

THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS AND THE IRANIAN POLITICS:
CAUSES AND OUTCOMES OF THE SHIFTING RELATIONS BETWEEN
THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS AND THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN
POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

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ABSTRACT

THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS AND THE IRANIAN POLITICS: CAUSES AND OUTCOMES OF THE SHIFTING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS AND THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN POST- REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

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This dissertation is aimed at analyzing the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' (IRGC) relationship to politics, which evolved into different forms through the three decades of the revolution. Eventually the IRGC has become one of the most influential organizations with respect to Iranian politics. This situation has raised the following question; why and how has the IRGC become such an influential political actor in post-revolutionary Iranian politics? Considering different forms of the IRGC-politics relationship, this study also questioned the reasons that lay behind the shifts in that relationship.

In order to answer these questions, this dissertation examined the relationship between the Revolutionary Guards and the political leadership in post-revolutionary Iran. It maintained that there are four variables that determined the IRGC-politics relationship, which are ideological position of the political leadership, power of the political leadership, ideological outlook of the Revolutionary Guards and corporateness of the Revolutionary Guards. In order to analyze forms of the IRGC-politics relationship and to explain shifts between these forms, it traced these variables through the post-revolutionary history of Iran, which was divided into four

periods (i.e. transition, radical, thermidorian, and neo-radical periods) because of the changing political and revolutionary dynamics. It concluded that because corporateness of the IRGC reached into a high level whereas power of the political leadership was seriously weakened in the last two periods, the IRGC's clout significantly increased in Iranian politics. Congruence or incongruence between ideological values of the political leadership and of the IRGC, and their commitment to pursue those values determined the confrontationist or cooperative nature of the IRGC's relations with the political leadership.

Keywords: Iran, Iranian politics, IRGC, Revolutionary Guards, IRGC-politics relationship, revolution, revolutionary army, civil-military relations

ÖZ

DEVİRİM MUHAFIZLARI VE İRAN SİYASETİ: DEVİRİM SONRASI İRAN'DA DEVİRİM MUHAFIZLARI İLE SİYASİ LİDERLİK ARASINDA DEĞİŞKEN İLİŞKİLERİN NEDENLERİ VE SONUÇLARI

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Bu tezin amacı İran İslam Devrimi Muhafızları Ordusu'nun (İDMO) siyasetle devrimin ardından geçen otuz yılda farklı tarzlarda tezahür eden ilişkisini incelemektir. Nihayet Devrim Muhafızları İran siyasetiyle ilgili en etkili örgütlerden birisi haline gelmiştir. Bu durum şu sorunun ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur: Devrimi Muhafızları, devrim sonrası İran siyasetinde neden ve nasıl böyle önemli bir siyasi aktör haline gelmiştir? Ayrıca, bu çalışmada, Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyaset ile farklı tarzlarda ortaya çıkan ilişkisi dikkate alınarak bu tarzların değişmesinin ardındaki nedenler sorgulanmıştır.

Bu sorulara cevap bulmak amacıyla bu tezde devrim sonrası İran'da Devrim Muhafızları ile siyasi liderlik arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Tezde, dört değişken faktörün, yani siyasi liderliğin ideolojik tutumu, siyasi liderliğin gücü, Devrim Muhafızları'nın ideolojik bakış açısı ve Devrim Muhafızları'nın birliğinin (corporateness) İDMO-siyaset ilişkisini belirlediği ileri sürülmüştür. Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasetle ilişki tarzlarını çözümlmek ve bu tarzlar arasındaki değişiklikleri açıklamak için söz konusu değişkenler, farklı siyasi ve devrimci dinamiklerden dolayı dört döneme (geçiş dönemi, radikal, thermidoryen ve neo-radikal dönemler) ayrılan devrim sonrası İran tarihi boyunca izlenmiştir. Tezde, Devrim Muhafızları'nın birliği son iki dönemde oldukça yüksek bir düzeye

erişmişken siyasi liderliğin gücünün ciddi şekilde zayıflamış olması nedeniyle Devrim Muhafızları'nın İran siyasetindeki etkisinin büyük ölçüde arttığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Siyasi liderlik ile Devrim Muhafızları'nın ideolojik değerleri ve bu değerleri hayata geçirme kararlılıkları arasındaki uyum veya uyumsuzluk Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasi liderlikle ilişkilerinin çatışmacı ya da işbirlikçi doğasını belirlemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İran, İran Siyaseti, İDMO, Devrim Muhafızları, İDMO-siyaset ilişkisi, devrim, devrimci ordu, asker-sivil ilişkileri

To My Late Uncle and Grandpas

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The revolution that took place in Iran in February 1979 profoundly changed the values and norms dominating the Iranian politics, in addition to replacing the ruling elites and the institutions with the new ones. One of the new institutions that the revolution gave birth to was the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Established as an armed force with the task of safeguarding the revolution and its achievements, the IRGC has become one of the most influential organizations in Iranian politics thirty years after the revolution.¹ The IRGC's political clout reached a high point, leading that some observers to estimate that, "... the Guard will be in the position to be a king-maker" in post-Khamanei politics.²

This dissertation is intended to study the reasons and the processes that lay behind the IRGC's becoming an influential political force. Why and how the IRGC turned into an influential political actor in post-revolutionary Iranian politics? By answering this question, it aims at analyzing the IRGC-politics relationship in Iran during the three decades after the revolution. Treating the IRGC as part of the Iranian armed forces, it argues that the IRGC's increasing political clout in the current Iranian politics has been derived from its involvement, interventions and interferences in the political sphere, rather than its being a constitutionally mandated authority. Otherwise, if its political power to be mandated by the constitution, the IRGC would constantly be an influential political actor. However, the historical

¹ See, F. Wehrey, J.D. Green *et.al.*, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009).

² Ali Gheissari & Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Consolidation in Iran," *Survival*, vol.47, no.2 (Summer 2005), p.184.

evidence proves that the IRGC was first regarded as a 'praetorian guard' of the political leadership, and then an ideologically zealous army. In the 1990s, the analysts rarely paid attention to the IRGC in the analyses of the Iranian politics as it did not have any significant political leverage. The IRGC's influence in Iranian politics has risen since the late 1990s, and only after Mohammad Khatami's presidency it has been considered a politically influential actor.

Therefore, in analyzing the causes behind the rise of the IRGC's influence in Iranian politics, this study will seek answers to the following questions: Why has the IRGC, the revolutionary army of Iran, been involved in politics? Involvement of the IRGC in politics raises another question: By what means the IRGC has been involved in politics? How has the IRGC, the so-called praetorian army of the Islamic radicals, which was once deemed as a temporary organization, become a 'king-maker' in Iranian politics?

A brief survey of the issue presents that the IRGC's involvement in politics has not followed a straightforward pattern. The course of the Guards' involvement in politics has taken various forms within the three decades after the revolution. Initially, the IRGC came into being as a coercive force utilized by a wing of the revolutionary coalition, the Islamic radicals, in order to intimidate and eliminate the rival political groups contending for political power. Then, it was a multi-faced organization. In addition to its principal role in providing security and chasing the counterrevolutionaries, the IRGC was acting like a cultural and political organization. Concurrently, the IRGC became a party to the factional fighting, whereby it struggled against the 'moderate' government of Prime Minister Mahdi Bazargan, and 'moderate' President Abolhassan Banisadr.

When the Islamic radicals consolidated their power in the mid-1980s, the IRGC became a reliable armed force that was entirely subordinated to the political leadership. At that time, due to the ongoing war between Iran and Iraq, the military side of the IRGC became more apparent. In the meantime, it had expanded its organizational structure and enhanced its standing in the post-revolutionary institutional structure. In terms of politics, the IRGC, then, took a low profile; and it was completely in cooperation with the political leadership. However, the conformity

between the political leadership and the IRGC started to shatter with Iran's acceptance of the UN-brokered cease-fire in July 1988, which displayed the steadily diverging positions within the political elite. Shortly after the end of the war, Ayatollah Khomeini's death in June 1989 unleashed a new 'era' in the history of the Iranian revolution.

This new era profoundly affected the IRGC's relations with the political leadership. Although it maintained the previous politically low-profile position for a while, its political character resurfaced in the late 1990s. Accordingly, the IRGC was involved in a political struggle against the reform movement that came to power at the time. Since then, the IRGC's involvement in politics has continued in two different and contrasting forms. Unlike its contentious relations with the reform movement and the reformist President Mohammad Khatami, the IRGC established a close relationship with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his neo-radical associates that rose to power in 2005.

Apparently, the IRGC's involvement in politics has considerably increased in the last decade. In this context, the IRGC-politics relationship raised new questions: Why did the IRGC-politics relationship take different forms in different times? In other words, why did the IRGC cooperate with some governments, whereas it struggled against quite others? More importantly, why has the IRGC's involvement in politics increased in the last decade?

The IRGC's steady involvement in politics, also, raised another question: What is the proper place of the IRGC in politics under the constitutional structure in post-revolutionary Iran? Because the IRGC is part of the Iranian armed forces, it necessitates dealing with the civil-military relations in post-revolutionary Iran. Although the Revolutionary Guards were constitutionally charged with safeguarding the achievements of the revolution, which is essentially and apparently a political task, the legal regulations related to daily politics and elections barred it, like other armed forces, from engaging in party politics. Yet, there is no barrier for those who relinquished their relationship with the IRGC to engage in politics. In this context, does the IRGC's involvement in politics mean a violation of the civil-military relations envisaged by the constitution and the relevant laws? Another question

pertinent to this issue is whether the IRGC's involvement in politics comes to mean the militarization of the political regime? Any attempt to answer those questions compels us to address another issue; in what ways does the IRGC get involved in politics?

Against this background, the analysis of the causes affecting the IRGC's relationship to politics would help us understand better the contemporary Iranian politics. It would uncover the key factors shaping the relations between the IRGC and the political leadership. Additionally, through such an analysis, the IRGC's role in Iranian politics, as well as the implications of its involvement in politics, would be explored. Furthermore, a proper analysis may help us make future projections about the Iranian politics. Therefore, this dissertation is an attempt to explore and analyze the factors affecting the IRGC-politics relationship, and its implications in post-revolutionary Iran.

1.1. Relevant Literature

Although the IRGC's political influence has apparently increased in recent years, it always played an important role in the consolidation and institutionalization of the Iranian revolution. However, despite the existence of a massive literature on the Iranian revolution and the contemporary Iranian politics, the IRGC's role in post-revolutionary institution building and its relationship to the politics were rarely addressed in the literature.

The subject of the IRGC-politics relationship was covered by a few studies dealing with the security establishment of the Islamic Republic. In this regard, accounts of Nikola B. Schahgaldian and Sepehr Zabih have a remarkable place in the literature.³ However, those studies were largely interested in the transition of Iranian army from a royal institution to an 'Islamic' one, and performance of the Iranian armed forces throughout the Iran-Iraq war. Yet, these studies provided valuable

³ Nikola B. Schahgaldian, *The Iranian Military Under the Islamic Republic*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1987); Sepehr Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1988). See also, Nader Entessar, "The Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in Hoshang Amirahmadi & Manoucher Parvin (eds.), *Post Revolutionary Iran*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), pp.56-74.

accounts of the formation of the IRGC. Additionally, because they speculated over the probability of a military coup in Iran, they presented insightful analyses about the IRGC's involvement in politics. In this context, both Schahgaldian and Zabih projected that the IRGC would play a decisive role in post-Khomeini period, despite their differences in premises.⁴ Whereas Schahgaldian underlined 'autonomous' position of IRGC and probable dilution of its ideological zeal as the primary reasons for IRGC's involvement in politics, Zabih focused on the loyalty of the IRGC to the political leadership and the elite cohesion. Zabih contemplated that fragmentation of the elite in post-Khomeini Iran may lead to the IRGC's involvement in political disputes. The historical developments proved Schahgaldian's and Zabih's projection for the IRGC's involvement in politics in the post-Khomeini Iran to be true, albeit after a period of paucity of the IRGC's political engagements.

Contrary to the anticipations of Schahgaldian and Zabih, the IRGC adopted a low profile in politics immediately after the death of Khomeini. Probably because of the IRGC's lack of political activities in the early 1990s, the issue of the IRGC and politics was greatly disregarded in the literature on the Iranian politics. Instead, whereas the general political studies on Iran was covering the issues related to the Iranian politics such as political legitimacy, factionalism and reformism, security studies on Iran focused on the government's new armament programs. The growing interest in the new security policies of Iran and the Iranian army culminated in several reports sponsored by the leading US-based think-tanks.⁵ These studies handled the IRGC as a component of the Iranian armed forces and as a military institution in charge of missile and non-conventional weapons programs. Yet, the place devoted to the Revolutionary Guards in those studies was limited to military technical issues, which ignored the IRGC's political engagements. Although they acknowledged the IRGC's notable position in Iran, and covered the institutional

⁴ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, pp.85-86; Zabih, *op.cit.*, pp.222-24.

⁵ Shahram Chubin, *Iran's National Security Policy: Intentions, Capabilities & Impact*, (Washington DC.: Carnegie Endowment, 1993); Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces:1988-1993*, (Washington DC.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994); Michael Eisenstadt, *Iranian Military Power: Capabilities and Intentions*, (Washington DC.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1996); Paula A. Desutter, *Denial and Jeopardy: Deterring Iranian Use of NBC Weapons*, (Washington DC., National Defense University Press: 1997).

evolution of the IRGC, these studies did not address the civil-military relations in the Islamic Republic, and the IRGC-politics relationship.

In this regard, *The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard*, authored by Kenneth Katzman, emerged as a noteworthy study, specifically dealing with the IRGC.⁶ Katzman addressed the IRGC's course of institutionalization and compared it to other revolutionary armies including the Soviet Red Army, the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army and the *armées révolutionnaires* of the French Revolution. He concluded that the IRGC maintained its revolutionary zeal and autonomy contrary to other revolutionary armies, which became professionalized shortly after the revolution and subordinated to the civilian governments. Therefore, despite its institutionalization within the Iranian political system, the IRGC has not professionalized and remained as an ideologically motivated military force. However, Katzman did not address the question of why the IRGC's ideological zeal was not diluted, as predicted by Schahgaldian?

Notwithstanding his emphasis on institutionalization of the IRGC, Katzman stopped short of providing a clear definition of revolutionary fervor, as well, at least in the context of the Revolutionary Guards. Revolutionary ideals and the IRGC's perception of Ayatollah Khomeini's views, that is, the IRGC's ideological outlook, was poorly addressed in his study. He did not elaborate on the implications of the IRGC's ideological zeal, as well. Additionally, although he defined the IRGC as an institution autonomous from other governmental institutions, and claimed that decision-making bodies should take the IRGC's interests into account, Katzman did not delve deeper into the role of the Revolutionary Guards in politics.

Moreover, contrary to Katzman's observation, the IRGC has moved towards professionalism as a military organization -- in terms of adopting regular military ranks, defining criteria for promotion and replacing revolutionary emotions with rational military strategies -- after the end of Iran-Iraq war, which proved that the revolutionary zeal was not enough to gain victory. Consequently, the Revolutionary

⁶ Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam; Iran's Revolutionary Guard*, (Boulder, San Francisco: Westview Press, 1993). See also, K. "The Politico-Military Threat from Iran," in Jamal S. al-Suwaidi (ed.), (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1996), p.207.

Guards adopted new uniforms and rank structures similar to those used by conventional armies.⁷ Promotion within the IRGC also has come depended on certain rules, such as military skills and knowledge, the level of education, organizational, administrative and managerial skills, and the level of experience in these areas. Ideological commitment and fervor are no longer sufficient for promotion in the Revolutionary Guards, yet it is still necessary.⁸ Another point related to the professionalization of the IRGC pertained to the enrollment of commissioned officers to its ranks. Whereas initially it was drawing on volunteers whose revolutionary commitment and loyalty to the regime was enough to be members of it, the IRGC started to enroll candidates to secondary and high-level schools administered by the IRGC.⁹

In this line, some scholars argued that the growing professionalism of the IRGC would decrease differences between the IRGC and the conventional army of Iran.¹⁰ They also argued that as the IRGC professionalized, the ideological and political commitment of the Guards would wane as well. Nevertheless, the developments after the late-1990s demonstrated that the IRGC's interest in politics has considerably increased, rather than decreasing, as it professionalized. This case has challenged both the Katzman's approach and the principal approach in the civil-military relations literature, which anticipated subordination of armed forces to the political leadership in the extent of their professionalization.¹¹

Because the Iranian armed forces did not attempt to make a coup, and apparently avoided from intervening in the political matters throughout the 1980s and the early

⁷ Michael Eisenstadt, "The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran: An Assessment," *MERIA*, vol.5, no.1 (March 2001), p.18.

⁸ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition*, (Westport&London: Praeger, 1999), p. 37.

⁹ Homa Omid, *Islam and the Post-Revolutionary State in Iran*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 112, 115.

¹⁰ Daniel L. Byman *et.al.* (eds), *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), p.2.

¹¹ See, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory of Civil-Military Relations*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1957); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier; A Social and Political Portrait*, (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960).

1990s, some observers assumed that the Iranian armed forces, including the IRGC, have been loyal and subordinated to the civil authority.¹² Therefore, Cann and Danopoulos embarked on explaining the non-interventionist stance of the Iranian armed forces. They examined indoctrination of the armed forces, divisions within the military structure and external factors such as presence of paramilitary groups to counterweight the army and the revolutionary war, as the primary factors that contributed to the armed forces' subordination to the political leadership. Nevertheless, they pointed out burgeoning discontent among the ranks of the regular army and the IRGC, with the political developments that took place in Iran in the early 1990s. They put forward several reasons for the dissatisfaction of the armed forces, which increased possibility of a military intervention in Iran in their view.¹³ First, according to Cann and Danopoulos, the end of the war diverted officers' attention away from an external enemy to internal economic and political problems. Secondly, they asserted that the expansion of the IRGC diminished its loyalty to the political leadership, which contributed to its political dissatisfaction. Moreover, they asserted that the ideological and political split among the clerics would make the indoctrination of the armed forces ineffective. Finally, they mentioned continuing economic problems as another reason for the alienation of the Guards with the political leadership.

Cann and Danopoulos' prediction of an increase in interventionism of the armed forces came to be true shortly after the publication of their article in 1997. The IRGC has become steadily interventionist in politics, whereas the conventional army maintained its political silence. Yet, contrary to their prediction, the IRGC apparently involved in politics on the grounds of its ideological convictions, rather than its dissatisfaction with the political and economic developments. That is, the indoctrination of the IRGC culminated in its interventionism in politics instead of providing its subordination to the political leadership. In other words, whereas the

¹² For instance, see, Rebecca Cann & Constantine Danopolous, "The Military and Politics in a Theocratic State: Iran as Case Study," *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.24, no.2 (Winter 1997), pp.269-88.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.280-83.

indoctrination of armed forces served their compliance with the political leadership for a while in the 1980s, it turned into a remarkable factor in the IRGC interventionism in the late 1990s. Then, why and how the ideological viewpoint of the IRGC has led its intervention in politics?

Concurrently with Hojatoleslam Mohammad Khatami's ascendance to presidency in 1997, the IRGC's involvement in politics through issuing political statements and taking political actions started to increase. At the time of the student riots in Iran in July 1999, 24 commanders of the IRGC wrote a very critical letter to the President, telling him that if he could not restore order, they would take over the authority. This letter, which has been a turning point in civil-military relations in Iran, incited a new interest in the analysis of civil-military relations and the IRGC-politics relationship in Iran.¹⁴ In this context, Hashim pointed out the probability of the IRGC's involvement in politics because of the IRGC's corporate interests vested in the political system and its rigid commitment to the revolutionary ideology, which were supposed to be threatened by the rise of the reform movement. He also referred to the regime's propensity to employ coercive forces in order to maintain political stability, as a major factor for the IRGC's involvement in politics. According to Byman and his colleagues, the IRGC had already a remarkable influence in Iranian politics intermingled with its security missions. However, they argued, "intervention [was] more likely if internal divisions deepen at the elite level, ideological fault lines widen, and factionalism turns violent."¹⁵

From 2000 onwards the IRGC's involvement in politics, however, has gone beyond the conventional line that prevailed over two decades and has appeared as its contention with the reform movement. Moreover, it actually used force to compel the 'reformist' Khatami government to revoke its contract with a Turkish firm, TAV, entitled to operate the Imam Khomeini Airport by occupying the terminal in May

¹⁴ Ahmed S. Hashim, "Civil-Military Relations in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in Joseph A. Kechichian, ed., *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp.31-53; Daniel L. Byman *et.al.*, *op.cit.*, *passim.*; Michael Eisenstadt, "The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran: An Assessment," in Barry Rubin, *Armed Forces in the Middle East and Strategy*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp.231-58.

¹⁵ Byman *et.al.*, *op.cit.*, p.52.

2004. Additionally, many acting and retired officers of the IRGC showed their interest in politics by running for the parliamentary elections that held in 2004. As a result, about one third of the Seventh Majlis (2004-2008) was composed of deputies that have formerly served in the IRGC ranks. Furthermore, four of the candidates running for the presidential election of 2005 were former members of the IRGC. Whereas former IRGC members competed for the elected positions, the IRGC institutionally interfered in the elections, and some of acting IRGC commanders was transferred to the significant positions under the Ahmadinejad administration.

The increasing involvement of the IRGC in politics stirred a lively debate over the IRGC's involvement in politics and the 'militarization' of the regime both inside and outside of Iran, which was reflected widely in the relevant literature.¹⁶ Various arguments and approaches to explain the IRGC's involvement in politics that has been put forward throughout those debates could be indentified into four lines.

The first line of arguments focuses on the relationship between the Leader and the IRGC. It suggests that the IRGC has turned from a revolutionary army into a special force instrumented by Leader Ayatollah Khamanei.¹⁷ In this regard, Rubin stated, "If Khamenei's will is supreme, the IRGC is his Praetorian Guard." Accordingly, the IRGC do not recognize any authority beyond Leader Khamanei, who relies on the Guards in order to sustain and expand his power. In turn, he consents to, and promotes, the IRGC's widening its political clout and economic ventures. This approach views Khamanei as the ultimate authority in the Islamic Republic and suggests paying attention to his policies in order to understand the IRGC affairs. Accordingly, Khamanei both as the Great Leader of the Revolution and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces is in full control of the IRGC's all

¹⁶ Babek Ganji, "Civil-Military Relations, State Strategies & Presidential Elections in Iran," *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, June 2005; Gheissari & Nasr, *op.cit.*, pp.175-90; Kazem Alamdari, "The Power Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Transition from Populism to Clientalism, and Militarization of the Government," *Third World Quarterly*, vol.26, no.8 (2005), pp.1283-130; Ali Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guard's Role in Iranian Politics," *Middle East Quarterly*, vol.15, no. 4 (Autumn 2008), pp.3-14; Bernard Hourcade, "The Rise to Power of Iran's 'Guardians of the Revolution,'" *Middle East Policy*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2009), pp.58-63.

¹⁷ M. Rubin, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards; A Rogue Outfit?" *Middle East Quarterly*, vol.15, no. 4 (Autumn 2008), pp. 37-48; Mehdi Khalaji, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, Inc." *WINEP Policywatch*, no.1273, 17 August 2007.

kind of activities. Therefore, the IRGC's interventions in politics arguably have also been sanctioned by Khamanei.

The second set of arguments claims that the IRGC has turned into a praetorian army that frequently intervenes in politics. This approach argues that the IRGC is no longer subordinated to Khamanei. Khamanei's reliance on the IRGC to maintain his power made him "a prisoner of his own Praetorian Guard."¹⁸ Thus, the Guards are able to pressure him to advance their agenda. In turn, the IRGC's political agenda and the primary impulses behind the IRGC activities are explained in reference to a mixture of the Guards' ideological concerns, constitutional missions, and factional and material interests.¹⁹

Another line of argument underlines the factional relationships. The factional approach claims that in order to understand increased IRGC involvement in politics, one should pay attention to the IRGC's so-called alliance with the conservative faction.²⁰ This approach argues that the alliance between the Guards and the conservatives was based on their ideological congruence as well as their shared interests vested in the political system. Therefore, the IRGC takes political positions similar to the conservative faction's stances. Thus, the conservatives' approach to the government determines the IRGC's relationship with the political leadership.

Finally, there is a generational approach that focuses on the generational changes in Iran. This approach argues that the IRGC's increasing political clout derives from the impact of its alumni.²¹ Accordingly, the IRGC was one of the principal revolutionary organizations in which young zealots voluntarily participated. Then,

¹⁸ Alfoneh, *op.cit.*, pp.10-14.

¹⁹ For instance see, Wilfried Buchta, "Iran's Security Sector, An Overview," *Working Paper*, no.146 (Geneva: DCAF, 2002), p.23.

²⁰ Gheissari & Nasr, *op.cit.*, pp.175-90; Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoub Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

²¹ Mohammad Quchani, "Second Generation of [Revolutionary Guards] Corps Is On The Way," *Sharq*, 12 April 2005, (FBIS Translated Text, WNC); Hourcade, *op.cit.*, pp.58-63; Bernard Hourcade, "La 'prise du pouvoir' par les Gardiens de la revolution: retour au passé ou perspective d'overture?" *La Revue Internationale et Strategique* (IRIS), no.70, 2008, pp.71-86 (English version of the article provided by author).

they were too young and too inexperienced to claim a stake in the post-revolutionary administrations; however, they were the leading supporters of the revolutionary regime. Throughout the war, they ran to the war-fronts in order to defend the Islamic Revolution. After the war, however, they continued their university education, took part in bureaucracy, and moved to economic activities. Therefore, two decades after the revolution, they constituted the new elites of Iran ready to take political administration of the country. This approach does not make a difference between those who relinquished their positions in the IRGC, and the active members of the IRGC. Therefore, although it makes sense to understand rising political clout of the IRGC in general, it negates the institutional structure and behaviors of the IRGC.

The burgeoning debates on the IRGC's involvement in politics, including the aforementioned approaches, pays attention to other factors, as well, in order to explain the IRGC-politics relationship. Those additional factors include the ideological outlook of the IRGC, its autonomy, and the rising internal and external security threats to Iran. Indeed, all approaches and factors, mentioned here, have an explanatory power to understand the IRGC's involvement in politics. However, that explanatory power of those approaches is limited because they cover only the recent decade of the IRGC-politics relationship. For instance, the same ideological background was influential in the subordination of the IRGC to the political leadership throughout the 1980s. Then, why and how has it become a reason for IRGC's involvement in politics? Similarly, the IRGC had subordinated to the leadership throughout the revolutionary struggle and the war against Iraq, which threatened the revolution's survival. If the IRGC complied with the political leadership during those critical periods, the rising external and internal threats appear as inadequate to explain the IRGC's involvement and intervention in politics in the recent decade. Additionally, although these explanations are useful in particular cases and times, they could not explain the transformation of the IRGC-politics relationship since its inception.

Consequently, civil-military relations and the IRGC-politics relationship in Iran remains underexplored in the current literature. Albeit they provided noteworthy information and insight on the relationship of the IRGC to politics, the existing

studies have fallen short of providing an analytical framework that will be helpful to comprehend the civil-military relations in Iran and the IRGC-politics relationship.

1.2. The Scope of the Dissertation and the Argument

This dissertation analyzes the IRGC's relationship to politics in a historical context beginning with the inception of IRGC in 1979. In doing so, it aims to explain changes in the forms of IRGC's relations with the political leadership. It also discusses why and how the IRGC has become an influential actor in post-revolutionary Iranian politics in the recent decade.

While explaining the IRGC-politics relationship in post-revolutionary Iran, this study departs from an initial observation: this relationship takes place in revolutionary conditions. In other words, the revolutionary dynamics in Iran affected the IRGC's relationship to politics. Moreover, the IRGC emerged as a revolutionary army. And then, this study raises two interrelated questions. How do civil-military relations take shape after revolutions? Why does a revolutionary army get involved in politics? In order to answer these questions, this study also reviews the literature on military-politics relationship in post-revolutionary states.

Although there is a vast literature on both civil-military relations and revolutions, military-politics relationship after revolutions has been sporadically addressed in the relevant literature. The place attached to militaries in revolutionary conditions is limited to armies' role in the revolutions, whatever it is. In fact, revolutions generate revolutionary armies, which have always been influential in the course of revolutions through their political actions in addition to their military performances. Despite the centrality of military affairs in the course of revolution, the subject has been largely ignored. Though a few studies looked at revolutionary armies, they particularly focused on their military performances, rather than their relationship to politics.²² As a result, civil-military relations in revolutionary states

²² Katherine Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); John Ellis, *Armies in Revolution*, (London: Croom Helm, 1973); Jonathan R. Adelman, *The Revolutionary Armies: The Historical Development of the Soviet and the Chinese People's Liberation Armies*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980); Jonathan R. Adelman, *Revolution, Armies, and War: A Political History*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1985); S.Paul Mckenzie, *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era: A Revisionist Approach*, (New York: Routledge, 1997).

and revolutionary armies' relations with political leaderships have remained largely understudied.

Though the bulk of literature shows little interest in revolutionary army and politics relationship, the existing literature provides a worthy information and insight in order to review civil-military relations in revolutionary states and revolutionary armies' relationship to politics. Especially, noteworthy studies on civil-military relations in post-revolutionary states, particularly in the communists systems,²³ and the studies on outcomes of revolutions and post-revolutionary institution building,²⁴ contribute much to understanding revolutionary army-politics relationships. Thus, the current literature do provides a solid basis on which to ground this study. Based on the existing literature on revolutions, revolutionary armies, and civil-military relations, this dissertation proceeds with an analytical framework of revolutionary army and politics relationship.

In its attempt to devise an analytical framework, this study reviews uniformities and parallelisms among the various revolutions, including the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Chinese Revolution and the Cuban Revolution, and their revolutionary armies. In doing so, it analyses both characteristics of revolutionary armies, and the revolutionary dynamics. Among the characteristics of revolutionary armies, their ideological nature and corporateness emerge as the two variables defining their relations with politics. On the other hand, post-revolutionary states and societies are in a constant transformation process moving from one stage to another one. In this volatile context, features and positions of the political elite, particularly

²³ For instance see, D.R. Herspring and L. Volgyes (eds.), *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978); Amos Perlmutter & William M. Leogrande, "The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems," *The American Political Science Review*, vol.76, no.4 (Dec. 1982). See also, Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

²⁴ See, Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1957); Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), Krishan Kumar (ed.), *Revolution; the Theory and Practice of A European Idea*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions; A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia & China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); See, Rosemary H.T. O'Kane, *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror: The Role of Violence in Political Change* (Worcester: Edward Elgar, 1991).

the ruling ones, have a decisive influence on civil-military relations. Especially, ideological posture and cohesiveness of the ruling elite directly affect their relationship with revolutionary armies.

As a result, a historical review of revolutionary armies and politics relationship, provides us with defining variables to understand the nature of the form of that relationship and its change. Unsurprisingly, those variables, namely the ideological stance and power of the ruling elite, the ideological outlook and corporateness of the revolutionary army, are reminiscent of the probable causes of the IRGC's involvement in politics that discussed in the relevant literature.

The historical review of civil-military relations in the aftermath of various revolutions provides us with emerging patterns and forms of revolutionary army-politics relations, as well. Various combinations of the aforementioned variables lead to different forms of revolutionary army-politics relationship, which included contention, fusion, subordination, intervention and symbiosis. A considerable change in one of the variables directly affects revolutionary armies' relations with the political leadership and culminates in the alteration of the dominant form of relationship. This subject is addressed in detail in the second chapter of the dissertation.

After demonstrating the various forms of the relationship between revolutionary armies and politics, the dissertation moves on to a more detailed analysis of the case of the IRGC and seeks the similar patterns in the Iranian case. In this study, I argue that the IRGC's relationship to politics is determined by a combination of two sets of variables. The first set is related to the characteristics of the IRGC, and consists of its ideological outlook and corporateness. Moreover, there is the political dynamics including ideological stance of the ruling elite and the elite cohesion in post-revolutionary Iran. Changes in those factors help us understand the shift of the form of IRGC-politics relationship. Various combinations of those variables produce in different forms of relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership, such as contention, subordination, intervention, and symbiosis. Both the interventionism of the IRGC in politics and the symbiotic relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership implicate the IRGC's involvement in politics and its increasing

appearance in the political sphere. The growing involvement of the IRGC in politics, in turn, has conferred it with an increasing political clout.

In order to substantiate this argument, I will trace the aforementioned variables; ideological outlook and corporateness of the IRGC, and the ideological stance and cohesiveness of the ruling elite in a historical framework. The ideological outlook of the IRGC will provide insights about its approach towards the dominant ideology and politics. The IRGC corporateness directly affects its ability to act as a unitary actor. As to the ruling elite, they play a decisive role in the IRGC-politics relations both as the civilian party of that relationship, and as the decision-maker, whose resolutions directly affect the IRGC. Whereas cohesiveness of the ruling elite displays its power vis-à-vis the armed forces, the ideological stance of the ruling elite establishes the basis of the relationship between the political leadership and the IRGC.

I contend that high degree of ideological consciousness and low level of corporateness of the IRGC harnessing the aims and interests of a cohesive and doctrinaire political leadership provide subordination of the Revolutionary Guards to the political leadership. However, any considerable change in one of these variables results in transformation of the IRGC-politics relationship. Therefore, identifying any change in those variables will help us explain transformation of relations between the IRGC and the political leadership.

It should be pointed out that this dissertation is not an attempt to offer a comprehensive analysis of civil-military relations in Iran. As it is well-known, the revolutionary leadership in Iran maintained the conventional army inherited from the Pahlavi regime. Thus, with the rise of the IRGC besides the conventional army, a dual military structure appeared in Iran. This study intentionally excluded the conventional army from the analysis, given that its main focus is to understand changes in the IRGC-politics relationship. Related to this point, it should be stated that this study intentionally overlooked the IRGC's relations with the Great Leader of the Revolution. In fact, political leadership, i.e. the executive authority, in Iran was constitutionally divided into several institutions embodied by the Leader, the President, the Prime Minister, and the cabinet. Whereas the IRGC constitutionally

reports to the Leader, the President has no formal authority over the Guards. Throughout the thirty years of the revolution, the IRGC subordinated to the Leader and there is no documented disagreement between him and the Revolutionary Guards. Therefore, this dissertation is concerned with the analysis of the IRGC's varying relations with the political leadership represented by the President, Prime Minister, and the cabinet.

1.3. Methodology

A two-tiered method is employed in this dissertation. First, I employed comparative case study method. The 'great' revolutions such as the French Revolution (1789), the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), the Chinese Revolution (1949) was addressed in terms of revolutionary army-politics relationship in order to identify possible variables, causal mechanisms, and the emerging patterns of relations between revolutionary armies and political leaderships. However, instead of in-depth comparisons between the cases and the quantitative analyses, this study concerned with macro processes in a historical context. Although each of the cases led to different outcomes in terms of revolutionary army-politics relationships, one may found striking similarities between these cases regarding the processes of institutionalization of revolutionary armies, their evolution, and their relationship to politics. This part of the study is largely based on secondary sources and the existing literature on revolutions, revolutionary armies and civil-military relations.

I found four variables to be decisive in revolutionary army-politics relationship as a result of my comparisons into the various revolutionary armies. Those variables are ideological outlook of revolutionary armies, corporateness of revolutionary armies, ideological stance of political leadership, and power of the ruling elite. Furthermore, I observed a fascinating coherence between the great changes in the political sphere, i.e. revolutionary stages, and the changes in the forms of revolutionary army-politics relations. Consequently I identified five patterns of revolutionary army-politics relations including contention, subordination, fusion, intervention, and symbiosis. These patterns and variables are elaborated in detail in the second chapter of the study.

And then, I employed process-tracing method in order to analyze the IRGC-politics relationship in a historical context. I attempted to trace the variables that were deduced in the first step, i.e. the possible causes, that supposed to be influential in the IRGC-politics relationship throughout the three decades following the revolution. In order to trace the links between the variables and the observed outcomes, i.e. changes in the forms of IRGC-politics relationship, I examined historical developments with particular attention to the political dynamics and the IRGC, historical documents and newspaper reports.

Consequently, this dissertation widely dwelled on empirical research, based on the analysis of both the primary and the secondary sources. The documents included laws and decrees regulating the rights and responsibilities of the Revolutionary Guards, official publications of the IRGC, and public declarations of the IRGC commanders. There are numerous publications of the IRGC, including periodicals such as *Payam-e Enghelab*, and *Sobh-e Sadegh*. The IRGC also operates several websites including *sepahnews.ir*, and *basirat.ir*. The IRGC-affiliated institutions like Imam Hussein University also have various websites, periodicals, and publications, some of which were utilized throughout the study.

Additionally, I surveyed daily press reports covering Iran and the Revolutionary Guards. In this regard, in addition to reviewing Persian press, the utilization of foreign news sources such as, *Federal Broadcasting Information Service* reports (FBIS), *Summary of World Broadcasting* (SWB) of the BBC, *Open Source Center* (OSC), and Iran reports of *Radio Free Europe* was very useful. My personal interviews with experts of Iranian politics during my researches in Iran and in the United States also helped me enhance my insight on the IRGC and politics. Finally, I used both information and analyses that took place in the current literature to advance this study.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

The body of the dissertation consists of eight chapters. This chapter of introduction is followed by Chapter 2, which proposes an analytical framework to understand the relationship between revolutionary armies and politics. As mentioned

above, Chapter 2, reviews revolutionary armies and politics in the aftermath of ‘great revolutions’ in a historical perspective and explores analytical tools for the rest of the study, which would facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the IRGC-politics relationship. In particular, it explores variables that are directly affecting revolutionary army-politics relationship and patterns of this relationship.

Chapter 3 provides an historical and institutional analysis of the IRGC, revolutionary army of Iran. Because the main concern of this study is to understand the IRGC-politics relationship, a separate chapter is assigned to analyze characteristics of the IRGC in detail. Thus, it also reviews the variables that are directly related to the IRGC, that is, the IRGC corporateness and the ideological/political outlook of the IRGC.

The subsequent four chapters analyzes the IRGC-politics relationship in a historical context. In accordance with the stages theory of revolution, post-revolutionary history of Iran is divided into four periods; transition period, radical period, thermidorian period, and neo-radical period. Each period is dedicated one chapter. These four chapters, that are Chapters 4,5,6, and 7, thus, review the four variables and analyze the political dynamics and the IRGC-politics relationship during the relevant time span. These chapters also discuss implications of the dominant form of IRGC-politics relationship in the period under study.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, covers overall assessment of the previous chapters. Finally, reviewing conclusions of the analysis, it will discuss strengths and liabilities of the approach suggested in the dissertation.

CHAPTER II

REVOLUTIONARY ARMIES AND POLITICS

This chapter seeks to develop an analytical framework to study the relationship between revolutionary armies and politics in the aftermath of revolutions, which will be applied to the case of the relationship between the IRGC and the politics in post-revolutionary Iran. Such an attempt implies that revolutionary armies have some characteristics that are different from other types of armies. Moreover, it assumes that revolutionary politics have some peculiarities that affect army-politics relationship in post-revolutionary states. To devise an analytical framework, one has to analyze characteristics of revolutionary armies and revolutionary political dynamics that affect the relationship between army and politics in the revolutionary process and its aftermath. This chapter, in particular, reviews revolutionary army-politics relationship in the aftermath of major revolutions including the French Revolution (1789), the Russian Revolution (1917), the Chinese Revolution (1949), and the Cuban Revolution (1959). These analyses will help us identify patterns of army-politics relationship in revolutionary states, which then can provide a framework to study the IRGC's relationship to the politics in post-revolutionary Iran.

2.1. Revolutions and Armies

The problem of having influential armed forces that are strong enough to prevail against enemies of any polity, but preventing them from using their power against civilian political leaders and regimes of these polities, is a long time issue in the literature.¹ However, the issue of relationship between revolutionary armies and politics has been rarely addressed in the relevant literature. The revolutionary

¹ Peter D. Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol.2 (1999), pp.211-241. See also Samuel P. Huntington (ed.), *Changing Patterns of Military Politics*, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1962); Giuseppe Cafario (ed.), *The Sociology of Military*, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Pub., 1998).

regimes are faced with another problem; a revolutionary regime, initially, has to create an army or to transform armed forces inherited from old regime into a formation that will serve the interests of revolution, fight against counterrevolutionaries inside the country, as well as fighting revolutionary wars against foreign enemies.² Having solved this problem, revolutionary states, then, are faced with a conventional problem; that is, to keep their armies strong enough to fight counter-revolutionaries and foreign enemies while ensuring their subordination to the revolutionary leadership.

The first part of the problem is especially valid for the spontaneous revolutions. Since the planned revolutions seized the power through long-term military (guerilla) struggle as in the Chinese revolution (1949) and the Cuban Revolution (1959), they had already established efficient armed forces.³ The spontaneous revolutions, in contrast, ‘come’ rapidly and probably unintentionally like the French Revolution (1789), the Russian Revolution (1917), and the Iranian revolution (1979). In such cases, they do not have reliable armed forces at their disposal when they capture the political power.

In the aftermath of the seizure of power by the revolutionaries, as a result, the revolutionary elites engage in establishing reliable armed forces and controlling coercive forces to prevent rival factions, remnants of old regime or foreign forces from attacking the revolutionary authority and to fight against the would-be separatists. Rapid creation of these armies and their efficiency is so crucial for the survival of revolution that if the revolutionary army fails in fighting counter-revolutionaries or foreign armies that invaded the country, the revolution will also fail.⁴ Nevertheless, since armed forces of the deposed regimes are either defeated or destructed in the course of the revolution, they are not useful for the revolutionary

² Katherine Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp.184-240.

³ See, Mehran Kamrava, “Revolution Revisited: the Structuralist–Voluntarist Debate,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol.32, no.2 (June 1999), p.320.

⁴ Torbjorn L. Knutsen; Jennifer L. Bailey, “Over the Hill? The Anatomy of Revolution at Fifty,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.26, no.4 (Nov. 1989), p.429.

leadership. Even in the cases that professional army of the old regime remain intact, the revolutionaries see it as unreliable. The leadership in spontaneous revolutions, however, may find roughly organized militias, formed concomitantly during the revolutionary tide, ready to their disposal such as the French National Guards, the Russian Red Guards, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which are composed of revolutionary zealots. Soon after the revolution, those zealot militias are brought under a unified organization that would serve as a reliable armed force for the revolutionary leadership. These militia armies are tasked with safeguarding the revolution, and viewed as a counterweight to the rival armed groups and the army of the deposed regime, if it is still intact.

Although the revolutionary guards (militia forces) are efficient in securing power inside the country, they seem to be very weak in fighting against professional armies in case they invade the revolutionary country, or fighting with counter-revolutionaries that have organized professional armed forces. For this reason, the problem of establishing a more efficient and powerful, but reliable, army remains as a principal question on the agenda of the revolutionary leadership. Additionally, they have to deal with the army inherited from the old regime in order to neutralize it, and to transform it into a form that will serve the revolution. In this regard, the nature of the remnants of inherited armies is critical.

For instance, the French Royal (Line) Army kept its integrity throughout the revolutionary turmoil. In order to transform the French Line Army into a reliable force, its composition, especially the composition of officer corps, was changed gradually and profoundly. It lost its aristocratic nature lest it could not pose an existential threat to the revolutionary regime. Meanwhile, in order to counterweigh the Royal Army and the monarchists, to secure the course of the revolution and to safeguard neighborhoods, the French revolutionaries established the French National Guards across the country. In contrast to the Royal Army in France, the Tsarist Army of Russia was virtually disbanded when the revolutionaries seized power in March 1917. Hence, the revolutionary leaders established the Red Guards based on voluntary enlistment of reliable comrades to safeguard the revolution. Later on, the Bolshevik regime appealed to former non-commissioned officers, and ex-officers,

who had offered their service to the revolutionary regime. As time went on, the Red Guards has completely merged into the Red Army and lost its corporate identity as a separate force. Like the French Royal Army, the Imperial Army of Iran remained virtually intact throughout the process that revolutionaries seized power. As in the French case, the revolutionary leaders in Iran did not opt for disbanding the inherited army; rather, they endeavored to transform it into a more reliable force by incrementally purging most of the officer corps.

The second part of the problem for the revolutionary regimes that have established their armed forces is ensuring political compliance of the revolutionary armies. In case of the spontaneous revolutions, since the re-structured conventional armies have to re-employ professional officers of the old regime in order to increase military efficiency in a short time; loyalty of these armies to the revolutionary regime remains suspected for a long time. Moreover, military coup attempts perpetrated by some former officers that usually take place against the moderate governments ruling in the aftermath of the revolutionary interregnum, like the *Kornilov* attempt in Russia, or the *Nuzhih* attempt in revolutionary Iran, flame suspicion of the revolutionary leadership against the army.

In order to ensure the political compliance of the conventional armies, the revolutionary leadership usually employs four methods.⁵ The first method utilized by the political leadership is the purging suspected elements within the army. As mentioned briefly above, the purge of officers loyal to the deposed regime and the suspects having political aspirations is the first step taken by the revolutionary leadership to establish a reliable army.

The second practice of the revolutionary leadership to secure loyalty of the conventional armed forces is ideological and political training/indoctrination.⁶ Ideological/political indoctrination aims at increasing ideological/political consciousness and morale of soldiers, and ensuring their dedication to the

⁵ See, Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations since Cromwell*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

⁶ Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics; Military Coups and Governments*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977).

revolutionary causes. Employment of political preachers in the lines of French armies, the Communist Party members in the Red Army and in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, and the clerics in the revolutionary Iran is a widely used method. Additionally, in order to increase revolutionary consciousness of the conventional armies that are largely composed of universal conscription, these units are amalgamated with volunteer militia forces that have a high political consciousness. Therefore, the French volunteers accompanied to the army in the revolutionary wars; the Red Guards was merged with the Red Army; and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards accompanied the Army throughout the Iran-Iraq war.

Another method resorted by the revolutionary leadership to ensure subordination of the conventional military is political surveillance of the armed forces. Representatives of the ruling party/faction dispatched to the military ranks with great authorities carry out political surveillance. The *representatives in mission* in the revolutionary France, the political commissars in the Red Army and the PLA, and the representatives of Imam/Leader in Iran have persistently supervised the armed forces almost in all ranks. These 'political commissars' with variably great authority in administration of military forces including the promotion of officers, are charged with preventing emergence of distinct corporate interests within the military, securing loyalty of officers, and coordinating ideological indoctrination activities.

Finally, the political leadership considers establishment of militia forces as a counter-weight against the potential political aspirations of the suspected conventional army. In fact, the militia forces that watch army barracks are useful to forestall the coup attempts perpetrated by the officers who are abhorrent from the revolutionary regime. The militia armies also play remarkable roles in the elimination of risks threatening the revolutionary regime; and thereby in consolidation of the revolution. However, the political leadership is not assured from subordination of the revolutionary militias, as well. For this reason, the revolutionary leadership employs the same methods mentioned above for ensuring subordination of the conventional armies in order to secure allegiance of the militia forces. Nevertheless, the revolutionary militias may become part of politics in the course of revolution. In general, the loyalty of the militia forces is divided between the

moderate and radical factions of the revolutionary coalition, which are competing for the final seizure of political power. The factions competing for power attempt to secure their control over the revolutionary militias, and gain support of the militias as an advantage against their rivals. Therefore, because of factional fighting the militia army may turn into a significant political instrument in post-revolutionary politics.

All of the militia armies established to safeguard revolution has played influential roles in post-revolutionary factional politics. In the course of time, ideologically committed and well-organized radicals incrementally seized control of revolutionary organizations including the militia forces. The Red Guards which was consisted of armed groups of workers were the leading strike force of the Bolsheviks against the moderate government of Kerensky for the complete seizure of political power.⁷ However, the Red Guards was terminated in 1918 when the Red Army was established on the basis of the Guards. In contrast to the integration of the Red Guards into the Red Army, both the French National Guards and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards held a permanent status (they also sided with the conventional army in the revolutionary wars) and both continued to play critical roles in the later stages of the revolution. The French National Guards was initially organized locally based on districts and was consisted of middle-class volunteers. The National Guards later included *sans-culottes* (working-class) to its ranks. The National Guards played a remarkable role in the storm of *Tuileries*, the royal palace in Paris, in August 1792 that led to the final downfall of monarchy. They also provided the force for the *Motagnards/Jacobins*, the ‘radical’ faction, to displace the *Girondins*, the ‘moderate’ political faction in power. As the revolution was radicalized, the middle-class sections of the National Guards took part in the revolts of *Vendemiaire* (October) 1795 and marched against the Convention, which was defended by Napoleon Bonaparte.⁸ Similarly, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards played remarkable roles in the elimination of rival factions competing with the radical Islamist factions that

⁷ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), pp.155-168.

⁸ Chorley, *op.cit.*, pp.168-171. See also, John Ellis, *Armies in Revolution*, (London: Croom Helm, 1973), pp.78-83.

seized power, and was involved in the political scene at different times, which will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters.

At the end of this brief survey of revolutions and armies, it becomes clear that two interrelated factors have decisive roles in the nature of the revolutionary army-politics relationship in a revolutionary state; the characteristics of the revolutionary armies and the features of the political leadership. However, the revolutionary political dynamics strongly affect the characteristics of both the revolutionary army and the political leadership. The interactions between these factors and variations that take place in characteristics of the revolutionary army and/or the political leadership account for variations in the type of the army-politics relationship. Then, the question arises: Why and how variations in each of these factors affect the revolutionary army's relationship to politics? In order to elaborate this relationship, it is useful to sketch out the characteristics of revolutionary armies and political dynamics (especially configuration of the political leadership) in the post-revolutionary states.

2.2. Characteristics of the Revolutionary Armies

Analyzing characteristics of armies to understand the army-politics relationship in a given case is a common method and a long-established approach in the literature.⁹ The armies are classified into different categories in accordance with their principal characteristics. However, the literature is full of competing taxonomies of armies because the analysts differ on the importance of various characteristics. Consequently, almost each leading scholar has proposed different categories of armies; and hence proposed different types of army-politics relationship. Notwithstanding disagreements in the literature on categorization of armies and the

⁹ See, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory of Civil-Military Relations*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1957); M. Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier; A Social and Political Portrait*, (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960); Samuel Finer, *Man on Horseback*, (London: Pall Mall, 1962), p.3; Nordlinger, *op.cit.*.

types of civil-military relations, the ‘professional’ and the ‘praetorian’ armies emerge as the most common types.¹⁰

The professional army is an exclusive bureaucratic organization of those having profession in ‘the management of violence’ in the service of security of society, nation and the state under the directives of the political leadership. The professional army is prevalent in well-institutionalized and stable political systems. The professional army that embraces an increased profession in military training and administration, and an increased level of corporate identity is based on the principle of the separation between the military expertise and politics. This characteristic of the professional army makes it effectively subordinated to civilian political leaders who formulate the basic decisions on foreign and military policy. In turn, the political leadership recognizes and accepts the competence and autonomy of the professional army. As a result, both military interventions in politics and political intervention in the military are minimized in political systems that have professional armies.¹¹

The second type of army is the praetorian army that refers to the Praetorian Guard of the Roman Empire, which eventually used its military profession for political purposes.¹² Therefore, “praetorianism is a word frequently used to characterize a situation where the military class of a given society exercises independent political power within it by virtue of an actual or threatened use of

¹⁰ See, Gerassimos Karabelias, “Civil-Military Relations: A Comparative Analysis of the Role of the Military in the Transformation of post-War Turkey and Greece: 1980-1995,” (A Report submitted to NATO, www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/karabeli.pdf, 1998), pp.10-14; David E. Albright, “Comparative Conceptualization of Civil Military Relations,” *World Politics*, vol.32, no.4 (July 1980), pp.553-557; David Rapoport, “A Comparative Theory of Military and Political Types,” in Huntington, *Changing Patterns of Military Politics*, pp.71-101; A.R. Lucham, “A Comparative Typology of Civil-Military Relations,” *Government and Opposition*, vol.6 (1971), pp.22-35. See, also, Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

¹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State ...*, pp. 8-39; Samuel P. Huntington, “Reforming Civil-Military Relations,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol.6, no.4 (1995), pp.9-10.

¹² See, Sandra Bingham, “The Praetorian Guard in the Political and Social Life of Julio-Claudian Rome,” Ph.D. Dissertation, The Faculty of Graduate Studies, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, August 1997.

force.”¹³ The praetorian army is usually born out in an environment of political instability. The absence of effective and legitimate political institutions and lack of political stability leave the army as a cohesive powerful institution that is inclined to get involved in politics. Furthermore, the murky boundaries between the civilian and the military spheres in an unstable system and the praetorian army’s tendency not to recognize any boundary between politics and the military profession result in the army’s involvement frequently in politics in various ways. Such involvement in politics may derive from its corporate interests, its ideological convictions, or its belief in the lack of legitimacy or efficiency of the political leadership.¹⁴

The typologies of armies stated above are not useful to understand armies and their relationship to politics in the revolutionary states that have special circumstances and unique political dynamics. However, armies of the revolutionary states, that is, revolutionary armies, are rarely addressed as an analytical category in civil-military relations literature. In fact, considering ‘different’ experiences of revolutionary communist states including the Soviet Russia, China and Cuba some scholars suggested the army-politics relationship in the communist states as a distinct category for analysis.¹⁵ Although the communist army–politics relationship literature was helpful to understand the revolutionary army–politics relationship, it is not inclusive enough to comprise non-communist revolutionary states like revolutionary France, and Iran. At this point, the categorization of Amos Perlmutter that divides armies in three types, namely professional, praetorian, and revolutionary, offers a useful conceptualization. Building on the same typology, this study addressed

¹³ Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p.89.

¹⁴ Amos Perlmutter, “The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Polities,” *Comparative Politics*, vol.1, no.3 (April 1969), p.383; Huntington, *Political Order ...*, pp.192-262; Nordlinger, *op.cit.*, p. 1-29; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics ...*, pp.89-114.

¹⁵ See David E. Albright, “Comparative Conceptualization of Civil Military Relations,” *World Politics*, vol.32, no.4 (July 1980); D.R. Herspring and L. Volgyes (eds.), *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978); Amos Perlmutter & William M. Leogrande, “The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems,” *The American Political Science Review*, vol.76, no.4 (Dec. 1982); Dale R. Herspring, “Samuel Huntington and Communist Civil-Military Relations,” *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.25, no.4 (1999), pp.557-577.

revolutionary army as an analytical category to understand civil-military relations in the revolutionary states.¹⁶

The revolutionary army comes out of special revolutionary circumstances that determine its characteristics, i.e. ideology, composition, organizational type and military mission. The revolutionary army is, above all, a political army harboring and pursuing ideological interests in the same vein with the revolutionary leadership. The revolutionary army is initially comprised of volunteer forces whose ideological and corporate interests lie with the revolutionary leadership. The revolutionary leadership views ideological commitment of volunteers more important than their military profession for recruitment into the army. Furthermore, in order to keep vigilance of the revolutionary soldiers, the revolutionary leadership employs ‘political preachers’ for ideological and political training of members of the revolutionary army. In terms of organization, the revolutionary army emerges as an egalitarian and a non-hierarchical militia force. However, over time, the revolutionary army turns into a hierarchically institutionalized armed force in order to increase its military capabilities. Another feature of the revolutionary army is that it has both internal and external military missions. In addition to fighting against counter-revolutionaries inside the country, the separatist forces, and the foreign armies that attacked the territorial integrity of the country, it may have extra-territorial missions to export the revolution.¹⁷ Finally, because it is composed of revolutionary zealots who feel themselves as an indispensable part of the revolutionary movement, the revolutionary army lacks a corporate identity and interest different from the revolutionary leadership. Consequently, the revolutionary army appears inherently as a political force because of its *raison d’être*.

In order to differentiate the revolutionary army/soldier from the professional and praetorian armies, Perlmutter looks at the following criteria: cliental relationship, corporatist orientation, ideology, and expertise. These criteria are useful to study the characteristics and peculiarities of the revolutionary armies. Firstly, the revolutionary

¹⁶ Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*.

¹⁷ Jonathan R. Adelman, *Revolution, Armies, and War: A Political History*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1985), p.5.

army differs from other types of armies in terms of its 'client relationship' that is determined by for what/whom the military service is being provided. The client of professional army is the state and nation. The client of praetorian army could be an ethnic group, a political party, and tribe etc.. However, the client of revolutionary army is neither the state nor a particular group; its client is the revolutionary movement and leadership. If the revolutionary movement is identified with a state, or a regime, then it becomes primary client of the revolutionary army.¹⁸

Secondly, the corporatist orientation of the revolutionary soldier is low when compared to its professional and praetorian counterparts. In contrast to the corporatist and exclusivist orientation of the professional and praetorian soldiers, the revolutionary type prefers comradeship. The revolutionary army defines itself with revolutionary commitment rather than 'skill and occupation' or membership to a specific group. It views itself as part of the revolutionary movement, and it does not see any difference between its functions as a soldier and that of a politician committed to the revolution. The revolutionary army does not draw a line of demarcation between itself and the rest of society, as well as the rest of the political system. Thus, a revolutionary army "functions as the instrument of the revolution, not as an independent agent."¹⁹

Another difference between the revolutionary army and the professional and praetorian ones derives from their respective ideologies. Although the professional army is mostly viewed as ideologically neutral, arguably, its ideology is conservative. The ideology of the praetorian army may be traditional, materialist, socialist, or anti-socialist. However, "the revolutionary type must, above all, be unswervingly loyal to the revolution and its dogmas."²⁰

The revolutionary army also differs from praetorian and professional armies with regard to its expertise. In a professional army, specific military knowledge based on objective standards of professional competence is necessary and very high.

¹⁸ Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, p.15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.206-207, 211.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.15.

In the praetorian armies, professional knowledge is not strictly observed. However, the revolutionary soldiers mostly lack military expertise, and the military profession is sacrificed for ideological dedication. An ideal type of revolutionary soldier must have both military profession and ideological commitment. Additionally, the conscription is universal in all types of armies; yet recruitment to the officer level is universal in professional armies based on military profession. In the praetorian armies, recruitment to the officers' corps is restrictive and depends on the corporate orientations of candidates. However, recruitment to the officers' corps in revolutionary armies is exclusive to those ideologically committed and militarily 'professionalized' ones. Finally, disposition with intervention in politics is usually low both in the professional and revolutionary armies, but it is permanent and high in the praetorian type.²¹

The characteristics of the revolutionary army mentioned above are derived through considering the initial phase at the time of establishment, which constituted the ideal type of the revolutionary armies.²² Among the characteristics of the revolutionary army, ideological outlook, and level of sense of corporateness emerge as the two leading characteristics which determine the revolutionary army-politics relationship in the later stages of the revolution.²³

The ideological outlook of the revolutionary army is equated with the revolutionary ideology because it is composed of volunteer zealots. It is also enhanced through intensive ideological indoctrination of members of the revolutionary army. The ideological viewpoint of the revolutionary army comes to determine its relationship to politics in several ways. First of all, the ideology prevailed over the revolutionary army affects formation of its institutional and corporate identity as performers of the ideological agenda of the revolution. Thus, ideological outlook of the revolutionary army establishes aims and missions of the revolutionary army. Finally, the revolutionary army views major political, social and

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.14-16.

²² See, Adelman, *Revolution, Armies, and War ...* , pp. 201-206.

²³ John Ellis, *Armies in Revolution*, (London: Croom Helm, 1973), pp.250-51; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, pp.289.

economic developments through the prism of ideology, and engages in encountering those developments with ideological measures.

The second defining characteristic of the revolutionary army in its relations with politics is corporateness of the army. Corporateness is used in the literature of civil-military relations to define “a sense of organic unity and consciousness of themselves as a group apart from laymen.”²⁴ The level of corporateness in any army determines its capability to act as a unitary actor, and strongly affects its relations with other institutions. If the sense of corporateness is low, the army members behave in different ways in their relationship with other institutions, i.e. political leadership. However, the higher the level of corporateness, the more members of the army tend to present similar manners towards lay institutions, and act in the same way.

The sense of corporateness is based on the exclusiveness of the group members. Therefore, corporateness essentially embraces three constituents, namely bureaucratization, institutional autonomy, and institutional identity. Bureaucratization denotes segregation of the armed forces from other organizations, and provides an institutional base for the army members. Through bureaucratization, a hierarchy is established among the army members, which helps to coordinate affairs of large organizations. The second constituent of corporateness is institutional autonomy that provides the army with an instrument to keep its exclusiveness in selecting and training new members, and preserving hierarchic relations among the army ranks without the influence of lay institutions and persons. Finally, institutional identity represents ideology and values of the revolutionary army that make it distinguishable from other institutions. Institutional identity connotes the army’s perception of its *raison d’être* that strongly influences behaviors of army members. Both institutional autonomy and identity provides the army with a considerable homogeneity among its ranks that facilitate a high level of corporateness. However, as the corporateness of the army increased, it tries to widen its autonomy and influence, and starts to pursue its own bureaucratic and material interests.²⁵

²⁴ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* ..., p.10.

²⁵ David Pion-Berlin, “Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America,” *Comparative Politics*, vol.25, no.21 (Oct. 1992), pp.84-85.

In fact, the characteristics of the revolutionary army are subjected to change in the course of time parallel to the broader changes in the nature of revolutions.²⁶ Therefore, it is appropriate to analyze political dynamics in the post-revolutionary states before setting in a detailed discussion of the variations in the characteristics and structure of the revolutionary army and its relationship to politics.

2.3. Political Dynamics in the Post-Revolutionary States

It is inadequate to analyze revolutionary army-politics relationship by reference to merely the characteristics of army, since it is itself dependent on the contextual developments in the aftermath of the revolution. The contextual developments affect the stand of the political leadership and its interactions with the revolutionary army, as well. Because the revolution connotes a highly volatile environment, there are rapid and frequent shifts in the configuration of politics. Indeed, a revolution does not end with the seizure of political power. The revolution is a process that begins with the collapse of the old regime, and continues through the institutionalization until its eventual consolidation, or its termination.²⁷ The political dynamics that are raised by the transition from the revolutionary interregnum to the consolidation, or termination strongly affect interactions between the revolutionary army and the political leadership. Despite their peculiarities, revolutions expose similar patterns of developments as explained by different theoreticians of revolution. Considering these similarities, Brinton devised his popular theory of ‘stages of revolution,’ which will be utilized here to elucidate political dynamics in the aftermath of victory of the revolution.²⁸

²⁶ See, Adelman, *Revolution, Armies, and War ...*, pp. 201-206.

²⁷ See, Brinton, *op.cit.*; Huntington, *Political Order ...*; Krishan Kumar (ed.), *Revolution; the Theory and Practice of A European Idea*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions; A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia & China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

²⁸ Brinton, *op.cit.*; Torbjorn L. Knutsen; Jennifer L. Bailey, “Over the Hill? The Anatomy of Revolution at Fifty,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.26, no.4 (Nov. 1989). The stages theories have been previously employed by some academicians to the Iranian Revolution (1979), as well; see, Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran*, (London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984).

Accordingly, the first stage of a revolution is the 'moderate phase' that follows the collapse of the old regime and ends with the rise of radicalism, usually by an event called as 'the second revolution,' or 'coup.' It is called as the moderate stage because the moderate political elites of the revolutionary coalition come to power. Although a provisional government led by the moderate revolutionaries assumes the responsibility to reinstate central authority, its capabilities are strictly hindered by already poor conditions of economy and inefficient administrative structures inherited from the old regime. Additionally, the revolutionary coalition that coalesced to overthrow the ancient regime starts to dissolve into rival ideologies and political groups such as conservative, moderate, radical, and extremist, each claiming to embody the substance of revolution. The moderates attempt to establish some sort of liberal, democratic, and constitutional state.²⁹ The moderate government is further weakened because the radical and independent revolutionary groups, such as self-appointed revolutionary committees or zealous mobs, block its activities. For this reason, some analysts call this process as the period of dual/multiple governments.³⁰ In addition to the controversies that may turn into a bitter inter-revolutionary fighting, the moderate government has to deal with an 'internal war' against counter-revolutionary forces, and to deal with rising insurrections around the country demanding further autonomy. Eventually, the moderate government finds itself helpless in the face of increasing challenges. Thus, this stage is characterized with political instability, lack of ideological coherence among the revolutionary groups, and limited authority of the provisional government. This stage may be omitted in the planned revolutions in which a cohesive group of leadership with a clear ideological agenda leads the revolution and seizes the political power through fighting by the help of a proto-administrative structure.

Whereas the power of the moderate government has gradually weakens, concomitantly, the influence of ideologically committed radicals, who are more disciplined than their rivals, increases over society and the revolutionary institutions.

²⁹ Huntington, *Political Order ...*, p.268-69.

³⁰ See, Timothy P. Wicham-Crowley, *Exploring Revolution: Essays on Latin American Insurgency and Revolutionary Theory*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), p.163-67. Tilly, ...

The goal of radicals is to expand political participation, to bring new masses into politics, and thereby to increase their own power. Throughout the revolutionary interregnum, the radicals have advantages in terms of their cohesiveness, discipline and ideological willingness, which help them mobilize previously marginalized groups into politics. Eventually, they take over government through extreme means, most probably by a coup; thus, 'the radical stage' of the revolution starts.

Having seized the power, the radicals establish their monopoly over coercive organizations and governmental bodies by ousting all active opponents and their rivals from these organizations. The radicals, who are highly doctrinaire, authoritarian, and prone to use violence, manage to establish and empower central authority of the revolutionary state, mostly through repression. They also introduce great social and institutional reforms in accordance with their ideological agenda. At this time, the radicals lean on exaltation of the 'revolutionary ideology.' The revolutionary ideology that is imposed over the entire society and state serves as a crucial link between the radical leaders and the revolutionary masses. Thereby, the revolutionary ideology provides the radical faction with a considerable measure of legitimacy and cohesion.³¹ Meanwhile, the radicals increasingly appeal to coercive rule to prevent opposition to these radical changes, which drives the revolution into a phase of terror. The violence involved in the terror and radical reforms ensure that there is no turning back to the *status quo ante*.³² The strong leadership with an empowered authoritarian administrative structure and revolutionary fervor leads to the emergence of an 'efficient' state when compared to the old regime. This stage is very critical for the survival of the regime and revolutionary leaders, because the political system, the institutional structure devised, and the policies employed in this term are decisive in the course of subsequent stages.

Radical reforms carried out by the ruling radical faction through coercive measures and repression add recruits to an opposition made up of all the defeated

³¹ Mehran Kamrava, "Revolution Revisited: the Structuralist-Voluntarist Debate," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol.32, no.2 (June 1999), p.329.

³² See, Rosemary H.T. O'Kane, *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror: The Role of Violence in Political Change* (Worcester: Edward Elgar, 1991).

parties of the earlier stages of the revolution. Additionally, a revolutionary fatigue of repression and radical transformation prevails over society. Eventually, through support of a broad-based opposition a new moderate faction comes to power; condemns and denies the excesses of the radicals, and shifts emphasis from social transformation to economic reconstruction and development.³³ This stage is called as thermidorian with a reference to date of overthrow of the 'reign of Terror' in France led by Robespierre on the 9th Thermidor, Year II (according to the French revolutionary calendar, 27 July 1794). Employing an analogy between revolution and 'fever,' Brinton calls the reign of terror as 'crisis' period, and the thermidorian process as 'convalescence from the fever.'³⁴

In the thermidorian period, the pressures of the previous stage are relaxed, the special tribunals give place to more regular ones, and the revolutionary committees are absorbed into the regular police. In parallel with the elimination of mechanisms of terror, the revolutionary ideology is gradually superseded by pragmatism, efficiency, and professionalism both in politics and in the state administration. An aggressive nationalism supplants the revolutionary ideology for internal and external mobilization. The imposition of ideological indoctrination/purity and the state intervention in economic and social life greatly diminishes. As a result of new economic and social policies, whereas the lower segments of society suffer economically, the search for pleasure and corruption increases in the higher segments of society. The people that politically proscribed in the previous stages of the revolution return to politics and administrative positions. Under these circumstances, the political scene becomes more pluralist, and competitive among different factions. It should be noted that, the thermidorians are not counter-revolutionaries; they claim to represent a 'realist' and pragmatist wing of the revolutionaries that defy extremism of the radicals. Although the thermidorians denounce extremism of the radicals and disband some means of terror, they maintain, and rely on strong institutional structure established by the radicals. In conclusion, the thermidorian stage is a period

³³ T.L. Knutsen and J.L. Bailey, "Over the Hill? The Anatomy of Revolution at Fifty," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.26, no.4 (Nov. 1989), p.421-422; Kumar, *op.cit.*, p.77-79.

³⁴ Brinton, *op.cit.*, p.215.

that traditional and revolutionary values and institutions are hybridized under a new state that is stronger than the pre-revolutionary one.³⁵

It should be pointed out that transition from the radical stage to the thermidor might not be as dramatic as it was in the French revolution where leaders of the radical faction were executed. In some cases, the thermidor may come through a generational change, or in a smoother way, such as election, or reshuffling of the political leadership. Conversely, in some cases political leaders of the radical stage and terror survive in the thermidorian stage and keep their reserve on power with dramatic change in some policies such as relaxing repression, and a shrewd use of accommodative policies.

The thermidorian stage is the turning point of any revolution in which three different patterns may be arise. First, the thermidorian stage may give rise to a revival of radicalism as a reaction to corruption, morale looseness, economic and possible military failures of the thermidorians. Brinton called revival of radicalism as “relapses, as one might expect in a convalescence” period.³⁶ The relapse of radicalism comes out with the rise of a radical faction or with the empowerment of the residual radical leadership. The radical revolutionaries that survived in the thermidorian stage reinstate repressive policies as Stalin did in the 1930s, and Mao did in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s.

Secondly, the thermidorian stage may terminate the revolution giving way to ‘military takeover,’ and/or eventual restoration of the traditional structures of authority. The ultimate establishment of a ‘tyranny’ or military regime at the end of the thermidorian stage is a commonly observed pattern in many of the revolutions.³⁷ With regard to this point, Brinton argues, “dictatorships and revolutions are inevitably closely associated,” because revolutions have greatly altered, or weakened values, customs, beliefs, and laws that are binding society together. Thus, the way is opened for ‘a man on horseback’ to take over the politics, which means the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.215-38.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.216.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.217-18.

revolution is over. The rise of tyranny or military regime may precipitate another revolutionary cycle.

Finally, in this stage the revolution is consummated through the consolidation of new social, political and economic institutions that are governed by the executives under the revolutionary symbols and slogans.³⁸ Thus, the revolutionary cycle may be broken out through a successful institutionalization and consolidation of the revolution. In this regard, Huntington states, “the measure of how successful a revolution is is the authority and stability of the institutions to which it gave birth.”³⁹ In this sense, the revolutions like the English (1649), or the French Revolution (1789) that culminated in military dictatorship and eventual restoration of monarchy are ‘incomplete’ revolutions because they have failed to stabilize and institutionalize new political structures. However, the revolutions such as the Russian (1917), and the Chinese revolutions (1949) are examples of ‘complete’ revolutions that produced and consolidated a new political system.⁴⁰

2.4. Revolutionary Armies and Politics

Having reviewed the characteristics of the revolutionary army and the revolutionary dynamics, we can move on discussion of interactions between the revolutionary army and politics. The survey of political dynamics above displays that the revolutionary politics is characterized with volatile political, social and economic conditions, fierce political competition, and the dominance of revolutionary ideology. Institutionalization efforts and the revolutionary wars are other constituent parts of the revolutionary political dynamics. Along with the political dynamics that affect structure of the revolutionary regimes, the political elites play influential roles both in the course of revolution and in civil-military relations. The changing political dynamics and the stand of ruling elites in revolutionary states strongly affect the revolutionary army’s structure, missions and corporateness. Major changes that take

³⁸ Skocpol, *op.cit.*, p.163-65

³⁹ Huntington, *Political Order ...*, p.266.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.313-15.

place in the revolutionary dynamics also brought major changes in the characteristics of the revolutionary army.

The initial changes in the structure of revolutionary armies take place upon the break out of violent armed insurgencies or revolutionary wars, a process that virtually coincides with the ascendance of radicals to the power. The first change occurs in the military mission of revolutionary armies; whereas they are initially charged with internal security, now they have to fight against potential separatist movements, and fight revolutionary wars against militarily stronger forces. In the face of stronger military threats, conscription method and organization type of revolutionary armies have to be changed in order to increase its efficiency. Instead of loosely organized voluntary forces, the revolutionary leadership appeals to greater mobilization campaigns, and finally to universal conscription; and imposes conventional hierarchic military discipline to the revolutionary army.⁴¹ Although military profession becomes an important factor in promotions, dedication to the revolutionary ideology and political loyalty still have decisive roles. Moreover, in order to keep revolutionary fever of the armed forces at a high level, an intensive program of political indoctrination is carried out. Thus, under the reign of radicals, the revolutionary armies lose their egalitarian characters, political and institutional autonomies, and they become dependent on the political leadership with a high ideological/political consciousness.

Transformation of the revolutionary armies continues through the radical stage, and the most decisive changes in structure and characteristics of the revolutionary armies take place until the thermidorian phase of the revolution. By that time, a considerable level of stabilization is achieved inside the revolutionary country, and revolutionary wars are either ended or eased. Therefore, in order to increase military efficiency, the revolutionary army achieves some sort of professionalism and institutional autonomy that provides it with a considerable corporate identity.⁴² Hence, the thermidorians face with well-organized, ideologically indoctrinated

⁴¹ Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.64-71.

⁴² Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, pp.13-14.

revolutionary armies with a considerable corporate identity. The type of relationship between these armies and civil politicians are determined according to the pattern that the thermidorian process would follow.

Under these circumstances, the political elite, particularly the ruling elite, play remarkable roles in the course of the revolution and the revolutionary army-politics relationship. Through their strife for management of the volatile political dynamics, the ruling elite's decisions and actions directly affect the course of developments. The political elite come out as the 'civil' party in the relations between the revolutionary army and politics as well. Especially certain steps taken by the ruling elite towards institutionalization and consolidation of political power determine the nature of civil-military relations in revolutionary states. In doing so, the ruling elite undertake measures and move in accordance with their ideological viewpoints. Success of the elite's strife for control of the dynamics and the course of the revolution is determined by their power. The elite's power is illustrated through their ability to mobilize people and ability to employ their political agenda. Consequently, the ideological stance and power of the ruling elite, that is the political leadership, appear as the two leading factors that affect both the course of the revolution and the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics.

Considering the fact that the revolutionary army is ideological in nature, the ruling elites' (pragmatist or doctrinaire) approach to the revolutionary ideology that dominate the revolutionary regime emerges as a substantial issue in the army's relations with the political leadership. The other factor that affects revolutionary army-politics relationship is power of the political leadership. Although defining power of the political leadership is a controversial issue, in this case it comprises elite cohesion, popular support and enforcement capability. A powerful political leadership could dominate the relationship between revolutionary armies and politics, whereas weakness of the political leadership leaves room for the increasing role of the armies in politics.

Based on the processes and factors outlined above, it is possible to deduce four variables to analyze the revolutionary army-politics relationship. Two of the variables are related to the revolutionary army, and the remaining two variables are

related to the ruling political elites in the revolutionary country. Interaction among these variables defines the nature of the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics.

The first variable related to the revolutionary army is corporateness of the revolutionary army. Corporateness defines the army's capability to act as a unitary actor. However, a high-level of corporateness leads the army to pursue bureaucratic and material interests, to search for greater autonomy and increased roles in politics, and to influence the related institutions. Level of institutionalization and institutional autonomy of the revolutionary army, and the state of factionalism among the army ranks display the degree of corporateness among the army members. The second variable is ideological dedication of the revolutionary army. The ideological line prevailing over the revolutionary army facilitates causes for the mobilization of the army members and provides a mindset to evaluate major political and social developments. It also helps the revolutionary army to appraise enemies and friends of the revolution. Similarity between the themes and discourse utilized by the revolutionary army and the revolutionary ideology illustrates the level of ideology prevailing over the revolutionary army.

Of other two variables pertaining to the political elite, the first one is ideological approach of the ruling elite. The commitment of the ruling revolutionary elite to the revolutionary values and ideology provides congruence between them and the revolutionary institutions. The flexibility of the political leadership in imposing revolutionary values, and the similarities or differences between themes and values underlined by the ruling elite and the dominant revolutionary ideology illustrate the level of ideological dedication of the political leadership. The final variable is the power of the ruling elite. Whereas a powerful political leadership can establish its authority over the revolutionary army, the weakness of the political leadership leaves a vacuum to be filled by the army. The cohesiveness of the political leaders, the popular support that they have, and their capability to put into effect their policies and political agenda give some clues about the power of the political leadership.

Considering the interrelationship between the variables defined above, we could devise four assumptions regarding the revolutionary army-politics relationship. There

are several critical points that lead those assumptions. Those points are the balance between the corporateness and ideological commitment of the revolutionary army; the ideological congruency between the revolutionary army and the political leadership; and the power of the political leadership vis-à-vis the revolutionary army.

The first assumption is that a high-level of ideological consciousness and low-level of corporateness of the revolutionary army harnessing the aims and interests of a powerful, doctrinaire revolutionary political leadership provide subordination of the army to the political leadership. The second assumption is based on the balance between the ideological commitment and the corporateness of the revolutionary army. A high-level of corporateness in the army exceeding its ideological/revolutionary aspirations may turn the revolutionary army into a praetorian one challenging the authority of political leadership. The third assumption pays special attention to the balance between revolutionary/ideological aspirations of the army and the civilian politicians. If the ideological harmony between the political leadership and the army fades away, the revolutionary army-politics relationship takes a conflictual form. However, the eventual result depends on the balance of power between the army and the political leadership. The final assumption is based on the balance of power between the revolutionary army and the political leadership. It suggests that in case of a powerful army with high level corporate identity faces with a weak political leadership, the army involves in politics. In the same case, if the revolutionary consciousness of army exceeds its corporateness, then the revolutionary army claims leadership of the revolution. Yet, if its corporateness supersedes its ideological commitment, then, the revolutionary army becomes a classic praetorian army.

Since the variables outlined above change in succeeding stages of the revolution, the nature of relations between the revolutionary army and politics is also subjected to change, and take different forms. The section below discusses different forms of the revolutionary army-politics relationships, and gives some historical examples to illustrate the arguments being made here.

2.5. Forms of the Revolutionary Army-Politics Relationship

As it is stated in the previous pages, various stages that are marked with different political dynamics ensue victory of the revolution. In each stage, the variables, which are deduced to define the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics, take different forms. Therefore, the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics takes different forms in each stage of the revolution.

In the aftermath of spontaneous revolutions, the revolutionary leadership finds two armies at its disposal: the inherited conventional army, and the revolutionary guards. The army inherited from the deposed regime has a low corporate identity because of the destruction of its discipline throughout the revolutionary interregnum. Although rank-and-file of this army and some of its officers may be sympathetic to the revolution, some of the officers who swore allegiance to the old regime may abhor revolutionary ideology. In the political realm, the revolutionary coalition fragments into rival factions that lead to political instability in the country. The moderate government that comes to power just after the victory of the revolution suffers from the lack of enough power to impose its authority across the country. Under these circumstances, relationship between the inherited conventional army and the moderate government could be defined as ‘suspected relationship.’ Coup attempts carried out by some officers of the inherited army inflame the suspicions of the moderate government. Hence, the chief aim of revolutionary leadership is to neutralize hostility of the inherited army to the revolution, and to convert it into a form harnessing the revolutionary interests.

For instance, it was unthinkable for the French revolutionaries of 1789 to leave the monopoly of the armed power into the hands of professional elites that were formed and organized according to the principles of the ancient regime. Given the fact that the King was, then, still in his post as chief of the executive body established according to the constitutional monarchy until the storm of *Tuileries* palace in August 1792, and there were abortive royalist attempts to forestall course of the revolution, suspicions on the part of the revolutionaries towards the military were substantial. However, under the pressure of time and given the immediate threats to the revolution, they decided to maintain the integrity of the inherited army,

but were determined to try to make it compatible with basic revolutionary tenets. In line with these efforts, there was a campaign to erode the autonomy and exclusiveness of the line army through reorganization of troops, and resettlement of recruitment and promotion criteria, and by gradually purging aristocratic elements of the army. In order to stiffen the line army with the revolutionary zeal, volunteer forces were deployed in the same lines with the inherited army. The troops were allowed to attend to political clubs to enable their politicization.⁴³ As regards to Russia, at the time of the outbreak of the first stage of the revolution in March 1917, majority of the Tsarist army was at the war front and they transferred their allegiance from the Tsarist government to the Provisional government led by Alexander Kerensky. Thus, throughout the spring and summer following the ‘February’ revolution, the army remained intact and subordinated, though suspect, to the provisional government.⁴⁴

The second armed force at the disposal of the revolutionary leadership in the aftermath of the spontaneous revolutions is the revolutionary guards (militia forces). Ideological consciousness of the revolutionary guards that are hastily established in the revolutionary interregnum is at a high level. However, the loyalty of the revolutionary militias is divided among the competing moderate and radical factions, and eventually the radicals take over the control of the militias. After then, the revolutionary guards turn into a strike force of the radicals against their moderate rivals. Therefore, the form of relationship between the provisional/moderate government and the revolutionary militia army could be depicted as ‘contentious.’ Instead of political compliance with the moderate government, the militia forces, which came under the direction of the radicals, challenge and block authority of the moderate government. Thus, they play a critical role in favor of radicals in ousting of the moderate government.

The French National Guard represents a good sample of change in the revolutionary militia armies and the contentious relations between the militia forces

⁴³ Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.89-91.

⁴⁴ Chorley, *op.cit.*, p.117.

and the moderate government. In fact, the French National Guard was composed of different autonomous units organized in provincial towns under the direction of local administrators. The Parisian National Guard, the most famous of the guards units, was founded through the insurrection of 13-14 July 1789 as a middle-class army to forestall royalist attempt to seize power again, and to provide security of neighborhoods. However, when the Assembly appealed universal conscription throughout the mass mobilization of 1792, the National Guard lost its exclusivist character. Now comprising the *sans-culotte* sections, loyalty of the Guardsmen was divided among the leading political factions. Eventually, the *sans-culotte* sections of the Guards helped the radicals to come to power by surrounding the National Convention in June 1793.⁴⁵ Similar to the French National Guard, the Red Guard detachments of Russia were formed in the revolutionary crisis in March 1917 in Petrograd and Moscow as a proletarian military organization.⁴⁶ It played a crucial role in defending Petrograd against the Kornilov attempt that strengthened its position. In the October Revolution, the Red Guards were the principal fighting force that the Bolsheviks relied on in contention with their moderate rivals.⁴⁷

As stated above, because a cohesive radical faction captures power through long-term struggle, the moderate stage is skipped over in the planned revolutions. Therefore, in terms of the revolutionary army-politics relationship, the planned revolutions follow a different pattern from the spontaneous revolutions in this stage. Different from the spontaneous revolutions, the revolutionary leadership in the planned revolution has an ideologically conscious revolutionary army at its disposal. The revolutionary army has virtually no corporate identity because the leadership of army and politics is concentrated in the same hands. Leaders of the revolution have dual roles both in the army and in politics. This kind of relationship is called ‘fusionist’ meaning the blend of army and politics. The line between the military and politics becomes so blurred that the distinction between them loses its meaning, and

⁴⁵ Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.78-88. Brinton, *op.cit.*, p.137.

⁴⁶ Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.175-87.

⁴⁷ Chorley, *op.cit.*, pp.234-236.

elites are circulated between military and non-military posts.⁴⁸ The best example of fusion as a revolutionary army-politics relationship form is the case of civil-military relations just after the Cuban Revolution. It was the ‘rebel army’ – transformed into the Revolutionary Armed Forces – that took over political and administrative control of the state after the revolution in 1959. It was difficult to distinguish between the military and the civilian authorities. This situation prevailed until the mid-1960s, when a formal party structure commenced taking shape.⁴⁹ However, once the political power was captured and a process of division of labor in governing begins, the fusionist relationship is difficult to sustain. As the separation between the military and the politics emerges and institutional boundaries solidify, circulation of elites between the military and non-military posts becomes more difficult. Then, the revolutionary army-politics relationship in the aftermath of the planned revolutions takes another form called ‘symbiosis’ that will be discussed below.

Unlike the fusion of political and military leadership in the planned revolutions, boundaries between the military and politics are institutionally demarcated in the aftermath of spontaneous revolutions. However, in the stage succeeding the rule of moderates in spontaneous revolutions, the radicals establish a firm authority with repressive mechanisms over the state and society, including the armed forces. Moreover, especially the revolutionary guards become one of the repressive mechanisms instrumented by the radicals. As already pointed out, the leadership of radicals is very cohesive and ideologically dedicated. Their repressive mechanisms extend into the military bodies, as well, to purge disloyal elements from the army and to indoctrinate soldiers with the revolutionary ideology. In this stage, primary concern of the political leadership is to put pressure on the armed forces to have them internalize the values of revolution. In order to ensure compliance of armies and their indoctrination, political leadership deeply penetrates into the army ranks through commissars and political preachers. Since the radicals constantly intervene in

⁴⁸ Albright, *op.cit.*, p.560.

⁴⁹ Albright, *op.cit.*, pp.558-560; Perlmutter and Leogrande, “*op.cit.*”, p.785; Amos Perlmutter, “The Comparative Analysis of Military Regimes: Formations, Aspirations, and Achievements,” *World Politics*, vol.33, no.1 (Oct. 1980); Louis A. Perez, “Army Politics in Socialist Cuba,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol.8, no.2 (November 1976), pp.251-271.

military affairs, neither the army nor the revolutionary guards have different corporate identities under their rule. Consequently, the revolutionary armies become greatly 'subordinate' to the political leadership. The ideological congruence between the revolutionary army and the radical political leadership also enhance subordination of the army.

At the time the radicals seized power in France in June 1793, the character of the Line Army was profoundly changed; thereby, majority of the officers and ranks were composed of recently enlisted civilians. Thus, the Line Army had become a reliable instrument in the hands of the new regime. Nevertheless, its alleged 'professionalism' was enough to make them suspect in the eyes of the radical leaders. In order to pre-empt any possible threat from the army – and to increase its efficiency in the face of invading armies – the Convention decreed the merger of the Line Army with the volunteers into a single force.⁵⁰ In line with the measures taken by the radicals towards administrative centralization and suppression of dissent, and in addition to intensive propaganda carried out by the radicals, the Convention appointed *representants-en-mission* with great authorities to the provincial departments and the army.

“They could order to dismiss and replace civil and military personnel on the spot; take any measures that seemed necessary to them to re-establish order wherever it might be threatened; bring before the revolutionary tribunal anyone deemed to have obstructed their operations; arrest and even have all suspects deported and take any measures necessary for the well-being of the troops.”⁵¹

The representatives were charged with reporting directly to the Committee of the Public Safety, the notorious executive body of the radicals, to keep control of army in the hands of radicals. The same strict measures were also extended into the National Guards. The Jacobins, thus, secured subordination of the army and the guards.

When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia in October 1917, the army was divided into two. Whereas the rank-and-file sided with the Bolsheviks, the officers

⁵⁰ Gunther E. Rothenberg, “Soldiers and the Revolution: the French Army, Society, and the State, 1788-99,” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 32, no.4 (Dec. 1989), pp.986-88.

⁵¹ Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.98.

either disappeared or fought against the Bolsheviks. Hence, on taking power, the Bolsheviks found themselves with a morally collapsed army without officers and lacking military profession and discipline at their disposal.⁵² Given the inadequate capability of the Red Guards to fight spreading civil war, the Bolsheviks established the Red Army that was composed of the Red Guard, the volunteer forces, and the former officers that offered their service to the revolution. Under these circumstances, the political commissars emerged as the representatives of the political leadership in order to preserve a reliable bulwark of the Bolshevik power over army. For the Bolsheviks, authority had to reside in the civilian organs of Soviet power that could be made possible by a rigid surveillance and political control. The leadership employed two organizations to accomplish surveillance and control the Red Army; the commissars and the party cells in the army. While the commissars with great powers such as dual command ensured the Party control over the army, the party members (the red cells) were dispatched to each unit to inspire the rank-and-file with the revolutionary ideology.⁵³ Thus, the Red Army greatly was made dependent on the political leadership.

The reign of radicals is terminated by the thermidorian reaction. The distinctive features of the thermidor are pluralism and competitiveness of politics, political instability, and the easing of radicalism of the previous stage. Until this stage, in order to make the armed forces more efficient and to prevent waste of sources, the army and the militia forces might be united under a single command, as it was the case in the course of the Russian revolution that the Red Guards merged with the Red Army. However, it is not necessarily an outcome of the course of the revolution. Thus, the French National Guards, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have survived in the thermidorian stage as well.

The thermidorian stage is a critical period for the revolutionary army-politics relationship that is shaped according to the pattern towards which the revolution is evolving. It is certain that corporateness of the army considerably increases in this

⁵² Chorley, *op.cit.*, pp.147-48.

⁵³ Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.175-98; Mark von Hagen, "Civil-Military Relations and the Evolution of the Soviet Socialist State," *Slavic Review*, vol.50, no.2 (Summer 1991), pp.269-72.

stage. As a result of measures taken by the political leadership in order to increase efficiency of the armed forces, the revolutionary army becomes professional in terms of operation, education, and promotion. Additionally, since the technology of war is too complex, the political leadership is forced to cede greater institutional autonomy to the military at least on issues directly related to military expertise. Hence, the revolutionary army gains greater institutional autonomy parallel to its professionalization, which may provide it with a greater corporate identity. Additionally, the revolutionary wars are ceased until the thermidor, and repressive policies of radicals are replaced with accommodative ones by the thermidorians. Therefore, the revolutionary armies are re-structured in this phase to take part in the campaign for economic reconstruction, which, in turn, may strengthen corporateness of the revolutionary army. Thereby, the thermidorians and their successors face an army with considerable corporate identity. However, the remaining variables regarding the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics are unpredictable in this period, and are far from presenting a common pattern. Therefore, the variables should be reviewed in accordance with the circumstances of any given case.

As discussed in the previous pages, at the end of the thermidor, the revolution either witnesses the relapse of radicalism, or collapses because of a military coup, or restoration of the previous regime or it is consummated through institutionalization. Collapse of the revolution comes through persistent instability and weakness of the political leadership. The persistent political instability, weakness of the political leadership, disintegration of elites and ideological disagreements among the elites resonate among the army ranks, which leads to the involvement of the army in politics. Then, the revolutionary army with a considerable corporateness starts to become a part of ordinary politics when the contending political factions attempt to gain support of the armed forces.⁵⁴ In this regard, level of ideological commitment of the revolutionary army defines the nature of its relations with politics. If its ideological zeal is in a high level, the revolutionary army remains loyal to the revolution and cooperates with the doctrinaire political factions. Then,

⁵⁴ Albright, *op.cit.*, p.569; Chorley, *op.cit.*, p.242.

interventionism of the revolutionary army occurs, arguably, in support of the revolution.⁵⁵

Indeed, in the case of persistent instability and weakness of the political leadership, political indoctrination and political control of the army might be adversely affected from the political contention, which may lead to the breakup of ideological-political outlook of the army. Whereas corporateness of the army is rising, dissolution of its ideological commitment together with persistent political instability and weak political leadership paves the way for praetorianism. Now operating in a praetorian environment, the army also turns into a praetorian army that opts for intervention in politics in order to trace its corporate interests.⁵⁶

The French revolutionary army best fits to the case, i.e., a revolutionary army turned into a praetorian one. The dramatic cast out of the radicals on 27th July 1794 (9th Thermidor, II), and the dismantling of the apparatus of the ‘Terror’ unleashed an anarchy of divergent political and economic aspirations. After the Terror, the Convention reduced the number and authority of representatives on mission; and hence, political surveillance of officers was diminished noticeably. However, the continuing volatility of the politics through the year of 1795 increased the Directory’s dependence on military success for its power that helped the army’s increasing independence from the civilian authority.⁵⁷ Thereby, the army’s influence gradually increased in the French politics, eventually leading to Napoleon Bonaparte’s *coup d’etat* overthrowing the Directory on 9 November 1799 (18 Brumaire, VIII).⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, pp.207-08.

⁵⁶ Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, pp.15-16, 289.

⁵⁷ Jonathan D. Devlin, “The Army, Politics and Public Order in Directorial Provence, 1795-1800,” *The Historical Journal*, vol.32, no.1 (Mar. 1989), pp.87-103; Howard G. Brown, “Politics, Professionalism and the Fate of Army Generals After Thermidor,” *French Historical Studies*, vol.19, no. 1 (Spring 1995), pp.138-151.

⁵⁸ See, Howard G. Brown, *Ending the French Revolution; Violence, Justice, and Repression from Terror to Napoleon*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Leo Gershoy, *The French Revolution and Napoleon*, (New York: F.S. Crofts and Co., 1947); Rothenberg, *op.cit.*, pp.988-995.

Contrary to the persistent instability that led to military involvement in politics, both cases of the relapse of radicalism and the institutionalization of the revolution imply that the political leadership is relatively powerful and is committed to the revolutionary ideology to some extent. If the revolutionary army with a considerable level of corporateness and ideological zeal is faced with such a stable and powerful political leadership, the revolutionary army-politics relationship evolves into a form, which could be defined as ‘symbiosis.’⁵⁹

In a symbiotic relationship, there is a high degree of equivalence in the political values of institutionally segregated military and political leadership; hence there is no reason for strife between the two. In addition to ideological uniformity between the army and the political leadership, there is a sense of some sort of institutional partnership among them in order to survive and maintain their power. If an ideological differentiation follows the institutional segregation between the army and the political leadership, that is if the ideological and institutional gap between the army and the civilian politicians widens, the symbiotic relationship between them shatters. Different from a coalition, in a symbiotic relation, institutionally segregated army accepts supremacy of the political leadership. That is, despite its institutional autonomy, the army is not autonomous politically.⁶⁰ In this form of revolutionary army-politics relationship, the political and military leaders are inter-located in the leading decision-making mechanisms. Participation of some military leaders in these mechanisms provides them with an opportunity to have a say over principal issues and politics of the country; yet, it secures the supremacy of the political leadership. It also helps to moderate any conflict between the military officers and the civilian officials that tends to increase because of increasing autonomy of the military. An additional potent effect of the symbiosis is drawing the military into any major factional strife in the revolutionary leadership. A sort of cooperation may arise

⁵⁹ Perlmutter and Leogrande, *op.cit.*, p.784, Dongmin Lee, “Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Divestiture of People’s Liberation Army Business Holdings,” *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3 (April 2006), p.442.

⁶⁰ See, David Pion-Berlin, “Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America,” *Comparative Politics*, vol.25, no.21 (Oct. 1992), pp.84-85; Perlmutter and Leogrande, *op.cit.*, pp.779-782; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, p.205-207.

between the army and political factions that share identical ideological/political outlooks.⁶¹

The symbiotic form of revolutionary army-politics relationship is founded most persuasively in civil-military relations in the post-revolutionary China. The Chinese Red Army grew out of irregular militias led by influential leaders of the Communist Party following the 1927 campaigns.⁶² During the long period of the civil war, the armed forces became a disciplined force with nearly two million soldiers. Having captured the political power all over China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) needed to lean on the army to govern the country. Indeed, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) – the Chinese Red Army renamed in 1937 – was instrumental in establishing the General Administrative Regions and governing large portions of the country prior to 1954.⁶³ Since the CCP leaders lead the armies throughout the civil war and they had dual role as being members of both the party and the army, the army-politics relationship during the Chinese civil war and in its aftermath was fusionist. The army was created by the CCP leadership in a guerilla form, and had no corporate identity different from the party. As the army became more regularized and developed a corporate identity, the Party employed a strict party control thorough political officers and instructors lest “the gun shall never be allowed to command the Party.”⁶⁴

Parallel to the professionalization of the PLA, gradual disappearance of soldier-politicians, and the growing bifurcation of military and the CCP, corporate structure and identity of the PLA have also increased. However, it continued to be subordinated to the CCP as well as ongoing participation of the PLA representatives

⁶¹ Perlmutter and Leogrande, *op.cit.*, p.787-788.

⁶² Ellis, *op.cit.*, pp.210-13.

⁶³ David Shambaugh, “The People's Liberation Army and the People's Republic at 50: Reform at Last,” *The China Quarterly*, no.159 (Special Issue), (Sep. 1999), p.660.

⁶⁴ Jonathan R. Adelman, *The Revolutionary Armies: The Historical Development of the Soviet and the Chinese People's Liberation Armies*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp.114-143.

– although in changing numbers – to the decision-making bodies of the CCP.⁶⁵ Because of the political control of the PLA, and principal characteristics of it, the PLA is still bound up with directions of the leadership of the CCP. The PLA's subordination to the party does not mean that it has not been involved in politics. Indeed, as a corollary of the symbiotic relationship between the party and the army throughout its history, the PLA has involved in a series of political affairs including the administration of the General Administrative Regions in the early 1950s, the Cultural Revolution, Deng's coming to power in 1978, and suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989. However, it is argued that "in no case ... did the PLA attempt to seize power *per se*."⁶⁶ Because of the symbiotic relationship between the army and the political leadership, the army came to rescue certain leaders and factions within the party/state. In this regard, David Shambaugh, respected scholar of the Chinese civil-military relations, concluded, "the PLA intervened precisely because of its symbiotic relationship with the party/state, rather than as a function of Bonapartist tendencies."⁶⁷

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the civil-military relations in revolutionary states in the aftermath of the seizure of power by the revolutionary forces and proposed a framework to study the revolutionary army-politics relationship. Devising the framework, the study has focused on characteristics of the revolutionary armies and the stance of political elites in the revolutionary country in historical context, which are deemed decisive factors in shaping the army-politics relationship in the revolutionary states.

⁶⁵ David Shambaugh, "The People's Liberation Army ... ," pp. 666-67; Jeremy T. Paltiel, "PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition," *The China Quarterly*, no.143 (Sep. 1995), pp.787-96.

⁶⁶ David Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State in China; The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army," *The China Quarterly*, no.127, Special Issue: The Individual and State in China (Sep., 1991), p.535; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, pp.247.

⁶⁷ David Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State ... ," pp.532-33.

In conclusion, this chapter has identified four variables determining the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics. Those variables are ideological outlook of the revolutionary army, corporateness of the revolutionary army, ideological commitment of the political leadership, and power of the political leadership, which are discussed in detail throughout the chapter. Furthermore, it has been argued that those variables are affected by the revolutionary dynamics, and tend to change in different stages of the revolution. For instance, corporateness of the revolutionary army is too weak in the first two stages (moderate and radical stages) of the revolution, but it reaches into a considerable level in the thermidorian stage. Similarly, although the revolutionary army is consisted of revolutionary zealots, its ideology is not clear in the moderate stage of the revolution because of the bitter rivalry among the leading political factions. However, in the radical stage, a radical ideological line prevails over the revolutionary army and its intensity and sustainability is depended on quality of ideological/political training of the army members. Similarly, the dedication of the ruling elites to the revolutionary ideology differs in time; it is modest in the first stage, doctrinaire in the radical phase, and pragmatist in the thermidorian stage. Finally, the power of the political leadership is limited in the moderate phase of the revolution, and vast in the radical period. The power of the political leadership also varies in the thermidorian phase, in accordance with special circumstances of the given case.

Based on the variables found out above, there are three critical points to be taken into account in order to understand the nature of the relationship between the revolutionary army and politics. The critical points are the balance between the corporateness and the ideological commitment of the revolutionary army; the ideological congruency between the revolutionary army and the political leadership; and the power of the political leadership vis-à-vis the revolutionary army. An ideologically vigilant revolutionary army with a considerably low corporateness is subordinated to powerful and doctrinaire political leadership. However, changes in the variables that affect the critical points stated above through different stages of the revolution provide the cause for changes in civil-military relations in the revolutionary states. As result of changes in the variables through the revolutionary

stages five forms of revolutionary army/politics relationship (contentious, subordinate, fusionist, intervention and symbiotic) take shape in post-revolutionary states.

In accordance with the framework drawn in this chapter, the following chapters will trace change of variables, thereby changes in revolutionary army/politics relationship in the revolutionary Iran. In order to put the process into context, history of post-revolutionary Iran is divided into four periods (moderate, radical, thermidorian, and neo-radical), each of which is covered in a different chapter. However, before the contextual analyses of the revolutionary army-politics relationship in Iran, the next chapter reviews characteristics of revolutionary army of Iran, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

CHAPTER III

REVOLUTIONARY ARMY OF IRAN: THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS CORPS (IRGC)

The revolutionary leadership in Iran inherited the Imperial Army among other institutions of the deposed regime after it seized power in February 11, 1979. Despite it heavily suffered from deserts, and flees of some officers, the Army remained intact through the revolutionary chaos and finally announced its neutrality in the clash between the revolutionary forces and the Bakhtiar government that had been installed by the deported Shah. However, the revolutionary leadership was doubtful about subordination of the Army that had been established by the Shah, and had been indoctrinated with the ideas of the previous regime. In order to transform the Army to the army of the revolution, the revolutionary leadership immediately started to purge any officials in the Army who were suspected in terms of loyalty to the Islamic revolution. At the same time, the revolutionary leadership started to train remaining Army members in accordance with the revolutionary ideas. Additionally, the revolutionary leadership established the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) both as a counterweight to the still-suspected Army and as a coercive force to enforce revolutionary authority across Iran.

Established in April 1979 as a militia force, the IRGC has gradually institutionalized and turned into an influential actor in Iranian politics. In accordance with the previous chapter, in order to understand the role of the IRGC in politics in post-revolutionary Iran, one should consider both the characteristics of the revolutionary army, i.e. the IRGC, and the political dynamics prevalent over the country. Therefore, this chapter deals with the characteristics of the IRGC, and analyzes implications of those characteristics on the IRGC's relationship to politics. Among the characteristics of revolutionary armies, the two come into prominence

with their determining affects for the relationship between revolutionary army and politics; the sense of corporateness within the revolutionary army and ideological/political outlook of that army. Analysis of the ideology of revolutionary army helps to explore the reasons for its involvement in politics; and study of the corporateness helps to understand to what extent it is influential. Therefore, this chapter reviews establishment and institutionalization of revolutionary army in Iran, the IRGC, and then, it explores the IRGC corporateness, and ideological/political outlook of the IRGC.

3.1. Formation and Institutionalization of the IRGC

3.1.1. Formation of the IRGC

Seizure of power by the revolutionary forces in February 11, 1979 did not give an end to the turmoil in Iran. Leaders of the revolution were in need of a powerful armed-force to establish stability and order, to safeguard their newly established position, and to enforce revolutionary measures. Since the state apparatus inherited from the deposed-regime could not assure authority of the new leadership and implementation of the revolutionary ideals, the revolutionaries led by Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini had to establish new institutions.¹ Therefore, a faithful and credible armed force owing direct allegiance to Khomeini, leader of the revolution, was deemed essential for the revolutionary leadership both to safeguard the revolution, and to enforce fundamental social and political changes.²

Moreover, the nascent revolution was defenseless against the immediate threats. One sort of perils threatening the revolution stemmed from remnants of the deposed regime, especially the Army. Considering and suspecting that the Army might still be loyal to the deposed Shah, the revolutionary leaders viewed survival of the Army as a severe threat to the revolution. The issue became more critical recalling the 1953 coup d'etat in Iran. Then, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had fled the country on 16 August 1953 following his skirmishes with Prime Minister Mohammad Musaddeq.

¹ Ashgar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp.151-57.

² Schahgaldian, *The Iranian Military under the Islamic Republic*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1987), p.67.

However, the armed forces loyal to the Shah, in cooperation with the US and British intelligence agencies, managed to stage a coup against Musaddeq and to restore the royal authority.³

Another danger to the revolutionary regime while establishing its authority was derived from existence of various armed militias. Some leftist militia forces were already waging guerilla warfare against the regime of Shah in the course of revolution. Among them, the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* and the *Fedaiyan-e Khalq*, each had remarkable number of armed-guerillas, were the leading ones.⁴ Additionally, the pro-Soviet Tudeh and many other leftist organizations had a number of armed-men in Tehran. Religious groups had also about 20,000 armed-members until the victory of the revolutionary forces. Throughout the revolutionary turmoil, in addition to already established armed militias, a number of people occupied some military bases and depots, and, thereby, captured many weapons.⁵ Among the militias, especially the Mojahedin and the Fedaiyan aroused as a threatening force for the Islamist/clerical leadership. Having seized the Tehran arms factory and arsenal depots, this organization dramatically increased its fire power. Furthermore, perceiving itself as the core of the army of the revolutionary regime, the Mojahedin had recruited personnel and organized revolutionary councils.⁶

Additionally, uprisings in Kurdistan, Turkoman Sahra, and other rural areas that followed victory of the revolution posed a great challenge to the revolutionary government. Initially, the Kurds and the Turkomans rioted against the revolutionary government because they were disappointed with the outcomes of the revolution.

³ See, Mahdi Gaani, "Az Razmandegi ta Sazendegi," *Shahrivande Emroz*, 25 Shahrivar 1386 [16 September 2007]. For a review of the 19 August coup against Mosaddeq see, Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.19, no.3 (August 1987), pp.261-286.

⁴ Ervand Abrahamian, "The Guerilla Movement in Iran, 1963-1977," *MERIP Reports*, no.86 (March-April 1980), pp.3-15.

⁵ Sepehr Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.209-210.

⁶ F. Bahnam, K. Behrooz, F. Shahabi, *Iran Almanac 2003 and Book of Facts*, (Tehran: The Echo of Iran, 2004), p.191-92; J.A. Kechichian and H. Sadri, "National Security," in H.C. Metz, *Iran, a Country Study*, (4th ed., Washington DC.; Library of Congress, 1989), pp.235-298.

Similar riots took place in Khuzestan and Balochistan provinces as well. Eventually, the largest minority group, the Azeris, joined to the insurgent movements against the government in Tehran. However, the revolutionary leadership did not trust the Army to handle those domestic disturbances.⁷

Under those circumstances, immediately after the victory of revolution, major political forces called for establishment of a 'people's army' or 'national guard' to safeguard the revolution against the threatening forces.⁸ It was not an idea peculiar to the Iranian revolutionaries to establish a revolutionary armed force to safeguard the revolution. It was a common practice especially for the spontaneous revolutions such as the establishment of the National Guard in France, and the Red Guards in Russia. Moreover, it is possible to find a prelude to the idea of establishing armed forces to defend the revolution in modern history of Iran. Throughout the constitutional revolution of 1906, the revolutionaries had organized armed militias, which had been very instrumental to reverse Mohammad Ali Shah's struggle against the constitutionalist movement.⁹ Thus, referring to that incident an IRGC Spokesman said in June 1979 that history makes the necessity to safeguard the revolution clear in all periods. He said, "Especially, when we look at our history, we see that after the revolution is carried out, the second stage is to safeguard the revolution."¹⁰

At that juncture, the Islamic Revolutionary Council began to address the issue of safeguarding the revolution. The Islamic Revolutionary Council consisted of radical clerics could rely neither on the radical leftist groups, nor on the 'dispirited' Army. The most viable option for the Council was to establish a new armed-force based on religious 'militias' loyal to the leading clerics.¹¹

⁷ Nader Entessar, "The Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in H. Amirahmadi & M. Parvin (eds.), *Post-Revolutionary Iran*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p.68; Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, p.237.

⁸ Gaani, "Az Razmandegi ta Sazendegi."

⁹ Nader Sohrabi, "Historicizing Revolutions: Constitutional Revolutions in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Russia, 1905-1908," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 100, no. 6 (May 1995), pp.1405-1436.

¹⁰ "Revolutionary Guards Spokesman Interviewed," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 11 June 1979, FBIS, 14 June 1979, R14-R15.

¹¹ Sazegara, "What was Once a Revolutionary Guard is Now Just a Mafia."

The religious militias were already organized around mosques and influential clerics under the name of the revolutionary committees concomitantly with the revolutionary interregnum. Since then the revolutionary committees, calling themselves *pasdars* (guards), started to play a prominent role in control of the streets and security of the neighborhoods. Paying for their equipment and using their own cars, those armed volunteers who were issued identity cards by any of the committees established in the mosques around cities, patrolled the streets and established roadblocks in order to perform searches and seizures. Their activities ranged from directing traffic to guarding revolutionary leaders, and to persecuting counterrevolutionaries.¹²

Nevertheless, the revolutionary committees were far from being unique in terms of political orientations and organizational set up.¹³ They were acting separately under their ‘bosses,’ and hardly cooperating with each other. The committees were acting even independent of the Provisional Government, which caused many troubles for the government. For that reason, Deputy Prime Minister Amir Entezam complaint in March 1979; “These committees have taken the law into their hands, and are undermining the authority of the Provisional Government and damaging the revolutionary spirit.”¹⁴

In order to combine those committees under an organized military force that would safeguard the revolution, thereby to overcome insecurity and disorganization deriving from uncontrolled armed groups, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered to form an armed force called ‘revolutionary guard.’ The mission to establish the revolutionary guards was enjoined to the Provisional Government that delegated this mission to Ebrahim Yazdi, the then Deputy Prime Minister in charge of revolutionary affairs.¹⁵

¹² Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.65.

¹³ Javad Deliri, “Sepah Chegoonah Tashkel Shod?” *Etemad-e Melli*, 17 Tir 1387 [7 July 2008].

¹⁴ *Tehran Journal*, 3 March 1979, p.4. Quoted in Susan E. Merdinger, “A Race for Martyrdom: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC),” Master’s Thesis, *Naval Postgraduate School*, Monterey, California, December 1982, p.31.

¹⁵ K. Behrouz, *Iran Almanac and Book of Facts; 1987*, (Tehran: Echo of Iran, 1988), p. 124; Mahdi Gaani, “Az Razmandegi ta Sazendegi,” *Shahrivande Emroz*, 25 Shahrivar 1386.

Meanwhile, Khomeini delegated Ayatollah Hassan Lahuti as his representative to the project to establish the revolutionary guards. At that time, the Provisional Government was in favor of naming this force as the 'National Guard.' Since the 'National Guard's connotation was reminding of the Shah's organizations, however, the new organization was named as *Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Islami* (the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, IRGC).¹⁶

In the meantime, besides the Provisional Government's strife to establish the revolutionary force, there were influential groups operating outside the jurisdiction of the government. Those groups included the Abu Sharif group, the so-called Jamshidiyeh Garrison, the Guards of Danesgah (Sadja) led by Mohammad Montazeri, and the *Mojahedin-e Enghelabe Eslami* that was coalition of the seven Islamic militia groups. In a short time those militia groups were incorporated into the IRGC.¹⁷ Having approved the provisional law of the IRGC and appointed a Command Council for the IRGC on April 22, 1979, the Islamic Revolutionary Council issued a statement announcing the formation of the Guards.¹⁸

Establishment of the IRGC signified transfer of the power of independent armed-men of the committees into a single organization, thereby controlling their activities. Additionally, foundation of the IRGC through merging different committees helped to accommodate rivalries among the leading Islamist groups, and enforced them to cooperate by putting their sources under a central organization. Finally, thereby, the Islamist/clerical leadership founded a disciplined armed force to serve their 'revolutionary ideals.'¹⁹

¹⁶ "Ravayate Mohammad Tavassoli az Tadvane Peshnavese Esasnamaye Sepahe Pasdaran," *Etemade Melli*, 17 Tir 1387 [7 July 2008], p.9.

¹⁷ "Chahar Sepah Yaki Shod," *Ramze Obor* (Vezhenameye Siyasi-ye Rouznamaye Iran, 1389 [March 2010]), pp.35-36.

¹⁸ "Khomeini orders formation of a special armed force," *The New York Times*, 7 May 1979; "Revolutionary Guards Corps Established in Iran," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 5 May 1979, FBIS, 7 May 1979, R10. See also, Mohammad Moqaddam, "Arteshe Motafaavete Jomhouri Eslami," *Baztab*, 21 April 2007.

¹⁹ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.67; "Khomeini orders formation of a special armed force," 7 May 1979.

Whereas the Revolutionary Council's endorsement provided a legal base for the establishment of IRGC, enactment of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic in December 1979 has granted constitutional authority to the IRGC. Article 150 of the Constitution stated; "The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, organized in the early days of the triumph of the Revolution, is to be maintained so that it may continue in its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements." However, the article 150 has not specified the scope of the duties of IRGC, and its areas of responsibility. Moreover, interpretation of the article has changed in time according to needs of the time or political outlook of the interpreter, which, in turn, led to changes in IRGC's missions. Changing duties and responsibilities of the IRGC has also caused variations in institutional structure of the IRGC.

3.1.2. Missions of the IRGC

Establishment of the IRGC and scope of its missions were initially laid with the provisional law of the IRGC, commissioned by the Revolutionary Council. According to the provisional law, the aim of formation of the IRGC was "to safeguard the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its expansion based on original Islamic ideology, and to fulfill the demands of the Islamic Republic."²⁰ In other words, the revolutionary leadership not only charged the IRGC with safeguarding the revolution, but also charged it with helping consolidation of the revolution in Iran and its expansion to other countries. The IRGC was also intended to act as an auxiliary security force to fulfill domestic security missions.

The provisional law outlined the IRGC's missions, which were also underlined in a statement of the IRGC on May 6, 1979.²¹ The IRGC's missions and responsibilities codified in the provisional law could be classified into three groups. First, it has a military/defense duty which means defending the country against foreign attacks and against agents and forces of alien powers inside the country. Second, the IRGC has police/domestic security duties that are to fight

²⁰ The IRGC Provisional Law, 22 April 1979, Article 1. The IRGC Provisional Law is retrieved as, "Avvalein Esasnameye Sepah, *Fars News Agency*, 23 Mehr 1387 [14 October 2008], <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8707220459>, (accessed on 1 June 2010).

²¹ "Aims and Responsibilities," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 6 May 1979, FBIS, 7 May 1979, R10.

counterrevolutionaries and forces interrupting internal security; to gather intelligence regarding security of the revolution; to safeguard public goods; to seize arms and munitions from unauthorized men; and to assist in execution of juridical decisions. Finally, missions of the IRGC covered a missionary dimension to support liberation movements and struggle for the rights by the oppressed people of the world.²²

In practice, the Guards' internal security activities included protection of critical centers in the country, and the leading revolutionary and political persona; guarding the ministries and government departments, especially the Radio-TV buildings; and safeguarding the army barracks and the police stations. The Guards also played an ideological training role by pursuing cultural activities to spread revolutionary culture and to promote Islamization of society. In this regard, the IRGC set up many Islamic libraries across the country, published books and magazines, distributed films, and even set up theatres.²³ It also carried out development and construction projects in the less developed parts of the country.

Although the provisional law seems to delimit responsibilities and duties of the IRGC, these above-outlined responsibilities and duties were subjected to various interpretations as well as the Article 150 of the Constitution that granted constitutional authority to the IRGC. According to these different interpretations, missions and responsibilities of the IRGC could be narrowed or expanded. Modifications in missions and responsibilities of the IRGC have been derived from shifts in the priorities of the revolutionary regime that determined by the changing circumstances as well as political outlook of the interpreter.²⁴ The modifications have been drawn either by the political leadership, or by the IRGC commanders.

In this regard, the political leadership initially tasked the IRGC with restoring order in the cities and chasing counterrevolutionaries. Upon the outbreak of ethnic uprisings across the country in the spring and summer of 1979, the Guards were

²² See, Behrouz, *op.cit.*, p. 125; Moqaddam, "Arteshe Motafaavete Jomhuri Eslami."

²³ *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.5 (1980-81), 1982, p.549 cited *Tehran Times*, 23 June 1981.

²⁴ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, pp.73-75; Sazegara, "What was Once a Revolutionary Guard is Now Just a Mafia."

charged with suppressing them. Additionally, the IRGC was effectively utilized by the radical clerics to suppress rival political groups that arguably opposed the 'Islamic Republic' regime in order to consolidate their political power. Security of the airlines and the civilian planes was also specified to the IRGC. Eventually, the Guards were dispatched to the war front in order to fight against the invading Iraqi armies.

In fact, outbreak of the war with Iraq in September 1980 posed a great challenge to the IRGC whose founders planned its missions as related to cultural, political and internal security activities rather than fighting against an invading enemy. Therefore, adjusting to the new conditions under war took some time. In the first year of the war, the Supreme Defense Council in charge of coordinating the war efforts, tended to view the situation at that time beyond missions and duties of the IRGC. For this reason, in the first year of the war, the IRGC has executed limited operations at the war front in addition to maintenance of its internal security missions inside the country.²⁵

The IRGC commanders also took initiative to reinterpret the Guards' missions and responsibilities. In fact, the IRGC leadership has usually tended to expand its area of responsibilities since its inception. That is why the IRGC commanders and the spokesmen did not shy away from talking on missions of the IRGC in a wider framework. For instance, in an interview in June 1979, the IRGC Spokesman said that the Guards are mainly active in the military field, but they are expanding into the ideological and political field too. Moreover, the Spokesman even mentioned safeguarding the revolution 'on all levels,' and the IRGC's hope to expand its programs so that it could "supervise all the works that [were] carried out in an Islamic society."²⁶

To give another example it should be mentioned that a congress of the IRGC commanders across the country that convened in Isfahan, discussed and modified the

²⁵ Gholamali Rashed, "Sharayat va Dzarorathaye Tovled, Roshd, Taspert ve Ghostarashe Sepah dar Jang," *Majalla-ye Seyasate Defa'*, vol.5, no.3 (Summer 1376), pp.7-36.

²⁶ "Revolutionary Guards Spokesman Interviewed," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 11 June 1979, FBIS, 14 June 1979, R14-R15.

IRGC's missions and duties in April 1981. After the congress, the IRGC commanders issued a resolution defining the modified missions and responsibilities of the Guards. Though the IRGC's relationship to the leader, Khomeini, was not elucidated in the provisional law, the commanders affirmed the IRGC's commitment to the *velayat-e faqih*²⁷ and its resoluteness to fulfill Imam Khomeini's orders. In the same line, the commanders argued that the IRGC had full responsibility for 'enjoining good and forbidding bad,' albeit implementing Islamic doctrines and principles were also beyond the scope of IRGC's missions stated in the provisional law. Finally, although the provisional law had charged the IRGC with supporting liberation movements under the supervision of the Revolutionary Council and with the authorization of the government, the commanders declared that the IRGC was duty bound "to export the revolution in every condition until the fluctuation of the flag of Islam in the high castles of the world."²⁸

Legislation of the IRGC Law by the Majlis in May 1982 is a turning point in the institutionalization of the IRGC.²⁹ The IRGC Law redefined its organizational structure, responsibilities, missions and relations with other organizations. The Law stated that the IRGC is an institution operated under the supervision of the supreme command of the Leader, whereas it was under the command of the Revolutionary Council previously. The law envisioned three missions for the IRGC. Its first mission, the law stated, is to safeguard the Iran Islamic revolution and its acquisitions. Secondly, the IRGC is asked to work continuously in order to realize divine principles and to expand sovereignty of the divine rules in conformity with the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The IRGC's third mission defined by the law is to support defense capability of the Islamic Republic through cooperating with other armed forces, and organizing and training people's forces (Basij). In terms of duties,

²⁷ "Velayat-e Faqih" means the government of the religious jurists. It is a theory of Khomeini that underpinned the Islamic radicals' worldview and legitimized rule of the clerics. See, Imam Khomeini, *Velayat-e Faqih: Hokoumate Eslami*, (Tehran: Moessasaye Tanzem va Nashre Asare Imam Khomeini, 1381[2002]).

²⁸ "Ghat'anameye Seminare Femandehane Sepah," *Payam-e Enghelab*, no.31, 12 Ordibehest 1360 [2 May 1981], pp.61-63.

²⁹ "Esasnameye Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Eslame," 6 September 1982. The IRGC Law is available through, <http://law.majlis.ir/law/Lawview.asp?key=5787>, (accessed on 1 June 2010).

the IRGC law reiterated military/defense duties and domestic security duties that envisaged by the provisional law.³⁰

The IRGC Law of 1982 has regulated IRGC-related issues by the time of writing of this study.³¹ However, after the end of the war between Iran and Iraq in July 1988, debates about the missions and responsibilities of IRGC resurfaced. Although this issue was already being debated since the establishment of the IRGC, the major split came out after the death of Khomeini, and the political leadership was divided into two groups over the missions of IRGC. The ‘moderate’ political forces led by Hojatoleslam Hashemi Rafsanjani, the then president, were in favor of treating the IRGC as a military organization and asked the IRGC to transform itself into a professional army. (This line of thinking has later reflected by the reformist politicians as well.) Reminding the testament of Ayatollah Khomeini, they preferred to refer the IRGC as an armed force to restrain it from involving in politics.³²

Unlike the moderate view, the hardliners and some conservative elites including Ayatollah Ali Khamanei, who succeeded Khomeini as the leader, asserted that duties of the IRGC have been beyond military missions. They argued that the main mission of IRGC is to defend Islam, the Islamic regime, and the revolution in all aspects. Ayatollah Khamanei decreed that the IRGC has three basic duties; “armed defense of the revolution, the establishment and organization of a 20-million strong army, and the defense of the revolution’s ideals wherever the occasion demands action on the part of the Islamic Republic.”³³ In the same line, Ayatollah Sayyid M. Hashemi

³⁰ It is notable that though the IRGC is charged with working to realize and expand divine sovereignty in accordance with the IRGC Law, the IRGC’s mission to support ‘liberation movements and the oppressed people of the world’ was displaced in recent law probably because of relieving international pressure on Iran.

³¹ See, Mehdi Nazarpour, “Jaygaah Nirouhaye Mosaleh dar Nezame Jomhore Eslami,” *Hassoun*, no.11 (Spring1386). In addition to the IRGC Law, the IRGC Personnel Law that enacted on October 13, 1991, administered the IRGC affairs. See, “Ghanone Mogharrerate Estahdamei Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Eslami,” in Jahangir Mansour (ed.), *Majmoaye Ghavanen va Mogharrerate Nirouhaye Mosalehe Jomhore Eslameye Iran*, (Tehran: Nashre Dedar, 1386), pp.287-353.

³² Imam Khomeini, *The Last Message: The Political and Divine Will of His Holliness*, (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of the Works of Imam Khomeini, 1998).

³³ “IRGC Official Interviewed on Restructuring,” *Tehran Domestic Service*, 16 January 1990, FBIS-NES-90-015, 23 January 1990, p.52. “Vazaayefe Sepah az Manzoure Rahbare Moazzame Enghelabe

Shahroudi, another member of the conservative faction and the Chief of the Judiciary (1999-2009) said; “Before being a military force for the Islamic Republic, the IRGC is a force serving the Islamic Revolution.” Arguing that protection of the values, goals, and ideals of the revolution in the region and in the entire world as the main missions of IRGC, Shahroudi stated that the IRGC “has many social, cultural, economic and international duties to serve, in addition to its military responsibilities.”³⁴

Notwithstanding the debates among the political elites with regard to the status of the IRGC, the IRGC organized a national convention of its commanders and officials in September 1988 to review future status, roles and missions of IRGC. After then, organization of national conventions became a common practice of IRGC. However, the conservative point of view regarding the missions of the IRGC has resonated with resolutions of the conventions. In other words, the IRGC has started to turn into a part of the conservative ring, which could be explained through three reasons. First, the IRGC has indebted its existence to Khamanei as it has survived thanks to the shelter of Khamanei through the process of reorganization of armed forces and the cabinet. The second reason for IRGC’s tilt toward conservatives lies with the capacity of Khamanei, leader of the conservative ring, as the Supreme Leader and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Therefore, it is understandable that the IRGC commanders resounded views of their commander in chief. Finally, as stated above, the IRGC officials have tended to increase their role in governance of the state and society. The conservative argument calling for widening roles for the IRGC has relieved the Guards’ leadership to claim enlarged missions.

Consequently, the IRGC has continued to pursue its security and defense missions.³⁵ The IRGC has regular security related duties as guarding the

Eslami,” *Chahrahaaye Afetab: Negaah-e ba Rabei Gharne Amalkarda Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Eslami*, Mehr 1382 [Supplement of *Sobhe Sadegh*, October 2003] p.3.

³⁴ “Judiciary Chief Highlights IRGC's Role In Exporting Revolution,” *FNA (English)*, 10 September 2007, OSC Transcribed Text, WNC.

³⁵ “Commander of Revolution Guards gives details of his forces’ activities,” *Vision of the IRI Network 1*, 11 November 1999, in SWB, ME 3691, 13 November 1999, p.1.

revolutionary leaders, aiding to judiciary, ensuring security of air space and airways. The IRGC has been in charge of safeguarding Tehran Province's security that has been vested with the Sarollah Base of IRGC. In the post-war era, the IRGC has revitalized extra-territorial missions to fight its enemies outside Iran's borders and to help the Islamic movements. In this regards, the *Qods Force* was established in 1990.³⁶ Additionally, the IRGC has continued its role as an auxiliary force to the Army. The IRGC has become responsible for the security in the volatile border regions including Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, Khorasan (after 1998), Balochistan, and the so-called strategic areas (Khuzestan, and the Persian Gulf). The IRGC Navy has been ordered to defend strategic islands and parts of the Persian Gulf and "to provide marine supremacy."³⁷ Although internal security functions of it were transferred to a great extent to the Basij,³⁸ and the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) that was established as an independent force in 1989, the IRGC has continued to fight against illegal drugs coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Additionally, in case of inability of the LEF to address the problems in certain areas, the IRGC would take action to create sustainable security in those areas.³⁹ Finally, the IRGC has acted as a relief force to be deployed in case of natural disasters like floods, and earthquakes.

In addition to security and defense missions, the IRGC has engaged in reconstruction efforts during the post-war era. With a decree of Khamaneh, the leader, the IRGC entered in non-military construction projects in order to support the

³⁶ Wilfried Buchta, "Iran's Security Sector, An Overview," *Working Paper*, no.146 (Geneva: DCAF, 2002), p.9.

³⁷ "IRGC's Role in Country's Security Outlined," *IRNA*, 24 December 1995, FBIS-NES-95-250, 29 December 1995, p.73; "General Seyed Yahya Rahim-Safavi: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Is Ready to Defend the Country's Strategic Areas," *Ya Lesarat Ol-Hoseyn*, 25 July 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

³⁸ After the war, the Basij was transformed into internal security force to be deployed in urban areas. The Majlis accepted a law to "empower the Basij to assist the LEF in fighting crimes in the country." According to this, the Basij would be entitled to undertake appropriate measures such as arresting the criminals. The Ashura and Zahra Brigades are created from among the members of Basij militias as an anti-riot force. Moslem, *op.cit.*, pp.217-19.

³⁹ "Guards Commander Says Change in Guards Strategy Necessary," *IRNA*, 17 August 2007, OSC Translated Excerpt, WNC.

government efforts to rebuild the destruction suffered the country throughout the eight-year war.⁴⁰ The *Khatom'ol Anbiya* and the *Basiji Sazendegi* are the two units employed by the IRGC to deal with reconstruction projects. Due to extensive civil engineering and reconstruction projects, the IRGC has gradually involved in economic and business life of the post-war Iran.

Last, but the most important engagement of IRGC (for this study) in the post-war period has been related to cultural sphere to safeguard 'soft security' (*amniyate narmafzare'i*) of the country.⁴¹ As pointed out above, the IRGC has been interested in cultural activities since its inception. However, this engagement to safeguard soft security has dragged the IRGC into the social and political scene. Initially, the motivation behind its involvement in cultural activities was derived from the ideological aspiration to Islamize society, and that idea has continued to play a central role in the IRGC activities. In this regard, the IRGC/Basij vowed to implement the religious principle of propagating virtue and prohibiting vice in society. For the same reason, the IRGC, along with other cultural centers in the country such as the IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting), Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Islamic Propagation Organization, has carried out cultural activities and organized courses for training purposes. However, in the post-war environment, the security concerns were added to IRGC's involvement in cultural activities. The conservative elites led by Khamanei started to propagate that the enemy has been waging a cultural onslaught on the Islamic Republic regime after the failure of its military strategies against Iran. They argued that the enemy has targeted religious values of society, and the *velayat-e faqih* to uproot the religion and unity among the people.⁴² According to that view, the aim of the cultural onslaught is

⁴⁰ "Gofte-goo ba Farmandeh-e Kole Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Eslami," *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.4.

⁴¹ "Bahrei der Koozah," *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.1.

⁴² "Guards Commander says US wants permanently-troubled Iran," IRNA (English), 28 September 2000, in SWB, ME 3959, 30 September 2000, p.13.

taking the religious and moral values away from the Iranian people, particularly from the young people, and imposing the enemy's values on them.⁴³

Thereby, threat perception of the Iranian (conservative) leaders and the IRGC were directed towards the cultural/political sphere. Arguing that preventing the occurrence of cultural and political threats to the Islamic Republic is part of IRGC's duties, the IRGC commanders declared their readiness to confront the enemy's (Western) cultural onslaught.⁴⁴ Against the cultural onslaught of the enemy, and in order to block it, the IRGC commanders asked their fellows and the Basijis (that is a part of the IRGC) to start a cultural jihad, and to be active in all fields, particularly the arts, literature, press and publications.⁴⁵ In this regard, M. Baqer Zolqadr, Head of the Public Relations Office of the IRGC, said; "The Basij does not just have a military function; the Basij is a military, political and cultural force, which must, while maintaining its combat readiness, enhance and extend its cultural movement in order to counter enemies' cultural assault."⁴⁶

The perception of cultural onslaught against the foundations of regime of the Islamic Republic, and the IRGC's sense of responsibility to counter the cultural onslaught have directed attention of the IRGC to cultural and political movements operating inside Iran. In view of the IRGC leadership, the cultural onslaught has turned into internal threats to the regime through activities of some cultural and political movements. In this regard, the IRGC Commander Jafari said that the threats against the revolution have become more sophisticated and more widespread than before. He stated that "active cultural movements in the country are capable of

⁴³ "Revolution Guards commander warns against 'enemy's cultural onslaught," Voice of the IRI, 17 September 2000, in SWB, ME 3949, 19 September 2000, p.7.

⁴⁴ "Assembly issues resolution," *Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network*, 17 September 1992, FBIS-NES-92-182, 18 September 1992, p.41; "Commander Says Foiling Cultural, Political Threats Part of Guards' Duties, *Islamic Republic of Iran News Network Television (IRINN)*, 23 January 2008, OSC Translated Text, WNC. See also Moslem, *op.cit.*, pp.217-19.

⁴⁵ "Guards commanders urges vote for believers in 'true' Islam," *IRNA*, 10 February 2000, in SWB, me 3762, 12 February 2000, p.8.

⁴⁶ "IRGC Threatens To Target Israeli Nuclear Arsenal," *Fars News Agency*, 17 August 2004, FBIS-NES-2004-0817.

damaging and threatening the regime's ideological foundations.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Hojatoleslam Hussein Taeb, the Deputy Head of Basij, considered “velvet revolution, political invasion, and penetration into the ruling system” as the major internal threats to the Islamic Republic.

Recalling that the IRGC has a mission to safeguard the revolution and its achievements, the IRGC leadership highlighted its role to confront the cultural attack and internal threats. The IRGC Commander Jafari said, “the mission of the Guards is to counter all kinds of threats with internal threats being chief amongst them. Now the major mission of the Guards is to counter internal threats ...”⁴⁸ Eventually, in March 2009, Jafari stated that an edict decreed by Ayatollah Khamanei charged the IRGC to deal with the “soft domestic threats.”⁴⁹

3.1.3. Institutional Structure of the IRGC

As the IRGC’s missions and duties have grown and changed in over time, institutional structure of IRGC has also been expanded and altered. Initially the top leadership of IRGC was consisted of the Commander in Chief, the Supreme Council of IRGC, and the Representative of Imam (*vali-ye faqih*, or the clerical supervisor) to the IRGC. The Revolutionary Council appointed both the commander in chief and members of the Supreme Council. The first commander of the IRGC was Javad Mansouri.⁵⁰ The IRGC Commander in Chief was in charge of operations, and executing decisions taken by the Council, in addition to appoint and dismiss all divisional and regional commanders. The Supreme Council was the principal decision making body of the IRGC. Most of the members of the Supreme Council including Javad Mansouri, Mohsen Rezai, Mohsen Rafiqdust, Abu Sharif, M. Ali Basharati, Yousuf Foroutan, Yousuf Kolahdooz, Abbas Duzduzani, were leaders of

⁴⁷ Esfendiar Saffari, “Security Memo identifies threats to Islamic Republic,” *Roozonline*, 3 December 2007.

⁴⁸ *Mehr News Agency*, 29 September 2007, OSC Summary, WNC.

⁴⁹ “Pasdaran’s New Role in Domestic Security,” *Roozonline*, 30 March 2009.

⁵⁰ Moqaddam, “Arteshe Motafaavete Jomhouri Eslami”; Reza Shafa, “IRGC’s Double Tasks: Domestic Suppression and Terrorism Abroad,” *NCR Foreign Affairs Committee*, 19 November 2007, part 1.

the militia groups incorporated into the IRGC. The Supreme Council was divided into directorates to deal with coordination of major operations, public relations, training of IRGC lines, information activities, personnel affairs, financial issues, and providing logistics. The IRGC has organized across the country along with regional, district, base and barrack levels in parallel with the central structure.⁵¹ The Representative of Imam to the IRGC coordinated political/ideological training of the Guard ranks, ensured political control over the IRGC commanders, and provided compliance of decisions taken by the IRGC Commander and the IRGC Supreme Council with the Islamic principles.

The IRGC has organized across Iran in a short time and number of the Guards has dramatically increased from 10,000 in 1980 to more than 100,000 in 1982. Moreover, the *Basij-e Mostazafin* (mobilization of oppressed) organization, established in November 1979 to mobilize people for the protection of the revolution under the banner of “the Army of 20 Million,” was incorporated into the IRGC in January 1981.⁵²

Because of the rapid expansion of the IRGC, the changing missions, the growing bureaucratic structure and the ongoing war with Iraq, organizational structure of IRGC has also transformed in time. Above all authority of the Commander in Chief has been increased at the expense of the Supreme Council. The commander has become in charge of all issues related to personnel, military training, ideological training, publication and propagation, logistics, intelligence, planning, and issues related to the Basij. The Supreme Council has turned most of its missions and duties to the Central Staff under the supervision of the Commander. Additionally, a ministry, the Ministry of the Revolutionary Guards, was set up in 1982 to deal with IRGC affairs.⁵³ This ministry was responsible for coordination between the Guards, the government, and the parliament, and for extending logistic support for the Guards. However, operational responsibility of the Guards remained

⁵¹ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.78.

⁵² <http://law.majlis.ir/law/Lawview.asp?key=5602>

⁵³ *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.6 (1981-82), 1983, p.533-34.

within the domain of the Commander in Chief of the IRGC. Since the IRGC's military role has expanded swiftly throughout the war, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the establishment of separate air force and navy units attached to the IRGC on September 17, 1985.⁵⁴ After the foundation of separate ground, air and naval forces of IRGC, the Joint Staff was set up consisting IRGC commander, his deputy, and the commanders of three military services.

With the end of the war with Iraq in July 1988, the IRGC was reformed to adjust new conditions under the direction of Hashemi Rafsanjani. Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Rafsanjani as the Acting Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces two months prior to the end of the war, and commissioned him to combine armed forces under a single command, and to improve military capacity of Iran. Rafsanjani, initially, established the General Staff of Joint Armed Forces, combining the joint staffs of Army and IRGC. In the same line, the Ministry of IRGC was merged with the Defense Ministry in August 1989. It was followed by the amalgamation of internal security organizations including the police, the gendarmerie, and the revolutionary committees under the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) in June 1990.

Rafsanjani attached great importance to professionalization of IRGC, in addition to his efforts to provide unity in the command of the armed forces, and in the management of defense institutions. As his capacity as the Acting Commander in Chief of Armed Forces, Rafsanjani told the Guards in October 1988 that as a military force, the IRGC should become a professional force so that it would provide deterrence against enemies.⁵⁵ Furthermore, some steps were taken to transform IRGC into a professional army as introducing military hierarchy and ranks, formulation of the rules and regulations for recruitment and service in the Guards Corps. Arguably, the desire of Rafsanjani to professionalize IRGC was another step to merge the IRGC with the Army. The upper echelons of the Army and the IRGC was already brought together in the General Staff of Joint Armed Forces. However, allegedly, the final step to merge the IRGC with the Army was never taken because of intervention of

⁵⁴ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.76.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Shahram Chubin, *Iran's National Security Policy: Intentions, Capabilities & Impact*, (Washington DC: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994), p.18.

Ayatollah Khamanei, who succeeded Khomeini as the new Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, and suggested differences in responsibilities of the Army and the IRGC. Additionally, the attempts to merge the IRGC and the Army met with resistance among members of the two armed forces. It is argued that unification of the IRGC with the Army would decrease effectiveness of the both forces in a critical period. Thus, the idea of merging armed forces was given up and the Army and the IRGC has retained their separate organizations.⁵⁶ Khamanei send a message to the Fourth National Convention of the IRGC Commanders and Officials on 16 September 1991 in which he denied the “rumors” of Army-IRGC merger. He assured the Guards that the Army and the IRGC would stand alongside each other with specific duties for defending the revolution and the country.⁵⁷ With the approval of Khamanei, the joint staff of IRGC was reestablished as a separate institution. Thereby, the IRGC had survived that challenge with the favor of Ayatollah Khamanei.

Meanwhile, a new force named the *Qods Force* was established under the command of IRGC in 1990 in order to support the Islamic movements, and to work for the liberation of Qods.⁵⁸ While defining the IRGC’s duties, the Leader, Khamanei, said that one of the duties of the IRGC that it carries out through the Qods Force is to establish nucleus of *Hezbollahi* people all over the world as a requirement of coming Islamic revolution of world. He said, “We do not mean that we would dispatch armies and intervene in affairs of other countries; however, we mean that the experienced armed forces of the country where the first Islamic revolution took place, undoubtedly, is not immune from any responsibility considering the seeds of

⁵⁶ “Report on the Merger of the Security Forces,” *Bayan*, no.2, 22 June/22 July 1990, “BAYAN comments on Merger of Security Forces,” FBIS-NES-90-169, 30 August 1990, p.60; Ahmed Hashim, “Iran’s Military Situation,” in Patrick Clawson (ed.), *Iran’s Strategic Intentions and Capabilities* (Washington: National Defense University, 1994), p.198.

⁵⁷ “Khamane’i Denies Rumor of Army-IRGC Merger,” *Tehran Voice of the IRI First Program Network*, 16 September 1991, FBIS-NES-91-180, 17 September 1991, p.65.

⁵⁸ “Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Eslami va Khadmate An,” *SepahNews*, 28 Farvardin 1389 [17 April 2010]. In the meantime the Basij-e Mostazafin that operated under the IRGC Ground Forces became an independent force, called Basij Resistance Force, attached to the IRGC.

armed Hezbollah all over the world.”⁵⁹ However, it has been argued that the Qods Force is charged with masterminding, planning, and executing operations outside the Iranian territories, and all activities related to the export of the Islamic revolution have fallen to the Qods Forces.⁶⁰

In the years after 2000, the IRGC has entered a new reformation process. In October 2005, IRGC Commander Safavi announced that the IRGC has begun making the structural and strategy changes necessary to meet the new threats aroused from the changes in environmental conditions of Iran.⁶¹ Occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States, and its policy of regime change towards Iran were primary reasons for the reformation of IRGC. The IRGC has changed its strategy, doctrine, method of trainings, organization, equipment, management, and command and control to prepare its five-fold forces to confront extra-regional forces.⁶² One of the first steps taken in this regard was the establishment of IRGC Center for Strategy, tasked with formulating the IRGC’s strategic policies.⁶³ In parallel with the new threat assessments, the center conducted researches on ‘velvet revolutions’ and ‘soft regime change policies’ of the United States. Finally, all the IRGC units were reorganized into 31 units in parallel with provincial divisions of the country. The relationship between the Basij Resistance Forces and the IRGC Ground Forces has

⁵⁹ “Vazaayefe Sepah az Manzoure Rahbare Moazzame Enghelabe Eslami,” *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.3.

⁶⁰ “Structure of ‘al-Quds Forces’ Detailed,” *Al-Hadath (Amman)*, 27 May 1996, FBIS-NES-96-108, 4 June 1996, pp.82-84; Reza Shafa, “IRGC’s Double Tasks: Domestic Suppression and Terrorism Abroad,” *NCR Foreign Affairs Committee*, Part 7, 4 December 2007; Matthew M. Frick, “Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps; An Open Source Analysis,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, issue 49, 2nd quarter 2008, p.123-24.

⁶¹ “IRGC revises strategy to meet new threats: commander,” *Mehr News*, 25 October 2005. The new IRGC commander also insists, “After the events of September 11, the direction of all of IRGC’s efforts changed and a new determination emerged for combat training. The first step was to prepare for asymmetric warfare by holding several military maneuvers.” Maziar Radmanesh, “Calm or Storm under Commander Jafari,” *Roozonline*, 17 September 2007.

⁶² “Guards Commander Says Change in Guards Strategy Necessary,” *IRNA*, 17 August 2007, OSC Translated Excerpt, WNC.

⁶³ Frick, *op.cit.*, p.125; H.Hassan-Yari, “Defending the Islamic Revolution; The Corps of the Matter,” *Eurasia Insight*, 7 August 2005; “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards take over key policy body,” *Iran Focus*, 27 September 2005.

been strengthened in all levels. Under the new structure, the connection between the Basij Resistance bases and the units of the IRGC Ground Forces would increase in every city and province, and those forces would support each other whereas they could use facilities of each other. This reorganization has not affected missions of Basij, but Basij organizations would continue their works under the supervision of IRGC commander.⁶⁴ Additionally, local commanders were granted with greater autonomy and power.⁶⁵ This reformation has been taken within the framework of asymmetric warfare strategy both to counter a possible US invasion, and to repress local dissent. For this reason, local commanders were granted with authority to take action independently in case of an immediate crisis.⁶⁶

At the time that this dissertation has been written, the IRGC is consisted of the Joint Staff of the IRGC, Representative of the Leader to the IRGC, Organization of Security and Information, Land Forces, Air Forces, Navy, the *Qods* Force and the *Basij* Resistance Force and their subordinate organizations.⁶⁷ The IRGC has a great bureaucratic structure headed by the Commander in Chief of IRGC, and the Representative of the Leader to the IRGC, both of whom are appointed by the Leader.

According to the Constitution, the highest command of the armed forces, including the IRGC, rests with the Supreme Leader. The Leader usually appoints representatives to all governmental organizations and the armed forces, who supervise almost all matters. The Representative of the Leader, in turn, appoints his own representatives to all levels of the IRGC. Almost all of the representatives are clerics; thereby this mechanism provided the presence of clergy in the governmental

⁶⁴ Mohammad Nabi-Rudaki, "An Increase in Basij Missions," *E'temad-e Melli*, 7 July 2008, OSC Translated Text.

⁶⁵ "IRGC Ground Forces Commander on IRGC History, 'Mosaic' Defense," *Tehran Kargozaran*, September 29, 2008, WNC; "Iranian Commander on IRGC Provincial Branches Across Country," *Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Khuzestan Provincial TV*, 1 July 2008, OSC Translated Text.

⁶⁶ The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps: Military and Political Influence in Today's Iran," *5th Session of the Iran Working Group*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.: 18 November 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/1113_iran.aspx?rssid=saban.

⁶⁷ "Ghanone Mogharrerate Estahdamei Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Eslami."

organizations and armed forces. Although the Representative is usually conceived to be responsible for ideological training of IRGC members, and ideological, political and cultural matters pertaining to the IRGC, he has some powers related to operational and executive matters like the admission of new members, and ratification of new appointments and promotions.⁶⁸ He also carries out political supervision of the Guard members.

The IRGC Commander in Chief looks after all operational, security, military and executive functions of the corps. There are several directorates⁶⁹ operating under the supervision of the commander in addition to its five-fold military structure consisted of the IRGC Ground Forces, Air Forces, Navy, the *Qods* Force and the *Basij* Resistance Force. The Joint Staff of IRGC is responsible for organization, support, and supervision of all the executive affairs. The IRGC has also a large intelligence organization called Organization of Security and Information. It was initially established as the Intelligence Unit attached to all levels of IRGC command structure to gather information about the counter-revolutionaries and political movements in Iran. It soon transformed into a great organization dealing with foreign intelligence affairs. After the establishment of the Ministry of Information in August 1984, the IRGC maintained a part of its intelligence unit as an office at the IRGC Command that dealt with military intelligence. However, that office was expanded again, and was later turned into the Organization of Security and Information.⁷⁰

The IRGC members are grouped under three categories. First of them is the permanent staff including official guards, and cadets. The official guards are the core of the IRGC who are described in the IRGC Law as following: "Those who are waging jihad for God, guarding the Islamic Revolution and its achievements and the

⁶⁸ *Payam-e Enghelab*, April 16, 1983, quoted in Behrouz, *Iran Almanac and Book of Facts: 1987 ...*, p.127. The Representative of the Leader oversees directorates of Ideological-Political Training, Propagation and Publication of the IRGC, and administers two offices; the Supervising Office, and the Political Office.

⁶⁹ The IRGC Commander supervises directorates of personnel affairs, public relations, military training, procurement and logistics, intelligence, planning, and engineering.

⁷⁰ Reza Khojasteh-Rahimi, "'Twenty Years of History; Three Rounds of Reform; Ministry of Information's Performance Report,'" *Sharq*, 6 October 2004, FBIS Translated Text, FBIS-NES-2004-1007, WNC.

regime of Islamic Republic of Iran.” They come to the service of the IRGC after completing the required terms of training with a certain military uniform and rank. Cadets are personnel who are under training in one of the IRGC’s training centers or other similar centers financed by the IRGC in order to serve as official guard or staff. The second category of IRGC members is consisted of the conscripts who are under the compulsory military service for a certain period. Finally, the *Basijis*, volunteer people’s forces affiliated with the *Basij* organization are regarded as personnel of IRGC.

In addition to its military structure, the IRGC has established its own centers to provide ideological and military training for the IRGC members. The Training Department set up a high school, the Imam Sadegh School in 1982, which combined general education, military training, and the teaching of Islamic ideology. Over the next two years, the Guard established branches of its high school along the lines of its administrative divisions throughout Iran.⁷¹ A military academy (*Daneshkadehe Farmandehiye Setade Sepahe Pasdarane Enqelabe Eslami*) was set up in 1985 exclusively for the IRGC to train its members. The courses thought in the academy included ideological training in addition to military sciences.⁷² Furthermore, the IRGC established its own university, Imam Hussein University, which offered advanced studies in engineering, management, medical sciences as well as military related courses. After the end of the war, it established its own military think-tank, the Academy of Multilateral Defense and Strategy.⁷³ According to the data given by Safavi in October 2006, the IRGC has two comprehensive universities named Imam Hussein and *Baqiyatollah al-Azam* Medical College. There are four university campuses in the forces, and in total twenty-four faculties and research centers, and

⁷¹ Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam; Iran’s Revolutionary Guard*, (Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), pp.90-92.

⁷² *Payam-e Enghelab*, no. 330, Aban 15, 1373 (Nov 5, 1994), pp.23-25 quoted in R. Cann & C. Danopoulos, “The Military and Politics in a Theocratic State: Iran as Case Study,” *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.24, no.2 (Winter 1997), pp.277-78.

⁷³ Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.92.

four higher education centers are responsible for training officers, commanders and IRGC officials at different higher education levels.⁷⁴

The IRGC was also allowed to establish its own defense industries in mid-1980 and its first arms factory was inaugurated in February 1984.⁷⁵ After then, the Ministry of IRGC exercised its control over many military factories. Although the Ministry of Defense was tasked to operate defense industries after the amalgamation of the Ministry of IRGC with the Ministry of Defense in 1988, the IRGC was put in charge of devising ballistic missiles, and allegedly developing non-conventional military programs.⁷⁶ The engineering branch of the IRGC has established the *Khatom'ol Anbiya* in 1990, and started to engage in non-military projects. Therefore, the IRGC has become a major contractor of the Iranian government in development, industrial, military and non-military projects. Its activities included construction of refinery; construction of depots; installation of pipelines of water, gas, and oil; mining; and construction of irrigation systems.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the IRGC has entered in commercial activities, and become one of the major actors of the Iranian economy.

3.2. The IRGC Corporateness

As a revolutionary army established after the victory of the revolution, the IRGC was too weak to develop corporateness among its ranks during its early years. Above all, the IRGC was planned to be a transitional organization to be demolished after the consolidation of the regime, and the establishment of security-military organizations.⁷⁸ For this reason, the IRGC has lacked a well-defined organizational

⁷⁴ "IRGC Commander Gives Speech on Strategic Changes, Educational Development," *Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1*, 26 November 2006, OSC Translated Excerpt, WNC.

⁷⁵ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, pp.60-61.

⁷⁶ Buchta, "Iran's Security Sector ...," p.9.

⁷⁷ For the activities of Khatam'ol Anbiya see "Mohemtareen Tarhaye Sazandegheye Keshvar ra Sepah Anjam Dade est," *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.28-35.

⁷⁸ "Ravayate Mohammad Tavassoli az Tadvane Peshnavese Esasnamaye Sepahe Pasdaran," p.9. In addition to Tavassoli's account, Deputy PM Entezam said in March 1979 that the Guards Corps would be set up as a "temporary" measure until the police and the gendarmerie were able to take over those functions again. Susan E. Merdinger, "A Race for Martyrdom: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)," Master's Thesis, *Naval Postgraduate School*, Monterey, California, December 1982, p.31, cited *Tehran Journal*, 3 March 1979, p.4.

structure. Moreover, since the IRGC was created through the amalgamation of various revolutionary groups, there were remarkable differences among them in terms of political outlook and organizational background. Many of the Guards were coming from ranks of the Islamic Nations Party, and Islamist wing of the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* Organization (MKO). The remarkable part of the Guards was organized around powerful clerics, political leaders, and high-ranking civilian officials (S.Khalkhali, H. Gaffari, B. Nabavi, H.Rafsanjani, M.Chamran, J. Farsi, S. Gotbzadeh, A. Lajevardi, M. Hadavi etc.) before their participation to the IRGC. However, these guards owed allegiance to their leaders who recruited, financed and trained them. Many of these guards acted autonomously and recognized little authority beyond their immediate patrons.⁷⁹

Additionally the Guards' early leadership was unclear and volatile. Ayatollah Khomeini fired Javad Mansouri, the Guards' first commander in late May 1979. After then, political and clerical supervisors, including Ayatollah H. Lahuti, A. Khamanei, H. Rafsanjani, A. Duzduzani, and M. Chamran, served as de facto commanders of the Guards during its first year.⁸⁰ IRGC Operations Commander Abu Sharif (Abbas Zamani) was appointed as IRGC Commander in Chief in May 1980. However, he resigned from this post in June 1980 after Khomeini implied that traitors might have infiltrated to the Guards. M. Kazem Bojnurdi refused his appointment to be Commander in Chief because of the factional struggles among the Guards that rendered the IRGC uncontrollable. Additionally, efforts of politicians to encroach into the IRGC further flamed the factional rivalry. Eventually, Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Hojatoleslam Fazlollah Mahallati as his representative to the IRGC, in July 1980.⁸¹ The IRGC leadership stabilized only after Mohsen Rezai became the Commander in Chief of IRGC in September 1981.

In order to heal the factional issues among the ranks of the IRGC, a campaign for religious and political education for all IRGC members was launched in the mid-

⁷⁹ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.66; Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.31-32.

⁸⁰ Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.33; Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.68.

⁸¹ Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.31-32; *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.4, (1979-80)1981, p.459.

1980. Many clerics were dispatched to the IRGC bases to indoctrinate its members along similar lines, and to conduct seminars on the necessity of ‘brotherly relations.’ Additionally, in order to cut the bounds between the IRGC members and their previous bosses, they were banned from involving in political matters and from becoming a member of political group or party.⁸² Finally, measures were taken to bring IRGC under further discipline, and to purge of those “corrupt in faith, ideas and morals.” The purge of those unfitting to the ideal-type of Guard was a way of ensuring homogeneity of the IRGC ranks. Soon after the establishment of the Guards, many leftists were dismissed from the organization, which was followed by discharge of sympathizers of the *Mojahedin*, and supporters of Abolhassan Banisadr – first president of the Islamic Republic turned into dissident. In addition to elimination of political tendencies other than the radical Islamist line of Khomeini and his fellow clerics, large numbers of allegedly “irresponsible and disorderly” Guards were purged of the IRGC.

In result of bureaucratization of the IRGC, elimination of different factional tendencies inside the IRGC, and heavy indoctrination through the early 1980s, a sort of corporateness has fermented in the IRGC ranks. The war also helped the Guards to develop a sense of corporateness. Because of centralization of the command structure and further discipline measures, former loyalties of the Guards were greatly broken. On the other hand, the Guards have forged strong personal bonds at the war-front. Thanks to the growing corporateness among the IRGC members, the revolutionary zeal of the Guards never faded away, and the chain of command has worked properly in spite of employment of the enlisted men and rapidly growing numbers of IRGC personnel.⁸³

Although there is little evidence of the Guards’ violation of the orders, or their challenge to the positions of the IRGC leadership, integrity of the IRGC is subjected

⁸² Nikola B. Schahgaldian, *The Iranian Military under the Islamic Republic*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1987), p.72-73; Susan E. Merdinger, “A Race for Martyrdom: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC),” Master’s Thesis, *Naval Postgraduate School*, Monterey, California, December 1982, p.37.

⁸³ Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.151.

to a long-time debate.⁸⁴ It has been reported that most of the Guards voted for reformist Mohammad Khatami in the presidential elections of 1997 and 2001, despite the apparent incongruence between the reformists and the Guards' leadership.⁸⁵ Similarly, when he was asked to which tendency within the IRGC he belonged, M. Baqer Qalibaf, former Commander of IRGC Air Force admitted the existence of "different tastes in the IRGC."⁸⁶ Additionally, disagreements among the former Guards commanders, who are currently involved in politics, led some assumptions about the existence of different cliques and rivalries within the IRGC.⁸⁷ Aside from the sympathizers to the reformists, it is argued that "a conservative sub-faction" within the IRGC, that is also called Rezai-Qalibaf clique, has been contended with the "radicals" around President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Baqer Zolqadr.⁸⁸

Moreover, the opposition sources have usually contended that there have been opposing divisions within the IRGC.⁸⁹ Throughout the late 1980s, some opposition outlets like *the Flag of Freedom* have published unconfirmed reports indicating the IRGC involvement in assassination attempts against Rafsanjani.⁹⁰ Similarly, the opposition sources claimed that the IRGC unit in Qazvin rejected to fight against the protestors through the Qazvin unrest in August 1994. It has been argued that a

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.151-53.

⁸⁵ For instance, former IRGC Navy Commander Ali Shamkhani's participation to the Khatami government as defense minister is viewed by some as evidence that the Corps was not completely united and uniform in its support of Khatami's rival candidate. "Sharq's Analytical Report Regarding Composition and Status of Iran's Foreign Affairs Strategic Council; the Return of Moderates to Foreign Policy," *Sharq*, 17 July 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁸⁶ "Report Highlights Presidential Candidate Qalibaf's Views," *Sharq*, 19 April 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

⁸⁷ Bernard Hourcade, "La 'prise du pouvoir' par les Gardiens de la revolution: retour au passé ou perspective d'overture?" *La Revue Internationale et Strategique* (IRIS), no.70, 2008, pp.71-86 (English version of the article provided by author).

⁸⁸ Vahid Sepehri, "New Commander Takes over Revolutionary Guards," *RFE/RL*, 4 September 2007.

⁸⁹ Amir Taheri, "Iran: A Rift that Cannot be Healed," *Assharq Alawsat*, 26 June 2009; See also, "Thirty-six Army Officers Arrested in Iran over Protest Plan," *Guardian*, 19 July 2009.

⁹⁰ For instance see, Edgar O'balance, *Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism, 1979-95: The Iranian Connection*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp.98, 140.

minority group is subordinated to the Leader Khamanei whereas the majority follows the “people.” For instance, in a letter to Khamanei in August 2002, it was claimed, some IRGC commanders reminded him that the majority of the Guards are followers of Ayatollah Montazeri – the dissident cleric – and the reforms.⁹¹ In the same line, in an unconfirmed report in the opposition circles it was stated that tens of IRGC officers signed a letter titled “We are Combatants!” that criticized the regime’s leaders with corruption and injustices in 2003. It was reported that Brigadier-General Mohammad Mehdi Dozdoozani, one of the high-level commanders of IRGC was executed with several other officers because of his endorsement of the letter.⁹²

Pretension of the opposition figures to pose “splits” within the IRGC has continued. However, lack of confirmation by independent or official sources has discredited those claims. Furthermore, in some incidents the relevant persons denied claims raised by the opposition sources. Recently, after the controversial presidential elections in June 2009, it was claimed that General Ali Fazli, commander of the Revolutionary Guards in Tehran was arrested for declining order of the Iranian leadership to use force on protestors.⁹³ In response, Fazli appeared on TV, and denied the claims and reiterated his allegiance to the regime and the Leader.⁹⁴

Although claims of the opposition is far from to be credited, the arguments suggesting the existence of different “tastes” among the IRGC ranks seems reasonable. Because both the reformists and the conservatives are conceived as “insiders” of the Iranian political regime, it is quite likely that the both tendencies have been represented to some extent in the IRGC ranks.⁹⁵ However, after Ayatollah

⁹¹ “Khamaneh’i warned by some rev. guards commander,” *Iran Press Service*, 21 August 2002.

⁹² “Purging of the Armed Forces, a Double Edged Sword in the Hands of the Executioners,” SMCDDI (Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran) Public Statement, 28 January 2004, available at http://www.daneshjoo.org/article/publish/article_3114.shtml.

⁹³ “Khamanei’s son takes control of Iran’s anti-protest militia,” *Gurdian*, 8 July 2009; “[Iran Revolutionary Guard Commander arrested for refusing to use force on protestors](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2277316/posts),” 22 June 2009, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2277316/posts>.

⁹⁴ “IRGC commander denies dismissal reports,” *Press TV*, 25 June 2009.

⁹⁵ “Editorial: An unjustly treated organisation!” *Aftab-e Yazd*, 23 August 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

Khamanei, who is associated with the conservatives, became the Supreme Leader in June 1989, and, thereby, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces including the IRGC, the IRGC has been regarded among the strong footholds of the conservatives.⁹⁶ Actually, as pointed out in the previous pages, declarations and speeches of the IRGC commanders have reflected conservative ideas since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, due to the strict hierarchy and the corporatist senses within the IRGC ranks, there is no documented instance of discord among the acting IRGC commanders, or challenge to the positions of IRGC commanders.

Consequently, bureaucratization and institutionalization of the IRGC have promoted the IRGC corporateness. The national conventions of IRGC commanders and officials also contributed to the sense of corporateness among the IRGC ranks. Elimination of factionalism provided homogeneity to the IRGC and helped to devise an institutional identity as the ultimate protector of the revolution and its acquisitions. Whereas the Guards previously were clients of the individual revolutionary leaders, the IRGC has turned into an institution of professional revolutionary soldiers that does not recognize any authority other than the Supreme Leader.

The IRGC is usually considered as an autonomous institution.⁹⁷ Its engagement in non-military economic activities through the 1990s onward advanced its autonomy *vis-a-vis* the government and the Majlis. However, its autonomous status becomes controversial considering the IRGC's relationship to the Leader and to his Representative in the IRGC.⁹⁸ Above all, promotion, rotation, and appointment of high-level IRGC commanders are determined not by the objective laws, not by any mechanism devised by the IRGC, but by the Leader. Moreover, confirmation of the Representative of the Leader (or his own representatives) is required for almost all decisions related to promotion, appointment, and discipline. The Representative

⁹⁶ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoub Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p.9-10.

⁹⁷ Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.115-139.

⁹⁸ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, pp.78-79. See also, Ali Alfoneh, "Indoctrination of the Revolutionary Guards," *AEI Online, Middle Eastern Outlook*, 20 February 2009, pp.1-3.

plays a remarkable role even in admission of the cadets. As stated by Ali Saidi, missions of the representatives of the *vali-ye faqih* in the IRGC included guarding the Guards, guarding the organization of the IRGC and guarding the direction in which the IRGC is moving.⁹⁹ In addition to political supervision of the representatives, there are approximately 4,000 clerics installed in the IRGC ranks to provide ideological/political training of the Guards.¹⁰⁰

Notwithstanding the penetration of the clerics to the IRGC, two factors contributed to their ideological/political congruence with the IRGC members. Firstly, the Leader, *vali-ye faqih*, has usually selected his representatives among conservative and radical clerics. For instance, Hojatoleslams Mahmud Mohammadi Araqi, and Ali Saidi, the Leader's representatives to the IRGC are alumni of the notorious *Haqqani* School, and trainees of radical Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. The second factor that helps to establishment of congruence between the clerics and the Guards is long-term service of the clerics in the IRGC ranks. Therefore, the clerics penetrated to the IRGC have become a part of the IRGC corporateness.

In conclusion, corporateness has become a remarkable characteristic of the Guards especially after the end of the war. Because the sense of corporateness has increased among the IRGC ranks and leadership since the 1980s, the IRGC has operated as a unitary actor in its relations with the lay institutions, and in its reaction to the major political and social developments. Consequently, the IRGC corporateness has become an influential factor in its relationship with politics.

3.3. Ideological/Political Outlook of IRGC

Soon after victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran in February 1979, the revolutionary regime engaged in establishment of an ideological army. The Constitution of the newly established Islamic Republic also called for the

⁹⁹ "The Representative of Vali-ye Faqih in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: "The IRGC Is the Powerful Arm of the Velayat-e Faqih in Defending Islam and the Revolution," *Hemayat*, 18 August 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹⁰⁰ Reza Shafa, "Who are Political Guides in the IRGC," 30 January 2009, <http://ncr-iran.org/content/view/5562/153/>.

establishment of an ideological (*maktabi*, doctrinaire) army.¹⁰¹ This was so crucial for the revolutionary leaders that M. Ali Rajai, who served as Prime Minister and President of the Islamic Republic prior to his assassination in August 1981, said that he “would prefer a *maktabi* army to a victorious one.” Consequently, the IRGC has emerged as the leading ideological armed force in post-revolutionary Iran. As stated above, as a revolutionary army, the IRGC was born as inherently a political army. The IRGC leaders, commanders, and supporters of the IRGC described it in many occasions as a revolutionary, ideological, political and military institution.¹⁰² In fact, IRGC Commander Rezaei argued that the basic duty of IRGC, that is “the promotion of the revolution and the defense of its values make it necessary that the IRGC remains political.” Furthermore, he stated that military uniform of IRGC do not hint that it is a military institution; rather it serves only to show “its military determination to defend the values of the regime.”¹⁰³

Nevertheless, in terms of ideological position, initially the IRGC was far from being homogenous because of different perceptions of the revolutionary ideology and values. The founders of the IRGC had various ideological beliefs and political positions reflecting variety of the revolutionary coalition because it was composed of different militia groups fighting against the Shah.¹⁰⁴ Almost every Iranian leader reiterated that the IRGC was charged with safeguarding the values of revolution, which had various meanings for different political currents participated to the revolutionary coalition. For instance, according to Mohammad Tavassoli the political director the Freedom Movement of Iran at that time and who was among the officials commissioned to establish the IRGC, the values of revolution had been established through a century and formulated under “five no”s. The five no’s included struggle against despotism (*estabdad*); struggle against foreign attack (*esteghlal*); struggle

¹⁰¹ It is stated in the preamble that “In the formation and equipping of the country’s defense forces, due attention must be paid to faith and ideology as the basic criteria.”

¹⁰² For instance see, “Guards commander warns against weakening of revolution’s institutions,” IRNA, 28 May 1998 in SWB, ME 3240, 30 May 1998, p.1.

¹⁰³ “Basij military camp for ‘rapid-engagement capability’ training ends,” Voice of the IRI, 6 Sep 1996 in SWB, ME 2712, 9 September 1996, p.19.

¹⁰⁴ Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.34.

against class exploitation; struggle against totalitarianism; struggle against corruption of the social culture, and struggle against foreign cultures. Therefore, the IRGC should defend those so-called five essentials of the revolution.¹⁰⁵ However, Ayatollah Khamanei, who became Leader of the Revolution in 1989, has defined the revolutionary values quite different from Tavassoli. According to him, the values of revolution means “religion, faith, political, economic and cultural independence, freedom of expression, promotion of good behavior, a popular government, an honest government and the management of the country’s affairs by individuals who possess faith and virtue based on Islamic teachings.” He underlined that all of the values must be viewed as a single entity; and he stated that someone cannot accept some of them and deny the rest.¹⁰⁶

Notwithstanding differences in ideological outlook among the revolutionary parties and members of the IRGC, establishment of the IRGC as a volunteer force and recruitment of its members among the militias who had participated in the revolution and remained active within the revolutionary committees provided it with zealot members. To be a volunteer was not enough for admission to the IRGC, and the applicants’ allegiance to revolutionary ideology and Islamic values were more important than their military capability.¹⁰⁷ In order to keep ideological vigilance, the provisional IRGC law determined certain criteria for admission to the IRGC, according to which the IRGC was investigating and choosing personnel from among the volunteers. According to those criteria, to be admitted to the IRGC one should believe in Islamic Ideology; should have faith in the Islamic nature of the revolution and the Islamic Republic; should possess bravery, spiritual valor, as well as physical

¹⁰⁵ “Ravayate Mohammad Tavassoli az Tadvane Peshnavese Esasnamaye Sepahe Pasdaran,” p.9. Tavassoli argued that those five essentials were also scripted into the arm of Sepah. The ‘lamalif’ at the arm of IRGC is symbolized that five nos and was gotten from the arm of Hosayniyah Ershad.

¹⁰⁶ “Khamane’i says reforms must be within Islamic framework,” Voice of the IRI, 12 May 2000, in SWB, ME 3840, 15 May 2000, pp.1-5.

¹⁰⁷ Jalil Roshandel, “The nuclear controversy in the context of Iran’s evolving defence strategy,” in Shannon N. Kile (ed.), *Europe and Iran: Perspectives on Non-Proliferation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.52-53.

and mental power; and finally should take a stand against Eastern and Western imperialism, Zionism, racism, and dictatorship.¹⁰⁸

In order to make the IRGC more homogenous in terms of ideology, some steps were taken by the political leadership in parallel with consolidation of clerical power in post-revolutionary Iran. The emphasis on allegiance to Islam and revolutionary ideals in admission process and ideological/political training changed into an emphasis on allegiance to *velayat-e faqih* and Imam Khomeini.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, in order to secure ideological/political loyalty to Imam Khomeini, some of early recruitments who sympathized with moderate politicians as Bazargan, and Banisadr were purged of the IRGC as a result of deep suspect with respect to their loyalty to *velayat-e faqih*.¹¹⁰ Thereby, many of the early Guard leaders lost power to younger, more radical Guard members claiming to be followers of the *Imam's Line*.

Although ideological commitment seemed essential to participate in the IRGC, ideological training took place after the recruitment alongside military training. New recruits were given an intensive six-months training in the ideology of the Islamic Republic that included reading and the passing of tests on three primary texts; *Qoran*, Imam Ali's *Nahj'ol Balagheh*, and Khomeini's *Velayat-e Faqih*.¹¹¹ In order to support religious education and indoctrination of the Guards, an Islamic Research Center was established in 1980, attached to the office of the Representative of the Imam to the IRGC; that became an Institute in 1986.¹¹² In 1982, Center for High Education for Ideological-Political Trainers (Institute of Shahid Mahallati) was founded for the education of clerical trainers in the IRGC. In order to meet religious

¹⁰⁸ Merdinger, *op.cit.*, p.33-34, 52.

¹⁰⁹ "IRGC list qualifications for youth conscription," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 15 October 1985, FBIS.

¹¹⁰ Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), p.199; Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.83.

¹¹¹ Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, p.199.

¹¹² "Besh az 400 Ketabe Deinei dar Markaze Tahgheghat Talef Shoda est," *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.23-24.

education of the Guards and Basij, Foundation of Qoran and Hadith was established in March 2002, attached to the Directorate of Cultural Affairs of the IRGC.¹¹³

As a result of homogenization of the IRGC in terms of ideological outlook, and persistent ideological/political and religious training of the Guards by the clerics, the IRGC has maintained its ideological commitment and vigilance. Therefore, it is viewed “not only the guardian of the revolution, but also the standard-bearer of the revolutionary ideals.”¹¹⁴ There are three principles of IRGC’s ideological/political outlook all of which could be found in IRGC statements, declarations, and publications, and that could be traced to the early years of the IRGC.

The first principle of IRGC’s ideological outlook is centrality of religion/Islam. As an outcome of the Islamization of the revolution, and clerical domination, the mainstream ideology of IRGC has aroused as a combination of the revolutionary values and Islam. Furthermore, the revolution and the revolutionary values are attributed to Islam and to the Shiite tradition. For many of the radical clerics and the IRGC commanders the (Islamic) revolutionary values were not new values, but they were the same forgotten values of Islam. Hence, the religion has aroused as “the philosophy of IRGC’s being.”¹¹⁵

Since it was deemed as a “*maktabi* army,” the core of the IRGC had been motivated by religious principles and its perception of the revolutionary values.¹¹⁶ The *maktab* was viewed as a lofty end in itself. Therefore, the aim of IRGC is defined to ensure victory of the *maktab* rather than to utilize *maktab* as an instrument for victory.¹¹⁷ Whereas the *maktab* has been conceived as identical with Islam in a

¹¹³ See, “Sepah and Basij Peshtaaze Jehade Qoranei Keshvar,” *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.10-12.

¹¹⁴ “Iranian Brigadier-General Says Sacrifice, Martyrdom to Overcome All Problems,” *ISNA*, 22 December 2005, OSC translated text, WNC.

¹¹⁵ “General Safavi: “IRGC Strongest Military Force in Middle East,” *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 16 March 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC

¹¹⁶ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.83.

¹¹⁷ *Majmo’aye Bayaneyahaye Daftare Seyaseye Sepahe Pasdarane Enqelabe Eslami*, (Tehran: Sepahe Pasdarane Enqelabe Eslami, 1359), pp.24-28.

broad sense, actually, it has referred to a fundamentalist, revolutionary understanding of the Shiite faith.¹¹⁸ Soon after the establishment of the IRGC, in order to present an ideological line for the Guards, Ayatollah Khomeini declared the 3rd day of *Shaban* (the eighth month of the Islamic Calendar), the birth date of Imam Hussein, as “the IRGC day.”¹¹⁹ The birthday of Imam Hussein was chosen so that “the philosophy of freedom-seeking and oppression-fighting of those who fought in the battle of Karbala would be the model and guiding principle” for the Revolutionary Guards.¹²⁰

The ideological outlook of IRGC that blended the so-called revolutionary values and Islamic/Shiite faith leads to two implications. The first implication is sublimation of culture of jihad, martyrdom, and sacrifice. The *maktab* has marked the revival of concepts and practices of jihad and *shahadat* (martyrdom), arguably, the line of Shiite Imams.¹²¹ Yet, members of the *maktabi* army should initially become conscious believers, and then, they should pursue jihad. Hence, the Guards have been expected to be aware of basic tenets and principles of Islam; to act in accordance with Islamic principles; and to defend Islam. Therefore, the Iranian leaders have called the IRGC to equip with faith, that is to equip with divine powers before arming with weapons.¹²²

The second implication of combination of religion (Islam) and revolutionary values as the official ideology prevailed over the Islamic Republic and the IRGC is sanctification of the IRGC as the principal guardian of not only the Islamic

¹¹⁸ Marvin Zonis and Daniel Brumberg, “Shiism as Interpreted by Khomeini: An Ideology of Revolutionary Violence,” in Martin Kramer (ed.), *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), pp.47-66.

¹¹⁹ “Revolutionary Guards announce March to Mark Guard’s Day,” *Tehran Domestic Service*, 27 June 1979, FBIS, 28 June 1979, R8.

¹²⁰ Elyas Hazrati, “Guards are the national and ideological asset of all Iranians,” *E'temad*, 18 August 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹²¹ Mateo M. Farzaneh, “Shi'i Ideology, Iranian Secular Nationalism and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88),” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, vol.7, no.1, 2007, p.96.

¹²² “You should not even entertain the slightest belief that it has been your weapons which have been victorious on this path. This is not true, for if the weapons could win the war, the Iraqis had more arms than you did, but it was your faith in Allah and your sincerity which made you victorious.” *A Glance at Two Years of War*, (Tehran: IRGC Political Office, 1983), p.26.

revolution but also Islam. For this reason, Ayatollah Khamanei regularly qualifies the Guards as a “divine blessing,” and praises the IRGC to be “sacred organization with divine aims.”¹²³ Another leading ayatollah, Mesbah Yazdi, hailed serving in the IRGC as a “divine honor” rather than being a profession.¹²⁴ Because of sanctification of the IRGC, and strong emphasis on Islam and the Shiite faith through indoctrination of the IRGC, the Guards have started to consider themselves as “chosen” warriors of Islam like the combatants of the early Islamic era. Thus, the main goal of training in the IRGC is defined to create the soldiers of Islam.¹²⁵ Hence, the mixture of religion and ideology has provided a religious conviction to the IRGC beyond the “legal” framework drawn by the Islamic Republic.¹²⁶

The second principle of the IRGC’s ideological outlook is regarding clerics as an honored class (clerical elitism) and belief in the *velayat-e faqih*. Because Islam is appeared as the central constituent of the ideology of the IRGC, the clerics, scholars of Islam, comes into prominence to interpret and understand the religious texts, and to execute divine laws. Furthermore, the clerics are viewed as the legitimate successors of the prophet and the Imams not only because of their proficiency on the divine law, but because of their duty and right to lead the Muslim society. Therefore, the clerics led the Islamic revolution, and their leadership provided victory for the revolution. Therefore, the rule of religious jurists (*velayat-e faqih*) that was theorized by Ayatollah Khomeini has appeared as a religious principle in an Islamic society in the absence of Imam Mahdi (the Hidden Imam) who is the rightful owner of divine and temporal authority.¹²⁷

¹²³ “Khamane’i stresses Islamic duty towards Palestinians, importance of IRGC,” Voice of the IRI, 15 September 1999, in SWB, ME 3642, 17 September 1999, p.12.

¹²⁴ “Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi: 'Hizballah Learned Safeguarding From Late Imam',” *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 8 September 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹²⁵ “The Chief of the Joint Staff of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: "Velayat-e Faqih-Centeredness Is the Main Characteristic of the Camp of Rightness,” *Hemayat*, 12 September 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹²⁶ Roshandel, *op.cit.*, p.55; Entessar, *op.cit.*, p.66.

¹²⁷ Hamid Algar (ed.), *Islam and Revolution, Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981); Abdulaziz Sachedina, “The Rule of the Religious Jurist in Iran,” in John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani (eds.), *Iran at the Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

The velayat-e faqih doctrine is the most important pillar of the post-revolutionary Iranian political system and the most important part of indoctrination activities within the IRGC that aimed at prevalence of this thought over the Guards. According to the IRGC, as well as for the radical clerics training the Guards, the *velayat-e faqih* is not only the constituent part of the revolution and the Islamic Republic, but a divine principle. The *vali-ye faqih* (the ruling Ayatollah) is conceived as representative of Imam Mahdi who is hidden from view. Imam fulfills his missions through his representative, *vali-ye faqih*. For this reason, it is argued that opponents of rule of *vali-ye faqih* is either ignorant, or enemies of Islam itself.¹²⁸ In order to verify gravity of the *velayat-e faqih* doctrine for the Guards, an IRGC representative to the Majlis said: “If – let’s imagine – after ten years, or a century, or a millennium, a government called Islamic Republic without authority of the *vali-ye faqih* would be established in Iran, we would regard service to that republic as treason to Islam.”¹²⁹

Consequently, commitment of any politician or any political group to the *velayat-e faqih* principle is like a litmus test for the IRGC “that separates good from evil, and that removes the impure people.”¹³⁰ It is argued that the main characteristic of being in “the camp of rightness” is commitment to the *velayat-e faqih*. Furthermore, in addition to classify political and social movements as opponents or proponents of the *velayat-e faqih*, the IRGC appraises position of political movements in Iran according to their views on the source of legitimacy of the *velayat-e faqih*. For instance, Yadollah Javani, Chief of the IRGC Political Bureau stated in September 2006 that there are two major political movements (the *Second Khordad* movement and the principlist movement) in Iran with different viewpoints about the source of legitimacy of *velayat-e faqih*. The *Second Khordad* (the reformist) movement argues that legitimacy of the *velayat-e faqih* is derived from

¹²⁸ *Pera'moun'e Velayat-e Faqih; 'Khatte Khaakam bar Sepah,'* pp.1-66.

¹²⁹ Quoted in the introduction to *Pera'moun'e Velayat-e Faqih; 'Khatte Khaakam bar Sepah.'*

¹³⁰ “The Chief of the Joint Staff of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: “Velayat-e Faqih-Centeredness Is the Main Characteristic of the Camp of Rightness,” *Hemayat*, 12 September 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

people's votes because the people votes for the Assembly of Experts that elects the Leader (*vali-ye faqih*). The IRGC official has denounced that viewpoint to be non-religious for positioning the *velayat-e faqih* as a kind of attorney. However, the other movement, the principlist one, believes the legitimacy of *velayat-e faqih* is indebted to God, and attributes the roots of *velayat-e faqih* to religious bases. "This is the idea that the late Imam had of *velayat*," Javani argued.¹³¹ Regarding the role of the popular vote for the Assembly of Experts, Hojatoleslam Mojtaba Zolnuri, the Head of the Office for the Representative of *Vali-ye Faqih* in the IRGC, said, "people's vote and approval is effective in making velayat operational, but it does not give legitimacy to the *vali-ye faqih*."¹³² Accordingly, for the IRGC officials, the *velayat-e faqih* is a divine office; and Imam Mahdi bestows its legitimacy.

The third principle of the IRGC's ideological and political viewpoint is conviction in the perpetual fight between good and evil. According to this view, good and evil are in an eternal struggle until the return of Imam Mahdi who will establish the divine authority over the whole earth just prior to the Resurrection Day. The IRGC's conviction in the perpetual fight between good and evil has several images including *kufir* vs. Islam, oppressor vs. oppressed etc. In view of the IRGC leaders, in the current period, the eternal battle of good and evil is embodied in the perpetual animosity, intrigues, and plots of the United States and the Zionism against the Islamic Republic. For instance, Javani, Chief of the IRGC Political Bureau, stated that there are "two camps in the world today, as two camps emerged after the demise of the Prophet," the camp of the world imperialism and the camp of oppressed nations. According to Javani, the center of the camp of oppressed nations is the Islamic Republic of Iran; and this camp comprises the poor people including African and Latin American nations, and the non-Muslim people in search of justice and identity. The camp of imperialism that fighting against the oppressed nations as

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² "The Representative of the Leader in the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps: Distributing Service and Applying Social Justice is a Goal of the Ninth Administration," *Hemayat*, 24 September 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC. See also *Pera'moun'e Velayat-e Faqih; 'Khatte Khaakam bar Sepah,'* pp.66-75.

argued by Javani, is consisted of many European countries, the United States and Israel.¹³³

Although this conviction of IRGC could be traced to “the epic struggle of Imam Hussein against the oppressor Yazid,” the final epitome of the eternal fight is the Islamic revolution. The IRGC leaders, who are portraying Iranian revolutionaries as the champions of the cause of the oppressed nations, expose the revolution as a “disgraceful defeat” for the imperialist camp headed by Zionism and American imperialism. For this reason, the IRGC argues, in order to amend its defeat, the enemy is continuously hatching new plots and spreading new rumors in order to create fear and anxiety in [the Iranian] society...¹³⁴

Consequently, the IRGC is tended to view developments in Iran and around it within the framework of the American/Zionist struggle against the Islamic Iran because of this conviction in the eternal fight. According to the IRGC, the enemy’s plots against the Islamic Republic have taken different forms stretching from waging military attack to pursuing a “soft war.” As stated above, it is argued that the enemy’s principal targets in its fighting against Iran are the rule of religious jurists and the ulama in order to destroy the Islamic regime in Iran.¹³⁵ The IRGC officials, as well as political leaders of post-revolutionary Iran argued that the enemy has provoked insurgencies by exploiting domestic problems of the country and the existence of various ethnic minorities. Moreover, the enemy has also played in Iranian politics taking advantage of diverse political parties and groups in Iran. In order to destroy the Islamic regime in Iran, the enemy has tried to infiltrate in political factions in the country and to manipulate them using various pretexts.¹³⁶

¹³³ “The Director of the Politburo of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps: The Enemy Is Trying To Portray the Government as Inefficient,” *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 9 July 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹³⁴ “Revolution Guard Issues Warning,” FBIS Translated Text, 13 November 1979, R9.

¹³⁵ *Majmo’aye Bayaneyahaye Daftare Seyaseye Sepah ...*, pp.49-58; “Guards Commander Reza’i says ‘liberalism’ is a cancerous tumour,” IRNA (in English), 11 April 1996 in SWB, ME 2585, 13 April 1996, p.25.

¹³⁶ “Khamane’i addresses armed forces on Majlis elections, Lebanon conflict,” Voice of the IRI Network 1, 16 April 1996 in SWB, ME 2589, 18 April 1996, p.17; “The Director of the Politburo of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps: The Enemy Is Trying To Portray the Government as Inefficient,” *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 9 July 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

As portrayed in the missions of the IRGC, it should be present on the scene as the principal guardian of the revolution whenever and wherever the revolution is threatened. However, as stated above, the conviction in the perpetual fight of the enemy against the Islamic revolution and the Islamic Republic in a wide range of spheres lead IRGC to oversee economic, cultural, and political developments in Iran. For this reason, the IRGC is encouraged to understand politics and to have a political insight without involving in factional disputes.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the IRGC commanders view having the political insight as a requirement for the IRGC to defend the revolution and the regime against any kind of plots.¹³⁸ Consequently, the IRGC has started to conceive itself as the observer of national politics in post-revolutionary Iran.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with characteristics of the Revolutionary Guards in Iran, and highlighted implications of these characteristics in relationship between the IRGC and politics. The analyses above suggest that the IRGC was established as a political army. It is formed through amalgamation of the most politicized armed militias apparently for political purposes. In order to preserve the political character of IRGC, the revolutionary leadership has maintained ideological/political training of the Guards. As a result of ideological/political indoctrination, the IRGC has retained its revolutionary zeal and political character in the course of time.

The official regulations have vaguely defined the missions enjoined to the IRGC, which are open to various interpretations. For this reason, the political elites have disagreed on duties and responsibilities of the IRGC while the commanders have continuously increased the scope of missions of the IRGC. Hence, the IRGC's interests have become widened to include economic, social, cultural and political spheres that unavoidably turned it into a political actor who views developments in

¹³⁷ "Vazaayefe Sepah az manzoro rahbare moazzame enghelabe Islami," *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.3.

¹³⁸ "Commander says IRGC not involved in partisan politics," IRNA (English), 10 August 1999, in SWB, ME 3611, 12 August 1999, p.10.

Iran through the prism of its ideology. The ideological/political outlook of the IRGC has also dragged it into the political sphere, and the IRGC has become a part of factional politics in Iran.

The IRGC's relationship with politics is also affected by its considerable corporateness. The sense of corporateness was too poor among the IRGC ranks at the time of its inception. However, homogenization of IRGC ranks in terms of political outlook, growing bureaucratization and relatively autonomous structure of the IRGC have increased the sense of corporateness among the IRGC ranks. The strong sense of corporateness among the ranks of IRGC facilitated its operation as a unitary actor.

To sum up, whereas the ideological outlook of the IRGC has made it a political actor, rising corporateness has helped its being an influential actor in post-revolutionary Iranian politics. However, analyzing the characteristics of IRGC is not enough to understand the IRGC's relationship to politics. For a better understanding of the nature of IRGC – politics relationship, the political context, political power and ideological commitment of the political elites in post-revolutionary Iran should be taken into consideration. Therefore, the coming chapters are devoted to review positions of the political elites, and the political contexts in which the IRGC has operated.

CHAPTER IV

THE IRGC AND POLITICS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD (1979-1981)

The revolutionary coalition in Iran comprised various political movements coalesced together under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Mousavi Khomeini against Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. It included nationalist, liberal, leftist and the Islamist intellectuals and politicians. Soon after the revolution, the revolutionary coalition was dissolved into moderate and radical factions. The moderates were mostly composed of Western-oriented nationalists and liberals who advocated a liberal, democratic and constitutional government. The radicals in Iran were Islamic fundamentalists who aimed at restructuring the Iranian state, economy and society in accordance with Islamic precepts. The radicals under the leadership of Khomeini were adamant to establish a theocratic state based on Islamic law and the Shiite tradition. The two factions were embroiled in a bitter struggle for power in the process of the institutionalization of the revolutionary regime.

The unfolding struggle between the radicals and the moderates resembled the stages theory of revolution outlined by Crane Brinton, which was introduced in the second chapter of this study. In an illustrative anecdote, the first President of Iran, Abolhasan Banisadr, recommended the book, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, to his associates.¹ Banisadr was not alone to draw a parallelism between the stages theory and the Iranian revolution. Many of the Iranian political elites made references to the

¹ John Kifner, "Iran: Obsessed with Martyrdom," *The New York Times*, 16 December 1984.

stages theory to elucidate post-revolutionary developments in Iran. Analysts observing the Iranian politics, too, followed this way of thinking.² Indeed, given its valuable insights to comprehend revolutionary outcomes, the stage theory is useful to study political dynamics in post-revolutionary Iran. This study will apply the stages theory to the Iranian revolution. Accordingly, history of post-revolutionary Iran is divided into four periods, namely transition, radical, thermidorian, and neo-radical stages.

This chapter addresses the IRGC-politics relationship in the transition period that started with the victory of the revolution, and ended with the consolidation of the radicals' power in June 1981, when the moderate President, Abolhassan Banisadr, was impeached by the Majlis. Although this stage is also known to be the era of dual government because of division of political authority between the Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government, or the moderate stage because the 'moderate' wing of the revolutionary coalition governed through this period, I called it as transition period, because Iran rapidly run towards radicalism. This chapter will, initially, review the revolutionary dynamics and the political context in Iran in the transition period. Then, it will discuss the form of IRGC-politics relationship in this period and will offer some historical cases that illustrated the relationship between the IRGC and civilian politicians.

4.1. Political Context and the Political Elites

The most remarkable feature of the transition periode in Iran is the disintegration of the revolutionary coalition that culminated in a severe contention for power among the revolutionary elites. As the moderate forces were gradually marginalized in due process, the revolution was radicalized step by step. Eventually,

² Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran, 1962-1982*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Fateful Encounter in Iran*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 1985); James H. Muhl, Jr., "The Iranian Revolution: Revalidating Crane Brinton's Model of Revolutions for the Operational and Strategic Planner," *Monograph*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies, 1990). See also Jack A. Goldstone, "Rethinking Revolutions: Integrating Origins, Processes, and Outcomes," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol.29, no.1 (2009), pp.18-32.

the contention for power in the revolutionary Iran ended with the victory of the Islamic radicals.

4.1.1. Disintegration of the Revolutionary Coalition

In the first phase after the revolution, relatively ‘moderate’ constituents of the revolutionary coalition took power as a provisional settlement among different parties. However, consent to the rule of moderates as the interim authority did not prevent different parties in the coalition from maintaining their profound disagreements regarding the course of the revolution, which resurfaced shortly after the fall of the old regime. Therefore, the revolutionary coalition that coalesced together to overthrow the old regime dissolved into various factions, i.e. moderate, conservative, extremist and radical, with different political interests and agendas.

Parties to the revolutionary coalition in Iran could be classified into three factions in terms of their political outlook. First, the moderate faction comprised the liberal-bourgeoisie parties of the middle class, i.e. the National Front, Freedom Movement of Iran and various associations of Iranian professionals, such as the Lawyers’ Association. The National Front was an alliance of nationalist and secular parties. The Freedom Movement was also an Islamically inclined offshoot of the National Front. Although those parties were old opposition parties, since they were outlawed by the Pahlavi regime, their organizations and base of support remained limited with few intellectuals, and professionals. Nevertheless, leaders of the Freedom Movement, including Mahdi Bazargan, Ayatollah Taleghani, and Ali Shariati had played a decisive role in seeding revolutionary ideology and mobilizing intellectuals and students against the Pahlavi regime. In general, the Iranian moderates advocated a liberal regime and parliamentary democracy.³

The second faction that played an effective role in the course of the Iranian revolution was the Islamic radicals (extremists) that consisted fundamentalist and radical Islamic parties. The radicals were made up of low-ranking clerics led by the disciples of Ayatollah Khomeini and Islamist non-clerical professionals following the line of Khomeini. The bazaar, the low-ranking clerics, and lower segments of

³ Bashiriyeh, *op.cit.*, pp.126-28.

society were principal bases of support of the Islamic radicals. The Islamic Republican Party (IRP) that was established in February 1979 by Khomeini's disciples, including Ayatollah Beheshti, Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili, Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani, Hojatoleslam Bahonar, Hojatoleslam Khamanei, and some non-clerical professionals such as Hassan Ayat, was the leading political organization of the Islamic radicals. The Society of Militant Clergy of Tehran and the Society of Teachers of the Qom Theological Schools were also among the leading clerical organizations associated with the Islamic radicals. Another organization of the Islamic radicals was the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution that was established as a front of Islamic guerillas fighting against the Pahlavi regime. They were qualified as radical because they sought for drastic transformation of social, economic and political structures according to their interpretation of the revolutionary ideology. They were also Islamic since they wished to unify Islam and the state, and temporal authority with divine authority in accordance with Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* (rule of the religious-jurist).⁴

Finally, the Iranian left was also a part of the revolutionary coalition. The left had included numerous factions and groups that were composed of intellectuals and students. Because of the systematic repression under the Pahlavi regime, the leftist parties were not in a position to play a leadership role in the revolution. Nevertheless, the leftist parties, especially those with guerilla organizations such as the *Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization* (MKO) and the *Fedaiyan-e Khalq*, played a remarkable role in defeating the old regime in Iran. In addition to the Mojahedin and the Fedaiyan, the *Tudeh* Party, which was one of the oldest political parties in Iran and associated with the Soviet Union, had a major following especially within the bureaucracy.⁵ The left advocated land reform, nationalization of all economic activities, and called for the establishment of a people's army and pursuing an anti-imperialist standing in foreign policy.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.128-29.

⁵ Val Moghadam, "Socialism or Anti-Imperialism? The Left and Revolution in Iran," *New Left Review*, no.166 (November/December 1987), pp.5-28; Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

In the course of the revolution, the left had revived and endeavored to broaden its social base. In this regard, the leftists were influential in the establishment of revolutionary committees in neighborhoods, universities, factories, etc.. However, they differed on the position to be taken against the course of the revolution and the leadership of Khomeini. While the Maoist *Paykar* organization and minority faction of the Fedaiyan opposed leadership of clerics and the Provisional Government established by the moderates, the majority faction of the Fedaiyan, the Mojahedin and the Tudeh compromised with the leadership of Khomeini. However, the leftist parties were gradually marginalized by the radical clerics who abhorred ‘the communist tendencies’ of the left in Iran. Although remarkable part of the left conceded to Khomeini’s leadership and his fellow clerics during the course of the revolution, Khomeini always kept them at arm’s length. Khomeini and his disciples preferred the nationalists and liberals, i.e., the Iranian ‘moderates,’ as potential partners in the process of the consolidation of the revolutionary regime.

4.1.2. The Dual Rule and the Contention between the Moderates and the Radicals

When Khomeini returned to Iran as the leader of the revolution from his 15-year exile, he appointed Mahdi Bazargan as the head of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Bazargan, who was known to be a nationalist-religious intellectual and the leader of the Freedom Movement of Iran, established a cabinet consisting of nationalist and liberal figures associated with the Liberation Movement or the National Front. However, the Provisional Government was not the only political authority in the country immediately after the revolution. Before appointing Bazargan as the Premier, Khomeini had established the Revolutionary Council to wield legislative and executive powers as the highest decision-making political authority of the revolutionary regime. Members of the Revolutionary Council were handpicked by Khomeini and were far from representing the diversity of the revolutionary coalition. Although most members of the Council remained concealed, it is widely believed that the Council was mostly comprised of radical clerics associated with Khomeini including Ayatollah Beheshti, Ayatollah Motahhari, Ayatollah Mousavi-Ardebili, Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani, Hojatoleslam Bahonar, etc..

In fact, the Council served as the shadow government until the resignation of Bazargan in November 1979, and then served as the acting government until the formation of the first cabinet in August 1980.

Because of the existence of multiple centers of power, this period is also called dual government rule in revolutionary Iran. Whereas Premier Bazargan, the Provisional Government, and the formal state institutions stood on one side, Khomeini's disciples, the Revolutionary Council and the 'shadow clerical state' that emerged during the course of the revolution formed the opposite block.⁶

At the advent of the revolution, the Islamic radicals in the Revolutionary Councils had remarkable popular support and the backing of Khomeini; however, they lacked experience in government. Additionally, then, there was a consensus among the revolutionaries that the clerics would not involve in the executive affairs. Therefore, the Revolutionary Council recommended Khomeini to appoint Bazargan as the prime minister of the interim government because of his political experience besides his credentials as a religious and nationalist leader.⁷ Bazargan also had confidence of a great part of the revolutionary coalition to lead the provisional government until the convention of a constituent assembly that would draft a constitution for the new political regime. Khomeini called the Bazargan's cabinet as an Islamic government and announced that rejection of it would mean violation of sharia. Thus, whereas the moderates, the liberals and the nationalists, were presenting their technical expertise, the clerical leadership was providing legitimacy for the government.⁸

Khomeini's apparent support for the Provisional Government under Bazargan did not exempt it from relentless critics. Initially, the leftist factions that desired

⁶ Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam; The Iranian Mojahedin*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 1989), p.42.

⁷ See, Mehdi Noorbaksh, "Mehdi Bazargan's Biography," *Bazargan.info*, http://www.bazargan.info/la_english/english.htm; RohAllah Husseinian, "Why and How Bazargan Became Prime Minister?" in *A Year of Fight for the Decapitation of Shah January 1978 [Bahman 1356] to January 1379 [Bahman 1357]*, (Tehran: The Center of the Documents of the Islamic Republic, 2006 -2007), pp: 830 – 860.

⁸ Mohamed H. Malek, "Elite Factionalism in the Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol.19, no.4 (1989), pp.441-442.

replacement of the Army with the Peoples' Army, started to attack him. Soon after the establishment of the Provisional Government, differences emerged between the Council and the Government, as well, regarding the course of the revolution, the nature of political authority in the new regime and control of the revolutionary organizations. The Bazargan government was initially criticized by the radicals for not being revolutionary enough and adopting a gradualist approach.⁹ However, Bazargan had continuously maintained that the Provisional Government would not be a revolutionary government to take radical actions. Instead, he adopted a step by step policy. Additionally, unlike the moderates in charge of the Provisional Government that attempted to establish a liberal, democratic and Western-oriented political regime, the radicals under the auspices of the Revolutionary Council were trying to install a theocratic regime. Those differences quickly turned into skirmishes between the radicals and the moderates under the guise of a contention between the Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government.

During this period, all the formal state institutions inherited from the old regime fell into the hands of Bazargan and his associates. However, the state institutions were inefficient, because they were heavily harmed during the revolutionary interregnum, and they were under the pressure of radicals to act in a 'revolutionary way.' In addition to the legal apparatus of the state, the revolutionary institutions that sprung up during the revolution started to exercise actual power. The revolutionary institutions included the local committees, the Guards, the foundations (*bonyad*), and the revolutionary tribunals operating under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Council. Additionally, the radical clerics of the Revolutionary Council established the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) soon after the revolution and organized across the country. Whereas the Council emerged as the authority to check the activities of the Provisional Government, the IRP emerged as the principal contender for political power. Moreover, the power exercised by the revolutionary organizations further undermined the authority of the Provisional Government.

⁹ Mostafa Eslahce, "Nekhosteen Dovlate Jomhoure Eslami: Az Aagaz ta Enjam," *Babamdadkhabar*, 9 February 2009.

For this reason, Prime Minister Bazargan complained, “The committees hinder the course of affairs and interfere in the administration and this is in contrast to the functions of the legal government.”¹⁰ He also stated his grievances with “‘hundreds of chiefs’ in the country leaving him powerless with a blunt knife in his hand and blades in the hands of others.”¹¹ Therefore, the Provisional Government sought to control the revolutionary committees, the courts and the Guards, yet failed to establish its authority over the revolutionary institutions.

On the other side, the radicals accused the Provisional Government for being negligent in struggling against the counter-revolutionaries. They argued that the revolutionary forces were chasing former supporters of Shah, especially former members of SAVAK, and counterrevolutionaries, who were involved in offenses against the revolution. Then, in addition to activities of the counterrevolutionaries in the city centers, there were insurgencies in the countryside such as in Kurdistan, Khuzestan, and Turkoman Sahra against the central government. These insurgencies that fed with ethnic sentiments were seeking political autonomy and some economic demands.¹² In this regard, the radicals maintained that Bazargan was struggling against the revolutionary forces instead of counter-revolutionaries.

Hence, the Revolutionary Council was prevented the Government from establishing its authority over the revolutionary organizations, and frequently intervened in executive affairs. In order to protest the Council’s interferences, Bazargan offered his resignation in July 1979. Khomeini rejected his resignation and arranged a meeting between himself, the Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government. As a result of the meeting, it was decided that some members of the Council would participate into the Cabinet, while some cabinet members would take part in the Council.¹³ However, this solution also did not work to contain contention

¹⁰ Bashiriyeh, *op.cit.*, p.136-37.

¹¹ Robert S. Litwak, “Iran,” in S.F. Wells, Jr. & M.A. Bruzonsky (eds.), *Security in the Middle East: Regional Change and Great Power Strategies*, (Boulder&London: Westview Press, 1987), p.118.

¹² Bashiriyeh, *op.cit.*, p.148-49.

¹³ Eslahce, “Nekhosteen Dovlate Jomhoure Eslami: Az Aagaz ta Enjam.” The Revolutionary Council members Hojateslams Khamanei, Madavi-Kani, Rafsanjani, Bahonar and Banisadr become deputy

between the moderates and the radicals, and to constrain ‘unauthorized’ activities of the revolutionary organizations that undermined the Bazargan government. This case was well-illustrated in November 1979, when the radical students occupied the US Embassy in Tehran and took the diplomats working there hostage. In reaction to the incident and the Revolutionary Council’s endorsement of the incident, Bazargan and his cabinet members resigned two days after the occupation.

Even after the fall of the Provisional Government in November 1979, the contention went on between Abolhassan Banisadr, the first President of Iran that was elected in January 1980, who represented the moderate factions, and the radicals who were dominating the Revolutionary Council, and then continued to dominate the first Majlis (May 1980 – May 1984). Consequently, the contention between the radicals and the moderates continued until the impeachment of Banisadr in June 1981.

The radical clerics had many advantages in their contention with the moderates. Firstly, they were disciples of Ayatollah Khomeini and enjoyed his confidence. Therefore, they appealed to Khomeini’s charismatic authority to enhance their ideas against their adversaries. They co-opted many of the clerics, and controlled the religious and traditional structures across the country. Additionally they had close links with the bazaars, the most dynamic institutions of the Iranian society. The radicals also established their own organizations including the IRP, and the Society of the Militant Clergy of Tehran. Moreover, they penetrated into the revolutionary institutions, the committees and the revolutionary foundations. They took over the control of the National Radio and Television Organization, and the Central Office of Mosques through which they could appoint the *imam jom’ehs* (prayer leaders) across the country. Since the prayer leaders were the principal interpreters of the expressions of their superiors, and because of their close links with the bazaaris and the lower segments of society, the prayer leader network was one of the chief mobilization institutions instrumented by the radical. Thus, the radicals benefited from the advantages of the aforementioned large-scale and influential organizations to establish their power. Additionally, they resorted to a populist rhetoric to mobilize

ministers respectively in the Ministries of Defense, Interior, Education, and Economic Affairs. In turn, five members of the Cabinet were involved in the Council.

the masses for their causes.¹⁴ Last but not least, the radicals relied on the *hizbullahi* mobs that were consisted of the urban poor and that were acting in conjunction with the Revolutionary Committees and the Guards in order to exert pressure over the rival political groups.¹⁵

Unlike the radicals, the moderate's power base was limited with middle-classes and intellectuals. Moreover, their power base, that is the middle class, was severely discredited and marginalized by the radicals who constantly campaigned in favor of the lower classes. Since the political parties associated with the ruling moderates were heavily suppressed by the Pahlavi regime, they had not institutions organized across the country to contact with the masses. Although the moderate parties played an influential role in fomenting the revolutionary ideology, the moderate leaders lost their appeal for the masses to the clerics led by Khomeini. They took over the defunct state apparatus of the deposed regime, whose influence was also curbed by the revolutionary organizations that fell to the control of the radicals.¹⁶

4.1.3. Radicalization of the Revolution

The contention between the moderates and the radicals revolved around the control of the revolutionary institutions, elections for the Constituent Assembly, drafting the constitution of the new regime, presidential and parliamentary elections, the direction of foreign policy and the management of economy etc.. Most of those conflicts were won by the radicals that utilized all facilities in their disposal. Each turning point of the long-lasting contention between the moderates and the radicals indicated the course of revolution towards radicalism. Therefore, this period was also marked by radicalization of the revolution.

One of the earlier confrontations between the moderates and the radicals was over naming the new political regime. Although there was a consensus within the

¹⁴ Abrahamian, *op.cit.*, pp.48-51; Emad Ferdows, "The Reconstruction Crusade and Class Conflict in Iran," *MERIP Reports*, no.113 (March-April 1983), p.11; Shahrugh Akhavi, "Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Middle East Journal*, vol.41, no.2 (Spring 1987), p.183.

¹⁵ Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp.69-70.

¹⁶ Bashiriyeh, *op.cit.*, p.149.

revolutionary coalition for the establishment of an Islamic Republic, Bazargan suggested naming the new regime as ‘the Democratic Islamic Republic.’ However, Khomeini rejected any qualifications for the projected republic other than the Islamic. Despite the opposing view of Khomeini, insistence of the cabinet on the ‘Democratic Islamic Republic,’ flamed the contention between the moderates and the radicals. Moreover, some of the cabinet members, like the Oil Minister Hasan Nazih, were even rejecting Islam as a base for the government.¹⁷ Eventually, the Iranian people were asked in a national referendum to make a choice for or against the Islamic Republic. As result of the referendum that took place on March 30 and 31, 1979, the new political regime was named the Islamic Republic of Iran on April 1, 1979.

Having decided the name of the new political regime, the Provisional Government engaged in drafting a new constitution. The first draft constitution prepared by the Provisional Government was publicized in June 1979. The draft constitution was resembling a mixture of the 1906 Constitution of Iran and the 1958 Constitution of the French Fifth Republic. The draft was essentially a liberal text, and apart from providing a council of guardians to ensure the conformity of legislation with Islamic laws, it did not designate a special role for the clerics. The Islamic radicals rejected the draft constitution and after its publication, a congress for the critics of the draft constitution was held under the auspices of the IRP. They maintained that the principle of the velayat-e faqih should be inserted into the constitution.

In order to review the draft constitution and to present the constitution for approval by popular referendum, the Assembly of Experts was convened on August 18, 1979. The Assembly of Experts was composed of 73 members elected by popular vote in the elections held on August 3, 1979. However, more than two third of the majority of the Assembly was dominated by the extremists, supported by the IRP that used its advantages over the moderates. Chaired by Ayatollah Beheshti, the Assembly of Experts profoundly changed the draft constitution prepared by the

¹⁷ Morteza Saffar-Harandi, “Begaanageiye Dovlate Movaghhat ba Mabaneye Enghelab,” *Taskher*, <http://revolution.shirazu.ac.ir/?p=1873>.

Provisional Government so that they could establish an Islamic regime based on the principle of the velayat-e faqih. When it had become clear that the projected constitution would institutionalize clerical domination of the regime in October 1979, the moderates and the left vocally expressed their opposition to the activities of the radicals in the Assembly of Experts, charging them for seeking to turn the Islamic Republic into a theocratic state.¹⁸

The moderates and the radicals were also confronted in foreign policy issues. Almost all parties to the revolutionary coalition stipulated ‘independence’ and ‘non-alignment’ as the fundamental principles of the revolutionary regime as a reaction to the US influence over Iran during the reign of the Shah. Therefore, Iran shortly after the victory of the revolution withdrew from the CENTO, ended its military and defense agreements with the United States, and declared itself as a non-aligned country. The concepts of independence and non-alignment, however, had different meanings for the radicals and the moderates. Whereas the radicals were insisting on severance of all kind of relations with the imperialist powers of the time, the moderates were advocating maintenance of ‘healthy’ diplomatic and economic relations with the great powers including the United States. The moderates favored a policy based on equidistance from the both superpowers of the time.¹⁹

Thus, the Provisional Government was under pressure of the radicals because of its direct contacts with the US officials that aimed at restoring bilateral relations. On November 1, Bazargan with his entourage met with Zbigniew Brzezinski, then serving as advisor of the US President Jimmy Carter, in Algiers, where they paid an official visit on the occasion of celebration of its independence. Because Brzezinski had supported military coup d’état in order to forestall revolution at the time of the revolutionary interregnum in Iran, this meeting that took place shortly after the Shah’s admission into the United States (for medical treatment), sparked a wide

¹⁸ Malek, *op.cit.*, p.446.

¹⁹ See, Rouhollah K. Ramazani, “Iran’s Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations,” *Middle East Journal*, vol.43, no.2 (Spring 1989); Houman A. Sadri, “Trends in Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Iran,” *Journal of Third World Studies*, vol.15, no.1 (Spring 1998); David Menashri, *Iran, A Decade of War and Revolution*, (New York, London: Holmes Mener, 1990), pp.94-97.

reaction in Iran.²⁰ The radicals in Iran concerned with a US operation such as coup d'état that restored Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the throne in August 1953.

In this context, three days after the meeting, amidst the vivid debates over the constitutional regulations in Iran, a group of radical students, who were calling themselves as 'followers of the Imam's line,' occupied the US Embassy compound in Tehran and took US diplomats hostage on November 4, 1979. The occupation sparked a new wave of anti-American mass protests across Iran and the date of the incident celebrated as the 'anti-imperialism day.' Occupation of the embassy was also a reaction to the Provisional Government's attempt to restore Iran's relations with the United States. Therefore, the demonstrators that called death to America also demanded dissolution of the Provisional Government.

The Islamic radicals and the IRP supported the incident and took charge of addressing the hostage issue. Moreover, Khomeini dubbed it 'a revolution greater than the first one.'²¹ Unlike the radicals, the moderates viewed occupation of the embassy illegal, and considered it as interference in government affairs.²² Both Bazargan and Ebrahim Yazdi, the then foreign minister, called the takeover as an irresponsible move that breached the international law. In response, Premier Bazargan and most members of his cabinet resigned from their posts two days after the seizure of the Embassy. At that time, Khomeini accepted his resignation and handed over the executive affairs to the Revolutionary Council. Thus, the moderates lost their only stronghold in the new political system. Moreover, the radicals utilized the files captured at the occupied Embassy to demonize their moderate rivals for their documented relations with the US Embassy. Hence, most of the former members of the Provisional Government was incarcerated and barred from involving in politics.

²⁰ Ahmad Reza Shahali, "Dovlate Movagghat va Taskhere Laneye Jasouseye Amreka," *Taskher*, 13 Aban 1386 [4 November 2007], <http://revolution.shirazu.ac.ir/?p=1866>.

²¹ "The Den of Spies from the Imam's Viewpoint," in *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, (Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1982), p.364.

²² Shahali, "Dovlate Movagghat va Taskhere Laneye Jasouseye Amreka."

After then, the word 'liberal' became equivalent to denominate counter-revolutionaries.²³

An additional effect of the embassy takeover was organization of the Basij-e Melli (National Mobilization) movement. Anticipating a harsh reaction from the United States to save the hostages and to forestall the course of the revolution, the radicals decided to mobilize people against the prospective plots of the enemy. In this regard, Ayatollah Khomeini asked establishment of 20-million volunteer forces to defend the revolution. As a result, mobilization units were spontaneously organized around the mosques, *husayniyehs* (centers that established for mourning for Imam Hussein), factories etc. in order to recruit and train volunteer people in terms of ideology and defense capabilities. The Basij functioned as an independent and loosely organized revolutionary institution until its amalgamation with the IRGC at the end of 1980.²⁴ After then, Basij played a remarkable role in enforcement of the revolutionary and Islamic values in society.

Meanwhile, soon after the occupation of the Embassy, the new Constitution completed by the Assembly of Experts was accepted in a national referendum that took place on December 2 and 3, 1979. Henceforth, commitment to the *velayat-e faqih* theory of Khomeini that became the fundamental basis of the Islamic Republic system, become the principal criteria for legality and political rights in Iran, and the principal base of the rise of authoritarianism.

4.1.4. Banisadr's Struggle for the Power and the Rise of the Radicals

In accordance with the Constitution, the first presidential elections took place on January 25, 1980. While Ayatollah Khomeini barred clerics from running, the candidate of the IRP, Jaleddin Farsi, was disqualified from the competition because he was not Iranian in origin. Then the IRP nominated Hasan Habibi instead of Farsi. Among the eight contenders, Banisadr, an independent intellectual and one of the close associates of Khomeini, garnered more than 75 percent of the votes and become the first president of Iran.

²³ Eslahce, "Nekhosteen Dovlate Jomhore Eslami: Az Aagaz ta Enjam."

²⁴ Schahgaldian, *op.cit.*, p.87.

Although Banisadr was a member of the Revolutionary Council, he managed to distance himself both from the radical clerics and from the 'liberals.' Nevertheless, through his activities before the revolution and during the revolutionary interregnum, he cultivated his image as an Islamist, revolutionary and intellectual figure. He was radical in comparison to the moderates, especially in terms of his ideas for establishing a classless society and Islamic economic system. Yet he was critical of the centralization of power in the hands of radical clerics. In this regard, throughout the constitutional debates in the Constituent Assembly, he had opposed warrants of the *vali-ye faqih* that inserted in the Constitution.²⁵ Because of his opposition to the clerical sovereignty the IRP become hostile to Banisadr, however, Khomeini sanctioned his presidency. Moreover, Khomeini delegated his authority of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces to Banisadr.

Soon after becoming President, he was embroiled in a bitter fighting with the radical clerics for political power, such as the control of national radio-TV, the revolutionary committees, and leading state institutions. He worked to centralize political authority within the domain of presidency and to keep radical clerics away from influential positions in the government. In this context he took the support of the moderates and some leftist groups. Thus, the struggle between the radical clerics and Abolhassan Banisadr, emerged as a clear manifestation for the continuation of this contention between the moderates and the radicals.

In addition to factional disputes, the contention for power between the President and the radicals had ideological roots as well. As to the ideological incongruity, contrary to the radicals arguing that sovereignty and legitimacy of power originated in God and religion, Banisadr attributed legitimacy of his presidency to the people that voted overwhelmingly for him. Thus, whereas the President Banisadr emerged as the defender of the republicanism, and attributed political legitimacy to the popular support, the radicals praised the religious dimension of the revolution and the regime. Such ideological disagreements further antagonized the radicals.

²⁵ Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak: Iran, the Revolution & Secret Deals with the U.S.* (New York: Brassey's Inc., 1991), p.10; Eman Hussein Ghezelayagh, "Ekdamate Banisadr va Reftare Imam dar Movaceh ba An," *Markaze Esnade Eslami*, retrieved in <http://www.bangdad.com/bangdad/pages/details.asp?id=319>.

Increasingly, the radical clerics viewed Banisadr as a barrier for the establishment and consolidation of the Islamic regime.²⁶ Thus, the initial disagreements between the President Banisadr and the radicals emerged over appointments for the high offices. Whereas Banisadr advocated the appointment of professionals based on expertise, the radicals prioritized commitment to the religious values as the principal criteria for employment.²⁷

In this regard, Banisadr emerged as the vocal person of the moderate and secular opposition, who stood against the transformation of the revolutionary regime into a theocratic state, by the radicals. However, Banisadr was poor in his standing against the IRP, as the Constitution of the Islamic Republic envisaged a weak presidency and divided political authority between the Majlis, the Prime Minister, President, and the Leader (*vale-ye faqih*). Moreover, the radical clerics had already secured their powerful positions especially in the supervisory bodies owing to their decisive role in drafting the constitution.²⁸

As the contention between the President and the radicals deepened, the both sides resolutely attempted to ensure the election of their supporters for the coming Islamic Consultative Assembly (*majlis*, parliament) in order to widen their base of support. The first parliamentary elections after the Islamic Revolution took place in two rounds in February and May 1980. The radicals formed an 'Islamic coalition' including the IRP, the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution, the Rohaniyat, and the Motelefeh. On the other side, President Banisadr established 'presidential bureaus' of 'cooperation and coordination between the people and the President' that in conjunction with the Freedom Movement, the National Front, and the Mojahedin-e

²⁶ Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Hatvatalar*, (trans. Hakkı Uygur), (İstanbul:Pınar Yayınları,2006), pp.17-18.

²⁷ Ayatollah Beheshti argued, " ... in a society ruled by the Supreme Leader (*jame-e-ye velayat-e faqih*) in which all different parts of the state are branches of Islamic leadership (*emanate*), the scientific profession comes second, while religious learning (*maktab*) has the priority, and is in the first place. In a society where *maktab* determines the form and direction of the policies, the first question for employment should be the level of attachment to the principle of *maktab* and then to the level of their profession." Quoted in Reza Razavi, "The Cultural Revolution in Iran, with Close Regard to the Universities, and its Impact on the Student Movement," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.45, no.1 (January 2009), p.4.

²⁸ Mohsen M. Milani, "The Evolution of the Iranian Presidency: From Bani Sadr to Rafsanjani," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.20, no.1 (1993), pp.83-97.

Khalq.²⁹ Notwithstanding the charges of election frauds, the Islamic coalition won almost 130 deputies, whereas the moderates won about 75 of the 241 chairs of the Majlis. Subsequently, Rafsanjani was elected as the Speaker of the Majlis. Thereby, the radicals dominated the legislative body, and afterwards the contention between the moderates and the radicals was disguised with confrontation between President Bani-Sadr and the Majlis, dominated by the radicals.

Concomitantly with the first parliamentary elections, the anti-intellectual and anti-Western discourse of the radicals resulted in assaults against the universities, which were regarded as the principal base of the spread of the Western culture in the Iranian society. The radical clerics, led by Khomeini, attributed most of the major problems of the country to the secular curricula of the universities in Iran. Moreover, the universities were viewed as the principal threat to the Islamic Revolution, not only because of the deep-rooted Western influence settled in the universities, but also because of the political activities of the secular, nationalist and leftist political parties in the campuses. Concerned with the activities of the 'counter-revolutionary' groups, the Revolutionary Council warned all political parties to cease their activities in the universities and ordered the closure of the universities in June 1980. Meanwhile, Khomeini established the Headquarters of the Cultural Revolution to review curricula of the universities in order to integrate the Islamic teaching into universities, purge the faculty considered to be un-Islamic, select students for enrollment and screen almost all cultural activities in order to Islamize universities.³⁰ As the radicals insisted on the Cultural Revolution for the Islamization of the Iranian society and state, Bani-Sadr and his moderate and secular supporters criticized the activities of the Headquarters of the Cultural Revolution and called for re-opening of the universities.³¹

²⁹ Ghezelayagh, "Ekdamate Bani-Sadr va Reftare Imam dar Movaceh ba An."

³⁰ Khosrow Sohbe, "Education in Revolution: Is Iran Duplicating the Chinese Cultural Revolution?" *Comparative Education*, vol.18, no.3 (1982), pp. 271-80; Nader Entessar, "Education Reforms in Iran: Cultural Revolution or Anti-Intellectualism," *J. South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.8, no.1 (Fall 1984), pp. 47-64; Razavi, *op.cit.*, pp.1-17.

³¹ Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, p.129-30.

One of the severe skirmishes between President Banisadr and the Majlis dominated by radicals took place over the designation of prime minister. According to the constitution, the authority to name prime minister was within the jurisdiction of president; however, the Majlis should approve his nominee for premiership. The controversy was so deep that the IRP became adamant to get rid of Banisadr. Thus, a prominent member of the IRP, Hasan Ayat, was reportedly quoted in a taped conversation for planning to force Banisadr's resignation either by political means, or by force.³² Eventually, Banisadr was forced to accept Mohammad Ali Rajai, the IRP candidate, as prime minister.

The settlement of the issue of designation of the Prime Minister did not end the contention between the President and his radical rivals who controlled the office of the Prime Minister and the Majlis. Banisadr maintained the expertise and cooperation of the proposed ministers with him as the principal criteria for the selection of the cabinet members. Conversely, Rajai insisted that commitment to the revolution would be the principal criterion. In due course, Banisadr rejected most of the nominations of Rajai for the cabinet. Due to the disagreements between Banisadr and Rajai, the cabinet could only be set up in September 1980, five months after the elections. Even after then, whereas Banisadr tried to paralyze Rajai's cabinet, the radicals dominating Majlis and the judiciary frustrated Banisadr's attempts to establish his authority over domestic and foreign affairs, and economy. For instance, President Banisadr failed in his attempts to address the hostage crisis which remained within the domain of the Majlis and the cabinet.

Meanwhile, in addition to the activities of counter revolutionaries inside and outside Iran, the Kurdish uprising, the US military operation to 'save the hostages' in April 1980, and military coup attempts, particularly the Nuzhah attempt that revealed in July 1980, served for further radicalization of the regime. The radicals abused those issues to attack President Banisadr and the moderate forces. Moreover, they accused Banisadr of involving in plots against the Islamic Republic.³³ As a result, the

³² *Ibid.*, p.25.

³³ For those allegations see, Hussein Kaveshi, "Ertebate Banisadr ba Vaghie Tabas va Koudetaye Nohjeh," <http://revolution.shirazu.ac.ir/?p=3423>.

hizbullahi activists under the direction of radicals ransacked offices of the moderate parties; and the revolutionary tribunals banned the moderates' papers and jailed their leaders.³⁴

President Bani Sadr and the IRP dominated Majlis and the cabinet confronted on a number of issues related to the direction of foreign policy, as well. The most immediate foreign policy issue of Iran, then, was handling of the hostage issue. Bani Sadr reiterated his opposition to the movement of the students that occupied the US Embassy, and dubbed them as extremists. After he became President, in order to take the helm of direction of the hostage issue, Bani Sadr asked deliverance of the hostages to the cabinet. His request was rejected by Khomeini, who declared that the Majlis would make a decision on this issue.³⁵ The Majlis, in turn, authorized Bahzad Nabavi to perform negotiations for the settlement of the hostage issue. After a series of abortive attempts, Nabavi reached an agreement with his US counterparts, the Algiers Accords, in January 1981. Accordingly, Iran freed hostages in return for unfreezing of the Iranian assets in America, and the US assurance for non-intervention in Iran's internal affairs. Because he was kept away from the negotiations, Bani Sadr criticized the Algiers accords, which added fuel to his confrontation with the radicals.³⁶

The embassy takeover, in fact, was a turning point in radicalization of Iranian foreign policy that set Iran against the 'international system,' and that pitted especially the Western and the Arab world against the revolutionary regime in Iran. The idealistic foreign policy approach pursued by the Iranian radicals defied international law, international system, and its norms of diplomatic behavior. As an implication of this approach to foreign policy, the radicals started to support 'liberation movements,' which was injected in the constitution as a duty for the

³⁴ Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The Nuzhah Plot and Iranian Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.34, no.4 (November 2002), pp.645-666.

³⁵ Ghezelayagh, "Ekdamate Bani Sadr va Reftare Imam dar Movaceh ba An." Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, pp.24-32.

³⁶ For his critics see, Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, pp.48-51.

government. The radicals called other Islamic countries to take revolutionary positions like Iran in order to defeat imperialism and the Zionism. In this regard, they engineered establishment of the Office of the Liberation Movements within the IRGC, and they convened the First Congress of Liberation Movements in Tehran, in January 1980. The radicals organized a campaign against the regional states that allied with either the Western or the Eastern bloc, under the banner of ‘Neither East, Nor West, Only the Islamic Republic.’

Contrary to the radicals, Banisadr and his Foreign Minister Sadegh Qotbzadeh defended maintenance of non-alignment and equidistance policy of the Provisional Government. The moderates led by Banisadr adopted ‘Iran first’ policy and discomfited with the radicals’ relations with the liberation movements abroad. Indeed, revolutionary regime in Iran was started to be blamed for a series of uprisings in the region and the rise of the political opposition.³⁷

The Iraqi military attack on Iran in September 1980 added a new dimension to the controversy between the President and his radical opponents. The parties were embroiled in another disagreement over the direction of the war, further aggravating the divisions between them. Whereas Banisadr, empowered by Khomeini as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, defended the Army to sustain war, and demanded greater authority for himself as the President. He opposed the IRGC’s involvement in the war-front and prevented arms supply to the Guards. Contrary to Banisadr, the radicals supported the IRGC and accused Banisadr of planning to use the Army to seize power.³⁸ Eventually, by early 1981 representatives of the radicals marginalized Banisadr in the Supreme Defense Council (SDC) that decides the direction of war.

The crisis between the radicals and President Banisadr was further deepened in March 1981. Banisadr, who were helpless in the face of criticisms and counterchecks of the radicals, wrote articles in his newspaper, *Enghelab-e Islami*, expressing his

³⁷ Ramazani, *op.cit.*, pp.204-10; Sadri, *op.cit.*.

³⁸ Shaul Bakhash, “Historical Setting,” in H.C. Metz, ed., *Iran: A Country Study*, (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1989), pp.55-62..

grievances with his opponents. He decided to appeal his supporters to organize demonstrations to challenge the radicals. In one occasion, Banisadr attended a meeting in Tehran held on March 5 to commemorate late Mohammad Mosaddeq, where his speech was disrupted by an attack of a *hizballahi* group. Because the police failed to calm the rally, Banisadr urged the audience to seize the disrupters, which was ensued by violent clashes between the leftist militias supporting Banisadr and the *hizballahis*. Banisadr hold the identity cards of the assailants who were captured by his supporters, which displayed that the attackers were affiliated with the IRP and the IRGC.³⁹ Concurrently with the March 5 incident, the Majlis passed new bills enhancing authority of the Prime Minister vis-à-vis the President such as equipping him with a right appoint ministers without presidential approval. In response, Banisadr defined the Iranian radicals as Stalinists, and claimed that if the Iranians failed to be vigilant about their rights, the revolution would end up in a dictatorship like other great revolutions. As a reaction, the radicals depicted Banisadr as a liberal, serving the interests of imperialists.⁴⁰

As the tension between the radicals and Banisadr escalated dramatically, Ayatollah Khomeini sought to mediate the differences between them. In March 1981, Khomeini issued a declaration, banning further speeches, declarations or newspaper articles of the parties that would contribute to factionalism. Additionally, he established a three-man committee (including representatives of Banisadr, the IRP, and Khomeini) headed by Mousavi Ardebili to resolve differences between the President and his rivals. Concomitantly with the establishment of the committee, Banisadr improved its relations with the Mujahedeen-e Khalq and continued his verbal attacks of the IRP, which was against Khomeini's request. As a result, the committee found Banisadr faulty in his activities, which culminated in Khomeini's withdrew of support from Banisadr.⁴¹ And then, Khomeini also joined the radical

³⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Iran under the Ayatollahs* (London: Routledge, 1985), p.175; *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.5 (1980-81), 1982, p.530-531. Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, pp.138-39.

⁴⁰ Abrahamian, *op.cit.*, pp.65-66; Malek, *op.cit.*, p.449.

⁴¹ Bakhash, *op.cit.*, pp.55-62; Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, pp.135-140; Ghezelayagh, "Ekdamate Banisadr va Reftare Imam dar Movaceh ba An."

cohort to criticize Banisadr to place himself above the law. Eventually, Khomeini removed him from his post as the Acting Commander in Chief on June 10, 1981. Soon after Banisadr's loss of Khomeini's support, the Majlis decided for the impeachment of him from Presidency on June 21. The impeachment of Banisadr illustrated the victory of the radicals over the moderate members of the revolutionary coalition. Meanwhile, pro-Banisadr demonstrations orchestrated by the MKO sparked the reign of terror in Iran.⁴²

4.2. The IRGC and Politics in the Moderate Stage: Contention

In order to understand the Revolutionary Guards' relationship to the politics in the transition period, the variables outlined in the second chapter of this study should be reviewed. Accordingly, there are four variables determining the Revolutionary Guards' relationship to the politics. These variables are ideological outlook of the IRGC, corporateness of the IRGC, power of the ruling elite and ideological stance of the ruling elite.

To begin with, the ideological outlook of the Guards was far from being uniformed, in the moderate stage, because the IRGC consisted of different units that were established before or during the revolutionary turmoil. Although principally the Islamist forces coalesced together to form the Revolutionary Guards, many armed-members of the parties that participated in the revolutionary coalition had found their way to join the IRGC. Therefore, the early Guards included the leftist, and the nationalist volunteers who joined the militia forces to fight against the Pahlavi regime. As a result, although the Guards consisted of zealots strongly committed to the revolution, there were various interpretations of the revolution and the revolutionary ideology among the Guardsmen. For this reason, the political loyalty of the Guards was divided among their immediate bosses, who had founded the militia forces that joined the IRGC, the clerical leadership, the Revolutionary Council, and the Provisional Government.

⁴² Abrahamian, *op.cit.*, pp.67, 219-23.

Over time, the radicals gradually penetrated into the IRGC in terms of ideology and organization, since the IRGC started to operate under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Council. Additionally, clerical figures associated with the IRP were charged with ideological and political training of the Guards. Thus, whereas the nationalist and leftist members of the IRGC were purged off from the organization, the radicals' understanding of the revolution prevailed over the Guards. After then, the ideological outlook of the Guards gradually started to reflect ideological/political discourse of the radicals which were in contradiction to the ruling moderates' political viewpoints. Because of the ideological incongruence between the IRGC and the political leadership, the IRGC sided with its ideological allies, the radicals.

The second factor that is influential over the IRGC-politics relationship is corporateness of the IRGC. Like the other revolutionary armies, in the moderate stage, the IRGC lacked corporateness because it was hastily established via the integration of various militia groups, which were organized to safeguard the revolution. Above all, since the IRGC was created by the integration of already established militia groups, it was difficult for the IRGC leadership to overcome organizational and ideological differences among those groups. Moreover, because most of the Guards admitted into the IRGC were still loyal to their former patrons, factionalism within the IRGC ranks in this period was considerably high. For this reason, IRGC Commander Abu Sharif resigned from his post in June 1980, and top command structure of the IRGC was not stabilized until September 1981.⁴³

Additionally, the IRGC had yet to institutionalize in the moderate stage. Because the Bazargan government deemed the IRGC as a temporal organization to be united with the police and the army over time, it was unclear whether it would survive until the Assembly of Experts injected a clause to the constitution that granted it with the constitutional mandate. Even after then, since the influential political and clerical figures tried to sustain their influence over the former fellows that participated into the IRGC, it has not institutional autonomy. Under those circumstances, the IRGC leadership failed to develop a corporate identity among the

⁴³ Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam; Iran's Revolutionary Guard*, (Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), pp.31-32.

Guard ranks. As result, corporateness of the IRGC was at scarce supply in the transition stage.

The weakness of the IRGC's corporateness made it vulnerable to the outside influences. That is why the radicals managed to penetrate into the IRGC both in terms of ideology, and in terms of organization. Whereas powers of the radicals helped them to control the Guards, in addition to other revolutionary organizations, the liabilities of the ruling moderates hindered their influence over the Guards. For this reason, the IRGC was formally established under the supervision of the Revolutionary Council, independent of the Provisional Government.

The power of the ruling elites is the third factor influential in the revolutionary army-politics relationship. In the Iranian case, the moderates in charge of the Provisional Government in the moderate stage was powerless vis-à-vis the challenges ahead of them. The ruling moderates were challenged by the left that viewed Bazargan, as the Kerensky of the Iranian revolution, and the secular forces objecting the gradual Islamization of politics and the state. The moderate faction was also far from presenting a united front. Whereas, the secular wing of the National Front splitting from the moderate faction, some other figures like Banisadr, who was considered as moderate, criticized the Bazargan government for not being revolutionary. Moreover, authority of the Provisional Government was undermined by the Islamic radicals. Although the formal state apparatus was under the control of the moderate elites, it was inefficient and challenged by the revolutionary organizations, i.e., the Revolutionary Guards, the Committees and the Revolutionary Tribunals, and the *hizballahi* mobs that were under the influence of the radicals. For this reason Prime Minister Bazargan complaint of political poverty and offered his resignation several times, which were declined by Khomeini. In order to reach a compromise between the Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government, some members of the Council took official position in the cabinet in July 1979. However, this settlement was also proved to be far from healing disagreements between the Council and the Government. Eventually, the Provisional Government led by Bazargan collapsed in November 1979, just after the radicals had sanctioned occupation of the US Embassy in Tehran.

Banisadr, who became the first president of Iran as a result of the presidential elections held in January 1980, started to represent the political leadership. Despite his claim for political leadership, President Banisadr found the presidency as a weak position, whose authority was severely contained by the cabinet under the Prime Minister and the Majlis. Moreover, his political rivals, the Islamic radicals dominated the Majlis in the aftermath of the first elections held in March 1980. Banisadr's attempts to widen his power were constrained by the Majlis. Thus, relying on the so-called popular support that was manifested through 75 percent of the population voted for him, he challenged the growing power of the radicals. Additionally, in his strife against the radicals, Banisadr sought alliance of the left and the nationalists, which furthered his 'marginalization.' In the end, the Majlis impeached Banisadr.

Apparently, both Bazargan and Banisadr, who admitted their poverty and desperation vis-à-vis the radicals, failed in their struggle to control the revolutionary organizations, including the IRGC. Because the IRGC was placed under the control of the Revolutionary Council with the order of Khomeini, the so-called political leadership was deprived of any instrument to control the Guards. Albeit the radicals established their clout over the IRGC through the clerical supervisors, the political leadership lacked an instrument in order to oversight the Guards. Thus, the IRGC got the ability to act independent of the Government, and against the Government. Nevertheless, because its institutional and political autonomy was very weak, the radicals could channel the IRGC for their aims.

Finally, ideological outlook of the political leadership should be taken into account to affect the IRGC-politics relationship. Because the transition period witnessed the disintegration of the revolutionary coalition, the ideological differences among the revolutionary elite resurfaced shortly after the victory of the revolution. In the same line, although Khomeini appointed 'moderate' Bazargan as the Prime Minister, in due course, differences emerged between the political leadership of the country represented by the moderates and the Islamic radicals, fellows of Khomeini, which turned into a serious contention between them.

The contention for power between the moderates and the radicals was both accompanied by, and derived from their ideological differences. The ideals and

policies articulated by the moderates were antagonistic to the radicals' ideological convictions. Whereas the radicals were trying to install a theocratic government, Premier Bazargan that represented the moderate factions, was calling for constitutional government, civil rights, and the rule of law. Furthermore, he opposed to constitutional regulations that vested vast powers to the faqih and clerics. His approaches to economy and foreign policy were also quite different from the agenda of the radicals. In turn, Bazargan was considered by the radicals as a conservative, and was criticized for not being revolutionary enough. Finally, Bazargan's attempt to improve relations with the United States, against the wishes of the radicals, led his final down fall from power.

President Banisadr was critical of apparently growing power of the Islamic radicals and Islamization of politics, as well. In return, he was criticized by the radicals for being a 'liberal' who tried to diverse the course of the revolution from its Islamic path by founding his authority over the revolutionary organizations. The radicals also harbored suspicions about him, arguing that he was trying to restore Iran's relations with the United States. Finally, ideological commitment of the moderates to impose the so-called revolutionary values formulated by Khomeini and his fellows was quite flexible. Therefore, Ayatollah Khomeini criticized Banisadr for failing to establish a 'truly Islamic' country.⁴⁴

Consequently, the moderates' understanding of the revolution and ideological viewpoints were noticeably different from the perception of the radicals. Thereby, because the IRGC gradually resembled the radicals in terms of ideology, there was no conformity between the Revolutionary Guards and the political leadership. As a result, the political leadership represented by the moderates neither had an ideological congruence with the IRGC, nor had political control over the IRGC. Conversely, the IRGC both had ideological incentives incited by the radicals, and had independence from the government, to contend with the political leadership.

⁴⁴ Robert S. Litwak, "Iran," in S.F. Wells, Jr. & M.A. Bruzonsky (eds.), *Security in the Middle East: Regional Change and Great Power Strategies*, (Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1987), p.118-19.

In this setting, the relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership took a conflictual form that could be depicted as ‘contention.’ In this form of relationship, although the IRGC challenged the moderate civilians, it did not claim to exercise power directly for itself. Rather than claiming to come to power, the IRGC worked for the radicals because of their ideological and institutional clout over the Guards. In other words, as the radicals’ influence over the Guards increased, the IRGC became a stronghold of the radicals throughout their contention with the moderates. As a result, the IRGC’s relations with the ruling moderate civilians, the Provisional Government led by Bazargan and the President Banisadr, were contentious as well.

4.3. Implications of the Contention between the IRGC and the Political Leadership

4.3.1. The Provisional Government and the IRGC

One of the contentious issues between the Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government revolved around the control of the Guards. The Revolutionary Committees (*komiteh*) and the Guards were organized independently from any authority throughout the revolutionary interregnum, and they were enforcing ‘revolutionary laws’ in the streets. Prime Minister Bazargan, who espoused to restore stability and rule of law, regularly complained the activities of the Guards and the Committees, which were turning ‘day into night.’ In order to reinstate government authority over these militias, Bazargan attempted to take the Revolutionary Committees and the Guards under government control by organizing them under an official institution.

On the other side, the radicals were also calling for establishment of a united revolutionary armed force in order to safeguard the revolution. In this context, Khomeini ordered establishment of the Revolutionary Guards under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government and appointed Hojatoleslam Hassan Lahuti to oversee establishment of the Revolutionary Guards. Ibrahim Yazdi, the then Deputy Prime Minister in charge of revolutionary affairs, was assigned to coordinate establishment of the Revolutionary Guards for a while. However, the Provisional Government’s

approach to the committees and the guards was completely antagonistic to the intentions of the radicals. Bazargan and his associates considered the Guards and the Committees as provisional organizations that would be incorporated into the regular police and the army after the consolidation of the revolutionary regime. Contrary to Bazargan's vision of the Guards, the Revolutionary Council deemed the Guards as counter-weight to the leftist militias and the Army in order to safeguard the Islamic Revolution, and as an influential loyal armed force at its disposal. Therefore, the Revolutionary Council and the Guards did not consent the IRGC to be subordinated to the Provisional Government. Thanks to their direct accession to Khomeini, the radicals persuaded him to place the Guards under the control of the Revolutionary Council.⁴⁵ Thus, the IRGC formally established under the direction of the Council in May 1979.⁴⁶

As a result, the IRGC Spokesman announced in June 1979 that the IRGC would operate under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Council in accordance with an order of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Spokesman depicted the IRGC's relationship to the Provisional Government as one of consultative. He said, "We consult with the government in all areas in the sense that we assist it when necessary and we receive help when it is necessary." However, the IRGC would procure its funds from the government. He warned that the IRGC's financial dependence on the government did not bring government control and constraints on the independence of the corps. Furthermore, he threatened the government for severance the IRGC's ties with the government in case of a restriction on the independence of the Guards.⁴⁷

The IRGC's resistance against the government's attempts to control it was essentially a result of the radical's penetration to the Guards. Ever since their creation, most of the committees that came together within the IRGC were under the

⁴⁵ "Nagoftehayeh Sepahe Pasdaran dar Gofteguye Sharvand ba Mohsen Rafiqdust," *Shahrivande Emroz*, 6 Bahman 1386 [26 January 2008].

⁴⁶ K. Behrouz, *Iran Almanac and Book of Facts; 1987*, (Tehran: Echo of Iran, 1988), p. 124; "Ravayate Mohammad Tavassoli az tadvane peshnavese esasnamaye sepahe pasdaran," *Etemade Melli*, 17 Tir 1387 [7 July 2008], p.9.

⁴⁷ "Revolutionary Guards Spokesman Interviewed," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 11 June 1979, FBIS, 14 June 1979, R14-R15.

direct control of the radical clerics.⁴⁸ Since the IRGC was placed under the direction of the Revolutionary Council, the radicals' domination over the Guards was expanded. Once the top leadership of IRGC was settled, the radicals organized campaigns for purge of 'disloyal' elements within the IRGC. Moreover, they launched campaigns for recruitment of fresh volunteers to the Guards. As a result, the number of the Guards rapidly increased from about 4,000 in May 1979 to 10,000 by the end of that year.⁴⁹

Another reason for the IRGC's stand against the Provisional Government was the radical revolutionary ideology prevailing over the Guards. The IRGC that came under the dominance of the radicals rejected 'non-revolutionary' policies of Bazargan government and sided with the so-called *Imam's Line*, represented by the IRP, against the opponents of the *Imam's Line*. The IRP employed the Revolutionary Guards, together with *hizbullahis* and the Committees, to increase its power, and suppress its opponents. Although the IRP rejected the claims that it instrumentalized the *hizbullahis* as part of its activities, the *hizbullahi* mobs were consistently supported by the IRGC and the IRP in their attacks against the political opponents of the *Imam's Line*. Moreover, offices of the rival political groups that were ransacked by the *hizbullahi* mobs were turned over to the IRGC.⁵⁰

Thus, the IRGC under the direction of radicals worked against the accommodationist policies of the Provisional Government, and thereby challenged its authority. The IRGC's massive campaign to chase and arrest the reported counter-revolutionaries and officers of the deposed regime culminated in skirmishes between the Guards and the Bazargan government that wished to enforce law and order. The IRGC and the Revolutionary Committees even intervened in the appointments of the government, which culminated in Premier Bazargan's resignation attempts. Eventually, Ayatollah Khomeini had to warn the Guards and the Committees to

⁴⁸ Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, p.200.

⁴⁹ Nikola B. Schahgaldian, *The Iranian Military under the Islamic Republic*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1987), p.68.

⁵⁰ Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, pp.69-70.

render assistance to the Provisional Government, and “to refrain from direct interference in government affairs and in dismissing and appointing officials.”⁵¹

Notwithstanding Khomeini’s call for IRGC not to interfere in the government affairs, the contention between the Revolutionary Guards and the Provisional Government was persistent. After his failed attempts to control the IRGC, Bazargan sought to thwart its growth. He utilized government authority over the budget as an advantage against the Guards. Thus, the government moved to restrict the funds allocated to the IRGC, in an effort to cut the flow of arms and ammunition to the Guards.

In his interview with *As-Safir* daily of Beirut, Operations Commander of the IRGC, Abu Sharif, acknowledged the tense relations between the Bazargan government and the Revolutionary Guards.⁵² In that interview, Abu Sharif criticized Bazargan’s attempts to restrain activities of the revolutionary courts and the Guards. He asserted that Bazargan “wanted to use the IRGC for solving disputes among civilians,” and asked the IRGC “to intervene to settle strikes or disturbances.” The IRGC turned down Bazargan’s appeals arguing that it was not the business of IRGC, and suggesting that it must solve the internal problems through negotiations with the popular organizations. In response, Abu Sharif maintained that, Bazargan, having failed to cease ‘independent’ activities of the IRGC, tried to prevent the expansion of the Guards.

The embassy takeover well-illustrated the differences between the IRGC and the Provisional Government; and the latter’s lack of authority over the Guards which sided with the radicals. The Revolutionary Guards did not participate in the incident directly; however, it was neglectful because it was in charge of the security of the Embassy compound.⁵³ The IRGC units arrived to the embassy shortly after the

⁵¹ “Khomeyni urges Guards not to interfere in Government,” *Tehran Domestic Service*, 29 June 1979, FBIS, 2 July 1979, R2. “These are acts of interference which could weaken the Islamic government contrary to the will of God and one should avoid them.”

⁵² “Guards Operations Commander Interviewed,” *As-Safir*, 1 December 1979, FBIS, 4 December 1979, R35-R39.

⁵³ Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.36-37.

students occupied it. Instead of evacuating the occupiers and saving the hostages, the Guards provided security for the invaders.

Furthermore, Hojatoleslam Lahuti, representative of Ayatollah Khomeini to the IRGC, issued a statement addressing the students occupying the US embassy, on the same day. In his statement, Lahuti praised the students that occupied the embassy, and expressed his grief because of his absence in the incident. Furthermore, he stated that the Revolutionary Guards were ready to serve the students, and would undertake their protection.⁵⁴ In his statement addressing the students, Lahuti condemned the meeting between Bazargan and Brzezinski in Algiers, and asserted that it was without the knowledge and permission of Khomeini. He said, “All the Revolutionary Guards, one by one, regret and severely condemn the meeting between some of the officials and Brzezinski.” Lahuti stated that the IRGC would only support revolutionary movements following the Imam Ayatollah Khomeini, and would condemn and crush any counterrevolutionary movement inside or outside the country.

Indeed, the IRGC’s collaboration with the hostage-taker students, the so-called followers of the Imam’s line, until the settlement of the hostage issue. The IRGC continued to provide security for the students overseeing the hostages, and it gave them military training. After the breakout of the war, those students went to the war-front in the ranks of the IRGC and some of them become senior commanders in the IRGC like Akbar Rafan, Hussein Dehgan, Alireza Afshar, and Reza Seyfollahi. Eventually, the compound of the US Embassy in Tehran turned into a school and headquarters of the IRGC.⁵⁵

4.3.2. The IRGC’s Contention with President Banisadr

The Iranian people approved the constitution drafted by the Assembly of Experts in the referendum that took place in December 1979. The IRGC has gained a

⁵⁴ “Guards Commander on Takeover,” *Tehran Domestic Service*, 5 November 1979, FBIS, 5 November 1979, R12.

⁵⁵ “444 Rouze Taskhere Lanei Jasouseye Amreka,” *Taskher*, 13 Dey 1389 [3 January 2011], <http://revolution.shirazu.ac.ir/?p=3482>.

permanent mandate to safeguard the revolution with the introduction of article 150 into the constitution. Ayatollah Khomeini, as the Leader of the Revolution, was designed by the constitution as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces including the IRGC. After Banisadr's ascent to the presidency, Khomeini delegated him with his power as the Commander in Chief on February 19, 1980.

Soon after coming to the office, President Banisadr was involved in a bitter fighting with the radicals. The popular support extended to Banisadr in the elections coupled with his opposition to clerical elitism, paved the way for the conflict between Banisadr and the radical clerics and their supporters including the IRGC. Following his appointment by Khomeini as the Acting Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Banisadr tried to rein over the IRGC. Since the IRGC had already come under the control of radicals, it sided with them in their contestation with Banisadr. The Guards viewed Banisadr, who wished to rein the IRGC, as a threat to their organization. Moreover, because of Banisadr's opposition to the clerical sovereignty and his fighting against the radical clerical leadership, the IRGC viewed him as a traitor of the principles of the revolution. Therefore, the Guards apparently defied the authority of the President in several instances.

Initially the IRGC disregarded the position of the President on the Kurdish insurgency against the central authority that resurfaced in April 1980. President Banisadr announced that he was ready to negotiate the demands of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leading the Kurdish insurgency. Despite announcements of his readiness to negotiate with the Kurds, the IRGC aggressively sustained its fighting against them. Finally, the IRGC arrested a Kurdish delegation as soon as it arrived in Tehran for talks with the President upon his invitation.⁵⁶ The Kurdish delegation was released only after strong protests from President Banisadr. The contention between the IRGC and Banisadr was so apparent that Ayatollah Khomeini warned the Guards in several occasions to obey the President, reminding them that he was the acting Commander in Chief.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Hiro, *op.cit.*, p.152; Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.55.

⁵⁷ "Ommate Hezbollah: Gofteguye Ekhtesase ba Abu Sharif," 28 Shahrivar 1389 [19 September 2010], <http://moh1979.blogfa.com/post-247.aspx>.

Therefore, Banisadr took a stance against the Guards believing that controlling the IRGC would mean undermining its radical ‘patrons.’ In order to rein the IRGC, Banisadr utilized his capacity as the Acting Commander in Chief of Armed Forces. In due course, because of the pressures of the President, then-incumbent IRGC Commander Abbas Duzdüzani resigned from his position.⁵⁸ In order to rein the IRGC, Banisadr, in his capacity as the Acting Commander in Chief of Armed Forces, appointed Abbas Zamani (Abu Sharif) as the Commander in Chief of the Guards in May 1980. The IRGC, however, viewed Banisadr’s endeavor to control the Guards as an attempt to weaken the IRGC and change its identity.⁵⁹ Therefore, appointment of Zamani as the Commander in Chief by Banisadr sparked a wide reaction within the IRGC ranks that considered it as Banisadr’s attempt to strengthen his position among the Guards. Consequently, because of the non-cooperative behaviors of the various Guards commanders, Zamani resigned from his position as the Commander in Chief of the IRGC on 17 June 1980.⁶⁰

The resignation of Zamani uncovered the factional rivalry between Banisadr and the radicals to penetrate into the IRGC. Although most of the IRGC members were sided with the radicals, it was known that supporters of the President were also present among the IRGC ranks. More importantly, Zamani who was appointed as the IRGC Commander by the President was also believed to be a supporter of Banisadr. Zamani’s resignation within a couple of months also revealed the failure of Banisadr to dominate the IRGC. Grievances expressed by Zamani after his resignation apparently indicated the level of factional rivalry within the Guards. He stated:

“We came to build an army under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, backed by the people and God, to support the oppressed of the world and continue the Islamic revolution. But, alas, power seeking and group-divisions and other present tendencies prevented this movement.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ “Tashkele Sepah ba Revayate Abbas Duzdüzani,” 10 Ordibehest 1387 [29 April 2008], <http://alef.ir/content/view/24972>.

⁵⁹ *A Glance at Two Years of War*, p.33.

⁶⁰ *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.4, (1979-80)1981, p.459; Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.54-55.

⁶¹ “Commander of Revolutionary Guards Resigns,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1980; “Khomeini forces Bani-Sadr man to quit Revolutionary Guards,” *The Guardian*, 18 June 1980.

After the resignation of Zamani, Banisadr asked M. Kazem Bojnurdi to head the IRGC. However, because of the Guards' resentment against Banisadr, Bojnurdi declined his request. Eventually, Morteza Rezaei, an ally of the IRP, became the Commander in Chief of IRGC in July 1980. Moreover, the IRP clerics were also serving as the Representatives of the Imam in the IRGC for a long time. Thereby, the IRGC came under the complete control of the IRP, i.e., the radicals.⁶² As an implication of the cooperation between the IRGC and the IRP, the latter was very influential in checking Banisadr's efforts to weaken the Guards. Therefore, contrary to Banisadr's attempts to restrain growth of IRGC, the number of Guards reached to 30,000 by June 1980, which was far above the original expectations of 6,000.

In July 1980, President Banisadr announced that the Guards forestalled a military coup attempt against the revolutionary regime. Accordingly, several hundred active officers and ex-officers in Iran in coordination with the exiled politicians planned to takeover the *Shahrokhi* (renamed *Nuzhah / Nojeh*) Air Base near Hamedan on the night of July 9, 1980, and then, to bomb a number of strategic targets including Khomeini's home in Tehran. However, the Revolutionary Guards who had learned of the plot thwarted it and arrested many of those involved in the plot.⁶³

Revelation of the Nuzhah plot led mutual accusations between Banisadr and the radicals, which further inflamed their fighting. In addition to their attack against the leadership of the Army, and their call for further purges in the Army, the radicals charged Banisadr to be associated with the plot. They also called for supporting and strengthening the IRGC in order to forestall further plots against the revolution. In turn, Banisadr defended the Army arguing that loyal Army personnel had discovered the conspiracy and played the most important role in thwarting it.⁶⁴

⁶² Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.54-55.

⁶³ "Stalking the Conspirators," *Time*, 28 July 1980.

⁶⁴ Gasiorowski, *op.cit.*, pp.645-666.

The Revolutionary Guard's approach to the Army was not friendly since the revolution, and *vice versa*.⁶⁵ The Guards viewed the Army as a royalist and un-Islamic organization, abhorring the revolution because its command was still greatly in the hands of senior officers of the defunct regime.⁶⁶ In contrast, the Army regarded the Guards as zealots, ignorant of the military profession, who were wasting defense sources of the country, and thereby creating additional troubles for the Army. Despite the numerous purges of former officers from the Army, and ideological indoctrination of the Army members, the distrust between the Army and the IRGC was difficult to overcome. For this reason, Banisadr's support to the Army was considered by the Guards as an action to provoke mistrust between the Army and the IRGC. Additionally, the Guards attributed Banisadr's opposition to the IRGC to his strife to gain favor of the Army. Finally, the Guards accused Banisadr of trying to make the Army a tool in his own hands to play against the *Imam's Line*.⁶⁷

Unlike the radicals, Banisadr viewed the Guards as being more dangerous than the Army. In his view, since the Guards thought that they were licensed to do anything because they conceived themselves as protector of the Islamic Revolution, they posed a danger to social order. Banisadr charged the Guards with using their power "as if it was their personal property."⁶⁸ Moreover, Banisadr claimed that the IRGC deviated from the principles of the revolution by obeying the clerics instead of the 'people.'⁶⁹

After the outbreak of the war between the revolutionary Iran and Iraq on September 22, 1980, the relationship between Banisadr and the IRGC remained to be tense. In order to coordinate war efforts, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the formation

⁶⁵ Mark Roberts, "Khomeini's Incorporation of the Iranian Military," *National Defense University, McNair Paper*, no.48, January 1996; See also J.A. Kechichian and H. Sadri, "National Security," in H.C. Metz, *Iran, a Country Study*, (4th ed., Washington DC.; Library of Congress, 1989), pp.235-298.

⁶⁶ "Guards Operations Commander Interviewed," *As-Safir*, 1 December 1979, FBIS, 4 December 1979, R35-R39.

⁶⁷ *A Glance at Two Years of War*, p.32-33.

⁶⁸ Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, p.76-78.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.116-17.

of Supreme Defense Council, headed by the President. President Banisadr, the acting Commander in Chief, preferred the conventional Army to fight against the invading Iraqi forces. Furthermore, he rejected the Guards' claim to take part in the war-front and barred IRGC officials from attending joint sessions of the commanders.⁷⁰ Therefore, Banisadr concentrated on building and empowering the Army.

In contrast, the IRP and Prime Minister Rajai endeavored to bolster the position of the IRGC in the war. The radio-TV, controlled by the IRP, was broadcasting on the fighting prowess of the IRGC, neglecting the achievements of the Army that was supported by the President. In turn, Banisadr, who lost influential power bases to the radicals, wrote essays in his newspaper *Enghelab-e Islami* to express his complaints against the radicals, and the IRP, arguing that they hindered his war plans.⁷¹

Another source of contention between the IRGC and Banisadr was the struggle to dominate over the Basij. After its establishment in November 1979, the Basij operated under the jurisdiction of the IRGC. However, after having been delegated as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces by Khomeini, Banisadr laid claim to supervise the Basij. The IRGC opposed the claim of Banisadr and sought to retain its supervision over the Basij. Eventually, after a long dispute between the parties, the Basij was formally incorporated into the IRGC.⁷²

The 5 March incident contributed to further the distrust and enmity between the IRGC and the President. President Banisadr depicted his radical opponents and the Guards as enemies of the Revolution and Islam who had infiltrated the institutions of the Republic and attacked the President. In turn, the Revolutionary Guards accused Banisadr of serving as 'an agent of imperialism,' of being 'incompetent' to act as president, and 'disqualified' to run the war.⁷³

⁷⁰ Gholamali Rashed, "Sharayat va Dzarorathaye Tovled, Roshd, Taspert ve Ghostrarashe Sepah dar Jang," *Majalla-ye Seyasate Defa*, vol.5, no.3 (Summer 1376), pp.7-36.

⁷¹ Hiro, *op.cit.*, p.170-72.

⁷² *A Glance at Two Years of War*, p.34. <http://law.majlis.ir/law/Lawview.asp?key=5602>

⁷³ *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.5 (1980-81), 1982, p.531.

Additionally, the position of the IRGC in the war-front was too delicate, which presented the Guards with a dilemma. If the operations of the IRGC succeeded, Banisadr would 'exploit' them in his own interest and would stabilize his shaky position against the so-called *Imam's Line*. However, in case of failure of the operations carried out by the Guards, Banisadr would level charges against the IRGC. Therefore, the Guards, along with the IRP, stated to seek dismissal of Banisadr from the position of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.⁷⁴

As the enmity between the IRGC and the President widened through the controversies between the radical 'patrons' of IRGC and Banisadr, the President decided to establish a Presidential Guard to provide for his protection in March 1981. The Presidential Guard was actually consisted of a battalion of the Army, and the army officers released from the purges constituted its command corps. This move of Banisadr that sparked reactions of the radical clerics was used to persuade Khomeini in order to dismiss him from the acting Commander in Chief position.⁷⁵

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the relationship between the Revolutionary Guards and politics in the transition period of the Iranian revolution that covers the time from February 1979 till June 1981. This stage was imprinted by the government of the moderates, the factional fighting between the moderates and the radicals, and radicalization of the revolution. The ruling moderates, i.e., Bazargan and Banisadr, were considerably weak in terms of political power in regard to the radicals. Therefore, they failed to consolidate their authority over the revolutionary organizations including the IRGC. Unlike the moderates, the radicals successfully reined the IRGC that lacked institutional and political autonomy, and turned it one of their strongholds. The ideological outlook of the moderates and their approach to the course of the revolution was also significantly different from the viewpoint of the radicals who were trying to install a theocratic regime based on the *velayat-e faqih*

⁷⁴ *A Glance at Two Years of War*, p.54-55.

⁷⁵ "Iran's army to take over Presidential protection," *The Guardian*, 13 March 1981; Sepehr Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), p.128.

doctrine. Conversely, the IRGC that fell to the control of the radicals steadily adopted an ideology reminiscent to the viewpoints of the radicals. Therefore, the moderate political leadership had neither political influence, nor control over the Guards. On the contrary, the IRGC that become independent of the government devised an ideology that pitted it against the moderate political leadership. As a result, when the factional fighting aroused between the moderates and the radicals, the IRGC sided with their ideological relatives and institutional sponsors, i.e. the radicals, contended with the moderate political leadership of the time.

Consequently, the IRGC framed the contention of the radicals with the Provisional Government and President Baniadr in terms of the conceived struggle between the 'liberals' and the 'ulama,' counter-revolutionaries and the *Imam's line*. According to this account, it was the duty of the IRGC to support the ulama and the Imam's line, that is, the radicals in that struggle. The cooperation between the IRGC and the radicals went on after the radicals consolidated their power under new conditions. The following chapter will deal with the IRGC's relationship to politics in the radical stage of the Iranian revolution, which was marked by the domination of the radicals.

CHAPTER V

THE IRGC AND POLITICS IN THE RADICAL IRAN (1981-1989)

As predicted by the stages theory, the rule of moderates in Iran was succeeded by the reign of radicals. The impeachment of President Banisadr in June 1981 by the Majlis and his dismissal by the Ayatollah Khomeini is the turning point in the history of the Iranian revolution, marking the ascendance of radicals, whose power endured until the death of Khomeini in June 1989. That period under the rule of radicals was marked by the rise of political violence and employment of various measures to realize their revolutionary ideals.

The radical Islamists in Iran initially attempted to eliminate their rivals by deploying a revolutionary/political ideology based on Islam, which provided them with an infinite warrant. Thereby, the radicals justified their use of force against political opponents. Additionally, they were not hesitant to mobilize people to manipulate the political context to their favor. Finally, the radicals sought to institutionalize their revolutionary ideals through codification of laws or enacting new ones. They vowed to build a new 'Islamic' state in accordance with their understanding of the revolutionary ideology as formulated by Ayatollah Khomeini. They met with little opposition in those arrangements, because they had already eliminated major rival groups. However, the problems encountered in implementation of the ideology into practice as developing Islamic economics, social policy and foreign policy have led to divisions and rise of various factions among the disciples of Khomeini. Yet, since Khomeini was involved in relevant matters as the 'final arbiter' factional rifts among the radical Islamists were contained until his death in June 1989.

The radicals' rise to power and the political dynamics of this period played a decisive role in IRGC's relationship to the politics, as well. This chapter addresses the political context and the political dynamics in Iran from the fall of Banisadr to the death of Khomeini. Then, it analyzes the form of the IRGC-politics relationship as it took shape under the rule of radicals. Finally, it reviews some historical cases for a better understanding of the relationship between the IRGC and the radical political leadership.

5.1. Political Context and the Political Elites

5.1.1. Reign of Terror and Elimination of Rival Political Groups

Throughout the contention between President Banisadr and the radical clerics discussed in the previous chapter, the principal supporters of the President were moderate parties including the National Front, and the Freedom Movement. Some parts of the secular opposition and the leftist parties were also sided with Banisadr. Especially the Mojahedin has allied itself with Banisadr against the radical clerics. On June 6, several newspapers including Banisadr's daily *Enghelab-e Eslami* were shut down by the revolutionary court. Believing that he enjoyed a great popular support, he called on his supporters "to resist tendencies towards dictatorship."¹ Khomeini sanctioned the court decision and reprimanded Banisadr. Nevertheless, Banisadr maintained his 'resistance' and urged his followers to take to the streets in support of the President, and to march the Majlis, the Prime Ministry, and to the palace of justice.² Subsequently clashes erupted between the supporters of President Banisadr, and the Revolutionary Guards backed up by the *hizbullahis*.

In turn, Khomeini declared in the national TV that the Islamic Republic was under attack from an alliance of liberals, nationalists, communist infidels, and 'hypocrites under the guise of the Mojahedin' and dismissed Banisadr from the post of Acting

¹ Dilip Hiro, *Iran under the Ayatollahs* (London: Routledge, 1985), p.181.

² Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak: Iran, the Revolution & Secret Deals with the U.S.* (New York: Brassey's Inc., 1991), pp.163-66.

Commander in Chief on June 10 1981. Khomeini, however, added that Banisadr could continue in office as the President if he apologizes for his wrong-doings on TV. That offer was rejected by Banisadr called on his supporters to “the resistance to tyranny.”³ Subsequently, the Majlis set out to review the President’s competence. In the meantime, Khomeini banned all protest actions and threatened supporters of Banisadr that he would declare demonstrations in favor of the President as activities against God. As a result, political fighting had intensified as the *hizballahi* mobs and the Revolutionary Guards attacked demonstrators who were considered as counter-revolutionaries. While the Majlis was discussing a motion for the impeachment of President Banisadr, the Mojahedin organized a large demonstration in support of the President on 20 June 1980, and called for ‘revolutionary resistance’ against the regime. Labeling the demonstrations as counter-revolutionary, the government violently confronted the rallies. The ensuing clashes between the Revolutionary Guards and the Mojahedin ‘sparked the reign of terror’ in Iran.⁴

The terror prevailing across Iran was two sided. On the one side, there was the violence and political assassinations perpetrated by the leftist guerilla forces led by the Mojahedin. Initially, the Mojahedin waged street wars against the security forces of the regime in order to overthrow the government. The street fights were followed by assassination of prominent leaders of the radical clerics and officials appointed to the countryside. The most drastic instance of terror instigated by the Mojahedin was the blast of a bomb placed in the IRP headquarters on June 28, 1980, that tolled more than seventy prominent members of the IRP including Ayatollah Beheshti, founder of the IRP and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, four cabinet ministers and twenty-seven members of the Majlis. Another bomb blast on 30 August 1981 killed Rajai, who

³ Hiro, *op.cit.*, pp.181-82.

⁴ Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam; The Iranian Mojahedin*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 1989), pp. 219-23; Rosemary H.T. O’Kane, *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror: The Role of Violence in Political Change*, (Worcester: Edward Elgar, 1991), pp.235-36; Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, pp.163-66.

replaced Banisadr as the President, and Mohammad Javad-Bahonar, the then Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic.

On the other side, there was the ‘terror’ directed by the government to repress the armed struggle against the regime. The revolutionary government headed by the radicals employed the revolutionary tribunals, the Revolutionary Guards, the Revolutionary Committees, and the *hizballahi* mobs in order to counter violence of the Mojahedin. In this regard, the radical government carried out widespread arrests and executions, and instrumented ‘summary executions’ as *modus operandi* of its terror. The executions were justified by a circular of the Supreme Judicial Council that allowed the revolutionary courts to give death penalties for ‘active members’ of the guerilla groups. The Revolutionary Prosecutor-General of Iran between the years of 1981 and 1983, Hojatoleslam Hussein Mousavi-Tabrizi, stated that all members of the Mojahedin and their supporters should be executed whenever they were arrested. He stated that the testimony of two Guardsmen would be sufficient for death sentences to be carried out on the spot.⁵ Thereby, the number of the executions skyrocketed after June 1981. It is maintained by the Amnesty International that almost 3,000 people were executed within a year after the impeachment of Banisadr. Since the authorities did not report all cases, the total number of executions has remained unknown. With the addition of the people who lost their lives in the street battles and armed clashes, the death toll of the reign of terror in Iran would reach higher levels.⁶ A great majority of the deaths were associated with the Mojahedin, and smaller groups that joined the Mojahedin to depose the government through armed struggle.

The terror employed by the government targeted not only the Mojahedin, but also almost all active opponents of the radical clerics. Initially, the National Front was condemned by Khomeini because it had decided to support Banisadr. In April 1982, the

⁵ Abrahamian, *op.cit.*, p.67, 219-23; O’Kane, *op.cit.*, pp.235-36; Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), p.205.

⁶ International Federation for Human Rights, *Iran: Death Penalty – A State Terror Policy*, April 2009, pp.7-9.

Grand Ayatollah Shariatmadari, the most vocal opponent of the velayat-e faqih doctrine as formulated by Khomeini, was charged with involvement in a coup attempt to overthrow the government. Then, he was stripped of his title of *marja-e taqlid*, and was placed under house arrest. The Tudeh, the greatest leftist party in Iran that supported Khomeini and the Islamists, became another target of the government repression. The government accused the Tudeh of infiltrating the official institutions including the Army and the IRGC, and spying for the USSR. Eventually, leaders of the Tudeh Party were detained in February 1983, which resulted in the dissolution of the party and a new wave of arrests.⁷ Later on, Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the *Hojjatiyeh Society* that rejected the rule of solely one faqih as prescribed in the Constitution. Upon Khomeini's reprimand, the Hojjatiyeh also dissolved itself. As a result, by the mid-1980s, Freedom Movement of Iran headed by Bazargan had remained the only party tolerated by the regime, but it was also kept outside the power centers.⁸

The government under the radicals also forcefully suppressed the Kurdish insurgents that resumed their fighting against the central authority. Then, the KDP, the principal fighting force of the Kurdish movement, had to move its command and forces to the Iraqi territories. After the elimination of major contenders for power in the mid-1980s, suppressive policies of the government considerably decreased. In December 1982, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a decree that aimed at preventing excessiveness of the security forces including the revolutionary organizations and installing the law as source of action. As result of the decree, some extremist figures were caste out from the revolutionary tribunals and the committees. However, the state terror resurfaced in 1988, when many of the MKO-associated political opponents in the prisons of Iran were summarily executed in response the MKO's massive attack on Iran.

⁷ Shaul Bakhash, "Historical Setting," in H.C. Metz, ed., *Iran: A Country Study*, (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1989), pp.62-66.

⁸ Houshang E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), pp.278-305.

5.1.2. Consolidation and Institutionalization of the Revolution

The radicals lost their prominent leaders including Beheshti along with over seventy IRP members, President Rajai and Prime Minister Bahonar due to the rising terror, however, the political leadership was stabilized in short span of time. Hojatoleslam Ali Khamanei was elected as the third president of Iran in October 1981 and designated Mir Hussein Mousavi as the new prime minister. Thus, the revolutionary elite achieved a coherent relationship between the President, the Prime Minister, and the Majlis. The new political leadership initially engaged in securing their power in the face of the terror perpetrated by the ‘counter-revolutionaries’ as mentioned above.

In addition to operating suppressive mechanisms and armed force to fight against their opponents, the radicals successfully utilized mobilization of the masses as a political instrument to consolidate their power. Accordingly, they devised a populist ideology championing for the rights of lower classes (*mostazafin*) and advocated redistributive policies. Strong bonds between the radicals and lower segments of the Iranian society helped the radical government to mobilize masses for their causes. The ongoing war between Iran and Iraq provided another justification both for the suppression of opponents and the mobilization of masses. The mobilization of masses, in turn, served as tool to intimidate opposition to the government programs, and to legitimize revolutionary programs undertaken by the government.⁹ By the mid-1980s, thereby, the revolutionary regime in Iran headed by the radicals had secured their power against opponents of the Islamic Republic.

Owing to their suppression of ‘opponents of the Islamic Republic’ including the secularists, liberals, nationalists, and leftists, the Islamic radicals that came together under the IRP and the Rohaniyat emerged as the only active political faction in the country. Having eliminated their political rivals, the radicals endeavored to consolidate

⁹ Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran, 1962-1982*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p.171-72. Theda Skocpol, “Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization,” *World Politics*, vol 40, no.2 (January 1988), p.165.

authority of the government. In this regard, they moved to institutionalize, and thereby ensure, greater government authority on the revolutionary organizations. The government restructured the IRGC and the Crusade for Reconstruction (*Jihad-e Sazendegi*) as ministries to increase cooperation between the cabinet, the Majlis and the revolutionary organizations. It also established the Office for Coordination of the Revolutionary Organizations, put the Revolutionary Committees under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, integrated the revolutionary courts into the regular judicial system, and reorganized security institutions by installing the Ministry of Information and Security.¹⁰ In December 1982, the government organized elections for the Assembly of Experts, which later on designed Ayatollah Husaynali Montazeri as deputy and successor to Khomeini as the leader of the revolution. In the spring of 1984, the second parliamentary elections were realized. The second Majlis that included several deputies who had served in the revolutionary organizations was arguably more radical than the previous one, which meant maintenance of the coherent relationship between the executive and the legislative authorities.¹¹

After the consolidation of the radicals' power, the government boosted its efforts to put the revolutionary ideals into practice and to institutionalize the so-called Islamic regime. Although the founders of the Islamic Republic espoused to build a political system based on both popular and divine sovereignty, the religious aspect of it became more apparent.¹² The radicals had already managed to install some clauses into the constitution that identifies Islam as the source of legitimacy for government, and established a judicial system arguably based on the Islamic law. Thereby, they had managed to install the rule of the religious jurists (*velayat-e faqih*) as the foundational principle of the constitution. Therefore, the constitution also provided efficient positions

¹⁰ *Midle East Contemporary Survey*, vol.6 (1981-82), 1983, p.533-34.

¹¹ Bakhash, *op.cit.*, pp.66-70.

¹² See, James A. Bill, "The Challenge of Institutionalization: Revolutionary Iran," *Iranian Studies*, vol.26, no.3/4 (Summer-Autumn 1993), pp.403-06.

for the clerics based on their expertise on the Islamic law in order to oversee politics and law.

Regarding that point, the judiciary remained within the jurisdiction of the clerics. Accordingly, both the head of the judiciary and the prosecutor general ought to be mojtahed in accordance with the constitution. The Supreme Judicial Council declared nullification of all ‘un-Islamic’ laws and codes, and ordered all judges to make their decisions according to the codified Islamic laws, fundamental sources of Islam, and the religious edictions of reputable ulama, in August 1982.¹³ Additionally, the Council of the Guardians, as envisioned by the constitution, emerged as the principal institution to monitor compliance of laws and regulations to Islam and the constitution. Thus, the Majlis which was dominated by the radicals and supervised by the radical clerics modified the existent corpus of law and regulations and enacted new ones on a number of issues stretching from the regulations related to judicial affairs to economic, and social affairs.

The radicals had endeavored to devise a nativist approach to culture, and the Islamic associations under the leadership of radicals had started to ‘Islamize’ almost all state institutions, including the army and the universities. The policy of Islamizing the state, law, society, economy, culture, and etc. remained as the primary course of action of the radical governments in Iran that took steps to enforce Islamic code of social and moral behavior. In this regard, massive purges took place in the bureaucracy by relevant committees that monitored officeholders on their beliefs and political inclinations. Even those seeking to enroll in universities were subject to similar screening process.¹⁴ Representatives of the Imam that appointed to various organizations supervised those Islamization activities in each organization. In order to oversee and coordinate Islamization of the cultural sphere and the educational system, that is the so-called

¹³ Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 2nd ed., 1994), pp.200-01.

¹⁴ Bakhsh, *op.cit.*,pp.62-66; Mehran Tamadonfar, “Islam, Law, and Political Control in Contemporary Iran,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, pp.205-19.

Cultural Revolution, the radicals established the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council in 1984. The revolutionary committees and the Basij that took control of the street start to enforce so-called social precepts of Islam such as the Islamic dress code, the ban on alcohol consumption, the sexual segregation etc. in the social life.

The radicals' domination, and strife for institutionalization, was not limited to the political, social and the cultural spheres, but also extended to economy as well. Out of the interaction of various opinions during the debates in the Constituent Assembly, the constitution identified the Iranian economy as consisting of three sectors; private, public, and cooperative sectors.¹⁵ However, in due course, either because of the intensive nationalization, appropriation and confiscation of private property or because of the flight of the capitalists, a great part of the economy fell to the control of the state dominated by the radicals, who wished to Islamize economic affairs, as well. 'Islamization of the economy' included the application of the Islamic law to land ownership and tenure, banking, labor relations, and inheritance etc..¹⁶ In addition to the state's growing influence in economy, the radicals also institutionalized religious foundations, called *bonyad*, to exercise economic activities. The well-known foundations such as Foundation of the Deprived and Veterans, Foundation of Martyrs, Foundation of Astane Qodse Razavi together got a remarkable portion of the Iranian economy.

¹⁵ Akbar Karbassian, "Islamic Revolution and the Management of the Iranian Economy," *Social Research*, vol.67, no.2 (Summer 2000), pp.621-35.

¹⁶ Mehrdad Valibeigi, "Islamic Economics and Economic Policy Formation in Post-Revolutionary Iran: A Critique," *Journal of Economic Issues*, vol.27, no.3 (September 1993), pp.793-812. See also, Sohrab Behdad, "Islamization of Economics in Iranian Universities," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.27, no.2 (May 1995), pp.193-217.

5.1.3. Revolutionary Foreign Policy

After the removal of the moderates from the power, foreign policy of Iran came to be dominated by the ideological agenda of the Islamic radicals.¹⁷ Their ideological mindset was strongly anti-imperialist because they blamed imperialism for the poor standing of the Islamic world and Iran in international politics. According to that narrative, the imperialist powers, especially the Britain that penetrated in Iran after the 19th century, installed the deposed Pahlavi regime and initiated a program, the Westernization, in order to distance the people from its origins. The imperialism that penetrated in Iran at the time of the revolution was embodied with the United States, which overthrew the popularly elected Mosaddeq government and restored Muhammad Reza Pahlavi to throne in 1953, and backed him in his offenses against the people. Therefore, most of the Iranian elite were strongly anti-American at the outset of the revolution. Khomeini interpreted this anti-American feeling by calling the United States as the 'Great Satan.' The anti-America feeling of the radicals was boosted by the US activities such as admission of the Shah to America, its alleged support for the counterrevolutionaries, and its alleged intelligence efforts to affect Iranian political elite to restore its previous position in Iran. The Iranian radicals were equally critical of the USSR because of its imperialist activities. For that reason, President Khamanei stated that all sufferings of the humanity derived from these two superpowers.¹⁸ In the same line Khomeini's famous motto, 'Neither East, Nor West,' became one of the principal foreign policy principles of the revolutionary Iran. In this context, the revolutionary foreign policy devised by the Iranian radicals defied the prevailing international system

¹⁷ See, Houman A. Sadri, *Revolutionary States, Leaders, and Foreign Relations*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 1997); Mahdi Mozaffari, "Revolutionary, Thermidorian, and Enigmatic Foreign Policy: President Khatami and the 'Fear of the Wave'," *International Relations*, vol.14, no. 9 (1999).

¹⁸ David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1990), p.287.

– then dominated by the two superpowers, i.e. the United States and the USSR – that arguably established a structure benefiting only for the imperialist powers.¹⁹

The radicals' rejection of the international system entailed their opposition to the status quo powers in the Islamic world and the Middle East. Therefore, leaders of the Islamic Republic questioned legitimacy of the existent nation states and their rulers allegedly installed by the imperialist powers. Instead, the Iranian revolutionaries that rejected alignment with either of the camps put forward the Islamic revolution and the Islamic Republic a model to be imitated by the oppressed part of the world, especially by other Islamic countries. They thought that their revolutionary doctrine that blended Islamism with an anti-imperialist discourse would become victorious in the other oppressed societies, as well. Aside from setting out the model, the radicals conceived extension of support for the oppressed of the world, and export of the revolution as a duty for the Islamic Republic. Therefore, the policy of export of the revolution emerged as one of the pillars of the revolutionary agenda that was executed by the radicals. It could trigger mobilization against the tyrants that serve the international imperialism, and eventually could transform the unjust international system. By this way, the radicals aimed at both sweeping influence of the imperialist powers in the Islamic countries and reaching into the unity of the Islamic *Ummah* (union of the believers).²⁰

The idea underpinning the export of the revolution was fed by the revolutionary messianic ideals, a quest for just world order, and Islamic universalism that sought to revive the *Ummah*. In the radicals' worldview, the 'Islamic' revolution would continue until the return of '*Imam Mahdi*, the Lord of Age.' Thus, the revolution was conceived to be heading towards a divine destination that would bring the kingdom of God. In

¹⁹ See, *Imam Khomeini and the International System: A Collection of Articles*, (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2006).

²⁰ See, *Imam Khomeini on Exportation of Revolution*, (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2001).

order to reach that aim, the radicals sought to eliminate evil and promote revolutionary/religious virtue, and export the revolution to other Islamic lands.²¹

It is commonly believed that strategic considerations also accompanied ideological messianism in the sense that the call for export of the revolution also served to empower the center of the revolutionary movement in the regional context and world politics. In this regard, for instance, Mohsen Rezai, Commander of the IRGC, maintained that as the superpowers of the time stood against the Islamic revolution with all their might, Iran should support Islamic revolutionary movements around the world.²² Thus, the revolutionary Iran was ambitious to pursue its 'national' interests and to export the revolution in its foreign policy, especially in the Middle East.²³

In this regard, Iran got in touch with many 'liberation' movements operating in the various Middle Eastern countries.²⁴ Among them the Palestinian organizations had a special blessing of the radicals, because they were waging war against Israel, 'the Zionist entity that occupied Palestine,' on behalf of the imperialism. The liberation of Palestine was a long time cause for the Iranian revolutionaries that either went the Palestinian camps in Lebanon to fight against Israel, or declared their outrage towards it.²⁵ Therefore, immediately after the revolution, Iran hosted Yaser Arafat, the leader of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), and handed over the former Israeli diplomatic mission in Iran to the PLO. Additionally, the kind of relationship of any country with Israel became a test for the radicals to establish diplomatic relations.

²¹ Bashiriyeh, *op.cit.*, p.175-76.

²² "Guards Corps Commander notes need to continue war," *IRNA (in English)*, 10 October 1984, FBIS.

²³ G. Sick, "Iran: The Adolescent Revolution," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 49, no.1 (Summer 1995), pp.147-48. See also, Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's Export of the Revolution: Its Politics, Ends and Means," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.13, no.1-2 (Fall/Winter 1989), pp.69-93.

²⁴ Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988).

²⁵ See, *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini*, (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2006).

In addition to the Palestinian organizations, the Shiite minorities of the various Middle Eastern countries like Lebanon and Iraq, drew interest of the Iranian radicals. Because of the historical bonds between the Lebanese Shiites and the Iranian clerics, Lebanon emerged as the principal target of the radicals to export their revolution.²⁶ Many of the revolutionary elite in Iran including Mostafa Chamran, Ebrahim Yazdi, had close ties with the Shiite political leadership in Lebanon at the time of the revolution. Therefore, the Lebanese Shiite celebrated the revolution as a revolt against the oppression. Moreover, Chamran was elected to leadership council of Amal, then the principal political organization of the Lebanese Shiites, in April 1980, while he was Defense Minister in Iran.²⁷ The Israeli occupation of the south of Lebanon in June 1982 led to the increase of Iran's involvement in Lebanese politics. After then Iran dispatched an IRGC contingent there, in order to organize and train the Lebanese Shiites to fight against the Israeli occupation. The Iranian presence in Lebanon was not limited with organization of the resistance against Israel, but also included Iranian 'missionary efforts' stimulating a new political movement, namely the *Hizballah*, among the Lebanese Shiites.

The first ramification of the revolutionary foreign policy pursued by the radicals was isolation of Iran both at the systemic level, and at the regional level. Iran's challenge to the international system and its anti-imperialist discourse led its confrontation both with the East, and with the West. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the late 1979, its support for the Iraq that fighting against Iran, its apprehension with Iran's export of the revolution, and finally Iran's repression of the Tudeh confronted the two countries. In addition to the hostage issue, US support for Israel and Iraq, and Iran's 'revolutionary' activities especially in Lebanon led maintenance of animosity between the United States and Iran. The Western diplomatic pressures and economic sanctions in reaction to the

²⁶ See, Houshang E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006).

²⁷ Houshang E. Chehabi, "Iran and Lebanon in the Revolutionary Decade," in Houshang E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), p.206.

hostage issue and Iran's activities in Lebanon contributed to the isolation of Iran. In response to Iran's arguably subversive activities in the region through its connections with the so-called liberation movements, most of the regional countries took an apprehensive stand towards Iran. Moreover, the Gulf countries established the Gulf Cooperation Council and enhanced their security cooperation with the United States in order to contain the affects of the revolutionary policy of Iran. Consequently, the radicals' revolutionary foreign policy left Iran with only two states, namely Libya and Syria, in cooperation in the region. Iran felt the bitter effects of the isolation when it was left alone in fighting against Iraq.

The Iran-Iraq war that broke up in September 1980 was another ramification of the revolution in Iran, because both of the parties accused each other for interference of internal affairs. The revolutionary elite in Iran were already critics of Saddam Hussein, then ruler of Iraq, as a tyrant subservient to the imperialist powers. Additionally, Iran accused the Iraqi administration for smuggling weapons to the Arab rioters in Khuzestan; and for allowing counter-revolutionaries to operate inside the Iraqi territories against the revolutionary regime. Iraq, for its part, was apprehensively watching the Iranian radicals who were calling their Shiite fellows in Iraq to overthrow the Saddam rule.²⁸ In this context, the Iraqi armed forces invaded in Iran on September 22, 1980. Despite the early military reversals, the Iranian armed forces stroke heavy blows to the Iraqi army invading the Iranian territories. By June 1982, the Iranian armed forces recovered the occupied areas and compelled the Iraqi forces to retreat to the international borders. However, the radical leadership in Iran decided to advance the war into the territories of Iraq with an intention to depose the Saddam Hussein regime and install an Islamic Republic in Iraq. The continuation of the war was justified by the Iranian leadership in ideological terms, which argued that the war would pave the way for the

²⁸ Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 2nd ed., 1994), pp.206-07.

liberation of Jerusalem from the Zionist occupation.²⁹ Iran's aggressive stance, in turn, furthered its isolation in international politics.

Lack of diplomatic support for Iran against Iraq, and short of the military spare parts for Iran's American made equipment compelled the Iranian leadership to tone down its radical rhetoric and to enter in pragmatic activities in foreign policy in order to foment diplomatic support. Moreover, Iran entered in secret deals with the United States and Israel in the second of the 1980s to procure military spare parts. Finally, Iran renounced its previous condition to end the war, and conceded to cease-fire by accepting the UN brokered Resolution 598, in July 1988.³⁰

5.1.4. Burgeoning Factionalism among the Radicals

In the course of time, disagreements surfaced among the radicals over how to handle issues related to economy, foreign policy, social life and relationship of Islam to the government.³¹ For this reason, when the challenges aroused regarding those issues, the Islamic radicals who were united in the centrality of the velayat-e faqih doctrine and the Islamic precepts for the regime, and who were united under the leadership of Khomeini had differed among themselves in order to address the challenges regarding those issues.³² Yet, the radicals managed to avoid factional disputes in the early 1980s

²⁹ See, Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*, (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2002).

³⁰ Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations," *Middle East Journal*, vol.43, no.2 (Spring 1989), pp.210-17. See also, Mohammad-Reza Dehshiri, "The Cycle of Idealism and Realism in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran," *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. XII, no. 2 (Summer 2001).

³¹ For instance, Iran had suffered a great economic crisis in the early 1980s that was aggravated by the flight of capital, the decline of the private sector, the disruption of economic relations between Iran and the West, and the outbreak of the war with Iraq. The radicals' revolutionary ideology, together with the severe implications of the economic crisis, necessitated increased state intervention in the economy. For this reason, the government nationalized major industries, banks and foreign trade. It also initiated land distribution, anti-profiteering campaign, and price-fixing. The increased state intervention in the economy, however, was met with opposition of some of the bazaaris, and caused frictions among the radicals over the economic policy of the Islamic state. See, Bashiriyeh, *op.cit.*, p.169-72.

³² Shahrough Akhavi, "Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Middle East Journal*, vol.41, no.2 (Spring 1987); Mohamed H. Malek, "Elite Factionalism in the Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol.19, no.4 (1989).

when the regime faced with problems threatening its survival. Additionally, because the politically active clerics and the radicals were united under the leadership of Khomeini and the velayat-e faqih, Islamification of state, culture and society, and policies of self-sufficiency, ‘independence’ and export of the revolution, they put aside their differences in other issues in the first half of the 1980s.³³

As the threats to the survival of the revolutionary regime faded away and the radicals consolidated their power, differences and disagreements among the radicals surfaced in the mid-1980s. Those disagreements, compounded by the difficulties that the Islamic regime faced in economy and foreign policy, resulted in internal dissension and factionalism.³⁴ The differences among the radicals either derived from their worldviews that were shaped by their socio-economic relations, or by competing interpretations of the canonical laws. Khomeini was concerned with divisions especially among the clerics, which in his view threatened to harm the Islamic revolution. Since the establishment of various parties was discouraged by Khomeini and the radicals that aimed to create a homogenous, religious and classless society, the radicals were united and were organized under few political organizations, such as the IRP and the Society of Combatant Clerics. In the absence of new political movements and major splits from those organizations, the burgeoning factionalism among the elites lacked any institutional base. Although the emerging factionalism lacked institutional bases, Rafsanjani admitted, in July 1986, the existence of ‘two relatively strong factions’ in the political spectrum in Iran.³⁵

³³ Akhavi, *op.cit.*, p.198-99.

³⁴ Malek, *op.cit.*, p.449.

³⁵ Akhavi, *op.cit.*, p.184. “In Iran ... two relatively strong factions exist. One [the ‘leftists’] supports the nationalization of most industries while the other [the ‘rightists’] supports the private sector ...’ he claimed that Khomeini wanted the two factions or wings to adopt a ‘critical stand’ but not to ‘clash’ with or ‘weaken each other.’ See also, Malek, *op.cit.*, p.454.

In due course, the radical political leadership in Iran apparently divided into two groups between ‘hardliners’ and ‘conservatives’ as of the mid-1980s.³⁶ The hardliners dominated the Majlis, the cabinet, and the revolutionary institutions. The leading hardliners were Hojatoleslams Ahmad Khomeini, Ali Akbar Mohtashami, Mousavi Khomeini, Mahdi Karrubi, Mousavi-Ardebili, and professionals such as Mir Hussein Mousavi and Bahzad Nabavi. The conservatives that were represented by Ayatollahs Mohammad Yazdi, Ahmad Jannati, Azari Qomi, Hojatoleslams Mahdavi Kani, Nateq Nuri and Ali Khamanei were in control of the Council of Guardians and the judiciary. Apart from the hardliners and the conservatives, there was another political stream, called pragmatist or moderate, among the political leadership of Iran represented by Hashemi Rafsanjani. Ayatollah Khomeini remained above the factions, and sought to maintain a balance between them. Nevertheless, each of the factions worked to empower their positions, citing numerous sayings of Khomeini.

The principal source of dissension among the emerging factions revolved around the economic foundations of the Islamic Republic and the state intervention in economy.³⁷ Unlike the hardliners that pursued state-controlled, populist and egalitarian economic policies, the conservatives opposed over-bearing policies of the state in economy, and favored private property ownership. The differences among the radicals in economic matters were accompanied with disagreements regarding the foreign policy issues. The hardliners aspired to export the revolution by actively supporting the revolutionary movements in other countries, and advocated a strict ‘non-alignment policy’ rejecting the establishment of any kind of relations both with the West and with the East. However, the conservatives were ready to compromise with the Western

³⁶ Fred Halliday, “Iran’s New Grand Strategy,” *Middle East Report*, January-February 1987, p.7; E. Patricia Raket, “The Political Elite in the Islamic Republic of Iran: From Khomeini to Ahmadinejad,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol.29, no.1 (2009), p.116.

³⁷ Malek, *op.cit.*, p.452.

powers, and opposed the export of revolution through the extension of material support to the revolutionary movements.³⁸

The emerging factionalism among the radicals gained with institutional bases through the latter half of the 1980s. Initially, the IRP was dissolved in June 1987, arguably because of the factional disputes within the party. Soon after the dissolution of the IRP, a group of clerics including the hardliner figures, such as Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, Mahdi Karrubi, Mohammad Musavi-Khoeiniha, and Sadeq Khalkhali split away from the Society of Militant Clerics, in April 1988, to establish a new organization called Association of the Combatant Clerics. Therefore, the factional politics gradually became one of the remarkable features of the Iranian politics.

Meanwhile, Iran faced with severe difficulties both in economy, and in foreign policy. The Islamic Republic under the rule of radicals failed to achieve social and economic improvements. The Iranian economy which was under the pressure of the Western embargos, the costs of the ongoing war with Iraq and the growing population, was on the verge of collapse. In foreign policy, the initial dreams of exporting the revolution to the Islamic lands could not be realized in the first decade of the revolution. Overall, Iran was isolated from the world and was left alone in its fight against Iraq. Moreover, eight years after the war, the Islamic Republic was confronted with the risk of involvement in a hot clash with the United States that deployed its Fifth Fleet to the Persian Gulf. Under those circumstances, Iran consented to cease-fire, brokered by the United Nations, to end the war with Iraq. Approximately ten months after the end of the war, Ayatollah Khomeini died in June 1989, which opened a new period of the Islamic revolution and marked the end of rule of radicals in Iran.

5.2. The IRGC and Politics in the Radical Period: Subordinate Relationship

The corporateness of the IRGC, which was little in the previous stage, flourished among the Guards in due time. Above all, the IRGC became a constitutionally mandated

³⁸ See, Sadri, *op.cit.*, pp.87-114; Dehshiri, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

permanent organization, and as its man-power increased, and its missions expanded, it started to institutionalize a great bureaucratic structure. The IRGC established its own training centers, including the IRGC high schools, military academies and universities, and it engaged in the management of defense industry-related factories. Eventually, a ministry was set up to handle matters related to the IRGC. Thus, the fellow Guardsmen found a strong institution to identify themselves. Meanwhile, factionalism within the IRGC was considerably curbed by the dismissal of those unfitted to the 'ideal-type' of the Guards, and by breaking ties of influential leaders with their clients among the Guards. The intensive ideological training, which preached 'fraternity' among the Guards and commitment to the revolutionary/religious values devised by the radicals, also helped elimination of factional and ideological differences among the Guards. Finally, the IRGC's role in fighting against the counterrevolutionaries and the invading Iraqi armed forces led to common experiences and comradeship in arms, which helped cultivation of the corporateness among the Guards.

The increasing corporateness of the IRGC rendered it remarkable political autonomy. Although, the clerical supervision maintained over the Guards, lay interference in the IRGC affairs remarkably diminished. Therefore, configuration of the IRGC command slightly changed. Whereas Mohsen Rezai maintained its position at the command of the IRGC, Mohsen Rafiqdut became first IRGC Minister, and sit there until 1989. Additionally, as an outcome of the increase in the IRGC corporateness, the Guards commanders became more powerful in the Supreme Defense Council in comparison to their underprivileged stand in the previous stage.

In terms of ideological/political outlook, a kind of uniformity was established among the Guards ranks especially after the appointment of Hojatoleslam Mahallati to the IRGC as Representative of Imam in June 1980. Initially, the militias who had participated to the Guards ranks to establish IRGC, but harboring ideological convictions different from the radicals' understanding of the revolutionary and religious values were purged off the institution and replaced by those sharing the *Maktabi* ideology of the radicals.

As an outcome of the intensive ideological training and penetration of radicals into the Guards, the IRGC started resonating ideological/political outlook of the radicals. Thus, commitment to the velayat-e faqih doctrine emerged as the principal characteristic of the Guardsmen. Furthermore, the Guards emerged as the standard bearers of the revolutionary ideology that committed to raise the flag of the revolution over other Islamic societies. They took an assertive position to implement revolutionary ideology in Iran, and to carry out the revolution to the oppressed people, especially among the Muslim world. Consequently, the IRGC emerged in the radical stage as an ideologically committed organization sharing the same revolutionary and religious ideals with the radical political leadership.

After the dismissal of Banisadr from his post in the presidency, all institutions of the state, together with the revolutionary organizations, fell into the hands of radicals. In response to the rising terror that targeted influential figures within the radical faction and victimized Beheshti, Rajai, and Bahonar, the radical political leadership composed of President Khamanei and Premier Mousavi orchestrated 'state terror' against the moderate and leftist contenders for power. Additionally, they pressured and marginalized other Islamic forces that rejected the velayat-e faqih doctrine. The radicals were strongly committed to the revolutionary and religious values including the velayat-e faqih. Therefore, they called themselves either as *Maktabi* to emphasize their commitment to the revolutionary doctrine blending fundamentalist understanding of Islam with a strong sense of anti-imperialism and opposition to the West, or *Khatte Imam*, that meant followers of Khomeini. After consolidating their power, the radicals engaged in radical reforms to make the society and the state Islamic. In this regard they maintained campaigns for the Islamization of state, economy, and society. Their campaign for Islamization included foreign policy as well. Accordingly, the radicals pursued a revolutionary, i.e. revisionist, foreign policy challenging the international system and engaged in exporting the revolution.

The ideological equivalence between the IRGC and the political leadership restrained ideological impulses behind the Guards' involvement in politics. Therefore,

the political leadership urged IRGC to avoid involving in politics. Indeed, the IRGC greatly refrained from interfering in politics, subordinated to the political leadership, and concentrated much on institutionalization and enhancing its military capabilities. Owing to the 'de-politicization' of the IRGC and its fight against Iraq, its military feature came into prominence.

In this stage, the political leadership dominated by the radicals was considerably powerful. Above all, the radical elites were united under a few political organizations, namely the IRP and the Society of Combatant Clerics (Ruhaniyat), the leadership of Khomeini, and commitment to the basic tenets of the Islamic Republic. Although some disagreements erupted among the members of the radical elites in the course of time regarding some economic issues and foreign policy matters, Ayatollah Khomeini managed to balance newly emerging factions and keep the political elite together. The radicals had also institutional power to implement their political agenda. Overall, the duality of the state apparatus and the revolutionary organizations, which prevailed over the moderate stage, were faded away because both of them came under the control of the radicals. Additionally, since the radicals seized the control of the traditional networks, i.e., the mosques and the bazaar, and revolutionary organizations including the Guards, the Basij, the Committees, and the *hizbullahi* groups they had a great capability to mobilize the masses for their ideological/political goals. Indeed the radicals mobilized the masses both to struggle against their political rivals and to fight against the Iraqi armed forces. The radicals also had popular support, as was demonstrated in succeeding elections. In the period between the dismissal of Banisadr and the death of Khomeini, Iran held three presidential elections, two legislative elections and one election for the Assembly of Experts. In none of the elections the turnout fell below fifty percent, and the majority of seats were held by the radicals in every election. Consequently, in the period covering June 1981 through June 1989, Iran had a powerful and cohesive political leadership that was strongly devoted to the revolutionary ideology and that was willing to implement the revolutionary agenda.

Doctrinaire and powerful political leadership both gained confidence of the IRGC, and secured its subordination. Therefore, unlike the moderate leader in the previous stage, the radical political leadership managed to exercise its authority over the Guards. For instance, upon the request of Khomeini in December 1982, the follow-up committees were set up in order to examine excessive activities of the IRGC and the Revolutionary Committees. Thus, the extremists among the Guards were discharged and the worst abuses of the Guards were tempered. In a similar manner, the Liberation Movements Office was disassociated with the IRGC in 1984, and was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁹

Apparently, the radical period in Iran was marked by ideological congruence and cohesion between the Revolutionary Guards and the political leadership dominated by the radicals. That is why IRGC Commander Reza'i stated; "Domestically, we became very united after the collapse of Banisadr; that is, all the political factions came together and closed ranks."⁴⁰ Because of this ideological congruence and cohesion between the IRGC and the strong political leadership during this period, the Guards subordinated to the political leadership. In other words, the powerful and doctrinaire revolutionary army subordinated to the powerful political leadership harnessing the same ideological aims with the Guards. In this form of relationship, the acted as an efficient strike force at the disposal of the political leadership against the counterrevolutionaries, as a capable army fighting against the outside enemy and avoided interfering in politics.

³⁹ Eric Hooglund, "Government and Politics," in H.C. Metz, ed., *Iran: A Country Study*, (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1989), pp.222-24.

⁴⁰ "Reza'i's Previously Unstated Words about War," Interview with Mohsen Reza'i, former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, by Fars News Agency correspondent, *Farhang-e Ashti*, 6 October 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

5.3. Implications of the IRGC's Subordination to the Political Leadership

5.3.1. Role of the IRGC in the Suppression of the Opposition

The IRGC provisional law enjoined it to struggle against any political party, group or movement that engaged in destructive activities against the Islamic Republic and the revolution, and charged the Guards with disarming the unauthorized men. It is also charged with enforcement of resolutions of the revolutionary courts, which were controlled by the radical clerics.⁴¹ Thereby, in addition to the revolutionary tribunals, the IRGC became the principal strike force of the radicals during the reign of terror that repressed almost all opponents of the radicals.

In fact, the IRGC's activities against the so-called counter-revolutionaries started with the rural insurgencies against the central authority. For instance, various groups coalesced under the leadership of Sheikh Shubar Khaqani and established the Arab People's Front in Khuzestan, which sought political autonomy for Khuzestan. Their demands turned into violent attacks against the revolutionary committees and the Guards. The insurgence in Khuzestan was suppressed by the deployment of additional IRGC forces in June 1979. The IRGC was also influential in suppression of the Turkoman uprising that incited by the leftist Fedaiyan militias. The IRGC also played a remarkable role in containment of the Kurdish insurgency, the most durable uprising led by the Iranian KDP that sought autonomy for Kurdistan.⁴²

When the Mojahedin unleashed an armed resistance against the regime in June 1981, the IRGC was one of their principal targets. In response to increasing violence perpetrated by the Mojahedin, the government expanded the IRGC and its intelligence activities, and intensified arrests, jailings, and executions. The Supreme Judicial Council ordered death sentences for 'active members' of the guerilla groups, and the testimony

⁴¹ See, The IRGC Provisional Law, article 2. Those duties of the IRGC were reaffirmed in the IRGC Law dated September 1982.

⁴² Ghodratollah Behrami, "Nakshe Sepah dar Mobaraza ba Dzedde Enghelab," *Hasun*, no.16 (Tabeston 1387).

of the two Guardsmen was considered enough to carry out summary executions.⁴³ The terror instrumented by the radicals to crush opponents of the Islamic revolution provided vast warrants to the Guards, along with the revolutionary committees, to conduct searches, enter homes, make arrests, and confiscate properties. In this context the IRGC chased and fought anyone conceived to be counter-revolutionary. The IRGC attacked the Mojahedin cells revealed by the IRGC Intelligence and killed or arrested the insiders. In such an attack, the Guards killed Mousa Khiabani, operational commander of the Mojahedin, along with other senior Mojahedin members in February 1982. As a result of IRGC attacks, the Mojahedin lost about eighty percent of its power in Iran and remaining members of the Mojahedin took refuge in Iraq.⁴⁴ By the mid-1982 key leaders of other guerilla groups, like Fedaiyan, Paykar, Forqan etc., that waged armed struggle against the Islamic Republic were killed or imprisoned.

Meanwhile, the IRGC devised a giant intelligence branch to chase counter revolutionaries. Because there was no intelligence organization other than the IRGC intelligence until 1984, it played remarkable roles in revealing and forestalling various coup attempts such as the Nuzhah attempt and Ghotbzadeh attempt. The IRGC Intelligence charged former Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, in April 1982, with masterminding a coup against the government. It also asserted that the Ghotbzadeh attempt was supported by Ayatollah Shariatmadari, who was known with his opposition to the *velayat-e faqih*.⁴⁵ After then, the Association of the Seminary Teachers demoted religious status of Shariatmadari, who was placed under house arrest.

The IRGC also played a leading role in suppression of uprisings in Amol, Zahedan, and the Qashqai uprising in Fars province etc., in arresting the Tudeh members in the spring of 1983. Although the vast warrant of the IRGC was useful in eradication of the armed opposition to the Islamic Republic, the excessive behavior of the Guards enraged

⁴³ Zabih, *Iran since the Revolution*, p.205.

⁴⁴ Behrami, "Nakshe Sepah dar Mobaraza ba Dzedde Enghelab."

⁴⁵ Behrami, "Nakshe Sepah dar Mobaraza ba Dzedde Enghelab."

a vast majority of people. Therefore, as stated in the preceding pages, when the radicals consolidated their power by eliminating active contenders, the government sought to constrain the extremism of the Guards and the Committees and some extremists were purged off from the IRGC and the Committees.⁴⁶ With the establishment of the Ministry of Intelligence in 1984, a great part of the IRGC intelligence was transferred to the new ministry. Thus, the IRGC's role in internal security, in other words its role in the reign of terror, considerably diminished after 1984.

5.3.2. The IRGC and the Export of the Revolution

The Guards served the radical regime in Tehran not only as a security force, but also as an instrument of foreign policy. In this regard, the IRGC operated as one of the principal instruments of the Islamic Republic to export its revolution. Indeed, aim of the establishment of the IRGC described in the IRGC Law as permanent strife for realizing divine principles and expanding rule of divine order. The IRGC Provisional Law that was in force until September 1982 was clearer in elucidating the role of the IRGC in the export of the revolution. It enjoined the IRGC with a duty to “support of the liberation movements and right-seeking oppressed under the supervision of the Revolutionary Council with the permission of the government.”⁴⁷ In this regard, the IRGC Commander Safavi reminded that the IRGC does not have the suffix or prefix Iran in its name and emphasized; “The range of our duty is not limited to our land and we have extra-border missions as well.”⁴⁸

Accordingly, the initial structure of the IRGC included a branch called the Liberation Movements Office, which was headed by Mohammad Montazeri and Mahdi

⁴⁶ Bakhsh, *op.cit.*, pp.62-66.

⁴⁷ The IRGC Provisional Law, Article 2, Item 10.

⁴⁸ "General Safavi: Permanent Administration of Iraq Will Have Problems With America," *Hemayat*, 17 December 2005, OSC Transcribed Text, WNC.

Hashemi.⁴⁹ Through that office, the IRGC established active and widespread connections with many ‘liberation movements’ especially in the Middle East. By offering sympathy, ideological training, tactical and logistical support to those movements, the IRGC hoped to perform its revolutionary moral mission do defend the rights of the oppressed people and cooperate with the Islamic movements.⁵⁰

Among the associations between the IRGC and the militant liberation movements, the relationship between the *Hizballah* of Lebanon and the IRGC has emerged as the most apparent and enduring one. Revolutionary Iran’s steadily involvement in Lebanese politics encouraged the Islamists there and eventually led to broke of Islamists with the Amal leadership, which declared foundation of the Islamic Amal in the mid-1982. Just before the split in the Lebanese Shiite leadership, i.e. the Amal, an IRGC unit consisting of few hundred guardsmen was dispatched to Lebanon in order to help the Muslim forces there to repel the Israeli army that occupied the south of the country in June 1982. Indeed a large amount of Iranian armed forces were intended to send Lebanon to fight against Israel. However, because of the disagreements between the Iranian and the Syrian officials that sponsored transfer of the Iranian armed forces to Lebanon; Israel’s effortless victory in sizing the South Lebanon and its announcement of cease-fire in a short time, and Iran’s ongoing war with Iraq a great part of the Iranian armed forces returned home.⁵¹

The limited size of IRGC unit dispatched to Lebanon, however, disappointed the radicals in Iran who advocated a more active Iranian involvement in Lebanon. Reportedly, Ayatollah Khomeini justified the restriction of number of the Guards

⁴⁹ This office was separated from the IRGC in 1984; its functions and personnel were transferred to the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Intelligence. <http://countrystudies.us/iran/100.htm>; Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam; Iran’s Revolutionary Guard*, (Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), p.99.

⁵⁰ Nader Entessar, “The Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” in H. Amirahmadi & M. Parvin (eds.), *Post-Revolutionary Iran*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p.69.

⁵¹ Houshang E. Chehabi, “Iran and Lebanon in the Revolutionary Decade,” in Houshang E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), pp.212-16.

dispatched to Lebanon on the ground that Iranians should not be confronting Israel and doing “a job which Arabs themselves should do.”⁵² He also argued that the Lebanese war was a complicated plot engineered by the Zionists and the Baath in Iraq in order to divert Iran’s interest in the war, which Iran was about to win. Because Iran, then, managed to save its territory occupied by the Iraqi force, the Iranian leadership’s perception of Iran’s power was considerably increased. In this context, Khomeini declared that ‘the road to Jerusalem goes through Karbala,’ that meant his priority to fight against the Saddam rule in Iraq over fighting against Israel in Lebanon.⁵³

In this regard, the principal concern of the IRGC unit in the Bekaa, Lebanon, was ideological and military training of the Lebanese Shiites, rather than fighting against the Israeli army. In fact, the Guards found various militant Shiites congregated in the Bekaa in order to instruct in guerilla fighting and revolutionary Shiism. The IRGC presence in the Bekaa affected the social life there, as well, where they managed to unleash a wave of Islamization. The Guards exhorted various Lebanese Shiite militants, religious dissidents of the Amal, and the Islamic Amal, which laid the basis a new organization, *Hizballah*, dedicated to the theocratic rule and the struggle against Israel.⁵⁴ In addition to ideological and military training, the IRGC unit in Lebanon also provided a channel to transfer Iranian financial and military assistance to Hizballah. In return, the Hizballah maintained close liaison with the IRGC and the Iranian officials in its administration and operations.⁵⁵

⁵² Eric Hooglund, “Iranian Views of the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.25, no.1 (Autumn 1995), p.92.

⁵³ Houshang E. Chehabi, “Iran and Lebanon in the Revolutionary Decade,” in Houshang E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), pp.212-16; Trita Parsi, *Tracherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp.102-03.

⁵⁴ See, Reza Shafa, “IRGC’s Double Tasks: Domestic Suppression and Terrorism Abroad,” *NCR Foreign Affairs Committee*, Part 6, 28 November 2007.

⁵⁵ See, Magnus Ranstorp, “Hezbollah’s Command Leadership; Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with the Iranian Clergy and Institution,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol.6, no.3 (Autumn 1994).

The activities of the IRGC unit in Lebanon were not independent of the political leadership in Iran. Actually, the Iranian embassies in Beirut and Damascus provided liaison between the Hizballah leadership, the IRGC contingent in Lebanon and the Iranian government, and coordinated their activities. Especially, Hojatoleslam A. Akbar Mohtashami, the then Iranian ambassador to Syria, has been credited to be an influential figure both in the formation of the Hizballah and in its subsequent activities, and its relationship with the IRGC. The Guards, which remained in Lebanon until the mid-1990s, also submitted regular reports on developments in Lebanon and related to the Hizballah, to the political leadership in Iran.

In the same period, the Shiites in Afghanistan, the Hazara community, drew special interest of the Iranian political leadership, as well. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, Iran opposed the Soviet occupation and pro-Soviet government in Kabul. Then, it started to support the Mojahedin against the Soviet occupation. In order to support the armed struggle against the Soviet forces, the IRGC-affiliated people entered in Afghanistan. Those Iranian nationals also engaged in propagating the Islamic revolution among the Afghan Shiites. The IRGC also gave military training to the Afghan Shiite organizations. Moreover, it employed a segment of the trainees to the front to fight against Iraq.⁵⁶

The IRGC organized and trained the Iraqi Shiites, as well, who fled to Iran because of the violent suppression of the Iraqi Shiite movement in April 1980. The Iranian leaders promoted the Iraqi dissidents to establish a common political front loyal to the velayat-e faqih to struggle against the Baath regime, to emulate the Iranian revolution. As a result, the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was established in Tehran, in November 1982, under the leadership of Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr. In the meantime, a military organization called the Badr Force was established among the young Iraqi Shiites fled into Iran and affiliated to the SCIRI. The IRGC equipped,

⁵⁶ See, Hafizullah Emadi, "Exporting Iran's Revolution; the Radicalization of the Shiite Movement in Afghanistan," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.31, no.1 (January 1995), pp.1-12.

trained and commanded the Badr Corps. In turn, the Badr Force cooperated with the IRGC in the military operations at the war-front.

In order to sum, the IRGC's role in the export of the revolution was comprised of ideological and military training of the 'liberation' movements, especially affiliated to the Shiite communities. Thereby, the IRGC shared its experiences related to the revolution and the war with its fellow militant organizations in Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iraq.⁵⁷ It also served as a conduit for the Iranian radicals that strived to widen influence of the revolution and Islamic Republic in the region.

5.3.3. Role of the IRGC in the War

The revolutionaries in Iran viewed the Iraqi attack on the Iranian soil as a war 'imposed' by the world imperialism, namely the United States, that "forced its mercenary Saddam into the war fields" in order to contain affects of the revolution in the region, and overthrow the revolutionary regime in Iran.⁵⁸ Moreover, the radicals called it 'a blessing of God,' which would enhance fundamentals of the Islamic revolution.⁵⁹ In the same line, the IRGC called it as the "third revolution" that "strengthened the Iranian nation" and "turned the US dreams into a nightmare."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ "Reza'i's Previously Unstated Words About War," Interview with Mohsen Reza'i, former Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, by Fars News Agency correspondent, *Farhang-e Ashti*, 6 October 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC. Reza'I said: "Iran has shared [its] experiences with other nations, such as the Lebanese, the Iraqis, Afghans ... in the form of training contacts and military training. Hizballah's military operations in Lebanon are similar to the kind of war that we fought against the Iraqi military. In fact, these experiences were transferred to Lebanon, were transferred to the front in northern Afghanistan, and were transferred to the Badr Army in Iraq ... We can see two influences at work here; one is the spirit and spiritual qualities that our Hizballah brothers have adopted from our warriors. They display the same human characteristics that existed among our warriors at that time, the same trust, the same sense of brotherhood, and the same spirit for seeking martyrdom. The other has to do with military tactics and the defense-related rules and principles that they have received in training."

⁵⁸ *A Glance at Two Years of War*, (Tehran: IRGC Political Office, 1983), p.16.

⁵⁹ Bani-Sadr, *op.cit.*, pp.76-78.

⁶⁰ *A Glance at Two Years of War*, p.22.

It is widely believed by the observers that Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi President at that time, thought to exploit the revolutionary chaos in Iran, especially broken of the discipline in the Iranian Army.⁶¹ However, as claimed by Rezai, the Iraqi leaders underestimated the revolutionary commitment of the Iranian people and rapid institutionalization of the IRGC as a military force.⁶² Accordingly, development of the IRGC in a short time both in terms of its men-power, and in terms of military capabilities played a significant role in the fate of the war.

The IRGC's role in the war, however, was limited in the first phase of the war, when Banisadr was still in power and the Acting Commander in Chief. After the impeachment of Banisadr, the radicals got a free hand in order to execute the war against Iraq, which paved the way for the greater IRGC involvement in the command of the war.⁶³ Then, the IRGC recruited, trained and organized the Basijis, the volunteer people, in a short time and dispatched them to the war front. The IRGC tactics in the war comprised the non-conventional operations such as the guerilla warfare and the 'human wave assaults' on the enemy, in which they used the Basijis in order to clear mines, break obstacles, and absorb enemy fire.⁶⁴ Additionally, after the dismissal of Banisadr, the IRGC and the Army reached an agreement to coordinate their military operations that resulted in setback of the Iraqi army. Thereby, Iran liberated much of its territories previously occupied by the Iraqi forces in the spring of 1982. Particularly the liberation

⁶¹ For instance see, Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution ...*, pp.206-08.

⁶² "Mosahabe ba Sardar Serlashkar Mohsen Rezai Farmandehe Mohtarame Kolle Sepahe Pasdaran," *Majalla Seyasete Defa'*, vol.4, no.3-4 (Summer and Autumn 1357), pp.7-24.

⁶³ Sayyid Morteza Kazemdenan, "Nakshe Sepahe Pasdaran dar Dowrane Defaye Moqaddas," Directorate of Education and Research, the Political Bureau, 21 Shahrivar 1386 [17 September 2007].

⁶⁴ Ben Wilson, "The Evolution of the Iranian Warfighting during the Iran-Iraq War," *Infantry Magazine*, July/August 2007, pp.28-32. For the performance of the IRGC in the war-front see, *A Glance at Two Years of War*; Sepehr Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1988); Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*.

of Khorramshahr that was occupied by the Iraqi armed forces, in May 1982 has been considered as a turning point in the Iran-Iraq war.⁶⁵

Despite the international calls for cease-fire as the Iraqi government conceded after the liberation of Khorramshahr, the radical leaders challenged the idea of ceasefire and urged Khomeini to carry the war into the Iraqi territories. In that decisive moment, the IRGC also strongly advocated the continuation of the war until the victory, which meant until the fall of the Baath regime in Iraq. IRGC commander of the time, Rezai, elaborated on their reasons for continuation of the war. He maintained that although Khorramshahr was liberated, the displaced people of the region had not returned their homes. Moreover, Iran sought retribution to compensate the heavy damages suffered by people due to the war, which was initiated by Iraq. For that reason, Rezai repeatedly declared that Iran would “never sit for negotiation at a table occupied by a war criminal [Saddam Hussein].” Eventually, the IRGC, along with the radicals in Iran, conceived the Saddam government and the Baathist regime in Iraq as an obstacle in the way of Iran to reach out other Islamic societies.⁶⁶

In the meantime, the IRGC expanded both in terms of members and in terms of its military capabilities. The initial simple IRGC units turned into brigades and divisions that comprised armoured, artillery, missile, naval, and engineering units. In September 1985, the IRGC established its own branches of naval and air force units and its own defense industry to wage an efficient battle against the Iraqi forces.⁶⁷ Although the

⁶⁵ J.A. Kechichian and H. Sadri, “National Security,” in H.C. Metz, *Iran, a Country Study*, (4th ed., Washington DC.; Library of Congress, 1989), pp.235-298.

⁶⁶ “IRGC Commander Speaks on Continuing War,” *Tehran Domestic Service*, 28 September 1984, FBIS. Rahim-Safavi, as one of the prominent IRGC commanders during the war, maintained some other reasons for continuation of the war. He contended that because there was no political guarantee for a lasting peace, “it would have been unwise to grant the enemy with an ideal opportunity to reorganize its forces.” Safavi also maintained that ending the war despite the victories would raise question in the minds of Iranian nation without punishing the Saddam Hussein, initiator of the war. “Guards Corps commander says country should not change its policies,” IRNA, 21 May 1999, in SWB, ME 3542, 24 May 1999, p.7.

⁶⁷ Gholamali Rashed, “Sharayat va Dzarorathaye Tovled, Roshd, Taspert ve Ghostarashe Sepah dar Jang,” *Majalla-ye Seyasate Defa*, vol.5, no.3 (Summer 1376), pp.7-36; “Iran’s Guards Take the Lead in the Military,” *The New York Times*, 30 August 1987.

coordination between the Army and the IRGC was maintained to some extent, the command of the operations was divided between the IRGC and the Army. Moreover, the two forces completely divided the operation areas. Accordingly, the IRGC assumed the leadership of the military operations in the south of the war-front, Khuzestan, and carried its operations into the Iraqi soil, which was supported by the Iranian radicals that pursuing a 'total victory' against Iraq. Notwithstandings its military failures and setbacks at the war-front, the Guards captured the Faw peninsula, Iraqi oil port, in the spring of 1986, and besieged Basra, the southern city of Iraq, in the early 1987.⁶⁸ The IRGC Navy that operated in the Persian Gulf was also active in waging naval war against the Iraqi navy and the US warships that entered to the Gulf in February 1987.

5.3.4. The IRGC and the Ceasefire: Shattering Subordinate Relationship?

Notwithstanding the ideological congruence between the IRGC and the radicals, as the ideological and factional differences emerged among the political elites in the latter half of the 1980s, the subordinate relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership started to shatter. The IRGC, then, implicitly forged an alignment with the hardliners against the conservatives and the pragmatists. As the government worked to avoid extremism and adventurism especially in foreign policy matters after the mid-1980s, the Guards with their hardliner associates challenged the moderation of foreign policy.⁶⁹

In this regard, after the US warships arrived in the Persian Gulf to provide security for the oil tankers flying the US flag in March 1987, the Iranian leaders decided to avoid a direct clash with the US forces.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Guards were accused of laying

⁶⁸ Wilson, *op.cit.*, pp.31-32; "The Gulf: The Long Siege of Basra," *Time*, 2 February 1986.

⁶⁹ For instance, the Guards were reportedly influential in orchestrating attacks to the Saudi and the Kuwaiti embassies in Tehran a few days after the Mecca riot in July 1987 when many Iranian pilgrims were killed in the hands of the Saudi security forces. "Iran's Guards Take the Lead in the Military," *The New York Times*, 30 August 1987; Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.155.

⁷⁰ "Radicals take the centre stage in Iran after compromise with pragmatists," *Guardian*, 24 September 1987.

mines in the Gulf that hit one of the US vessels. IRGC Commander Rezai recalled that although Ayatollah Khomeini personally wanted to attack the US warships, he left final decision to the political and military officials. Rezai stated that the officials including him decided to avoid direct confrontation with the American fleet.⁷¹ However, the presence of US warships in the Gulf was perceived by the Guards as providing a shield to protect Iraq, and led frustration among the IRGC ranks. Consequently, although the senior leadership of IRGC along with the political leadership decided to avoid confrontation with the US forces, some IRGC bands involved in minor clashes with the American warships.⁷²

Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Guards who had carried the war into the Iraqi territories in the mid-1980s faced with major setbacks in the war-front in the spring of 1988. The Guards lost the Faw peninsula -- that was captured a year earlier -- to the Iraqi forces, ended the siege over Basra and withdrew from the Iraqi territories. Furthermore, the partial skirmishes between the US warships and the naval forces of IRGC in the Persian Gulf resulted in destruction of Iranian oil platforms on the shore of the Gulf and the annihilation of a large part of the Iranian Navy.

Upon those setbacks on the war-front, Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Hojatoleslam Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Majlis Speaker at the time and the well-known pragmatist figure, as Acting Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces on June 2, 1988. Until then, Rafsanjani was Khomeini's representative to the Supreme Defense Council, and he had headed the Supreme Headquarters for Support of War Effort. Khomeini commissioned Rafsanjani to reorganize armed forces to provide unity in command, and to integrate relevant offices of the armed forces.⁷³

⁷¹ "Rezai's Untold Account of the War," *Farhang-e Ashti*, 20 October 2005, WNC.

⁷² Eric J. Hooglund, "The Islamic Republic at War and Peace," *Middle East Report*, no.156, pp.7-8.

⁷³ "Khomeini decree on appointment," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 2 June 1988, FBIS-NES-88-107, 3 June 1988. Scheherezade Daneshku, "Rafsanjani moves up," *MEI*, no 327, 11 June 1988, p.11.

That assignment sparked a new debate among the political elite regarding the integration of the Army and the IRGC. Soon after his appointment as the Acting Commander in Chief, Rafsanjani stated that the existence of different branches tasked with the security of the country caused the waste of the resources. For the better utilization of the existing assets, and oversee all armed forces, he proposed the establishment of a unified headquarters for the general command that would bring representatives of the various branches of the armed forces together and that would streamline coordination among the armed forces. As a result, the General Staff of Joint Armed Forces which combined the joint staffs of the Army and the IRGC was established in June 1988.

Commenting on the merger of the IRGC with the Army, Rafsanjani said that it was not imperative to merge the two organizations. He underscored that only in case of necessity, i.e., if there is duplication of tasks, they would consider merging them.⁷⁴ Although Rafsanjani had publicly declined any intention of merging the IRGC with the Army, the steps taken by him to professionalize the Guards, the integration of the IRGC Ministry with the Ministry of Defense, and the merger of internal security forces were viewed as measures to lay the ground for eventually combining the IRGC with the Army.

Concomitant to Rafsanjani's efforts to restructure the command of the armed forces, the majority of political leaders including, Khamanei, Mousavi, and Rafsanjani had reached to the conclusion that the continuation of the war would pose a serious threat to the survival of the Islamic Republic. In addition to military reversals suffered by Iran in the warfront in the spring of 1988, and the growing public resentment against the war, the shot down of an Iranian civilian airline by the *USS Vincennes* on July 3 was a

⁷⁴ "Hashemi-Rafsanjani on Central Command Formation," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 4 June 1988, FBIS-NES-88-109, 7 June 1988, p.55.

dramatic incident compelling the Iranian political leadership to reconsider a cease-fire plan offered by the UN Security Council.⁷⁵

In the mid of July 1988, the top leadership of the Islamic Republic met to discuss the situation and to decide about the course of the war. Some hardliner figures like Hojatoleslam Mohtashami and the IRGC commanders voiced their dissent regarding the cease-fire. Their opposition was mainly based on their view of the war, which equated it with the revolution. The hardliners viewed any tendency to make a cease-fire as equal to derogating from the basic tenets of the revolution. However, the Supreme Defense Council decided to recommend Ayatollah Khomeini to accept the cease-fire mandated by the UN Security Council Resolution 598.⁷⁶

Rafsanjani is usually credited to persuade Khomeini to accept the cease-fire. In fact, unlike the hardliners and the IRGC that advocated maintenance of the ‘war until victory’ that meant a total victory over Iraq, Rafsanjani was in favor of pursuing the war until a ‘decisive victory’ that would facilitate a diplomatic solution to the war.⁷⁷ Accordingly, with his capacity as the Acting Commander in Chief he asked the IRGC Commander Rezaei to write a letter in order to outline Iran’s military needs to strike a decisive blow on the enemy, Iraq. He asked officials from the various economic, cultural and political institutions to write similar report regarding the country’s capacity to sustain the war.⁷⁸ The reports revealed that maintenance of the war was unfeasible considering the military requirements and the country’s sources. Rafsanjani handed these reports to Khomeini and convinced him to accept the cease-fire.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Hooglund, “The Islamic Republic at War and Peace,” pp.7-8.

⁷⁶ Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, pp.260.

⁷⁷ “MP Says Former IRGC Chief Wrote Letter at Rafsanjani's Behest,” *Baztab*, 3 October 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁷⁸ “Esrarhaye Rafsanjani va Pazerashe Ghat’anameye 598,” *Markeze Esnade Enghelab*, 26 Farvardin 1387; “Jang Chagouneh Tamam Shod,” *Rajanews*, 28 Azer 1389.

⁷⁹ In September 2006, Rafsanjani published Khomeini’s letter dated 16 July 1988 that related to the cease-fire. According to the letter, Khomeini stated: “... now that the military officials, including the IRGC and

In addition to his efforts to merge the IRGC with the Army, Rafsanjani's perceived role in persuading Khomeini to accept cease-fire sparked some resentment against him among the IRGC ranks. The IRGC commanders maintained that notwithstanding the disparity between the Iraqi and the Iranian military capabilities, Iran had enough sources to support a full-scale war effort that would bring a decisive victory for Iran. Therefore, they accused the government and Rafsanjani for seeking cease-fire instead of mobilizing further sources for the war.⁸⁰ Considering Khomeini's words on maintenance of the war effort in the early July, the IRGC blamed Rafsanjani for pressuring him to accept the Resolution 598. They were also discomfited with Rafsanjani's deliverance of Rezaei's letter that addressed Rafsanjani to Khomeini.⁸¹ The Guards' opposition to the acceptance of the cease-fire could be detected in Rezaei's later words. He criticized the political leadership because of their indecisiveness to launch an 'all-out war' that would "blossom the Iranian economy and industry." Rezaei, moreover, depicted the Resolution 598 as a 'little' acquisition, as it failed to recognize Faw and Shalamchah as Iranian territory and secured the power of Saddam in Iraq. However, "since Imam Khomeini accepted the Resolution, we had no choice but to accept it at the time," Rezaei said.⁸²

the Army commanders who are war specialists, openly confess that the Islamic military will not be victorious for some time, and considering that the military and political officials of the Islamic Republic see the continuation of the war as not advisable at all, and are firmly pointing out that, under no circumstances and at any price, they can obtain even one-tenth of the weapons that put at Saddam's disposal by the Eastern and Western arrogant powers, and in view of the shocking letter of the IRGC commander ... who believes in the continuation of the war providing that the needed equipment can be procured, and in the light of the enemy's extensive use of chemical weapons and our lack of equipment to neutralize them, I give my consent to the cease-fire..." For the full text of the letter see, "Rafsanjani Publishes Letter by Khomeini to Back Iran-Iraq War Cease-Fire Claim," *ILNA*, 29 September 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁸⁰ "Esrarhaye Rafsanjani va Pazerashe Ghat'anameye 598," *Markeze Esnade Enghelab*, 26 Farvardin 1387. See also, "There is a Feeling that the Regime Owes something to the People," (Interview with Ahmad Ashraf), *Middle East Report*, no.156 (January-February 1989), pp.13-18. Furthermore, it was reported by the opposition sources that the Guards, who believed that Rafsanjani sold out the revolution by engineering acceptance of the ceasefire, attempted on his life several times. "Rafsanjani to have ordered IRGC executions," *Iran's Flag of Freedom*, 18 December 1988, FBIS-NES-88-244, 20 December 1988, p.52; Safa Haeri, "At a crossroads," *Middle East International*, no 328, 24 June 1988, p.13.

⁸¹ "Jang Chagouneh Tamam Shod."

⁸² "Rezaei's Untold Account of the War."

Khomeini's official statement that declared his acceptance of the resolution and his take of responsibility for the ceasefire decision was efficient in preventing any backlash from the Guards and the radicals.⁸³ Thus, the day after Khomeini's declaration of his acceptance of the cease-fire on July 18, Rezai announced the IRGC's support for the acceptance of the resolution. He said, "The IRGC supports the decision of the political officials of the country to accept Resolution No 598, which was made with the approval of the Leader of the Revolution."⁸⁴

In addition to Khomeini's public approval for the cease-fire as the Leader of the Revolution, the weakened position of the IRGC vis-à-vis the political leadership contributed its acquiescence to the cease-fire. The developments that took place in the final year, leading to the ceasefire adversely affected the public and political image of the Guards. Above all, despite the mobilization of most of the sources of country for the war for eight years, the lack of a decisive victory against the Iraqi forces seriously damaged the public image of the IRGC that had advocated carrying the war into the Iraqi territories. Moreover, the defeats of the IRGC contingents in the war-front in the spring of 1988 further deteriorated the epic representation of the Guards. Following the military reversals, Rafsanjani convinced IRGC Commander Rezai to appear on television to accept personal blame for the defeats. He admitted that the Guards lacked adequate military training and they made some mistakes in the conduct of the military operations.⁸⁵ Another development that seriously damaged the image of the Guards was the circulation of a letter of Rezai, addressed to the Acting Commander in Chief, Rafsanjani. Although Rezai reiterated the Guards' commitment to the war until victory, he asked an additional five billion dollars and another five years "to impose a heavy

⁸³ Katzman, *op.cit.*, pp.57-58.

⁸⁴ "IRGC Commander Reza'i on Supporting UN Resolution," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 21 July 1988, FBIS NES-88-141, 22 July 1988, p.47.

⁸⁵ Haeri, *op.cit.*, p.12.

defeat on Iraq.”⁸⁶ Finally, the IRGC faced with accusations of financial embezzlement that was uncovered as a result of an investigation. The funds amounting to hundreds of millions of US dollars, allocated to the military industry of IRGC, were apparently misused and embezzled.⁸⁷ Eventually, the Majlis impeached Mohsen-Rafiqdust, the longtime minister of IRGC in September 1988.

In order to counter the challenges in the new conjuncture, the IRGC convened Guards commanders and officials across the country in a meeting in Azadi Stadium in Tehran, in September 1988. According to Rezai, the main aim of the convention was to survey future plans of the IRGC to safeguard the revolution in the post-war conditions.⁸⁸ However, this move was considered as a challenge to the political authority to resist further efforts to undermine the IRGC. The convention of the Guards provided a forum for its hardline supporters to express their view that the IRGC should remain as a separate military force and the principal guardian of the revolution. The Majlis also delayed for six months its session on the legislation to merge the IRGC and Defense Ministries.⁸⁹

Ayatollah Khomeini, as well, issued a praising message to the convention of the IRGC commanders and officials. Notwithstanding the convention was deemed as a counter-act against Rafsanjani’s projections regarding the IRGC, the Guards’ issued a message affirming their allegiance to Khomeini. The message stated that the IRGC was ready to decisively deal with all threats to the Islamic revolution and the Islamic

⁸⁶ “Rezai’s Untold Account of the War”

⁸⁷ Haeri, *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁸⁸ “Mohsen Reza’i interviewed on IRGC Role,” *Tehran Television Service*, 17 September 1988, FBIS-NES-88-181, 19 September 1988, pp.43-44.

⁸⁹ Katzman, *op.cit.*, p.59.

Republic system. Furthermore, the IRGC commanders pledged to realize Khomeini's wishes and wills all over the world.⁹⁰

Khomeini's message to the convention was conceived as an extension of his support for the IRGC. However, in order to adjust the IRGC to the post-war circumstances and to further discipline within the armed forces, Rafsanjani's attempt to professionalize the IRGC and merge defense institutions went on through the end of this period. In this regard, the number of the Guards was decreased to half of the war-conditions, military hierarchy and uniforms were introduced to the IRGC ranks, and the ministries of IRGC and Defense were integrated under a single ministry, the Ministry of Defense and Logistics for the Armed Forces.

In general, adjusting to the post-war conditions is a painful process for civil-military relations in many cases, especially after an unsuccessful war. However, despite the reported skirmishes between the Acting Commander in Chief, Rafsanjani, and the IRGC, the process of transition from the war conditions to the post-war circumstances was noticeably smooth in Iran, because of the subordinate relationship between the political leadership and the IRGC.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the IRGC's relationship to the politics in Iran in the radical period that covered the stage starting with the impeachment of President Bani-sadr in June 1981, and continuing until the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989. This period was marked by the rule of the radicals of the Iranian revolution. At this stage, the contentious relationship between the IRGC and the civilian political leadership prevailing in the previous stage under the rule of the moderates, turned into a subordinate relationship between the Guards and the radical leadership. Due to the ideological congruence between the Revolutionary Guards and the radicals in

⁹⁰ "Commanders thank Khomeini," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 18 September 1988, FBIS-NES-88-181, 19 September 1988, p.43.

government, and the institutional and political control of the radicals over the Guards, the IRGC subordinated to the political leadership. In other words, since the radicals captured both the soul of the revolution and all levers of the revolutionary regime, the IRGC mission to safeguard the revolution naturally served the radical's interests. Therefore, the IRGC emerged as a functional institution, employed by the radical leadership as a strike force against the opponents, a defense force against the invading army, and even as a supplementary instrument in foreign policy to help the export of the revolution.

The subordinate relationship between the Guards and the civilian leadership, however, started to tremble as the ideological and factional differences arose among the radicals in the latter half of the 1980s. Nevertheless, the IRGC continued to comply with the political leadership, and maintained the subordinate relationship. Therefore, Iran smoothly adjusted to the post-war circumstances in terms of civilian control over the armed forces, including the Revolutionary Guards. The IRGC's compliance with the civilian leadership went on as long as Ayatollah Khomeini, who managed to constrain factionalism among the radicals and keep them unified, was alive. However, after the death of Khomeini, the Iranian revolution entered in a new stage during which political factionalism among the revolutionary elites was deepened and ideological conformity between the Guards and the civilian politicians was considerably eroded. Therefore, the IRGC-politics relationship evolved into a new form that would be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE IRGC AND POLITICS IN THE THERMIDORIAN IRAN (1989-2005)

The post-war Iranian politics entered a sea-change with the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989. In fact, with the end of the eight-year war with Iraq in July 1988, a profound wave of change had already swept Iran in order to restructure Iranian economy, and to reformulate fundamental bases of the Islamic Republic. At the end of the decade-long extremist policies of the radicals, it became unbearable for the Iranian government to chase ambitious revolutionary ideals. Therefore, the ideological motivation behind the revolutionary policies incrementally waned and subordinated to pragmatic and national interests. Thus, both the internal and the external policies of the Iranian government gradually looked like actions of a conventional state, indicating Iran's 'convalescence from the revolutionary fever.' In other words, the sea-change of the Iranian politics heralded the start of the 'Iranian Thermidor.' However, because the government continued to derive its legitimacy from the revolution, the revolutionary impulses did not cease entirely, and continued to dominate national policies of Iran.¹ Therefore, the thermidor stage in Iran, resembling the same period in other social revolutions, was packed with episodes illustrating the tension in Iran to choose its identity between a revolutionary state and a conventional state. As a result, this stage in Iran was marked by political instability and intensive factional fighting.

The sea-change in Iran profoundly affected the Revolutionary Guards' relationship to the politics, as well. This chapter is allocated to analyze the relations between the IRGC and the civilian political leadership in the thermidorian Iran. In order to

¹ Gary Sick, "Iran: The Adolescent Revolution," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 49, no.1 (Summer 1995), p.147.

comprehend the IRGC-politics relationship, this chapter initially reviewed political dynamics, and the situation of political elites in the Thermidorian Iran. And then, it analyzed the variables which are considered to be decisive on civil-military relations in revolutionary states, and discussed the form of IRGC-politics relationship in the new era. Finally, it pointed out some incidents in Iran during the thermidorian stage (1989-2005) to comprehend the form of the IRGC's relationship to politics.

6.1. Political Context and the Political Elites in Thermidorian Iran

6.1.1. Transition to the Iranian Thermidor

At the end of the war, the struggle to perform revolutionary ideals became economically and socially unbearable for the Islamic Republic as it became apparent that sustaining revolutionary politics was excessively unrealistic and costly for Iran. Thus, concomitantly with the end of the war, a 'fatigue' that accompanied by a sense of exhaustion with revolutionary excesses and dilution of the revolutionary zeal prevailed over the Iranian society and politics. This fatigue limited the regime's ability to mobilize masses for the sake of the revolutionary ideals and allocate further sources to the revolutionary causes.² Moreover, the Islamic Republic encountered with internal and external pressures to transform its revolutionary politics into the activities of a 'conventional state.' Iran had to overcome deteriorating economic and social conditions that further deepened due to the eight-year war with Iraq and the international isolation of Iran.

The Iranian economy was seriously destructed throughout the revolution because of flight of the capital and secular professionals from the country. Additionally, isolationist, protective, autarkic and populist economy policies of the revolutionary governments necessitated greater state involvement in economy. Mismanagement of economy because of the revolutionary conditions together with dramatic ups and downs in oil

² Shamram Chubin, *Iran's National Security Policy: Intentions, Capabilities & Impact*, (Washington DC: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994), p.67.

prices in the 1980s, the principal export commodity of Iran, further distressed the Iranian economy. Moreover, the war, especially the 'tanker war' in the Persian Gulf constrained the country's oil export. As a result, nominal oil revenues of Iran as of 1989 stood forty percent below of its level at 1978. Finally, the Western embargos and the increasing cost of the war against Iraq brought the Iranian economy to the verge of collapse. Consequently, manufacturing output of Iran fell around forty percent below the pre-revolutionary years.³

Notwithstanding flight of the secular professionals from the country, Iran faced with an explosive population growth and population dislocation caused by the war which complicated the country's economic and social problems. Moreover, a fundamental split emerged within the Iranian society between those ardent supporters of the revolution that sacrificed their life for the revolution and those critics of the revolutionary politics.⁴ The critics were joined by the new generation that grew during the 1980s and 'defectors' among the revolutionary elite as Ayatollah Montazeri, and the religious intellectuals like Abdolkarim Soroush and Mohsen Kadivar who started to question fundamental bases, especially the mandate of the religious jurist (*velayat-e faqih*), and politics of the Islamic Republic. The death of Khomeini at that critical turning point lifted away his charismatic leadership over the country that restrained political factionalism and that provided the government with an infinite power as all political factions observed his rulings especially regarding internal politics and foreign policy. Whereas the factional strife was limited with discussing economic matters during the leadership of Khomeini, after his death, different factions started to express their views on internal and external policy matters.⁵ Thus, in the absence of charismatic leadership

³ See, Ali Saedi, "Charismatic Political Authority and Populist Economics in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *Third World Quarterly*, vol.22, no.2 (2001).

⁴ Farideh Farhi, "The Antinomies of Iran's War Generation," in L.G.Potter & G.G.Sick (eds.), *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War*, (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 101-20; Lara Marlowe, "Revolutionary Disintegration," *Time*, 24 June 2001.

⁵ Ali A. Saedi, "Dislocation of the State and the Emergence of Factional Politics in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Political Geography*, no. 21 (2002), p. 534.

of Khomeini, various political factions questioned and disputed the government's decisions regarding the internal politics, economy, and foreign policy.

Under these circumstances, President Ayatollah Khamanei succeeded Khomeini as the Leader of the Revolution and Hashemi Rafsanjani became the new President of the Islamic Republic in July 1989. The new political leadership of the country focused on restoration of Iranian economy under the banner of 'the era of reconstruction' (*sazendegi*). However, the declaration of the era of reconstruction suggested a remarkable difference from the previous eras dominated by the revolution and the war.⁶ Actually, politics went beyond the discourse in the new period and a profound wave of change swept across Iran. The pace of reforms within the framework of reconstruction that started just after the end of the war accelerated encompassing almost all aspects of daily-life in the country. The backbone of the sea-change was 'rationalization' of politics, as some called it 'de-revolutionization,'⁷ which marked the start of the thermidor stage in post-revolutionary Iran.

6.1.2. The Reconstruction Era and the Rationalization of Politics

Although the period that begun with the new political leadership in Iran in 1989 was marked by the reconstruction movement because of the economic activities of the post-Khomeini governments, the process of rationalization of politics has also dominated that period. The rationalization of politics "meant either doing away, or providing alternative renditions of, the prevailing discourse and practice of the first ten years of the revolution."⁸ That process in the Thermidorian Iran initially covered rearrangement of politics in terms of ideology and institutional structure.

⁶ Farhi, *op.cit.*, p.108.

⁷ Mahdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), p.144.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.144. See also Mehdi Moslem, "Ayatollah Khomeini's Role in the Rationalization of the Islamic Government," *Middle East Critique*, vol.8, no.4 (Spring 1999), pp.75-92.

Considering the former, Rafsanjani attempted to curb extremism of the ideological discourse of the radicals that dominated the Iranian politics approximately for a decade. Contrary to the radical religious-revolutionary discourse that preached commitment to the doctrine, asceticism, export of the revolution, egalitarianism and redistributive economy the Iranian thermidorians led by Rafsanjani suggested expertise, indulgence, and free market economy.⁹ However, because transition of the Iranian revolution to the thermidor stage came smoothly, Rafsanjani wavered between the revolutionary thoughts and moderation in order to overcome ‘revolutionary inertia.’¹⁰ Therefore, he reiterated that the government would observe the Imam’s line and would continue to perform revolutionary ideals.¹¹

As to the institutional level, the Iranian thermidorians aimed at increasing power of the central government at the expense of the revolutionary organizations. Actually, that inclination first appeared in the last year of the war when Ayatollah Khomeini decreed the absolute guardianship of the faqih, which provided an infinite power to the government.¹² In the same line, Khomeini had asked the establishment of a review committee to revise the Constitution. Consequently, the position of premiership was abolished and much of his powers were handed to the president’s office. Additionally, the government merged some revolutionary organizations with parallel institutions affiliated to the central government – like amalgamation of the Revolutionary Committees with the police and the gendarmerie forces – to eliminate duplications and

⁹ Moslem, *Factional Politics ...* , p.144.

¹⁰ Mahmood Sariolghalam, “Iran’s Emerging Regional Security Doctrine: Domestic Sources and the Role of International Constraints,” in *The Gulf: Challenges of the Future*, (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2005), p.8.

¹¹ Moslem, *Factional Politics ...* , pp.146-47.

¹² Abdulaziz Sachedina, “The Rule of the Religious Jurist in Iran, in John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani (eds.), *Iran at the Crossroads*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Moslem, “Ayatollah Khomeini’s Role in the Rationalization of the Islamic Government,” pp.75-92.

to provide better management.¹³ Therefore, various revolutionary bodies were brought under the control of the central government managed by President Rafsanjani.¹⁴

Another aspect of the rationalization process has covered ‘liberalization’ of the economy renouncing the previous ambitions to create a self-sufficient economy isolated from the capitalist world economy. In this line Rafsanjani clearly stated in September 1989, “I will not now engage in fantasies of an independent and self sufficient society.”¹⁵ His economy strategy was based on raising industrial production, controlling inflation, reducing budget deficits and accelerating the economic growth. Therefore, the First Five-Year Development Program formulated in 1989 envisaged a departure from the self-reliance economy, adopting an open-door policy in conjunction with a *laissez-faire* approach. The program was intended to attract exiled Iranian industrialists and well-educated people, and to raise foreign finance for reconstruction and economic development.¹⁶

The Rafsanjani administration’s liberalization policies were boosted by the collapse of command economies with the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. In this line, Iran tended to open its economy to the world markets, and tried to establish efficient relationships with international financial institutions.¹⁷ The Iranian government’s strive to liberalize and internationalize economy of the country gained a momentum with the declaration of free trade zones and its official application to join GATT (General

¹³ The new combined force was named az Nioure-ye Entezami-ye Jomhour-e Eslami (NAJA – the Persian acronym), which is called in the English literature as the LEF (Law Enforcement Forces), or the disciplinary forces.

¹⁴ See, Mohsen M. Milani “The Evolution of the Iranian Presidency: from Banisadr to Rafsanjani,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.20, no.1 (1993), pp.83-97.

¹⁵ SWB, ME/0552, 4 September 1989, quoted in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), p.42.

¹⁶ Jahangir Amuzegar, “Iran’s Post-Revolution Planning; The Second Try,” *Middle East Policy*, vol. 8, no.1 (March 2001).

¹⁷ Saedi, “Dislocation of the state and the emergence of factional politics in post-revolutionary Iran,” p.538.

Agreements on Trade and Tariffs that transformed into the World Trade Organization) in 1993.

The process of rationalization of politics also took place in foreign policy of the government. According to Rafsanjani, the economic and military recovering of Iran entailed ending its regional and international isolation, and adopting a pragmatic policy based on the national interests. In fact, this policy change was an outcome of Iranian elite's 'realist'/pragmatist response to internal and external pressure over Iran. Iran's military, economic and technological weaknesses and its quest for modernization limited Iran's foreign policy options and compelled it to adopt more accommodative policy towards outside world. Additionally, the rapid and great geopolitical changes around Iran in the early 1990s, i.e. the Gulf War and the dissolution of the USSR, rendered it extremely vulnerable to events beyond its control. Particularly, the increasing power of the United States in the Middle East as the remaining sole 'superpower' in the international system, which further weakened Iran vis-à-vis the West, compelled the revolutionary Iran to adjust itself into the new conditions.¹⁸ Therefore, the Rafsanjani administration's foreign policy approach was established on the bases of "reconciliation with outside world; restoration of stability in the Gulf; reintegration into global economy; more active participation in global and regional organizations."¹⁹

Accordingly, the world has witnessed a change in Iranian diplomacy in the early 1990s towards reconciliation with the West, which started with Iran's mediating in the liberation of the Western hostages held by Hizballah in Lebanon in 1989. Iran under Rafsanjani also recognized the Taif Agreement that ended fifteen-year civil war in Lebanon in 1990. Thereby, 'revolutionary' Iran acknowledged the legitimacy of the

¹⁸ See, Mahmood Sariolghalam, *The Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Theoretical Renewal and a Paradigm for Coalition*, (Tehran: The Center for Strategic Research, 2000); Shreen T. Hunter, *Iran After Khomeini*, (Washington DC.: CSIS, 1992) pp.101-02; Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, *After Khomeini; New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy* (Boulder, San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994), pp.10-21.

¹⁹ Jalil Roshandel, "Iran's Foreign and Security Policies; How the Decision Making Process Evolved," *Security Dialogue*, vol.31, no.1 (2000), pp.109-110.

Lebanon government and encouraged Hizballah to cooperate with the Lebanese government.²⁰ Contrary to previous foreign policy mottos against the Western and the Eastern Blocs, the Thermidorian Iran tried to normalize its relations with the neighboring countries including the Persian Gulf countries and S. Arabia, and to improve its relations with the Western countries including the United States and the European Union. Iran also engaged in improving its relations with the USSR.²¹ However, after its disintegration in 1991, Iran immediately recognized the newly independent countries in the Caucasus and the Central Asia, and strived to establish close relations with the Russian Federation.²²

The rationalist foreign policy, however, was challenged by a number of developments that reminded revolutionary and ideological policies of Iran. In fact, it was a reflection of the thermidor.²³ As the thermidorian regime continued to draw its legitimacy from the revolution, the thermidorians could not directly contest with the ‘fundamentals’ of the revolution. Additionally, the hardliners that survived the thermidor and found places for themselves in the diverse and complex decision-making mechanisms challenged the accommodative policies of the government. Therefore, President Rafsanjani reiterated his loyal to the Imam’s line, and his administration maintained revolutionary Iran’s anti-imperialist discourse and hatred towards Israel. Iran, for this reason, opposed the Middle East Peace Process. Rafsanjani also denied reversing Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie, which was asked by his Western counterparts. Furthermore, assassinations of the exiled Iranian political activists including former Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar, Kazem Rajavi, brother of MKO

²⁰ Houshang E. Chehabi, “Iran and Lebanon After Khomeini,” in Houshang E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), pp/287-308.

²¹ Rouhullah K. Ramazani, “Iran’s Foreign Policy: Both North and South,” *Middle East Journal*, vol.46, no.3 (Summer 1992), pp.393-412.

²² See, Adam Tarock, “Iran’s Policy in Central Asia,” *Central Asian Survey*, vol.16, no.2 (1997); Edmund Herzig, *Iran and the Former Soviet South* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995).

²³ Mehdi Mozaffari, “Revolutionary, Thermidorian and Enigmatic Foreign policy; President Khatami and the ‘Fear of the Wave’,” *International Relations*, vol.14, no.5 (August 1999), pp.13-16.

Leader Masoud Rajavi, Abdurahman Qassemu, leader of the I-KDP, in Europe in the early 1990s, and some terror actions against the Israeli and American targets in the same period, which were attributed to the Iranian government, challenged the rationalist foreign policy of the Rafsanjani administration.²⁴ As a result, Iranian foreign policy lacked consistency, coherence and clarity in the thermidorian stage.

Those challenges to the Rafsanjani government endangered the European countries' 'critical dialog' approach that welcomed rationalization of Iranian foreign policy. In this vein, when the Berlin Court decided in April 1997 that several high-level Iranian officials including Rafsanjani, and his Intelligence Minister Ali Fallahian had direct responsibility for the assassination of Qassemu in Berlin, known as the Mykonos affair, the EU countries withdrew their ambassadors in Tehran.²⁵ Unlike the European countries, the United States did not respond positively to the change in Iran, instead, it maintained its pressure. Furthermore, in order to further isolation of Iran, the Clinton administration unleashed the 'dual containment' policy in 1993, which was boosted by the Iran-Libya Sanctions that adopted by the US Congress in 1995.²⁶

6.1.3. Intensification of Political Factionalism

In addition to the reconstruction efforts and the rationalization of politics, an increasingly bitter rivalry among the political factions imprinted this period in Iran. After the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini, who balanced the rival political factions and kept them together, the ruling elites split into different factions that entered into an intense factional fighting over the future of the revolution and the Islamic Republic.

²⁴ See, Ali Tekin, *The Place of Terrorism in Iran's Foreign Policy*, (Ankara: Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Vakfı, 1997); Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat*, (Washington DC.: Seven Locks Press, 1993).

²⁵ Ziba Moshaver, "Revolution, Theocratic Leadership and Iran's Foreign Policy: Implications for Iran-EU Relations," *The Review of International Affairs*, vol.3, no.2 (Winter 2003), pp.283-305.

²⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brend Scowcroft, and Richard Murphy, "Differentiated Containment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol.76, no.73 (May/June 1997).

Throughout that fighting, rival factions have established various and varying coalitions among themselves.

Concurrently with revolutionary Iran's transition to the thermidorian stage, the conservatives²⁷ were divided into the traditional conservatives and the modern right that was also called as the pragmatists.²⁸ Rafsanjani, who was known as a moderate figure further distanced himself from the traditional conservatives and emerged as the leader of the modern right that called for economic and political development (*towse'eh*). However, this faction that comprised technocrats and intellectuals gathered around President Rafsanjani, suffered lack of an institutional base until the establishment of *Kargozaran-e Sazendegi* (Executives of Reconstruction) in January 1996. The modern right was supported by the bureaucrats, the professionals, and the modern industrialists. The modern right that represented the new middle class in Iran was tolerant in socio-cultural sphere to impose revolutionary and Islamic principles and favored creation of a 'liberal' culture promoting the modern concepts as 'civil society,' 'human rights' and press freedom. The modern right maintained that a watchful open-door policy and integration to the international system was indispensable for reconstruction of Iran. Therefore, it favored improvement of relations with the Western countries, even establishment of diplomatic ties with the United States. This faction in charge of the government during the reconstruction crusade solicited foreign sources to finance its strife for reconstruction and development activities, attempted to attract foreign

²⁷ See, Chapter 5, *supra.*, pp.135-73.

²⁸ In order to denote the political factions operating in Iran, I used here the classification of Mehdi Moslem, who was also inspired from Bahzad Nabavi's taxonomy of the Iranian political factions. Nabavi published his views and taxonomy as a series of articles published in bi-weekly *Asr-e Ma*, between December 1994 and May 1995. "Asr-e Ma Looks at Political Factions," *Asr-e Ma*, *FBIS-NES-96-064-S*, 2 April 1996, pp. 1-40. For the Moslem's account consult, Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*. On this issue see also, Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran: The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*, (Washington DC.: The Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy & Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000); Pinar Arıkan Sinkaya, *Uneasy Coexistence: "Islamism vs. Republicanism" Debate in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, (Berlin: VDM Verlag, 2010).

investment to the country, and attempted to restructure distributive networks of goods in Iran to control inflation rates.²⁹

The traditional conservatives that represented the bazaaris and majority of the high-ranking ulama (old middle-class) have favored private property and free market, but they opposed both *etatist* policies of the radicals and liberalization of Iranian economy by the modern right. The principal political organizations of the traditionalist conservatives, who were called as the traditionalist right as well, were the Rouhaniyat, and the *Heyatha-ye Mo'talefeh-ye Eslami. Jame'eh-ye Modarresin-e Howzeh-ye Elmiyye-ye Qom* (the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers) should also be mentioned among the strongholds of the traditional conservatives. Although this faction has favored establishment of pragmatic relations with Western countries, it has been skeptic of foreign involvement in Iran and improvement of relations with the West because of nationalist and traditionalist considerations. This faction that has prioritized Islamic features of the political regime in Iran and continued to advocate clerical rule, based its opposition to the West on the cultural grounds arguing that the West has been trying to undermine religious and traditional values of the Iranian people.³⁰

On the other side of the political spectrum in post-revolutionary Iran, the hardliners³¹ that sought for a powerful state, command economy and export of the revolution, have also been split into the Islamic left and the neo-radicals. While the revolutionary Iran was coming into the thermidoriam stage, the Islamic left has been differentiated from the hardliner position as it has adopted relatively liberal stance on economic and socio-cultural issues. Members of this faction have prioritized republican

²⁹ Saedi, "Dislocation of the state and the emergence of factional politics ... ," pp.534-43.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.534-43. "Asr-e Ma Looks at Political Factions," *Asr-e Ma*.

³¹ See Chapter 5, *supra.*, pp. 135-73. See also, Fred Halliday, "Iran's New Grand Strategy," *Middle East Report*, January-February 1987; Shahrugh Akhavi, "Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Middle East Journal*, vol.41, no.2 (Spring 1987); Mohamed H. Malek, "Elite Factionalism in the Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol.19, no.4 (1989); E. Patricia Rakel, "The Political Elite in the Islamic Republic of Iran: From Khomeini to Ahmadinejad," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol.29, no.1 (2009).

features of the post-revolutionary regime in Iran and strived to reconcile the velayat-e faqih with popular sovereignty. Therefore, the Islamic left propagated pluralism of ideas and political parties, civil society and freedom of press. As of the mid-1990s, they also have softened their radical position considering foreign policy and called for a foreign policy based on national interest.³² This faction has been represented in the political arena by the *Majma'e-ye Rouhaniyoun-e Mobarez* (The Association of Combatant Clergy) and the *Mojahedin-e Enqelab-e Eslami* (The Crusaders of the Islamic Revolution). The Rouhaniyun, headed by Hojatoleslam Mahdi Karrubi was established in 1988 in result of emerging factionalism within the Rouhaniyat, and the Mojahedin-e Enqelab-e Eslami, the well known radical party of the revolutionary coalition was revived in 1991 by Mohammad Salamati, Bahzad Nabavi and Mohsen Armin. The Islamic left recruited its supporters among the middle class, professionals and students.

The hardliners of the radical period also gave birth into the new radicals, who are also known as neo-fundamentalists, in the 1990s. Unlike the Islamic left faction that altered its approach to politics, economy, and foreign policy towards liberalism, the neo-radicals has continued championing the rights of the oppressed, advocated egalitarian and interventionist state, aspired to create an Islamic society, and defended revolutionary and revisionist foreign policy. Notwithstanding its populist stand in politics and economy, the neo-radicals viewed the Islamic bases of the political regime established in Iran as indispensable features of the revolution. Furthermore, they regarded the velayat-e faqih as a divine order. In this line, they considered obedience to the vali-ye faqih (Leader) and his absolute mandate as the main pillar of the Islamic regime and religion. Therefore, they have been highly critical of the Islamic left that has been seeking to empower popular sovereignty disregarding the divinity of the velayat-e faqih. In the socio-cultural sphere, the neo-radicals, like the traditional conservatives, have advocated the strict implementation of *sharia* and considered permeation of foreign cultures into the Iranian society as the greatest danger to the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic

³² Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics ...*, p. 113.

Republic. The neo-radical elites represented by Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, and Hojatoleslam Mohammad Rayshahri have found their supporters among the lower segments of society, war veterans, security organizations of the Islamic Republic, and the Basij. The political organizations as the *Jam'iyat-e Defa' az Arzesh-ha-ye Enghelab-e Eslami* (the Society for the Defense of the Revolutionary Values) and the *Jam'iyat-e Isargaran-e Enghelab-e Eslami* (the Society of Devotees of the Islamic Revolution) have emerged as the principal neo-radical parties in the mid-1990s. Additionally, the young neo-radicals who have strong anti-Western and anti-liberal sentiments have been organized into the *Ansar-e Hezbollah*, a vigilant group that acted as a strike force to attack so-called 'liberals' in Iran.³³

The new political leadership immediately in the post-Khomeini period symbolized a rightist coalition that comprised the modern right represented by Rafsanjani and the traditional conservatives represented by Khamanei.³⁴ In that coalition Rafsanjani seemed to be the stronger partner vis-à-vis Khamanei who lacked charismatic leadership, and religious and political credentials to claim power as utilized by Khomeini. Rafsanjani discharged the hardliners in the bureaucracy, brought the moderate and pragmatist technocrats to his administration and became the so-called 'commander of the reconstruction' (*Sardar-e Sazendegi*) as the President of the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, the traditional conservatives sustained their power in the Guardians' Council, and penetrated into the judiciary and the revolutionary organizations under the supervision of Khamanei. Thus, the rightist coalition eliminated the hardliners from the influential positions in the government, and replaced them with technocrats.

The unfolding struggle between the rightist coalition and the hardliners was considerably bitter. Throughout the fighting between the hardliners and the Rafsanjani camp, Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, deputy chief editor of *Kayhan* daily and Majlis deputy,

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.134-41.

³⁴ Matthew C. Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Rise of Muhammad Khatami," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.26, no.1, pp.27-39.

reportedly called Rafsanjani a ‘traitor’ to the revolution and Khomeini.³⁵ Nevertheless, the rightist domination of politics was crowned in 1992, when prominent leaders of the hardliners were proscribed from running for the fourth Majlis elections.

The gap within the rightist coalition was widened as the traditional conservatives were disturbed by President Rafsanjani’s policies of internationalization of the Iranian economy, improvement of relations with the Western powers and tolerant cultural policies. Their opposition was based on the revolution’s championship of the causes of the Islamic movements, anti-capitalism and antagonism to the Western dominated international system.³⁶ Similarly, the neo-radicals that have believed in the preservation of the ideological order, the clerical elitism, the state control over culture and economy, and considered the Western world as the enemy vocally criticized the Rafsanjani government.

However, as far as the traditionalist conservatives distanced from the modern right and come closer to the neo-radicals, the newly emerging Islamic left has supported social and foreign policy implemented by the modern right. Therefore, in the mid-1990s a new alliance was established between the Islamic left and the modern right that brought Mohammad Khatami to power and unleashed the reform era.³⁷

6.1.4. The Reform Era: Rise and Fall of the Reform Movement

The thermidor of the Iranian revolution was heightened with the start of reform era under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami in 1997. The reform era came as result of coalition of the refashioned Islamic left and the modern right that was backed by religious intellectuals. With reference to the date of the presidential elections in which

³⁵ “There is a Feeling that the Regime Owes something to the People,” (Interview with Ahmad Ashraf), *Middle East Report*, no.156 (January-February 1989), pp.13-18.

³⁶ Saedi, “Dislocation of the state and the emergence of factional politics ... ,” p.537. Sariolghalam, “Iran’s Emerging Regional Security Doctrine ... ,” p.8.

³⁷ Wells, “Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran ... ,” p.37.

Khatami took more than seventy percent of the votes, that coalition was called the *Jebheh-ye Dovvom-e Khordad* (23 May Front) or the reform movement.

The landslide victory of Khatami encouraged the Islamic left to challenge the radical and the conservative reading of Islam and the revolution. The prominent intellectuals affiliated with the 23 May Front as Abdolkarim Soroush, Mojtabeh Shabestari, and Mohsen Kadivar strived to construct an interpretation of Islam and the objectives of the revolution that essentially based on the popular sovereignty. They infused the conceptions relevant with popular sovereignty as democracy, civil society and rule of law to the Iranian political debates. Furthermore they maintained that the ruling faqih should be an elected man and become accountable for his actions. President Khatami also involved in that cohort voicing the popular concepts devised by the intellectuals and calling for accountability of all officials in the Islamic Republic.³⁸ The reform movement also revised foreign policy approach of the revolutionary Iran based on anti-imperialism, opposition to the West and the United States, and export of the revolution, which resulted in isolation of Iran. Therefore, rather than confronting with the status quo powers, the West and the internationally system, President Khatami called for ‘dialogue among civilizations,’ ‘détente with neighboring countries,’ and the establishment of contacts and cooperation with international organizations.³⁹

The reformist discourse, thereby, appeared particularly attractive for the youth, the women, and lay and Islamic intelligentsia. Additionally the middle and the under segments of the Iranian society supported the reformist discourse believing in that

³⁸ Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, pp.254-55.

³⁹ See, Shah Alam, “The Changing Paradigm of Iranian Foreign Policy under Khatami,” *Strategic Analysis*, vol. XXIV, no.9 (December 2000), pp. 1669-1653; R.K. Ramazani, “The Shifting Premise of Iran’s Foreign Policy; towards a Democratic Peace?,” *Middle East Journal*, vol.52, no.2 (Spring, 1998), pp.177-87; Moustafa Torkzahrani, “Iran After Khatami; Civil Society and Foreign Policy,” *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, vol.9, no.4 (1997/98).

structural economic problems could be properly addressed if the political reforms took place.⁴⁰

Thus, the Iranian politics in this period has been identified with the struggle for social and political reform, and the quest for democracy. The principal outcome of the Khatami's presidency was spring of the press with the burgeoning of pro-23 May Front publications. Thus, the press became an instrumental leverage of the reform movement to make people familiar with their political concepts, to raise questions regarding the administration of the state, and to support President Khatami in his bidding for power against his conservative rivals.

Indeed, with the rise of the reform movement and their revisionist approach to the radical and the conservative reading of Islam and the revolution, political and ideological differences among the Iranian political factions aroused dramatically to the unprecedented levels. The traditional conservatives, now allied with the neo-radicals, stood against the reform movement. The first reaction and resistance to the reforms came from the conservative dominated fifth Majlis that hindered legislation of reforms and impeached the cabinet ministers. Moreover, it accepted a restrictive press law in July 1999 that laid the ground for suppression of the press. Additionally, the Khatami government had to contend with the revolutionary organizations, the courts, and the Guardians' Council that were controlled by the traditional conservatives. Furthermore, the top leadership position of the regime has been also occupied by a conservative figure, Khamanei. The conservative's control over the courts, the Guardians' Council and the ruling faqih was critical in the ongoing struggle between the competing factions as it gave the conservatives the ability to block the efforts of the reformists.

The judiciary, both the revolutionary courts and the regular ones, and the Special Clerical Courts attached to the Leader, played a remarkable role in suppressing the

⁴⁰ Kaveh Ehsani, "Do-e Khordad and the Specter of Democracy," *Middle East Report*, no.212; Farhad Kazemi, "The Precarious Revolution: Unchanging Institutions and the Fate of Reform in Iran," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol.57, no.1 (Fall 2003), pp.81-95.

reformist press by banning numerous reformist publications.⁴¹ In the same vein, supporters of the reform movement and prominent intellectuals convicted of various charges such as corruption, acting against the national security of the Islamic Republic, and desecrating Islamic sanctities were jailed. The prosecution of Gholamhussein Karbashi, Tehran mayor and leading member of the Kargozaran, and his imprisonment for corruption and misuse of funds in July 1998, has been regarded as one of the first attempts to intimidate supporters of President Khatami.⁴² It was followed by the trial of Hojatolislam Abdullah Nuri in the Special Clerical Court. Nuri, who served as Interior Minister of the Khatami cabinet until his impeachment by the Majlis in June 1998, and owner and editor of the *Khordad* daily, was sentenced to five years in jail for insulting Islamic values in November 1999.⁴³

In addition to institutional and structural barriers erected by the judiciary, and the conservative dominated Majlis, the reform movement was also encountered with violence perpetrated either by the Ansar or by the 'gangs' based in the security organizations. The implicit alliance between the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals that have great influence over the security institutions and the Ansar, the vigilant group, also emerged as another barrier for the political agenda of the reformists.⁴⁴ As result of the violent activities supported by the neo-radicals, religious intellectuals like Soroush that arguably constructed the reformist political agenda were beaten many times. Even, Khatami's ministers, Nuri and Mohajerani could not have escaped to be pounded in street, and his adviser Hajjarian hardly saved from an assassination attempt. However, some people were murdered within a short time in late

⁴¹ Adam Tarock, "The Muzzling of Liberal Press in Iran," *Third World Quarterly*, vol.22, no.4 (2001); A. W. Samii, "Sisyphus' Newsstand: The Iranian Press under Khatami," *MERIA*, vol.5, no.3 (September 2001).

⁴² Elaine Sciolino, "The Case of the Tehran Mayor; Reform on Trial," *New York Times*, 1 July 1998.

⁴³ "Iranian reformer jailed," *BBC News / Middle East*, 27 November 1999.

⁴⁴ Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran ...," p.38. Ali Gheissari & Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Consolidation in Iran," *Survival*, vol.47, no.2 (Summer 2005).

1998 as part of the ‘serial killings’ aimed at ‘dissident’ intellectuals.⁴⁵ The violence was also directed at the student movement that constituted the driving force of the reform movement. The student demonstrations in July 1999 (and in June 2003) that illustrated dissidence against the authoritarian practices of the Islamic Republic were suppressed violently.

Considering power of the conservative and neo-radical factions to impede the reforms, executors of the reform movement favored a gradual and peaceful transformation of the country and avoided to antagonize Khamanei who occupied the Leadership position and arguably orchestrated the conservative backlash. For this reason, President Khatami apparently shunned away to back his supporters, the students and intellectuals when they confronted with the ‘establishment.’ Under those circumstances, Khatami achieved little reforms other than promoting the concepts of civil society, democracy, and rule of law, realizing the first city council elections, removing the restrictions over the press and cultural realm, and improving Iran’s relations with the West.

Despite the hurdles instigated by the conservative and neo-radical alliance to prevent the rise of the reform movement, supporters of President Khatami secured majority of the seats in the sixth Majlis elections that held in February 2000. Approximately two months after the reformist victory in the parliamentary elections, a group of pro-reform intellectuals and activists attended a conference entitled ‘Iran after the Elections’ in Berlin, Germany, in April 2000. However, a group of exiled Iranians came to the conference hall and chanted slogans against the Islamic Republic. Unsurprisingly, all attendees to the Berlin conference were put in trial for involving in activities that threatened the national security, and insulting Islamic sanctities immediately after their return to home, which was viewed as another example of the judiciary’s association with activities to curb growing influence of the reformist

⁴⁵ The incidents were attributed to the ‘Saeed Emami gang’ based in the Intelligence Ministry. Whereas Emami, the leader of the gang committed ‘suicide’ in prison, fifteen officials of the Ministry was sentenced to various penalties in result of the trial.

faction.⁴⁶ The revolutionary court sentenced imprisonment of those intellectuals and activists including Ezzetollah Sahabi, Akbar Ganji, Ali Afshari, Mehrangiz Kar, Shahla Lahiji between four and ten years, which represented a major blow to the reform movement and President Khatami.⁴⁷

After the seize of majority of the seats in the Majlis in 2000 by the reformist faction, the Guardians' Council that has the right to interpret constitution and review conformity of laws to the constitution and the Islamic law emerged as the principal barrier before the legislation of reforms. In this regard, more than fifty legislations of the Majlis were rejected by the Guardian's Council within two years. The Leader, Khamanei, who has been conceived to be mastermind of the conservative reaction to the reform movement usually, sided with the conservative faction representing the 'establishment' in Iran when it disagreed with the reformist elites and the President.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he inserted his personal influence to prevent the prospective reforms. After his reprimand, Ataollah Mohajerani, the Minister of Culture and instigator of the reforms in the cultural arena resigned from the cabinet in April 2000. Similarly, Khamanei wrote a letter to the Majlis in August 2000 to prevent amendment of the press law, which was the first remarkable initiative of the reformist-dominated sixth Majlis.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding the factional bickering, due to the favor of the Iranian populace towards the reform movement, President Khatami was re-elected for the second four-year term in May 2001 with a greater percentage of the casted votes than the previous

⁴⁶ "Court Summons for Iranian Reformists," *BBC News / Middle East*, 20 April 2000.

⁴⁷ Jim Muir, "Analysis: Backlash gathers pace," *BBC News / Middle East*, 14 January 2001.

⁴⁸ Khamanei occasionally came to the help of the reformists arguably to calm populace that supported the reformist faction. In this regard he prevented execution of Hashem Aghajari, a war veteran and university professor that convicted to death penalty for apostasy in December 2002. Khamanei also asked the Guardians' Council to review its decision to forbid many reformist politicians to run for the Majlis elections in February 2004. For a review of Khamanei's relationship to the reform movement see, Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, p.262.

⁴⁹ "Punch-up over press law," *BBC News / Middle East*, 6 August 2000.

election.⁵⁰ In order to overcome his political impotence as the President, Khatami drafted two bills in his second term, called twin bills, to enhance executive powers of the President and curb power of the Guardians Council related to elections. One of the laws aimed to restrain authority of the Guardians' Council to review candidates for the elected offices including Majlis membership and the presidency. The other law would boost the presidential authority by giving him the right to warn and punish officials in the executive, legislative or judicial branches that violated the constitution as he was constitutionally charged with observing execution of the Constitution. Hence, the President would be granted with authority to suspend rulings of the judiciary that viewed as unconstitutional.⁵¹ The bills were approved by the Majlis in November 2002, yet rejected by the Guardians' Council.⁵²

Despite the challenges facing Khatami inside Iran, he had a great maneuvering capability in the foreign policy realm. The OIC summit held in Tehran in December 1997, shortly after Khatami's inauguration in presidency, provided him a good starting point. At the summit that attracted a great number of leaders, including the leaders of the Arab countries, Khatami outlined his accommodative foreign policy strategy that based on dialogue, and acknowledged legitimacy of nation-states. Additionally, because the summit provided Khatami with an opportunity for bilateral negotiations with leaders of the Arab countries, it paved the way for normalization of relations between Iran and the Arab world. Khatami's conciliatory messages towards the outside world continued through his interview that published on CNN in January 1998. Then, he spelled out his regret with the hostage-taking in November 1979, denounced terrorism, and acknowledged the 'greatness of the American civilization.' Furthermore, he offered

⁵⁰ He was elected as President in May 1997 by garnering 61 percent of the casted votes. In the June 2001 election, Khatami got 78 of the casted votes. See, Ahmad Siddiqi, "Khatami and Search for Reform in Iran," *Stanford Journal of International Affairs*, vol.6, no.1 (Winter 2005).

⁵¹ "Iran power struggle nears showdown," *BBC News / Middle East*, 5 November 2002.

⁵² A. William Samii, "Dissent in Iranian Elections: Reasons and Implications," *Middle East Journal*, Vol.58, No.3 (Summer 2004), pp.415-417.

establishment of non-political dialogue between the Iranian and the American nation.⁵³ Khatami reiterated his call for dialogue among civilizations in various international platforms, and eventually sponsored designation of 2001 as the ‘UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.’ After Khatami’s ascend to the presidency Iran-EU relations were also restored. Moreover, following Khatami’s assurance that his government would make no effort to carry out Khomeini’s fatwa against Rushdie in September 1998, the EU-Iran relations flourished and turned into comprehensive and constructive dialogue.⁵⁴

Revolutionary foreign policy of Iran, however, continued to dominate Iran’s relations with Israel and the United States. Despite the mutual gestures between Iran and the United States, the two states could not settle their conflicts. Moreover, after the September 11 (2001), the conflict between the United States and the Islamic Republic started to turn into confrontation.⁵⁵ Above all, US President Georg W. Bush depicted Iran as a member of so-called ‘axis of evil’ in his ‘State of Union Address’ in January 2002. Additionally, reveal of the Iranian uranium enrichment program in August 2002 led to the revitalization of international pressure on the Iranian regime. Additionally, the US ‘war on terror’ and the presence of numerous American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the Bush administration’s talk of ‘regime change’ in Tehran, made the survival and security of the Islamic Republic the principal preoccupation of the elites.⁵⁶ This change in priorities was also evident in President Khatami’s agenda that started to talk less about reform and more about security issues. As result of the rising security concerns, whereas the political regime became more intolerant towards opposition, the

⁵³ Ramazani, “The Shifting Premise of Iran’s Foreign Policy ... ,” *Middle East Journal*, vol.52, no.2 (Spring, 1998), pp.177-85.

⁵⁴ Ziba Moshaver, “Revolution, Theocratic Leadership and Iran’s Foreign Policy: Implications for Iran-EU Relations,” *The Review of International Affairs*, vol.3, no.2 (Winter 2003), pp.295-297.

⁵⁵ Nabi Sonboli, “Iran va Amreka pas az 11 September: az Eetelaf taa Barkhord,” *Negah*, vol.3, no.21 (Nisan 2002).

⁵⁶ See, Gawdat Baghat, “Iran, the United States, and the War on Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol.26, no.2 (March-April 2003); Garry Sick, “Iran: Confronting Terrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.26, no.4 (Autumn 2003).

alliance between the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals that represented anti-Americanism and prioritized 'security' came to the fore in the Iranian politics.⁵⁷

Consequently, the reform movement failed to put their reformist agenda into practice because of structural and political reasons. However, the passive stance of Khatami vis-à-vis the establishment and reverse of some reforms like the freedom of press led to gradual disillusionment among the supporters of the reform movement. Another blow to the reformist movement came from disagreements among the parties to the 23 May Front that led to disintegration of the reformist coalition. The reform movement failed in economic grounds, as well. Despite forwarding the Iranian economy in general, the Khatami government also failed to improve economic conditions of the Iranian population that suffered from poverty, unemployment, inflation and corruption, which resulted in alienation of the lower segments of society to the reformist faction. Complicating the picture for the fall of the reformist faction, the Islamic Republic under the Khatami administration encountered with new difficulties in the foreign policy realm. In fact, the Khatami government did the best in foreign policy as it achieved to improve relations with the neighboring countries and the European countries, to change international image of the Islamic Republic from a quarrelsome state to the sponsor of dialogue among civilizations.⁵⁸ However, from 2002 onwards the Islamic Republic faced with new difficulties in foreign policy and new threats to its national security. The outcome of the new regional setting that pose novel threats to security of Iran was the consolidation and the ascent of the alliance between the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals. Consequently, the thermidor stage in the revolutionary Iran gave way to rise of neo-radicals in Iranian politics and relapse of radicalism.

⁵⁷ Daniel Brumberg, "Iranian Domestic Politics and U.S.–Iranian Relations: A Complex Encounter," in C.F. Ziemke (ed.), *Leadership Dynamics and Nuclear Decision Making in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, (Virginia: Institute for Defense Analysis, 2005), pp.10-20.

⁵⁸ Roshendal, *op.cit.*, pp.109-10.

6.1.5. Rise of the Neo-Radicals

As stated above, in the process of transition from the radicalism to the thermidor in revolutionary Iran, hardliners, the so-called *Maktabis* of the radical period were eliminated from the influential positions in the government and the Majlis by the rightist (traditional conservative and modern right) coalition in power. In due time, the hardliners split into two groups; the Islamic left that supported republicanism within the framework of the constitution of the Islamic Republic, and the neo-radicals, that emerged as the ardent supporters of the velayat-e faqih within the frame of religio-revolutionary principles.

Contrary to the Islamic left that supported reforms initiated by President Rafsanjani that entailed liberalization of politics, culture and economy and constituted the backbone of the reform movement, the same reforms made by Rafsanjani frustrated the neo-radicals, who are also known as the neo-fundamentalists. In response they established their own organizations to fight against political and economic ‘liberalization’ and ‘moral corruption’ of the youth and women.⁵⁹ Due to the similarity of their views on socio-cultural issues, the traditional conservatives supported this faction against the rising reformist coalition. Hence, neo-radical political organizations like the *Isargaran*, *Defa’ az Arzasha* and the *Abadgaran-e Iran-e Eslami* (Developers of the Islamic Iran) affiliated with this faction come to the fore in Iranian politics beginning with the mid-1990s.

The organizational rise of the new radicals was accompanied by the rise of new intellectuals, as some called neo-conservative intellectuals and bureaucrats in relation with this faction.⁶⁰ As stated above, the neo-radicals had already great influence over the security organizations of the country including the Intelligence Ministry, the IRGC and

⁵⁹ Farhi, “The Antinomies of Iran’s War Generation,” pp. 101-20. Lara Marlowe, “Revolutionary Disintegration,” *Time*, 24 June 2001.

⁶⁰ Farhad Khosrokhavar, “The New Conservatives Take a Turn,” *Middle East Report*, no.233 (Winter 2004), pp.24-27.

the Basij. Additionally, veterans of the war who had found jobs in various ministries, among whom the neo-radicals have been regarded to have considerable supporters, started to come influential positions within ten years after the end of the war. Thus, the neo-radicals represented a new faction of younger revolutionary Iranian elite, particularly those with a common background in defense of the revolution and the Islamic Republic.⁶¹

The national, regional and international dynamics that caused to the fall of the reform movement, led to the rise of the neo-radicals in Iranian politics. The first dramatic indication of the rise of neo-radicals came in March 2003, when the neo-radical contenders achieved an outstanding victory in the city council elections. Approximately a year after the local elections, the neo-radicals' alliance with the traditional conservatives gained majority of the seats in the seventh Majlis. Finally, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mayor of Tehran and the neo-radical contender for the presidential elections that held in June 2005, became the sixth president of the Islamic Republic.

6.2. The IRGC and Politics in the Thermidorian Iran: From Subordinate to Interventionist

The thermidor stage in post-revolutionary Iran brought a change in terms of civil-military relations, as well, considering the Revolutionary Guards' relationship to the politics. The IRGC's subordination to the political leadership was started to alarm in the last year of the war, as the political leadership favored moderation in its foreign policy approach. Nevertheless, several factors, including Khomeini's support for the political leadership and weakness of the IRGC corporateness that was seriously threatened immediately after the end of the war, the subordinate relationship between the IRGC and the civilian government was persistent, for a while, in the post-war Iran.

⁶¹ Bill Samii, "A New Generation and the Drift to the Right in Iran," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 21 June 2005; Barnard Hourcade, "The Rise to Power of Iran's 'Guardians of the Revolution'," *Middle East Policy*, vol.16, no.3 (Autumn 2009), ss.58-63.

The corporatism that flourished among the IRGC ranks in the radical period and boosted by the common experiences in the war was challenged by several developments in the process of transition from the radical period to the thermidor stage. Above all, institutional integrity and institutional autonomy of the Guards were threatened by the government initiatives to restructure armed forces of the country immediately after the end of the war. Hashemi Rafsanjani directed the government initiatives first as the Acting Commander in Chief, and then President of the country that aimed at professionalization and combination of the armed forces including the IRGC and the Army. In this regard, initially, the General Staff of the Joint Armed Forces was established in June 1988. This attempt was regarded as the first step towards amalgamation of the armed forces and followed by the steps to professionalize the Guards, the merge of the Defense Ministry with the IRGC Ministry, and the amalgamation of internal security forces. However, Ayatollah Khamanei, who replaced Khomeini as the Leader of the Revolution strongly rejected the idea of amalgamation of the armed forces and stated that the two armed forces with their characteristic missions would survive next to next. Moreover, Khamanei asserted that “durability and strength” of the Guards “is closely knit to the durability and strength of the system.”⁶² Recalling the abolishment of the Revolutionary Committees, one of the leading revolutionary organizations, in 1991 it is true to suggest that the IRGC has survived the most severe threat to its survival through the shield of Khamanei.

Additionally, immediately after the end of the war, the IRGC encountered with the issue of demobilization of its excessive man-power. It emerged from the war as a highly expanded military organization with a huge bureaucratic structure. At the end of the war it had almost 300,000 men including the Basij forces and the conscripted soldiers. A dramatic demobilization could provoke disagreements and lead to rise of factionalism within the command structure of the Guards. However, since, the threat of revival of the war continued for a long time despite the cease-fire, Iran did not realized a dramatic

⁶² “Khamane’i Speaks on Importance of IRGC,” *Tehran Television Service*, 27 January 1990, FBIS-NES-90-021, 31 January 1990, p.63.

demobilization of the forces, but the number of the Guards gradually decreased to around 125,000 in the mid-1990s. Many members of the Guards ‘voluntarily’ leaved their positions in the IRGC after the end of the war and attended their education and involved in intellectual circles of the country, sought government jobs, or entered in business activities. The remaining IRGC commanders and officials came together in nation-wide conventions in order to save the IRGC corporatism and establish uniformity of the command.

Having secured its survival, the IRGC took several steps to adjust itself into the changing circumstances of the country in the process of transition to the thermidor stage. To begin with, the IRGC command clearly sided with the Leader, Khamanei, the savior of the Guards. The burgeoning association between the Guards and Khamanei implicated prospective stances of the IRGC towards politics. The second attempt of the Guards for resilience into the new conditions was agreement with the government on measures to professionalize the IRGC as a military institution. Therefore, the IRGC cooperated with the government to establish conventional ranking system, military hierarchy, uniforms, and new criteria for administration of personnel affairs in the IRGC. Additionally, the IRGC started to play a remarkable role in the ‘reconstruction crusade’ by employing its material and technical sources, manpower, and engineering capability that was devised throughout the war.

As a result, although institutional autonomy of the IRGC was curbed to some extent, it overcame the immediate threats that jeopardized its institutional integrity after the end of the war. Despite intensification of factionalism among the Iranian political elites in this stage, the IRGC managed to keep its uniformity and discipline. Moreover, the gradual professionalization of the IRGC and its involvement in the economic activities as well as the shield of Khamanei boosted its autonomy vis-à-vis the civilian political leadership represented by the President and government. Thus, it can be concluded that corporatism within the ranks of the Guards remarkably increased throughout the thermidor stage in Iran. The growing corporatism provided the IRGC

with an ability to redefine its institutional identity and missions, and to play a remarkable role in the factional struggles.

As to the ideological outlook of the IRGC, unlike many revolutionary regimes that prioritized professionalism of their armies over ideological indoctrination during the revolutionary wars, the Iranian revolutionary leadership never gave up religious and political education of the Guards. Many clerics that dispatched to the war fronts both trained the fellow Guardsmen, and fought against the enemy in the same line with them. As a result, at the end of the war, the IRGC was pretty doctrinaire in its approach to the revolutionary ideology and religious principles. An analysis of the martyrs wills clearly exposed that approximately 95 percent of the Guards' wills were religious in tone with references to the Karbala incident and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.⁶³ Moreover, ideological-political training of the Guards and the Basijis was enhanced in the 1990s, especially after the rise of the reform movement.⁶⁴

Although the civilian political leadership led by President Rafsanjani promoted professionalism of the Guards as a military organization, the conservative and radical clerics highlighted the religious and revolutionary missions of IRGC. In this regard, Leader Khamanei continuously underlined the importance of maintaining faith, Islamic knowledge and piety among the IRGC forces.⁶⁵ Thus, the Guards under the shield of Khamanei, which made the IRGC considerably autonomous from the political leadership embodied by the President, courageously defined its institutional identity and missions in religious and revolutionary terms. The Guards portrayed themselves as a 'specific

⁶³ Mateo M. Farzaneh, "Shi'i Ideology, Iranian Secular Nationalism and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88)," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, vol.7, no.1, 2007, p.96.

⁶⁴ See, Saeid Golkar, "The Ideological-Political Training of Iran's Basij," *Middle East Brief*, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, no.44, September 2010.

⁶⁵ "Khamane'i Speaks on Importance of IRGC," *Tehran Television Service*, 27 January 1990, FBIS-NES-90-021, 31 January 1990, p.63.

group' committed to the Islamic revolution, sacrificed much in this way throughout the revolution and the war, and tasked with safeguarding the revolution.⁶⁶

Because the Guards saved their institutional integrity and 'revolutionary' character through the favor of Leader Khamanei, and conservative clerics associated with him, the IRGC turned into a stronghold of the traditional conservative faction in the 1990s. Despite its association with the conservative faction, majority of the Guards remained under the influence of the neo-radical preachers who acted as clerical supervisors to the Guards since the early 1990s, like Hojatoleslams Mohammadi Araqi, Movahhedi Kermani, and Ali Saedi, all disciples of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, the prominent neo-radical figure. Thus, the subordination of the IRGC to the traditional conservative faction signified the implicit alliance between the neo-radicals and the traditional conservatives because the both factions believed in the necessity of the absolute mandate of the vali-ye faqih and advocated supremacy of the religious values and religious establishment vis-à-vis the popular values and popular institutions of the Islamic Republic. The IRGC has endured its anti-American and anti-imperialist position in foreign policy matters, as well, which brought the Guards closer to the neo-radicals and the conservatives. Thus, the ideological/political outlook of the IRGC in the thermidorian Iran was quite associated with the political viewpoints of the neo-radical and the traditional conservative factions.

The institutional and ideological association of the IRGC, with the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals culminated its confrontation with the Iranian thermidorians in terms of ideology. Indeed, the Rafsanjani administration's attempts to rationalize politics and developmentalist economy policies were conceived by the 'hardliners' as deviation from the Imam's line and the revolution. Once the merger of

⁶⁶ For instance, Rahim Safavi said in the graduation ceremony of the students of Shahid Mahallati College in Qom, in October 2003, "The status of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps is higher than the status of political parties and groups. Political parties are like seasonal mushrooms; with these differences that they say certain things for three or four years and then disappear ... The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps will remain in order to safeguard our revolution." "The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Yahya Rahim Safavi: After the Middle East, America will go to (conquer) Europe," *Keyhan*, 6 October 2003, FBIS-NES-2003-1006.

the Revolutionary Committee with the police and the gendarmerie was underway, the Committee criticized Rafsanjani's policies and warned, "A creeping revolution against the Islamic revolution is under way that is an enemy's plot against our Islamic culture."⁶⁷ Similarly, Ali Akbar Mohtashami, a prominent hardliner, called supporters of open-door policy and free-market system, referring to President Rafsanjani and his associates, as "rightists" who "either want to obliterate the revolutionary process or to make it fade away."⁶⁸ Rafsanjani not only changed the direction of economy and foreign policy, he led liberalization of politics. Moreover, the new intellectuals including Saeed Hajjarian, Akbar Abdi and Akbar Ganji who challenged the 'establishment' in the Islamic Republic first burgeoned in the Center for Strategic Studies which was under the auspices of President Rafsanjani. The intellectuals associated with the Center, together with the *Kiyan* circle that consisted of religious intellectuals came around the *Kiyan*, an influential monthly magazine, challenged the absolute mandate of the vali-ye faqih, and campaigned for rule of law and establishment of civil society. Thus, the two circles emerged as the pioneers of the reformist thinking and the reform movement.

Rise of the reform movement frustrated the conservative and the neo-radical factions that claimed to sustain the revolutionary values and the Imam's line. The conservative and neo-radical elite were highly critical of liberal approaches of the reform movement as well as its conceptions of religious democracy, civil society and rule of law. Moreover, the reform movement's critical position towards the velayat-e faqih regarded as a threat to the Islamic bases of the Islamic Republic.⁶⁹ Consequently, ideological posture of the ruling elites in the thermidorian Iran was considerably different from the revolutionary ideology and values underlined by the conservative and

⁶⁷ Quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, pp.191-92.

⁶⁸ Elaine Sciolino, "Rafsanjani Sketches Vision of a Moderate, Modern Iran," *The New York Times*, 19 April 1992.

⁶⁹ Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, pp.134-41.

neo-radical elite, who claimed to be true heirs of the Imam's line, thereby from the IRGC's ideological outlook.

While the ideological differences were widening between the IRGC and the political leadership throughout the 1990s, power of the ruling elites were gradually hampered by the factional bickering. In parallel to the intensification of political factionalism, the dualism of the early stages of the revolution, i.e. the division of political authority between the formal state apparatus and the revolutionary organizations which was disappeared during the reign of the radicals, resurfaced in the thermidorian stage. The revolutionary organizations, the judiciary and the Council of Guardians fell to the domain of the conservative-radical alliance. Although the formal state apparatus remained under the influence of the political leadership represented by the President, his authority strongly checked and challenged by the revolutionary organizations. Although the presidency emerged as a powerful position due to the constitutional amendments just at the start of the Iranian thermidor, its powers, thus, were strongly checked by the judiciary, and curbed by the revolutionary organizations, when those institutions fell under the control of different factions.

Notwithstanding its institutional powerless, the political leadership associated with the reform movement had a great popular support. President Khatami, however, shunned away to mobilize his supporters to avoid direct and violent clashes with the 'guardians' of the regime, which would eventually threaten the Islamic Republic. Additionally, the reform movement was a great coalition of more than eighteen parties with different tendencies.⁷⁰ Therefore, the reformists failed to establish a united front to encounter challenges facing the reform movement. Therefore, after the liberal press was muzzled by the conservative judiciary, the President, the formal political leadership, virtually had no power to advance his political agenda.⁷¹ Hence, the political leadership lacked

⁷⁰ Bijan Khajepour, "Protest and Regime Resilience in Iran," *Middle East Report Online*, 11 December 2002, <http://merip.org/mero/mero121102.html>.

⁷¹ See, Keyvan Tabari, "The Rule of Law and the Politics of Reform in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *International Sociology*, vol.18, no.1 (March 2003), pp.96-113.

institutional and political authority to supervise the IRGC activities, whereas its corporateness was remarkably burgeoned under the shield of Leader Khamanei. Thereby, the IRGC re-emerged as an influential institution redefining its institutional missions and identity as of the mid-1990s.

In accordance with the framework drawn in this study, there are two explanation of the IRGC's increasing interventionism in politics. First, ideological harmony between the Guards and the ruling leadership faded away because the ruling elite in this stage were represented by the modern right and the Islamic left, and the IRGC came under the influence of the neo-radicals. Second, the ruling elite lacked necessary institutional and political power to control the IRGC, which resulted in interventionism of the Revolutionary Guards. Moreover, contrary to the 'moderate view' advocated by the modern right and the reformist elite led by Rafsanjani and Khatami, which depicted the IRGC as a military force and opposed its involvement in politics, the conservative and neo-radical elites led by Khamanei implicitly or publicly supported the Guards' interventions in politics.⁷² In this context, when the factional bickering intensified, the IRGC started to intervene in politics, usually in favor of the conservative/neo-radical alliance on the grounds of safeguarding the revolution and its achievements. The interventionism of the IRGC in politics, in this stage, typically occurred in way issuing public statements and warnings implicating a threat to use force.

6.3. Implications of the Change of the IRGC-Politics Relationship from Subordination to Interventionism

6.3.1. President Rafsanjani and the IRGC

At the time of Ayatollah Khomeini's death on June 3, 1989, the IRGC and the Army issued a joint statement announcing their readiness to continue to protect the Islamic revolution and the Islamic homeland. In the statement, the IRGC and the Army affirmed that they would carry out their duties under the command of the Acting

⁷² Chapter.3, Missions of IRGC, *supra.*, pp.62-71.

Commander in Chief, Rafsanjani.⁷³ In a joint statement issued on June 5, the Army and the IRGC supported the Assembly of Experts' vote for President Khamanei as the new Leader of the Islamic Iran.⁷⁴ It is followed by announcements of the allegiance of other IRGC units to the new Leader, Khamanei.

As a result of the fifth presidential elections of Iran that held on July 28, 1989, Rafsanjani became the new President. Thus, for the second time after the revolution, the Iranian President held the title of the Acting Commander in Chief, that is, the military and political leadership embodied in a single person for the first time after the dismissal of President Banisadr from the Commander in Chief. This unity of the leadership lasted by Rafsanjani's resignation as the Commander in Chief on September 2, 1989.⁷⁵ Thus, as constitutionally required, command of the armed forces laid to the Leader, Ayatollah Khamanei. Under the command of Khamanei, the IRGC gradually became associated with the traditional conservative and the neo-radical factions, which resulted in destruction of subordinate relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership embodied with the President and the government.

Under those circumstances, the first row between the Guards and President Rafsanjani came on the issue of amalgamation of the armed forces and professionalization of the Guards. Rafsanjani viewed the IRGC as a military organization and asked its commanders to "turn their organization into a military one, a completely military organization."⁷⁶ In response, the Guards resisted the merger of the armed forces with the support of their hardline allies. By underscoring the IRGC's mission as the guardian of the revolution, they argued that its merger with the traditional army would decrease its effectiveness in defending the revolution at a sensitive

⁷³ "Armed Force's Statement," *IRNA*, 4 June 1989.

⁷⁴ "Army, IRGC swear allegiance," *IRNA*, 5 June 1989.

⁷⁵ "Iranian President quits as Chief of Armed Forces," *The New York Times*, 3 September 1989.

⁷⁶ "Hashemi-Rafsanjani Speaks on Future of IRGC," *Tehran Domestic Service*, 6 October 1988, FBIS-NES-88-195, 7 October 1988, pp.50-53.

juncture.⁷⁷ Eventually, Khamanei assured the Guards on the survival of the IRGC and ruled out the amalgamation schemes.⁷⁸

Although it conceded with the Rafsanjani government to put some reforms in order to increase its military efficiency,⁷⁹ the IRGC involved in reconstruction and economic activities rather than ‘turning into a complete military organization,’ which encouraged by the Leader.⁸⁰ Establishment of the GHORB (*Gharargah-e Sazandegi-ye Khatam al-Anbia*), in 1990, the major contractor of the government in construction, development, industrial and military projects, was a turning point in IRGC’s involvement in economy. However, because the IRGC reported to Leader Khamanei, the bulk of its activities were not subject to government or parliamentary oversight. Thus, economic activities of the Guards provided them with great material interests and financial independence from the central government, which boosted autonomy of the IRGC vis-à-vis the civilian political leadership.⁸¹

By the mid-1990s, as the rightist coalition of the modern right and the traditional conservative elites faded away, President Rafsanjani confronted with Leader Khamanei. The developmentalist and liberal agenda of the modern right, which led its dissociation

⁷⁷ “Report on the Merger of the Security Forces,” *Bayan*, no.2, 22 June/22 July 1990, “BAYAN comments on Merger of Security Forces,” FBIS-NES-90-169, 30 August 1990, p.60. Ahmed Hashim, “Iran’s Military Situation,” in Patrick Clawson (ed.), *Iran’s Strategic Intentions and Capabilities* (Washington: National Defense University, 1994), p.198. K. Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam; Iran’s Revolutionary Guard*, (Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), p.59.

⁷⁸ “Khamane’i Denies Rumor of Army-IRGC Merger,” *Tehran Voice of the IRI First Program Network*, 16 September 1991, FBIS-NES-91-180, 17 September 1991, p.65.

⁷⁹ “IRGC Official Interviewed on Restructuring,” *Tehran Domestic Service*, 16 January 1990, FBIS-NES-90-015, 23 January 1990, p.52.

⁸⁰ “Gofte-goo ba Farmandehe Kole Sepahe Pasdarane Enghelabe Islami,” *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, pp.4-5; Revolution Guards Corps Chief of Staff interviewed,” *Tehran Times*, 13 February 1990, FBIS-NES-90-040, 28 February 1990, p.71. On the RGC economic activities see, Mehdi Khalaji, “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps, Inc.” *WINEP Policywatch*, no.1273, 17 August 2007, p.2; and A. Alfoneh, “How Intertwined are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran’s Economy,” *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, no.3 (October 2007).

⁸¹ Ahmad Naghibzadeh, “Politics and the military in Iran,” *Defense nationale et securite collective*, January 2008, p.124; Azadeh Moaveni, “Iran’s rich Revolutionary Guard,” *Time*, 5 September 2007.

with the conservative elites, also attracted the ire of the Revolutionary Guards, which, then, allied with the conservative and the neo-radical factions. In this regard, Brig-Gen Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr, the then the Chief of the IRGC General Staff said:

“... in the name of development, some people want to trample under foot and weaken all the fundamentals and values of this revolution, for the preservation of which so many martyrs and war disabled have sacrificed their lives; and they want to please arrogance by turning their backs on the sacred aspirations of the revolution...”⁸²

In the meantime, as discussed in the third chapter of this study, the IRGC portrayed the Western ‘cultural onslaught’ as the principal threat to the Islamic revolution which aimed at Islamic foundations of the regime.⁸³ Although that threat assessment, which was in conformity with the viewpoint of the Leader, seemed to be a reaction to the implications of globalization, it was also a rejection of Rafsanjani’s cultural and social policies that entailed cultural openness, tolerance and political liberalism.⁸⁴ Eventually, Mohammad Khatami, the then the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, was forced to resign in 1992, and was replaced by Ali Larijani, a *Motelefeh* member and former deputy minister of IRGC.

In the same line, IRGC Commander Rezai stressed that “the fate of the Islamic Revolution would be dependent on the results of the cultural and political war of Hezbollah with liberals in Iran.” Having pointed out that liberalism was “a cancerous tumor that was growing up in parts of the country,” Rezai accused the political leadership for its inadequate handling with the issue.⁸⁵ It was interesting that Rezai made

⁸² “Official says Guards Corps will act to protect revolutionary values,” Kayhan, 21 May 1996 in SWB, ME 2625, 30 May 1996, p.13.

⁸³ Chapter.3, Missions of IRGC, *supra.*, pp.85-95.

⁸⁴ Farideh Farhi, “Cultural Policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” paper presented to the conference entitled “*Iran After 25 Years of Revolution: A Retrospective and a Look Ahead.*,” which was held at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars on November 16-17, 2004. It is available at <https://wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/FaridehFarhiFinal.pdf>.

⁸⁵ “Guards Commander Reza’i says ‘liberalism’ is a cancerous tumour’,” IRNA (in English), 11 April 1996 in SWB, ME 2585. 13 April 1996, p.25.

those remarks on the brink of the parliamentary elections, in April 1996, and during the campaign of election the Society of Combatant Clerics (Ruhaniyat) warned people against voting for “liberals” by implying candidates of the modern right and the Islamic left, who allegedly opposed the velayat-e faqih.⁸⁶ After all, Rezaei called people to vote for who would defend the values of the Islamic revolution, and the velayat-e faqih.⁸⁷ Moreover, he warned that “the Guards will knock down the ‘liberals’ and prevent them from entering the Majlis even if they were elected.”⁸⁸

A year after the parliamentary elections, Iran went to the presidential elections, which resulted in landslide victory of Mohammad Khatami. While President Rafsanjani and his associates threw their support for Khatami, the conservatives backed Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, the then Speaker of the Majlis. It was reported that the IRGC leadership also sided with Nateq-Nuri and resolutely stood against the victory of Khatami, which conceived to pose a vital threat to the Islamic Republic.⁸⁹ Eventually, victory of Khatami unleashed a bitter factional fighting and severe crises in terms of civil-military relations. Rezaei’s following remarks rightly underscored break lines of the IRGC’s relationship to the politics:

“It is very difficult for the IRGC men who obey the instructions of the vali [Leader] to see that there are persons amongst the associates of the president-elect who question the concept of absolute guardianship of the vali-ye faqih and even dare to consider the vote of the people above that of the Leader. In the meantime, Iran is the land of the ‘Imam of the Time’ and speaking about national sovereignty

⁸⁶ “Militant Clerics Society Candidate Interviewed,” *Salam*, 16 April 1996, FBIS-NES-96-079, 23 April 1996, p.80.

⁸⁷ “Guards Commander – Hezbollah must fight liberalism,” *IRNA (in English)*, 11 April 1996, FBIS-NES-96-072, 12 April 1996, p.77.

⁸⁸ *Hamshahri*, April 18, 1996, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, p.38.

⁸⁹ Geneive Abdo and Jonathan Lyons, *Answering Only to God; Faith and Freedom in Twenty-First Century Iran*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2003), p.75.

and man-made laws vis-à-vis the divine laws, had made the dear Islamic Guards seriously concerned.”⁹⁰

6.3.2. The IRGC Encounters the Reform Movement

Despite the resentment of the Guards towards the reform movement, Leader Khamenei asked them to accept the president-elect and forget about objections they had raised before the elections.⁹¹ In due course, IRGC Commander Rezai resigned from his post in September 1997. Leader Khamenei appointed his deputy, Yahya Rahim Safavi, to replace him as the Commander of the Revolutionary Guards.⁹² Although Rezai’s resignation was considered as a blow to President Khatami’s opponents, it also improved Khamenei’s authority over the Guards through reshuffling the IRGC command.⁹³

Soon after his appointment as Commander of IRGC, Yahya Rahim Safavi encountered with the reform movement and the President, through his controversial statements. Initially, the IRGC reacted to President Khatami’s famous interview that appeared on the CNN International, because he expressed his ‘regret’ over the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran in November 1979.⁹⁴ After then, the IRGC Commander continued to criticize foreign policy and liberalization program of the Khatami administration.

One of Safavi’s critical statements addressed to the fellow Guardsmen in Qom was publicized in April 1998 by the reformist newspapers, which caused a great disturbance

⁹⁰ *Ettela’at*, 23 June 1997, quoted in Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoub Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p.20.

⁹¹ *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, June 16, 1997, p.2, referred in Stephen C. Fairbanks, “A New Era for Iran?” *Middle East Policy*, vol.5, no.3 (September 1997), p.53.

⁹² Kenneth Pollack, “Iran: Shaking up the High Command,” *WINEP Policy Watch*, no.269, 1 October 1997; Saeed Barzin, “Officers kept at a distance,” *Middle East International*, no 574, 8 May 1998, p.13.

⁹³ Amir Ali Nurbakhsh, “Iran’s Foreign Policy and its key decision makers,” *Payvand*, 25 April 2005.

⁹⁴ “Islamic Guards react to Khatami CNN interview, defend US embassy takeover,” *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, 12 January 1998, in SWB, ME 3126, 16 January 1998, p.19.

especially among the supporters of the reform movement.⁹⁵ He maintained that foreign policy activities of President Khatami, including the détente policy, the dialogue among civilizations, and the participation to the multilateral conventions would not boost Iran's national security and interests. Safavi, reportedly, condemned Khatami's ministers and associates, especially Abdollah Nuri, Minister of Interior, and Ataollah Mohacerani, Minister of Culture, for undermining the principle of velayat-e faqih, and thereby, jeopardizing the basic pillars of the revolution and the regime. He also attacked the liberal press, which flourished in Iran under the Khatami administration, and threatened to decapitate the 'liberal' intellectuals who were associated with the West, and, allegedly, undermining the regime.⁹⁶

Safavi, also, clearly warned that the IRGC might involve in politics under certain conditions. He stated, "If we see that the foundations of our system of government and our revolution are threatened... we got involved."⁹⁷ He argued that there was political current, he labeled as the 'third current,' sponsored by foreigners, intended to destroy the foundations of the Islamic Republic by hatching cultural plots, creating social unrest, and pitting the revolutionary forces against each other. Safavi asserted that the IRGC identified many elements in that current, but it was waiting the 'right time' to catch them.⁹⁸ Moreover, implying the trial of Karbashchi in June 1998, Safavi said, "the trial

⁹⁵ H. Jalaepor, "Shahadat Talabei ba Manteghe Kur," *Pas az Dovvome Khordad, Negahe be Jameashenakhte be Jonboshe Madaney Iran, 1376-78*, (Tehran: 1378), pp.75-78; "Iranian daily criticizes Guards commander's 'outrageous' threats," Iran Daily, 5 May 1998 in SWB, ME 3223, 11 May 1998, p.11.

⁹⁶"Revolutionary Guards Chief send coup warning to the President," *Iran Press Service*, 29 April 1998; "For the First Time, the Regime is Challenged by the Military," *Iran Press Service*, 3 May 1998; Michael Eisenstadt, "Iran's Revolutionary Guard Commander sends a warning," *WINEP Policywatch*, no.314, 7 May 1998; Barzin, "Officers kept at a distance," p.12-13. See also Abdo and Lyons, *op.cit.*, pp.151-195. For an assessment of the issue from the viewpoint of Safavi, see, "Nagoftehayeh Rahim Safavi az 10 Sale Fermandehi Sepahe Pasdaran," *Markeze Esnade Enghelab*, 21 Dey 1388 [11 January 2010].

⁹⁷ Quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Iran*, p.38.

⁹⁸ "Guards commander warns of 'third current' intent on destroying religion," IRNA, 2 June 1998 in SWB, ME 3244, 4 June 1998, pp.2-3.

of one of them is in fact going to be held on the 18th of this month.”⁹⁹ Soon after, Safavi’s controversial statements condemning Abdullah Nuri and Mohajerani, Nuri was impeached by the Majlis in June 1998. The two friends were, also, physically attacked by the vigilantes in September 1998, when they were on the way for the Friday prayer.

Not only Safavi’s controversial remarks, but the IRGC’s usual statements, in some occasions, were also antagonistic to Khatami government’s handling of internal and foreign policy issues. A well-known illustration of this antagonism appeared around the fatwa of Ayatollah Khomeini that sentenced author and publishers of the contentious novel, *The Satanic Verses*, authored by Salman Rushdie, to death. In order to restore Iran’s relations with the United Kingdom and improve relations with the EU, the Iranian government denounced the death fatwa. President Khatami and Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi publicly announced, in September 1998, that the Iranian government had no intention of taking any action whatsoever to threaten the life of Rushdie, and dissociated itself from any reward offered in this regard.¹⁰⁰ However, in the same line with the 15 Khordad Foundation headed by Ayatollah Hassan Sanai, which offered a bounty for the assassination of Rushdie, in a written statement issued in February 1999, on the occasion of anniversary of the fatwa, the IRGC reiterated validity of Khomeini’s decree, and underscored that nothing could change it.¹⁰¹ The Guards continued to issue a statement in every anniversary of the fatwa, confirming its validity.

6.3.3. The 9 July 1999 Student Unrest and the IRGC Warning to Khatami

A group of university students organized a peaceful demonstration on July 8, 1999, to protest the new constrictive press law enacted by the conservative-dominated fifth Majlis, and the closure of the Salam daily, owned by the Association of Combatant

⁹⁹ “Guards commander warns of ‘third current’ intent on destroying religion,” IRNA, 2 June 1998 in SWB, ME 3244, 4 June 1998, pp.2-3.

¹⁰⁰ “Rushdie’s relief over fatwa move,” *BBC News / UK*, 23 September 1998.

¹⁰¹ “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards say Salman Rushdie death sentence is irrevocable,” *BBC News / World*, 13 February 1999.

Clerics (Rouhaniyun), by the press court. On the evening of the same day, the security forces, the LEF (Law Enforcement Forces, the police) surrounded the student dormitories of Tehran University, and the accompanying plainclothes, who were supposed to be members of the Ansar-e Hezbollah and Basij, raided the dormitory compound, beat students, and set fire some rooms. As a result of the violence perpetrated by the plainclothes, in which many students were wounded, one student was killed.

The next day students rallied to protest the incident of the last night, which was supported by people. The students charged Brig-Gen Hedayat Lotfian, the Commander in Chief of the LEF, to be responsible for the LEF's attack on dormitory and demanded his dismissal. Moreover, they demanded the LEF, which was under the supervision of the Leader, to be subordinated to the Ministry of Interior.¹⁰² Most of the officials of the country including the President, the Interior Minister, Leader's representatives at universities, and even the Leader himself declared the police's entrance into the complex as unauthorized and condemned the events.¹⁰³ Moreover, the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) condemned the incident and expressed sympathy with the students. It also appointed a special committee to investigate the causes of the events.¹⁰⁴

Notwithstanding that initial sympathy towards students, the protests continued for five more days and spread from Tehran to other major cities including Tabriz, Isfahan and Mashad. Meanwhile, the protests turned into violent demonstrations that chanted slogans against Khamenei and the regime, as the demonstrators charged Khamenei with supporting the plainclothes that attacked the students. As the violent accompanying the demonstrations increased, and the protest transformed into open challenge to the regime,

¹⁰² "Elected council of university students sets out their demands," IRNA (English), 14 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3587, 15 July 1999, p.6.

¹⁰³ "Khamane'i says attack on university campus 'unacceptable,' orders inquiry," IRNA (English), 12 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3585, 13 July 1999, p.1.

¹⁰⁴ "Supreme National Security Council condemns attack on students," Vision of the IRI, Network 1, 10 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3584, 12 July 1999, p.2.

the officials' position changed to seek opportunist elements, infiltrators, agents and pilots of enemy exploiting grievances of the students.¹⁰⁵ In the same line, Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani said that involvement of invisible hands in peaceful protest of the students led to unwelcomed developments.¹⁰⁶

As the demonstrations turned into violent challenge to the regime and continued to spread, the IRGC Commander Safavi asked in the SNSC to deploy the Basij and the IRGC to suppress the demonstrations, which was opposed by Nuri, the Interior Minister. The IRGC and the Basij, however, appeared to suppress demonstrations with the permission of the Leader.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the demonstrations ended on July 13, under the repression and intimidation of the security forces. In order to condemn the dormitory incidents and "certain riotous demonstrations in Tehran and few other cities," the Islamic Propagation Organization organized a rally at Tehran University on Wednesday, July 14, which was also supported by the IRGC.¹⁰⁸

Hassan Rowhani, Secretary of SNSC, in his address at the rally on July 14, summarized the official portrayal of the student unrest, which meant the conservative review of the events. He told that Iran witnessed 'three bitter incidents' within a week. First, the students were insulted due to illegal attack on university dormitories. Second, the enemies, exploiting the disturbance of the students, tried to seize this opportunity and led violent events and disturbed public tranquility. Finally, the regime's sanctities, including the velayat-e faqih, were offended.¹⁰⁹ However, the strong 'conservative'

¹⁰⁵ See "Information ministry says 'counter-revolutionaries' involved in unrest," Voice of the IRI, 17 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3590, 19 July 1999, p.1.

¹⁰⁶ "Defence minister says security to be guaranteed from 14th July onwards," IRNA (English), 14 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3587, 15 July 1999, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ See, "Nagoftehayeh Rahim Safavi az 10 Sale Fermandehei Sepahe Pasdaran," *Markeze Esnade Enghelab*, 21 Dey 1388 [11 January 2010].

¹⁰⁸ "Guards Corps, other bodies, urge participation in 14th July rally," IRNA (English), 13 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3587, 15 July 1999, p.3.

¹⁰⁹ "Security Council vows to 'crush mercilessly' any unrest," Vision of the IRI Network 1, 14 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3588, 16 July 1999, p.1.

reaction to the demonstrations turned into attack on the ‘liberal’ press and supporters of President Khatami. For this reason, the Organization of the Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution (OMIR) issued a statement describing recent developments as part of ‘anti-libertarian scenario,’ and harbinger of ‘a silent pseudo-coup’ against the government and the president.¹¹⁰

Because the demonstrations turned into attack on ‘pillars of the revolution,’ as portrayed by the conservative reading of recent developments, 24 senior IRGC commanders wrote a warning letter addressed to President Khatami, on July 12, 1999.¹¹¹ The commanders criticized the government’s way of dealing with recent events because it prioritized investigation of the attack on dormitory, but negated other offences such as violation of the law by unlawful rallies, and violence accompanied the demonstrations, which harmed the public safety. In fact, they maintained, violation of sanctities and offense to the principles of the system were the bitter incidents to be regretted and investigated. They expressed their regret for their silence in the face of the attacks to the velayat-e faqih and the Islamic Republic, which derived from the expediency concerns of the leadership. Moreover, they asked God to grant them death, because their “hands were tied” and they “have been forced to shut [their] eyes, remain silent, and watch the wilting of a flower which blossomed as an outcome of fourteen centuries of Shiite and Muslim suffering.” Eventually, they asked the President, “How long should we have revolutionary patience while the system is being destroyed?” They warned Khatami, “If you do not make a revolutionary decision, and if you do not fulfill your Islamic and national mission today, tomorrow will be far too late.” At the end of the letter, the IRGC

¹¹⁰ “Pro-Khatami faction says attack on students was part of ‘pseudo-coup’,” Neshat website, 15 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3591, 20 July 1999, p.6.

¹¹¹ “Military commanders give an ultimatum to President Khatami,” Jomhuri-ye Eslami, 19 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3592, 21 July 1999, pp.1-2. The letter, claimed by the reformist press to be a ‘classified’ document, was published in Keyhan and Jomhuri-ye Eslami, on July 19, 1999.

Commanders stated, “we inform you that our patience is at an end, and we do not think it possible to tolerate any more if [this matter is] not addressed.”¹¹²

Notwithstanding the fact that the letter contained a direct and clear warning to President Khatami, the commanders expressed their respect for Khatami and they stressed that all signatories consider him “upright person, revolutionary, pious, with deep religious roots in the seminary, and sympathetic to the revolution.” Yet, they underlined their disturbance with the government’s treatment of the development, which, essentially, in view of the Guards, was an insurgence of counter- revolutionaries, exploiting the situation, against the regime. They asked the president to pay attention to the speeches of his friends and supporters, which were “tantamount to encouraging chaos and lawlessness,” at the gathering of the students. Thus, they made a distinction between the President and his so-called supporters. In this line, IRGC Commander Rahim Safavi said, “The IRGC has always supported the president and it will not tolerate attempts to weaken or insult him.”¹¹³

The President’s Office confirmed that the letter was given to President Khatami, and classified as a ‘top secret’ document. It also announced that President Khatami “responded to the letter in detail, on the same day, describing different sectors’ duties and functions,” and the reply letter was sent to the IRGC Commander. The statement of the President’s Office maintained that the letter “was quite normal for different strata of society, including the respected commanders of the IRGC, to send letters to president.”¹¹⁴ However, supporters of the president strongly reacted to the letter, and called IRGC not to interfere in politics.¹¹⁵

¹¹² The fulltext of the letter is available at *Iranian.com*, <http://www.iranian.com/News/1999/July/irgc.html>. For a notable review of the letter, see, Navid Kermani, “The Fear of the Guardians: 24 Army Officers Write a Letter to President Khatami,” in R. Bruinner & W. Ende, *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times*, (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2001).

¹¹³ “Commander Safavi says Guards Corps has always supported Khatami,” Voice of the Islamic Republic of *Iran*, 23 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3596, 26 July 1999, p.12.

¹¹⁴ “President’s office plays down IRGC commanders’ ‘top secret’ letter to Khatami,” *IRNA*, 20 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3593, 22 July 1999, p.12.

Although both the government and the IRGC leadership¹¹⁶ tended to downplay importance of the letter, it was insignificant in terms of displaying the Guards' readiness to use force. The letter gave some clues about how the threat to use force was legitimized by the IRGC. Additionally, it clearly illustrated ideological outlook of the IRGC, and its association with the traditional conservative and neo-radical factions.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, there is a controversial point regarding the letter, whether it was complied with the will of the IRGC command. The IRGC Commander's office stated that the letter "was written and sent by the individuals involved without informing the IRGC officials."¹¹⁸ Indeed, neither the Chief-Commander Safavi, nor his deputy, Baqer Zolqadr, nor the Basij Commander Mohammad Hejazi was among the signatories of the document. In every occasion, the Chief Commander reiterated that they were waiting for the right time and they would act accordingly orders of the Leader. Then, absence of their signatures implied that the letter was simultaneously written by the individual commanders, without waiting an order from the Chief Commander. The reference made by the signatory commanders to the expediency concern of their friends, enhances this argument. However, neither of the signatories was condemned by the IRGC leadership, or the Leader, because they breached the command line. On the contrary, they were promoted to influential positions in due course.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ For instance, see, "Pro-Khatami paper criticizes IRGC commanders' letter to president," *Iran*, 21 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3594, 23 July 1999, p.3.

¹¹⁶ Referring to the letter, IRGC Commander Safavi said that the commanders have "expressed their concern and devotion," which "was a normal thing to do." "Commander Safavi says Guards Corps has always supported Khatami," *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 23 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3596, 26 July 1999, p.12.

¹¹⁷ Kermani, *op.cit.*, pp.354-55.

¹¹⁸ "Guards commander's office says letter to Khatami was not secret," Neshat [web site], 27 July 1999, in SWB, ME 3599, 29 July 1999, p.2.

¹¹⁹ Another explanation may argue that since the IRGC leadership involved in government's decisions in the SNSC to address the incidents, avoided to sign a document criticizing the government. Moreover, the signs of Morteza Rezai, Director of Counterintelligence in the IRGC, and Ahmad Vahidi, Director of Intelligence in the IRGC, who were members of the investigation committee that was established by the

6.3.4. Occupation of the IKIA by the IRGC

The IRGC's 'interference' in politics by way of issuing statements continued throughout the presidency of Khatami. After the parliamentary elections that held in February 2000, which resulted in domination of the reform movement over the (sixth) Majlis, the tune of the IRGC's statements become more threatening for the reformists. Especially, the IRGC declaration issued on April 16, 2000, stated:

“... Those who oppose the system, as well as those who were hurt in the first years of the Islamic revolution, have changed their disguises. However, they have returned and they are gradually shedding their disguises and using the same expressions as they did in the first years of the revolution. ... We are the Revolutionary Guards and the Basijis, who are the children of this heroic nation. We shall deal with the deceived and criminals with modesty and moderation at first. However, when necessary, we shall swoop on the like lightning and we shall legally deal with them and we shall not hesitate to do so indiscriminately.”¹²⁰

Because of the Guards threatening statements, the rumors of coup swept Iran.¹²¹ Although, the IRGC ruled out the claims that it was plotting a coup,¹²² verbal fighting between the reform movement, outspoken reformist deputies in the Majlis, and the IRGC continued until the parliamentary elections that held in February 2004.¹²³ The Guards, then, charged with interference in elections because many of the Guard

SNSC, were also absent in the letter. See, also, Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows; Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran*, (Washington D.C.; WINEP, 2001), p.68-69.

¹²⁰ “Islamic Revolution Guards Corps supports Khamane'i, threatens opponents,” Vision of the IRI Network 1, 16 April 2000, in SWB, ME 3818, 18 April 2000, p.1.

¹²¹ “Political Party warns Guards Corps against staging coup d'état,” Iran, 19 April 2000, in SWB, ME 3821, 21 April 2000, pp.5-6; Geneive Abdo, “Hardliners in elite force 'plotting coup against Iranian President,” *Guardian*, 27 April 2000.

¹²² “Islamic Revolution Guards Corps rejects rumours of staging coup d'état,” Vision of the IRI Network 1, 20 April 2000, in SWB, ME 3822, 24 April 2000, p.6; “IRGC dismisses accusations of coup intention,” *Payvand's Iran News*, 20 April 2000.

¹²³ ¹²³ “Majles Student Movt Urges Armed Forces Not to Enter Political Issues,” *IRNA in English*, 12 July 2003, FBIS-NES-2003-0712, WNC ; Safa Haeri, “Reform takes a new face in Iran,” *Asia Times*, 19 November 2003.

commanders resigned from their posts to run in the elections.¹²⁴ Moreover, the IRGC was charged to organize support for the *Abadgaran*, the neo-radical front, list in the elections.¹²⁵ More than 3,000 candidates, including eighty incumbent deputies, were barred from the elections by the Council of Guardians. As a result of the elections, the conservative camp including the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals seized the two third of the 290 seats in the Majlis, which meant the formation of a new Majlis in harmony with the IRGC in terms of ideological viewpoints.¹²⁶

A few months after the elections, the IRGC, again, come into confrontation with the Khatami government, when it forced the shutdown of the newly operated Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA). The Ministry of Roads and Transportation awarded operation of the new airport to a consortium of Austrian and Turkish companies (TAV - Tepe-Akfen-Vie), which won the related tender in 2003. The awarded contract between the TAV and The Ministry of Roads and Transportation entailed construction of new terminal, and operation of the Terminal I, including the handling of baggage, catering of the planes and restaurants, cafes, shops and other services in the IKIA. However, some dissent aroused among the conservative elites of Iran, who condemned the contract to be against the national interests and security.¹²⁷

Despite the conservative reactions to the assignment of operation of the IKIA, the Ministry scheduled May 8, 2004, for the opening of the airport. Although the first plane

¹²⁴ Javad Deliri, "Military figures standing as (Majles) candidates: A development full of speculation," *Iran*, 15 Ekim 2003, FBIS-NES-2003-1016; Qasem Khorrami, "The Military, Policy and Elections: Reviewing the Phenomenon of Militarizing the Foundation of Political Power," *Hambastegi*, Ekim 19 2003, FBIS-NES-2003-1029.

¹²⁵ "Revolutionary Guards accused of political interference," *RFE/RL Iran Report*, 1 Mart 2004; "Ministry Accuses Revolution Guards of Engaging in Election Campaigning," *ISNA*, 18 Şubat 2004, FBIS-NES-2004-0218.

¹²⁶ Khosrokhavar, "The New Conservatives Take a Turn."

¹²⁷ "The Former Official in Charge of Commissioning the Imam Khomeyni Airport: the Imam Khomeyni Airport Has Not Gone Through the Legal Stages of Commissioning," *Resalat*, 10 May 2004, (Former Official Says Legal Stages Were Skipped in Airport Commissioning, FBIS-NES-2004-0512).

landed the airport, the second plane was forced by the IRGC unit that drove its military vehicles to the runways and seized the control tower, to change its destination to the Isfahan airport. Furthermore, two warplanes escorted its flight to Isfahan.¹²⁸ As result of the IRGC operation, employees of TAV were ordered to leave the airport, and operations of the IKIA were handed over to the state carrier, the Iran Air.

A few hours later, the General Staff of the Armed Forces issued a communiqué that justified the Guards' operation under 'security concerns.' The communiqué declared that the IRGC acted upon a decision made earlier by the Supreme Council on National Security (SCNS), which urged the responsible authorities to review the security issues and handling of the services at the IKIA. Stressing that the assignment of airport services to a foreign company was contrary to national security, the communiqué stated that the officials ignored the security measures at the IKI, and the new airport would remain closed until further notice.¹²⁹ Soon after the IRGC's occupation of the IKIA, the Iranian government declared the cancellation of the contract awarded to TAV.

Ahmad Khorram, Minister of Roads and Transportation, stressed that the so-called security concerns that led to shutting down of the IKIA was meaningless, because, at the same time, there were some 300 foreigners working at the Mehrabad Airport, the principal international airport in Tehran. He maintained that the operation was part of a wider campaign to discredit foreign investments in country. He, also, underlined that Iranian companies affiliated with the armed forces and the Revolutionary Guards bid for the tender for the operation of the IKIA, yet, because their prices were higher they were not selected.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ "E'temad's Analysis on Closure of Imam Khomeyni Airport: Reviewing the File of a Dispute," *E'temad*, 10 May 2004, (Deputies Say Airport Closure Has Damaged Iran's International Prestige, FBIS-NES-2004-0511);

¹²⁹ Safa Haeri, "Iran: Invisible hands guide military ambitions," *Asia Times*, 28 May 2004; Neil Denslow, "Iranian army closes new airport on opening day," 6 June 2004, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/iranian-army-closes-new-airport-on-opening-day-206046.html>.

¹³⁰ "Iranian Transportation Ministry Denies Blaming IRGC For Closure of New Airport," *IRNA (English)*, 31 August 2004, FBIS-NES-2004-0831.

The occupation of the IKIA, on the inauguration day, was deemed as an action instigated by the ‘conservatives’ do discredit President Khatami, who was embattled after the reform movement’s dramatic defeat in the Majlis elections. Furthermore, this development forced Khatami to cancel his scheduled state visit to Turkey. The Speaker of the departing sixth Majlis, Mahdi Karrubi, who called the closure “a disaster and a disgrace for the country,” assigned two-man committee to investigate the incident. The investigation committee of the Majlis found out that lack of coordination and differences between the Cabinet, the SNSC, and the IRGC prevented the solution of the issue until that day.¹³¹ However, the next Majlis consisted of the conservative and neo-radical majority impeached Khorram, in October 2004 because he endangered security, and caused humiliation of the Islamic Republic.¹³²

This incident illustrated, once more time, the IRGC’s implicit alliance with the conservative camp in Iran. It, also, indicated that the IRGC’s involvement in politics started to go beyond the verbal attacks or issuing statements. Furthermore, for the first time, the IRGC directly involved in government matters and compelled the cabinet to take a decision acceptable to the Guards.¹³³ However, the question of whether the IRGC realized that operation with its own initiative, or was it ordered in accordance with the chain of command, remained unanswered.

6.4. Conclusion

As outline above, naming the post-Khomeini Iran as the thermidor stage of the revolution suggests a considerable divergence from the previous periods in terms of both ideological position and praxis. That divergence started with rationalization of politics

¹³¹ “Iran's Majles Speaker Says Lack of Coordination Behind Closure of Airport,” *IRNA in English*, 23 May 2004, FBIS-NES-2004-0523.

¹³² “Majlise Iran Ray ba barkenare Vazere Rah DAD,” *BBC Persian*, 3 October 2004.

¹³³ See also, A. Alfoneh, “How Intertwined are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran’s Economy,” *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, no.3 (October 2007), p.5.

under President Rafsanjani. He proclaimed that Iran had to adjust itself into the new circumstances of the day that noticeably were different from the 1980s. Since the regime still derived its legitimacy from the revolution, the political leadership in this stage had to overcome the difficulty of denying the principles represented in the first decade of the revolution. Therefore, the political leadership constantly reiterated their commitment to the ideals of Khomeini and the revolution. Thus, Iran oscillated between acting as a revolutionary state and a conventional state, which caused gradually intensifying disagreements that eventually led tensions among the political elites over time.¹³⁴

Throughout the thermidorian stage, the political instability that stemmed from intensive political factionalism and the tension of choice between the revolutionary values and national interests, the clerical elitism and popular sovereignty, affected the nature of the IRGC-politics relationship. Initially, at the time of transition to the thermidor, because the corporateness of the IRGC was seriously damaged, and ideological and political division among the political elite did not surfaced, the IRGC continued to be subordinated to the political leadership. However, as the divisions among the elite crystallized through the mid-1990s, and the elite were apparently divided into two camps, the reform movement that comprised the modern right and the Islamic left, and the conservative camp including the traditional conservatives and neo-radicals, the IRGC was, also, forced to make a choice between the two camps.¹³⁵ Because Leader Khamanei, who was also Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces headed the conservative block, institutionally controlled the Guards, and because of the ideological congruence between the Guards and the conservative camp, the IRGC sided with the latter in their factional fighting.

Since the reform movement was in charge of the government in most part of this stage, the IRGC-government relations, once more turned into interventionist relationship. Accordingly, the IRGC interfered in political matters when it judged that

¹³⁴ Sariolghalam, "Iran's Emerging Regional Security Doctrine ...," pp.6-7.

¹³⁵ Ehteshami and Zweiri, *op.cit.*, p.21.

actions of the reformist faction and the government threatening the revolution and its achievements. The IRGC, either challenged the governmental policies by taking certain steps, or criticized the leaders of the government and its associates by issuing statements. Moreover, as it clearly shown in the IRGC's occupation of the IKIA, the Guards forced the government to take, or not to take some actions. When ideological posture of the governing elites changed, and became harmonious with ideological outlook of the Guards, with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency, the nature of IRGC-politics relationship, also, changed, which will be reviewed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE IRGC AND POLITICS IN THE NEO-RADICAL IRAN (2005-??)

The thermidorian stage in Iran was culminated in ascendance of the neo-radicals, who strongly criticized economic, political and social ‘liberalization’ programs of the reformist governments and yearned to restore revolutionary ideology. As it will be discussed below, the neo-radicals in cooperation with the traditional conservatives, steadily captured political power in Iran starting from the city councils, and then controlled the Majlis, and eventually took the presidency in June, 2005. The ascendance of the neo-radicals in Iran is reminiscent of the ‘relapse of radicalism’ that observed in other great revolutions, like ‘the period of great purge’ in the Soviet Russia under Stalin in the 1930s, the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1960s, and the ‘Rectification Campaign’ in Cuba in the 1980s.¹ In fact, it is a reaction to the reformist governments, and the thermidorian stage that was marked by retreat from the revolutionary goals, which was accompanied by ‘corruption’ and ‘moral looseness.’² Believing that reassertion of the ‘original’ revolutionary ideology would be a panacea to the problems that the country faced, the neo-radicals envisioned a return to the revolutionary period. Thus, the relapse of radicalism entailed re-ideologization of state, politics and foreign policy, in an authoritarian way, in order to rectify the revolutionary ideology and the

¹ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), pp.216-217; Fred Halliday, “Iran’s revolutionary spasm,” *OpenDemocracy*, 30 June 2005; Jack A. Goldstone, “The Return of the Radicals in Iran,” *Project Syndicate*, 1 March 2006.

² For instance, Mohammad Ali Namazi, a reformist deputy reportedly told in a session of the Majlis: “Generalized corruption, the increase in cases of illegitimate relations of women for material reasons, the escape from home of young girls, the staggering number of financial and drug addict prisoners on the one hand and prostitutes on the other, the hopelessness of the youngsters and the gap between the rich and the poor etc. have discredited the system.” Safa Haeri, “Reform takes a new face in Iran,” *Asia Times*, 19 November 2003.

institutions. Nonetheless, the resurgence of radicalism in Iran, at this time, was considerably milder than the previous experience of the reign of the radicals.

The relapse of radicalism in Iran dramatically affected the IRGC's relations with the political leadership, which was evolved from a conflictual form to a cooperative one. This chapter addresses the IRGC-politics relationship in the neo-radical Iran, an ongoing process that started with Ahmadinejad's ascent to the presidency in June 2005. In order to comprehend the dramatic change in the IRGC-politics relationship in this period, this chapter starts with a review of the political context and the position of the political elites. And then it deals with the variables supposed to be influential in civil-military relations in this process, and discusses the new form of relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership. Finally, it handles the IRGC's relationship to the political leadership with a historical perspective and reviews the implications of the new form of relationship between the IRGC and the government.

7.1. The Political Context and the Ruling Elites

7.1.1. The Neo-Radicals' Rise to Power

Following the successive election defeats in the face of the rising reform movement, more than eighteen political organization associated with the traditional conservative and neo-radical factions established a united political front, in 2002, under the banner of the 'Coordination Council for the Revolutionary Forces.'³ Portraying themselves as guardians of the revolution and faithful followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and Leader Khamanei, members of the alliance called themselves as the principlists (*osoulgarayan*) in order to illustrate their commitment to the fundamental principles (*osoul*) of the revolution and the religion. The principlists prioritized religious values and divine concepts over the popular, republican institutions and concepts, and they attached a divine value to *velayat-e faqih* and Leader Khamanei. In due time, the concept of

³ "Dzarorat va Bazsaazeye Shoura-ye Hamahange-ye Nirouha-ye Enghelab," *Aftab*, 2 Ordibehesht, 1385; Walter Posch, "A Last Chance for Iran's Reformists? The "Green Struggle" Reconsidered," Working Paper, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, May 2010, p.4.

principlism (osoulgaraye) emerged as a common denominator, like the *Maktabi* notion through the 1980s and the *Hizbullahi* notion through the 1990s, which implies commitment to the revolutionary and religious principles, and allegiance to the *velayat-e faqih*.

The traditional conservative's and the neo-radical's animosity towards the West and outrage towards the reform movement, which were conceived as threatening fundamentals of the Islamic Republic, and the arising threats to the national security of Iran since 2002 onwards, were additional factors led to the principlist alliance. In fact, development of the concept of principlism was an initiative by the neo-radical and conservative figures around Leader Khamanei to redefine the 'insiders' that meant the primary circle of elite devoted to the religious and revolutionary values. Until then, members of the reformist faction were also considered to be part of insiders, which helped them to come to influential positions. However, because the reformist elite, who emphasized popular and republican values of the revolution, and questioned the clerical elitism and the attempts to attach a divine value to the *velayat-e faqih*, were steadily considered by the neo-radicals and the conservatives as the 'fifth column' of the enemy inside the country to destruct fundamentals of the Islamic Republic. As a result, most of the reformist elite were threatened to be excommunicated from the circle of insiders, which was evident in vetting the reformist candidates from running in consecutive elections. It appeared dramatically when eighty incumbent reformist deputies were barred from running for the parliamentary elections designed to be held in February 2004.⁴

The principlist coalition, i.e. the Coordination Council, was too influential in rolling back the acquisitions of the reform movement; thus, candidates affiliated with the Council emerged as victorious in two consecutive elections including the city council

⁴ The campaign to delegitimize and excommunicate the reformist faction continued in a way associating the prominent reformist figures with the so-called Western conspiracies against the Islamic Republic. In this regard, even President Ahmadinejad accused his two predecessors, Rafsanjani and Khatami, of masterminding a plot to overthrow his cabinet. "Ahmadinejad attacks Hashemi, Khatami during debate with Mousavi," *Payvand News*, 4 June 2009.

elections (2003) and the parliamentary elections (2004). The principlist camp owed its election successes to the new discourse outlined by the neo-radicals, as well as the failure of the reform movement to face with the country's economic and social problems, and institutional and constitutional mechanisms that helped victory of the principlists. The neo-radicals developed a new discourse that underscored economic welfare and development by underlining the preservation of national culture and independence.⁵ Championing the rights of the oppressed, and pledging to fight against corruption and to provide social justice, they cultivated support among the poor segments of the Iranian population. Additionally, the new faces representing the new generation of the Iranian revolutionaries with a background in the IRGC and other security institutions, who were brought to the political scene by the neo-radicals, drew attention of a great amount of people and provided a considerable popular support for the principlist camp.⁶

The traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals, however, disagreed on their nominations for the presidential elections that held in June 2005, while the former supported Ali Larijani, former head of the Iranian Radio-TV, and the latter supported Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mayor of Tehran. Because Larijani failed to get enough vote to compete for the second round of the elections, Ahmadinejad got the support of the traditional conservatives against Hashemi Rafsanjani, in the second round, which resulted in victory of Ahmadinejad, who garnered 63 percent of the casted votes.⁷ Thus, in addition to the coercive forces and judiciary, the executive and the legislative authorities fell to the hands of the principlists.⁸

⁵ Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The New Conservatives Take a Turn," *Middle East Report*, no.233, Winter 2004, pp.24-27.

⁶ Mohammad Quchani, "Second Generation of [Revolutionary Guards] Corps Is On The Way," *Sharq*, 12 April 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

⁷ Abbas Pazouki: "Who Supports Which Candidates?" *Mardomsalari*, 22 June 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

⁸ See, Ali Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad: The Politics of Confrontation*, (Adelphi Papers, vol.47, no.393), (London: IISS, 2007).

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was not only presidential candidate, but also one of the leading members of the of the neo-radical faction that claimed to be devout followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and the *velayat-e faqih*.⁹ In order to show his dedication to Khomeni, leader of the revolution, Ahmadinejad visited his tomb just after the elections. In a similar way, in order to prove his allegiance to Leader Khamanei, he kissed his hand in the ceremony of presidential inauguration. Thus, Ahmadinejad became the new president of Iran, which brought the neo-radical faction to the direction of the executive authority. President Ahmadinejad's government was a tangible embodiment of the neo-radical faction, which largely consists of a little-known, new generation of political elites. His cabinet included former IRGC officers, his associates coming from the University of Science and Technology, Tehran Municipality, and intelligence and security organizations.

7.1.2. The IRGC and the 2005 Presidential Elections

As discussed in the previous chapter, the IRGC apprehensively watched the reformist governments of Mohammad Khatami, the reformist-dominated sixth Majlis and the political activists supporting the reformist agenda. Notwithstanding the IRGC leaders, then, shied away directly accusing the political leadership of the reform movement, especially the then President Khatami. Instead it charged 'some extremists' associated with the reform movement to be involved in enemy's plots to destruct fundamentals of the Islamic Republic, thereby seeking to secularize Iran. Thus, in view of the IRGC, as stated by Hojatoleslam Ali Saedi, the Leader's representative to the IRGC, the reform period was characterized by "extremism and crises that faced the system." He said: "... there were the groups in the past that tried to violate norms and trespass red lines and fundamentals of the thought of Imam (Khomeini) and injure values. ... What worries us is the possibility of the repetition of those events and a return

⁹ He was a leading member of the *Isargaran*, and played an influential role in fomenting the *Abadgaran* Party. See, A. William Samii, "The Changing Landscape of Party Politics in Iran – A Case Study," *VaseteH; The Journal of European Society for Iranian Studies*, vol.1, no.1, (Winter 2005), pp.53-62.

to the reform period.”¹⁰ Likewise, IRGC Commander Jafari stated that they would not allow recurrence of developments that took place under the reformist governments.¹¹

Additionally, contrary to the IRGC’s self-definition of a revolutionary, military, political, and cultural organization, the reformists were tended to view the IRGC solely as a military and security organization. Therefore, the corporate interests of the IRGC were also threatened by the reformists’ attempts to restructure the political system of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, the IRGC was keen on delimiting the influence of the reform movement, and casting it out of the political scene. Indeed, the IRGC declarations against the reform movement and its occupation of the IKIA were conceived by the analysts and the reformists as intentional activities to discredit the Khatami administration.¹² Meanwhile, rise of the external threats to the Islamic Republic after 2002, which was marked by US President George Bush’s depiction of Iran as a part of the axis of evil, together with Iraq and the North Korea, caused steadily ‘securitization’ of Iranian politics and ascendance of the Guards.

In this context, the IRGC found the principlists as a natural ally to confront the reform movement. Above all, the principlists were ideologically coherent with the Guards. Additionally they had close personal bonds, and common political and economic interests with the IRGC. Finally, because Leader Khamanei implicitly supported the principlist alliance, the IRGC has involved in politics and elections in coordination with the principlists. At times, the Guard commanders, apparently ending their relationship with the IRGC, became candidates on behalf of the principlist alliance, and at times, the IRGC mobilized its sources in favor of the principlist candidates.

¹⁰ “The Representative of the Leader in the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps: Distributing Service and Applying Social Justice is a Goal of the Ninth Administration,” *Hemayat*, 24 September 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹¹ “Nabaayed Bagozareim Havadeshe Salha-ye 78 ta 80 Takrar Shaved,” *Afetaab-e Yazd*, 11 February 2009.

¹² Ali Gheissari & Vali Nasr, “The Conservative Consolidation in Iran,” *Survival*, vol.47, no.2 (Summer 2005), p.178.

The IRGC involvement in politics became a controversial issue during the parliamentary elections of February 2004, when reportedly more than forty IRGC commanders discarded their uniforms in order to take seats in the next Majlis.¹³ Although there were candidates with military backgrounds in the previous elections, the large number of IRGC-affiliated candidates, and the claims that they were “entering the political domain on the basis of an organized plan and within the framework of a party coalition” made the 2004 Majlis elections very sensitive. Pointing the IRGC’s confrontationist approach towards the reformist forces, especially deputies of the outgoing sixth Majlis, the critics of former commanders’ involvement in the elections insisted that their participation was part of an organized decision aimed at reducing the power of the reformist groups.¹⁴ Although the IRGC rejected any form of organizational and planned decision on this issue, the IRGC commanders supported candidacy of their comrades-in-arms in the elections arguing that presence of the IRGC members in the Majlis would help Iran. In a similar vein, Gholamali Haddad-Adel, leader of Abadgaran, said; “...there is nothing wrong with military personnel serving in the parliament. ... many of these people have served in various professional areas and now they want to bring their expertise to the legislature.”¹⁵

Likewise, all of the four principlist candidates (Ahmadinejad, Qalibaf, Larijani, and Rezaei) running for the presidential elections of 2005 were, to some extent, affiliated with the Guards. Especially candidature of IRGC Major General Qalibaf, who served as Commander of IRGC Air Force between 1997-2000, sparked much attention for the IRGC involvement in politics because he recently resigned from his post as Chief of the Disciplinary Forces in April 2005. His resignation, which ended his military carrier two

¹³ Safa Haeri, “Reform takes a new face in Iran,” *Asia Times*, 19 November 2003.

¹⁴ Javad Deliri, “Military figures standing as (Majles) candidates: A development full of speculation,” *Iran*, 15 October 2003, FBIS Translated Text, FBIS-NES-2003-1016, WNC Insert Date: October 17, 2003.

¹⁵ “Praetorians prepare to play overt political role,” *RFE/RL Iran Report*, 20 October 2003. According to Article 29 of the Election Law, armed forces personnel must leave the military at least two months before registering as candidates and they must discontinue all activities related to their previous profession.

months before the elections, was required by the Election Law that barred military officials from running for political offices. Although the candidates provided the legal condition that ending their relationship with the military institutions, the rise of former IRGC officers as presidential candidates unleashed a new debate on militarization of Iranian politics.¹⁶

Proponents of participation of former IRGC commanders into the election race argued that there is only one condition for allowing the military personnel to take part in the elections as candidates. They should resign from their posts at least two months before the registration of their candidacy, and they should completely cease any relationship with their profession.¹⁷ The Deputy Commander of the IRGC Operations Directorate, General Ali Fazli, defended the participation of the military personnel in the presidential election, and said, “capable people should fill administrative positions of the country, especially at the presidential level, and some military personnel enjoy such capabilities.” Furthermore, he asserted, “if a military individual is elected as president, he will be able to administer the country better in some respects including security aspects.”¹⁸

Above all, the critics of former commanders’ participation in the elections argued, it showed temptation of the IRGC members to take over the government. They presented, and regretted, the picture as an indicator of the ‘anomaly’ that the Iranian political system suffered for a long time, in which the military men considered themselves as the saviors of the people.¹⁹ Additionally, in view of them, election of a president with military background would precipitate ‘militarization’ of other elections and institutions.

¹⁶ Babak Ganji, “Civil-Military Relations, State Strategies and Presidential Elections in Iran,” Conflict Studies Research Center, Defense Academy of the UK, June 2005.

¹⁷ Deliri, "Military figures standing as (Majles) candidates: A development full of speculation."

¹⁸ “Iranian Commander Supports Military Personnel’s Bid for Presidency,” *IRNA*, 26 May 2005, WNC.

¹⁹ Abuzar Kordi, “The Ninth Election and a Very Special Specification,” *Mardomsalari*, 1 July 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

The critics, largely consist of the reformist politicians and intellectuals, were also concerned with the possible IRGC interference in the elections in favor of the former commanders, who were supposed to seek out support among the Guards and the Basij ranks.²⁰

Indeed, amongst the four principlist candidates associated with the IRGC, the Guards and Basij were believed to have supported Ahmadinejad.²¹ Especially the reformist contenders in the election accused the Guards, particularly the Basij, of pressuring voters at the polling stations to vote for Ahmadinejad and mobilizing their sources for his campaign.²² For this reason, M. Reza Khatami, leader of the Islamic Participation Front that supported Mostafa Moin in the election race, stated that they were defeated by ‘a garrison party.’²³ Mahdi Karrubi wrote a public letter addressing Leader Khamanei and complained that the Guards and the Basij illegally intervened in the elections to the benefit of one candidate by “calling on their personnel to back him, influencing or intimidating voters at polling places, using false identity cards, and even bribing voters.”²⁴ Additionally, he contended that Khamanei’s son, Mojtaba, also involved in the campaign in favor of Ahmadinejad. Furthermore, Jahanbakhsh Khanjani, spokesman of the Interior Ministry that runs elections, told reporters that certain people in charge of protecting the public order “orchestrated and organized the people's vote”

²⁰ Bill Samii, “Observers Fears Militarization of Politics,” *RFE/RL*, 11 April 2005; Bill Samii, “New Worries over Military Involvement in Election,” *RFE/RL Iran Report*, 14 June 2005.

²¹ Kamal Nazer Yasin, “Election Aftermath,” *MEI*, no 757, 2 September 2005, p.12-14; Gary Thomas, “Iran Election Filled with Surprises,” *Payvand News*, 21 June 2005; Anoushiravan Ehteshami & Mahjoub Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp.63-85.

²² Bill Samii, “As Winners Head for Runoff, Losers Complain of Fraud,” *RFE/RL*, 19 June 2005.

²³ Kazem Alamdari, “The Power Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Transition from Populism to Clientelism, and Militarization of the Government,” *Journal of the Third World Quarterly*, vol.26, no 8 (2005), p.1297.

²⁴ Mark Gasiorowski, “The Causes and Consequences of Iran’s June 2005 Presidential Election,” *Strategic Insights*, vol.4, no.8 (August 2005), p.3.

ahead of the first round of the presidential elections. Then he warned, “they might do it again, and even stronger this time [the second round of the elections].”²⁵

Thus, the second round of the election was not free of charges of election frauds, as well. Hashemi Rafsanjani noted that his rivals have “interfered in the elections by utilizing the facilities of the system in an organized and illegitimate manner.”²⁶ In an official letter addressed to Interior Minister Moussavi Lari, Rafsanjani’s campaign chairman, Mahmoud Vaezi, listed a number of “irregularities and fraudulent practices” just ahead of the second round of the poll. He specifically mentioned a speech of Ahmadi Moghaddam, the Basij Commander of Tehran, in which he claimed that Rafsanjani courted with the European governments to generate their support.²⁷

In this regard, Interior Ministry Spokesman Khanjani said that the Ministry received “a number of reports concerning interference in certain polling stations from people who shouldn’t be there.” The reported violations were so serious that the Ministry thought suspending voting in certain polling stations, Khanjani said.²⁸ Unlike the officials of the Interior Ministry, the Guardian Council in charge of supervising the elections dismissed the claims of election irregularities. However, in an occasion, Tehran Military Prosecutor Hojatolislam Ahmad Shafi’i admitted that “in a number of cases there were enough documents and evidence for interference of the armed forces” in the presidential elections. He pointed out that in few cases the verdicts were issued; however “... the

²⁵ Golnaz Esfandiari, “Interior Ministry Warns Of Vote Fraud Ahead Of Presidential Runoff,” *RFE/RL*, 21 June 2005.

²⁶ Bill Samii, “Iran: A New Paradigm and New Math,” *RFE/RL*, 26 June 2005.

²⁷ “Iran puts police under Revolutionary Guards control,” *Iran Focus*, 10 July 2005.

²⁸ “Irregularities in Iran presidential run-off,” *The Daily Star*, 25 June 2005. See, also, Babak Ganji, “President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad: A Turning Point in Iranian Politics and Strategy,” Conflict Studies Research Center, Defense Academy of the UK, October 2005.

convicts have not been at the level of high-ranking managers of the Armed Forces but at the level of middle-ranking or ordinary members.”²⁹

Soon after the elections, the IRGC commanders expressed their joy with the victory of Ahmadinejad and hailed him. In his letter to Ahmadinejad, Safavi depicted the election of Ahmadinejad as “an indication of the good choice of the Iranian people.” He said, “...the election of an honest, committed, caring and hard-working person as the president show the people's wisdom, insight, interest and their commitment to their country and the Islamic Republic system.”³⁰ Deputy Commander Zolqadr, also, mentioned of a ‘complex operation’ to engineer victory of the principlists. The IRGC commanders’ evident pleasure with the election results could be regarded as a pointer of the IRGC support for Ahmadinejad, as well. In the same manner, President Ahmadinejad’s appointments of former Guards commanders to the influential positions were viewed as “a payoff for the support the IRGC and the Basij militia gave Ahmadinejad during the election.”³¹

7.1.3. Re-Ideologization of Politics

During the election campaigns, Ahmadinejad asserted that the current problems of the country were results of the officials’ deviation from the path of the Islamic Revolution, and he stressed that his objective was to establish a ‘true Islamic Government.’³² Moreover, he was known to initiate some sort of Islamization of the Tehran Municipality, during his mayorship, such as turning the numerous cultural centers of the previous administration to the Islamic centers, and enforcing sexual segregation in certain parts of the administration. Associates of Ahmadinejad, who were

²⁹ “Tehran's Military Prosecutor: Armed Forces Should Not Interfere in Assembly of Experts' Election,” *Farhang-e Ashti*, 10 July 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

³⁰ “Iranian Guards Voice Support For President-Elect Ahmadinezhad,” *FNA*, 4 July 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

³¹ Bill Samii, “Iran: No Welcome for President’s New Elite,” *RFE/RL Iran*, 22 February 2006.

³² *Tehran Times*, 15 June 2005.

resentful of previous administrations' lenient approach towards enforcement of Islamic puritanical standards, and concerned with the moral decay of society, continuously called for restoration of moral rectitude.³³ Ahmadinejad, himself, frequently praised the 'Basiji culture,' and asserted that a return to the revolutionary principles would serve as the panacea of Iran's all troubles.³⁴ In an occasion, he argued that the country's economic woes could be solved by the 'culture of martyrdom.'³⁵ Thus, in accordance with the ideological leanings of the neo-radicals, the Ahmadinejad government unleashed an agenda of re-ideologization of the state, politics and culture.

Re-ideologization of the state was clearly evident in Ahmadinejad's initiation to reshuffle bureaucratic administration of the country. One of the first activities of Ahmadinejad government was to fire high-ranking bureaucrats of the country, including many of the governors and the ambassadors, whom were replaced by a younger generation that came either from the security organizations, or from the Tehran Municipality.³⁶ Although, he occasionally gave compromising messages on social appearances of religiosity such as enforcing 'proper' hejab, evident devotion to the revolutionary and religious values became the principal criteria for appointment to key government positions under the Ahmadinejad administration. However, the policy of prioritizing commitment to the revolutionary/religious values as the criteria for appointment reached a point that it was faced with reaction of even the out-going cabinet members. Davoud Danesh-Jafari, who resigned as Minister of Economy in April 2008, complained in his farewell ceremony, "during my time, there was no positive attitude

³³ Azam Khatam, "The Islamic Republic's Failed Quest for the Spotless City," *Middle East Report*, no.250, Spring 2009, pp.44-49.

³⁴ Said Amir Arjomand, "The Iranian Revolution in the New Era," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol.10, August 2010, pp.5-20.

³⁵ "Martyrdom would solve Iran's economic woes: Ahmadinejad," *AFP*, 24 April 2008.

³⁶ Majid Mohammadi, "The Shifting Composition of Political Forces in Iran," *Gozaar*, 1 August 2007.

towards previous experiences or experienced people and there was no plan for the future.³⁷

The cultural sphere was the most apparent realm of re-ideologization invoked by the Ahmadinejad government. In accordance with its priority to promote religious ideology and culture, and probably to consolidate his alliance with the religious establishment, the government allocated great amount of sums to the religious foundations and cultural institutions in conjunction with the government.³⁸ Concurrently, under the guise of the ‘public security scheme’ to struggle against consumption of drugs, burglary, and moral decadence, the ‘morality teams’ reappeared to patrol streets in order to enforce Islamic dress codes.³⁹

Re-ideologization of the cultural sphere, under Ahmadinejad, extended to revitalize the ‘cultural revolution’ of the 1980s, the radical stage of the Iranian revolution. In order to re-Islamize the universities, which were considered by the neo-radicals serving as hotbed of supporters of the reform movement and political dissidence, the government fired allegedly ‘liberal’ and ‘secular’ faculty, or forced them into retirement.⁴⁰ The Ahmadinejad government, also, installed its allies in key positions, and strengthened the student branches of the Basij. The students were subjected to a ranking system based on their political activities and positions, and politically active students, many of whom were imprisoned, were barred from attending the graduate education.⁴¹ Moreover, in order to disseminate the Basiji culture and to keep the martyrdom culture alive in the

³⁷ “Ahmadinejad slammed by outgoing economy minister,” *AFP*, 22 April 2008.

³⁸ Reihaneh Mazaheri, “Ahmadinejad’s Cultural Priorities,” *Mianeh*, 29 March 2010.

³⁹ Khatam, *op.cit.*, pp.44-49; Kamal N. Yasin, “The Morality Police Press Their Offensive,” *Eurasianet*, 15 May 2007.

⁴⁰ Ahmadinejad called for purging universities of secular and liberal professors in September 2006. After then, a number of well-known professors, including Mohsen Kadivar, Hashem Aghajari, Hossein Bashiriyeh, were expelled from universities. See, “Allow Peaceful Demonstrations of National Student Day,” *The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran*, 5 December 2007.

⁴¹ Mahjoob Zweiri, “Iran’s Second Cultural Revolution: Ranking Students Based on Political Views,” *Islam Online*, 14 October 2007.

universities, Ahmadinejad led a campaign for burials of martyrs at the university campuses.⁴²

The 'second' cultural revolution of Iran also spread into other spheres of the cultural life inside the country. The censorship mechanism, which oversees all kind of publications including books, magazines, and newspapers, was enhanced and strict limitations placed on activities of the artists, intellectuals, and journalists, known to be opponents of the neo-radicalism. Thus, they were either compelled to give up their profession, or flee the country.⁴³

7.1.4. Revival of the Revolutionary Foreign Policy?

Foreign policy has been widely regarded as one of the principal areas subjected to the re-ideologization during Ahmadinejad's tenure as President of Iran. Since Ahmadinejad and the neo-radicals came to power, Iran has encountered an increased international pressure to halt its nuclear program, which was supposed to be directed at developing nuclear weapons, and to cease its so-called support to international terrorism, which were considered not only as a threat to the US national interests, but also as a threat to the international community. Therefore, the US officials and the Israeli leaders frequently talked about a 'regime change' in Iran, and threatened Iran with military attacks.⁴⁴ Moreover, the enormous US military presence in various places adjacent to the Iranian territory, and its proven predisposition to use force in Afghanistan and Iraq when it invaded the both countries, made the United States an immediate threat to the Islamic Republic. In fact, rise of this threat helped the neo-radicals in Iran to come power.

Thus, the neo-radicals, who were already skeptic of the Western activities that supposed to be intended to destruct fundamentals of the Islamic Republic, positioned

⁴² Rasmus C. Elling, "Bring in the Dead: Martyr Burials and Election Politics in Iran," *Middle East Report Online*, 19 March 2009.

⁴³ Bahman Nirumand, "Ahmadinejad's Cultural Revolution: Increased Level of Repression," *Qantara*, December 2006.

⁴⁴ Alistair Millar, "Next Stop, Iran?" *Iranexpert*, 15 December 2003.

Iran in a ‘cold war’ against the West, which sounded quite different from the view of ‘dialogue among civilizations’ championed by Khatami. Criticizing accommodationist and pragmatic foreign policy of the previous administrations towards the West, Ahmadinejad called for an ‘active foreign policy’ to keep Iran’s national interests and developed security-oriented foreign policy strategy based on confronting the enemy, including the Western Europe, the United States and Israel. In this regard, Ahmadinejad and his associates, the neo-radicals, stressed that a return to the original revolutionary principles, which were the keen on preserving national independence, fighting against imperialism, and enforcement of Islamic solidarity, would solve foreign policy problems of Iran, as well.⁴⁵

Accordingly, President Ahmadinejad presented the controversial nuclear program of Iran as an issue of national sovereignty and independence. He rejected any limitation on Iran’s nuclear program asked by the Western countries, which was deemed by the neo-radicals as the Western encroachment on Iran’s sovereignty rights. The neo-radicals argued that the West wished to deprive Iran from its internationally-recognized right to develop and use peaceful nuclear energy in order prevent Iran’s technical and economic advancement, and made it subordinate to the Western powers. Moreover, Ahmadinejad likened maintenance of the nuclear program to the nationalization of oil industry by the Iranian national hero, Mohammad Mosaddegh, in the early 1950s. After Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005, the Iranian government restarted uranium enrichment activities and shelved the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the NPT, the measures taken by the Khatami government to compromise with the European powers negotiating with Iran and to prove Iran’s goodwill. After then, the European countries, which were advocating negotiation and were cautious towards the assertive stand of the

⁴⁵ See, Masoud Kazemzadeh, “Ahmadinejad’s Foreign Policy,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol.27, no.2 (2007), pp.423-449.

United States, came closer to the US position. Therefore, he gave away the policy of the previous administration to pit the European countries against the United States.⁴⁶

In reaction to the rising confrontationalist policy of Iran under Ahmadinejad, the European countries coalesced with the United States, and headed transfer of Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council in early 2006. In order to balance the US hegemony and the superiority of the West in the international system, Iran engaged in boosting its relations with Russia and China, the two member states of the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, the Security Council decided on five consecutive resolutions asking Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program, and envisaged steadily increasing sanctions towards it.

In accordance with the revolutionary foreign policy approach, and in order to relieve international pressure over Iran, the Ahmadinejad government enacted an anti-imperialist rhetoric. Iran, under Ahmadinejad, tried to compensate its deteriorating relations with the West by improving its relations with the regional countries and the 'third world' states in Africa and Latin America. Thereby, while promoting regional cooperation and enhancing Iran's international standing, the Iranian officials whispered their counterparts to sever their relations with the imperialist powers, the Western Europe, Israel, and the United States. Through a series of well-publicized tours to numerous countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and warmly welcoming so-called 'anti-American' leaders of Latin America, including Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, and Evo Morales of Bolivia, in Tehran, Ahmadinejad burnished his reputation as an anti-imperialist leader standing against the United States.⁴⁷ Iran also sought to improve its relations with the new-rising powers, including Brazil and India, which were supposed to challenge unipolarity and the hierarchic structure of the present international system.

⁴⁶ Farideh Farhi, "Ahmadinejad's Nuclear Folly," *Middle East Report*, no.252, Fall 2009.

⁴⁷ Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran's Discontent with Ahmadinejad Grows," *The Washington Post*, 17 January 2007.

Another column of the revolutionary foreign policy of Iran revalidated by President Ahmadinejad was enforcement of Islamic solidarity. Although the Islamism has always been a remarkable constituent of the Iranian foreign policy after the revolution, the thermidorian governments tuned down its impact on foreign policy. Blending anti-imperialism with the poor standing of the Islamic world in international affairs throughout the several centuries, Ahmadinejad blamed the Western encroachment over the Islamic world, the imperialism, and called for unity and greater solidarity among the Islamic countries to deal with the oppressor. This approach was well-evident in the Palestinian case, as Ahmadinejad said, “The Palestinian nation represents the Islamic nation [Umma] against a system of oppression...”⁴⁸ Portraying Iran as the leader of the Islamic world, the Ahmadinejad government bid for the leadership of the Islamic movements resisting against Israel and the United States. In this line, Iran under Ahmadinejad emerged as the strong supporter of the Palestine ‘resistance’ organizations and Hezbollah of Lebanon.

In this regard, soon after coming to office, Ahmadinejad drew reactions of the Western world because of his remarks at a conference titled ‘A World without Zionism,’ held in October 2005, where he reiterated Khomeini’s view of the necessity of wiping ‘the occupying regime’ out of the pages of history.⁴⁹ He asserted, “The Zionist regime with its 60 years of crimes, aggression and plundering reached its end, and would soon disappear off the geographical scene.” Furthermore, he continuously called the Holocaust as a myth invented by the Zionists to legitimize their claim to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Through such statements, Ahmadinejad thought to influence Islamic countries and pushed Iran as the primary supporter of the Palestinian cause, and the champion of the struggle against imperialism embodied by the United States and

⁴⁸ “Text of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Speech (trans. by Nazila Fathi),” *The New York Times*, 30 October 2005.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Israel. Unsurprisingly, it provided the Iranian leader with popular favor in the Arab street and fomented an alliance between Hamas and Iran.

Iran's new confrontationist policy towards Israel and the West scared the Arab regimes that allied with the United States and concerned with the revival of the radical Iran and repercussions of its nuclear program. The outbreak of the 33-day war between Israel and the Hezbollah in July 2006, the enhancement of the Iran-Syria alliance, and Iran's growing influence over Iraq, which were seen as the greater assertiveness of Iran, flamed the suspicions of the Arab countries that Iran has been projecting to establish a regional hegemony.⁵⁰ In turn, Iran continuously blamed the West and the Zionism to sow seeds of discord among the regional countries, and apparently endeavored to allay fears of the regional countries. In this regard, for the first time an Iranian president, Ahmadinejad, participated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit in Qatar, in December 2007, and offered to sign security and economic cooperation agreements with the GCC countries in addition to a series of suggestions to improve relations.⁵¹

The revolutionary approach of Iranian neo-radical elite to the international affairs, also, entailed a normative dimension prioritizing 'justice,' and criticizing the international law that was supposed to be safeguarding interests of the powerful states. Accordingly, the Ahmadinejad government sought to make ethics, spirituality and justice the centerpiece of its foreign policy discourse. In his addresses to the world leaders, including his letters to the US presidents George W. Bush, and Barack H. Obama, Ahmadinejad invited them to be bound with ethic values and justice. Arguing that all of the international and national problems were stemming from the lack of justice and deviation from divinity, he said, "A sustainable order, nurturing and flourishing peace and tranquility, can only be realized on the pillars of justice and

⁵⁰ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Iran's Politics and Regional Relations: Post-Détente," *Perceptions*, vol.12, no.1 (Spring 2007), pp.29-43.

⁵¹ "GCC aims for Greater Integration," *Arab News*, 4 December 2007.

spirituality.”⁵² Although Ahmadinejad addressed the world leaders, his intended audience was ordinary people. Thus, he sought to cultivate opposition to the present unjust international system, and persuade a wider part of the public opinion to support the Iranian causes.⁵³

Although Iranian foreign policy under the Ahmadinejad government was dubbed as ideological and confrontationist, in fact, it was pursuing a mixture of pragmatic and ideological interests.⁵⁴ While confronting the West and Israel not only on an ideological ground, but also to forestall their ‘threats’ to Iran as perceived by the neo-radical elite, Iran sought to improve its relations with the regional countries, and anti-American and anti-Israeli constituents in various parts of the world. This policy was supposed to help the Iranian government both to pursue its national interests, to enhance Iran’s regional and international standing, and to relieve international pressure over Iran. Moreover, Ahmadinejad’s foreign policy record was relatively pragmatic in comparison to the radical stage of the revolution.⁵⁵ Contrary to the radicals’ vision of international relations that necessitated supporting revolutionary movements against the monarchs of the Arabian peninsula, and completely rejecting to be a part of the international system, Iran under Ahmadinejad strived to boost its relations with the Arab regimes, and asked only a revision of the international system. President Ahmadinejad’s regular appearances in the UN General Assemblies and Iran’s (failed) bid for one of the temporary seats in the UN

⁵² “Full Text of President Ahmadinejad’s Speech at [the UN] General Assembly,” 17 September 2005 (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2005/iran-050918-irna02.htm>); “Full Text of President Ahmadinejad’s Letter to George Bush,” 9 May 2006, (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2006/iran-060510-irna01.htm>), “President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s Letter to Barack Obama,” *Washington Post*, 6 November 2008.

⁵³ Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, “Iran’s Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation,” Presented to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada June 2-3, 2010.

⁵⁴ Kayhan Barzegar, “Iran’s Foreign Policy Strategy after Saddam,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.33, no.1 (January 2010), pp.173-189; Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, *op.cit.*, pp.1-25.

⁵⁵ A. William Samii, “Iranian Foreign Policy: not so Revolutionary Anymore,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 February 2007.

Security Council for two years (2009-2010) showed its desire to be a part of the international system.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the pragmatic tendencies of the Iranian foreign policy under Ahmadinejad, it implied a radical depart from the thermidorian period in Iran, when the rulers accepted the international system and considerably distanced themselves from the radical foreign policy discourse.

7.1.5. Caught between Economic/Social Justice Seeking and Populism

Ahmadinejad, who made the social justice, fight against corruption, and ‘bringing the oil revenue to the table of people’ his principal slogans, represented a return to initial revolutionary ideals in terms of economic policies of the regime, as well.⁵⁷ When reminded of economists’ critics of his economic policies, Ahmadinejad said, “I pray to God that I will never know about economics,” reminiscent to Khomeini’s similar rhetoric embarrassing economics and economists.⁵⁸

The principlists were critical of Rafsanjani and Khatami governments’ liberalization of Iranian economy and its integration to the world economy system, which boosted by the conservative concerns for possible penetration of the ‘materialist culture of the West’ to the Iranian society in result of the increased Western investments in Iran. The principlists, also, argued that the economic integration would make Iranian economy ‘dependent’ on foreign powers, and spoke out against capitalism and foreign investment. They thought that increasing domestic investments by channeling oil revenues to native entrepreneurs would solve Iran’s economic problems, and they envisaged a greater role for the state in economy.⁵⁹ They also devised a discourse to fight against corruption, to realize social justice, and to defend rights of the oppressed, and the poor. In accordance

⁵⁶ Bidjan Neshat, “Iran’s Tactical Foreign Policy Rhetoric,” *The Iranian Revolution at 30*, (Washington D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 2009), pp.139-141.

⁵⁷ David Menashri, “Reform versus Radicalism in the Islamic Republic,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol.10, 20 August 2010.

⁵⁸ “The Populist Problem,” *The Economist*, 5 May 2009.

⁵⁹ Ali Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad: The Politics of Confrontation*, (Adelphi Papers, vol.47, no.393), (London: IISS, 2007), p.67-68.

with the neo-radicals' approach to economy, Ahmadinejad developed his economic discourse, during the campaign period, on an egalitarian basis. He underlined economic development and welfare, and promised to sweep social inequality and corruption. Ahmadinejad maintained that economic development in an Islamic society means the fair distribution of wealth and facilities, and, promised to tackle housing issue and to provide cheap credits in order to boost employment.⁶⁰

Ahmadinejad, who continuously prophesized collapse of the capitalism, rolled back his predecessors' attempts to liberalize Iranian economy, and its integration to the world economy. He criticized his predecessors' policy to attract foreign investment, arguing that foreign companies were given an unfair advantage over local firms.⁶¹ However, Ahmadinejad administration's policy toward foreign investment was unclear. Although foreign investors welcomed especially in energy sector, which Iran needed desperately to sustain its oil and gas industry alive, 'security concerns' prevented complete opening of economy.⁶² Concurrently, most of the foreign investors, which were threatened by the US sanctions against Iran and political instability, shied away investing in Iran.

In the same line, Ahmadinejad stalled implementing the Five-Year Economic Development Plan that covered the period between 2005 and 2010, and drafted by the Khatami government, which entailed structural reforms. For instance, regarding the privatization, an issue clearly supported by Leader Khamanei, Ahmadinejad announced that the government would privatize eighty percent of state assets through selling in the stock market and distributing justice shares. The 'justice shares' scheme entailed ceding shares in state-owned companies that were projected to be privatized to the low-income families starting with the poorest in return for a discounted rate over a long period. However, because the state might sustain forty-nine percent of the shares in the

⁶⁰ *Tehran Times*, 9 June 2005.

⁶¹ "The Fight for the Right," *Emerging Markets*, 24 September 2005, <http://www.emergingmarkets.org/Article/1017543/Middle-East-and-Africa/The-fight-for-the-right.html>.

⁶² Samantha Fang, "Tentative Steps: Ahmadinejad's Economic Reform," *Harvard International Review*, vol.29, no.3 (Fall 2007).

companies, this policy was criticized to sustain state management over the ‘privatized’ assets. Additionally, the administration was criticized to utilize databases driven by the politically connected distributive institutions, including the religious/revolutionary foundations and the Basij, for doling out the shares.⁶³ Indeed, Ahmadinejad government preferred to co-opt revolutionary and religious organizations and networks, which were associated with the neo-radical faction. During first two years of his presidency, companies affiliated with the IRGC and Basij were awarded with no-bid contracts in worth of 7 billion US dollars in the field of expansion of gas fields, and construction of 600-mile pipeline from South Pars gas field to Pakistan border.⁶⁴ Those companies were also the primary clients of privatization of state assets.⁶⁵

Iran witnessed again greater state involvement in economy, under Ahmadinejad government, who fixed interest rates below the inflation, and intervened in prices of goods and services. He increased salaries, raised the minimum wage, and provided cheap credits. He established a fund, called *Imam Reza Compassion Fund*, in order to provide financial support to the young people for marriage, housing, and creating job.⁶⁶ In accordance with his slogan to remove bureaucratic organizations between the government and the people, he replaced the central and autonomous Planning and the Budget Organization with new budget organizations subordinated to the local

⁶³ Kaveh Ehsani, “Survival through Dispossession: Privatization of Public Goods in the Islamic Republic,” *Middle East Report*, no.250 (Spring 2009), pp.26-33; Abbas Bakhtiar, “Ahmadinejad’s Achilles Heel: The Iranian Economy,” *Payvand*, 25 January 2007.

⁶⁴ “The Minority Deputies Demand An Explanation from The President Regarding The Recent Economic Contracts Awarded by The Petroleum Ministry To The Revolution Guards--Objection to \$7-Billion No-Bid Deal,” *Sharq*, 30 June 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁶⁵ Alexandre Leroi-Ponant, “Iran’s new power balance,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2006. “Sepahe Pasdaran ta che hadde dar eqtesade Iran dekhalet darad?” *IranianUK.com*, 1 July 2008, <http://www.iranianuk.com/article.php?id=29327>; A. Alfoneh, “How Intertwined are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran’s Economy,” *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, no.3 (October 2007), p.2.

⁶⁶ Benedetta Berdetti, “Ahmadinejad and the Shifting Political Environment in Iran,” *Middle East Monitor*, vol.3, no 2 (August 2008).

administrations.⁶⁷ Ahmadinejad, also, engaged in ‘populist policies’ such as diverting cash outs to the poor. He has frequently traveled to the countryside and convened his cabinet meetings in various provinces instead of Tehran, the capital city. During his provincial trips, the President was handed many petitions by the locale people asking for financial assistance, help for employment, housing and medical care. In order to meet those demands, the President’s Office granted a considerable amount of money.⁶⁸

In order to compensate increased government spending he utilized the sum amounted in the Oil Stabilization Fund, and oil revenues. The coincidence of high level of oil prices helped the President by providing extra sources to fund his ‘populist’ economic policies.⁶⁹ During the first four-years of Ahmadinejad in office, the average oil prices were above 70 US dollars, which was an unprecedented level. The increase in government spending and oil revenues provided Iran with a considerable growth of GDP; they also caused a huge growth in liquidity and inflation. Therefore, Ahmadinejad’s economy policies were strongly criticized not only by his political rivals, but also by economists in several occasions.⁷⁰

Notwithstanding Ahmadinejad’s economic policies were widely regarded as ‘populist’ by his rivals and political analysts,⁷¹ he was forced to realize some structural measures to decrease Iran’s dependency on oil revenue and to alleviate budget deficits, which was exacerbated by over government spending, floating oil prices, and the sanctions. In this regard, he rationed gasoline and petrol in July 2007, and steadily

⁶⁷ “Debate heats up over restructuring of Management and Planning Organization,” *Mehr News Agency*, 17 October 2006.

⁶⁸ Kimia Sanati, “Ahmadinejad held to election promises,” *Asia Times*, 24 August 2007.

⁶⁹ Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad ...*, pp.68-69.” See, “OPEC Basket Price (Yearly), available at http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/data_graphs/40.htm.

⁷⁰ Borzou Daragahi, “Economists in Iran criticize Ahmadinejad,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 November 2008.

⁷¹ Ali Ansari, “Iran under Ahmadinejad: Populism and its Malcontents,” *International Affairs*, vol.84, no.4 (2008), pp.683-700; Abbas Milani, “Pious Populist: Understanding the Rise of Iran’s President,” *Boston Review*, November/December 2007, pp.7-14.

decreased subsidies for the refined oil, which was a great burden over the budget. He also leveled value added tax on various items in September 2008, taking the risk to disturb the bazaaris, who were credited to be an influential actor in Iranian politics. Additionally, he instigated an attempt to restructure subsidies. Arguing that current price subsidies for the basic consumer goods did not help to improve economic conditions of the poor, furthermore sustained the gap between the rich and the poor, Ahmadinejad government yearned to replace price subsidies with direct payment to the poor.⁷²

7.1.6. The Rise of Authoritarianism

After the parliamentary elections that held in February 2004, the concept of ‘security state’ (*dovlat-e padegane*) introduced into the Iranian political jargon. Accordingly, it was reported that some 90 out of 290 deputies in the new Majlis had a background in ‘revolutionary and military institutions.’⁷³ In fact, it might be considered as a likely outcome of integration of veterans of the war and former members of security and intelligence organizations into bureaucratic administration of the state, and intellectual and political life of the country since the 1990s.⁷⁴ The rise of this new generation in politics, however, was accompanied by an increasingly authoritarian inclination inside Iran.⁷⁵

The rise of authoritarianism in Iran precipitated by the ascent of so-called ‘reformist threat’ to the establishment of the Islamic Republic that coincided with bellicose statements from the United States and Israel. Especially, from 2003 onward, in response to emergence of Iran’s nuclear program as the principal ‘international security’ issue, the United States adopted a belligerent policy towards Iran that entailed a regime-change in

⁷² “Iran Confronts an ‘Economic Evolution’,” *Washington Post*, 4 December 2008.

⁷³ “The Revolutionary Guards are back,” *The Economist*, 17 June 2004.

⁷⁴ Mehran Kamrava, “2009 Elections and Iran’s Changing Political Landscape,” *Orbis*, vol.54, no.2 (Summer 2010), p.403; Barnard Hourcade, “The Rise to Power of Iran’s ‘Guardians of the Revolution’,” *Middle East Policy*, vol.16, no.3 (Autumn 2009), ss.58-63.

⁷⁵ Elliot Hen-Tov, “Understanding Iran’s New Authoritarianism,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.30, no.1 (Winter 2006/07), pp.163-79.

Iran, or threatened it with a possible military attack. In turn, Iran adopted a policy to reinforce its 'unity' and to strengthen 'internal foundations' to combat 'the enemy's plots.'⁷⁶ Therefore, while most of the reformist candidates were disqualified in consecutive elections, the persons affiliated with the security organizations were brought to influential positions, which was dramatically shown in President Ahmadinejad's choice of his cabinet.

Most members of Ahmadinejad's cabinet and senior administrators had a background in military, intelligence and security organizations, including the IRGC. Even the two members of the cabinet wearing clerical garbs were coming from the intelligence and security organizations. Designation of Hojatoleslam Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, who has been considered to be a leading member of the tribunals that executed many political prisoners in 1988, as interior minister, and Hojatoleslam Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, a notorious judge that sentenced to imprisonment of numerous 'dissidents' including Abdollah Nuri, as intelligence minister displayed the 'security-oriented' character of the Ahmadinejad cabinet.⁷⁷

After Ahmadinejad came to power, the pressure over the opposition, dissident intellectuals, and civil society organizations were steadily increased; and human rights record of Iran gravely deteriorated. A gradual rise documented in arrests of political activists, which were justified by so-called 'national security' concerns. Various institutions affiliated with the government including the National Security Council, and Tehran Prosecutor-General, Saeed Mortazavi, warned editors of newspapers against taking a critical stand towards government by reminding them "freedom of the press and freedom of expression are not absolute and are subject to respect for Islamic and legal principles."⁷⁸ The government leveled its pressure over the press through the Ministry of

⁷⁶ Naghmeh Sohrabi, "Conservatives, Neoconservatives and Reformists: Iran after the Election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad," Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, no.4, April 2006.

⁷⁷ Kaveh Ehsani. "The Populist Threat to Democracy," *Middle East Report*, no.241, Winter 2006.

⁷⁸ Golnaz Esfendiari, "State Maintains Tight Control over Information," *RFE/RL*, 2 May 2006. See, also, Human Rights Watch World Report 2010, Iran Ch.

Culture and Islamic Guidance -- Mohammad Hossein Saffar-Harandi, Minister of Culture, was also a former commander of the IRGC-- which charged with observing the press and cultural activities across the country. Moreover, the government blocked many websites carrying political news and analysis, which were considered against to the official position.⁷⁹

The pressure over the dissidents and the reform movement entered in a new phase following the presidential elections, held in June 2009. Once the incumbent President Ahmadinejad was declared as the winner of the elections with a substantial majority, the reformist contenders, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karrubi, rejected the announced election results. They argued that through the election frauds the votes casted for the reformist candidates were stolen to the benefit of Ahmadinejad. Accordingly, the supporters of the reform movement took to the streets, protested the so-called election frauds, and asked renewal of the elections. The protest movement was dubbed as the Green Movement, because the protestors wore clothes or carried banners in green, the color of Mousavi's election campaign. Over time, because Khamanei approved the election results and threatened the protestors to be treated as those waging war against God, which displayed his support for Ahmadinejad, the anger of the protestors was, also, directed against the Leader, which was evident among the slogans chanted against him. Following Khamanei's endorsement of the elections results, the security structure of Iran led by the IRGC and the Basij that viewed the protest as an attempt of velvet revolution, cruelly suppressed demonstrators and arrested leading members of the reform movement. Later on, repression over the reform movement increased so heavily that many observers of Iranian politics thought, the regime vowed to eliminate the reformist faction.⁸⁰ On the opposite side, the reformists called the election and the subsequent

⁷⁹ Mohammad Tavahori, "The Shifting Landscape of Iran's Press," *Gozaar*, 1 September 2007.

⁸⁰ Mehran Kamrava, "2009 Elections and Iran's Changing Political Landscape," *Orbis*, (Summer 2010), p.411; Posch, "A Last Chance for Iran's Reformists? The "Green Struggle" Reconsidered," pp.5-6; "Counter-Revolution and Revolt in Iran: An Interview with Iranian Political Scientist Hossein Bashiriyeh," *Constellations*, vol.17, no.1 (2010), p.68.

suppression as a ‘political coup’ engineered by President Ahmadinejad that directed to end the republican feature of the regime.

Due to the rise of the ‘security state,’ a new wave of emigration of intellectuals and artists has begun from 2005 onwards, which was boosted after the 2009 elections.⁸¹ Let aside political dissidents such as Akbar Ganji, prominent intellectuals like Ramin Jahanbegloo and Hossein Bashiriyeh, who has been under constant pressure and lost their posts in Iran, fled the country. Moreover, some diplomats working in the foreign missions of Iran, who were supposed to defend the government’s position, defected from their missions and rejected to return Iran, following the suppression of the Green Movement violently.⁸²

7.1.7. Rift within the Principlist Camp

Notwithstanding the establishment of a united front, the Coordination Council did not extinguish differences between the neo-radicals and the traditional conservatives in their approaches to economy, religion and foreign policy. The traditional conservatives identified with Ali Larijani, Ali Akbar Valayati, and most members of the high-ranking ulama, who have been loyal to Leader Khamanei personally, opposed the government’s over intervention in economy and called for a pragmatic foreign policy to divert immediate threats to the ‘national security.’ Contrary to the traditional conservatives, the neo-radicals aligned with President Ahmadinejad and his clerical mentor Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi, were supporters of greater involvement of government in economy and pursuing an ‘assertive’ foreign policy.⁸³ Moreover, the neo-radicals emerged as iconoclasts in some religious issues as epitomized by Ahmadinejad’s claim

⁸¹ Majid Mohammadi, “The Shifting Composition of Political Forces in Iran,” *Gozaar*, 1 August 2007. See also, “Report on the Situation of Iranian Refugees in Turkey: Post June 12th Election, One Year Later,” *OMID Advocates for Human Rights*, June 2010.

⁸² Shayan Gajar, “More Iranian Diplomats Defect to ‘Green Embassy,’” *InsideIran*, 14 September 2010.

⁸³ David Menashri, “Reform versus Radicalism in the Islamic Republic,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol.10, August 2010, pp.56-71.

to contact with Imam Mahdi, or his invitation of women to the stadiums to watch soccer matches, which faced with the strong reactions of the traditional conservatives.

As a result, in the absence of vocal opposition from the reformist faction, executive record of the neo-radicals under Ahmadinejad government in economy, politics and foreign policy caused to rise of reactions of the traditional conservatives, who were opposing provocative statements of President Ahmadinejad and seeking to avert a direct confrontation with the West.⁸⁴ Therefore, the main contenders of the neo-radicals in the consecutive elections, including the city council elections and the Assembly of Expert Elections (2006), and the parliamentary elections (2008) were the traditional conservatives. As a result of the rift between the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals, the latter lost control of municipal councils and failed in their bid to secure majority in the Assembly of Experts, and dominate the Majlis.

In this context, Leader Khamanei, who became the most influential decision-maker in the country and steadily involved in politics and government affairs in due process, came to the help of President Ahmadinejad. Khamanei continuously pronounced his support for Ahmadinejad government, and defined it as the best government in the Iranian history.⁸⁵ Khamanei, who constantly praised President Ahmadinejad's humility, commitment to the velayat-e faqih and strict stand against the West, urged his followers to be 'vigilant' in order to 'preserve the system' (*hefz-e nezam*). He consistently asked the political elite to keep their unity in order encounter various threats to the revolution and the regime. Therefore, the traditional conservatives tuned down their critics of the Ahmadinejad government. Thus, the principlist camp that claimed to be loyal to the Leader, stayed alive as a loose political front under the shelter of Khamanei.

⁸⁴ See, Naghmeh Sohrabi, "Conservatives, Neoconservatives and Reformists: Iran after the Election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad," Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, no.4, April 2006.

⁸⁵ Vali Nasr, "Meet 'The Decider' of Tehran: It's Not the Hothead You Expect," *The Washington Post*, 9 December 2007.

Khamanei's support for President Ahmadinejad was not indefinite, as well, and he frequently involved in political debates and rebuked Ahmadinejad and his associates to curb their extremism in several occasions. For instance, to the expense of the executive authority, now led by Ahmadinejad, Khamanei extended, in October 2005, the power of the Expediency Council headed by Rafsanjani to oversee the President, the Majlis Speaker, and the judiciary. In the same manner, he established the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations consisted of conservative and pragmatic figures, in June 2006, to curb Ahmadinejad's radical discourse in foreign policy.⁸⁶

Despite Khamanei's frequent involvement in political affairs to secure unity of the elites, President Ahmadinejad initiated a battle against the so-called 'old guard' of the Islamic Republic, conservative or reformist alike. While striving to discredit the reformists by accusing them for undermining national security of Iran, he leveled charges of corruption against the prominent 'conservative' figures including Nateq Nuri, and Mohsen Rezai. His attack against the old guard particularly targeted former presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami.

The reform movement, however, encouraged by the rising disagreements between the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals, pushed again in the presidential elections that held in June 2009. When the supporters of the Green Movement took to the streets to force renewal of the elections, the traditional conservatives, once again, coalesced with the neo-radicals to condemn the demonstrations. Thus, Mohsen Rezai, the 'principlist' hopeful of the presidential election who initially complained of irregularities, withdrew his objection in a short time. After Leader Khamanei's approved the elections results, the demonstrations suppressed violently by the security forces, and Ahmadinejad inaugurated his second term in presidency, in August 2009, without signing a remarkable change in his policies.

⁸⁶ See, Mehran Kamrava, "2009 Elections and Iran's Changing Political Landscape," *Orbis*, (Summer 2010), p.404-05.

The Green Movement continued to challenge President Ahmadinejad, after his second inauguration by rejecting his government's legitimacy. Therefore, the 'green protest' apparently advocating the republican features of the regime, resurfaced in most of the official and religious meetings for a while. In this regard, the protestors utilized several occasions celebrated officially by the Islamic Republic such as the anniversary of the takeover of the US Embassy, the Qods Day, the ashura ceremonies (to commemorate the death of Imam Hussein), the anniversary of the revolution, and the commemoration of Imam Khomeini. The Green Movement's 'evident' commitment to the Islamic revolution, the Islamic Republic and the teaching of Imam Khomeini as underlined by its so-called leaders, and its utilization of religious and revolutionary occasions to display their protest constituted a great challenge to the legitimacy of the Ahmadinejad government.

In order to weaken the Green Movement, the Iranian officials and the IRGC portrayed it as velvet coup attempt orchestrated by the Western powers in conjunction with the counter-revolutionaries, and continued to suppress its demonstrations violently. Furthermore, in order to marginalize the leading reformist leaders who have been the vanguards of the Green Movement were accused by the neo-radicals to be in association with 'velvet coup d'état' attempts of the West and incarcerated most of the reformist politicians and intellectuals.⁸⁷ Due to the increasing violence against the demonstrators and penetration of the political opponents of the Islamic Republic to the Green Movement, its so-called leaders retreated leading from further public protests. Anyway, the Green Movement displayed the remarkable power of the opposition against the

⁸⁷ For instance see, Payam Fazlinejad, "Mohammad Khatami's Mission for a Velvet Coup d'état," *Kayhan*, 3-9 June 2009. Full text of an English version of the treatise that published in five sections in *Kayhan* from 3rd to 9th June 2009 on page 14 of *Kayhan* newspaper is available at http://www.johnkeane.net/pdf_docs/iran/Fazlinejad-Velvet%20Revolution-Full-text-English.pdf (accessed in October 2010).

power structure in Iran and the delicate nature of the legitimacy of the Ahmadinejad government.⁸⁸

7.2. The IRGC and the Politics in the Neo-Radical Iran: Symbiotic Relationship

Although the doctrinaire principlists with their resoluteness to revalidate revolutionary values of the earlier period retook the whole political power in Iran after Ahmadinejad's ascent to presidency, their political clout was restricted by several factors. To begin with, although the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals colluded under the shelter of Leader Khamanei in order to confront arising threats to the Islamic Republic and revalidate revolutionary ideology, it did not provide the Ahmadinejad government and his neo-radical associates with an unlimited warrant. As the political rifts resurfaced between the two factions shortly after they came to power, as mentioned in the preceding pages, the Ahmadinejad government at times faced with opposition of the traditional conservatives, which started to court with the reformist faction against the neo-radical government. The traditional conservatives in the Majlis, occasionally in cooperation with the few reformist and independent deputies challenged President Ahmadinejad in various ways, such as rejection of his nominations for the cabinet, interpellation of ministers, and rejection of parliamentary approve for some bills offered by the government. The traditional conservatives also competed against the neo-radical associates of President Ahmadinejad in the elections for the city councils, and the Assembly of Experts, and the parliamentary elections. Additionally, despite the Leader's support for the Ahmadinejad government, his occasional involvement in political matters in favor of the traditional conservatives severely constrained maneuver capability of the government.

The neo-radicals exposed President Ahmadinejad as a popular leader; however, it was hard for him to claim to have popular support among the Iranian people. Certainly

⁸⁸ For an analysis of the Green Movement, see, Mahmood Monshipopuri and Ali Assareh, "The Islamic Republic, and the 'Green Movement': Coming Full Circle," *Middle East Policy*, vol.16, no.4 (Winter 2009), pp.27-46; Walter Posch, "A Last Chance for Iran's Reformists? The 'Green Struggle' Reconsidered."

he had the support of the poor and the veterans, yet he failed to get a substantial victory in the first round of the presidential elections of June 2005. Nevertheless, his election victory against Rafsanjani, in the second round of the elections was an amazing success for an underdog runner; it was far from the landslide victories of his predecessor, Khatami. Moreover, his election success was shadowed by the claims of election irregularities. Although Ahmadinejad's record was better in the June 2009 presidential elections, it was more controversial than the previous one. Additionally, the Leader's blessing also helped him to cultivate a considerable popular support.

Consequently, although the principlist alliance and the Leader's support provided the ruling neo-radicals with a considerable political clout, it was short of popular support, constrained by factional disputes, and limited by the constitutional check-and-balance system. Thus, the Ahmadinejad government was forced either to seek support of the Leader, and other influential institutions such as the revolutionary organizations including the IRGC, or to compromise with the traditional conservatives in order to put its political agenda into practice.

In this stage, the IRGC emerged as an influential and well-institutionalized organization. In addition to its military structure and entrenched popular organization, i.e. Basij, it advanced its institutional interests to the economic sphere through increasing its involvement in non-military industrial projects, contractions, and trade relations. The IRGC affiliated firms become the primary beneficiary of the government contractions and privatization under the Ahmadinejad administration.

The clerical penetration to the IRGC, which used to constrain its autonomy, in order to sustain political/ideological training of the Guards and enforce clerical supervision on behalf of the Leader, was maintained in this stage as well. However, the IRGC's autonomy was improved by two concomitant and steady developments over time. First, the clerical supervisors and trainers, who have been selected among the doctrinaire clerical disciples and served in the military ranks for long years led to the rise of 'militaristic clerics' among the Iranian political elite. The militaristic clerics, represented

by Hojatoleslams Ali Saedi, Mojtaba Zolnour, Khamanei's representatives to the Guards, and Hojatoleslam Hossein Taeb, served as the Basij commander, seemed to have a pretty hardliner and 'militaristic' stand in Iranian politics. Moreover, their militarist discourse started to dominate the political language of most of the conservative clerics.

The second development that helped the IRGC to enhance its political and institutional autonomy was the rising 'military' threats to the Islamic Republic. Thus, the IRGC come to the fore, as the primary security organization in charge of safeguarding the revolution and the Islamic Republic. While the IRGC changed its structure to adjust itself to the new conditions, former IRGC officers come to the influential positions in the state administration, which ensued by expansion of the IRGC's political clout.

Thus, the IRGC that developed an institutional identity in the preceding decades, started to redefine its missions and interests in accordance with its increasing autonomy and political influence. However, the over-size of the organization started to threaten its corporateness. Although the institutional expansion of the IRGC boosted its corporate and material interests vested in the political regime, the various occupations engaged by the Guards might led to the differentiation of their ideological and material interests. Additionally, it is widely regarded that engagement of an ideological army in material interests certainly leads dilution of its ideological commitment and interests. Therefore, contrary to the well-known public image of the Guards regarded as an ideologically dedicated volunteer army, the IRGC started to be portrayed by some analysts as a bunch of armed-guys pursuing their material interests.⁸⁹

Despite the prospect of differentiation of ideological and material interests of the Guards, apparently, it did not lead any conflict within the Guards ranks. However, the competition between the former IRGC leaders, who have been regarded to be still influential among the Guards, for political offices was conceived as clues of factionalism

⁸⁹ Mohsen Sazegara, "What was Once a Revolutionary Guard is Now Just a Mafia," *Sazegara.net*, 16 March 2007; Azadeh Moaveni, "Iran's rich Revolutionary Guard," *Time*, 5 September 2007.

within the IRGC. In the presidential elections held in 2005, four of the principlist candidates, Ali Larijani, M. Baqer Qalibaf, Mohsen Rezai, and Ahmadinejad, were affiliated with the Guards to some extent, which allegedly showed not only growing political influence of the IRGC, but also existence of different factions within the Guards ranks.⁹⁰ Indeed, Qalibaf admitted the existence of ‘different tastes in the IRGC,’⁹¹ however; he shied away from elucidating it. It is also plausible that the reformist faction, which used to be seen as part of the insider circle, has a considerable number of followers among the Guards.⁹² However, it is difficult to prove the factionalism within the Guards, and differentiation of ideological/political interests objectively, for the moment, in the absence of a documented instance of conflict among the active IRGC members. Therefore, I considered the IRGC corporateness considerably high in his period, because of its increasing institutional and political autonomy and self-identified corporate identity which presented the Guards as a monolithic organization.

As outline in the previous chapters, the IRGC espoused an ideology that blended religiosity with the ‘revolutionary’ values. Furthermore, in accordance with its rising power, the IRGC equated its ideological convictions as the fundamentals of the revolution and the Islamic Republic. It made sense throughout the radical stage, when the ideological viewpoints of the ruling elites were close to being monolithic. As the ideological differences aroused among the political factions in the 1990s, the IRGC was compelled to adjust itself to the new conditions. From the early 1990s onwards, ideological position of the IRGC started to reflect the conservative’s viewpoints, which were prone to the dominant ideology of the 1980s. It was enabled by the IRGC leadership’s implicit alignment with the conservatives; the conservative stand of Leader

⁹⁰ Kaveh-Cyrus Sanandaji, “Political Factionalism in Iran’s Guards and Militias,” 11 June 2009, <http://www.ndi.org/node/15541>.

⁹¹ “Report Highlights Presidential Candidate Qalibaf’s Views,” *Sharq*, 19 April 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

⁹² “Editorial: An unjustly treated organization!” *Afetaf-e Yazd*, 23 August 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

Khamanei who has also been the Commander in Chief of Armed Forces; and the penetration of conservative and neo-radical clerics to the Guards as supervisors and political/ideological trainers. Therefore, the IRGC leaders positioned the organization within the ‘Hizballahi’ camp, throughout its so-called fight against the liberals.⁹³

In a similar vein, after the traditional conservatives and the neo-radicals devised and adopted the notion of ‘principlism,’ the IRGC quickly introduced the ‘principlism’ into its ideological outlook.⁹⁴ Defining the principlism as an umbrella term to identify those committed to the revolutionary ideals, and followers of Khomeini and Khamanei, the commanders declared the IRGC as part of the principlist camp. The IRGC Commander Safavi viewed the election of Ahmadinejad to the presidency as a development marking that the Iranian nation was “moving towards principlism and that it supports revolutionary values.”⁹⁵

The IRGC’s affiliation with the ‘principlism’ was theatrically become evident in a statement of Mohammad Ali Jafari, who replaced Safavi as the IRGC Commander in Chief in September 2007, just prior to the eight parliamentary elections that scheduled to be held in February 2008. At a conference attended by the Basij commanders and the Basiji students, Commander Jafari said that supporting the principlist movement was a definite and inevitable necessity and the divine duty of the country's revolutionary and worthy forces, and asked the fellow Basijis to support, develop and advance

⁹³ “Guards Commander Reza’i says ‘liberalism’ is a cancerous tumour’,” IRNA (in English), 11 April 1996 in SWB, ME 2585, 13 April 1996, p.25.

⁹⁴ The IRGC’s adoption of ‘principlism’ was not antagonistic to its original ideological outlook that sketched out in the third chapter of this study. Furthermore, they were complementary to each other in terms of centrality of Islam, commitment to the velayat-e faqih, and conviction in the perpetual fight between Islam and kufr. Consequently, throughout the neo-radical stage of the Iranian revolution, the IRGC maintained its ideological zeal in a high level because the themes and discourse utilized by the Guards was reminiscent of the revolutionary ideology as portrayed by the Islamic radicals.

⁹⁵ “IRGC Commander Says Gaza Withdrawal Major Defeat for US,” *Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1*, 14 September 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

principlism.⁹⁶ Jafari's remarks on principlism sparked a strong reaction of the reformists and even some neo-radical figures.⁹⁷ In order to elucidate his remarks, Jafari stressed that the term 'principlist' has meanings further than personal and party interests in the context of the revolution literature. He stated, "This term stresses the ideals derived from the thoughts of Imam Khomeyni and the Supreme Leader. ... The principlism actually includes all individuals and groups in the country that believe in the state, the Islamic Revolution and the true Mohammadan Islam." He also added, "Based on the teachings of Imam Khomeini, it is the corps' duty to support principle-ism as a fundamental idea."⁹⁸

As outlined above, while the corporateness of IRGC was considerably high, political clout of the ruling elites was impeded by factional disputes, and short of popular support in addition to constraints derived from the constitutional check-and-balances system. However, both the ruling elites, and the IRGC had similar ideological viewpoints. It is well-evident in the following words of IRGC Commander Jafari; "... the current [Ahmadinejad] government ... is in step and harmony with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Basij force when it comes to the focus on the Islamic Revolution values and aspirations."⁹⁹ The apparent ideological congruence between the Ahmadinejad government and the Guards paved the way for a cooperative relationship between the two.

⁹⁶ Mohammad Hashemi, "Be Revolution Guards," *Kargozaran*, 17 February 2008, OSC Translated Text, WNC; Iraj Jamshidi, "Reaction to Electoral Remarks of IRGC Commander," *E'temad*, 19 February 2008, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁹⁷ Hoseyn Shari'atmadari, "Mistake must be accepted," *Keyhan*, 13 February 2008, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁹⁸ "Guards Commander Clarifies Remarks on Principle-ism," *Fars News Agency*, 15 February 2008, OSC Translated Excerpt, WNC. See also, Hoseyn Shari'atmadri, "A few words of sense," *Keyhan*, 18 February 2008, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

⁹⁹ "IRGC commander: Ninth government is in step with IRGC and Basij in promoting the Revolution's ideals," *Iran*, 2 November 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

The ideological correspondence between the Ahmadinejad government and the IRGC was, also, boosted by factional relations. Many of the veterans, former IRGC officers, and the Basijis were in relationship with the neo-radicals associated with Ahmadinejad, and the so-called principlists. Ahmadinejad was also once a member of the IRGC, and served as trainer of the Basij. Moreover, the IRGC supposedly played a crucial role in ascendance of the neo-radicals and election of Ahmadinejad by mobilizing the Basij and its sources for his campaign.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, in a gathering of commanders of the Basiji forces shortly after the presidential elections held in June 2005, Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr, Deputy Commander in Chief of the IRGC expressed the following remarks, which were viewed as an evidence displaying the IRGC support for Ahmadinejad:¹⁰¹

“In a complex political situation, in which both foreign powers and extremist internal forces were ... trying to change the election results in their advantage and to prevent establishment of a successful principlist (osoulgara) government, [we] had to operate with complexity. Thank God, the principlist forces managed to get support of most of the people in a hard and actual competition thanks to their smart and multi-fold plans ...”¹⁰²

In addition to the ideological congruence and factional association between the neo-radicals and the IRGC, a cooperative relationship with the Ahmadinejad government would help the Guards to secure its steadily increasing political autonomy and clout, and material interests vested in survival of the political regime. Thus, the IRGC commanders offered their service to the Ahmadinejad government. Both Comamnder Safavi, and his deputy Zolqadr, announced the readiness of the IRGC and the Basij to cooperate with the new president.¹⁰³ As for Ahmadinejad, the IRGC support was an indispensable

¹⁰⁰ Gary Thomas, “Iran Election Filled with Surprises,” *Payvand News*, 21 June 2005; Kamal Nazer Yasin, “Election Aftermath,” MEI, no 757, 2 September 2005, p.12-14.

¹⁰¹ Ehteshami and Zweiri, *op.cit.*, p.84; Alamdari, “The Power Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran ...”

¹⁰² Zahra Ebrahimi, “Baayad Peicheida Amal Meshod,” *Sharq*, 14 July 2005, reprinted in <http://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php?/news2/print/2829/>.

¹⁰³ “Iranian Guards Voice Support For President-Elect Ahmadinezhad,” *FNA*, 4 July 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

constituent of his administration that would compensate his weaknesses outlined above. Additionally, the IRGC provided Ahmadinejad with educated man-power capable of assuming administrative positions, and an influential security network to suppress opponents of his government.

Therefore, the interventionist relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership that prevailed over during the thermidorian era, turned into a symbiotic relationship in the neo-radical Iran. That symbiotic relationship was based on ideological congruence, and institutional partnership between the Ahmadinejad government and the IRGC, and aimed at furthering both the ideological and, most probably, the institutional interests of the Guards and the government. In fact, in addition to advancing ideological interest, the symbiotic relationship between the Ahmadinejad government and the IRGC has been politically expedient for the government, while it has been economically valuable for the Guards.¹⁰⁴

In accordance with the symbiotic relationship, the IRGC commanders came to the influential positions in the administration of Ahmadinejad. That is, the Guards recognized the primacy of the political leadership, rather than directly claiming for the political authority. Although the IRGC concedes to the supremacy of the political leadership, this symbiotic relationship marks a remarkable difference from the subordinate relationship, as it entailed an institutional partnership rather than the IRGC dependency to the political leadership. Furthermore, the IRGC support for the Ahmadinejad government was not infinite. For instance, the IRGC Political Director Yadollah Javani stated that if the principlist government fails in the face of the enemy's plots against the Islamic Republic, then, even the IRGC may turn into critics of the administration.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Rasool Nafisi, "Iran's Revolutionary Guard has a Lot to Lose," *RFE/RL*, 18 September 2009.

¹⁰⁵ "The Director of the Politburo of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps: The Enemy Is Trying To Portray the Government as Inefficient," *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 9 July 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

7.3. Implications of the Symbiotic Relationship between the IRGC and the Ahmadinejad Government

As stated above, the relationship between the IRGC and the Ahmadinejad government could aptly be depicted as symbiotic. In addition to ideological coherence between the Ahmadinejad government and the IRGC, and similar ideological concerns shared by them were the primary impulses that paved the way for the symbiotic relationship between the two. Aside from the IRGC support for Ahmadinejad during the presidential elections that discussed above, the symbiosis between the government and the IRGC reflected in several ways.

First, President Ahmadinejad appointed former or acting IRGC officers to the influential positions. In other words, the IRGC served as a human sources base for the Ahmadinejad government. The first cabinet of Ahmadinejad included six senior IRGC officers, in addition to a number of veterans voluntarily served in the IRGC throughout the war against Iraq.¹⁰⁶ Ahmadinejad appointed another former IRGC commander, Sadeq Mahsuli, as his advisor. Additionally, Deputy IRGC Commander M. Baqer Zolqadr was appointed as the Deputy Interior Minister in charge of security affairs. Another influential IRGC Commander, Ali Reza Afshar, was also appointed as the Deputy Interior Minister for political affairs and head of the Ministry's election headquarters.

Many of the IRGC members were picked by the Ahmadinejad government to become governor-generals, when it was reshuffling the whole administration. For instance, Abdul Hamid Raufinejad, Abutaleb Shafiqat, Amir Hayat-Moqaddam were

¹⁰⁶ Senior IRGC officers of the first Ahmadinejad cabinet were M. Mohammad-Najjar (Minister of Defense and Logistics), Brig-Gen in the IRGC; M. H. Saffar-Harandi (Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance), former Brig-Gen in the IRGC; Masoud Mirkazemi (Minister of Commerce), former Logistics Commander in the IRGC; Muhammad Rahmati (Minister of Roads and Transportation), former Head of the Universities' Jihad affiliated the IRGC; Alireza Tahmasbi (Minister of Industries and Mines), former IRGC officer in the Khatam-ol-Anbiya Garrison of the IRGC; Parviz Fattah (Minister of Energy), former Deputy Commander of the Special Division of the IRGC. See, "18 of Iran's 21 New Ministers Hail from Revolutionary Guards, Secret Police," *Iran Focus*, 14 August 2005.

appointed as governor-generals of Kerman, Mazandaran and Khuzestan provinces.¹⁰⁷ The IRGC members found influential positions in the foreign ministry, as well. Javad Mansuri, the first Commander of the IRGC was appointed as Iran's new ambassador to Beijing. Some other IRGC officers were selected as senior diplomats in a number of countries.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the IRGC Spokesman Seyyid Ahmad M. Morshedi reportedly said that "the IRGC is ready to step in and full those positions should the newly appointed personnel get out of line."¹⁰⁹

Whereas the Ahmadinejad government resorting the IRGC as a human sources base, Leader Khamanei had a long practice of appointing the IRGC officers to the influential positions within his jurisdiction. He appointed former IRGC Minister Rafiqdust to head Bonyad-e Mostazafin in September 1989. Mohammad Foruzandeh, who acted as Chief of Staff of the IRGC, replaced Rafiqdust in 1999. He also appointed former IRGC officers consecutively, Ali Larijani (1994) and Ezzetollah Zarghami (2004), as the Head of the National Radio and TV. Khamanei also assigned the IRGC officers (Hedayat Lotfian, M. Baqer Qalibaf) as the Chief of the Disciplinary (Police) Forces. He appointed another IRGC commander, Ismail Ahmadi Moghaddam, as the country's new police chief in 2005.¹¹⁰

The IRGC officers' takeover of influential positions furthered the discussion on 'militarization of Iranian politics.'¹¹¹ Maintaining that the commanders that found new jobs in government ended their relations with the IRGC, the IRGC leadership rejected any claim of militarization. In this regard, The IRGC Commander Safavi said, "Only

¹⁰⁷ Bill Samii, "Iran: No Welcome for President's New Elite, *RFE/RL Iran*, 22 February 2006.

¹⁰⁸ "Iran to replace its ambassadors with officers from elite IRGC," *Geo-Strategy Direct*, 7 May 2006, p.1; "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Can Play a Part in International Diplomacy," *Farhang-e Ashti*, 15 June 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹⁰⁹ Referred in Matthew M. Frick, "Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps; An Open Source Analysis," *Joint Force Quarterly*, issue 49, 2nd quarter 2008, p.126.

¹¹⁰ "Iran puts police under Revolutionary Guards control," *Iran Focus*, 10 July 2005.

¹¹¹ Ehteshami and Zweiri, *op.cit.*, p.69.

politicians who have a stupid mentality think that the appointment of capable IRGC forces to state posts creates a security climate in the country.”¹¹² Likewise, Abbas Haji Najari of the IRGC Political Directorate said, “The nomination of certain brothers who served at the frontlines during the war should be a source of pride and not worry.”¹¹³

The second reflection of the symbiotic relationship between the Ahmadinejad government and the IRGC has been the government’s co-optation of the IRGC and IRGC affiliated firms for lucrative contractions. In other words, as stated by the IRGC officials, the Guards provided engineering and logistics services in support for the government especially in impoverished regions to contribute overall development of the country.¹¹⁴ In fact, with the election of Ahmadinejad as president, the IRGC’s economic activities expanded considerably; and its economic activities evolved from engineering development projects into huge business conglomerates.¹¹⁵

Indeed, the IRGC’s involvement in economic activities beyond the military industry started long times ago, especially after the establishment of Khatam’ol Anbiya (*Gharargah Sazandegi-ye Khatam al-Anbiya*, known also as GHORB), in the early 1990s.¹¹⁶ However, the Ahmadinejad government gave a new impetus to the process.

¹¹² “Appointment of new First Deputy IRGC Commander in Iran said Unlikely,” *Fars News Agency*, 30 November 2005, (WNC, FBIS)

¹¹³ “Revolutionary guardsman wins top Iran security post,” *AFP*, 30 November 2005 (Factiva).

¹¹⁴ “Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Commander in Chief: IRGC Ready To Provide Engineering Services, Support for Administration,” *Hemayat*, 8 May 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC; “Corps’ Engagement in Economic Contracts,” (Interview with IRGC Brigadier General Abdolreza Abed, Acting Commander of Khatam’ol Anbiya Base, by Reza Zandi), *Sharq*, 13 July 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC; “Sepahe Pasdaran ta che hadde dar eqtesade Iran dekhalet darad?” *IranianUK.com*, 1 July 2008.

¹¹⁵ See, “IRGC’s dominance over Iran’s politics and economy – Part 1,” *Iran Focus*, 11 May 2010; “IRGC’s dominance over Iran’s politics and economy – Part 2,” *Iran Focus*, 12 May 2010; Ali Alfoneh, “The Revolutionary Guards’ Looting of Iran’s Economy,” *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, no.3, June 2010.

¹¹⁶ Fields of activities of Khatam’ol Anbiya, the principal IRGC construction company that established in 1990, includes engineering projects for agricultural, industrial, and commercial development; construction of dam, tunnel, underground buildings, roads and highways; installation of water and gas pipelines; constructions in the sea; and mining. For the activities of Khatam’ol Anbiya, see, “Mohemtareen Tarh-haye Sazandeghe-ye Keshvar ra Sepah Anjam dade-est,” *Chahrahaaye Afetab ...*, *op.cit.*, p.28-35.

The National Iranian Gas Company awarded Khatam'ol Anbiya a \$1.3 billion-worth contract to build a gas pipeline from Asaluyeh, the South Pars gas field, to Iranshahr at the Iran-Pakistan border in June 2006.¹¹⁷ In the meantime, the National Oil Company gave Khatam'ol Anbiya a no-bid contract to develop the fifteenth and sixteenth phases of South Pars Gas Field, one of Iran's most valuable gas development projects. Furthermore, the government used the foreign currency reserve account to fund the latter contract in worth of about \$2.0 billion.¹¹⁸ Additionally, Khatam'ol Anbiya seized the ownership of the Oriental Kish Company, a private enterprise engaged in drilling oil and gas in various Persian Gulf fields.¹¹⁹ Recently, in September 2009, a consortium led by IRGC affiliated companies, the Mobin Trust and Shahriyar Mahestan, purchased 51 percent stake of the national Telecommunication Company of Iran. Furthermore the IRGC entered in the banking sector through its two financial institutions; the Ansar Institute of Finance and Credit, and the Mehr Institute of Finance and Credit. In due process, the IRGC become one of the great economic powers in Iran with its more than 800 companies that control a great part of the Iranian economy.¹²⁰

There are several controversial points related to the IRGC's involvement in the economic affairs. First, the Ahmadinejad government favored the Khatam'ol Anbiya and other IRGC companies in great contracts. Even in some cases, the government awarded the IRGC no-bid contracts. The government also used public funds and public banks to

¹¹⁷ A. Alfoneh, "How Intertwined are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran's Economy," *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, no.3 (October 2007), p.4; Ahmad Rafat, "Pasdaran Seek to Control Economy," *Adnkronos International*, 4 July 2006 [www.adnki.com, accessed on 19 September 2006]; K. Murphy, "Iran's Guard builds a Fiscal Empire," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 August 2007.

¹¹⁸ "The Minority Deputies Demand An Explanation from The President Regarding The Recent Economic Contracts Awarded by The Petroleum Ministry To The Revolution Guards--Objection to \$7-Billion No-Bid Deal," *Sharq*, 30 June 2006, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹¹⁹ Mehdi Khalaji, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, Inc." *WINEP Policywatch*, no.1273, 17 August 2007.

¹²⁰ See, Omid Memarian, "Revolutionary Guards Tighten Economic Hold," *Inter-Press Service*, 29 December 2009; Mark Gregory, "Expanding Business Empire of Iran's Revolutionary Guards," *BBC Middle East*, 26 July 2010; Farahmand Alipour, "IRGC Devouring All of the Country's Wealth," *Iran Briefing*, 13 September 2010.

finance the IRGC companies' capital needs. Second, the IRGC allegedly intimidated contending private companies from bidding for the tenders, or engineered their elimination from the bidding process with the pretext of 'national security concerns.' Moreover, it is alleged by some experts that its economic activities included smuggling through unauthorized jetties.¹²¹ Finally, the IRGC's economic activities have been beyond the inspection of the government and parliament, and some of its economic activities are exempted from tax. Since the IRGC affairs have been remained within the jurisdiction of the Leader, there is no oversight body to supervise its economic activities.

Finally, in accordance with their symbiotic relationship, the IRGC extended verbal and actual support to the President at times of crises. Soon after the establishment of Ahmadinejad government, the IRGC Commander Safavi, while addressing the Student Basij, warned them that some political groups were trying to weaken the new administration. Depicting those activities to weaken the government as "evil intentions," he maintained that they would fail in the face of "the alertness of the people, the Majles deputies, and the mass media." He also called everyone to be ready to "engage in conflicts in all fields."¹²²

When President Ahmadinejad incited a wide reaction outside Iran with his remarks on the necessity of wiping Israel out of the map, the IRGC commanders apparently backed the president. Commander Safavi stressed that the president interpreted the nation's will. He maintained that the president's reiteration of Imam's words upset the United States and the Zionist regime that trying to subvert the Islamic Republic. However, he toned down the militaristic content of Ahmadinejad's remarks by underlining that the national will to destroy Israel was not tantamount to taking a military action. Instead, Safavi stated, "It means that all Islamic nations should unite and

¹²¹ Khalaji, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, Inc." p.2; Alfonh, "How Intertwined are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran's Economy," p.5; Azadeh Moaveni, "Iran's rich Revolutionary Guard," *Time*, 5 September 2007.

¹²² "General Rahim-Safavi: Some Political Groups Are Trying To Weaken Government," *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 27 August 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

campaign economically, politically and culturally against Israel for the deliverance of the Palestinian nation.”¹²³ In an official communiqué, the IRGC stated that *intifadah* and the wrath of Palestinians would definitely lead to the destruction of Israel.¹²⁴

IRGC Commander Jafari, who replaced Safavi in September 2007, continued to voice IRGC support for President Ahmadinejad. He praised the government’s approach to the cultural issues and stated:

“With the start of the term of the Ninth Government, we came out of the peripheries, and the current government ... is in step and harmony with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Basij force when it comes to the focus on the Islamic Revolution values and aspirations.”¹²⁵

As a good illustration of the IRGC support for Ahmadinejad government, the IRGC Political Director Javani condemned the critics of the government to be part of the enemy’s plots to portray the government as inefficient.¹²⁶ As briefly mentioned above, Jafari called on the Basijis to support the principlists, just before the parliamentary elections of 2008. Although he maintained that by principlism he meant commitment to the revolutionary ideals and Imam Khomeini, in a part of the same statement he said that the principlist movement has once again become revived and is now in a ruling position twenty-five years after the Revolution. In another part of the statement, he said, “Today, the principlist movement rules the executive and the legislative branches,” which was a clear reference to the political movement led by President Ahmadinejad.¹²⁷ The IRGC officials’ expression of support for President Ahmadinejad continued in other occasions.

¹²³ “Guards Chief Says Ahmadinezhad's Remarks on Israel Were Those of Nation,” *Fars News Agency*, 28 October 2005, FBIS Translated Text, WNC.

¹²⁴ “Iranian Guards Corps Says Palestinian Intifadah Will 'Wipe Israel Off The Map',” *Mehr News Agency*, 1 November 2005, FBIS Translated Excerpt, WNC.

¹²⁵ “IRGC commander: Ninth government is in step with IRGC and Basij in promoting the Revolution's ideals,” *Iran*, 2 November 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹²⁶ “The Director of the Politburo of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps: The Enemy Is Trying To Portray the Government as Inefficient,” *Siyasat-e Ruz*, 9 July 2007, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

¹²⁷ Hoseyn Shari'atmadari, “Mistake must be accepted,” *Keyhan*, 13 February 2008, OSC Translated Text, WNC.

For instance, Deputy of the Leader's Representative to the IRGC, Mojtaba Zolnour, stressing that Khamanei defined the Ahmadinejad government as 'the best government of the Islamic Republic,' suggested, continuation of this government would be expedient to the regime. Thus, he clearly supported re-election of Ahmadinejad.¹²⁸

Indeed, the IRGC maintained its support for Ahmadinejad in the presidential election of June 2009, as well. Anticipating that a reformist victory in the election would culminate in weakening of the velayat-e faqih, the IRGC sided with the principlist Ahmadinejad vis-à-vis his reformist contenders, Mousavi and Karrubi.¹²⁹ Whereas orchestrating a smear campaign against the reformist candidates, the IRGC mobilized the Basij to contribute Ahmadinejad's election campaign. In this regard, few days before the election, Yadollah Javani likened the vivid campaign of Mousavi colored with green as a prelude to the velvet revolution attempt against the regime.¹³⁰ Thus, he called 'supporters' of the regime to be vigilant against the plots that has been orchestrating by the reformist leaders in conjunction with the West, he threatened followers of the reformist leaders. Eventually, the IRGC cruelly suppressed the post-election demonstrations carried out by the 'Green Movement' that supposed to be led by Mousavi.¹³¹

7.4. Conclusion

The neo-radical stage in Iran that started with the election of Ahmadinejad as the new president in 2005 is marked by the dominance of the principlist camp consisting of the neo-radical and the traditional conservative factions, which controlled both the

¹²⁸ "Hemayate yak Maghame Sepah az Entekhabe Mojaddade Ahmadinejad," *Etemaad*, 2 September 2008.

¹²⁹ Farideh Farhi, "IRGC Commander Acknowledges Military Involvement in Election Politics," *NIAC US-Iran Policy Memo*, September 2009; Babak Rahimi, "The Role of the Revolutionary Guards and Basij Militia in Iran's 'Electoral Coup'," *Terrorism Monitor (Jamestown)*, vol.7, no.21, 17 July 2009, pp.6-8; Ali Alfoneh, "Supremely Undemocratic: The Revolutionary Guards Engineer Iran's Elections," *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, no.4, June 2009.

¹³⁰ "Mousavi Camp Waging Velvet Revolution," *Reuters*, 10 June 2009.

¹³¹ Posch, "A Last Chance for Iran's Reformists? The 'Green Struggle' Reconsidered."

executive authority and the Majlis after 2005. The principlist elite have been committed to the revolutionary ideology and strong supporters of the velayat-e faqih, which made them closer to the IRGC in terms of ideological view. The IRGC has already fomented a relationship based on cooperation with the principlists even before they came to power. As discussed in the previous pages, in addition to ideological congruence between them, personal relations, and the Leader's implicit support for the principlists played an influential role in establishment of that cooperation. Once the neo-radicals seized the parliamentary majority and the presidency, the cooperation between the IRGC and the principlist elite was maintained in the form of symbiotic relationship. Thus, the IRGC's contentious relationship with the political leadership that prevailed over the thermidorian stage was replaced by cooperative relationship based on the symbiosis. The symbiotic relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership, i.e. the Ahmadinejad governments, was principally reflected in former or acting IRGC commanders' takeover of influential positions in the new administration.

Although the form of IRGC's relationship to the politics changed from interventionism to the symbiotic, it did not mean the end of the IRGC's involvement in politics. Instead of returning to their military profession after defeating the so-called reformist threat to the Islamic Republic, the Guards started to take part in administration of the country. However, it is noteworthy that rather than directly claiming for power, the Guards supported one of the revolutionary factions and lend a hand in support of them in administrating the country. That is, the IRGC conceded primacy of the civilian leadership. That is why President Ahmadinejad freely appointed or dismissed officials in relationship with the IRGC without interference of the IRGC leadership, and neither of the commanders got political offices because of their position in the IRGC. Additionally, all of the IRGC commanders, with the exception of the Defense Ministers, that took part in the administration, stripped of their IRGC uniforms. That is, the symbiotic relationship between the IRGC and the Ahmadinejad government emerged as an institutional partnership, rather than a fusion of the political and military missions.

However, this symbiotic relationship enhanced political autonomy and corporate interests of the IRGC, which furthered its clout in Iranian politics.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This dissertation analyzed the IRGC-politics relationship in post-revolutionary Iran and explored the causes of the rise of the IRGC in Iranian politics. Because the IRGC's influence in Iranian politics considerably increased in the recent decade, this analysis is deemed helpful in understanding contemporary Iranian politics. However, the IRGC's involvement in politics was not a straight-forward movement. Whereas the IRGC's relationship to politics consisted of ebbs and downs, its relations with the political leadership, i.e. various governments, oscillated between confrontation and cooperation throughout the thirty years following the establishment of the IRGC in May 1979. Therefore, any attempt to comprehend the IRGC-politics relationship and the rise of the IRGC's political clout necessitated explaining causes lying behind the changes of the relations between the IRGC and the Iranian revolutionary political leadership.

Despite the apparently extensive interest in the rise of the IRGC in Iranian politics that is incited in recent years, the issue is still underexplored in the Iranian studies. Various explanations to explain the IRGC's involvement in politics in the relevant literature focused on generational change, factional relations, the IRGC's relations with the Leader, the increasing praetorian tendencies of the Guards, etc.. Although those explanations helped to understand the IRGC-politics relationship to some extent in the last decade, they failed to provide an explanation for the reasons of the change of the forms of the IRGC-politics relationship. Additionally, explanatory power of those approaches was limited with particular time and place, because they lacked an analytical framework that would be helpful to analyze the IRGC-politics relationship in various periods after the revolution. Nevertheless, the existing literature provided good insights and valuable information on the subject.

Therefore, departing from the observation that the IRGC-politics relationship operates in revolutionary conditions, this dissertation initially set forth to devise a framework for explaining revolutionary army-politics relations in post-revolutionary

states. This issue has also been understudied in the relevant literature. Nevertheless, noteworthy studies on civil-military relations, revolutions, and revolutionary armies presented a solid ground to study revolutionary armies and politics. In this regard, this dissertation reviewed revolutionary armies and politics in the aftermath of the ‘great revolutions’ including the French Revolution (1789), the Russian Revolution (1917), Chinese Revolution (1949), and the Cuban Revolution (1959).

Although those revolutions had peculiar causes and culminated in different outcomes, they all faced with similar issues in the aftermath of the victory. Above all, revolutionary regimes should either establish new armies, or transform the existing ones, in order to safeguard the revolution. Then, they encountered with the conventional problem of civil-military relations; that is, keeping armies strong enough to fight enemies, but ensuring their subordination to political leadership. However, because they continued to operate in revolutionary conditions, revolutionary dynamics strongly dominated revolutionary army-politics relations in those revolutionary regimes.

The revolutionary dynamics that prevailed in the aftermath of the most revolutions and affect revolutionary army-politics relationship, embraced striking similarities in causes, processes and outcomes of revolutions, as well. Moreover, most of the revolutions resemble each other in terms of the structure of the government, the role of the revolutionary ideology in the administration, the commitment of the elite to the revolution, the internal and external policies of the revolutionary regime, and the principal political developments. Based on those similarities between the various revolutions led Crane Brinton to devise a theory of revolutionary stages in his groundbreaking study of the *Anatomy of Revolution*. Accordingly, after its victory, the course of revolution continued through the rule of moderates, the rule of radicals and the reign of terror that was ensued by the thermidorian reaction.

Another remarkable similarity between those revolutions is related to the characteristics of their revolutionary armies. The revolutionary armies were alike in terms of role of ideology, composition, organization type and missions. Above all, the revolutionary armies were political armies pursuing ideological interests in line

with the revolutionary leadership. They consisted of ideologically vigilante volunteers that organized in a non-hierarchic way. The revolutionary armies had internal security missions and external military missions to safeguard and expand revolution, and to fight against enemies. Another distinctive feature of the revolutionary armies was lack of their corporate interests distinct from the political leadership. However, in the course of revolution, because of the revolutionary dynamics, those characteristics of revolutionary armies were also subject to change in parallel to the revolutionary stages. In turn, shifts in the characteristics of revolutionary armies and stance of the ruling elite came up with changes in revolutionary army-politics relations.

This dissertation's examination of revolutionary armies and politics put forward four variables that were influential in revolutionary armies' relationship to politics. The variables included ideological outlook of the revolutionary army, its corporateness, ideological stance of the political leadership, and its power. Ideological outlook of the revolutionary army offered a basis for its corporate identity, a mindset to assess major developments, and provided impulses for its mobilization. Corporateness of the revolutionary army that comprised bureaucratization, institutional autonomy and institutional identity, determined its capability to act as unitary actor and provided additional incentives, i.e. corporate interests, for its actions. Ideological stance of the political elites, especially the ruling elite, led to congruence or incongruence of values between the political leadership and the revolutionary army that profoundly affected their relations. Finally, power of the political leadership that consisted of elite cohesiveness, popular support and institutional power affected its capability to control the revolutionary army.

Diverse combinations of those variables led to different forms of relations between the revolutionary army and politics in various stages of the revolution. Accordingly, this study also identified five patterns of revolutionary army-politics relations besides the distrustful relationship between the revolutionary leadership and the inherited conventional army.

Contention emerged as the first form of relationship between the revolutionary army and politics. In this form, a weak and liberal political leadership encountered

with hastily established, highly devoted revolutionary army with low corporateness. Because of the ideological incongruence between the two, and weakness of the political leadership to dominate the revolutionary guards that steadily fell to the control of the radicals, the revolutionary army contended with the political leadership. It was the case in the first stage after the revolution, when the French National Guards helped the Jacobins to come to power, and the Russian Red Guards struggled against the Kerensky government alongside the Bolsheviks. The second pattern of the relationship between the revolutionary army and the political leadership is subordination. When the devoted revolutionary army with a burgeoning corporate identity faced with highly doctrinaire and powerful political leadership, it subordinated to the political leadership. It usually coincided with the rule of radicals like the Jacobins in France, and consolidation of the Bolsheviks rule in Russia, and the CCP rule in China.

Another pattern of revolutionary army-politics relationship is the fusion, in which boundaries between the military and political spheres are too murky, and officials frequently move between the military and political posts. In other words, the political leadership is the same with the military leadership, as it shown after the Cuban revolution.

The fourth form of revolutionary army-politics relationship is interventionism. If a revolutionary army with high ideological commitment and corporateness comes across a liberal and weak political leadership, the revolutionary army inclines to intervene in politics. The revolutionary army's involvement in politics is derived from either its own ideological motivations, or incitement of some acting political factions. This development is usually observed in the thermidorian stage of revolution. Persistent involvement of the revolutionary army in politics paves the way for praetorianism, as it was seen in the French case when Bonaparte took over political administration. Finally, revolutionary armies and the political leadership establish a symbiotic relationship. This kind of relationship is illustrated best in the Chinese case, where the doctrinaire and powerful political leadership, i.e. the Chinese Communist Party, encountered with an ideologically committed and powerful revolutionary army, the PLA.

Having determined variables to study revolutionary army-politics relationship and after reviewing emerging patterns of relations between the revolutionary army and the political leadership, this dissertation moved on the Iranian case in order to analyze the IRGC and politics relationship and the rise of the IRGC in Iranian politics. Relying on the framework drawn above on the issue of the revolutionary army-politics relationship, it is argued in this study that the IRGC-politics relationship is determined by the revolutionary dynamics of Iran that included two sets of factors related to characteristics of the revolutionary army, i.e. the IRGC, and the features of the political leadership in post-revolutionary Iran. In order to substantiate this argument and to analyze the IRGC-politics relationship, the four variables are traced throughout the three decades of the revolution. In accordance with the 'stages theory of revolution,' history of post-revolutionary Iran was divided into four periods; transition, radical, thermidorian, and neo-radical.

The first period after the revolution in Iran could be described as the transition period that covered February 1979 through June 1981, which is the period that is also known as the moderate stage because the moderate leaders took over the government. The principal features of the revolutionary dynamics in this stage were political instability because of the factional bickering and the steadily radicalization of the revolution. The ruling elites like Bazargan and Banisadr were liberal in comparison to the Islamic radicals; however, they had no power to put their political agenda into practice vis-à-vis the Islamic radicals. The IRGC was newly established in this period by combination of various guerilla forces. That is why its corporateness was considerably low and its loyalty was fragmented between the contending factions. However, the Islamic radicals quickly penetrated into this organization and made it one of the strongholds of their faction. Thus, the IRGC became a party to the factional fighting alongside the Islamic radicals and struggled against the moderate government of Bazargan, and President Banisadr. The contention between the IRGC and the political leadership was well-illustrated through the Guards' resistance against Bazargan's and Banisadr's bid to rein the organization, and the support of the IRGC for the occupation of the US Embassy.

Table 1. Interaction of Characteristics of the IRGC and the Stance of the Ruling Elite throughout the Revolutionary Stages in Iran, and the observed outcomes of IRGC-Politics relationship.

Revolutionary Stages	<i>Characteristics of the IRGC</i>		<i>Stance of the Ruling Elite</i>		<i>Form of the IRGC-Politics Relationship</i>
	Ideological Commitment	Corporateness	Ideological Commitment	Power	
Transition (1979-1981)	High, but differentiated	Low	Low	Low	<i>Contention</i>
Radical (1981-1989)	High	Slightly High	High	High	<i>Subordination</i>
Thermidorian (1989-2005)	High	High	Low	Low	<i>Intervention</i>
Neo-Radical (2005- 20??)	High	High	High	Slightly High	<i>Symbiotic</i>

After the Iranian Majlis impeached President Banisadr in June 1981, the Iranian revolution entered its radical stage as the Islamic radicals consolidated their power. The strife for Islamization of state, society, economics and politics, the elimination of the political rivals of the radicals through the ‘reign of terror,’ and the eight-year war against Iraq dominated Iranian politics in this period. Because the IRGC was institutionalized in due course, it has slightly high corporateness while maintaining its ideological vigilance. On the other side, there was a doctrinaire and powerful political leadership, i.e. the Islamic radicals, represented by President Ali Khamanei and Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi. In this context, the IRGC subordinated to the political leadership. Its subordination was exemplified in the IRGC’s active participation into the repression of political opponents and into the war-front to fight against enemies.

The reign of radicals in Iran ended shortly after the death of Khomeini in June 1989. In the new stage that called as the thermidorian period, a gradual rationalization process accompanied the reconstruction campaign initiated by President Hashemi Rafsanjani. Later on, the rise of the reform movement led by President Mohammad Khatami marked this stage, which was ensued by intensification of the factional fighting among the revolutionary elite. The political leadership in this term was too lenient in imposing revolutionary values and pragmatic in action. However, although the political leadership had a considerable popular support, its power was strongly curbed by factional fighting, constitutional

check-and-balances, and additional barriers instigated by Leader Ali Khamanei. On the other side, the IRGC sustained its strict adherence to the revolutionary ideology; however, its corporateness initially was curtailed by the political leadership's attempt to compel the IRGC to professionalize and to amalgamate armed forces. Additionally, the IRGC's public image was worsened because of its failure in the war-front. The IRGC also faced another challenge to adjust itself into the post-war conditions. Thus, the IRGC remained politically inactive and maintained its subordination to the political leadership for a while.

Nevertheless, as soon as the IRGC restored its corporateness, the IRGC commanders launched issuing political statements. As far as the factional fighting among the elite deepened and the ruling leadership continued to distance itself from the revolutionary ideology as formulated by the Islamic radicals in the early 1980s, the IRGC confronted with the political leadership, which led its steady involvement in politics. Its involvement in politics took the form of interventionism, when the Khatami government was in charge. Interventionism of the IRGC was very apparent when the 24 senior IRGC commanders wrote a warning letter to President Khatami in July 1999 in the midst of student riots. The IRGC's occupation of the IKIA to enforce the reformist government to revoke its contract with a Turkish firm to operate the airport was much more alarming in terms of the IRGC-politics relationship.

The thermidorian stage in Iran gave birth to relapse of radicalism; that is, the rise of neo-radical movement. With the ascent of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power in June 2005, a new period took start in the revolutionary history of Iran, which is called as the neo-radical stage. Ahmadinejad and his neo-radical associates, with the backing of the conservative faction, came to power by pledging to reinvigorate the revolutionary ideology and politics. In terms of political power, the neo-radicals in power was also suffered the same problems preventing the reformist government to implement their political agenda. However, the ideological congruence between the political leadership and the revolutionary institutions including the IRGC provided it with a considerable base of support. Then, the IRGC with a high level of corporateness and ideological commitment extended its support for the neo-radical

government. This relationship between the IRGC and the political leadership is called symbiotic. The symbiotic relationship between the Ahmadinejad government and the IRGC was reflected in assignment of former and acting IRGC personnel to the influential positions in administration, the government's co-optation of the IRGC and the IRGC affiliated firms for the lucrative contracts, and the IRGC's vocal and actual support for President Ahmadinejad.

Consequently, this dissertation set an analytical framework to comprehend the IRGC-politics relationship by combining the studies on revolutionary armies with theories of revolution and civil-military relations. This analytical framework provided us both analytical tools, i.e., the four variables and periodization, and patterns of revolutionary-army's relationship to politics. Indeed, varieties in four variables as traced in the Iranian case helped us to explain why the IRGC established different forms of relations with different governments in various stages after the revolution. To sum up, congruence or incongruence of ideological commitment of political leadership with the ideological outlook of the IRGC, and their respective powers vis-à-vis each other determined the IRGC-politics relationship in Iran. Soon after its establishment, the IRGC adopted a uniform ideological outlook in harmony with the revolutionary ideology as formulated by the Islamic radicals. Thus, the ideological outlook of the IRGC turned to be constant variable. Therefore, corporateness of the IRGC, and ideological stance and power of the ruling elites gained more explanatory power. A variation in one of those variables culminated in a different form of IRGC-politics relationship, as it shown from contention to subordination, and then to intervention, and finally to a symbiotic relationship. As it is illustrated throughout the study, the changes of form of the IRGC-politics relations were in parallel to changes in the revolutionary stages. In fact, the political dynamics in each stage following the victory of the revolution played a secondary role in the IRGC's relations with the political leadership by affecting both the variables outlined in this study, and the context of the IRGC-politics relationship.

Because this dissertation was primarily concerned with analyzing the IRGC-politics relationship and explaining changes of forms in this relationship, the study focused on the Iranian case. However, the analytical framework set in this

dissertation has an explanatory and predictive power to comprehend revolutionary army-politics relationship in other cases. Therefore, it could be utilized in explaining revolutionary army-politics relations in other revolutionary states as well.

Notwithstanding its power, this framework has some liabilities as well. First, its explanatory power is limited with the first three to four stages of the revolution. In fact, in a broad view, relapse of radicalism as in the case in Iran, contributes to consummation of the revolution because it rectified, to some extent, revolutionary values and institutions. However, it becomes difficult to find similarities between various revolutionary states as far as a revolutionary country distanced from the departing point for the revolution. Therefore, stages theory also ends with the thermidorian stage to start another cycle of revolution. Then, although the variables outlined here could be utilized to understand army-politics relationship in any case and time, the revolutionary dynamics lost its explanatory power. Instead, local and peculiar political dynamics gain more explanatory power. For instance, although it is likely that we will continue to talk about impact of the revolution on Iranian politics throughout the decades ahead, peculiar dynamics of Iran would have more explanatory power to understand army-politics relations.

Another liability of the framework drawn in this study is related to its analytical category of the revolutionary army. Although it is persuasive to take the revolutionary army as distinct category for analysis because it has some peculiarities in the first stages of the revolution, its characteristics are also subjected to change. As a result, revolutionary armies are likely to turn into a professional army or a praetorian one. Revolutionary armies' transformation into a professional or praetorian army needs further study.

Finally, the relationship between the ideological commitment and corporateness of the revolutionary army needs further exploration. Both ideological aspirations and corporate interests of the revolutionary army are influential in its involvement politics. However, measuring the rate of these two factors remains as a tough issue. Indeed, exploring motivations behind the activities of the revolutionary army is difficult because both its ideological outlook and its corporate interest may render coinciding impulses. Moreover, the revolutionary army might exploit the

revolutionary ideology to disguise its corporate interests. Therefore, depiction of the true motivations of the revolutionary armies is essential to understand their relationship to politics.

Consequently, this dissertation studied the IRGC's shifting relations with the Iranian political leadership since its inception shortly after the victory of the revolution in February 1979. Additionally, at the end of the research, it provided an analytical framework to explain varying forms of the IRGC-politics relationship, which could also be utilized in civil-military relations regarding revolutionary armies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TÜKÇE ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı İran İslam Devrimi Muhafızları Ordusu'nun (İDMO) siyasetle ilişkilerini analiz etmektir. Siyasete uzun bir süre kayıtsız kalmasının ardından Devrim Muhafızları 1997-2005 yılları arasında İran'ın reformcu cumhurbaşkanı olan Muhammed Hatemi ile karşı karşıya gelmesiyle dikkatleri çekmiştir. Mahmud Ahmedinecad'ın Haziran 2005'te cumhurbaşkanlığı makamına gelmesiyle birlikte İDMO'nun İran siyasetinde artan etkisine dair tartışmalar oldukça yoğunlaştı. İDMO'nun Ahmedinecad'ın cumhurbaşkanlığı kampanyasını desteklemesi ve bazı üst düzey İDMO komutanlarının Ahmedinecad kabinesinde kimi bakanlıklara getirilmesi nedeniyle bazı kimseler İDMO'nun İran siyasetinde artan etkisinin İran siyasetinin militerleşmesinin göstergesi olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. Gerçekten de İDMO'nun siyasetteki ağırlığı Ahmedinecad yönetimi altında artmaya devam etmiştir. Bu etki o denli artmıştır ki İran siyasetinin bazı gözlemcileri İDMO'nun yakın bir gelecekte İran'da "kral-yapıcı" bir konumda olacağını iddia etti. Bu nedenle, İDMO-siyaset ilişkisinin analiz edilmesi çağdaş İran siyasi gelişmelerinin daha iyi anlaşılması için yardımcı olacaktır.

Bu bağlamda tez çalışmasında öncelikle şu soruya cevap aranmıştır: Devrimi Muhafızları neden ve nasıl devrim sonrası İran siyasetinde önemli bir aktör haline gelmiştir? İDMO'nun devrimden sonra geçen otuz yıldan yalnızca son yılında önemli bir siyasi aktör haline gelmiş olması dikkate alınarak tezde, İDMO'nun İran siyasetinde artan etkinliğinin çok sayıda siyasi içerikli bildiri yayınlamak, hükümeti bazı kararlar almaya zorlamak, seçimlere müdahale etmek, bakanlık koltuklarına oturmak gibi değişik şekillerde siyasete müdahil olmasından kaynaklandığı varsayılmıştır.

İşte bu nedenle yeni bir soru ortaya çıkmıştır: İDMO, İran'ın devrimci ordusu neden ve nasıl siyasete müdahil olmaktadır? Bu soruya cevap bulabilmek amacıyla devrimden sonraki otuz yıl içerisinde İDMO'nun siyasete müdahaleleri ve siyasi liderle ilişkileri gözden geçirilmiştir. Böyle bir değerlendirmenin sonucunda İDMO-siyaset ilişkisinin ve Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasi liderlerle ilişkilerinin devrimin farklı aşamalarında farklı tarzlarda seyrettiği ortaya çıkmıştır. İDMO, ilk olarak devrimci koalisyonun İslamcı-radikal kanadı tarafından siyasi otorite için yarışan rakip siyasi gruplara gözdağı vermek ve onları siyasi arenadan tasfiye etmek amacıyla kullanılan silahlı bir güç şeklinde ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu dönemde İDMO çok-yönlü bir örgüttü. Güvenliğin sağlanması ve karşı-devrimcilerin takibi gibi başlıca görevlerinin yanı sıra siyasi ve kültürel bir örgüt gibi çalışıyordu. İDMO aynı zamanda siyasi mücadelelere dâhil olmuş, İslamcı radikallerin yanında dönemin "ılımlı" liderlerine karşı mücadele etmişti. İslamcı radikallerin 1980'lerin ortalarında iktidarlarını pekiştirmesiyle birlikte İDMO siyasi liderliğe tam olarak tabi olan güvenilir ve etkili bir ordu haline geldi. Bu dönemde İran ile Irak arasındaki savaş devam ettiği için Devrim Muhafızlarının askeri yönü daha görünür ve önemli hale geldi. Savaşın Temmuz 1988'de sona ermesinin ardından İDMO'nun siyasi niteliği tekrar öne çıkmaya başladı. Bu çerçevede İDMO, 1990'ların ikinci yarısında yükselerek iktidara gelen reformcu harekete karşı siyasi mücadele içine girdi. Bu nedenle birçok kez Hatemi hükümetiyle İDMO karşı karşıya geldi. Nihayet, 2005 yılında yapılan seçimlerde İDMO reformculara adaylara karşı Ahmedinead'ın yanında yer aldı. Ahmedinecad hükümetinin kurulmasının ardından İDMO'nun reformcu hükümetler ile çekişmeli ilişkileri yerini Devrim Muhafızları ve Ahmedinecad hükümeti arasında işbirliğine bıraktı.

Bu bağlamda İDMO-siyaset ilişkisi ile ilgili olarak yeni sorular ortaya çıkmıştır. İDMO-siyaset ilişkisi neden farklı dönemlerde değişik şekiller almıştır? Diğer bir tabirle, Devrim Muhafızları neden bazı hükümetlere karşı mücadele ederken bazı hükümetlerle işbirliğine gitmiştir? Daha önemlisi, Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasete müdahalesi neden son on yılda artış göstermiştir?

Devrim Muhafızları'nın İran siyasetinde yükselişine ilişkin akademik ilgi son yıllarda büyük ölçüde artmışsa da bu konu İran çalışmaları literatüründe yeterince ele

alınmamıştır. İlgili literatürde Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasete giderek artan ilgisini ve müdahalesini açıklamaya çalışan farklı yaklaşımlar nesil değişimine, siyasi fraksiyon bağlantılarına, İDMO'nun Rehber ile ilişkilerine ve Devrim Muhafızları'nın artan pretoryenleşme* eğilimine dikkat çekmektedir. Bu yaklaşımlar İDMO-siyaset ilişkisini son on yılda anlamak için bir ölçüde yararlı olmakla birlikte Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasi liderlikle ilişki tarzının değişmesinin ardındaki nedenleri çözümlenmede yetersiz kalmaktadır. Ayrıca bu yaklaşımların açıklayıcı gücü belirli bir zamanla sınırlıdır; çünkü devrimden sonra farklı aşamalarda İDMO-siyaset ilişkisini anlayabilmek için yeterli bir analitik çerçeve sunmaktan uzaktır.

Bu soruları cevaplamak ve Devrim Muhafızları ile siyasi liderlik arasındaki değişken ilişkileri açıklamak amacıyla bu tez şu tespitten hareket etmiştir: İDMO devrimci bir ordudur ve onun siyasetle ilişkileri de devrim şartları altında gelişmektedir. Diğer bir tabirle, İran'da devrimin dinamikleri İDMO-siyaset ilişkisi üzerinde belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle, tezde öncelikle devrim sonrası toplumlarda asker-sivil ilişkilerinin nasıl geliştiğine bakılmış ve bu ilişkilerde ortaya çıkan yaygın tarzlar aranmıştır. Böylece, devrim, devrimci ordular ve asker-sivil ilişkileri hakkında mevcut literatüre dayanarak devrimci ordu-siyaset ilişkisini çözümlenmede işlevsel olacak bir analitik çerçeve ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda 1789 Fransız Devrimi, 1917 Rus Devrimi, 1949 Çin Devrimi ve 1959 Küba Devrimi dâhil farklı devrimlerden sonra ortaya çıkan asker-siyaset ilişkileri arasındaki benzerlikler ve paralellikler araştırılmıştır.

Devrim, devrimcilerin zafere ulaşmasıyla sona ermez, bilakis seyrine devam eder. Ancak siyasi dinamiklerin farklılaşması nedeniyle devrimin bu seyri değişik aşamalara ayrılabilir. Her devrimin kendine özgü özelliklerine rağmen birçok devrimde bazı benzer eğilimler görülmektedir. Bu benzerliklere dayanılarak Crane Brinton, "devrim aşamaları" teorisini ortaya koymuştur ki bu çalışmada da söz konusu teoriden istifade edilmiştir.

Devrimin zafere ulaşmasından sonra demokratik ve anayasal bir siyasal sistem kurma arzusundaki liberaller iktidara gelir ve bu dönem ılımlıların iktidar dönemi

* Pretoryenleşme, askerlerin elindeki imkânların kendi şahsi ya da kurumsal çıkarları için seferber edilmesidir.

olarak adlandırılır. Ancak bu dönemde iktidar zayıftır ve devrim giderek radikalleşir. Nihayet radikaller iktidarı ele alır ki bu devrimden sonraki ikinci aşamadır. Radikaller devrimci ideolojiyi katı bir şekilde yeniden yorumlayarak bu ideolojiyi hayata geçirmek için zaman zaman baskıcı yöntemlere başvurur. Hatta bazı dönemlerde şiddet dalgası o denli artar ki bu nedenle bu aşamaya “terör dönemi” de denilir. Ancak radikallerin baskısı ve devrim yorgunluğu radikallere karşı muhalefetin yükselmesine neden olur. Radikallere yönelik bu tepkiye Fransız devrim tarihinden esinlenerek termidoryen (thermidorian) tepki denilir ve sonunda radikaller iktidardan uzaklaştırılır. Bu aşamanın adı termidor dönemidir. Termidoryenler döneminde siyaset çoğulculaşır ve iktidar oldukça pragmatikleşir. Siyasetin çoğulculaşmasına paralel olarak istikrarsızlık da baş gösterebilir. Termidor aşamasını seyri devrimin kaderini belirler: Devrim ya iyice yerleşir ve kurumsallaşır; ya radikal iktidarlar geri döner; ya da askeri bir darbe veya devrik otoritenin yeniden tesisiyle devrim süreci sona erer.

Farklı devrimler arasındaki bir başka önemli benzerlik noktası da devrimci orduların özellikleridir. Devrimci ordular ideolojik, örgütlenme ve misyonları açısından benzerlikler arz etmektedir. Her şeyden önce devrimci ordular ideolojik hedefler peşinde koşan siyasal nitelikli ordulardır. Çünkü bu ordular devrimci liderler tarafından devrimi ve kazanımlarını korumak ve yaygınlaştırmak üzere kurulur. Bu ordular, ideolojik olarak adanmış gönüllüler tarafından kardeşlik ilişkileri esasında kurulmaktadır. Devrimi korumak ve yaygınlaştırmak için hem iç hem de dış misyonları vardır. Bu orduların ayırt edici bir özelliği ise devrimci liderlikten farklı birlik anlayışının ve çıkarının bulunmamasıdır. Ancak bu özellikler zamanla, devrimin farklı aşamalarında değişmeye başlar ve devrimci ordu nihayet ya profesyonel bir orduya ya da pretoryen bir orduya dönüşür.

Bu tarihsel değerlendirmeye dayanılarak devrimci orduların siyasetle ilişkilerini belirleyen dört değişken faktör tespit edilmiştir. Bu değişkenler devrimci ordunun ideolojik bakışı ve onun birliği (*corporateness*) ile siyasi liderlerin ideolojik konumu ve siyasi güçleridir.

Devrimci ordular genellikle ideolojik kaygıları ön planda olan ordulardır. Devrimci ordunun ideolojik duruşu, ordu mensupları için bir birlik nedeni ortaya

koymakta; devrimci askerlere önemli siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal gelişmeleri değerlendirmeleri için bir zihniyet teşkil etmekte ve devrimci ordunun hareketleri için dürtü sağlamaktadır. Devrimci ordunun ideolojisi devrimde hâkim olan ideolojidir ve bu ideolojiye bağlılık devrimci ordu mensuplarının askerlikle ilgili niteliklerinden daha önemlidir. Ancak kurumsallaşma ve profesyonelleşmeye bağlı olarak çoğu zaman ideoloji başat konumunu kaybetmeye başlar.

Devrimci orduların siyasetle ilişkilerini belirleyen ikinci değişken faktör devrimci ordunun birliğidir. Birlikten kasıt, devrimci ordu mensuplarının kendilerini alakasız kişi ve kurumlardan farklı hissetmesidir. Yani birlik, devrimci ordu mensupları arasında düşüce ve çıkarlar açısından homojenliğin yaratılmasıdır. Bu farklılık hissinin oluşması ve birliğin sürdürülebilmesi için kurumsallaşma, kurumsal özerklik ve kurumsal kimliğe ihtiyaç vardır. Bir ordudaki birliğin en önemli göstergesi örgütsel hiyerarşinin bozulmadan işlemeye devam etmesi ve ordu mensupları arasında hizipleşmemenin olmamasıdır. Birlik, devrimci askerleri tek ve birleşik bir aktör olarak hareket etmesini sağlar. Ayrıca, ordunun bazı faaliyetleri için “kurumsal çıkarları” ortaya koyar.

Üçüncü belirleyici ve değişken faktör siyasi elitlerin, özellikle yöneticilerin, ideolojik konumlarıdır. Devrimci şartlar genellikle ideolojinin belirleyici olduğu bir siyasal yapının kurulmasına neden olur. Bununla birlikte siyasal elitler çoğu zaman ordular kadar homojen değildir. Kimi sivil yöneticiler devrimci ideolojiye tavizsiz şekilde bağlı olduğu halde, kimi siviller daha esnek ve pragmatik olabilir. Dolayısıyla, sivil yöneticilerin ideolojik duruşları onların devrimci ordunun ideolojik değerleri arasında uyumluluk veya uyumsuzluk ortaya çıkabilir. Değerler arasında uyumluluk siviller ve devrimci askerler arasında uyumlu bir birlikteliği sağlarken, değerlerdeki farklılaşma sivil ve askeri unsurlar arasında çatışmaya neden olur.

Siyasi iktidarın gücü, onun devrimci ordu ile ilişkisini belirleyen dördüncü değişken faktördür. Siyasi iktidarın gücü iktidardaki elitlerin bütünlüğü, halk desteği ve kurumsal gücünden oluşmaktadır. Güçlü sivil yöneticiler devrimci orduyu kontrol etme ve yönlendirme yetisine sahipken, zayıf iktidarlar böyle bir imkândan yoksun kalır. Dolayısıyla, güçlü iktidarların hâkim olduğu dönemlerde ordu genellikle siyasi

otoriteye tabi olma eğilimindedir. Aksi durumlarda ise ordu siyasi çekişmelere taraf olmaya başlar ve giderek siyasetteki ağırlığını artırır.

Bu faktörler devrimin farklı aşamalarında farklı seyirler izlemektedir ve bu faktörlerin farklı birliktelikleri devrimci ordu ve siyasi liderlik arasında farklı ilişki tarzlarının ortaya çıkmasına neden olmaktadır. Bazı devrimlerden sonra devrimci ordunun yanı sıra eski rejimde devralınan profesyonel ordular da muhafaza edilmektedir. Ancak eski rejime bağlılık yeminleri etmiş ve devrik rejimin değerleri ile yetişmiş olan bu profesyonel ordular devrimciler için güvenilir değildir. Profesyonel ordunun darbe yapma ihtimalinden korkulur. Yani, eski ordunun varlığını sürdürdüğü durumlarda devrimci liderler ile profesyonel ordu arasında “şüpheli,” güvensiz bir ilişki tarzı vardır. Devrimci liderlerin en önemli işlerinden birisi bu orduyu devrimin değerlerine hizmet edecek şekle dönüştürmektir. Bu bağlamda bu tasfiye, yeniden yapılandırma, ideolojik eğitim ve siyasi kontrol yoluyla denetim altına alınır. Ancak gerçek devrimci ordular ya devrim uğrunda verilen silahlı mücadele sırasında kurulmuştur, ya da devrimden hemen sonra gönüllüler (devrim muhafızları) tarafından devrimi savunmak üzere kurulur. Bu çalışmada devrimci ordu ile siyasi liderlik arasında beş ilişki tarzı tespit edilmiştir.

Devrimci ordu ile sivil siyasi yönetim arasındaki ilişkilerin ilk tarzı “çekişme”dir. Bu ilişki tarzı genellikle spontane devrimlerin* ilk aşamasında görülmektedir. Bu dönemde iktidarda olan zayıf ve liberal siyasi liderler alelacele ideolojik olarak adanmış gönüllülerin bir araya gelmesiyle kurulmuş devrim muhafızları ile karşı karşıya gelmiştir. İktidardaki elitlerin zayıflığı ve ideolojik esnekliği nedeniyle devrim muhafızları giderek daha örgütlü ve doktriner radikal grupların etkisine girmeye başlar. Böylelikle devrimci ordu ile siyasi iktidar arasında ideolojik uyumsuzluk ortaya çıkar ve ılımlıların kontrolündeki iktidar zayıf olduğu için devrimci orduyu kontrol edemez. Bu nedenle giderek radikallerin etkisine giren devrimci ordu devrime yeterince bağlı olmadığı düşündüğü liberal iktidar ile çekişmeye girer ve ılımlılar ile radikaller arasındaki iktidar mücadelesinde radikallerin yanında yer alır. Nitekim Fransız devrimi sürecinde Ulusal Muhafızlar,

* Devrimler, spontane (çok hızlı ve ansızın gerçekleşen) devrimler ve uzun bir mücadele sonunda gerçekleşen “planlı” devrimler olarak iki gruba ayrılabilir. Fransız (1789), Rus (1917) ve İran (1979) devrimleri ilk gruba girerken Çin (1949) ve Küba (1959) devrimleri ikinci grupta yer almaktadır.

Milli Konvansiyon'a baskı yaparak Jakobenlerin iktidara gelmesine yardımcı olmuştur. Keza Rus devrimi sırasında Kızıl Muhafızlar Kerensky hükümeti ile çekişme içine girmiş ve Bolşeviklerin iktidara yükselmesine katkıda bulunmuştur.

Devrimci ordu ile sivil iktidar arasında ortaya çıkan ikinci ilişki tarzı “tabiyet”dir. İdeolojik adanmışlık düzeyi yüksek ve birliği gelişmekte olan devrimci ordu, güçlü ve doktriner bir siyasi iktidar ile karşılaştığında ona tabi olmaktadır. Bu tabiyet ilişkisi siyasi liderlik ile devrimci ordu arasındaki ideolojik uyum ve güçlü siyasi iktidarın birliği tam olarak gelişmemiş orduyu kolayca kontrol edebilmesi ile perçinlenmiştir. Tabiyet ilişkisinde ordu siyasetten uzak dururken ve siyaseten iktidarın hizmetinde iken sivil iktidar, ordu içine müdahale edebilmektedir. Bu ilişki tarzı genellikle radikallerin iktidarı döneminde ortaya çıkmaktadır. Devrimci ordular, Fransa'da Jakobenlerin iktidarı döneminde, Rusya'da Bolşeviklerin iktidarlarını pekiştirmesinden sonra ve Çin'de Komünist Parti'nin iktidarı ele geçirmesinden sonra siyasi iktidara tam anlamıyla tabi olmuştur.

Kaynaşma (füzyon) devrimci ordu ile siyasi iktidar arasında ortaya çıkan başka bir ilişki tarzıdır. Bu ilişki tarzında siyasi ve askeri alanlar arasındaki sınırlar oldukça muğlaktır ve yetkililer sık sık askeri ve sivil pozisyonlar arasında yer değiştirir. Diğer bir tabirle askeri liderlik ile siyasi liderlik aynı ellerde toplanmıştır. Bu ilişki tarzı devrimci liderlerin aynı zamanda devrimci ordunun komutanları oldukları Küba'da görülmüştür.

Sivil otorite ile devrimci ordu arasındaki dördüncü ilişki tarzı “müdahalecilik”tir. Devrimci ordu ideolojik niteliğini kaybetmeksizin birliğini geliştirir ve liberal, pragmatik ve zayıf bir siyasi iktidarla karşılaşırsa siyasi alana müdahale etmeye eğilimli olur. Devrimci ordunun siyasete müdahale etme eğilimi ya kendi ideolojik motivasyonu ya da faal siyasi gruplardan bazılarının kışkırtması ile beslenir. Siyasi iktidar ile devrimci ordu arasındaki ideolojik uyumsuzluk ordunun sivil iktidara karşı çıkmasına neden olurken, sivil iktidarın orduyu kontrol edecek imkan ve kabiliyetten yoksun olması onun müdahalelerinin önünü açar. Bu müdahaleler değişik şekillerde siyaset üzerinde baskı kurulması şeklinde olmaktadır. Devrimci ordunun siyasete müdahalelerinin sürekli hale gelmesi durumunda

pretoryenleşmenin önu açılabilir ve nihayet Fransa'da Napolyon Bonaparte'ın yaptığı gibi bir darbe ile asker yönetimi tamamen ele geçirebilir.

Son olarak devrimci ordu ile siyasi liderlik arasında “simbiyotik” ilişki tarzı ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Bu ilişki tarzında devrimci ordunun birliği oldukça yüksek düzeydedir ve ordu ideolojik kararlılığını sürdürmektedir. Buna mukabil siyasi iktidar göreceli olarak zayıf, ancak ideolojik açıdan devrimci ordu ile uyum içerisindedir. Ayrıca hem siyasi iktidar hem de devrimci ordu birbirlerine ihtiyaç duymakta ve yardımlaşmaktadır. Dolayısıyla devrimci ordu siyasete iktidar lehine müdahil olmaktadır, ancak siyasi iktidar askeri işlere karışmaz. Bu ilişki tarzı Çin'de en iyi şekilde görülmüştür. Doktiner ve güçlü PLA ile Çin Komünist Partisi arasında simbiyotik bir ilişki gelişmiştir.

Tez çalışmasında devrimci ordu-siyaset ilişkisinde etkili olan faktörlerin ve bu ilişkilerde ortaya çıkan tarzların tespit edilmesiyle İran'da Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasetle ilişkilerini tartışmak için gerekli analitik araçlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu araçlar dönemlendirme (devrim sonrası tarihi aşamalara ayırma) ve değişkenlerdir. Geçmiş dönemlerde ortaya çıkan devrimci ordu-siyaset ilişkisi tarzları da analize yardımcı olmaktadır.

İşte bu çerçeveye dayanarak tezde, İDMO-siyaset ilişkilerinin dört değişken faktörün dâhil olduğu devrimci dinamikler tarafından belirlendiği ileri sürülmüştür. Bu değişkenler Devrim Muhafızları'nın ideolojik bakış açısı, Muhafızların birliği, siyasi liderlerin ideolojik duruşu ve siyasi iktidarın gücüdür. Bu faktörlerdeki herhangi bir değişim İDMO-siyaset ilişkisindeki değişimlerin açıklanmasına yardımcı olmaktadır. İran'da, bu faktörlerin farklı kombinasyonlarının sonucunda ortaya çekişme, tabiyet, müdahalecilik ve simbiyotik ilişki tarzları çıkmıştır. Hem müdahalecilik hem de simbiyotik ilişkiler Devrim Muhafızları'nın siyasete dahil olduğuna ve Muhafızların siyasi alanda görünürlüklerinin arttığına işaret etmektedir. Muhafızların siyasi alana girişiyle birlikte İDMO'nun siyasi etkinliği artmıştır.

Bu savı desteklemek ve İran'da İDMO-siyaset ilişkisini çözümlmek için devrim sonrası İran tarihi, devrim aşamaları teorisi kullanılarak dört döneme ayrılmıştır; geçiş dönemi, radikal dönem, termidor dönemi ve neo-radikal dönem.

Her dönem tezde ayrı bir bölümde incelenmiştir. Bu dönemlerde yukarıda bahsedilen değişken faktörler izlenmiş ve bu faktörlerin o şartlar altında bir araya gelmesi sonucunda ortaya çıkan İDMO-siyaset ilişkisi tartışılmıştır.

İran’da devrimden sonra Şubat 1979 ile Haziran 1981arasını kapsayan ilk dönem geçiş dönemi olarak adlandırılabilir. Bu dönemde iktidarda ılımlı ve liberal liderlerin bulunması nedeni ile ılımlı dönem olarak da bilinir. Bu dönemde devrimci dinamiklerin temel özelliği devrimci koalisyonun parçalanmasıdır. Devrimci mücadelede bir araya gelen solcu, liberal, milliyetçi ve İslamcı gruplar devrimin Şubat 1979’da zafere ulaşmasından kısa bir süre sonra iktidar mücadelesine girmiştir. Dönemin diğer bir özelliği de devrimin giderek İslamcı radikallerin kontrolüne geçmesi ve radikalleşmesidir. Devrimci ideoloji bu süre zarfında İslamcı ideolojiyle harmanlanmış ve devrim adına siyaset, toplum ve ekonominin “İslamlaştırılmaya” başlanmıştır. Bu süreç içerisinde Ayetullah Humeyni’nin siyasi sorumluluk almaksızın devrime liderlik etmesi ve İslamcılarının hızla örgütlenerek toplumun büyük kesimlerini seferber edebilmesi etkili olmuştur. Nitekim bu dönemde iktidarda liberal ve ılımlı liderler olsa da onlar Humeyni’nin desteği ile iktidara gelebilmiştir. Geçici Hükümetin Başbakanı Mehdi Bazergan doğrudan Humeyni tarafından atanmıştır. Keza, İran’ın ilk cumhurbaşkanı Abulhasan Banisadr bir ölçüde Humeyni’nin himayesi sayesinde seçimleri kazanmıştır. Bununla birlikte hem Bazergan hem de Banisadr, İslamcı radikaller ile müthiş bir iktidar mücadelesine girmiştir. Bazergan ve Banisadr İslamcı radikallere göre oldukça liberaldi. Diğer taraftan başbakanlık ve cumhurbaşkanlığı gibi siyasi iktidarın tepebaşlarını kontrol etmelerine rağmen fiilen siyasi olarak zayıf kalmışlardır. İslamcı radikallere rağmen kendi siyasi programlarını uygulayacak siyasi ve kurumsal güç ne Bazergan’da ne de Banisadr’da vardı. Nitekim Bazergan istifa ederek başbakanlıktan çekilmek zorunda kalırken, Banisadr Meclis tarafında yetersiz bulunmuş ve görevinden alınmıştır.

İDMO işte bu geçiş döneminde, çoğunlukla İslamcı, devrimci ve gönüllü gerilla grupları ile komitelerin tek bir çatı altında örgütlenmesiyle kurulmuştur. Ancak farklı gruplar birleştirildiği için Muhafızların bu dönemde ideolojileri homojen değildir ve birliği zayıftır. Bu nedenle dışarıdan, özellikle İslamcı radikallerin müdahalelerine

açık hale gelmiştir. Nitekim İDMO kuruluşundan kısa bir süre sonra neredeyse tamamen İslamcı radikallerin etkisine girmiştir. İşte bu nedenle Muhafızlar hem Bazergan yönetimiyle hem de Banisadr ile çekişme içine girmiş ve onlara karşı İslamcı radikallerin yanında yer almıştır. Bu bağlamda İDMO'nun Bazergan ve Banisadr'ın Muhafızlar üzerinde denetim kurma teşebbüslerine direnmesi; Bazergan'ın istifasına yol açan Amerikan Elçiliği'nin işgalini desteklemesi ve nihayet alenen Banisadr'a karşı cephe alması, Devrim Muhafızları ile siyasi liderlik arasında çekişmeli ilişkinin yansımaları olarak görülebilir.

Meclis'in Haziran 1981'de Cumhurbaşkanı Banisadr'ı düşürmesiyle birlikte İslamcı radikallerin iktidarı sağlamlaştığı, İran devriminin radikal dönemi başlamıştır. İslamcı radikallerin iktidarlarını pekiştirmesi ile birlikte “devrimci ideoloji” hem iç hem de dış siyaseti iyice etkisi altına almıştır. Devlet, siyaset, ekonomi ve toplumun “İslamlaştırılması” gayretleri ile siyasi rakiplerin şiddetle baskı (terör) yoluyla tasfiye edilmesi bu döneme damgasını vurmuştur. Yine bu dönem İran siyasetini etkileyen en önemli gelişmelerden birisi İran ile Irak arasında başlayan ve sekiz yıl süren savaştır.

Radikal dönemde İslamcı radikaller, Başbakan Mir Hüseyin Musavi, Cumhurbaşkanı Ali Hamanei ve Meclis Başkanı Haşimi Rafsancani tarafından temsil edilen İran'da siyasi liderlik oldukça doktriner ve güçlü idi. Buna karşılık ideolojik homojenliğini artık büyük ölçüde sağlamış olan Devrim Muhafızlarının birliği henüz oluşum sürecindeydi. Siyasi liderlik ve İDMO arasındaki ideolojik değerler birliği uyumlu bir ilişki kurulmasına neden oldu. Bununla birlikte İDMO'nun birliğinin emekleme aşamasında olmasına karşın siyasi iktidar oldukça güçlü idi. Bu nedenle siyasi liderlik Muhafızlara müdahale edebiliyor ve istediği gibi yönlendirebiliyordu. Yani İDMO, radikal dönemde siyasi liderliğe tam olarak tabi idi. Bu ilişkinin en önemli göstergesi İDMO'nun muhaliflerin sindirilmesi ve tasfiye edilmesi politikasına aktif olarak katılmış olmasıdır.

Ayetullah Humeyni'nin Haziran 1989'da ölümünden kısa bir süre sonra radikallerin iktidarı sona erdi. Humeyni'nin Rehberlik koltuğuna Hamanei oturdu. Yapılan anayasa değişikliği ile Başbakanlık makamı lağvedildi. Böylece yeni cumhurbaşkanı seçilen Rafsanjani siyasi liderliğin en önemli ve belirgin yüzü oldu.

Bu dönemin en önemli özelliği İslamcı radikallerin farklı siyasi hiziplere kesin ve net olarak ayrılmasıdır. Rafsanjani radikalleri yönetimden uzaklaştırdı ve “yeniden yapılanma seferberliği” adı altında yeni bir dönem başlattı. Bu dönem İran’da termidor dönemi olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Bu dönemin genel özelliği siyaset ve ekonomide yeniden inşa girişimlerine eşlik eden “rasyonelleşme,” yani devrimci ideolojiden uzaklaşmadır. Cumhurbaşkanı Rafsanjani’nin temsil ettiği siyasi liderlik, 1990’ların ortasında yükselen reformcu hareketin temsilcisi olan ve Mayıs 1997’de cumhurbaşkanı seçilen Muhammed Hatemi tarafından üstlenildi. Ancak Hamanei’nin de geçen süre içerisinde Rehberlik makamındaki konumunu sağlaştırması ve siyasete müdahale etmesiyle birlikte siyasi liderlik iki başlı hale geldi: Rehber Hamanei ve Cumhurbaşkanı Hatemi. Her iki lider de farklı siyasi hiziplerin liderliğini üstlendi; reformcu siyasi çizgiyi temsil eden Cumhurbaşkanı Hatemi’nin karşısına muhafazakârların liderliğini üstlenen Hamanei çıktı. Böylece İran’da siyasi hizipler arasında yeni ve ciddi bir mücadele başladı.

Rafsanjani ve Hatemi’nin temsil ettiği siyasal iktidar devrimci değerleri hayata geçirme konusunda oldukça gönülsüzdü ve faaliyetleri ile belli başlı politikalarında oldukça pragmatikti. Hatta siyasal sistemde reformlar yapılmasını talep ediyordu. Ne var ki bu iktidarlar anayasal dengeler ve Rehber Hamanei’nin engellemeleri ile karşılaştı. Sonuç olarak arkasındaki halk desteğine rağmen Rafsanjani ve Hatemi yönetimleri iktidarda zayıf kaldı. Buna karşılık ideolojik eğitimlerin aksatılmadan sürdürülmesi sayesinde Devrim Muhafızları ideolojik kararlılıklarını korudu. Dönemin başlarında İDMO birliği, siyasi iktidarın Muhafızları profesyonelleşmeye zorlaması ve silahlı güçleri birleştirme girişimleri nedeniyle bir ölçüde örselendi. Bununla birlikte Hamanei’nin desteğiyle Muhafızların birliği kısa bir süre içerisinde onarıldı. Birliğin örselendiği sıralarda İDMO siyasi otoriteye tabiiyetini bir müddet daha sürdürdü ve siyaset dışında kaldı. Ancak Muhafızların birliğinin onarılmasıyla siyasi elitler arasındaki ideolojik farklılaşma ve ayrışma hemen hemen eş zamanlı oldu. İşte siyasi iktidarın pragmatik ve reformcu bir düşüncenin kontrolüne girdiği bu noktadan sonra, yani 1990’lı yılların ortalarından itibaren Devrim Muhafızları bir takım beyanatlar vermek suretiyle siyasete müdahale etmeye başladı. Hizipler arasındaki mücadelenin şiddetlenmesi ve reformcu iktidarın devrimci ideolojiden

giderek uzaklaşmasıyla birlikte Devrim Muhafızları siyasi liderlikle karşı karşıya geldi. Böylece İDMO'nun siyasetle ilişkileri müdahaleci bir hal almaya başladı. İDMO'nun siyaset müdahaleleri başlangıçta bir takım siyasi beyanlar vermekle sınırlı iken müdahalenin tonu giderek sertleşti. 1999 yılı Temmuz ayında öğrenci protestolarının rejim karşıtı gösterilere dönüşmesi üzerine üst düzey İDMO komutanları Cumhurbaşkanı Hatemi'ye hitaben tehditvari bir mektup yazarak gerekli devrimci tedbirleri almasını isteyip artık tahammüllerinin kalmadığını belirtti. Ayrıca İDMO Mayıs 2004'te yeni hizmete girmek üzere olan İmam Humeyni Havaalanını işgal etti ve hükümeti havaalanının işletme sözleşmesini feshetmeye zorladı.

Termidor aşaması İran'da radikalizmin yeniden yükselmesi ve neo-radikal hareketin iktidara yükselmesiyle sona erdi. Mahmud Ahmedinecad'ın Haziran 2005'te cumhurbaşkanı seçilmesiyle neo-radikal dönem başladı. Ahmedinecad ve onun neo-radikal destekçileri, muhafazakârların da desteğiyle, devrimci ideoloji ve politikaları tekrar gündeme getirmek ve hayata uygulamak iddiasıyla iktidara geldi. Dolayısıyla neo-radikal dönemde ideoloji siyaset ve yönetimde yeniden ön plana çıktı. Bu dönemde siyasetin yanı sıra ekonomi ve dış politika da ideolojinin etkisine girmeye başladı. Neo-radikal iktidarın önemli bir özelliği de siyasal baskının yeniden yoğunlaşması oldu. Neo-radikal iktidar ile İDMO dahil devrimci örgütler arasındaki ideolojik ortaklık siyasi iktidarın gücünü artırdı. Bununla birlikte Ahmedinecad yönetiminin gücü de hizipler arası mücadele ve Rehber Hamanei tarafından bir ölçüde sınırlandırılmıştır.

Neo-radikal dönemde de Devrim Muhafızları ideolojik bağlılıklarını sürdürdü. Bu dönemde Muhafızların birliği de oldukça yükseldi. Güçlü ve doktriner devrimci ordu, kendisi ile aynı ideolojik değerleri paylaşan Ahmedinecad yönetimine ve neo-radikallere destek verdi. Bu destek hem İDMO'nun insan kaynaklarının Ahmedinecad hükümeti için seferber edilmesi hem de hükümetin muhaliflerinin şiddetle bastırılması şeklinde oldu. Hatta Ahmedinecad'ın kimi tartışmalı açıklamalarından sonra İDMO yönetimi Ahmedinecad'a desteğini açıkça bildirdi. Diğer taraftan Ahmedinecad hükümeti Devrim Muhafızlarına hem ülke idaresinde önemli pozisyonlar verdi hem de İDMO ile bağlantılı şirketlere geniş ekonomik imkanlar verdi. Ahmedinecad yönetimi ile Devrim Muhafızları arasındaki bu ilişki

simbiyotik olarak adlandırılmıştır. Zira hem siyasal liderlik hem de İDMO aynı hedefler için yakın ve birbirlerini gözeten ve kollayan bir ilişki içine girmiştir. Bu dönemde İDMO'nun siyasetteki ağırlığı ve görünürlüğü büyük ölçüde artmış ise de Muhafızlar siyasal otoritenin kararlarına müdahale etmemiştir. Keza, tabiyet ilişkisinin aksine bu simbiyotik ilişki içerisinde siyasal otorite askeri işlere, yani Muhafızların kendi içindeki işleyişine karışmamıştır.

Sonuç olarak bu tezde, devrimci ordular üzerine yapılan çalışmalar ile asker-sivil ilişkileri ve devrim teorilerini birlikte değerlendirerek İDMO-siyaset ilişkisini anlaşılmasını sağlayacak analitik bir çerçeve çizmeye çalışmıştır. Bu çerçevede hem değişkenler ve dönemlendirme gibi analitik araçlar, hem de devrimci ordu-siyaset ilişki tarzları ortaya konulmuştur. Gerçekten de söz konusu dört değişkenin herhangi birindeki bir sapma İran örneğinde olduğu gibi devrimci ordunun siyasetle farklı dönemlerde neden farklı tarzlarda ilişki içine girdiğini açıklamayabilmektedir. Özetlemek gerekirse, sivil siyasi otoritenin ideolojik adanmışlık düzeyi ile Devrim Muhafızları'nın ideolojik duruşu arasındaki uyum veya uyumsuzluk ile bu iki kurumun karşılıklı güç ilişkileri İran'da İDMO-siyaset ilişkisini belirlemiştir.

APPENDIX B
CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
Ph.D.	METU Department of International Relations	2011
M.Sc.	METU Department of International Relations	2004
B.A.	Ankara University Department of International Relations	2000

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2002-Present	METU Department of International Relations	Research Assistant
2009-2010	ORSAM (Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies, Ankara)	Part-time Researcher
2007-2008	Columbia University (MEALAC) Middle East & Asian Languages & Cultures	Visiting Researcher
2007 July	International Studies Journal	Intern

Tehran, Iran

2003 January- July Tehran University
Faculty of Political Science and Law

Visiting
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FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Fluent Persian

ACADEMIC INTERESTS

Iranian politics, Foreign and Security Policy of Iran, the Revolutionary Guards, Turkey-Iran relations, Middle Eastern Politics, Political Islam, Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy

PUBLICATIONS

1. "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," *Perceptions*, vol. 10, no.1 (Spring 2005).
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