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AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE QUDS FORCE IN LEBANON

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AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE QUDS FORCE IN LEBANON

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ABSTRACT

It is uncommon for a sovereign state to employ irregular warfare (IW) in the furtherance of its foreign policy. Typically, IW is employed by guerrillas operating within a state in order to achieve a political goal such as overthrowing the government or establishing an autonomous region. However, over the last three decades Iran has successfully employed IW in Lebanon as an extension of its foreign policy. Iran's main expeditionary IW force is the Quds Force, a subordinate component of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). As this paper will highlight, Iran has been driven both ideologically and pragmatically to adopt an IW approach to achieving its foreign policy objectives in Lebanon. Many commentators have claimed that the IRGC, Quds Force and their Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, have been successful on account of their doctrine. This paper contends that Quds Force successes attributed to geopolitical, doctrinal, and logistics factors do not adequately account for its effectiveness. Using the Scott institutional analysis model, this paper will demonstrate that the Quds Force's successful institutionalization of IW is founded upon the successful integration of cognitive-cultural, normative, and regulatory pillars. Ultimately, it is the mutually supporting nature of these elements that have served to legitimize and strengthen the Quds Force.

INTRODUCTION

In 1979, the Iranian Islamic Revolution cast aside the Shah of Iran and ushered in a theocratic government intent on solidifying control of Iran both domestically and internationally. The establishment of an expeditionary Irregular Warfare (IW) component of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) known as the Quds, or Jerusalem, Force is designed to enable Iran to project influence beyond its borders. One of the primary areas of operation for the Quds Force has been and continues to be Lebanon. While little is known about the actual capabilities and specific activities of this covert organization it is widely recognized to be supporting Hezbollah, Lebanon's Shia-based political and military institution.¹ Originally founded by the IRGC in 1982, Hezbollah has maintained extremely close ties with Iran which the Quds Force, as a subordinate component of the IRGC, is expected to facilitate. This begs the question as to just how effective the Quds Force has been in its supporting role.

Iran stands as an outlier amongst the international community as a nation that successfully employs expeditionary IW.² This paper will seek to determine what socio-political factors underlie the effectiveness of Iran's asymmetric strategy and, in particular, the success of the Quds Force's implantation in Lebanon. Several

¹ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), xi.

² Alexander Wilner and Anthony Cordesman, "Iran and the Gulf Military Balance," *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 27 October 2011, Accessed 1 February 2013, http://csis.org/files/publication/111027_Iran_Gulf_Military_Balance.pdf

contemporary political and military analysts have offered traditional explanations of Iran's involvement in Lebanon based on geopolitics, religion and culture, irregular and hybrid warfare doctrine, and logistics and training support.^{3,4} While important for contextualization, this paper attempts to move beyond these superficial metrics by uncovering the key socio-political forces that have shaped the Quds Force as an institution in Lebanon. Examining the Quds Force in Lebanon poses a significant research challenge. By its very nature a covert entity, there is little primary source material available; however, by drawing upon that material that does reside in the public domain allows this paper to craft a useful analysis and contribute to the understanding of the Quds Force in Lebanon.

Using the Scott model of institutional analysis, this paper will examine the Quds Force in Lebanon. In order to frame the problem, this paper will begin by reviewing Arab-Iranian relations in the Middle East and more specifically Iran's relations with Lebanon since the Islamic Revolution. Next, to provide further context this paper will briefly review the rise of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and examine the role, leadership, capabilities, and activities of the Quds Force in both broad terms and within Lebanon specifically. This paper will then turn to the conduct an institutional analysis of the Quds Force in Lebanon. After a short introduction of the Scott Model this paper will in turn examine how three types of institutional forces, cognitive (ideas, worldviews, shared patterns of

³ Ralph Peters, "Lessons from Lebanon: The New Model Terrorist Army," *Armed Forces Journal International*, October 2006, 39. <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/10/2069044/>

⁴ Frank Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 52 (1st quarter 2009): 37, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/jfghoffman.pdf>

thoughts), normative (values, norms, both formally and informally conceived), and regulative (rules, regulations, policies, both formal and informal) have each shaped the Quds Force.⁵ Finally, this paper will assess how these three pillars have interacted with each other and dynamically shaped the Quds Force and their ability to execute Iranian foreign policy. Doing so, this sociological analysis is designed to gain insights into the internal and external legitimacy of the Quds Force with a view to understanding both its institutional robustness and its future prospects. One of the key goals of this paper is to demonstrate that Quds Force successes in supporting their Lebanese Hezbollah is as dependent on institutional forces as it is upon geopolitics, doctrine and material support. The development of any institution, including an irregular military force such as the Quds Force, occurs through compromises that may appear irrational to outside observers but are nevertheless aimed at preserving the institution's legitimacy. This paper attempts to move beyond superficial metrics by uncovering key socio-political forces that have shaped the Quds Force as an institution in Lebanon.

⁵ W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations : Ideas and Interests*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008).

CHAPTER 1 – A LONGSTANDING RELATIONSHIP: IRANIAN INFLUENCE IN LEBANON

Introduction

In order to be able to adequately assess the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Quds Force in Lebanon it is necessary to understand the historical and strategic political context within which they operate. To that end, this chapter will examine post-revolutionary Iran's relations with the Arab world and specifically with Lebanon. Drawing upon the works of political analysts such as Hunter, Chubin and Takeyh this chapter will describe a number of factors which have broadly shaped Arab-Iranian relations and Iranian-Lebanese relations in particular. This chapter, along with chapter 2's overview of the IRGC and Quds Force, will allow us to gain a better understanding of the growth of Iranian influence and the establishment of Quds Force in Lebanon while the following chapters provide a more detailed and thorough examination of these issues through a sociological analysis framework.

Iranian-Arab Relations

Iran is a major player in world politics due to its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Throughout history Persia, and likewise modern day Iran, has benefited from dominating major trade routes and from the diverse population and

knowledge and skills transfer that its geography has enabled.⁶ This influence is keenly felt in the Arab world, where relations with Iran writ large have historically been turbulent characterized by competition and mutual suspicion at times tempered by expedient cooperation and mutual accommodation.⁷ Iran's ties to Lebanon date back to pre-Islamic times, although the deep religious links between the Iranian and Lebanese Shia communities only date to the 16th Century.⁸ Before delving too deeply into Iran's influence in Lebanon it is useful to briefly examine Iran's overall relations within the Middle East in order to highlight the major determinants of Iranian-Arab relations. Casual western observers, including leaders of major western powers, have often made the mistake of portraying Iranian-Arab relations as monolithic and static.⁹ The following analysis will show this is far from the case.

Iran and the Arab world have had a long and turbulent history of interaction.¹⁰ Iranians and Arabs have significantly influenced each other's cultural evolution and together have helped shape Islamic civilization. Arab-Iranian historical relations still influences the two peoples' current perceptions of each other and exerts a largely negative influence on their current relations.¹¹ Since the Iranian revolution's

⁶ Stephen R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 4.

⁷ Shireen Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order*, (Oxford: Praeger, 2010), 185.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁹ Elah Rostani-Povey, *Iran's Influence: A Religious-Political State and Society in its Region*, (London: Zed Books, 2010), 11.

¹⁰ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 185.

establishment of a Shia theocracy the competitive aspects of Arab-Iranian relations have been enhanced by two key factors.¹² First, the Arab states' fear of the spread of revolution, perhaps now mitigated to some extent by the recent Arab Spring uprisings, but still keenly felt particularly in Gulf States such as Bahrain.¹³ Secondly, the Arab states temptation to profit from Iran's post-revolutionary instability and to realize long-held territorial and other ambitions toward Iran. Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980 resulted from the combined effect of these factors, as did the Arab states' overwhelming support for Iraq during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988).¹⁴ A more recent example is provided by the Syrian crisis which, in many respects, presents an opportunity for Arab monarchies to break the Shi'ite axis.¹⁵

Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war, followed shortly thereafter by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, Iranian-Arab relations have evolved considerably. Much like the first decade of the Islamic regime and the Pahlavi era before that, Arab-Iranian relations have been uneven. Iran has had good or reasonable relations with some Arab states such as Syria, and strained or hostile relations with others such as Saudi Arabia.¹⁶ This continuity in the balance of Arab-Iranian relations, despite a fundamental shift in the pattern of Iran's enmities and friendships in the Arab world in the post-revolutionary

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Slavoj Zizek, "Why Fear the Arab Revolutionary Spirit?" *The Guardian*, 1 February 2011. Accessed 1 February 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/01/egypt-tunisia-revolt>

¹⁴ Efraim Karsh, "Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 256-268.

¹⁵ Roxane Farmanfarmanian, "Redrawing the Middle East Map: Iran, Syria and the New Cold War," *Aljazeera*, 15 November 2012. Accessed 28 March 2013 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/11/2012111311424048459.html>

¹⁶ Rostani-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 105.

period, reflects the enduring influence of certain basic determinants of Arab-Iranian relations.¹⁷

Determinants of Iranian-Arab Relations

In her work on Iranian foreign relations in the post-Soviet era, Shireen Hunter identified eight major determinants within Arab-Iranian relations.¹⁸ These were religious and cultural competition, resource disparities, competing nationalisms, ideological differences, competing power ambitions, intra-Arab politics, the Israel-Palestine issue, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. While these are all broadly applicable to Iran's relations in the Arab world, the issues of resource disparity and competing nationalism are chiefly concerned with Iranian relations with the Gulf States and will not be subject to discussion here.

Religious and cultural differences have formed the basis of tensions in Arab-Iranian relations since the Islamic conquest of Iran in the 7th Century.¹⁹ Despite Islamization, and a long period of Arab rule, Iran was not linguistically or culturally Arabized, and by the 10th Century it experienced a cultural revival characterized by the rediscovery of its pre-Islamic history and traditions.²⁰ Iranians played a major role in the

¹⁷ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 185.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

²⁰ Rostani-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 101.

development of Islamic civilization, and the Arabs borrowed heavily from pre-Islamic Iran's political system as well as their philosophical and scientific heritage. This Iranian role, although largely unrecognized publicly by the Arabs, is, nevertheless, highly resented by Arabs and has led to a long-standing cultural competition between the two peoples.²¹

Following Iran's nearly complete Shiiazation in the sixteenth century, sectarian differences have arisen to become another source of tension in Arab-Iranian relations.²² This became particularly important after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and more recently in the wake of the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the fall of Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated government.²³ The Iranian regime's efforts to portray their revolution of 1979 as being based upon Pan-Islamic principles has led many Arab states to emphasize that the Iranian revolution, and its uniquely Persian-Shia character is inapplicable to Sunni Arabs.²⁴ Nevertheless, some of its ethos is still powerful and affects the Arab countries' political positions, especially toward non-Arab states.

Ideological differences and diverging patterns of alliances of Iran and Arab states have also deeply influenced the character of their relations.²⁵ In general, Iran has always

²¹ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 186.

²² Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 22.

²³ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 186

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

had good or reasonable relations with those Arab countries with which it shared similar ideology and allies. Before the revolution, Iran had good relations with pro-Western Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, while its relations with pro-Soviet radical Arab countries such as Egypt during the rule of Nasser were tense. The Islamic regime's animosity toward the conservative Arab regimes typified by Saudi Arabia largely derives from their close association with the West, rather than their practice of what the Iranian regime has described as "American Islam." Chubin goes so far to contend that it is impossible to divorce Iran's regional policy in the Middle East from its confrontation of the United States.²⁶ By contrast, Iran overlooked anti-Islamic policies of those Arab countries, such as Syria under Assad, with which it has had many ideological and political affinities.²⁷ Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, Iran has attempted to pursue a non-ideological policy toward Arab states and has attempted to delink its bilateral relations with them from their alliances with the United States. However, Arab states have not been receptive to this Iranian ploy, partly because of concern over U.S. reaction.

Competing power ambitions between Iran and some Arab countries impacted their relations in both the pre and post-revolutionary periods.²⁸ While Iran's chief power rivals have been Saudi Arabia and Saddam-era Iraq, they have also competed heavily with Syria for influence in Lebanon. In the 1970's Saudi Arabia undermined the Shah in

²⁶ Shahram Chubin, "Iran and the Arab Spring: Ascendancy Frustrated," *Gulf Research Centre*, 27 September 2012. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/27/iran-and-arab-spring-ascendancy-frustrated/e09z>

²⁷ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 189.

²⁸ Kayhan Barzegar, "Iran's Foreign Policy in Post-Invasion Iraq," *Middle East Policy Council*, Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/irans-foreign-policy-post-invasion-iraq>

order to make themselves the primary U.S. ally in the region. Following the Iranian revolution this power competition intensified acquiring sectarian and ideological dimensions.²⁹ While Iraq under Saddam was a key regional rival, post-Saddam Iraq dominated by a democratically elected Iraqi Shia government is viewed by some as more a proxy than a competitor.³⁰

From the early 1950s, the rise of Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, and Pan-Arabism coupled with the rise of revolutionary regimes led to increased interaction between the Arab world and Iran.³¹ This ultimately led to Iran becoming a factor in intra-Arab politics. Before the Iranian revolution, Iran's primary foreign policy priority was to support pro-Western governments, although it is notable that the Shah did covertly support foreign Shia communities. Post-revolution, Iran's relations with Arab states became more complex since they found themselves to be anti-Western but not fully pro-Soviet. Adding complexity, the ideology of revolutionary Islam posed a threat to conservative and leftist Arab regimes as it offered a potential alternative form of governance.³² Over time, Iran's appeal to the Arab street has been limited by its poor economic performance; however, their defiance of the West and support for Islamic unity has made it appealing to some. In this case Iran must walk a fine line between appealing

²⁹ Martin Walker, "Revenge of the Shia," *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, (Autumn 2006). Accessed 28 March 2013 <http://gees.org/documentos/Documen-02311.pdf>.

³⁰ "Iraq's Foreign Policy Pressures," *BBC News*, 11 Oct 2012. Accessed 19 February 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19908094>

³¹ Rostani-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 7.

³² Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 190.

to the Arab masses while avoiding the perception that it is interfering too greatly in Arab affairs.

Arab-Iranian relations have been greatly affected by Iran's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Middle East peace process in general. Iran foreign policy has gradually shifted over time from having secret relations with Israel during the Shah's reign to the Islamic regime's vocal support of the Palestinian cause.³³ Ironically, the regime's increased support for the PLO was not enough to prevent Arafat's support of Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war. Since 1992, Iran's support for the Palestinian cause has created tensions between Iran, conservative Arab states and the Palestinian Authority.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the fallout from the 1991 Iraq War negatively affected Arab-Iranian relations. The disappearance of the Soviet threat and the increased U.S. force presence in the Persian Gulf has enabled Arab States to take a harder line with Iran and be less willing to accommodate Iran's regional power ambitions. Takeyh goes so far as to suggest that despite popular belief in a powerful Shia Crescent Iran's influence is waning in the Middle East.³⁴ For its part, newly formed Russia was free to base its foreign interests along national rather than ideological lines meaning that it was not willing to sacrifice its interests in the Arab world for Iran's sake.³⁵

³³ "Iran's strategy toward Palestine will remain unchanged", *Tehran Times*, 6 February 2013. Accessed 24 February 2013, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/105467-irans-strategy-toward-palestine-will-remain-unchanged-ahmadinejad>

³⁴ Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Waning Influence on Iraq," *Washington Post*, 2 November 2011. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-waning-influence-iraq/p26407>

³⁵ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 190.

Iran's Relations with Lebanon

The basic determinants of Arab-Iranian relations discussed above have played a significant part in shaping the character of Iran's ties with Lebanon. The common religious bonds between Iran and Lebanon's Shia communities have existed since the 16th Century. Given the Shia linkage as a baseline, Iran's relations with Lebanon from the end of the Second World War were affected by the Cold War bipolar dynamics and their influence on both intra-Arab and Arab-Iranian relations.³⁶ For most of its post-independence, Lebanon has been a Christian-dominated, pro-Western country, accordingly, its relationship with pre-revolutionary Iran was generally good. The Shah financially assisted Shia institutions in Lebanon while Lebanon's ambassadors to Iran typically came from prominent Shia families.³⁷ However, after the PLO established camps in Lebanon following their expulsion from Jordan in 1970, and Lebanon suffered through lengthy civil war (1975-1990) relations with Iran were fundamentally altered.³⁸ Since the early 1960s, radical Arab countries and movements supported the Shah's Islamist and leftist opponents. Members of these groups were frequently trained in PLO camps inside Lebanon. Some of these individuals, such as Mustapha Chamran, who was credited by many to have founded the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, played important roles in the Iranian Revolution. In return, the IRGC sponsored the birth of Islamic Jihad

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Mudar Zahran, "Jordan is Palestinian," *Middle East Quarterly*, (Winter 2012): 3-12. Accessed 18 February 2013, <http://www.meforum.org/3121/jordan-is-palestinian>

in 1988 and supervised the formation of Hamas' paramilitary members in the late 1990s.³⁹

While Lebanon provided a training base for many Iranian revolutionaries, it was the Israeli invasion of 1982 that overwhelmingly shaped Iran's relations with Lebanon. Without the existential threat posed by the Israeli Defense Force Iran would not have been able to introduce the Revolutionary Guards and Quds Force into Lebanon with a view to supporting the local Shia population and eventually facilitating the creation of Hezbollah.⁴⁰ In the early 1980s, the underprivileged conditions of the Lebanese Shia, especially those who had become internally displaced by the Israeli invasion and compelled to move further north into South Beirut and around Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley, enabled Iran to claim that they were merely supporting an oppressed minority.⁴¹ At this time, Iran was also assisted by Syria who worried that Lebanon might fall to Christian Phalangists who might be tempted to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

During the 1980s, Iran's relations with Lebanon's Shia were complex and the two were often in conflict. Iran's uncompromising position on Lebanon's future and on the Palestinian issue strained its relations with the more pragmatic Lebanese Shia,

³⁹ Daniel Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Jerrod Green, "Impact on Foreign Policy," in *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001), 93.

⁴⁰ Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33.

⁴¹ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon*, (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1990), 443.

particularly those within the Syrian backed Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnainya (AMAL).⁴² Even within Hezbollah there were differences as to exactly what Iran's role in Lebanon should be.⁴³ These factors, coupled with Syria's dominance within Lebanon during the 1980s and early 1990s, acted to limit Iran's influence.

During the Rafsanjani years, Iran's influence in Lebanon had been usurped by Syria who has long viewed Lebanon as part of Greater Syria.⁴⁴ Despite this, Lebanon remained important to Iran largely due to the issue of Western hostages who were still being held by Hezbollah inside Lebanon.⁴⁵ This issue complicated Rafsanjani's efforts to defuse tensions with the West and concentrate on Iranian economic development. As a result, Rafsanjani did attempt to secure the hostages release at the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, and consensus suggests that his failure was related more to the lack of control over Hezbollah than it did to Iranian intransigence.⁴⁶ On this point, it is important to clarify that while Hezbollah has acted as an Iranian proxy it is certainly not a puppet, a consideration which will be explored in greater depth in the institutional analysis of the Quds Force later in this paper.

⁴² Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 141.

⁴³ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 211.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴⁵ Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan 1997), 125.

⁴⁶ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 125.

The after-effects of the fall of the Soviet Union and the U.S.-led Coalition victory in the First Gulf War facilitated Hezbollah's transition into a mainstream political party.⁴⁷ While this development reduced Iran's informal influence within Hezbollah their formal ties to the Lebanese government improved with Lebanese Prime Minister Karami embracing Rafsanjani's policy of openness.⁴⁸ However, by the mid-1990s the continuing Israeli presence in South Lebanon propelled Hezbollah, and thus Iran, to a position of prominence as the main group opposing Israeli occupation.⁴⁹

During the Khatami presidency official relations between Iran and Lebanon grew closer. Prime Minister Hariri visited Tehran in October 1997, the first visit of a Lebanese head of state to Iran since the Islamic Revolution. During this visit Hariri met with Supreme Leader Khamenei and pledged to help build Iranian-Arab ties.⁵⁰ Israel's withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000, for which Hezbollah took most of the credit, coupled with diminished Iranian-Syrian competition for influence inside Lebanon, led to an Iranian-Lebanese rapprochement.⁵¹ However, the Hariri assassination, Cedar revolution and Hariri assassination all directly led to a further evolution of Lebanon's relations with Iran.⁵²

⁴⁷ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, (London: I.B.Taurus, 2006), 43-52.

⁴⁸ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 211.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵¹ Shahram Chubin, "Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security," *The International Institute of Strategic Studies*, Adelphi Paper 342, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 93.

⁵² Paul Salem, "The Future of Lebanon," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 6, (Winter 2006): 16.

Political analysts such as Stephen Zunes have claimed that the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 was part of a larger plan to reshape the Middle East political situation through regime change in Iran and Syria, thus eliminating their influence in Lebanon.⁵³ His argument is strengthened by the text of the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration bill passed by the U.S. Congress in June of 2003 that imposed tougher sanctions on Syria and called for their troop withdrawal from Lebanon.⁵⁴ The February 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, for which Syrian Intelligence was accused of facilitating, sparked a popular uprising by Lebanese Christian, Druze, and Sunni populations against Syria's military presence and Hezbollah.⁵⁵ This civil unrest became known as the Cedar Revolution a movement whose primary goals became the removal of pro-Syrian president Emil Lahoud, and the elimination of Syrian and Iranian influence in Lebanon.⁵⁶ The Cedar Revolution was supported by the West as well as many Arab states, chiefly Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who were alarmed by the potential emergence of a Shia crescent encompassing Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.⁵⁷

⁵³ Stephen Zunes, "The United States and Lebanon: A Meddlesome History", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, April 2006. Accessed 24 February 2013, http://www.fpif.org/articles/the_united_states_and_lebanon_a_meddlesome_history

⁵⁴ United States, *Congressional Act H.R. 1828, Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Publishing Office 2003. Accessed 24 February 2013, <http://www.bis.doc.gov/licensing/syria/hr1828act.htm>

⁵⁵ Jim Muir, "Lebanon's Search for Irrelevance," *BBC News*, 22 June 2005. Accessed 24 February 2013, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4118220.stm

⁵⁶ Jacob Campbell, "Consolidating the Cedar Revolution: Prospects for a Free Lebanon in the Post-Assad Era", *Institute for Middle Eastern Democracy*, 2011.

⁵⁷ Kevin Mazur, "The Shia Crescent and Arab State Legitimacy", *The SIAS Review of International Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 2, (Summer-Fall 2009): 21-22.

In July 2006, Israel attacked Lebanon in retaliation for Hezbollah's abduction of two Israeli soldiers. Some analysts claim that Israel had been planning to attack Lebanon prior to these abductions.⁵⁸ Regardless of the level of pre-planning, Israel viewed the abduction of its soldiers and corresponding operations as a means by which "the Lebanese Army could achieve a monopoly over the use of force in Lebanon."⁵⁹ In short, the IDF would destroy Hezbollah's capability as a military force and thereby hinder their political relevance within Lebanon. While this paper will examine the Second Lebanon War in greater detail in later chapters, ultimately the war ended with Israel failing to achieve its objectives while Hezbollah demonstrated great resilience.⁶⁰ At the conclusion of hostilities, feelings inside Lebanon were mixed. Many Lebanese, particularly Christian's displaced by the fighting in South Lebanon blamed Hezbollah and their sponsors, Iran and Syria, for their suffering during the 33 day conflict.⁶¹ Conversely, the majority of the Arab population within the Middle East praised Hezbollah and its leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrullah for standing up to Israel. Iran's prestige in Lebanon, certainly amongst the Shia population, also received a boost.⁶²

⁵⁸ Efraim Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," *Middle East Quarterly* (Summer 2007), Accessed 24 Feb 2013, <http://www.meforum.org/1686/how-israel-bungled-the-second-lebanon-war>

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Andrew Exum, "Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment," *Policy Focus*, no 63 (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 2006), 13. Accessed 4 January 2013 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus63.pdf>

⁶¹ World Council of the Cedars Revolution, *Press Release*, 30 July 2006, Accessed 24 February 2013, <http://www.debbieschlusset.com/2210/right-these-lebanese-blame-hezbollah-for-gana-deaths/>

⁶² Dan Murphy and Sameh Naguib, "Hizbullah Winning Over the Arab Street", *Christian Science Monitor*, July 18, 2006. Accessed 24 February 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0718/p01s03-wome.html>

The cessation of hostilities with Israel led to a further destabilization of the Lebanese political situation where the Druze and Sunni supported government led by Saad Hariri clashed with the Hezbollah dominated opposition. The situation further deteriorated when a Sunni Salafist group, Fatah al Islam, staged attacks against the Lebanese Army and Alawite enclaves in Northern Lebanon. Opinion both within Lebanon and externally was divided over whether these attacks were conducted with the tacit agreement of the Hariri government in order to undermine Hezbollah or whether they were facilitated by Syria.⁶³ The internal instability of 2007 increased regional anxiety to the level that the Saudis were compelled to lead in mediating a solution to the crisis while permitting Iranian involvement in the process. This resulted in the Doha Agreement of 2008 which ultimately strengthened Hezbollah's political legitimacy and representation in government. Following its proxy's victory, Iran's prestige inside Lebanon grew accordingly.⁶⁴ The concessions afforded to Hezbollah seemed to vindicate Iran's President Ahmadinejad's hardline stance on the Palestinian conflict.⁶⁵

Following the election of a compromise candidate, General Michel Suleiman, as Prime Minister formal relations between Lebanon and Iran warmed. Despite being non-aligned Suleiman signed a five year military trade agreement with Iran and also facilitate

⁶³ Roger Hardy, "The Lebanese Crisis Explained", *BBC News*, 22 May 2007. Accessed 24 February 2013, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6173322.stm

⁶⁴ United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 22 May 2008 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 10 June 2008. Accessed 24 February 2013, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Lebanon%20S2008392.pdf>

⁶⁵ "Iran's strategy toward Palestine will remain unchanged," *Tehran Times*, 6 February 2013.

the expansion of commercial trade relations between the two countries.⁶⁶ Formal relations subsequently cooled when Hezbollah and their allies failed to win in Lebanon's parliamentary elections in 2009. Throughout the two year term of Saad Hariri's national unity government Iran continued to curry favour with Lebanon. Relations were strained due to the fact that Iran was well aware that the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) investigating the 2005 assassination of Rafik Hariri was close indicting Hezbollah members for their alleged involvement in the plot.⁶⁷

The collapse of Hariri's government in January of 2011 paved the way for the appointment of Najib Mikati who headed a Hezbollah dominated coalition until his resignation in March of 2013. While Mikati, by necessity a Sunni under long-standing Lebanese national agreement, was personally moderate, his March 8th Coalition government was receptive to closer relations with Iran. While he had been a traditional supporter of the Assad regime, Mikati's leadership became untenable when he came into conflict with his Hezbollah coalition partners who were seeking to increase their influence over the state's security apparatus.⁶⁸ As the civil war in Syria enters its third year the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict has made it increasingly difficult for

⁶⁶ Will Fulton, Ariel Farrar-Wellman, Robert Frasco, "Lebanon-Iran Foreign Relations," *Iran Tracker*, 5 August 2011. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/lebanon-iran-foreign-relations>

⁶⁷ Omar Nashabe, "The Special Tribunal for Lebanon: International Justice Dissected," *Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs*, September 2012, 18. Accessed 24 February 2013, http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/international_affairs/unaw/Documents/working_paper_series/20120924ifi_wps_unaw_omar_nashabi_final.pdf

⁶⁸ Bylal Saab, "Why Lebanon's Najib Mikati Resigned," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 March 2013. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139078/bilal-y-saab/why-lebanons-najib-mikati-resigned>

a Sunni Prime Minister to lead a Shia dominated coalition and serves to underline the fragility of any Lebanese government. As of this writing, Lebanon had not selected a new Prime Minister.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the historical and political foundations of Iranian-Lebanese relations from which we will be better able to contextualize the effectiveness of the Quds Force. We have seen that the relationship is shaped by both broad overarching determinants as well as the vagaries of Lebanese domestic politics. It is essential to understand both sets of shaping forces if one is to gain a better understanding of the dynamic of Iran's relations with Lebanon and how they flow down to the Quds Force. The casual reader would do well to appreciate that the close relationship between Iran and Middle Eastern states often described in the Western media is frequently illusory if not completely false. As this chapter has described, Arab-Iranian relations have historically been turbulent hindered as they are by competition and mutual suspicion.

The broadly divisive issues of cultural competition, resource disparities, competing nationalisms, ideological differences, competing power ambitions, intra-Arab politics, the Israel-Palestine issue, and the collapse of the Soviet Union have all shaped Arab-Iranian relations to some extent. Within Lebanon, the cultural and religious connections between the Iranian and Lebanese Shia have acted as a unifying force, while conversely it has aroused suspicions amongst Lebanese Christians, Druze and Sunnis.

Likewise, Iran's version of Pan-Islamism appeals to Lebanon's Shia exclusively while Lebanon's government officially downplays extreme Islam and attempts to attract investment from both the West and Iran. Currently, Iran has seen its regional influence in the Levant grow as the Assad regime in Syria is wracked by civil war. Officially, Iran remains a supporter of the Palestinian cause although for ideological reasons they have thrown their support behind Hamas and have worked to reduce the influence of Fatah.

Domestic politics within Lebanon itself has also shaped Iran's ability to project its influence. Since 1982, Iran's primary conduit for influence has been through Hezbollah, its Shia proxy. Through Hezbollah, Iran has seen its influence within Lebanese Shia society grow significantly. While their ability to exert official influence on the government of Lebanon has varied depending on whether a pro and anti-Iranian/Syrian party held the reins of power their relative influence has increased dramatically since 2005. The withdrawal of Syria in the aftermath of the Hariri assassination and the transition of Hezbollah into a political movement facilitated by the Doha Agreement of 2008 paved the way for the election of a pro-Iranian government in Lebanon in 2011. All this has provided Iran a freer hand in establishing a base of operations in Lebanon from which it can spread Iran's influence more widely throughout the region. Given the security situation in neighbouring Syria where a Sunni-based insurgency looks set to topple Assad's Alawite regime, Iran's foothold in Lebanon becomes all the more important.

This political overview is necessary to understand the context within which the Quds Force must operate. Nevertheless, this superficial review does not go far enough to be able to allow us to analyse the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Quds Force. For that purpose a sociological analysis is necessary to enrich our understanding. Before commencing this analysis it is important that this paper next examine the IRGC and Quds Force in slightly more detail to develop a necessary baseline of understanding and build further contextualization.

CHAPTER 2 – IRANIAN SECURITY FORCE ACTIVITY IN LEBANON: IRGC AND QUDS FORCE

Introduction

There are very few examples of states which rely upon IW as a main tool of their foreign policy. However, Iran has employed IW since the Islamic Revolution both to protect the regime from domestic threats and to exert its influence within the Middle East. While the preceding chapter has explored the broad determinants of Iranian-Arab relations and examined Iran's relations with Lebanon, a further overview of Iran's security forces, in particular the IRGC and Quds Force, is also necessary in order for this paper to subsequently delve into an institutional analysis. To that end, this chapter will examine IRGC/Quds Force organization, capabilities, and leadership, their activities throughout the Middle East. This is necessary to gain an appreciation for the national capacity that Iran is able to apportion to Lebanon within its overall security strategy and given its other commitments. Moreover, some of Iran's other regional security activities, such as support to the Assad regime in Syria, are directly supported by the Quds Force in Lebanon. By establishing this baseline understanding of the IRGC and Quds Force this paper will be better able to firmly ground its subsequent institutional analysis of the Quds Force in Lebanon.

Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

Iranian security force operations outside its national borders are controlled by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) or *Pasdaran* of which the Quds Force is a subordinate component. The IRGC was founded by Ayatollah Khomeini following the Islamic Revolution in order to defend the regime against foreign and domestic threats.⁶⁹ Initially, these threats were primarily internal ranging from monarchist and leftist groups as well as ethnic uprisings, particularly by the Kurds but also by the Turkomans, Baluchi, and some Azeris.⁷⁰ A small force at its inception, the IRGC's size, power and influence has grown steadily over time.⁷¹ The Iran-Iraq War was a decisive moment in the development of the IRGC as it was compelled to adopt a military structure and rapidly expand to meet the Iraqi threat.⁷² This expansion gave the IRGC significant power and influence, not only by establishing its own army, navy, and air force units, but also through the creation of its own Ministry in government parallel to the Defense Ministry for the duration of the war.⁷³

⁶⁹ Greg Bruno, and Jayshree Bajoria, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards", *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 2011. Accessed 1 February 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-revolutionary-guards/p14324>

⁷⁰ Daniel Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Jerrold D. Green, "Major Security Institutions and their Composition" in *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001), 33. Accessed 26 February 2013, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1320/MR1320.ch4.pdf

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 45.

⁷³ Byman *et al.*, "Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era," 35.

Currently, the IRGC is assessed to have an approximate strength of 125,000 composed of air, ground, and naval elements organized along conventional military lines.⁷⁴ While its' primary role is internal security it is capable of assisting the Iranian Army in the defence of national sovereignty as it also commands most of Iran's surface to surface missiles and most or all of the state's nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.⁷⁵ Although it does conduct conventional military exercises military analysts such as Michael Connell suggest that the IRGC is at the center of Iran's efforts to develop IW capabilities to defeat any potential U.S. invasion.⁷⁶ Indeed, the current Commander of the IRGC, Major General Mohammed Ali Jafari, outlined the IRGC's commitment to IW when he said:

“Asymmetrical warfare... is [our] strategy for dealing with the considerable capabilities of the enemy. A prominent example of this kind of warfare was [the tactics employed by Hezbollah during] the Lebanon war in 2006... Since the enemy has considerable technological abilities, and since we are still at a disadvantage in comparison, despite the progress we have made in the area of equipment, [our only] way to confront [the enemy] successfully is to adopt the strategy [of asymmetric warfare] and to employ various methods of this kind.”⁷⁷

This admission by Jafari is key as it highlights Iran's commitment to IW as the cornerstone of its strategy as well as implying that Lebanon is the laboratory and testing

⁷⁴ Bruno and Bajoria, “Iran's Revolutionary Guards.”

⁷⁵ Anthony Cordesman, “Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the Al Quds Force, and other Intelligence and Paramilitary Forces,” *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, (16 August 2007): 3. Accessed 1 February 2013, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/070816_cordesman_report.pdf

⁷⁶ Michael Connell, “Iran's Military Doctrine”, *The Iran Primer*, Accessed 27 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>

⁷⁷ Anthony Cordesman and Alexander Wilner, “Iran and the Gulf Military Balance I – Conventional and Asymmetric Dimensions,” *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, (10 October 2012). Accessed 27 February 2013, http://csis.org/files/publication/121010_Iran_Gulf%20Military_Balance.pdf

ground for this asymmetric strategy. Both of these factors will figure prominently in the institutional analysis of the Quds Force in Lebanon.

Internally, General Jafari's 2007 initiatives to formally merge the Basij into the IRGC while concurrently decentralizing the IRGC's command structure were heavily influenced by his IW mindset.⁷⁸ Political analysts such as Abbas Milani contend that the Guards have evolved beyond a security agency into a socio-political-economic force with influence reaching deep into Iran's power structure.⁷⁹ Indeed, the decentralization of IRGC command centers to each provincial capital has increased the IRGC's power and gave them the capacity to interfere in the political process across the country.⁸⁰ Having built strong linkages to the Supreme Leader and other ruling elites has allowed the IRGC to direct the nation's modest defence budget into those areas, such as nuclear and IW. This reduces the need to modernize the aging conventional forces of Iran's regular army, the *Artesh*, which is seen to have less practical value given the absence of an Iraqi threat.⁸¹ Some studies have gone so far as to suggest that there are signs that the *Artesh* is becoming increasingly integrated into the IRGC's system of IW.⁸² Building upon this

⁷⁸ Muhammad Sahimi, "A Hardliner's Hardliner: General Muhammad Ali Jafari," *PBS Frontline*, 21 January 2010. Accessed 27 February 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/01/a-hardliners-hardliner.html>

⁷⁹ Bruno and Bajoria, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards."

⁸⁰ Muhammad Sahimi, "A Hardliner's Hardliner."

⁸¹ Anthony Cordesman, *Gulf Threats, Risks and Vulnerabilities: Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare*, *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, (26 August 2009). Accessed 5 February 2013, <http://csis.org/publication/gulf-threats-risks-and-vulnerabilities-0>

theme, the following section will show that Iran's emphasis on IW has benefited the Quds Force greatly.

The Quds Force

Military analysts such as Bruce Reidel contend that the Guards began deploying fighters abroad during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980 to 1988, and commenced exporting the ideals of the revolution throughout the Middle East.⁸³ The Quds Force was formally established in 1983 to operate inside Iraq, arm and train Iraqi Kurdish rebels and collect intelligence on Iraqi military movements.⁸⁴ This was not a new concept, as the Shah had supported the Kurds against Saddam in the early 1970s however these activities had been curtailed as a result of the Algiers Agreement of 1975.⁸⁵ Over time, the Quds Force's role broadened to encompass all of Iran's overseas IW activities, primarily through the use of foreign movements as proxies.⁸⁶ As a useful analogy, the Quds Force may be considered to be the "Iranian foreign legion" as it is a primary means through which the Iranian state is able to project its influence, through IW, abroad.

⁸² Major Jörg Witoschek, "The Institutionalization of Iran's Regular Army (Artesh)," (Masters of Defence Studies Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2012).

⁸³ Bruce Reidel, Evolution of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, *NPR*, 5 April 2007, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9371072>

⁸⁴ Muhammad Sahimi, "The Canny General: Quds Force Commander Gahsem Suloimani," *PBS Frontline*, 31 December 2011.

⁸⁵ Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, 23.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Gresh, "Instigating Instability: Iran's Support of Non-State Armed Groups in Iraq," Fletcher School: Tufts University (Spring 2006), 3. Accessed 1 March 2013, <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Al-Nakhlah/Archives/~media/Fletcher/Microsites/al%20Nakhlah/archives/2006/gresh.ashx>

The Quds Force continues to function as a small paramilitary arm of the IRGC, with an estimated strength between 5,000 and 15,000 operatives, whose current mission is to “export the principles of the revolution and perform special operations.”⁸⁷ This is a broad mandate that includes support for terrorist organizations throughout the Middle East although some such as Cordesman suggest that pragmatically their actual mission is to support Shia movements and militias.⁸⁸ While Cordesman may be a bit too adamant on this point, as others such as Pahlavi note that the Iranians seek to balance pan-Shi’ism with their relations with the Sunnis, it is clear that the Quds Force is a valuable tool for IW.⁸⁹ Their principle activities include activating terrorist networks and agents trained in sabotage, providing military and financial support to Islamist opposition organizations in Muslim countries and conducting operations against the Iranian opposition in exile.⁹⁰ A Quds unit was deployed to Lebanon in 1982, where it helped in the creation of Hezbollah.⁹¹ Another unit was sent to Bosnia to support Bosnian Muslims in the early and mid-1990s.⁹² Many analysts claim that the Quds Force has shipped weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank, and is also supplying munitions to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shi’ite militias in Iraq.⁹³

⁸⁷ Wilner and Cordesman, “Iran and the Gulf Military Balance,” 51.

⁸⁸ Cordesman, “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards”, 3.

⁸⁹ Pierre Pahlavi, “The Place of Shi’ism in Iranian Grand Strategy,” *Défense nationale et sécurité collective*, 64 (8/9), (August-September, 2008): 55-57.

⁹⁰ Wilner and Cordesman, “Iran and the Gulf Military Balance,” 51.

⁹¹ Emile Hokayem, “Iran and Lebanon”, *The Iran Primer*, USIP. Accessed 28 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-lebanon>

⁹² Peter Andreas, “The Clandestine Political Economy of War and Peace in Bosnia,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, (2004): 43.

In the wake of aftermath of the Arab Spring of 2011, Canada, the United States and the European Union accused the Quds Force of providing equipment and support to help the Syrian regime suppress revolts in Syria. In October 2011, Washington accused the Quds Force of plotting the assassination of the Saudi ambassador to the United States, and plotting to bomb the Israeli Embassy in Washington and the Saudi and Israeli Embassies in Argentina.⁹⁴ Tehran has denied these accusations. In July 2012, a suicide attack on a busload of Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria was linked to Hezbollah operatives and the IRGC/Quds Force planners. Of even greater concern for Canada, one of the two bombers was found to have held dual Canadian-Lebanese citizenship.⁹⁵ The culmination of these events led the Canadian government to designate the Quds Force a terrorist organization in December 2012, citing their support for a wide range of extremist groups.⁹⁶

The Quds Force is held in high regard by the Iranian leadership and as such it is the beneficiary of extensive government resources.⁹⁷ It is included in the decision-making process on sensitive national security and foreign policy issues. The commander of the force is appointed by Supreme Leader Kameini who closely monitors Quds Force

⁹³ Reidel, "Evolution of Iran's Revolutionary Guards."

⁹⁴ Charlie Savage and Scott Shane, "Iranians Accused of Plot to Kill Saudi's US Envoy," *New York Times*, 11 October 2011. Accessed 1 February 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/us/us-accuses-iranians-of-plotting-to-kill-saudi-envoy.html?hp&r=0>

⁹⁵ "Hezbollah linked to Burgas Bus bombing in Bulgaria," *BBC News*, 5 February 2013. Accessed 8 March 2013 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21342192>

⁹⁶ Government of Canada, *Public Safety Currently Listed Entities*. Accessed on 1 February 2013, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/ns/le/cle-eng.aspx#IRGCQF>

⁹⁷ Wilner and Cordesman, "Iran and the Gulf Military Balance," 52.

activities through his personal representative in the Revolutionary Guards. Underling the Quds Force's influence, Ahmad Vahidi, the Force's first commander, is currently Iran's Defense Minister. It has been alleged that he provided input into the planning of terrorist attacks against Israeli targets in the 1990s, most prominently the bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires in July 1994 which killed 85 people and injured 330.⁹⁸ For the last 14 years, the Quds Force has been commanded by Major General Ghasem Soleimani, by all accounts a strong supporter of the current conservative regime who is assessed to have the strong personal support of Supreme Leader.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ "INTERPOL statement clarifying its role in case involving Iranian minister wanted by Argentina", *INTERPOL Media Release*, 4 September 2009. Accessed 1 February 2013, <https://secure.interpol.int/Public/ICPO/PressReleases/PR2009/PR200980.asp>

⁹⁹ Michael Gordon, "Iran's Master of Iraq Chaos Still Vexes U.S.", *New York Times*, 2 October 2012, Accessed 1 February 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/world/middleeast/qassim-suleimani-irans-master-of-iraq-chaos-still-vexes-the-us.html?pagewanted=all>

Overview of Iranian Foreign Security Force Activity

Since the mid-2000s, Iran has emerged as perhaps the key foreign relations challenge for the United States and its allies. Canadian Prime Minister Harper has gone so far as to say that Iran is “the world’s most serious threat to international peace and security.”¹⁰⁰ Iran has actively supported armed groups throughout the Middle East, most notably Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, and Shiite militias in Iraq. While this paper will delve into deeper sociological analysis in the following chapters, traditional analysis has emphasized Iran’s adoption of an IW approach to warfare as being rooted in their “years of dealing with a complex geopolitical environment that emerged from Iran’s revolution, its defeat by Iraq, and its lack of economic and technical strength.”¹⁰¹ Iran’s commitment to supporting armed groups in other nations is codified in the regulations of the Iranian Armed Forces which, while predominantly defensive, state that their goals include the provision of support to other Muslim and *oppressed* nations.¹⁰² Indeed, the current Iranian Defense Minister Vahidi re-emphasized his commitment to establishing a regional Pan-Islamic military organization in January of 2013.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ “Iran is the ‘World’s Most Serious Threat to Peace’: Stephen Harper,” *National Post*, 5 January 2012, Accessed 29 March 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/01/05/iran-is-the-worlds-most-serious-threat-to-international-peace-stephen-harper/>

¹⁰¹ Stephen Ward, “The Continuing Evolution of Iran’s Military Doctrine,” *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 59, no. 4, (Autumn 2005): 560.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, “Iran Proposes Establishment of Islamic Military Organization,” *Iranian Press TV*, 26 January 2013. Accessed 25 February 2013, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/26/285690/iran-proposes-islamic-military-org/>

The IRGC's support to Shi'ite militias in Iraq has been of particular concern to the U.S. over the past decade owing to their large military presence there from 2003 to 2012. U.S. military analysts have alleged that the IRGC provided arms, training, and military technology to Shi'ite militias in Iraq and may have also provided support to Sunni Islamist extremists as well, which led to attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces.¹⁰⁴ These transfers have reportedly included advanced shaped charge Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and triggering components, which sharply increased the lethality of IED strikes on Coalition Forces operating in Iraq. There were also indicators that similar training, weapons, and other aid were being provided to Shi'ite forces and Taliban elements in Afghanistan from 2007 onward.

In addition to security force elements, there are several other Iranian organizations which pursue Iran's foreign policy goals. Iran's leading intelligence service known as the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) or VAVAK "plays an active role attempting to suppress Iranian dissidents and support coreligionists abroad."¹⁰⁵ While unclassified information regarding MOIS activities is extremely limited the Iranian Constitution empowers them to act against conspiracies endangering the nation. Various cultural and information agencies also actively promote Iran's foreign policy goals. Cultural bureaus operating out of embassies provide financial support to friendly Muslim movements and

¹⁰⁴ Cordesman, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards," 7.

¹⁰⁵ Byman, "Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era," 32.

proselytize.¹⁰⁶ The Islamic Propagation Organization (IPO) also devotes some resources to proselytizing and organizing supporters abroad.

Iranian Security Force Activity in Lebanon

Iranian military activities in Lebanon had their foundation in the 1970s when Iranian opposition groups such as the Liberation Movement for Iran were based inside Lebanon.¹⁰⁷ Building on these linkages in the post-Islamic Revolutionary period, Ayatollah Khomeini engaged the support of their lone ally in the region, Syria, to facilitate the deployment of 1,500 Guards to the Bekaa Valley in 1982.¹⁰⁸ This was the crucial step in the formation of Hezbollah as the Guards organized, trained, and funded Hezbollah while Syria provided them free access to their borders and the air and seaport linkages back to Iran.¹⁰⁹

Middle Eastern analysts are quick to point out that the commonly held Western perception of Hezbollah as a puppet of Iran is not completely accurate. Rostami-Povey suggests that Hezbollah remains inspired by Iran but also has a track record of acting independently.¹¹⁰ Wehrey describes the relationship as one where Iran retains strategic influence but not control over Hezbollah.¹¹¹ Cordesman contends that there is no

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 114.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

evidence to suggest that Iran has ever dominated or controlled Hezbollah however they have historically been a major source of money and weapons.¹¹² Even in this regard, Rostami-Povey suggests that Iranian funding of Hezbollah has declined since the 1990s. In 2004 the level of Iranian funding to Hezbollah was approximately \$60M to \$100M per year while the proportion of funding received from other sources, predominantly Lebanese Shia, had increased.¹¹³ This is not to imply that Iranian funding is irrelevant, quite the contrary, most sources agree that during the build-up to the Second Lebanon War and again during the Arab Spring and Syrian crisis Iranian funding to Hezbollah increased.¹¹⁴

Examining Iranian activity in Lebanon poses a significant research challenge. While little is known about the actual activities of the Quds Force in Lebanon many pro-Israeli media commentators have likely inflated the capabilities and intentions of the Quds Forces owing to the existing high degree of tensions between Iran and Israel. As such, military analysts such as Cordesman caution that this reporting must be treated with a great deal of skepticism.¹¹⁵ Given this caveat, there is consensus among most observers

¹¹¹ Frederick Wehrey *et al*, "Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East," (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009): 86.

¹¹² Anthony Cordesman, "Iran's Support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon," *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, July 2006, 2.

¹¹³ Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 115.

¹¹⁴ Will Fulton and Andrew Voxman, "Iran-Lebanese Hezbollah Tracker 2012: Funding," *Iran Tracker*, 7 February 2012, Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.irantracker.org/military-activities/iran-hezbollah-tracker-2012/funding>

¹¹⁵ Anthony Cordesman, "Iran's Support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon," 2.

that there has been a continuing presence of IRGC and Quds Force cadres in Lebanon engaged in the training of Hezbollah members.¹¹⁶

The first reports of Iranian support for Hezbollah IW activity are found in the early 1980s when Hezbollah conducted a variety of suicide attacks against Israeli and Multinational forces, and kidnapped a number of Western hostages over a three year period from 1983 until 1986. Wehrey contends that this was a prime example where Iran and Hezbollah had a shared interest in the removal of Israeli and U.S. forces from Lebanon although a lack of consensus on the use of suicide attacks eventually curtailed that particular tactic.¹¹⁷ Iran solidified its ties to Hezbollah throughout the 1990s providing planning and logistics support for Hezbollah attacks on Israeli targets in Argentina as well as providing social support to Shi'ite communities in South Lebanon. Foremost amongst Iran's contributions to Hezbollah was its transfer of weapons, principally rockets, through which Hezbollah continued to strike Israeli targets up to the IDF's withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000.

Iran's supply of rockets and other advanced military hardware such as anti-tank missiles, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs were employed with great success by Hezbollah in the Second Lebanon War. As part of its strategy of deterring the United States, Iran points to Hezbollah's success in the Second Lebanon War as a validation of its own asymmetric strategy, with the warning that the United States can expect a similarly lethal

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Wehrey *et al.*, "Dangerous but Not Omnipotent," 93.

guerilla opponent in the form of *Basij* paramilitary units.¹¹⁸ Since the 2006 conflict, Iran has transferred thousands of short-range Katyusha-type rockets capable of reaching target up to 20 kilometers inside Israel. In 2012, the IDF generously estimated that Hezbollah possessed approximately 60,000 of these short range missiles, a ten-fold increase since the Second Lebanon War.¹¹⁹ Hezbollah does not need Quds Force expertise to launch these rockets and as such Quds Force members do not accompany Hezbollah fighters to the border launch sites for fear of capture by the IDF.¹²⁰

More significantly, Iran has provided smaller numbers of longer-range rockets which permit Hezbollah to strike cities well inside Israel. While these missiles are extremely inaccurate when compared to western capabilities, striking area targets such as Israel's larger cities offers Hezbollah a far more potent propaganda victory than merely hitting small settlements and IDF bases near the border with their shorter ranged systems.¹²¹ Learning from the Second Lebanon War, these longer-range rocket systems have been stockpiled in well concealed locations far away from the Israeli border permitting the IRGC/Quds Force to provide their hands-on expertise in the event of any launch.¹²²

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹⁹ Gili Cohen and Jonathan Lis, "IDF: Israel in range of nearly 65,000 Hezbollah, Iranian, and Syrian Rockets," *Haaretz*, 23 May 2012. Accessed 27 Feb 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/idf-israel-in-range-of-nearly-65-000-hezbollah-iran-syria-rockets.premium-1.432012>

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Farnaz Fassihi, "Gaza Fight Hints at Hezbollah Arsenal," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 December 2012, Accessed 27 Feb 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324784404578141240450216114.html>

In terms of political support, Hezbollah has enjoyed a close relationship with the IRGC and Quds Force throughout Rafsanjani's and Khatami's reformist governments as well as throughout Ahmadinejad's conservative government.¹²³ For its part, Iran expects Hezbollah to pursue an Islamic Revolutionary agenda, one where Iranian clerics are provided access to Hezbollah mosques and where Hezbollah continues to push a Shia agenda within the Lebanese government. Further, given Iran's history of generous support, it is quite likely that Iran would in-turn expect Hezbollah to act as an extension of their foreign policy, possibly by conducting attacks against Israeli or Western targets while allowing Iran to maintain an appearance of non-involvement. Whether Hezbollah would comply with any Iranian direction in this regard is open for debate and would be heavily influenced by specific circumstances. Undoubtedly, Hezbollah's pragmatic leader Hassan Nasrallah realizes that his organization needs Iranian financial and material support however he must balance Hezbollah's emerging nationalist ambitions with Iran's revolutionary ones.¹²⁴

¹²³ Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 127.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Building upon Iran's historical and strategic political relations discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter has completed the contextual foundation by illustrating how Iran has employed their security forces, utilizing IW, as one of the main tools of their foreign policy. We have seen how the establishment of the IRGC as a parallel security organization has enabled Iran to optimize its capabilities to protect the regime both domestically and internationally through IW means. The inclusion of both domestic security forces such as the Basij within the same structure as the covert expeditionary Quds Force enables the IRGC leadership to indoctrinate an IW approach across their entire organization. It is also not surprising given Iran's financial and resource limitations due to ongoing UN embargoes for the Commander of the IRGC to personally emphasize an IW approach to counter U.S. influence. We have seen that the Quds Force, established in 1983 as a small insurgent training cadre in Saddam's Iraq has evolved into Iran's capability to export its revolution through the provision of training and support to Islamist opposition organizations primarily in the Middle East.

Iran's IW activities throughout the Middle East have historically been focused upon support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, and Shi'ite militias in Iraq. In these three instances, analysts tend to agree that IRGC/Quds Force elements have supplied funds, weapons, training and tactical advice. Further, Iranian intelligence collection, cultural propaganda and charitable support activities have also been prevalent throughout the Middle East. Specifically within Lebanon, IRGC/Quds Force support to

Hezbollah has been ongoing since the early 1980s. Lebanon marks a particular success for Iran as it represents the one country where Iran has successfully exported its revolutionary agenda.¹²⁵

Through significant financial and material support to Hezbollah, Iran has been able to gain some regional influence, particularly as a defender of Lebanese Shia against Israeli aggression.¹²⁶ However, in some respects Iran has also been the victim of its own success. Hezbollah, in the wake of its battlefield successes of 2006, was able to carve a greater niche for itself as a Lebanese Shia nationalist political movement whose priorities may not always match those of Iran. This creates challenges for the Quds Force in Lebanon in that it must not only train and equip Hezbollah fighters but also seek to ensure its proxy is willing and able to be employed as an extension of Iranian foreign policy. The degree to which it is capable of accomplishing this is directly related to its institutional legitimacy within Lebanon.

Although these two preceding chapters have described the relevant historical and geopolitical factors that are essential for understanding the context within which the Quds Force must operate, this paper contends that this superficial analysis, while necessary, does not go quite far enough in accounting for the effectiveness of the Quds Force. Through the use of the Scott institutional analysis model in the following chapters this paper will

¹²⁵ Wehrey *et al*, "Dangerous But Not Omnipotent," 86.

¹²⁶ Pahlavi, "The Place of Shi'ism in Iranian Grand Strategy," 55.

demonstrate that the Quds Force in Lebanon's legitimacy is as closely linked, if not more so, to underlying sociological factors.

CHAPTER 3 – AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

As Iranian security force activities both domestically and throughout the Middle East are of key concern to Western military analysts there has been much research into the capabilities and intentions of the IRGC and the Iranian regime. Two recent RAND Corporation reports, *The Rise of the Pasdaran* (2009) and *Dangerous but Not Omnipotent* (2009) respectively examine the domestic role of the IRGC and Iran's strategic imperatives. While each are informative, and have been referenced extensively in the preceding two chapters of this paper, they do not by themselves explain why Iran continues to successfully export IW via the Quds Force. Similarly, much has been written about Iran's Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, particularly in the wake of its successful operations against the IDF in the Second Lebanon War of 2006. Both Norton's *Hezbollah* (2007) and Azani's *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (2009) provides an excellent summary of that organization's transition from a socio-religious movement to a political institution; however, they only hint at how Iran and the Quds Force has influenced this trajectory. While having laid the very necessary contextual foundation with an examination of Iran's strategic interests and security force activities in the Middle East and Lebanon this paper will now augment our understanding by conducting a more detailed institutional analysis of the Quds Force in Lebanon. Ultimately, it is by a thorough understanding of both the broad context *and* an institutional analysis that the Quds Force in Lebanon can be fully understood.

Irregular Warfare (IW), as defined by the U.S. Department of Defense is “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over relevant populations.”¹²⁷ IW favors an asymmetric approach although defense theorists acknowledge it may employ a full range of military and other capacities in order to destroy an adversary’s will to fight. Traditional analysts, such as Frank Hoffman, tend to focus upon the application of guerrilla warfare tactics and novel use of advanced military technology when describing contemporary IW.¹²⁸ What is not as simple to explain is how the Quds Force in Lebanon has maintained Hezbollah’s IW mindset and capabilities when a typical trajectory for a revolutionary armed force according to Katherine Chorley’s classic model would see Hezbollah strive to professionalize.¹²⁹ Building upon Pierre Pahlavi’s institutional analysis of the IRGC, which analyzed the factors which allow Iran to successfully institutionalize IW nationally; this paper will attempt to explore how many of these factors relate to the specific situation the Quds Force in Lebanon.¹³⁰ Further, Pahlavi and Ouellet’s findings from their institutional analysis of the IDF during the 33-Day War offer a unique vantage point from which a complementary Scott Model institutional analysis of their Iranian adversary can be conducted. As the Quds Force’s activities are closely bound to their Lebanese proxy, this paper will serve to complement

¹²⁷ United States, Department of Defence, *Directive 3000.07: Irregular Warfare*, 1 Dec 2008. Accessed 3 March 2013, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300007p.pdf>

¹²⁸ Frank Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 52 (1st quarter 2009): 37. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/jfghoffman.pdf>

¹²⁹ Katharine Campbell (Hopkinson) Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

¹³⁰ Pierre Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle: Le cas de la stratégie asymétrique des Gardiens de la révolution en Iran,” *Etudes internationales*, vol. XLII, no. 4, (Quebec : Institut Québécoise des Hautes Etudes Internationales, December 2011).

Major Steve Boivin's 2011 institutional analysis of Hezbollah by offering an analysis of their principle IW supporter.¹³¹

The Scott Model

The concept of the *institution* is a fundamental component in social science.

Institutions, although extremely varied and complex, may be defined as:

“...relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances.”¹³²

Society is only possible if there is a degree of cohesiveness and predictability within an institution which enables it to exist. As such, cohesiveness and predictability are often described as the foundation of social order within any institution. Emile Durkheim, the founder of modern sociology, emphasized that any institution can only exist if it serves a social function that can be legitimized.¹³³ How an institution legitimizes its existence is closely linked to the social environment within which it must operate. One method to examine the relative success of an institution's legitimization is through the application of the Scott Model of institutional analysis.

¹³¹Major Steve Boivin, “Le processus de légitimation du Hezbollah: Un cas d’analyse institutionnelle,” (Masters of Defence Studies, Canadian Forces College, 2011).

¹³²James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 78, (1984): 734-749.

¹³³Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, (New York: MacMillan, 1982), 5.

Richard Scott has created a three pillar conceptual model for the study of institutions and the broader frameworks in which they operate.¹³⁴ These three pillars consist of the cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative pillars.¹³⁵ The first of these pillars, the cultural-cognitive examines the impact on the institution of *internal* cognitive frameworks and predispositions along with the way those frameworks interact with *external* cultural perspectives. It emphasizes the impact of mental processes on the way the world is perceived.¹³⁶ The normative pillar centers on the institutional impact of the values and norms common within an institution, or what the institution prefers and how it believes things should be done. It includes the constraints on social action, and what actions are particularly enabled or encouraged.¹³⁷ Finally, the regulative pillar examines the rules and structures that form the institution both formally and informally. This includes not only the rules and structures themselves, but also the capacity to establish and enforce them.¹³⁸

Although these three pillars are presented separately within the framework they are not mutually exclusive and have significant impacts on each other. Indeed institutions function best, and are legitimized, when all three pillars are aligned and supportive. Where normative or cultural-cognitive elements either conflict with each other or with the regulative aspects of an institution, some degree of dysfunction is likely. Scott goes

¹³⁴ W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations : Ideas and Interests*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008).

¹³⁵ For purposes of analytical clarity this paper will deal with Scott's three pillars in the reverse order from his original description.

¹³⁶ W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 56.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

on to state that a misalignment of the pillars and the resulting confusion and conflict can be a strong driver for institutional change.¹³⁹ Chapter 7 of this paper will specifically examine whether any misalignment of the pillars within the Quds Force have either driven them to change or whether change may be expected in the near future.

Within this study the full depth of sociological analysis supported by the Scott model will not be conducted. This paper will not attempt to address rational-choice or alternate models. Scott's three pillar model will be used as a method for examining aspects of the Quds Force in Lebanon that might otherwise go unconsidered in traditional analysis. This is not to say that applying the model is without its challenges. In particular conducting institutional analysis on an organization like the Quds Force, where very few sources are available from within the institution, is extremely difficult. Many sources of information that would ideally be used to conduct institutional analysis are unavailable. In particular, without primary sources of information exposing the mindset of key Quds Force members it is extremely challenging to separate those actions arising from normative elements as opposed to cultural-cognitive elements. While this is unfortunate it detracts little from this particular study for whether an element is normative or cultural-cognitive matters little in the final analysis, which seeks as its essential goal to determine the degree of conformity between elements. The next chapter will examine the first of Scott's pillars, the cultural-cognitive, where we will examine how the Quds Force's

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

internal cognitive frameworks interact with both Iranian and Lebanese *external* cultural perspectives.

CHAPTER 4 - CULTURAL-COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

Before being institutionalized, Iran's concept of exporting irregular warfare via the Quds Force, like many strategic concepts developed subconsciously, is informed by the particular religious-cultural context of post-Revolutionary Iran.¹⁴⁰ Pierre Pahlavi suggests that Iran's cognitive adoption of IW was founded upon the three complementary ideologies of the Shia religion, the revolutionary ideals of the Mullahs, and the synthesis of the ideas of militarism, populism, and nationalism, particularly by the IRGC.¹⁴¹ As the Quds Force is drawn from the elite of the IRGC these conceptions undoubtedly hold true amongst their members. However, there is possibly more at play when it comes to the Quds Force in Lebanon. The members of this organization must attempt to ensure that as an institution they retain legitimacy in the eyes of their Lebanese hosts. As such they must remain extremely cognizant of their Arab host's cognitive framework which differs from their own. While the core foundations of IRGC cognitive framework must be explored, it is the juxtaposition of the Lebanese Shia cognitive framework which bears heavily on the Quds Force's legitimacy.

Section 1 - The Persian Mindset

¹⁴⁰ Pierre Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 475.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The collective psychology of Iranians is strongly influenced by their heritage of greatness encompassing the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanid dynasties as well as their legacy of loss including the fall of empires and later invasions.¹⁴² Thaler suggests that the elite of Iran, which the senior leadership of the IRGC and Quds Force certainly are, view themselves as a “natural, indispensable, leading power of the Middle East, or even the Muslim World.”¹⁴³ Conversely, Iranians also have a distinct feeling of victimization. This victimization stretches back to the Greek, Arab, Mongol and Turkish invasions of antiquity, through British and Russian domination in the nineteenth and into the mid-twentieth centuries, and ultimately to their current perception of U.S. domination.¹⁴⁴

It may be argued that the Persian mindset has been historically conditioned to emphasize an IW approach. Giles contends that well before the Islamization of Iran in the 16th Century everyday Persians required “artifice, flattery. . . and treachery” in order to survive and that this mindset has carried over to present day where Iranian diplomats must be resourceful in order to outmanoeuvre competing powers.¹⁴⁵ This mindset remains foremost in the minds of contemporary IRGC and Quds Force commanders as witnessed by their public statements emphasizing an IW approach to operations.¹⁴⁶ While many

¹⁴² Stephen R. Ward, *Immortal*, 11.

¹⁴³ David Thaler *et al.*, “Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics,” (Washington, D.C.: National Defence Research Institute, 2010): 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Gregory Giles, “The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran’s Leader and Strategic Culture”, in *Know Thy Enemy. Profiles of Adversary Leaders and Their Strategic Cultures*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004): 145.

commentators would point to Iran's relative economic weakness and the limitations imposed by UN sanctions as the key drivers for an IW approach, the Iranian preference for an indirect IW approach can be argued to be equally linked to their cultural heritage.

Although Iranian strategic culture is not static it can be typified by this cultural duality of national pride and feelings of victimization, resulting in what Thaler refers to as an assertive but cautious approach to foreign policy.¹⁴⁷ This cognitive duality is reflected in the very structure of their armed forces where the security of the state is ensured by both the Iranian Army (*Artesh*) and the IRGC.¹⁴⁸ While Iranians have been quite comfortable with their underdog status vis-à-vis the U.S. omnipresence in the region, the withdrawal of significant U.S. forces from Iraq and their pending withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, has likely prompted some within the ruling elite to perceive that they may have an opportunity to expand Iran's regional influence. In this regard, utilizing the Quds Force in Lebanon would be an excellent vehicle to expand their influence in the Levant.¹⁴⁹ However, there are some indications that Hezbollah is wary of publically associating too closely with Iran as it detracts from their nationalist agenda.¹⁵⁰ This perhaps restricts the level of overt involvement that Iran and the Quds Force can

¹⁴⁶ Muhammad Sahimi, "A Hardliner's Hardliner: General Muhammad Ali Jafiri," *PBS Frontline*, 21 January 2010. Accessed 27 February 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/01/a-hardliners-hardliner.html>

¹⁴⁷ Thaler *et al.*, "Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads", 5

¹⁴⁸ Ward, *Immortal*, 301.

¹⁴⁹ Barbara Slavin, "Strategically Lonely Iran Exploits Opportunities for Regional Influence," *Atlantic Council*, February 2011. Accessed 1 March 2013, http://www.acus.org/files/publication_pdfs/403/032511_ACUS_Slavin_LonelyIran.PDF

¹⁵⁰ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, Political Program*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2006), 170.

have in Lebanon as any surge in Lebanese Shia nationalist opposition to visible signs of Iranian manipulation would hinder their covert support program.

Section 2 - The Shia Foundation

From the 16th Century onward, Shia Islam has been the dominant religion in Iran. Indeed, the Shia faith has evolved to become one of the essential traits of the Iranian national character.¹⁵¹ Historically, the Safavid dynasty (1501-1760) marked the official recognition of Shi'ism as Persia's official religion and it is this event, and the conflict that resulted from it, that ties Shi'ism to the concept of IW.¹⁵² The Safavid's established a buffer between themselves, the Sunni-dominated Ottomans and the Christian west. As they found themselves threatened by these two competing empires and ideologies they came to rely upon deception and concealment of their faith, known as *taqiye*, in order to survive.¹⁵³ These elements of *taqiye* continue to this day, where Iranian strategic decision-making, including the activities of the Quds Force in Lebanon, remain purposely opaque not only to Western observers but to average Iranian citizens.¹⁵⁴

Pahlavi and Giles both contend that specific elements of Islam such as the concept of martyrdom in the service of God are well suited to the employment of an asymmetric approach which may require the employment of suicide attacks.¹⁵⁵ Further, the Persian

¹⁵¹ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 475.

¹⁵² Ward, *Immortal*, 3.

¹⁵³ Gregory F. Giles, "The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic Culture," 147.

¹⁵⁴ Thaler *et al.*, "Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads", xi.

notion of *chahadat* (martyr) possesses a special connotation in Shi'ism where it is based upon resistance against an oppressor.¹⁵⁶ Thaler describes how the radical Shia ideology of *moqavamat* (resistance) against *zolm* (injustice) helped support the Islamic Revolution.¹⁵⁷ This religious foundation has certainly facilitated Iran's adoption of the Quds Force's asymmetric approach. However, while Iran certainly did employ suicide tactics extensively in the Iran-Iraq War, justified by the concept of sacrifice in the case of an unprovoked attack, what seems less certain is whether the regime, and the Quds Force in Lebanon, could convince Hezbollah to employ such tactics in anything other than a defensive/resistance scenario. Boivin argues quite convincingly that Hezbollah, in an effort to be perceived as a legitimate institution, has sought to downplay its role as a terrorist organization while bolstering its image as a national resistance movement.¹⁵⁸

Iranian and Lebanese Shia have longstanding ties, dating at least as far back to the personal relationship between Ayatollah Khomeini and Hezbollah's alleged spiritual leader, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah.¹⁵⁹ Hezbollah's leader Nasrallah continues to publically promote these ties up to the present day. Despite their common faith, Magnus Ranstorp has suggested that Hezbollah leadership expressed misgivings about suicide tactics as far back as the western hostage crisis of 1980s.¹⁶⁰ Recent Hezbollah conflicts with the IDF, such as the Second Lebanon War of 2006, have been marked by

¹⁵⁵ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 476.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Thaler *et al.*, "Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads," 13.

¹⁵⁸ Boivin, "Le processus de légitimation du Hezbollah: Un cas d'analyse institutionnelle," 39.

¹⁵⁹ Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 16.

¹⁶⁰ Magnus Ranstorp, "The Strategy and Tactics of Hezbollah's Current Lebanonization Process," *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1, (Summer 1998): 103–134.

an absence of suicide attacks. While on the surface, Hezbollah shares the common bond of the Shia faith with Iran, as an organization they qualify their support for the Supreme Leader and the concept of clerical rule under *velayat e-faqih*.¹⁶¹ Wehrey suggests that beginning in the 1990's that Hezbollah felt it needed a broader message based on Lebanese nationalism in order to appeal to a wider support base.¹⁶² For the Quds Force this likely means that while the common bond of the Shia faith gives them legitimacy in the eyes of their Lebanese Shia hosts, it does not imply that they can simply direct Hezbollah action on the basis of the authority of the Supreme Leader.

Section 3 - A Product of the Revolution

The experience of the revolution has emphasized, and legitimized, the role of the Shia clergy as liberators against illegitimate government regimes, formalized the sense of victimization and politicized the ideas of resistance and the battle against injustice.¹⁶³ Revolutionary thought has grafted itself onto Shi'ism and permitted the development of a more aggressive political system which is able to better embrace IW.¹⁶⁴ The system of revolutionary thought forms a foundation for a strategy based in IW rather than one based upon conventional military operations.¹⁶⁵ In fomenting the revolution, Khomeini combined the Shia ideology of resistance against injustice with concepts such as

¹⁶¹ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 39.

¹⁶² Wehrey *et al.*, "Dangerous but not Omnipotent," 99.

¹⁶³ Thaler *et al.*, "Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads," 13.

¹⁶⁴ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 476.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen Ward, "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 59, no. 4, (Autumn 2005): 559-576.

mostaz'afin (downtrodden peoples) and other leftist ideologies from around the world including Marxism, Maoism and the writings of Frantz Fanon. This was not a novel approach as Khomeini's rhetoric built on the previous efforts of Ali Shariati, a prominent Shia intellectual, who sought to infuse Islam with a Third-World revolutionary spirit in the 1960s.¹⁶⁶ Khomeini's aim was to convince Iranians to support a revolutionary ideology which included the use of IW tactics long advocated by Shariati to overthrow the Shah.

The Iranian revolution coupled with Shi'ism has produced a belief-set, based in martyrdom, ideally suited for asymmetric warfare and capable of being exported beyond Iran's borders.¹⁶⁷ Against this backdrop, Iran has a history since the Revolution of being exceptionally active in its support, and even conduct, of terrorism and other forms of IW throughout the Middle East and the world. Ward has suggested that Iran's emphasis on IW results from its lack of technological and material capabilities which compelled them to compensate by relying upon "nationalistic and revolutionary zeal."¹⁶⁸ While Iran's economic challenges cannot be disputed, it is the position of this paper that both religious and revolutionary ideology forms a cognitive foundation for IRGC and Quds Force that few western observers appreciate.

In terms of revolutionary ideology, Lebanon, much like Syria and Iraq, provides us with a case where it may be claimed that Iran has successfully exported its

¹⁶⁶ Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 14.

¹⁶⁷ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 477.

¹⁶⁸ Ward, "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," 560.

revolution.¹⁶⁹ Wehrey makes the compelling case that early in the Iranian Regime's existence its' primary goal was to export its revolution to those areas where their fellow Shia were marginalized.¹⁷⁰ In recent years, though, many analysts portray Iranian foreign policy as moving back towards a more traditional emphasis on state-to-state power politics. Indeed, a few months before his death in 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa stipulating that Iran's interests must come before the export of the revolution. While Iran did shift to a more pragmatic approach, within Lebanon they continued to emphasize their revolutionary view of the international system, likely considering this approach to be a useful vehicle to expand their influence.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Wehrey *et al*, "Dangerous but Not Omnipotent," 86.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁷¹ "Supreme Leader Meets Lebanese President," *Mojnews Agency*, 31 August 2012, http://www.mojnews.com/en/Miscellaneous/ViewContents.aspx?Contract=cms_Contents_I_News&r=1025897

Section 4 – The IRGC and Quds Force

As it embodies the Iranian Strategic culture, founded on the Persian mindset and Shia ideology coupled with revolutionary zeal, the IRGC and Quds Force is the perfect vehicle for exporting IW on behalf of the state. The IRGC was founded in 1979 to safeguard the Iranian regime both physically and ideologically.¹⁷² In order to achieve this, it indoctrinates its members in both revolutionary ethics and their political military ideology.¹⁷³ While much of its activity has been focused upon domestic threats such as the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), Fedayeen-e Khalq (FEK), and more recently Green revolutionaries, Article 150 of the Iranian Constitution only vaguely defines the functions of the IRGC as being focused upon protecting the Islamic Revolution.¹⁷⁴

The broad scope of its Constitutional powers has enabled the IRGC to view its role as fundamentally political, which subsequently allows it to justify its employment of the Quds Force beyond its borders.¹⁷⁵ Within the cognitive pillar, the main result of this political freedom enjoyed by the IRGC, and thus the Quds Force, is the development of an original ideological identity. This identity is forged from the combination of revolutionary thought and Iranian nationalism, populism, and militarism.¹⁷⁶ Wehrey has suggested that the key themes within this identity include “anti-humanism, anti-

¹⁷² Frederick Wehrey *et al.*, “The Rise of the Pasdaran. Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps,” (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009), xi.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁷⁴ Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle,” 477

¹⁷⁵ Wehrey *et al.*, “The Rise of the Pasdaran,” 78.

¹⁷⁶ Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle,” 478.

technology, anti-Western, populist, insular, and highly nationalistic.”¹⁷⁷ This raises an interesting dichotomy. If the mindset of the IRGC is insular and highly nationalistic why then do they feel the need to support extremist groups outside of Iran when they might simply rely upon their nation’s daunting military geography? Pahlavi contends that the IRGC has bridged the gulf between the Mullahs desire for regime survival and their own institution’s pragmatic nationalism by emphasizing that IW offers the best vehicle to defend the national interests of the state.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, here we see the emergence of the uniquely Iranian concept of a “*mosaic defense*” wherein any aggression, namely U.S., could be deterred or potentially defeated by a myriad of asymmetric threats.¹⁷⁹

In the context of the mosaic defense the Quds Force provides strategic depth to Iran by developing Hezbollah’s IW capabilities and working to ensure their Lebanese allies remain supportive of Iranian foreign policy. This approach fits well within Iranian doctrine which has emphasized the development of niche capabilities that complement Iranian strengths while exploiting the weaknesses of adversaries, who are regarded as risk adverse, casualty sensitive and heavily dependent on technology.¹⁸⁰ One of the strengths of Iranian influence, through the Quds Force, to Hezbollah is the emphasis on the politicization of their conflict with Israel. In their institutional analysis of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), Pahlavi and Ouellet demonstrated how the techno-centric IDF had no effective answer for a Hezbollah rocket campaign whose objective was strategic

¹⁷⁷ Wehrey *et al.*, “The Rise of the Pasdaran,” 36.

¹⁷⁸ Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle,” 478.

¹⁷⁹ Wehrey *et al.*, ““Dangerous but not Omnipotent,” xvii.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Connell, “Iran’s Military Doctrine,” *The Iran Primer*, USIP. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>

political rather than military tactical.¹⁸¹ While Quds Force tends to stay in the background they have successfully encouraged Hezbollah to make maximum use of the political sphere to further their interests.

Conclusion

Through an examination of the major elements of the cultural-cognitive pillar we have seen how the Persian mindset, Shi'ism and Revolutionary ideologies have impacted upon the *internal* cognitive frameworks and predispositions of the Quds Force in Lebanon. In essence, the distinctly Persian character of the Force coupled with its' religious and revolutionary fervor make it the ideal vehicle to deliver an IW capability to Lebanon. What differentiates this study from previous institutional analysis of the IRGC is that the Quds Force in Lebanon is compelled to operate within the slightly different culture of their Arab hosts. This has created some cross-cultural challenges for the Quds Force over the span of its involvement in Lebanon.

Ultimately, an examination of cultural-cognitive pillar has largely shown that the mental processes of the Quds Force and Hezbollah have been and continue to be very alike. Despite differences in the Persian and Arab mindset the common bonds of religion and the successful export of Iran's revolutionary ideology have made Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shia a key ally and partner in Iran's *mosaic defense*. Next, this paper will

¹⁸¹ Pierre Pahlavi and Eric Ouellet, "Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: Israel Defense Forces during the 33-Day War of 2006," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 23, no. 1, (March 2012): 41.

examine the institutional impact of the Quds Force in Lebanon's values and norms. This will entail a deeper examination of the constraints on their social action, and what actions are particularly enabled or encouraged.

CHAPTER 5 – NORMATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE QUDS FORCE

Social theorist such as March and Olsen see institutions resting primarily on the normative pillar.¹⁸² They emphasize the normative rules that provide an obligatory dimension into the social life within a given institution. Scott observes that a normative system includes both values and norms that “define legitimate ways to pursue valued ends.”¹⁸³ Therefore, in this analysis we must not only consider the Quds Force in Lebanon’s goals and objectives, e.g. to ensure Hezbollah remains a willing proxy, but also what the Force considers to be an appropriate method to pursue these goals, e.g. by instructing Hezbollah fighters in IW tactics. In this context, the indoctrination of its members, paramilitary training, the enshrinement of IW doctrine, influence activities and the social role of the Quds Force in Lebanon are key elements which will be considered in turn. This chapter will show that continuing operations over the past thirty years has led to the growing institutionalization of the Quds Force in Lebanon.

Section 1 - Indoctrination

In order to understand the normative framework of the members of the Quds Force in Lebanon it is important to shed light on their internal norms, most of which were developed during their youth in Iran. During the 1990s, the institutional stature of the

¹⁸² James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 78, (1984): 734-749.

¹⁸³ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 54.

IRGC as both a military and a political force within Iran solidified.¹⁸⁴ Initially intended to as a military force when they were created by Ayatollah Khomeini, the ascendance of Ayatollah Khamenei as Supreme Leader in 1989 facilitated the IRGC's transition into a political force.¹⁸⁵ The political power of the IRGC was limited to some extent under the Rafsanjani and Khatami governments; however the 2005 election of the former IRGC member Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has strengthened their political influence.¹⁸⁶ Today, the IRGC is widely regarded as having considerable influence over the formulation of Iranian foreign policy.¹⁸⁷ The transition to a political force not only enabled the IRGC's Quds Force to become closely linked to the power structure of the state, but almost certainly allowed them a freer hand in dealing with Hezbollah. In addition to these external forces, the normalization of the IRGC institution was also heavily influenced internally. Throughout the 1990s the IRGC, through an aggressive program of self-promotion and indoctrination, have developed a sense of corporatism, cultivated loyalty to the regime, and bolstered their own institutional image.¹⁸⁸

Among the most important ideological indoctrination programs run by the IRGC are those dedicated to indoctrinating young Basijis.¹⁸⁹ The program of Ideological-

¹⁸⁴ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 478.

¹⁸⁵ Wehrey *et al*, "The Rise of the Pasdaran," 80.

¹⁸⁶ Ali Alfoneh, "Ahmadinejad vs Khamenei : IRGC Wins, Civilians Lose," *American Enterprise Institute*, 25 May 2011. Accessed 8 March 2013, <http://www.aei.org/article/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/ahmadinejad-versus-khamenei-irgc-wins-civilians-lose/>

¹⁸⁷ Bruno and Bajoria, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards."

¹⁸⁸ Wehrey *et al*, "The Rise of the Pasdaran," 35.

Political Training (IPT), frequently offered in Basij-administered summer camps across the country, offers instruction in a range of skills from methods for organizing counter-reformist student movements to vocational training. Golkar observes that since 2006 the Basij has re-emphasized ideological indoctrination in addition to skills training.¹⁹⁰ The purpose of this shift is assessed to be the importance placed upon the internalization of the regime's values and beliefs at an early age, while vocational and military training may be delivered later in life.¹⁹¹

Aside from running their own indoctrination efforts, the IRGC and the Basij have also become deeply entrenched in the Iranian education system.¹⁹² This ensures that the ideological indoctrination that was commenced amongst the Basijis is reinforced in the secondary and post-secondary schools of Iran. Of particular importance since the Green Revolution of 2009, it permits a check on the growth of any potential reformist organizations within the academic environment. What remains unclear is what effect these indoctrination efforts have had upon the youth of Iran. Broadly, reviews of IRGC indoctrination efforts have been mixed. Pahlavi cites several examples of its effectiveness, particularly in rural areas, while others such as Wehrey and Golkar suggest there is a degree of cynicism and resistance to their program amongst Iranian youth in the cities.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁰ Saeid Golkar, "The Ideological-Political Training of Iran's Basij", *Middle East Brief*, Crown Centre for Middle East Studies, no. 44 (September 2010). Accessed 9 March 2013
<http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB44.pdf>

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Wehrey *et al.*, "The Rise of the Pasdaran," 38.

What can be implied from this intensive indoctrination program is the reasonable assurance that any young Basiji recruited into the IRGC and subsequently into the Quds Force will be highly indoctrinated with the ideology of the regime. This aggressive approach to ideological indoctrination, and the acceptance of this approach by Quds Force members as a norm, may then be subsequently transposed to their Hezbollah hosts, albeit modified to suit the specific cultural circumstances. What results is the crafting of a Hezbollah indoctrination program in Lebanon which in many ways resembles its Iranian sponsor. Hezbollah has established the Imam Mahdi Scouts, a youth movement similar to the Boy Scouts. In order to indoctrinate these youth, Hezbollah along with Quds Force support, have reportedly made extensive use of summer camps in South Lebanon which thousands of young Mahdi Scouts attend annually.¹⁹⁴ While youth programs for Lebanese children are offered by at least 27 political parties, Hezbollah is widely acknowledged to indoctrinate the Mahdi Scouts in the philosophy of resistance to Israel and actively groom the most promising Scouts for later service in Hezbollah.¹⁹⁵

Section 2 – Paramilitary Training

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁹⁴ “Hezbollah uses its summer camps to indoctrinate youngsters,” *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, 1 September 2008. Accessed 8 March 2013, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_08_220_2.pdf

¹⁹⁵ Andrew Coombes, “Hezbollah’s Scout Brigade,” *Al Jazeera News*, 29 January 2009. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2007/12/20085251919830843.html>

Another key element of the IRGC's legitimization is their program of paramilitary training of the Iranian population. Today, the IRGC and Basij conduct regular paramilitary training throughout Iran for both active and potential members.¹⁹⁶ Wehrey suggests that this paramilitary training serves four broad purposes. First, it prepares Basij members to defend the state as part of the *mosaic defense* strategy using IW tactics proven in the Second Lebanon War. Second, it enables them to support disaster relief operations such as earthquakes to which Iran is prone.¹⁹⁷ Third, it prepares them to defend the regime against internal dissent, a threat which has received much attention in the wake of the 2009 presidential elections, leading to the appointment of the former head of Iranian police counter-intelligence as commander of the Basij.¹⁹⁸ Finally, as previously discussed it provides an additional venue for indoctrinating a large portion of civil society with the IRGC's institutional values.

While paramilitary training within Iran is not a task that the Quds Force performs, they are a net beneficiary as the vast numbers of Basij, an estimated 14 million members of which 1.5 million may be mobilized, form the recruiting base for the IRGC and thus eventually the Quds Force.¹⁹⁹ Having a recruiting pool that is both heavily indoctrinated

¹⁹⁶ Wehrey *et al*, "The Rise of the Pasdaran," 44.

¹⁹⁷ Brigadier-General Mohammad Reza Naghdi, "Basij Commander Urges People to Cooperate with Basij in Quake Aftermath," *Iran Daily Brief*, 14 August 2012. Accessed 8 March 2013, <http://www.irandailybrief.com/2012/08/14/basij-commander-urges-people-to-cooperate-with-the-basij-in-quake-aftermath/>

¹⁹⁸ Bahram Rafiei, "Second Stage of Structural Change in Revolutionary Guards," *Rooz*, 12 October 2009. Accessed 8 March 2013, <http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/article/second-stage-of-structural-change-in-revolutionary-guards.html>

and already partially trained in employing IW facilitates their absorption into the Quds Force and allows for a relatively quick transition for these individuals to instruct Hezbollah members in IW. While analysts such as Cordesman, Wilner and Wehrey suggest that the relatively low level of paramilitary training delivered to the Basij does not make them combat capable, for the purposes of instilling normative values these training programs are effective.²⁰⁰ Indeed, delivering paramilitary training to Hezbollah members is the primary task of the Quds Force in Lebanon. Indications that the Basij have applied lessons learned during the Second Lebanon War suggest that the Quds Force has facilitated the flow of information between the field and their advanced asymmetric warfare school at Imam Ali University in Tehran.²⁰¹

Section 3 – Normalization of IW Doctrine

During the 1990s, the gradual institutionalization of IRGC in Iran was accompanied by a growing legitimization of their operations; in particular there was a growing acceptance of asymmetric methods as the foundation of Iranian political-military strategy.²⁰² These asymmetric methods were codified in Iran's Armed Forces Regulations published in 1992, which while outwardly very defensive in nature

¹⁹⁹ Wilner, "Iran and the Gulf Military Balance," 111.

²⁰⁰ Wehrey *et al.*, "The Rise of the Pasdaran," 48.

²⁰¹ Wilner, "Iran and the Gulf Military Balance," 117.

²⁰² Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 481.

still make frequent reference to protecting Islam, and other oppressed Muslim nations.²⁰³ Ward suggests that the Iranian leadership were only being pragmatic when they chose to adopt a national military doctrine based on ballistic missile deterrence and unconventional operations that were both more in line with their military capabilities and capable of confronting U.S. power.²⁰⁴ This emphasis on IW would have definite appeal to the regime and IRGC/Quds Force leadership, almost all veterans of the costly Iran-Iraq War, where “zeal was not a substitute for arms and that a willingness to accept high casualties did not guarantee results on a [conventional] battlefield.”²⁰⁵ Coupled with this subconscious aversion for another conventional war, the Iranian leadership only had to look to the recent successes of insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as their proxy in Lebanon to see how effective an IW approach could be in defeating a technologically superior foe.

The preference for an IW approach is further captured in the Iranian concept of a *mosaic defense*. Ward describes this concept as relying upon asymmetric warfare, the mobilization of the Basij, and the further mobilization of Iranian society to defend against any invasion.²⁰⁶ In the defense of the homeland the use of proxy forces such as Lebanon’s Hezbollah serves three key purposes. First, it “internationalizes” the conflict, providing Iran further strategic depth by compelling any U.S. or Israeli aggressor to deal with a proxy war in another part of the region lessening the direct threat to Tehran.

²⁰³ Government of IRI, "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Foundation for Iranian Studies*. Accessed 10 March 2013, <http://fis-iran.org/en/resources/legaldoc/constitutionislamic>

²⁰⁴ Ward, “The Continuing Evolution of Iran’s Military Doctrine,” 599.

²⁰⁵ Chubin, *Iran and Iraq at War*, 254.

²⁰⁶ Ward, “The Continuing Evolution of Iran’s Military Doctrine,” 573.

Secondly, it offers plausible deniability that Iranian leaders are behind any such activity, reducing the likelihood that Iran could be directly targeted by the U.S. or Israel for Hezbollah activity. Finally, any internationalization of the conflict would provide Iran with a source of regional legitimacy, a valuable psychological dimension in any future show-down with the U.S. or Israel.

A possible example of the mosaic defense strategy in action is the alleged Hezbollah suicide attack on a busload of Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria in July 2012.²⁰⁷ Despite the fact that both Hezbollah and Iran have denied their involvement it is quite plausible that this incident was an Iranian response to the U.S. and Israeli-backed assassinations of their nuclear scientists.²⁰⁸ If true, this attack would be Hezbollah's first operation in Europe since their involvement in the Kosovo conflict and might suggest a willingness to employ suicide bombers in future attacks. This attack would also serve to reinforce the operational linkage between Hezbollah and the Quds Force and the natural melding of the Shia cognitive ideology of martyrdom with IW tactics. In their study of the French Army in Algeria Ouellet and Pahlavi observed that "legitimization justifies the institutional existence by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives."²⁰⁹ In this vein, the operational success achieved against the IDF in the Second Lebanon War of

²⁰⁷ "Hezbollah linked to Burgas Bus bombing in Bulgaria," *BBC News*, 5 February 2013. Accessed 8 March 2013 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21342192>

²⁰⁸ "Hezbollah is Blamed for Attack on Israeli Tourists in Bulgaria," *New York Times*, 12 July 2012. Accessed 8 March 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/world/europe/explosion-on-bulgaria-tour-bus-kills-at-least-five-israelis.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

²⁰⁹ Eric Ouellet and Pierre Pahlavi, "Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare : A Case Study of the French Army in Algeria 1954-1960," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (Department of Defence Studies, Royal Military College of Canada, 2011): 812.

2006 coupled with a successful strike against Israeli civilians in Europe would only serve to normalize the Quds Force's IW approach in Lebanon. The Quds Force may train and guide Hezbollah in the conduct of terrorist activities that may be abhorrent to Western observers yet it fulfills vital goals for the organization.

Section 4 – Influence Activities

Coupled with their indoctrination and domestic paramilitary training, the IRGC employs influence activities, often negatively defined as *propaganda*, extensively to expand their influence. Initially limited by their use of antiquated methods, the self-promotion system of the IRGC rapidly modernized being centrally coordinated by the Office of the Supreme Leader resident within the IRGC organization.²¹⁰ In the same vein, the IRGC also engages Iranian and wider public opinion through cultural institutes and think tanks. The influential journal *Keyhan* and the Iranian broadcast media (IRIB) are both led by former Guardians who ensure that their outlets messages are distinctly pro-IRGC.²¹¹

Iran has embraced the use of influence activities, particularly media diplomacy, as a relatively affordable way to both spread its influence and defend its interests.²¹² Arsali observed that strategic messaging is designed to *defy* the West, *deceive* Western militaries about Iran's military capabilities, *deter* Western military intervention, and

²¹⁰ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 479.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 480.

²¹² Pierre Pahlavi, "Understanding Iran's Media Diplomacy," *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 2012. Accessed 28 March 2013, <http://israelcfr.com/free-downloads.php?inp=5>.

demonstrate the nation's power.²¹³ Typically, the regime attempts to deceive the West by obscuring the role of the Quds Force in Lebanon. Following the February 2013 assassination of General Hassan Shateri, the Quds Force in Lebanon commander, Iranian officials merely stated that the Quds Force played a leading role in reconstruction.²¹⁴ While this is true it fails to mention their involvement in providing military training to Hezbollah. However, a mere two weeks later the Deputy Commander of the IRGC publically praised the Quds Force for its role in assisting Hezbollah and Hamas against the IDF.²¹⁵ While this "mixed message" approach may seem amateurish, it is quite likely that the first message was intended for an international audience while the second, delivered through the official news site of the IRGC, was intended to be a morale booster for the IRGC itself in the wake of Shateri's death.

Iran and the Quds Force also promote their presence in Lebanon through what would be classified as traditional communications. In the Lebanese Shia context this includes the dissemination of pro-Iranian messaging, particularly from influential figures such as Fadlallah and Nasrallah, in mosques and *husseiniyyas* (places of religious congregation).²¹⁶ While many moderate Lebanese Muslims are uneasy with Shiite

²¹³ Jahangir Arsali, "Obsolete Weapons, Unconventional Tactics, and Martyrdom Zeal: How Iran would apply its Asymmetric Warfare Doctrine in a Future Conflict," *Occasional Paper Series*, George C. Marshall School European Centre for Security Studies, no. 10, (April 2007): 37-38. Accessed 8 March 2013, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA478853>

²¹⁴ "Suspected Israeli Agents Kill IRGC Commander," Press TV, 14 February 2013. Accessed 10 March 2013, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/02/14/288857/irgc-commander-assassinated-in-lebanon/>

²¹⁵ Brig Gen Hussien Salami, "Secret Revolutionary Soldiers and Branches in Lebanon and Gaza caused Historic Failures for IDF," *Iran Military News*, 7 March 2013. Accessed 10 March 2013, <http://iranmilitarynews.org/2013/03/07/irgc-cdr-secret-revolutionary-soldiers-and-branches-in-lebanon-gaza-caused-historical-failures-for-idf/>

political Islam they have been very receptive to messaging urging resistance to Israel. By continuing to focus their messaging against Israel without introducing wedge issues such as *velayat e-faqih* into the conversation has facilitated the Quds Force normalization into Lebanese Shia society.

Lastly, Iran's support for Hezbollah social programs aimed at the Lebanese Shia forms a key component of Quds Force influence activities. Wehrey describes that since the mid-1990s Iran has supplied significant funding for the reconstruction of homes destroyed by Israel and for the delivery of health care and clinics in South Lebanon.²¹⁷ Harik contends that Hezbollah has subsequently leveraged this support to increase its appeal as a legitimate political force.²¹⁸ While western observers such as Cordesman tend to emphasize Hezbollah's and the Quds Force's military capabilities Harik rightly observes that the legitimacy of organizations in the eyes of most Lebanese owes more to their performance in the social arena.²¹⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the normative system of the Quds Force in Lebanon is heavily influenced by, and in many cases mirrors, the values and norms of the IRGC in Iran. The Quds Force members' individual and collective experiences undergoing ideological indoctrination have led them to export the spirit of this approach, adapted for

²¹⁶ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2006), 61.

²¹⁷ Wehrey *et al*, "Dangerous but Not Omnipotent," 95.

²¹⁸ Harik, *Hezbollah*, 81.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

local circumstances,, to Lebanon in the form of Hezbollah's Madhi Scout program.

Likewise, the Quds Force members' experiences of paramilitary training as a normal way of life in Iran have facilitated its adaptation for use in Lebanon. The successes of Hezbollah during the Second Lebanon War has provided further justification for Iran's and the Quds Force's institutionalization of IW doctrine as a core component of the *mosaic defense*.

Recent Hezbollah operations against Israeli civilian targets in Europe suggest that the commitment to an IW approach is firmly entrenched within Hezbollah and capable of supporting Iranian strategic objectives. This support, as we shall see in Chapter 7, extends to Hezbollah's current participation alongside Assad's government forces in Syria.

Lastly, we have seen how Iran's aggressive influence activities, both through propaganda and support to social programs have had an extremely positive impact on the legitimization of the Quds Force within Lebanese Shia society. This paper will now move to examine the rules and structures that form the Quds Force and determine whether the Force has the capacity to establish and enforce them.

CHAPTER 6 – REGULATIVE ANALYSIS

Broadly, all social scientists emphasize the importance of the regulative aspects of institutions as they function to “constrain and regularize behaviour.”²²⁰ In the case of the Quds Force in Lebanon, who by their secretive nature has not publically divulged any primary source material, regulative analysis will examine the rule-setting and sanctioning of activities of the Iranian state, IRGC and Quds Force senior commanders in their attempt to influence institutional behaviour. Scott observes that although “the concept of regulation conjures up visions of repression and constraint; many types of regulations enable social actors and action.”²²¹ In the case of the Quds Force in Lebanon this is certainly true as this chapter will demonstrate that the prominent position of its’ parent organization and its support for IW have effectively legitimized the Quds Force as an action arm of Iran’s foreign policy. This chapter will also highlight the challenges the Quds Force in Lebanon faces in informally coercing their proxy, Hezbollah. In this case, the absence of formal Quds Force authority over Hezbollah means that they must rely heavily upon benefits rather than sanctions to induce compliance.

²²⁰ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 52.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

Section 1 – Constitutional Foundation

The institutionalization of IW is grounded in the Iranian Constitution. The justification for the use of IW outside Iranian borders is implied in Articles 152 and 154 of the Iranian Constitution which state that Iranian foreign policy is based upon its rejection of the domination of “hegemonist superpowers” and pledges their support for the “just struggles of the *mustad'afun* (oppressed) against the *mustakbirun* (oppressor) in every corner of the globe.”²²² As the concept of *moqavamat* (resistance) is seeded throughout the constitution, the use IW is further implied in both the Preamble and Article 2(6)(3) which speaks of the “struggle for liberation for all deprived and oppressed people” and the “negation of all forms of oppression” while Article 3(5) advocates the elimination of imperialism and prevention of foreign influence.²²³ Ward notes that the IRGC’s ideology mirrors the Constitution, a fact that enabled the Guard to establish a strong bond with Ayatollah Khomeini cemented through the concept of *valiyat-e faqih* in the early days of the Revolution.²²⁴ This bond with the Supreme Leader, coupled with the IRGC’s demonstrated effectiveness during the Iran-Iraq War, enabled it to triumph over numerous competing Islamic *komitehs* and revolutionary tribunals and led it to become the state’s premier security institution.²²⁵

²²² Government of IRI, "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Foundation for Iranian Studies*, Accessed 10 March 2013, <http://fis-iran.org/en/resources/legaldoc/constitutionislamic>

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Ward, *Immortal*, 302.

²²⁵ Wehrey *et al.*, “Rise of the Pasdaran,” 23.

The executive control of the IRGC, and thus the Quds Force, is an important regulative element. While the Constitution does not expressly subordinate the IRGC to the Supreme Leader, from its inception Ayatollah Khomeini not only used to IRGC to counter internal threats such as the *mujahedin-e-Khalq* (MEK), Tudeh, and Fedayeen, who generally did not hold with Khomeini's vision of the *veleyat-e faqih*, the ruling clerics also actively undermined the President's role as the IRGC's commander-in-chief.²²⁶ When the first post-revolutionary president of Iran, Abol Hasan Bani Sadr, proposed the abolishment of the IRGC and the re-establishment of traditional security institutions, the IRGC refused and used the Supreme Leader's influence to ensure their continued survival. After this, the IRGC were no longer responsive to Presidential authority.²²⁷ In this regard one can no longer apply Huntington's classic "normal" theory of civil-military relations to the IRGC. Alexander and Hoenig observe that that "although created primarily for domestic security, the IRGC has branched out considerably, providing assistance to other Shia communities around the world as the state feels necessary."²²⁸ In this regard the Constitution is sufficiently vague, providing ample regulative authority under Article 150 which names the IRGC as the "guardian of the Revolution and its achievements."²²⁹ In this context the IRGC and Quds Force is empowered to employ IW against both domestic and external enemies that it deems to be a threat to the revolution and to the Supreme Leader's power.

Section 2 – A Contemporary Resurgence

²²⁶ Ward, *Immortal*, 228.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Yonah Alexander and Milton Hoenig, *The New Iranian Leadership: Ahmadinejad, Terrorism, Nuclear Ambitions, and the Middle East*, (New York: Praeger, 2008), 20.

²²⁹ Government of IRI, "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Despite the IRGC's close ties to Ayatollah Khomeini and their important role in the Iran-Iraq War, the institutionalization of IW within Iran slowed during the 1990s.²³⁰ During the Rafsanjani era (1989-1997) the IRGC's political role was marginalized while it was forced to undergo a program of military professionalization and ideological de-radicalization.²³¹ The pragmatic leadership approach of Rafsanjani was aimed at re-integrating Iran into the international community.²³² One method to show his commitment to a less aggressive foreign policy was an attempt to improve image of the armed forces by removing radicals from command positions within the IRGC.²³³ While their political power had been reduced, the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, in which U.S. investigators alleged at least some Iranian support would seem to demonstrate that the IRGC were capable of conducting IW activities without their reformist President's consent.²³⁴ The Khatami government (1997-2005) was likewise strongly committed to keeping the power of the IRGC minimized. However, the IRGC was able to subvert Khatami's control through its strong ties to Supreme Leader Khamenei. Wehrey notes that from his earliest days as President under Ayatollah Khomeini, Khamenei compensated for his lack of influence amongst senior clerics by

²³⁰ Pahlavi, "Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle," 483.

²³¹ Wehrey *et al*, "Rise of the Pasdaran," 80.

²³² Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 195.

²³³ Wehrey *et al*, "Rise of the Pasdaran," 80.

²³⁴ "Justice for Khobar Towers," New York Times, 22 June 2001. Accessed 11 March 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/22/opinion/justice-for-khobar-towers.html>

cultivating close ties to IRGC and Basij.²³⁵ These ties proved essential for Khamenei as he was able to use these institutions to confront reform activists in the late 1990s.²³⁶

Leveraging their abilities to quell the 1999 student uprisings to increase their political power, the IRGC solidified their regulative base during the 2000s.²³⁷ Wehrey describes their growing politicization as being closely linked to a conservative agenda:

“Beginning first with its episodic confrontations against reform activists during the Khatami era, networks of active and former IRGC officers began to take on an increasingly political role that enabled the IRGC - by design or by accident - to emerge as a sort of “guardian” for conservatives seeking to displace Khatami supporters from political power.”²³⁸

In 2003, former IRGC members or associates ran for elected office on numerous city and town councils throughout the country. This facilitated their entry into legislative politics during the 2004 parliamentary elections where 91 IRGC-linked candidates won seats in the *Majles* (parliament).²³⁹ The following year, four IRGC-linked candidates ran for the office of president, with one of them, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a former Basij member who enjoyed the personal support of the Supreme Leader and the IRGC-backed Abadgaran party, winning office.²⁴⁰ The trend toward conservative control continued in the 2008 parliamentary elections when an even stronger majority of conservative

²³⁵ Wehrey *et al.*, “Rise of the Pasdaran,” 80.

²³⁶ Golkar, “The Ideological-Political Training of the Basij”

²³⁷ Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle,” 484.

²³⁸ Wehrey *et al.*, “Rise of the Pasdaran,” 77.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Ilan Berman, “Understanding Ahmadinejad,” *Iran Strategy Brief*, American Foreign Policy Council, no. 1, (June 2006): 2.

candidates were elected. In 2009 the conservatives consolidated their grip on power when Ahmadinejad was controversially re-elected. Alexander and Hoenig point directly to the influence of the Supreme Leader and role the Council of Guardians played in disqualifying potential candidates as decisive in ensuring conservatives remain in power.²⁴¹

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, while factionalism does hinder the overall legitimacy of the IRGC, the fact that a further 34 former IRGC officers hold senior positions in the government continue to provide it a firm grip on power and allow it to freely pursue its IW strategy.²⁴² This offers a comparative advantage to Iran over the Israel and its Western allies, where the transformations experienced in post-Cold War warfare in favour of low intensity conflicts have hampered the political sphere's capacity to control the military sphere.²⁴³ In Michael's study of the Israeli civil/military relationship he states that the political community has neither the know-how nor the knowledge to deal with low intensity conflicts.²⁴⁴ This is certainly not the case in terms of Iran where the government's direction to the IRGC and Quds Force allows them to prosecute effective IW on behalf of the government.

²⁴¹ Alexander and Hoenig, *The New Iranian Leadership*, 17.

²⁴² Wehrey *et al*, "Rise of the Pasdaran," 77.

²⁴³ Kobi Michael, "Military Knowledge and Weak Civilian Control in the Reality of Low Intensity Conflict – the Israeli Case," in *Militarism and Israeli Society*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010): 45-46.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

Wehrey observes that the IRGC's political involvement, even if at an informal level, seems to be an expansion of its original mandate to protect the Revolution.²⁴⁵ While this true, the transition from a clerical old-guard to an IRGC-linked new guard has resulted in some tangible changes. This new guard, Takeyh's "war generation" of Iran-Iraq veterans, are overwhelmingly military strategists and tacticians rather than religious scholars.²⁴⁶ In general, they lack the political experience of the clerical old guard and are far less practiced in the language of *taqiyyah* (obfuscation) and *kitman* (dissimulation).²⁴⁷ Ahmadinejad's very straightforward anti-Israel comments are a reflection of this, and despite Western alarm, have been well received in the Arab world, particularly in South Lebanon.²⁴⁸ However, the regime has had to take a much softer approach with Lebanon on the issue of political Islam, indicated by Ahmadinejad's public statement on a 2010 visit to Beirut that he would "always back the Lebanese government and its nation."²⁴⁹

Section 3 – The Evolution of Hezbollah

Just as the Iranian Constitution and a conservative government empower the Quds Force its activities in Lebanon have been further shaped by the evolving regulatory

²⁴⁵ Wehrey, "Dangerous but not Omnipotent," 77.

²⁴⁶ Ray Takeyh, "A Profile in Defiance," *Council on Foreign Relations*, (Spring 2006): 16-21.

²⁴⁷ Amir Taheri, "No Change in Iran's Strategic Goals," *Gulf News* (Dubai), 2 November 2005, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/no-change-in-iran-s-strategic-goals-1.442408>

²⁴⁸ Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "Ahmadinejad's fiery rhetoric targets Israel," *Washington Post*, 14 October 2010. Accessed 10 March 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/14/AR2010101406121.html>

²⁴⁹ Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad 'Backs a United Lebanon'," *BBC World News*, 13 October 2010. Accessed 10 March 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11526143>

framework of Hezbollah. As a non-state actor, Hezbollah's regulatory framework was initially quite informal, disseminated by an *Open Letter* to a Beirut newspaper in 1985.²⁵⁰ This letter outlined three founding principles: their belief in Islam, jihad, and jurisdiction of the jurist-theologian.²⁵¹ These perfectly mirrored Ayatollah Khomeini's priorities and assured continuing IRGC support to Hezbollah allowing them gain power and influence relative to the rival al-Da'wa Party and AMAL militia.²⁵² At the conclusion of the Lebanon Civil War in 1990, Hezbollah opted to become involved in the Lebanese political process, while still maintaining their military capability to oppose the IDF in South Lebanon.²⁵³ Wiegand correctly observes that since the Lebanese government and army was weaker than Hezbollah they were not compelled to disarm in the wake of the Hariri assassination.²⁵⁴ Despite the fact that Hezbollah has, by necessity, had to de-emphasize their Islamic foundations to appeal to a wider range of supporters, Harik contends that the legitimization of Hezbollah as a political force has nevertheless helped advanced the foreign policy goals of Iran.²⁵⁵ Certainly, the establishment of a Hezbollah dominated ruling coalition in 2011 has further helped this goal. The transition of Hezbollah from a terrorist organization into a political entity, albeit one with an armed wing, not only allows the Quds Force to retain its military support role it provides the Iranian state a pathway to influence the legitimate government of Lebanon.

Conclusion

²⁵⁰ Krista E. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 32 (2009), 671.

²⁵¹ Qassem, *Hezbollah*, 21-58.

²⁵² Wehrey *et al*, "Dangerous but not Omnipotent," 89.

²⁵³ Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist Group," 673.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁵ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 3.

Scott suggests that social theorists should not “conflate the coercive functions of law with its normative and cognitive dimensions.”²⁵⁶ Even in the case of the Iranian theocracy, while the Constitution does provide a solid regulatory foundation for the Quds Force, this document is ambiguous by design and does not, in and of itself, provide clear direction on how the Quds Force should conduct itself. In this case, the regulative framework is better viewed as an “occasion for sense-making and collective interpretation, relying more on cognitive and normative than coercive elements for its effects.”²⁵⁷ This is exactly how the rise to prominence of the IRGC within the Iranian political hierarchy should be perceived. The fact that it has achieved significant political influence provides it the regulatory foundation from which it can pursue its IW doctrine which is directly informed by its cognitive and normative elements. Having to deal with an absence of formal regulative authority in Lebanon has compelled the Quds Force to employ the provision of both military and social benefits to coerce Hezbollah. As we have seen, the transition of Hezbollah into a political entity has imposed some practical limits on Iran in terms of its Pan-Shi’ism agenda; however, Iran is more than willing to downplay this issue in order to gain a state ally.

²⁵⁶ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 53.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

CHAPTER 7 – INTEGRATION OF THE THREE PILLARS

Scott wrote that “organizations require more than material resources and technical information if they are to survive and thrive in their social environments . . . they also need social acceptability and credibility.”²⁵⁸ While social acceptability cannot be quantified, Suchman’s legitimacy theory contends that we are able to subjectively assess an institution’s *legitimacy*, which he defines as the degree to which the perception that the actions of an entity are deemed desirable and appropriate within an institutional framework of norms, values and beliefs.²⁵⁹ To this end Scott’s three pillars elicit three related, but distinguishable bases of legitimacy. The cultural-cognitive view sees legitimacy bound to conformity to a commonly defined frame of reference. A normative conception stresses a deeper, moral base where controls are more likely to be internalized. Finally, the regulatory emphasis is on conformity to rules where legitimate organizations are those established by and operating in accordance with relevant legal requirements.²⁶⁰

Although this study has examined each pillar of the Quds Force in Lebanon separately up to this point, in reality these elements work in combination with each other. In stable social systems where all three pillars are aligned we would observe practices that persist and are reinforced because they are taken for granted, normatively endorsed,

²⁵⁸ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 59.

²⁵⁹ Michael C. Suchman, “Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches,” *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3, (1995): 574.

²⁶⁰ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 60.

and backed by authoritative powers.²⁶¹ However, in other situations the pillars may be misaligned, where one may operate virtually alone in supporting the social order, and in many situations, a given pillar will assume primacy. Often, if the pillars are misaligned they may support and motivate differing choices and behaviours resulting in confusion and conflict, and establishing conditions that are likely to give rise to institutional instability and change.²⁶² This chapter will discuss how, in general, the proper alignment of the three pillars as led to the legitimization of Quds Force in Lebanon as an effective tool of Iranian foreign policy and a vital component of its IW-based *mosaic defense*.

Section 1 – Cognitive Consonance

As we have seen in Chapter 4, Iran’s concept of exporting IW via the Quds Force in Lebanon, like many strategic concepts, developed subconsciously informed by the particular religious-cultural context of post-Revolutionary Iran.²⁶³ The cultural-cognitive foundation of the Persian mindset reinforced by militarism, populism, and nationalism coupled with the Shia religion and revolutionary ideals forms the Quds Force’s frame of reference. This has proven to be a solid foundation upon which Iran, over time, has created a normative value set within Quds Force members through aggressive indoctrination, paramilitary training, and the development and implementation of an effective IW doctrine. The regulative authorities of the Quds Force, established by the

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Pierre Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle,” 475.

state's Constitution and through the political power of the IRGC, are the formalized expression of the Iranian ruling elite's commitment to perpetuating the idea of a revolutionary theocratic state through IW.

While the cognitive pillar of the Quds Force in Lebanon is well supported by their normative value set and regulative authorities it does face potential challenges from the Iranian socio-political debate and from the political reality of Lebanese society. The Quds Force leadership, like its IRGC parent, has been described by Safshekan and Sabet as *neo-principlists*, who place greater emphasis on nationalism rather than upon what they term to be the “waning legitimacy of political Islam in Iran.”²⁶⁴ This interpretation of the New Guard's motivations would imply that nationalism might replace theocratic politics over time, and thus we might witness a political shift where religion is less important in decision-making than the economy and the security of the political leadership. It is perhaps in this context that one can interpret the current debate within Iran which sees a growing number of elected officials, including some IRGC-linked conservatives, advocating for direct negotiations with the U.S. over the nuclear issue with a view to easing economic sanctions.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2010): 553.

²⁶⁵ Farideh Farni, "Iran Debates Talking with the U.S.," *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 11 December 2012. Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/12/iran-debates-talking-with-the-u-s/>

Despite calls for moderation from the New Guard, by virtue of being founded upon a religious ideology rather than a political one, the Supreme Leader is bound to the status quo as any softening in his defiant stand against the West could be perceived as a break of faith with Islam. As Takeyh observes, political Islam “is the foundation of the state and the sole source of clerical leaders' legitimacy. Without a rigid Islamist ideology, the ayatollahs would become irrelevant.”²⁶⁶ This has led the Supreme Leader to label all those who would consider bilateral talks with the U.S. as “warn-out revolutionaries” despite the fact this group includes Moshen Rezai, a former head of the IRGC, and General Muhammad Reza Naqdi, current head of the Basij.²⁶⁷ It is possible that any weakening of the Shia element of cognitive foundation in favour of increased emphasis on Persian nationalism, together with the challenges that political factionalism brings within the regulative pillar, could result in some conflict and confusion amongst the Quds Force in Lebanon as to their loyalties to the Iranian State versus their personal loyalty to the Supreme Leader.

Also, the dissonance between the Quds Force's cognitive foundation in political Islam and their Lebanese proxy's transition towards a nationalist frame of reference could be problematic. While Hezbollah's senior leadership has taken great care in publically stating that they fully subscribe to the authority of Iran's Supreme Leader under the concept of *velayat-e faqih* they have undeniably de-emphasized political-Islam in favour

²⁶⁶ Ray Takeyh, “Why Iran Can't Follow China's Lead,” *New York Times*, 11 October 2012. Accessed 13 March 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/12/opinion/why-iran-cant-follow-chinas-lead.html?_r=1&

²⁶⁷ Ray Takeyh, “Iran's Conservatives Push for a Deal,” *The National Interest*, 21 December 2012. Accessed 11 March 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/will-khamenei-compromise-7894>

of national liberation.²⁶⁸ In this regard they harken back to their spiritual guide, Sayyed Fadlallah, whose long-held view that Lebanon was not conducive to Islamic governance correctly understood the limitations that a pluralist society imposed.²⁶⁹ While this issue is worth noting, it is quite likely that it does not pose a significant issue for the Quds Force. Due to the vital strategic position of Lebanon, from which the Quds Force can assist Hezbollah in both targeting Israel and assisting the Assad-Alawite cause in Syria, Iran seems willing to forgo the goal of a Lebanese theocracy as long as it is able to retain strategically influence.

Section 2 – Challenges to Institutional Norms

As detailed in Chapter 5, the normative foundations of the Quds Force in Lebanon are firmly grounded in four major elements. The Iran’s aggressive ideological indoctrination of its citizens, the paramilitary training it delivers to the Basij which forms the Quds Force’s recruiting pool, the institutionalization of IW doctrine as the predominant method for achieving state security, and influence activities directed both internally at Quds Force members and externally at their Lebanese hosts. It is through these elements that the values and norms of the Quds Force are shaped resulting in the internalization of these approaches as simply “the way things are done” in order to accomplish their objectives. Certainly, the Quds Force’s IW approach is well suited to build upon their cognitive frame of reference and has been further legitimized by the

²⁶⁸ Qassem, *Hezbollah*, 236.

²⁶⁹ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 70.

regulative authorities of the Iranian Constitution and political power of the IRGC.

Despite this concurrence, the Force's normative pillar does face a challenge in the form of a cognitive shift in Iranian society which may hinder complete pillar alignment and thus their complete legitimacy in the eyes of some Iranians.

Institutionalization of IW

Iran has made a conscious effort to upgrade its unconventional capabilities since the late 1980s. At the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War it established partnerships with the Soviet Union with the aim of replacing lost equipment, weapons and munitions, as well as to acquire weapons to be used for IW.²⁷⁰ Hampered by the lack of an indigenous defense industry, Iran procured conventional capabilities such as submarines, fighter jets and tanks from Russia, China and North Korea throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s.²⁷¹ However, as sanctions denied it access to Western military technologies, Iran remained at a comparative disadvantage in its conventional warfighting capabilities. While Iran was able to generate significant oil revenues in the late 1990s and early 2000s the amount of funds it could direct to defense expenditures paled in comparison to the U.S. In 2008, Iran's defense budget was approximately US\$9.2Bn for the conventional armed forces and US\$5.6Bn for the IRGC.²⁷² While significant in regional terms, this

²⁷⁰ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "The Future of Iran's Defence and Nuclear Policy," *Chaillot Paper*, no. 89 (May 2006): 76.

²⁷¹ Kenneth Katzman, "Iran: Arms and Weapons of Mass Destruction Suppliers," *Report for US Congress*, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, June 2006).

represents less than 1.5% of the United States' defense expenditures of US\$629Bn in 2008.²⁷³

Faced with this overwhelming shortfall in conventional capabilities, we have seen in Chapter 5 how the Iranian leadership made the conscious decision to bring its military doctrine in line with its capability limitations. This allows Iran to threaten U.S. interests, as it does through its ongoing support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, despite its conventional limitations. Indeed, this paper has discussed how the cognitive foundation of Persian nationalism, Shi'ism, and the revolutionary ideology are a perfect fit for the employment of an IW approach. In an era of falling oil revenues and limited defense spending increases an IW approach continues to make the most economic sense for the regime and serves to legitimize the Quds Force's approach.

Despite its affordability there still remain some challenges within Iran's IW doctrine as it pertains to Lebanon. First, Iran has named the U.S. followed by Israel as their most likely foes.²⁷⁴ While the Quds Force-Hezbollah operations against the IDF have been extremely effective and brought great acclaim to their organizations their current operations in support of President Assad in the Syrian Civil War have been decidedly less so. In September 2012 Iran officially announced that members of the Lebanese Quds Force were conducting operations in Syria, with the purpose of providing

²⁷² "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Ward, "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," 566.

“intellectual and advisory support.”²⁷⁵ In December 2012 the UN confirmed that members of Hezbollah, possibly along with Iraqi Shia, were fighting on behalf of the government in Syria.²⁷⁶ In this case, the commitment of Quds Force and Hezbollah in support of their Alawite allies in Syria risks committing both organizations to a long and costly campaign against Sunni rivals. While this would be quite consistent with the Pan-Shia elements of their cognitive framework this shift of emphasis away from their U.S. and Israeli adversaries toward sectarian violence will likely cost Iran influence within the Arab world and the reduce Quds Force legitimacy in the eyes of Lebanese Sunni and Christians.

Cognitive threats to Indoctrination

Iranian society is not monolithic. The 2009 Green movement (*Jonbeshe sabz*) revealed a deep discontent among a significant portion of the regime’s elite and “a profound social and political malaise in the Iranian society.”²⁷⁷ It is arguable how much success the State’s program of indoctrination will truly have given that more than half of the Iranian population are under 25 years of age and only eight million of the seventy

²⁷⁵ Mohammad Ali Jafari, “Iran Confirms it has Forces in Syria,” *The Guardian*, 16 September 2012. Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/sep/16/iran-middleeast>

²⁷⁶ United Nations, “Periodic Update,” *United Nations High Commission for Refugees*, 20 December 2012. Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SY/ColSyriaDecember2012.pdf>

²⁷⁷ Mehdi Mozaffari, “The Iranian Green Movement: One Year After,” *Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalization*, Denmark: Aarhus University, June 2010. Accessed 13 March 2013, http://cir.au.dk/fileadmin/site_files/filer_statskundskab/subsites/cir/pdf-filer/Iranian_Green_Movement.pdf

million Iranians were born before the revolution.²⁷⁸ In addition to the demographic youth bulge, Iran's economic difficulties including high unemployment and an inflation rate reaching 38.5% in December of 2012 would make any government appeal for revolutionary fervor difficult.²⁷⁹ While the Supreme Leader, with the assistance of IRGC and Basij was able to successfully repress the Green movement in 2009, civil unrest remains. One notable example was a November 2012 protest by Tehran merchants, who during their public demonstration over currency devaluation, chanted slogans such as "Stop supporting Syria" and "Neither for Gaza nor Lebanon."²⁸⁰ This popular disenchantment with the ideological foundation of the regime and coupled with continuing economic malaise could impact upon the Quds Force in Lebanon two ways. First, it may hinder their organization's ability to recruit the best and the brightest Iranian youth owing to the reduced appeal of their revolutionary cause. Second, younger members of the Quds Force, although most likely supportive of the state, may cognitively shift from a religious and revolutionary mindset to one of pragmatic nationalism. Nader notes that many of the IRGC rank and file have "historically reflected Iranian society and politics at large" which would suggest that not all members of the Quds Force would be conservative principlists.²⁸¹ If a cognitive shift were to occur it could very well weaken

²⁷⁸ United States, "Mid-year Population by Five Year Age Groups and Sex - Custom Region – Iran," *US Census Bureau*, <http://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/region.php?N=%20Results%20&T=10&A=separate&RT=0&Y=2013&R=-1&C=IR>

²⁷⁹ "Iran Inflation Rate," *Central Bank of Iran, Trading Economics*. Accessed 14 March 2013 <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/iran/inflation-cpi>

²⁸⁰ Abdul Qader Tafesh, "Iran's Green Movement: Reality and Aspirations," *Al Jazeera*, 5 November 2012. Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2012/11/20121159103533337.htm>

their commitment to perpetuating the regime's indoctrination and influence activities. Conversely, recent analysis suggests that Iranian society at large is not yet ripe for a counter-revolution. While many Iranian expatriate supporters of the Green movement highlight deep-seeded grievances, Gallup polling and RAND studies suggest that Iran's opposition to the U.S. and pursuit of nuclear capabilities are supported by a significant portion of the Iranian population.²⁸² What this nuanced counter-point might imply is that while newer Quds Force members may be less fervent revolutionaries they will nevertheless be strongly committed to their state.

Section 3 – Legitimate for Whom?

As described in Chapter 6, the regulative pillar, whose elements comprise Iranian constitutional and political authorities as well as the emerging political authority of Hezbollah, provide the formal legitimization of the Quds Force in Lebanon and their employment of IW which springs naturally from their cultural-cognitive framework and normative values. In this context, the regulative pillar can be viewed as a supporting one which would not be effective merely acting upon its own. Indeed, Pahlavi and Ouellet cite the challenge faced by Israeli society whose normative conventional mindset struggled with the notion of its defense forces conducting stability operations.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Alireza Nader, "The Revolutionary Guards," *The Iran Primer*, US Institute of Peace. Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/revolutionary-guards>

²⁸² Sarah Beth Elson and Alireza Nader, "What Do Iranians Think?" Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2011. Accessed 28 March 2013, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/2011/RAND_TR910.pdf

Currently, the regulative pillar, as represented by Iran's ruling elite, strongly supports the Quds Force's IW activities in Lebanon although there are two potential threats which are worth noting. First, the IRGC's over-politicization, factionalism, and entry into business may divert focus away from foreign military operations. Secondly, as a result of international pressure over its nuclear program, the Supreme Leader may be compelled to reduce IW activities in Lebanon in order to ease crippling economic sanctions.

The IRGC has developed into one of the most powerful political organizations in Iran. As detailed in Chapter 6, throughout the 1990s and 2000s it has built significant influence with the Supreme Leader and has increased its strength by populating senior government positions with former members. This almost certainly provides the IRGC with great freedom of action in the direction of Quds Force IW operations. The IRGC has also lessened its reliance on the state treasury by establishing its own revenue generating business ventures ranging from large legitimate ventures, such as the umbrella engineering corporation Khatam al-Anbia, to the shadowy black-marketeering of illicit goods.²⁸⁴ While some argue that their involvement in public works and rural development fosters a positive image, others such as Wehrey point to the risks that stem from these commercial ventures such as factionalism within the Guards, and the resentment of larger Iranian society.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Pahlavi and Ouellet, "Institutional analysis and irregular warfare: Israel Defense Forces during the 33-Day War of 2006," 39.

²⁸⁴ Wehrey *et al*, "Rise of the Pasdaran," 55-70.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

The weight of evidence does suggest that its politicization and entry into the commercial sphere, while empowering and enriching the organization, have contributed to factionalization. Some suggest that it was Rafsanjani, one of the IRGC's strongest opponents, who facilitated the IRGC's entry into commercial activity as a means to co-opt them.²⁸⁶ Commentators such as Alfoneh and Milani further this line of thinking by hypothesizing that the over-politicization of the IRGC and its development into a commercial power may come to eventually threaten the Ayatollahs if ever the IRGC senior leadership ever feels it could successfully seize power.²⁸⁷ While worth noting, the potential for an IRGC-led coup seems highly unlikely given the extremely strong ties between Khamenei and the IRGC principlists.²⁸⁸ Based on the lead up to 2013 Presidential elections it would appear that factionalism within the conservative bloc typified by the ongoing disputes between President Ahmadinejad and Parliamentary speaker, and former IRGC commander, Ali Larijani, is the greater threat which prevents the IRGC from becoming a truly omnipotent organization.²⁸⁹

Overall, this level of political in-fighting is unlikely to seriously undermine the effectiveness of the Quds Force in Lebanon. A more compelling argument could be made

²⁸⁶ Alireza Nader, "The Revolutionary Guards," *The Iran Primer*, US Institute of Peace. Accessed 13 March 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/revolutionary-guards>

²⁸⁷ Abbas Milani, "Iran in Ferment: Cracks in the Regime," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 20, no. 4, (October 2009): pp 15. Accessed 14 March 2013, <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/Milani-20-4.pdf>

²⁸⁸ Alireza Nader, David E. Thaler and S. R. Bohandy, *The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2011): 45-83.

²⁸⁹ Elie Chalhoub, "A Preview of Iran's 2013 Election Rivalries," *Alakhbar*, 5 February 2013. Accessed 14 March 2013, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14880>

based upon Scott's concept of *significant others* that other elements within Iranian society have differing views on the legitimacy of the IRGC and Quds Force. Scott contends that "many structures persist and spread because they are regarded as appropriate by entrenched authorities, although their legitimacy is challenged by other, less powerful, constituencies."²⁹⁰ This takes us back to the previous discussion of the significant proportion of Iranian society which is disillusioned with the Supreme Leader and the ruling elite. Nader observes that "the current dominance of Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, and the principlists is not assured in the future."²⁹¹ While power currently lies with what Takeyh describes as "a narrow segment of the conservative clerical elite" there are competing elements within the clergy, traditional conservatives such as Rafsanjani, as well as those on the political left who continue to vie for power and influence.²⁹² It is conceivable that on the occasion of death of the Supreme Leader the country could transition to Islamic democracy which would be far less likely to engage in aggressive foreign IW activities.²⁹³ Although this transition would be welcomed in the West it is quite likely that even a democratic Iranian government, guided by pragmatic nationalism, would retain the Quds Force in Lebanon as part of their strategic mosaic defense.

Another potential regulative threat to the Quds Force in Lebanon is posed by the desire amongst many within the regime to ease the crippling economic sanctions imposed

²⁹⁰ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 60.

²⁹¹ Nader *et al.*, *The Next Supreme Leader*, 55.

²⁹² Ray Takeyh, "All the Ayatollah's Men," *The National Interest*, 22 August 2012. Accessed 15 March 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/article/all-the-ayatollahs-men-7344?page=6>

²⁹³ Nader *et al.*, *The Next Supreme Leader*, 68-73.

by the West in response to Iran's nuclear program.²⁹⁴ In advocating a broader U.S. led approach to contain Iranian nuclear aspirations, Takeyh envisions a scenario whereby the Supreme Leader might be compelled to admit more moderates into the regime and abandon objectionable policies abroad if it led to an easing of sanctions.²⁹⁵ If the Iranian regime felt it had no choice but to begrudgingly abandon its Quds Force activities in Lebanon and elsewhere to ensure regime survival it may very well act to do so. As long as funding for social programs continued, this scenario may also play towards furthering Hezbollah's transition into a more independent political entity free of overt signs of Iranian influence.²⁹⁶ If political analysts such as Wiegand are correct in assuming that Hezbollah will continue to moderate their objectives, rhetoric and action their further legitimization as a political entity may have the unintended effect of de-legitimizing their local Iranian mentors.

Conclusion

The analysis of the relative convergence of the cognitive, normative and regulative pillars leads us to believe that, for the moment, the Quds Force in Lebanon is an institution that has been legitimized internally as well as externally. The perception of its legitimacy is quite likely strongly felt internally amongst its members owing to the strong connection between their cognitive framework and normative value set. Externally, it is clear that the legitimacy of both the IRGC and Hezbollah as institutions

²⁹⁴ Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Conservatives Push for a Deal," *The National Interest*, 21 December 2012.

²⁹⁵ Ray Takeyh, "Talk to Iran's Leaders: But Look Beyond Them," *New York Times*, 19 September 2012. Accessed 15 March 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/20/opinion/talk-to-irans-leaders-but-look-beyond-them.html?_r=2partner=rss&emc=rss&

²⁹⁶ Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party," 678.

in their own right currently support the legitimacy of the Quds Force. However, Scott's institutional analysis has also shown us that the Force does face a potential challenge in the form of a cognitive shift of much of Iranian society away from a theocratic mindset towards a more pragmatic nationalist approach. Further, the transformation of Hezbollah from an ideologically motivated armed group into a pragmatic national political entity may also impact upon the Quds Force. The Iranian cognitive shift and Hezbollah's regulative transition may eventually weaken the Force's normative pillar to the point that it becomes a driver for future institutional change.

CONCLUSION

From its earliest beginnings during the Iran-Iraq War right up to the present day, the Quds Force has enabled Iran to project its influence abroad through the use of Irregular Warfare. Nowhere is this arguably more important than in Lebanon. Since the IRGC/Quds Force's establishment of Hezbollah as a Lebanese Shia proxy force in 1982 the Force has maintained an enduring presence. While little about their activities has been formally documented, the success of the Quds Force is largely reflected in the increasing legitimization of their Lebanese proxy. As Hezbollah has transitioned from a terrorist organization into a Lebanese nationalist resistance movement, the influence of Iran has grown proportionally. Traditional analysis such as Cordesman's and Ward's have emphasized Iran's historical and geopolitical drivers coupled with its current economic constraints to explain why Iran has chosen to employ IW through the Quds Force in Lebanon. This paper has sought to augment their approach through the use of a sociological analysis through which we might gain a more holistic understanding of the Quds Force in Lebanon's successes and challenges.

This paper does not refute the findings of the traditional political and military analysts who have examined Iranian foreign policy and security force operations in the Middle East and Lebanon. Indeed, in order for this paper to properly contextualize the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Quds Force in Lebanon it was necessary to review the historical and strategic political-military framework within which they operate. The long and turbulent history of Iranian-Arab interaction coupled with the major determinants of

their interrelations, including religious and cultural competition, ideological differences, competing power ambitions, intra-Arab politics, the Israel-Palestine issue, and the collapse of the Soviet Union have had impact at all levels which not only effect Iranian-Lebanese strategic relations but also local relations between the Quds Force and Hezbollah. A review of the Lebanese national political environment has indeed revealed that since Hezbollah's transition into a major political force in the mid-2000s, coupled with the decline of the Assad regime in neighbouring Syria, Iran has enjoyed an increasing level of influence within Lebanon.

A review of Iranian security force activities allowed us to determine that Iran's employment of IW is fully endorsed at the highest levels of the Iranian leadership as a core component of their mosaic defense strategy. The current IRGC Commander's statement that Iran has looked to Hezbollah's employment of IW against Israel as a key test-bed for the mosaic defense concept serves to underline the level of importance that Iran places in its Quds Force in Lebanon. Cordesman and Ward point to the U.S. and Israeli resource and technology overmatch as well as the effect of crippling economic sanctions that has driven Iran to pragmatically adopt an IW approach. Again, the justification of Iran's IW in terms of a cost-benefit analysis is not completely wrong, only that it ignores many of the underlying forces which has driven Iran's pursuit of IW, and its successful implantation within the Quds Force in Lebanon.

While much has been written on the rise of the IRGC and the successful transition of Hezbollah into a political institution, these works have only hinted at the role of the

Quds Force. Leveraging an examination of the historical, geopolitical and security force this paper employed a Scott Institutional Analysis to assess the legitimacy and level of success of the Quds Force in Lebanon. Scott's three pillar conceptual model for the study of institutions and the broader frameworks in which they operate allowed us to individually examine the cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative frameworks of the Quds Force and subsequently permitted us to examine how these pillars align with each other and where potential misalignment may drive future change within the institution.

Through an examination of the major elements of the cultural-cognitive pillar it was found that the Persian mindset, Shi'ism and Revolutionary ideologies have all impacted upon the *internal* cognitive frameworks and predispositions of the Quds Force in Lebanon. Ultimately, the distinctly Persian character of the Force coupled with its' religious and revolutionary fervor have made it an ideal vehicle to deliver an IW capability to Lebanon. Despite differences in the Persian and Arab mindset the common bonds of religion and the successful export of Iran's revolutionary ideology have made Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shia a key ally and partner in Iran's mosaic defense.

An investigation of the normative pillar found that the values and norms of Quds Force in Lebanon closely mirror those of the wider IRGC. Many norms, such as the belief in the effectiveness of indoctrination, paramilitary training, and aggressive use of influence activities, have likely been shaped by their own experiences as subjects or targets of these programs in Iran. This has subsequently allowed the Quds Force to simply adapt this approach to the local Lebanese context. In this regard, the creation of

Hezbollah's successful Mahdi Scout program serves as but one example. In terms of pursuing an IW approach rather than a purely conventional one, the successes of Hezbollah during the Second Lebanon War has provided Iran and the Quds Force further justification for the institutionalization of IW doctrine as a core component of the *mosaic defense*.

The analysis of the regulatory framework further demonstrates the significant impact that the IRGC and its support for IW have had in legitimizing the Quds Force as an action arm of Iran's foreign policy. The Iranian constitution, although by its nature a very general document, is replete with IW-related concepts and language and as such provides a solid foundation upon which the Quds Force may draw internal legitimacy. More importantly, the evolution of the IRGC into one of the most powerful political forces within Iran capable of influencing foreign policy works to ensure the ongoing relevance of the Quds Force in Lebanon. Finally, while the transition of Hezbollah from a terrorist organization to a Lebanese nationalist resistance movement does pose some local challenges to the Quds Force it ultimately provides Iran with greater influence within the region.

The analysis of the convergence of the cognitive, normative and regulative pillars suggests that the Quds Force in Lebanon is an institution that has been legitimized internally as well as externally. Owing to the strong connection between their cognitive framework and normative value set the internal perception of legitimacy is quite likely strongly felt amongst Quds Force members. Externally, the legitimacy of both the IRGC

and Hezbollah as institutions in their own right combines to support the legitimacy of the Quds Force. However, Scott's institutional analysis has also shown us that the Quds Force does face a potential challenge in the form of a cognitive shift of much of Iranian society away from a theocratic mindset towards a more pragmatic nationalist approach. Further, the transformation of Hezbollah from an ideologically motivated armed group into a pragmatic national political entity may also impact upon the Quds Force. The Iranian cognitive shift and Hezbollah's regulative transition may eventually weaken the Force's normative pillar to the point that it becomes a driver for future institutional change.

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