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Civil Military Relations in Iran:

An Inside Look on Control and Fragmentation

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Abstract

The degree of military autonomy and its impact on civilian life is a frequent topic of concern when determining a state's ability to execute its policy. An evaluation of the components that constitute a functional civil-military relationship is integral in ensuring a state's protection from unrest and valid representation of its sovereignty and overarching ideology. This commentary aims to articulate the key factors contributing to the establishment of a synergistic relationship between civilians and the military. The determination of adequate civil control, methods of integration of the military into societal values and beliefs, and the establishment of an identity that instills unity across varying backgrounds are the factors that will be examined. An application of political theories to Iran will illustrate the divergence between a functional and dysfunctional state. This paper will contend that there are two models presented in Iran's case, Model A: which presents a more liberal and Westernized method of operation; and Model B: a post revolutionary and Islamic model which will be shown to be the most effective model for the current regime which embodies radical Islam in the political realm.

Introduction

History has demonstrated that amidst tensions surrounding conflicting ideologies and doctrines, a state's security remains the most paramount concern. There are two societal structures that are charged with protecting the state – the military and the civilians entrusted with holding political office. Civil-military relations scholars often identify the relationship between the two structures as being dependent upon personal or situational influences. They note also a dichotomy between the need for the government to maintain control over the military and the need to give the military autonomy in order to protect against common threats. The role of ideology in determining a state's identity and the form of civil-military relations has been less studied. Civilian control, military power, and the social benefits they provide will be examined in the second half of this paper using a case study of Iran. Iran will be examined to illustrate how a state undergoing episodes of regime changes and constant tensions has produced two very different models of the structure of military organization.

The first model introduced is Model A, associated with the Pahlavi dynasty. Beginning in the first quarter of the twentieth century, in the hope of establishing a modern state, the Pahlavi regime took was perceived to be a drastically liberal stance, and was considered to be “Americanized”. The Shah's government was secular in nature, appealing to Western values in an attempt to dissociate Iran's identity from any religion. In 1980, the post-revolutionary Ayatollah regime undertook a profound initiative to eliminate the heritage of the imperial Pahlavi culture. This involved the introduction of what is labelled as Model B. The purpose of this model was to incorporate the military into daily life. The revolutionary government believed that the Shah's agenda was illegitimate and ultimately undermined Shariah law. The IRGC, Islamic Revolutionary

Guards Corps, the militia, was then tasked with the neutralization of opposing views and ensuring the implementation of Shariah/Islamic beliefs in daily life.

The contrast between these key periods in history, which represent two separate doctrines, enable a deeper understanding of Iran's civil-military relations and of the building blocks of the current system. This paper is divided into two main sections; the first part will be used to provide an analysis of civil-military relations and its core components: civilian control and military influence. The second part will be an examination of the Iran's central civil-military relations structure and the transformation of its organization throughout regimes. The analysis of these core explanations will be applied to the Iranian case. The second half of the paper we will determine how Iran's dispersed powers and slightly fragmented nature enables Model B to be effective for a regime that cannot separate religious doctrine from its political structure.

The focus of this paper is designed to answer the following questions:

- a) What role does civilian control play?
- b) Is integration or segregation of the military the most effective approach?
- c) What role does identity play in forming a state and its military?
- d) What is the division of power between Iran's military and civil society?
- e) Which model is more effective for the current regime?

Key Terms

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

The IRGC is one of the branches of the military and the one that adheres to the current post-revolutionary regime of Iran. It is also known as the *Pasdaran* – meaning *guards* in Farsi.¹ This

¹ Wehrey, Frederic, et al. "Introduction." *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA, 2009, pp. 1. *JSTOR*.

army was assembled during the post-revolutionary period in support of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to establish a political hold of Iran through violent means.² The IRGC is the only branch of the military that represents an Islamic doctrine, and it punishes all those who oppose the ideologies set forth by Khomeini.³

Artesh

This is the original army assembled under the Pahlavi dynasty, and is that part of the current military which remains from the Shah's regime.⁴ Relatively speaking, the Artesh has more troops but is less powerful politically than the IRGC.

The Supreme Leader

Ayatollah Khomeini was the founder and Supreme Religious Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.⁵ He is perceived as an icon by Islamic society for taking the initiative to deploy resources to establishing the modern day regime.

Shah

The Shah was the ruler of the Pahlavi dynasty and viewed as a symbol of pure Persian identity, ancient traditions, and modernization.⁶ King Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, son of Reza Shah Pahlavi was entrusted with the throne by his father from 1941 until he was overthrown during the 1979

² Katzman, Kenneth, and Kazemi, Farhad. *Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Radical Ideology despite Institutionalization in the Islamic Republic*, 1991, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

³ Ibid, 1.

⁴ Aryan, Hossein. 2011. "The Artesh: Iran's Marginalized And Under-Armed Conventional Military". *Middle East Institute*.

⁵ Secor, Laura. "From Shah to Supreme Leader." *Foreign Affairs*. June 8, 2018.

⁶ Ibid.

revolution.⁷ Intending to follow in his father's footsteps to establish a modern state, the Shah created a state identity that was distant from the expectations of Khomeini.

Literature Review

Many sources have addressed the varying factors that contribute a dysfunctional civil-military relationship. The two books most often cited on the topic are Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* and Morris Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier*. These two works on civil-military relations reappear in many other writer's research as bedrock foundational papers. Huntington alludes to the idea that the body that citizens fear (i.e. the military) is in fact also the entity that is in place to protect them, leading to an ironic situation.⁸ Huntington argues that the military should primarily be used for protection and emergencies and not as a political tool. This is because of the high costs associated with deploying military forces.⁹ However, contrary to Huntington, many states, both developing and developed, utilize the military to serve multiple purposes.

The main idea which people take from of Huntington's work is that of civilian control. He defines civilian control as " minimizing the political power of the military".¹⁰ He explains that there are two forms of civilian control. The first is subjective control, which requires a civilian group such as a social class or governmental institution to pursue power through military

⁷ Saleh, Alam and James Worrall. 2015. "Between Darius and Khomeini: Exploring Iran's National Identity Problematique." *National Identities* 17 (1): 92.

⁸ Feaver, Peter. 1996. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (2): 150.

⁹ Ibid, 152.

¹⁰ Nielsen, Suzanne. "American Civil-military Relations Today: The Continuing Relevance of Samuel P. Huntington's "The Soldier and the State"." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 88, no. 2 (2012): 375.

insitutions.¹¹ This form of control governs military affairs in a manner that further increases the power of the dominant civilian group in society by decreasing the power of the military. The second is objective control, which Huntington prefers to subjective control, and which involves recognizing the autonomy of the military. Under this system of control the military gives its obedience to the leader in power. Huntington also argues that the political power struggles among civilians do not affect the military because the two groups are separate entities from one another.¹²

By means of an examination of the effectiveness of the military in conducting delegated tasks Suzanne Nielsen has critiqued Huntington's idea of "the professional military" which is subordinate to the civilian authorities.¹³ Nielsen's main argument concerns the trade-off between having an effective military and having a military which is under civilian control.¹⁴ Nielsen disagrees with Huntington's explanation of objective control, arguing that there is not a complete separation between the realms of politics and of military affairs, and that therefore Huntington fails to recognize the degree of influence that politics and the military have on one another.

Another important author is Peter D. Feaver, who builds on the work of Huntington and Janowitz to explain how civilians and the military operate. Using the contrast between what he calls the "Professional Supremacists versus Civilian Supremacists", he illustrates how these two groups operate with different mindsets.¹⁵ This theme is apparent in the tensions of competing ideologies, the "us vs. them" debate, and in Iran's case the Pahlavi dynasty vs. the Islamic Revolution.

¹¹ Ibid, 375.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Nielsen, Suzanne. "Civil Military Relations theory and Military Effectiveness." *Policy and Management Review* 2, no. 2 (2002): 3.

¹⁴ Ibid,15.

¹⁵ Feaver, P. (2011). The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision. *International Security*, 35(4), pp.90.

Another key scholar whose contribution had a profound effect of research on this topic is Brooks Risa. She provides a slightly different outlook on civil-military relations by centering on the power play relations in the Middle East. Her argument is that the lack of control from civilians can potentially lead to coup opportunities. She explains that the trade off in power between the military and civilians can affect the stability of regimes, and she makes the argument that the military acts as “defenders of state and sovereignty against external adversaries. Yet they also defend the regime from internal opponents and challengers”.¹⁶ This can be seen in the case of Iran.

Also important with regard to studies of Iran’s history and identity are Salah Alam and James Worrall. These scholars specialize in identity formation and nationalism and more specifically the history of Iran’s identity construction and the shifts that occurred between eras. They argue that Iran faces an identity crisis, as the citizens have always been followers of their rulers and the division among their rulers between modernists and Islamists contributes to uncertainty as to whether one can be Persian and a Muslim or both or neither.¹⁷ The authors explore the dichotomy between nationalism and Islamism in both pre- and post-revolutionary Iran and how it has contributed to the present day identity. They argue that both the nationalist and the Islamic identities have used each other’s existence to define themselves, and that this has become a huge segment of the construction of their discourses.¹⁸ The formation of Iran’s identity is significant in understanding the Islamic doctrine used in Iran’s current civil affairs and why the government

¹⁶ Brooks, Risa. "Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East." In *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability, and Political Change*. Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA: RAND Corporation, 2004: 129.

¹⁷ Saleh, Alam and James Worrall. 2015. "Between Darius and Khomeini: Exploring Iran's National Identity Problematique." *National Identities* 17 (1):90.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 91.

resorts to the military to protect not only their identity but also the ideology that has become the foundation of all affairs in Iran.

In another piece of work, “*The Iranian Military in Politics, Revolution and War*,” Hashim Ahmed mentions episodes of political turbulence in conjunction with situations that compromise Iran’s internal stability and security.¹⁹ Hashim further discusses the birth of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and elaborates on their recruitment processes in order to solidify their stance in the Islamic Revolution.²⁰ His work on this topic is instrumental in providing the foundation of establishing the role of the IRGC and its impact on Iran’s regime and also in understanding the IRGC’s relations with the government.

Scholars who specialize in Iranian civil military relations such as Ali Alfoneh, Hossein Aryan, and Homa Katouzian, explain the doctrines behind the Artesh and the IRGC, the amount of civilian control over each branch of military, and the amount of support one gets over the other. The fragmentation of Iranian civil-military relations is best comprehended as a division between military groups, exacerbated by financial resources and competing ideologies.

The 1979 Iranian revolution was a significant moment because it represented a shift away from Persian nationalism and towards an Islamic identity. One scholar specializing in the political structure of Iran is Laure Secor, who examines the upbringings of the Shah and the Supreme Leader, and sheds light on the influence they have had in creating the structure of Iranian civil society and its effect on the population. Secor’s article emphasizes the importance of doctrines and ideologies and how the existence of two competing different ideologies in a state can cause a revolution.

¹⁹ Hashim, Ahmed S. 2012. "The Iranian Military in Politics, Revolution and War, Part Two." *Middle East Policy* 19 (3): 65-83.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 71.

Alam Sham focuses primarily on the division of ideologies and their categorization into political parties; liberals and conservatives. He argues that the emergence of these groups directly and indirectly threaten the clerical rule, and in the end reduces the influence of the clerical establishment.²¹ He expresses indirectly in his arguments the idea that the liberal party has an upper hand because it progresses alongside globalization and modernization, forces that cannot be subdued. Thus, a form of liberal theocracy is constantly emerging and battling with the conservative faction. These competing ideologies have transformed from wandering beliefs to established organizations.

The research of the authors mentioned above provides concrete information about historical events, and explains the structure of civil society and the ideological shifts which have altered Iran's society to what it is today. This paper will demonstrate that Iran's current military model is effective for the regime that is currently in place due to the root of its power; civil society and the Islamic revolutionary regime.

Chapter I: Key Themes

Civilian Control

Suzzane Nielsen uses Samuel Huntington's position on civil-military relations in the United States in *The Soldier and The State* to explain the relationship between civilian control and the military. Nielsen contends that political outcomes are heavily dependent on civilians' relations with the military and vice-versa. She argues that Huntington asserts an equilibrium where civilian control and maximum security can be achieved.²² The military's expertise and

²¹ Alam, Shah. 2000. "Conservatives, Liberals and the Struggle Over Iranian Politics." *Strategic Analysis* 24 (3): 579.

²² Nielsen, Suzanne. "Civil- Military Relations Theory and Military Effectiveness." *Policy and Management Review* 2, no. 2 (2002): 3.

responsibilities demonstrate its professional role and in turn dictate its separation from politics and civilians. In regards to national security, the military has the upper hand relative to the government as the latter will rely heavily on the military's expertise to provide recommendations. Huntington argues that achieving civilian control in the United States requires the state to allow military professionals autonomy and to label them as neutral, as their ultimate goal is the same as the civilians: to achieve military security.²³ Huntington introduces his concept of 'objective civilian control', which "guarantees the protection of civilian society from external enemies and from the military themselves".²⁴ This approach involves maximizing military subordination and military power and is the key trait of model B. Huntington argues that by giving the military autonomy the civilians are recognizing their 'professionalism', which will in return give the civilians voluntary subordination and loyalty. The military is recognized for its expertise and specialized code of ethics which lists the military's societal responsibilities and how it operates with the rest of society.²⁵ Therefore, reasons for minimizing the military's autonomy for fear of betrayal or lack of civilian control is not a strong argument as in objective control, the military is opposed to intervention in spheres outside of its expertise. This is contrary to Huntington's subjective control which he argues is detrimental to military effectiveness because it forces the military to defer to civilians in the battlefield. As opposed to giving the military autonomy, subjective control is civilians controlling the military sphere.

²³ Ibid,4.

²⁴ Feaver, Peter. 1996. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (2): 160.

²⁵ Fitch, J. Samuel. 1989. "Military Professionalism, National Security and Democracy: Lessons from the Latin American Experience." *Pacific Focus* 4 (2): 100.

Huntington used the United States as his main case study in order to develop the concept of civilian control. This, however, means that some of the arguments made by Huntington do not apply to current relations as the United States is not in the same place it was many years ago, nor are all countries similar to the United States. In recent decades, the United States has never had potential situations involving military coups or the prospect of a military dictatorship. This would suggest that giving the military autonomy does not threaten the state. However, the situation is very different in dysfunctional states, where civilian authority cannot safely be undermined in such a manner. Iran, for instance, faces very different circumstances from the USA, as its civilian and military realms are heavily intertwined, and issues of loyalty and subordination are extremely important.

Contrary to Huntington's apolitical military, Nielsen introduces Morris Janowitz and *The Professional Soldier*, in which he argues that Huntington's approach is unrealistic and that one needs to accept that with the expertise the military possess, it will inevitably become an active actor in the decision making process.²⁶ However, providing the military with autonomy is inevitable with all its risks, because the military is tasked with state protection against enemies or potential threats. Janowitz reassures readers however, that providing the military with autonomy will not be counterproductive to civilian control if the military integrates itself with civilian values.²⁷ This reassurance is present in the post-revolutionary model of Iran, with the state giving the military autonomy while knowing that it can expect subordination and loyalty because the military's values are aligned with the state's.

²⁶ Nielsen, Suzanne. "Civil-Military Relations Theory and Military Effectiveness." *Policy and Management Review* 2, no. 2 (2002): 6.

²⁷ *Ibid*,6.

Although in a functional state, the military can be subordinate to civilians, Janowitz and Huntington place too much trust in the military's responsibilities and duty to the civilians. In history, this has only occurred when there is a functional relationship between the two organizations. This begs the question of whether it is possible to establish an equilibrium in the working relationship of these two bodies, rather than leaning towards too much or too little civilian influence. With the case of Iran it is evident that such a neutrality can exist but both models present complications.

Separation or Integration: Which Works?

The priority of the military is to protect the state. Yet, the organization is also perceived as a mechanism to incite violence. Two of the main concerns of risk management with regard to military organizations are a) ensuring their cooperation and b) lessening the possibility of radical judgment calls when providing advice about internal and external affairs. Finding that medium is often the challenge when maintaining a crucial relationship, as one body is seeking more autonomy while the other is focused on balance and policy. But as Feaver explains in his article of *Civil Military Problematique*, a dysfunctional military could be worse than no military at all.²⁸ The term dysfunctional has been used frequently to describe a military that does not have a positive relation with the civilian authorities. Therefore, it is important to explain what a functional military is in order to better prescribe a solution. Feaver explains, "It is tasked with defending the body politic; it is ready for extreme emergencies and for lesser tasks as desired; and it is sufficiently strong and properly oriented to meet the peculiar threats facing that particular polity...so must it conduct its own affairs so as not to destroy the society it is intended to protect".²⁹ Therefore, in accordance

²⁸ Feaver, Peter. 1996. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (2): 151.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 152.

with Feaver's perception of a functional military, a military fulfils the role of protecting its state's society from external attacks and from itself. Feaver's explanation of a functional state is argued to be equivalent to the form of control prescribed by Huntington, objective control. Both guarantee protection from external enemies and from the military themselves and recognize military autonomy as key to military professionalism. This form of state and control is model B and demonstrated in the post-revolutionary regime. What is often observed in dysfunctional military affairs is the opposite; the military wishes to perform a coup over the civilian institutions, inflicts violence on the population it was created to protect, and disrupts the everyday lifestyle of all members of the state. Model A reflects some traits of a dysfunctional military affair with the exception of violence on its population. The military under the Shah will be argued to be controlled by too many dispersed powers and the violence occurred under his regime is one of the many reasons that military coups and disruption of daily life occurred.

Having established the foundation of functional and dysfunctional military states, the focus of attention shifts towards how much a military's values reflect those of civilians and societal values in comparison to how much they should reflect them, and towards the question of which side of the spectrum (military or civilians) possesses more power. Feaver argues that Huntington's view is that there is a preference for civilian control but that this has to be balanced with the need for military security. In order to gain more civilian control, society sacrifices protection against external enemies by minimizing military power.³⁰ The main question then is how much security the state should give up in exchange for more control, given that there remains the possibility that the civilians handling national security will execute decisions poorly from a military standpoint.

³⁰ Ibid, 158.

To provide an answer to this question, we should ask ourselves – who declares war and approves the way that it conducted? If the answer is the President (civilian) or Prime Minister, then by default the civilian has more power as the military responds in demand to the civilian's immediate requests. The civilian in power will possess the decision making ability bestowed upon them through the process of election. Their overarching duty is to represent society and the core societal beliefs and values as well as provide sound judgment guided by their education, knowledge and training. This discussion leads to the next segment regarding who in the civil-military problematic reflects society's values adequately, and whether this guarantees them a monopoly of power within the national security realm?

Reflection of Societal Values

Model A, led by Reza Pahlavi, involved a policy of Westernization, increased women's rights, such as the choice of wearing a headscarf and increased tolerance of different ethnic and religious groups. By contrast, Model B, after the overthrow of the Shah, led to the banning of Western influences. Khomeini promoted Islamic fundamentalism and returned the state's structure back to traditional Islamic teachings. Both these societies reflected different values and beliefs that the population under each reign responded differently to. Individuals who desire more military autonomy and relations and investments with the Western world, would believe that Model A is the most effective one for Iran. However, this model would not operate smoothly under a regime whose laws, structure, and values are presently embodied with Islamic fundamentalism. With regards to the Islamic doctrine currently practiced in Iran, the liberals will still want and obey Islamic laws. However, they also believe in more political expression and that

it is inevitable when there is progress towards modernization in the country.³¹ The clerics in Model B, on the other hand, have an opposite approach, “the conservatives are universalist in their approach, literalist in their method, and follow tradition. They have a totalitarian approach in teaching Islam and believe that their interpretation and version of Islam should regulate all aspects of the lives of people”.³²

These two societies have two different values and understandings of what peace, and more specifically, what Islam is and how a state should achieve it. Although both societies possess different goals and perceptions, they both face a key challenge: a trade-off. Huntington argues that “if society minimizes the strength of the military so as to guard against a military seizure of political power, it leaves itself vulnerable to predations from external enemies...tradeoffs at the margins are inevitable”.³³ If the civilians in power are minimizing the strength of the military they lose some level of protection in exchange, and vice versa if military autonomy and strength is increased and civilian control is decreased. Iran exemplifies high civilian control of the military, but that control can increase and decrease depending on the branch of military. This paper will show that the IRGC for example, has more autonomy because it is heavily incorporated into society. It receives more funding, freedom, and support since its views align with the current society. By contrast, the Artesh is at the opposite end of the spectrum, receiving less funding and support while being less aligned with societal values. This demonstrates that these values and their alignment with the military may have a stronger impact

³¹ Alam, Shah. 2000. "Conservatives, Liberals and the Struggle Over Iranian Politics." *Strategic Analysis* 24 (3): 559.

³² Ibid, 560.

³³ Feaver, Peter. 1996. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (2):154.

than expected. With that said, two questions are presented: should the military's values represent that of society, or is it a separate entity which can hold and act on values of its own?

One side of the argument is that the military is just another division of society and a representative of society's core belief system. When troops are deployed they are representing and protecting the state and thus it would be counterintuitive to behave and display values outside of the state they are protecting. The military is not separate from the government as it is part of the department of defense. All policy, national events, and/or societal reactions to events affect the military. Feaver argues that the military "was invented as a protection device against external enemies, once created, however, the military institution can be a vehicle for advancing any number of other societal goals".³⁴ This is exactly what Iran does with the IRGC, using it to uphold the Islamic revolutionary beliefs and advance all goals in relation to the primary Islamic doctrine. The military works on behalf of society's expectations and goals and in that characterization it is not separate from society's core. In addition, depending on "independent military standards" is problematic because in those terms, the "military's actions can only be evaluated in relation to the political ends that these means are to serve".³⁵ As they are part of a collective society, they should be held responsible and act on the same standards and values as civilians. The civil government and the military focus on working together to attain national goals and protect civilians from external and internal threats.

Edgar Shein, an organizational psychologist argues that "culture is what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and

³⁴ Ibid, 155.

³⁵ Nielsen, Suzanne. "Civil-Military Relations Theory and Military Effectiveness." *Policy and Management Review* 2, no. 2 (2002): 4.

its problems of internal integration.”³⁶ It can be argued, that according to Schein’s perception of culture, the values and beliefs gained from society are abstract and changing over periods of time. Thus, an institution such as the military, if it were to reflect and match society’s belief system, would be constantly changing and would fail to provide a solid foundation. In his study of military culture, Hillen argues that global military cultures transform in history as a result of responding to the needs of conflict – this is called *occupational necessity*.³⁷ The combatants have their own set of virtues, among them are: honor, courage, integrity, strength, and duty.³⁸ These values are neither considered to be immoral or pose a strong divergence from a state’s core values. However, abstract values from society may not be able to withstand events or time. An argument can be made that as long as the military’s actions and belief system is not far from that of society’s expectations, then no adjustments need to be made to reflect the state’s views.

Both sides of the argument agree that civilian control is important and that the level of autonomy the military has, and how closely its goals and identity match those of society, depend on the level of control exerted by the civilians. Iran’s case illustrates both sides of the spectrum, the military (IRGC) demonstrates a tightly-knit relationship with the civilian government by reflecting the current regime’s beliefs (as seen in Model B), whereas the Artesh and the other is not granted a high degree of autonomy and lacks a strong relationship with civilians in power, operating instead on the prior regime mandate (Model A). The IRGC vividly portrays the military values listed above such as duty and honor, albeit within the context of Iran’s Islamic revolutionary ideals. The Artesh, by contrast, fails to reflect the post-revolutionary society and

³⁶ Edgar H. Schein, “Organizational Culture,” *American Psychologist*, February 1990, p.111.

³⁷ Hillen, John. 1999. "Must U.S. Military Culture Reform?" *Orbis* 43 (1): 45.

doi:10.1016/S0030-4387(99)80056-8.

³⁸ *Ibid*,45.

due to that, is given less autonomy and resources, and in the end, is treated like an outcast. This suggest that military institutions benefit in terms of their relationship with the decision-making authority and the resources they receive when they reflect a society's beliefs. On the other hand, if the military, such as the Artesh, does not believe in the regime's ideology and decides to operate slightly independently, it faces cuts in funding and unequal treatment, among many other disadvantages.

Iran's Nationalism

Another key component in understanding civilian control is recognizing the state's identity internally and how it presents itself to the rest of the world. The construction of an Iranian identity is central for Iran because it entails the nation's culture and beliefs and affects its interaction with foreign states. Iran's identity may be seen as under development, undergoing transformations as a result of regime changes. A nation's identity requires varying ethnic and religious groups to be unified under one banner. Iran faces challenges with this aspect of development, especially with many sects of religions branching out of one, and because of efforts to politicize the identity. This is what Alam and Worrall call Iran's identity crisis: finding a common ground between nationalistic and Islamic discourses.³⁹ Post 1979, the Islamic revolutionary government has faced the challenges of not only establishing an Islamic dominant identity, but also defending it through military means. Therefore, regime change resulted in a shift in the national identity as well.

³⁹ Saleh, Alam and James Worrall. 2015. "Between Darius and Khomeini: Exploring Iran's National Identity Problematique." *National Identities* 17 (1): 73.

In the Pahlavi era, the nationalist discourses were based on pre-Islamic heritage which became the original source of Iranian identity and “this ties the notion of Iran to a specific territory, a specific sense of self and a knowledge of former greatness”.⁴⁰ In this era, Iran’s identity was not closely connected to Islamic doctrines and was instead founded on Persian culture, language, and traditions. Reza Shah’s main goal was to maintain the monarchy and include aspects of the Persian Empires. In that way he could have both modernity and ancient traditions.⁴¹ By centralizing power and reducing the power of the religious institutions,⁴² Iran’s identity could be centered on ethnic traditions, versatility, and language while pushing the state towards modernity. Much of what was incorporated into the foundation of Iran’s identity was themes chosen from ancient times in order to separate Iran from the Arabs, which also meant separation from Islam. Alam and Worrall summarize the Pahlavi identity of Iran as consisting of three elements: “(1) proving your modernity (2) Persianisation and (3) glorification of the ancient past”.⁴³ The identity presented here was an attempt at marginalizing Iran from Islam combined with fear of a religious collective identity consuming the nationalism of the state. Figure 1 illustrates the Shah’s discourses and how he used each one to create an identity that would lead to modernity. Unfortunately, what the Shah feared happening in regards to nationalism occurred in the next regime and a confrontation with Islam began.

FIGURE 1 – The core elements of monarchical nationalist identity⁴⁴

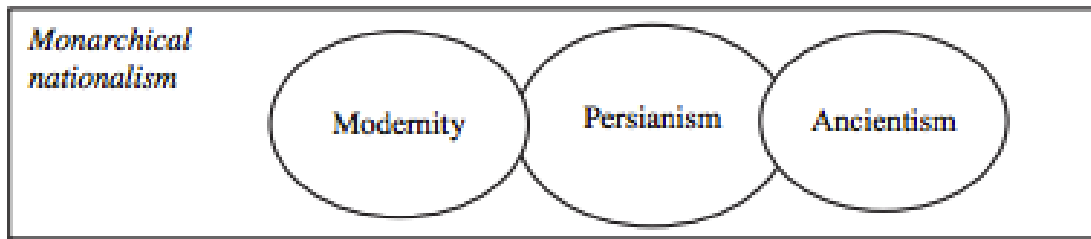
⁴⁰ Ibid, 74.

⁴¹ Ibid, 83.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, 84.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



In the Khomeini era, there was a shift to an anti-nationalistic and pro-Islamic identity. The shift towards a pro-Islamic identity is significant in Iran's history and civil society because it was the beginning of an 'us' versus 'them' era. The 'us' identity became reinforced in everyday teachings and laws, only to be situated further from any nationalistic traditions and behavior. Khomeini associated national affiliations with Western thought, and influenced the Iranian society that nationalistic tendencies undermine Islamic ruling⁴⁵ and therefore the Iranian identity. The Islamic government's plan was to eliminate secular Iranian nationalism. It claimed that the only legitimate identity for the state is what is mentioned in Islam and in the Shariah. The use of religious doctrines and invoking religious duty became a prime strategy for the new government. Anything prior to this new identity was considered illegitimate,⁴⁶ hence the decision to aggressively push Islam into everyday life in order to construct a collective identity. The Iranian identity replaced ancientism and shifted Persianism to the right in order to center Shi'a Islam (See Figure 1.1). Attempts have been made to include parts of Persianism and modernity in the post-revolutionary doctrine, but the figure symbolizes the significance of Islam as the center of all operations.

In Model B, the idea that the Islamic doctrines could unify all Iranians together has failed, and its lack of success is currently seen in the problems the Islamic government struggles with in

⁴⁵ Ibid, 75.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 86.

regards to modernity, secularism and rights. Iran's nationalism can be argued to be a state-building nationalism, built out of history, and culture, which is political in nature.⁴⁷ Due to the multiple ethnic and religious backgrounds, Iran is argued to have a politicized identity which is used to group everyone together regardless of their background and which is meant to tie identities together based on belonging to a territory. When neighboring states begin form, or already have formed, their state of nationalism, Iran then becomes less secure and what follows are security issues.

There are a few factors that contribute to having a higher risk of war: first, the greater the proportion of state-seeking nationalities that are stateless; second, the more severely nationalities oppress minorities living in their states, the greater the risk of war."⁴⁸ Van Evera states that these security issues are broad enough to be applied to states who are challenged with possessing a collective identity. However, Iran checks off all four boxes of the immediate security issues for the following reasons. Due to Iran's large number of ethnic groups and neighbouring states who share some of the ethnic group's traditions and culture, there is always going to be a battle for dominance or at least balance between the minority groups. Iran has also always wanted to have a hegemonic identity, thus, there will be tensions to keep the persian identity as a prominent identity representing Iran. In the post-revolution regime, there have been numerous incidents of oppression of members of society who do not share the identity, beliefs, and practice of the Islamic doctrine. The question then arises whether Iran will ever have a collective identity and if so, whether favouritism and oppression between groups is inevitable. Although the goal of this

⁴⁷ Ibid, 77.

⁴⁸ Van Evera, Stephen. "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War." *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 8.

paper is not to discuss nationalism and its implications, it is important to assess the effects identity has on a politically fragile state which uses military force to reinforce its identity.

Chapter II: Iran's Military Affairs

Iran's Military

Iran's military represents an interesting and unique case in studying global affairs as its history demonstrates shifts in the ideological construction of the armed forces. The regular military, the *Artesh*, constructed under the Pahlavi regime, is apolitical and dedicated to working with the regime that is in current power, although that doesn't always seem to be the case.⁴⁹ On the contrary, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is further explained below, sees involvement in politics as a duty of the soldier to represent and defend the Islamic revolution.⁵⁰ The *Artesh* holds little influence in the political realm, which puts it at a disadvantage, as more funding and resources go towards the IRGC. The overlapping responsibilities and unequal treatment between the forces makes the *Artesh* behave as an independent force as it will at times not contribute to roles that include upholding the Islamic revolutionary goals. In fact, the revolutionary ideals which are the legacy of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini are now a key factor in identifying what Iran's military represents, whereas the *Artesh* cannot relate to, nor desires to relate to, those ideals. Iran's military doctrine, which was formalized in 1992 in the regulations

⁴⁹ Katzman, Kenneth, and Kazemi, Farhad. *Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Radical Ideology despite Institutionalization in the Islamic Republic*, 1991, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses : 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2.

of the Iranian Armed Forces, list many key objectives that all are tied to Islamic ideology.⁵¹

Scholar Steven Ward argues that,

“the regulations point to an Iranian outlook that is essentially defensive but also zealous about protecting Islam. The principles outlined in the regulations are really statements of national security policy and are tied to the regulations presentation of Iran’s defensive goals of protecting national independence, territorial integrity, regional interests, the theocracy, and other Muslim and oppressed nations. These principles stress Islamic ideology as a basic precept for organizing and equipping the Armed Forces. They also demand loyalty to the Supreme Leader, seek self-sufficiency, and punishing an aggressor against Iran”⁵²

These regulations demand obedience to the Supreme Leader, and by being subordinate to him there is less opportunity for a military coup or for authority to be questioned. In Model B, obedience to Islam is also clearly mandatory as the military’s whole doctrine is founded on protecting and promoting Islam. The doctrine also appears to demonstrate a level of hostility towards nations and individuals that do not share the same ideology as Iran. This explains the current regime’s relationship with the Western world. By having different ideologies, the two sides struggle to improve their relations with one another. Whereas the current regime’s doctrine presents a traditional and Islamic view of how society should operate, the Western world resembles a more modern approach, similar to the Shah’s regime. Thus, an argument can be made that one solution to overcoming the feud between states is learning how to separate religion from the state’s military structure and doctrine. This would be Model A’s approach, as the Shah

⁵¹ Steven R. Ward. "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine." *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 4 (2005): 560.

⁵² Ibid.

took a more secular stance with the political structure and its relation with the military. However, when the state's civil society and identity is heavily based on a religion, taking religious doctrines out of the equation is deemed as unacceptable. Prior to the revolution, the Shah demonstrated presented what appeared like an equal balance of practicing Islam but also guiding the state towards a more modern society. This exact period however is also when some clerics thought the Shah was a puppet to the Western world, poverty was rising, and laws were not followed according to Islamic doctrines. Therefore, in order to understand Iran's heavily Islamic structured military status further, the next section will explain the key events that led to the creation of the IRGC and the Artesh.

The Shah and the Military

Unfortunately, the Shah had many politicians who were trying to overthrow his power and change foreign relations with the Americans and British. It was presumed by the Shah's foreign patrons that having a military officer as prime minister would change the perception of the military in the eyes of the public.⁵³ General Hajjali Razmara was chosen as the prime delegate for the PM position, however, it was later seen that his intentions were to limit the Shah's powers and in return his actions cost him the ability to delegate authority over the military and to reach an agreement with the British over oil royalties.⁵⁴ Razmara had gone head to head with the Shah and on March 7th, 1951 he was assassinated. Razmara was not the first who had issues with Shah's more liberal direction in foreign relations, especially concerning oil.

⁵³ Hashim, Ahmed S. "The Iranian Military in Politics, Revolution and War, Part Two." *Middle East Policy Council*, Middle East Policy Council.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Mohammad Mossadegh was the next opponent wanting to overthrow the Shah after his election as prime minister.

Mossadegh, in the early 1950s, headed the National Front of secular nationalists.⁵⁵ After his election, Mossadegh passed one of the most important laws that would change Iran's relations with America and Britain, and the future economic state of Iran. In 1951, the Oil Nationalization law was passed. In response to many forceful attempts from foreign powers to gain control over Iran's oil, Iran's prime minister had decided to nationalize the oil industry.⁵⁶ Foreign relations worsened with the US and Britain as they were furious with Iran's response. As a result the purchase of Iranian oil dramatically decreased while other states in the Middle East such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq witnessed an increase in their production. The loss of oil exports negatively impacted Iran's economy and was not foreseen by Mossadegh, whose main goal was to bring military control away from the Shah and instead under his own wings. The following year, the Shah denied all requests made by Mossadegh and a national uprising took place in favour of Mossadegh. Right-wing conservative forces led by Ayatollah Kashani encouraged and enlisted men to join the people in the anti-Shah struggle.⁵⁷ In an attempt to end the violent uproar, the Shah reinstated Mossadegh, whose response to the military was to cut its share of the budget and discharge officers who were pro-Shah. These officers, along with the Shah's support, carried out a coup which failed, but then a second coup, backed up by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Britain's M16, was launched and successfully brought the Shah back

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

into power.⁵⁸ This led to further fragmentation of the political realm, resulting in unstable relationships with the Western world.

The betrayal from Mossadegh is just one of the many scenarios of political tension in Iranian civil society. However, in the case of Mossadegh, the Shah had external support from the Western world to regain his power. Although this power struggle exists between the liberal and conservative parties, one pattern that is apparent and which one can expect to keep returning is the liberals' urge to not quit and fight back. The conservatives control a huge portion of the military and use it to protect their status. However, as the Shah argued earlier, Model A, liberalization and its core beliefs of freedom of expression and political demonstrations comes along with modernization and globalization. Model B demonstrates that many were unhappy with the progress made in Model A's time period and thus a change was needed to bring Islamic teachings back into the political and military realm, which is what Mossadegh attempted to do. The Shah's regime represented a lot of power struggle and a main reason for that was the differing ideologies and identities that were present and active in his regime. The existence of active identities was further contributed to by the amount of dispersed powers present. According to Huntington, "political power struggles among civilian groups do not play out within the military, which is divorced from them and operates according to functional military requirements. This arrangement is beneficial because it maximizes both civilian control and military effectiveness."⁵⁹ The military was receiving training and support from the United States and Britain, receiving orders from the Shah, and generals and other politicians who had differing

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Nielsen, Suzanne C. "American Civil-military Relations Today: The Continuing Relevance of Samuel P. Huntington's "The Soldier and the State"." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 88, no. 2 (2012): 375.

opinions from that of the Shahs'. The amount of civilian control exerted by the dispersed power groups caused the military to be less effective and prompt military coups. If model B was to be present: more autonomy, less civilian control and external influence, then, civil military relations between the Shah and the military branches could have been more effective and possibly changed the outcome of the regime.

Prime Historical Events in Iran's Military Structure

1979 Iranian Revolution

The 1979 Iranian revolution involved an extreme Islamic society revolting against the state.⁶⁰ It has been conjectured that America or Britain were in charge of the revolution in an attempt to stop the Shah from influencing higher oil prices which would cost America and Britain a lot.⁶¹ However, the true spark behind the revolution was an ideology that resembled Islamic belief. In order for it to be established, the monarchy would need to be overthrown.⁶² The Shah was known as Mohammad Reza, who inherited the throne from his father who founded the Pahlavi dynasty. In the pre-revolutionary period the Western world had a much more intimate relationship with Iran's civil society than it did later. Between 1970 and 1979, there were many Americans who had immigrated to Iran and worked mainly in the defence industry, with a population increasing from fewer than 8,000 to close to 50,000.⁶³ However, in the process of wanting to achieve modernity for his state, the Shah was faced with a growing population and increase in slums. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a cleric who was known for his strong

⁶⁰ Katouzian, H. (2009, January 29). The Iranian Revolution of February 1979.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Secor, Laura. "From Shah to Supreme Leader." *Foreign Affairs*. June 8, 2018.

opposition to the Shah, organized opposition to a 1963 law that would allow women the right to vote and run for city council.⁶⁴ This was the start of an upheaval that would not end until Khomeini had taken over the monarchy and established an Islamic state governed by clerics. Once Khomeini had achieved this goal, the position of Supreme Leader was created, which changed the whole civil structure of society and foreign affairs, and was the beginning of a new revolutionary order.⁶⁵

After Khomeini's death in 1989, the Islamic Republic allowed for a president, a parliament, and local councils, all subordinate to the clerical councils and the powers of the Supreme Leader.⁶⁶ The Supreme Leader became the highest-ranking authority figure and therefore, all decisions have to be approved by him. The Supreme Leader is also a religious figure, which means the Islamic revolutionary ideal came into effect the moment he claimed his position.

The revolution has benefited the population to a certain extent. Education, being a primary good to the clerics, has been made more accessible, even to females, and education is seen as a must in the Iranian culture. A slight transformation was made in the social realm, with movements towards civic engagement and the rule of law.⁶⁷ However, when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad succeeded Khatami, there was what felt like a return to when the revolution had first occurred. Violent protest occurred, in particular after the bizarre 2009 election that got him re-elected.⁶⁸ The revolution can be seen as a product of differing interpretations of Islamic doctrines, an attempt to find an equilibrium between traditional life and modern life. The military

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

of Iran also suffered from differing ideologies as one branch of the military was still operating under the outlook of the Pahlavi regime (Model A) whereas the revolutionary corps breathes and lives authoritarian political philosophies (Model B). The fragmentation and fragility that is produced within these dynamics contributes to Iran's current reputation, a developing state with what can be considered a strong military but a weak and scattered civil society.

Iran-Iraq War

The famous Iran-Iraq war was an eight-year war which neither state won. Iraq, under the rule of Saddam Hussein, invaded Iran on the 22 of September 1980, a year after the Iranian revolution.⁶⁹ Saddam claimed that the reason for Iraq's invasion was a dispute over the territorial boundaries of the Shaat al-Arab, the river which divides Iran's and Iraq's territories. However, the invasion in reality had multiple ulterior motives, one of which included territorial disputes, but others which involved religious and regional rivalry.⁷⁰ Saddam had felt threatened by the Islamic Revolution brought upon by Ayatollah Khomeini, and Khomeini had felt that Saddam, a Sunni, was oppressing his Shia majority population. Both rulers wanted to overthrow one another before they got hit first. The bloody eight-year war ended with a ceasefire organized by the United Nations in 1988, which Khomeini, after much convincing by Iranian officials, accepted and described as like drinking a cup of poison.⁷¹ Iraq's intention was to gain control over the Shaat al- Arab and to overthrow the new regime, whereas Khomeini viewed the war as one of Islam, with a desire to replace Hussein's Sunni government with a Shi'a dominated regime.⁷²

⁶⁹ Hardy , Roger . "The Iran-Iraq war: 25 years on." *BBC NEWS*, BBC , 22 Sept. 2005.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 23.

The significance of the Iran-Iraq war for Iran was that it gave multiple opportunities to the post-revolutionary government to demonstrate to the rest of the world and its own population that the Islamic method of operation was the correct method of operating and strategizing (Model B). By winning the war, the people's pride in the military would be strengthened. In other words, the war provided an opportunity to demonstrate national unity, patriotism and power; a chance to show the country that this new regime was the right one. With respect to finances, loss of territory and soldiers' lives lost, the war was a defeat for Iraq, and Iran viewed the war as a victory and as a successful attempt to stabilize the political system. The military prior to the revolution had a lot of support and training given to it from the United States and Britain, and for the Supreme Leader, going to war proved to the Western world that Iran was self-sufficient. By having close foreign civilian relations, the military was being civilianized by the civil society, a form of subjective control which Huntington argued would not be effective in the battlefield. Further, the onset of the Iran-Iraq war was to "cleanse Iran from all of the secular tendencies."⁷³ Ray Takeyh, who has studied the implications of the Iran-Iraq war, reinforces the idea that for the clerical state, unlike Iraq, the issue was not territorial loss or gain, but rather Iran saw the Iraqi declaration of war on Iran as a war against Islam. Thus Khomeini stressed that his nation's goal was that of the Prophet.⁷⁴ Labelling the war as God's intention and will and identifying it as now the nation's goal and will, strongly reinforced the identity of Iran as an Islamic state, which further reinforced the transformation of Iran's political culture. Iran has been commented as a state that will "emphasize its ability to suffer losses while avoiding decisive defeats to prolong the

⁷³ Takeyh, Ray. "The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment." *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 3 (2010): 366

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 367.

war and prevail in a contest of wills.”⁷⁵ Iran’s current approach to their military operations and doctrine reflects years of complications of political environments that emerged from the Iran-Iraq war and the revolution.

The IRGC

The IRGC stands for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, one of the branches of Iran’s armed forces.⁷⁶ This branch, as mentioned earlier, was created in support of Ayatollah Khomeini who was invested in taking hold of the Shah’s power and regime and transforming it into his ideal radical version of clerical power.⁷⁷ The birth of the IRGC marks an important transformation in Iran’s history as it illustrates the change in Iran’s civil control, the transfer of power from one government to another, and the new regime’s effects on the population and relations with other states. The IRGC has an estimated 120,000 personnel who fulfil duties regarding internal and external defence, border-patrol, and disaster-relief.⁷⁸ In addition, anything in the arena of infrastructure and storage of unconventional warfare weapons such as ballistic missiles falls under the oversight of the IRGC.⁷⁹

The IRGC, although appearing as the sole dominant force in Iran, in reality operates in a system that is factionalized both formally and informally.⁸⁰ Following the complications of

⁷⁵ Steven R. Ward. "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine." *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 4 (2005): 559-76.

⁷⁶ Hashim, Ahmed S. 2012. "The Iranian Military in Politics, Revolution and War, Part Two." *Middle East Policy* 19 (3): 65-83. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4967.2012.00548.x.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 71.

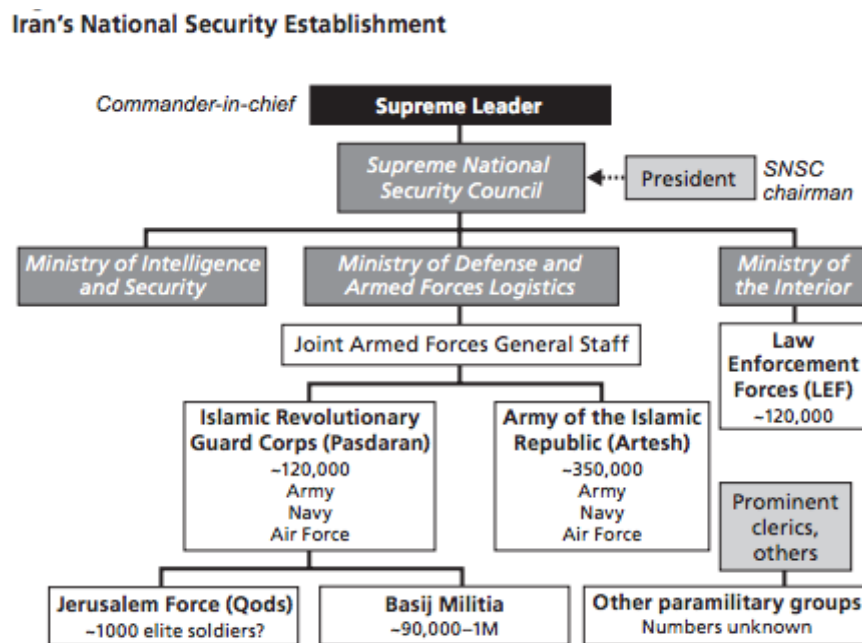
⁷⁸ Wehrey, Frederic, et al. "Introduction." *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA, 2009, pp. 8.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.,7.

battlefield coordination between the regular force and the IRGC in the Iran-Iraq war, a formal arrangement was constructed to help foster the relationship between the Artesh and the IRGC.⁸¹ The structure of Iran’s military began to become further fragmented, yet simultaneously providing more control over and limiting the autonomy of the IRGC. In 1988, the Joint Armed Forces General Staff was constructed.⁸² This included personnel from both the regular force and the IRGC.⁸³ Although the Artesh and the IRGC both play important roles, there is a higher chain of command that settles national security issues. This includes the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), consisting of “the president, defence and foreign ministers, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards, and several appointees or “representatives” of the Supreme Leader”.⁸⁴

FIGURE 1.1 - Illustrating the military chain of command and the division of powers ⁸⁵



⁸¹ Ibid., 8.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.,9.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

As illustrated above, Iran in theory adopts a top down approach to national decision-making, with the commander-in-chief (The Supreme Leader) holding a highly influential position, arguably more than the President as he mediates with other commanders in each segment of the military. However, in practice there are multiple factions within Iran's power structure, both formal and informal, where decisions are based on relationships to the Supreme Leader and the President. Since the IRGC is involved in the political, economic, social and foreign affairs of the country, it possesses a vast influence over all spheres in Iran's civil affairs and thus this is where a rivalry is created between the two branches of the military.⁸⁶ After the 1979 revolution, the new leaders presumed that some in the military would continue to be loyal to the exiled monarch of Iran, and so they created another branch of the military, which caused overlapping responsibilities and ideological differences.⁸⁷ This marks a shift from an organized military which responded to the Shah to a system which is now fragmented and involves unequal power relations.

In regards to civil military relations, it can be argued that although there are multiple branches of the military, it is clear that the civilian government exercises control over the military despite the fragmentation, as the IRGC is controlled by the Supreme Leader. It has been argued thus far that the IRGC was constructed to support the current regime and their methods of operation and ideology are aligned with the post-revolutionary government. Iran's IRGC leaders and all its operations are handled and approved by the Supreme Leader as seen in Figure 1.1. When members of the political office incorporate themselves into military affairs, the IRGC's power is minimized along with possibilities of a military coup. In addition, prior to the

⁸⁶ Aryan, Hossein. 2011. "The Artesh: Iran's Marginalized And Under-Armed Conventional Military". *Middle East Institute*.

⁸⁷ Alfoneh, Ali. 2011. "Eternal Rivals? The Artesh And The IRGC". *Middle East Institute*.

revolutionary coup, the Artesh was apolitical so it was not involved with the Shah's decisions and political arena. Autonomy was given to the military and civilian control was maintained at a moderate level. Thus, Iran demonstrates two cases: one where a classic military organization exists and responds when it is needed, and another where the military is heavily incorporated into the civilian sphere, demonstrating full civilian control over what appears as the rival military. The first case demonstrates Huntington's objective control where civilian control does exist, but the military is obedient and responds to the government whenever it is needed. The positive relationship that the government and the military have with one another demonstrates that in Iran's case, an objective control would be more effective than subjective control because it has been shown under Iran's model that giving the military autonomy to work on their own with some level of civilian control has been more effective than little autonomy and actions governed by civilians.

A key issue in Iran's case is the differences between Artesh and the IRGC. Although the Artesh is bigger than the IRGC, the Army has not received the same funding; for example, in the 2010-2011 budget, \$4.8 billion was given to the army while the IRGC received \$5.8 billion in addition to access to Iran's foreign exchange reserve.⁸⁸ Even in the political sphere, because the IRGC is meant to represent Islamic revolutionary doctrine, the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, has surrounded himself with military advisors who are all IRGC commanders in addition to the cabinet members.⁸⁹ The IRGC is not only equivalent to the civil society, but as argued earlier with regards to the military representing societal beliefs, Iran's current military state resembles just that. As Feaver had mentioned earlier in this paper, the military is invented to advance many

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

societal goals, and in case of Iran, the IRGC was created to advance a new Islamic revolutionary regime not only in military affairs but in the economic, political, and social realm.

The Islamic Republic presented war, such as the Iraq-Iran war, as a gift and a door to prove ;royalty through propaganda, to not only IRGC but to citizens in mosques as well. The Friday prayers often included in sermons, suggesting that God had provided a redemption opportunity which includes having foes to vanquish in order get a place in His Kingdom.⁹⁰ The structure of Iran's civil and military society was set up in a manner that to serve the nation and to serve Islam meant the same thing.⁹¹ The role of religion became politicized to an extent that one could not separate the Islam from politics and politics from religion.

Chapter III: Power Relations

In understanding what the IRGC is, it must be noted that many of the civilian leaders of Iran, including former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and cabinet members, are IRGC veterans. For that reason, Iran's civil society is heavily intertwined with an authoritarian and nationalistic outlook.⁹² The IRGC has an upper hand by taking control through the participation in every aspect of everyday life in Iran from education to the automobile industry, all which have members of the IRGC present. The military then can be argued to have far more power than civilians in every social realm and therefore the upper hand in decision-making. If the military is sided more towards the liberal stance then there may be a start to a transition away from an

⁹⁰ Takeyh, Ray. "The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment." *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 3 (2010): 366.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 367.

⁹² Wehrey, Frederic, et al. "Introduction." *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA, 2009, pp. 1. *JSTOR*.

authoritarian government and towards a new regime and order. Vice-versa, the current regime, presents a revolutionary and traditional stance in which the military, and more specifically, the strongest military unit, the IRGC, has taken charge of decision-making regarding political expression and any commentary or action taken which opposes the Islamic Revolution's ideology. With the over insertion of the military's involvement in daily life, it can be argued that the military appears to have more power than the civilians.

Throughout Iran's political history, its leaders have depended on military forces to defend and fight for the political leaders' beliefs, and for that reason their control over the military has had a profound effect on their relations with one another and its effect on civilians. In Risa Brooks words, "opposition invites repression, which increases the public profile of military leaders, and reinforces a leader's dependence on them for his position; consequently it tips the political-military balance of power in the military's favor".⁹³ Every time a military is called on to defend the political leader, the leader runs a risk of betrayal. This was evidently seen in the case of the Shah and the General Hajjali Razmara. The Shah presumed that having a good relationship with the General and announcing him as the prime minister would show to Iran and the rest of the world that Iran had a solid partnership with its military. However, as explained in the earlier section of this paper, that was not the case, as the Shah was betrayed twice by the general and by Mossadegh. Mossadegh also attempted to steer power away from the Shah and take control. This is what Brooks calls destabilizing civil military relations; testing the loyalties of the military towards the civilians can strengthen mutual relations but can also harm them.⁹⁴

⁹³ Brooks, Risa. "CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST." In *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability, and Political Change*, edited by Bensahel Nora and Byman Daniel L., 133.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

The power relations demonstrated by Iran's civilian leaders and the military go back to what Huntington and Feaver were arguing about objective and subjective civilian control. Huntington in the earlier section argued that the role of the military is protection from external enemies and themselves, and Iran's current model which exhibits objective control, demonstrates that Iran has some traits of a functional military which has shown its ability to protect the society that it was meant to guard.⁹⁵ Whereas in the previous regime ruled by the Shah, the military was not given a level of autonomy that it required for it to present what Huntington labels as "military professionalism". Too much civilian control of the military by the Shah and foreign states caused the military to be less effective and rely more on civilian power and guidance. This can be argued to be a positive factor because this means that the civilians have control over actions in the political and military sphere. However, a lack of objective control will cause the military to rely less on themselves and more on civilians, which will result in less effective actions taken to protect the state from external attacks and civil society from the military themselves.

In the post-revolution regime, Iran's military still demonstrates to be overtly involved in every aspect of society. However, it is the form of civilian control chosen by the leadership that has allowed for this to occur. Iran's political leaders have over-relied on the use of the military and have faced exactly what Huntington described as a tradeoff. By enabling the military to take more control than is necessary and granting them power in oppressing and silencing those against the Islamic Revolution, the government has created opportunities for more military power while giving them more autonomy. It can be argued however that this is a positive trait of the

⁹⁵ Feaver, Peter. 1996. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (2): 160.

relationship between the military and the civilians, as the level of autonomy granted to the military demonstrates royalty and trust between the two.

Brooks discusses three main areas in civil military relations where this trade-off is apparent. These three areas will be used to demonstrate how Iran's power relations have affected its stability and maintenance of its regime.

The first area in which tradeoffs are seen is command and control. Brooks argues that often in authoritarian militaries, there is a trend towards centralizing decision-making authority.⁹⁶ Although this is an obvious notion in this context, i.e. that political leaders should be the ones making all decisions, in reality this can involve drawbacks for the political figures. Not every political leader has the knowledge to issue military commands and thus this is where military autonomy and expertise come into play. In the case of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi command and control were in the hands of Saddam Hussein who lacked military expertise.⁹⁷ Although this worked out in favour for Iran, it harmed Iraq. Brooks argues that too much control by the civilians of the military places the country at a disadvantage for the following reasons. Firstly, it does not allow for the military to take advantage of situations as they occur because they need to receive authorization in order to act.⁹⁸ Although this is true for many militaries, Brook's theory does not apply to Iran's case because Iran over relies on the military for command and control and many of the leaders are past or current military experts. In addition, due to Iran's fragmented military and political structure, if the IRGC was to wait until granted permission for action, there

⁹⁶ Brooks, Risa. "Civil- Military Relations in the Middle East." In *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability, and Political Change*, edited by Bensahel Nora and Byman Daniel L., 141.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 142.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 144.

would be more feuds and confusion with the regular military which also shares the same responsibilities. Brooks' first crucial area of tradeoffs is not applicable to Iran.

The second area of tradeoffs listed is leadership. Brooks' second argument is centered on the fact that leaders who lack charisma are less likely to pose a threat, and this is the ideal for authoritarian regimes.⁹⁹ The Shah in Iran's case is placed in the middle of this equilibrium as he inspired some but also brought on frustrations among citizens and clerics. It is for this reason that the Shah posed a threat. The clerics were not happy that he was controlling the minds of so many of the Iranian population and guiding them towards a civilization that was not ideal from the point of view of Islamic revolutionary thought. In addition, it also due to the type of modern leadership displayed by the Shah that Mossadegh wanted to overrule Shah's military decisions and gain more central decision-making power, and steer the political structure of Iran towards Islamic fundamentalism.

The third and final crucial area is intelligence and information. This is concerned with gathering information about the activities of groups and individuals who are in opposition with the regime.¹⁰⁰ In Iran's case this is illustrated in two historical scenarios . The first is the Islamic revolution's leader's effort to gather intelligence against the Pahlavi dynasty. Prior to the multiple takeovers of the Shah's power, Iran and the Western world, more specifically, the United States and Britain, had a good relationship with the Shah. Thus, there was an exchange of intelligence and information between Iran's army and theirs. It was not until Mossadegh's attempt to destroy that relation by passing the Oil Nationalization law that the relations disconnected and intelligence and information became fragmented. With the withdrawal of

⁹⁹ Ibid, 145.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 146.

foreign relations and the separation of the Shah's army and the IRGC, information became sparse or absent overall.¹⁰¹ Brooks' final point is important in Iran's case, as the further apart the Artesh and the IRGC become from one another, the more information is protected and held from each other because of differing ideologies. The leaders then choose similar minded people who will represent their doctrine and identify those who oppose their ideology. Throughout Iran's history, the military's loyalty and the civilian leader's control was continuously tested, as if in a competition to see who would lose first. Iran has demonstrated an over-reliance on its military by including them in central decision-making positions within the political realm.

Iran's Current Military Status

Iran's current military status has proven to be effective not only in regards to internal operations, but in addition to its external operations. With the autonomy given to the military and actions approved by the Supreme Leader, Iran's power relations with other states has increased its position in the level of power hierarchy in the Middle East. For example, Iran's role in Syria has prompted fear from the United States amongst other foreign states in regards to what Iran's intentions are and how much power Iran is gaining from its commitment to Syria. The relationship between the two is described to be a "strategic relationship, a marriage of convenience."¹⁰² However, their cooperation only began when Syria's relations with Iraq started deteriorating . Throughout Syria's regime, Iran has dispatched senior military figures, sent fighters, provided petroleum products, and provided large lines of credit.¹⁰³ Iran's main goal

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Pan, Esther. "Syria, Iran, and the Mideast Conflict." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed July 18, 2016.

¹⁰³ Barfi, Barak. "The Real Reason Why Iran Backs Syria." *The National Interest*, January 24, 2016.

however is to maintain President Bashar al-Assad in power while setting the conditions needed to use Syrian territory and gain assets in the regional area, should Assad fall.¹⁰⁴ Iran's reasons for its investment in Syria can fall under anyone or all of the following categories: a) geopolitical factors b) common religious roots c) profit.

Iran has often been a defensive power with the Iran-Iraq war and Sunni forces in the Persian Gulf, and Syria was perceived as an opportunity to change that cycle. With a new regime in charge, Iran's opening to be a dominant power in the Persian Gulf area requires to position Assad as an ally. By establishing relations with its neighbouring states and becoming allies, Iran can ensure that its regional interests are protected. The more allies Iran's military can gather, the stronger Iran can appear as an offensive power. There is also "shared interests on Iraq and Lebanon, relations with key external powers such as Russia/the USSR and the United States, and opposition to Israel are the most important."¹⁰⁵ Iran has accommodated Syria in order to maintain its channel to Hezbollah. These geopolitical states come together to be known as the "axis of resistance"¹⁰⁶ This power bloc consists of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas in Palestine. These states together have reconfigured the order of the Middle East and built a new political and security structure. All these factors contribute to Iran's military and civil geopolitical advantage in investing in Syria.

Iran and Syria train their fighters and volunteers in this regime through religious reinforcement. By using its transnational religious networks, Iran has facilitated the supplement

¹⁰⁴ Fulton, Will, Sam Wyer, and Joseph Holliday. "Iranian Strategy in Syria." Institute for the Study of War. May 2013.

¹⁰⁵ Wastnidge, Edward. "Iran and Syria: An Enduring Axis." Middle East Policy 24, no. 2 (2017): 148.

¹⁰⁶ Mohseni, Payam, and Hussein Kalout. "Iran's Axis of Resistance Rises." Foreign Affairs. Jan 24, 2017.

of volunteers into the conflict from Shii communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Lebanon. Iran uses religious duty as a strategy to invoke their forces to invest in Syria's regime and as a defensive mindset that deepens the cooperation between Iran and Syria. Shared religious doctrines can also be argued to be a justification as to why Iran is still involved.

While building the alliance with Syria, Iran has increased profit with Syria through trade and tourism. In 2007, the Iranian- Syrian trade "amounted to one third of Washington's commercial exchanges with Damascus."¹⁰⁷ Iranians also comprised of 20% of all tourists to Syria,¹⁰⁸ which increased profit for both states. Many of the tourists are religious volunteers and pilgrims who come to visit the shrines in Syria. Using religious motivation as a strategy to strengthen alliances with Syria has also increased profit for tourism. Iran and Syria have built an alliance based on mutual opponents, beliefs, and regional interests. Therefore, viewing Iran's involvement with Syria as purely only falling under one of the categories listed above is simplistic because they all intertwine with one another.

Iran's prominent involvement in Syria is one example of the advantages Iran's military has post-transformation of the regime. If Syria's conflict was operating while the Shah was in power, the military and the state would not have gained this much advantage over other states in the Middle East. Under Model A, the military would most likely not have intervened because a) they did not have the autonomy to do so and b) the Shah would not have involved his political sphere with Syria's. The Shah did not share the same passion and desire to use religious beliefs as the common denominator in their alliances. The Shah's alliance with the United States shared the same goal of modernizing Iran's economy and pro-American foreign policy. These same

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

goals and intentions would not have been shared with the president of Syria. However, post-revolution, the transformation of not only civilian control but also ideology and military structure aligns with present-day Syria. In addition, after receiving the Supreme leader's approval, the military's professionalism is trusted enough to ensure that they will protect Iran from external attacks and from themselves. Subjective control such as that exhibited under the Shah's reign would not have been effective in the case of Syria. Although Iran's intervention in Syria has demonstrated success, it is still not in a position to be exerting military force in the Middle East. Iran's disengagement with the United States and the fight for power over oil control with the Saudis leaves Iran in a defensive position. Thus, Syria is argued to be just one of the first steps to escape that defense position and transition into an offense position.

Conclusion

What has been seen in Iran's political history is factionalism repeated throughout every regime. Iran has been presented in this research as a state that has produced dysfunctional and fragmented relationships in one political regime, and between the civilians in power and branches of the military such as the Artesh. However, it has also demonstrated functional relationships as the military and the post-revolutionary political powers are highly integrated into each other's spheres while maintaining military autonomy. Thus, the focus of this paper was to demonstrate that Iran has experienced two models of civilian control and for a regime that operates based on radical Islamic ideology, Model B: objective control was argued to be most effective for the current regime. The first half of the paper was used to provide an analysis of

civilian control and the level of autonomy and integration into civil society and whether more integration or more separation was the better route. Nielsen and Huntington illustrated a neutral version of civilian control and what that looks like. The main role of the military was frequently presented as the “ultimate guarantor of regime security”¹⁰⁹, the main actor in the use of force. In Iran the military was not only the guarantor of external security, however. It was also shown to be a threat to Iran’s own internal security. The fragmented military, as shown by the examples of the IRGC and the Artesh, is involved in every sector in society and the IRGC are integrated heavily into daily life. This has enabled two things: the expectation that the military could deliver internal and external advice because of a better understanding of society, and more power because it has control over many sectors. In a functional relationship, the military is to respond to the demands of the civilians, and the civilians are also in charge of how much funding and resources to provide the military. However, it was demonstrated that this support relationship was only evident with the IRGC, in Model B.

Key events in Iran’s history have each altered the regime, the operations of the state, and the relationship between the civilians, the military, and society. The most important was the 1979 revolution of Iran, which introduced an extremist Islamic society run by clerics who believed their doctrine was the ultimate option for Iran to follow. When the Shah lost power, the existing military, the Artesh, remained, but a new military force, the IRGC, was introduced. This shifted the power relations between the army and the civilians.

By using the military, and specifically the IGRC, to carry out multiple objectives, and by thereby inserting it into civil society, the post-revolutionary government has granted the military more power. In the process, Iran’s post-revolutionary regime imposed an identity onto all

¹⁰⁹ Ibid 131.

members of civil society, some of whom did not share the same ideology and therefore as a result have faced oppression. Iran's construction of its national identity is strongly correlated to how the military and the government operated and related to one another. Under the Shah's regime subjective control was demonstrated as the military's autonomy was minimal and overtly controlled by multiple civilian and foreign powers. This caused the military to defer to civilians in the military realm. The complications from a lack of autonomy and multiple civilian commands and identities had resulted in the push for a new regime change. Thus Model A, was not as effective as it could be because it relied on subjective control in its military relations. Whereas in the post-revolutionary regime, objective control guaranteed protection and autonomous military professionalism. This regime although has complications and not every individual may agree with the way operations are done, has proven to be an effective military. By respecting military affairs, the civilian does not undermine military professionalism and therefore the civilian can expect the military to be subordinate to civilian control.

The research has proven that each regime in Iran had a model that demonstrated one of two forms of civilian control as suggested by Huntington. Model A was argued to demonstrate subjective control in which the military was civilianized, there were too many political powers leading the military and that resulted in fragmentation of Iran's military relations. The lack of autonomy given to the military throughout the Shah's regime put the military in a position where the chances of them voluntarily subordinating to the civilian at risk. In comparison, Model B exemplified recognition of the military's autonomy and respect for their sphere of action. The Supreme Leader would still command actions required of them, however, the military's expertise was trusted and therefore, that is why the civilian in power does not undermine their control. As Janowitz reassured earlier, it is not counterproductive to provide the military with autonomy if

the military is integrated with civilian values. In the post-revolutionary model of Iran, the military's values are aligned with the state's, protecting Islamic values and protecting the state from external attacks. Iran's military can therefore be perceived as strong and efficient because they demonstrate functional military relations where a professional military is present.

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