The Iranian Military Under the Islamic Republic

Nikola B. Schahgaldian
With the assistance of Gina Barkhordarian

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The research reported here was sponsored by the Directorate of Operational Requirements, Deputy Chief of Staff/Research, Development, and Acquisition, Hq USAF, under Contract F49620-86-C-0008.

ISBN: 0-8330-0777-7

The RAND Publication Series: The Report is the principal publication documenting and transmitting RAND's major research findings and final research results. The RAND Note reports other outputs of sponsored research for general distribution. Publications of The RAND Corporation do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the sponsors of RAND research.

Published by The RAND Corporation
1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90406-2138

R-3473-USDP

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March 1987

Prepared for the
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
for Policy

RAND

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED

PREFACE

This study assesses the Iranian military as a factor in internal Iranian politics. It examines successive influences on the Iranian armed forces since the Islamic Revolution of February 1979. The analysis includes both the professional military and the new paramilitary organizations, the Pasdaran and the Basij. The findings of the study are based primarily on interviews with former Iranian military personnel living outside Iran who have seen service since the revolution, and with nonmilitary individuals. The interview data were supplemented by an analysis of open source literature in local and Western languages.

This report reflects the findings of a RAND study conducted over a period of three years. The research started in early 1983 and was carried out in two consecutive phases. The first phase was completed in mid-1984, and the second phase ended in December 1985. Interviews were conducted through June 1985, but the material was updated through the end of that year. This report was completed before the recent U.S.-Iranian secret contacts and does not reflect information that has come to light following these revelations.

This research was sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy under the auspices of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It was conducted as part of RAND's research program on International Security and Defense Policy. The findings of this report should be of interest to Middle East specialists and policy analysts concerned with political and military developments in Iran and in Southwest Asia.

SUMMARY

As the Islamic Republic of Iran goes through its eighth year in existence, its clerical regime still faces formidable political, economic, social, and military problems. In their efforts to hold on to political power, the clerics have won a solid core of supporters; but they have also created many external and domestic opponents including many antagonists in the country's professional military. Despite the ravages of the war with Iraq and the post-revolutionary political and socioeconomic difficulties, the clerical regime has sufficiently stabilized itself and institutionalized its role that the professional military will not be able to mount a serious challenge to it in the foreseeable future. However, a less passive internal political role may be in store for the professional military in the future, especially after Ayatollah Khomeyni's political departure.

- The professional military has heightened prestige, and it has become a genuine national force more representative of the people than under the monarchy;
- Many officers trained under the Shah remain in the armed forces, particularly in the more technical branches;
- Some measure of professional discipline has been restored;
- Islam and Islamic indoctrination have apparently had only superficial influence on many active duty officers.

The professional military is unlikely to initiate and be able to sustain a move against the current regime in Tehran because:

- It has been deployed since 1980 in the Iraqi front, far away from centers of political power;
- Its command structure is decentralized and tailored to maximize the regime's political control;
- There is more than one control mechanism to watch over its activities;
- It has little coup-making experience and tradition.

In addition, since the Islamic revolution the Iranian officer corps has witnessed the emergence of an increasing number of junior level officers who have accepted the regime's ideology and political directives. At present, this type of officer constitutes the most dynamic, fastest growing, and most powerful group within the regular armed forces. Many of these officers have great authority among the conscripts; and unlike many of their colleagues, they enjoy some freedom of action.

Under the Islamic regime, the professional military has been subjected to several intermittent purges. These did not come about haphazardly but took place in several distinct stages, each of which differed in scope, intent, method, and intensity. Initially, almost all senior commanders were relieved of their posts; the intelligence services were hit hard, especially by the clerical regime's leftist collaborators. Intermediate-grade officers were not imprisoned, killed, or forced to flee into exile, however, until after one of the anticlerical coup attempts. The clerical regime's crackdown on various opposition groups, especially since 1982, has on one hand neutralized the influence of the Iranian left among the officer corps by purging many known leftists, and on the other hand has pushed some die-hard leftist elements underground. The technically oriented branches of the military, including the air force, the navy, and the army aviation command, have also suffered large losses because of the purges. The ability of the regime to train personnel in these specialties remains severely limited.

At any rate, the high point of the purge movement in the professional military has passed. At least as long as the war with Iraq goes on, there is little reason for, or likelihood of, another wave of massive purges like those of the first three years after the revolution. In addition, the purge process has led to a higher degree of politicization within the officer corps.

Having a clerical background or connections is clearly a requirement for advancement in the military, although considerable skepticism remains about the extent and sincerity of personal religious beliefs among many officers. The professional military remains one of the least religious, most modernized, and most 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.

The most important new military organization to have emerged since 1979 is the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), or Pasdaran. The IRGC deploys several regular military units at the front and provides 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. Reflecting the political priorities of the Islamic regime, since 1983 the IRGC has effectively ended the earlier monopoly of the regular military over domestic arms production and repair industries.

Most Pasdaran leaders have direct or indirect family ties with major Shii clerical figures. Many of these leaders have already acquired

political weight of their own. The Pasdaran maintains its own training facilities, the quality of whose instruction has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years. Because many of its functions have not yet been clearly defined, the Pasdaran has come into conflict with many state organs. However, the tension between the professional military and the IRGC has subsided considerably. Six years of shared battle experience against Iraq, more efficient logistic support rendered by the IRGC to the professional military, and joint planning and coordinated practices have all helped to foster a rapprochement between the two wings of the Iranian military.

The core of the IRGC is still motivated by Shia religious morality and Islamic revolutionary perceptions. As such, it is loyal to the Islamic regime. Despite this, the Islamicization of the Pasdaran may be less than complete. Stable employment, fairly good pay, and the possibility of personal advancement often 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. These and many other factors suggest that the Pasdaran's loyalty may not be unquestionable in the future. Indeed, a threat to Ayatollah Khomeyni's successors is more likely from this quarter than from the professional military. Although the expected volatility of internal political conditions in the immediate post-Khomeyni period will not push the IRGC leadership or rank and file to move against the Islamic regime per se, some of its power centers may not hesitate to engage in armed conflict in attempts to influence the makeup of a future clerical regime in Iran.

In addition to the IRGC, many other paramilitary organizations have come to life since the revolution, including the Army of Mobilization or Basij. 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 and participate in human wave attacks.

No single organization is charged with overall responsibility for internal security. Instead, several 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. Most of these organizations appear to be poorly institutionalized, although their overall effectiveness in preserving regime security has improved considerably in the past few years.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the important contributions of numerous people. RAND colleague Francis Fukuyama not only led the project, and participated in the interviewing process, but gave continuous encouragement and assisted in surmounting many obstacles. Throughout the course of the study he also provided valuable advice and intellectual insight.

Gina Barkhordarian assisted in the drafting of Sec. II and in the preparation of interview transcripts. She was a Consultant to The RAND Corporation at the time of this writing. I am grateful to Gary Sick of The Ford Foundation and RAND colleague Stephen T. Hosmer for their insightful written reviews of the final draft. Their comments in many cases led to a reworking of the original. Andrew Marshall, Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, supported the first phase of this project.

Two other RAND colleagues provided assistance: Alexander R. Alexiev reviewed and gave valuable suggestions on the final research findings of Phase I of this project, and Arnold Kanter read an earlier draft, offered wise counsel, and helped in clarifying many important issues. Responsibility for any errors and omissions that may remain rests with the author.

Hester Palmquist typed the manuscript, checked and rechecked the details of the text, and saved it from many errors; and Nazila Shokrian helped in preparing the interview transcripts.

Special thanks are due to numerous Iranian interviewees on whose cooperation this project critically depended, and equally to those who made it possible for me to meet these interviewees. Motivated by their love for Iran and readiness to serve its cause the way each saw fit, most of these men gave generously of their time without expectation of financial remuneration.

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Frontispiece—Map of Iran

I. INTRODUCTION: STUDY METHODS, SCOPE, SOURCES, AND DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

This report constitutes the findings of the second phase of a RAND study of the Iranian military since the revolution. To a large extent, the research is based on interviews with former Iranian military personnel who have defected or otherwise left Iran in the past few years, and with nonmilitary individuals who have knowledge of recent developments in the Iranian armed forces.

The first phase of this study was intended to determine the size and quality of the potential pool of interviewees in order to gauge the feasibility of a full-scale interviewing effort in the subsequent phase. We were very successful in establishing contacts among the extensive networks of Iranian emigre communities in the United States and Europe. Based on such contacts, we conducted numerous interviews with people of varied background and experience and were surprised at both the quantity of available candidates and the quality of information.[1]

Based on phase I results, we generated a list of specific candidates, and several RAND researchers engaged in a full-scale effort to interview former members of the Iranian military during the second phase. After the completion of the interviewing effort, both in the United States and Europe, responses were analyzed, evaluated, and later supplemented with close examination of open source literature in Persian and western languages.

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

This 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. 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 U.S. foreign policy agenda. Indeed, the loss of a U.S. presence in Iran since the fall of the monarchy has resulted in a major gap in our knowledge of internal political developments in Iran.

[1]The documentation and results of Phase I of this study appear in Fukuyama and Schahgaldian, 1984.

Detailed and reliable knowledge of the Iranian military, including both the professional military and the new paramilitary organizations such as the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (or Pasdaran), is of critical importance for U.S. foreign policy interests in the Persian Gulf region;[2] and a better understanding of issues surrounding the reemergence of the Iranian military can contribute directly to U.S. government decisions, planning, and balance assessments in many respects:

- Currently, the Iranian military is involved in the ongoing conflict with Iraq and constitutes a potential threat to countries friendly to the United States in the Persian Gulf. A fresh analysis of its basic operations and structure, as well as its potential vulnerabilities, will be helpful in assessing future military developments in Southwest Asia.
- Over the longer term, the Iranian military has the potential to play a large role in internal Iranian politics, and its role in the formulation of Iran's future policy decisions could be critical to U.S. interests. Any number of events, such as Khomeyni's death or a negotiated settlement of the war with Iraq, could trigger significant changes within Iran in which the military could become politically involved.
- No analysis of contemporary Iran could be complete without detailed attention to the political role of the Iranian military. On a more general level, the question of how a newly established revolutionary regime can mold military organizations to its purposes and needs has implications for other states in the region. The Iranian military is important in its own right, and its actions are likely to influence the militaries in other third world countries facing internal political instability.

Given the broad institutionalization of many aspects of Islamic rule in Iran, many observers have concluded that the current regime will be able to meet potential challenges from the professional military or other opposition groups in the foreseeable future. This assertion requires continual testing, however, because Iran's internal situation is constantly changing, prompting many analysts to argue that recent Iranian politics have been too chaotic to permit meaningful forecasting beyond a short period.

[2]Although this study can be helpful in determining the Iranian military's overall combat capabilities, it does not attempt to stack up Iran against its neighbors in the region. The in-depth analysis of the Iranian military's performance in the Iran-Iraq war is also beyond the scope of this study.

This report seeks to cut through these competing perspectives by studying the Iranian military in terms of continuities and more or less stable patterns that were observable over an extended period. In the course of this research, therefore, I emphasized prevailing trends and tendencies and sought to explain the reasons for their durability. To this end, I paid special attention to questions concerning the organization and structure of the military, the nature of training and indoctrination, mechanisms of political control the regime exercises over the military, the social backgrounds and political inclinations of the current officer corps, together with elements of the population from which new entrants are recruited, and finally the relations between the professional military and other paramilitary organizations such as the Pasdaran and the Basij.

In concentrating on these and other issues, I also sought to investigate whether Iran will follow the pattern of the French Revolution, where internal upheaval and external war led to military takeover, or that of the Russian Revolution, where civilians established and institutionalized their control over the armed forces.

Any investigation of the present nature and likely future prospects of the Iranian armed forces must be historically grounded. Not only are there surprising continuities between the Shah's armed forces and the present professional military, but changes affecting this organization can be understood only in light of practices that existed before 1979.

SOURCES

Although many Americans had long experience dealing with the Iranian military and were quite familiar with many aspects of its internal workings, serious gaps remain in their knowledge, in part as a result of restrictions imposed by the Shah himself.[3] This shortcoming is compounded because of the scarcity of sources; indeed, there is virtually no open scholarly literature on the subject of the Iranian military, either since the revolution or before.[4] The result was that the Iranian armed forces remained essentially *terra incognita*.

A few articles and monographs have shed some light on various aspects of the subject, but vast areas of it remain uncovered. The long

[3]U.S. intelligence on Iran, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, was focused almost exclusively on the Soviet Union, and to operate it needed the cooperation of the Tehran government.

[4]The only recent unclassified study of the Iranian military in English is Hickman, 1982. This booklet, although useful in certain ways, is severely limited in its scope and by the type of sources used.

list of works mentioned in the Bibliography is somewhat deceptive, as many of these items are either too general or too spotty to be of much use. As a whole, they reflect more the demand for knowledge about the Iranian military than any increased supply of it, either through the application of new methods or utilization of new sources. In view of this difficulty, I have undertaken the task of assembling, analyzing, and synthesizing the accessible factual data appearing periodically in numerous Persian language sources. These include many newspapers and journals published both inside and outside Iran, official Iranian government publications, and press organs of Iranian political groups. Although these are not invariably reliable, some of them and other Persian language sources contain often surprisingly frank information on various aspects of the present-day Iranian armed forces not found elsewhere. In addition, specialized military publications in Persian proved to be greatly beneficial.[5] Despite their wealth of relevant information, such local sources have thus far remained inadequately exploited in the United States. I was also able to utilize several public and private archives of brochures and pamphlets in Persian, together with various radio broadcast materials.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS AND DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWS

In addition to written primary sources, the research method of this study relied heavily on interviews with former Iranian military personnel.[6] The principal objection typically raised to such emigre interviewing projects is that the sample from which the data is drawn is politically biased, because the vast majority of the Iranians currently living outside of the country are opponents of the present regime in one way or another.

There is obviously a certain degree of validity to this criticism. A fully balanced sample would ideally supplement emigre interviews with interviews done inside Iran, including some with strong supporters of the clerical regime. In present circumstances, such an approach was not feasible. To minimize this problem, we attempted to interview as wide a spectrum of political opinion as possible within the very large

[5]The IRGC-related publications include *Payam-e Enghelab, Omid-e Enghelab, Pasdaran-e Enghelab, Pasdaran,* and *Pasdar-e Eslam*; those of the professional military include *Saff, Khanevadeh, Daryanavardi,* and *Pasdaran-e Aseman.*

[6]The number of Iranian military personnel who have been forced to leave Iran or who went into exile voluntarily after the revolution is a controversial matter: Estimates range from a low of 1500 to as many as 12,000. For an examination of this issue, among others, see Rose, 1983a, p. 77.

Iranian emigre community. Owing to the clerical regime's continuing crackdown on political opponents, this spectrum now ranges from extreme rightists to revolutionary communists, from entirely secular to deeply religious individuals, and includes religious, regional, tribal, and ethnic groups with less clearly defined ideological positions.

The interview effort also sought a spread in ranks and ages; RAND analysts interviewed former senior military officers and government officials, many of whom had been important political players, and former junior officers and civilians in the defense sector, who presented a much different but nonetheless valuable perspective on events since the revolution. Both the politics of the military and the day-to-day experiences of life on a contemporary Iranian military base were relevant to this research.

Finally, the degree of bias on the part of interviewees depends to a great extent on the type of interview conducted. It has been our experience, not only in this study but in other interviewing efforts, that the most successful interviews encourage 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 may offer wild and improbable interpretations. More mundane questions concerning living conditions in a given base, or the number of clerics attached to each unit, do not have an obvious political significance and tend to elicit fairly factual responses from those who are in a position to know. The personal experiences of senior officers tended to correspond with the high politics of the day, but here the problems were not different from those of any other researcher dealing with the principals involved in major historical events. By interviewing enough people at different levels, it is possible to distinguish more and less reliable views and fact from opinions.

I originally sought to approach interview subjects through various Iranian emigre organizations in the United States and Europe. Although these organizations by no means represent the entire emigre community, we believed 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 than we did through formal organizational networks.

Several aspects of Iranian culture and social organization influenced our approach. In the first place, the Iranian emigre community, like Iranian political groups, tends to be highly factionalized into competing political organizations, most of them centered around one prominent individual. Although 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 several

organizations that often have a hard time cooperating with one another. The existing networks are based on obscure kinship, professional linkages, or other ties that 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 was 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 stranger 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. Most of our interviewees were very generous with their own time and often quite frank in expressing their views.

Finally, the interviewees as a group tended to be somewhat more suspicious than many Westerners and often attributed complicated conspiratorial motives to otherwise straightforward political events. This tendency is understandable for several historical and cultural reasons, but it creates problems for interviewers because it affects both the substantive views expressed and the way interview subjects deal with strangers. Throughout the interview phase of this study, 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.

In the course of this study we talked to perhaps 110 people, but we conducted a total of 56 formal interviews recorded in writing. In some cases, we interviewed the same person more than once. We tried to tape-record and transcribe as many interviews as possible, but in some instances we were able to keep only handwritten notes. Altogether, approximately 1,400 double-spaced transcript pages were generated during the interview phase. Perhaps three-fourths of the interviews were carried out in Persian, the rest in English or French. The interviews were of differing lengths and quality, and many turned out to be quite substantial.

We began by following a previously prepared standard outline in the interviews but found ourselves using a much less structured approach as we learned more about specific events and aspects of the subject. We were of course most interested in interviewing officers who had left

the service and Iran as recently as possible. Table 1 gives the distribution of dates when our interview subjects left Iran.

The interviewers found a large group of officers who left Iran in the period from immediately before the revolution through the fall of Bakhtiyar and the arrival of Khomeyni in Tehran (Period I). Although the purpose of this study is to examine the Iranian military after the revolution, we nonetheless believed 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 1978–1979. In general, we found their information to be highly useful for interpreting subsequent events, in that it provided a benchmark against which to measure the military's evolution.

We found a fairly large group, including some rather senior officers, who stayed on during Period II (between the formal establishment of the Islamic Republic and the resignation of the Bazargan government) and Period III (between the hostage crisis and the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war). This may reflect the fact that many officers found it unsafe to remain in Iran only after the 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 (Communist) party in the spring of 1983. Period

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY DATE OF DEPARTURE

Period	Date of Departure[a]	Number of Interviewees
I	Before March 1979	12
II	March 1979–November 1979	9
III	December 1979–October 1980	10
IV	November 1980–June 1981	4
V	July 1981–March 1983	10
VI	April 1983–present	6

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

VI covers the time since April 1983. The interviewee who left Iran most recently departed in February 1985. 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.

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 officers tended to be. This is in part 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. Many of the most recent defectors went to Turkey and Pakistan, hindering our access to them.

Table 2 lists the distribution of interviewees by rank. It is evident that our database is somewhat top-heavy. During the initial phase of our project, we believed it would be preferable to interview people who either had great authority or possessed a broad political perspective. In addition, these senior officers tended to be more active in the Iranian emigre community and therefore useful as initial points of contact. We also interviewed some civilians who either worked in the defense ministry or had particularly close personal or family connections to the military. Although our interview sample did not include former members

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY RANK

Rank	Number of Interviewees
General or Admiral	18
Colonel or Navy Captain	10
Lieutenant Colonel	7
Major	5
Captain	5
Lieutenant	6
Civilian	5

of the IRGC or its subordinate organization of Basij, we strove to make up for this shortcoming by interviewing individuals who had either interacted with these organizations in the past or were in position through their personal ties to have reliable information about recent developments in these organizations.

We also made an effort to interview members of all service branches: the army, air force, navy, army air command, the gendarmerie, national police, and ultimately the various intelligence services. The distribution of actual interviewees by service branch is shown in Table 3. The air force is somewhat overrepresented in our interview sample, in part because our initial contacts were air force officers, who then led us to their colleagues in the same service, and in part because air force personnel had an easier time escaping, because they had access to aircraft. In fact, three of our interviewees had left Iran by hijacking airplanes. A few of our interviewees worked in intelligence, either in their own services or seconded to the SAVAK.[7]

In the course of choosing our respondents we made a special effort to ascertain that our interview sample included a sufficient number of officers who still maintained personal ties with their former colleagues back in Iran and who had access to reliable sources of first-hand information about orientation, motivation, and the inner workings of Iran's present-day military forces. Finally, to the extent possible, we attempted to make the interview sample representative of ethnolinguistic, religious, and provincial cleavages of Iran's population. Thus, aside

Table 3

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY SERVICE BRANCH

Service Branch	Number of Interviewees
Army	20
Air Force	16
Navy	10
National Police	3
Gendarmerie	2
Civilian	5

[7]Abbreviation for *sazeman-e amniyat va etela'at-e keshvar* (State Security and Intelligence Organization) in Persian.

from the dominant Persian group, our interviewees included Azeris, Kurds, Qashqais, and members of a few religious minorities.

STUDY ORGANIZATION

At present the Iranian armed forces are divided into two major wings: the professional military and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, otherwise known as the Pasdaran or IRGC. Figure 1 shows the overall organization of the Iranian military and its chain of command. Section II begins with a brief discussion of major elements that shaped the Iranian military under the monarchy and examines its performance immediately before and after the Iranian revolution. This section also traces the evolution of the professional military under the Islamic Republic and analyzes its dynamics and present status and the nature of its officer corps. Section III discusses various logistic and domestic arms production issues.

Section IV concentrates on the IRGC, studies its evolution, and discusses its internal dynamics, organizational structures, functions, and possible future political role. Section V considers the Mobilization Army or the Basij as a subordinate military organization of the IRGC. Section VI analyzes the present and probable future political situation in Iran and discusses the role of the military in internal politics, summarizes the study's major conclusions, and suggests appropriate policy initiatives.

Appendix A brings together relevant data on some 100 individuals who have held senior command positions or have had other influential posts in selected Iranian military organizations. It is meant to be a reference aid for future studies of various aspects of the leadership of the Iranian armed forces; it is drawn together in the hope of lessening the considerable confusion—especially concerning specific dates of appointments and removals of top Iranian military personalities in the past eight years—that often characterize the open literature on the subject. Appendix B supplies a chronology of events for the years 1979 to 1986; it tracks major internal developments and includes details of certain happenings in the Iranian scene not otherwise covered in the main body of this study.

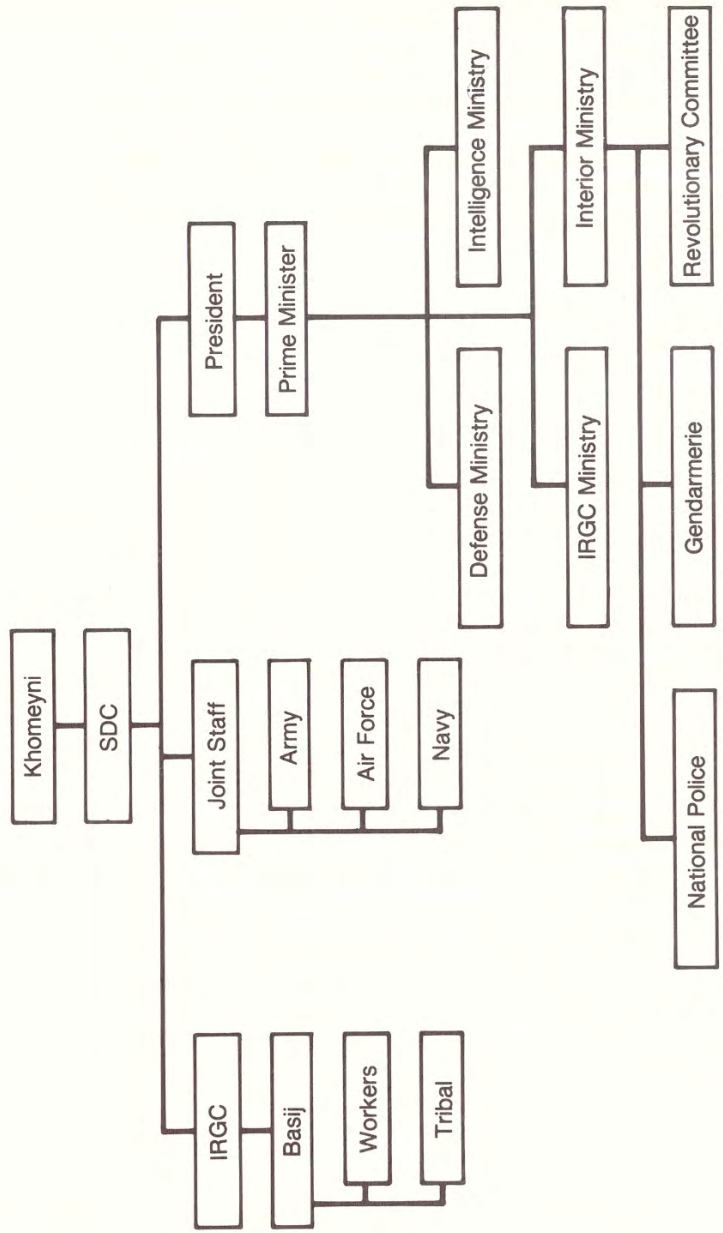


Fig. 1—Iranian military organization

II. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY

During the revolutionary upheaval of 1978–1979 in Iran, the country's military establishment was rejected as a monarchist anachronism and condemned as an oppressive tool of the Shah's regime. Although the monarchy had in effect come to an end when the Shah left Iran in mid-January 1979, the opposition forces continued to consider the military as their main domestic adversary. The revolutionaries mistrusted the military and feared that, if given the opportunity, senior officers would not hesitate to turn the armed forces into a counterrevolutionary bastion or stage a coup for the restoration of the monarchy. This widely shared perception was the result of the long-established and close association of the Iranian military with the Shah and his policies, as well as a direct consequence of the behavior of the armed forces during the internal political strife that preceded the revolution.

THE SHAH AND THE ARMED FORCES

Before 1978–1979, especially since the early 1960s, the Shah had gradually come to exercise unchallenged control over the Iranian armed forces; the military, in turn, was soon transformed into an indispensable keystone in the monarch's rule.[1] The Shah consistently increased the size of the military and equipped it with modern weapons;[2] he also went out of his way to satisfy the material aspirations of his senior officers.[3] In the meantime, the monarch did his best to insulate the officer corps from all political, religious, and social currents affecting the civilian population.[4] This policy, along with the strict political control of the military, left officers little room for voicing reformist ideas lest they be accused of disloyalty.

[1]For an early history of the Iranian armed forces, see Hurewitz, 1969, pp. 265–295.

[2]The Shah sought to make Iran the leading military power of a region extending from India to the Mediterranean by following a textbook American strategy: armored and mechanized divisions, an air force more sophisticated than any in Europe and a pocket navy.

[3]For the size and equipment of the Shah's military see Cottrell, 1978, pp. 389–431; Furlong, 1973, pp. 719–729; also U.S. Congress, 1976.

[4]For a picture of the social and political role of the clergy under the monarchy, see Akhavi, 1980.

As for the domestic political role of the military,[5] the regime emphasized the separation of the military from politics, citing prohibitions against voting or joining political parties by military personnel.[6] But despite the Shah's stringent attempts to give the military a non-political appearance, the armed forces came to play an important role in Iran's political life in support of the Shah's domestic and foreign policies. In fact, after the monarch launched his "White Revolution" in 1963, the armed forces assumed increasing responsibilities in various civilian matters.

By the 1970s, the military was already deeply involved in carrying out the Shah's educational, health, and developmental programs.[7] In addition, by this time the military also came to assume duties in the administration of justice. Whenever internal opposition to the regime became serious, the Shah imposed martial law; but even when civilian authority was reinstated, most political offenses continued to be brought before military courts. By the mid-1970s the Shah had increased the jurisdiction of the armed forces to the extent that even smugglers, drug pushers, and currency forgers were tried in military tribunals.

The influence of the armed forces was not confined to socioeconomic and judicial fields. As a common practice, the monarch often appointed senior officers to cabinet, ambassadorial, and bureaucratic positions. Important posts in the country's internal security and law enforcement organizations all went to trusted and loyal military personnel. In addition, governors and mayors of major urban centers were often army generals.

The growing visibility and influence of the military in the 1970s, however, was not an outcome of its internal dynamism or solidarity. Although well-equipped and numerous, the military in fact lacked the necessary *esprit de corps* that would have made it a credible political power center in Iranian politics. Instead, the military establishment showed many weaknesses and was vulnerable to manipulation from the outside.[8] For example, although the Shah did his best to inculcate strict loyalty to his person among the military, in part by according material privileges to his top commanders, he also made sure that they

[5]Under the monarchy Iran's ground force deployments had an almost purely defensive and internal security character. For example, in the 1970s some 60 percent of the army was deployed near the Iraqi border, and half of the remainder was stationed in Tehran itself. See Canby, 1981, pp. 100–130.

[6]Zonis, 1971, p. 116.

[7]Ibid; pp. 113–114; see also Lenczowski, 1978, pp. 477–478.

[8]For discussions of various back-end deficiencies in the Iranian military and their socioeconomic consequences under the monarchy, see U.S. Congress, 1976; Moran, 1978/1979, pp. 178–192.

did not forget their dependence on him. Accordingly, he frequently sacked officers whom he judged to be too independent or reformist as potential security threats to his throne.[9]

Similarly, the monarch shuffled senior officers to insure that they did not form power bases or enduring alliances.[10] In addition, he kept the top command in his own hand and encouraged some senior military officials to report to him personally on the conduct of their fellow generals. For example, the three service chiefs, the commanders of the national police force and gendarmerie, and the directors of various security and intelligence organizations all reported directly to the monarch and received orders from him and were permitted to communicate with one another only through the Shah or his own personal staff.[11] Moreover, the Shah manipulated the traditionally personal nature of promotion and selection practices among the military. For example, promotions above the level of colonel were at the royal pleasure and often unrelated to length of service or other requirements. Those who did not have the King's ear were unlikely to reach senior flag rank.[12] Finally, well aware of the importance of the military for the survival of his regime, the Shah blanketed the armed forces with an extensive surveillance network accountable to himself.[13]

The Shah's extensive personal control, however, inevitably resulted in many drawbacks: It gradually emasculated the armed forces, seriously undermined the internal solidarity of the forces, and demoralized large numbers of middle-level and junior officers. As later events came to prove, the military lost its bearings without the King, command structures were debilitated, and decisions were left unmade.[14] The insulation of the officer corps from the country's domestic political environment in time led to the political isolation of top army commanders and to their inability to make sound political decisions. Similarly, the undue favoritism of the King, together with the allegedly

[9]Our sample of the interviewees included several senior and middle level former officers belonging to this category.

[10]Halliday, 1979, p. 68.

[11]Gharabaghi, 1984, pp. 103–104.

[12]Sargent, 1979, pp. 275–279; Afshar, 1985, p. 187.

[13]The Shah's security and intelligence organizations included the SAVAK, which was mainly run by officers seconded to it from the regular military or recalled from retirement; then there was the more conventional military intelligence organization, J-2 or the Second Bureau; and since 1959 the Imperial Inspectorate Organization, manned exclusively by military personnel. These agencies not only kept watch over all aspects of political activity in the country but also reported on each other's activities to the monarch.

[14]For coverage of these and related events consult, among others, Ledeen and Lewis, 1981.

widespread corruption of the top military echelons, led to dissatisfaction and tension among many nationalist junior officers;[15] such practices also widened the gulf between junior and senior officers as well as between the officers and soldiers.[16]

THE REVOLUTION AND THE ARMED FORCES

As the foundations of the Shah's rule began to crumble in face of the continued popular unrest in 1978, the King was forced to call on the military to neutralize the Islamic revolutionary challenge and reestablish order. The first major involvement of the military in domestic strife took place in February 1978 when the army was ordered to take over Tabriz to restore order following two days of anti-government rioting. The military's involvement became more extensive after August 11 when the army imposed martial law and a dusk-to-dawn curfew on Esfahan under direct orders from the Shah. By this time, however, a new element was added to the long series of disturbances: For the first time, rioters opened fire on the military, shooting officers.[17] And as tension grew between the government and the increasingly emboldened opposition forces, more and more military personnel and civilians were killed during demonstrations and armed encounters.[18]

[15]In modern times, financial morality has seldom been a characteristic of Iranian society, the private sector, or governmental relations. However, to be fair to the Shah's military establishment, there is no reason to assert that his officers were involved in questionable financial transactions and corruption any more than, or even equally with, the rest of the governmental apparatus.

[16]The Iranian armed forces under the Shah were divided between two-year conscripts and volunteers. An estimated 70 percent of ground forces personnel were conscripts, but they constituted only 10 to 20 percent of the military personnel in the air force and navy. The rest were cadre volunteers. The bulk of the conscripts and the NCOs came from the lowest strata of the population and were susceptible to the same religious and political influences that produced the anti-Shah crowds in 1978. In contrast, the officer corps was drawn largely from the middle class.

[17]A number of officers were shot by rioting crowds in Esfahan as early as in mid-August. See *The Iran Times*, August 18, 1978, p. 1.

[18]Several of our respondents who served as local army commanders in various Iranian cities at this time asserted that they were repeatedly prevented by their superiors in Tehran from "dealing effectively" with the demonstrators, rioters, and other regime opponents in their attempts to impose law and order, and that their subordinate units remained spectators for the most part. Although this was not the universal practice, there is some evidence that this was indeed the case in many urban centers, including parts of Tehran. Like many other Iranians, several of our interviewees believed that the relative passivity of the military in suppressing the revolutionary wave was not caused by the indecision of or disagreements among the high-ranking regime officials of the time, but was rather the result of a well-prepared "plot" by some of the Shah's top generals

The imposition of martial law in Tehran and most other major cities on September 8 marked the beginning of an even bloodier phase of revolutionary upheaval in Iran. The Shah's reliance on the armed forces to preserve his throne became even more pronounced when on November 6 he brought his top generals to head a new military government. The rule of the generals did not last long. The army encountered widespread protests from the very first day the country came under military rule. In less than two months it was forced to resign in face of anti-Shah clashes and armed uprisings. However, the country was ruled under martial law up to the fall of the monarchy two months later.

By this time many cracks had opened within the military, and its morale had sunk to a new low. For example, it was reported that on December 11 a dozen officers of the rank of major and above were shot to death in a military base in Tehran during an armed encounter between rival military factions.[19] In many other instances soldiers refused to fire on anti-Shah demonstrators, while others went over to the revolutionaries' side.[20]

With the departure of the Shah from Iran on January 16, 1979, "for a short vacation abroad," the armed forces became even more disoriented and began moving in several directions.[21] This was because the effectiveness of the armed forces depended wholly on the presence of the King. Once the Shah was gone, his senior officers followed him in droves; those who stayed refused to obey commands of one another or the civilians. Some of the rest started contacts with various revolutionary and Islamic groups primarily to hedge against unforeseen eventualities. Thus the effectiveness of the only group that was likely to keep him in power was paradoxically destroyed by his own actions. Almost immediately after the Shah's departure, some units went on rampages in several cities shooting the rioters, others rebelled and joined the revolutionaries, while thousands of soldiers simply deserted and went home.[22] The situation was even worse among the senior

and their western backers designed to demoralize the military rank and file, foment dissension, and finally render it powerless to face the revolutionary challenge.

[19]See the *Wall Street Journal*, December 14, 1978; and the *New York Times*, December 19, 1978.

[20]See the *Washington Post*, December 19, 1978; and the *New York Times*, December 19, 1978.

[21]For detailed discussions of the military's dilemma and the role played by some top Iranian officers in bringing about the monarchy's downfall, see Homayoun, 1981, especially pp. 57–91; and Afkhami, 1985, pp. 113–144.

[22]By early February open support for Khomeyni was being shown by the military rank and file. For example, during a military parade on February 1 some Air Force personnel publicly voiced their support for Khomeyni. See the *New York Times*, February 2, 1979.

commanders: Some generals staged a show of force in support of the Shah's return, others pledged support for the transitory government of Shapour Bakhtiyar, while yet others negotiated with revolutionary leaders.[23]

The split within the military finally came into the open when on February 9 heavy shooting broke out between rival military factions inside an air force base in Tehran. A sense of impunity resulting from the split emboldened the revolutionaries to attack army barracks and police stations. The insurrection in turn made the armed forces capitulate and call back the troops to their garrisons on February 11, heralding the end of the monarchy.

THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY TURMOIL AND THE PURGE PROCESS

The early months of 1979 were the beginning of a classic phenomenon. The temporary unity of revolutionaries around the common goal of overthrowing the Shah exploded under the pressure of forces that reflected conflicting interests and political aspirations. The radicals and leftists called for the complete transformation of society along Marxist lines; the middle class liberals and nationalists advocated parliamentary rule, social democracy, and maintenance of a liberal economy; Khomeyni and his supporters pressed for his vision of an Islamic system based on religious moral values, laws, and perceptions; the ethnic minorities demanded self-determination; the rest of the revolutionaries were divided among rightist, leftist, and centrist factions, each usually under the patronage of an ayatollah of like persuasion. But as far as the armed forces were concerned, almost all revolutionary factions agreed on several points. They wanted to end the military's political influence, reduce its size, and do away with privileges accorded to senior officers.

Responding to these pressures the government announced on March 6, 1979, that the naval base under construction at Chah Bahar on the Gulf of Oman would be converted into a fishing harbor, as Iran would no longer play the role of the "policeman of the Persian Gulf." Contracts for sophisticated weaponry and equipment—such as aircraft, radar systems, tanks, and warships—with the United States and other Western nations were either frozen or canceled, and foreign military

[23]Many contradictory accounts are given by direct participants and others about what was going on in the military's high command during the final days of the monarchy. See, for example, Bakhtiyar, 1984, pp. 50–60; Gharabaghi, 1984, pp. 445–476; also see Parson, 1984; Sullivan, 1981.

advisers and technicians were expelled.[24] U.S. surveillance stations in Iran were also closed down. The Iranian contingent stationed in Lebanon under the United Nations forces was withdrawn, and the 5,000-strong detachment of Iranian troops in Oman was brought home.[25] In addition, as early as May 1979 the government announced its intention to cut the armed forces in half.[26] Simultaneously the length of service for conscripts was reduced from 24 to 12 months, and conscription was not enforced.

Although no group or individual disagreed with these measures, such a course of action did not satisfy any faction either. What most revolutionary groups in effect wanted was the total civilian control of the professional military and replacement of the old military elite. All agreed that a purge was necessary, but when the question came to determining limits and specific means of undertaking this policy, there was much debate, ambivalence, and disagreement among factions.

The revolutionary leftists, such as the Fedayin, and Islamic Marxist radicals, headed by the Mojahedin Khalgh, demanded the complete and swift dissolution of the professional military and its replacement with a "people's army."[27] Their envisioned "army" would have no ranks and little vertical command structure, and be controlled by decentralized "soldiers' committees." In addition, these groups pressed hard for the physical elimination of all "traitors" and "people's enemies," which meant senior commanders, rightists, and pro-Western officers as well as the military personnel of SAVAK and other intelligence services. The pro-Soviet Tudeh party did not go as far as demanding the total

[24]Contrary to the new government's claims at that time, the process of renegotiating contracts for weaponry acquisitions from the West did not begin after the revolutionary takeover in Tehran. Indeed, the Shah had already begun reducing military procurement in late 1978. More important, the legal basis for restructuring Iran's military procurement contracts with the United States was established by a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the two partners on February 2, 1979, before the collapse of the imperial regime. That agreement, rather than the decisions of the new Tehran government, resulted in the cancellation of Iran's massive military procurement program with the United States. For a detailed account of this and related issues consult Sick, 1985, pp. 56, 148–149.

[25]See O'Ballance, 1980, p. 47.

[26]FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report*, May 4, 1979, R1.

[27]As early as August 1978, the Marxist-oriented Iranian People's Fedayin Guerrilla Organization (IPFGO), otherwise known simply as the Fedayin Khalgh, was already calling for the complete dissolution of the military establishment and its replacement by a people's army. See this group's theoretical-political mouthpiece *Nabard-e Khalgh* (People's Struggle), New Series, No. 1, Tir 1359, June-July 1980, pp. 49–57. Also for an examination of similarities in the anti-Shah policies and tactics of various leftist and radical Islamic groups during the 1978–1979 upheaval see Mohammad Derakhshesh, 1983.

dissolution of the military establishment but called for a thorough and drastic purge of the officer corps regardless of rank.[28]

Ayatollah Khomeyni and some of his supporters, while distrustful of the professional military, did not have a consistent view about what to do about them. At times they advocated integrating the professional military with revolutionary militias so as to control the latter and "purify" the former, and at different times they pressed for the elimination of "corrupt" military elements.[29] In contrast, some nationalist members of Khomeyni's entourage wanted to remove the top echelons of the professional military without destroying its professional discipline. Meanwhile Mehdi Bazargan and his provisional government genuinely believed in the necessity of retaining the structure and personnel of armed forces.[30]

During the first year after the revolution, the professional military's fate was often determined by shifting outcomes of these conflicting attitudes. As a whole, however, the position of the leftists often prevailed. As a result the new regime's leftist collaborators played a very large role in the waves of purges to which the armed forces were subsequently subjected.

The purges began on February 15, 1979, when four of the Shah's top-ranking generals were executed. By May as many as 27 other generals were also shot. As the purge progressed, lower ranking officers were also affected, although senior personnel remained the primary targets.[31] Of the officially announced executions during the first eight months after the revolution, some 250 were members of the armed forces. There is reason to believe that many more high-ranking

[28]The Tudeh party's views on the Iranian revolution and the country's social and political problems are discussed in Ehsan, 1979. For background information on the communist movement in Iran consult Abrahamian, 1970, pp. 291–316; Zabih, 1966; and Abrahamian, 1982.

[29]Several of our ideologically extreme rightist interviewees, mostly senior officers, were sincerely persuaded that from the very beginning it was a cardinal policy of the Islamic authorities to exterminate the officer corps or completely destroy the professional military and replace it with the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps and other paramilitary organizations. This policy was asserted to be a part of an "international plot" designed to destroy Iran's territorial integrity. Assertions of this type are commonplace among Iranian emigres residing in western countries. Claims for the willful attempts of the Islamic regime to "destroy" the Iranian professional military are also put forward in some academic studies. See, for example, Zabih, 1982.

[30]Several clerics and regime officials have from time to time called for the partial or complete "integration" or dissolution of the professional military in the new revolutionary organizations. Such demands, however, have not been translated into government policy and have remained personal opinions of their advocates. The latest example of such calls was made by a Majles deputy in the open session of the Islamic Consultative Assembly on March 13, 1986. For details see *Kayhan* (London), No. 99, May 29, 1986, p. 1.

[31]For partial documentation of the executions in the first post-revolution year, see Amnesty International, 1980.

officers were also executed in this period, but their names remain undisclosed. In addition, scores of other officers were killed by radical leftist groups. Some of these were maimed, others dismembered or hung from trees. Still others lost their lives because of personal vendetta, while the families of many officers were ostracized from their community.

The chaotic internal political conditions of Iran in 1979 compounded the professional military's problems in more ways than one. For many months after the revolution, armed militias, political groups, ideological movements, and self-styled "councils" and "associations"—among which the leftists were the most prominent—controlled the military barracks and bases.[32] Many officers, NCOs, and soldiers, especially in the ground forces, national police and gendarmerie, abandoned their barracks and stations.[33] For instance, by July of that year, an estimated 250,000 military personnel, (some 60 percent of the total) had already deserted the force.[34] Most simply went home.

Often encouraged by Marxists and Islamic radicals, various military units refused to obey their commanders. Military armories were broken into and weapons distributed among various armed groups. The Imperial Guard and the elite Javidan Regiment were dissolved, and other formations either fell apart or remained in skeleton form only. Servicemen were not allowed on the streets in uniform, except for the low ranking air force personnel who had a revolutionary reputation.

The provisional government of Mehdi Bazargan was powerless to enforce measures against the lawlessness.[35] The Prime Minister appointed many high ranking and middle level officers to various positions. Some lasted only a few hours, others days or weeks. Many police chiefs who decided to report to duty were arrested in police stations and imprisoned by self-styled revolutionaries. Despite this situation, many senior officers felt safe enough to remain in the country hoping for better days.

In the meantime the purge went on. Although it reflected the popular demand for fundamental change within the military, it was not an

[32]For Iran's immediate post-revolutionary internal political conditions see Semkus, 1979. Also see Grogan, 1979; and Binder, 1979, pp. 48–54.

[33]The German paper *Die Welt* of Bonn reported that at most 80,000 military men were still in uniform at this time. See Peter Hornung's reporting from Oman in the issue dated March 29, 1979, p. 7.

[34]The Western estimate of deserters, made at the time, was often much higher. For example, the Hamburg magazine *Der Spiegel* asserted, "Out of 450,000, only 100,000 are at their posts." See its issue of April 2, 1979, p. 138.

[35]For an analysis of problems encountered by the Provisional Government and its relations with the clergy-dominated Revolutionary Council see Bazargan, 1982a and b; Rouleau, 1980, pp. 1–20.

entirely haphazard process. In fact, the purges demonstrated certain regularities. As noted earlier, the flag officers were targeted first. Initially, Ayatollah Khomeyni had broadly identified the targets as those elements most closely related to the Shah and those who had committed violence against the revolutionary movement.[36]

Most of those executed were the Shah's senior commanders, members of the security services, commanders of martial law in 1978, officers who had tried to suppress demonstrations and riots, and members of the Imperial Guard. Those who were spared usually found themselves in prison or in hiding.

The vast majority of the purged were forcibly retired, often to be dealt with later on. Some received their retirement pension provided they did not leave the country. Others were fired without compensation or severance pay. Still others were given negligible sums of money in compensation for their services and let go.[37] Many middle level officers did not wait for the purge process. They left the service voluntarily, because of either opposition to the new regime or feelings of insecurity. Many of these later left Iran for the West.

By the end of 1979 almost all of the hard-line pro-Shah officers and those who had been known for their pro-American views were eliminated, regardless of rank, in one way or the other. These reportedly included all of the 14 army division commanders, the eight commanders of the independent army and army air command brigades, and all the military governors. Among senior commanders only those individuals who had fallen out of favor with the Shah and who later cooperated with the new regime, such as Admiral Ahmad Madani, were spared. Also those generals who were instrumental in organizing the surrender of the professional military to the revolutionaries on February 11, 1979, or fermenting internal dissidence within the military before that date, were left unharmed. A few of these, including Generals Hoseyn Fardoust and Abbas Gharabaghi, not only survived but remained in responsible positions long after the revolution.

Until late 1979 the purge process was conducted by several agencies, among them, the revolutionary committees, and Islamic societies and associations, which were often dominated by religious fanatics and revolutionary leftists of various types. These often autonomous bodies selected those whom they thought undesirable in each military base and sent them to be tried by the revolutionary courts. In other cases

[36]See Khomeyni's address on Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, February 28, 1979. (FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report*, March 1, 1979, R2-R4.)

[37]Later on several regime officials admitted that excesses were committed in this regard and that the mass retirement of officers was a grave mistake. See Defense Minister Taghi Riyahi's remarks in *Kayhan* (Tehran daily in Persian), April 1, 1979, p. 4.

names of officers to be purged were sent to local revolutionary bodies from their headquarters in Tehran.[38]

Once the most "corrupt" elements of the old military establishment were eliminated, the purge process was extended in 1980 to the lower ranking personnel. This marked the beginning of the second phase of the process.[39] The move coincided with the increased political power of the pro-Khomeyni Islamic Republican Party (IRP) and the government's reduced dependence on leftists and secularist liberal nationalist forces. By late 1979 the IRP clerics clearly controlled the administrative machinery of the professional armed forces. In order to centralize the overall direction of the purge process and make its conduct more efficient, they revived the Shah's old military intelligence organization, renamed it the Political-Ideological Bureau (as a part of the Ministry of Defense), and put it in charge of carrying out the purges.

Once the new machinery was set in motion, the purges became more systematic. The clerics and their civilian allies did not hide the thrust of their program, to alter the ideological and religious outlook of the professional military. Declaring that the military was a creation of Satan (i.e., the Shah) in defense of imperialism and zionism, they called for the "purification" of the armed forces on Islamic and revolutionary criteria.[40] Taking his cue from the clerics, Mostafa Chamran, the Minister of Defense at the time, declared, "As far as I am concerned, the most important issue which must be addressed in the Defense Ministry . . . is the question of a purge in the army. Another important issue related to this purge . . . is the need to change the existing system in the army. . . . As far as we are concerned, the existing order is an order created and tailored by the satanic regime."[41]

As the Political-Ideological Bureau took over the purge process, grounds for neutralizing "undesirable elements" grew wider. The targets now included not only pro-Shah officers or those who had

[38]During 1979 Khomeyni and his aides repeatedly declared that it was every officer's religious duty to identify "corrupt" members of the military and pass their names to the authorities.

[39]After stressing that the army still needed "profound and fundamental change" and that "it does not fit in with the plans and ideas that I have for the future," Defense Minister Chamran admitted in February 1980 that the purge process would have been much more extensive in 1979 if the government had not faced the rebellion in Kurdestan where the professional military was fighting against the separatist movement. "The clashes that occurred did not permit us to take action in this direction," asserted the minister. See *Sobh-e Azadegan*, February 10, 1980, p. 1.

[40]For such assertions see FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report*, October 5, 1979, R2-R3; also *Kayhan* (Tehran daily in Persian), October 21, 1979, p. 10.

[41]For Chamran's remarks see Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, September 30, 1979. (FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report*, October 1, 1979, R14-R15.)

allegedly committed crimes against the people, but those judged to be potentially disloyal or unreliable. Membership with any political group not in favor of the newly instituted clerical regime came to be regarded as a sufficient ground for purge. The process was also carried out through vigorous enforcement of Shii religious codes of behavior, as defined by the ruling clerics, and punishment of "sins" such as drinking alcohol or gambling. Sympathy with "imported" ideologies also became grounds for elimination.

Successive aborted or rumored coups by anticlerical opposition groups centered both within and outside Iran often stimulated the purge process, and large numbers of officers were eliminated immediately after each of these events. For example, a coup attempt intended to topple the Islamic regime and restore Shapour Bakhtiyar to power was discovered on July 8, 1980.[42] The conspiracy, generally known as the Nojeh Coup, involved air force and army officers at Shahrokhi and Mehrabad airbases in Hamadan and Tehran, some junior officers, NCOs, and enlisted men in the ground forces, and a group of purged officers originally from the Imperial Guard. However, it seems that the coup was initially planned abroad by civilian opposition leaders in exile, including Shapour Bakhtiyar, and directed from Paris and Baghdad.[43] The discovery resulted in a major purge of the armed forces. Over 500 officers and enlisted men were subsequently arrested, some 200 of whom were sentenced to long prison terms. The government announced the execution of about 50 officers, most of them from the air force.[44]

[42]This aborted coup attempt was not well-planned nor could some of its participants keep it a tightly guarded secret. According to two interviewees who played liaison roles in the course of preparations, former officers would openly discuss operational details among themselves in sidewalk cafes in Paris several days before the designated date. Various rumors of an impending coup, full of astonishing details, appeared in print among emigre circles in Paris several weeks before July 8, 1980. See, for example, *Name-ye Ruz* (in Persian), Paris, May 3, 1980, p. 9. Since then, officials in Tehran have admitted that they were informed about the plot several weeks in advance and that they closely followed the course of its preparation, ready to crush it at the appropriate moment. See, for example, *Ettela'at* (Tehran daily in Persian), July 12, 1980, p. 10.

[43]Immediately following the discovery of the plot, the regime accused the United States of being the main foreign power involved in this affair. Iraq, Israel, and Egypt were also accused of complicity. For example, in the course of operations, the Iraqis were alleged to support monarchist forces commanded by General Palizban based in the Iran-Iraq frontier to move on Bakhtaran, Eslamabad, and Ghasr-e Shirin. See remarks of President Bani-Sadr, Col. Javad Fakeuri, Dr. Mohammad Javad Bahonar, and Ali Akbar Rezvani in *Ettela'at* (Tehran Daily), July 12, 1980, pp. 2–4, 10; also *Kayhan* (Tehran Daily), September 2, 1980, p. 13; and *Bamdad* (Tehran) July 17, 1980, pp. 1–3.

[44]Immediately after the discovery of the coup, the Tudeh party asserted that the Nojeh Coup was the sixth plot of its kind between April and July 1980, and that it could no longer "tolerate" such a situation. Voicing its deep dissatisfaction with the slow pace of the ongoing purges within the professional military, which was said to be "a very con-

By 1981 the clerical regime had already fallen out with its leftist collaborators. In January the government-controlled press was calling the leftists, particularly the Fedayin, "a threat to the existence of the Islamic Republic."[45] In February Khomeyni openly warned the professional military to be watchful about the influence of leftist opposition groups within its ranks.[46] The falling out marked the beginning of the purge of the leftists within the professional military.

In the summer of 1981 the IRP turned its attention to the Mojahedin and the clerical and civilian supporters of President Bani-Sadr, who had opposed the clerics' complete domination of the governmental apparatus.[47] And after an explosion at the IRP headquarters in Tehran on June 28, 1981, in which at least 71 top party and government leaders were killed, the regime declared its intention of fully cleansing all Mojahedin members and sympathizers from governmental organizations.[48] This sealed the fate of the Mojahedin supporters and sympathizers within the professional military. In the meantime, hundreds of officers whom Bani-Sadr had appointed to various positions during his presidency were replaced or forcibly retired.[49] Since then smaller collective purges have taken place, with the targets shifting away from the Mojahedin to leftists and to members of the Tudeh party in particular. For example, in late 1981 and again in late 1983, hundreds of alleged communist officers and NCOs were arrested. Most of these were later sentenced to long-term prison terms, while others were executed. Among the latter category was Captain Bahram Afzali, the former commander of the navy, who was executed in February 1984.

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taminated domain [where] seditious SAVAK elements and people loyal to American imperialism are still numerous in sensitive positions," the Tudeh urged the "unhesitant and decisive purge of these criminals and traitors." The Tudeh also claimed that various "pseudo leftist" groups and "Maoist elements" were also participants in the aborted coup planning and that they had elaborate plans to cause confusion by public disturbances in urban centers in support of the plotters. See the Tudeh newspaper *Mardom* (Tehran daily in Persian), July 12, 1980, pp. 1–2.

[45]See *Tehran Times*, January 6, 1981, p. 1

[46]The text of this speech appeared in English in FBIS/SAS, *Daily Report*, February 9, 1981, I4, I6.

[47]In July 1981 Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin leader Mas'ud Rajavi escaped to Paris. In the next three months, the official total number of executions in Iran reached 1405; Amnesty International put the figure for July-October 1981 at 1800, and Mojahedin leader Rajavi claimed that the true figure was nearly 3,000. See *Iran Press Service* in English (London), October 22, 1981, pp. 10–12.

[48]The campaign for the suppression of the Mojahedin and related groups was officially sanctioned on June 30, when Ayatollah Khomeyni blamed the "misled groups" for the explosion at the IRP headquarters.

[49]These included many senior commanders such as General Amir-Bahman Bagheri, the air force commander, who later stood trial for his alleged complicity with the U.S. rescue mission.

Although the purge process has been on and off under the Islamic regime, since 1982 its pace has slowed, and in some cases even reversed. For example, the Iraqi invasion in September 1980 left the authorities with no alternative but to call on large numbers of previously retired officers to return to service.[50] The need for technically or professionally competent personnel also forced the regime to relax its political requirements. Thus, many air force pilots, even some of those who were in prison, were released in 1981–1982 to serve in the war.

By and large the purged officers who did return to service to face the Iraqis have mostly been those who did not have deep-seated loyalties to the old regime, and those originally purged because of their "un-Islamic" behavior. Most of these men were motivated to return either because of a sense of Iranian nationalism or because they had remained unemployed and needed money to look after their families. Although most returnees in 1981 were air force pilots or technical personnel, many other previously purged military men have also returned to the professional armed forces. There is some evidence to suggest that just before the crackdown on the leftists, some intelligence officers and low-ranking SAVAK and J-2 officials were also asked to return to their former jobs because they had specialized knowledge of the Iranian left.[51] At any rate, the high point of the purge movement in the professional military is believed to have passed. At least as long as the war with Iraq goes on, there is little reason for, or likelihood of, another wave of massive purges like those in the first three years after the revolution. In addition, the Islamic Consultative Assembly (the Parliament, or Majles) has reportedly placed legal limitations on the purge process in the past few years.

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[50]According to some reports, by the summer of 1983 an estimated 3,000 retired officers had been recalled into service. See *Sunday Times* (London), June 26, 1983, p. 11.

[51]Much has been made of this point by various Iranian opposition groups currently in exile. Some leftist publications have repeatedly claimed that, remaining true to their "reactionary commitments," once the radical clerics got the upper hand in Iran after July 1981, they brought back into government service all former SAVAK personnel who had earlier been purged under the pressure of "progressive elements." Such views are also echoed in some scholarly literature on contemporary Iran. See, for example, Irfani, 1983, p. 189. Several interviewees brought up these same assertions as the best evidence in support of their allegation that the Shah's security apparatus had already sold out to "foreign powers" in 1978 and that once the transition from the monarchy to the Islamic regime was completed, the SAVAK was reinstated by the same "powers" under the new name of SAVAMA. While touring the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran in early November 1984, the Majles Speaker Ali-Akbar Rafsanjani declared, "the Iranian people have forgiven SAVAK." See *Iran Times* (in English), November 9, 1984, p. 15.

The Effect of the Purges

The purges have had an enormous effect on the professional military. As to its extent, there is little doubt that most, if not all, of the Shah's flag officers—some 500 people—have been executed, imprisoned, forcibly retired, or escaped abroad. Altogether, over 10,000 military personnel of all ranks were purged in one way or other during the first year after the revolution;[52] by September 1980 it was officially announced that the number of purged military personnel had gone over 12,000.[53] We estimate that by early 1986 the total number of purged military personnel topped 23,000, of which close to 17,000 were officers, the remainder being mostly NCOs, conscripts, and defense related civilians.[54] In view of the estimated officer strengths of the Shah's armed forces in each grade (including the national police and gendarmerie) in the late 1970s, the number of those purged amounts to some 45 percent of the officer corps. As for the field grades, major through colonel, the proportion is 68 percent.[55]

The purges have affected all the services, but the national police and gendarmerie were hit the hardest, followed by the ground forces.[56] The air force also suffered heavy casualties, but not as much as most of the other services. The navy was the least affected. The navy maintained

[52]In early February 1980 Defense Minister Mostafa Chamran admitted in an interview that during the months of December 1979 and January 1980, 7500 military personnel had been purged from the ground forces alone. Chamran hastened to add that "the files of 500 to 700 additional [military] people are being reviewed each week, and they are being purged in order that we might transform the army into a revolutionary Islamic army." The text of this interview appears in *Sobhe-Azadegan*, February 10, 1980, p. 1. However, two weeks later, Ali Khamene'i, then Undersecretary of Defense, claimed that about 6,000 military personnel had been purged by then. See FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report*, Supplement 48, February 22, 1980, p. 9.

[53]This figure was supplied publicly by Bani-Sadr. See FBIS/SAS, *Daily Report*, October 15, 1980, I12.

[54]This estimate is arrived at after the close analysis of various figures and tabulations derived from data appearing in various Persian language press organs published in Iran and abroad for several specific time periods in the years 1979 through 1984; the generated data were later supplemented by confidential name lists (provided by several interviewees) involving hundreds of junior and senior officers, shot or otherwise purged in specific periods, whose names have never appeared in Tehran newspapers.

[55]In the past several years, the Iranian authorities have remained publicly silent on the extent of the purges. Meanwhile, some Western observers have minimized the number of purged military personnel, especially those shot or imprisoned, and have consequently arrived at considerably lower corresponding ratios. Such studies have based their figures exclusively on official Iranian data and on various name lists of purged officers appearing from time to time in the state-controlled Tehran press. A good example of such scholarship is Rose, 1983b.

[56]As Bani-Sadr pointed out early on, over 80 percent of those purged by late September 1980 were members of the ground forces. See FBIS/SAS, *Daily Report,* October 15, 1980, I12.

little physical presence in the Iranian urban centers, except in a few ports in the Persian Gulf and on the Caspian Sea. It had much less contact with the population and had therefore aroused little hostility among the revolutionaries. In addition, its remoteness from the centers of political power made it much less threatening to the Islamic authorities than the other two services. More important, during the first year after the revolution when the other two services were subjected to widespread purges, Admiral Ahmad Madani in his capacity as Commander of the Navy and Governor of Khuzistan managed to keep navy personnel out of the reach of the radicals and within his own jurisdiction. In this way he saved a great many officers who would otherwise have been eliminated in the turmoil following the downfall of the monarchy.

The purges have had a largely negative effect on the professional military's ability to conduct combat operations, especially in the more technically oriented services—the air force, the navy, and the army aviation command. However, as will be discussed later, the Iranian authorities and military high command have attempted to make up for this shortcoming by quickly promoting lower-ranking officers, some of whom 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 senior commanders, and the number of technically competent pilots was reduced considerably. Contrary to assertions of several of our more disgruntled interviewees, the purges have by no means resulted in the "virtual disappearance of all technically competent pilots."[57]

This process has had certain advantages from the regime's standpoint. It has greatly increased the political loyalty and sympathy of the younger officers with a vested interest in the Islamic regime, by heightening the prospects for rapid advancement among the lower ranks.

Finally, the purges seem to have generally achieved their original objective: They have created a psychological "reign of terror" among the professional 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 little choice except to protect one's own interests in the face of rapidly changing political conditions in the country.

[57]The Iranian Air Force, in particular, performed impressively in the earliest days of the war with Iraq, and the subsequent problems it encountered are not simply the result of the purges.

POLITICAL CONTROL AND COMMAND STRUCTURES

A striking feature of post-revolutionary Iran is the success with which the clerical regime has consolidated its power and attempted to institutionalize its rule. This is nowhere more apparent than within the military establishment, which the revolutionary government inherited from the monarchy. From the very beginning of the Islamic regime, the ruling clerics were intensely aware of the potential threat that the Shah's military posed to their own political survival; accordingly, they pressed for the radical reorganization of the military's command and control structures, the demolition of the old security paraphernalia, and their replacement with cadres and newly created organizations loyal to the new regime. This effort went on hand in hand with the purge process and was as significant as the purges in the gradual consolidation of clerical rule.

As it stands today, the Iranian professional military has certain features that, aside from realizing purely military objectives, are designed specifically to ensure the clear supremacy of clerical rule. This has taken the form of closely supervising the officer corps, placing various restrictions on horizontal communications, and limiting the free movement of the commanders. These measures, some of which have been codified by law, merit a brief analysis here. (Figure 2 shows the various political control mechanisms active in post-revolutionary Iran and their administrative links.)

To begin with, Ayatollah Khomeyni, as the *Faghih*, or the supreme religious leader, is vested with the supreme command of the Iranian armed forces.[58] As Commander in Chief, Khomeyni has the power to:

- appoint and dismiss the chief of the joint staff of the professional military;
- appoint and dismiss the commander in chief of the IRGC;
- supervise the activities of the Supreme Defense Council (SDC);
- appoint and dismiss the service commanders of the ground forces, the air force, and the navy;
- declare war and mobilize the armed forces.

In addition, Ayatollah Khomeyni appoints his own two representatives in the SDC, who regularly brief him on SDC's activities and thus extend Khomeyni's supervision over that body.

Directly below the *Faghih* comes the Supreme Defense Council. Set up on Khomeyni's orders on October 12, 1980, its top membership is composed of Iran's President, Prime Minister, Minister of Defense,

[58]This is according to Article 110 of the Iranian Constitution. See "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran" in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 1980.

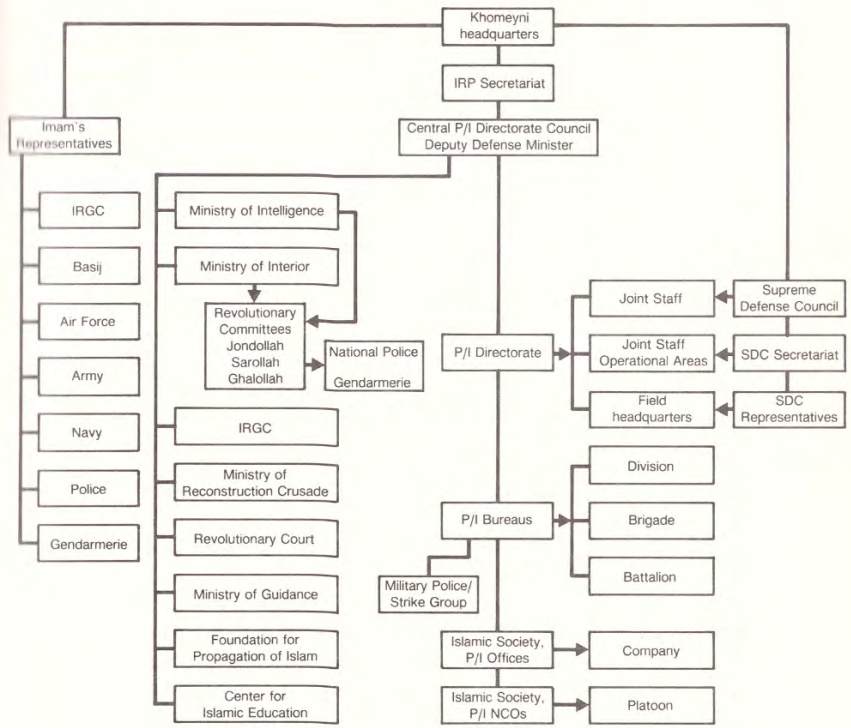


Fig. 2—Overlapping political control mechanisms

Chief of Joint Staff, the IRGC Commander in Chief, and two representatives of Khomeyni. Other high-ranking officials also attend its meetings on a more or less regular basis; these include the Interior Minister, Minister for the IRGC, Deputy Commander of the IRGC, the service commanders of the air force, navy, and the ground forces, and many others.[59]

[59]Information on participants, issues under review, and decisions made at SDC sessions appear routinely in the Iranian press. See, for example, *Ettela'at* (Tehran daily), July 26, 1983, p. 3; and September 29, 1983, p. 3; also FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, August 3, 1981, I21; September 21, 1981, I16; May 31, 1985, I1.

As a mixed clerical-military body, the SDC is responsible for drawing defense policy, planning, and direction of the war with Iraq. As such it guides the operations of senior commanders. Equally important, the SDC maintains a large secretariat whose staff members are posted to all military echelons, down to the division level. The basic function of the SDC Secretariat is to ensure the political and ideological loyalty of senior field commanders. The overwhelming majority of SDC staff members, otherwise known as SDC representatives, are clerics of *Hojjat ol-eslam* rank; they not only watch over the field commanders, but are also empowered to veto some of their decisions. The SDC functionaries act somewhat like Soviet *Stavka* personnel during the Second World War.[60]

A second important, though unofficial, avenue of political and ideological control over the senior ranks of the professional military is maintained through the Central Committee of the ruling Islamic Republican Party (IRP). This takes the form of sending senior and middle level clergymen and their aides, all invariably party members, to watch over and supervise the activities of commanders and report back to the IRP central authorities. This exercise becomes more active during preparations for major offensives and is largely confined to units serving in the war front with Iraq.

Political control of the professional military has also been conducted by yet another organization: the Political-Ideological Directorate (PID), a very large security organization whose personnel are to be found in all levels of the military from the Joint Staff down to the Platoon.[61] While officially a part of the Ministry of Defense, the PID is in reality independent of both civilian and military sectors of the government. Instead, it is subordinate and accountable to the Central Committee of the IRP.[62] Staffed again by clerics, except in its lowest levels where both soldiers and civilians may act as its functionaries, the PID performs security functions including responsibilities in ideological and political education of troops, internal security operations against dissidents of all types, political propaganda, indoctrination, and related tasks.[63] In many respects, the PID is similar to the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet armed forces.

[60]In addition to clerics, some civilian IRGC personnel are also known to have been entrusted with these responsibilities within the SDC. This information was verified by several former officers we interviewed and was confirmed by close reading of the Iranian press.

[61]The PID's field of activity is not confined to the professional military alone, but also covers the rural gendarmerie and the national police force, both of which are subordinate to the Ministry of Interior.

[62]The PID is nominally headed by a deputy defense minister.

[63]For further details on PID's functions see *Sobh-e Azadegan*, November 19, 1981, p. 9.

Little public information is available about PID organization. However, it is known that the PID Secretariat, like the SDC, controls the higher echelons of the professional military (down to the division level); and its subordinate branches, usually referred to as Political-Ideological Bureaus (PIB), are attached to the divisions, brigades, and battalions. Below the battalion level, political control is exercised by so-called strike groups, together with various Islamic societies and associations.[64] These outfits, which function as cells of the IRP, are found in every company and platoon. Aside from conducting political indoctrination and informing on soldiers, their members organize recreational and educational activities, mediate requests for leaves of absence, and promote literacy. They also hold seminars and daily prayers and otherwise enforce codes of Islamic behavior. More important, these societies and associations screen the low-level military cadres and NCOs for career advancement within the professional military.

In addition to the above avenues of political control, at least three other structures are also active in this field. The first is theocratic supervision (nezarat-e rouhani), involving the appointment by Ayatollah Khomeyni of many middle-level clerics to various military services as his own representatives. These clerics, usually referred to as Imam's Representatives or Supervisors, are accountable to Khomeyni's Central Staff for ensuring "the implementation of the Imam's guidelines." They maintain their subordinate clerical staffs and appoint their own representatives in lower military structures.[65] As a whole, Imam's Representatives, who are also found in the IRGC, handle agitprop among the military personnel, but they can and sometimes do interfere in purely military affairs. Some specific missions, for example, are believed to require the approval of Representatives at military bases. However, many of our respondents, talking from their own experience, asserted that clerical intervention in purely military matters has rapidly decreased in recent years. In addition to carrying out their other duties, the Imam's Representatives are also charged with

[64]The Strike Groups, or *Grouha-ye Zarbe* in Persian, were initially autonomous structures that came into being soon after the Islamic revolution in many army bases and barracks. Their membership is Islamic-oriented young men who are assigned to military units only after receiving basic training from the IRGC. Although the members of Strike Groups live on military bases, they have their own quarters and facilities. In the years after 1982 the Strike Groups were gradually subordinated to the Political-Ideological Bureaus and at present carry out their functions in coordination with PIB officers. The Strike Groups are said to have the additional responsibility of following the politically unreliable units into battle on the Iraqi front and shooting deserters.

[65]Unlike many other security and control organizations, the Imam's Representatives have had a very low turnover. Moreover, since 1983 the same individuals have headed the Political-Ideological Bureaus.

other duties, the Imam's Representatives are also charged with appointing the local heads of the Islamic societies who are subsequently elected by the base personnel.

The Joint Staff of the Iranian professional military maintains its own separate security component: the Security and Intelligence Department or J-2. While most of its tasks seem to revolve around intelligence planning and training, together with counterintelligence and foreign intelligence, J-2 is also believed to be active in gathering information on officers, NCOs, and defense-related civilian employees.

The military's political control is entrusted to yet another organization: *Grouh-e Ershad* or the Guidance Organization (GO). Like the rest, this is a cleric-led intelligence-gathering force apparently charged with identification of political opponents or suspects. In contrast to the Islamic societies, its local representative at each military unit or base is appointed by the commanding officer or sent directly to units by the central headquarters in Tehran. The internal chain of command and structure of the GO is said to resemble that of the J-2 under the monarchy.

The foregoing discussion points to a basic feature of the post-revolutionary Iranian political system: No single organization is charged with the responsibility for carrying out control and security tasks considered vital to the political future of the regime. Instead, several agencies with parallel, and often overlapping, bureaucratic responsibilities and functions perform these tasks. This situation also characterizes the civilian sector. Here an even larger number of organizations are caught up in a fierce competition for money and missions.[66] Many of these are also apparently charged with watching over one another. This technique has long been a part of Iranian political culture and was practiced widely under the monarchy as well.

Based on fragmentary though often specific information, Iran's post-revolutionary intelligence and political control organizations, unlike many other newly created bureaucratic/administrative structures, are far from being fully institutionalized. First, there is still a fairly rapid turnover and reshifting of the key personnel, even though many individuals active in these organizations were trained in various theological seminaries, especially those in Ghom, and received specialized instructions by IRGC units. Moreover, jurisdictions, lines of duty, and organizational responsibilities are still undergoing changes of all

[66]These include the Revolutionary Committees, the IRGC and its subordinate paramilitary organizations of *Sarollah* and *Ghalollah*, the Ministry of Interior and its subordinate organization of *Jondollah* (active within the gendarmerie), the Ministries of Intelligence, Reconstruction Crusade, and Islamic Guidance together with a large number of Islamic foundations, associations, and the like.

kinds.[67] As a result, the clerical authorities have had numerous difficulties in establishing fully effective political control mechanisms of the sort that characterized true police states such as Nazi Germany or Stalinist Soviet Union.

The ineffectiveness of some of the Iranian security and political control agencies, their ongoing bureaucratic rivalries, and their vulnerability to outside infiltration have come to public attention many times in the past years through incidents involving security personnel. For example, in the latest of such incidents, it was revealed that Khosrow Tehrani, the head of a security organization in the Prime Ministry, and 60 other staff members from that office were arrested in early 1986 for planting explosives that killed President Raja'i and Prime Minister Javad Bahonar on August 30, 1981.[68] A few of those detained, including Mohammad Taghi Mohammadi, reportedly committed suicide in prison, but Tehrani was set free in May apparently because of insufficient evidence against him or intervention of high-ranking regime officials.[69]

Some of our respondents also testified about large gaps in the control mechanisms for watching over the professional military. In particular, one Air Force pilot we interviewed asserted he was able to discuss his plans to hijack a transport plane openly with his colleagues in his squadron for nearly two weeks before actually doing it in late 1983, and that there was no retaliation against his family after he left Iran.

Most of our respondents asserted that despite (or perhaps because of) ongoing bureaucratic and functional changes within and between political control structures, these agencies have become better organized and more efficient during the past two or three years. The

[67]Many high-ranking regime officials in charge of intelligence and political control organizations have been remarkably open in discussing various issues related to the goals, activities, jurisdictions, administrative changes and many other problems faced by such organizations in Iran. For a representative sample of such reporting, as carried by the Iranian media, see *Jomhuriy-e Eslami*, July 8, 1982, p. 2; January 27, 1983, p. 12; *Omat-e Eslami*, No. 33, September 26, 1983, pp. 4–7; *Payam-e Enghelab*, No. 101, January 7, 1984, pp. 12–15, 19; *Sobh-e Azadegan*, November 19, 1981, p. 9; February 18, 1985, p. 2; *Iran Times*, December 14, 1984, p. 3, 16; February 1, 1985, p. 2; March 22, 1985, p. 5; *Kayhan* (daily in Persian, Tehran), July 13, 1980, p. 2; July 17, 1980, p. 12; February 12, 1981, p. 9; November 25, 1981, p. 5; January 25, 1982, p. 15; October 4, 1982, p. 5; December 9, 1984, p. 22; November 11, 1984, p. 2; February 18, 1985, p. 2; May 5, 1985, p. 18; *Ettela'at*, October 12, 1980, p. 5; September 25, 1983, p. 15; April 28, 1984, p. 14; February 18, 1985, p. 2; *Kayhan Havai*, June 1, 1983, p. 5; June 27, 1984, p. 7; November 21, 1984, p. 6; September 11, 1985, p. 3; and April 2, 1986, p. 11.

[68]At the time the Mojahedin were officially blamed for the explosion. Alireza Keshmiri, who had allegedly planted the bomb, was said to have succeeded in escaping abroad after the incident.

[69]For details of this episode see *Iran Times*, June 13, 1986, pp. 5, 14; *Kayhan* (London), June 5, 1986, pp. 1, 2; *Middle East Economic Digest* (London), May 24–30, 1986, p. 13.

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 high-ranking intelligence officials assigned to the professional military do not seem to derive from their positions. Instead, their power appears to correspond directly to the degree of access they have—through kinship or other ties—to leading clerics.

Despite all the shortcomings in organization and activities of political control personnel assigned to the professional military, these agencies have severely limited the free movement of senior officers and restricted horizontal communication among them. Similar to the practice under the Shah, military officials are encouraged to report to their clerical superiors on the conduct of their fellow officers. The clergy in turn is able to manipulate promotion and selection practices among high-ranking officers. This and many other similar tactics often hinder the development of *esprit de corps* among senior military commanders.

The quick rate of turnover among the top military ranks prevents many potential regime opponents among such individuals from developing a large personal following. Moreover, key military officials are not allowed to move about freely, as they might otherwise wish, without getting permission from clerical officials. It is believed that three or more senior or middle-level officers from different branches or units can not meet in a group and hope to remain unreported.

PRESENT STATUS

Since the revolution of 1979, the Iranian professional military has gone through many changes that have altered its image and domestic status and affected its organizational setup and missions. To begin with, it has become a much smaller and leaner organization. Its size has been cut by almost one-half to its estimated present strength of 250,000. (Figure 3 shows the change in numerical strength of the professional military in the last eight years.) It no longer plays any administrative and civilian role and has been clearly subordinated to the clerics. It is no longer a pillar for the current regime.

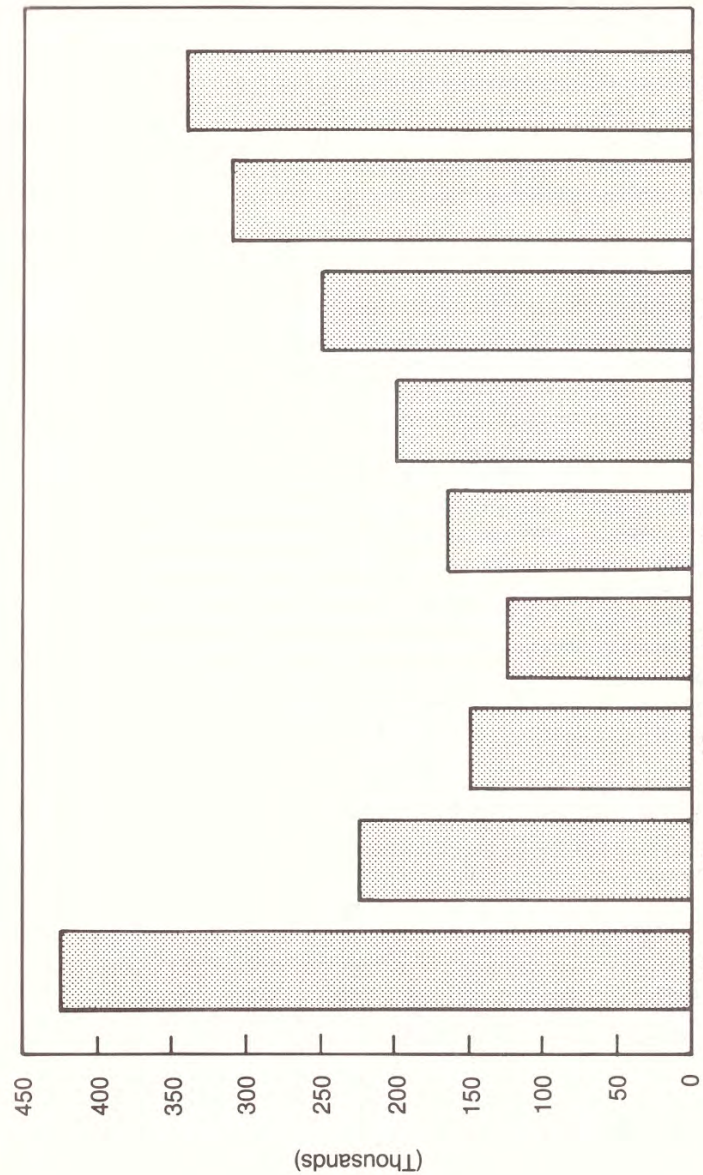


Fig. 3—Professional military manpower

Despite these and other changes, the professional military continues to show many similarities with the Shah's armed forces.[70] For example, it remains the best organized structure in Iranian society; it is also the best educated and, compared with most other governmental and revolutionary organizations, the least religious. In addition, the professional military continues to regard itself, and be regarded by others, as a bastion of Iranian nationalism.

Increased Legitimacy

The Iranian professional military has gone a long way in shedding its former negative image among broad sections of the population. It has gradually acquired increased legitimacy as a genuine national institution in the public eye.[71] Many factors account for the unprecedented growth in the prestige of the professional military.

The Islamic regime's purging of all the Shah's senior officers, especially those in the police force and the gendarmerie, has removed the widespread public perception of the military as an abusive organization. Rightly or wrongly, most Iranians for a long time blamed the high ranking officers and members of the Shah's secret police for much of the abuse and corruption that had incited public antagonism in the 1970s. Their removal and the promotion in their place of younger officers from lower economic classes and more religious backgrounds have weakened this resentment.

The new regime has also the system of special privileges that made many of the Shah's senior officers wealthy. Now, as in the past, the main body of the officer corps is recruited from the lower and middle classes. But during the monarchy, years of training and education in the West helped alienate officers from their social backgrounds. Fairly high salaries, particularly in the more technical branches, facilitated quick upward mobility. The Shah's generals, especially those

[70]For a comparison of the military doctrine and security policies of the Iranian armed forces before and after the Iranian revolution see, among others, Schulz, 1982, pp. 247–266.

[71]This assertion also applies to the Iranian police and the gendarmerie, both of which by 1983 had been fully rehabilitated and have since acquired a new lease on life. The national police, in particular, was an influential and powerful organization under the monarchy and enjoyed the Shah's special patronage. Iranian civilians, particularly urban lower classes and students, had a decidedly unfavorable view of the police as a corrupt and abusive organization. Many among the rural population held similar views about the gendarmerie. Partly because of their past activities under the monarchy and their close identification with the Shah's internal policies, the top leadership and the middle ranks of both of these organizations were thoroughly purged during 1979–1982. At present, the national police and the gendarmerie remain under the constant scrutiny of the clerical authorities.

appointed to head otherwise civilian agencies of the government, usually acquired a great deal of authority, which many were known to have abused. Under the republic, most of these and other abuses have ended. For example, the assignment of conscripts to act as personal servants for officers from the rank of colonel and up is no longer practiced.

Military service in the Islamic Republic, while still an avenue of social mobility, does not provide officers with the means to cross into a higher economic class as quickly as before. Moreover, allegations of officers' abusing military funds and resources, so prevalent under the Shah, have become all but nonexistent. Astronomical bank accounts and seaside villas are now attributed to the members of the ruling clergy and to the powerful elements within the Pasdaran.

Another important factor accounting for the increased legitimacy of the professional military is that it is no longer responsible for maintaining internal security, at least in the cities. Reza Shah had stationed the army in every city in Iran. The last Shah in turn moved the barracks out of the cities, but frequently called on the gendarmerie to fight rural insurgencies and tribal elements. The national police did the same in the urban areas. These two forces, together with SAVAK, were widely regarded as abusive organizations and condemned as such. Khomeyni has charged the IRGC with the task of policing Iran's cities and villages, leaving most of the armed forces to fight the war with Iraq and patrol the borders. Therefore, public resentment has shifted away from the officers and is concentrated on the Pasdaran. However, public resentment of the Pasdaran, while noticeable as a general phenomenon, does not cut across all the social classes and is not as widespread as many of our respondents believed. Indeed, contrary to their claims, there is reason to believe that such feelings are confined largely to some sectors of the middle and upper classes in the urban centers as well as some minority ethnic groups such as the Sunni Kurds, Torkamans, and Baluchis.

The war has placed the armed forces in the position of the nation's defenders. For the first time since its creation in the early 1920s, the professional military is perceived by the people as essential to their continued safety and to Iranian territorial integrity.[72] The liberation of large parts of Iraqi-occupied Khuzistan in March 1982 has also served as proof of officers' courage, capability, and devotion.

In the past three years the authorities have also embarked on a campaign to promote the image of the armed forces. Official celebrations

[72]Many of our interviewees, and many other recent civilian arrivals from Iran, shared this assessment. Several Iranian writers have also reached similar conclusions. See, for example, Homayoun, 1984, pp. 187–198; and Afkhami, 1985, p. 212.

of "Armed Forces Days" in the past few years, public praises of the sacrifices and the accomplishments of the professional military, as well as assertions of the loyalty of the armed forces to the revolution have similarly heightened their prestige among the population.[73] Many senior clerics have generally been less critical of the professional military than their leftist allies. For example, during the revolution the slogan "the army is our brother" was part of a campaign aimed at winning support of the military.[74] After the revolution, assertions that the armed forces had "joined the nation" continued.[75] On February 28, 1979 Khomeyni declared in a speech: "I emphatically warn the Iranian nation that the government must have a strong national army with a mighty morale, so that the government will have the power to safeguard the country."[76]

One obvious reason for the regime's efforts to boost the prestige of the professional armed forces seems to be the need to strengthen its support. Another reason is the growing belief among the clerical leadership in the importance of the military in defending the country against Iraqi forces, and the difficulty of replacing it with the IRGC or any other form of "people's army" at any time in the near future.

Ethnicity in the Professional Military

Interethnic factionalism has played a less important role in modern Iranian public life than in most other Southwest Asian countries.[77] This does not mean, however, that "unity in diversity" has been an accepted principle of past or present governments in Tehran. Indeed, the belief in the necessity of maintaining strong central control over

[73]Some of the war front successes of the professional military are still attributed, albeit with decreasing frequency, by a number of clerics to various "heavenly miracles" and "divine interventions" in official army publications. See, for example, *Saf*, 28 Farvardin 1361.

[74]See Algar, 1981, pp. 235–236, 240, 260. Also Ayatollahs Khomeyni and Shariatmadari's appeals to the military on February 11, 1979. Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, FBIS/MEA, February 12, 1979, R17–18, R22–23.

[75]See Ayatollah Khomeyni's remarks in FBIS/MEA, Daily Report, of following dates: February 13, 1979, R1; February 15, 1979, R3, R8; February 27, 1979, R3; March 1, 1979, R2; also Ayatollah Shirazi, February 12, 1979, R35–36, and Ayatollah Shariatmadari February 14, 1979, R4-R5.

[76]Ibid., February 28, 1979.

[77]Despite Iran's multiethnic character and centrifugal tendencies among certain Kurdish, Baluchi, Torkaman, Azerbaijani, and Arab elements, a more or less common Iranian cultural identity nurtured during the long historical association of these minorities with Iran has created significant political attachments and loyalties among these groups. Thus, calls for ethnic autonomy, much less insistence on separating from Iran—voiced usually by leftist intellectuals and groups—commonly unites all other political and ideological Iranian factions against such demands.

various ethnic minorities—even through military power, if necessary—remains as unshakable with the Islamic authorities as it was with their predecessors. This belief has traditionally been most pronounced in the Iranian armed forces and still remains a part of its officer corps' psyche.

In part because of this tradition, political, ideological, familial, and personal motives play much more prominent roles within the professional military in interpersonal and intergroup relations and in formal and informal coalition-building processes than purely ethnic factors. However, ethnoreligious, subnational, and provincial identifications and loyalties among the officers and the rank and file are not to be discounted altogether. On the contrary, many political and ideological conflicts in recent years have acquired ethnic colorations, 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 in 1979–1980, to some of the leading religious figures, 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.[78]

As a whole, during the past eight years, the professional military has become more homogeneous in its ethnoreligious composition; more important, it has gone through a process of Persianization. This movement is strongly connected with the striking changes in official unifying symbols and principles introduced in the post-1979 period; it is also related to the common ethnic composition of the ruling clerical establishment. Although the Shah often professed loyalty to Islamic beliefs and made some claim to legitimacy on religious grounds, he attempted to develop and extend a sense of Iranian national identity defined primarily in terms of common culture, literature, language, and pre-Islamic history. Instead, under the new regime, Shia Islam has become the focal symbol of identity and the primary bond of unity among the population.[79] As a result, integration and social and political mobility have become more difficult for some groups and easier for others.

The revolution has effectively restricted most non-Muslim minorities from attaining positions of power both within and outside the professional military. However, some Armenian Christians continue to serve, particularly in technical positions within the air force. Muslim but non-Shia groups are also largely excluded—the Sunni Kurds, Tor-

[78]For Western coverage of these events see the *New York Times*, December 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 1979, and January 8 and 10, 1980.

[79]For essentials of Ayatollah Khomeyni's theory of Islamic government see Khomeini, 1979; Bayat, 1983, pp. 30–42. Also Algar, 1981.

komans, Baluchis, Sunni Arabs, and others.[80] A more noticeable consequence of this transformation is that whereas some of the Shah's leading military commanders had reportedly been of Kurdish origin (most were Shia, however), the overwhelming majority of present senior officers are Persian. Most non-Persian-speaking Shia groups, including some Azerbaijanis, seem to have been the prime beneficiaries of the new state-minority relations.[81]

The second factor responsible for the gradual Persianization of the military is that the ruling religious establishment of Iran is overwhelmingly Fars in ethnicity;[82] 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 likely that this phenomenon has also greatly affected 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 1979–1981 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, especially in northern Kurdestan and some areas of Baluchestan, has reduced the proportion of enlisted men coming from these areas.

Increased Politicization

A new and equally important phenomenon has come to characterize the professional military: greater political awareness of the officer corps. The revolution and subsequent events in Iran brought the officers face to face with many political issues of direct importance to their own lives and futures. In the first few chaotic years after the revolution various political and revolutionary factions contending for power found their way into the armed forces in an effort to attract supporters among the officer corps. Barracks were flooded by political and ideological propaganda, books, and leaflets. Officers were invited to

[80]In the course of the 1978–79 revolution, these minority elements remained peripheral and suspicious of the essentially Shia revolutionary movement.

[81]For a good discussion of ethnic-religious relations in Iran, consult Higgins, 1982. Also see Cottam, 1979, 1982, pp. 263–277.

[82]A close analysis of the public pronouncement of Iranian senior clerics leaves little doubt that many equate Persian with Iranian nationalism. For them Iranian nationalism is inseparable from historical evolution of the Shia religious movement and perceptions. Such views are widely shared by large sectors of Iran's population as well.

partisan political meetings outside their barracks, while they participated in open discussion forums inside the barracks. The Islamic regime later banned the membership of officers in political parties and movements and put an end to open political agitation in barracks and posts.[83] However, it did not succeed in reversing the growing political awareness that had already been set in motion.

The experience of the purges, the rapidly changing domestic political conditions, the on-going war with Iraq, and many other factors have also helped to sustain this process. For example, common frontline experience has increased a sense of camaraderie and closeness among both senior and junior officers. It has also increased their sense of pride and self-confidence and has made them more outspoken than before in voicing grievances and defending their rights and opinions. As a whole, the officer corps have become much more interested in, and knowledgeable about, domestic Iranian and international political events. They are also much more conscious of themselves as members of a national organization and of their status and role in society at large.

Many of our respondents, as well as other recent arrivals from Iran who are knowledgeable about the country's military establishment, confirmed the increased political awareness among the officer corps. For example, many officers reportedly listen regularly to various political programs and international news items broadcast by local and foreign radio stations and discuss international and regional events. Such behavior was clearly not the usual pattern under the monarchy. A comparison of military publications before and after the revolution leaves the same impression.

The heightened sense of political awareness is bound to have serious political implications. For example, although the present professional military is not likely to initiate a coup against the regime, it also is not likely to remain a passive spectator in future internal political events that threaten its interests. Further, it may not go along with future political directives (as opposed to purely military orders) from the top regime officials as easily as it used to under the Shah. Instead, policies will have to be broadly acceptable to the officer corps, especially in the post-Khomeyni era. The lessons of 1978–1979 and their immediate aftermath are simply too vivid for the professional military to willingly fall into a political trap that might cost them their own lives.

[83]Ayatollah Khomeyni and other influential clerics have repeatedly urged the professional military to avoid factionalism and division, and to keep away from all political parties and activities. See, for example, Khomeyni's speech delivered on August 9, 1984, Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian (FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, August 10, 1984, I1-I3).

MANPOWER ISSUES

The Iranian military has traditionally prided itself in being a well-disciplined force. Although that was certainly the case under the Shah until a few months before the downfall of the monarchy, the same could not be said about the immediate post-revolutionary period, which was characterized by widespread chaos, insubordination of soldiers to commanders, and irresponsible intervention of revolutionary and clerical officials in military affairs everywhere. The same chaotic conditions also prevailed in the higher ranks. Frustrated by their inability to enforce law and order, at least within their own ranks, senior commanders and staff officers resigned their positions with amazing rapidity. The officers' concern about the purges and their personal safety also had the same effect. By the summer of 1979 the chain of command had collapsed, while aircraft, tanks, guns, and other weaponry lay rusting on military bases all across the country.

Although Khomenyni and other leaders had often called for restoration of discipline in the armed forces, the authorities were unwilling or unable to do much about the situation.[84] The first realization that a well-disciplined conventional military was indispensable to hold the country together came in late summer of 1979 when the authorities became alarmed by the growing challenge posed by Kurdish autonomists. The value of the professional military, and a competent one, was again forcibly brought home to senior clerics in late 1979 and early 1980. In November 1979, the American hostages were seized, bringing the threat of a possible U.S. attack to free them.

After this point, more attention was paid to the professional military. Khomeyni called for restoration of strict discipline and ordered an increase in the size of the armed forces. Conscription, which was already reintroduced, was increased to eighteen months and enforced more seriously. In the meantime, Bani-Sadr, elected President in January 1980, attempted to strengthen the military's central command and staff structure and appointed Major General Hadi Shadmehr as "Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."[85]

Heartened by more favorable attitudes of senior clerics toward the military's problems, senior commanders embarked on efforts to restore discipline. Other events also accelerated this process. For example,

[84]For example, as early as in February 1979 Khomeyni declared that "irresponsible" elements and "soldiers' councils" should not be allowed to disrupt military discipline. In August he ordered that "members of the armed forces must obey the chain of command" and that "strikes by members of the disciplinary forces are strictly forbidden." For the text of the Ayatollah's speech see *Ettela'at* (Tehran daily in Persian), August 23, 1979, p. 12.

[85]Under the Shah, there was no Joint Chiefs of Staff set up; he preferred to do its functions through his own staff.

many junior officers, NCOs, and enlisted men who had originally played a major role in the disruption of the Shah's military establishment in 1978 continued their behavior under the new regime. These people were motivated primarily by personal reasons, but they were exploited by various Islamic groups and leftist movements for their own purposes within the military. Once this objective was replaced by the need to restore internal discipline, these disorderly elements were gradually purged in 1980–1981.

The major catalyst was undoubtedly the Iraqi invasion of Iran. Old disciplinary measures were reintroduced officially and strictly adhered to, including proper dress and uniform codes, strict observance of morning flag ceremonies, and substantially increased penalties for breach of rules and regulations.[86] Thus, from a low point of widespread chaos in 1979, the professional military had gradually restored much of its former discipline by 1982. Former Iranian officers interviewed during this study were unanimous in asserting that, based on their personal experience, overall discipline is no longer a cause of worry for senior commanders or government officials.

In spite of all the political upheavals that Iran has gone through since 1978, the professional military has managed to keep open most of its military universities, colleges, and training centers. These include the Military College of the Ground Forces, the Air Force Pilot Training College, the Command and General Staff College, the Islamic Defense University, and the Officers College. The gendarmerie, the police force, and the navy also have their own smaller academies and training centers.

In most cases, there has been a large turnover of teaching staff in these institutions, and the overall standards of instruction have become lower than under the monarchy. Shortage of qualified instructors, especially technicians, is felt everywhere. Moreover, many officers who would otherwise teach in these academies are now serving at the front. This has compelled the authorities to introduce various new organizational and administrative changes in these institutions. Rules and regulations governing matters of admission, length of training, and graduation have also been altered.

In general, the professional military has become much more lenient both in admission and graduation requirements of most training centers. Although these changes were dictated by the demands of the war, they nevertheless lowered the professional competence of the officer corps. In the meantime, the practice of sending cadets and

[86]In the late summer of 1980 the uniform color was changed to dark green, and ranks assigned numbers. For example, a general was to wear the number 22 and a sergeant the number one. See *Tehran Times* (in English), August 24, 1980, p. 1.

students abroad for training has all but stopped. The composition of the student body in military training institutions has also been altered. In line with the regime's political priorities, a much higher proportion of students coming from lower economic classes and religious family backgrounds have been admitted to these centers.

In addition, along with the junior officers, an undetermined number of nonmilitary individuals, usually members of the IRGC, are being trained in some of these institutions. The reverse, however, is not true: No professional military personnel are known to be undergoing training in institutions set up exclusively for the IRGC. Finally, training programs continue to suffer because of the student body's inadequate familiarity with foreign lanuages, especially English. This problem arises, as it did under the monarchy, because Iranian officials have thus far failed to fully substitute standard definitions of Persian words to correspond to the English technical and mechanical terms used in teaching manuals.

The poor training standards and shortage of qualified instructors have not been the only factors, or for that matter the most important ones hindering the performance quality of the Iranian professional military. The massive purges of the first three post-revolutionary years left many senior military positions unoccupied. Factional political problems of various kinds have also had the same effect. In the absence of many senior and field grade officers, the authorities have been forced to turn to younger and often inexperienced junior officers to fill command positions. In many cases, captains and even lieutenants were promoted quickly to colonel and appointed as commanders of bases. In many other cases, the officials chose to promote junior officers who were not the most capable men available, but those of whose political loyalty they were certain. Similarly, some otherwise competent young men were appointed to senior command positions who simply lacked any management experience. As one of our interviewers put it, "They took away from our squadron a friend of mine and a truly good pilot, turned him into a bureaucrat, and gave us a lousy commander in return."

These and many other similar practices have negatively affected morale, especially among the middle level ranks who often resent seeing their juniors placed in senior positions. There are strong indications, however, that since early 1983 the regime officials have begun to place officers who are both politically loyal and competent in appropriate leadership positions.

Despite such changes, the professional military has paid a heavy price: The war with Iraq has already taken the lives of many of the most capable officers. The shortage of qualified manpower, especially

in the more technical service branches, which require many years of training and great expense to prepare competent cadres, is not expected to be rectified in the foreseeable future.

In sum, although there can be no question that these and many other factors have negatively affected the quality of the professional military, its performance record measured against the Iraqi forces should not be overlooked. After all, the Iranian military swiftly regrouped following the Iraqi attack, drove the enemy forces out of Khuzestan, and often demonstrated a capacity to improvise effectively under very unfavorable circumstances. The professional military, albeit assisted by the IRGC, has also on occasion (e.g., river crossings, surprise attacks across marshes and the recent flanking movement that captured Faw) demonstrated some real technical skill and military thinking that required more than raw unskilled manpower.

CHARACTER AND VALUES OF THE OFFICER CORPS

The typical post-revolutionary Iranian officer is in many ways different from those traditionally attracted to armed forces under the monarchy. At the same time, new officers have many traits, qualities, and values characteristic of the old corps. In general, these officers could be divided into four broad categories.[87] First, there are the sympathizers of leftist ideologies of various types. At present, members of this group do not appear to make up a sizable proportion of the officer corps. While the left had never been permitted to develop deep roots in the Shah's armed forces, in the immediate post-revolutionary period many young officers were attracted by the popular slogans of various leftist Iranian political groups. At that time, many others developed ties with the left out of an initial curiosity to find out about something that had long been forbidden to them. Although some of these men later lost their enthusiasm and interest in leftism, others continued to keep their ideological loyalty, if not organizational links, to many leftist groups.

The clerical regime's crackdown on these groups, especially since early 1982, has had a dual effect: On one hand, it has neutralized the influence of the Iranian left among the officer corps by purging many known leftists; on the other hand, it has pushed the die-hard elements underground. As long as the current regime is clearly dominant, these

[87]The following discussion of officer types is based in part on analyzing and synthesizing various memoirs, articles, speeches, and other writings of Iranian active-duty officers that we were able to assemble from reading Persian language publications, and in part from bits and pieces of relevant information from interviewees.

individuals may continue serving in the military without letting themselves be exposed, but they are sure to surface as disruptive elements as soon as political conditions permit.

A second and a larger category consists of officers who do not follow any particular ideology. Most of these, and there are many of these in leading positions, are the so-called "overnight Muslims" who joined the revolutionaries only after they realized that the Shah's regime was destined to collapse. Motivated primarily by their narrow personal or financial interests, these opportunistic elements do follow all religiously sanctioned patterns of behavior. Many of them are also politically active and go along with the regime's policies. There is reason to believe, however, that the Islamic authorities have gradually come to distinguish the opportunists from the real supporters and have restricted their influence within the military. As a reaction, many of these individuals, while retaining some resentment against the clerics, have attempted to preserve their positions by becoming "more catholic than the Pope."

A third, and perhaps the largest, group of officers is made up of individuals who remain (or are forced to remain) politically inactive, but who show little sympathy and support for the Islamic authorities.[88] Members of this group are more visible in the field ranks, especially in the more technical services. Coming from the middle and lower-middle class strata of the population, they are secular in their background, education, values, and outlooks, and have no family ties to leading clerics and influential officials. Many of these officers were originally neither for nor against the revolution; they had recognized many problems with the Shah's regime but were too removed from political ideas to actively join any opposition group. Immediately after the revolution this type of officer had expected that the revolutionary regime would solve the problems of mismanagement, corruption, and the like, but for one reason or other have since become disappointed. Others have increasingly come to take the purges as proof of the Islamic regime's lasting distrust of the professional military. This belief, combined with the regime's visible efforts to promote the IRGC, has led their officers to conclude that their service is not properly appreciated and that they are being tolerated for the time being merely to fight Iraq.

[88]This category of officers, together with like-minded NCOs, has been especially targeted for cooptation by the Islamic authorities. For example, in mid-1982 the Islamic Republican Party began a large-scale campaign to attract members of this group to the party. The repeated warnings of Ayatollah Khomeyni to the military about not joining political parties is apparently not intended to prevent membership of the military personnel in the IRP.

Members of this group neither identify themselves with nor maintain any visible ties to any anti-regime opposition organization; they tend to view themselves as Iranian nationalists in the service of their homeland. While officers in this category have become much more religiously conformist in recent years, attempts by regime officials to further Islamicize the armed forces have generated considerable irritation and prompted widespread passive resistance among officers in this category. Instead, Iranian nationalism, stimulated by the war with Iraq, still binds these men together and provides psychological solidarity against their actual or potential adversaries. This attitude, often suppressed by an atmosphere of uncertainty and political fear, gives many of the officers in this category some feelings of security and, more important, a sense of moral superiority over the clerics who are often subjects of scorn in their private gatherings.

The last category in the professional officer corps consists of genuinely religious and religious-oriented people. At present, this is the most dynamic, fastest growing, and most powerful group; many of its members have great authority among the conscripts and enjoy some freedom of action. These officers profess allegiance to Ayatollah Khomeyni and are loyal supporters of the Islamic regime. Mostly young, ambitious, and energetic, they are also active in Shia religious affairs and have direct family or marriage ties with traditional religious families. Many of these men, especially the more junior officers among them, obey Khomeyni's orders unquestioningly, even if these go against their own judgments. What may be wrong from a professional point of view is still justifiable for most of them if the Imam declares it to be in the interests of the country and Islam. Many of these are also members of the IRP.

Like many of their civilian counterparts in other state organs, the religious officers are driven by their Islamic belief and their desire to bring about meaningful changes in Iranian society. But unlike many clerics and civilian secularists they see little conflict between Iranian nationalism and Shia Islam: To them one is inseparable from the other, especially for the more junior officers and those who received their commissions in the post-revolutionary years, partly because of the country's religious-oriented educational system and partly because of the strictly enforced religious laws and regulations for all entry-level personnel.

As for the more senior religious officers, many of these have a history of having been in some sort of trouble with their superiors under the monarchy. Many had actually voiced political and religious criticisms under the Shah and were consequently demoted or retired, or resigned their commissions. A noticeable pattern among officers in

this category is that the higher the rank of an individual, the closer his ties with the more prominent clerical families. Although this pattern is not yet universal among the officer corps, available evidence suggests that the number of senior officers lacking this requirement has been steadily decreasing. Religious background, however, may or may not be an indication of personal piousness.

A common characteristic of religious officers, whether in junior or senior positions, is that most of them hail from the lower economic classes. In general, this is also true of all entry-level personnel in the professional military. The policy of recruiting people of humble backgrounds has enhanced the prestige of the officer corps among the poorer strata of the Iranian population; more important, it has narrowed the socioeconomic gap between the professional officers and leaders of other state organs, particularly in the IRGC. In fact, the young commanders in both wings of the Iranian armed forces have increasingly come to resemble each other in their outlooks, values, and behavior patterns. This convergence has been an important factor accounting for abatement of tension between the Pasdaran and the professional military.

As noted earlier, the new officers continue to have many qualities and values characteristic of the Shah's corps. Despite the introduction of many official reform measures and a noticeable decrease in instances of corruption, especially in the very top echelons, some corruption and personal and financial abuses have continued. However, as was the case under the monarchy, corrupt elements are considerably fewer among the officers than in many other state and private organizations, where graft, profiteering, theft, and bribery are as prevalent now as they were under the monarchy.

Like the civilian population, the officer corps has also retained many of the old and more or less commonly accepted and traditionally sanctioned qualities; these include modesty and humility, ostentatious hospitality and courtesy, suspiciousness and unpredictability, deception and hypocrisy, and concealment of true feelings and opinions from strangers.[89] Moreover, as a common characteristic officers remain intensely individualistic. This has prompted many senior commanders, especially in the first few years after the revolution, to bypass regular command chains and go directly to leading clerical figures in order to resolve internal military problems. The professional military is also not entirely immune to personal rivalries among its top ranks. However, unlike the pattern in many other Middle Eastern armies, these

[89]For studies of these characteristics among the Iranian population and its political elites see Zonis, 1971, pp. 199–298. Also Bateson, 1979, 1977, pp. 257–274.

disagreements have not succeeded in dividing the Iranian officer corps into distinct partisan factions.

Professional Military's Future Political Role

A crucial issue in the durability of regimes in third world countries has always been the political reliability of their armed forces. But the task of passing judgment on the military's political role in Iran becomes particularly difficult because of its internal political volatility and because it is at war. However, the foregoing discussion permits us to make some observations. First, much to the dismay of many officers still in active duty, the Iranian professional military is unlikely to initiate and sustain a military move against the current regime in Tehran in the foreseeable future for several reasons:

- The Islamic authorities appear to have lost a good deal of the early paranoia that characterized their dealings with the professional armed forces. However, this wing of the Iranian military is controlled by mechanisms created by the regime for the express purpose of watching over its activities. This leaves little chance for the potentially dissident officers to engage in free horizontal communication. In addition, the professional military's top command structure is tailored for political control.
- At present the professional military is poorly deployed in urban areas and centers of political power; the bulk of its forces are concentrated at the Iraqi front and will continue to be stationed there as long as the war goes on.
- Since the revolution the Iranian officer corps has witnessed the emergence of an increasing number of junior level officers who have accepted (or at least have made an excellent pretense of doing so) the regime's ideology and political directives. This acceptance is characterized by the clear understanding that they are not to challenge the clerical regime.
- The purge process has helped in creating an atmosphere of personal suspicion and distrust among large numbers of officers. In spite of their opposition to some of the regime's specific policies, potential opponents are simply forced to submit to regime wishes to avoid the consequences of different behavior. In addition, many of the potentially strongest opponents of the regime are no longer within the professional military, at least among its senior ranks.
- The countervailing presence of the IRGC also restricts the professional military's freedom of action. Given the intricacies of

internal Iranian politics, the professional military is very unlikely to sustain a military move without the collusion of the IRGC and some other clerical and civilian factions. Under present circumstances, this is clearly not possible.

- Unlike many other Middle Eastern armed forces, the Iranian professional military has little tradition or experience in initiating anti-regime coups. Even the Nojeh coup of July 1980 was planned and directed by civilians.

The foregoing discussion is not meant to imply that the professional military is going to remain a passive spectator in future internal Iranian developments that may come to threaten its present status. On the contrary, there are many reasons to argue that it may not go along passively and easily as it used to under the Shah, with future governmental directives affecting its collective interests or its new found domestic prestige. For example, its heightened popularity among the civilian population, and the feeling among the officer corps that the professional military has become a legitimate national force, together with officers' growing sophistication and knowledge about domestic political developments, all tend to make the professional military much more assertive in defending their opinions. The future circumstances in which such qualities may acquire political connotations and thus push the professional services toward activist political postures will be discussed later in this study.

III. LOGISTICS, EQUIPMENT PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND SUPPLY

Political and personnel difficulties have caused more serious problems in the management and operational readiness of the Iranian professional military, but major deficiencies in the logistical support system continue to hamstring it as well. The Islamic authorities inherited many of the shortcomings in this field from the monarchy. Similar to many other military establishments in the Middle East, the Shah's armed forces suffered from inefficient supply and maintenance practices, weak internal management, and insufficient long-term planning and rebuilding programs. These and many other problems were exacerbated during 1978–1979 when the Iranian military went from being the policeman of the Persian Gulf to a rag-tag organization unable to protect its own garrisons.

Initially, the revolutionary authorities ignored these issues and took no steps to remedy the situation. In fact, the deeply held suspicions of the new rulers about the political reliability of the professional military, together with their revolutionary zeal and priority to purge it of all unwanted elements, convinced them that logistical matters had to be postponed until they had first settled the personnel problems. The imprudence of this approach was fully revealed during the campaign against Kurdish rebels in mid-1979, and later when Iraq invaded the country.

In the first two years after the revolution, the professional military's logistical support system ceased to exist. Drastic shortages of ammunition, spare parts, and even foodstuffs plagued the armed forces. The situation among various newly formed paramilitary elements was hardly better at that time, for many reasons other than clerical inattention to logistic issues. For example, the sophisticated computer system that the Shah had bought a few years earlier for the control of the military's inventory system was sabotaged and badly damaged by his opponents during the revolutionary upheavals in 1978, in part to paralyze the military. This factor alone made the army's supply procurement and inventory accountability systems almost nonfunctional for the next few years.

The initially widespread political and economic unrest in the country and the breakdown of transportation and communications facilities

following the revolution also contributed to the near collapse of the logistical system on which the deployment of regular army divisions depended. Later on, the departure of American and other technical cadres and the trade embargo imposed on military supplies during the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis had the same effect.[1] In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the IRGC commanders and many other revolutionary officials opposed and in some cases succeeded in preventing the implementation of many logistical reorganization plans advocated by several senior military officers.

The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war more than any other single factor mandated the reorganization of the military's logistical system. The initial failure of Iranian regular ground forces to effectively meet the Iraqi challenge is well known. Major logistic problems contributed to this failure. For example, in October 1980 the movement of a single infantry division from Mashad to Khuzestan took over six weeks of nonstop activity by the country's transport assets. At this time, various shortages had also incapacitated the movement of most of Iran's military vehicles. The Iranian air force and the navy, both of which had performed impressive offensive actions during the first few days of the war, quickly felt the effect of the grave logistic supply situation.[2]

By November 1980 both services were forced to drastically reduce their operations: The air force concentrated on limited air patrol over Iranian territory,[3] and the navy retired from direct combat, only to interdict Iraqi supply routes at sea.[4]

Despite these setbacks, continued ideological and political problems in Tehran prevented the Iranian authorities from directing new attention to logistic problems. Indeed, the continued contest between the IRP-based hard-liner clerics and President Bani-Sadr for the control of the professional military left little room for the realization of the repeated demands of some senior officers to immediately improve the logistic situation. The desire of a number of clerics to promote the interests of the IRGC over the regular army had the same overall

[1]For a detailed discussion of the reasons for imposition and broader implications of the financial sanctions on Iran see Carswell and Davis, 1985, pp. 173–200.

[2]The Iranian navy destroyed the better part of Iraq's offensive naval capability in the first 10 days of the war by attacking Iraqi facilities at Faw, Mina al-Bakr, and Basra. Meanwhile, Iranian air force pilots staged some spectacular raids throughout Iraq, forced the redeployment of Iraqi air defense assets, and compelled it to withdraw the bulk of its bombers and transport aircraft to Jordan. See *New York Times*, September 24, September 25, September 30, October 15, and October 19, 1980.

[3]*New York Times*, November 1, 1980.

[4]Hickman, 1982, p. 21.

effect.[5] Bani-Sadr's opposition to General Zahirnezhad and Army Colonel Seyyed Shirazi who had sided with the clerical faction also contributed to the impasse.

Following the conclusion of the IRP-Bani-Sadr power struggle (and street battles resulting from it) in July 1981, the logistical supply situation began to improve gradually. Iran's military success in lifting the Iraqi siege of Abadan in September 1981, followed by the general offensive during April-May 1982, ending Iraq's occupation of southern Khuzestan, not only demonstrated that the Iranian military had finally become a fairly well-organized and efficient fighting force, but these battlefront successes were indicative of improvements made in logistical planning, coordination, and supply.[6]

Alongside command and control questions, logistical and supply matters came under increasing scrutiny after the military campaigns of the summer of 1982; the effort resulted in many procedural changes and organizational reforms. First, deficiencies in the combat engineer support field were reduced by integrating the human and material assets of several revolutionary organizations into engineer support roles. In particular, close liaison was established between the logistics and support component of the Armed Forces Joint Staff and *Jahad-e Sazandegi* ("Crusade for Constructiveness" or less literally "Reconstruction Crusade"). Since then the cadre of this nationwide revolutionary organization, although remaining accountable to its own independent chain of command, became an active part of the civilian logistical base of the armed forces.[7]

Similarly, the *Sazeman-e Eteka* (Provision Organization), originally established in 1955 to provide the basic items needed by families and dependents of military personnel, was reorganized in mid-1982 and turned into the civilian wing of the army's logistics and support base.[8]

[5]Ayatollah Montazeri was one of the most prominent clerics among this group. See Eric Rouleau, *Le Monde*, January 7, 1981 (translated in FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, January 9, 1981, p. I5).

[6]These improvements did not go unnoticed by Western military observers at the time. For example, see *New York Times*, April 7, 1982; and *Washington Post*, April 1, May 7, May 9, and May 26, 1982.

[7]The Reconstruction Crusade was established on May 17, 1979 to dispatch young volunteers to the countryside for economic development purposes. Later on, it developed a complex hierarchy of its own and the volunteers became regular salaried members. In 1981 it had some 15,000 full-time members and close to 5,000 experts (usually engineers, doctors, and university students). During its first year it had an operating revenue of $330 million. In December 1983 the Reconstruction Crusade was turned into a separate ministry. The early activities of this organization are covered in Ferdows, 1983, pp. 11–15.

[8]*Kayhan* (Tehran) July 29, 1982, p. 3 (translated in JPRS/NEA 81913, October 4, 1982, pp. 45–48).

Later on, the resources of several other independent organizations such as the Shahid Foundation and Islamic Revolution Committees were centralized and placed under its direction. In this way the Provision Organization came to serve and support not only the professional military, but also the IRGC, national police, and gendarmerie.

Since then the Provision Organization has become a large supply and distribution network: It participates in agriculture, animal husbandry, and livestock production; it also operates factories producing foodstuffs and textile and hygiene products. The Provision Organization continues to operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense.

Despite governmental attempts to gradually centralize logistic and supply activities, major problems persist in this field. For example, the distribution of supplies among various regular, IRGC, Basij, and gendarmerie units stationed in the Iraqi front has created a great deal of rancor and resentment among various organs. The problem arises because the IRGC, the Reconstruction Crusade, the professional military, and many others maintain their own "contribution centers" throughout the country for collecting public donations for the war front. These funds (or supplies purchased by them) are supposed to be distributed equally across all war front units according to specific needs and shortages. In reality, however, one platoon or company of soldiers may be oversupplied, while the next group lacks basic necessities. In addition, a considerable portion of donations never reach the war front. Instead, each group spends these funds among its own membership stationed far away from the front. This haphazardness not only creates unnecessary competition and rivalry among these organizations, but also affects morale among military personnel at the front.[9]

In attempting to remedy this situation, measures were adopted in late March 1984 to set up a joint army, guards corps, and Reconstruction Crusade headquarters in Tehran to coordinate the collection activities of these organizations and distribute public donations "in a just and fair way and on the basis of the needs of the front."[10] To this end a central organization called "The Staff to Attract and Guide People's Aid to the Fronts" was also set up. However, statements and appeals by many high-ranking government officials and senior clerics,

[9]Local mosques, ministries, welfare foundations, and a host of other private and public groups are also regularly engaged in collecting public donations for the war effort. Some of these funds are passed up to senior clerics who, through their own channels, distribute them for various purposes, including the purchase and dispatch of supplies to the Iraqi front.

[10]Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, March 29, 1984 (FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, March 29, 1984, I4).

voiced as late as in February 1985, leave no doubt that these measures have thus far produced few positive results.[11]

Attempts to address the logistic and supply requirements of the armed forces continued in 1985. In April the Iranian cabinet approved the formation of a "War Support Commission";[12] and in May it decided to set up a central "War Affairs Headquarters" with subordinate structures in every ministry and relevant revolutionary organization for the same purpose.[13] The utility of these new arrangements remains to be seen.

At present, the Joint Staff of the professional military maintains its own Logistics and Support Department, commonly known as the J4. However, it functions merely as a coordination and liaison unit for the services. The primary responsibility for logistic and supply matters generally rests with individual services, which coordinate and plan their activities in this field with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry for the IRGC, and the Interior Ministry. However, the J4 is believed to maintain some degree of operational control at the Iraqi front, especially in distribution of supplies and coordination of transportation.

The current logistical system of the Iranian professional military is basically a result of experimentation and expediency produced by the Iran-Iraq war. Aside from constraining political and organizational problems discussed earlier, other equally important factors continue to limit the capabilities of the professional military in getting supplies to the troops at the Iraqi front. For example, although Iran's transportation infrastructure is adequate by Middle Eastern standards, most strategic highway routes connecting Tehran as well as most of the rest of the country to the Iraqi border are subject to snow blockage (at higher elevations of the Zagross mountains) and flooding from late November to April. In addition, railroad stock, which has always been preferred for transport of military supplies in Iran, continues to suffer from

[11]For example, in a meeting with some high-ranking clerics, Ayatollah Montazeri asserted, "We must not have one organization which somehow has the resources and equipment needed at the front while another organization, also at the fronts, lacks resources and basic weaponry for its personnel. This is absolutely wrong, and it must be confronted decisively and properly." He then urged officials "to remove discord, and strive to give greater attention to the needs of the dear brothers in the Mobilization [Army], who bear the brunt of the burden of the war." See daily *Kayhan* (Tehran) in Persian, February 3, 1985, p. 2 (translated in JPRS-NEA, 85042, March 21, 1985, p. 148).

[12]The Commission comprises Ministers of the IRGC, Defense, Post-Telegraph-Telephone, Commerce, Reconstruction Crusade, Industries, Mines and Metals, Energy, and Heavy Industries. See *Kayhan* (London weekly in Persian), May 3, 1985, p. 2.

[13]Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, May 23, 1985 (FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, May 24, 1985, I3).

severe shortages in spare parts. Similarly, air resupply can be exercised only on an extremely limited basis. Logistical supply problems are also exacerbated by often severe congestion at ports in the Persian Gulf.[14]

Deficiencies in logistical supply and transportation difficulties have forced the Iranian professional military to reshape its overall supply and distribution, practices and policies. At present, it operates according to the principle of forward distribution somewhat similar to the Soviet practice, rather than applying the concept of organic support, which characterizes the system of the U.S. armed forces. Thus, the larger units of the Iranian professional military (e.g., divisions) are responsible for delivering supplies to smaller units (e.g., brigades) using the larger units' organic means of transportation. This mode of supply distribution can function more or less efficiently only when substantial supply resources are maintained as close to the supported unit as possible. When the logistical support system breaks down, as has often been the case in the past six years, Iranian units are forced (and traditionally expected) to live off the land for many days before links are reestablished with other units.

Because of Iran's continued economic stagnation, various organizational and political problems, and the persistent competition between the professional military and the IRGC, there is little reason to forecast that a satisfactory solution is in sight.[15] However, the professional military has demonstrated a capacity to improvise effectively under very unfavorable circumstances and the logistical supply situation has been gradually improving.

RESERVE MOBILIZATION

Like many other Middle Eastern military establishments, the professional military in Iran has always lacked a credible reserve force ready for callup in case of a national emergency. This was true under the monarchy and continues to be the case in the Islamic Republic.

[14]The Islamic authorities have often claimed that various governmental measures for equipment procurement, procedural changes, and organizational reforms have helped to eliminate these deficiencies. However, the official Iranian press sometimes acknowledges persisting shortcomings in this area. For example, see *Sobh-e Azadegan* (Tehran daily newspaper), December 20, 1984, p. 20.

[15]The continuing logistic problems are reflected in the fact that long periods of time still occur between major Iranian offensives against Iraq; these "pauses" usually represent the period necessary to resupply and reequip units before they can resume operations.

Under the Shah, conscripts were technically in the reserve until the age of 44, but reservists remained unorganized, unarmed, and untrained. The active component of the professional military generally viewed reservists only as a "last recourse"—old men to be armed for the final defense. Indeed, reservists considered themselves not even as "weekend warriors" and were thus denied adequate resources and management attention. Instead, defense expenditures were allocated almost exclusively to the active component of the military. Only in the late 1970s did some of the service branches, such as the ground forces, begin to formulate preliminary plans for the orderly redirection of manpower resources in support of national emergencies.

In the first post-Revolutionary years, the mobilization of former conscripts continued to be a moot point for the professional military: It was simply not in a position to do anything effective in this field. After the outbreak of the war with Iraq, Islamic authorities were quick to recognize the need for military mobilization of the population. However, when attempts were made to deal with many problems associated with the management of this effort, it was decided to leave the professional military entirely out of the task. Instead, the newly established IRGC was charged with directing, organizing, training, and deployment of hundreds of thousands of volunteer civilians.[16] Since then, the power and authority for mobilizing Iran's manpower resources against Iraq have continued to be concentrated in the IRGC. In the meantime, regular ex-conscripts have never been called up for active duty.

This arrangement is likely to continue to be the case for many reasons. In the Navy, for example, there are no naval reserves to be called up and no plans to establish them. Then, there is the high cost of calling up the ground forces' reservists, many of whom seem to lack the dedication and commitment to report to duty even if mobilized.[17] In addition, the professional military at present does not possess sufficient political resources to enable it to play an active role in this field without violating the officially sanctioned prerogatives of its rival revolutionary forces. Finally, for political and economic reasons, the Islamic Republic could probably not long stay in a fully mobilized posture involving both volunteers and ex-conscripts.

[16]See *Kayhan* (Tehran, daily newspaper in Persian), July 7, 1982, p. 5.

[17]The professional military already faces major problems in enforcing current conscription regulations and in filling recruiting quotas for soldiers.

DOMESTIC ARMS PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

The existence of military industries and domestic production of arms and ammunition is not a new phenomenon in Iran. As in the Islamic Republic, considerable emphasis was placed on this effort during the Pahlavi era. As the nation's major advocates of military strength, both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah were keenly interested in developing and expanding Iran's military industries. Both monarchs, firmly committed to Iran's rapid industrialization, believed that domestic arms production would not only increase Iran's military self-reliance but also would offer many opportunities to enhance the overall industrial capacity of the country. Past problems in securing an adequate supply of various spare parts and ammunition were also major reasons for the establishment of military industries in Iran.

Before World War II the effort in this field was largely confined to producing some light ammunition, gunpowder, and various explosives.[18] As military factories grew steadily in number and production capacity after the war years, all these units were centralized in 1963 and placed under the Military Industries Organization (MIO) of the Ministry of War.[19] By the late 1970s, military plants produced fairly large quantities of small arms ammunition, batteries, tires, copper products, explosives, and mortar rounds and fuses.[20] Iran also produced rifles and machine guns, usually under West German license, and assembled components of some communication electronics imported from abroad. In addition, assembly plants produced utility Bell helicopters, AMC Jeeps, British Leyland Land Rovers, trucks, and trailers, which were used both in the military and civilian sectors. Diesel engine plants also operated with West German and British cooperation; and Iran was rapidly on its way to manufacturing rocket launchers, rockets, gun barrels, and grenades. Arms exporting activities, however, had barely begun when the revolution halted the activities of the MIO.[21] In the

[18]The Bornu War Implements Factory was the first military plant established in Iran with German assistance in the mid-1920s. In 1928 the Parchin Factory was built to produce chemicals for ammunition and gunpowder, followed by the Ghaniabad Foundry, which went into operation in 1942.

[19]As the head of MIO, General Manuchehr Toufanian (later Vice-Minister of War) was instrumental in expansion of this organization in the 1960s and 1970s.

[20]The huge military complex in Saltanatabad (now a northern suburb of Tehran), run with West German assistance, was instrumental in production of these items.

[21]Before the 1979 revolution, the total work force of the MIO was under 20,000. Of these, the non-Iranian foreign nationals (managers, experts, technicians, etc.) numbered about 3,000, mostly Americans. Close to 1,500 U.S. citizens were engaged in various support services in the Iranian Helicopter Industries alone. For details see *Ettela'at* (Tehran daily), April 11, 1982, pp. 10–11; *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* (Tehran daily), September 26, 1984, p. 11; and *Sobh-e Azadegan*, September 27, 1984, p. 16.

first post-revolutionary period, Iran's arms producing and repair facilities almost ceased to function. The MIO was not only plagued by the general political upheavals of the time, but was unable to operate without the foreign specialists and technicians who had departed immediately after the revolution. Problems created by the shortage of qualified personnel and successive administrative and organizational changes were later compounded by the imposition of an economic embargo on Iran by Western powers following the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis.

By 1981 the MIO had lost much of its management power and responsibility over its industrial facilities. Many of these were taken over by various revolutionary and semigovernmental organs, which ran them without being really accountable to a centralized managing organ. Confusion, functional duplicity, and much waste characterized the activities of Iranian military industries in this period.

Despite these difficulties, the professional military somehow managed to keep many of the defense industries operational in 1980, albeit on a much lower scale. The situation changed, however, following the outbreak of hostilities with Iraq. Pressures generated by the war served as the main impetus for reorganization, reinvigoration, and, later on, in further expansion of activities in this field.

In late 1981, most of the country's military industrial units were once again brought together and placed under a single organization, called the Defense Industries Organization (DIO), to handle production activities and services for the professional military. At present, the DIO is governed by a mixed civilian-military board of directors and a managing director who oversee its actual management and planning activities. The DIO Director is accountable to the Deputy Minister of Defense for Logistics. However, Iran's President, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Supreme Defense Council, is ultimately responsible for the DIO's operations.[22]

At present Iranian military industries are active in several fields, including armaments, mechanics, electronics, communications, aeronautics, and research. The activities of each of these sectors are coordinated and supervised by corresponding DIO divisions.[23] In general, the DIO factories have tended to continue producing most of the same items that they were already capable of producing under the

[22]Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, January 1, 1985. (FBIS/SA, January 3, 1985, I1.)

[23]See *Kayhan* (Tehran daily), September 26, 1984, p. 22.

Shah.[24] In other cases, however, these industries have apparently succeeded in producing new items ranging from washers to helicopter fuselage parts. For example, since late 1982 the Machine Construction Factory in Tabriz has been active in producing some of the vital parts of Iran's Chieftain tanks, including its hermetic sealing cylinder. The Esfahan Steel Mill produces various artillery flame-deflectors (weighing up to 200 pounds), together with artillery pads. The Masjed Soleyman Industrial School and Repair Center manufactures over 100 parts for military implements and equipment including Katyusha gauges, personnel carrier shafts, gears, and fan pulleys. Similarly, the personnel of the Army's Ghazvin-based 16th Armored Division have reportedly come to produce various machine-gun parts, while facilities supervised by the Army Aviation Command put out aircraft washers and rubber parts. By 1983 Iranian military industries were also able to produce carriages for the 50 mm caliber guns, 155 mm shells, bases for night-vision telescopic rifles, parts for the G-3 rifle, various firing pins, and flash suppressors for the 130 mm guns.[25]

Although the bulk of Iran's arms and military equipment production facilities have thus far remained under the direction of the DIO, this organization has little control over many other similar military production units. For example, since October 1981 the Reconstruction Crusade has managed several military factories in Shiraz that are producing triggers for 120 mm heavy mortar launchers, door levers for M-60 tanks, adapters for inflating airplane tires, pressure control vents for C-130 aircraft, and cannon grooves.[26]

More important, however, the monopoly of the professional military over domestic arms production and repair industries came to an effective end in mid-1983 when the Islamic authorities decided to let the IRGC establish its own military industries. Since then the Ministry for IRGC has come to exercise actual management and production responsibilities over many newly built and existing military factories. Reflecting the political priorities of the Islamic regime, this new policy is in line with the IRGC's growing political and military weight. And if this trend continues, the IRGC-controlled sector of Iran's military

[24]The Director of DIO has claimed that by mid-1984 Iran was completely self-sufficient with regard to light ammunition. See *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* (Tehran daily), September 26, 1984, p. 11.

[25]A good deal of information on these and many other items manufactured domestically in Iran appears regularly in the Iranian press. In addition the Logistical Command of the professional military maintains a "Permanent Industrial Exhibition" in Tehran where hundreds of such items are displayed for public viewing, to illustrate achievements in gaining industrial and military self-sufficiency.

[26]Radio Shiraz Domestic Service in Persian, April 13, 1982. (FBIS/SA, April 14, 1982, I7.) Also see *Kayhan* (Tehran daily in Persian), August 2, 1982, p. 14.

industries will soon overshadow the professional military's contribution in this field.

The first IRGC armaments factory was inaugurated on February 15, 1984 in Tehran. For the first time in Iran, this facility began manufacturing 120 mm mortars. It planned to put out 2,000 of these in 1984 and 4,000 in 1985. The factory was also on its way to producing 60 mm and 81 mm mortars as well as 106 mm guns.[27] At present, production lines of the IRGC military industries are reportedly putting out antipersonnel grenades,[28] various antichemical warfare implements, antitank rockets and RPGs.[29]

Aside from boosting arms production activities, Iran's ongoing difficulties in importing weapons and spare parts, together with pressures generated by the Iran-Iraq war, have invigorated research activities in Iranian military industries. A "Research and Development" division was established within the DIO in April 1982 and efforts were made for utilizing talents in this field.[30] Since then this division has signed numerous contracts with various local universities and private industrial enterprises and schools, and has attempted to make better use of domestic manpower resources in expanding the research base of the military industries.[31] The government has also declared its readiness to fund research activities of several newly established private military research institutes.

Despite the spirited activities of Iranian military industries in the past few years,[32] this field faces many unresolved difficulties and suffers from various shortcomings. Major problems include the

[27]Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, February 15, 1984. (FBIS/SA, February 16, 1984, I4.)

[28]The IRGC's major grenade manufacturing facility is the Towhid Factory located in Esfahan.

[29]Anti-tank rockets, RPGs, and mortars are manufactured in IRGC's "al-Hadid" group of industrial facilities, while water, engine, and cylinder cap washers for Soviet- and Polish-made T-52, T-55, T-62, and T-72 tanks, captured from Iraq, are produced in the IRGC Armor Repair Center in Khuzistan. For details see *Omid-e Enghelab* (official organ of the IRGC Basij), No. 81, June 2, 1984, pp. 20–21, 60; *Kayhan Havai* (Tehran Weekly), November 14, 1984, p. 8; and *Iran Times*, May 10, 1984, p. 8; and October 4, 1985, p. 5.

[30]The latest of such efforts is the proposed establishment of a separate "Office of Strategic Studies" within the DIO. Radio Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, January 1, 1985 (FBIS/SA, January 3, 1985, I1).

[31]See *Kayhan* (Tehran daily), August 2, 1982, p. 5; September 26, 1984, p. 22; and *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* (Tehran daily), September 26, 1984, p. 11.

[32]In mid-1985, various military and clerical leaders claimed that Iran had already acquired the technology and know-how to produce ground to ground missiles and that it would soon become "a missile power second only to the superpowers." For example, see Hashemi-Rafsanjani's remarks to Tokyo NHK Television Network on June 11, 1985 (FBIS/SA, June 12, 1985, I1).

continuing shortages in raw materials due to import restrictions, low productivity, and faulty management practices. These problems are compounded by scarcity of expert personnel, insufficient receptivity to innovations, and excessive bureaucratic formalities, especially in the governmental sector. In addition, Iran's military industries tend to manufacture a large variety of usually low-quality parts and equipment, instead of choosing a few of the best items and producing them on a mass level. This practice continues to discourage private investment in military industrial facilities. While many of these problems do not seem to be unresolvable in the long run, the weak technological-industrial base of the country still precludes the mass production of sophisticated arms and equipment for the foreseeable future, at least without large-scale foreign input.[33]

The equipment repair and maintenance situation within the Iranian military presents an even bleaker picture than arms production. This does not mean that the significance of this field has remained unrecognized. On the contrary, the professional military and some sectors of ruling clerical establishment had early on become fully aware of the widely felt maintenance deficiencies. Indeed, faced with the still tight pipeline of military spare-parts importation and shortage of qualified maintenance personnel, the Islamic regime has in the past two years mobilized both military and civilian technical manpower resources and attempted to boost preventive maintenance practices and the cannibalization of equipment. In general, such efforts have registered only partial successes.

At present, the Iranian military prides itself in being able to successfully repair various military transmitters, receivers, and helicopter engines. The repair of the testing equipment of F-14 hydraulic pressure transmitters and F-14 generators is also said to have gone on successfully.[34] Similarly, in mid-1984 the Iranian Navy claimed to have successfully repaired the gas turbines of several Iranian naval combat vessels in Bandar Abbas, making these ready for use.[35] Meanwhile, the IRGC Armor Repair Center has been repairing Soviet- and Polish-made T-55, T-62, T-54, and T-72 tanks originally captured from the Iraqis in 1982.[36]

[33]Although the Iranian opposition press abroad as well as many regional and West European newspapers have repeatedly reported the presence of foreign military advisors and technicians in the Iranian military and its arms production facilities, none of our respondents were able to corroborate such rumors through their personal experience.

[34]*Kayhan International* (in English), "Interview with Colonel Baba'i, Commander of Eight Fighter Base in Esfahan," July 18, 1982, p. 8.

[35]*Kayhan Havai*, August 8, 1984, p. 14.

[36]*Omid-e Enghelab* (weekly organ of the IRGC Basij), June 2, 1984, p. 21.

Although these activities have partially relieved the situation, serious constraints still characterize the maintenance process. For example, in face of the widespread shortage of qualified maintenance personnel, the authorities have been forced, in the past few years, to enroll in maintenance courses large numbers of students who do not have the proper educational backgrounds. This practice has not only resulted in slipshod maintenance standards, which limited the use of equipment, but has also made the operating personnel wary and frustrated.

Such limitations are compounded especially in the navy and air force, in that Iranian technicians simply cannot repair much of their more sophisticated equipment.[37] As for the Iranian ground forces, limited repair of tracked vehicles is attempted at brigade level, while small arms are often repaired at battalion level. Although maintenance of artillery pieces is also possible within artillery battalions, this process reportedly does not go on well enough because of scarcity of mechanical skills. Until sufficient numbers of Iranian technicians and mechanics are fully trained and upgraded to fill positions once occupied by foreign personnel, and unless the spare part pipeline opens, various logistical supply and maintenance problems will continue to hamstring the operational readiness of the Iranian military establishment. This assertion, however, is not meant to imply that the Iranian military's overall capability to engage in extended encounters on the Iraqi warfront will be diminished in the future. On the contrary, the current shortcomings involved in equipment repair and maintenance, arms production, and spare part supplies, together with faulty management practices, are likely to improve over the coming years.

[37]A good example of this situation is presented by the air defense system of Iran, which continues to be ineffective against the Iraqi air raids.

IV. THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION GUARD CORPS

The past seven years have witnessed the emergence and subsequent institutionalization of several new paramilitary and security organizations in Iran. Some of these are primarily manifestations of responses to various challenges waged against the new political order; others sprang up spontaneously amid the disarray that marked Iran in 1978–1979. Although revolutionary dynamism and the process of institution-building has yet to end, some of these structures have already acquired considerable political and military weight to act as powerful lobbies. Many of these organizations have become permanent features of the Iranian political scene and are likely to remain so.

The most important of these organizations is undoubtedly the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), otherwise known as the Pasdaran. With an estimated current membership of about 350,000 men, the IRGC constitutes one of the main pillars of the present regime in Tehran. Charged with the overall responsibility of "protecting the Islamic Revolution," the IRGC has branched out to all Iranian provinces and to numerous major and minor urban centers, in addition to being heavily represented on the war front against the Iraqi forces.[1]

FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Pasdaran was formally "established" by a decree issued by Ayatollah Khomeyni on May 5, 1979 ostensibly to protect the new clerical order and assist the ruling clerics in administering Islamic laws and morals. There are different interpretations of just how and why the IRGC was established and organized. Some observers credit the *Harakat al-Amal,* a Lebanese Shia political and guerrilla movement, as

[1]A few of our respondents, usually of the senior ranks, were contemptuous of the IRGC and dismissed the Pasdaran as little more than a collection of unprincipled thugs, former convicts, and mercenaries hired for the sole purpose of terrorizing the civilian population. Unlike many other interviewees, they also tended to ignore the role played by this organization in the war with Iraq. This attitude is in sharp contrast with the clerical regime's official position, which magnifies the military role of the IRGC and depicts its members as the real heroes of the war with Iraq.

playing a key role in formation of the Pasdaran.[2] PLO leader Yasser Arafat has claimed that "Palestinian commandos" assisted the Iranian government in "the formation and organization of the Revolutionary Guards."[3] Others have implied a possible Soviet hand.[4] Although there may be something to each of these explanations, all of them overlook the essential point that revolutionary guards of various types had not only come into existence much before May 1979, but that they had already evolved considerably by the summer of that year. More important, the early activities and evolution of the Pasdaran came to provide the political context and organizational environment within which the IRGC developed later. The formative period of the Pasdaran merits a brief analysis.

In fact, a close look at Iranian newspapers of the time leaves no doubt that some of these elements had surfaced immediately before and after the downfall of the monarchy. In other cases these underground paramilitary groups originated much earlier.[5] Known to the public at the time simply as pasdars (guards), many of these were usually extensions of various originally underground revolutionary leftist and extremist Islamic organizations whose members became fully armed in early February 1979 when military arsenals in Tehran and elsewhere fell into the hands of the Shah's opponents.[6]

Under the provisional government of Mehdi Bazargan (February-November 1979), these militiamen performed a variety of functions in support of Islamic authorities, while the government of the day failed repeatedly to bring them under control. On one hand, these pasdars,

[2]See, for example, Kifner, 1979, p. 1.

[3]See his remarks appearing in an interview printed in *The New Republic,* December 24, 1984. The alliance of various leftist Iranian groups with Palestinian guerrillas was not new. As early as 1974 the Shah complained of such cooperation. See his interview with *al-Hawadis* of Beirut, the text of which appeared in FBIS/ME, *Daily Report,* December 13, 1974, p. 5.

[4]For example, consult Khalilzad, 1984, p. 5.

[5]Several of these groups had their counterparts operating abroad, mostly among Iranian students. For some detailed references to these and their political ties see, among others, *Asrar-e fa'aliyatha-ye zed-e Irani dar Kharej az Keshvar* [Secrets of Anti-Iranian Activities Outside the Country], Tehran: SAVAK, Bahman 2535. Also *An Alliance of Reaction and Terror,* Tehran: Focus Publications, 1977.

[6]Much first-hand information about leading members and political ties of various underground radical leftist and Islamic groups active during the last years of monarchy was kept in several headquarters of the Shah's intelligence services in Tehran. Most of these disappeared one way or the other during the chaotic days of early February 1979. However, a series of articles, apparently based in part on such information, have appeared in the Persian language organ of the Iranian Liberation Army, *ARA,* published in Paris. See Vol. 5, Nos. 7–8, January 5, 1984; 9–10, February 4, 1984; 11–12, February 29, 1984; 13, April 4, 1984; 14, May 5, 1984; 15, June 10, 1984; 16, July 6, 1984; and 18, September 6, 1984.

in conjunction with self-styled local revolutionary committees, took over mosques, police stations, prisons, government buildings, and army barracks, and acted as agents for revolutionary authorities. On the other hand, they arrested counterrevolutionaries, confiscated property, and often settled personal scores against one another or against "suspects" of all types.

In terms of their ideological and political orientations, organizational setup, and membership background, pasdars presented a diverse and fragmented picture. To begin with, many Iranian political organizations, including the Mojahedin Khalgh, Fedayin, and Tudeh (communist) party, kept their own guards in addition to their sympathizers among other revolutionary groups. A large number of smaller Marxist organizations also did the same.[7]

In addition, powerful clerics, judges, cabinet and parliament members, and many other high-ranking civilian officials also kept their own armed pasdars. For example, Sadegh Khalkhali,[8] Hadi Ghaffari,[9] Behzad Nabavi,[10] Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Mostafa Chamran,[11] Jalal el-din Farsi, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, Asadollah Lajevardi,[12] Mehdi Hadavi[13] and others headed their own pasdaran groups. Recruited, financed, and trained by their bosses, these guards owed allegiance to such individuals usually by virtue of family ties and shared revolutionary background. In turn, the leader assured the proper share of his

[7]These included predecessors and offshoots of Peykar, Razmandegan, Rah-e Kargar, Shora-ye Motahed-e Chap, Tufan, Sazeman-e Vahdat-e Komunisti, Etehadiyeh-e Komunistha, and the like.

[8]This long-time follower of Khomeyni is a prominent clerical leader of a branch of a fundamentalist terrorist group named *Fedayin-e Islam,* active in Iran since the 1940s. Khalkhali, who is at present an influential member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, still retains his own armed bodyguards.

[9]This influential radical clerical ideologue still leads one of the most extremist factions among the Pasdaran, called the Musa ibn-Ja'far group; some of the members of Ghaffari's group originally received guerrilla training in Lebanon, Syria, and Libya in the early 1970s, while the PLO trained others immediately after the revolution. Along with many other extremist Islamic underground organizations led by such people as Haji Eraghi, Rafi'i, Mashallah Ghasab and Mofatteh, Ghaffari was active in clerical opposition to the Shah's regime in the late 1970s.

[10]Minister of Heavy Industries since 1981, Nabavi is a founding member of the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution. This is an extremist Islamic group whose club-wielding members attack the rallies of political opponents.

[11]Until his death in June 1981, Chamran headed his own pasdaran contingent, which controlled the Tehran airport. The police replaced the Pasdaran in the airport in July 1981. See Rouleau, 1981, pp. 1, 5.

[12]Until recently, this cleric commanded a 300-man unit of Pasdaran personally loyal only to himself; in January 1985 he was finally removed as the head of the infamous Evin prison in Tehran.

[13]This was a prominent revolutionary prosecutor-general who kept a large number of armed pasdars who served as prison guards and executioners.

guards in distribution of offices, resolved personal and other conflicts, and counted on them to respond to his wishes regardless of his political stands.

Although remaining ultimately loyal to Ayatollah Khomeyni, many of the pasdar groups acted autonomously and recognized little authority beyond their immediate patrons. The situation was more or less the same in the provinces. For example, in Esfahan local Pasdaran groups tended to attach themselves to two rival ayatollahs named Hoseyn Khadami and Jalal al-Din Taheri, each of whom ran his own revolutionary clientele. In Tabriz large numbers of pasdars and revolutionary committee members owed allegiance to Ayatollah Shariatmadari and several other clerical and local leaders.

Keenly aware of the potentially dangerous consequences of such fragmentation among his own immediate followers, by the summer of 1979 Khomeyni sought to ameliorate the situation. His decree of May 5 was only the harbinger of a new set of policies that pursued several interrelated objectives. One was to serve notice to various Islamic and revolutionary power centers, otherwise loyal to Khomeyni, that there were going to be limits placed on their centrifugal tendencies and rivalries, and that they had to cooperate with one another on a more rational basis. This they could do by placing their resources, including their armed Pasdaran, in the service of the envisioned new paramilitary organization.

Second was the desire of Khomeyni to shape up a better organized and credible force of "faithful" followers owing direct allegiance to himself. At the same time, his decree was prompted by the fear of possible challenge waged by many anti-clerical elements. For example, Khomeyni knew that he could not trust the professional military and the remnants of the Shah's police and gendarmerie forces to willingly carry out his policies. Thus, his orders for integration of various Pasdaran groups, also aimed to provide for a credible counterweight to the professional military as well as his potentially dangerous leftist allies of the time.

The decree was also actuated in part by Khomeyni's efforts on the one hand to accommodate politically dissenting Islamic groups by legitimizing the activities of their armed personnel, and on the other hand to decrease public alienation caused by the lawlessness and arbitrary behavior of many unmanageable Pasdaran groups in urban centers. Finally, Khomeyni was convinced that fundamental social and political changes could not be introduced without a loyal and committed "police force" under the direct control and command of senior clerics. Soon after Khomeyni's order, the Guard Corps underwent radical changes designed to bring that paramilitary organization under tighter clerical

control. Javad Mansouri,[14] who had served as the Guards' Commander since early March 1979, was dropped by Khomeyni in late May and was later replaced by Mostafa Chamran.[15] The Imam then appointed his own representative, Hojjat ol-eslam (middle level Shii religious rank) Hasan Laheuti, to oversee the Guard Corps and report back directly to himself. The ruling Revolutionary Council[16] and Khomeyni also appointed a seven-member Supreme Command to head the organization.[17]

Once the top was reorganized, the Supreme Command began to centralize its authority; this involved coopting individual Pasdar leaders, winning over many influential clerics and appointing them to various positions both within and outside the Guard Corps, and organizing a campaign for recruitment of fresh volunteers. Later on, the Command began clarifying lines of authority, specified responsibilities, and arranged for a better communication system. It also introduced a program for the more systematic training of the Pasdaran. The program was formally established with PLO assistance to train the Guards in several towns, including Tehran, Ahvaz, and Ghom.[18] The Palestinian connection, however, did not last long. After a few months, most Palestinian "advisers" were officially asked to leave Iran, and by August 1980 the professional military started to train the Pasdaran.[19] In the meantime, Laheuti strengthened the clerical supervision of the Corps by appointing his own subordinate clerical representatives to various local Pasdaran units.

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[14]Mansouri became a Deputy Foreign Minister in 1982.

[15]By this time Mostafa Chamran was in charge of several large Pasdaran contingents. In fact, in early April he was instructed by Khomeyni to reorganize the loosely coordinated Guards into a well-trained and disciplined force in the service of the Imam. Chamran did this by attracting several thousand sympathizers and members of the Mojahedin Khalgh into the new organization, and as deputy prime minister managed to bring this force under his own immediate command.

[16]At this time the Revolutionary Council included Mehdi Bazargan, Yadollah Sahabi, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, Ebrahim Yazdi, Mohammad Beheshti, Hasan Lahouti, Hoseyn Ali Montazeri, Ali Asghar Mousavi, Morteza Motahari, Razi Shirazi, Sadegh Khalkhali, and Ali Akbar Hasheim-Rafsanjani. Others were added or dropped from time to time depending on Khomeyni's wishes. The Council was dissolved in September 1980.

[17]See *Ettela'at*, October 6, 1979, p. 15.

[18]Various Palestinian guerrillas were already inside Iran in the winter of 1978, training underground leftist and Islamic groups and helping them to carry out their anti-Shah activities. Soon after Yasser Arafat's visit to Tehran on February 18, 1979, the number of Palestinian guerrillas active in Iran, mostly from the Arafat and George Habash groups, topped 800. The cooperation among various Iranian revolutionary groups and Palestinian guerrillas went back to the late 1960s. The Shah was impelled to make public his discontent about these ties as early as December 1974. See the text of the Shah's interview with the Beirut daily *al-Hawadis* on December 13, 1974, as translated in *FBIS*, December 13, 1974, I5.

[19]*Kayhan* (Tehran daily), August 31, 1980, p. 3.

After this formative stage, the Pasdaran expanded rapidly. From about 4,000 in early May 1979, it more than doubled to 10,000 by that year's end. By mid-1980 the IRGC had an estimated 25,000 regulars. This figure reached 50,000 in 1981, 150,000 in 1983, and over 250,000 by 1985. As of 1986, the Pasdaran number some 350,000. (The numerical expansion of the IRGC is reflected in Fig. 4.) By 1980, the IRGC's presence was felt in many major Iranian cities, while smaller branches were operating in parts of Azerbaijan, Khorasan, Esfahan, and Kerman. The Guards also gained valuable military experience in the autumn of 1979 when several thousand of them were dispatched from Tehran to fight against Kurdish rebels in Iranian Kurdestan.[20] Many of the local commanders who distinguished themselves against Kurdish forces were later promoted to responsible positions and came to exercise much influence within the IRGC.

As it grew in numbers, the IRGC began to acquire a political weight and value of its own. It gained much prominence when the clerics of the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), established by Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti in the spring of 1979, succeeded during the first half of 1980 in gaining the upper hand within the IRGC. Laheuti was dropped as the senior cleric and was replaced first by Hashemi-Rafsanjani and later by Ali Khamene'i. And as the IRP clerics increased their influence within the IRGC during Abolhasan Bani-Sadr's presidency (January 1980-June 1981), it soon became a major responsibility of the Pasdaran to organize the mob against the President's supporters in addition to fighting against the remaining anticlerical opposition forces.

During the second phase of the IRGC's evolution, it became a valuable prize and bone of contention among many power centers. Initially, among Bazargan's colleagues both Ebrahim Yazdi and Mostafa Chamran vied for influence with the Corps. Later on, Mohammad Montazeri, the son of Ayatollah Montazeri and a product of the PLO training camps, competed with Jalal al-din Farsi and Hadi Ghaffari for influence. These men were at the same time joined by Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Ali Khamene'i, and several other clerics and civilians.

The fragmentation of authority resulting from intraclerical conflicts together with personal and other clashes among influential Pasdaran leaders impeded efforts to tighten up the IRGC central command structure and inflicted heavy blows on the internal solidarity and discipline

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[20]Smaller numbers of Pasdaran were also sent against Torkaman tribesmen in northwest Khorasan and eastern Mazandaran provinces in March 1979.

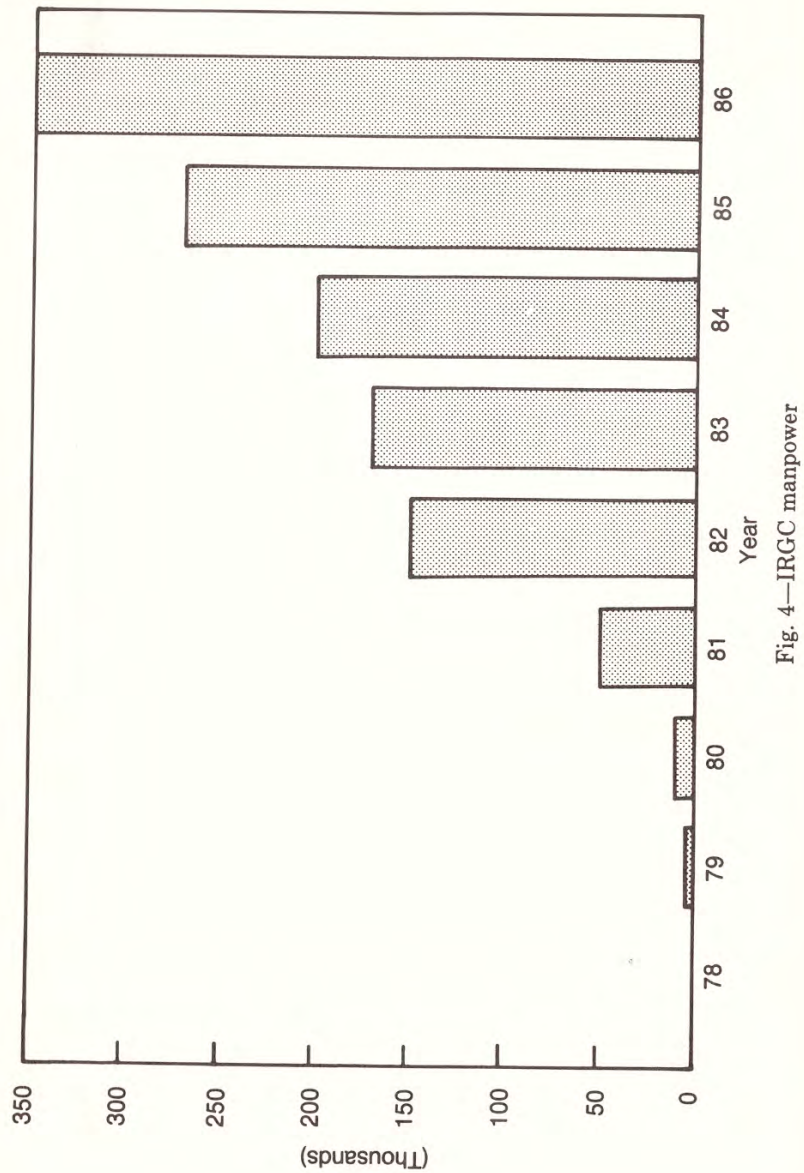


Fig. 4—IRGC manpower

among the rank and file. Yet, the ruling clerics were unable or unwilling to end the factional struggle within the IRGC for many reasons.[21]

Essentially, the turbulence and discord within the Pasdaran was a direct consequence of the way this organization came into existence. For one thing, the purpose behind its establishment was not to destroy the loosely connected militia groups that existed before the summer of 1979. In fact, the formation of the IRGC was based on a compromise between the desire of individual Islamic power centers to preserve and legitimize their prerogatives, and the recognized need for some form of central management and control. What emerged was a combination of various autonomous IRGC departments and units formed around vested political and personal interests.

The factional nature of the IRGC leadership and fragmentation of authority among its various power centers did not prevent Pasdaran's further growth and extension of its political influence.[22] On the contrary, the multiplicity of power centers compelled each rival group to increase its weight within the organization, in part by recruiting as many loyal people as they could.[23] This pattern of recruitment became even more common after September 1980 when the need for mobilizing more IRGC volunteers against the Iraqi forces became obvious.[24] In addition, Iranian social and family structure, particularly in some tribal and rural areas, made individual recruitment all but impossible. Instead, entire extended families and clans would join the IRGC once their heads decided to enter the Pasdaran. As an accepted practice, these people usually served together in separate local IRGC units.

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[21]The tension between two local IRGC factions in Esfahan, each supported by the rival ayatollahs Khademi and Taheri, did not subside until March 1985 when Taheri was finally able to crush the opposition. The rivalry made Esfahan the scene of often bloody events.

[22]For example, by 1983 the Pasdaran numbered over 150,000. See Mehdi Alam, 1984, p. 10 (translated in FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, February 24, 1984, I5-I7).

[23]Apparently even some factions of the Mojahedin Khalgh publicly exhorted their members and sympathizers to join and collaborate with the Pasdaran in order to "better fight against imperialism." A Mojahedin communique to this effect appeared in *Kayhan* (Tehran daily), April 28, 1980, p. 3.

[24]Many of the IRGC factions strove to outdo the others by claiming to have offered more "martyrs" on the Iraqi front. For example, Mostafa Chamran, who commanded his own irregular pasdar forces, went into considerable detail during an interview in asserting that his own group was the most self-sacrificing unit. Chamran admitted, however, that "Even the groups of Mr. Khalkhali and Mr. Ghaffari, which are known for disorganization and which no one is prepared to work with, have made acts of self-sacrifice in our area and also offered up many martyrs." See *Kayhan* (Tehran daily in Persian), November 30, 1980, p. 3. On the existence of distinct IRGC factions on the Iraqi front see also General Fallahi's remarks in *Enghelab-e Eslami* (Tehran daily), December 22, 1980, pp. 2, 12.

Such a situation was of course not to the liking of many senior clerics who had all along pressed for an internally strong and all-embracing army of the "faithful" molded according to their own religious and ideological perceptions. In their attempts to strengthen Pasdaran solidarity, and perhaps reverse the factional tide, they soon realized that although they had little power to affect local recruitment, a lot could be done once the volunteers joined the Guard Corps.

Initially, a campaign for religious and civic education of all Pasdaran units was launched in early 1980. Hundreds of clerics from Tehran and Ghom were sent to various IRGC bases around the country to lecture and conduct seminars on the necessity of "brotherly relations" and the need for elimination of "negative phenomena" resulting from "personal vices" such as "power hungriness, pomposity, selfishness" and the like. State-controlled radio and TV stations spread the same message. Specific religious training and education departments, staffed mostly by clerics, were created within Pasdaran units to indoctrinate its members along similar lines. Periodicals, books, and pamphlets specifically prepared for Pasdaran and Basij members were also distributed as required reading. By the middle of 1981 theological education and instruction already constituted a large part of internal IRGC educational programs.[25]

In their attempts to reduce factional discord in the IRGC and increase their own influence, Khomeyni and his close aides were not content with indoctrination alone. Beginning in early 1982, the clerics began to impose stricter internal disciplinary measures on the Pasdaran, attempted to weed out "undesirable elements," and through various means sought to further strengthen the clerical supervision of the IRGC.[26] Finally, in a measure clearly designed to reduce the dependence of Pasdaran members on individual commanders, in March 1982

[25]Since then, many senior clerics have repeatedly urged the dispatch of only nonfactional clerics to the IRGC. In the words of Ayatollah Montazeri, these should be "the learned and aware clergymen who are in line with pure Islam . . . so that the Guard Corps might be immune from internal clashes." This quotation is from the text of an order by Montazeri read over Tehran Radio. See FBIS/MEA, November 19, 1981, I2-I3.

[26]The Guard Corps, like the professional military, has not been immune to purges. In late 1979 and early 1980 many leftists were kicked out of the organization, followed by the Mojahedin and supporters of Bani-Sadr in June-September of 1981; and following Khomeyni's decree of December 1982 aimed at curbing the worst excesses of the Guard Corps, again a large number of "irresponsible and disorderly" Pasdars were purged in Tehran and in the provinces. In other cases, not only were individual commanders and functionaries sacked, but entire IRGC units were disbanded because of "disobedience" to the Central Command. An early example of such purges occurred in Garmsar in late November 1980. For details see *Tehran Times* (Tehran daily in English), November 30, 1980, p. 2. In other cases, the purges turned into tools for settling local factional discords, thereby necessitating the intervention of senior clerics. See FBIS/SAS, *Daily Report*, November 15, 1983, I1-I2.

Khomeyni banned IRGC members from getting involved in political matters and from becoming a member of any political group or party regardless of its ideology.[27]

Although these and many other measures brought some internal organizational order and solidarity among the Pasdaran in the years after 1982, the ruling clerics have not succeeded in ending factional rivalries among Pasdaran units and commanders, nor have they prevented the IRGC from meddling in politics or being exploited by politicians.[28]

FUNCTIONS OF THE IRGC

In the past seven years the IRGC has evolved into the most powerful political and military organization in Iran. It exerts considerable influence on the policies of the regime and may prove to be capable of shaping its future nature and direction. Reflecting its new status, the Guard Corps has witnessed some fundamental changes in functions and missions. Some of these changes are no doubt derived from policy priorities of the clerical regime, others have resulted from the personal ambitions of the men who have led the IRGC, and still others occurred because no other organization could be counted on by the clerical leadership to fulfill some of these duties.

In general, the IRGC's evolution is not unlike the Waffen SS in Nazi Germany, starting out as a largely political organization with primarily internal and security functions, then developing rapidly into a regular military force with heavy weapons and with a hierarchical command structure.[29] At present, it maintains separate division-size infantry units, usually on the Iraqi front, and operates its own independent armored and mechanized units. In early 1983 it established specialized naval and air elements.[30] Although these units are autonomous, their military activities are coordinated with the professional military at higher levels. This is especially true in the so-called Western

[27]Khomeyni's decree to this effect is printed in *Jomhuri—ye Eslami* (Tehran daily), March 17, 1982, p. 2.

[28]For example, as late as in December 1984, the Majles Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani once again publicly urged the Guardsmen to keep away from party politics. Tehran Radio in English (FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, December 10, 1984, I50). Also see *Kayhan* (Tehran daily), February 14, 1984, p. 18.

[29]Recent scholarship on the Iranian revolution has pointed out the remarkable social and structural similarities between the earlier national-socialist movements in Europe and various Iranian revolutionary groups. See, for example, Bordewich, 1980, pp. 65–71. Also consult Cottam, 1986; Arjomand, 1986, pp. 383–414.

[30]The air and naval wings of the Pasdaran received a major boost in December 1985 when Ayatollah Khomeyni publicly called for their further expansion and rapid growth.

Operational Area, which includes Khuzestan, West Azerbaijan, Kurdestan, and Bakhtaran.

In addition to its front-line military role, the Guard Corps has retained important internal functions. According to Article 150 of the Islamic Constitution, the IRGC is charged with "defending the revolution and safeguarding its achievements."[31] However, it does not specify the limits of its duties and responsibilities, leaving their formulation to the Islamic Assembly (Parliament). This arrangement has resulted in considerable confusion because of the continuous changes and amendments initiated in the Assembly in descriptions of the Pasdaran duties and functions.

An equal degree of confusion also characterizes the IRGC internal regulations and its organizational setup. These matters are regulated by an internal IRGC "Constitution"; however, each article of this constitution has to be approved again by the assembly, which has not hesitated to periodically amend and reamend them according to changing political circumstances. For example, the present IRGC constitution is probably the seventh version, and it may change too when necessary.

The most important specific internal functions of the Guard Corps include the following:[32]

- Patrolling urban areas as a kind of local police and enforcing Islamic laws and regulations; this is usually carried out in conjunction with the Revolutionary Committees and the police. In the rural areas, the IRGC performs this task together with the gendarmerie, tribal militia, and border guards.
- Confronting "counterrevolutionary" forces of all types with armed resistance, pursuit, and arrest; this function is not confined to fighting against underground urban opposition groups, but may extend to large territories, such as parts of Iranian Kurdestan, where the IRGC units function as military formations similar to regular army units.
- Protecting ministries, factories, radio and TV stations, prisons, airports, and other sensitive government buildings from saboteurs and opposition groups. This task goes hand in hand with the careful supervision of the personnel of these institutions, in addition to those in labor and trade unions, schools and colleges, and some sectors of the civil bureaucracy. The IRGC "supervision" is officially justified by "the necessity to prevent infiltration of destructive elements or deviation of the personnel."[33]
- Conducting intelligence collection operations both inside and outside the country, and acting as local intelligence organs engaged in spying on the regime's domestic adversaries. This task is often coordinated with the Ministries of Intelligence, Interior, and Defense.
- Assisting Islamic revolutionary movements abroad and "establishing fraternal relations and contacts with those movements fighting for freedom from servitude and fetters of Western and Eastern imperialism and world Zionism."[34]
- Engaging in propagation of the regime's religious and political principles on a mass level by organizing sponsored rallies, printing and distributing books and publications, producing and staging films and plays, and so forth.
- Recruiting, training, and otherwise mobilizing the Iranian population for industrial and agricultural reconstruction operations, dispatching logistic aid to its front-line forces, and gathering up arms and ammunition from people or groups. In addition, many Pasdaran carry out bodyguard duties in the urban centers for senior and middle level clerics, government ministers, judges, prosecutors, governors, parliament members, and other regime officials.

The wide law-enforcing and other prerogatives of the Pasdaran have brought its members into day-to-day contact with 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. For example, from the start, it was clear that there was little love lost between the IRGC and the regular army, air force, and navy, on both the enlisted-man and officer levels. However, the tension between the professional military and the IRGC appears to have subsided considerably following the Iranian battlefront victories of April-June 1982.

[31]An English translation of the Iranian Constitution appears in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 1980.

[32]The Iranian press and high-ranking Islamic officials often discuss the evolving goals and functions of the IRGC and debate and elaborate on various administrative and organizational matters involving the Pasdaran. For a representative sample see *Soroush* (Tehran monthly in Persian), April 1981, pp. 17–22; *Kayhan* (daily), February 12, 1981, p. 6; May 1, 1982, p. 9; *Ettela'at*, May 26, 1983, p. 3; and *Sobh-e Azadegan*, November 13, 1984, p. 2.

[33]See for example *Jomhuriy-e Eslami*, May 27, 1982, p. 2, and *Payam-e Enghelab*, May 27, 1982, pp. 3, 32.

[34]This quotation constitutes the official objective of a Liberation Movements Department within the IRGC, which was established on Khomeyni's orders in February 1981. IRGC Central Command's statement to this effect appears in FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, February 5, 1981, I12.

Six years of shared battle experience, more efficient logistic support rendered by the IRGC to the professional military, and more efficient joint planning and coordination practices have all helped to cultivate a feeling of mutual respect and closeness among officers and rank and file and foster a rapid rapprochement between the two organizations. The regime, in the meantime, has been well aware of potential tensions and has tried to devise strategies for their resolution.

In addition, there are indications that the IRGC rank and file, much like other sectors of Iran's population, have recently become somewhat less enthusiastic about the continued conflict with Iraq, partly because the IRGC has borne the brunt of the war and partly because of the recognition that some officials have exploited them. This realization has apparently lessened the earlier fanatical identification of many Pasdaran leaders, especially those at the front, with regime policies. Such changes of attitude are one more reason for the gradually diminishing tensions between the professional military and the IRGC units at the Iraqi front. This process may increase prospects for full cooperation, not necessarily confined to military matters, between the two wings of the Iranian military in the coming years.

IRGC INTERNAL STRUCTURE AND CHAIN OF COMMAND

Like many other post-revolutionary institutions in Iran, the IRGC has experienced significant changes in its internal structure and organizational hierarchy. As a whole, the Pasdaran has been gradually acquiring specialized military, political, and administrative knowledge; this process is reflected in the growing organizational complexity and functional diversification of the Guard Corps. See Fig. 5 for the internal organizational chart of the IRGC.

What sets the IRGC apart from the other post-revolutionary organizations is that its entire administrative apparatus has come to reflect the primacy of a military rather than a purely political mission.[35] The Guard Corps is characterized today by its internal pyramidal structure, the strict subordination of minority opinion to majority and of lower bodies to higher ones, and the rapid flow of directives from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom.

[35]The IRGC's involvement in domestic intelligence matters was considerably reduced in late 1984 when the regime decided to eventually transfer the Corps' intelligence collection duties to the newly established Ministry of Intelligence. In its place, Pasdaran's military role is bound to increase swiftly, especially after Khomeyni's order of September 17, 1985 to the IRGC to further expand its specialized naval and air elements. For official coverage of these changes, see *Kayhan* (Tehran daily), February 14, 1984, p. 18; and the special section on the war in *Kayhan Hava'i* (Tehran weekly), September 25, 1985.

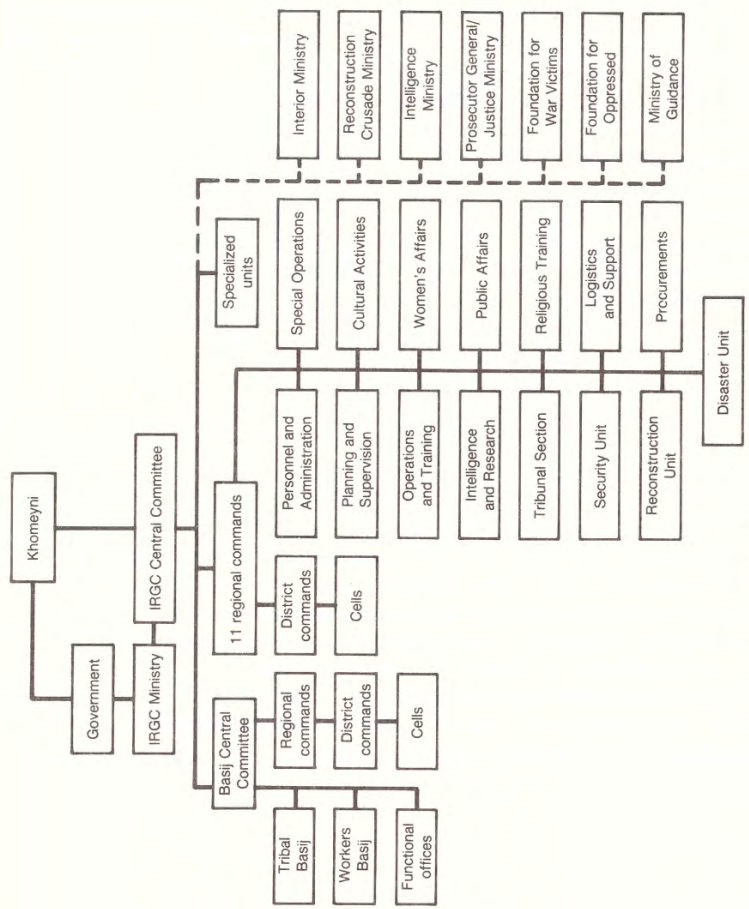


Fig. 5—IRGC internal structure

According to its present by-laws, the supreme decisionmaking and executive power of the Pasdaran is vested in the IRGC Central Command. This body is responsible for formulating the organization's political and military policy and overseeing IRGC's entire operations.

The direction of the Pasdaran is entrusted to the IRGC Commander in Chief who also chairs the sessions of the Central Command.[36] No official meeting of this body can be held without the presence of the Commander in Chief or his chosen representative. According to article 110 of Iran's Constitution, Khomeyni, as the *Faghih* and the overall Commander in Chief of Iranian Armed Forces, is empowered to appoint and dismiss the IRGC Commander in Chief. The Central Command also includes the IRGC Deputy Commander in Chief, the Imam's Representative, the IRGC Minister, and the Chief of Central Headquarters. Meetings of the Central Command are also frequently attended by the heads of various IRGC departments and other influential Pasdaran leaders.

Below the Central Command level the order of the chain of command runs down through regional commanders, district commanders, base commanders, and barrack commanders. Each serves as chief of his own corresponding command, and these commanders are usually the most powerful IRGC functionaries in the given area. At present, the Guard Corps has 11 regional commands, each of which corresponds roughly to the geographical divisions of the country on provincial level.[37] In the Western Operational Area, Pasdaran division and brigade commanders usually act as Regional and District commanders as well. Here all IRGC troops with internal security missions, together with regular military forces assigned to support them, are subordinated to the senior Pasdaran commander in the province or district where they are operating. As a rule, the IRGC Commander in Chief appoints and dismisses all divisional and regional commanders who exercise the same right in the lower echelons. Although the overwhelming majority of senior IRGC commanders are nonclerical civilians, many clerics are also known to hold such positions.[38]

Since 1980 the clerical control of the IRGC has been maintained basically through the elaborate machinery of the so-called Theocratic

[36]The IRGC Commander in Chief is also a permanent member of the Supreme Defense Council. Since September 1981 Mohsen Reze'i has occupied this position.

[37]Among these commands the most powerful seems to be that of Tehran province, followed by those of Esfahan, Khorasan, and Fars.

[38]For example, Hojjat ol-eslam Ahangaran is the District Commander of Arak; he is also represented in the Regional Command of the Tehran province. See *Kayhan Hava'i*, July 29, 1984, p. 22.

Supervision (nezarat-e rouhani). At the very top, this involves the direct appointment by Khomeyni of a middle-level cleric, usually of the rank of Hojjat ol-eslam, to the IRGC Central Command as his own representative. Although a full-fledged member of the Central Command, this cleric, often referred to as the IRGC Supervisor, is in no way accountable to anyone within the Pasdaran for his duties; instead he reports directly to Khomeyni or to Khomeyni's central office.

As a whole, the Imam's Representative is responsible for "administering the principles of Islamic rule and supervising the implementation of the Imam's guidelines." As such, he has the authority to veto all decisions of the IRGC Central Command that he finds incompatible with Khomeyni's directions and orders. The Supervisor also enjoys some veto power over IRGC military plans in case such plans violate Khomeyni's guidelines.[39]

In general, the Imam's Representative has two sets of responsibilities: those delegated and approved by the Islamic Assembly and those given to him by Khomeyni. Although the first is practically confined to his "supervision" of the Central Command and approval of its decisions, the second set involves a large number of duties. For example, through the all-clerical staff of his Central Office, the Imam's Representative oversees the Corps' religious and ideological training programs and supervises its Publications and Propaganda Departments. Since early 1984, the Supervisor also heads a newly established IRGC Research Center in Ghom, which directs the production of all IRGC programs for mass communication and all religious and ideological teaching materials. For all these activities the Central Office prepares detailed reports and submits them to the Supervisor who in turn briefs Khomeyni about them.

The Imam's Representative is authorized to establish his own "supervisory" offices in all IRGC units. At present, there are over 300 subordinate clerics attached to IRGC regional and district commands. These individuals, who are appointed and dismissed by the Supervisor, act as his representatives in the lower IRGC echelons. They participate in regional and district command meetings and report on their activities to the Supervisor.

The elaborate internal IRGC machinery is not confined to the clerical supervision of this organization. Instead, in line with the common

[39]When this prerogative was given to the Supervisor in 1981, regime officials did not hide the fact that it was meant to prevent "possible deviation" of the Central Command. However, they took pains to explain that the step taken did not symbolize clerics' mistrust of the IRGC. A Majles deputy in charge of writing up this provision in the IRGC bylaws said at the time "Of course we have not until now reached such a stage [of mistrust] with the Corps in practice, but [we] had this in mind as a precautionary measure for the future." See Shiraz Majles deputy Sabah Zanganeh's remarks in *Sobh-e Azadegan* (Tehran daily), February 10, 1981, p. 2.

post-revolutionary practice elsewhere in Iran, the Pasdaran have witnessed a rapid rate of bureaucratization. This process is clearly reflected in the growing compartmentalization of the Guard Corps and the emergence of many specialized subcomponents. At present, the IRGC maintains at least 15 separate departments in Tehran; many of these in turn operate their subdivisions in the regional and district levels, including Personnel and Administration, Special Operations, Procurement, Public Affairs, Cultural Activities, Operations and Training, Planning, Reconstruction, Women's Affairs, Tribunal Section, Disaster Unit, Security Unit, Religious and Ideological Training, Logistics and Support, and Intelligence and Research.

Although there is little reliable information available on the internal structures and modes of operation of these departments, it is believed that most of them are attached to the so-called IRGC Central Headquarters in Tehran, which directs and coordinates their activities. Many of these components are also in close touch and cooperate with other revolutionary and governmental organizations.[40] In addition to these, the IRGC has its own specialized military units with corresponding hierarchical commands, including air assault, airborne, naval infantry, naval aviation, amphibious, and marine units. They operate as independent companies, regiments, and battalions under the direct command of the IRGC Central Command, and are at present undergoing a rapid pace of expansion.

In the past several years the IRGC has also come to effectively control several smaller paramilitary organizations active in Iran. The most prominent among these are the so-called *Sarollah, Ghalollah,* and *Jondollah* units. The first two are urban-based and have the power to detain and punish suspected people in the major cities. These have their own subordinate units, such as the so-called *Khaharan-e* Zeynab (the Zeynab Sisters), that are entirely female and act more like an "ethics police." The *Jondollah* members are rarely seen in the cities; they are closely associated with the gendarmerie forces, perhaps acting as a watchdog over this organization on behalf of the IRGC.

The growing administrative and organizational complexity of the Guard Corps is also reflected in the emergence of the IRGC Ministry. Established in November 1982 to take up the task of bringing about better coordination between the Guard Corps and the government, this ministry has been caught up in fierce competition between the revolutionary and bureaucratic arms of the Islamic regime. Initially, many regime officials both in the cabinet and among senior clerics supported

[40]These include the Ministries of Interior, Intelligence, Islamic Guidance, Justice, Defense, and Reconstruction, as well as the Foundation for War Victims, and the Foundation for the Oppressed.

the establishment of the ministry because they hoped it would help them to extend the government's control over the activities of the Guard Corps and to bring its commanders under their own influence.

Such hopes, however, have remained frustrated. The IRGC has thus far not only neutralized all these attempts, but has growingly come to view the IRGC Ministry as a primary means of extending its own political influence in governmental bureaucracy.[41] At the same time, the ministry has come to serve as a primary springboard for IRGC functionaries to more important positions in the government, and it has contributed to the further growth of bureaucratization among the Pasdaran.

As it stands today, the Pasdaran Ministry is an organic part of the IRGC. It maintains contact between the Guard Corps and the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Cabinet, provides for the housing and other needs of the IRGC rank and file, and defends the Guard Corps before the legal authorities. The ministry also has some logistical responsibilities: It procures and produces provisions, and the IRGC Procurement Department stores and distributes them. As for the ministry's workforce, although there are no legal prohibitions against hiring outside individuals, thus far nearly all ministry personnel are provided by the IRGC. Although it is the Prime Minister who appoints the IRGC Minister, his base of support is the IRGC rank and file. The IRGC Minister is a principal member of the IRGC Central Command, without whom (or his representative) no official Command meeting can be held.[42]

IRGC INTERNAL DYNAMICS

As it stands today, the IRGC is not a monolithic and cohesive organization. Although there is little evidence (and a lot of hearsay) of serious disloyalty or documented instances of open armed opposition on the part of the Guard Corp's members against the clerical regime, the Pasdaran is something less than a completely loyal and strictly

[41]The IRGC Minister, Mohsen Rafighdoust, clearly voiced this sentiment in July 1983, "One of the goals we intend to implement . . . is to try to maintain . . . the revolutionary spirit of the individuals forming this Ministry so that it can be held up to other government organizations as proof that without following the traditional ways of the ministries, [our] work can be accomplished. . . ." For the text of this interview, see *Kayhan* (Tehran daily), July 28, 1983, p. 14.

[42]Information on some aspects of the IRGC internal structure and duties of its senior officials was gathered in part from the following official publications: *Pasdar-e Eslam,* No. 12, November-December 1982, pp. 59–61; *Payam-e Enghelab,* No. 54, March 19, 1981, pp. 26–27, 35; *Omid-e Enghelab,* No. 81, June 2, 1984, pp. 40–41; as well as *Sobh-e Azadegan,* February 10, 1981, p. 2, and *Ettela'at* (daily) September 12, 1982, p. 3.

revolutionary Islamic organization. Indeed, the internal life of the Pasdaran has often been characterized by factionalism and persistent disputes among its top officials, as well as by disagreements originating outside its ranks.

A discussion of the historical development of factional alignments within the Guard Corps and detailed analysis of various Pasdaran groups is beyond the scope of this study. However, certain aspects of this issue—crucial in better understanding the IRGC internal dynamics—need to be considered here. To begin with, internal disagreements, which often lead to factional configurations within the Pasdaran, occur on many grounds. In a country where much of the public has traditionally never had any political stake in government affairs, narrow self-interest is inevitably highly developed. Thus personal and personality conflicts, the origins of which are mostly obscure, play a large role. This goes hand in hand with common provincial origins, educational and professional backgrounds, and shared past experiences.[43]

Aside from personality issues, many Pasdaran leaders appear to be divided into various subgroups according to their political and ideological preferences. This can be gleaned from an examination of pronouncements and expressed views of many Guard Corps leaders during official interviews and the like. While limitations of space prevent discussion of specific political issues around which group configurations occur, the publicly voiced opinions of Pasdaran leaders reflect the views of dominant clerical figures of the day, indicating that the Pasdaran is affected by the same political and ideological cleavages that divide the ruling clerical establishment. More important perhaps, it indicates that IRGC commanders are preoccupied with their immediate self-interests, rather than with any profound ideological commitment. There is therefore a greater potential for internal conflict within the IRGC than many observers are prepared to concede.

As a whole, Pasdaran factions appear to consist of a small number of core members who either have direct family and marriage ties with major Shia clerical figures, or who come from certain Tehran neighborhoods, Ghom, Najafabad, Mashad, and Esfahan, where some of the most influential clerics have traditionally been based. As a pattern, large numbers of IRGC rank and file gravitate around these influential core members on an ad-hoc basis depending on specific issues and

[43]For example, some IRGC leaders have had a long common experience in fighting against the monarchy as members of underground Islamic organizations, while others lack pre-revolutionary activist credentials. Still others became prominent only after their common battlefield experiences in Kurdestan in 1979–1980. Again, many other Pasdaran leaders are professionals (usually engineers and doctors) by training, while others do not even have a high school education. Cleavages formed around such differences are not confined to leaders alone, but seem to affect the Pasdaran rank and file as well.

political circumstances. In general, Pasdaran factionalism does not seem to be as schematic as is characteristic of the clerical and bureaucratic establishment. In addition, in many areas there is considerable overlap and fluidity among IRGC power centers whose ties to one another are also determined by the commonly accepted practices of jockeying for position.

The effect of IRGC factionalism on current Iranian domestic politics should not be exaggerated, however. The core of the IRGC is still motivated by Shia religious morality and Islamic revolutionary perceptions. As such, it is loyal to the Islamic regime. Although internal IRGC disagreements may further strain the current regime, as long as Khomeyni remains healthy enough to exercise effective control in Iran these rivalries are unlikely to get out of hand, nor are they likely to lead to overt opposition to the regime.

Most anti-regime opposition groups, including the leftist Mojahedin and various Fedayin Khalgh factions, no longer possess any noticeable influence among the IRGC rank and file or leadership. These groups were influential in the first two post revolutionary years, but most of their sympathizers and supporters have by now been identified and purged by the authorities. Remnants of these groups, however, especially the die-hard Tudeh party, are believed to be still present among the Guard Corps, professing loyalty outwardly but waiting for an opportune time to reassert themselves.

Liberal, monarchist, and nationalist groups, in contrast, have apparently never amounted to anything serious within the IRGC. This assertion does not mean that no individual Pasdaran leaders or members are Iranian nationalists. In fact, there is reason to believe that some of the Islamic-oriented and revolutionary youths among the Pasdaran of today may turn out to be leading Iranian nationalists of tomorrow.

Aside from multiplicity of power centers, the IRGC is also characterized by many other peculiarities. Most Pasdars are young, 18 to 26 years of age, unmarried, and come from the very poorest strata of the urban population, especially in Tehran. The ethnic Persian-speaking element of the population is much more strongly represented in the Pasdaran rank and file than in the regular armed forces. Minorities such as Sunni Muslim Arabs, Torkomans, Baluchis, and Kurds make up a fairly insignificant portion of the IRGC rank and file. Similarly, non-Muslim groups as the Armenians, Assyrians, Bahais, Zoroastrians, and Jews are either left out completely or represent a negligible percentage.

Since 1983, many Shia Kurds have reportedly become IRGC members in Bakhtaran and Shia Arabs in Khuzestan provinces.

Similarly, an undetermined number of Afghan and Iraqi refugees have joined the IRGC lately. The Afghans are believed to be motivated by personal and financial reasons; unlike many of the original Persian refugees coming from Iraq who have volunteered to go to the Iraqi front, the Afghans are not characterized by their loyalty to the Islamic authorities, and they act more like mercenaries than anything else.

As noted earlier, the Guard Corps has grown rapidly in size, and thus far does not appear to have experienced difficulties in attracting volunteers. There are many reasons for this. For one, the marked growth of the private sector of Iranian economy in the 1970s had resulted in the gradual loss of popularity of public employment. The revolution reversed this trend. Since then private enterprises have not regained their earlier momentum; many firms remain closed down, and the activities of most of the remaining are drastically reduced.

This change has not only produced some two to three million unemployed young people but has revived the traditional popularity of government employment. The IRGC, together with several other post-revolutionary organizations, seem to be the prime beneficiaries of this situation. In addition, the Pasdaran provides a secure source of both income and prestige, especially for volunteers coming from slum-dwelling urban families.[44] This increases the vested interests of such elements in the maintenance of the political status quo.

Finally, the IRGC appears to pay special attention to organizing and strengthening its own instruction centers and training programs. At present, the Guard Corps maintains separate and specialized training facilities and small military "academies" in various locations in Iran. In conjunction with the Iranian Army, Navy, and Air Force, the Pasdaran has set up joint institutions for advanced training of its membership in various military fields. In addition, regular military instructors from the Islamic Defense University, Command and General Staff College, Officers' College, and similar professional institutions are engaged in teaching the Pasdaran members. The IRGC has also carried out joint military maneuvers at the Iraqi front and elsewhere with different service branches of the professional armed forces.[45]

[44]The official salaries of the IRGC rank and file seem to be still somewhat lower than the comparable pay for the professional military personnel. This assertion, however, is a matter of dispute: Several of our interviewees contended that the guardsmen actually receive salaries as high as twice the usual pay for the military, while regime officials have often argued otherwise.

[45]Efforts to enhance Guard Corps members' specialized military knowledge was boosted in mid-1984 when this organization began a campaign to attract secondary school and college graduates. At present, professionals and college graduates, whether volunteers or conscripts, can enter different IRGC wings according to their field of specialization. See *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* (Tehran daily), June 28, 1984, p. 2.

Despite these advances, the available information points to a low level of overall technical training and performance.[46] For example, the Pasdaran can not operate warships, nor can they fly sophisticated fighter planes. Most technical manuals are still in English, and despite the introduction of various English-language instruction programs, the overwhelming majority of the IRGC members are not competent in that language. Additionally, like the regular armed forces, the Guards Corps suffers from a serious shortage of qualified technical instructors.

THE IRGC'S FUTURE ROLE

The foregoing analysis suggests that the IRGC remains a primary source of support for the ruling regime in Tehran. However, this has led many observers to ignore the future political role of the Pasdaran and concentrate their attention on the professional military as the logical candidate for possible future military moves against the regime in Iran. Data presented in this study indicate that the IRGC is going to be the decisive military organization with a corresponding political role in the future. In fact, the continued political loyalty of the IRGC should not be taken for granted in the post-Khomeyni period, because a potential threat to his successors may one day come from the Guard Corps rather than from the professional military.

There are several reasons for this assertion. First, the clerical leadership regards the IRGC as the true guardian of the Islamic revolution and controls it in a much less rigid manner than it does the professional military; this has given the Pasdaran leadership a certain freedom of movement and autonomy. Second, unlike the regular military, the bulk of whose forces is concentrated in the Iraqi front, many Pasdaran units are stationed in strategically important locations in Tehran and other major Iranian cities. The strategic urban deployment of the Guard Corps in centers of political power enables its members to rapidly capitalize on future political opportunities that may come their way. Third, the IRGC serves as a prime vehicle of political mobility for many young and secular commanders who may be motivated by personal ambition rather than by Islamic perceptions and ideological loyalties.

In addition, the rapid growth of the Pasdaran has already made the political and ideological control of the IRGC less and less effective. If unchecked, this phenomenon alone is potentially bound to seriously affect the internal cohesion of the IRGC rank and file with grave

[46]This shortcoming is often compensated for by the readiness of the IRGC rank and file to sustain a high rate of casualties at the front with Iraq.

political consequences for the clerical regime. However, there are indications that the Islamic authorities have lately become aware of the potentially dangerous consequences of further ideological dilution within the Pasdaran. For example, in a meeting with the personnel of IRGC Political-Ideological Department on May 5, 1986 in Tehran, President Khamene'i told them "Do not let the quality of your [ideological] work decrease; if the revolutionary comprehension of the Pasdaran weakens, the revolution will be stricken."[47]

Finally, Pasdaran leaders usually maintain close personal ties to leading clerical figures. These young men are well-informed about lines of factional clerical coalitions and have access to inner layers of the decisionmaking establishment. In case any serious disagreement arises among the clerics in the future, the IRGC cannot be expected to remain passive. Indeed, there is reason to believe that some Pasdaran commanders will exploit intraleadership disputes or influence the makeup of a future clerical regime in Iran and in the process attempt to enhance their own influence. This may then lead to armed conflict within the ranks of the Guard Corps.

As noted earlier, the real test for the clerical regime will come only after Khomeyni's political departure. In the immediate post-Khomeyni era, the IRGC power centers are likely to continue remaining loyal to Islamic principles and the revolutionary legacy. However, there are likely to be major shifts in loyalties among the Pasdaran. While the expected volatility of internal political conditions will not push the IRGC—which still remains a child of the revolution and has an obvious vested interest in maintaining the clerical order in Iran—to move against the Islamic regime per se, some of its power centers may not hesitate to engage in armed conflict in support of their own clerical patrons.[48] In view of these considerations, the Guard Corps may yet become a major player in a possible post-Khomeyni political power struggle.

[47]See *Kayhan Havai* (in Persian), May 14, 1986, p. 11.

[48]This is not to argue with the point made earlier in this study that the professional military is much more disposed than the IRGC to want to overthrow the continued clerical rule in Tehran altogether.

V. THE BASIJ

CIRCUMSTANCES OF ESTABLISHMENT

The *Sepah-e Basij* (Mobilization Army), or simply the Basij,[1] occupies a prominent position among Iran's newly formed paramilitary organizations, being second only to the IRGC in importance. Unlike the Pasdaran, which came into being much earlier, the Basij was decreed into existence following the taking of American hostages. On November 26, 1979, Khomeyni ordered that a "people's army of 20 million" be set up to defend the Islamic Republic against its internal enemies and what he called the American intervention in Iran. The Basij functioned as an independent revolutionary organization until the end of 1980 when it merged with the IRGC after the ratification of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (the Parliament).[2]

Khomeyni is often credited with having the foresight to initiate the formation of the Basij, which later became instrumental in dispatching tens of thousands of volunteers to the Iraqi front.[3] In reality, however, the establishment of this new force had nothing to do with the war with Iraq; it was only a response, perhaps much delayed, to two interrelated political circumstances then prevailing in Iran. By the fall of 1979 the Islamic regime was facing a dire internal situation characterized by political uncertainty, ongoing Kurdish, Torkaman, and Baluchi rebellions in the provinces, economic chaos, and widespread lawlessness in many cities. The Islamic authorities felt vulnerable and following the onset of the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis had to confront

[1]The original name of the Basij was *sazeman-e basij-e melli* (The Organization for National Mobilization); in September 1980 its name was changed to *sazeman-e basij-e mostazafin* (The Organization for the Mobilization of the Deprived). Following its incorporation into the IRGC it was renamed as *vahed-e basij-e mostazafin-e sepah-e pasdaran-e enghelab-e eslami* (The Mobilization Unit of the Deprived of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps).

[2]As with the Pasdaran, a few of our respondents were scornful of the Basij and tended to dismiss it as a meaningless institution with little political and military significance. Others, usually lower ranking former officers, were much grieved by the uncommonly high casualty rate among the Basij members, especially the children, found it entirely unnecessary, and blamed Khomeyni and his aides for their deaths. However, many of the lower ranking officers seemed to appreciate the contribution of the Basij to the Iranian military effort.

[3]In late March 1982 about 30,000 Basij members participated in the Iranian offensive that broke the back of Iraqi resistance in Khuzestan. For the Iranian reporting of this offensive see FBIS/SA, *Daily Report*, issues 22 to 31, March 1982. For Western reporting see *Washington Post*, March 29, 30, and 31, 1982; also *New York Times*, April 7, 1982.

growing rifts between the so-called moderates and hard-liners among their own higher ranks. They were thus fearful that they could not hold onto political power unless they swiftly organized a popular force in defense of the new order embracing the most loyal elements in the society.

The formation of the Basij was also an effort to placate and at the same time somehow meet pressures of the more revolutionary and "progressive" forces that had become more powerful after the downfall of the Bazargan government on 11 November 1979. The Fedayin, Mojahedin, Tudeh, and most of other lesser leftist groups had for a long time demanded the creation of a "People's Militia," which was to replace the Iranian professional military after the latter's complete destruction.[4] In many cases the leftists had already established their own armed bands even before the collapse of the monarchy, hoping to turn these into nuclei of an all-embracing future revolutionary army. Ayatollah Khomeyni and most of the other senior clerics never welcomed such demands. Yet, in the second half of 1979, the pressure for establishment of some sort of a "people's army" was boosted when many "progressive clerics" joined the left by publicly calling for immediate training and arming of the sympathetic masses.[5]

NATURE AND EARLY EVOLUTION

As an organization decreed from above, the Basij was initially very slow in taking shape. Ayatollah Khomeyni wanted it to be a popular force built and commanded by the clergy and manned by the deprived classes from urban slums who at the time were fully committed to the cause of the Islamic revolution. Beyond this, the senior clerics had little idea about the future organizational aspects of the Basij. Initially, therefore, operational principles, functions, and structure were left largely undefined. As the clerics realized later, these shortcomings not only hindered the future growth and effectiveness of the new paramilitary force, but from the very outset made it a bone of contention among competing Islamic, revolutionary, and bureaucratic power centers. Each of these viewed the Basij as a potentially useful vehicle

[4]For instance, the Marxist Iranian People's Fedayin Guerrilla Organization (IPFGO) had called for "a people's revolutionary army" as early as August 1978. See *Nabard-e Khalgh* (People's Struggle), the political and theoretic organ of the IPFGO, New Series, No. 1, Tir 1359, June-July 1980, pp. 49–51.

[5]During the 1979 Jerusalem Day celebration no less a figure than Ayatollah Mahmud Talleghani called for the nationwide training and arming of the people "in the schools, villages and factories." Excerpts from this speech appear in *Kayhan* (Tehran daily in Persian), February 19, 1980, p. 5.

for strengthening their own bases of political power, strove to place themselves in positions of influence within it, and tried to mold it according to their own particular religious-ideological preferences.

Reflecting the views of the IRP leadership, the IRGC wanted the Basij to be a highly centralized, disciplined, and tightly controlled structure devoted solely to internal security matters during normal peacetime conditions. It would "stop the fifth-column activities" of anti-regime "troublemakers" and "those who have sold themselves," neutralize "the propaganda plots" of foreign enemies, and prevent the infiltration of enemy agents by controlling the border regions. During a national emergency or in a wartime situation, the Revolutionary Guards wanted the Basij to function as a decentralized resistance force, supplying its own needs and sustaining continuous operations against the enemy, independent of the government. In wartime, however, it was also to be charged with various civil defense functions, including first aid and preparation of shelters against enemy air attacks.[6] In contrast, some of the commanders of the professional military, especially those from the ground forces, preferred the Basij to become a decentralized civilian reserve force, trained and organized by themselves. The officers wanted the Basij to be entrusted primarily with the duty of preparing the civilian population to live under emergency war conditions.[7]

For the Mojahedin Khalgh and clerics sympathetic to their cause, it was imperative for the Basij to have an overriding "political and ideological nature and motivation." This motivation could only come from "the struggle against U.S. imperialism and its domestic bases," which would constitute the *raison d'être* of the Basij. "If it is other than this, it will gradually die." Viewing themselves as vanguards of the anti-American struggle, the Mojahedin leaders also demanded that they be entrusted with training the newly established force because of their "revolutionary experience and competence" in such matters.[8]

Finally, some secular Islamic political groups, including the former Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan's Liberation Movement and the Movement of Combatant Muslims,[9] emphasized "the Islamic ideology

[6]The IRGC preferences were clearly reflected in an article titled "The 20-Million-Member Army Is the Only Way to Stop Eastern and Western Aggression," *Sobh-e Azadegan* (Tehran), February 7, 1980, p. 10.

[7]The views of the professional military on this matter were perhaps best summarized by a Major Ghoroghi during an interview with the daily *Kayhan* (Tehran). See "Plans to Mobilize the 20-Million-Man Army," *Kayhan*, February 19, 1980, p. 5.

[8]Quotations in this paragraph are from an interview conducted with Mr. Abuzar Vardasbi, a well-known Mojahed intellectual.

[9]This latter organization was headed by Dr. Habibollah Peyman whom Ayatollah Khomeyni appointed as a member of the Revolutionary Council immediately after the fall of the monarchy.

and faith" as the guiding principle of the Basij and called for the "cultural training" of its members. While consenting that the Basij might be of use in mobilizing against "capitalists" and "landowners" in the future, these groups wanted it to become more of an urban-based, voluntary civilian defense organization than a guerrilla force as advocated by hard-line revolutionaries.

The divided and often contradictory opinions and approaches of Islamic groups were not the only reasons that hindered the development of the Basij. From the very beginning the Islamic authorities had decided that the new force had to operate without a budget of its own. Thus, the Basij depended to a large extent on the goodwill and cooperation of other Islamic, revolutionary, and government organs for its operations. Many of these, however, were apparently reluctant to spend their resources on an organization that remained beyond their own immediate control.

In view of these difficulties, sometime in late 1979 a National Mobilization Staff (NMS) was created to head the new force. To satisfy and balance the various competing elements, the NMS was designed as a mixed civilian-clerical-military body. Its membership included representatives from the IRP, the ground forces, the IRGC, revolutionary committees, and various Islamic councils and associations. As such, the NMS was placed under the supervision of the Revolutionary Council, while its overall leadership responsibilities and day-to-day operations were entrusted to the clerics.[10] As far as the basic functions of the Basij were concerned, the NMS was apparently careful not to omit the opinions and preferences of any particular element: All it could agree on was that the Basij would concentrate on "cultural, economic, political and military training."

Until about the late summer of 1980, the Basij remained a politically unimpressive and organizationally weak structure; it was far from becoming the disciplined "20 million army" of loyal volunteers in service of the new Islamic order that Khomeyni had originally envisioned. Its activities were largely confined to training a limited number of volunteers from both urban and rural areas. Local mosques, revolutionary committees and various Islamic councils, societies, and associations both in Tehran and in provincial towns usually selected and dispatched the volunteers. These were little-educated men, between the ages of 20 and 30, who came from the very low-income families usually sympathetic to the official Islamic ideology. Small groups of these men, at most a few hundred at a time, were periodically taken to

[10]The first Supervisor of the Basij was Hojjat ol-eslam Amir Majd who headed it until late 1980 when the IRGC incorporated this organization.

various camps outside the cities and for a short period of time given both political-ideological and military training.[11]

The "cultural" training involved participation in obligatory collective prayers several times a day, attendance at religious lectures, revolutionary films, ideological question-and-answer sessions, and the like. Clergymen supervised these functions. The Revolutionary Guards and junior officers and NCOs from the ground forces conducted the military training exercises.[12]

Military training consisted of teaching simple techniques: self-defense, night-watching, compass reading, recognition of military equipment, and some guerrilla and anti-guerrilla measures. In addition, the volunteers received elementary instructions in fighting disasters (flood, fire, earthquakes) and first aid. At this time, the Basij also included women, albeit on a much smaller scale. They did not receive any military training. Instead, whenever male volunteers were sent to camps, some of them took their wives and mothers with them to prepare food and perform nursing duties.

Once they completed such instructions, the Basij volunteers were employed against domestic and external adversaries of the Islamic republic. Many were dispatched to fight against the Kurdish partisans in the western provinces. Many of the rest engaged in urban security and law-enforcement activities in support of the IRGC or other revolutionary organizations. Operational coordination between the Basij elements, other paramilitary forces, and regular military units was often haphazard and ad hoc at best. This resulted in very high Basij casualties and severe military reverses for governmental forces.[13]

POST-1980 EVOLUTION

Following the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980, the Basij underwent radical changes that affected its organizational setup, functions, and political role. In view of the unhappy situation of the professional military at the Iraqi front and shortages of trained personnel to counter the widespread armed activities of various antiregime groups, particularly the Mojahedin, the Islamic authorities were forced to pay much closer attention to the Basij. Hard pressed by these

[11]These were mostly civilian camps, which usually belonged to the former Iranian National Boy Scouts.

[12]Army Colonel Kuchekzadeh (the future commander of the gendarmerie), then the acting commander of the 77th Army in Mashad, was instrumental in securing and organizing the professional military's participation in training of the Basij members.

[13]For coverage of specific instances, see FBIS/MEA, July 30, 1979, R15 and FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report,* August 21, 1979, R1.

unfavorable political-military circumstances, the regime was quick in reshaping the Basij this time. It was decreed that the Basij was not only to play a serious military role at the Iraqi front, but state officials were to turn it into an effective political-ideological organization to bring about fundamental societal change in accordance with Ayatollah Khomeyni's vision.

Organizational Structure

Hojjat ol-eslam Amir Majd, who headed the Basij until then, was dropped together with many other functionaries and replaced with the more energetic Hojjat ol-eslam Salek. Islamic societies were ordered to become more vigorous in recruiting prospective Basij members, and mosques were instructed to better coordinate their activities with local Basij cells and look after various needs of Basij members. Finally, as a means of bringing about better force coordination among revolutionary organs and tighter clerical control, the Basij was incorporated into the IRGC as an autonomous department in late 1980.

Soon after these changes, a Central Basij Council (CBC) was formed to head the force. Headquartered in Tehran, this body is directly subordinated to the IRGC Central Staff to which it is accountable. At present, the CBC is chaired by the Basij Commander, who is himself appointed to that position by the Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Guards. The Commander, in turn, appoints a dozen or so field commanders in operational Basij areas in the provinces who are aided by their own regional councils. The power of the Basij Commander, however, is not absolute: It is somewhat limited by the presence at the CBC of a personal representative of Khomeyni, often called "the Supervisor." Appointed directly by Khomeyni, the Supervisor is invariably a cleric of Hojjat ol-eslam rank. In general, the Supervisor is charged with overseeing all Basij activities and, in particular, providing political and religious guidance to the force. He may also appoint his own subordinate clerical representatives to lower Basij organs in the provinces. The Imam's representative is believed to possess substantial influence as a result of his direct access to Khomeyni's office, and by virtue of his personal ties to higher echelons in the IRGC proper he can effectively take internal Basij matters over the Basij Commander's head.

In line with the common practice within the IRGC, administrative and bureaucratic matters in the Basij are handled by the Ministry for the IRGC through its staff elements. In contrast, operational issues and chain of command are directly subordinated to and supervised by the IRGC Central Staff. The situation seems to be somewhat more

complicated in Iranian Kurdestan and other Western provinces. Here Basij units, alongside other paramilitary elements, are integrated together and come under the direction of the Western Operational Area Command, which directs the conduct of the war with Iraq. The Basij also maintains 11 large bases, often referred to as "headquarters," in Tehran.

Little information is currently available on the internal Basij structures below the CBC. However, we have reason to believe that this organization has many more or less specialized subcomponents, including:

- Security or intelligence; this branch apparently handles liaison, through the IRGC, with revolutionary committees, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Intelligence, and other state organs for coordination and direction of such activities;
- Educational; this branch is charged with the preparation of training materials and also maintains liaison with various local branches of Islamic associations and the like;
- Workers' Mobilization Office; this is the latest addition to the Basij organization, becoming active in 1984. Currently, it maintains a presence in many factories and work places in the cities, and together with the Ministry of Labor tries to mobilize the workers for the war effort;
- Tribal Mobilization Office; this constitutes a large subsection of the Basij and is active in tribal areas of the country. This part of the Basij will be treated separately in this section.

In addition, the Basij has other specialized elements in charge of training, planning, communications, coordination, political-ideology, and procurement.

Training and Manpower Issues

Since the beginning of 1982, the Basij network has expanded rapidly and branched out to cover most large and small towns and thousands of Iranian villages where it has become particularly influential.[14] It has also become instrumental in training, and, through the IRGC, dispatching hundreds of thousands of young men to the Iraqi front. For instance, Seyyed Ali Khamene'i claimed that by the end of that

[14]Since 1981 the Basij has been particularly successful in mobilizing and training the formerly tribal rural population of Lorestan province.

year the Basij had already encompassed 400,000[15] "battle-hardened" volunteers divided into about 9,000 local cells, which operated out of over 6,000 "bases of resistance," or local mosques throughout Iran.[16] By early 1985, the Basij claimed to have set up close to 10,000 rural, tribal, and urban "resistance bases," which were administered by 811 regional headquarters; it also claimed to have trained 3 million personnel, of which 600,000 had seen action at the battlefronts.[17]

Although the growth of the Basij and its trainees seems to be quite impressive, the same can by no means be asserted about the quality of military training and competence of its membership or those trained by it. To be sure, military exercises, still limited to a few weeks, have gradually improved. For instance, more emphasis is now placed on disciplinary matters; and small-arms training, including the use of mortars, receives priority over the familiarity with self-defense techniques. As of 1985, small groups of Basij forces, usually about 1,000, also conduct military maneuvers before being sent to the Iraqi front.[18] Designed to increase the combat capability of the Basij forces, such maneuvers are limited to only a few hours. During these exercises, the volunteers usually penetrate various predetermined obstacles of types used by the Iraqi forces.

The Basij trainees who are normally deployed alongside the main field forces on the Iraqi front often have inadequate military training. The shortage of qualified military instructors is still acutely felt. Thousands of them have died in human wave assaults, especially in August-November 1982 and during February 1984 because of lack of

[15]This figure did not surpass 250,000 in November 1982. See *Tehran Times*, November 23, 1982, p. 1.

[16]In November 1982, during a meeting with Basij officials, the Iranian President is reported to have said, "These figures are hard to believe for a world that stands afar and does not understand the realities of our society and assesses problems by old criteria." And referring to those trained by the Basij, he added, "Still, they find it hard to believe that it is possible to have 2.5 million men who are alert and ready to defend their revolution, homeland, society, principles, values and ideology. They cannot understand this. The world cannot understand the epic that you people, young and old, have created." Radio Tehran Domestic Service, November 30, 1982. FBIS/MEA, December 3, 1982, I9. For the above figures see also the editorial "Confidence in Ourselves" in *Kayhan International* (Tehran), November 27, 1982, p. 2.

[17]See the Basij chief Mohamad Ali Rahmani's remarks appearing in *Kayhan Havai*, January 16, 1985, p. 20. In late February 1985, however, IRGC minister Mohsen Rafighdust claimed that the number of those trained by the Basij exceeded 3 million and that "over 700 to 800 thousand" of these had participated in the battlefront. See *Iran Times* (Washington, D.C.), March 1, 1985, pp. 5, 15. In August 1985 Rahmani asserted that the number of Basij cells had reached over 11,000. See *Iran Times*, August 16, 1985, p. 5.

[18]Some of these maneuvers receive coverage in the Iranian local media, presumably to generate more support for such activities among the population. For example, see FBIS/MEA, *Daily Report*, May 3, 1985, I2.

combat experience, poor organization, and their willingness to become martyrs. At present, the Basij members also receive a more or less specialized training in maintenance of security in villages, simple counter-insurgency techniques, protection of provincial roads and bridges, and some intelligence and police tasks.

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF BASIJ

Aside from its involvement in military matters, the Mobilization Army plays an important political and cultural role in the Islamic Republic. In reality, together with the IRGC, its "mother organization," the Basij is important for ideological-religious education, propaganda, conformity, and political repression.

During the first phase of its existence, politically loyal and ideologically motivated young urban men constituted the overwhelming majority of the Basij membership. With the passage of time, however, the composition of Basij rank and file underwent a radical transformation. At present, Basij members are both males and females, predominantly either in their teens or above the age of 35 or 40.[19] They come from the poorest strata of the population and often have rural backgrounds. Most of them are either illiterate or semi-literate. The pressing socioeconomic requirements of its membership and their need for social mobility have helped the Basij to become the prime revolutionary machinery of patronage for low-income youths, serving as a stepping stone into more prestigious, usually provincial, bureaucratic positions.

A carefully planned program of political socialization has also been set up for the Mobilization Army. This program differs radically from the usual Western approach adopted in matters of recruitment. For example, the families of the martyrs (that is, those who have died in the Iraq-Iran war, or during clashes against anti-government elements), together with youth and women, are the special object of intense political-religious indoctrination.[20] The Basij, along with other revolutionary organizations, views the latter as the most important link in further mass mobilization of the population.

Basij women are ordinarily divided into three categories: regular, active, and special. Many of those in the last two categories receive training in the use of small arms and have to complete some political-

[19]Those between these two age groups are usually recruited by the IRGC, drafted into the army, or employed elsewhere.

[20]Some details about propaganda and "culture" activities conducted by the Basij were given out by Hojjat ol-eslam Salek, the Basij chief, in an interview with the Tehran daily newspaper *Kayhan*, December 1, 1982, p. 5.

ideological courses. At present, Basij women are deployed as security personnel in various sensitive government buildings, including the Central Bank Building in Tehran, the Mehrabad Airport, and several ministries. They are also active during the Friday public prayers and state-organized public demonstrations. Many Basij women are especially active in intelligence gathering tasks in the cities. They inform on antiregime elements and identify their hideouts.[21] Other Basij women perform such chores as caring for the injured.

In addition, all Basij members, especially women, are encouraged to instill in their children the official ideology and teachings of Khomeyni. In this way, the regime hopes that the younger generation would be socialized rapidly enough to ensure the continued existence of the Islamic government in Iran. In this context, the theme of "martyrdom" has become a most powerful tool for political socialization within the Basij. Those who sacrifice their lives for the revolution are promised eternal life in heaven and a glorious memory on earth. Trained and indoctrinated in this manner, Basij members are often mobilized effectively (as members of the Party of God) on short notice for mass demonstrations in support of the government or for other propaganda functions sanctioned by the authorities. By engaging in activities of this nature, the Basij has evolved into a powerful religious and political propaganda organization in contemporary Iran.

MANAGEMENT PATTERNS AND LINKS TO OTHER ORGANS

Little is known about internal personnel practices and policies within the Mobilization Army. On the basis of fragmentary evidence we have been able to collect, however, it is fair to assert that many Basij functionaries are often given political, military, and security assignments that may not necessarily correspond with their training or competence. But such a pattern is neither confined to the Basij or other revolutionary and bureaucratic Iranian organizations, nor apparently a cause for concern among its membership. Instead, it is more or less accepted as inescapable by most Iranians, especially by the urban poor who predominate in the Basij.

In general, many of those who profess strong loyalty, at least publicly, to Khomeyni and his chief lieutenants within the IRP and the

[21]According to "Sister" Nour Mohamadi, a high-ranking Basij official in Tehran, about 4,000 Basij women are currently engaged in these activities in Tehran. See *Iran Times*, Vol. 14, No. 41, December 28, 1984, p. 6. For more information on Basij women see *Iran Times*, March 28, 1986, p. 2.

IRGC can hope eventually to find themselves in positions of power. As among the Revolutionary Guards, personal and family ties also play a large role in promotions and advancements. When combined with religious or ideological militancy and some noticeable experience and service record, personal ties virtually guarantee quick advancement. However, for the rank and file the ultimate test of political loyalty and commitment to the Islamic regime remains "martyrdom" in the struggle against foreign and internal enemies of the regime.

Similar to many other paramilitary organizations currently active in Iran, the Basij has its own "constitution" or charter.[22] Among other things, this document is supposed to define functions and jurisdictions of the Basij and regulate its links with other organizations and power centers. The charter's existence, however, has not prevented the continued rivalry and persistent friction between the Basij and some of these other groups. In particular, Basij links with local mosques and their prayer leaders have been marked by jealousy, rivalry, and tension.

There are many reasons for this uneasy relationship. To begin with, functional overlap between mosques and Basij cells creates tension in urban areas. Both are empowered to mobilize the crowds, spread the official doctrine, educate the youth, dispense patronage, and keep an eye on neighborhood inhabitants. Matters are also complicated by the fact that Basij members are officially regarded as "volunteers" who cannot receive salaries from the government.[23] But many thousands of them are full-time functionaries, so they and their families have to be compensated somehow, either through allocation of lump sums to Basij "resistance cells" by the network of local mosque preachers, or by sharing revenues from confiscations and fines levied by Basij members and Islamic associations attached to the mosques. Thus collection and disbursement of local mosque budgets become everyday issues of contention. The tendency of many low-level clerics to guard their privileges closely and restrict the intervention of Basij members in mosque business has made matters even worse.

Since 1982 the Islamic authorities have consistently attempted to bring the local Basij cells under tighter political and administrative control through the IRP. They have also introduced many other mea-

[22]At present this charter forms section four of the overall IRGC constitution. *Payam-e Enghelab*, No. 73, 20 Azar 1361 (December 1982), p. 42.

[23]The "volunteer" status of Basij members was hotly disputed by some of our interviewees who reported specific cases of forced membership drives by the Basij in various localities. Although instances of such drives cannot be ruled out, many lower income individuals find sufficient incentives and rewards in the Basij to join voluntarily.

sures to somehow remedy the situation.[24] However, problems in this area continue to exist on a nationwide scale. Even though the clerics have consolidated their power, considerable fragmentation of authority on the local level still characterizes the uneasy mosque-Basij alliance.[25]

THE TRIBAL MOBILIZATION

Originally named as the Tribal Corps (*sepah-e ashayer*), this section of the Mobilization Army came into being in September 1980, immediately after the outbreak of the war with Iraq. About one year after its establishment, it was placed under the IRGC and its name changed into *basij-e ashayer* (the Tribal Mobilization). The jurisdiction and activities of this organization are confined to Iran's tribal territories where an estimated 5 million settled, semi-settled, and migrant tribal population of great ethnolinguistic and religious diversity currently resides.[26]

Until 1983 the activities of the Tribal Basij revolved around mobilizing the tribes in the western provinces—including Lorestan, Bakhtaran, and Ilam—where it succeeded in training and dispatching large numbers of Shia tribesmen to the Iraqi front. Elsewhere, it remained ineffective and maintained little presence. For example, in Fars province with a tribal population of over 400,000, this organization managed to train only 1,000 tribesmen in 1982 and about 300 during the first six months of 1983. In the same period, it dispatched only 2,000 tribesmen to the front, almost one-third of these being high school children.[27] Since then, however, the Tribal Basij has intensified its activities and extended its "resistance cells" among the Ghashghai, Baluch, Torkaman, Bakhtiyari, Khamseh, Boir Ahmadi, and other tribal groupings. In many of these tribal areas nearly all Basij personnel

[24]Most prominent among them have been the periodic "Unity Seminars for Clerics and the Mobilization" conducted by the IRGC at various levels since the beginning of 1982.

[25]Similar, though less troublesome, problems exist between the Basij and various Islamic welfare foundations on one hand, and government civil bureaucracies, particularly the Ministry of Reconstruction Crusade, on the other.

[26]For comprehensive information on various Iranian tribal groups consult: *Ilat va Ashayer: majmu'eyeh maghalat* [Tribes: Collection of Articles], (Tehran, Entesharat Agah, Summer 1983); and *Majmu'eh maghalat mardomshenasi: ilat va ashayer* [The Tribes: Collection of Anthropological Articles], Vol. II (Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, Anthropological Center, Autumn 1983).

[27]These figures were revealed by the regional commander of the Tribal Basij in Fars. See *Omid-e Enghelab* (Tehran), No. 81 (12 Kordad 1363), June 2, 1983, p. 31.

are reported to be local recruits.[28] At present, the Tribal Basij carries out the following activities in territories under its jurisdiction:

- It collects provisions and supplies for the war effort through its "resistance cells," which may or may not be physically headquartered in local mosques. These supplies usually include cash and domestic animals.
- It recruits tribal people and sends them to the Iraqi front. These "volunteers" usually go through short-term military training exercises that last no more than 10 days. Recruitment activities, however, are seldom carried out on an individual basis. Instead, entire clans and sub-tribes are collectively mobilized and dispatched to the front.
- Together with the IRGC regulars, the Tribal Basij also participates in the fight against feudal tribal heads, landlords, and other antiregime elements. The power of tribal khans and landlords, however, has been drastically reduced since 1980. In many cases, their lands have also been appropriated and distributed among settled tribal communities.
- The Tribal Basij plays an important role in the maintenance of security in tribal areas. Alongside other revolutionary organs, it controls intertribe conflicts and keeps an eye on tribal movements. It is also supposed to struggle against tribal banditry and smuggling, and engage in disaster relief operations. Under the monarchy, many of these functions were the responsibility of the gendarmerie; this force, however, ceased to exercise these functions after the Islamic revolution and maintained little presence in tribal areas until very recently. In mid-1984 reports appeared in the Iranian press about the gendarmerie's readiness to become active in this field once again.
- The Tribal Basij also conducts political and religious propaganda among tribesmen and indoctrinates tribal youth.

As is the case in the urban centers, there is currently a considerable degree of rivalry, functional duplicity, and fragmentation of authority among various revolutionary and bureaucratic organs active in Iran's tribal areas. These problems continue to hinder governmental efforts to resolve many socioeconomic difficulties facing the tribal communities. They also give rise to local political disagreements, which become especially worrisome for the authorities in Tehran during national parliamentary elections.

[28]Ibid., p. 32.

Since 1983 the Tehran government has attempted to coordinate the activities of various "concerned" organizations in tribal areas. Steps have also been taken to increase the financial control and accountability of these organizations. At present, the Minister of the Interior heads a newly established "Iranian Tribal Affairs Headquarters" (TAH), the policies of which are to be implemented by all local officials. Among its other functions, the TAH approves the tribal budget of each organization before it is sent to the government for funding. The TAH also maintains subordinate regional headquarters in particular tribal areas.[29]

[29]The TAH was established in early February 1983. Its membership is composed of "fully authorized representatives" from the IRGC and the ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, Public Health, Education, Islamic Guidance, and Reconstruction Crusade. See *Sobh-e Azadegan* (Tehran), February 14, 1983, p. 15.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Although the focus of the present study has been the Iranian armed forces, it is important to place the military in the context of the larger internal Iranian political picture, because one of the original motives for undertaking this study was the possibility that the military might play an important role in future internal politics. The interviews we conducted and other sources suggest that the probability is very slight, and if there is any such involvement, it will be limited and will come about only under certain specific conditions. The prospective political role of the other major wing of the Iranian armed forces, the IRGC, is considerably higher, but even here its freedom of maneuver will be determined by developments within the country's true ruling elite, the clerical hierarchy and the Islamic Republican Party.

POST-REVOLUTIONARY ISLAMIC RULE AND THE MILITARY

One of the most striking features of post-revolutionary Iran is the success with which the Islamic regime has consolidated its power and established its rule. This is nowhere more apparent than in relation to the military. From the moment the monarchy was overthrown, the ruling clerics were intensely aware of the potential threat that the Shah's military posed to their own political future and undertook a series of steps to neutralize it. These included:

- A thorough purging of the professional military, which eventually reached all potential enemies from pro-Shah, pro-Western monarchists to the Islamic Marxist Mojahedin and communists. Like the purges associated with the French and Bolshevik revolutions, this process had a continuing psychological effect in intimidating those unhappy with the regime, even after the actual purges slowed down.
- The gradual replacement of the Shah's officer corps with more ideologically reliable leaders, linked through family ties to the clerical hierarchy and trained increasingly in indigenous military schools and academies.
- The establishment of a parallel military organization, the IRGC, to control and eventually assume the same responsibilities as those of the professional military. Creation of the IRGC

both gave the regime coercive power and reduced its dependence on the regular military to prosecute the Iraqi war.

- The creation of a large number of overlapping control mechanisms within the armed forces, whose purpose was specifically to guard against potential antiregime challenges arising within the regular military. These organizations not only watch the military, but watch each other as well and provide multiple reporting channels through which the regime can gather information on the military.
- Continuation of the Shah's practice of splitting the military and preventing the formation of strong horizontal links within the armed forces that could serve as the organizational basis for an antiregime conspiracy.

The regime's efforts to purge and control the military suffered something of a setback with the onset of the Iraqi war, because the combat put a premium on professional know-how and experience. The purge process slowed and in some respects was reversed as the regime was forced to recruit back some formerly suspect officers. As a result, there are even now many officers remaining from the Shah's army who received training in the West. Nonetheless, the purpose of the purges had been largely accomplished by the beginning of the war. The conflict, moreover, vastly accelerated the growth of the IRGC and gave the clerics an alternative instrument both of fighting and control. For the first year and a half of the war, the presence of Iraqi troops on Iranian soil concentrated the military's attention on the foreign enemy, during which time the regime was able to put into place the mechanisms for continuing control over the military.

For all of these reasons, the probability that the professional military could even organize a coup, much less successfully overthrow the clerical regime, at any time in the foreseeable future is low to vanishing. Although the military may have increasing grounds for complaint the longer the war continues, it has decreasing leverage against Tehran.

The IRGC, however, will probably play a larger political role than it has in the past. The political weight of the Pasdaran has grown to be larger than that of the military and will continue to do so. One reason is dilution of the IRGC's ideological character. At the start the Pasdaran represented one of the most fanatical elements of Iranian society, dedicated to Khomeyni and to the Islamic ideology he espoused. This remains true of the core leadership of the IRGC, but with a tenfold expansion in membership between 1981 and 1985, it has been impossible to maintain the organization's level of ideological

commitment. Although many of those who joined later were also loyal to the Islamic regime, others were motivated by pay, or by the fact that the IRGC became a route to quick political and social advancement. There is no evidence of active hostility toward the regime within the Pasdaran, or any sort of principled rejection of the officially sanctioned Islamic ideology; rather, personal ambition or rivalries may come to motivate a turn against the regime officials. Moreover, the loyalty of Pasdar commanders is absolute only with respect to Khomeyni himself within the clerical leadership; it is by no means automatic in the case of those who may follow him.

Another factor permitting a greater IRGC political role is that it is not subject to nearly the same number of political controls as the professional military. When first created, the Pasdaran was itself an instrument of political control; the issue of its loyalty never arose. In subsequent years the regime in effect imposed some control mechanisms on the IRGC through the assignment of so-called Imam's representatives and supervisors to Pasdar units. Khomeyni and the clerical leadership control major appointments within the IRGC and can dismiss either the Commander in Chief or Minister. But the Pasdaran has never suffered from the same degree of distrust as the professional military and consequently is subject to far fewer and less intrusive political controls.

The IRGC is much better deployed for political action than the professional military, almost all of whose units are engaged at the Iraqi front. For the military to stage a coup, it would have to disengage physically from the Iraqi front and march into the interior of the country. By contrast, as many as 30 percent of the IRGC's personnel are currently deployed away from the front in Tehran and other key urban centers. The IRGC began its institutional life playing a primarily political role and continues to perform such sensitive functions as the guarding of clerical leaders, ministries, and communications.

A final factor is the decentralization of the IRCG command and the presence of various internal tensions and factions within it. Although decentralization of the professional military's leadership decreases the likelihood that it will play a political role by weakening its ability to act collectively, decentralization may have the opposite effect within the IRGC by providing the occasion for potentially destructive internal conflicts. There have already been instances of intra-IRGC rivalries that have at times led to open fighting and internal purges.

All of these considerations taken together suggest the possibility of more overt involvement by the IRGC in internal Iranian politics. More overt political involvement, however, is quite different from posing a serious challenge to the IRP leadership. For all that the

Pasdaran is positioned to make an independent bid for power, it does not as yet have sufficient motive to do so. For this to occur any time in the foreseeable future, one would have to posit the existence of other forms of internal conflict within Iran, primarily within the clerical leadership itself.

SCENARIOS FOR INSTABILITY

As a prelude to any discussion of scenarios for future internal instability in Iran, it should be stated that our results do not lead us to conclude that internal instability is likely. Quite the opposite: The research indicates that the regime has done a remarkable job in neutralizing the potential threat posed by the professional military, and that the IRGC remains an integral part of the impressive web of institutions supporting the present regime in Tehran. Indeed, during the past seven years Iran's ruling clerical establishment has proven itself to be a far more durable institution under pressure than the Pahlavi family. Moreover, the regime that the clerics have created in the first seven years since the Iranian revolution is more thoroughly institutionalized than most in the Middle East, and some form of Islamic rule will survive the passing of Ayatollah Khomeyni. The purpose of the present exercise is to think through the ways in which instability could occur, even if their probability is low; they remain possibilities that U.S. policymakers, among others, would be imprudent to ignore.

Serious internal conflict in Iran before the death of Khomeyni is unlikely. In spite of his advanced age and less than perfect health, Khomeyni continues to command enormous authority within the IRP and Iran as a whole and has been crucial to the resolution of disputes within the ruling party and its subordinate organizations, including the military. Once the father of the revolution goes, however, it is possible that many current tensions will eventually find expression in challenges to or within the post-Khomeyni leadership. By the mid-1980s, it was evident that several factors were eroding the Islamic regime's credibility and legitimacy.

In the first place, although the regime has been able to keep the economy going through the five years of war with Iraq, it has clearly been unable to bring about the improvements in Iranian standards of living repeatedly promised. Economic stringency brought about by the war has been exacerbated by the dislocations caused by the rush of millions of villagers to the cities since the late 1970s.

Iran has been unable to achieve a decisive victory in the war with Iraq. In spite of battlefield successes such as the taking of Faw in

February of 1986, the Iranian armed forces seem less willing or able to mount the large offensives that were characteristic of the first few years of the war. There has been increasingly open talk about the costs of the war in the media, costs that now amount to upward of half a million dead and wounded. Some clerical leaders have also criticized continuation of the war, and there may be growing resistance to service at the front.

Finally, the urban poor and the bazaar merchants, at one time the backbone of the revolution, appear to have lost much of their previous enthusiasm for the regime, part of a general erosion in its popular support.[1] There is an increasing amount of anecdotal evidence available of the regime's growing lack of popularity, much of it quite openly expressed.

Although many aspects of clerical rule have been institutionalized, this institutionalization, as we have seen in the case of the political control agencies, has been incomplete and subject to continuing change. The most important question is of course the mechanism that will choose a successor to Khomeyni. Although Ayatollah Montazeri was designated as Khomeyni's successor in December 1985, it is not at all clear that his authority will be readily accepted by other members of the clerical hierarchy. There is substantial evidence of rifts among the top ranks of the IRP on both socioeconomic and war and foreign policy issues, at times spilling over into violent confrontation between the regime's supporters.[2]

A TWO-PHASE SCENARIO FOR INSTABILITY

If there is a serious succession crisis or breakdown in internal order, it is likely to come about in two distinct stages. In the first stage, conflict would have to be internal to the present clerical leadership. All potential opposition groups, including the leftist parties (i.e., the Fedayin, Mojahedin, and Tudeh parties), tribal and ethnic groups such as the Kurds, Baluchis, Torkamans, and Azeris, and the professional military have been carefully suppressed by the regime and the control mechanisms it has set up. They appear to be much too weak to be able to take power on their own. Rather, conflict would have to begin with a split, probably over possession of Khomeyni's mantle, between two or

[1]In a radio broadcast in the spring of 1985, Khomeyni is said to have scoffed at a group of clerics who "say it was better under the former [i.e., the Shah's] regime. . . . These are a minority to whom the people should not listen. The overwhelming majority of the clergy are committed to the Islamic Republic." *New York Times*, May 7, 1985.

[2]For example, it was a top IRP security leader who was eventually blamed for the August 1981 assassination of the President and Prime Minister in Tehran.

more of the senior clerics within the IRP. Such a rupture need not occur, of course. The clerical leadership realizes that it has a common interest in preserving civil order and clerical rule and may well find ways to compose differences peacefully and within legally established procedures. Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence of serious rivalries in the past among such powerful clerics as Khamenei, Rafsanjani, or Khoeyniha such that a major succession struggle can by no means be ruled out in the future.

Were this to happen, what we know of the Pasdaran suggests that the conflict would be transmitted to that organization very quickly. The IRGC is factionalized into competing groups, many of them highly politicized and tied to one or another of the leading clerics. It is conceivable that in the event of a succession deadlock the leading clerical contenders could call on their Pasdar allies for political and even military support, leading to the possibility of the spread of outright conflict within the IRGC itself. Indeed, the temptation to call for Pasdar military intervention could be quite strong, given the strategic deployment of many Pasdar units in Tehran and the other major cities. Such a sequence of events actually unfolded as the result of a rivalry between two clerics for the leadership of Esfahan in 1983, where open fighting broke out between two groups of Pasdars allied with the two ayatollahs. After the death of Khomeyni, this sort of scenario could be replayed, but on a national scale. Overt politicization of the Pasdaran is the primary scenario under which a breakdown of central authority and even civil war becomes possible.

Even if open fighting between Pasdaran factions were to break out, the chances are that one side or the other would win fairly quickly, or that the conflict would be resolved through negotiation. In any case, the Islamic character of the Iranian regime would not be threatened, and Iran would be governed by one or another faction within the IRP. Even under these circumstances, none of the Pasdar factions has an incentive to undermine the rule of Islam in Iran.

Nonetheless, there is the possibility that a second stage could begin after the clerical regime had weakened itself through prolonged internal conflict, similar to what happened in South Yemen in January 1986. Only after the different Pasdar factions had exhausted themselves through civil war does the prospect arise that outside groups like the professional army or the leftist parties have a chance of playing a role. This would be the most critical time for the United States as well, because scenarios in which factions either within the IRP or among the leftist parties call on the Soviet Union for assistance (as in Afghanistan) are most likely to occur at this point. The Pasdaran could fragment altogether into private armies, or else be consumed in internecine

conflict to such an extent that the professional military will emerge as the most disciplined, powerful, and well-organized force in the country. Hence, over the long term the possibility of a political move by the professional military cannot be ruled out. Before this can occur, however, a long sequence of extremely improbable events has to take place.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The long-term U.S. policy objective ought to be to reestablish some sort of working relationship with Iran and to prevent it or any part of it from coming under Soviet influence.[3] Iran remains the most important Persian Gulf state from the standpoint of population, power, and geographical location; Soviet influence there would endanger the security of Saudi Arabia and the other pro-Western states around the Persian Gulf. Although there is little prospect for better relations in the near term, Iran's importance dictates that the United States rebuild some kind of position there.

It is by no means the intention of this study to predict that Iran will become unstable in the near future. As noted earlier, instability would have to start within the clerical leadership, a subject that has not been the focus of this research. What we wanted to do was merely to suggest how internal conflict might start, and what roles the two wings of the Iranian military might come to play in it. Indeed, over the short run quite the opposite conclusion is warranted. Iran has remained remarkably stable over the past several years in view of the economic, military, and other pressures it has experienced since 1979; and while Khomeyni lives, it is likely to remain so. What the scenario above should suggest is that Iran's apparently quiescent state could change—indeed, under the right circumstances, change very rapidly—once Khomeyni departs the scene. The American public, and at times American policymakers, have short memories and are likely to be taken by surprise should this happen.

In the short run, almost all policy conclusions suggested by the present research are negative ones. The United States will have very little influence over internal events in Iran while the IRP's position remains what it is. The interviews suggest that some officers remain who are sympathetic to resumption of relations with the United States, particularly in the professional military; but the United States will be

[3]This report was written before it was revealed that members of the National Security Council had in fact been in touch with elements within the Iranian armed forces. These contacts and the controversy they aroused will, to say the least, complicate the future course of U.S.-Iranian relations.

able to reach out to them in the future only with great difficulty, much less improve their position. However, the United States can take some actions that might actually make its position worse. One example of this is abandonment of the U.S. posture of formal neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war. It is very clear that hostility toward Iraq runs very deep, even among American-trained, pro-monarchist officers abroad. Were the United States to be seen siding with Iraq against Iran—a trend some already perceive—it would risk alienating almost all Iranians, including groups that far down the road might constitute a potential ally. Similarly, promotion of Iranian opposition groups that have not established a strong basis of support internally can only serve as an irritant and obstacle to the eventual building of relations and may damage American credibility. Finally, although one cannot categorically rule out U.S. military retaliation in response to terrorism linked to Iran (for example in Lebanon) the benefits of such a response will have to be weighed very carefully against its probable internal consequences.

What the United States needs to do is to position itself for a crisis *before the fact* because the situation inside Iran could deteriorate very quickly. In a fluid internal political situation, the risks and potential benefits to U.S. interests increase dramatically. Khomeyni's successors, for example, are likely to show greater flexibility on all issues, including the terms on which they are willing to settle the Iran-Iraq war and their interest in supporting revolution and terrorism elsewhere in the Middle East. As noted earlier, there is evidence of growing opposition to the war; the common assumption that Khomeyni's successors' terms for settlement will be less demanding seems reasonable.

In the past, contenders for power in Iran have appealed to outside forces to bolster their position: In the early 1920s, Reza Shah sought an alliance with the Soviet Union, whereas his son received American backing to regain the throne in 1953. There are, of course, major rifts between Iran and both superpowers that will prevent any successor regime from moving quickly to establish close relations, particularly in the case of the United States. In the case of Moscow, historical distrust of Russian expansionism (much of which has come at the expense of Iran) and Moscow's intimidating military weight on the northern border, as well as the Islamic regime's ideological distrust of Communism, serve as a barrier to improved ties. Particularly after the Islamic Republic's crackdown on the Tudeh party in the spring of 1983, Soviet-Iranian ties have been characterized by harsh invective on both sides. In the case of the United States, the causes of American-Iranian hostility are as well known as they are deep. But if an internal power struggle becomes sufficiently intense, groups may revert quickly to the historical practice of making clandestine appeals for support. Which

superpower receives the appeal will depend on the character of internal factional politics; within the clerical leadership itself, there are already evident factions more and less sympathetic to either the United States or the Soviet Union. It is worth bearing in mind, moreover, the pragmatic streak evident in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic, reflected in such actions as the negotiations to end the hostage crisis in 1980–81, and Iran's acceptance of military supplies from Zionist archenemy Israel a mere two years after the revolution.

Positioning oneself before a crisis means several things. It means knowing who the major players are likely to be. One of the conclusions of the present study is that the Iranian military, particularly the IRGC, is likely to be one of the most important institutions in the future internal Iranian politics; yet very little is known about its leadership, composition, and functioning. Many U.S. policymakers are unaware of who their potential friends may be in the Iranian military. Another way of positioning oneself is to create certain lines of communication such that elements in the Iranian leadership, inside or outside the military, would have the means of making overtures to the United States if they wanted to do so. At present the United States has no easy way of communicating with potential political players in Iran, particularly at lower levels.

However, other channels are available. West Germany, Japan, and, in the region, Turkey and Pakistan have considerable economic and political ties with Tehran. At one point during the hostage crisis, American policy actively sought to isolate Iran to punish it. This policy has already changed to some extent and should do so further. U.S. allies with ties to Tehran should be encouraged to build their presence in Iran to the extent possible and at an appropriate moment could be used to communicate U.S. desire to restore some semblance of normal relations. With a settlement of the Iran-Iraq war and an end to the acute threat to the pro-Western states of the Persian Gulf, the United States should be prepared to resume other aspects of normal relations, including, under the right circumstances, weapons sales.

In the end, one of the greatest obstacles to improved relations with a successor to Khomeyni will be American public opinion. As a result of the hostage crisis and continuing Iranian support for international terrorism, many Americans remain understandably suspicious of Iran and unwilling to countenance a resumption of relations with the present regime. And clearly, the United States cannot support a regime that appears to want to undermine U.S. interests at every opportunity. Nonetheless, a successor to Ayatollah Khomeyni may be considerably less prone to pursue the messianic spread of radical Islam and more

willing to work pragmatically to attend to Iran's economic development needs. If that is the case, the United States needs to prepare the way for a restoration of ties.

Appendix A

DIRECTORY OF IRANIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS

As a reference aid, this section identifies individuals who have held senior command or other influential positions in selected Iranian military organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979. The dates, unless otherwise indicated, refer to a person's earliest and most recent identification in a given position.

AIR FORCE

Mehdiyun, Said. General. After heading the Air Defense Command until early February 1979, he succeeded General Hoseyn Rabii (executed on April 9, 1979) as commander in mid-February 1979; however, he was removed from that position only two days later because of his unpopularity with subordinate air force personnel. Mehdiyun was arrested by Islamic authorities in the wake of the aborted Nojeh coup of July 1980 as he was apparently attempting to flee the country. Executed on August 15, 1980.

Azarbarzin, Shapour. Lieutenant General. Replacing Mehdiyun, he served as commander from about February 20, 1979 to the first week of March 1979. Before the revolution, he was a deputy air force commander under Rabii. Was imprisoned for a short time by the new regime in spring 1979, then released through Mehdi Bazargan's mediation. Was offered the post of defense minister in April 1979 but refused to accept. Left Iran in November 1980.

Imanian, Afsar. Brigadier General. Served as commander from late March to early August 1979. Was also air force chief of staff in the period after February 25, 1979.

Bagheri, Hoseyn, Amir-Bahman. Major General. Deputy head of the Air Defense Command in early 1979. Replaced Imanian as air force commander in August 1979 and kept this position until July 1980 when he was removed and arrested for a short period of time. In February 1981 Bagheri was arrested again on charges of complicity with the U.S. rescue mission in Tabas. Condemned to life imprisonment in July 1985.

Fakuri, Javad. Colonel Commander from July 1980 to September 29, 1981 when he was killed in a C-130 plane crash. Also served as Minister of Defense from September 1980 until his death. In contrast with former air force commanders who had been mostly secularist senior officers under the Shah, Fakuri symbolized the emergence and elevation of ideologically motivated and genuinely revolutionary junior officers to senior command positions in the Iranian professional military.

Moinpur, Mohammad-Hasan. Colonel. Commander from October 2, 1981 to November 25, 1983 when he resigned from his position for health reasons. Hailing from a religious family, Moinpur was himself a thoroughly religious individual. An air force major immediately before his appointment as air force commander, he was promoted to colonel by Islamic authorities to "qualify" for the position.

Sadigh, Hushang. Colonel Commander from November 28, 1983 to the present.

Saghafi, A. Brigadier General. The first air force commander after the revolution. Was appointed to that position on February 12, 1979 but resigned a few days later.

Sepidmui-Azar, Ali-Asghar. Colonel. Deputy Commander; served from October 1984 to December 1984.

Abedin. Colonel. Deputy Commander, from February 1984 to June 1985.

GROUND FORCES

Fallahi, Valiollah. Brigadier General. Acting commander from May 22, 1980 to June 19, 1980. He had served three prison terms under the monarchy. Was a supporter of President Bani-Sadr. Also held position of Chief of Joint Staff from June 1980 to September 1981.

Zahirnezhad, Ghasem-Ali. Brigadier General. Commander from June 19, 1980 until October 1, 1981. Was simultaneously the supervisor of the gendarmerie during that period. Zahirnezhad has been one of the most influential officers under the Islamic Republic and a major figure in the reorganization of the armed forces since the revolution.

Foruzan, Mohammad. Colonel Deputy Commander in 1981 under Azhirnezhad. Served simultaneously as commander of the gendarmerie.

Sayad-Shirazi, Ali. Colonel. Commander from October 1, 1981 to the present. Probably the most influential professional officer in the ground forces. Distinguished himself during the campaign to suppress

Kurdish guerrillas in 1980, later becoming a major architect of Iranian military victories against the Iraqi forces. Sayad-Shirazi has also played an important role in the gradual integration of the IRGC with the professional military. He has reportedly been a leftist and a member of Tudeh party in his youth. In early 1981 an attempt to remove Sayad-Shirazi from his command position in western Iran failed, in part because of his strong support among junior officers, NCOs, and the Pasdaran. In March 1981, the IRGC formally demanded Shirazi's reinstatement.

Saidnia, Ali. Colonel. Commander of the Ground Forces' Aviation Command, from May 12, 1982 to September 1982.

Afshar, Hasan. Brigadier General. Commander of the Ground Forces' Aviation Command. Appointed on September 6, 1982.

Jamali-Zallikhani, Abdollah Ali-Asghar. Colonel. Deputy Commander, April 1982 to January 1985.

NAVY

Afsari-Pur. Captain. Acting commander of the navy for a short while in early 1979.

Madani, Seyyed Ahmad. Rear Admiral. The first navy commander after the revolution, appointed to that position on February 12, 1979. Became a candidate in the presidential elections that brought Bani-Sadr to power in January 1980. Also served as Minister of the Interior for a short while in early February 1979, after which time he was appointed Governor of Khuzestan, a position that he held until August 1979. Madani was also Iran's first Minister of Defense after the revolution. Disillusioned with the ruling clerics, he fled Iran in May 1980.

Alavi, Mohammad. Commodore. Retired in late 1976 by Admiral Kamal Habibollahi, then the Navy Commander. Succeeding Madani as commander, he lasted in that position until the summer of 1980. Alavi was detained in July 1980 and sentenced to eight years in prison in February 1981 on charges of having maintained clandestine connections with U.S. officials. He was released from prison on July 27, 1982. Alavi was a nonreligious individual.

Tabatabai, A. Commodore. Served as acting navy commander for a short while in the summer of 1980.

Afzali, Khoshk-Bijari, Bahram. Captain. Commander from July 1980 until April 30, 1983. Was also appointed the navy's chief of staff on June 6, 1980. Along with many high-ranking navy and army officers, Afzali was arrested in April 1983 on charges of being a communist

and passing classified government documents to the Tudeh party. The son of a clergyman, Afzali was, however, never known to be a leftist before his arrest. He was tried in December 1983 and executed on February 25, 1984.

Razmju, Gholam-Ali. Captain. Deputy Commander. Appointed in December 1983 and served at least until March 1985.

Hoseyni, Esfandyar. Captain. Replaced Afzali as commander on April 30, 1983 and lasted until June 25, 1985 when he resigned for unknown reasons. He was a nonreligious individual, married to an Italian national.

Malekzadegan, Mohammad-Hoseyn. Captain. The present commander of the navy; appointed on June 27, 1985. Also served as a deputy commander after October 10, 1980, and was appointed Commander of Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman Fleet by Capt. Hoseyni in June 1983.

Ahmadi, S. Captain. Commander of the Bushehr and Khark naval bases as of November 1983.

Ghafuri, Taghi. Captain. Appointed commander of the Northern Fleet on July 4, 1984.

CHIEFS OF JOINT STAFF

Gharani, Valiollah. Major General. The Chief of Army Staff immediately after the revolution. Appointed in February 1979, he held that position until April 23, 1979 when he was assassinated in Tehran by the terrorist group Forghan.

Gharavi, Mohammad Vali. Major General. The first Chief of General Staff, appointed to that position on February 12, 1979, was removed a short while later.

Farbod, Naser. Major General. Appointed Chief of Staff following Gharani's assassination; was dismissed on July 21, 1979. Was several times dismissed or imprisoned under the Shah.

Shaker, Hoseyn. Brigadier General. Acting Chief of Staff after Farbod's dismissal, lasted until September 1979.

Riyahi, Taghi. Major General. Appointed Chief of Staff in mid-1979, was simultaneously acting Minister of Defense. Resigned position in September 1979.

Shadmehr, Hadi. Major General. Was appointed Chief of Staff by Bani-Sadr in February 1980. Served until June 14, 1980.

Fallahi, Valiollah. Brigadier General. Replaced Shadmehr as Chief of Staff on June 19, 1980 and held the position until September 29, 1981 when he died in a plane crash. From January 1981 to June

11, 1981, Fallahi also served as the acting commander of the ground forces.

Zahirnezhad, Ghasem-Ali. Brigadier General. Appointed Chief of Staff on October 1, 1981 upon Fallahi's death and retained that position until October 25, 1984 when he became Ayatollah Khomeyni's personal representative in the Supreme Defense Council. He has been one of the most influential professional officers in the Islamic Republic with close personal ties to senior clerics. Also served as Deputy Chief of Staff under Fallahi.

Eskandarzadeh, M. Colonel. The current Deputy Chief of Staff, appointed in mid-March 1985.

Sohrabi, Esmail. Colonel. The current Chief of Staff; appointed to that position by Ayatollah Khomeyni on October 25, 1984. He has been an infantry staff colonel and was 46 years old at the time of his appointment. He is a native of Bakhtaran and most probably a Shii Kurd. Like Zahirnezhad and Shirazi (present commander of the ground forces), Sohrabi was among the first professional officers who directed the campaign to suppress the Kurdish rebellion in 1979–1981. Distinguishing himself during the war in Kurdestan, he rapidly rose in the ranks from commanding a brigade in 1979 to becoming a division commander in 1981. Immediately before becoming Chief of Staff, Sohrabi was the military commander of the Fars province.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Madani, Seyyed-Ahmad. Rear Admiral. First Minister of Defense after the revolution. He served in that position from February 22, 1979 to April 2 of the same year. Falling out with Islamic authorities, Madani left Iran for Europe in May 1980.

Jafar, Shafaghat. Major General. Acting Minister of Defense from January to early March of 1979.

Riyahi, Taghi. General. Minister of Defense from April 1, 1979 to September 18 of the same year when he resigned from his position.

Khamenei, Seyyed-Ali. Hojjat ol-eslam. Served as the Undersecretary of Defense from late July to November 6, 1979, bringing that ministry under greater control of the Revolutionary Council. Khamenei is currently serving his second term as the President of the Islamic Republic.

Chamran, Mostafa. The first and thus far the only civilian Minister of Defense in the Islamic Republic. Served from November 15, 1979 to June 21, 1981 when he was killed apparently on the war front with Iraq. Originally a guerrilla leader trained in Lebanon and

elsewhere before the Shah's downfall, Chamran has been credited by Islamic authorities with reorganizing the professional military on the eve of the Iran-Iraq war and bringing that force under the control of clerical authority.

Fakuri, Javad. Air Force Colonel. Appointed as Minister of Defense by the then Premier Rajai in September 1980. Died in a plane crash on September 29, 1981. Was simultaneously the Air Force Commander.

Namju, Musa. Colonel. Deputy Minister of Defense from sometime in 1980 until his death in September 1981. Was also Ayatollah Khomeyni's military advisor and representative in the Supreme Defense Council from July to September 1981.

Salimi, Mohammad. Colonel. Became Minister of Defense in early October 1981, retaining this position until October 1984, when he was chosen by President Khamenei as his senior military advisor. Salimi was earlier trained in guerrilla warfare by the Libyans.

Rahimi, Mohammad-Reza. Colonel. Appointed acting Minister of Defense on August 16, 1984, he served in that position until October 22, 1985. Was also the First Deputy Minister of Defense from January 1983 to August 1984.

Azimi-Etemadi, Farokh. Colonel. Appointed Deputy Minister of Defense in October 1984; has served in that position to at least October 22, 1985.

Dehghani, Kuchak. Deputy Minister of Defense for weapons procurement from April 1982 until August 1983.

Azizi, Mehdi. Colonel. Deputy Minister of Defense for logistics from November 1982 to at least May 1985.

Jalali, Mohammad-Hoseyn. Colonel. The current Minister of Defense, serving in that position since late October 1985. Jalali is a communications specialist with staff and command training in the Aviation Command of the Ground Forces. Born in Babol, Mazandaran, in 1943, he has also studied in the United States, Italy, and Pakistan. Jalali has held various senior positions in the professional Iranian army, mostly in its air support units. He is battle-tested in the Iraqi front and has reportedly distinguished himself in several engagements for which he was earlier decorated with a medal for bravery.

NATIONAL POLICE

Mojalali, Naser. Colonel. Appointed Commander of the National Police on February 12, 1979 lasting in that position until June of the same year. Purged later in 1980.

Dastgerdi, Hushang. Colonel. Commander of the police force from July 5, 1981 to September 5, 1981 when he was assassinated in Tehran.

Dibachi, Seyyed-Hadi. Colonel. Appointed as Acting Chief of Police on July 12, 1981, retaining that position until January 1983. During this period he was simultaneously the Deputy Chief of the police force for planning and training. Before July 1981, Dibachi served as the police chief of the Bakhtaran province.

Hejazi, Ebrahim. Colonel. The Commander of the Police from September 9, 1981 to January 11, 1983 when he resigned for unspecified reasons. Appointed as Chief of General State Security in August 1983.

Sadeghzadeh, Parviz. Colonel. Deputy Commander of the Police since late 1979 and Tehran's Chief of Police since October 1, 1980. Purged in 1982.

Maleki, T. Colonel. Deputy Chief of Police sometime in 1980, serving simultaneously as the Chief of the Tehran Police Force. Arrested in June 1981 and purged later.

Samimi, Khalil. Colonel. The current Chief of National Police. Was appointed by Hojjat ol-eslam Nategh-e Nuri, then the Minister of the Interior, to that position on January 12, 1983. Samimi is credited with reviving and reorganizing the Iranian police force under the Islamic Republic.

GENDARMERIE

Momtaz, Ali. Colonel. Appointed commander on February 12, 1979, but lasted no longer than June 1979 when he was purged.

Daneshvar, Elias. Colonel. Commander of the gendarmerie for most of 1979. Later purged.

Mohagheghi, Ahmad. Brigadier General. The gendarmerie commander in the early republican period. Executed in late summer of 1980.

Foruzan, Hasan-Ali. Colonel. Appointed as commander of the gendarmerie by Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani on September 6, 1980. He also served as Deputy Commander of the Ground Forces in 1981. Resigned as gendarmerie chief on August 6, 1981.

Najafdari, Manuchehr. Colonel. Acting commander of the gendarmerie since mid-1981. Was removed from his position on February 20, 1982.

Kuchekzadeh, Ali. Colonel. Thus far the longest-lasting commander of the gendarmerie. Was appointed to position by Hojjat ol-

eslam Nategh-e Nuri on February 22, 1982, and replaced on February 9, 1985. Colonel Kuchekzadeh is believed to have played a large role in reorganizing and strengthening the gendarmerie after its near collapse in the early republican period.

Sohrabi, Mohammad. Colonel. The current commander of the gendarmerie, serving in that position since February 9, 1985. Born in Tabas in 1940, Sohrabi is the first gendarmerie chief to have risen from the ranks within the gendarmerie itself and not transferred to head the force from other service branches. Before February 1985, Sohrabi was the gendarmerie commander in Khorasan province.

ISLAMIC REVOLUTION GUARD CORPS

Mansuri, Jarad. Acting commander in the early formative phase of the IRGC. Served from mid-March to May 1979.

Chamran, Mostafa. De facto Commander of the IRGC in the summer 1979 before he took over the position of Minister of Defense in early September 1979. Died on June 21, 1981.

Zamani, Abbas (Abu Sharif). Appointed by Bani-Sadr to head the IRGC on May 24, 1980. Lasted until June 17, 1980 when, upon disapproval of influential clerics, he had to resign. Zamani was earlier trained by the PLO in guerrilla warfare and had fought with the Muslim forces during the Lebanese civil war of 1975–76. Zamani later served as Iran's ambassador to Pakistan.

Morteza Rezai. Commanded the IRGC for a short while in summer/autumn 1979 after Zamani's removal. Is the older brother of the current IRGC Commander in Chief, Mohsen Rezai.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Ali-Akbar. The IRGC Supervisor for a short while about August 1979.

Kiyan, Fereydun. Lieutenant Colonel. Acting Commander of the Guards for a short while in late 1979. Was also appointed to command the 23rd Special Forces Brigade on February 26, 1979.

Reza'i, Mohsen. By far the most influential commander since the IRGC's formation, Reza'i was appointed to this position by Ayatollah Khomeyni on June 7, 1980 and as the Pasdaran grew in power and organizational complexity, Reza'i became its first Commander in Chief on September 11, 1981.

Afshar, Ali-Reza. The current Chief of IRGC Central Staff Headquarters in Tehran (this position more or less corresponds to that of Chief of Joint Staff in the Iranian professional military), occupying this position since early November 1984. Afshar is currently also the official IRGC spokesman.