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THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF IRANIAN IRREGULAR WARFARE

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ABSTRACT

Irregular warfare (IW) has seldom been used successfully by states as their military modus operandi. This type of warfare is typically used by militants in their efforts to overthrow their own government. However, over the last 30 years, Iran has successfully institutionalized IW through its main practitioners, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), supported by the Basij (the IRGC's paramilitary) and the Qods (the IRGC's terrorism arm). The reasons for this can be gleaned from considering the military procurement restrictions and the economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States and its international community partners. However, this method of reasoning only addresses the why of IW, as opposed to the how. Using Richard Scott's institutional analysis model, this document will show how the Iran's successful institutionalization of IW is related to the successful combination and convergence of the model's three pillars: socio-cultural (cognitive pillar), normative and regulatory.

INTRODUCTION

Irregular warfare is a "violent struggle among state and nonstate actors for legitimacy and influence over a population, and includes insurgency, counterinsurgency, and unconventional warfare as the principal activities."[1] In its various forms (e.g. guerilla, terrorism, etc) it has been used countless times throughout history, and in all parts of the World. Persia used irregular warfare to free itself from Seleucid dynasty rule as early as 250 B.C.[2] Mao Tse-Tung's use of irregular warfare is one of the most widely studied examples. T.E. Lawrence (also known as Lawrence of Arabia), a British officer assigned as liaison officer to help an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Turkish rule, is also respected as a master in the doctrinal development of irregular warfare.[3] Studies of past irregular wars such as the Malayan insurgency or the Boer War often overlook the fact that these are past wars, with specific temporal, societal and cultural contexts. Trying to adapt to today's irregular wars in various parts of the world using insights from the tactics used in these past wars can be difficult. Oftentimes, more effort is expended on the study of counter-insurgency tactics and military equipment than on the underlying social-cultural, normative and regulatory factors that lead to the successful use of irregular warfare. For example, France's counter-insurgency war against Algerian insurgents between 1954 and 1960 is an example of how a state that ultimately does not support

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[1] Department of Defense, *FM 3-0: Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2008), 2-8.

[2] Seleucid was one of Alexander the Great's generals, and he established his own dynasty in Persia following Alexander's death. For more information, see Thomas R. Mattair, *Global Security Watch Iran: A Reference Handbook* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 1-4.

[3] David Jordan and others, *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 252.

changes to its military thinking, conventions and structures to adapt to irregular warfare is bound to fail. France went through this painful exercise and failed.[4] Thus, the study of irregular warfare is challenging and calls for a more holistic and academic approach in trying to understand the factors that allow this type of warfare to thrive in one situation while failing in another.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Middle East has been the source of significant political tensions (e.g. Israeli-Palestinian enmity), economic hardship (e.g. rising cost of food), social upheaval (e.g. unease between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, protests in the streets of Cairo) and military conflicts (ex. Israel-Arab wars, Gulf wars between Iraq and the US-led coalitions). The peaceful and often violent demonstrations that rocked the Middle East starting in February 2011 are a case in point. Citizens of countries in this region have been successful in taking down governments such as the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.[5] They used mass protests to call for increased democratization, jobs, better economic conditions, justice, and better social services. Demonstrators, in some cases, also turned to irregular warfare tactics as a means to making their presence and their requests for change felt by their government. For example, on 20 February 2011, protesters steered a vehicle packed with explosives on a wall surrounding the Alfadeel Abu Omar military camp in Libya.[6]

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[4] Pierre Pahlavi, "Guerre Irrégulière Et Analyse Institutionnelle: Le Cas De La Guerre Révolutionnaire De l'Armée Française En Algérie," *Guerres Mondiales Et Conflits Contemporains*, no. 235 (2009), 136.

[5] CNN Wire Staff, "Unrest in the Middle East and North Africa - Country by Country," Turner Broadcasting System, http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/02/18/mideast.africa.unrest/index.html (accessed 02/20, 2011).

[6] CNN Wire Staff, "Clashes Erupt at Libyan Funeral Procession, Military Camp," Turner Broadcasting System, http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/20/libya.protests/index.html?hpt=T1 (accessed 02/20, 2011).

The Middle East is a hub of many religions such as Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Islamic religion is based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad: to follow a different lifestyle than the Prophet is considered heresy.[7] This ideological belief taken to a radical level leads to some states being anti-Western and to resorting to irregular warfare in their struggle to push back Western powers and Western influence in their country. There are few examples of states using irregular warfare as a main tool of foreign-policy. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), however, has been proficient at using this tool. For the past 30 years, it has worked to become a powerful player within the Middle East. Indeed, since the 1979 Revolution, successive IRI governments have gradually transformed Iran into a state that exerts much effort towards internal security and on aggressive anti-Western foreign rhetoric and actions. Iran relies on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, also called the Pasdaran or Sepah) and its affiliates such as the Basij (para-military militia) and the Qods (the IRGC's international terrorist arm) to wage irregular warfare. Iran also supports terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. More recently, the IRGC has been linked with efforts to develop Iran's nuclear weapons capability.[8] This would be yet another example of the types of irregular warfare tools that the IRI could use in its foreign policy.

However, recent events might lead one to wonder whether the Iranian government is facing new threats to its legitimacy that might not be contained by IRGC resources.

[7] Le Monde, *L'Atlas Des Religions* (Paris: Le Monde, 2009), 16.

[8] Iran Watch, "Iranian Entity: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)," Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, http://www.iranwatch.org/suspect/records/iran-revolutionary-guard-corps-(irgc).html (accessed 04/12, 2011).

While the IRGC and its civilian militias, the Basij, successfully carried out internal security tasks during the 2009 Teheran protests, new types of information-sharing methods placed significant pressure on the Iranian government and its legitimacy. Citizens used new technologies (cell phones, internet, and networking tools) to distribute protest reports, images and videos. But while government crack-downs on access to internet and IRGC/Basij presence in the streets allowed for crowd control (often through brutal and lethal methods), the flow of information was not stopped altogether. Thus the need for the application of irregular warfare inside Iran has arisen in order to ensure that the population could be kept under control by IRI leaders.   Iran's ability to practice irregular warfare stems from the institutionalization of this practice. Using an institutional analysis model developed by Richard Scott, a sociologist, this essay will show how the institutionalization of irregular warfare in Iran is due to the combination of historical, cultural, ideological and political factors that are not normally covered by studies of international relations and political science.

This essay is composed of five main chapters. The first chapter will discuss Richard Scott's institutional analysis theory.   This model is based on the study of Cognitive (ideas), Normative (codes and norms) and Regulative (political and legal realm) pillars which, when well balanced, allow an organization or a paradigm to be institutionalized. The aim of this study will be to understand how of the three pillars interact to create a strong base from which the institution of irregular warfare gains legitimacy and flourishes despite outside challenges. It will be explained that weaknesses in any one of the pillars decreases the institution's strength and legitimacy. Chapter 2 will consider the Cognitive pillar of Richard Scott's institutional analysis theory. This

chapter will look at ideological factors that allowed Iran to develop and wage irregular

warfare. It will consider how Iranian nationalism has an impact on the support of

irregular warfare. Shi'ism, with its related concepts of victimization and isolation will

also be linked to the cognitive factors that lead to the support of Iran's practice of

irregular warfare as a tool of foreign policy. The 1979 revolution and the introduction of

revolutionary thinking by Ayatollah Khomeini as well as concepts such as martyrdom,

injustice and resistance will continue this exploration into the cognitive pillar. Finally,

the creation of the Pasdaran as a tool to protect and to export the Revolution will be

covered. Chapter 3 will consider the Normative pillar. Normative factors that led to the

integration of irregular warfare. The Pasdaran's actions during the war against Iraq

solidified its position as an ideological beacon of the Islamic revolution, but the IRGC

faced political obstacles during the 1990s. Indeed, the political overtures of Presidents

Rafsanjani and Khatami toward the West made the practice of irregular warfare more

challenging. To ensure their survival, as well as the continued application of irregular

warfare, the IRGC expanded its activities into civilian businesses, to generate funds. It

was so successful that the IRGC has become the dominant power within Iranian business.

Chapter 4 will cover the IRGC's gradual recognition amongst legal, religious and

political levels of Iran's government within a study of the Regulative pillar of Scott's

model. The election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (an ex-Basij member) in 2005

led to increased political and regulative support for the IRGC, and to broadened irregular

warfare actions by this organization. There will be links and overlaps between each of

the pillars. The IRGC's continual expansion over the last 30 years, and its integration

within Iranian society, are examples of these overlaps. Chapter 5 will discuss the

synergies and convergences between Scott's pillars, leading to observations on the

successful institutionalization of Iranian irregular warfare. The result of this study will

show that the institutionalization of irregular warfare by the IRI is the result of a synergy

between historical, cultural, religious, normative and political factors.

CHAPTER 1: INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS MODEL

Clausewitz refers to war as "policy by other means."[9] Conventional warfare has been extensively studied by academics, politicians and soldiers. Indeed, a trip to the neighbourhood library or bookstore will lead to a plethora of books on conventional battles and wars that have occurred between World War I and now. But while Westphalian states have documented and studied irregular warfare, they have not always been successful at adapting to this type of warfare. Examples of irregular wars include the French and American wars in Vietnam, Mao Zedong's irregular battles during the Chinese communist revolution and, more recently, the insurgent irregular conflicts in Iraq against the USA and its allies.[10] The most famous example of an irregular tactic is the use of the Trojan horse with soldiers inside to secretly gain access to fortresses and then open the gates.[11] This chapter will discuss irregular warfare using Roberts Scott's institutional analysis model, which is based on the study of cognitive, normative and regulative components.

Humans gather in groups and live by rules. The way they live is also characterized by synchronization and collaboration.[12] Humans normally associate themselves with other individuals in societies that have common beliefs, characteristics

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[9] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 87.

[10] Jordan and others, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 253.

[11] Ibid., 239.

[12] Michael Hechter and Christine Horne, "The Problem of Social Order," in *Theories of Social Order: A Reader* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 27.

and behaviors. Within these societies, humans behave according to specific norms and they expect that the institutions which are charged with organizing society will also behave in such as way as to provide people with the services, discipline and structure that they require. For this to occur, coordination of these rules, norms and behaviours required; it is also expected by individuals. In return, a state requires that individuals cooperate with the state's rules and norms. When a state's institutions behave in a predictable manner, individuals go about their daily activities knowing that their basic premises about the state's institutions will be met. Thus, the state and its institutions have legitimacy.[13] Social theorists like Michael Hechter take these concepts and try to determine what motivates individuals within societies to behave in certain ways and how are they motivated or upset by the society in which they live. However, while theorists have studied humans within societies, fewer efforts have been expended to study states and their institutions. More specifically, while few studies exist on military institutions, there are fewer still on military institutions that practice irregular warfare.

Irregular warfare has often been studied in terms of military tactics and equipment. In the case of Iran's use of irregular warfare, one can easily quantify Iran's irregular forces as numbering 125,000 (IRGC), that they have antiship missiles, fast attack boats, antiaircraft missiles and ballistic missiles. It would be also easy to describe how Hezbollah, supported by Iran irregular warriors and Iranian weapons and munitions, had successes in its asymmetric war against Israel in the Lebanon war of 2006.[14] However, it

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[13] Ibid., 28

[14] Anthony H. Cordesman, *Threats, Risks and Vulnerabilities: Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2009), 23.

is not so easy to explain the fact that during the last 30 years, Iran has, relatively unopposed, increased its irregular warfare activities, while supporting terrorist organizations such as Hezballah, Hamas, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and its Badr Corps Militia.[15] Determining the factors that explain these successes and Iran's continued use of irregular warfare is more challenging. There are suggestions that fourth generation warfare (4GW) has already begun and is mainly composed of irregular warfare tactics.[16] Countries such as Iran, faced with an overwhelmingly stronger opponent such as United States can leverage irregular tactics against the stronger enemy and still come out on top. One of the main reasons for this is that zealous soldiers, such as those found in Iran's IRGC, are more willing to use methods that professional armies generally will not use: "this advantage is crucial in explaining why militias, tribes and others using irregular tactics have frustrated and defeated more powerful adversaries with professional modern armies."[17] As will be seen later, Iran has structured its military and paramilitary forces to master the use of irregular warfare and to leverage warfare methods that Western countries are loathe to adopt. But to understand Iran's use of irregular warfare methods, one must consider factors that go beyond simple cost-benefit arguments such as the use of martyrs to shock the enemy. And one way to understand Iran's success in institutionalizing irregular warfare is through the institutional analysis, which considers cultural, normative and political factors in a more comprehensive manner.

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[15] Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and "Other Means"* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008), 7.

[16] Jordan and others, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 227.

[17] Ibid., 269

Institutional analysis is a relatively recent addition to the study of organizational behavior. Kenneth Katzman has written about the institutionalization of the Pasdaran.[18] But instead of focusing specifically (and perhaps too closely) on the Pasdaran, the aim of this dissertation is to discuss how the institutionalization of irregular warfare in Iran was achieved holistically over the last three decades, through a combination of ideas, actions and political support that includes, among other tools of irregular warfare, the Pasdaran. This methodology allows a focus on not only Iran's conventional and unconventional military forces; it also places attention on ideological, normative and regulatory factors that have led to the institutionalization of irregular warfare. Authors such as David Thaler ("Mullahs, Guards and Boynads") and Frederic Wehrey ("The Rise of the Pasdaran") focus on Iran's governing elite and the IRGC in order to explain the reasoning behind Iran's aggressive anti-Western position as well as the importance of the IRG C within Iran's government. These two documents are useful and will be covered in this essay.

Richard Scott's work on institutions and their legitimacy will be useful in determining what ideas, behaviours, and rules, combined together, make Iran's leaders and military institutions such as the IRGC, turn so eagerly towards irregular warfare as a foreign policy tool. Dr. Pierre Pahlavi used Richard Scott's institutional analysis model in determining the causes for the French failure in adapting to irregular warfare in Algeria

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[18] Kenneth Katzman, "The Pasdaran: Institutionalization of Revolutionary Armed Force," *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3/4 (Summer - Autumn 1993), 389.

during the latter half of the 1950s.[19] Likewise, Dr. Eric Ouellet used Scott's model in

analyzing India's involvement in counter-insurgency warfare between 1987 and 1990 in

Sri Lanka.[20] In his book on institutional and organizational theory, Richard Scott

mentions that the study the institutional behavior of companies, schools and hospitals

began in the 1970s. The aim was to understand what made institutions behave in specific

ways, what motivated individuals to make decisions that conflicted with their

organization's rules, and whether there existed cultural differences between organizations

that could explain differences in institutional behavior, etc. In addition to the study of

institutional decisions based on empirical data, institutional analysis began to look at

organizations as social creatures that could be differentiated from other organizations

based on cultural differences.[21]

Scott's institutional analysis is based on the study of institutions. He defines them

as follows: "Institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive

elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and

meaning to social life."[22] Not only are individuals complex, institutions are also complex

systems composed of sub-systems that behave in various ways. The challenge is to

understand what sets institutions apart from one another, and what allows them to gain

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[19] Pahlavi, *Guerre Irrégulière Et Analyse Institutionnelle: Le Cas De La Guerre Révolutionnaire De l'Armée Française En Algérie*, 1.

[20] Eric Ouellet, "Institutional Analysis of Counterinsurgency: The Case of the IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987-1990)" (Chicago, 23-25 October 2009, 2009).

[21] Richard W. Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc, 2008), ix.

[22] Ibid., 48

and maintain credibility and legitimacy. Scott posits that institutions gain legitimacy

through a combination of three components: cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative.

The first component, cultural-cognitive, pertains to "preconceived notions, thought

patterns, and worldviews that also contribute to maintaining social cohesiveness."[23] This

component touches on what is thought to be the most primal of levels within individuals,

their preconceptions and basic understanding of how they are supposed to behave in

society and what to expect from society.[24] The second element, normative, pertains to

norms and conventions as the basis for collective behavior within societies.[25] Finally, the

regulative component of institutional analysis is related to the organization of institutions

according to rules, regulations and legal frameworks.[26]

The three components have varying strengths. Their degree of convergence

determines an institution's legitimacy. For example, the mafia may be recognized by its

members as being legitimate, but it may not be deemed so by a society's regulatory

agencies: "…it is treated as an illegal form by police and other regulative bodies, and it

lacks the normative endorsement of most citizens."[27] In fact, as Scott explains, a lack of

convergence between the components can lead to an institutional change:

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[23] Eric Ouellet and Pierre Pahlavi, Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: A Case Study of the French Army in Algeria, 1954-1960 (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 2009), 3.

[24] Scott, Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests, 61.

[25] Pahlavi, *Guerre Irrégulière Et Analyse Institutionnelle: Le Cas De La Guerre Révolutionnaire De l'Armée Française En Algérie*, 133.

[26] Scott, Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests, 61.

[27] Ibid., 62

> ... where cognitive, normative, and regulative supports are not well aligned, they
> provide resources that different actors can employ for different ends. Such
> situations   exhibit both confusion and conflict, and provide conditions that are
> highly likely to give rise to institutional change.[28]

Thus, it is important that the three pillars converge and overlap in order for an institution

to be based on a sound structure and to survive. The next chapter will consider the first of

Scott's components, the cultural-cognitive portion of the institutional analysis, with Iran

and irregular warfare as a case-study.

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[28] Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL-COGNITIVE PILLAR

Institutional analysis places significant importance on factors related to thoughts

and ideas related to culture, religion and ideology.   Scott's model suggests that these

factors influenced the institutionalization of military institutions; in Iran's case, they

influenced the decisions related to the development, use, and institutionalization of

irregular warfare. For example, Iranians are cognizant that their country is the sole Shi'a

state in existence.[29] This characteristic is at the heart of Iran's "sense of uniqueness and

its sense of isolation,"[30] and is one of the ideological factors that, combined with other

cognitive factors, have influenced the institutionalization of irregular warfare. This

chapter will consider the combination of the effects of isolation with radical thinking as

well as other cognitive-cultural factors that have led to the adoption of irregular warfare.

Subjects covered will be nationalism, Shi'ism, revolutionary thinking, and the Pasdaran.

Nationalism

Irregular warfare was in full use more than 2500 years ago. The Persian emperor

Cyrus the Great used irregular tactics to cause confusion within enemy ranks. As an

example, during the battle of Thymbra (546 B.C.), he placed camels from his logistics

group in front of his infantry (a tactic never used before) in order to successfully cause

confusion among enemy horses: "The unaccustomed smell and sight of the camels was

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[29] Kenneth Pollack M., *The Persian Puzzle* (New York: Random House, 2004), 3.

[30] Ibid., 4

reported to have thrown the Lydian cavalry into disarray."[31] During the 2nd century B.C., the Parthian empire, which ruled over Persia, also used irregular warfare techniques to fight against the Romans. By using a mixture of psychological warfare (yelling and beating drums to demoralize the Romans), hit-and-run tactics using heavy cavalry to torment the enemy, and missiles (waves of arrows) that outranged the opponent's arrows, the Parthians were successful in keeping Roman attacks at bay.[32] In what was to be called the Battle of Carrhae in 53 BC, Romans attacked Iran with a force that amounted to a ratio of four attacking Romans for everyone defending Persian. Once again, the use of heavy cavalry in hit-and-run tactics and indirect fire with arrows allowed the Persians to defeat the Romans.[33] These examples show that Iran is not new to the concept of survival through the defeat of much stronger enemies with the use of irregular warfare tactics.

The defeat of the Persian Empire to the Greeks was followed by Turk, Mongol and Arab invasions.[34] But even after numerous invasions, Iran kept its sense of cultural superiority and sought to exert its influence in the region. The country was also at the center of the road used to trade silk between Asia and Mediterranean countries. Persia benefited from this through the exchange of cultural information and knowledge with merchants travelled through the country.[35] Even today, Iran's geographical size, its 75

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[31] Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 13.

[32] Ibid., 26.

[33] William R. Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, from Persia to the Islamic Republic, from Cyrus to Ahmadinejad* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17.

[34] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 3.

[35] Ibid., 4.

million citizens, its location within the Middle East and its economic power as an oil

producer (2ⁿᵈ largest oil reserves in the world) give credence to claims of regional and

global importance by Iranians.[36] The geographic and demographic size of Iran would

become useful assets for IRI irregular warfare. For example, the tactics of Iran's irregular

warriors could exploit the enemy's limited knowledge of the country's large size, and

they could use the IRI's many population centers to hide and strike at the enemy at will.

Therefore, even though Iran experienced numerous invasions throughout its history, its

population drew pride from having survived, and in the knowledge that leverage of the

country's size and large population with irregular tactics could repel enemies. Iran's

ability to survive and its desire to expand its influence are also characteristics that would

be present in the mind of the initiators of Iran's 1979 Revolution and useful in its

application of irregular warfare.

Other cognitive-cultural factors related to nationalism contributed to the

institutionalization of irregular warfare. Efforts to secure their independence from

successive invaders led Persians to feelings of insecurity and victimization. As well,

during most of the 1800s and 1900s, Britain and France fought for influence in Persia

over economic trade in the Gulf region, and Russia moved to acquire Persian territory

such as parts of the Caucasus.[37] This led to a Persian fear of loss of territorial integrity

that would be exploited by Khomeini in preparing for the 1979 Revolution. Indeed, he

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[36] David E. Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2010), 5.

[37] Persia was also seen as a buffer between Western powers and the Soviet Union, leading to the stationing of British troops in Persia at the end of the First World War. For more information on this, see Thomas R. Mattair, *Global Security Watch Iran: A Reference Handbook* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008),4-6.

would use the Marxist concept of capitalism and materialism (in this example, the exploitation of Iranian resources to benefit capitalist societies) to justify the use of irregular warfare in the Iranians' resistance against a perceived corrupt government.[38]

Shi'ism

The perception of insecurity and feeling of victimization are also attributes of Shi'ism, the dominant religion in Iran.[39] But this insecurity is not only a result of invasions and fears of violations of territorial integrity. The Safavid dynasty marked the official recognition of Shi'ism as Persia's official religion, which makes a discussion of this version of Islam, and its link with irregular warfare, pertinent. For example, a by-product of the imposition of Shi'ite religion on Persian ethnicity by the Safavid dynasty (1501-1760) is the creation of buffer between the Ottoman Empire (which was Sunni dominated) and the Christian world.[40] Being a religious minority in a region dominated by Sunni states, and being militarily less powerful than Western states, and Western-backed Sunni states, Iranians turned to tactics such as deception and "...concealment of faith if their lives were at stake,"[41] tactics that would be integrated in Iranian irregular warfare.

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[38] Jordan and others, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 243.

[39] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 3.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Gregory F. Giles, "The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic Culture," in *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and their Strategic Cultures*, eds. Dr Jerrold M. Post and Dr Barry R. Schneider (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: United States Air Force Counterproliferation Center, 2003), 147.

One of the elements that describe the essence of Shi'ism is "...suffering and passion in the name of righteousness,"[42] as illustrated by the struggle that led to the creation of this variation of Islam.[43] The concept of martyrdom is also a central theme of the Shi'a religion. Husayn's death was perceived as martyrdom and is remembered every year by Shi'a Muslims during the Day of Ashura (with some men drawing blood from their heads with razor or sword cuts in remembrance of the massacre of Husayn).[44] Within Shi'ism, martyrdom is acceptable especially in the context of a struggle against injustice, and when used in wars of all kinds, including irregular, it represents a significant military advantage.[45] It certainly helped in the Iran-Iraq war when Iranians threw themselves, often unarmed, against Iraqi forces in an unconventional warfare tactic of human waves used by the IRGC.[46] In fact, the desire for martyrdom was so great that it could lead to difficulties in Iranian battlefield tactics:

> Because command and control capabilities were limited, lead Guard units were nearly autonomous, which, when coupled with the basijis' desire for martyrdom, sometimes made it difficult for commanders to redirect or recall their units."[47]

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[42] Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation* (New York: Plume, 1998), 105.

[43] Following the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632, a disagreement occurred between Muslims over who should succeed him, and this led to the separation of Muslims between Sunnis and Shi'ites. Sunnis believed that a successor should be elected, while others believed that he should come from Mohammed's family, and particular his cousin Ali. In the ensuing years, Ali was murdered, and his son, Husayn, was killed and decapitated during the Battle of Karbala in Iraq in AD680. For more information, see Thomas R. Mattair, *Global Security Watch Iran: A Reference Handbook* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 2.

[44] Ibid., 105

[45] Giles, *The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic Culture*, 147.

[46] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 254.

[47] Ibid., 260

The fact that the Iranian population accepted important numbers of deaths during the Iran-Iraq war highlights martyrdom's value as a force multiplier for irregular warfare.

Within Shi'ism, concepts such as martyrdom, fighting much stronger opponents and resistance are omnipresent. Another very important concept that is crucial to the continuation of this version of Islam is the use of flattery, treachery and *taqiyeh*, the practice of faith concealment.[48] *Taqiyeh* was useful to "...those Iranians of Safavid Iran who lived under the threat of the Ottoman Turks, followers of Islam's Sunni branch."[49] All these concepts are related to irregular warfare. Shi'ism also does not equate victory with defeating an enemy on a conventional battlefield, which gives them an advantage in irregular warfare: "Defeat is not necessarily equated with failure. This emphasis on continuing the struggle against oppression and injustice rather than on achieving victory is seen as producing a high tolerance of pain in Iran."[50]

Consequently, irregular warfare is not foreign to Iran. The country's history shows that resistance against much stronger enemies was prevalent throughout the various development periods of this country. As well, Shi'ism's characteristics are the same that are found within irregular warfare. Therefore, the institutionalization of irregular warfare is not only attributable to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But a look at the revolutionary thinking of Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary leaders can certainly help to

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[48] Giles, *The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic Culture*, 147.

[49] Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, 109.

[50] Giles, *The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic Culture*, 147.

contextualize their move to formalize the use of irregular warfare as the country's main warfare effort.

Revolutionary Thinking

Irregular warfare is not foreign to Iran's history, as attested by its use by Persian emperors such as Cyrus the Great, and by subsequent Persian rulers in battles against foreign invaders. But in contrast with the historical use of irregular warfare to push back invading forces or to defeat the enemy in battles outside Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini would use revolutionary motives in justifying the use of this type of warfare to remove Iran's own government. During the 1970s, as the Shah of Iran moved to modernize Iran, radical religious leaders such as Khomeini were frustrated by the increasing Western influence on Iranians (e.g. liberal dress codes, consumerism, Western ideology, corruption, injustice) and what they perceived as a diminishing level of religious faith.[51] Radical clergy leaders thought that Iran's transformation into a Western society was a threat to Islamic religion, as well as to the identity of Iran: "Westernized habits were associated with Western politico-economic domination, and anti-Westernism and anti-regime ideas turned increasingly to the masses' Shi'i outlook."[52] Ali Shariati, a teacher of Shi'ite Islam prior to the revolution, referred to this as Westoxication.[53] In line with Shi'ism's concept of victimization, there was also a strong sense of injustice as Iran was a victim of

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[51] Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, 263.

[52] Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 189.

[53] Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, 264.

US and Western states negative influence (corruption, lesser morals, etc).[54] Khomeini

combined this concept of injustice with concepts such as *mostaz'afin* (the downtrodden)

and other Marxist-Leninist, Maoist and various leftist ideologies from around the world;

in essence he was blending Shi'ism with social ideology: "In this sense, Khomeini's

rhetoric mirrored that of Ali Shariati, the famed intellectual who spent much of the 1960s

seeking to infuse Islam with the Third-Worldist revolutionary spirit."[55] Khomeini's aim

was to influence Iranians into supporting his revolutionary ideas and to support the use of

irregular warfare tactics (psychological warfare, guerrilla attacks against the Shah's

government) in his efforts to lead the revolution. In the decade leading to the 1979

revolution, irregular tactics were used against the Shah's government. Islamic militants

received funding, aid and training by the Palestinian Palestine Liberation Organization

(PLO) and Libya also provided assistance.[56] The insurgents' aim was to weaken the

government: "they used guerrilla warfare to provoke regime repression and show that it

was possible to act against Pahlavi autocracy."[57] The theme of "governmental

destabilization" would be used by Khomeini for steering Iran towards a radical Islamic

Revolution.

One of Khomeini's aims was to force Iranian's into thinking that they were being

victimized by the Shah and his government, and to call for a change in government to

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[54] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 13.

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

[56] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 211.

[57] Ibid., 211

resolve this situation.[58] To stand up against the oppressing government, Khomeini

offered Iranians two tools from his version of radical Shi'a ideology: "...*moqavamat*

(resistance) against *zolm* (injustice)."[59] In another show of irregular warfare, intimidation

and sabotage were used to successfully force the Artesh (the Iranian conventional military

forces) to let the revolutionaries take control over the government.[60] The Iranian

Revolution led to significant changes in Iranian society and institutions. It transformed

Iran's society from secular to religious, with both religious and political powers

centralized in the position of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. The concept,

called *velayat-e faqih*, formally recognized in Iran's constitution, gave Khomeini direct

authority over what would become the IRI's irregular warriors (the IRGC, the Qods and

the Basij) and "absolute authority on all matters of religion and state, with the power to

mobilize the armed forces and declare war and peace."[61] As *velayat-e faqih*, he also had

at his disposal a military tool whose sole purpose was to use any and all means, including

irregular warfare, to carry out its duties.[62] This status also allowed Khomeini to focus the

IRGC on using irregular warfare to eliminate his adversaries: "...the IRGC under the

command of Khomeini was critical in eliminating the non-Islamist opposition and

keeping the Islamists in power."[63] Khomeini would also be able to have direct influence

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[58] Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, 273.

[59] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 13.

[60] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 219.

[61] Giles, *The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic Culture*, 142.

[62] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 86.

[63] 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), 548.

over the support to the IRGC and their efforts to push the institutionalization of irregular

warfare.

Khomeini authorized the formal establishment of the IRGC on 5 May 1979.[64] The

Basij (para-military forces), controlled by the IRGC and with a mission to create civilian

militias, followed a year after. [65] The IRGC can be described as a combination of Iranian

culture, Shi'ism and Islamic revolution precepts.[66] Its members swore allegiance to the

Supreme Leader, to the protection of the revolution (thus to the Islamic government) and

the country, as well as to the protection and enforcement of Islamic ideals within Iran. Its

initial role was to ensure that the Iran's conventional military forces (the Artesh), and

other internal opposition groups would not try to oppose the Islamic Revolution and "...it

accorded primacy to an *internal* role against potential counterrevolutionaries while at the

same time pushing for the export of the revolution."[67]   But the IRGC also competed

against over 1000 *komitehs* (revolutionaries committees) for the function of enforcing

Islamic ideals. The IRGC would eventually come out the winner: "the triumph of the

IRGC over these groups was ultimately achieved by demonstrating its superior

effectiveness as a guard for the nascent revolutionary regime during the Iran-Iraq War."[68]

The IRGC were also initiated to irregular warfare as they battled against guerrilla tactics

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[64] Frederic Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009), 20.

[65] Ibid., 20

[66] Pierre Pahlavi, *CGRI Et Guerre Asymétrique* (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 2010), 7.

[67] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 21.

[68] Ibid., 23

used by Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) and Fedayeen-e Khalq (FEK) members, who supported "...incorporation of Islamic values into government but resisted what members saw as dictatorship by the mullahs."[69] Thus, the IRGC's creation in 1979 was quickly followed by the deployment of its members around Iran, especially against the MEK and the FEK. And while the concept of *velayat-e faqih* meant that the IRGC would be completely subordinated to the Supreme Leader, its employment (and the use of irregular warfare) was quickly focused on the defeat of enemies of the Revolution within Iran's border.

Ayatollah Khomeini also envisioned exporting this revolution outside of Iran's borders. He believed the Revolution was a model that would benefit Muslims everywhere: "...il est en effet ¨normal¨ et ¨légitime¨ de l'exporter afin que les Musulmans puissant en bénéficier et enfin vivre ¨dignement¨, ¨libérés¨ de l'¨impérialisme¨ des superpuissances."[70] Khomeini's mention of liberation, the legitimate right to help other Muslims, and the expulsion of imperialist countries were references to Marxist concepts that would justify the use of irregular warfare in a revolution. Khomeini also announced that contrary to the Shah's support of Israel, Iran would support Palestinians. In justifying his decision, and to address the issue that Palestinians are not Shi'ah Muslims, Ayatollah Khomeini stated that "... Palestine is the vaqf - waqf, Arabic – or endowment-in-perpetuity ... of all Muslims, not only Arabs, or Palestinians. It cannot be sacrificed

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[69] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 234.

[70] Stéphane Bouffard, La Politique d'Extension De La Révolution Iranienne (1979-1989) Ou l'Impossible Communauté Des Croyants (Montréal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 2009), 13.

through negotiation."[71] It is also worth noting that Khomeini's vision of exporting the Revolution was not a foreign concept to Iranians. Indeed, Darius, the third emperor of the Achaemenid Empire in Persia, believed that by invading Greece, "...he could restructure the world because, he believed, all the lands of the Mediterranean would follow Greece into the Iranian world empire."[72] To accomplish this, Darius would have to use all of the irregular warfare skills at his disposal in order to ensure victory. In justifying the Revolution, Khomeini argued that Western political systems such as those espoused by the Shah were corrupt. He was actually successful in tapping into the nationalistic fervor of Iranians: "Khomeini's call for Iran to emerge as the nucleus of a new Middle East resonated with the populace endued with images of Persian greatness."[73] He referred to the quintessential oppression of the Iranians and of their obligation to resist the Western powers to avoid further oppression (e.g. imposition of economic sanctions).[74] Once again, the Shi'ism theme of resistance (*moqavamat*) would be used in the justification of Iranian practice of irregular warfare.[75]

During the few years leading to the 1979 Islamic revolution, there were other radical religious groups that could influence future events in the country. In fact, an independent group called "Anjoman-e Zedd-e Baha-iyat", founded in the 1950s by an

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[71] Sherifa D. Zuhur, Iran, Iraq, and the United States: The New Triangle's Impact on Sectarianism and the Nuclear Threat (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Insitute, 2006), 40.

[72] Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, from Persia to the Islamic Republic, from Cyrus to Ahmadinejad*, 13.

[73] Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

[74] Ibid., 19.

[75] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 13.

Iranian cleric, Ayatollah Mahmoud Halabi, believed that a purely Islamic government in

Iran would delay the arrival of some of the Mahdi. Shi'ite Islam believes in the return of

the 12th Imam, the Mahdi, and that his return will lead to "an era of global Islamic

justice...the long awaited global Islamic Caliphate."[76] Ayatollah Khomeini, using his

power as the "Velayat-e-Faqih," or ultimate legal power of the supreme leader of the

Islamic Revolution, this group was ordered to disband. However, the group merely

renamed itself to Hojjatieh, and adopted a more politically correct stance while secretly

keeping their original beliefs. [77] Members of this group participated in the 1979 Islamic

revolution, including the current president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.[78] As

president of Iran, Ahmadinejad's speeches have had the impact of shocking the

international community.[79] This is in line with the Hojjatieh belief that "...the spread of

tyranny and oppression will hasten the return of the Imam Mahdi...and that the

destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization is critical to our national survival."[80] The Chief

of the Joint Staff of the IRGC, Major General Hossein Salami, known as the leader of

Iranian irregular warfare doctrine development, is also reported to be a member of the

Hojattieh.[81]   This would place Iran's leaders as well as Iran's irregular warfare

practitioners right in line with the plan to create chaos through all means, including

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[76] Sean Osborne, "Armageddon and the Hojjatieh Sect of Shiite Islam," Northeast Intelligence Network, http://homelandsecurityus.com/archives/534 (accessed October/15, 2009), 1.

[77] Ibid..

[78] Ibid.

[79] Steve Schippert, "Understanding Ahmadinejad," Center for Threat Awareness, http://threatswatch.org/analysis/2005/11/understanding-ahmadinejad/ (accessed October/15, 2009).

[80] Osborne, *Armageddon and the Hojjatieh Sect of Shiite Islam*, 2.

[81] Ibid.

irregular warfare, to hasten the return of the 12th Imam. Khomeini himself was involved in the connection between the revolution and the appearance of Mahdi. He believed that the revolution would hasten the arrival of the hidden imam.[82] Thus, the Supreme Leader, combined with the Hojjatieh belief that chaos and conflict are useful, has considerable power to condone the use, and the continued institutionalization of irregular warfare in order to hasten the return of the Mahdi.

Consequently, a study of the cognitive pillar has shown that throughout Iran's history, events have led to the realization that Iran is a source of significant national pride for its citizens. It has survived invasions and the imposition of Shi'ism as its official religion. Concepts such as deception, insecurity, resistance, oppression and martyrdom were a result of the struggle of Iranians to survive. And by putting these concepts to practical use (through such means as irregular warfare), Iranians have been able to preserve the integrity of their state, and they have been able to promote their national interests. These concepts are also part of today's irregular warfare tactics in Iran. Persian and Iranian militaries of the past were also divided between conventional armies loyal to the central authority, and informal armies or militias loyal to the clerics. This led to the politicization of Iran's armies and to an eventual preference for irregular military structures over conventional ones: "Because all sides were suspicious of strong militaries and their ability to threaten the throne or for central authority, enthusiasm for modernizing reforms and military professionalism has often been limited unsustained."[83]

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[82] Ze'ev Maghen, "Occultation *in Perpetuum*: Shi'Ite Messianism and the Policies of the Islamic Republic," *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 235.

[83] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 4.

As mentioned in this chapter, competing radical organizations and early irregular warfare

challenges from internal guerrilla groups such as MEK and FEK tested Iran's ability to

institutionalize irregular warfare. The next chapter will discuss the normative pillar of

Richard Scott's institutional analysis model and what the IRGC faced in its efforts to

make itself Iran's center of excellence in irregular warfare.

CHAPTER 3: NORMATIVE PILLAR

The institutionalization of irregular warfare requires more than just the cognitive pillar in order for legitimacy to be achieved. As the IRGC faced competition by other radical militias after the 1979 revolution, it had to struggle to become the country's center of excellence in the practice of irregular warfare. Therefore, in addition to giving the IRGC the task of protecting the revolution through any means (including irregular warfare), Iran's Islamic leaders had to create conditions to increase the credibility of this organization. Institutional goals and tasks would be required to create a sense of shared values and beliefs. Indeed, the creation of norms can lead to feelings of loyalty, pride, honor, and, conversely, shame or disgrace.[84] The normative pillar is Richard Scott's second pillar within the institutional analysis model. This chapter will consider the Iran-Iraq war, the IRGC's autopromotion within Iranian society, the Basij and the economic integration of the IRGC within Iran. The aim will be to show that the IRGC's self-promotion, the normalization of irregular warfare doctrine and the expansion of IRGC activities into the economic sphere, allowed IRGC to increase its credibility and hold on the application of irregular warfare.

Creation of the IRGC

Following its creation in 1979, the IRGC faced competition in the enforcement of revolutionary ideals. Other organizations had already initiated, amongst other activities,

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[84] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests*, 55.

"revolutionary tribunals" against suspected counter-revolutionary Iranians. Yet another type of organization was the "pro-Khomeini Islamic Republic Party (IRP)", which sought to impress on Iranians their version of the Revolution.[85] The need to set itself apart from these rival organizations forced the IRGC to create a structure, rules, norms, specific behaviors and values. Although the IRGC was created to help Iran's leaders protect the Revolution, its functions were varied. The Revolutionary Council gave the IRGC the following responsibilities:

Table 1 – IRGC duties

- assisting police and security forces in the apprehension of liquidation of counterrevolutionary elements;
- battling armed counterrevolutionaries;
- defending against attacks and the activities of foreign forces inside the country
- coordinating and cooperating with the country's armed forces;
- training subordinate IRGC personnel in moral, ideological, and politico-military matters;
- assisting the Islamic Republic in the implementation of the Islamic Revolution
- supporting liberation movements and their call for justice of the oppressed people of the world under the tutelage of the leader of the Revolution of the Islamic Republic
- utilizing the human resources and expertise of the IRGC to deal with national calamities and unexpected catastrophes and supporting the developmental plans of the Islamic Republic to completely maximize the IRGC's resource

Source: Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 21.

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[85] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 23.

For the IRGC to take on these tasks, it needed basic military training, which is why initial

IRGC members were sent to Syria and Lebanon for military training.[86] Very early on

after its creation, the IRGC would be directly involved in irregular warfare in order to

assist with the tasks related to assisting police and battling counterrevolutionaries. IRGC

forces were quickly asked to carry out irregular warfare, especially through the fight

against Kurdish rebels, the MEK and the FEK.[87] The IRGC and other Iranian security

forces also faced irregular warriors when, on 9 July 1980, the Nuzhih plot against the

revolution was enacted by counter-revolutionaries.[88] This plot was uncovered and

several thousand Iranians were executed, resulting in a weakened Artesh (arrested pilots

and members of the 92nd Armoured Division were not available to operate the IRI's tanks

and planes), which led Saddam Hussein to invade Iran.[89] On the other hand, a weak

Artesh helped push the IRGC to use irregular warfare tactics to compensate. But while

the initial employment of the IRGC led to the practice of irregular warfare, it would take

more time for this organization to gain both status and recognition as the main user and

practitioner of this type of warfare. Indeed, initial factionalism and political battles for

control over the Pasdaran affected how IRI leaders viewed the employment of the IRGC.

Although the Pasdaran eventually gained recognition as IRI's irregular warriors, some

initially believed that it should become a conventional military while others pushed for

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[86] Ibid., 21

[87] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 227.

[88] Members of this attempted coup included retired and active personnel from the Artesh (including pilots and members of the 92nd Armoured Division whose responsibility was to defend the southwestern border of Iran), supported by former members of the Shah`s government, and counter-revolutionaries based in Iraq.

[89] Ibid., 241

the IRGC to focus on exporting the revolution through irregular means.[90] The task

related to the support of liberation movements would become very important for the

justification of the IRGC's international arm, the Qods, to participate in the fight against

oppressing governments, using irregular warfare tactics. Thus, the duties most closely

linked with irregular warfare were those that involved the protection of the revolution

(and by extension of the Iranian territory) and those associated with supporting liberation

movements around the world. Over time, the IRI would create and maintain links with

states that supported terrorism and irregular warfare.

Iran-Iraq War

Irregular warfare was an important part of the IRI's strategy during the Iran-Iraq

war. The war was initiated by Saddam Hussein, who feared that the new Islamic state

would incite Iraq's Shi'ite population to oppose his Sunni-based Baathist regime. He was

also concerned that Iran's radical Islamic leaders could use irregular warfare tactics to

restrict Iraq's access to the Persian Gulf (important for oil trade).[91] For its part, the IRI

perceived the war less as Iraqi territorial ambition and more as a theocratic fight to save

Islam and the Iranian revolution.[92] In what amounts to an overlap between the normative

and cognitive pillars of Scott's institutional analysis, IRI leaders justified this war to

Iranians by using the concept of martyrdom (cognitive pillar) to achieve the normative

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[90] Katzman, *The Pasdaran: Institutionalization of Revolutionary Armed Force*, 398.

[91] Global Security.org, "Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)," Global Security.org, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm (accessed 10 March 2010)

[92] Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, 88.

effect of shaping the Iranians' belief. They called on Iranians to participate in the war by arguing that it was a way for them to "confirm their faith through deed."[93] Martyrdom was presented as the ultimate reward for sacrifices made on the battlefield: "not only would God ensure victory, but, on the path to success, all sacrifices were would be recompensed eternal reward."[94] The IRGC was at the front from the start, and its successes in irregular warfare allowed it to gain much needed credibility among Iranians and IRI leaders. Terms such as "Imposed War " and "Holy Defence" were used to motivate Iranians in both accepting sacrifices and the burden of the war, as well as joining the ranks of the military and participating, to the point of giving their lives for the nation.[95] The war helped prove that irregular tactics on the battlefield, although costly in human lives, were a plausible complement to the Artesh's conventional tactics.

Early in the war, the IRI leaders' decided to keep military forces engaged against Kurdish rebels meant that fewer conventional forces were available to defend the south of Iran against the advancing forces of Saddam Hussein.[96] Limited Iranian munitions, weapons (and related suppliers) and experienced officers underscored the need to use an irregular warfare strategy which involved using human waves tactics followed by attacks by Iran's conventional forces: "the clerical leadership insisted that it had found a new Islamic warfare strategy that was not wedded to conventional tactics... From the regime's

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[93] Ibid., 88

[94] Ibid.

[95] Shahram Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security* (New York: International Institute for Strategic Studies: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36.

[96] Ray Takeyh, "The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 3 (Summer 2010), 368.

perspective, though, this type of warfare demonstrated the vibrancy of the revolution."[97]
To supply the IRGC with the martyrs required to counter Iraq, Iran turned to a proven
concept of a "people's militia." Iran mobilized over 100 000 volunteer Basiji soldiers,
many taken from Islamic religious schools (madrassahs).[98] The fact that individuals
volunteered to become martyrs by participating in human waves underscores the link and
the mutually-supporting relationship between the cognitive and normative pillars of
Scott's model. Indeed, the volunteering of great numbers of individuals, combined with
their preparation and march toward the enemy as groups (normative traits) led to feelings
of pride and loyalty of what they were doing (cognitive traits). So individuals that
showed religious fervor even before volunteering saw their feelings strengthened through
the bonding activities related to the war (hence the link between cognitive and normative
pillars).

But the strategy of irregular warfare also led to criticism. While the use of zealous
soldiers throwing themselves against enemy positions led to tactical victories, follow-
through exploitation of these victories was difficult, especially considering the high
number of casualties caused by this tactic.[99] On the other hand, the IRGC's irregular
warfare credibility was solidified because it proved to Iranians that they could succeed at
protecting the Iranian state and the Islamic revolution by confronting a stronger military
opponent: by 1982, two years after the war had begun, Iran had successfully repulsed Iraq

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[97] Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, 91.

[98] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 27.

[99] Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 31.

outside its borders.[100] The decision to continue the war even after Iraq had been pushed

back from Iran was a politically motivated one, essentially justified by the need to export

the Islamic revolution, but also based on perceptions that irregular warfare tactics such as

human waves would compensate for inferior conventional equipment and command-and-

control means.[101] Unfortunately those same weaknesses halted Iranian forces as they

crossed into Iraq, leading to a war of attrition that would last until 1988. In a

demonstration of its revolutionary zeal, it was the IRGC that pressed for the continuation

of the war through to 1988, even after tactical victories using human waves early in the

war stopped being useful (now that Iranians had crossed into Iraq, they were facing a

much stronger opponent adept at using conventional forces to defeat the IRI's irregular

warfare methods). These decisions by the IRGC led to accusations of *nadanam kari*

(incompetence).[102] Ultimately, the continued use of unconventional warfare methods by

Iraq, such as chemical weapons against Iranian forces led IRI leaders to realize that the

war's continuation could lead to a serious weakening or even the death of the Islamic

Republic.[103] The Iran-Iraq war allowed the IRGC the opportunity to promote their

successes in irregular warfare: "...la guerre a donc été une opportunité pour conforter les

assises populaires du CGRI et des Basijis, pour opérer un début d'institutionnalisation de

la guerre irrégulière tout en confirmant le caractère « populiste » de ces deux

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[100] Takeyh, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment*, 370.

[101] Ibid., 371

[102] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 24.

[103] Takeyh, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment*, 383.

organisations soeurs."[104] Although Iran lost many fighters to superior Iraqi conventional forces, the IRI had confidence in irregular warfare. This was highlighted, after the war, by the decision to send over 1000 IRGC members to Lebanon in order to help the PLO and its fights against Israel in the south of Lebanon, and to assist in the establishment of Hezbollah, and other Shia resistance movements in Lebanon.[105] This self-promotion would also become very important after the death of Khomeini.

Self-promotion

The memory of Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war has survived the more than twenty years since the end of this war:

> International organizations, global opinion and prevailing conventions did not protect Iran from Iraq's chemical weapons assaults. Saddam's aggression, targeting of civilians...and use of weapons of mass destruction were all condoned by the great powers.[106]

In the end, the international community did not stop Iraq from its attacks on Iran. This has affected how isolated Iran sees itself, and how important the IRGC and irregular warfare is to the survival of the Islamic state: "The notion of self-sufficiency and self-reliance are hallmarks of the Islamic Republic's foreign-policy, as the guardians of the revolution recognized that the survival of their regime depends entirely on their own

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[104] Pahlavi, *CGRI Et Guerre Asymétrique*, 11.

[105] Mattair, *Global Security Watch Iran: A Reference Handbook*, 35.

[106] Takeyh, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment*, 383.

efforts."[107] The success of the irregular warfare, especially the use of martyrs, has been

widely used as glue that binds Iranian war veterans. This link between veterans would

also become useful later as they developed networks and business relationships. The

Iran-Iraq war also led to the buildup of normative bonds and networks, especially among

IRGC participants, that would survive until today: "this experience shaped political

outlooks and forged enduring social bonds among individuals who fought in the same

battle or served under the same commander."[108] These bonds would become an important

part of the IRGC's growth during the 1990s and early 2000s, a period during which

political support for irregular warfare in an aggressive anti-Western foreign policy was

not as strong.

During the 1980s, Ayatollah Khomeini empowered the Islamic Republic clerical

leadership. Networks of mosques and religious schools educated and groomed future

leaders of various IRI institutions, including the IRGC. These individuals would become

part of informal networks that generated funds through Iran's *bonyads* (foundations that

provided help for the poor but that ultimately provided funding for various contracts

within Iran using money from former foundations under the Shah) and thus allowed the

IRGC to become self-sufficient and ever more present in Iranian business life.[109] Indeed,

political support for the IRGC's focus on irregular warfare took on a different tone after

the death of Khomeini, which forced the IRGC to build a strong informal and formal

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 12.

[109] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 55.

system of networks and to integrate itself further into Iranian society through its business arms. Through its ever increasing network of war veterans, and through its contacts with the *bonyads*, the IRGC was able to insert itself into Iranian business and to amass considerable wealth. [110] It created a civil construction and engineering company that received billions in contracts. Even more lucrative was its role in border defense, which "...gave it control over border posts and port facilities, allowing it to enter the lucrative business of importing duty-free consumer goods and smuggling."[111] The integration of the IRGC within Iranian society continued with an onslaught of revolutionary propaganda through media tools such as websites, magazines, newspapers, and audio video channels countrywide. In a world where psychological warfare is carried out using all of these tools, it is not surprising to see the IRGC using them to promote its revolutionary ideas, and to wage its own asymmetric warfare, as described by Basij commander Mehdi Sa'adati: "Sa'adati alleged that Iran's enemies are engaged in a media war to weaken the Islamic Republic and emphasized the importance of the Iranian press in protecting the country's religious and cultural values."[112]

The IRGC's prominence within Iranian society, especially in the economic sphere, leads to certain observations. The most notable is related to the IRGC's ability to leverage its ideological character (strong support of the Islamic revolution and Islamic values) and its focus the protection of the revolution (through the use of such means as irregular

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[110] Ibid., 57

[111] Safshekan and Sabet, *The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis*, 548.

[112] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 52.

warfare) with its desire to amass financial wealth. Wehrey compares Iran's situation to the Chinese and to the Pakistani situation. He notes that there is a potential for the loss of ideological cohesion within both militaries because of their significant penetration into Pakistani and Chinese business life, and that Iran may face the same situation with the IRGC.[113] The concern is that, as they become entrenched within Iranian bureaucracy, IRGC leaders may place less emphasis on the practice of irregular warfare: "...there are growing tensions with the IRGC about the institution's corporate narrative of a return to the golden age, e.g., the ideological purity, militancy, stridency, and insularity that marked the post revolutionary period."[114] But this concern, which can lead to speculations of a decrease in the practice of irregular warfare, does not seem to have affected the IRGC's ability to conduct irregular warfare so far. One of the reasons for this is that throughout the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, the IRGC constantly updated irregular warfare doctrine in the face of continued economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the international community.

Irregular warfare doctrine

The Basij was important in popularizing the Revolution through the creation of an organization based on Iranian citizens' willingness to go "one step further" in their ideological support of the Revolution.   The Basij was set up as a "20 million-man militia to defend the republic from both external aggressions from the United States and from the

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[113] Ibid., 96

[114] Ibid., 70

revolution's internal enemies."[115] Iran's sense of insecurity never stopped influencing

policy leaders, even after the end of the Iran-Iraq war. For example, the presence of the

United States in the Middle East increased fears that America would attack the Islamic

Republic's legitimacy through indirect means. To illustrate this, in 2007, the United

States announced an updated policy on Iran, with a budget of $85M that would "empower

civil society and promote democracy in Iran, increase satellite TV and Radio broadcasting

to the country, expand outreach to young and professional Iranians, and enhance

communication for public diplomacy."[116] To carry out its task of protecting the Islamic

revolution, the IRGC has continued its efforts to widen its presence across Iran.[117] The

Basij, being an extension of the IRGC, gained much legitimacy from their creation and

subsequent use:

> ...more than any other IRGC entity, the Basij has evolved to become the
> institution's most visible, omnipresent face to the Iranian population and has seen
> its domestic functions expand significantly since its early role in the Iran-Iraq
> War.[118]

The Basiji successes in "human waves" during the Iran-Iraq war also strengthened Iran's

resolve in institutionalizing this method of warfare, and it has led the IRGC to adapt its

irregular warfare doctrine to defend Iran from invaders:

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[115] Ibid., 26

[116] Hooshang Amirahmadi, "A Wrong Policy to make "Iranian Bombs" Right," American Iranian Council, http://www.amirahmadi.org/Writing/Articles/AWrongPolicy-03-03-06.pdf (accessed 04/23, 2011).

[117] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 32.

[118] Ibid., 26

> ...the early reliance on superior morale, sheer numbers, indoctrination, and youth, necessitated by Iran's conventional military weaknesses, set the template for the Islamic Republic's current "asymmetric" strategy of homeland defense – the conduct of partisan warfare, defense-in-depth, and scorched-earth tactics by lightly armed popular forces against a militarily superior opponent.[119]

In fact, the Basij's role has been expanded to become the basis upon which irregular warfare across the country would be carried out against foreign invaders or internal dissenters. And to enhance recruitment and to foster popular support, the Basij was involved in many public works projects.

Gradually, Basij presence has increased across Iran to include units in universities, factories and regional tribes.[120]   Today, about 600,000 members of the Basij are part of what are called paramilitary units divided into male *ashura* battalions, female's *zahra* battalions and *karbala* and *zolfaqar* special operations groups.[121] The purpose is to take part in the defense of the homeland by resorting to Iranian "mosaic defense" and "spontaneous battle." This is based on irregular warfare tactics that include harassment of invading armies in order to disrupt the enemy's willingness to continue fighting, leading to its withdrawal from Iran.[122] Examples of Basij unit irregular warfare training includes "work in ambush, logistics, operations, reconnaissance (and) a four-day military exercise, during which *ashura* and *zahra* personnel from the area practiced troop call up,

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[119] Ibid., 27

[120] Ibid., 28

[121] Ibid., 44

[122] Ibid., 45

organization of the forces, operations, and preparation for deterrence operations."[123]

Consequently, IRGC efforts at integrating Basij in irregular warfare tactics have been

successful. The irregular warfare capability that is represented by the Basij and the IRGC

throughout Iran has helped IRI leaders in adapting and modifying their military doctrine.

The aim is to protect the Islamic republic and the revolution against what is perceived as

an increased threat from the United States and its allies in the region, especially since the

United States invasion of Iraq in 2003:

> If it can fulfill its maturing approached doctrine, Iran will be better positioned to
> threaten US interests despite many military shortcomings. And, should conflict
> come, Iran could be much better prepared than recent American adversaries to
> upset seriously US operations through surprise, unconventional tactics, and
> worldwide retaliatory responses.[124]

The development of Iran's irregular warfare doctrine can be explained in varying ways.

One way is to use an analysis of Iran's turn to irregular warfare based on a cost-benefit

logic. Using this logic, Iran turned to irregular warfare because of losses suffered during

the Iran-Iraq war and because of a lack of access to modern weapons. Instead of this oft-

used cost-benefit analysis, Scott's institutional analysis model offers a look at cognitive

and normative factors that explain Iran's development (and institutionalization) of

irregular warfare doctrine. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini "... insured ideology would

be a keystone for Iran's conception of war and military doctrine."[125] Thus, ideological

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[123] Ibid., 49

[124] Steven R. Ward, "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," *Middle East Journal*
59, no. 74 (Autumn 2005), 560.

[125] Ibid.

influences such as the need to protect the revolution and Islam had an impact on the

normative changes to the doctrine, as first represented by the 1992 regulations:

> These principles stress Islamic ideology as a basic precept for organizing and equipping the Armed Forces. They also demand loyalty to the Supreme Leader, seek self-sufficiency, and hold defense — deterring, defending against, and ultimately punishing an aggressor against Iran or oppressed nations — as the Armed Forces' primary orientation.[126]

The doctrine spells out cognitive requirements such as absolute loyalty to the *valiyat-e*

faqih. Cognitive and normative ideas are also present in the doctrine's prescription for

irregular warfare methods in the defense of the IRI: "Khomeini's thoughts on defense

underscore the importance today's Iranian leaders continue to place on the psychological

preparation of Iran's Armed Forces to draw on religious zeal and the concept of

martyrdom to confront stronger powers."[127] The most recent step in the evolution of the

Iranian military doctrine is a move towards a reliance on irregular warfare as a main tool

for deterrence of enemies. The intent is to use asymmetric warfare of all kinds (including

terrorism against the opponent's interests, even those outside of Iran's immediate

geographic vicinity) to force the enemy to stop its aggression.[128] The latest commander

of the IRGC summarized Iran's position on irregular warfare in a speech in 2007:

> Asymmetric 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

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[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 561

[128] Ibid., 567

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.[129]

During the 2000s, Iran carried out irregular warfare using a mix of conventional, irregular and Special Forces to both protect and extend Iran's influence in the region. Some examples include: "...oil spills and floating mines in the Gulf, use of Quds force in Iraq, Iranian use of UAVs in Iraq, support of Shi'ite groups in Bahrain, missile and space tests; expanding range of missile programs (future nuclear tests?)."[130] IRI leaders justified their use of irregular warfare by pointing to their enemy: the US's presence in the region was seen as oppressing Muslims in the region, it was motivated to undermine the IRI revolution, and it intended on expanding its presence in the region. Thus by using the United States as a symbol (cultural-cognitive) for Iran's biggest enemy, the IRI continued their modification of irregular warfare doctrine to promote its institutionalization.

In summary, irregular warfare was first used by the IRI as a tool to protect the revolution, justified by ideological reasons. This is the basis for the cultural cognitive pillar of Richard Scott's institutional analysis model. Scott's second pillar, based on normative beliefs, norms, and doctrine were presented in this chapter to show the institutionalization of irregular warfare through the integration of the IRGC, the Basij and the Qods forces in all aspects of Iranian society, including cultural, economic and military. The success of the normative integration of irregular warfare as Iran's main

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[129] Cordesman, *Threats, Risks and Vulnerabilities: Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare*, 23.

[130] Ibid.

foreign policy tool is exemplified through Iran's support of the 2006 Lebanon war, in which Hezbollah resisted Israel by using weapons and irregular warfare tactics. And the third pillar, the regulative, is another important part of Richard Scott's model, one that will show that the political integration of IRGC and Basiji members and former members within the IRI political structure has further allowed the institutionalization of irregular warfare.

CHAPTER 5: REGULATIVE PILLAR

The 2000s marked a transition for the IRGC to a more politically-oriented role, with irregular warfare benefiting from this change. This decade saw many ex-IRGC and ex-Basij members come to power alongside President Ahmadinejad, an ex-Basij himself. Just like experience in Afghanistan or Iraq has become a requirement for promotion within armies of Western countries, veterans from the IRGC and the Basij are "gradually dominating national affairs...service in the war is seen as an important prerequisite for business connections and political prominence."[131] This chapter will discuss how the political influence of the IRGC reached an all-time high, which allowed irregular warfare to further become institutionalized at the political level, and thus the regulative level. Subjects discussed will include the constitutional framework around the IRGC and irregular warfare, the transition from difficult political support during the 1990s to full political integration in the 2000s and the modification of irregular warfare doctrine to become more inward-focused within Iran.

The regulatory legitimacy of irregular warfare is found first and foremost in the Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution. The use of irregular warfare outside Iranian borders is mentioned in article 154 of the constitution, which binds the IRI to the protection of oppressed peoples throughout the world: "...[the IRI] supports the just struggles of the mustad'afun (oppressed) against the mustakbirun (oppressor) in every

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[131] Takeyh, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment*, 383.

corner of the globe."[132] This article, combined with the revolutionary zeal of IRI leaders, was used as political justification to support terrorist organizations such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Hezbollah and Hamas. IRGC and their Qods affiliate established irregular warfare training camps in Lebanon and Sudan; Qods operatives also killed Iranian dissidents who had fled to Europe.[133] And while the IRGC was initially involved in various military operations to save the Islamic revolution against internal enemies such as the MEK and radical Islamic groups that opposed Khomeini, it also showed its ability to flex political muscle against the first president of the IRI, Abol Hasan Bani Sadr. Khomeini conferred to Sadr his authority as commander in chief of IRI armed forces, which included the IRGC. When Sadr attempted to dissolve the IRGC in favor of more tradition armed forces, the IRGC opposed him, prevailed, and "... after this success Guard leaders were no longer responsive to presidential authority."[134] Thus, the constitution allowed the IRGC to apply irregular warfare against enemies that it deemed to be a threat to the revolution and to the Supreme Leader's power.

However, political support for the application of irregular warfare to project IRI political aggression was not always strong. The political parties present in the IRI following the 1979 included both sides of the political spectrum, which would eventually lead to differing views on the application of irregular warfare.   The party to which Khomeini belonged was the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), which included members from

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[132] Foundation for Iranian Studies, "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Foundation for Iranian Studies, http://fis-iran.org/en/resources/legaldoc/constitutionislamic (accessed 03/07, 2011).

[133] Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 303.

[134] Ibid., 228

the right side of the political sphere (conservatives, mostly represented by the clergy), and the left side of the political spectrum (represented by moderate politicians who could be described as reformists). The decade following the Iran-Iraq war saw the political focus of the IRI change in two ways: first, the end of the war was also the end of what had been, for over 10 years, a cause (protecting the country and the revolution from Iraq) that had linked Iranians together. This was a period during which support for irregular warfare (as represented by martyrs running toward a superior enemy) was strong. Combined with the second event, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, who was the ideological glue of the revolution, this situation opened the way for challenging times in the political support for irregular warfare. Following the death of Khomeini, Ayatollah Khameini succeeded him and, as Supreme Leader, steered the political inclination of the IRI towards the conservative side.[135] While this was good for the political support of the IRGC (and irregular warfare), both Iranian presidents of the 1989-2005 period (Rafsanjani and Khatami) were representatives of the left side of the political spectrum, and their policies were more pragmatic, and perhaps less oriented towards an aggressive, irregular warfare-based foreign policy.

The first post-war president (Rafsanjani) believed that the hard-lined approach to foreign relations, including the use of irregular means to try to export the revolution, should be moderated in order to allow economic ties and to foster trade with the international community in order to generate more revenue for the nation. In 1990, in a show of good faith towards the Gulf states, Iran cooperated with the US-led coalition in

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[135] Safshekan and Sabet, *The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis*, 544.

its preparation for war with Iraq : "...[Iran] allowed the Iraqi Shia SCIRIs Badr Brigade to enter Iraq from Iran as an international coalition was preparing to eject Iraq from Kuwait."[136] This newfound good faith, however, met with opposition from the IRGC, which flexed its political muscles: "Throughout the 1990s, they called for suppression of the reform movement and denounced its attempts to expand the political rights of the citizenry." [137] Ayatollah Khomeini (prior to his death) also opposed Rafsanjani's attempts to combine the chains of command of both the Artesh and the IRGC.[138] Rafsanjani was succeeded by president Khatami, a reformist who espoused many Western concepts, without quite being an advocate of changing the IRI's system to a Western-style democratic system. He tried to respond to the public's call for more freedoms by relaxing, for example, the approval process for written material distributed or sold to the public. But IRI conservatives were opposed to reforms, and responded with public disapproval of Khatami's initiatives. The commander of the IRGC, reminding Iranians of the IRGC's prerogative to use irregular warfare to protect the IRI, stated that "when I see conspirator cultural currents, I give myself the right to defend the revolution and my commander, the esteemed Leader, has not prevented me."[139] Khatami's reformist agenda prompted serving and ex-IRGC members to use their informal networks and became engaged politically to try to oust him.[140] Thus, the IRGC's ability to make its presence

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[136] Mattair, *Global Security Watch Iran: A Reference Handbook*, 42.

[137] Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*, 34.

[138] Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 33.

[139] Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*, 52.

[140] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 58.

felt politically, due in part to their support from the IRI's Supreme Leader, showed its

ability for regulatory influence. Efforts at gaining legitimacy through normative methods

such as auto-promotion by the IRGC during the 1990s (and thus its ability to get political

and legislative support to carry out irregular warfare) proved worthwhile. And with the

election of an ex-IRGC member to the presidency of Iran, the IRGC would be well-

placed to enhance the push towards the institutionalization of irregular warfare.

A new generation of ex-IRGC and ex-Basiji members entered the IRI political

sphere during the 2000s. This allowed the regulative pillar of Scott's institutional

analysis model to reinforce the cognitive and normative pillars in the legitimization of the

IRGC and its use of irregular warfare. Under the political designation of neo-principlists,

IRGC members entered politics of the city and village level in 2003, and henceforth

progressively rose to higher levels of political influence throughout Iran. Their ideology

is comparable to the Chinese political system, "... with a strong emphasis on economic

development, national independence, and grandeur."[141] The major factor that led to

Khatami's 2005 election loss is that he failed to improve ordinary Iranians' economic

situation, leading to election of a neo-principlist, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. An ex-Basij

himself, he has focuses on the "great Satan" (the US) in his speeches and rapprochement

with several communist and socialist countries such as Venezuela, Cuba and North

Korea; this illustrates the IRI's preference for the confrontational attitude that marked the

early post-revolutionary Iran. [142] The use of irregular warfare as a political (and thus

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[141] Safshekan and Sabet, *The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis*, 550.

[142] Ibid., 24

regulative) tool has found new support with Ahmadinejad, with his efforts to draw attention away from internal political problems and social unrest related to weaknesses in economic policies: "the country's worsening economic condition means that its leaders increasingly depend on the foreign threat in order to keep attention focused abroad."[143] To illustrate the increased political power of the IRGC, its commander, in 2005, spoke on matters of foreign policy, stating that "America's current policy is to create tension among Shi'as and Sunnis, but America must know the time when superpowers could dominate Islamic states has now passed."[144] Thus, the one institution that has the most influence on the application of irregular warfare is increasingly speaking on behalf of the IRI on matters of foreign-policy.

Another source of political support for Iran's use of irregular warfare in its foreign-policy is the international pressure on Iran to halt its development of nuclear power. Whether or not technological work on nuclear power is related to the development of nuclear weapons, Iranians support their country's right to go its own way: "In the face of foreign threats, Iranian's of all persuasion political are likely to rally around the flag. Iranian support their government's ability to make a sovereign decision on the issue without regard to what faction or type of government is in power."[145] The IRGC is also using this theme to justify anti-American and anti-Western comments, and to announce their intent to use irregular warfare means to defend the IRI: "Recent statements by the

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[143] Ansari, Iran Under Ahmadinejad, 45.

[144] Keith Crane, Rollie Lal and Jeffrey Martini, *Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008), 19.

[145] Ibid., 34

IRGC and other regime officials make clear their fixation on psychological warfare and the cultural onslaught of the United States, even if the fear of a direct attack has subsided."[146] While international fears of a nuclear Iran motivates the US and its allies to continue to push Iran in stopping its development program, any attack on Iran's nuclear technology capability may give the IRI and the IRGC the upper hand in consolidating their regulative support for the use of irregular warfare: "If Iran's facilities were to be bombed, public support for retaliation would likely be widespread."[147] A nuclear Iran could have at its disposal the tools necessary to both carry out irregular warfare in various ways. Its possession of nuclear weapons could deter enemies through the threat of attack from Iranian nuclear-armed missiles, and this would be strong psychological warfare tool for Iran. Likewise, Iran transfer of nuclear weapons or nuclear materials to terrorist organizations could be difficult to track and to prove.[148] Consequently, the IRI could use nuclear technology as both a deterrent (which is in line with its irregular warfare policy of defending the revolution and the Iranian territory) and as a tool to support terrorism around the world.

After decades of leveraging cognitive-cultural tools (such as the *valiyat-e faqih*, Iranians' sense of insecurity and their resulting support for resistance) with normative tools (such as the auto-promotion of the IRGC, their integration within Iranian businesses and government, and the evolution of Iran's irregular warfare doctrine), regulative events

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[146] Wehrey and others, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, 32.

[147] Crane, Lal and Martini, *Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities*, 107.

[148] James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and its Complications," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March/April 2010), 45.

of the last decade have allowed the IRGC to gain prominence and to deepen their influence over Iranian politics. Just like experience in Afghanistan or Iraq has become a requirement for promotion within armies of Western countries, veterans from the IRGC and the Basij are "gradually dominating national affairs...service in the war is seen as an important prerequisite for business connections and political prominence."[149] The election of president Ahmadinejad, his provocative and anti-Western speeches and support for the IRGC's continued acquisition of irregular warfare equipment such as fast attack boats and ballistic missiles show that the institutionalization of irregular warfare accelerated during the 2000s. Thus, as the first decade of the 21st century ended, the IRGC continued to consolidate its influence in the regulative context of Scott's institutional analysis model.

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[149] Takeyh, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment*, 383.

CHAPTER 6: CONVERGENCE

The successful institutionalization of irregular warfare requires the convergence of the three pillars, cognitive, normative and regulative. This chapter will discuss how the use of irregular warfare by the IRI has changed from being a simple tool within the foreign policy toolbox to a force multiplier that is successfully used to influence both internal IRI and external IRI interests.

Cognitive

The IRGC represents the protector of revolutionary ideology within the IRI. It has effected a transition from a zealous revolutionary-minded organization that sent martyrs towards a stronger enemy during the Iran-Iraq war, into an institution that uses irregular warfare to keep a tight degree of security within IRI borders. At the same time, the IRGC works to disrupt governments around the world (Iraq being the most recent example) in order to incite either revolution or a change in regime. At the same time, the IRGC's ability to practice irregular warfare is contingent on the need, as they consolidate more political and economic powers, to have ideological support from the population.

The IRGC is part of the neo-principlist movement, which places more emphasis on nationalism than on blind ideology. Nationalism is seen as a holistic belief that can replace theocratic politics, and involves, for members of the movement (which include the IRGC and the current president), a political shift where religion is less important in decision-making than the economy and the security of the political leadership. They

argue that the path to the improvement of the state is through the economy, and this may allow them to meet more of the population's needs than the clergy.[150] There are also suggestions that Iran has moved away from a theocratic state to a Praetorian state (or military state), and that the IRI is a "state that can be described as a theocracy only in name."[151]

While the IRGC's hold on the practice of irregular warfare is well known, its ability to sustain itself is based on self-generated funding. A challenge that could lead to the loss of ideological support for the IRI's government by Iranians is Ahmadinejad's plan to reduce the amount of money the IRI spends to subsidize food and energy. Instead of spending money to ensure that fuel and food prices are low, the new plan, announced at the end of 2010, will involve monthly allowances for Iranians to help compensate for higher food and fuel prices. One potential negative effect is that costs to IRGC businesses will go up significantly (gas prices rose in December 2010 from 5 cents a liter to 15 cents, with a plan to increase the price to 35 cents per liter), and profits could diminish, thereby threatening the IRGC's funding sources. [152] How the IRGC chooses to react to this situation will indicate how much political clout the IRGC has amassed, and how it manages conflict with ex-IRGC members in key political positions such as

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[150] Safshekan and Sabet, *The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis*, 553.

[151] Babak Rahimi, "The Role of the Revolutionary Guards and Basij Militia in Iran's "Electoral Coup"," Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35277&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=412&no_cache=1 (accessed 03/16, 2011).

[152] Meir Javedanfar, "Subsidy Reforms Threaten Legitimacy of Ahmadinejad," The Guardian, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/21/subsidy-reforms-iran-ahmadinejad (accessed 03/16, 2011).

Ahmadinejad: "the IRGC, with its massive business interests and increasing say in the country's domestic security and the nuclear program, will be harder to ignore."[153] The lasting effect of this may be that the neo-principlists could lose ideological support from the population (thus weakening the cognitive pillar for the support for irregular warfare). On the other hand, should the longer term lead to sustained high petroleum prices (and thus to a higher cash flow), IRI leaders may be able to avoid such conflict.

Normative

Iran has been updating its unconventional warfare weapons over the past two decades. The IRI initiated partnerships with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) following the end of its war with Iraq, with the aim of replacing lost equipment, weapons and munitions, and to modernize and acquire weapons to be used for irregular warfare and deterrence.[154] Throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, Iran was able to purchase conventional warfare equipment such as Soviet submarines, combat aircraft and tanks, as well as military equipment from China and North Korea. However, because it does not have access to Western military technology and equipment, Iran is at a disadvantage in its conventional warfare capabilities. But while the IRI's reported defense budget stands at around US$8.6Bn for Iran's regular

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[153] Ibid.

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

army and US$5.6Bn for Iran's IRGC (for a total of $14.2Bn), it only represents around

2% that of the United States' defense budget (US$698 in 2010).[155]

Understanding that it cannot match the defense expenditures of its main

competitors in conventional weapons, the IRI has increased its procurement of irregular

warfare weapons and systems. And while Iran has acquired sophisticated missiles and

missile technology, such as the Shahab missiles, it has also noted the successes of

Saddam Hussein's Iraq in managing missiles and other irregular weapon systems. For

example, the IRGC noted the success of Iraq's concealment of its anti-ship missiles.

During the first Gulf War, Iraq did not lose any of its missiles to US fire, which motivated

the IRGC's dispersal of these systems in various hiding places like caves and hardened

sites.[156] The IRI has also procured fast naval patrol boats capable of launching anti-ship

missiles, a fleet of minelaying ships, midget submarines and smart torpedoes.[157] More

recently, the IRGC has increased its naval irregular warfare capabilities by announcing

that it has started production of fast patrol boats capable of reaching speeds of 60-70

knots: "...high-speed vessels have already proved highly efficient in fighting back US

heavyweight warships."[158]

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[155] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, http://milexdata.sipri.org/files/?file=SIPRI+milex+data+1988-2010.xls (accessed 04/10, 2011).

[156] Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Military Balance in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 273.

[157] Cordesman, *Threats, Risks and Vulnerabilities: Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare*, 15-16.

[158] FNA, "Third Iran-made Aluminum Crewboat Handed to IRGC," FARS News Agency, http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8912180831 (accessed 03/16, 2011).

The IRGC's specialized irregular warriors the Qods, have also significantly increased their representation abroad. Iran can count on these resources, as well as the terrorist organizations it supports, to carry out destabilization efforts in countries that the IRI targets. For example, the IRGC maintains directorates for Qods work in "...Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Turkey, the Arab Peninsula, the Asiatic republics of the FSU, Western Nations (Europe and North America), and North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan and Morocco)."[159] Add to this impressive list the fact that there are Qods operatives in several Iranian embassies around the world. Thus, the capability for Iran to reach out and carry out irregular warfare around the world is aided by the vast network of Iranian embassies, and of links with friendly governments such as Venezuela. But the ultimate example of the application of irregular warfare for the IRI would be deterrence through its possession of nuclear weapons. The IRGC controls efforts to develop of nuclear technology. And it also benefits from sanctions caused by nuclear research and development. Because of the IRI's refusal to stop the development of nuclear technology, it is isolated from international community through sanctions, and the IRGC gains from this isolation by getting first access to Iranian contracts: "...The IRGC also benefits financially from Iran's diplomatic isolation, which has hitherto resulted in the transfer of billions of dollars from Iran's $100 billion foreign exchange reserve to the Khatam al-Anbia Construction Base of the Revolutionary Guards."[160] Thus, there are significant gains to be made for the IRGC and irregular warfare through the isolation of Iran.

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[159] Cordesman, *The Military Balance in the Middle East*, 264.
[160] Ali Alfoneh, "Don't Expect Much from these Talks with Iran," National Review Online, http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/254551/dont-expect-much-these-talks-iran-ali-alfoneh (accessed 02/13, 2011).

But the ability of the IRI to fund and expand its use of irregular warfare in the

region is also dependant on the price of oil, Iran's main funding source. For example,

during the 2003 to 2008 period, the price oil quadrupled, allowing Iran to expand its

subsidy of terrorist groups in the region like Hezbollah and Hamas.[161] On the other hand,

there are ways to weaken the IRI's ability to generate sufficient revenue to sustain its

budget. For example, analysts suggest that for Iran to have sufficient funds for its yearly

budget, and because the IRI is so dependent on the export of their oil for revenue, the

price of oil needs to be over $90 per barrel (Saudi Arabia, by contrast, needs a $51 barrel

of oil to cover its yearly budgetary revenue requirements). If arrangements were made by

members of OPEC to cut the price of oil, the IRI's ability to sustain itself, and to fund

irregular warfare, could be weakened.[162] Still, the IRI's ability to influence its neighbours

(through psychological warfare and intimidate) has increased so much that such a

scenario is unlikely without strong backing from the United States: "Should the United

States conclude that the potential benefits outweigh the risks, it will need to muster every

instrument at its disposal to steel the Saudi king to take unprecedented measures to face

down Iran's unprecedented challenge." [163] A great portion of the wariness of Saudi

Arabia and its American allies is related to the rebuilding of Iran's military strength,

especially in the area of unconventional weapons and doctrine. Hampering the Iranians'

source of funding could reduce its ability to procure weapons and equipment for its armed

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[161] Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 82.

[162] John Hannah, "Is Saudi Arabia Ready to Play Hardball with Iran?" Slate Group,
http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/11/13/is_saudi_arabia_ready_to_play_hardball_with_iran
(accessed February/15, 2010).

[163] Ibid.

forces. On the other hand, the IRGC's self-funding model might still allow it to sustain irregular warfare capabilities.

In another illustration of Iran's strategic reach and ability to wage irregular warfare, the IRI and Venezuela are cooperating to establish an IRGC military base on Venezuelan territory, and deploy Iranian Shahab 3 missiles with IRGC officers to control these missiles: "...now Venezuela is acting on behalf of Iran...among the nations that aspire to become world powers, Iran has certainly the best capabilities of posing a challenge to the West."[164] In addition to this recent development, Iran claims that a recent IRGC naval visit to Qatar will be followed up with future joint land and naval exercises between both countries.[165] Finally, after a crossing of the Suez Canal by IRGC naval ships in February 2011, Iran announced that it would build a permanent IRGC naval base in Syria, a base that would include a large weapons depot. This development will significantly increase Iran's capability to wage irregular warfare within the Mediterranean region.[166] Therefore, these examples underscore the IRI's capability in projecting its irregular warfare assets around the world.

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[164] Anna Mahjar-Barducci, "Iran Placing Medium-Range Missiles in Venezuela; can Reach the U.S." Hudson New York, http://www.hudson-ny.org/1714/iran-missiles-in-venezuela (accessed 03/16, 2011).

[165] PressTV, "Qatar "Welcomes" More Iran Military Ties," http://www.presstv.ir/detail/157110.html (accessed 03/16, 2011).

[166] DEBKAfile, "Iran to Build Permanent Naval Base in Syria," DEBKAfile, http://www.debka.com/article/20718/ (accessed 03/16, 2011).

Regulative

The IRI's 2005 and 2009 presidential elections can be described as the ascension

of the IRGC's level of political influence to the highest level, both on internal and

external matters of IRI politics. Claims of IRGC influencing voters to voting for

Ahmadinejad only add to proof of the IRGC's influence over the political process:

"Mehdi Karrubi suggested that...the IRGC, and Basij had paid or pressured some voters

to vote in favor of Ahmadinejad". [167] With Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's arrival, the IRGC,

as advocate of irregular warfare (in addition to having support from the Supreme Leader),

now has more influence around presidential and legislative circles within the IRI. With

Ahmadinejad's election as President in 2005, and with his re-election in 2009, the IRGC

also received a significant amount of political and financial support in the form of

contracts for its businesses, and this allowed the IRGC to reduce its reliance on

intimidation to win contracts. For example, prior to the Ahmadinejad election, the IRGC

used intimidation and informal influence to force the Majles to cancel a contract it had

awarded to a Turkish cell phone company and awarded it instead to an IRGC-controlled

company. The period following Ahmadinejad's election was significantly easier for the

IRGC: "Since Ahmadinejad's election, the Guards have no longer needed to rely on such

tactics, but could simply ''legalize'' their demands instead."[168] And he also awarded

many municipal contracts to IRGC firms.[169] In return, the IRGC has increasingly showed

[167] Crane, Lal and Martini, *Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities*, 30.

[168] Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran: Praetorianism 2.0," *The Washington Quarterly*, no. Winter 2011 (2011), 53.

[169] Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, 231.

its political support for Ahmadinejad, even though it is unconstitutional to do so: "...ever since the June 2009 presidential elections IRGC commanders have widely expressed their support for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad...despite the specific ban on such activity in the charter of the force."[170] And while Ahmadinejad has proved useful to the IRGC, the Supreme Leader's political actions over the last few years have also benefited the IRGC (and thus their continued support and practice of irregular warfare).

Ayatollah Khameini's response to the 2009 presidential election is indicative of his own political weakness. Indeed, he "...crossed a traditional red line and sided with the hard-line principalists around President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad."[171] Doing so was seen as reducing his legitimacy as the Supreme Leader. In fact, a number of senior clerics within Iran have criticized Khameini and suggested that he has damaged the office of the Supreme Leader: "Khameinei's consistent support for Ahmadinejad since 2005 has been seen by some camps as having colluded in, or at least acquiesced to, this weakening of velayat-e faghih at the expense of Iran's traditional clerical class."[172] This may affect his standing. In a demonstration of how political the IRGC has become, witness the 2009 demonstrations in Tehran which occurred as a result of opposition statements that the

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[170] Bahram Rafiee, "Supreme Commander, Leader's Representative and IRGC PR are Cited," Iran Gooya media group, http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/archive/2011/january/30/article/supreme-commander-leaders-representative-and-irgc-pr-are-cited.html (accessed 03/16, 2011).

[171] Democracy Digest, "Iran: Resilient Opposition, Robust Regime," National Endowment for Democracy, http://www.demdigest.net/blog/2011/02/iran-resilient-opposition-robust-regime/ (accessed 04/25, 2011).

[172] 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), 87.

elections had been rigged. Ayatollah Khameini deferred to the IRGC to decide which

measures they could use in controlling the demonstrations:

> Khamenei, in fear of losing his position, sees himself in need of militants [IRGC]
> ... This reliance reached its peak during the aftermath of last year's presidential
> elections when he devolved the issue [demonstrations] to the militants and chose
> their method of suppression to solve the problem instead of reaching out to
> political mechanisms. [173]

The use of the IRGC for internal security matters may also underscore the dependence of

the IRI's theocratic and conservative leaders on an IRGC that is associated with the neo-

principlists, which are less religious-oriented, and giving credence to claims that the

country is being transformed into a military state: "The Guard is now perceived as the

main political force within the theocratic establishment, remapping its factional political

landscape into a new military oligarchy."[174] And the next ten years may highlight the

IRGC's continued influence over the regulative pillar, especially on the issue of support

to the Supreme Leader. While the senior members of the IRGC support Khameini,

younger IRGC members who will be in senior positions in the next 20 years may not be

so supportive of the clerical establishment: "The political worldviews of the new

generation of leaders will likely cast the role of the Supreme Leader in a different light

than the one in which their elders viewed it."[175]

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[173] Iran1, "Supreme Leader's Reliance on Militants: Violating Law to Maintain Power," IranBriefing Foundation, http://iranbriefing.net/archives/3621 (accessed 03/15, 2011).

[174] Rahimi, *The Role of the Revolutionary Guards and Basij Militia in Iran's "Electoral Coup"*, 1.

[175] Nader, Thaler and Bohandy, *The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 90.

The IRGC's increased hold on the reins of political power is also exemplified by recent external policy statements by Rahim Safavi on Iraq. Referring to the IRGC's responsibility, according to article 150 of the IRI constitution, to export the revolution, the current military advisor to Khameini, and a former IRGC commander, Rahim Safavi, spoke of the exportation of the Basij concept: "Following the formation of the [paramilitary] Basij and the thinking of Bassij in Iran...this model gained ground in Lebanon and Palestine and produced positive results. It must also take shape in Iraq."[176] Such political statements are in line with the IRI's aim to use irregular warfare in any possible way throughout the Middle East to encourage Islamic revolution. Lastly, in an ultimate example of how much the IRGC has gained political power, there are claims that the commander of the IRGC (General Jafari) slapped Ahmadinejad during an Ashura meeting in January 2010. It is claimed that Ahmadinejad, aware of Iranians discontent over social freedoms, suggested that they should perhaps be granted more freedoms, to which Jafari answered that it was Ahmadinejad who had created this situation and that he should put up with it.[177] The IRGC's increase in political confidence is best illustrated with its show of force in May 2004, at the Imam Khomeini International Airport. The IRGC successfully used tanks to block runway in order to wrestle the management of the airport out of a Turkish company's hands.[178] This action illustrates that the IRGC, strong from its regulative backing from the IRI constitution, wasted no time in using irregular warfare means inside and outside Iran in order to strengthen its political power.

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[176] NCRI, "Former IRGC Chief Wants Basiji Militia Model in Iraq," http://www.mojahedin.org/pagesen/detailsNews.aspx?newsid=10510 (accessed 03/13, 2011).

[177] The Green Voice of Freedom, "Ahmadinejad Slapped in the Face by IRGC Commander," The Green Voice of Freedom, http://en.irangreenvoice.com/article/2010/dec/31/2623 (accessed 03/16, 2011).

[178] Crane, Lal and Martini, *Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities*, 14.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this document was to show how the institutionalization of irregular warfare within Iran is due to a convergence of cultural, historical, ideological, normative and political factors, and that these factors are not normally studied in their combination by other political science studies. The cognitive, normative and regulative pillars, based on Richard Scott's institutional analysis model, is a credible instrument to study these factors and their convergence allows an understanding of that when they are mutually reinforcing, an institution is deemed credible and legitimate: "Il permet d'intégrer ces paramètres dans une grille d'analyse à la fois commode et réaliste permettant de disséquer de manière transparente tout la compléxité du phénomène d'évolution organisationnelle."[179] The institutionalization of irregular warfare in Iran was achieved in stages .

The first stage includes events in Iran's history leading up to the 1979 revolution, as well as the exploitation of cognitive-cultural factors by IRI leaders to influence Iranians into accepting large numbers of martyrs during the Iran-Iraq war. The main characteristics of this stage are represented in the cognitive pillar of Scott's model. In preparing for the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini linked Marxist principles related to oppression of the population with the historical context of Persia, including occupation by foreign nations, oppression of Shi'ites, concepts such as martyrdom and resistance. He combined these concepts to foster a sentiment of resistance against the Shah's monarchy,

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[179] Pahlavi, *CGRI Et Guerre Asymétrique*, 29.

leading to the successful replacement of the government with the IRI. The IRGC was created along ideological lines, to protect and export the revolution. Irregular warfare was the main tool which the IRGC used to distinguish itself from the Artesh, and the success of martyrs proved that the institutionalization of irregular warfare had a strong cognitive-cultural base.

At the same time, the war's veterans built enduring and strong bonds that would be important for the second stage in the institutionalization process of irregular warfare, the normative pillar. The successful institutionalization of irregular warfare met with some political challenges following Iran's war with Iraq. Indeed, both individuals who presided over the IRI (Rafsanjani and Khatami) were pragmatist, more inclined to improving relations with the international community to allow for Iran's economic situation to improve. They also placed less emphasis on the IRGC, which forced it to turn to self-promotion. The IRGC was very successful at expanding into business activities, creating and nurturing informal networks to win government contracts and to increase their influence within Iranian business. This generated the necessary funds to expand its influence over the Iranian population, mainly through the expansion of the Basij. Concurrently, Iran initiated a process to replace weapons, equipment and munitions that were lost during the Iran-Iraq war. While it was successful in securing military contracts with countries such as Russia, China and North Korea, it was limited in the quantity and technological sophistication of the equipment and weapons by economic sanctions and restrictions on access to Western military equipment. To compensate for these restrictions and realizing that it could not challenge the United States and its allies in the Middle East, the IRI empowered the IRGC to purchase and develop irregular warfare

weapons and equipment, while using its Qods forces to both strengthen links with terrorist organizations throughout the world and to carry out irregular warfare (including assassinations of Iranian in exile in Europe) on behalf of the IRI. IRGC informal networks would also become increasingly useful over the 1990s and 2000s as the IRGC increased their influence over IRI politics.

The IRGC's ability to influence political decisions related to IRI foreign policy and to the use of irregular warfare is linked with the third stage of Scott's institutionalization model, the regulative pillar. The IRGC's political influence was significantly strengthened with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and with ex-IRGC and ex-Basij members who were either elected to municipal or national levels of governments, or who were appointed to high profile committees and political posts. The IRGC's prominence has reached a level where the Supreme Leader defers to them to ensure that the revolution and its Islamic principles are secured. The IRGC's involvements in internal security during and after the 2009 elections are a case in point. At the same time, Khameini's unwavering support of president Ahmadinejad (especially following protests that the elections were fraudulent) damaged his reputation as *velayat-e faqih* and the support to this position by senior Iranian clerics. A precarious political position has led to an increase in political dependence on the IRGC, especially to protect the revolution. But future IRI leaders coming from ex-IRGC or ex-Basij ranks may be less supportive of the Supreme Leader. Indeed, the IRGC is associated with the neo-principlist movement, which is more nationalistic than unconditionally loyal to ideology, which may lead to future political difficulties for the Supreme Leader.

The convergence of all three pillars has led to an IRGC that has political acumen, is able to carry out irregular warfare thanks to a strong weapons acquisition and development program, and that continues to use historical Persian and Islamic concepts such as the downtrodden and resistance to justify its continued support for terrorist organizations around the world and other irregular warfare activities in the Middle East. One of the litmus tests in the evaluation of the success of the institutionalization of irregular warfare within the IRI is related to internal troubles. Civil protests, as demonstrated by the 2009 demonstrations in Tehran, indicate that the 1979 Islamic revolution is showing strains in its ability to provide Iranians with sufficient resources to meet their basic needs, and that religion faith alone will not resolve Iran's problems. Iranians are dissatisfied towards their standard of life, their government's use of brutal methods to control demonstrations, an unwillingness to bring about more democracy and rising poverty: "...though Ayatollah Khomeini famously said that the 1979 revolution was about more than the price of watermelons, three decades later, the unfolding counterrevolution is about just that."[180] However, it may prove difficult for Iranians to replicate the regime-changing successes that were seen starting in early 2011 in the Middle East, also known as the Jasmine Revolution. While demonstrations in the streets of major cities within Iran, the institutionalization of irregular warfare by an IRGC that is fully integrated within Iranian society, combined with hundreds of thousands of Basiji (and Qods) forces should ensure that regimes changes are avoided (and this would only serve to remind that the IRGC's main role is as *guardian* of the revolution).

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[180] Parag Khanna, *The Second World* (New York: Random House, 2008), 233.

The IRGC is the subject of considerable media attention. The effect of President Ahmadinejad's televised presence (and his inflammatory anti-western comments) during announcement for the introduction of new irregular warfare weapons (such as ballistic missiles) highlights the importance of irregular warfare. However, beyond this facade, few analysts offer in-depth explanations on how the IRGC has become so prominent and powerful within IRI politics and society. The use of Richard Scott's institutional analysis model to evaluate the degree of convergence between the cognitive, normative and regulative pillars leads to the conclusion that irregular warfare, and its main proponent, the IRGC, are solidly integrated within the IRI. This analysis model shows that the IRGC is now in a position to both influence decisions on the use of irregular warfare, and to execute irregular warfare inside and outside the borders of the IRI. Institutional analysis, then, offers a tool that explains how Iranian irregular warfare has become institutionalized, and how the IRGC, and their use of irregular warfare, will continue into the future.

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