Development of a Model for the Analysis of the Allegiance of the Iranian Imperial Army with the Islamic Revolution of Iran

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Abstract

The current study aims to present a model which will explain the backgrounds of the allegiance of the Iranian Imperial Army with the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Even though Mohammadreza Shah had always boasted that the Iranian Imperial Army was a formidable pillar of his power and spared no efforts to bolster its strength, the Army adopted an integrative policy with the overwhelming majority of people and was one of the most important elements which contributed to the success of the Islamic Revolution against the Pahlavi regime. The present study is an attempt to explore what contributed to the loyalty of the Iranian Imperial Army to the Islamic Revolution. It also takes an approach of historical sociology and is based on inductive methodology. After identifying the relevant variables and the association among them, the study offers a theoretical model in order to explain why the Iranian Imperial Army joined and united with the revolutionary forces. The results showed that the factors fall into three broad categories, i.e. ideological, agency and structural. The ideological backgrounds had to do with the adherence of the personnel of the Army to Islamic teachings and getting inspired by the revolutionary ideology which were manifested in several instances. The agency backgrounds were concerned with the fact that the top commanders were obsequious to the Shah who held all the power which is a norm in monarchies. The structural backgrounds were about the patrimonial and centralized structure that the Army used to have which fostered the institutionalized and organized corruption in the Army.

Keywords: Iranian Imperial Army, Islamic Revolution, structural factors, ideological factors.

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Introduction
Control and suppression are a significant pillar in all regimes, since the ruling force establishes
the order and strengthens the ruler. All regimes have their own opponents and enemies and if
they do not attempt to subvert the regime, they may be tolerated. But if they try to undermine the
regime, they will be surely suppressed. The inefficiency and incapability of protective forces in
the regime may do serious damage to it while loyalty and determination will unequivocally lead
to the power and continuity of the ruling establishment (Sabaq Jadid, 2014: 52).

Security is always associated with the military power. If a country lacks an adequate military
power, it may not be able to establish and maintain security. This explains the reason why all
countries find it essential to uphold their military power. In some circumstances, it may influence
other aspects of the country such as politics, culture, society and economics since the government
might deduct large amounts of budget from other sectors in order to spend it on equipping and
developing the military forces (Alvandi, 2004: 95).

Undoubtedly, losing the loyalty of the armed forces is a significant cause for the collapse of the
regime and the transition of power in a revolutionary situation. There are three short-term factors
generally considered for the transition of power: 1) a revolutionary or a multi-rule situation 2) a
revolutionary alliance between the rivalry and members of political community 3) controlling the
coercive instrument by the revolutionary alliance (Moshirzade, 1996: 146). As Tilly maintains, if
the regime loses the control of the means of coercion and on the other hand the revolutionaries
take control of it, the transition of power occurs. Therefore, all regimes, especially those which
are poorly legitimate among people, not only try to reinforce their military power, but also try to
train the armed forces totally loyal and servile to the ruler.

Different theoretical models, thus far, have been suggested to explain the nature of the Pahlavi
regime. The writer is of the opinion that Sultanism is the closest model which explains the nature
of the Pahlavi regime. Sultanistic regimes are of a nature which require a loyal and robust army.
They pay excessive attention to equipping and developing their armed forces. The main features
of the Sultanistic regimes include: a limited social status, authoritarianism, reliance on a foreign
power, nationalist ideology, despotism, imbalanced economic development or distorted capital,
corruption, sovereignty crisis, uncertain future, etc. (Shamsini Ghiyasvand, 2004: 60-62).

The structure of the Pahlavi regime was similar to that of Sultanistic regimes. In such regimes,
the armed forces hold considerable power. But the ruler’s power and domination over the army
do not let them become independent not only in political domain but also in its own military aspects.
Therefore, the political power utilizes the army as an instrument of its own power which
keeps the army into a major pillar of the political power. Consequently, as the army gets powerful,
the political system will also gain power accordingly. In order to strengthen its own pillars,
the political system tries to reinforce the army. This policy was quite visible during the Pahlavi
regime in which the army had been bolstered under the direct supervision of the Shah and the aid
of foreign powers.

As stated earlier, the political power must reinforce the obedient military power in order to main-
tain its own power. But this may have two different results: on the one hand, one of the major
pillars of the political power is reinforced which will maintain the continuity of the current politi-
cal system and on the other hand it may lead to the creation of a powerful rival which may chal-
lenge the power of the ruler. Even though in Sultanistic regimes the armed forces must be obedi-
ent to the ruler, it may be, at the same time, tempting for them to get the position of the ruler in case they become too powerful. This is the reason why the Shah of Iran was always afraid of bolstering and reinforcing the position of the military. Accounting of this fear, the structure of the army was designed and organized in a way in which the Shah was able to have a direct supervision and control over the armed forces. The structure of the army means the distribution of decision-making power and command and military hierarchies within the army. The important factors involved in the formation of the army structure include: the opinion of the armed forces about the political power, the interpersonal relationship among members of the army and the relationship of the army commanders with the political ruler. In a Sultanistic structure, the commanders of the army are obedient to the political power and the relationship between different parts of the army as well as the relationship between the top commanders and the ruler are all established in a specific hierarchical framework. Therefore, lower ranks follow higher ranks and commanders are obedient to the political ruler (Ghasemi, 2009: 247).

The device of suppression and coercion is of a special function which is required by all forms of political systems. For unpopular and authoritarian regimes, this device is of paramount significance in creating political power. The device of suppression and coercion often has the authority beyond the law and may impact all aspects of social life. Considering the authoritarian nature of Sultanistic regimes, bureaucratic and military devices are considered important pillars for the power of the ruler. In such regimes which are unpopular and illegitimate, the best possible way for policy-making and exercising power is to establish a loyal military power. The army represents the ruler’s will and he can deal with his opponents through the army. In fact, the military forces are the ruler’s private army and the ruler is the commander-in-chief. According to Max Weber, the more the ruler spends on the military forces, the more the army will look like the personal armed forces of the ruler (Weber, 1995: 385).

In a Sultanistic structure, the political power finds its continuity in the loyalty of the armed forces which defends it. On the other hand, the armed forces also find themselves extremely dependent on the political power and consider this dependence essential for the maintenance of their interests, credibility and values. As a result, the ruler supports and reinforces the armed forces and they are also committed to defend the political power and its plans. In such structure, the armed forces can be used to defend the political power if they remain loyal and respect the principle of obeying in the hierarchical military framework. Also, it depends on the ability of the political power to take advantage of this loyalty and adherence. If the loyalty of the armed forces weakens or the political power fails to use their loyalty, the army may lose its function as a tool to maintain the political power. In such case, opponents may undermine the political power. Different factors inside and outside of the army may contribute to the occurrence of such situation (Ghasemi, 2009: 248).

As stated earlier, the Iranian Imperial Army was that type of army which is typical of Sultanistic regimes (Bashirieh, 1995: 276). But this army, though so powerful, could not stop the revolutionaries or impede the success of the Islamic Revolution. Having looked at the backgrounds of inefficiency of the armed forces against the revolutionaries in the course of the Islamic Revolution, three categories are broadly suggested in this regard: ideological and intellectual background, agent background and structural background. Each of these factors had their own indexes which finally led to the disloyalty of the army to the Shah. This paper will deal with these index-
es and their examples. Given the fact that the Sultanistic model does not robustly explain the backgrounds of the allegiance of the military personnel with revolutionaries, this paper is an attempt to offer a model in which it will be explained how the Iranian Imperial Army joined the Islamic Revolution. Thus, the main question of the paper is: what is the explaining model of backgrounds of the allegiance of the Iranian Imperial Army with the revolutionary forces?

Methodology
The current study utilizes a socio-historical approach for analyzing historical records and an inductive method for studying historical records during the years between 1974 and 1979. An attempt has been made to make a theoretical generalization in order to develop a model for the analysis of the backgrounds of the loyalty of the Iranian Imperial Army to the revolutionary forces. In this historical study, independent and mediating variables have been identified and then their association will be shown as a model based on logical arguments. No model has been suggested so far about the allegiance of the Iranian Imperial Army with the revolutionary forces.

A. Intellectual and ideological backgrounds

1. Belief of the military personnel in the Islamic teachings

The personnel of the army, like Iranian people, were the follower of the Twelver Shia Islam. The overwhelming majority of the personnel were born as Muslim and the religious teachings were transferred to them through inheritance and blood. Despite the heavy control of intelligence agencies, they were never able to control the beliefs of the military personnel (Islamic Revolution Document Center, No. 31 to No. 14130).

1.1. Belief in Imam Khomeini’s religious authority

One of the significant factors of the allegiance of the Iranian Imperial Army with the Islamic Revolution had to do with their interest in Imam Khomeini as a religious authority. It was not easy for the military personnel to express their interest in Imam Khomeini as General Razavi stated:

“The establishments did not let the name Imam Khomeini be heard anywhere at all, and even those who chose Imam Khomeini as their religious authority, were afraid to pronounce his name, since they could get arrested and punished (Azizi, 2007, 132)”.

There is, therefore, much irony in the fact that despite the strict and harsh suppression in the military organization and the long distance between Imam Khomeini and the military personnel, he was extremely influential among them. The influence of Imam Khomeini on the military personnel increased to the extent that his voice tapes were being distributed in police stations during curfew (Islamic Revolution Document Center, No. 2042).

The leaders of Islamic Revolution, especially Imam Khomeini, were cognizant of the personnel’s beliefs, therefore, they were able to influence the army through religion. The fact that the religious military personnel believed in the Islamic leadership was the biggest damage to the Shah and his military top commanders who were always boasting about their powerful armed forces. Conversely, the religious leaders seized this chance and paved the way for the integration of the armed forces with people.

General Gharabaghi, the then chief of the army staff, confessed that:

“Most of the soldiers and many officers were strictly religious and were followers of the religious authorities (Ulama)… some law enforcement personnel even officially wrote
that they were following Imam Khomeini as their religious authority and they could not act against the Ayatollah’s orders (Gharabaghi, 1989: 104).

1.1.1. Heeding Imam Khomeini’s orders
As stated earlier, given many military personnel of the Pahlavi regime considered Imam Khomeini as their religious authority, they found it incumbent upon themselves to follow his commandments. Using this opportunity, Imam Khomeini issued commandments which ruined the backbone of the Pahlavi regime. Imam urged the soldiers to disobey their higher ranks. He regarded the disobedience in the army as an Islamic invitation. Arousing their national and Islamic emotions, Imam Khomeini exhorted them to emancipate themselves from the Shah’s yoke and join other people (Beheshtiseresht, 2012: 364).

Imam Khomeini suggested that the soldiers who comprised the main body of the army should escape:
“I have demanded all the soldiers around the country to escape from barracks, this is a religious duty not to work for the oppressor” (Musavi Khomeini, 2006, vol 5: 153).

After Imam Khomeini’s commandment, many soldiers found it indispensable to follow their religious authority, therefore, they did escape from bases and their number increased day by day. It is worth noting that they could get a death sentence by doing so. Despite that, deserters increased everyday. General Gharabaghi stated that:
“Imam Khomeini’s fatwa for the military personnel to escape from their barracks made many armed forces, especially the conscripted soldiers, to escape. The adverse effects of the situation exacerbated until the armed forces did not have the power to resist anymore” (Gharabaghi, 1989: 79).

1.1.2. The letter of the armed forces to Imam Khomeini (religious inquiry)
Imam Khomeini as a religious authority had considerable influence on people’s lives including the armed forces. When the army was requested to take to the street and suppress the protestors, many military forces who were coming from an Islamic society became ambivalent about their oath to protect the Pahlavi regime, considering the Ulama and religious authorities condemned the army’s suppression (Talebidarabi, 1999: 135-138).

In March 1977, a group of the military personnel requested a religious inquiry from Imam Khomeini about breaking their loyalty oath from the Shah and his regime. The following is the excerpt from their letter:
“Surely you are cognizant of this common tradition that the military personnel take an oath on God and on the Quran to protect the throne and the royal regime when they receive their ranks. We request to know your opinion and your fatwa about breaking this oath and joining the big Islamic movement” (Azizi, 2005: 60).

In response to this request, Imam Khomeini explained his fatwa as follows:
“Taking an oath to protect the idolatrous power is not right and it is obligatory to oppose to it and those who have taken the oath must act the opposite (Hizer, 1986: 122-123).

2.1. Illegitimacy of usurper regimes
Today how can we remain unruffled and silent and see a few traitors and usurers and alien agents with their foreign aids and through force have usurped the wealth and wage of millions of Muslims and do not let Muslims enjoy the least standards? This is the duty of the Ulama and all Muslims to put an end to this oppressive situation and subvert the op-
pressive regimes and establish an Islamic state which will bring the happiness of millions of people (Imam Khomeini, Velayat Faqih 35).

1.2.1. Illegitimacy of the forceful organizations of the usurper regime

Before the advent of the revolutionary crisis, the armed forces pegged the military organization of the Pahlavi regime as legal and legitimate. So they used to obey their commanders without question. They had an extremely high regard for the Shah and the slogan “God, Shah, land” was quite popular and instilled among the military personnel. By the advent of the revolutionary conditions in the country and by the efforts of the leaders of the revolution especially Imam Khomeini in raising awareness about the illegitimacy of the Pahlavi regime among people, the military personnel also gradually started to believe that the forceful organization which was directly supervised by the Shah had no legitimacy as well. Such conviction became more and more popular among the armed forces and they did not care to obey the commandments of the organization and even sometimes found it necessary to defy them. Deserting the barracks, disobedience and defiance and even the assassination of those commanders who had a decisive role in people’s suppression were the signs of losing legitimacy of the forceful organization among the military personnel. The loss of legitimacy and the belief of the personnel to fight the organization as a pillar of the protection of the usurper regime led to the gradual collapse of the organization.

1.2.1.1. Defying the command of killing people by conscripted soldiers

The army had difficulty in suppressing the revolutionary forces, since many soldiers in the army had religious backgrounds and the revolution was of an Islamic nature, therefore they could not kill the protestors which made them more inactive and incapable and in some cases, some armed forces joined the revolutionary forces. When Gharabaghi was appointed as the chief of the army staff, the number of deserters was estimated to be a thousand soldiers per day which exceeded 1200 soldiers per day at the end of the crisis. Direct and constant contacts with people on streets along with the emerged gap in the military hierarchy and clergymen’s messages to the armed forces to desert their barracks were among the important factors of the allegiance of more military forces with the opponents of the Shah regime (Gharabaghi, 1989: 271).

1.2.1.2. Defying commanders’ commands

It is important to note that many commanders of the army were discontent with the Shah regime and had relationship with the revolutionary forces which finally resulted in their resignation from power during the last chaotic days of the Pahlavi regime. When Azhari was the prime minister and there were increasing popular unrests around the country, a number of ground forces commanders such as the commander of Khorasan division, the commanders of Isfahan and Shiraz barracks resigned to express their opposition to General Oveis’s commandments (Latifian, 2001: 359).

1.2.1.3. The influence of the rewarding and punitive actions of people

The way Imam Khomeini dealt with the army as the center of power of the regime was unique in the history of the world revolutions. Following Imam Khomeini’s orders, the revolutionaries tried to attract the armed forces and put them in the same line as the revo-
volutionary forces. They tried every method, sometimes through kindness and emotions and sometimes through forcefulness and wrath. Imam Khomeini was ready to sacrifice his followers in order to break the ties between the army and the Shah. His message was this: “Do not attack the chest of the army but target its heart. You have to turn to soldiers’ hearts, even if they shoot and kill you” (Latifian, 2001: 199). This tactic was quite worrisome for many military commanders and American officials. Huyser wrote in his memoir that the weapon of love and kindness made victory in the psychological operation of the regime and broke out a new dilemma for the regime (Ardestani, 1997: 64).

1.2.1.3.1. The influence of the emotional and epic chants of people
The role of emotional and religious chants of revolutionary people in an attempt to integrate the armed forces is undeniable. General Najafi, a former chief of the army staff, stated:
“The chants that people were shouting was a big blessing that affected the army, though in my opinion those who were involved in curfews were more prone to get influenced… For example, ground forces and air forces got more influenced by these chants than the navy given the fact that they were more in contact with people” (Islamic Revolution Document Center, No. 2042).
The writer of the book ‘Clergyman and the Shah’ wrote about how the psychological operation was conducted by the revolutionaries in one demonstration in order to attract the army:
“The crowd abruptly faced the armed soldiers who were coming from Shahreza Street. The crowd shouted the army is our brother. The military units eased off, smiled, lowered their guns and laughed… then they joined the crowd” (Harni, 1998: 217-218).
Some mobilizing chants which had been shouted by the revolutionaries to get the armed forces to their own front are: “The army is our brother/ Iran is our country”, “By Khomeini’s order, soldier is our brother”, “the army! You are innocent, you are only the instrument of the Shah”, “To Shah’s despair, the army is our brother”, “my armed brother, I give you flower, why do you kill me?”, etc (Bozorgmehr, 1979: 4-6).

1.2.1.3.2. Flower and confectionery tactic
The kind and gentle methods that were used by the revolutionaries to attract the armed forces were throwing flowers, kissing and chanting slogans which requested the army to join the people. With reference to people giving flowers to soldiers, AFP chose the headline “Red carnation in gun’s barrel” and wrote that girls and women were waving the flowers in the air and then threw them upon soldiers. Protestors went to soldiers and put tens of flowers inside their uniforms and even into their guns (Keyhan, 1979/01/14). Also, the revolutionaries hanged flower wreaths around soldiers’ necks. Soldiers mostly expressed approval of such actions.

1.2.1.3.3. The influence of punitive actions of people towards the army
Attracting and mobilizing the armed forces were not done only by friendly and gentle actions. In some cases, the revolutionaries were trying to exert pressure on soldiers in order to make them join the revolutionaries. Doctors and hospitals refused to admit them and their families and pharmacies did not sell drugs to them. After a while, Imam Khomeini ordered that the military personnel be admitted in hospitals and private clinics. Also,
many stores and super markets were reluctant to sell their products to the military personnel (Gharabaghi, 1989: 105). In addition, the revolutionaries used some resentful chants about why the army had not joined the people yet: “Such apathetic army, never seen by any nation” (Bozorgmehr, 1979: 13).

2. **Embracing the revolutionary ideology**

A changing element which distinguishes different social groups is ideology. Without ideology various social groups can never reach a consolidation and the conflicts within the society would get destroyed without impacting the social construction. But if individuals’ latent interests become active and turn into an ideology and the ideology becomes more popular and acceptable to a wider range of people, it can exceed its scope and attract other social groups and finally replace the rival ideology. The revolutionary ideology has to do with changing the status quo immediately. Sometimes the revolutionary ideology is of a religious nature and is based on a set of religious values (Mohammadi, 2004: 53). Therefore, three functions have been considered for ideology.

2.1. **Denouncing the status quo**

The revolutionary ideology denounces the current regime and challenges its values. This is done by an ideologue. To this end, Imam Khomeini stated: “The articles and amendments pertaining to the monarchy and the like have nothing to do with Islam. They are against Islam, violating the laws of Islam. Islam rebuts monopoly and royalty and has immediately overthrew them in Iran, Eastern Roman Empire, Egypt and Yemen. Monarchy and royalty were exactly what Imam Hussein fought against its establishment and was martyred for (Imam Khomeini, Velayat Faqih, 10). For the first time, Imam Khomeini dared to challenge a value which not only had long been upheld and instilled in people but also was part of the constitution.

2.1.1. **Loss of legitimacy of the regime and its administration of the society from armed forces’ point of view**

One of the issues that Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, spoke about was concerned with the function and future of the army. In his interviews and statements, he emphasized that the army would be necessary in principle and we have set its goals based on our national interests:

“… it is not true that our nation is against the army, the commanders, the officers or the soldiers. All of them are our brothers. We are not against them, we are against the bloodthirsty. The enforcement law must exist and we embrace them with open arms” (Sahifeh Noor, v. 5: 455).

This eased the armed forces that they would not lose their job or life so that they could join the revolution and be advised that their position would remain and if an Islamic state would be established, their social service would turn into a holy organization, since they not only would work for the nation, but also and more importantly they would work for Islam and an Islamic society.

2.2. **Delineation of the desired situation**

One of Imam Khomeini’s strategies in attracting the armed forces to the revolution was to keep them hopeful that they would remain in the future Islamic government. Many were employed in the army and they were worried about their future after the revolution. Even though the leftist revolutionary groups had the slogan of the total collapse of the army,
Imam Khomeini reassured them that they would exist after the revolution (Beheshtiseresht, 2012: 363). On this matter, Imam Khomeini clarified that: “They have terrified them that if an Islamic state is established, there would be no officials. No that is not true, even during Amir’s period (Ali ibn Abitaleb) there were officials. The country always needs an army” (Musavi Khomeini, 2006, vol. 5: 214-215).

Having said that, Imam Khomeini still believed that the army must get purged from regime’s sycophants:

“We need the army, we respect the army. We respect the young officials of the army. Even we respect one or a few top officials of the army who are good people… the corrupt must go and it must get purged. Yes the country needs the army” (Musavi Khomeini, 2006, vol. 5: 373-374).

2.2.1. Creating motivation and enthusiasm among the armed forces for the revolution and moving towards an ideal society

“I have an advice for the army and also would like to thank some part of the army. But my advice is that we want you to be independent. We are trying, we lost lives, we lost youths, our honor and dignity were taken away, our elders went to jail tormented there, we want the army to be independent. Mr. General, don’t you want to be independent? You would like to remain a servant?! I advise you to come to people’s arms and say what people say. Say we want to be independent. The nation says the army must be independent, the army must not wok under the commandments of American and foreign military advisors. We say this for the sake of you, you also say it for the sake of yourselves. Say that we want to be independent and we do not want these advisors to be here. We said we want an independent army, do we deserve to be killed for saying we want the army to be independent?! We want you to be a master” (Sahifeh Imam, vol 6: 17-18).

3.2. Planning to move from an undesired situation to a desired one

The next task of the revolution’s leader is to delineate an ideal society and practical ways to reach it. Considering the fact that most of people were followers of Islam, an Islamic state in the way it used to be administered and executed during Prophet Muhammad’s period was considered an ideal form of government and could be a good model for the future government. Based on the Quran and Hadith, the leader of the revolution eloquently proved that the principle of the guardianship of the jurist is necessary and the laws of God cannot be ignored and in all circumstances even during the Major Occultation we cannot overlook the holy laws and this is a responsibility of jurists (Mohammadi, 2003: 215).

2.3.1. Plans of the army for the revolution

The army faced the most critical days between 11 February 1979 until 18 April 1979 and was under increasing attack by self-interested enemies and misinformed friends. The army survived after the revolution by the aid of religious armed forces and Imam Khomeini’s total support. The barracks were full of guns and ammunitions. It was hard to imagine what would happen if these were handed over people. The revolutionary forces of the army kept the arms in order to give them to their new commanders. Imam Khomeini’s leadership and perspicacity helped the army remain and dismissed the requests of the collapse of the army.
3. **The inclination of the armed forces to the revolution**

The Iranian Imperial Army forces were comprised of people with the shared concerns and interests. The most important shared factor between the army and the people was their religious background which led to their integration with the revolution. Considering the fact that the revolution was triggered by an Islamic ideology and the armed forces were mostly religious Muslims, their trust was obtained. Taking into consideration their beliefs, the leaders of the revolution used many techniques in order to mobilize the armed forces including the opposition of the religious leadership to the Pahlavi regime, denouncing the Pahlavi regime as an illegitimate and usurper regime, founding the revolutionary ideology on Islam, generating motivation and enthusiasm among the armed forces and having a concrete plan to reach a desired situation. These made the military personnel express their approval and join the revolution.

**B. Agent backgrounds**

In his theory of Structuration, Anthony Giddens pays close attention to the structure of mutual actions among beliefs, intentions, goals, choices and individual and collective actions on the one hand and the structural conditions of thought and action on the other hand. He believes that social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution. In his view, structures do not exist independently but are covered within actions.

1. **Personalization of the Shah’s power**

Dependence of all the establishments on one individual and the centralized power that he had led to the collapse of the regime. In Iran, the Shah had the authority over the army’s commanders. Mohammadreza Shah personally appointed all the commanders of the army and the awarding of grades above the head of battalion was only done by him. The army commanders could not do anything without his consent. In military establishments, those who were personally close to him or his friends had the highest positions. One of the reasons had to do with his interest in the army.

1.1. **Dependence of top commanders of the army on the Shah**

The main weakness of the Iranian army was its dependence on the absolute command in the center. The army had long been used to the Shah’s command and relied on his commands and was always expecting his order (Same’ Nasayeh, 2006: 70). In general, his policy was based on distrust, therefore, all the system including the armed forces depended upon him. This had a considerable adverse impact on dynamism and efficiency of the army. Consequently, when the Shah escaped from the country, the army in the most critical moments was about to collapse. The Shah himself wrote in his book ‘a response to the history’: “the commanders of the army were urging me not to leave the country so the armed forces wouldn’t collapse” (Gharabaghi, 1989: 155).

Huyser wrote in his memoir: “I wanted them to accept their responsibilities. They couldn’t always depend on somebody else. But they lost the leadership of the Shah and insisted to rely on me. However, they should have had their own innovations” (Hizer, 1986: 95).

1.1.1. **Structural dependence of the command and body of the army on the Shah’s decisions**
All the decisions pertaining to the army were made by the Shah. General Huysier believes that even less important decisions of most military organizations used to be made by the Shah. He argued that this was the case because Iranian officers had been used to receiving orders. He finally concluded that Iran’s army had a big undeniable weakness: “the army was not trained to deal with issues per se. It depended on the leading power of the Shah”.

Gharabaghi also admitted that the officials of the army had little experience in planning, since the Shah used to formulate all the plans and they were only used to executing them. The Shah trained the generals in a way that they could not portray any sign of intent and independence. The commanders of the armed forces used to receive commandments directly from the Shah and could not make a decision without him. The Shah insisted that he be consulted in all affairs. All the decisions related to the transfer of senior officers from one force to the other or takeoff and landing of every military aircraft needed his approval.

1.1.1. The Shah’s escape and the incapability of senior commanders in decision-making on the revolution

When the Shah left the country, a wave of escapes, disorders, resignations and irresponsibilities occurred: Army General Djam did not accept the ministry of war, Army General Shafeqat was forced to accept it, Army General Toofanian retired, Corps General Jafari (deputy commander of law enforcement) requested to retire, Gharabaghi requested to resign and Corps General Kamali declared his consolidation with the revolutionaries, etc. These demonstrate that the senior officials of the army were incapable of making decisions and exerting their power (Hazeri and Salehabadi, 2002: 16).

The army lost its backbone in an unprecedented way and also had to face with the crisis of senior command. Speaking about the spirit of senior commanders after the Shah’s departure, General Huysier stated that Rabi’ei’s (Commander of the air force) conditions were shocking and he almost lost his mind. They did not want to let the Shah leave Iran and even decided to prevent his flight by blocking the airport and when they were totally disappointed with him, they wanted to leave the country with him too (Fardoost, 1999, Vol. 1: 585).

1.1.2. Lack of self-confidence among the commanders of the army

The policy of “sowing the seed of discord among top officials in the army” was exacerbated after General Army Khatami’s issue. In order to avoid any measure against him, the Shah made the commanders of the different forces and even lower ranks antagonistic to each other which eventually resulted in the almost collapse of the army during the revolutionary days. Even though Mohamadreza had close senior officers around him and they were indeed loyal to him, he always had misgivings that one day the army might stage a coup against him. He made his senior officers spy for him and constantly gather intelligence about other officers. He played with them like chess pieces, changing their positions all the time so that no officer could stay in a position for a long time. He was certain that an attempted coup against him would fail and told Alam that “in case of plotting a coup by the army, my generals are so suspicious of each other and have no respect for each other. They are so bloodthirsty of each other that they pose no threat”. The discord and lack of self-confidence among the military commanders did not let them manage the revolution and the Shah’s escape in a consolidated way which eventually led to the practical dissolution of the army.

1.2.3. Discord and disunity inside the army in the Shah’s absence
After the Shah left the country, the army lost its loose unity and centrality. He knew it would happen but had no other choice. In a meeting, he told Anthony Parsons that: “in case of my leaving, the army would lose its unity. Commanders would vie with each other and a similar situation like Latin American countries would happen to Iran in which a coup would be staged from time to time. And a constant instability would prevail the country”. Ardeshr Zahedi also believed that the army would not become unstable if the Shah had not left the country. However, the changes were not to ruin the economic power of the country and the dissolution of the army. Army General Hossein Fardoost also stated that: “By the Shah’s departure, the army whose commander and symbol were him, lost its spirit and its body and was absorbed in the revolution and its officials drowned in despair and confusion”.

C. Structural backgrounds

The key concept of Giddens’ theory is structuration and the mutual relationship of the structure which means that the social structure is used by actors and is changed by them. In structuralism, components of a structure cannot be studied independently, but are studied in relation to each other.

1. Structural problems in the army

The structure of the Iranian Imperial Army had a big problem. Each force was under the command of a senior officer who was a member of the chiefs of the command. It operated as a planning and supervision center for the Shah. Therefore, Iran’s army system was so similar to that of the US. But unlike the US system, Iranian general commanders did not have much authority. The Shah was the commander in chief and each force had to report to him systematically about its budget, administration and military leadership. What made a common reporting uncommon was concerned with the fact that the Shah personally used to make all the decisions about every military aspect and in fact he was the practical commander of all forces. As a result, officers lost their potential for innovation and novelty and if a senior officer wanted to act based on his innovation, he would face problems.

1.1. Discrimination in the army

1.1.1. Attention to higher ranks

Economic inequalities and income gap between higher and lower ranks in the army contributed to some degree to the allegiance of the military personnel with the revolution. Since assuming power on 18 August 1953, he had been trying to keep the military personnel content by buying permitted advanced military equipment and awarding privileges to them. If somebody could become a military officer, he would enjoy a good salary, a good house, free servants and lackeys, recreational facilities and having the privilege to import luxury products. In 1974, a soldier used to receive a salary of 500 to 600 rials per month while a captain used to receive 30000 rials, a colonel 60000 rials and a general between 70000 to 100000 rials per month. The Shah was extremely generous in spending money for higher ranks who were also exempt from paying taxes and educational fees for their children. In addition, they used to receive special payments too (Same’ Nasayeh, 2006: 151-152).

1.1.2. Ignoring the lower ranks

Lower ranks of the military personnel were in contact with ordinary people. They were trained mostly in technical fields by the government and were denied of any of those privileges that higher ranks enjoyed. The chasm between them was quite yawning. Parsons rightly
stated that: “in military ceremonies and gatherings, senior officers and generals were conspicuous with their chests full of medals and badges and we sometimes wondered which wars did they fight that obtained these medals for them? But lower ranks and soldiers looked like Central Asian farmers with harsh faces” (Rastin, 1984: 61).

The conscripted soldiers of the army were mainly illiterate from the low social class and deprived rural areas. They had nothing to do with the regime and their commanders used to take advantage of them to make them their personal servants. Such discrimination would surely bring about frustration and dissatisfaction about the regime and their commanders. Therefore, lower ranks had a yawning gap with higher ranks. They had ideological and cultural differences and were from different social class which made them establish intellectual and social ties with ordinary people. Given these discriminations and differences, the main body of the army had no attachment with the Shah and did not consider themselves as the protector of his royalty.

3.1.1. **Discrimination within different forces of the army**

Another discriminatory aspect of the Iranian Imperial Army was related to the salaries different forces used to receive. The Shah had a special attention to the air force and followed their affairs closely. Army General Gharabaghi wrote one discriminatory instance in his memoir: “One of the factors of dissatisfaction in the armed forces had to do with the discrimination they faced in public and private living conditions which originated from the unfair allocation of resources. For example, in Jask port which is located in a remote, hot area near to the Persian Gulf, there was an air base. In the same area, there was also a police station for public security and confronting smuggling. The personnel of the air force enjoyed all the facilities including buildings equipped with water, electricity, A/C and also state buildings for their families with refined water and gyms. When on leave, they could use free flights of air force and bring their own products to the base all by air. However, the police station which was near to them had none of these facilities. Their families even had to live in decrepit buildings of the municipality which did not have water nor other facilities which were necessary for living in the weather of 40 to 50 degrees. The same unfair situation was true in Bandar Abbas or other ports which they had air bases”.

2.1. **The patrimonial structure of the army**

From the beginning, Iran’s modern army had a patrimonial structure. In his reigning period, the Shah had been trying to preserve this structure and relations. The army was under the Shah’s authority, independent from the executive branch and without the parliamentary supervision. The Shah used to decide and approve all the affairs of the army such as promoting insignia, educational programs, purchase of weapons, organizational relations of military units, etc (Sina’i, 2005: 557). In principle, the Shah did not want the commanders to have authority and power. All the power was in his hand and he did not allow any central parallel power to exist besides his (Hazeri and Salehabadi, 2002: 14).

According to the constitution, the Shah was the commander in chief. But his relationship with the army was beyond that. Once he expressed his opinion about the army in a patriarchal sentence: “I am the army”. One of the structural and operational complications in the military establishments was the personal scrutiny and intervention of the Shah in the
supervising and commanding structure of the army. His personal interventions led to many problems: it helped dissolve the armed forces, damaged the unity within the army and weakened the spirit of junior officers.

3.1. Non-centralized structure of the armed forces
The command structure of the army was non-centralized. The chief of the army staff was to make coordination among the three forces. However, he was not superior than other commanders of the forces. The commander of each force used to report directly to the Shah and receive the required orders without any involvement of the chief of the army staff. Therefore, the armed forces were not in a central structure. This structure was designed by the Shah in order to prevent any concentration of power. He tried to maintain this structure in the armed forces in order to keep his position at the head of the army (Sina’i, 2005: 570).

His policies also made the position of the chief of the army staff pointless and ineffective. The Shah used to meet the commander of each force separately and the last person he used to meet was the chief of the army staff who was supposed to make coordination among the forces, he was not attended a lot.

Even after the Shah appointed Bakhtiar as the prime minister and was ready to leave Iran, he insisted that this non-centralized structure be kept. When being away from Iran, the Shah usually used to issue a command under the name of the chief of the army staff for urgent operational decisions and essential matters to the three forces. However, on his last exit, he did not do so. Gharabaghi, the then chief of the army staff, eagerly asked if something unpredictable and against the constitution happened, what should we do? The Shah told him: “we don’t know what will happen, do whatever you and other commanders think is appropriate” (Gharabaghi, 1989: 133).

1.4. Copying the Western model for the army structure
Considering the fact that the army had a special contribution in maintenance and protection of the Pahlavi regime, the influence of foreign agents should not be overlooked. When Mohammadreza came to power, the US entered into Iran’s political scene, since Americans found themselves committed to stop the influence of Soviet Union within the third world countries. On the other hand, the Shah gained his power due to the US plots and its agents in the army, therefore, he was totally willing to cooperate closely with CIA. He also strengthened the army and established SAVAK (Organization of intelligence and national security) with the aid of the same agents. Therefore, America obtained more and more influence in Iran and had an enormous impact on the command and the body of the army. After a while, Iran turned into a key regional ally of the US in 1960s and became the biggest buyer of American weapons (Naraqi, 2006: 115).

Thus, Iran was totally reliant on the US from the military point view. Also, Many military and non-military experts of the US came to Iran along with their families in order to train the Iranian military personnel. The problem was, however, that the US did not train, organize and equip the Iranian army based on Iran’s interests but considered the US priorities. For example, our air bases and communication networks were built in the Zagros mountains based on the possibility of a Soviet Union attack on Iran. Therefore, the army
was not organized for Iranian needs and was merely to preserve the foreign interests (Latifian, 2001: 32).

5.1. Corruption and dissatisfaction within the army structure
Dissatisfaction in the armed forces of the Pahlavi regime was not a shallow problem. Corruption in military and civilian bureaucracy was deeply rooted. From time to time, some propaganda campaigns were staged which did not help diminish the deeply-rooted corruption and only victimized some state and military officials (Sina’i, 2005: 571).

As Iran expanded its military purchases, corruption, fraud and embezzlement also gradually increased in the army. On occasions, these scandals became publicized. For example, the Senate investigation commission revealed that in one of the military deals with US companies, many Iranians received astronomical bribes including Army General Khataimi, the commander of the Iranian Air Force, the Shah’s brother-in-law and the oldest son of Ashraf (the Shah’s sister). Also, Admiral General Ramzi Ata’i received a three-million-dollar bribe in order to close a weaponry deal. He and his deputy Rear Admiral Hasan Rafe’i were arrested. After their trial and conviction, many naval officers were sentenced and sent into prison or were fired from the army. But they were released shortly after and went to America and lived a luxurious life from the money they made illegally. This had an adverse impact on the spirit of the armed forces since they had been released much sooner than their sentence.

1.6. The unprofessional structure and composition of human resources
The structure of human resources and the composition of the forces and the personnel of the army also facilitated its dissolution. All soldiers and many officers were conscripted. They were vulnerable in their two-year service. Even though they did not have any official position, the army depended on them. By the advent of the revolution, they comprised two third of the army and only one third of the army were professional personnel (Stempel, 1998: 52).

The conscripted soldiers had to tackle the demonstrators face-to-face. They were ordered to shoot people, while they knew their family members were in the demonstrations. In order to solve this issue, they used to be consigned to their non-local areas, though these measures finally turned out to be futile for the regime survival (Sina’i, 2005: 573).

1.6.1. Lack of proper training and equipment
Lack of proper training, specialist forces and the necessary equipment for crushing popular unrests were among the structural factors of the dissolution of the army. These unrests became quite widespread during 1978 and 1979 which forced the armed forces to be constantly present in streets. Considering the large frequent popular demonstrations and lack of well-trained military personnel for the anti-riot crushing, the regime faced a serious threat. Therefore, lack of proper equipment and training for putting down the demonstrations contributed significantly to the dissolution of the Iranian Imperial Army. Sullivan, the US ambassador to Iran, did not agree to sell anti-riot equipment to Iran. In the end, Brzezinski (Carter’s national security advisor) managed to send some equipment in October 1978 but it was too late.

The police was not trained well too. SAVAK also did not have sufficient programs available to meet the anti-riot needs. In general, the role change of the armed forces, lack of
the necessary anti-riot equipment, lack of proper training of the police, lack of the necessary forces in the domestic security and paying excessive attention to the role of the regional gendarmeries which finally failed to manage the crisis (Hazeri and Salehabadi, 2002: 21).

3. The failure of the army
The Iranian Imperial Army, one of the biggest and most important armies of its time, failed to stop the Islamic Revolution. The truth is that the army looked strong on the surface but had many defects within it. Agent and structural problems which were mentioned above incapacitated the army. The reliance of the army and its commanders on the Shah resulted in indecisiveness and ineffectiveness when he had left the country. Therefore, the strong-looking army did not block the path of the revolution. The internal problems of the army were revealed more each day. Nobody could believe that the Iranian Imperial Army was only strong on the surface and empty within.

The development of the model

The following model, therefore, is developed to explain the backgrounds of the allegiance of the Iranian Imperial Army with the revolutionary forces in the Islamic revolution.
Conclusion:
This paper investigated the backgrounds of the allegiance of the army with the revolutionary forces and developed a model to explicate it. On 11 February 1979, the Iranian Imperial Army declared its neutrality while it was the world’s fifth strongest army and Mohammadreza Shah considered it an important assurance for the Pahlavi regime’s survival. Given the fact that Sultanistic regimes do not have popular legitimacy, they usually rely on the military power. This is why Mohammadreza Shah paid much attention to the armed forces. This paper used an inductive method in studying the Iranian contemporary history and identified the backgrounds which led to the loyalty of the army to revolutionaries. The results showed that these backgrounds fall into three categories i.e. ideological, agent and structural. The ideological factors were rooted in the beliefs of the armed forces. Considering that Iranians had long been Muslims and the army was mostly comprised of the same people, thus, they stuck to the Islamic teachings. They believed that they must follow their religious leader and religious authority so they heeded to the Islamic leader's orders as the most popular religious authority of the time. The other ideological factor had to do with the adoption of the revolutionary ideology by the military personnel. According to the ideology, Muslims were to denounce the situation of the Pahlavi regime and to demand an ideal society which is the Islamic reign over the country and to plan for achieving it. Their faith, therefore, led them to become absorbed in the revolutionary ideology which paved the path for the allegiance of the armed forces with the revolutionary forces. The most important agent factor was concerned with the fact that the armed forces were excessively reliant on the Shah and received orders directly from him. When the Shah left the country, the army failed to preserve itself which resulted in indecisiveness and lack of self-
confidence among the commanders. The structural backgrounds also provided the grounds for the integration of the army with the revolution. Even though it was well equipped and looked strong, the army revealed its internal and latent problems as the crisis and revolution broke out. The main structural problems include discrimination in the army, the patrimonial structure, non-centralized structure of the armed forces, the unprofessional structure and composition of the army, corruption and dissatisfaction within the army, copying the Western model for the army, which all have been elaborated in this paper.
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