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## **SLEEPING BEAUTY OR CINDERELLA? IRAN'S CONVENTIONAL MILITARY - THE ARTESH - AND THE EVOLUTION OF ITS LEGITIMACY OVER THREE DECADES OF THE MULLAHS REGIMES**

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## ABSTRACT

Western media, in general, paint a picture of Iran as a mysterious country ruled by an irrational regime, which supports terrorism and strives for the atomic bomb. Thus far, the media and scientific publications focused mainly on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or Pasdaran. However, the former Shah's conventional military forces, or Artesh, have survived more than three decades beside them under a revolutionary regime. Concerning Article 143 of Iran's constitution, they are "responsible for guarding the independence and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the order of the Islamic Republic". In the realm of the current sabre rattling between Iran and the West and the potential application of hard power in the region, it is prudent to gain a better understanding of Iran's real military capabilities.

For analyzing how the Artesh, as an institution, has been able to adapt and remained vital beside the Pasdaran, Richard Scott's model of "Institutional Analysis" is used.

Examining the Artesh evolvement in the timeframe from the 1970s until present day through Scott's normative, cultural-cognitive and regulative lenses, this paper reveals that the legitimacy of this military institution has followed along the general lines a sinus curve. While different factors provided a reliable baseline, which prevented the Artesh from marginalization, other factors, triggered by shaping events and personalities, generated the curvy sinus graph challenging the Artesh meaning as an Iranian institution over the last three decades. Furthermore, this study shows that notwithstanding, risks in the Artesh normative and cultural-cognitive pillars, all three pillars appear aligned and hence, the Artesh in contemporary Iran is a legitimate institution, which managed to withstand marginalization and sustain its viability. This study implies that Western

experts, if their standard is a serious and all-embracing analysis of contemporary Iran's military potential, should also consider the Artesh as a major player in Iran's security establishment alongside the Pasdaran.

# **SLEEPING BEAUTY OR CINDERELLA? IRAN'S CONVENTIONAL MILITARY - THE ARTESH - AND THE EVOLUTION OF ITS LEGITIMACY OVER THREE DECADES OF THE MULLAHS REGIMES**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Western media, in general, paint a picture of Iran as a mysterious country ruled by an irrational regime which supports terrorism and strives for the atomic bomb. The informed public in the world is well aware of Iran's animosity against the West and therefore perceives Iran as a threat for peace and security in the world. So far, media and scientific publications focused mainly on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or Pasdaran which was established during the 1979 Revolution and tasked with protecting the new regime against internal and external threats. However, according to the Iranian constitution, the Pasdaran is not the only guarantor or protector of the Islamic regime. Concerning Article 143 the Iranian Regular Armed Forces are "responsible for guarding the independence and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the order of the Islamic Republic".<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the Artesh, as the former Shah's regular army, survived beside the Pasdaran as the second pillar in Iran's security layout for more than three decades. In the realm of the current sabre rattling between Iran and the West, in particular regarding its nuclear programme, and Iran's menace to close the important Strait of Hormuz, again, reporting and analysis covers almost solely the Pasdaran and their irregular warfare capabilities, whereby the huge amount of western uncertainty about Iran's real military capabilities is noticeable.

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<sup>1</sup> Iranian Government, "Iranian Constitution," available from <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution.html>; Internet, accessed 12 February 2012.

Clausewitz wrote in his book “*On War*” that “Many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain”.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there is currently no classical war ongoing with Iran, but there is potential for engagement and it seems prudent to clarify and analyze how Iran’s regular military managed to keep their meaning and how, and to what extent its legitimacy evolved over the last decades. In particular, with the Western perception of an Iranian focus on means of irregular warfare, whether the Artesh as an institution was able to adopt and therefore, still exist beside the Pasdaran.

This paper will attempt to demonstrate that a number of factors may have prevented the Iranian Regular Armed Forces from disintegration since the 1979 revolution. In particular Iranian nationalism, its striving for regional superiority in conjunction with perceived insecurity, as well as Shi’ism seems to be decisive. Furthermore the regime, it appears, retained the Artesh in the early 1980’s merely because of its military knowledge and the need for conventional forces for the juvenile regime’s survival, as well as for the Iran-Iraq war. Besides these salient points, it looks as though Iran’s elite recognized the value of the Artesh as a check against the Pasdaran, as well as for veiling its own military strength and weaknesses. Additionally, it seems the Artesh, in comparison with the Pasdaran, managed to maintain a deeper linkage to and better image in the society and moreover, most likely kept their military ethos as a key factor for the legitimacy of an institution. However, it also probable that this legitimacy has been challenged over time, in particular with regard to the support of Iran’s elite in

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<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1976), 117.



form of patronage, factionalism but also the ideas of revolutionary zeal and irregular warfare and the subsequent tensions with conventional elements in security policy and doctrine.

For analyzing how the Artesh, as an institution, has been able to adapt and remained vital, Richard Scott's model of "Institutional Analysis" and its reference to the link between institutions and societies is used. Scott defines three pillars which must be examined, namely, the normative pillar which references a society's values, norms and shared standards of action. The cultural-cognitive pillar includes the role of ideas, beliefs and individual convictions and informal and formal rules and laws which constrain or empower social behaviour are shielded within the regulative pillar. Scott's model incorporates the fact of interaction of all three pillars, which can either strengthen when supporting each other, or if contradictory, weaken an institution.

The paper's first chapter explains in detail Scott's model and the rationale behind its selection. The following chapters each encompass the evolution of the Artesh meaning regarding internal and external factors from the Shah era to the revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, and further into the 1990s eras of "*reconstruction*" and "*reform*". The normative chapter analyzes the factors of checks and balances, deception, the Iran-Iraq war and the evolving Artesh ethos. Furthermore, the cultural-cognitive taken for granted elements like nationalism, regional superiority and insecurity, and the image of Iran's regular military, are discussed in the next chapter. The regulative pillar addresses the drivers for the Artesh legitimacy, in particular patronage, factionalism, Shi'ism and the constitution and in conclusion, the meaning of security policy, strategy and doctrine and

their effects on the Artesh. The final chapter analyses the interaction of all elements of the three pillars and will generally span the decade from 2002 until 2012.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

Scott's model is one of the more appropriate analytical tools to uncover and understand the deep forces that generally entangle military institutions and state structures. This paper will neither focus on a broad explanation of Scott's model, nor intend to grasp his ideas and conceptions in depth. Rather, his model is used as a means to utilize its main benefit, and its particular approach, which stresses the importance of ideas and beliefs in influencing organizations like the military. Moreover, a couple of studies completed by the Centre for Institutional Analysis of Armed Forces used his model and therefore, makes it more convenient for the reader to compare the results of the respective studies with this paper.<sup>3</sup>

The regulative pillar of Scott's model covers all elements, which constrain and regulate social behaviour through formal and informal laws and rules. For the purpose of this paper, the regulative pillar is chiefly linked to the regime and its stakeholders. Scott views this pillar as the least powerful concerning its contribution to the legitimacy of an institution.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example: Pierre Pahlavi, Eric Quellet, "Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: Israel Defence Forces during the 33-Day War of 2006," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 29-52; <http://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/257/223-eng.html>; Internet; accessed 23 March 2012.

<sup>4</sup> W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008), 61.

The cultural-cognitive pillar presents beliefs and ideas. This pillar's elements are taken for granted by a society and gives landmarks on how the world is perceived. Yet, beliefs can change over time but this also means that in many circumstances other forms of behaviour outside the generally acknowledged way of doing things are inconceivable.<sup>5</sup> Therefore beliefs can hamper, as well as accelerate change and the ability of organizations to adapt. This pillar, due to its "taken for granted" compliancy, is the deepest and most powerful pillar for an institution's legitimacy.<sup>6</sup>

The third pillar emphasizes the norms and values of a society. Norms give guidance on how things should be done, specifies goals and objectives and the right ways to strive for them.<sup>7</sup> Scott describes norms as prescriptions with serious effects on individual feelings when adhering to or breaking them.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the strength of the normative pillar is decisive for the legitimacy of organizations.

Finally, the alignment of the three pillars describes the stability of organizations. If all factors, which make up the three pillars, are supporting the legitimacy of an institution, or if simply, all pillars are well aligned, the institution is stable and resistant against change, while in the case of a misalignment, conditions are generated which may trigger institutional change or marginalize its legitimacy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

### III. THE NORMATIVE PILLAR

In this chapter the Artesh as an institution is analyzed from a normative point of view. Norms serve as a compass for individuals as well as for organizations and societies, and helps those to act as it is expected and perceived as normal by the aforementioned players. “We have always done things in that way”, or “things have to be done this way”, a famous German saying, describes the general content of this pillar. Having said this, it also suggests tensions between long lasting or old norms and values on the one hand, and new ones derived, for example, from radical changes in societies.<sup>10</sup>

A variety of norms which shape the Artesh will be analyzed. In particular the influence of external norms valid in Iranian society, like the system of checks and balances in order to control the power of government bodies, and the ancient Persian concept of *druj* or deception are worthy of examination.<sup>11</sup> In addition, this chapter encompasses internal norms (inherent within the Artesh as an institution) such as the evolution of the Artesh ethos as well as the shaping effects of the Iran-Iraq war.

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<sup>10</sup> Tony Berett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 146.

<sup>11</sup> The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies, “Concept of Druj (Lie) in Iranian Culture,” available from [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Culture/druj\\_concept.html](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Culture/druj_concept.html); Internet, accessed 11 February 2012.

## The System of Checks and Balances, Deception and the Iran-Iraq War

### The System of Checks and Balances

The Romans applied the concept of checks and balances in order to prevent a concentration of power within one body of the state.<sup>12</sup> Also well-known is the U.S. system described by the founding fathers in the Constitution of 1787. Similar to the Romans, power was allotted to the judiciary, executive and legislative bodies to control the overwhelming influence of the state and specifically, its rulers. These same principles of power-sharing and control are common in contemporary democracies as well as non-democratic systems.<sup>13</sup>

Iran's systematic application of checks and balances can be found prior to the revolution in the Shah era. In contrast to the democratic approach, the main purpose for the Shah was not to limit and control the power of the state, but to ensure the survival of the monarchy by establishing different organizations with overlapping tasks. Pahlavi was anxious of facing a coup by the military and therefore installed a multi-layered security structure. One pillar in that system of checks and balances was the Artesh.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Fordham University, "Ancient History Source Book. The Roman Republic: System of Checks and Balances," available from <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/rome-balance.asp>; Internet, accessed 15 February 2012.

<sup>13</sup> For example in the Russian Federation. See: David Mannheimer, "Comparing the American and Russian Constitutions," *Alaska Justice Forum* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 11; available from <http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/forum/24/4winter2008/244.winter2008.pdf>; Internet, accessed 26 March 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124.

Early in the revolution of 1979, with Khomeini on one side, and the Leftists and Marxists on the other, disputed the need of a conventional military. While the latter insisted on a new formation of a “Peoples’ army”, Khomeini’s advisers preferred to purge the Artesh leadership and keep them as a conventional force.<sup>15</sup> Their main driver was the anticipation of security threats, which could potentially endanger the revolution. Despite the purges, the regime did not trust the Artesh.<sup>16</sup> The founding of the Pasdaran acted as a counterweight, which were tasked to protect and spread the revolution, thus limiting the power and influence of the Artesh, by defining overlapping responsibilities. This perception and application of the system of checks and balances enabled the Artesh to remain shortly after the revolution.<sup>17</sup> The Supreme Leader also realized the usefulness of the Artesh as a check against the increasingly developing and power-seeking Pasdaran, in realm of the Iran-Iraq war, because it enabled Khomeini to apply the “divide to rule

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<sup>15</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 228.

<sup>16</sup> One of the reasons for that was for example the fact that the Artesh officers were during the Shah era often trained abroad. See: Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, USA: Library of Congress, 2008), 258.

<sup>17</sup> Interesting enough, in contrast to the US concept of checks and balances there was no attempt by the regime to formulate this concept into the constitution. See: Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Boulder, USA: Westview Press, 1988), 266.

principle” and thus, maintains his power.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, this concept is still in practice today and not merely restricted to the security sector.<sup>19</sup>

The duplication of responsibilities and tasks created frictions that cannot be neglected in the sensitive framework of the security sector. In face of the various threats, the regime recognized these disadvantages during the Iran-Iraq war (the “*Holy Defence*”) and therefore improved the effectiveness of its forces by establishing a joint Army-Pasdaran field headquarters in 1982.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding the regime’s attempts to further develop its security forces efficiency, the overall drawback of keeping two forces and the subsequent frictions are obvious in Iran’s security community. Hence, the Artesh cadre may have been aware of its role as a check against the Pasdaran and the regime’s interest in its own survival by using competing forces in order to ensure realization of that goal. The regime would not abandon them and therefore, the Artesh profits by the system of checks and balances.

In short: the normative element of the Iranian application of checks and balances from the beginning of the 1979 revolution through its continuation to present day, has limited the Artesh in its performance as a military institution, more importantly however,

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<sup>18</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 255.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre Pahlavi described in an essay the two faces of Iranian institutions which on the one hand consist of the official and on the other, of a hidden mechanism and parallel layout. See: Pierre Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle: Le cas de la stratégie asymétrique des Gardiens de la révolution en Iran,” *Etudes Internationales* 42, no. 4 (December 2011): 5; available from <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ei/2011/v42/n4/1007551ar.html?vue=resume&mode=restriction>; Internet, accessed 26 March 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 255.

it strengthened the normative pillar and ensured the Artesh survival and legitimacy as an Iranian institution.

### Druj or Deception

Deception or *druj* can be found in written documents 600 BCE which are linked to Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic religion in ancient Persia which preceded the arrival of Islam in the region.<sup>21</sup> While some scholars argue that *druj* can also be understood as disorder, this definition does not change its deeper meaning as an approach for deception of the opponent.<sup>22</sup> Disorder eventually creates the same effects because things are unclear and vague. Notwithstanding the different definitions, the overall purpose of *druj* is to protect one's interests and safety, as well as to betray the enemy in a broader sense. As a result, *druj* aims, in a military context, to create confusion regarding intent and strength.<sup>23</sup> Thus, deception as a normative element in Iran has been mapped by a layered defence design and policy whereby the concepts shown, also apply to the Artesh.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Dona J. Stewart, *The Middle East Today: Political, Geographical and Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 30.

<sup>22</sup> The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies. "Concept of Druj . . . ."

<sup>23</sup> In addition to the normative concept of deception, *druj* is supported by similar ideals written in the Koran, namely Al-Taquiyya (the lawful lie) and Kitman (the lawful half-truth) which are associated with the Iranian Shiism. See: Middle East Forum, "Islam's Doctrines of Deception," available from <http://www.meforum.org/2095/islams-doctrines-of-deception>; Internet, accessed 11 February 2012.

<sup>24</sup> The author did the same experience as a mentor in an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) at the tactical level in the realm of the ISAF mission. Deception of the enemy was always part of Operational Planning and heavily emphasized by the Afghan National Army officers.



A prominent Iranian conservative stated in an interview with the German weekly magazine, “*Der Spiegel*”, in February 2005: “We should not hastily reveal our military capabilities”.<sup>25</sup> While that statement was given in the broader context of new Iranian weapon systems and capabilities, it underlines the general attitude and behaviour of Iranian officials with regard to its security institutions and the normative meaning of *druj*. Creating fog and friction for the enemy is fortified by Iran’s continuous exaggeration of own capabilities and success. For example, at the beginning of the “*Holy Defence*”, the Artesh war-fighting abilities were seriously hampered by purges and the loss of skilled personnel.<sup>26</sup> Khomeini’s regime realized this disadvantage in face of the increasing tensions with Iraq and announced the creation of an “*Army of Twenty Million*”, in order to deter Saddam Hussein’s regime in Bagdad.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the newly founded Pasdaran were not initially capable in the realms of leadership, training or equipment stores to cope with the conventional Iraqi army. Although the Artesh were debilitated due to the purges, the regime needed conventional forces in order to divert the Iraqis from the aforementioned weaknesses.

In summary, Iran’s overall war-fighting capabilities were grossly insufficient in comparison to a strong conventional adversary. However, through exaggeration and

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<sup>25</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipote: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East* (Santa Monica, USA: RAND Corporation, 2009),32.

<sup>26</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 245.

<sup>27</sup> With regard to the obvious weakness of its conventional forces Teheran introduced for example means of irregular warfare and created the tactics of human waves which were successful in overrunning the Iraqi forces on several occasions. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 251.

ambitious announcements, Iran distracted Iraq and the West from its own deficits.<sup>28</sup> The workings of this deception can be illustrated by the U.S. assessment of an Iranian Course of Action (COA) during the Iran-Iraq war, which includes the possibility of victory over Iraq and the occupation of neighbouring Gulf States by Iranian forces.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the Iranian regimes need for the normative application of *druj* in the 1980s kept the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

The usefulness of the Artesh for deception by the regime is demonstrated by its “mix of propaganda and pragmatism”, concerning exercises.<sup>30</sup> The sanctions that hampered Iran after the war prevented modernization and rebuilding its Armed forces and consequently, deception has proven useful as well as distracting from the optics of those challenges.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, with intent, Iran exaggerates numbers, purpose and nature of exercises.<sup>32</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman states, “The difficulties in translating Iran’s public statements about its intentions [and capabilities] into anything more than a guess”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 93.

<sup>29</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2011), 100.

<sup>30</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber, *Iran’s Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities: The Threat in the Northern Gulf* (Westport, USA: Praeger Security International, 2007), 15.

<sup>31</sup> The long lasting sanctions still have serious impacts on the modernization of the Iranian security forces and stymies them from becoming more effective compared with their Western military counterparts.

<sup>32</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 64.

<sup>33</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber, *Iran’s Military Forces...*, 15.

For Western analysts, the weaknesses and shortfalls of the conventional forces inherent in Iran with its modernization, seems to be obvious and as such, the success of *druj* must be questioned. Conversely, for the West, there is a certain amount of ambiguity about the real-world capabilities of the Artesh, besides the material aspects.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the Artesh is only one aspect within the whole idea of *druj* in Iran's layered security institutions use of propaganda and hyperbole. Beside the Artesh there is, for example, the "mysterious" Pasdaran with, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, overlapping responsibilities with the Artesh. This creates further ambiguity leading contemporary discussions to speculate about the risks of attacking Iran which reflects Western uncertainty about Iran's true capabilities.

The purpose of the complex security architecture in Iran is not only to check and balance power of institutions, but also serve as a deception for Iran's adversaries in order to camouflage its own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. As shown in this section, the architecture works well and actively contributes to the normative pillar of the Artesh and its subsequent legitimacy as an Iranian institution. Furthermore, the Artesh cadres' knowledge of its institutional role in the normative notion of *druj* is also a factor positively influencing the Artesh morale, as further exploration of this topic in a section of this chapter will show.

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<sup>34</sup> For example there is a certain amount of uncertainty regarding the ethos of the Artesh, though there are some indicators which give clarification like those analyzed later in this paper.

## The Iran-Iraq War

A defining event inherent to the legitimacy of the Artesh from a normative perspective was the Iran-Iraq war or “*Holy Defence*”, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. Starting in late 1950s with an arms race and increasing border skirmishes at a low level,<sup>35</sup> Saddam Hussein, in face of marked vulnerabilities of an opponent’s juvenile revolutionary regime, intended to quickly solve the conflict in favour of Iraq. Iraqi forces commenced attack on Iran on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1980.<sup>36</sup> With regard to internal and external security challenges and the ongoing consolidation of the revolution in Iran, its leaders realized that for securing power, a mainly ideological and revolutionary tailored militia is not sufficient.<sup>37</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman states:

There was a debate at the beginning of the revolution over the value of Western-style regular military forces using advanced weapons and popular military forces relying on mass and revolutionary fervour. This debate was largely resolved by the painful lessons of Iran’s defeat in the Iran-Iraq War ....<sup>38</sup>

Therefore the legitimacy of the Artesh as an institution was supported by the requirements of a nation going to war.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War* ..., 49.

<sup>37</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*..., 261.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber, *Iran’s Military Forces*..., 31.

<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, at the time of the Iraqi attack the Artesh was already recognized as useful and therefore utilized to suppress internal unrest, for example, against the Kurds in August 1979 despite initial attempts of Artesh officers to question and prevent its use for those internal security challenges. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 231.

Also, its overall performance during the war fostered further legitimacy of the Artesh. Hampered by purges, with losses of up to 60% of its manpower, a subsequent reorganization, and internal problems with discipline, the Artesh were initially in a weak condition for coping with the Iraqi invaders. It appears evident that the morale and fighting spirit at the beginning of the “*Holy Defence*”, notwithstanding a general remaining structural cohesion, were insufficient for defending the country.<sup>40</sup> However, triggered by nationalism, a historic sense of vulnerability in conjunction with superiority within the Iranian society, (factors which will be analyzed in a later chapter of this paper), the dividing effects on the general Iranian populace due to the revolution, were overwhelmed by the uniting effect of the “*Holy Defence*”.<sup>41</sup> The Artesh still consisted of conventionally trained and experienced personnel and as an institution of the society, profited from the same uniting effect. Artesh senior leadership gave advice to the regime regarding operational questions and its voice was increasingly recognized and considered.<sup>42</sup> One reason, as stated earlier in this paper, was the inexperience of the Pasdaran cadre in conventional war-fighting and the need of a regular army in order to cope with the conventional/established operating Iraqi forces. With this in mind, despite Khomeini’s favour for the Pasdaran and its initial success with, “*human wave tactics*”, as well as regular purges of Artesh officers for failures in various campaigns, the Artesh

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<sup>40</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution ...*, 258.

<sup>41</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

remained operational.<sup>43</sup> It is to conclude that there were certainly effects on the morale of the Artesh, but one can extrapolate that a mixture of fear and hope, as well as pride in their own, “war knowledge”, underscored the Artesh willingness and morale, preventing the institution from imploding.

Furthermore, in face of the Iraqi supremacy in tanks and artillery, the regime recognized the need for increased battlefield performance and began to improve the relationship and effectiveness of both military forces. In joint Artesh/Pasdarán operations, both groups supported the other against the Iraqi forces. With their respective tasks and roles clearly defined, the Pasdarán provided infantry units for the assaults, and the Artesh supported those troops with heavy armour and artillery.<sup>44</sup> There is evidence that the Artesh, and in particular its Navy, adopted some elements of irregular warfare, for example, the use of sea mines.<sup>45</sup> However, the influence of the Artesh on the Pasdarán *modus operandi* was more significant. The Pasdarán still employed human wave attacks and the will to sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, they put more and more importance on “Artesh typical” pre-deployment training and better quality planning and this eventually caused a transformation after the war into a more conventional looking force.<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Iran Chamber Society, “History of Iran: Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988,” available from [http://www.iranchamber.com/history/iran\\_iraq\\_war/iran\\_iraq\\_war2.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/iran_iraq_war/iran_iraq_war2.php); Internet, accessed 12 February 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 63.

<sup>45</sup> Hossein Aryan, “Iranian Naval Modernisation: The Strategic Implications” *Janes Intelligence Review*, September 2000, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 274.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 278, 304.

interoperability of the Artesh and Pasdaran was further fostered by the establishment of joint staffs by the mixing of leaders of both forces at senior levels and the merging of logistics and procurement efforts following the war.<sup>48</sup> Overall, the increasing interoperability was based on proven conventional military attributes such as planning and training but also encompassing staff procedures, which was a positive reinforcement for the Artesh and its abilities as an institutional force. No doubt, the mistrust of the regime towards the Artesh still existed and while they were blamed for the defeat, the war also revealed to the regime the value and necessity of a conventional force.<sup>49</sup>

In summary, derived from the regime's perception of internal and external insecurity during the early beginnings of the revolution and further revealed by the "*Holy Defence*", the need of a conventional military and therefore the "how things have to be done" external element of the normative pillar clearly supported the Artesh remaining as an institution. There is also evidence of a positive impact of the, "*Holy Defence*", on the ethos and morale of the Artesh despite the purges and difficult conditions during the war which will be analyzed in further detail in the following section.

### **Ethos and Morale**

The second part of this chapter focuses on ethos and morale of the Artesh. Richard A. Gabriel defines the military ethos as the art of monitoring, controlling, and

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 49.

conducting military-specific ethical obligations and principles.<sup>50</sup> The Canadian Forces publication, *Duty with Honour*, is clear, defining the military ethos as, "... the spirit that binds the profession together".<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly, military ethos is entwined with the core virtues and values of an organization and has strong ties of respect for and obedience to law.<sup>52</sup> Hence, the military ethos can be described as a unifying guideline, or compass, for all members of the organization, from the upper echelons to the trooper on how things should be done, and therefore is a key factor for the normative identity of an army.

The ethos inherent in the Artesh prior to the revolution, how this ethos was influenced and altered by the revolutionary ideas and the promotion of irregular means by the regime, will be examined. The influence shaping Iran-Iraq war, as well as the implementation of revolutionary elements such as the, "Islamic commissars", in the standing force structure increasingly heightened the commonality, interaction and exchange between Artesh and Pasdaran forces, are parameters that also had an impact on the ethos and on the legitimacy of the Artesh from a normative point of view. Finally the professionalism of the Artesh in light of the effects of both a maturing revolution and the impact of the long lasting embargo, reveal positive and negative influences on the Artesh morale and ethos.

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<sup>50</sup> Richard A. Gabriel, *The Warriors Way: A Treatise on Military Ethics* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>51</sup> Canadian Forces, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2009), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Canadian Defence Forces, "Defence Ethics Programme," available from <http://www.ethics.forces.gc.ca/dl-tc/dep-ped/about-ausujet/statement-enonce-eng.pdf>; Internet; accessed 23 February 2012.



## The Shah's Army

Shah Pahlavi's army was mentored and supported by the U.S. military since the early 1940s and the presence of Western soldiers strongly influenced all aspects of Iran's military forces. Those efforts had positive effects on the war-fighting capabilities and morale on all echelons.<sup>53</sup>

Despite continual mentoring efforts, the senior leadership showed signs of unprofessionalism regarding decision making, which indicates challenges in its ethos.<sup>54</sup> Another critic, Richard Russell raises the plea, that notwithstanding the U.S. support, and the quick defection during the revolution, the Artesh forces kept a "Potemkin Village" or hollow façade, barely comparable with Western armies.<sup>55</sup> This was undoubtedly due to the senior leaderships' inability to make decisions without the Shah. However, the influence of the Western culture on the military can be seen in the perception of the Artesh officers as vanguards of modernity by Khomeini in the 1970s.<sup>56</sup> Overall, the aforementioned critic does not limit the conclusion that the strong U.S.

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<sup>53</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 201.

<sup>54</sup> The senior leadership attempted to prevent garnering negative attention of Shah Pahlavi, who partly micromanaged the Armed Forces. Pahlavi feared a coup and therefore kept the power of procurement for said leaders, limited. Therefore, the flag officers were not used, nor were they enthusiastic in making decisions. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 202.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Russell, "The Artesh: From the War with Iraq until Today," *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, November 2011: 23; available from <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 21.

presence certainly led to a military ethos which, despite the influence of religion in an Islamic country, was close to the one of Western militaries.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, the Shah spoiled his military forces with privileges in order to retain their loyalty.<sup>58</sup> The Shah had a military background and was not only interested in purchasing new weapons, training and manoeuvres, but as Ervand Abrahamian mentioned:

He [the Shah].... takes a keen interest .... [in] the general well-being of the officers. He showered them with generous salaries, pensions, and fringe benefits, including comfortable housing, frequent travel abroad, periodic bonuses, modern medical facilities, discount department stores, and real estate gifts.<sup>59</sup>

Those privileges were mainly focused on the officer corps and did not include lower levels. However, there is evidence that the overall morale of the Artesh during the Shah's era was relatively high for a non-Western country.<sup>60</sup> Hence, the Artesh ethos supported its normative pillar.

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<sup>57</sup> Richard Burt, "Power and the Peacock Throne," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 1975: 349-356; available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00358537508453188>; Internet, accessed 06 March 2012.

<sup>58</sup> The practice was not exclusive to Iran but also for all Middle Eastern Armies including Israel. See: Barry Rubin, *Conflict and Insurgency in the Contemporary Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2010), 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran...*, 125.

<sup>60</sup> During the 1973 Dhofar rebellion in Oman, the Artesh were fighting on side of the Oman government. The British contingent commander testified good morale and discipline of the Artesh as well as a good battlefield performance. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 205.

## The Revolution

As mentioned in the previous section, the senior leadership of the Artesh, failed in the confusion during the revolution in 1979. Due to their heavy reliance on the Shah, they were not accustomed to the independent decision making process and were hysteric in face of the turmoil despite U.S. support for a coup attempt.<sup>61</sup> This lack of leadership “paralyzed” the Artesh and the casualties caused by Army units dealing with demonstrators led to “attacks” on Army units by demonstrators with flowers. As a result of the insinuation of psychological warfare, the morale of the troops rapidly decreased and led to desertion *en masse*.<sup>62</sup> The morale of the Artesh was further weakened by the perception of the troops regarding the neutrality negotiations of the forces during the revolution. Despite the Artesh’s final declaration of its neutrality, this decision was not made from a position of strength, but due to the aforementioned breakup of the Army and the inherited challenges, was perceived as a declaration made from a position of weakness.<sup>63</sup> Together with the failed coups, which were instrumental in the demoralisation and demobilization of the supporters of the Shah, a vicious circle was generated which finally demoralized the Artesh as an institution and weakened their normative legitimacy.

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<sup>61</sup> There was a coup planned by the services chiefs of the Army in order to prevent the Shah’s departure, but a lack of coordination and the inability of the generals to organize a coup prevented that idea from coming to fruition. See: Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution ...*, 220.

<sup>62</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 309.

<sup>63</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution ...*, 231.

As noted in the section pertaining to the Iran-Iraq war, the new regime was forced to keep the Artesh, which may have had stopping effects on the erosion of the ethos. However, at the same time, Khomeini cleansed Shah Loyalists from the army, in particular, at the senior officer level.<sup>64</sup> While Steven Ward mentioned in his book, “Immortal”, that the purges didn’t affect the Artesh as an institution due to the mass of senior officers remaining, it nevertheless created distrust and anxiety.<sup>65</sup> This had negative impacts on the ethos and in conjunction with desertion and the internally perceived failings of its standing as an institution, an overall weakening of the normative pillar of the Artesh occurred.

#### The “*Holy Defence*” and its Aftermath

Despite its usefulness for the regime with the volatile security situation, the loss of Artesh privileges and the ban into the 2<sup>nd</sup> row compared with the Pasdaran, led to an army struggling with its ethos. However, in the broader realm of the purges only the personal guard units of the Shah were eradicated while with the consolidation of the revolution over time, personnel from the former General Staff were recalled in order to reorganize the Artesh.<sup>66</sup> The Shah’s officers were needed again and that need, once again lifted morale. Therefore, this action increased the motivation of the individual and as a result, slightly but continuously improved the damaged ethos of the institution.

Furthermore, with the beginning of the “*Holy Defence*”, the Artesh were able to prove

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<sup>64</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 230.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 260.

their ability in a war-fighting environment. In the early days of the war in September 1980, the Navy for example showed effective resistance against the attacking Iraqis.<sup>67</sup> The “*Holy Defence*” during its course turned into a war of attrition which the heavily embargo hampered regime in Teheran regime could barely sustain in the long term.<sup>68</sup> The war of attrition with its huge losses due to the “*human waves*” also had a negative impact on the morale of the Artesh.<sup>69</sup> The locally occurring abandonment of equipment and disintegration of units was an indicator of bad leadership and a decrease of morale and military ethos in the respective units.<sup>70</sup> In face of these negative trends, the Artesh leadership endeavoured to convince the clerics to end the war.<sup>71</sup> Notwithstanding, the deteriorating conditions the Artesh in general kept fighting in a professional manner and were partly successful with applied tactics and procedures linked to asymmetric warfare. For example during the so called, “Tanker War”, it used nightly speedboat attacks, helicopters and small boats for laying mines in order to harass shipping lanes in the Gulf.<sup>72</sup> The reason for adopting these tactics was undoubtedly due to the sheer lack of conventional equipment, for example, functioning warships. Conversely, the close

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<sup>67</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 50.

<sup>68</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 260.

<sup>69</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 74.

<sup>70</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran’s Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 93.

<sup>71</sup> Finally, the Artesh cadre confirmed their conclusion that Iran’s lack of firepower with regard to tanks and artillery, but also the support from the air, eventually would seal the defeat of Iran. See: Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 116.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

cooperation with the Pasdaran in daily fighting fostered the exchange of tactics and procedures based on best practices derived from the joint operations.<sup>73</sup> Overall, the Artesh demonstrated professionalism which leads to the conclusion, that despite the aforementioned difficulties, the Artesh kept its integrity based on the ability to maintain a minimum level of military ethos and morale.

As stated earlier in this paper, the regime promoted the Artesh after the war because they realized the need of conventional forces. While the Artesh still absorbed the majority of the shame for the losing the war, there were also cases of negative consequences for Pasdaran leaders. For example in the public accusation against Guard Commander Mohsen Rezai, he was not only held accountable for personal mistakes, but held responsible for a defeat in a decisive operation as well.<sup>74</sup> This may have positively influenced the morale and ethos of the Artesh. Backed by the regime's intent to strengthen the conventional forces after the end of the war in 1988, the Artesh made steady progress in its war-fighting capabilities.<sup>75</sup> With regard to the initial definition of the ethos of a military body, it is logical to conclude that overall, the Artesh were able to keep their ethos and had a favourable starting position after the war. Supported by pride with the bravery and professionalism displayed in the war, the clerical lessons learned

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<sup>73</sup> There are certainly other factors for the Artesh which kept the fighting spirit alive during the “*Holy Defence*”, such as Nationalism and the general reluctance for foreign occupiers, which will be covered in a later chapter.

<sup>74</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 301.

<sup>75</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 120.

and the acknowledgment of its usefulness as a force for defending the country, the Artesh ethos was rehabilitated.

#### The “Islamic Commissars”

Due to the mistrust of the revolutionary regime for the Shah’s army, it introduced several instruments in order to control and convert the Artesh into a loyal, pro-revolutionary institution. Barry Rubin argues that the militaries of the Middle East were, in the past and are to present day (with exception of contemporary Iran), institutions which had the most contact with foreign views, personnel as well as their respective culture.<sup>76</sup> The decades long presence of U.S. advisors in Iran shaped their ethos in a decidedly Western style as discussed in a previous section of this chapter and made the exposed forces critical of pure Islamist ideals.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the regime established and installed the Political-Ideological Department (PID) with representatives at all levels and its similarity can be likened to the Bolshevik model in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of simple “religious commissars”.<sup>78</sup> Initially, their task and mandate was multifaceted with their main efforts to ensure compliance of the Artesh within the revolutionary regime. In particular the PID was tasked to:

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<sup>76</sup> Barry Rubin, *Conflict and Insurgency in the Contemporary...*, 16.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution ...*, 257.

... [provide] ideological and political education of the troops, evaluated candidates at all ranks for promotion, reviewed military school curricula and published text books, and provided radio and television programs for the troops.<sup>79</sup>

In short, the PID heavily influenced and interfered in all areas of the Artesh. The implementation of a new layer of control was not exclusively reserved for the military; universities were subject to the same treatment. Khomeini recognized these institutions of learning as vulnerable to foreign culture and ideology and was subsequently streamlined by the regime to purge university personnel and review the curriculum in order to indoctrinate the ideas and principles of the revolution.<sup>80</sup> Together with the regimes' strong use of the media for propaganda, it can be assumed that the society as a whole was seriously influenced by the ideals of the revolution. Thus one can extrapolate that the continuous, quasi-daily exposure to revolutionary zeal, together with the steady build-up of a pro-regime cadre, influenced the Artesh and could therefore indicate movement from a secular ethos towards a more revolutionary, Islamic one. However, with the increased experience and duration of the "*Holy Defence*", the interference of the "religious commissars" in the decision making process on the various levels of the Artesh organization became mission critical in a negative way. Tied with the fact, that even Pasdaran commanders complained about the "religious commissars", forced the regime to recall them and restricted their role to advisory and indoctrination tasks.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, the sharp sword of the PID was blunted over time in face of the reality of war.

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<sup>79</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 230.

<sup>80</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 255.



Nevertheless, the “religious commissars” are still in existence and the regime’s steady attempts to influence the whole society with regard to traditional values, such as religion and family, may have had influence on the opinion of the Artesh cadre in terms of accepting those values as normal.<sup>82</sup> Bernd Kaussler wrote in a compendium dealing with the Artesh in November 2011, that the PID failed to “instil revolutionary zeal”, but at least they prevented the army from endangering the regime with a coup.<sup>83</sup> That leads to the conclusion, that the initial Western coloured ethos of the Artesh was opposed and was subsequently influenced by revolutionary ideals through “total indoctrination” and personnel selection based on recommendations of the PID. However, the reality of war and the softening of the power held by the “religious commissars”, in conjunction with the normalization of the perception of the Artesh cadre with regard to the values inherent in the revolution, helped the Artesh keep a sufficient portion of its “conventional” ethos.<sup>84</sup>

### The Growing-up of the Revolution

The juvenile revolution faced existential challenges from the very beginning, forcing the regime to concentrate further efforts on consolidation and security instead of

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>83</sup> Bernd Kaussler, “The Iranian Army: Tasks and Capabilities,” *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, November 2011: 36; <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Therefore the Artesh normative identity differs from that of the Pasdaran, which is mainly based on revolutionary zeal. However, there is also evidence as will be shown later, that a maturing revolution is able to accommodate the more conventional ethos of the Artesh.

exporting the revolution.<sup>85</sup> However, Iran still influenced the shaping of the Middle East as it demonstrated by the Beirut bombing of the U.S. embassy in 1982. Though, the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 and its protraction until 1988 slowed down and altered the revolution itself.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore the Iran-Iraq war transformed the Pasdaran into a more conventional force with structures, ranks and symbols like a uniform.<sup>87</sup> The close cooperation with the Artesh combined with the battlefields need of structured forces, drove this transformation. As earlier revealed in this paper, not only the Artesh were influenced by revolutionary ideas, but also vice versa they affected its concurrent with its conventional layout.<sup>88</sup> The overall supremacy of the generated effects based on conventional force attributes, may have influenced the ethos of the Artesh in a positive way.

Another aspect derived from the war, was the languishing Iranian economy and a need for a more pragmatic approach to the world, following the death of Khomeini in 1989.<sup>89</sup> Together with the lessons learned from the war and the need to make the security architecture more effective can be highlighted by the integration of the Command and Control structure for Pasdaran and Artesh in 1988. While this amalgamation contributed to the relaxation of tensions between the Artesh and Pasdaran, without doubt, the Artesh

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<sup>85</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution ...*, 258.

<sup>86</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 101.

<sup>87</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 76.

<sup>88</sup> Some scholars use the term of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation revolutionaries, whereby the first are primarily clerics, while the latter grew up in the ranks during the Iran-Iraq war and are more military and administrative officials.

<sup>89</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 111.

still played a secondary role compared with the Pasdaran.<sup>90</sup> However, the mistrust of the Artesh institution was decreasing more and more and that contributed favourably to their self-esteem and subsequent ethos. That trend is underlined by the fact that senior Artesh officers, it was announced, were to begin working as advisors for the regime following the war, though their advice was often not taken.<sup>91</sup>

Alternatively, the training for the land forces, in particular, remained low in the mid 1990s with the NCO's and conscripts bearing the brunt of poor training and therefore a lack of motivation to best serve their country.<sup>92</sup> An article published in 1995, in the magazine, "IISS Strategic Comments", argues, that Iran "virtually ignores its ground forces".<sup>93</sup> This leads to the conclusion, that at a minimum, the Artesh land forces could face challenges with regard to morale and ethos. In contrast, it must be noted that during that time, the Iranian Navy, which put a premium on training, and in comparison with other Southern Gulf navies, clearly demonstrated a higher level of ongoing professionalism.<sup>94</sup> The focus on training notwithstanding, the challenges for the land forces can be seen as an indicator for professionalism and therefore for a stable military ethos, specifically in the more technology reliant trades of the Artesh.

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<sup>90</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 133.

<sup>91</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 305.

<sup>92</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 88.

<sup>93</sup> IISS, "Iran's Nuclear and Conventional Arms Programmes," *IISS Strategic Comments*, June 8, 1995, 1-2.

<sup>94</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 210.

Furthermore, Iran fostered in the 1990s, the concept of mission command at the lowest tactical levels.<sup>95</sup> Iran's strategy with dispersed and flexible units at land and sea is reliant on independent leaders aware of their responsibilities and willing to take accountability, which only works in a force which carries a sufficient amount of ethos and morale. The recognition of these prerequisites and the trust in very junior levels, leads to the conclusion that those measures increased motivation and morale of the Artesh from the 1990s to the early 2000s.

In summary, the lack of training in the 1990s for the land forces had a negative impact on the Artesh ethos. Conversely, there are more positive gains, given the fact that the maturing regime put emphasis on conventional factors, increasing training for the technology driven trades and the meaning of mission command which, as a whole, stabilized the Artesh ethos.

The ethos and morale of the Artesh were influenced and shaped over the past 30-plus years. The Shah's Artesh sound ethos and morale was initially weakened by the revolution but recovered due to its good performance during the Iran-Iraq war, in conjunction with the regimes acknowledgement of the value of conventional forces and structures. Finally, the maturing regimes' increasing trust in the Artesh with the emphasis on mission command and overall better professionalism, further fostered its ethos. That "growing-up" together with Artesh's engagement of principle Islamic ideas and relaxation towards the Islamic commissars further maintained its conventional ethos. As covered in previous sections of this paper, the knowledge of the Artesh cadre for their meaning within the system of checks and balances, as well as for *druj*, further contributed

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<sup>95</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 57.

positively to its ethos. Overall, the ethos of the Artesh has remained sufficient and generally conventional during the last three decades and hence strengthened its normative pillar.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter analyzed the Artesh from a normative point of view. As a reminder, norms are a compass for individuals as well as organizations and societies to assist those to act as expected, which is perceived as normal. Encompassing different phases of recent Iranian history from the Shah, the revolution and “*Holy Defence*”, in addition to the “*reconstruction*” and “*reform*” era’s, the impact on the pillar by indicators like the system of checks and balances, the concept of *druj* or deception as well as the shaping Iran-Iraq war and the evolution of the military ethos of the Artesh, were considered.

While the normative system of checks and balances is not exclusively reserved for security forces, it hampered the performance of the Artesh in a military professional meaning. But the analysis also revealed that checks and balances were installed in the early beginning of the revolution for regime survival and therefore, that indicator strongly supports the normative pillar of the Artesh as an institution. The same was found for the concept of *druj* or deception. Faced with an enemy superior in strength and capabilities, Iran had to exaggerate its own potency as well as conceal its weakness regarding its capabilities to effectively counter an attack. The Artesh participated in and were needed for, that deception and therefore *druj* legitimizes them as an institution from a normative point of view as well as positively contributing to its ethos. Furthermore, the Iran-Iraq war shaped the Artesh as an institution in the way of how things have to be done. The

perception of the regime's need to have a conventional tailored force at its disposal in order to cope with external threats strengthened the normative pillar of the Artesh. Finally, Western coloured military ethos was a decisive brick in its normative pillar after being initially damaged post-revolution. But it could recover due to a mixture of a wholly skilful battlefield performance during the Iran-Iraq war, years of pragmatic emphasis on conventional military attributes and an aging revolution with a more realistic view of the world. In summary, the Artesh coped to a certain degree with the revolutionary ideas, but kept its Western style ethos and morale. Therefore, the analyzed normative elements contributed overall, in the described timeframe, to a strengthening of the normative pillar. It can be concluded that the normative pillar, despite some phases of weakness with regard to ethos, had been in aggregation over time, yet remained stable and therefore supported the legitimacy of the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

#### **IV. THE CULTURAL-COGNITIVE PILLAR**

This chapter focuses on the cultural-cognitive pillar of Scott's model in analyzing the legitimacy of the Artesh as an institution. The pillar's content is rooted in the German concept of worldview or *Weltanschauung*, developed by the German philosopher Kant in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. *Weltanschauung* puts an emphasis on a very concrete and particular view of the world, how things are perceived.<sup>96</sup> Those perceptions can vary individually and change over time. Yet, with the integration of individuals into society and its interactions, beliefs of a society, in many circumstances, dictate behaviour and

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<sup>96</sup> Albert M. Wolters, "On the Idea of Worldview and its Relation to Philosophy," available from <http://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Wolters/AMVWorldviews.pdf>; Internet, accessed 08 March 2012.

acting outside the generally acknowledged “how things have to be done”, are inconceivable.<sup>97</sup>

The factors analyzed in the following, range from nationalism to the Iranian perception of superiority and insecurity. Finally, the reputation of the Artesh in the society as an important element for its legitimacy is addressed. As discussed in the previous chapter, the analysis embraces the pre-revolutionary period up to the eras of “*reconstruction*” and “*reform*”.

### **Nationalism**

Nationalism is a phenomenon found all over the world and consists of ideological aspects, which are built on beliefs, anthropological factors, as well as cultural and ethnic dimensions.<sup>98</sup> Anthony D. Smith defines nationalism as:

An ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential nation.<sup>99</sup>

Iran’s nationalism is rooted in a variety of those elements. First, its harsh geographic conditions favoured Iran in developing and maintaining its own identity.<sup>100</sup> Second its

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<sup>97</sup> W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: ...*, 58.

<sup>98</sup> Ronald Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 58.

<sup>99</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Politi Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>100</sup> Notwithstanding the conquering of Iran over centuries, geography actually helped Iran to preserve its identity. See: Richard W. Cottham, *Nationalism in Iran: Updated Through 1978* (Pittsburgh, USA: Pittsburgh University Press, 1979), 24.

long history and culture that is regularly broadcast in the media. In addition, Persian, as the dominant language, links the people together and fosters nationalism in Iran. Finally, Iran's nationalism is fed by a strong ethnic dimension with the effective Iranian-wide perception of the supremacy of the Aryan descent Iranian race.<sup>101</sup> Nationalism is therefore deeply engrained in the population and played an important role in Iran's public and private life.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism in Iran was fostered by colonialism and the perception that the presence of foreigners denied Iranians from fulfilling their destinies.<sup>102</sup> The 1906 constitutional revolution and the ongoing interference of Great Britain during its aftermath generated, for example, the slogan "Iran for the Iranians and the Foreigners out".<sup>103</sup> That rise of nationalism was nurtured after WWI by Reza Khan, who adopted Atatuerk's modern nationalism model. He believed that nationalism, together with a strong military force, was the key means for building a potent country able to defend itself.<sup>104</sup> However, the Soviets and Britain occupied Iranian territory in

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>102</sup> Though Iran was not ruled by colonial powers, it was heavily steered and controlled economically by Russia and later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Great Britain with the struggle for control of Persian Oil companies in 1908. See: e-International Relations, "Iran's Nationalism: A Theoretical Dilemma," available from <http://www.e-ir.info/2009/01/26/iranian-nationalism-a-historical-overview/>; Internet, accessed 07 March 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2004), 24.

<sup>104</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 131.



WWII in order to use the region as a logistics hub for supporting the Red Army.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, Reza Khan was accused of collaboration with the Nazis, subsequently deported by the British in 1942 to Africa, and replaced by his nationalistic and military passionate son, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.<sup>106</sup> Both events had severe effects on Iranian society, as Rob Johnson writes: “National pride had been injured by the Allies’ action [...]. More importantly, the notion of anti-colonialism was to take deep root in the political rhetoric [...]”.<sup>107</sup> Later, events like the CIA supported coup in 1953 against Prime Minister Mossadegh, contributed to the dominant anti-colonialism and nationalistic sentiments, which had largely remained a stable cultural-cognitive factor in contemporary Iran.<sup>108</sup>

A strong linkage exists between nationalism and the militarization of a society. As nationalism encourages people to join the military in order to protect and fight for their country, one can therefore assume that soldiers generally tend to be passionate about their nation.<sup>109</sup> To the society itself, the use of national symbols and rituals generates zeal for one’s country and promotes nationalism.<sup>110</sup> The military profits from these

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>106</sup> Abbas Milani, *The Shah* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 109.

<sup>107</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 19.

<sup>108</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East* (Cambridge, USA: Basic Books, 2006), 37.

<sup>109</sup> Risa Brooks, and Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 30.

<sup>110</sup> Joshua Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 2001),

perceptions and its usage of nationalistic symbols like uniforms, flags, and parades appeal to nationalists.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the continuous influence of national symbols and rituals, in conjunction with group dynamics, promotes nationalistic attitudes.<sup>112</sup> This conclusion can be applied to the Artesh prior to 1979 and is visible, for example, in the nationalistic celebration of the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Persia in 1971, where Artesh members had trained for month for parading disguised as Persian warriors.<sup>113</sup> In summary, deeply rooted nationalism within society and Artesh supported its legitimacy from a cultural-cognitive perspective.

The revolution of 1979 did not minimize nationalism within the society, but slightly changed its colour. Beside Persian nationalism, the regime added Shi'ism, which is a form of nationalized Islam, and results from a merger between Islam and Iranian identity.<sup>114</sup> While the regime initially tried to outweigh Persian nationalism with the latter, the Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent need for the support of the whole society, eventually forced them to revive Persian nationalism. Ultimately, the regime managed to

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<sup>111</sup> For example, the German nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Prussian Army, made use of symbols and rituals which supports the strong causal linkage between nationalism, society and its shaping effects on the military as an institution. See: Guntram H. Kerb, and David H. Kaplan, *Nations and Nationalism: A Global Historical Overview* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008), 620.

<sup>112</sup> Risa Brooks, and Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Creating Military Power: ...*, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Tallin Grigor, "Preserving the Antique Modern: Persepolis '71," available from <http://www.arch.columbia.edu/files/gsap/imceshared/aml2193/5%20-%20Grigor.pdf>; Internet, accessed 30 March 2012.

<sup>114</sup> Samih K. Farsoun, and Mehrdad Mashayekhi, *Iran: Political Culture in Iran* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 59.

align both and Persian nationalism in conjunction with Shi'ism became the glue that bound the nation together.<sup>115</sup> No doubt, Khomeini was aware of the meaning of Persian nationalism:

Ayatolla Khomeini's reference to Persian "as the language of the revolution"; the regimes defence of the Persian language in its confrontation with ethnic minorities; its sensitivity on 'Persian Gulf' rather than the more neutral term of "Gulf"; its war-time invocation of Persian nationalistic themes and images and finally its promotion of Persian language and culture in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, all testify to the strong presence of a nationalistic element, albeit cloaked in Islamic guise, in the Islamic culture.<sup>116</sup>

Conversely, Khomeini worked to Arabize the Islamic republic and aimed to build strong diplomatic links with the Arab-Sunni countries of Syria and Lebanon, which could be seen as contrary to nationalism.<sup>117</sup> However, those efforts were mainly derived from pragmatic considerations and did not undermine the meaning of Shi'ism or Persian nationalism. Both played a crucial role and their justifications were aligned. Despite the revolutionary focus on religion, the meaning of the military with regard to nationalism as an element in the cultural-cognitive pillar was stable.

Furthermore, the Iran-Iraq war also demanded soldiers willing to fight and die for their country. Nationalism contributes to that purpose, because it has positive effects on

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<sup>115</sup> Daniel Byman, *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era* (Santa Monica: RAND National Research Institute, 2001), 9.

<sup>116</sup> Samih K. Farsoun, and Mehrdad Mashayekhi, *Iran: ...*, 76.

<sup>117</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 244.

the members of military institutions by increasing the motivation and skills of soldiers to kill and die in times of war.<sup>118</sup> In summary nationalism had, as previously discussed, not only stabilizing effects on the ethos of the Artesh during the war, it also deepened in the realm of the “*first revolution*” as well as the “*holy defence*”, the cultural-cognitive pillar and therefore the legitimacy of the Artesh as an institution.

However, Ray Takeh argues that in the post war eras of “*reconstruction*” and “*reform*”, and with a more pragmatic approach towards the West, Iran was in “the midst of a prolonged and unresolved identity crisis.”<sup>119</sup> Doubtless, with regard to foreign policy, there was tension between spreading the revolution and attaining a more realistic and relaxed interaction, in particular, towards the West. Despite this, both nationalisms were well aligned and with the mitigation of Islamic nationalistic verve, the supporting effects of nationalism on the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh, remained intact.

The inherent societal Persian nationalism and the Shah-era Artesh fostered the meaning of military forces and therefore its legitimacy. Notwithstanding the revolution’s initial focus on Shi’ism, the Iran-Iraq war forced the regime to reinforce Persian nationalism in order to obtain the support of all Iranian’s and to increase the combat effectiveness of the Artesh. The regime managed to align both successfully. Furthermore, this alignment was kept in the aftermath of the “*holy defence*” under Presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami despite Iran’s relaxing attitudes to the West. Nationalism kept its meaning in Iran’s society and institutions and therefore contributed as a solid brick into

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<sup>118</sup> Risa Brooks, and Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Creating Military Power: ...*, 47.

<sup>119</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 159.

the cultural-cognitive pillar. Therefore, during the last decades it has supported the legitimacy of the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

### **Superiority and Vulnerability**

A nation's military force as an institution is entangled with its society regarding beliefs, views and perceptions of the world. Both spheres are interdependent and affect each other because military forces of a nation are normally generated by its respective society.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, the Iranian belief of being a regional power and the simultaneous perceived feeling of vulnerability and insecurity may have had effects on the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

The Iranian cultural-cognitive conviction of being superior in the region is based on several factors. First, 3000 years of Persian culture with influence on the world's religions; the establishment of a world state 2500 years ago, coupled with excellence in science and research during ancient times, or succinctly: its pace-making role over the centuries in the world.<sup>121</sup> Second, as the Shi'ite center of gravity in a Sunni-dominated region, holds them responsible to strengthen the Shi'ite diaspora and spread Shi'ite Islam globally.<sup>122</sup> Third, Iran's geostrategic position in an energy rich region serves as a hinge

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<sup>120</sup> There are exceptions, for example the French Foreign Legion. See: Patricia Rosof, *The Military and Society: Reviews of Recent Research* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>121</sup> International Business Publications, *Iran Foreign Policy and Government Guide, Volume 1 Strategic Information and Policy* (Washington: International Business Publications, 2009), 162.

<sup>122</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 13.

between Europe and Asia and includes its ability to control key terrain, such as the Strait of Hormuz and therefore, its natural aspiration as a player on the world stage.<sup>123</sup>

At the same time, Iran as a nation has a very strong sense of being vulnerable and insecure. Two main factors offer crucial insights into this perception. Iran was, over the centuries since its inception, invaded by the Greeks, Mongols, Arabs, and Turks. In contemporary Iran, this perception is based on the experiences with colonial powers during the last century and in particular, with the ongoing regional presence of Russia, Great Britain, and the U.S. together with their support for Iran's neighbours.<sup>124</sup> Those experiences have fostered Iran's drive for independence, which does not hamper them from adopting elements of Western culture. Without doubt, there has been a bias, specifically by the clerics, with regard to influence from the West.<sup>125</sup> However, on the other hand, Pahlavi strongly supported Western views and later, the maturing revolutionary regime recognized the need to access and obtain Western technology, such as nuclear power, in order to modernize Iran's economy and military forces.<sup>126</sup> It is in particular, the young generation under thirty, which nurse a limited Western lifestyle by

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<sup>123</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: ...*, 7.

<sup>124</sup> David E. Thaler, et al, *Mullahs, Guards and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010), 5.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>126</sup> Anthony Kairouz, *Nuclear Iran: A Prelude to WW III* (Bloomington, USA: Author House, 2007), 19.

wearing jeans or listening to Western music.<sup>127</sup> Doubtless, Iran has not been open to foreign conquerors but has been receptive to a variety of ingredients of Western comforts.

Secondly, concurrent links with the aforementioned belief in being a regional power, Shi'ite Iran is surrounded by Sunni countries and therefore feels insecure. Ray Takeh makes the point:

The Shiite Muslims constituted a minority sect throughout much of the Middle East, and where they constituted a majority, they were usually ruled by Sunni tyrants.<sup>128</sup>

Amid those conditions, Iran's perception of insecurity and vulnerability is comprehensible.

Superiority and vulnerability are at first glance contradictory perceptions within the Iranian society. However, more than being opposite, they are considered as factors supporting each other with regard to foreign policy and subsequently to military forces as a means within their foreign policies toolbox. Therefore, Iran's strategic culture rests on a dual superiority/vulnerability complex.

Becoming or being a hegemon requires political, economic, or cultural resources as well as military forces.<sup>129</sup> Following Charles Doran's *power cycle theory*, the power of a state within a system of states is beside other factors mainly defined by its military

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<sup>127</sup> Reza Afshari, *Human Rights in Iran: The Abuse of Cultural Relativism* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 321.

<sup>128</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 69.

<sup>129</sup> Eva Herrschinger, *Constructing Global Enemies: Hegemony and Identity in International Discourses on Terrorism and Drug Prohibition* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 17.

expenditure and military size.<sup>130</sup> Insecurity in reverse creates the desire for security and the ability to keep the integrity of a country. Military forces are not the solitary channel, but one instrument in order to achieve those objectives.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, the military plays a significant role in order to address hegemony and insecurity.

Yet Shi'ism was important, though it played no major role in the Iranian's perception of insecurity and subsequent foreign policy until 1979, because the clerics were excluded from the ruling elite.<sup>132</sup> Other factors were more important, such as the mistrust towards Iraq. Iranians were aware of this threat, due to the border skirmishes, which occurred on a regular basis. Furthermore, the Iraqi Ba'ath party in the 1960s, as well as the Soviet Union, were perceived by the rulers as a threat towards Iranian regional power ambitions. Those ambitions were expressed by the Shah's policy of the Artesh being the "regional policemen" from the 1960s onwards. The Artesh, as a tool to solidify regional objectives, were for example used to support Yemen in its civil war (1962-1970), and successfully occupied in 1971 the British annexed islands of Abu Musa and Tunbs in the Gulf.<sup>133</sup> The Shah needed military forces not only to protect Iran's border, but also used them for his larger regional ambitions, which fed Iranian nationalism on

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<sup>130</sup> Beside quantity, consideration of qualitative factors like motivation, training, leadership, and readiness of forces in order to assess a nation's military power, however, it does not change the importance of military forces for the credibility of being a hegemony. See: Homa Katouzian, and Hossein Shahidi, *Iran in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Politics, Economics & Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2008), 9.

<sup>131</sup> Anthony D. Lott, *Creating Insecurity: Realism, Constructivism and US Security Policy* (Hants, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004), 22.

<sup>132</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution ...*, 30.

<sup>133</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 43.



one hand, but also generated regional pressure on the Shah's regime, though it overall it can be argued this posture strengthened the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh.

In contrast to the clerics, Pahlavi was not reluctant towards the presence and cultural influence of Western advisers in the country.<sup>134</sup> His favour of the military and the close relation of U.S.-advisers with Artesh cadres lead to the conclusion that the Artesh members were pro-Western in their attitude as well. Yet, the perception in Iranian society in the 1960s was different due to the inference of subjugation by the colonial powers and therefore, excluded from the economic benefits with regard to the oil-boom of the time.<sup>135</sup> Though the Western lifestyle and privileges of senior Artesh leaders were later exploited by the revolutionary regime, there is no evidence, that those perceptions in the society generally diminished the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh. The Artesh were mainly used for coping with external threats and therefore in the perception of Iranian's legitimate.<sup>136</sup> However, the widespread belief of being excluded from economic welfare supported the revolutionary movement of Khomeini and eventually contributed to the fall of the Shah. Furthermore, the mistrust of the society towards the Western presence from the late 1960s on and its growing perception that the military failed to create independence from the colonial powers, was contrary to the internal perception of the

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<sup>134</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 194.

<sup>135</sup> Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence : A Religious-Political State and Society in its Region* (London: Zed Publishers, 2010), 33.

<sup>136</sup> The Artesh were used for suppressing internal uprisings, i.e. the Kurds in the 1960s and faced its first major clash with internal unrest in 1978, for which they were completely unprepared. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 213.

Artesh, which was further exploited by Khomeini.<sup>137</sup> This created tensions during the last phase of the Shah era, which weakened the cultural-cognitive pillar in Scott's model, and subsequently the meaning of the Artesh.

As mentioned previously, the Shi'ite *ulama* were excluded from the ruling elite during the Pahlavi era until 1979. The clerics however, kept their belief in Shi'ite supremacy, as well as its concurrent vulnerability and subsequently made the revolution's ideas spread to a fundamental objective within their strategy.<sup>138</sup> Takeyh argues that:

Khomeini's call for Iran to emerge as the nucleus of a new Middle East resonated with a populace imbued with images of Persian greatness. Instead of military conquest and claims of civilization greatness, Khomeini employed religion to justify Iran's expansionist designs.<sup>139</sup>

The emphasis on religion could therefore suggest that the meaning of the military destabilized with the revolution and different elements of the Artesh's normative and cultural-cognitive pillar weakened during the early revolution as previously analyzed in this paper.<sup>140</sup> However, during the juvenile revolution, Khomeini faced internal unrest and different power seeking parties like the Fedayeen and Mujahedeen-e Khalk (MEK), which endangered the revolutionary regime.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, Khomeini was aware of the

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<sup>137</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 21.

<sup>138</sup> Barry Rubin, "Iran: The Rise of a Regional Power," available from <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue3/jv10no3a10.html>; Internet, accessed 09 March 2012.

<sup>139</sup> Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 18.

<sup>140</sup> For example, the ethos as analyzed in Chapter II.

<sup>141</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution ...*, 258.

threats to regional expansion, which came from Iraq, as well as from the ousted colonial powers, particularly the U.S.<sup>142</sup> With reference to the aforementioned, and the need to turn the perception of insecurity into security, Khomeini was forced to strive for a two-folded approach. For one, he created the Pasdaran in order to protect the revolution and the regime from mainly, internal threats,<sup>143</sup> and for another he needed military forces to support the newly founded and inexperienced Pasdaran in suppressing internal unrest but as importantly, for protecting the country from the external menace of the smouldering Iraqi conflict.<sup>144</sup> Notwithstanding the regimes mistrust towards the Artesh and the earlier stated purges, as well as the favouritism of the Pasdaran, the perception of insecurity strengthened the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh and therefore, the meaning and usefulness of this force during the revolution and the “*holy defence*”.

The protracted Iran-Iraq war, with the palpable support of Iraq by the colonial powers and its aftermath, reasons to a clearly deepening feeling for insecurity, which fostered Iranian’s bias towards foreigners and explains the need for military forces.<sup>145</sup> Despite Khatami’s and Rafsanjani’s more pragmatic approach towards the West, those

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<sup>142</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 42.

<sup>143</sup> Concerning the hegemonic aspects of the regime by spreading the revolution, the Pasdaran were tasked to support Islamic movements in neighbouring countries, for example in 1982 Lebanon. See: Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: ...*, 47.

<sup>144</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution ...*, 259.

<sup>145</sup> Baylis et al., “Conflict without Victory: The Iran-Iraq War,” available from [http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199289783/01student/cases/iran\\_iraq\\_war.pdf](http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199289783/01student/cases/iran_iraq_war.pdf); Internet, accessed 09 March 2012

suspicious remained relevant in Iran of the 1990s which Khatami pointedly illustrated in a CNN Interview in January 1998:

There is a bulky wall of mistrust between us and American administrations, a mistrust rooted in improper behaviour by the American governments. [...] I should refer to admitted involvement of the American government in the 1953 *coup d'état* [...]. I should also refer to the capitulation law imposed by the American government on Iran.<sup>146</sup>

Furthermore, the threat from the neighbouring Taliban regime in Afghanistan led to increasing border security activities.<sup>147</sup> A massive joint exercise with over 200,000 troops was conducted in 1998 in the proximity of the Iranian-Afghan border, which finally intimidated the Taliban from interfering within Iran.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, the continuous security issues from abroad in the 1990s and beginning 2000s reinforced the cultural-cognitive pillar and thus the meaning of the Artesh.

While the spread of the revolution remained important during this era, the focus on security and independence was of greater consequence after the war.<sup>149</sup> However, the Iranian perception of its cultural supremacy was unchanged and the idea of being a regional power became more relevant in the 1990s. Due to its geographic position and

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<sup>146</sup> Homa Katouzian, and Hossein Shahidi, *Iran in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*:..., 111.

<sup>147</sup> There have been also threats from Saddam Hussein's regime, the Gulf Council Cooperation (GCC), Israel and increasingly from 2000 on the increasing presence of western powers, in particular the USA and United Kingdom.

<sup>148</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 29.

<sup>149</sup> Iran Policy Committee, *What Makes Teheran Tick: Islamist Ideology and Hegemonic Interests* (Washington: Iran Policy Committee, 2006), 10.

energy resources, Iran put a premium on its navy and started allocating more money and training into those forces.<sup>150</sup> No doubt, in face of sanctions and the still recuperating economy at that time, the IRIN (Iranian Islamic Navy) was embryonic, barely able to cope with their Western counterparts and far from being a blue water navy. Nevertheless, they started to be a tool of power projection with the potential to threaten aggressors from the outside.<sup>151</sup> The U.S. CENTCOM General Joseph P. Hoar stated in 1993, that:

By virtue of geography, military strength, economic potential, demographics, and hegemonic aspirations, Iran poses the greatest long-term threat to peace and stability throughout (the region).<sup>152</sup>

Those perceptions outside Iran underline the success of Iran's attempts for regional power projection and therefore legitimized the meaning of the Artesh during this era which further underscored its cultural-cognitive pillar.

In summary, regional power and insecurity are ideas and perceptions, which both support the meaning of military. Based on a long and rich history, its Shi'ite landscape and geographic position, Iran has, with a distinctive accent focused on these two themes, generated a "taken for granted" status for hegemonic desire and the perception of insecurity. With regard to external and internal security challenges, the Artesh were

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<sup>150</sup> Jamal S. al-Suwaidi, *Iran and the Gulf: A Search for Stability* (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1996), 198.

<sup>151</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 187.

<sup>152</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Deja Vue All Over Again? An Assessment of Iran's Military Buildup," available from <http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/.../Files/ISN/.../Pages+from+mcnair29pre7.pdf>; Internet, accessed 27 March 2012.

needed during the Shah era, while the division in the perception of Western influence between Artesh and society in the 1970s weakened its initially strong cultural-cognitive pillar and therefore, its legitimacy. During the revolution the level of insecurity for Iran increased. Proved by the Iran-Iraq war, the decision of Khomeini to keep the Artesh in order to generate security was consequential and supported the meaning of the Artesh from a cultural-cognitive point of view. The experiences in the war, but also the emergence of new threats, coupled with a more pragmatic view of the world in the 1990s, as well as Iran's desire for regional supremacy, acknowledged the need for conventional military forces. Therefore, in the accumulation over time, the cultural-cognitive view, with regard to supremacy and insecurity, strengthened this pillar and consequently the legitimacy of the Artesh.

### **Perception of the Artesh in the Society**

This section will analyze the Iranian's perception of the Artesh. Society and the military are knotted together regardless of political system, culture, and history of a nation. A variety of factors such as the status of civil control, military professionalism or the meaning of foreign policy within a society but also sociological factors like education

and labour market, influence the military and vice versa.<sup>153</sup> Therefore the linkage between both, affect the Artesh cultural-cognitive pillar.<sup>154</sup>

Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi heavily advocated the Artesh in order to maintain control and the power of his rule, and subsequently militarized the society.<sup>155</sup> The increased oil revenues allowed him, with the support of the U.S., to build up military forces, specifically concerning equipment and training and seize state of the art in the Middle East.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, he needed the loyalty of his armed forces and therefore, granted them privileges similar to the U.S. model with housing areas, supermarkets etc..<sup>157</sup> Those privileges kept the morale and motivation, especially of the senior officers, high. However, due to the flooding of equipment by the U.S., and in conjunction with a rising inflation of the 1970s, a trend of corruption and fraud was evident at all levels of the military.<sup>158</sup> Attempts by the military forces to restrict corruption eventually failed.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Giuseppe Caforio, *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* (New York: Springer Science + Business Media LLC, 2006), 131.

<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, as discussed in the next chapter dealing with the regulative pillar, the interaction between society and military and their effects cannot be neglected by a country's stakeholders. See: Adam Kuper, *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Volume I A-K (New York: Routledge, 2004), 110.

<sup>155</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran...*, 124.

<sup>156</sup> Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (London: University of California Press, 2009), 299.

<sup>157</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran...*, 125.

<sup>158</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 206.

<sup>159</sup> One example was the attempt to send officers, which were familiar with the procurement process and the furtive ways of corruption, into remote areas with a lack of access to resources. This

Therefore the image of the Artesh in the 1970s got notwithstanding supporting factors like nationalism and the superiority/vulnerability complex a negative touch. In addition, Khomeini painted, in preparation for the revolution, a picture of “the military as a symbol of the Westernization” in the country. In a speech in March 1963, he stated: “[...] To achieve real independence we have to remove all forms of American influence, whether economic, political, military or cultural [...]”.<sup>160</sup> Later, during the heated phase of the revolution with bloody clashes between Artesh and the society, Khomeini recognized the meaning of the Artesh as the Shah’s centre of gravity and consequently, its threat for his own ambitions and plans. Hence, he used means of psychological warfare in order to convince the army to stay, at least, neutral:

Do not attack the army in its breast, but in its heart. You must appeal to the soldiers’ hearts even if they fire on you and kill you. Let them kill five thousand, ten thousand, twenty thousand – they are our brothers, and we will welcome them.<sup>161</sup>

Therefore, despite his early attempts to draw a picture of the Artesh as a tool of the West, he eventually transformed, with certain success, the public perception of it into a more pro-revolutionary or at least neutral one.<sup>162</sup> Khomeini’s propaganda, the weak and

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created frictions in the procurement process and therefore were not successful in deterring corruption. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 207.

<sup>160</sup> Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1999), 213.

<sup>161</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 217.

<sup>162</sup> The Artesh officially declared the neutrality in February 1979. See: Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution ...*, 231.



dependent Artesh top leadership, and the abortive coup attempts by members of the military, culminated in the Artesh failure to prevent the revolution and forced them to declare its neutrality from a position of weakness.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, its reputation in the society suffered. In sum, society's perception of the Artesh during the pre-revolutionary era was eroded with regard to privileges, corruption, and the failing of the Artesh to prevent the revolution. In contrast, ancillary elements, such as a militarized society and Khomeini's psychological warfare towards the Artesh, could be seen as positive factors for its standing. However, those factors were not strong enough to prevent the erosion of the Artesh reputation in the 1970s, which therefore weakened its cultural-cognitive pillar.

The upcoming war, with the mass mobilization of additional troops for the Artesh was, within a tight timeframe, was impressive and mainly due to the willingness of reservists but also their patriotic, notwithstanding damaged, image which the Artesh had maintained in the population.<sup>164</sup> This massive influx of new recruits potentially caused a stronger bond between the Artesh and the nation with positive effects on its standing in society.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, its reputation was healed in part, due to their performance and sacrifices on the battlefield. In conjunction with the purge of the ousted Shah's cliques, as well as an increasing adoption of bad habits like corruption and privileges by the Pasdaran during the war,<sup>166</sup> the restorative image in the realm of war and its aftermath, strengthened the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh.

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<sup>163</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 258.

<sup>164</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 58.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>166</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 245.

In the eras of “*reconstruction*” and “*reform*”, the Artesh were more and more perceived as apolitical. For example, during the 1999 student protests in Teheran, Artesh leaders declared their neutrality and political independence.<sup>167</sup> With regard to the aging revolution, Ken Katzman argues that:

The Artesh is avowedly apolitical. It is a national institution, created and maintained to defend the nation against external threats. Unlike the IRGC [Pasdaran], it is not a revolutionary institution and does not interpret its mission as defending the Islamic regime that came to power in 1979.<sup>168</sup>

Furthermore, the Artesh are involved in humanitarian tasks such as mine clearing efforts, removing remnants left from the “*holy defence*”, which has further fostered its reputation.<sup>169</sup>

However, the Artesh could barely survive if the regime was not interested in keeping it as an institution. Several factors supporting this deduction were already revealed in the previous, as well as the current chapter, and are further elaborated upon in the following one.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, one can conclude that the Artesh reputation in the period from 1988 to the early 2000s is due to its obvious neutrality and support of the

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>168</sup> Ken Katzman, “The Politics of Iran’s Regular Military,” *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, November 2011: 10; <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>169</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 279.

<sup>170</sup> For example, the increased insecurity for Iran, the need for the Artesh in the system of checks and balances or, as later revealed, patronage.

population by, for example, humanitarian tasks, which further salvaged the Artesh standing, and therefore, its cultural-cognitive pillar was strengthened.

In summary, the perception of the Artesh alternated over time. The pre-revolutionary and revolution eras with hefty negative factors such as the allocation of privileges for the Artesh and its inability to prevent the revolution, in contrast to its finally declared neutrality, damaged its reputation and therefore, weakened this element of the cultural-cognitive pillar. On the other hand, during the “*holy defence*” its proficient battlefield performance as well as its post-war neutrality and humanitarian tasks, repaired their dented image, and therefore, strengthened its legitimacy in the 1990s and up to the early 2000s, from a cultural-cognitive point of view.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter focused on the Artesh legitimacy regarding the cultural-cognitive pillar of Scott’s model. Nationalism, the superiority/vulnerability complex, and the perception of the Artesh within society were analyzed. All three factors are derived from the beliefs and ideas of the Iranian society with a “taken for granted” status apportioned to the two former points, though, all of which contribute strongly to either the strength or weakness of an institution.

Persian nationalism was encouraged during the Shah era and inherent in a militarized society and therefore the Artesh, supported its meaning from a cultural-cognitive point of view. Furthermore, the revolutionary regime was, in the face of the Iran-Iraq war, forced to align Shi’ism with Persian nationalism in order to bolster the willingness of the armed forces to fight and maintain the nation’s integrity. This dualism

has been kept by the regime during the 90s and into the early 2000s. Overall, nationalism has been a stable factor within the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh and legitimated its meaning. The Artesh legitimacy was also promoted by Iran's historic, religious and culturally generated hegemonic claims in conjunction with its sense for insecurity. While the superiority/vulnerability complex initially was a stout component in Artesh credibility during the Shah era, it weakened that legitimacy from the late 1960s onwards because of the dividing perceptions of Western influence between the Artesh and society. Yet, the revolution brought an increase of security threats and together with Iran's experiences in the Iran-Iraq war, deepened the Iranian's perception of insecurity and therefore the legitimacy of the Artesh in order to create security. Combined with Iran's geostrategic driven hegemonic desire in the pragmatic 1990s, the "taken for granted" superiority/vulnerability complex and its subsequent need for military forces, contributed to the stabilization of the meaning of the Artesh as an Iranian institution. Finally, the perception of the society concerning the Artesh must be viewed in conjunction with the aforementioned two factors. Notwithstanding the strong support for the military from a nationalistic as well as hegemonic and insecurity viewpoint, the reputation of the Artesh in the 1970s and the early revolution eroded, mainly due to privileges and ineffectual leadership which weakened its cultural-cognitive pillar at that time. Alternatively, the Artesh benefited from the Iran-Iraq war and its aftermath because of its capable battlefield performance and the later publicly proven post-war neutrality, with regard to internal civil unrest, as well as its humanitarian tasks in support of the population. From the early 1980s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its reputation has recuperated and rallied, strengthening the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh and therefore its legitimacy.

In total, the cultural-cognitive pillar of the Artesh with regard to the analyzed three factors was kept, notwithstanding some negative phases, stable and legitimizes the survival of the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

## V. THE REGULATIVE PILLAR

The legitimacy of the Artesh as an Iranian institution will be analyzed in this chapter from a regulative framework. This pillar of Scott's model encompasses elements, which constrain, regulate, and steer institutions through formal and informal laws and rules. These linked activities can be described as a process which stretches from rule setting to monitoring, sanctioning of activities by, for example, rewards and punishment. Scott highlights the lesser effects of this pillar on the legitimacy of an institution. In contrast to the normative pillar with its deep moral meaning ("things have to be done this way") and the cultural-cognitive pillar ("taken things for granted"), the regulative one emphasizes the conformity to relatively dynamic laws and rules.<sup>171</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, analysis of this pillar will focus mainly on Iranian leadership and its stakeholders. The effects of informal factors such as patronage and factionalism, as well as the formal ones of Shi'ism, the Iranian Constitution, security policy, and doctrine regarding the Artesh legitimacy, will be assessed in this chapter.

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<sup>171</sup> W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: ...*, 61.

## Patronage

Patronage is a phenomenon with roots in both religion and culture. The Shi'a "Twelver Islam" faith, for example, describes patronage as the legal responsibility of an Imam with regard to the believers.<sup>172</sup> This section will refer to patronage as it has been engrained in Persian culture for centuries:

Patronage and client ship were widespread relationships in traditional Iran. [...]. [The patrons] were able to distribute jobs, money, and other forms of patronage, [...]. So there existed a number of overlapping formal and informal hierarchies which helped organize society in the absence of an all-pervasive central government.<sup>173</sup>

Therefore, patronage was a substitute for a lack of central authority, but at the same time protected the expansion of one's own power and interests.

The tradition of the informal mechanism of patronage has kept its meaning in 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary Iran".<sup>174</sup> The Iranian political Decision Making Process mirrored patronage with consequences for Iran's institutions and their meaning. While formal bodies like the constitution defines the role of the military forces and their respective influence, allocation of resources etc., depend mainly on the power and

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<sup>172</sup> The source used refers to Islam in general, with the section referenced below focusing mainly on Shi'ism. See: Monique Bernards, and John Nawas, *Patronate and Patronage in Early Classical Islam* (Leiden, NLD: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 134.

<sup>173</sup> Nikkie R. Keddie, *Iran: Religion, Politics & Society* (New York: Routledge, 1980), 148.

<sup>174</sup> David E. Thaler, et al, *Mullahs, Guards and Bonyads: ..., 116.*

strength of these informal networks.<sup>175</sup> However, Iran's constitutions have been influenced by informal rules and as such, no contradictions occurred between these two sources of legitimacy.<sup>176</sup> Shah Pahlavi was pro-military and needed the constitution as a key pillar for regime protection and regional power ambitions.<sup>177</sup> He was the “patronage-center of gravity”, for the Artesh and its credo, “God, Shah, Fatherland”, illustrates that.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, his support and influence of this institution in the form of patronage strengthened the regulative pillar of the Artesh and its legitimacy.

The revolution changed the Artesh patronage significantly. While patronage kept its meaning, during the revolution, Khomeini considered the Artesh with mistrust and suspicion. The Pasdaran, founded for protecting the regime, was the benefactor of his tremendous support.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, due to internal and external threats Khomeini kept the Artesh and subsequently formulated their role into the constitution.<sup>180</sup> Khomeini's lieutenants however, within the new regime, filled key positions and their promotion of the Pasdaran made them the central pillar of the regime.<sup>181</sup> During the latter Iran-Iraq

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<sup>175</sup> Keith Crane, Rollie Lal, and Jeffrey Martini, *Iran's Political, Demographic and Economic Vulnerabilities* (Santa Monica, RAND, 2008), 15.

<sup>176</sup> The constitutions were written in 1906 and 1979 by committees appointed by the Shah/Khomeini respectively and therefore, clearly influenced by patronage.

<sup>177</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 194.

<sup>178</sup> Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah ...*, 286.

<sup>179</sup> Frederic Wherey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2009), 20.

<sup>180</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution ...*, 264.

<sup>181</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 226.

war, the regime's preference for "human wave tactic" conducted by the Pasdaran and Basij, illustrates that lack of patronage for the Artesh though despite early successes, this tactic eventually proved to be unsuccessful.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, the Pasdaran received priority in its build-up with the most resources allocated to its cause until, at minimum, 1985.<sup>183</sup> In summary, the Artesh lacked patronage during the early years of the regime, which therefore weakened its regulative pillar.

However, evidence exists for an increasing appreciation of their merit. Faced with a protracted war, the regime saw the value of experienced conventional forces. The Artesh were placed, for example, as the lead in planning major operations, such as "Operation Dawn 8" in 1986.<sup>184</sup> This elevation is likely due to the professional superiority and operational knowledge of the Artesh compared with that of the Pasdaran.<sup>185</sup> However, the Artesh cadre was still under close surveillance and scrutiny, one glaring example of which is fighter pilots who flew with fuel sufficient only for their tasked mission.<sup>186</sup> However, these restrictions were not contrary to the support of the Artesh by key stakeholders within the regime. That support continued into the final stage of the war as President Khamenei and the Chairman of the parliament Rafsanjani, fostered cooperation between the Pasdaran and Artesh by merging their supply and

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<sup>182</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 71.

<sup>183</sup> Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2009), 47.

<sup>184</sup> This operation focused on the seizure of the southern Iraqi oilfields. See: *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>185</sup> Evidence supports that major operations planned under Pasdaran lead failed. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 260.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.



procurement chains in 1988.<sup>187</sup> Patronage also granted the Artesh more power, by including an Artesh representative into the powerful Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).<sup>188</sup> In addition, the regime applied lessons learned from the war and together with its easing tensions toward the Artesh, a pragmatic emphasis on professional military forces in the 1990s, further increased the meaning of the Artesh.<sup>189</sup> Cordesman assessed Iran's military forces at that time:

The end result is that the IRGC is now closer to a regular military force, [...].

There continues to be serious rivalry between the IRGC and the regular forces, although the political importance of such splits diminished. The regular forces are no longer the forces shaped by the Shah. [...] Iran's officers [...] have largely grown to adulthood since the revolution, and the IRGC and the regular forces owe far more to their common heritage of combat during the Iran-Iraq war than any vestigial memories of the Shah's regime.<sup>190</sup>

Yet, the Pasdaran still had a grip on key positions in the joint General Staff.<sup>191</sup> However, the death of its main advocate, Khomeini in 1989, changed the Iranian establishment.

President Rafsanjani triggered a process of "military professionalization and ideological

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<sup>187</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 161.

<sup>188</sup> Keith Crane, *Iran's Political, Demographic ...*, 14.

<sup>189</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 304.

<sup>190</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 37.

<sup>191</sup> Ali Afoneh, "Eternal Rivals? The Artesh and the IRGC," *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, November 2011: 32; <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

de-radicalization” of the Pasdaran which decreased its domestic influence between 1989 and 2003.<sup>192</sup> Despite the existing patronage for the Pasdaran, its marginalisation during that timeframe has certainly benefited the regulative re-legitimization of the Artesh.

Patronage has remained relevant from the Shah era, to 21<sup>st</sup> century Iran. While the Shah as the patron raised the Artesh and therefore, strengthened its regulative pillar, the revolution dramatically changed that. The regime’s mistrust towards the Artesh and its focus on revolutionary zeal, eradicated Artesh advocates. Hence, the regulative pillar of the Artesh weakened. However, due to the regime’s experiences of the war, its growing trust towards the Artesh and a renewed focus on military professionalism in the 1990s re-established the regulative elements of the Artesh. In conjunction with a marginalization of the Pasdaran between 1989 and 2003, the Artesh regulative pillar recovered and therefore contributed to its legitimacy as an Iranian institution.

### **Factionalism**

Another informal mechanism shaping Iran and its institutions is factionalism. It is “a general [dynamic] process of subgroup partitioning [...] and it is the nature of this process which gives factions their specific characteristics”.<sup>193</sup> Therefore, factionalism is something fluxionary, serving the respective interests of factions and effects institutions either in a positive (supportive) or negative (marginalized) way. This dynamic is seen in the different composition of factions depending on the specific issue. Members of a

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<sup>192</sup> Frederic Wherey, et al., *The Rise of the Pasdarn: ...*, 80.

<sup>193</sup> Francoise Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalis: Typologies, Intra-Party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), 25.

faction on foreign policy can be in an opposite faction concerning economic issues, depending on what best serves individual interests.<sup>194</sup> Factionalism is a global phenomenon and Iran has a competitive one, where “the state is the principal arena in which the competition takes place”.<sup>195</sup> Institutions play a significant role in factionalism as Scott writes:

[Institution is] a structure in which powerful people are committed to some value or interest, emphasizing that [...] interests are protected only if those holding them possess and retain power.<sup>196</sup>

Therefore, it seems reasonable that an institution like the regular army is also determined by factionalism.

In contrast to most countries in the Middle East, Iran is a more democratic one.<sup>197</sup> The elected parliament and a variety of different bodies exists which control power.<sup>198</sup> With the beginning of the rule of Mohammed Reza in the early 1940s, factionalism flourished.<sup>199</sup> However, his reign was the return to despotism, in particular, after the

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<sup>194</sup> Frederic Wherey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdarn: ...*, 14.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>196</sup> W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: ...*, 23.

<sup>197</sup> At the same time, this semblance of democracy is increasingly challenged today by the ascendancy of unelected institutions such as the IRGC, the Guardian Council, or the Judiciary Power. See, for example: David E. Thaler, et al, *Mullahs, Guards and Bonyads: ...*, 30.

<sup>198</sup> Iran’s constitution emphasizes the separation of power, notwithstanding the ultimate power which lies in the supreme leader.

<sup>199</sup> Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran: The Institutionalization of Factional Politics* (Gainesville, USA: The University Press of Florida, 1996), 28.

1953 coup and despite his modernization policy; he ignored the necessity to democratize society and its political system.<sup>200</sup> The Shah and his partisan appointments were the only powerful groups during his reign.<sup>201</sup> However, factionalism exists only when at least two equal groups compete.<sup>202</sup> The Shah's power monopoly prevented factionalism and was therefore irrelevant for the Artesh legitimacy. Yet, factionalism can support or marginalize institutions. The Shah as a fervent advocate of the Artesh, and with a power monopoly, sustained the Artesh legitimacy. Therefore, it was the lack of factionalism, during this period, which strengthened the regulative pillar of the Artesh.

The revolution reawakened factionalism. Contrary to the Shah, Khomeini granted to relevant elites and its institutions more autonomy. Although, he was the final arbiter and allowed factionalism, he nevertheless cumulated power and controlled the state.<sup>203</sup> However, the emergence of dozens of different factions during the early revolution in 1979, forced Khomeini to protect his juvenile regime.<sup>204</sup> Again, the country's top leader came to the aid of the Artesh. In any case, there were discussions between factions about the value of a conventional army, but due to imminent threats, Khomeini decided to keep the Artesh beside the newly founded Pasdaran. The Artesh was treated with mistrust,

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<sup>200</sup> Nematollah Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran: Anthropology, Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006), 79.

<sup>201</sup> The official state politics of "Monarchist Modernist Nationalism" was dominant in daily life and was fostered by the state controlled media. See: *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>202</sup> Alan Barnard, and Jonathan Spencer, *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (New York, USA: Routledge, 2002), 338.

<sup>203</sup> Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution ...*, 248.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

suffered purges and were abandoned in the second line, but the fact that a faction (Khomeini) existed which wanted to retain the force and make use of their conventional military value, for own purposes reveals, that factionalism supported the regulative pillar of the Artesh at that time.

Within the revolutionary regime factionalism started shortly after its consolidation. Different factions arose in the decade after 1979, such as the conservative traditionalists and the reformists with different visions concerning the revolution's future.<sup>205</sup> The Artesh profited from this factionalism in particular because of the support and appreciation of their professionalism by Khamenei and Rafsanjani in the late 1980s.<sup>206</sup> Despite Khomeini's veto for merging both militaries, organizational changes led to the closing of the Ministry for the Revolutionary Guard together with the creation of a joint Ministry of Defence which improved the significance of the Artesh.<sup>207</sup> There is also evidence that further into the 1990s, a more realpolitik approach fostered the awareness in the regime's elite concerning the need for a stronger conventional army for

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<sup>205</sup> Mehran Kamrava, "Iranian National Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," *Middle East Policy* Vol XIV, no. 2 (Summer 2007), 87; available from [http://georgetown.academia.edu/MehranKamrava/Papers/194332/Iranian\\_NationalSecurity\\_Debates\\_Factionalism\\_and\\_Lost\\_Opportunities](http://georgetown.academia.edu/MehranKamrava/Papers/194332/Iranian_NationalSecurity_Debates_Factionalism_and_Lost_Opportunities); Internet, accessed 12 March 2012.

<sup>206</sup> Fatemah Aman, "Living with the Artesh's Green Sympathies," *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, November 2011: 18; <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>207</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 33.

proper military credibility in the Middle East.<sup>208</sup> However, the Supreme Leader Khamenei wanted to re-establish the power balance between himself and Khatami and therefore supported the Pasdaran which he saw as a natural ally.<sup>209</sup> This factionalism-generated friction regarding resources hampered the Artesh from obtaining the necessary funding it needed to rebuild and modernize.<sup>210</sup> However, as mentioned previously, the absence of factionalism with the monopoly of power vetted within one person also could have led to the decision to maintain the Pasdaran and eradicate the Artesh, which did not happen. Thus, despite the rejuvenation of the Pasdaran in the 1990s, the Artesh from the mid 1980s to the early 2000s profited from factionalism, supporting, and defining their role in serving the country. Therefore, it can be concluded that overall, factionalism supported the regulative pillar of the Artesh.

Factionalism has played a significant role in Iran and its institutions in the last and current century. While the Shah supported the Artesh in order to stabilize his reign, the juvenile revolution faced the same problems and consequently, Khomeini kept them as a conventional force. Furthermore, the regime's Iran-Iraq war experiences and its emphasis on national interest instead of ideology, from the late 1980s until the early 2000s, fostered the cognition of top leaders for the need of a professional conventional army. Notwithstanding other hostile factions toward the Artesh, the sum of measures taken in order to improve the professionalism of Iran's military forces increased the meaning and

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>209</sup> Frederic Wherey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: ...*, 80.

<sup>210</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 304.

legitimacy of the Artesh. Overall it can be argued, factionalism has proved to be a strong supporter of the regulative pillar of the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

### **The Formal Regulative Factors**

The last section of this chapter deals with formal aspects affecting the Artesh regulative pillar. An analysis of Shi'ism and the constitution will be completed with final thoughts on policy and doctrine.<sup>211</sup>

#### Shi'ism

Islam as a religion is not *per se* violent, but the Koran gives its believers legitimacy to defend against aggressors.<sup>212</sup> This is especially true for Shi'ism with its key elements *moqavemat* (resistance) and *zolm* (injustice), both justifying the use of force.<sup>213</sup> Shi'ism, the religion of the “weak and oppressed”, tends to turn resistance into legitimate political strategies. After 1979, this was reinforced by Khomeini who blended Shi'ism, Marxist-Leninism and Third-Worldism, into a revolutionary ideology. The politicizing of traditional concepts such as *zolm* or *moqavamat* turned them into genuine weapons such as “imposed war”, “resistance to oppression” and “sacred defence”. The result is a synthetic ideology, which represents a “keystone for Iran’s conception of war and

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<sup>211</sup> The perception of threats, the idea of being a regional power as well as checks and balances etc. play a role in developing, announcing and implementing a defence strategy and doctrine.

<sup>212</sup> Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 44.

<sup>213</sup> Pierre Pahlavi, “Guerre irrégulière et analyse institutionnelle: ...”, 6.

military doctrine".<sup>214</sup> Whereas these concepts were mediocre for the justification of the Artesh during the secular Pahlavi dynasty, the Islamic revolution implied the importance of the aforementioned ideology.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, Shi'ism blended into a revolutionary ideology that justified military forces and the subsequent regulative legitimacy of the Artesh.<sup>216</sup>

### The Constitution

Another element in the regulative pillar of the Artesh is the constitution. Samuel Finer defines:

Constitutions are codes of rules which aspire to regulate the allocation of functions, powers and duties among the various agencies and officers of government, and define the relationships between these and the public.<sup>217</sup>

Charles Montesquieu developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the theories of separated power. In his belief, a constitution must be based on two distinctive principles, the separation and the balance of power, in order to limit power vested in one person or body of a state.<sup>218</sup> That separation of power is allocated to the legislative, judiciary and executive powers within

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<sup>214</sup> Steven R. Ward, "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 559-576.

<sup>215</sup> Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah...*, 239.

<sup>216</sup> The same is to conclude for the Pasdaran. However, that does not change the meaning of Shi'ism for the legitimacy of military forces.

<sup>217</sup> Samuel E. Finer, *Five Constitutions* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1979), 15.

<sup>218</sup> Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Melvin Richter (Indianapolis, USA: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1990), 40.



its respective institutions. A key executive role hereby lays in the states power “to make war or peace” and in the legitimacy of military forces.<sup>219</sup>

The Iranian Constitution of 1906 contained all three powers and aimed to limit the power of the Shah.<sup>220</sup> The 1953 coup changed the constitution and *de facto*, turned constitutionalism into monarchism with all power vested in the Shah.<sup>221</sup> However, the military retained its meaning. Various articles of said constitution deal with the army. For example, article 50 determines the Shah’s role as Supreme Commander and article 104 generally mentions, “the duties and rights of the military [...] are regulated by the law”.<sup>222</sup> Article 39 by contrast, is more precise by committing the Supreme commander “to preserve the independence of Persia, safeguard, and protect the frontiers of my Kingdom”.<sup>223</sup> In summary, the Shah’s constitution considered the military and therefore, within the framework of regulatory impact, legitimizes the Artesh.

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<sup>219</sup> Maurice J.C. Vile, “The Theory of the Balanced Constitution,” The Online Library of Liberty; available from [http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=677&chapter=122668&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=677&chapter=122668&layout=html&Itemid=27); Internet, accessed 03April 2012.

<sup>220</sup> Janet Afary, “The Iranian Constitutional Revolution: 1906-1911,”; available from <http://www.iranian.com/Books/2000/October/Afary/index.html>; Internet, accessed 03April 2012.

<sup>221</sup> Fakhreddin Azimi, *The Quest for Democracy in Iran: A Century of Struggle against Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>222</sup> See: Foundation for Iranian Studies, “Iran’s 1906 Constitution,” available from <http://fis-iran.org/en/resources/legaldoc/iranconstitution>; Internet, accessed 05 February 2012.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

The revolutionary constitution from 1979 comprises the separation of powers.<sup>224</sup>

Yet, it also stresses in its preamble that:

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran [...] [is] based on Islamic principles and rules, and reflecting the fundamental desires of the Islamic people. [...]. [The] Islamic Government is founded on a basis of "religious guardianship" (Velayat Faqiye).<sup>225</sup>

The emphasis on the overarching revolutionary ideology binding the Islamic republic together also encompasses the army. Article 144 describes the "religious army" and commits to that ideology.<sup>226</sup> However, that accent on ideology does not marginalize the meaning of military as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, articles 143 to 151 deal with tasks and responsibilities. Article 143 states:

The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran [Artesh] is responsible for guarding the independence and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the order of the Islamic Republic.<sup>227</sup>

Furthermore, the Artesh is also utilizable, within its means and capabilities, for relief operations and reconstruction efforts (Article 147). While the Artesh tasks are clear and sound, the Pasdaran responsibilities remain vague in article 150:

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<sup>224</sup> For example article 57, which describes the general meaning of legislative, judiciary and executive powers. See: ACE - The Electoral Knowledge Network, "Iran: Constitution 1979,"; available from <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/asia/IR/Iran%20Constitution%201979.pdf/view>; Internet, accessed 05 February 2012.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, Preamble.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 144.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 143.

The scope of the duties of this Corps, and its areas of responsibility, in relation to the duties and areas of responsibility of the other armed forces, are to be determined by law, with emphasis on brotherly cooperation and harmony among them.<sup>228</sup>

Indeed, there is a constitutional ambiguity regarding distinctive tasks for both militaries. Yet, the regime's normative elements of "checks and balances" and/or *druj* require such obfuscation and frictions between the Pasdaran and Artesh, the latent weakening in the regulative pillar could create potential challenges for the Artesh legitimacy. For example, the overlapping responsibilities in the 1990s for securing the Persian Gulf between IRIN and the Pasdaran navy may have also been generated due to the constitutional blurring.<sup>229</sup> However, these frictions do not scatter the explicit constitutional reference of the Artesh and its tasks. Therefore, despite the potential discord, the constitution of 1979 has regulatively legitimized the Artesh as an Iranian institution.

### Security Policy, Strategy and Doctrine

Iran's security policy is another factor that affected the Artesh legitimacy. The Shah, aside from maintaining a focus on internal security and homeland defence, had hegemonic ambitions in the Middle East, the latter apparent by his concept of the Artesh as regional policemen.<sup>230</sup> The Artesh as a key pillar in the Shah's toolbox played a major

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 150.

<sup>229</sup> See for example: Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional ...*, 207.

<sup>230</sup> Abbas Milani, *The Shah ...*, 310.

role in operationalizing that security policy and as previously mentioned in this paper, conducted several operations outside Iran in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>231</sup> Therefore, the Shah's security policy backed the Artesh regulative pillar and thus, its legitimacy.

The revolution of 1979 generated a deteriorating security situation for Iran. In particular, the U.S. was transformed into an enemy and its regional presence, together with support for Iran's neighbours, dramatically increased Iran's threat level.<sup>232</sup> Furthermore, the international sanctions in conjunction with the enormous costs of the Iran-Iraq war hampered Iran from rebuilding and modernizing its militaries.<sup>233</sup> Together with Iran's desire to export the revolution and its increasing hegemonic aspirations in the 1990s those aforementioned factors have shaped Iran's security policy from 1979 to the present day. Consequently, Iran set up a security policy, which merged a general defensive layout with elements of deterrence that was later supplemented with limited capability for power projection.<sup>234</sup> In the face of its conventional inferiority compared with that of the U.S. forces, and Iran's intent to export the revolution, the regime introduced elements of irregular warfare into its security policy.<sup>235</sup> Its security policy therefore rests on a duality of conventional and unconventional elements. While the

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<sup>231</sup> For example: Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran...*, 124.

<sup>232</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 257.

<sup>233</sup> While the Shah had nearly unlimited support by the U.S. for equipping his security forces, that convenience was obsolete after the revolution. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 301.

<sup>234</sup> The capability for power projection was mainly generated by the IRIN. See: Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 282.

<sup>235</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al., *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 49.

Pasdaran functions as the latter, the Artesh assumed the conventional piece.<sup>236</sup> Therefore, Iran's double-stranded security policy, with need for conventional forces, legitimated the Artesh from a regulative perspective.

Deduced from security policy, is doctrine, or as Dennis Drew writes: "military doctrine is what we believe about the best way to conduct military affairs".<sup>237</sup> That implies that doctrine can also change if circumstances such as, new technology or emerging threats call for it.<sup>238</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Artesh dealt mainly with external security threats in the 1960s. Yet, at that time the U.S. believed that the main risks for Iran's stability lay internally, contradictory to the Shah's opinion and wanted to focus the Artesh on domestic operations.<sup>239</sup> However, the Nixon Doctrine of 1969 stressed the importance of each countries own responsibility for homeland defence which subsequently allowed the Shah to steer his military forces with a threefold doctrine.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> However, as earlier mentioned in this paper, there is also evidence that the Artesh were exposed to irregular tactics during the Iran-Iraq war and in particular, the navy applied irregular tactics at the end of the war. See: Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 116.

<sup>237</sup> Dennis Drew, and Don Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell, USA: Air University Press, 1988), 163.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>239</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 192.

<sup>240</sup> Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah...*, 303.

The doctrines triad of homeland defence, offensive operations and counterinsurgency, satisfied the Shah's security needs and ambitions.<sup>241</sup> The conventional responsibilities of homeland defence and regional power projection were conceptualized, for example, by the land forces with doctrinal emphasis on mobile warfare, the air force build-up of modern airplanes and the navy's increasing training and procurement emphasis on blue water tasks. The more unconventional counterinsurgency aspect mainly involved special-forces units able to deal with, for example, guerrilla attacks on oilrigs.<sup>242</sup> In summary, the pre-revolutionary conventional doctrine, scattered with elements of irregular warfare, gave the Artesh regulative legitimacy.

After the revolution of 1979, doctrinal thinking emphasized the religiously justified use of force.<sup>243</sup> As discussed earlier, the 1979 constitution postulated an Islamic army guided by revolutionary ideology plus Khomeini was deeply convinced of the value of martyrdom and sacrifice.<sup>244</sup> Hence, the massive doctrinal shift initially de-legitimized the "secular-conventional" indoctrinated Artesh. On the other hand, Khomeini, aware of upcoming internal and external threats, kept the Shah's conventional army.<sup>245</sup> However, the early phases of the Iran-Iraq war revealed that the regime's ideology still outweighed

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<sup>241</sup> After the United States announced that it would not replace Great Britain in the region, Iran was expected to take over that role in the Gulf, which the Shah willingly did. See: Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 194.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 196 -199.

<sup>243</sup> Sepehr Zabi, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War* (New York, USA: Routledge, 1988), 136.

<sup>244</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 74.

<sup>245</sup> Sepehr Zabi, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War ...*, 136.

“conventional doctrinal thinking”. The initial successes of human wave tactics encouraged the regimes belief in the supremacy of revolutionary zeal.<sup>246</sup> Yet, this alone, was not sufficient to deal with a conventionally operating and superior adversary.<sup>247</sup> Subsequently, in face of the heavy losses caused by implementation of said tactics, the regime’s increasing challenge to legitimize the protracted war in the society, but also the sheer needs of the battlefield, convinced the regime to add conventional military elements besides martyrdom and irregular warfare tactics into doctrine.<sup>248</sup> In contrast, Khomeini’s verve for sacrifice was inherent within the Artesh, though they did not seek martyrdom.<sup>249</sup> The increasingly doctrinal blend of conventional, unconventional, and revolutionary elements as well as the Artesh ability to sacrifice re-legitimized the Artesh in a regulatory context. This was fostered after the war following shifts in doctrinal thinking in the 1990s.<sup>250</sup> In particular, with Iran’s war experiences, its perceived inability to cope with a superior enemy, and the revival of conventional military thinking with regard to hegemonic aspirations, drove a doctrine, which contains hybrid conventional with asymmetric elements and revolutionary ideology.<sup>251</sup> In addition, because of demands for a better battlefield performance, Iran’s doctrine became more joint and combined.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>247</sup> Rob Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War ...*, 78.

<sup>248</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 289.

<sup>249</sup> Fatemah Aman, “Living with the Artesh Green Sympathies....”, 18.

<sup>250</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 49.

<sup>251</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 281-282.

<sup>252</sup> United States Institute for Peace, “The Iran Primer: Iran’s Military Doctrine,”; available from <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

While the Pasdaran's training, equipment, and operational focus generally covered the asymmetric doctrinal portion, the Artesh anchored the major responsibilities of conventional duties.<sup>253</sup> Therefore, Iran's hybrid doctrine together with the Artesh proved ability to partly adapt to revolutionary elements (sacrifice), strengthening the Artesh regulative pillar and its legitimacy after the war.

In summary, Shi'ism and the constitution remained stable anchors in justifying military forces from a regulative point of view. Furthermore, the Artesh were a key pillar within the Shah's security policy and therefore legitimate. The revolution of 1979 triggered an increasing threat level and isolation for Iran, which together with its regional ambitions, shaped a defensive security policy that included elements for limited power projection. The security policies dual nature of conventional and unconventional warfare fundamentals subsequently legitimized the Artesh in a regulative framework. Doctrine follows security policy and therefore, the Shah's doctrine, with the (mainly) conventional elements, promoted the Artesh. While, the revolutionary emphasis on ideology and unconventional doctrine weakened the regulative pillar of the Artesh, due to the battlefield experiences, harsh conditions and a revival of conventional thinking, Iran's doctrine became a hybrid of conventional, unconventional, and revolutionary elements. Together with the Artesh ability to adapt in part to revolutionary ideas, doctrine eventually regulatory re-legitimized Iran's conventional military.

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<sup>253</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study...*, 270.



## **Conclusions**

This chapter analyzed the Artesh regulative legitimacy and the impact of Iran's elite on this institution. It analyzed patronage and factionalism but also, more formal factors such as Shi'ism, the constitution, security policy and doctrine.

The ancient mode of patronage has been valid in Iran for centuries and the Shah's sponsorship strengthened the meaning of the Artesh, whereby the early revolution cut its patronage, this eventually weakened its regulative pillar. The lessons of the Iran-Iraq war and the regime's emphasis on professionalization of Iran's security forces, together with eased tensions toward the Artesh, bred patronage and therefore re-legitimized the Iranian institution in a regulative context.

The same supportive effects were generated by factionalism, whereby the Artesh, spoiled by the Shah later in the revolution, took a back seat to the Pasdaran. However, from the late 1980s onwards, factionalism generated support for the Artesh due to the recognition by top leaders for the need of conventional forces. Notwithstanding the frictions over resources with the Pasdaran, this further fostered Artesh legitimacy.

The formal factors of Shi'ism and the constitution proved to be supportive elements of the Artesh regulative pillar. The same is true of security policy, where the Artesh played a key role in the conventionally coloured outline during the Shah era and were subsequently kept important by the revolutionary dual stranded conventional/unconventional security policy. While the conventional Shah doctrine was doubtlessly supportive of the Artesh, the juvenile revolutions emphasis on ideology and asymmetric warfare weakened its legitimacy. However, the shaping Iran-Iraq war,

together with Iran's increasing isolation, forced the regime to rethink conventional doctrine and induce a hybrid doctrine, which gave the Artesh meaning and legitimacy.

In summary despite phases with shaky bricks within the regulative pillar, all factors eventually strengthened the Artesh and therefore ensured its legitimacy as an Iranian institution.

## **VI. THE STATE OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE NORMATIVE, CULTURAL-COGNITIVE, AND REGULATIVE PILLARS**

The final chapter focuses on the interaction of normative, cultural-cognitive, and regulative pillar. Institutions are stable when elements, which are taken for granted, normatively acknowledged and regulative approved are present and all three pillars are aligned.<sup>254</sup> Conversely, a misalignment makes institutions vulnerable for change because opposite drifting creates frictions and tensions within the institution. In the case of the Artesh, the paper has revealed that factors of the three pillars were particularly weak in the early days of the revolution. The analysis has also shown that after the Iran-Iraq war and up to the millennium, increasingly, all three pillars were stable with a tendency to solidify the meaning of the Artesh. Therefore, one could conclude that all three pillars, taken separately, were well aligned and fostered the legitimacy of the Artesh as an Iranian institution until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>254</sup> W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: ...*, 62.

For reassessing that conclusion, the purpose of this chapter examines the different pillars from 2002 to 2012. Here it is necessary to note that Iran is not an isolated island, independent and resistant to changes in a dynamic world. Key events within the last decade affected Iran and its institutions. The engagement of the West in Afghanistan after 9/11, and operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003 on, changed the long-term balance of forces towards Shi'ite Iran.<sup>255</sup> In contrast, Iran feels more vulnerable due to the increasing U.S. presence in the region and therefore put a premium on means of deterrence.<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2011 as well as the Arab Spring have influenced Iran's economic outlook. Because Iran generates 70% of its revenues from oil exports, a decline (or rise) in the world market price affects Iran's ability to finance its security forces.<sup>257</sup> In addition, the reformists failed in achieving improvements for the society which resulted in the former Pasdaran cadre Ahmadinejad's presidential election in 2005 and which resulted in a shift of its attitudes towards revolutionary zeal including asymmetric warfare.<sup>258</sup> The regime was further encouraged to promote asymmetric warfare by the Hezbollah's success during the 2006 war of 33 days.<sup>259</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>255</sup> Jerold D. Green, Frederic Wehrey, and Charles Wolf Jr., *Understanding Iran* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009), 103.

<sup>256</sup> Roger Howard, *Iran in Crisis? Nuclear Ambitions and the American Response* (London: ZED Books, 2004), 3.

<sup>257</sup> Keith Crane, *Iran's Political, Demographic ...*, 74.

<sup>258</sup> Joshua Himes, "Iran's Two Navies: A Maturing Maritime Strategy," *Institute for the Study of War*, October 2011: 6; available from <http://understandingwar.org/report/irans-two-navies>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>259</sup> Frederic Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 54.

the “Green Movement” of 2009 also revealed that the Artesh were a factor which cannot be neglected by the regime. At that time, the Artesh rank and file revealed in subtle ways its sympathy for the protesters.<sup>260</sup> Furthermore, despite considerations to use the Artesh for suppressing the movement, Artesh leaders sent public signals to remain neutral.<sup>261</sup> Those aforementioned factors frame the realm for the following analysis of the current and future legitimacy of the Artesh in this chapter.

## **The Normative Pillar**

### **System of Checks and Balances**

The significance of checks and balances at large has kept valid within the last decade. There is no evidence that Iran’s leaders, despite negative effects of sanctions on its economy and increasing threats particularly by the U.S., seriously tried to merge both forces to generate a more efficient security structure. However, the repression of the pro-democracy movement in 2009 and 2011, as well as the extension of the Arab Spring to Syria, together with increasing international pressure on Iran, offered the Pasdaran a new opportunity to strengthen its grip on the Islamic Republic. They used the crisis for increasing their control over the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Iran’s

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<sup>260</sup> Alex Vatanka, “Ayatollah Khamenei’s Advances Toward the Artesh,” *Middle East Institute*, January 2012: 58; <http://www.mei.edu/content/ayatollah-khameneis-advances-toward-artesh>; accessed 05 February 2012.

<sup>261</sup> Ken Katzman, “The Politics of Iran’s Regular Military ...”, 11.

political system.<sup>262</sup> This growing “militarization” of Iran’s power centres by the Pasdaran presents a risk for the normative pillar of the Artesh.<sup>263</sup> However, evidence reveals that even the Supreme leader’s overarching power necessary for balancing the factions is possibly at risk.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, the power shift in favour of the Pasdaran could also marginalize the Artesh and therefore has potential to weaken its normative legitimacy.

On the other hand, Iran’s striving for economy of forces and its closing the ranks, is visible in its restructuring of IRIN and the IRGCN (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy) since 2011, with clear allocation of tasks and responsibilities. While both, in the past, had responsibilities in the Persian Gulf, the IRGC focus is the Persian Gulf coastal waters and the IRIN is responsible for the blue water terrain such as the Gulf of Oman

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<sup>262</sup> Allen L. Keiswetter, “The Arab Spring: Implications for US Policy and Interests,” Middle East Institute, January 2012; <http://www.mei.edu/content/arab-spring-implications-us-policy-and-interests>; Internet; accessed 05 April 2012.

<sup>263</sup> However, other scholars do not see a militarization of Iran. They argue that the Supreme Leader still has the control of power and furthermore, the existence of two militaries prevents the monopolization of power. The main reason for an increasing presence of Pasdaran members in politics is argued as simply a demographic one. This current political generation rose in the ranks of the Pasdaran since the 1980s and has obtained the age, experience and loyalty to the regime for being active in Iran’s political establishment. See for example: Walter Posch, “Ahamdineshad und die Prinzipalisten: Iran’s politische Rechte und die Perspektiven fuer einen Neuen Elitenkompromiss,” *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Studie*, December 2011: 23; [http://www.swpberlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2011\\_S35\\_poc\\_ks.pdf](http://www.swpberlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2011_S35_poc_ks.pdf); Internet; accessed 05 April 2012.

<sup>264</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses,” *CRS Report for Congress*, March 2012: 3; <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>; Internet; accessed 05 April 2012.

and south of the Strait of Hormuz towards the Pakistani border.<sup>265</sup> This indicates the regime's unchanged recognition of the need for two militaries where both act as a check against each other and subsequently legitimates the Artesh from a normative framework.

### Deception or *Druj*

Furthermore, the meaning of *druj* has remained stable. Iran is due to the sanction unable to modernize and equip its security forces and therefore conventionally impotent to cope with a superior adversary like the U.S.<sup>266</sup> Therefore, Iran has continued with the exaggeration of own capabilities. The Artesh is used a tool for the regime to operationalize the concept of *druj*, visible, for example in 2004, with the Artesh announcement that they increasingly training for irregular warfare.<sup>267</sup> Indeed, the U.S. invasion of Iraq forced Iran to send a signal towards the U.S. in an attempt to deter them from invading Iran. However, there is uncertainty about the Artesh true efforts in doing so. Besides, the fog and friction created by the IRIN Commander Sayyari in September 2011, where he mentioned the ability of the IRIN to show a presence on the eastern coast of the U.S. and close the Strait of Hormuz, also demonstrated the concept of *druj*.<sup>268</sup> No

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<sup>265</sup> Joshua Himes, "Iran's Two Navies: ...", 7.

<sup>266</sup> There is a growing and increasing capable domestic industry, yet it is not sufficient to procure the quantity and quality (in particular high technology) necessary to cope with modern Western forces. See: Global Security Org, "Iran's Defence Industry", available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iran/industry.htm>; Internet, accessed 14 March 2012.

<sup>267</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 323.

<sup>268</sup> The Inquirer, "Iran Navy Sending Warships To Patrol Near U.S. East Coast," available from

doubt, this statement is propaganda, but furthermore distracts from Iran's real military capabilities and generates challenges for Western intelligence. Both examples illustrate that the Artesh has kept its value for the regime regarding deception and hence stabilized its normative pillar.

### The Iran-Iraq War

The impact of the Iran-Iraq war has kept its importance in the last decade. In the context of an increased likelihood of an Israeli and/or Western attack, the Iranians have, for example, reactivated their sacred defence plans.<sup>269</sup> Notwithstanding Iran's regional ambitions, this previous war experience is reflected in Iran's general defensive security layout, which includes conventional elements like the Artesh.

### Ethos and Morale

On the other hand, unbalanced media coverage together with the apparatus' lack of appreciation for the Artesh war sacrifices led to a public statement in 2009 by the Army criticizing those misconceptions.<sup>270</sup> It showed an Artesh, proud of their sacrifices and integrated the war into their tradition, which is despite a generational change was

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<http://www.inquisitr.com/145897/iran-navy-sending-warships-to-patrol-near-u-s-east-coast/#sofrxjM1lkKpdWTL.99>; Internet, accessed 14 March 2012.

<sup>269</sup> Fars News Agency, "Cleric: Iran's Military, Political Might be Boosted by Sacred Defence," available from <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8807030760>; Internet; accessed 05 April 2012.

<sup>270</sup> Fatemah Aman, "Living with the Artesh Green Sympathies....", 19.

important for its ethos. In contrast, that self-promotion attempt of the Artesh might suggest that the army is not as legitimate as it seems. However, it could also depict the increasing self-esteem of the Artesh, which uses the revival of sacred defence for boosting its image in the society.<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, the IRIN put a premium on training and are perceived as the more professional force within the population, as well as by its Western counterparts.<sup>272</sup> Yet, there is evidence that in particular, the Artesh land forces were neglected during the last decades, which likely tested its morale.<sup>273</sup> However, there is also proof that the Army has improved its capabilities and is able to defend Iran against its neighbours.<sup>274</sup> This is only possible with sufficient training and operational standards, which indicates an overall stable ethos. Moreover, the regime's experiences with the Green Movement seem to increase its acknowledgement of the necessity to keep the Artesh as a relevant and loyal player, visible in its increasing advances towards them. Khamenei, for example, stressed during a visit of Army units in 2011, the importance of

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<sup>271</sup> Lesser funding of the Artesh, compared with the better career chances and payment in the Pasdaran, likely challenges the morale of the Artesh. See: Sharif Sokkary, "A United States Marine's View of the Artesh and IRGC," *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, November 2011: 53; <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>272</sup> Michael Connell, "The Artesh Navy: Iran's Strategic Force," *Middle East Institute*, January 2012: 1; <http://www.mei.edu/content/artesh-navy-irans-strategic-force>; Internet; accessed 06 February 2012.

<sup>273</sup> See: Chapter II the Normative Pillar.

<sup>274</sup> Secretary of Defence, *Unclassified Report on Military of Iran* (Washington: Department of Defence, 2010), 7.



good working and living conditions for the military.<sup>275</sup> Therefore, despite some challenges for the Artesh, its aforementioned pride in the Iran-Iraq war and other stabilizing factors like nationalism, regional supremacy and the perception of insecurity, as well as the increasing support by Iran's elite, proved supportive for the Artesh ethos. Hence, it remained a reliable factor for the Artesh normative legitimacy.

In summary, the system of checks and balances and *druj* maintained their importance in Iran. As analyzed, the Artesh have been an important factor for both elements and therefore has kept their normative legitimacy. However, the increasing monopolization of power by the Pasdaran by trend jars the balanced system in Iran and therefore, has potential to weaken the normative legitimacy of the Artesh. In contrast, the ongoing presence of the Iran-Iraq war in Iran's security institutions together with the reactivation of sacred defence plans, plus a stable military ethos supports the Artesh normatively. Overall, this pillar has contributed to the legitimacy of the Artesh as an Iranian institution within the last decade, with potential to decrease.

### **The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar**

#### Nationalism

The cultural-cognitive pillar has remained stable for the Artesh legitimacy. While the eras of "*reconstruction*" and "*reform*" minted a more pragmatic approach towards the

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<sup>275</sup> Press TV, "Leader hails Iran Armed Forces," available from <http://edition.presstv.ir/search.html?q=Leader+hails+Iran+Armed+Forces>; Internet, accessed 14 March 2012.

West (including nationalism as an important factor), a nationalistic stance was reinforced during the Ahmadinejad presidency.<sup>276</sup> This trend further increased the militarization of the society, whereby Ahmadinejad brought Pasdaran cadres into key positions, which deepened its strong participation in all parts of Iranian politics and as earlier mentioned, has a potential for marginalizing the Artesh legitimacy.<sup>277</sup> However, the militarization *per se* supports the armed forces legitimacy and in addition, there is evidence that the Artesh has profited from nationalism. With regard to the nuclear issue, for example, it is the Artesh, which is tasked to protect nuclear sites.<sup>278</sup> In summary, nationalism has been, notwithstanding the Pasdaran rise, a stable factor for the Artesh cultural-cognitive legitimacy.

### Superiority and Vulnerability

This is also valid for the Iranian perceptions of superiority and vulnerability. While in the 1990s and early 2000s its mainly geostrategic aspects drove Iran's regional ambitions, Ahmadinejad reinforced Khomeini's idea of spreading the ideology.<sup>279</sup> While the latter task is the Pasdaran's speciality, the increase of Iran's geostrategic regional ambitions is a task for the Artesh, and in particular, its navy. Iran labels the IRIN a

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<sup>276</sup> Ali M. Ansari names it a vulgar nationalism due to Ahmadinejad's rough public announcements. See: Ali M. Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad: ...*, 78.

<sup>277</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution* (London: I.B. Tauris&Co Ltd, 2007), 82.

<sup>278</sup> The nuclear technology itself is controlled by the Pasdaran. See: Bernd Kaussler, "The Iranian Army: Tasks and Capabilities ...", 37.

<sup>279</sup> Iran Policy Committee, *What makes Tehran Tick: ...*, 27.

”strategic navy”, able to project power beyond Iran’s borders and has demonstrated that ambition with a variety of activities, for example, by the passage of Iranian warships through the Suez Channel into the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, Iran increased its domestic shipbuilding program with new frigates and submarines and proved its capability for sustained operations in blue water since 2008, with anti-piracy patrols a distance from Iranian coastal waters in the Gulf of Aden.<sup>281</sup>

While the IRIN displays capabilities for power projection, the Artesh land forces are unable to contribute to that goal. They have a very limited capability for power projection, but they are quite capable for homeland defence.<sup>282</sup> With reservations, this also applies to the Air Force, which cannot project power because of an obsolete fleet and lack of training but boasts a modern air interception capability for defending the country.<sup>283</sup> Finally, the allocation of the Air Defence to the Artesh in 2008 may foster its

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<sup>280</sup> The Telegraph, “Iran Claims its Navy enters Mediterranean as Tensions with Israel Grow”, available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9090465/Iran-claims-its-navy-enters-Mediterranean-as-tensions-with-Israel-grow.html>; Internet, accessed 14 February 2012.

<sup>281</sup> Defence Web, “Iranians Navy’s first Indigenous Destroyer begins Anti-Piracy Patrol,” available from [http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19950:iranian-navys-first-indigenous-destroyer-begins-anti-piracy-patrol&catid=51:Sea&Itemid=106](http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19950:iranian-navys-first-indigenous-destroyer-begins-anti-piracy-patrol&catid=51:Sea&Itemid=106); Internet, accessed 14 October 2011.

<sup>282</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, and Khalid R. Al-Rodhan, *Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars*, Vol. 2 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007), 336.

<sup>283</sup> The modern MiG 29 is a valuable asset in Iran’s arsenal. See: Hossein Aryan, “The Artesh: Iran’s Marginalized and Under-Armed Conventional Military,” Middle East Institute Viewpoints, November 2011: 49; <http://www.mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications/Viewpoints/>

legitimacy, though this can be due to a limited number of weapon systems that only defend key infrastructure.<sup>284</sup> To be clear, the limited capabilities of the Artesh for power projection, in contrast to the Pasdaran asymmetric projection capabilities, do not weaken its legitimacy. The opposite is true; both tasks are different and need a different set of forces. While conventional power projection rests on an obvious and strong footprint, the unconventional requires small and agile forces.<sup>285</sup> Two completely distinct capabilities hence justify different forces, and therefore the cultural-cognitive legitimacy of the Pasdaran and the Artesh.

Furthermore, the regime's perception of insecurity has grown in the last decade. Beside hard power in form of Western military forces in the region, there are the "soft power threats" of opposition movements that drive this sensitivity.<sup>286</sup> The former is reflected in Iran's security strategy containing a strong deterrence component in form of ballistic missiles controlled by the Pasdaran, which also encompasses homeland defence. As later in this chapter will be shown, Iran's mosaic defence strategy requires conventional and unconventional forces. Iran's increasing defensive posture with the erection of new bases along its borders indicates the importance of homeland defence and

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ViewpointsArchive/tabid/541/ctl/Detail/mid/1623/xmid/2202/xmfid/11/Default.aspx; Internet; accessed 06 December 2011.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>285</sup> The spread of the revolution and support of Iran's proxies is mainly accomplished by the Pasdaran Special Forces, the Al Quds Brigades.

<sup>286</sup> Joshua Himes, "Iran's Two Navies: ...", 11.

underlines a stable cultural-cognitive legitimacy of the Artesh.<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, the regime's perceived soft threat by the Green Movement gave rise to the Pasdaran, but also reveals the necessity of a loyal Artesh. Therefore, both forces normative legitimacy profited from the internal unrest.

Overall, superiority and insecurity remained constants in the Artesh normative pillar. Iran's hegemonic claims and a rise in its perceived insecurity during the last decade have notwithstanding, challenges regarding its military capabilities bolstered the Artesh normative legitimacy.

#### Perception of the Artesh in the Society

The Artesh image tends to raise despite the fact that serving in the Pasdaran is perceived as easier.<sup>288</sup> However, Steven Ward notes, "the Guards even mimic the Pahlavi military in its role [...], influential in politics, bathed in privileges, [...]"<sup>289</sup> With the Pasdaran's interference in all aspects of Iranian life, it seems consistent that the Artesh image is better than the Pasdaran. Furthermore, the Artesh are perceived as more professional and apolitical by its nature.<sup>290</sup> This was obvious during the Green Movement

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<sup>287</sup> Fars News, "Commander: Army to Reinvigorate Military Buildup along Iranian Borders," available from <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9001231869>; Internet, accessed 18 February 2012.

<sup>288</sup> Michael Connell, "The Artesh Navy: Iran's Strategic Force," *Middle East Institute*, January 2012: 3; <http://www.mei.edu/content/artesh-navy-irans-strategic-force>; Internet; accessed 06 February 2012.

<sup>289</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: ...*, 302.

<sup>290</sup> Michael Connell, "The Artesh Navy: ...", 3.

of 2009, where the protesters addressed the Army, if not to join them in their protest, to stay neutral.<sup>291</sup> While the Artesh has been continuously used to suppress internal secessions, the Artesh cadre obviously can differ between legal political protest and illegal secessionist movements.<sup>292</sup> A letter released by mid-level Artesh commanders in 2009, criticised the brutal attacks of the security forces against demonstrators and may corroborate that deduction.<sup>293</sup> However, there are also signs for an increasing involvement of Artesh top cadres into politics, which is illustrated by their evolving number of public statements.<sup>294</sup> Conversely, there is nonetheless latent potential, and no sign that the Artesh lost reputation due to those activities. In total, the Artesh have increasingly improved its image within the last decade, which therefore promoted its cultural-cognitive legitimacy.

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<sup>291</sup> YouTube, “A message from Green Movement to Armed Forces of Iran,” available from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_YgagNKDJU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_YgagNKDJU); Internet, accessed 18 February 2012.

<sup>292</sup> EurasiaReview, “The Iranian Army: Tasks And Capabilities – Analysis,” available from <http://www.eurasiareview.com/2011/2011-the-iranian-army-tasks-and-capabilities-analysis/>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

<sup>293</sup> Iran Opposition, “Iran’s Main Army: Artesh,” available from <http://raymorrison.wordpress.com/2010/01/22/irans-main-army-artesh/>; Internet, accessed 18 February 2012.

<sup>294</sup> This is likely owed to the factionalism and patronage of Khamenei for the Artesh, which will be addressed later in this chapter. See for example: Fars News Agency, “Iranian Army Urges Closer Ties Among Muslim Armies,” available from <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9012152333>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

In summary, increased nationalism, the flamed hegemonic desire, together with Iran's perception of insecurity, nurtured the need for the Artesh within the last decade. Notwithstanding challenges in its capabilities, together with its better image, all factors contributed to a stable and strong cultural-cognitive pillar, which legitimates the Artesh as an institution. However, the increasing involvement of Artesh cadres in politics has the potential to weaken its cultural-cognitive legitimacy.

### **The Regulative Pillar**

#### **Patronage and Factionalism**

Iran's political arena has remained dynamic in the last decade. After the reformists, the "new conservatives" with Ahmadinejad assumed power. With him, the Pasdaran's power and influence has risen because the "new conservatives" mainly consists of ex or active Pasdaran personnel.<sup>295</sup> In contrast to the dialogue-oriented reformists, Ahmadinejad applies an aggressive and provocative foreign policy.<sup>296</sup> That change in Iran's political landscape affected patronage and factionalism with regard to the Artesh. The rise of the Pasdaran and its regulative legitimacy on the cost of the Artesh started in the 1990s.<sup>297</sup> That rise accelerated after the election in 2005 and together with the reformist's neutralization, generated a loss of patronage for the Artesh and

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<sup>295</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 25.

<sup>296</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad: ...*, 46.

<sup>297</sup> Mainly because of the support of the Supreme Leader Khamenei, who has always cultivated a cognitive collusion with the Pasdaran, and wanted to counterbalance the reformist Khatami.

subsequently sidelined them.<sup>298</sup> The Pasdaran assumed control over ballistic missiles and received more resources during that time.<sup>299</sup> The lack of patronage and factionalism in that timeframe weakened the Artesh regulative legitimacy.

On the contrary, Khamenei has started to promote the Artesh and rebalance factionalism since 2010.<sup>300</sup> The obvious sympathy for the Artesh together with its declared neutrality in the realm of the Green Movement 2009 suggests that:

It is highly unlikely that this Army would engage in a plan to plot the regime's overthrow. However, as is evident by post-2009 election events, it is receptive to political change and welcomes the country opening up to the world as espoused by the Green opposition.<sup>301</sup>

The potential for insubordination by Artesh members endangering the regime during phases of domestic turmoil is a risk, which the Supreme Leader can scarcely bear.<sup>302</sup> Therefore, the Supreme Leader has to consider the Artesh as an important player to be kept loyal to the regime. This deduction is supported by Khamenei's internal power

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<sup>298</sup> Electoral Geography 2.0, "Iran. Presidential Election," available from <http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/i/iran/2005-president-elections-iran.html>Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

<sup>299</sup> Richard Russell, "The Artesh: From the War with Iraq until Today...", 28.

<sup>300</sup> Though, it was not fully reflected in the controversial 2009 election where he obviously backed the conservative candidate Ahmadinejad. See: David E. Thaler, et al, *Mullahs, Guards and Bonyads: ...*, 47.

<sup>301</sup> Fatemah Aman, "Living with the Artesh Green Sympathies....",19.

<sup>302</sup> Alex Vatanka, "Ayatollah Khamenei's Advances Toward the Artesh ...", 58.



struggle with Ahmadinejad since 2011.<sup>303</sup> For maintaining his power, Khamenei has started to increase his grip on Iran's security forces.<sup>304</sup> The growing presence of Artesh top leaders in the media or the allocation of new equipment to the Artesh may indicate "Ayatollah Khamenei's advances toward the Artesh". However, it hardly means that he favours one military at the expense of the other, but rather it seems that he wants to support both Iranian armed forces. Increasing joint activity in exercises and operations between Artesh and Pasdaran shows that Khamenei wants to close the ranks of his security forces.<sup>305</sup> In addition, Iran's "militarization", notwithstanding the risks for the Artesh normative legitimacy, with supremacy of military minded personnel in key positions, may be a further explanation for the current reinstatement of regular forces. In summary, after years of being marginalized, it seems that patronage and factionalism since 2010 has increasingly backed the Artesh regulative pillar and re-legitimized it as an Iranian institution.

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<sup>303</sup> CNN, "Ahmadinejad Fights Rare Public Battle with Iran's Supreme Leader," available from <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/05/10/ahmadinejad-fights-rare-public-battle-with-irans-supreme-leader/?iref=allsearch>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

<sup>304</sup> The Voting News, "Iran's Parliamentary Vote: The Beginning of the End of Ahmadinejad," available from <http://thevotingnews.com/editorial/irans-parliamentary-vote-the-beginning-of-the-end-of-ahmadinejad-angie-ahmadihuffington-post/>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

<sup>305</sup> Fars News Agency, "Commander: Army, IRGC Review Latest Air Defense Tactics in Drills," available from <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9010175740>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

## Shi'ism, the Constitution and Security Policy, Strategy and Doctrine

While Shi'ism and the constitution remained unchanged in the last decade and therefore backed the Artesh regulative legitimacy, security policy and doctrine evolved. Iran's contemporary strategy encompasses internal stability, deterrence, homeland defence, and expanding its regional power including an international search for influence.<sup>306</sup> The Artesh is needed in several of the aforementioned pieces. Firstly, as a security force able to cope with internal threats. The slow modernization of its conventional forces steers Iran's emphasis in deterrence on the Pasdaran's ballistic missiles.<sup>307</sup> However, deception with exaggeration and camouflage of own capabilities are part of deterrence and as earlier mentioned, the Artesh have their meaning in that endeavour. Secondly, Iran changed its strategy for homeland defence after the defeat of the Taliban and Iraq. Its 2005 announced mosaic defence doctrine aims at a technological and manpower superior enemy. In that strategy, the Artesh form the first line of defence at the borders, while the Pasdaran operates under irregular methods mainly in the depth of the country together with the Basij.<sup>308</sup> Finally, expanding regional power besides exporting the revolution by the Pasdaran, also doctrinally includes the IRIN, as the regime's perceived strategic force with the (very ambitious) long-term goal to enlarge its influence across the Indian Ocean to the Malacca Strait.<sup>309</sup> Iran's security policy, strategy

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<sup>306</sup> Fredric Wehrey, et al, *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: ...*, 41.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

<sup>308</sup> United States Institute for Peace, "The Iran Primer: Iran's Military Doctrine," available from <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>; Internet, accessed 16 March 2012.

<sup>309</sup> Joshua Himes, "Iran's Two Navies: ...", 11.

and doctrine was kept hybrid with its mixture of conventional and asymmetric elements and the Artesh were applied to important roles within that strategy. Overall, the last decade further consolidated the Artesh meaning with regard to the security triangle of policy, strategy and doctrine and therefore its regulatory legitimacy.

In summary, while the lack of patronage and factionalism from 2005 to 2009 damaged the regulative pillar of the Artesh, the Green Movement, and the power struggle within the regime and the arguably increasing militarization of Iran's establishment, helped the Artesh in order to recuperate from that weakness. Furthermore, the security triangle remained a stable factor for the Artesh regulative pillar. In summary this pillar of the Artesh in contemporary Iran is in tendency getting stronger and supports the Artesh regulatory meaning.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter focused on the last decade and key events which, with respect to the normative, cultural-cognitive, and regulative factors, have influenced the Artesh legitimacy. All pillars interact and must be aligned in order to maintain an institution. Various factors kept firm or increased the Artesh meaning during the last 10 years and therefore, stabilized the respective pillars. As the analysis revealed, the normative factors *druj* and the impact of the Iran-Iraq war, as well as the cultural-cognitive factors like Iran's increasing nationalism and regional hegemony aspirations, together with a higher perception of insecurity since 2005, boosted the Artesh legitimacy. The same conclusion is reached for the regulative features of Shi'ism, the constitution and security triangle.

However, while the meaning of the system of checks and balances remained important, the increasing grip of the Pasdaran on Iran's power centres generates a potential for an imbalance, which could weaken the Artesh normative legitimacy in the future, though that regime's militarization generally promotes regular military forces. Another latent would-be weakening, despite the Artesh improvements in the last decade, lay in the Artesh cultural-cognitive pillar, where its image, due to the increasing politicization of top Artesh leaders could suffer, though it is currently not foreseeable. In addition, the Artesh ethos was challenged since the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005, though was overall kept stable by pride in its war performance and supporting factors like nationalism and the increasing support by Khamenei since 2010. Ahmadinejad's presidency also led to lack of patronage and factionalism for the Artesh, which weakened its regulative legitimacy. However, the shaping event of the Green Movement in 2009, as well as an internal power struggle, turned the tide for the Artesh and therefore its regulative pillar started to recover.

At the present time, despite potential challenges for the Artesh normative and cultural-cognitive legitimacy, all three pillars appear to be well aligned and therefore the Artesh has kept its legitimacy as an Iranian institution within the last decade.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the Artesh legitimacy by using Scott's model of institutional analysis. It covered normative, cultural-cognitive, and regulative factors, whereby all three pillars provide legitimacy to an institution, moreover, the further aligned, the deeper the legitimacy. From the 1970s to 2012, key events shaped the

Artesh legitimacy and revealed an Iran, which is not omnipotent against global dynamics. The revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, 9/11, the West's subsequent war on terror and recently the Green Movement, generated a cumulative level of legitimacy, which roughly follows a sine curve. Some factors in the respective pillars proved to be stable contributors preventing that curve from gliding below the horizontal axis of abscissae, which is equal to a marginalized legitimacy while others generated the curvy course of that graph.

The Shah's Artesh was an institution, whose pillars aligned well and therefore was legitimate. However, at the end of that era in particular, its cultural-cognitive pillar weakened because of the different perceptions between society and the Artesh regarding Western influence and threats. Furthermore, privileges and weak leadership battered its image in the 1970s. Both shortcomings were in the cultural-cognitive pillar, which have, with reference to Scott's model, significant effects on an institution's legitimacy. This indicates that these two factors strongly contributed to the Artesh weakening at the beginning of the revolution.

Yet, the revolution did not eradicate the Artesh. Doubtless, purges and mistrust, together with an emphasis on revolutionary zeal bated the Artesh ethos, cut patronage and factionalism as well as the emphasis on martyrdom and revolutionary doctrine, weakened its regulative legitimacy and overall set the Artesh back compared with the favoured Pasdaran. However, the institution was not abandoned, because some critical factors remained a reliable stake for its legitimacy. Khomeini, in particular, needed the Artesh as a check against the Pasdaran and the increasing internal and external threats forced him to keep the Shah's conventional military. In face of the weakness of the juvenile revolution,

the Artesh were also valuable for deception, and Shi'ism as well as the 1979 constitution, backed its legitimacy.

The Iran-Iraq war and the later reforms of the 1990s, draw the gradient of the Artesh legitimacy curve. The war revealed to the regime the necessity of a professional military, which favoured the Artesh and sidelined the Pasdaran, though the latter got a "second wind" in the late 1990s. However, patronage, pride in its war performance, the reformists support and the Artesh ability to partly adapt to the revolutionary ideas, supported them in recuperating its damaged military ethos, an important factor in its normative legitimacy. In addition, the cultural-cognitive factors such as the regime's blend of Persian nationalism and Shi'ism for enhancing the Iranians willingness to fight against Iraq, as well as other increasing external threats together with hegemonic aspirations, further stabilized the Artesh legitimacy. Its legitimacy was again boosted by the improved image generated by the Artesh war performance, declared neutrality and regulatory supported by its key role in Iran's post war hybrid conventional-unconventional security policy and doctrine. Hence, the analysis revealed that all three pillars were well aligned and subsequently, the Artesh legitimacy seemed to be unquestioned.

However, the peak of the Artesh legitimacy in 2005 was followed by a descent with the election of Ahmadinejad, though firm factors such as deception, the meaning of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran's increasing nationalism, hegemonic ambitions and threat perceptions, plus the Artesh multi-faceted role in Iran's security policy and mosaic-defence doctrine, assured a sufficient level of legitimacy. Yet, Ahmadinejad's support for the Pasdaran, together with a lack of factionalism, weakened the Artesh regulative pillar

and challenged its ethos, though they could preserve it. In addition, the Pasdaran's strive for power since the 2009 Green Movement, creates a potential risk for imbalance in favour of the Pasdaran, as well as the Artesh top leaders increasing political engagement, which implies a latent risk for its neutrality and consequently its image. Nevertheless, Khamenei's cognition following the Green Movement for keeping the Artesh loyal, as well as his efforts to strengthen his grip on both security forces and possibly Iran's militarization, stopped the negative turn of the legitimacy sinus curve and changed its amplitude upwards). Notwithstanding, the risks in the Artesh normative and cultural-cognitive pillars, the analysis revealed that all three pillars seem to be aligned and therefore, the Artesh in contemporary Iran, is a legitimate institution, which managed to stay alive and often vital in the last three decades.

The introduction mentioned the current discussion surrounding Iranian warfare capabilities; this paper demonstrates that the Artesh role, beside the Pasdaran, is completely underestimated by Western perception. It further highlights the merit of closer monitoring of Iran's regular military force. Referring to Clausewitz, it was cited that there is a level of uncertainty in intelligence reports he also wrote,

... an imminent war, its possible aims, and the resources it will require, are matters that can only be assessed when every circumstance has been examined in the context of the whole, ....<sup>310</sup>

Again, there is no open, ongoing war with Iran at present; however planning for a possible conflict requires crucial clarification concerning Iran's true war-fighting capabilities. This paper did not intend to fulfill Clausewitz's principle as a whole and

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<sup>310</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* ..., 586.

therefore to reveal Iran's complete military capabilities, but it aimed to contribute to that clarification with a basic understanding of Iran's conventional military forces – the Artesh, Iran's reputed sleeping beauty.



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