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A RAND NOTE

THE IRANIAN MILITARY SINCE THE REVOLUTION: PHASE I PROGRESS REPORT

Francis Fukuyama, Nikola Schahgaldian

May 1984

N-2151-NA

Prepared for

The Director of Net Assessment,
Office of the Secretary of Defense

Rand
1700 MAIN STREET
P.O. BOX 2138
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PREFACE

This Note reports on the results of Phase I of the project "The Iranian Military since the Revolution," sponsored by the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense. The aim of this project is to examine and analyze the evolution of the Iranian armed forces, including both the regular military and the new paramilitary organizations, since the 1978-79 revolution. The research is based on interviews with former Iranian military personnel living outside Iran who have had service experience since the revolution, as well as nonmilitary individuals with relevant information, and on secondary sources.

The purpose of Phase I was to gauge the size and quality of the pool of potential interviewees, and to conduct a number of formal interviews for substantive content. Based on the results, the authors are confident that the full-scale interviewing effort and the analysis planned for Phase II are feasible and will lead to results that are both interesting and relevant to U.S. policymakers dealing with Southwest Asia.

SUMMARY

This Note constitutes the documentation of Phase I of a Rand study of the Iranian military since the revolution. The research is based on interviews with Iranian military personnel who have defected recently, and with nonmilitary individuals with current knowledge of developments in the Iranian armed forces.

A central question we wanted to investigate is whether or not the Iranian military has the potential to play a major role in internal Iranian politics under certain conditions, e.g., a settlement of the Iran-Iraq war or a post-Khomeyni succession struggle. The results of the Phase I research are too incomplete and preliminary to enable us to make a definitive judgment on this question. Although the interviews generally supported the current consensus of opinion in U.S. government and academic circles that the clerical regime has sufficiently stabilized itself and institutionalized its role that the military will not be able to mount a serious challenge to it in the foreseeable future, several factors suggest that an internal political role for the Iranian military remains an open possibility:

- The heightened prestige of the Army and the feeling that it has become a genuine national force that is more representative of the people than was the Army under the Shah.
- The fact that a substantial (though uncertain) number of officers trained under the Shah remain in the armed forces, particularly in the more technical branches.
- The restoration of some measure of professional discipline and the degree of autonomy in military decisionmaking permitted by the regime.
- The apparent superficiality with which Islam and Islamic indoctrination have touched the officer corps.
- The incomplete institutionalization of many of the new control and security mechanisms.

In addition, a threat to the regime may come from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), or *Pasdaran,* itself; indeed, there are reasons for thinking that a threat is *more* likely to emerge from this quarter than from the professional military.

For Phase I, the research staff conducted a total of 31 interviews with Iranian emigres in the United States and Europe; the interviews are documented in approximately 650 transcript pages. To minimize the problem of bias in the interview sample, the interviewers sought as much diversity among the interview subjects as possible with regard to (1) political background, (2) rank, (3) service branch, and (4) ethnic origin. By and large, a reasonable balance was achieved, although a number of gaps remain. The most important of these, which we hope to rectify in Phase II, is the absence of military personnel sympathetic to left-wing groups, particularly the *Mojahedin Khalgh* and the *Tudeh* Party.

The researchers were successful in establishing initial contacts with many of the most important Iranian emigre organizations in the United States and Europe, which serve as points of entry into the larger emigre community. In general, these organizations were open and helpful in providing leads to former military personnel. While we made a special effort to locate defectors who had left Iran as recently as possible, a number of officers with senior command positions just prior to and during the revolution were interviewed as well to provide a framework for understanding the subsequent evolution of the armed forces. Of the 31 interviews, eight were conducted with officers who left Iran after July 1981; the most recent departure was in August 1983.

The interview findings at this point must be considered highly tentative and will require considerably more effort to test and document. Our preliminary conclusions are summarized below.

The Present State of the Professional Military. There is general agreement that the professional military has succeeded in shedding its negative image from the days of the Shah and has increasingly come to be viewed as a genuine national force and "people's army." In addition, the purge process has led to a higher degree of politicization within the officer corps, which may augur a less passive role for the military in the future.

Purges in the Army did not come about haphazardly, but took place in several distinct stages. Initially, all senior commanders were relieved of their posts, and the intelligence services (particularly the SAVAK) were hit hard, especially by the clerical regime's leftist collaborators. Many intermediate-grade officers were not imprisoned, killed, or forced to flee into exile, however, until after one of the anticlerical coup attempts. The technically oriented branches of the military--e.g., the Air Force, the Navy, and the Army Aviation Command--have suffered particularly large losses, and the ability of the regime to train personnel in these specialities is severely limited (in part because of the inability of many new inductees to read English). Having a clerical background or connections is clearly a requirement for advancement in the military, although our interviewees expressed considerable skepticism about the extent and sincerity of personal religious belief among the officer corps. The professional military remains one of the most secularized, modernized, and nationalist state organs in republican Iran. Much of its former discipline has been restored since the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war. Finally, the military has gone through a process of Persianization over the past five years, and access by non-Shii Muslim minorities has been restricted.

New Military and Paramilitary Organizations. The most important new military organization to have emerged since 1979 is the IRGC, or *Pasdaran*. The IRGC deploys a number of regular military units at the front and provides a wide variety of police and security functions in support of the regime. Most of its recruits are 18 to 24 years of age, come from the poorest strata of the urban population, and are more ethnically Persian than members of the regular armed forces. Nearly all of the *Pasdaran* leaders have direct family ties with major Shii clerical figures. The *Pasdaran* maintains its own training facilities, the quality of whose instruction has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years. Since many of its functions have not yet been clearly defined, the *Pasdaran* has come into conflict with all branches of the regular armed forces and many of the other new security organs.

Many respondents believe that the Islamicization of the *Pasdaran* may be less than complete. Stable employment, relatively high pay, and the possibility of personal advancement compete with belief in Islam as motives for joining. The regime has not created the same sorts of political control mechanisms to watch over the *Pasdaran* as it has for the professional military. The rapid increase in *Pasdaran* membership has clearly diluted the average level of ideological commitment. All of these factors suggest that the *Pasdaran's* loyalty may not be guaranteed in the future, and that a threat to the regime could arise from that quarter.

In addition to the IRGC, many other paramilitary organizations have been founded since the revolution, including the *Basij* (Army of Mobilization), the *Jondollah,* the *Ghalollah,* and the *Sarollah*. The *Basij* are recruited overwhelmingly from rural areas and are more Islamicly oriented than the *Pasdaran.* They are used frequently in the war as shock troops. The exact function and areas of responsibility of the other organizations remains to be clarified in further detail.

Security Organizations and Control Mechanisms. In post-revolutionary Iran, no single organization is charged with overall responsibility for internal security. Instead, a number of different agencies with overlapping responsibilities and functions have been established, partly to keep watch over the regular military and potential opposition groups, and partly to keep watch over each other. These groups include the *Dayereh Siyasi* (Political and Ideological Section), *Grouh Zarbe* (Strike Group), *Anjoman Eslami* (Islamic Societies), *Grouh Ershad* (Guidance Organization), and SAVAMA (the supposed successor to the SAVAK). All of these organizations appear to be poorly institutionalized, although their overall effectiveness in preserving regime security has been good and has improved considerably in the past few years.

Domestic Political Groups. The respondents provided considerable information on the historical role played by leftist political groups such as the *Mojahedin, Fedayin,* and *Tudeh* Party in undermining the Shah's armed forces, but there was considerable disagreement over the extent of these groups' influence since the purges of 1982 and 1983.

Personalities within the Military. The interviews contained considerable detail (not reported in this Note) on the backgrounds of a number of leading post-revolution military commanders.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to pay special thanks to the numerous people, Iranian and other, who helped in the preparation of Phase I of this project. While we cannot name or thank them individually, they all added immeasurably to our understanding of the subject, and many were both exceedingly generous with their time and candid in the expression of their views and experiences.

The authors would also like to express their gratitude to Gina Barkhordarian, who worked long hours helping to prepare and transcribe the interviews; Alex Alexiev, who reviewed this Note; and Zell Stanley and Billie Fenton, who helped in the preparation of the manuscript.

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I. INTRODUCTION: STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This Note constitutes the documentation for the first phase of a study of the Iranian military since the revolution. The research is based on interviews with Iranian military personnel who have defected recently, and with nonmilitary individuals who have knowledge of current developments in the Iranian armed forces.

Our task in this phase was to examine the scope and quality of the potential pool of interviewees to gauge the feasibility of a full-scale interviewing effort in the subsequent phase or phases of the study. We were also to conduct a limited number of interviews for substantive results. As it turned out, we were very successful in establishing contacts among the extensive networks of Iranian emigres in the United States and Europe. We conducted numerous interviews with people of varied background and experience, both in and out of the military, and were surprised not only at the quantity of available candidates, but also at the quality of the information we were able to obtain. This Note describes how we went about the interviewing process, the characteristics of the emigre community as it affected our research, potential problems in the interviewing methodology, and finally, the sorts of findings on the Iranian military that emerged from the interviews. It is important to emphasize that our research is still in its preliminary stages, and that any findings reported here must be considered very tentative. While we have begun to formulate and address a number of hypotheses on the subject of the post-revolution Iranian military, we have not been able to reach final or definitive conclusions. Based on our work to date, however, we believe that sufficient data exist to eventually produce more informed judgments.

BACKGROUND

Our study began with the assumption that Iran would continue to be one of the most important countries of the Persian Gulf/Middle East region with respect to U.S. strategic interests, if not *the* single most critical country in the 1980s. U.S. decisionmakers tend to be

preoccupied with immediate policy concerns, and since the resolution of the Iranian hostage crisis in January 1981, Iran has fallen from the top of the foreign-policy agenda. This is a situation that could change very suddenly, and we believe that there are important long-term issues that should be carefully studied before a new crisis occurs involving Iran.

Chief among these issues is the future role of the Iranian armed forces, defined broadly to include not only the regular military, but also the variety of new paramilitary and security organizations that have come into existence since the 1978-79 revolution. This issue has two major aspects:

- *The external role of the Iranian military.* Prior to the revolution, the Iranian armed forces constituted one of the largest and most powerful military organizations in the Middle East, reflecting Iran's size, economic resources, and the relatively high level of development of Iranian society. Although internal political upheavals have weakened the Iranian military since 1979, it still constitutes a major threat to many of the regimes in the Persian Gulf and is regarded as a destabilizing force by many in the Middle East. Iran's inherent power and geostrategic position on the southern borders of the Soviet Union ensure that the Iranian military will continue to be a factor for stability or instability for the foreseeable future.
- *The internal role of the Iranian military.* Perhaps more important than the Iranian military's external function is its potential role in future domestic Iranian politics. The internal involvement of the Iranian military has traditionally been quite significant. It was instrumental in Reza Shah's rise to power in the early 1920s, and it formed the underpinning of his son's rule for nearly 40 years. While the clerical regime currently ruling Iran has succeeded in controlling the military politically, scenarios can be envisioned in which this control might break down and lead to renewed involvement of the military in internal politics.

The central question we wanted to investigate in this study was whether, in spite of the purges, disruption, and wartime losses that have taken place since the revolution, the Iranian military (including new organizations such as the *Pasdaran*) might yet play a major role in internal Iranian politics in the event of developments such as a post-Khomeyni power struggle. The current consensus in both the U.S. government and academic circles is that the clerical regime has successfully stabilized itself following its suppression of the terrorist campaign in 1981. Given the broadening institutionalization of many aspects of Islamic rule, most observers have concluded that the current regime will be able to meet challenges from the Army or other opposition groups in the foreseeable future.[1]

While this conclusion is well taken under present circumstances, it requires continual testing, because Iran's internal situation is constantly changing. Moreover, the ability of the regime to prevail in the event of such challenges will be perhaps the single most important factor affecting U.S. policy interests in Iran over the next few years. There are several reasons for thinking that the regime's control over the military may be less than complete. While it is true that the armed forces were severely purged in the year and a half following the revolution, the outbreak of the war with Iraq forced the regime to rebuild the military substantially, and the continuing war effort has both raised the prestige of the Army and guaranteed the professional military a certain degree of autonomy. In the course of our research, therefore, we have paid special attention to questions concerning the precise mechanisms of political control the regime exercises over the military, the social backgrounds and political inclinations of the current officer corps, elements of the population from which new entrants (both officers and enlisted men) are recruited, the relations between the professional military and other, more ideological organizations (e.g., the *Pasdaran* and the *Basij*), and the nature of training and indoctrination. The basic question to be addressed is whether Iran will follow the pattern of the French Revolution, where

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[1]For one example of this point of view, see Elaine Sciolino, "Iran's Durable Revolution," *Foreign Affairs,* Spring 1983.

internal upheaval and external war led to a military takeover, or that of the Russian Revolution, where the civilian party moved effectively to establish and institutionalize its control over the armed forces.

Finally, while not among our original study objectives, it became increasingly clear to us as our research progressed that we had in our interviewees a potential gold mine of information regarding not only the Iranian armed forces, but the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent evolution of Iranian society and institutions as well. Many of our interviews, particularly those with officers in senior command positions, contained new and detailed information about historically significant political events that, to our knowledge, had never been recorded. While some of this information is primarily of academic interest, preserving first-hand accounts of a major historical development while the memory of the participants is still fresh is a very important task in itself, and the information obtained might contribute substantially to new understanding of the events. This is particularly important in the present case, since there is virtually no open literature on the subject of the Iranian military, either since the revolution or, more surprisingly, before.[2]

METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW OBJECTIVES

Our research method relied primarily on interviews with former Iranian military personnel, as well as civilians working in the defense ministry and tribal fighters with recent experience in Iran, and secondarily on published sources including Persian-language materials published in Iran.

The principal objection typically raised to such emigre-interviewing projects is that the sample from which we are drawing our data is politically biased, because the vast majority of the Iranians currently living outside of the country are in one way or another opponents of the present regime.

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[2]The only recent unclassified study of the Iranian military is William Hickman, *Ravaged and Reborn: The Iranian Army, 1982,* Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1982. This study, while useful in many ways, is limited in its scope and in the type of sources used--primarily translated newspaper articles and other open publications.

There is obviously a certain degree of validity to this criticism. A fully balanced sample would supplement emigre interviews with interviews done inside Iran, including some with strong supporters of the clerical regime. Unfortunately, it was not possible for us to interview Iranians within Iran. On the other hand, we do not believe that the biases among the available interview subjects outside Iran are necessarily much greater or more systematic than those among individuals on the inside. To minimize this problem, we attempted to contact sources representing as wide a spectrum of political opinion as possible within the very large Iranian emigre community. Owing to the clerical regime's continuing crackdown on political opponents, this spectrum now ranges from confirmed monarchists on the right to Islamic Marxists and communists on the left, and includes a variety of tribal and ethnic groups with less clearly defined ideological positions.

In addition, we also sought a spread in ranks and ages; we interviewed both senior military officers and government officials, many of whom were important political players in their own right, and junior officers, NCOs, enlisted men, and civilians in the defense sector, who have a different but nonetheless valuable perspective on events since the revolution. People of different ranks provide different types of information; and both the high politics of the military and the day-to-day experiences of life on a contemporary Iranian military base are relevant to our research.

Finally, the degree of bias on the part of interviewees depends to a great extent on type of interview conducted. It has been our experience, not only in this project but in other interviewing efforts among different national groups, that the most successful interviews are those that force the subject to give a strictly factual account of his or her own personal experiences. Obviously, if a lieutenant or major is asked to speculate on questions of high politics, he is likely to offer wild and improbable interpretations. On the other hand, more mundane questions such as those concerning living conditions on the base, when the *Komitehs* (Revolutionary Committees) were formed, and how many mullahs were attached to each unit, etc., do not have an obvious political significance and tend to elicit relatively factual responses.

The personal experiences of more senior officers tend to correspond more closely with the high politics of the day, but here the problems are no different from those of any other researcher dealing with the principals involved in major historical events. By interviewing enough people at different levels, one begins to be able to distinguish more and less reliable views and fact from opinions.

II. THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

We originally sought to approach interview subjects through various Iranian emigre organizations in the United States and Europe. While these organizations by no means represent the entirety of the emigre community, we thought that they would provide a convenient means of access to former officers and would help us identify their political backgrounds. As it turned out, we located more interviewees through personal contacts with individuals than we did through formal organizational networks. Nonetheless, a brief discussion of the emigre groups and our experience with them is in order.

Several aspects of Iranian culture and social organization influenced our approach to these organizations. In the first place, the Iranian emigre community, like Iranian political parties, tends to be highly factionalized into a wide variety of competing political organizations and groupings, most of them centered around one prominent individual. While the major cleavages are ideological, group ties tend to be highly personalized as well. For example, the pro-Pahlavi monarchists in the Los Angeles area are divided into four or five rival organizations which often have a hard time cooperating with one another. The existing networks are based on obscure kinship, professional linkages, or other ties which are only dimly perceptible to outsiders; individuals who ought to cooperate with one another for ideological reasons frequently turn out to be bitter rivals. Hence, it is necessary to secure multiple entry points into the different major groupings of emigre organizations.

A second characteristic is that interview subjects must be approached entirely through personal contacts. In other interview projects (e.g., among Soviet and Eastern European emigres), it is possible to advertise for interview candidates in emigre newspapers. But such a practice would be unthinkable in the case of Iranians: In general, they will not open up to a foreigner without a personal introduction, usually from some other Iranian. However, once that original contact has been established--usually requiring both face-

to-face and written communication--most Iranians are extremely cooperative. Our interviewees were very generous with their own time and often surprisingly frank in expressing their views. Receiving the blessing of the leader of an organization is particularly important, as this will tend to open doors throughout the hierarchy. Hence, the most difficult part of the project was the initial effort to gain the confidence of appropriate people in the emigre community. Once this time-consuming task was completed, subsequent contacts for substantive discussions were made with astonishing rapidity.

Finally, Iranians as a group tend to be somewhat more suspicious than many Westerners and often attribute complicated conspiratorial motives to otherwise straightforward events. While this tendency is understandable for a number of historical and cultural reasons, it creates problems for interviewers because it affects both the substantive views expressed and the way interview subjects deal with strangers.[1] Throughout the project, we were constantly aware that our own motives might be misinterpreted, or that we would run afoul of one or another unseen rivalry within the emigre community. We were therefore careful to be as straightforward as possible about our own purposes and the overall nature of our project.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE IRANIAN EMIGRE COMMUNITY

The number of Iranians in exile is enormous, and the number of former military officers abroad is also substantial--one source put the figure at approximately 7,000. As part of our preliminary survey, we were able to identify between 40 and 50 emigre organizations in the United States and Europe which either cater specifically to military officers or are organized around some military issue. In addition, many other organizations that are primarily political in nature have military sections or include large numbers of former military personnel in their ranks. The total number of military emigre organizations is probably much larger--we have been told of other "secret" groups in the business of helping military personnel escape and resettle outside of Iran. In

[1]The recent murder of General Gholam Ali Oveysi and his brother in Paris indicates that many of the fears of the Iranian emigre community are indeed well-founded.

addition, we have identified up to 25 publications either issued by military organizations or having military themes.

The vast majority of these organizations and journals are small and politically marginal. The frequently noted difficulty Iranians have in cooperating with each other politically is evident here: These groups are often created by single individuals who have broken off from other organizations as a result of personal disputes or obscure ideological quarrels.

The character of the Iranian emigre community has changed in recent years as a result of purges and upheavals within Iran itself. Table 1 lists some of the major political organizations operating outside of Iran, ranked from right to left by their political orientation. These organizations vary vastly in size and political significance.

In addition to the organizations listed in Table 1, there are any number of other groups formed around particular individuals, including Reza Pahlavi (the ex-Shah's son), Ashraf Pahlavi (the ex-Shah's twin sister), the late General Oveysi (former Chief of Staff and Military Governor of Tehran), and Admiral Madani (former Defense Minister under Khomeyni). These groups (with the exception of Reza Pahlavi's entourage) and most of the organizations listed in Table 1 are headquartered in either Paris or London, though many of them have branches and supporters in the United States. Some of them operate in Turkey, Pakistan, and other parts of the Middle East as well, where they carry out political work, publish newspapers, operate clandestine radio stations, help sympathizers escape, and occasionally carry out so-called "operations" against the current regime. There are several relatively large organizations of military officers in the United States as well, though these tend to be less active and less visible politically. Finally, it is common for a senior commander to act as a patron for younger officers who served under his command; while these networks do not constitute formal organizations, they often meet regularly and are tightly knit socially.

Iran's ethnic groups and tribes are also well represented in the emigre community. Numerous Kurdish tribes have members--and in some cases, entire branches--living abroad; there is a Kurdish research center in Paris, and functionaries of the major Kurdish political

Table 1

MAJOR IRANIAN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE IRAN

	Organization	Leader	Political Orientation
1.	Pan-Iranist Party	M. Pezeshkpour	Extreme Persian nationalist
2.	Const. Movement of Iran Gama Assoc. of Iranian Soldiers Guardians of the Iranian Constitution Guardians of the Flag	Reza Pahlavi (nominal)	Pro-Pahlavi monarchist
3.	ARA (Iranian Liberation Army)	J. Moinzadeh	Monarchist
4.	Azadegan Army	B. Aryana	Monarchist; Persian nationalist
5.	NAMARA (Iran's Revolutionary Armed Forces)	E. Pezeshkpour	Monarchist
6.	Neghab		Monarchist
7.	National Iranian Resistance Movement	S. Bakhtiar	Liberal, constitutionalist, nationalist
8.	Front for the Liberation of Iran	A. Amini	Liberal, constitutionalist
9.	National Front of Iran National Democratic Front National Movement of Iran	Various leaders	Centrist, nationalist
10.	*Mojahedin Khalgh*	M. Rajavi	Islamic Marxist, republican
11.	*Tudeh* Party	Various factions and fronts	Communist
12.	*Fedayin Khalgh*[a]	....	Revolutionary communist

[a]And various other groups, including *Peykar, Razmandegan, Rah Kargar, Tufan,* the United Leftist Council, Communist Unity Organization, Association of the Communists, and the Socialist Workers Party.

parties (e.g., the Kurdish Democratic Party and *Komalah*) are to be found in various cities in the United States and Europe. Due to their persecution by the current regime, many Bahais, as well as Jews and other religious minorities, left Iran after the revolution.

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWS

We hoped to get in touch with at least one representative of each of the groups listed in Table 1, and we began by using our own personal contacts in government, the academic community, and elsewhere. Establishing initial contact was difficult in many cases, for the reasons outlined earlier: Many respondents were suspicious of our motives and had to be reassured in a variety of ways. Our initial contacts quickly led to many more, however, and we soon found ourselves with the names of more interview subjects than we could accommodate. By the end of this phase of the study, we had succeeded in talking to one member, and in some cases several members, of the first eight organizations listed.

We talked to perhaps 70 or 80 people in the course of the project, but we conducted a total of 31 formal interviews which we recorded in writing. In some instances, the individuals were interviewed more than once. We tried to tape-record and transcribe as many interviews as possible, but in some cases, we were able to keep only handwritten notes.[2] Approximately two-thirds of the interviews were carried out in Persian; the rest, in English or French. The interviews were of differing lengths and quality; many turned out to be quite substantial. The general character of our findings is presented in Section III below.

We began by following a standard outline in the interviews, but we found ourselves using a less structured approach as we learned more about the subject.

We were of course most interested in interviewing military personnel who had left the service and Iran as recently as possible. Table 2 gives the distribution of dates when our interview subjects left Iran.

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[2]We generated a total of approximately 650 double-spaced transcript pages.

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY DATE OF DEPARTURE

Period	Date of Departure[a]	Number of Interviewees
I	Before March 1979	9
II	March 1979-November 1979	5
III	December 1979-October 1980	5
IV	November 1980-June 1981	1
V	July 1981-March 1983	7
VI	April 1983-present	1

[a]We were unable to determine the date of departure of three of our interview subjects.

We were not surprised to find a large group of officers who left Iran in the period from immediately before the revolution through the fall of Bakhtiar and the arrival of Khomeyni in Tehran (Period I). While the purpose of this study is to examine the Iranian military after the revolution, we nonetheless thought it was necessary to talk to some old-regime officers, if only to improve our own understanding of the Shah's military system on the eve of and during the revolution. Most of the officers we talked to from this period held very senior command positions (two were chiefs of staff, and one was a commander of the Navy) and were direct participants in the events of 1978-79. In general, we found the information provided by these individuals to be highly useful for interpreting subsequent events, in that it provided a benchmark against which to measure the military's evolution.

We were somewhat surprised to find a fairly large group, including some rather senior officers, who stayed on during Period II (between the return of Khomeyni and the hostage crisis) and Period III (between the hostage crisis and the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war). As will be seen below, this may reflect the fact that many officers found it unsafe to remain in Iran only after so-called "Nojeh" coup of July 1980. Period

IV extends from the beginning of the war with Iraq to the fall of President Abolhasan Bani Sadr and the purge of the *Mojahedin.* Period V extends from the purge of the *Mojahedin* to the purge of the *Tudeh* Party in the spring of 1983. And Period VI covers the time since April 1983. The interviewee who left Iran most recently departed in August 1983. However, some of the interviewees who left in Periods V and VI did not reside in Iran continuously. The last two periods correspond to the times when large numbers of *Mojahedin* and *Tudeh* Party sympathizers, respectively, left the country. But we are anticipating ourselves somewhat; we have not yet been able to interview members of either of these groups. The subjects from Periods V and VI come from nonleftist groups.

In general, the more recent the date of his departure, the younger, lower in rank, more politicized, and more left-wing in political sympathies the Iranian military man tends to be. This is the result of the successive purges carried out by the clerical regime: The monarchists, liberals, secular nationalists, and potentially pro-Western elements left in the first two years, followed by a wave of officers sympathetic to the *Mojahedin* who escaped after the departure of President Abolhasan Bani Sadr in June 1981, followed in turn by a group of *Tudeh* sympathizers in the wake of the anti-communist crackdown of March 1983. In addition, many of the most recent defectors remain in foreign locations such as Turkey and Pakistan, which tends to hinder our access to them.

Table 3 lists the distribution of interviewees by rank. It is evident that our database is rather top-heavy. During the initial phase of our project, we felt it would be preferable to interview people who either had greater authority or possessed a broader political perspective. In addition, these senior officers tend to be active in emigre organizations and therefore useful as initial points of contact. We did not interview any NCOs or enlisted men, although we intend to do so later in the project. We did interview some civilians who either worked in the defense ministry or had particularly close personal or family connections to the military.

Table 3

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY RANK

Rank	Number of Interviewees
General or Admiral	13
Colonel or Navy Captain	7
Lieutenant Colonel	2
Major	3
Captain	1
Lieutenant	2
NCO	0
Enlisted Man	0
Civilian	3

We also made an effort to interview members of all service branches, including the Gendarmerie, National Police, the various intelligence services, and ultimately the *Pasdaran* and other recent paramilitary units. The distribution of actual interviewees in Phase I is shown in Table 4. The Air Force is somewhat overrepresented in our interview sample, perhaps because our initial contacts were Air Force officers, who then led us to their colleagues in the same service, or because Air Force personnel had an easier time escaping, since they had access to aircraft (two of our interviewees did, in fact, leave Iran by

Table 4

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY SERVICE BRANCH

Service Branch	Number of Interviewees
Army	13
Air Force	10
Navy	4
National Police	1
Gendarmerie	0
Civilian	3

hijacking airplanes). A number of our interviewees worked in intelligence, either in their own services or seconded to the SAVAK.

In Phase II, we would like to fill in the gaps left by the Phase I interviews. The major areas for further work include:

- *Leftist sympathizers*. All of our interview subjects were either on the right or at the center of the Iranian political spectrum. Thus far we have not been able to talk to any military personnel sympathetic with any of the left-wing political parties, such as the *Mojahedin, Fedayin,* or *Tudeh*. The *Mojahedin* in particular has a fairly substantial number of officers associated with it. Their perspective is particularly important on questions concerning the extent of leftist influence remaining in the armed forces. As noted above, the left-wing groups also tend to have left Iran more recently than others.
- *Pasdars and other Islamic radicals*. While it is not certain whether we will be able to gain access to any Islamic radicals, a number of *Pasdars* and other regime sympathizers have traveled outside of Iran for medical care and other reasons. For obvious reasons, it would be highly useful to interview members of one of the new paramilitary organizations.
- *Ethnic minorities*. The Phase I interview sample included a Kurd, as well as Persian officers who were familiar with the situation in Kurdistan. It would be desirable, however, to expand our contacts among this and other ethnic and tribal groups, including the Azeris, Baluchis, and Ghashghais, and religious minorities such as the Bahais.
- *NCOs and enlisted men*. The Phase I sample did not include any NCOs or enlisted men, primarily because we thought that the views of higher-ranking officers would give us a somewhat broader perspective in the early stages of the project. Nonetheless, it will be important for balance and completeness to include the views of NCOs and enlisted men as well.

- *Members of other services.* The Phase I sample did not include any members of the Gendarmerie or the post-revolutionary intelligence services, and it included only one member of the National Police. Interviews with these groups are important for understanding the current interrelationships among the multitude of new and old security organizations in Iran.
- *Recent departees.* While we were generally pleased with the number of relatively recent emigres we were able to locate during Phase I, the situation of the Iranian military is changing constantly, and it is important to keep our information as up to date as possible. There are two systematic ways by which to improve the chances of locating recent emigres: (1) by developing contacts with the leftist groups whose members left Iran following the purges of 1982 and 1983, and (2) by interviewing former Iranian military personnel in places like Turkey, Pakistan, and possibly Iraq, where many of the most recent emigres (of a variety of political colorations) are located.

In addition, the interview research needs to be supplemented with further systematic review of materials from open sources, such as Persian-language newspapers and periodicals. The Iranian press, while not exactly free, often contains surprisingly frank and detailed coverage of military topics. In addition, there are a large number of emigre publications--of varying reliability--which cover the Iran-Iraq war and related topics. The research in Phase I drew on open sources to some extent, and in Phase II such sources will be used more systematically.

III. SCOPE OF SUBSTANTIVE INTERVIEW DATA

Another goal of Phase I was to determine the character, breadth, and quality of the information available from our interviewees. The interviews were based on a structured questionnaire which sought to elicit responses to several distinct categories of questions, although we tried to keep the dialogue as informal and open-ended as possible. These categories included:

- The present state of the professional military
- Post-revolutionary military and paramilitary organizations
- Security organizations and control mechanisms
- Domestic political groupings
- Personalities

We must caution again that our conclusions from the interviews are very preliminary, incomplete, and in some cases contradictory. The information needs to be sifted, verified, evaluated, and supplemented with much more extensive interview data. Our intent here is merely to indicate the wide range of responses we received, not to make final judgments or observations.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY

The bulk of the data generated in this phase of the study concern the evolution of the professional Iranian armed forces since the revolution. The interviews explored the following areas in considerable depth: problems of morale and politicization; the extent and impact of purges; intersector rivalries and functional overlaps with the *Pasdaran* and other organizations; organizational structure and the chain of command; the character and quality of the officer corps; instruction and training; weapons production and procurement; and the regime's political control mechanisms. We believe that this information will contribute to our understanding of the political role of the military and will thus enable us to evaluate the likely future role of the Iranian military in

the event of developments such as a post-Khomeyni succession struggle. Our tentative findings are summarized briefly below.

Many of our interviewees made the point that following the downfall of the Shah, the Iranian military succeeded in shedding its old negative image among broad sections of the population and has increasingly come to be regarded as a genuine national force or a "people's army." The unprecedented growth in the prestige of the professional military has occurred despite, or perhaps because of, ongoing massive purges, the Iran-Iraq war, and the many social and political upheavals of the past five years. In addition, a new and equally important phenomenon has occurred: greater politicization of the officer corps. Most officers on both senior and junior levels have become more interested in, and knowledgeable about, domestic Iranian and international political events and situations. This phenomenon, if it proves to be as prevalent as our interviewees have claimed, will have serious political implications. For example, the present professional military may no longer be a passive spectator in internal political events and may not go along with future political directives (as opposed to purely military directives) from the top echelons of the Iranian leadership. Instead, policies will have to be broadly acceptable to the officer corps. The lessons of 1978-79 and its immediate aftermath are said to be too vivid for the professional military to willingly fall into a political trap that might cost them their own lives.

As to the extent and impact of the massive purges, there seems to be little doubt that most, if not all, of the Shah's general officers--at least 300 people--have either been executed, imprisoned, or retired, or have escaped abroad. Altogether, over 6,000 military personnel of all ranks were purged during the first year after the revolution; this figure had more than doubled by the time of the Iraqi invasion of September 1980. Although subjected to extensive purges, many of the lower-ranking officers (lieutenant to colonel), especially the more technically competent ones, while still part of the military, are said to be deliberately restricted from sensitive command positions as a matter of general policy.

The waves of purges to which the professional military was subjected over the past several years do not seem to have been part of a haphazard process activated by the whims of successive top state officials. Each phase differed in scope, intent, and method. While the precise patterns of these purges remain to be delineated, certain regularities can be seen. The new regime's leftist collaborators played a very large role in the purge process in the first few months after the revolution. It was the left that argued that the professional military should be disbanded altogether and replaced with a "people's army"; the left also wanted to eliminate specific enemies, primarily in the SAVAK and other intelligence services. The clerical hierarchy, on the other hand, while distrustful of the military, did not have a consistent view as to what should be done about it. Some nationalist members of Khomeyni's entourage and Bazargan's provisional government (including Ebrahim Yazdi) had extensive ties to individual officers in the military and wanted to maintain an organization with professional discipline. As a result of the interplay between the left and the clerical establishment, most of the openly pro-American and hard-line pro-Shah officers, regardless of rank, were eliminated by late 1979. Those eliminated reportedly included all of the 14 division commanders, the 8 commanders of the independent brigades, and all the military governors. However, many other senior officers, purged or retired, felt safe enough to remain in the country until recently. Again, while most of the military intelligence organizations have been extensively purged, some officers (including General Hoseyn Fardoust and other leading personnel of the old Imperial Inspectorate) are claimed not only to have survived but to have remained in positions of responsibility. Successive aborted or rumored coups by anticlerical dissidents centered both within and outside the republic have also stimulated the purge process, and large numbers of officers have been eliminated immediately after each of these events. For example, the July 1980 conspiracy involving Army and Air Force officers at Shahrokhi and Mehrabad bases, which was intended to restore Shapur Bakhtiar to power, resulted in a major purge of the armed forces. Over 500 officers were arrested, about 50 were executed, and many more were retired or exiled.

In general, political disloyalty to the regime, usually in the form of membership in or sympathy with outlawed opposition groups, has been sufficient grounds for purge. Also, the purge process was carried out through vigorous enforcement of Shii religious codes of behavior and punishment of "sins" such as engaging in alcohol consumption or gambling. Our interviewees disagreed strongly about the importance of commitment to "imported" ideologies (such as Marxism and liberalism) as grounds for elimination. A number argued that most of those who have been purged were pro-U.S., while others believe that the bulk of the victims were leftist-Marxists.

No matter what the objective criteria, the purges have had an enormous impact on the military. They have seriously affected war-fighting capability, especially in the more technically oriented services--the Air Force, the Navy, and the Army Aviation Command. In addition, the regime has been quick to promote lower-ranking officers who are said to be less than fully trained for their new command positions. The Air Force in particular is left with few politically reliable and experienced commanders, and virtually no technically competent pilots. On the other hand, this process has had certain advantages from the regime's standpoint. It has greatly increased the political loyalty and sympathy of the younger officers by heightening the prospects for rapid advancement among the lower ranks. In contrast to the accepted standards under the monarchy, the Islamic authorities adopted a conscious official policy of downplaying formal educational and technical training requirements for all sectors of the professional military.

It is important to note, however, that the purge process was dramatically slowed, and in some cases even reversed, before it could be completed. The need for technically or professionally competent personnel engendered by the war with Iraq forced the regime to relax its political standards. A number of our respondents were personally asked to rejoin the military in September 1980, after having been involuntarily retired; many also knew of colleagues in similar situations. The returnees included not only a large number of Air Force pilots, but members of the SAVAK as well. (One respondent noted that a

number of his friends in the SAVAK had been asked to return to their former jobs after the 1981-82 crackdown on the *Mojahedin,* because they had specialized knowledge of the Iranian left.) The high point of the purge movement in the military is believed to have passed, with little reason for, or likelihood of, another expansive wave of massive purges like those of the first post-revolutionary period. In addition, the Islamic Consultative Assembly (the Parliament, or *Majles*) has reportedly placed legal limitations on the purge process.

Despite such measures, the purges are said to have generally achieved their original objective: They have created a psychological "reign of terror" among the military. In spite of their opposition to some of the regime's specific policies, most officers are forced to submit to regime wishes to avoid the dire consequences of different behavior. Fear and personal distrust are also reported to be pervasive in the military, where one has no choice except to protect one's own interests in the face of rapidly changing political conditions in the country.

The Iranian military has traditionally prided itself on maintaining high standards of professionalism. While this was certainly the case under the Pahlavi dynasty until the final months before the Islamic revolution, the same could not be said about the immediate post-revolutionary period. However, our respondents were unanimous in asserting that, based on their personal experience, overall disciplinary matters are no longer a cause of worry for senior commanders or government officials. From a very low point of widespread chaos sometime in mid-1980, the military had gradually restored a good deal of its former discipline by 1982. While the war is believed to have been the major factor, other events also apparently accelerated the process. For example, the military personnel, mostly junior officers, NCOs, and enlisted men, who played a major role in the disruption of the Shah's military continued their behavior under the new regime as well. Motivated primarily by personal reasons, these elements are said to have been fully exploited by various Islamic groups and leftist political parties, who used them in the effective neutralization of the Shah's armed forces. Once this objective was achieved, however, the disorderly elements became useless for the new leaders and were eliminated

altogether. This situation preceded the official reintroduction of a number of old disciplinary measures sometime in 1980-81, including the imposition of proper dress and uniform codes, strict observance of morning flag ceremonies, and substantially increased penalties for breach of a number of disciplinary rules and regulations. Such measures have improved the performance of the military at the front and have further increased the prestige of the Army among the civilians.

In many ways, the typical member of the post-revolutionary Iranian officer corps is a different breed from those who served under the monarchy; at the same time, new officers reportedly have many traits and qualities characteristic of the old corps. While our information on this issue is rather limited, certain regularities and patterns again appear. First, many of the recent and current commanders in all services, including the former Air Force commander, Colonel Fakouri, and the former commander of the Navy, Captain Afzali, have well-established religious backgrounds. Most of these commanders are either active in Shii religious affairs or have direct marriage ties with traditional religious families. The higher-ranking the officer, the closer his ties with the more prominent religious families tend to be. While this pattern may not yet be universal, there is reason to believe that the number of senior and middle-level officers lacking this requirement has been steadily decreasing. Religious background, however, may or may not be an indication of personal piousness or belief in Shii religious dogmas and perceptions. Our respondents speak of large numbers of leading officers who are "post-revolutionary Muslims," that is, individuals completely secular in their beliefs and views, who for a variety of personal and political reasons have adopted religiously sanctioned patterns of behavior and who have, in some cases, become "more Catholic than the Pope."

Another common characteristic of these individuals is a history of having been in some sort of trouble with their superiors earlier in their careers. While many of these men were personally disgruntled, many others actually voiced political criticisms--for which they were either demoted, retired, imprisoned, or resigned their commissions under the Shah. The more junior-ranking officers and those who received their commissions in the post-revolutionary years seem to be more genuinely

religious. This is due partly to the impact of the country's religious-oriented educational system, and partly to the strictly enforced religious laws and regulations for all entry-level personnel. For example, those who apply to enter various military colleges or technical training facilities must have personal references and certificates of "good religious conduct" from local mosques, neighborhood or village clerics, and functionaries of various local religious guidance offices. An applicant's files are not checked by the regime's security organizations until all these references are in order. Also, as a general practice, individuals from the higher-income classes, known secularist families, and those identified in one way or another with the previous regime or its functionaries tend to be disqualified altogether from joining the officer corps.

There are also similarities between the old and new officer corps. For example, most respondents concurred that the military is still one of the most secularized, modernized, nonreligious, and nationalist state organs in republican Iran. While it has obviously become more religiously conformist, attempts at Islamicization have been largely ineffective, have generated considerable irritation, and have prompted widespread passive resistance among both the officers and the rank and file. Secular nationalism of the military, further stimulated by the Iraqi attack, is reportedly the major--if not the only--factor that binds the military together and provides internal solidarity against actual or potential domestic adversaries. These qualities, suppressed as they are by an atmosphere of political fear and uncertainty, give the officer corps some feelings of security and, more important, a sense of moral superiority over the clerics who are reported to be subjects of scorn in private Army circles.

Finally, despite the introduction of many official reform measures and a reported decrease in instances of corruption, personal and financial abuses continue in the post-revolutionary period. Many of our respondents implied that theft, graft, profiteering, greed, and bribery are as prevalent now as they were under the monarchy. The officer corps is said to have retained the old, and more or less commonly accepted and traditionally sanctioned, qualities of hypocrisy and deception, concealment of true feelings and opinions, ostentatious hospitality and

courtesy, suspiciousness and unpredictability, and modesty and humility. As a whole, officers remain intensely individualistic, and there seems to be a continuing overlap of authority among service branches. For example, service commanders often bypass regular command chains and go directly to leading clerical figures, especially Khomeyni, to resolve internal military matters. The professional military is also not entirely immune to personal rivalries among its top ranks. The past few years have witnessed a protracted struggle between the commander of the Ground Forces, Colonel Seyyed Shirazi, and the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Brigadier General Ghasem Ali Zahirnezhad.

Most respondents ascribed a rather secondary significance to ethnicity and the role of interethnic factionalism in the Iranian military. Political, ideological, familial, and personal motives are said to play much more prominent roles in interpersonal and intergroup relations and in both formal and informal coalition-building processes than purely ethnic factors. This does not mean, however, that ethno-religious, subnational, and provincial identifications and loyalties are to be discounted altogether. On the contrary, many political/ideological conflicts have acquired ethnic colorings, spilling into the ranks of the military and pitting one ethnic group against another. For example, the religious opposition of the Azeri clerics headed by Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari to some of the leading religious personalities, including Khomeyni, caused widespread ethnic strife at Army and Air Force bases in Azeri-populated areas such as Tabriz, and led to many personnel changes.

As a whole, during the past five years, the Iranian military has gone through an apparent process of Persianization. This is strongly connected with the striking changes in official unifying symbols and principles introduced in the post-1979 period, and it is also related to the common ethnic composition of the ruling clerical establishment. Although the monarchy did identify itself with Islam and made some claim to legitimacy on religious grounds, it attempted to develop and extend a sense of Iranian ethnicity defined primarily in terms of common culture, literature, language, and pre-Islamic history. Under the new regime, Shia Islam has become the focal symbol of identity and the primary bond of unity. As a result, the process of assimilation, and therefore

mobility, has become more difficult for some groups and easier for others. The revolution has effectively restricted the access of most non-Muslim minorities to positions of power both within and outside the military. A number of Muslim but non-Shia groups are also excluded--the Sunni Kurds, Turkoman, Baluchis, Sunni Arabs, and others. A more noticeable consequence of this transformation is that whereas some of the leading military commanders of the Shah had reportedly been of Kurdish origin (most were Shia, however), the present senior officers seem to be overwhelmingly Fars. On the other hand, most non-Persian-speaking Shia groups, including some Azeris, seem to have been the prime beneficiaries of the new state-minority relations.

The second overall factor responsible for the gradual Persianization of the military is that the ruling religious establishment of Iran is overwhelmingly Fars in ethnicity; it is traditionally based in, and receives support from, Fars-dominated cities and provinces such as Esfahan, Mashad, Tehran, Ghom, Shiraz, Yazd, and Kerman. Given the role of Shiism and the prevalence of personal and kinship ties as accepted avenues of upward mobility, it is more than plausible that this phenomenon has also had a large impact on military personnel. Still another factor responsible for Persianization of the armed forces has been the mass desertion of Kurdish officers and enlisted men, especially in the 1979-81 period, and the subsequent defection of many of these individuals to the armed Kurdish autonomy movement. Finally, the failure of the present regime to fully extend its authority to some of the non-Persian populated districts and provinces (i.e., northern Kurdistan, some areas of Baluchistan, northeastern Khorasan, and Mazandaran) has reduced the proportion of enlisted men coming from these areas.

In addition to probing general issues of ethnicity in contemporary Iran, we also elicited detailed eyewitness accounts of the on-again, off-again armed antiregime struggle in Iranian Kurdistan and the surrounding areas. In general, this struggle has been the result of a long-standing quest for local autonomy. The harsh reaction of the regime against the local population has added further fuel to popular discontent and has widened the rebellion's dimensions. While the Kurdish forces are reportedly no longer in control of the area's major towns, they are

still active in the countryside, and after dark, they control a number of strategically important roads. The overall group relations among ethnic Kurds, Azeris, and Persians is acutely tense. General socioeconomic conditions in Kurdistan are also said to be comparatively worse than those elsewhere in Iran.

The armed opposition to the regime in Kurdish populated areas is carried out mainly by the Kurdish Democratic Party and the *Komalah*. Both of these are secular, Kurdish nationalist, paramilitary political organizations led by detribalized Kurdish elements. Both groups are leftist in ideology, and the *Komalah* is openly Marxist. These forces have been assisted by a number of non-Kurdish Iranian political and guerrilla movements active both inside Iran and abroad. The two organizations employ a number of Army deserters as instructors. Supported by the more educated, detribalized, and urban elements, they have been instrumental in the rapid rise of Kurdish ethnic consciousness in the largely Sunni-populated central and northern districts of Iranian Kurdistan. In contrast, the majority of the Shii Kurds have remained noncommittal and continue to support the Tehran regime, even if only passively. The tribal element and its leadership remain politically conservative and have, to some degree, cooperated with foreign-based monarchist forces; however, they are presently disheartened and await further developments. Some of the monarchist sympathizers recently joined the IRGC, probably in the face of massive unemployment in the region.

In spite of all the political upheaval that Iran has gone through since 1978, it seems clear that the Iranian armed forces have managed to keep open most, if not all, of their military colleges and training centers. These include the Military College of the Ground Forces, the Air Force Pilot College, the Staff and Command College, the Defense College, and the Officers College.

In most cases, there has been a large turnover of teaching staff in these institutions, and the overall standards of instruction are believed to have become much poorer than they were under the previous regime. The shortage of qualified personnel, especially technical instructors, is said to be felt everywhere. Various administrative, organizational, and political changes have been introduced, and rules

and regulations governing matters of admissions and graduation have all undergone transformation. The quality and composition of the student body has also been altered. For example, along with the junior officers, an undetermined number of non-Army individuals, mostly members of the IRGC, are being trained in some of these institutions. The reverse, however, is not true: No Army personnel are known to be trained in institutions set up exclusively for the IRGC.

Along with formal Army training facilities, the Iranian military has apparently managed to keep the domestic arms-producing and repair industries operational. Pressures generated by the ongoing war with the Iraqis are probably the main impetus for such efforts. In spite of shortages of qualified manpower and material, there has been a renewed effort to increase self-reliance in the weapons industries in the past few years.

Although rumors of the presence of foreign military advisors and technicians in the Iranian military are widespread, none of our respondents were able to corroborate this through their personal experience. Production lines of some heavy and light ammunition and heavy shells are reported to have started. There have also been reports of successful efforts to repair and cannibalize various types of American and West European helicopters. In addition, the production of J-3 guns and antipersonnel grenades and repairs of Katushas and RPG7s are also said to be under way or planned for the near future. Large numbers of batteries for armored trucks are also said to be produced locally.

Any study of the present Iranian military would be incomplete, if not superficial, without a firm understanding of the Shah's military establishment. Mindful of this, we sought to elicit from interviewees who had been senior command officers under the Shah detailed, first-hand accounts of major developments that the Iranian military underwent under the monarchy. We believe that this information will assist us in identifying stable relationship patterns over an extended period of time, and will thus contribute to a substantially new and better understanding of the professional military in Iran. Virtually no open literature exists on the subject of the Iranian military before the revolution, although various events that occurred in the Pahlavi era,

especially in the late 1970s, helped to shape the post-revolutionary military.

Prior to the revolution, especially in the early 1960s, the Shah exercised unchallenged control over the Iranian armed forces; the military, in turn, soon came to be the indispensable keystone in the monarch's rule. The Shah consistently increased the size of the Army, equipped it with modern weapons, and satisfied the material aspirations of the officer corps. He controlled the military by closely supervising his officers. For example, promotion above the rank of colonel required his explicit permission. Many officers judged to be too independent-minded or reformist, as well as those who in one way or another acquired some measure of political popularity, were also promptly sacked by the monarch as potential security threats to the throne. In the meantime, the Shah did his best to inculcate strict loyalty to his person.

Many of our respondents asserted that they and their colleagues had been powerless to initiate any reformist measures to reverse the situation. There was more than one reason for this. The regime's close insulation of the armed forces from all political and social currents affecting civilians, along with its strict political control of the military, left officers little room for voicing reformist ideas lest they be accused of disloyalty. Also, the allegedly widespread corruption of the top echelons and their narrowly personal priorities are said to have demoralized large numbers of otherwise reformist-minded junior officers.

Undue favoritism, the essentially personal nature of promotion and selection practices, and the absence of a generally effective retirement policy are said to have all had the same overall impact. Our data indicate that the pre-revolutionary Iranian military was uniquely characterized by weak internal solidarity, extreme vulnerability to manipulation from the outside, inability to make sound political decisions, and inability to reform from within.

POST-REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY AND PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

The post-1979 period has witnessed the emergence and the subsequent institutionalization of a number of new military, paramilitary, and security organizations in Iran. While the process of institutionalization is by no means complete, some of these structures appear to have acquired considerable political/military weight and significance and may, in one way or another, become permanent features of the Iranian political scene in the coming years.

The most important of these organizations is undoubtedly the IRGC. Reportedly numbering up to 250,000 men, the IRGC is believed to constitute one of the main pillars of the current regime in Tehran. Charged with the overall responsibility of "protecting the Islamic revolution," the IRGC has branched out by now to almost all major and middle-level Iranian urban centers, in addition to being heavily represented on the war front against the Iraqi forces. The IRGC has undergone an evolution not unlike that of the Waffen SS, starting out as a largely political organization with primarily internal functions, then slowly developing into a regular military force with heavy weapons and a hierarchical command structure. At present, it maintains separate battalion-size units on the Iraqi front and elsewhere. While these units are autonomous, their military activities are coordinated with those of the professional armed forces at higher levels.

In addition to their front-line military role, different IRGC units retain a variety of specific internal functions, the most important of which are:

- Patrolling urban areas as a kind of local police and enforcing Islamic laws and regulations.
- Fighting "antirevolutionary" forces of all types; this function is not confined to urban centers but in certain localities may include extended territories, such as parts of Iranian Kurdistan, where the IRGC battalions function as military formations similar to regular Army units.

- Protecting ministries, factories, radio and TV stations, airports, prisons, and other sensitive places.
- Acting as local intelligence organs engaged in spying on the population.
- Engaging in official propaganda, organizing sponsored rallies, and generally "guiding" the bureaucracy, labor unions, schools, etc.

The wide law-enforcing and other prerogatives of the *Pasdaran* have brought its members into day-to-day contact with a large number of other organizations, both civilian and military. And since responsibilities of a variety of official and semi-official organs have not yet been clearly defined, considerable tension, misunderstanding, rivalry, and even enmity are reported to exist among them. From the start, it was clear that there is little love lost between the IRGC and the regular Army, Air Force, and Navy, on both the enlisted-man and officer levels. However, the tension between the professional military and the IRGC appears to have subsided considerably following the Iranian battlefront victories of April-June 1982. Four years of shared battle experience, more efficient logistic support rendered by the IRGC to the Army, and more efficient joint planning and coordination practices have all helped to foster rapprochement between the two organizations. The regime, in the meantime, has been well aware of potential tensions and has tried to devise a variety of strategies for resolution. Latent and open tensions still exist between the IRGC units and the National Police in some major urban centers, as well as between the IRGC and Gendarmerie personnel, some of the ministries, and other state organs. Causes of these tensions range from ideological/political differences to functional problems. In addition, the IRGC has not been immune to personality conflicts and factional rivalries among its top commanders. For example, there is no love lost between the Minister of the IRGC (a protege of Rafsanjani), Mohsen Rafighdoust, and the IRGC commander (a supporter of Montazari), Mohsen Rezai.

While we have little evidence of serious disloyalty or documented instances of open armed opposition on the part of IRGC elements against the clerical regime, most respondents view the *Pasdaran* as something less than a completely loyal and strictly Islamic organization. Only a minority (perhaps no more than 20 percent) of its members are believed to be motivated by Shii religious morality and ideology. Rather, a good many seem to be attracted to the IRGC because of the high unemployment rate in the country. The organization provides an excellent source of income, especially for volunteers coming from lower-income urban families, with salaries said to be more than twice the usual pay for comparable military personnel. An undetermined number of Afghan refugees have joined the IRGC lately. The Afghans are believed to be primarily motivated by personal and financial reasons; they are not loyal to the Islamic regime, and they act more like mercenaries than anything else.

As noted earlier, the data we have collected thus far suggest clearly that the IRGC remains a primary source of support for the Islamic regime. This generally well-known fact, however, has led many observers to ignore the future political role of the *Pasdaran,* leading them, instead, to concentrate exclusively on the professional military as the logical candidate for possible future military coups in Iran. In contrast, our data indicate that the continued unconditional political loyalty of the IRGC should not be taken for granted in the coming years, and that a potential threat to the regime may one day come from the IRGC ranks rather than the professional military. There are several reasons for this supposition. First, the clerical leadership regards the IRGC as the true "guardian of the Revolution" and controls it in a much less formal and rigid manner than the professional military, giving the *Pasdaran* leadership a certain freedom of movement; second, unlike the regular military, the IRGC is placed in strategically important locations in Tehran and other major Iranian cities; third, the IRGC apparently serves as a vehicle for many young secular commanders who may be motivated by personal ambition rather than by ideology; fourth, if the rapid numerical growth of the *Pasdaran*--from some 40,000 in early 1980 to the present 250,000--continues, the political and ideological

control of the IRGC will inevitably become less and less effective; finally, the *Pasdaran* leaders usually maintain close personal ties to leading clerical figures, and any serious disagreement among them is likely to lead to armed conflict within the ranks of the IRGC. In view of these considerations, we believe the IRGC may yet become a major player in a post-Khomeyni political power struggle.

The all-volunteer IRGC appears to pay special attention to its own composition, training, and recruitment. Most members are young (18 to 24 years of age), unmarried, and from the very poorest of the urban population, especially in Tehran. The ethnic Persian-speaking element of the population is much more strongly represented in the *Pasdaran* than in the regular armed forces. Minorities such as Sunni Muslims (Kurds, Turkmans, Baluchis, Arabs, and others), Christians, Bahais, Zoroastrians, and Jews are either left out completely or make up a negligible portion of the IRGC rank and file. Recently, however, a large number of Shii Kurds are reported to have become IRGC members in Bakhtaran province.

Most of the IRGC leaders either have direct family and marriage ties with major Shii clerical figures or come from districts and localities such as Najafabad and Esfahan, where some of the most influential clerics have traditionally been based. Most IRGC commanders also have humble backgrounds. Pieces of specific information on individual *Pasdaran* leaders indicate that many of them received extensive guerrilla training from the PLO and others in the late 1970s, especially in Libya, Syria, and Lebanon.

Most of the respondents agreed that leftist opposition groups such as the *Mojahedin* and *Fedayin* no longer have any noticeable influence among the IRGC rank and file. These groups had considerable influence in the first two post-revolutionary years, but most of their sympathizers and supporters have been purged. Remnants of the groups, however, especially the *Tudeh* Party, are reported to be still present in the IRGC, professing loyalty outwardly but waiting for an opportune time to reassert themselves. Nationalist groups, in contrast, have apparently never amounted to anything within the IRGC. This does not mean, however, that no individual *Pasdaran* members or leaders are Iranian nationalists. In fact, it is believed that some of the

Islamic-oriented youth of today may turn out to be leading nationalists of tomorrow.

The *Pasdaran* maintains its own separate and specialized training facilities and military academies in various locations inside Iran. Theological education and instruction is a strict requirement for all. In addition, regular military instructors from various military academies train the corps members. As a whole, the *Pasdaran* have been gradually acquiring specialized military knowledge; this is reflected in the growing functional and organizational diversification of the IRGC units. In fact, the IRGC has recently begun to operate its own armored units and has established various naval and air elements. Despite these advances, the available information points to a rather low level of overall technical training and performance. For example, the *Pasdaran* can neither operate ships nor fly sophisticated fighter planes. Most technical manuals are still in English, and despite the introduction of vigorous English-language instruction programs, the overwhelming majority of the IRGC are not competent in the language. Additionally, there is a serious shortage of qualified technical instructors.

A number of our interviewees reported increasing signs of war weariness among the IRGC rank and file, based on the realization that the IRGC has borne the brunt of the war against Iraq, as well as the recognition that it has been exploited by the regime against both the regular armed forces and the population at large. This realization lessened the earlier fanatical identification of many of the IRGC leaders, especially those at the front, with the regime policies. This would constitute one more reason for the gradually diminishing tensions and rivalries between the regular Army and the IRGC units at the Iraqi war front.

In addition to detailed information on the issues outlined above, we have also gathered preliminary data on (1) the internal organizational structure and workings of some of the IRGC's specific subordinate organs; (2) the complex web of its actual chain of command, lines of communications, limits of jurisdiction, and modes of operation; and (3) formal and informal links between the IRGC and other civil and military organs and centers of power.

The 100,000-strong *Sepah Basij* (Army of Mobilization) occupies a prominent position among the newly formed paramilitary and security organizations. Unlike the *Pasdaran,* which came into being much earlier, the *Basij* was established by a government decision in November 1979. The overwhelming majority of *Basij* members come from the rural areas of the country; thus the organization has no function or presence inside city limits in normal times. Believed to be more Islamic-oriented and fanatical than the IRGC, *Basij* members are often unemployed before joining. Although they are all supposed to be volunteers, a few of our respondents reported specific instances of forced membership drives by the state organs in various localities.

The *Basij,* unlike the *Pasdaran,* appear to use small arms only. *Basij* units have been used alongside the main field forces on the Iraqi front, but their basic function seems to be the maintenance of security measures in villages, including counterinsurgency, protection of provincial roads and bridges, and some intelligence and police functions. Thousands of *Basij* members seem to have some economic and social functions as well. They coordinate some of their activities with the so-called Construction Brigades and other state organs. As with the IRGC, some of the *Basij* functions overlap with those of other organizations such as the Gendarmerie, giving rise to tensions in rural areas.

In addition to the above organizations, several other new paramilitary organizations have emerged in Iran in the last year or so. While data on these groups are relatively scarce, we know that the most prominent among them are the *Jondollah*, the *Ghalollah*, and the *Sarollah*. These are much smaller than the IRGC and are apparently either associated with or subordinate to the *Pasdaran. Jandollah* members are rarely seen in major urban areas; instead, they seem to cooperate closely with Gendarmerie forces, perhaps acting as a watchdog over them. The *Ghalollah* and the *Sarollah*, in contrast, are urban-based and enjoy the power to detain and punish suspected "undesirable" elements in the major cities. The two organizations have some subordinate elements, such as the so-called *Khaharan Zeynab* (the Zeynab Sisters), that are entirely female and act more like an "Ethics Police."

SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS AND CONTROL MECHANISMS

One of the basic features of the post-revolutionary Iranian political system is that no single organization is charged with the overall responsibility of carrying out tasks considered vital to the regime. This technique has long been a part of Iranian political culture and was practiced widely by the Shah's regime as well. A good example of this division of responsibility is the way post-revolutionary intelligence organizations function in Iran. No single organization is charged with maintaining security measures or the gathering and supplying of intelligence on political issues. Instead, a number of agencies with parallel or overlapping bureaucratic responsibilities and functions perform this task. They are also apparently charged with watching over one another.

According to our information, organizations of this type include the *Dayereh Siyasi va Ideolozhik* (Political and Ideological Section), *Edareh Aghidati* (Persuasion Office), *Grouh Ershad* (Guidance Organization), *Grouh Zarbe* (Strike Groups), *Anjoman Eslami* (Islamic Society), *Shora Eslami* (Islamic Councils), and SAVAMA (State Security and Intelligence Organization). Most of the key positions in these organizations are apparently held by persons promoted since the revolution. However, a large number of intelligence officials from the previous regime, especially those from the old Army Counter-Intelligence Organization, SAVAK, and the Imperial Inspectorate, are said to have retained their positions in the new security organizations. Many of these officials were reinstated to purge leftists. Overall political control of the professional military is maintained partly through the countervailing presence of the *Basij* and the IRGC units, and partly through the above-mentioned organizations, which permeate the entire armed forces.

The Political and Ideological Section (PIS), the Guidance Organization (GO), and the Islamic Society are said to exist on all Army and Air Force bases, in all naval units, and at all police and Gendarmerie stations. They also have representatives in all Army organizations. Individuals active in these outfits are said to have been trained in various theological seminaries, especially the seminary

at Ghom, and to have received specialized instructions by IRGC units. The local head of the PIS at each Army base is always a cleric, although this pattern may or may not apply to other security organizations. As a whole, the PIS handles agitprop among the military, but it also can and often does interfere in purely military affairs. Some specific Air Force missions, for example, are said to require the approval of PIS heads at military bases. These individuals are also charged with appointing at each base the local heads of the Islamic Society who are subsequently elected by the base personnel. The latter's function seems to be the political control of suspected military personnel.

The GO is also a cleric-led intelligence-gathering force that is apparently charged with identification of political opponents or suspects. In contrast with the Islamic Society, its local representatives at each military base are either appointed by the service commanders or sent directly by the central committee of the GO in Tehran. The internal chain of command and structure of the GO is said to be patterned after the old J-2. The Strike Group is said to comprise well-armed, loyal, Islamic-oriented young men who act as military police. They are assigned to military bases only after receiving basic training from the IRGC. Although members of the Strike Group live on military bases, they have their own quarters and facilities and are only nominally under the control of the base commanders.

Based on fragmentary, though often specific information, it seems clear that Iranian post-revolutionary intelligence organizations are far from fully institutionalized. There is still a relatively rapid turnover and reshifting of the key personnel. Appropriate jurisdictions, specific lines of duty, and organizational responsibilities are still undergoing major and minor changes of all kinds. For example, the Islamic Councils, which played key roles in the purge of the professional armed forces during the first two years after the revolution, are said to have effectively been dissolved or incorporated in the PIS.

As a result, it would appear that the clerical regime has not succeeded in establishing fully effective political control mechanisms of the sort that characterized true police states such as Nazi Germany

or Stalinist Russia. One pilot we interviewed said that he was able to discuss his plans to hijack a transport plane openly in his squadron for nearly a month prior to actually doing it, and that there was no retaliation against his family after he left Iran.

Most of our respondents asserted that despite or perhaps because of these changes, Iranian security organizations have become better organized and more efficient during the past several years. The overall power and political relevance of these structures are also greater than they were under the monarchy. Finally, the strength and practical day-to-day influence of many higher-ranking intelligence officials assigned to the professional military does not seem to derive from their organizationally attained positions. Their power appears to correspond directly to the degree of access they have (through kinship ties) to leading clerical personalities.

DOMESTIC POLITICAL GROUPINGS

In the course of our interviews, we obtained a considerable amount of hitherto unavailable information about various Iranian political, religious, and ideological factions and organizations, some of which played prominent political roles during and after the Iranian revolution, and whose influence has been felt, one way or another, in the Iranian armed forces. The bulk of this information concerns the leftist radical forces, such as the *Mojahedin Khalgh*, *Fedayin Khalgh*, and the *Tudeh* Party, but some of it pertains to clerical factions such as the *Hojati* and *Maktabi* groups, as well as some rightist and monarchist elements.

In general, our data indicate that the leftist forces, particularly the *Fedayin* and *Mojahedin* guerrillas, played a leading role in the period immediately after the revolution in bringing about disintegration of the military's entire command, control, and supply systems. To successfully attain this goal, these two organizations had prepared themselves many months, if not years, before the actual outbreak of revolutionary agitation in late 1978. Seeing themselves as "vanguards" of the future revolution, these and similar organizations had long ago established close ties with such countries as Libya, Syria, and East Germany. Many of their members, including junior officers and NCOs, had

apparently received guerrilla training in the late 1970s in Lebanon and elsewhere from the PLO and other foreign organizations.

Apparently dictated by their firm belief that "chaos contains the germs of all possibilities," these leftists infiltrated the Shah's military and instigated the chaos that led to the establishment of the Islamic republic in mid-1979. As such, these forces were also the first to capture arms factories and government arsenals, and thus they played a prominent role in the actual seizure of state power.

Through the use of a variety of tactics intended to further arouse the general public against the military, these organizations were instrumental in demanding a radical purge of the armed forces. We have extensive data on how these organizations planned and later infiltrated the so-called Soldiers' Councils and other governmental and semiofficial bodies, which later came to supervise the actual purge process. As far as the *Tudeh* is concerned, our data seem to confirm that while this organization refrained from open advocacy of fully dismantling the armed forces, it nevertheless pressed vigorously for the purge of the officer corps in general and specific individuals within the military in particular. The *Tudeh* Party also publicly advocated restoration of its own officer sympathizers and members who had either been retired or imprisoned under the previous regime. In the initial post-revolutionary phase, the activities of the leftist forces went hand in hand with the clerics' intention to "Islamicize" the armed forces through ideological indoctrination. The Soviet Union, in the meantime, actively encouraged these activities, while infiltrating its own functionaries into the newly emerging government organs and intelligence agencies. To this end, the USSR is also said to have sent back to Iran thousands of ethnic Azeri members of the banned Democratic Party of Iran who had defected to the Soviet Union before the early 1950s.

Our data concerning the present political role of leftist forces in Iran appear to be contradictory. Some of our respondents informed us that the leftists and their sympathizers still exercise considerable political influence behind the scenes in Iran and under the guise of Islam and "Maktabism." These interviewees also tended to dismiss the official governmental crackdown against the organized leftist forces as nothing but a political show designed to win political credibility in

Western eyes. Anti-communist activities and public declarations of the Islamic regime in Tehran are also said to be intimately tied to factional infighting among the ruling clerical establishment and to signify a temporary rise in the political fortunes of the more conservative elements in government.

In contrast, other interviewees tended to dismiss the Iranian left as nothing but a fringe element that, except in the very first months after the downfall of the monarchy, never came to exercise any serious measure of political power.

Most of our interviewees asserted that despite widespread popular opposition to the current regime and the existence of growing popular support for Prince Reza, the ex-Shah's son, the monarchist forces remain disorganized and divided among themselves. Some interviewees complained bitterly about the indifference and lack of support shown by the West, particularly the United States, for the monarchist cause in Iran.

PERSONALITIES

We have amassed a considerable amount of detailed data on leading contemporary Iranian military and civilian personalities. In general, these individuals occupied major political, religious, or military positions following the downfall of the monarchy. They include some commanders and deputy commanders of different military services, leading staff officers, cabinet members, and major religious figures. Most are pro-Khomeyni. While many of them are still alive and continue to occupy civilian and military positions in Iran, others have either been retired, executed, or assassinated in the past few years or are no longer engaged in public political life. Some have also succeeded in establishing residency abroad. They include Colonel Zahirnezhad, the current Commander of the Ground Forces and Chief of General Staff; Colonel Fakouri, the former Air Force Commander; Captain Afzali, the former Commander of the Navy; Colonel Moinpour, the former Air Force Commander; General Hoseyn Rabiyi, the former Air Force Commander; General Gharani, the former Chief of General Staff; General Bagheri, the former Air Force Commander; Captain Hoseyni, the present Navy Commander; General Fallahi, the former Chief of General Staff; and Mostafa Chamran, the former Defense Minister.

Although our data on these and other leading Iranian personalities are still incomplete and often contradictory, we believe our files will eventually become a unique source of first-hand information. Many of our respondents personally knew these individuals, often as fellow officers. Some served directly under them, while others had intimate ties of friendship or kinship. Still other interviewees attended the same military colleges or were otherwise in daily contact with these individuals. In a word, our interviewees seem qualified to evaluate the professional competence, credibility, personal character, and political values and beliefs of many current Iranian officials, and are in a position to inform us of their family and other ties with each other and with leading personalities in the current Iranian regime. We believe that detailed information of this type will eventually guide us to a better appreciation of the inner workings, mechanisms, and hidden patterns of politically relevant relationships in Iran in the post-revolutionary period.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The account of the post-revolutionary Iranian military presented above indicates the sorts of issues that were discussed in our Phase I interviews. We were quite pleased--indeed, surprised--at the number of interviewees we were able to find, their cooperativeness, and the general quality of the information they provided. We have no doubt that the full-scale interviewing effort envisioned for Phase II can be conducted successfully and will yield results that are relevant to U.S. analysts and policymakers concerned with Iran and Southwest Asia in general.

We of course obtained considerably more information in our Phase I interviews than is presented here. Much of that information consists of very specific and detailed accounts of personalities, historical events, and personal experiences undergone by the interviewees before they left Iran. While this sort of detail is both interesting and relevant to our larger research topic, we are reluctant to draw extended generalizations until our database has been expanded considerably.

The results obtained in Phase I are necessarily quite preliminary and incomplete in many respects. In particular, it is much too early to pass judgment on whether the Iranian military has the potential to play a significant role in future internal Iranian politics. There are a number of good reasons for thinking that this will not happen in the immediate future, including the extensive purges that have taken place within the military; the large number of internal security, intelligence, and control mechanisms with overlapping responsibilities created by the clerical regime for the precise purpose of watching over the armed forces; and the widespread legitimacy that the Islamic regime continues to enjoy, particularly within new, post-revolutionary paramilitary organizations such as the *Pasdaran*.

On the other hand, a number of factors suggest that the armed forces may indeed play a more active political role under certain circumstances:

- The heightened prestige of the Army and the feeling that it has become a genuine national force more representative of the people than it was under the Shah.
- The fact that a substantial (though uncertain) number of officers trained under the Shah remain in the armed forces, particularly in the more technical branches.
- The restoration of some measure of professional discipline and the degree of autonomy in military decisionmaking permitted by the regime.
- The apparent superficiality with which Islam and Islamic indoctrination have touched the officer corps.
- The incomplete institutionalization of many of the new control and security mechanisms.

In addition, the intriguing possibility exists that a potential threat to the regime may come not from the ranks of the professional military, but from the *Pasdaran* itself. Much of our evidence suggests that the IRGC serves as a vehicle for the personal ambitions of many young Iranians, for whom Islamic ideology is only one of several motivating factors.

To further test this question, we must broaden our interview database both quantitatively and qualitatively in Phase II. The interview sample in Phase I consisted of only 30 individuals, and many generalizations had to be based on only a few data points. There are several topics that we were unable to cover as extensively as we would have liked, such as changes in military doctrine since the revolution and the character of current operations and planning in the Iran-Iraq war. A number of different opinions and experiences were conveyed in the interviews concerning the degree of individual Islamic piety within the contemporary armed forces and the extent of ideological control exercised by the regime. The actual situation probably varies widely from base to base and province to province, as well as over time, so that generalizations are safe only after a great many views are heard. One of the first priorities in Phase II will be to expand the number of interviews by exploiting existing contacts and reinterviewing certain individuals.

Another objective of Phase II, as stated earlier, is to improve the qualitative diversity of the interview sample in several respects, in order to ensure a balance in the interpretations and conclusions reached. We would like to be able to talk to more (1) leftist sympathizers, (2) *Pasdars* and other Islamic radicals, (3) ethnic and tribal minorities, (4) NCOs and enlisted men, (5) members of other services such as the Gendarmerie, and (6) emigres who have departed very recently. We plan to supplement the interview base with secondary sources, including Persian-language newspapers and periodicals. In Phase I, we consciously avoided the use of classified secondary sources, since we were interested in seeing how much information we could generate through the interviewing process. In Phase II, we will attempt to survey classified sources systematically and will check them against the results of our own work.

Finally, it became clear in the course of Phase I that there was a considerable amount of historical information on the Iranian revolution available through the interviewing process, which is not available in existing published sources. There is, for example, substantial controversy within the emigre community about the precise role of the military at the time of Khomeyni's return to Iran and the Army's declaration of neutrality. There is a common belief that at least some senior military commanders sought to make separate deals with the new regime, and indeed General Fardoust, head of the Imperial Inspectorate, not only survived the change of regime but went on to play an important role in the security system established by Khomeyni. These and similar issues will probably never be resolved satisfactorily, but it is worthwhile to preserve first-hand accounts of these important events while the memory of the participants is still relatively fresh.

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Iran: The Growing Role of the Consultative Assembly

A Research Paper

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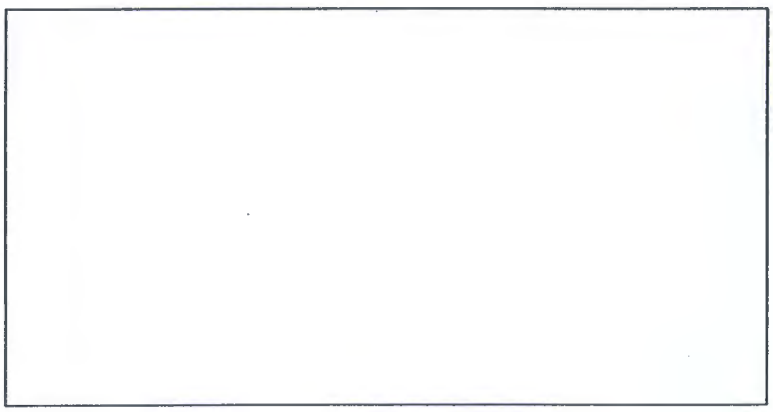
Iran: The Growing Role of the Consultative Assembly

A Research Paper



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January 1985

Iran: The Growing Role of the Consultative Assembly

Key Judgments

Information available as of 3 January 1985 was used in this report.

The Consultative Assembly has become one of the most influential political institutions in Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini. As Khomeini's health deteriorates, an increasing number of policy questions are likely to be sent to the Assembly for resolution.

During the past four years the Assembly has passed much important legislation, strengthened its control over parts of the executive branch, and helped tighten regime control over independent revolutionary organizations and paramilitary forces. Effective leadership of the Assembly by Speaker Hojat ol-Eslam Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani has helped it acquire more institutional power at the expense of the presidency and judiciary. The only effective political check on Assembly decisions—aside from Khomeini—comes from the conservative Council of Guardians, which must approve all legislation before it can become law.

A conservative coalition strong enough to block proposals by Islamic radicals is emerging in the recently elected second Consultative Assembly. If the coalition continues to gain adherents, it will increase pressure on the government to chart a more conservative course. The new coalition also will help ease the strained relations between the Assembly and the Council of Guardians.

The conservatives face stiff resistance from the radicals in defining the Islamic Republic. Both radical and conservative leaders sense that Khomeini's time may be short, and they are likely to press hard during 1985 to impose their views on land reform, the economy, and the division of power among regime factions and organizations.

Highly placed Iranians believe the Assembly will become even more important in the power vacuum that will follow Khomeini's death. Limited information about members of the emerging conservative coalition in the Assembly suggests its leaders are interested in making it the centerpiece of a parliamentary theocracy after Khomeini. Radicals also favor a more powerful Assembly because it offers the best opportunity to achieve at least some of their goals in restructuring Iranian society.

Assembly Speaker Rafsanjani is well placed to encourage and exploit any increase in the Assembly's authority. Skilled at maneuvering among Iran's diverse political factions, Rafsanjani is second only to Khomeini in power. Once Khomeini dies, he could become the most influential political figure in the country, although he is too young and too junior a cleric to succeed Khomeini directly.

The emergence and survival of a conservative majority in the Consultative Assembly would benefit Western interests and reduce Soviet opportunities to bring to power a leftist government in Tehran. An Assembly led by such a coalition would continue to impose Islamic values in Iran and remain critical of Western policies affecting the Third World, but it would also be likely to give primary importance to strengthening the economy and establishing a stable social structure. Conservatives would encourage working relationships with the West—eventually including the United States—and with the non-Communist Third World, especially Iran's neighbors.

Dominance of the Assembly by the radicals would allow it to override legislative review by the conservative Council of Guardians, enact extreme social and economic programs, and press for a hardline foreign policy. Such a regime is more likely to look to the USSR for assistance.

Contents

Radical and Conservative Views on Selected Issues [a]

Radical and conservative disagreements are most clearly defined on economic issues such as land reform, management of trade and industry, and the tax structure. Radicals favor redistributing private property to benefit the lower classes, strong central control and planning over the economy, and increasing taxes through higher rates and a broadening of the tax base. Conservatives want no limitations placed on amassing private property, a wider role for the private sector, and no increased tax burden. They charge that radicals in the regime do not properly manage the assets they now control.

Divisions between the factions blur on many other matters. Most radicals, however, are hawkish on the war with Iraq and are suspicious of the loyalty of the regular armed forces. Most conservatives, on the other hand, want to end the conflict and to improve Iran's economy. They oppose strengthening the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard at the expense of the regular forces. Conservatives believe that the Guard is controlled by trigger-happy radicals willing to eliminate rival interest groups by force.

Radicals favor a hardline foreign policy in association with other regimes and organizations opposed to "imperialism"—that is, the United States—and seem less hostile to the USSR. *radical and conservative leaders to terrorism and planning to export the revolution to other Muslim communities. Many conservatives are as concerned as radicals about the Western cultural impact on Islamic societies, but the conservatives' economic interests contribute heavily to their interest in continued contacts with the West and a less aggressive foreign policy.*

Conservatives and some radicals are strong supporters of the Islamization of Iranian society. The most extreme proponents of Islamization are the ultraconservatives. Conservatives, however, do not strongly support the political and religious domination of Iran by a supreme jurisprudent and hope to reduce the authority of that post after Khomeini's death. Many radicals support a view of Islam consonant with socialist principles and hope eventually to push the clerics into the background. Meanwhile, however, radicals support Khomeini's dominance, realizing Iran's need for a strong leader at the helm and hoping that he will allow their views to prevail.

[a] *This paper uses the terms* radical, conservative, *and* ultraconservative *to indicate general divisions in the Iranian political spectrum.* Pragmatist *is used to characterize individuals like Assembly Speaker Hashemi-Rafsanjani, whose views seem to be driven mainly by opportunism. These terms are intended only to define Iranian viewpoints relative to each other and not to suggest similarities with foreign political groups. Moreover, political figures may fit into one part of the spectrum on some issues and other parts of the spectrum on other issues. Iranians tend not to be troubled by vague and shifting alliances or by simultaneous participation in groups with opposing goals and ideologies, according to Western scholars.*

Iran: The Growing Role of the Consultative Assembly

In the four years of its existence, the Consultative Assembly (*Majles-e Shura*) has grown from a fledgling institution to Iran's single most important decisionmaking center—aside from Ayatollah Khomeini. It has become the main arena in which Iranian power struggles are waged. Khomeini has made clear publicly that the Majles is the regime's link with the people and the forum in which different factional views will be melded into policy. Leaders of major political factions responded to this mandate by competing strongly in the 1984 election for the Assembly.

> *If we look at the executive and judicial powers in relation to the legislative, it is clear that the Majles is at the head of affairs.*
>
> *Editorial in government-controlled* Kayhan *newspaper*
> *March 1984*

The increased power of the Majles results mainly from provisions in the Constitution that weaken the executive branch. The Constitution divides the government into executive, legislative, and judicial branches—apparently with balanced powers as in many Western countries. But it imposes on the government a supreme jurisprudent—Khomeini. Although Khomeini has not become involved in day-to-day policymaking, his presence has prevented the emergence of a strong president.

This has allowed the Assembly to occupy center stage. As the Iranian power struggle unfolds, now and after Khomeini dies, decisions made in the Majles will be important indicators of whether conservative or radical Islamic ideology is becoming dominant.

Growing Power and Constraints

The 270-member Consultative Assembly has evolved into the political institution most representative of Iran's diverse political spectrum. With Khomeini's blessing, the Majles has been the primary beneficiary

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The Iranian Consultative Assembly (Majles-e Shura)

The Iranian Constitution establishes a single-chamber, 270-member Consultative Assembly elected every four years. The Majles is "consultative" because, strictly speaking, it does not legislate—all law having been revealed by God. Three seats are reserved for representatives of Christian sects and one each for the Jews and Zoroastrians. The Assembly:

- *Introduces "resolutions" and legislation.*
- *Enacts laws and ratifies treaties, contracts, and accords negotiated by the executive branch.*
- *Approves appointment of the prime minister and Cabinet and censures or removes the prime minister, Cabinet, or a single minister through votes of no confidence. The Majles may require the president, the prime minister, or any individual minister to answer questions in person.*
- *Investigates any aspect of national affairs.*
- *Approves employment of foreign nationals.*

The Assembly cannot:

- *Authorize changes—except minor adjustments—in national borders.*
- *Grant foreign concessions for commercial, agricultural, or mineral "affairs or services"—a reaction to concessions to Western interests granted by the Shah and his predecessors.*
- *Impose martial law. "Restrictions" lasting 30 days are allowed during wartime but are not known to have been implemented during the present conflict with Iraq.*

Assembly Sessions

No Majles debate is official unless Council of Guardians members are present, and no proposal is considered law until the Council has reviewed and accepted the text—usually within 10 days after passage of a bill. The Assembly must amend any proposal that the Council of Guardians considers in violation of Islamic or constitutional principles unless two-thirds of the Assembly's members vote to override the Council. The Constitution forbids the Majles from even debating an urgent item—one that must be implemented without a 10-day review—unless Council members participate in the debate.

Representatives who propose "bills resulting in a reduction of public income or increase of general expenses" must offer provisions to restore an equilibrium in the budget. Members cannot transfer their individual responsibilities to substitutes, and the Assembly as a whole cannot delegate its powers. Members who want to resign have 15 days to reconsider.

Majles members are authorized to address all domestic and foreign issues—although the Majles has had greater impact on domestic than on foreign policy. Representatives are not liable to prosecution or arrest for remarks made during debate or for their votes. Khomeini has recently ruled, however, that anyone libeled by a Majles member can exercise a right of reply.

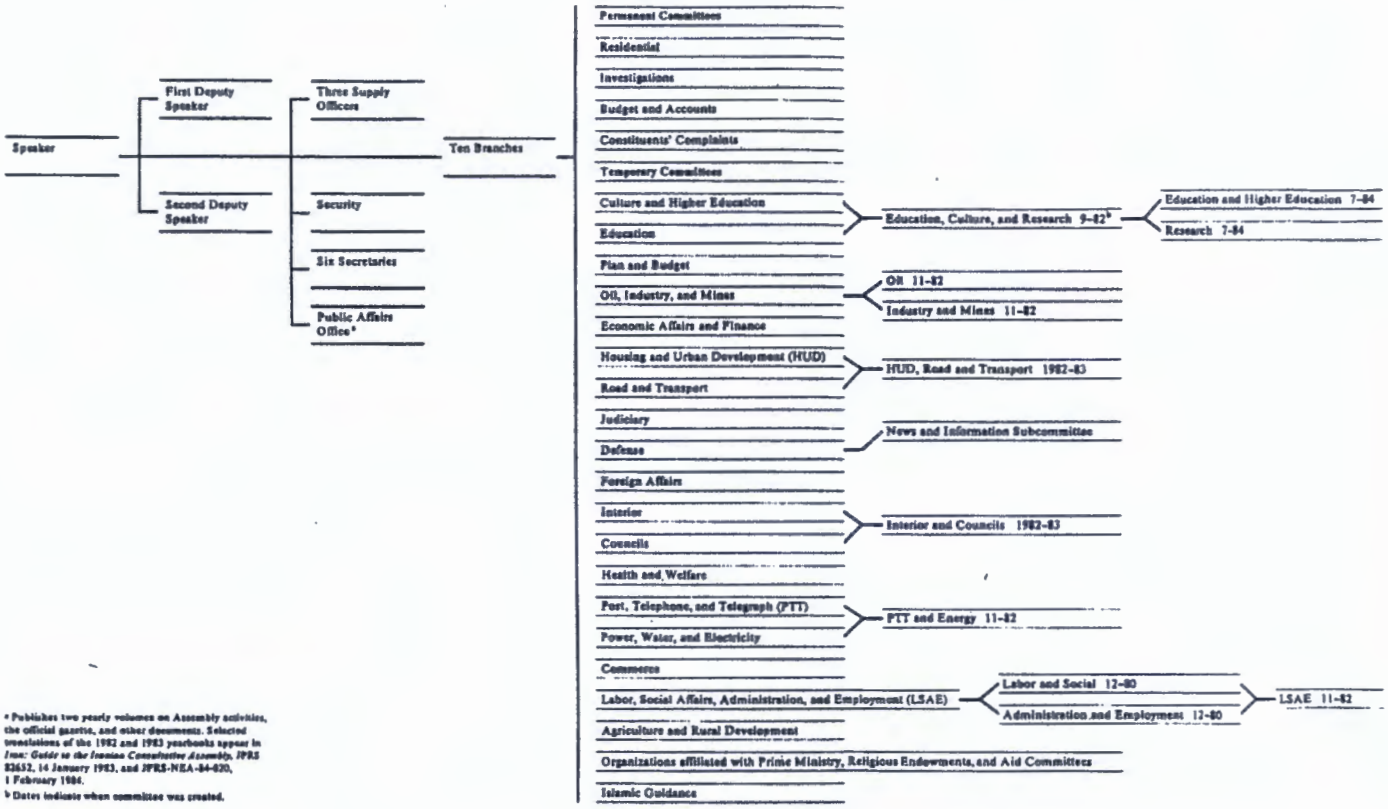
The Constitution provides that Assembly sessions should be open to the public and press, except when the prime minister, a Cabinet minister, or 10 Assembly members call for a closed session.

indicate that the Majles routinely goes into closed session during debate on controversial issues, if only to mask heated exchanges between members. Representatives of religious minorities allege that they have been excluded from closed debates on defense issues. Three-fourths of the members must approve measures adopted in closed session, two-thirds in open session.

The Assembly elects officers—a speaker, two deputies, six secretaries, and three "supply" officers, who apparently arrange for all the equipment needed by the Majles and its members—and divides itself by lot into about 10 equal "branches" twice a year. Heads of the branches, in consultation with the other Majles officers, determine committee assignments of members. Special committees are often set up to consider special issues, for example, how to deal with the US hostages and the qualifications of prime-ministerial candidates. The Defense Committee has a "news and information" subcommittee that tries to obtain for Majles members "correct and accurate" reports on the war with Iraq.

The Majles meets Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday for debate, according to Speaker Rafsanjani, and other days for committee work. Friday is a religious holiday. A typical Majles session opens with announcements and speeches that raise parochial issues or allow members to endorse the regime's position on an issue not under debate. It continues with readings from the Qoran, remarks by the Speaker, and the items scheduled for debate.

Figure 1
Majles Organization



* Publishes two yearly volumes on Assembly activities, the official gazette, and other documents. Selected translations of the 1982 and 1983 yearbooks appear in *Iran: Guide to the Iranian Consultative Assembly*, JPRS 82652, 14 January 1983, and JPRS-NEA-84-020, 1 February 1984.

b Dates indicate when committee was created.

of regime efforts to institutionalize its power. Almost all the formerly independent revolutionary bodies such as the Revolutionary Guard and Construction Crusade are now accountable to the Majles. Reining in the few remaining independent bodies is on the agenda of the newly elected second Assembly.

Today the Majles is the home of the nation—(It) is the government of the oppressed who inherit the earth.

Assembly Speaker Hashemi-Rafsanjani
November 1984

Majles records detail how individual members and committees have become persistent watchdogs over other government organizations and officials, These records and commentary in Iranian media indicate that the Assembly has passed hundreds of bills defining domestic and foreign policy and responding to constituents' needs. Majles activity has focused on budgetary, defense, judicial, agricultural, and ideological affairs, according to these records.

As far as I know, such a hard-working Consultative Assembly does not exist anywhere else in the world.

Speaker Rafsanjani,
May 1984

The first Assembly, which sat from May 1980 to May 1984, also defined policy by failing to legislate on several contentious issues. Radical proposals for land reform, for example, were blocked by conservatives even though the radicals constituted a majority in the first Assembly. This, in effect, established the preeminence of conservative demands that agricultural policy be based on respect for private property.

Evidence of varying reliability suggests a close link between the fortunes of the Majles and its Speaker, Hojat ol-Eslam Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani is a pragmatist who allies himself with conservatives or radicals depending on the issue and his perception of his own best interests. He lacks impressive clerical ancestry and credentials as well as the authority of age but has parlayed his leadership of the Majles into nationwide influence second only to Khomeini's. In turn, Rafsanjani's skills have helped the Majles emerge as the focus of political activity in Iran. Both have gained power primarily at the expense of the executive branch.

Weak President

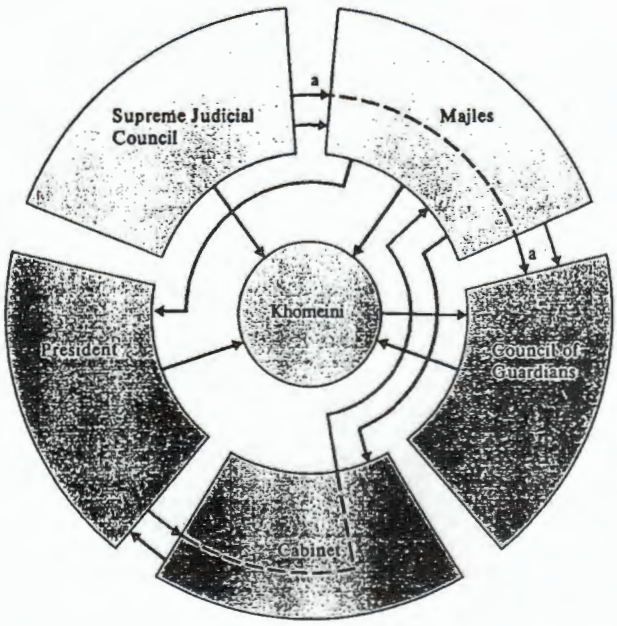
The presidency has been overshadowed by Khomeini and is unable to provide the checks on legislative power common in Western countries. The Constitution vests Khomeini with supervisory powers over the entire government, thus gutting the presidency. Moreover, in 1980 the clerical-controlled Majles was angered by then President Abol Hasan Bani-Sadr and passed legislation severely limiting the powers of the president. The executive lost its power to frustrate the Majles by refusing to sign bills. The Majles also gave some of the president's appointive powers to the prime minister, who must retain the Assembly's confidence.

The current President, Hojat ol-Eslam Ali Hoseini-Khamenei, a major rival of Assembly Speaker Rafsanjani, has been unable to revitalize the presidency. In contrast to the vigorous Assembly Speaker, President Khamenei's health has been weakened by the aftereffects of the serious wound he suffered in an assassination attempt in June 1981. Moreover, according to diplomatic sources in Tehran, his personality is more suited to the seminary than to the rough-and-tumble of Iranian politics.

Khamenei announced in mid-October 1984 that he planned soon to introduce legislation increasing the powers of his office. This move reflects his desire to weaken Rafsanjani and curtail the increasing power of the Majles before Khomeini dies. We believe the President will not gain the power he wants. According to the exile press, Rafsanjani curtly responded that "real power rests with the Majles Speaker, who . . . can accept or reject any minister and supervise all legislative, administrative, and judicial activity."

Figure 2
Iran: Institutional Relationships

— Responsible to
— Reviews competency
— Names members
— Proposes bills
— Reviews bills



[a] Majles chooses the six lay members of the Council of Guardians from a list of nominees prepared by the Supreme Judicial Council.

Constraint—The Council of Guardians

The Council of Guardians is the only political institution serving as a check on the Majles. To ensure that the Majles could not subvert the Islamic revolution, the clerics established a body of experts in Shia law—the Council of Guardians (*Shura-e Negabandan*) composed of six clerics appointed by Khomeini and six laymen named by the Majles—to review all legislation for conformity with Islamic tenets and the Constitution. In effect, the Council of Guardians performs judicial review functions akin to those of the US Supreme Court. It answers only to Khomeini

Conservatives have controlled the Council of Guardians since its formation in 1980. They are careful to check excesses by radicals, Westernized politicians, and technocrats in the Assembly and executive branch. Iranian press accounts detail how the Council

of Guardians ordered significant modifications in bills, making them unacceptable to the radicals in the first Assembly. As a result, during the past four years the radicals have been unable to pass legislation on land reform, labor relations, civil taxes, and management of trade and industry. Because the Majles has been unable to address controversial issues in omnibus bills, it has dealt with them piecemeal.

The 1984 Election

We believe the general perception that Ayatollah Khomeini's health is seriously deteriorating intensified the desire of diverse political groups to win seats in the Majles during the election in May 1984. They wanted to protect their interests in the post-Khomeini era by securing legislation while it could still be blessed by Khomeini. Many highly placed Iranians also seem to believe that the Majles will become the focus of the post-Khomeini power struggle. In addition, we believe they see the Assembly as a major forum for airing and institutionalizing views, making alliances, winning adherents, and thereby gaining national prominence. Provincial figures hope in addition to parlay influence in the capital into more clout back home.

So many provincial clerics, government officials, and members of revolutionary organizations wanted to run for Assembly seats in 1984 that the regime discouraged them. A new election law required anyone holding an official position to resign a month before he or she could be considered as a candidate.

During the election, members of each faction complained bitterly—as they had during the 1980 election—that their rivals were blatantly ignoring election regulations:

- Members of political groups and revolutionary organizations intimidated voters and clashed with each other, according to sources of varying reliability. Disputes in some cities became so intense that there was almost a breakdown of general order.

- Clerics and government officials exploited their positions to endorse their candidates and attack opponents. Election officials wrote in the names of their proteges on the ballots of illiterate voters, according to Iranian press accounts.

Islamic Elections

Iran's strict Islamic election regulations are designed to eliminate Western-style politicking and encourage an atmosphere of unity and local initiative. The election law:

- *Permits only a two-week campaign after review of candidates' backgrounds by election and security officials and clerics.*

- *Forbids critical statements about candidates by prominent clerics and laymen, attacks on rivals by candidates, or the destruction of others' publicity materials. Influential clerics are specifically ordered by Khomeini to maintain a "fatherly" neutrality even at the cost of allowing the election of less well-qualified candidates.*

- *Encourages candidates to voluntarily withdraw in favor of more qualified rivals.*

- *Bans use of mass media for electioneering or publicizing candidates' rallies or meetings.*

The general populace did not demonstrate much interest in the election. Sources of varying reliability suggest the low turnout reflected popular disgust with the unending war and the regime's economic mismanagement.

Reacting to an even smaller turnout in subsequent runoff elections, the Majles amended the election law to allow the election of any candidate who won a plurality of at least one-third of the votes.

1984 Election Results at a Glance

— *Nearly 1,600 candidates registered to run, including 25 women; 152 withdrew, and 271 failed the review process, according to election officials.*

— *In the first and second rounds in April and May, 251 members were elected. The remaining 18 were elected—or reelected if their victories had been successfully challenged—in byelections held in August, September, and October. One seat, that of Bandar Lengeh, remains empty because of repeated election violations.*

— *Only one of the candidates identified as a hostage taker at the US Embassy was elected. Almost all of those elected were active in the anti-Shah movement. None held office under the Shah.*

— *Of the new deputies 36 are 26 to 30 years old, 117 are 31 to 40 years, 70 are 41 to 50 years, 23 are 51 to 60 years, and four are 61 to 70 years, the upper age limit established by the election law, according to the Iranian press. Four—all from Tehran—are women. Four are Sunni Muslim clerics, and an unknown number are Sunni laymen.*

— *Incomplete statistics released by the Iranian media indicate that 1.4 percent of the new Assembly members can only read and write (the minimum educational qualification allowed by law), 9.3 percent completed elementary school, 26 percent have two years of college-level work, 26 percent have undergraduate degrees, 4 percent have doctorates, and 25 percent attended a seminary but are not necessarily all clerics.*

— *According to Speaker Rafsanjani, about 120 representatives are associated with the Islamic Republic Party, which encompasses almost all factions, and 107 members served in the first Majles. Other regime spokesmen have indicated that about 100 members are clerics, slightly less than in the first Majles.*

Throughout the world, this is the only parliament that truly represents the masses, who have elected it free from the influence of feudal overlords, politicking, and so on.

Ayatollah Khomeini
May 1984

Western observers found the process corrupt, but others had quite different perspectives. Two Third World officials have told [redacted] at the Iranian election was impressive by their standards. One emphasized, in addition, that Khomeini had scored a propaganda coup by holding the election during wartime.

A New Conservative Coalition

Conservatives with links to bazaar associations and their clerical allies waged an effective campaign to challenge radical domination of the Majles. They were motivated by the same concerns that spurred bazaari members' opposition to the Shah—increased taxes, concentration of economic power in the hands of state enterprises and a few favored individuals, and bazaaris' inability to protect their personal property. Many were concerned over the radical economic proposals considered by the first Majles.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Pragmatists in the Majles, like Speaker Rafsanjani, and some radicals—such as Dori-Najafabadi, a prominent Tehran representative—were prompted by the activities of the bazaar political committees to accommodate the conservatives, according to sources of varying reliability. An Iranian political digest has suggested that Rafsanjani cleared candidate lists with the conservative Grand Ayatollah Golpayegani—a critic of the regime—during a visit to Qom this spring.

Our society must become more moderate.

Speaker Rafsanjani
September 1984

Radicals—fearing they would be swamped by the conservatives—turned to Khomeini for support during the election. Some radical spokesmen argued strongly that provincial clerics and their proteges—who tend to be conservative—should not abandon their local responsibilities by seeking seats in the Majles. Just weeks before the election, radicals based in Tehran universities obtained their own ruling from Khomeini that "students"—a codeword for radicals—should feel free to participate fully in the election.

The Radical-Conservative Power Balance

We do not believe the conservatives won absolute control of the Majles in the election.

In practice, this means that the conservatives must be able to count on a core of slightly more than one-third of the Assembly necessary to block passage of legislation.

that 32 are radicals, 24 are conservatives, and one is an independent. The remaining 213 members cannot now be labeled with assurance. We believe these data underrepresent conservatives, who generally work behind the scenes, and overrepresent radicals, who tend to be more flamboyant.

We estimate that the radicals probably also have a core of about 90 members in the new Majles. One of the most obvious casualties of the election was the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), often referred to in the Western media as Iran's "ruling party." The IRP was a key vehicle for radical power in the first Majles.

The Majles is "a place, not of rational discussions between rational men, but a place of humdrum accusations and counteraccusations pouring on members from all sides."

A centrist representative, 1980.

Radicals can also appeal to Khomeini—who has an emotional attachment to some radical leaders and to their ideology, according to the Iranian media—to urge that radical views be heeded.

The conservative coalition is probably capable of mustering the simple majority needed to pass compromise bills addressing limited elements of major controversial issues. Nonetheless, radicals will still attempt to block such bills by using parliamentary maneuvers to require a two-thirds vote.

Khomeini and other leading figures have indicated publicly their expectation that the second Majles will

Hojat ol-Eslam Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjan

Hojat ol-Eslam Mohammad Yazd

Hojat ol-Eslam Mohammad Mehdi Rabani-Amlash

pass legislation acceptable to the conservative Council of Guardians. Such hopes may not be fulfilled directly, as the radicals and their conservative rivals can prevent each other from passing controversial legislation. Khomeini's fragile health, however, has made the political stakes higher, and factional loyalties and alliances may become more fluid as members less strongly committed to either side opportunistically seek links to any faction they suspect is becoming dominant

Four More Years

When the second Majles opened on 29 May, radicals promptly clashed with the Council of Guardians over the election results in many districts. Iranian press accounts reveal that radicals vehemently protested Council certification of races lost by radical candidates and its annulment of other races radicals had won. Radicals also challenged the credentials of many conservative members who had been approved by the Council of Guardians, but in almost all cases their charges were rejected by the Majles. The conservatives won a significant early victory by gaining both of the Deputy Speaker positions in the second Assembly over strong opposition from the radicals

The confidence debate for the Prime Minister and Cabinet in August provided a major test of strength between conservatives and radicals. Publication in the press for the first time of verbatim accounts of Assembly debates heightened the power struggle among the factions. Conservatives who believed the radical-dominated media had misrepresented their remarks circulated broadsheets containing their own version of the debates

- Conservatives compelled Prime Minister Musavi-Khamenei, who has become identified with the radicals, to seek a vote of confidence for the entire Cabinet. They also pushed through legislation requiring that the Prime Minister seek a confidence vote from each newly elected Majles. Conservatives won another victory by forcing each minister to face an individual review.

- Five ministers were eventually voted out of office by the Majles. Three had illegally endorsed a radical list of Majles candidates. According to a political news digest published in Tehran, the two other ousted ministers were close to President Khamenei and sympathetic to the ultraconservative Hojatieh Society, which is strongly opposed by radicals and by less strident conservatives as well.

The conservative coalition also won a victory over the status of three Ministers of State in the Cabinet. During the confidence debate, the Council of Guardians ruled that such posts were unconstitutional because the incumbents were not subject to questioning and ouster by the Assembly. On 3 January the Majles passed a law that made one, the Plan and Budget Organization, into a ministry. The Social Welfare

The Consultative Assembly in session

Organization will also become a ministry, while the third, Executive Affairs, will be abolished, according to an Iranian political digest.

These moves further strengthened Majles—and conservative—control over the executive. The ouster of the five ministers—the most the Assembly had ever dropped at once—and the narrow approval of four others signaled that the Assembly expects policy changes from the government. The removal of all nine would have been, in effect, a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister, according to the Constitution.

Prime Minister Musavi-Khamenei may yet be forced out, according to rumors circulating in Tehran that probably reflect the goals of the conservative coalition.

Although apparently thrown off balance by their electoral defeats and the initial conservative victories in the second Assembly, the radicals quickly recovered. In recent months they have been able to block the appointment of a moderate as Minister of Defense.

Choosing a Defense Minister: A Model for Gridlock

The Defense Minister—no matter which faction he represents—is caught between:

- *Khomeini, who is named commander in chief by the Constitution.*
- *The Supreme Defense Council, which defines policy options for Khomeini and handles day-to-day decisionmaking.*
- *The Revolutionary Guard Minister, who is independent of the Defense Ministry.*
- *The Majles, which believes it does not have enough influence on defense policy—especially on the war.*

Defense Minister Salimi was ousted in the confidence debate in August, ostensibly because of inadequate handling of support operations for the front and other management failures. According to Iranian press accounts, he was a conservative tied to President Khamenei. Two subsequent nominees—one of whom is a retired Army colonel who has been a Deputy Defense Minister and now a Majles member—have been denied confirmation by the Assembly.

Continued Controversy

All elements of the regime claim to be satisfied with the results of the initial actions of the second Assembly. Nonetheless, we believe the second Assembly will be as controversial as the first. Regime spokesmen have indicated that the second Majles will deal with empty Cabinet posts and legislation that:

- Defines the role and relationship to the government of the komitehs, the armed semiofficial groups that sprang up throughout Iran after the revolution. Restrictions on the komitehs would further reduce the independence of revolutionary organizations and strengthen the Majles.
- Incorporates into the Interior Ministry and the new Information and Security Ministry the Revolutionary Guards now associated with the komitehs. Both the Majles and the executive want control over these forces, which perform vital internal security functions, because they will play a critical role in the post-Khomeini era.
- Clarifies the powers of the presidency.
- Addresses controversial issues such as land reform, civil taxes, and the management of trade and industry.
- And, perhaps, endorses terms for ending the war.

We believe Speaker Rafsanjani's recent public remark that the second Majles may address war issues suggests he is trying to persuade Khomeini to declare Iraq defeated and allow the Majles to modify his general outline for a settlement. The regime used this method in 1980 to end the US hostage crisis

One of the important issues that we hope to include in the Majles agenda is ending the war. This will be interesting work, full of incidents.

Speaker Rafsanjani
November 1984

Prospects

The Assembly will be a key institution in the struggle to shape the Islamic Republic over the next four

years. Control of the Majles and the shape of future legislation will depend on the ability of rival factions to win support among the large body of loosely affiliated or independent members.

Radical power has been weakened but not ended. Neither radicals nor conservatives are likely to capture the allegiance of uncommitted Majles members unless Khomeini clearly endorses one side or the other on particular issues. At the moment, he seems to favor the conservatives. This will give the conservatives an edge on bills that come up early in the Assembly calendar. We believe, however, that Khomeini will attempt to maintain a balance among the factions to avert an intensified power struggle he realizes could threaten clerical rule. The Assembly, therefore, is likely to remain deadlocked on several important issues, such as land reform, economic policy, and labor relations. Since it is the radicals who wish a fundamental restructuring of society, deadlock will, in effect, be a defeat for the radicals.

If the Majles is harmed, the Islamic Republic is harmed.

Ayatollah Khomeini
May 1984

We believe that the extent to which the Majles provides a dynamic forum for shaping policy and managing factional differences also will define, in large part, the degree to which post-Khomeini Iran can maintain its cohesion. There is no other official body in the Islamic Republic that has the authority to deal with a broad range of issues and in which all major factional interests are represented. If Iranian factions cannot work out their disagreements through the legislative process, they are likely to resort to force.

the Iranian media indicate that the conservative leaders want to increase the Assembly's independence and make it the focus of a parliamentary theocracy in the post-Khomeini era. The two conservative Deputy Speakers, Yazdi and Rabani-Amlashi, as well as other prominent Assembly members associated with the bazaar, have spoken about the structure of the government—including Khomeini's role—in ways that indicate they want a stronger Majles. Little information is available on the views of Khomeini's heir apparent, Ayatollah Montazeri.

I believe by drawing on the experience of the first Majles, the second will become even more powerful.

Speaker Rafsanjani
May 1984

Accounts of Assembly debates show that Rafsanjani and some of the radicals also want to strengthen the Majles—although not at the expense of Khomeini or his successor. They have heatedly attacked both the conservative Council of Guardians for thwarting the will of the Assembly and those ministers whom members believe have been disrespectful toward the Majles.

Majles Vulnerabilities

There are two major threats to the growing power of the Majles and the ambitions of leading parliamentary figures. The first would arise if factional disputes in the Assembly lead to its paralysis, making it irrelevant and pushing the power struggle into other arenas. We do not believe this is likely. It is in the interest of all faction leaders in the Majles to preserve its power and, hence, their own.

The second threat is the possible unraveling of the regime after Khomeini's death. The Majles controls no armed forces that could safeguard its power. At least a dozen of its members, however, are known to have close connections with paramilitary and regular forces.

We believe that the Iranian clerics and their lay allies are likely to maintain their hold on power immediately after Khomeini's death. We doubt, however, that the rivalries between Iranian interest groups can be controlled without the mediation of an unquestioned leader such as Khomeini. The prospects for political instability, therefore, are growing:

- In the first year or so of the post-Khomeini era—especially if he dies soon—we believe Speaker Rafsanjani's continued participation in the political

Abolish the Majles?

The Majles as defined in the 1979 Iranian Constitution represented a compromise between the often inconsistent views of the factions then participating in the Khomeini regime. The Assembly and its leaders have played an increasingly important role, and it has been repeatedly endorsed by Ayatollah Khomeini and his heir, Ayatollah Montazeri. But its ideological basis remains fragile both because of the idiosyncrasies of clerical dogma and because, like most Third World states, Iran lacks a parliamentary tradition

Strictly speaking, and as influential Iranian ultraconservatives argue, Shia ideology has no place for a legislature—all law has been revealed by Allah and interpreted authoritatively by the Prophet Muhammad, the 12 Imams, and a long line of revered senior Shia clerics. Extreme supporters of leadership by a supreme jurisprudent want power to be concentrated in that office, revolutionary organizations, and support bodies of experts in Shia law. Radical Islamic technocrats, on the other hand, look to the day when the clerics can be sent back to the seminaries, the supreme jurisprudent is no more than a consultant, and the regime is dominated by the executive

Extremist supporters of leadership by a supreme jurisprudent, ultraconservatives, and even some conservatives could argue for abolishing the Assembly once it has enacted basic laws. We believe radicals would oppose abolition unless they could dominate the regime. If the Assembly closed:

- *The Council of Guardians could assume responsibility for interpreting the legal code to meet new circumstances.*
- *An Assembly of Experts (*Majles-e Khebregan*) could be called to address a specific issue if a broader consensus of legal expertise was needed. Two such Assemblies have already met—in late 1979 to draft the Constitution and since early 1983 to establish guidelines for an eventual transition to the post-Khomeini era.*

We believe it is unlikely that a majority within the Majles would vote for its closure. The possibility of continued revision of the legal code along lines preferred by their own supporters is likely to tempt all factions. Moreover, the existence of the Assembly maintains the appearance of popular participation in political activities that enhances support for the regime

process will be an important stabilizing factor.[1] If Rafsanjani were assassinated in the first months after Khomeini's demise, we believe the development of the Majles into a stronger focus of power could be slowed.

- On the other hand, if Rafsanjani were killed or permanently removed by his opponents after a post-Khomeini regime has begun to consolidate, we believe other Majles leaders will have emerged who could step into his shoes

The Majles is unlikely to play a major independent role in the political arena, however, if an Iranian strongman eventually seizes control. No single powerful leader is likely to want another institution to challenge his primacy.

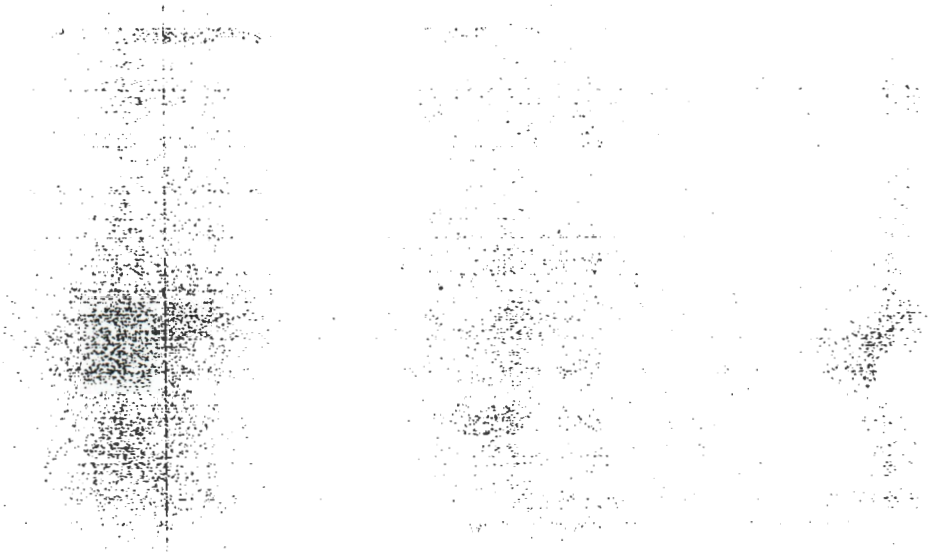
Implications for the United States

We would not expect even a conservative-led Majles to advocate a dramatic improvement in relations with the United States. The factions and interest groups that would make up such a government include many who strongly support the continued Islamization of Iran and the exclusion of Western values from the Muslim world. Some are associated with terrorism.

Nevertheless, these leaders are also the most persistent advocates of a more moderate approach to the

outside world and the expanded use of Western technology. We believe that over time their interests in domestic stability and economic development would lead to an easier relationship with the United States, even if formal diplomatic relations were not reopened. Their actions also would weaken opportunities for the USSR to exploit Iranian ethnic and economic dissatisfaction in the hope of eventually bringing a pro-Soviet government to power.

On the other hand, if Iranian radicals come to dominate the Assembly, extreme social and economic legislation is likely to be passed over the objections of the Council of Guardians. Conservatives on the Council could even be replaced by radical clerics and lay jurists. We would expect a radical Majles to feel threatened by the West—especially the United States—and to press for a hardline foreign policy, possibly one that looked to the USSR for assistance.



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THE MULLAHS WHO RULE IRAN

PRESENT ROLE AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Series on Contemporary Iran

NUMBER FOUR

The Foundation for Constitutional Government in Iran

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AUGUST 1985

FOUNDATION FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN IRAN
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INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth in a series of seven monographs on the struggle for political power in Iran. The purpose of the series is to bring to the attention of the American public the weaknesses and contradictions inherent in the Khomeini regime, and the dangers it presents for peace in the Middle East and the world. Specifically, the series will strive a) to establish the improbability of the present regime either to survive in its present disposition or to transform into a moderate political system as the concept is commonly understood; b) to analyze the characteristics of various leftist and pseudo-liberal groups that are now jockeying for political power in the post-Khomeini Iran; and c) to suggest a form of government that is feasible to establish, that is conducive to regional and international peace, that is supportive of the free world, and that optimizes the chances for achieving cultural freedom, socioeconomic progress, and political democracy.

The following constitutes the list of the topics and the order of their presentation:

Paper number one: The Khomeini Phenomenon: Myth and Reality. The paper addresses a number of basic misconceptions about the Iranian revolution, the Khomeini regime's support base inside Iran, its organizational characteristics, and its ideological affinity with the Iranian people.

Paper number two: The Mujahedin Khalq (not to be confused with the Afghan Mujahedin). The aim is to present, based on their

professed ideology and past behavior, the Iranian Mujahedin's inherent propensities toward Marxism, terrorism, and anti-Westernism. This is particularly important because the Mujahedin in exile have recently mounted a concerted propaganda effort to present themselves to the West as a liberal political force by capitalizing on the similarity between their name and that of the Afghan freedom fighters, and also by coopting a number of former pseudo-liberals who now help them present a liberal facade.

Paper number three: The Soviet Presence in Iran: the Tudeh party. The paper will use historical evidence as well as the statements of recent Tudeh leaders to underline the point that the Tudeh is only one form of Soviet presence in Iran, and therefore its ebb and flow as a party often serves to camouflage other patterns of Soviet penetration of the Iranian state and society.

Paper number four: Iran's Contemporary Political Power Elite. The paper will discuss and analyze existing factions, their power base, their apparent strength and inherent weaknesses, their rivalries, their interactions among themselves and with their social environment, their dependence on Khomeini, and their probable future after Khomeini.

Paper number five: The New Left in Contemporary Iran. The paper will discuss the role played by various leftist groups such as the Marxist Fadaiyan Khalgh, Union of Iranian Communists, Trotskyites, etc., in creating distortion and bias concerning the Pahlavi regime in Iran. It will also point out the fragility of the liaison between the so-called revolutionary liberal intelligentsia (Bazargan, Nazih, Yazdi, etc.) and the Iranian masses.

Paper number six: Ethnic Minorities and Their Role in the Present and Future Power Relations in Iran. This paper will analyze the characterisitcs of the Iranian ethnic minorities, their power bases, their ideological propensities, their relationship to the Khomeini regime, and the political conditions under which there may evolve a reasonable relationship between these groups and the central government.

Paper number seven: The Constitutionalists. The paper will discuss the forces that support the idea of constitutional monarchy in Iran, their relevance to Iranian culture, their potential power, and their promise for a future of peace and tranquility in the region. It will address the point made by the constitutionalists that constitutional monarchy is the only political frame of reference in which the contradictory characteristics of Iranian society can be brought into meaningful balance and creative harmony in the interest of political freedom, human rights, socioeconomic progress, and peace.

This series is prepared for The Foundation for Constitutional Government in Iran by the research section of Basic Points, Inc. The Foundation for Constitutional Government in Iran is a non-profit educational and humanitarian organization dedicated to the promotion of human rights and political freedom in Iran.

THE MULLAHS WHO RULE IRAN: PRESENT ROLE AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

In the first issue of this series we suggested that the Khomeini phenomenon was not a revolution, but rather a counterrevolution fundamentally antithetical to the objective needs and subjective demands of the Iranian people at this historical epoch. It was a reaction to the substantial change that the Shah's regime achieved in a relatively short span of time-- a change in line with expected historical requirements of progress. We also suggested that the Shah's system fell partly because of the contradiction between too much success in achieving social, economic, and cultural change and too little ability to achieve structural political change required to cope with it. Thus, the political system under the Shah became progressively underdeveloped relative to the development of its socioeconomic environment. As a result it became fragile and vulnerable to attack.

The attack was initiated by the liberal-leftist elements (the National Front, Freedom Movement, Confederation of Iranian Students, Amnesty International, etc.) and consummated by the regime's own cadres (technocrats, bureaucrats, intelligentsia, even parts of the modern economic sector, etc.) who, in the final analysis, caused it to break down from within-- hence the rather wide-spread liberal tendency to expect a liberal substitute for the Shah's regime. The clerics, however, spearheaded what the middle class could not do and they could do best, namely, the mobilization of the urban fringes onto the

streets, initially in support of middle-class values, and subsequently, once critical revolutionary momentum had been achieved, in the name of the fundamentalist Shii creed. The fall of the Shah broke down the organization of state power, leaving the field to whoever controlled the streets. Consequently, the clerics emerged as the controlling power. The clerical assumption of political power, however, neither did nor could change the objective properties of the Iranian society.

The correct analysis of the Iranian upheaval is important for the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Khomeini regime. It is important because it places the clerical regime in proper context-- where myth and reality can be separated and fact and fiction distinguished. Khomeini's governing elite rule not only in a hostile social environment but also in a hostile historical milieu. They are handicapped by two major problems: an antihistorical fundamentalist Shii creed to which they are inextricably bound; and a relatively complex social environment that cannot accommodate itself to the fundamentalist ideology.

II. THE SHII FUNDAMENTALIST CREED

Islamic fundamentalism is essentially a form of response to a diffuse feeling of political frustration prevalent in certain traditional sectors of Islamic societies in the age of advanced technology. When it achieves political power in partially developed societies like Iran, where nonindigenous values have developed stronger roots, it is likely to appear as radical traditionalism,

aiming to reorganize the society on the basis of religion's fundamental tenets, thereby assuming the characteristics of a regressive totalitarian regime. The resulting system, however, is hampered by the properties of its ideology, which is both backward-looking and resistant to modification.

The primary reason for the fundamentalists' resistance to historical change is their approach to Islam's holy book, the Qur'an, as an ideological document. In Islam, the prophet Mohammad is an ordinary mortal, whereas the Qur'an is the "Word" of God, of divine origin. The "Book" takes the place of the "Body" in Christian faith with its two complements of 'flesh' and 'blood'. In Christianity, Christ is God's 'Word'; however, the Gospel, as the history of Christ's Being and teaching, is an act of relation by the Apostles and consequently is more easily open to interpretation. In Orthodox Judaism, though not in Reform Judaism, the Torah is also considered the 'Word' of God, but one that has been revealed over time through the prophets in relation to the stages in the history of the Jewish people. The Quran, however, is ahistorical, and for the believer infinitely true, and true for all times. The 'Word' may not be doubted and may not be changed, unless through symbolic interpretation. The symbolism, however, pertains more readily to the essence of religion, primarily to questions of the beginning, meaning, and end of being as revealed in the earlier Meccan period. The later Medinan verses, on the other hand, contain detailed instructions concerning individual behavior, family rights and responsibilities, crime and punishment, and the general organization of socioeconomic

relations. As Word of God these injunctions are inviolable. Thus when transmuted into political ideology, Islam severely limits the options of the leaders who are faced, on the one hand, with historical reality and, on the other hand, with immutable transcendental laws to whose observance their claim to legitimacy is inextricably bound.

For this reason, perhaps, Iranian Shiism has been historically more at home in the role of the opposition. Indeed until the recent rise of Islamic fundamentalism, true Islamic government was considered by the Iranian Shii hierarchy to be inconceivable until the appearance of the Mahdi , the "rightly guided" Twelfth Imam, at the end of historical time. Given this inclination it is difficult to justify the claim, now made by Khomeini, that Shii doctrine holds temporal rule to be illegitimate. Conversely, according to a 1979 statement by Grand Ayatollah Shari'atmadari, there is no provision in Shii Islam requiring the clergy to intervene in politics by directly seizing power.

The fundamentalist creed therefore is faced with two sets of contradictions. On the general political level, it faces a society whose characteristics are determined by social forces that do not always move in accordance with the tenets of the prevailing theology. On the doctrinal level, it is faced with a majority of higher clergy who, partly for the above reason, oppose clerical assumption of direct rule, albeit cautiously and within the general framework of their religious right to taqiyah or dissimulation.

The latter controversy is not confined to the relationship between the Khomeini group and the followers of the traditional grand

ayatollahs; it extends to the divisions within the ranks of the ruling elite.

III. MAJOR IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS

Whereas specifically the ruling elite may be divided into numerous subgroupings, generically they may be subsumed under two major ideological positions. The first, the Maktabi philosophy, has been one of the main driving forces behind the Khomeini movement and at present appears the more energetic of the two. The Maktabiyun take their name from Insan-i Maktabi , the ideological individual, a newsletter founded by Hassan Ayat, the early theoretician of the ruling Islamic Republican Party, and Hujjat al-Islam 'Abdol-Majid Mu'adikhah, a close associate of Ayatollah Khomeini and other leaders of the party. The group includes the President, the Prime Minister, a majority of the Islamic Assembly, a majority in the Central Council of the Islamic Republican Party, as well as a significant number of officials occupying positions of responsibility in the bureaucracy and in various revolutionary organizations.

Ideologically, the Maktabiyun advocate clerical participation in all branches of politics and favor the concept of vilayat-i faqih (tutelage of the jurisprudent) exercised by a single, ideologically correct individual with commensurate power and responsibility to conduct directly or by delegation the affairs of the government and to direct the political life of the community. They advocate central control of the economy, nationalization of major industries, nationalization and/or tight control of foreign trade,

expropriation of large landholdings, expropriation of "counterrevolutionaries'" property, substantial relocation of the urban population into rural areas, export of the Islamic Revolution to other Moslem countries, continuation of war with Iraq until the fall of the Baathist regime as a first step toward the liberation of Palestine, continuation of adversary relations with the United States, and nonalignment in foreign policy. They use standard regime terminology-- mustaz'af (the oppressed), mustakbar (the oppressor), nas (the masses), and tawhid (unity)--but tend to give them a decidedly Marxist connotation.

The second group are the Hujjatiyun . They are ideologically closer to the traditional clergy. They constitute the majority in Shuray-i Negahban (the Guardian Council empowered to rule on the conformity of the Majles statutes with Islamic law) and possibly among the rank and file of the clergy.

The Hujjatiyun question the validity of the concept of vilayat-i faqih and the wisdom of instituting an Islamic government in an imperfect world frought with sin and human frailty. They see themselves as guardians of Islamic values. They are particularly adamant about the outward manifestations of Islamic probity. They show extreme zeal in opposing Bahaiism. They oppose expropriations advocated by the Maktabis , and as the majority in the Guardian Council, they have prevented the promulgation of many such measures passed by the Maktabi majority in the Islamic Assembly. They are anxious about the effects of Iran-Iraq war but, given Khomeini's position on the subject, are cautious in the advocacy of their views.

They underemphasize the export of revolution to other Moslem countries and, unlike some Maktabi members, do not consider the Iranian Revolution as a prelude to the revolution of the Mahdi .

The line between the two ideological positions is not always clear cut, and adherence to the two factions is not exclusive. One reason is that on each issue Khomeini's position is of paramount importance. Crossing lines on particular issues therefore is not uncommon. Points of ideological controversy, however, are being increasingly crystallized into incontrovertible positions. One reason for this tendency is that Khomeini's indisputable political ascendency has not significantly affected the religious following of other high ulama who continue to act as marja taqlid (source of emulation) for their respective followers, despite the system's efforts to curtail the public contacts of the more vociferous ayatollahs as demonstrated by the virtual house arrest of Shari'atmadari and Qomi. Another reason is the higher clergy's anxiety about the doubts now being voiced by the traditional core of religious believers, the urban lower middle class, concerning the validity of the basic tenets of the Shii creed. The news from Iran overwhelmingly suggests what is also logically tenable: in the process of legitimizing political options by reference to the sacred, the Shii fundamentalist rule has transformed the sacred into the profane. The mystery of Shiism is fading in face of the stark reality of its everyday implementation. Questions concerning the present regime's presumed deviations from "true Islam" now are being increasingly transmuted into questions about the true nature of Shii Islam. This phenomenon has proven extremely

distasteful to the traditional religious leaders.

IV. PROTOTYPES OF THE NEW ELITE

Any attempt at type casting the contemporary ruling elite must be viewed as tentative. Nevertheless based on background information and present performance, certain charactero-ideological prototypes may be identified. Such an attempt leads to ideal types and as such is a simplification. However, it helps to understand certain propensities within the system and possibly to attempt scenarios of future development. The information for constructing the typology has been gathered through personal interviews with individuals who, because of their former positions in Iran's counter-insurgeancy organizations, have been deemed knowledgeable about the backgrounds of the better known members of the present ruling elite. It has then been checked against other sources, including some of the more consistent policy positions the clerics have taken. Prototypes include both the ideological and characterological traits. Given the nature of the Islamic Republic, the assumption is that psychological traits are as important as the ideological. The following have been chosen as the leaders who best represent the ruling traits in the Islamic Republic.

1. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

Khomeini is unique because he is the single most important driving force in the Islamic Republic. He is also distinct from the others because he is the only leader who defines the bases of his own legitimacy. All others receive their legitimacy in relation to him. Those with independent claims have been either eliminated or

forcefully kept at bay.

Khomeini conceives of his mission as divinely ordained and of himself as uniquely chosen to execute it. The mission is the gradual establishment of the Islamic government over the globe. All other human considerations, including human life, are secondary to this purpose. In this, his religious beliefs and psychological traits intertwine, making him impervious to human suffering, socioeconomic destruction, national or personal defeat. Ideologically, he justifies his position in terms of categorical imperatives: no compromise with the Shah's regime because it is evil; only an Islamic Republic, not a word more not a word less; no compromise with secularists because they vitiate Islam; war with Iraq must continue irrespective of results because it is the right thing to do.

Like most successful true believers he is also a shrewed politician. He understands the difference between tactic and strategy. His statements are often camouflaged in ambivalent terminology leading to different interpretations among his followers and his opponents. Thus his soft words in Naufle-le-Chateau about freedom, democracy, and the rights of women deceived the liberals into believing that they would be the heirs of the revolution; his apparent bestowal of responsibility on the Islamic Assembly misguided the Americans into believing that formal office holders like Bani-Sadr and Qotbzadeh had the power as well as the apparent authority to negotiate the release of the American hostages; his initial statements about the brotherhood of all Moslems lured his opponents into the open, where they were routed.

In Paretian terms, Khomeini is the "lion" of the revolution. He takes seriously the idea of the destruction of Iranian society because of the Shah's "blind emulation" of the decadent West. Conversely he rejects the idea that the Iranian revolution was a response to economic problems. He is thus impervious to criticisms of Iran's present dismal economic conditions or to arguments for economic development. For him the adage that man does not live by bread alone is transformed into the dictum that man does not live by bread at all. He is thus forced into positions that are fundamentally antihistorical. In this, however, he sees no contradiction because his world view is essentially ahistorical.

Khomeini's type is inimitable regardless of what ensues in the future. His legacy, however, is likely to be chaos. His charisma will not allow a comparably dominant personality to emerge, and the ahistorical nature of the world view now dominating the regime precludes the institutionalization of the Islamic organizations. These points are being increasingly recognized by the contending elite types that maneuver, each according to its prototypical chracteristics, to confront the future.

2. Hujjat al-Islam Hashemi-Rafsanjani

If Khomeini is the lion of the Islamic Republic, Hashemi-Rafsanjani is its prototypical fox. According to Pareto, every lion-based regime needs its foxes to smooth the relations between the rulers and the ruled. It must be noted, however, that he can only act within the confines of the Khomeini regime. Without subscribing to the Khomeini line, which defines the basic parameters

within which he can maneuver, he would most likely lose the bases of his preeminence.

His role in the Khomeini regime is best depicted as the balancer. In his capacities as the President of the Islamic Assembly and as one of the leaders of the dominant Islamic Republican Party, he reflects the softer side of the regime's policies in international and domestic political arenas. His statements, however, differ from Khomeini's only in tone, rarely in substance. Examples are his intimation to the United Nations Secretary General Perez de Cuellar in Tehran that the Secretary General's approach was the only one that could conceivably lead to a cease fire in the Iran-Iraq war, his July 1985 statement in Japan about possible normalization of relations with the United States, and his role in the release of the TWA hostages under the apparent proddings of the Syrian President Hafiz Assad. In all three cases the conciliatory tone camouflaged Khomeini's basically incontrovertible position. Nevertheless, Rafsanjani presented himself as a moderate who would be looked to by the United States and others as a possible negotiating partner.

Rafsanjani is a maneuverer par excellence . While his commitment to Khomeini's version of Islam is unquestionable, he does not seem to hold strongly with either of the two major contending camps. His support among the rank and file is concentrated in the mosques where many traditional prayer leaders now act as Khomeini's representatives. As centers for the distribution of rationed goods, the revolutionary komitehs instituted in the mosques form the Islamic Republic's immediate channel of communication with the people.

As a result they are also the immediate object of people's dissatisfaction. On the other hand, they possess critical information about the sociopolitical charactristics of their immediate surroundings. Most of the traditional prayer leaders, however, lack significant revolutionary credential and seem to have joined the revolution in order to protect their privileges under the Islamic regime. In this sense their worth as fighting forces under adverse conditions is open to question.

Nevertheless Rafsanjani is a particularly valuable ally for Khomeini because of his ability to move within the opposing factions and retain a semblance of balance among them. He realizes that his own future depends on the institutionalization of the Islamic Republic during Khomeini's life time. He therefore tries to find a modus operandi whereby the question of succession can be amicably settled. He promotes Ayatollah Montazeri as Khomeini's heir apparent partly because he is Khomeini's choice and partly because his colorless and malleable personality is susceptible of manipulation.

3. Hujjat al-Islam Mohammad Musavi Khoeiniha

Khoeiniha represents the protoype of the left in religious attire. His roots are in Iran's northwestern province of Azarbaijan, where his father was a leading member of the Soviet inspired communist movement during WWII. After the defeat of the communist forces in 1945, Khoeiniha, still in his teens, was taken to the Soviet Union. He received Islamic training in Kazakstan and later attended Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University. He is now closely associated with Ali Khamenei, president of the Islamic Republic. He was instrumental in

taking and keeping Americans hostage at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. As the hajj leader, he directed Iranian anti-Western and anti-Saudi demonstrations in Mecca on successive periods of hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. Recently, in early July 1985 he was appointed the Islamic Republic's Prosecutor General.

Khoeiniha has consistently played an important role in the politics of the Islamic Republic. In his comments on the occasion of Khoeiniha's appointment as the Islamic Republic's Prosecutor General, Khomeini found it necessary to emphasize that a number of clerics had indicated their confidence in Khoeiniha's Islamic credentials. However, his type has caused persistent anxiety among both Iranians and foreign observers about leftist infiltration of the Khomeini regime. They are sometimes referred to as the "red mullahs." They are associated particularly with the regime's organs of control, including the pasdaran , hezbollahis , and the Basij organization. Their power is likely to increase now that Ali Khamenei has been reelected president.

In addition to clerics, the type includes nonclerical elements such as Behzad Nabavi, Minister for Heavy Industries, and Oil Minister Mohammad Gharazi, a former pasdaran commander. In general politics, they represent the more radical of the Maktabis . In domestic economic policy, they argue for nationalization of the major means of production, more stringent control of foreign trade and more emphasis on centralized planning. In social policy, they are less strict concerning the outward manifestations of Islamic probity, such as the observance of the Islamic hijab . In foreign policy, they advocate

nonalignment closely following the Cuban model.

4. Ayatollah Sadiq Khalkhali

Khalkhali is a special type useful in the early stages of all revolutionary upheavals. He is a combination psychopath and ideological zealot. According to a number of profile reports he was treated in his youth for mental illness. His cruelty is said to have extended to torturing animals. While the sources of these particular reports cannot be fully trusted, his behavior as an Islamic judge bears out the gist of what they suggest.

Khalkhali's apparent function in the early years of the Islamic Republic was that of the executioner. It was the position he coveted. In his own words, he took care that none of the "antirevolutionaries" escape as a result of oversight or intervention by their "friends" among the clergy or members of Bazargan's provisional government. He was seconded by the revolutionary Islamic prosecutors like Lajevardi, Gilani, and Rabbani-Amlashi. None, however, was as flamboyant as he. In the end Khalkhali proved too much even for the Khomeini regime and was removed as Qazi Shar'a (religious judge). But even as he was being dismissed, he maintained that, as a bona-fide ayatollah, he was legally entitled to pass judgment on anti-Islamic behavior.

A leading figure in the Fadaiyan Islam movement, Khalkhali boasts an independent base of support. As a member of the Islamic Assembly and a major figure in Qom's theological circles, he still wields influence with Khomeini.

5. Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani

In Mahdavi-Kani we have the prototype of a moderate, albeit within the fundamentalist frame of reference. Like many of his revolutionary colleagues he had attended Khomeini's lectures in his youth. As a prayer leader in Tehran's Jalili Mosque and lecturer on Islamic economics, he had secured a following of his own. He worked closely with Ayatollah Motahhari, one of Khomeini's most intimate associates, and with Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti who emerged as the strong man of the regime after the revolution. Mahdavi-Kani was appointed minister of the interior in the Bazargan interim government, a position he retained until a few months after Beheshti's assassination on 28 June 1981. On 30 August 1981, a bomb exploded in the chancery killing Mohammad-Ali Raja'i, a one time Tehran peddler and Beheshti protege who had succeeded Bani-Sadr as president, and the new Prime Minister, Javad Bahonar, a former advisor to the ministry of education during the Shah's regime. Mahdavi-Kani emerged as the interim prime minister and an aspirant to the vacant office of the president.

The fall of Beheshti, however, had opened the way to power for the Maktabi radicals. In the October 1981 elections, Ali Khamenei, the Islamic Revolutionary Party (IRP) candidate, succeeded to the presidency. Mahdavi-Kani lost his bid for premiership to Mir Hossein Musavi, the editor of the IRP organ, Jumhuri-ye Islami. In August 1982, he was replaced as Interior Minister by another IRP cleric, Ali-Akbar Natiq-Nuri. After an extensive purge, Mahdavi-Kani's appointees in provincial administrations were replaced by the followers of IRP's new leadership.

The fate of Mahdavi-Kani is similar to that of other so-called moderates who rose to power in the first year of the revolution. Most of them gradually lost ground to their more radical colleagues. At the moment most of them exercise whatever influence they still possess in a negative sense: as a form of check on Maktabi measures. Their stronghold is the Shuray-e Negahban , the Guardian Council empowered by the Islamic Constitution to rule on the religious admissibility of laws passed by the Islamic Assembly. In concert with the Hujjati members in the Shuray-e Negahban , they have blocked a number of the more radical Maktabi bills.

V. THE TOTALITARIAN FACADE

The fundamentalist governing elite appear to have at their disposal a seemingly formidable array of devices including a comprehensive Shii Islamic ideology, a single dominant Islamic Republican Party, a network of Komitehs, various military and paramilitary organizations for political terror and ideological control (pasdaran , hezbollahis , sarollahs , khaharan-i Zeinab , etc.), a monopoly of the means of effective combat, control of the internal means of communication, control of the bureaucratic apparatus, control of the economy, and a host of interchangeable scapegoats including the United States as the "Great Satan," Israel and a number of "smaller" satans. Certain caveats, however, are in order.

Shii ideology is comprehensive in its scope, but it does not easily yield itself to modern totalitarian concepts. A major

prohibitive factor is the millenial notion of the eventual advent of the Mahdi , during whose absence each qualified mujtahid possesses, by common consent, the right to pass judgment on the points of the shari'a and to guide his lay followers on religious matters. When applied to modern political questions, this stipulated independence leads to innumerable controversies within the ranks of the clergy itself, thereby precluding a unified front.

Taken in the abstract, the controversy may create an image of politics as usual. However, as the reigning world view is essentially antithetical to the reality of the society's needs and demands, the ruling elite have become progressively alienated from the people who constitute at once their political constituency and their religious flock. Hence the Regime has been increasingly forced to lean on its paraphernalia of control in order to maintain itself in power. In this struggle for survival each faction has tried either to achieve control of all or part of the existing forces, or to create its own new power base. As the societal base on which the factions can draw has progressively contracted, the result has been the gradual weakening and/or alienation of the existing support base. The system cannot escape this fate in the future unless it can modify its ideology in order to accommodate the actual requirements of its social environment. This, as we have seen, is precisely what it cannot do without denying the basis of its own legitimacy.

VI. CONCLUSION

The argument that the Islamic Republic is strongly entrenched

in Iranian society is palpably false. The present governing elite have substantially lost their grip on the Iranian people. The trend is structural and cannot be reversed by simple policy changes. The Regime, however, has enough means of political control to maintain itself in power in the absence of a meaningful and acceptable political force to oppose it inside Iran. Optimally, this force should be capable of accommodating the contradictory requirements of Iranian society, including the contradiction between religious and secular claims to legitimate authority. The optimal political framework for such a force is Iran's 1906 constitution.

In the absence of such a force, an alternative may be a systemic metamorphosis transforming the present ephemeral regime into a more hideous but historically more permanent one. Its contours may be discerned in the parallelism that exists between Marxist concepts and the Regime's terminology as used by the prototype of the left. It points to the cogency of the argument that the longer the Khomeini regime lasts, the greater will be the chances for the left, signifying a Soviet political breakthrough in Iran.