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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**



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PREFACE

A RAND NOTE

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, through interviews with former Iranian military personnel living outside Iraq who have had service experience, interviews with nonmilitary individuals with relevant information, and secondary sources.

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PREFACE

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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.

The authors would like to pay special thanks to the numerous people, friends 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 wonderfully generous with their time and insight in the expression of their views and experiences.

The authors would also like to express their gratitude to Jim Tarkenton, who was of long hours helping to prepare and transcribe the interviews; Jim Murray, who reviewed this Note; and Bill Stanley and Bill Gentry, who helped in the preparation of the manuscript.

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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

¹For 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.

²The 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

¹The 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. <i>Mojahedin Khalgh</i>	M. Rajavi	Islamic Marxist, republican
11. <i>Tudeh</i> Party	Various factions and fronts	Communist
12. <i>Fedayin Khalgh</i> ^a	Revolutionary communist

^aAnd 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.

²We 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

^aWe 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 battlefield 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 *Pasdarān* 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 *Pasdarān* 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 *Pasdarān* 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 *Pasdarān* 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 Rabiyyi, 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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