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"An Exploration of Iran's Women Soccer Team's Disqualification from the

Olympic Qualifier through Politics, Sports, and Gender"

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Introduction

On June 3, 2011 the hopes of the Iranian women's soccer team were destroyed as the

Fédération International de Football Association (FIFA) disqualified the team from playing in

their Olympic qualifier match against Jordan.[1] According to FIFA, the team was disqualified

because the headscarves worn by the players did not meet the dress code regulations.[2] FIFA

insisted that any head cover worn by women during play could only cover from the hairline to

the beginning of the neck.[3] The Iranian federation was allegedly aware of this and chose to equip

the team with a more conservative headscarf anyways.[4] Iran was thus forced to forfeit the game,

giving Jordan a 3-0 victory.[5] This resulted in Iran not being able to qualify for the 2012 Olympic

Games in London.[6]

Different sources give different reasons for FIFA's disqualification. CNN quotes a FIFA

representative stating that

> "despite initial assurances that the Iranian delegation understood this [rules
> regarding headscarves during play], the players came out wearing the hijab, and
> the head and neck totally covered, which was an infringement of the laws of the
> game".[7]

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[1] Erdbrink, Thomas, "Olympics 2012: FIFA bans headscarves for Iranian women's soccer team," *The Washington Post,* June 6, 2011, Accessed March 19, 2012, http://www.washington post .com/sports/united/olympics-2012-fifa-bans-headscarves-for-irans-women-soccer-team/2011/06/06/ AGzT1JKH_story.html.
[2] Ibid
[3] "World soccer officials defend hijab ban after Iranian team forfeits match," *CNN,* June 7th 2011, Accessed March 19, 2012, http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/06/07/fifa-defends-hijab-ban-after-iranian-team-forfeits-match/.
[4] Ibid
[5] "Olympics 2012: FIFA bans headscarves for Iranian women's soccer team."
[6] Ibid.
[7] "World soccer officials defend hijab ban after Iranian team forfeits match."

Others point to the fact that the women used pins to hold the headscarves in place, and it was the pin, not the headscarf itself that was dangerous.[8] . Some others have alluded to the FIFA rule against displaying religious symbols during play.[9] Even though FIFA has decided to lift the headscarf ban, a decision which should be ratified in July 2012, it is too late for Iran.[10]

The issue permeates further than a simple violation of dress code, whether for safety reasons or for religious reasons. Iran's opponent, Jordan, whose players were also Muslim, were wearing headscarves that satisfied both FIFA's requirements and Islam's. Iran, thus, had an alternative to display their Islamic identity, while still obeying FIFA's regulations. But they did not. This paper tries to determine why Iran behaved the way it did. An easy answer would revolve around Islam and its practices of clothing and the Western imposition of its values on Eastern countries. Although this is surely an element present in the discussion, alone, it is insufficient to explain the event. One of the arguments of this paper will be that this event served as a political platform for Iran and that what initially seems to have been a simple decision by FIFA to sanction Iran for not dressing according to regulation is clouded by the use of sports and women's bodies as political tools. This paper will show how Iran has used its support and disdain of sports in the past to push a political agenda, and, similarly, that through restrictive policies, including laws dictating the dress code of women, women's bodies have been used to express the political point of view of the Iranian government.

In order to answer this question, it is important to explore the issue in terms of Iran's identity. A constructivist approach lends itself better to analyzing the event than a realist or

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[8] "FIFA lifts ban on soccer headscarf," *Radio Australia,* March 8, 2012, Accessed March 19, 2012, http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacific/radio/onairhighlights/fifa-lifts-ban-on-soccer-headscarf.
[9] Michelle Norris, "FIFA Disqualifies Iranian Women's Soccer Team," *NPR,* June 9, 2011, Accessed March 19, 2012, http://www.npr.org/2011/06/09/137089323/fifa-disqualifies-iranian-womens-soccer-team.
[10] "FIFA lifts ban on soccer headscarf."

liberalist approach. A rationalist approach would argue that Iran's behavior was a means to secure its self-interest which in this case could be the following of religious doctrine or an assertion of its independence, amongst others. While this may be true, identity is important because it is identity that defines interests.[11] Additionally, on a more basic level, this situation does not involve solely states as rational actors, but rather seems to pit a state (Iran) against an international organization (FIFA). The rationalist self-help notion of world politics, in which states believe that must rely on themselves alone to ensure their interests and security,[12] is also lacking in this situation. As an organization of states, FIFA is an international organization which states trust to help protect their interests in all that regards soccer. Additionally, the realist paradigm assumes that states work in anarchical system, but in the world of international sports, international organizations like FIFA are supranational and create an ordered set of rules that states must follow.

Furthermore, both rationalist theories rely on interest as the motivating factor in the behavior of states.[13] However, in this instance, it would have been in Iran's interest to follow the headscarf guidelines and let the women's team participate. It would have shown goodwill from those in power positions to women and the women's rights movement, and it would have been prestigious for the country to participate in the Olympics. Yet, Iran did not behave following its interests, because its identity was more important in dictating its actions. Rationalist theories do not provide an adequate explanation for Iran's behavior because they do not understand identity as a reason for behavior. Constructivism provides an understanding that allows identity to move

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[11] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states Make of It: The Social Construct of Power Politics," *International Organization:* 46 (1992): 391-425, Accessed April 26, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706858 . 398.
[12] Wendt, 394.
[13] Wendt, 392.

to the center of the explanatory discussion of a state's behavior, and is thus more suited to understanding this event.

Moreover, as Wendt lays out, rationalist paradigms (realism and liberalism) believe that although state behavior may be changed, identity and interests are not.[14] This paper argues, however, that Iranian identity does change along three main tensions: religion versus secularism, tradition versus modernity, and an open policy to the West versus a more isolationist position. The argument of the paper relies on the fact that throughout its history Iran's identity has indeed shifted along these lines, and realism and liberalism do not allow for that. Constructivism concedes the relational nature of identity and is thus better suited to a project that seeks to follow the evolution of a particular group's identity.

Another reason to use an identity based analysis is derived from Homeira Moshirzadeh's article "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy." Moshirzadeh's argument is that Iran's nuclear policy can be understood via three discourses that are fundamental in defining Iranian identity: discourses of justice, independence and resistance.[15] Although this paper does not delve into Iran's nuclear policy, the same tensions in Iranian identity arise as explanatory factors for Iran's behavior. Moshirzadeh helps provide some driving factors of Iranian identity that can be extrapolated from the context of nuclear policy, and applied to better understand this situation.

In the context of international relations, which is the context in which this paper aims to be, it is particularly important to understand this event in terms of Iran's identity. As Wendt argues, state identities are cemented in part through the state's interaction with other actors

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Homeira Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy," *Security Dialogue* 38(2007): 521-543, Accessed April 26, 2012, doi: 10.1177/0967010607084999. 521.

outside the state,[16] in other words, international relations. This paper, as well as Moshirzadeh, argues that significant parts of Iranian identity stem precisely from these interactions with other agents, particularly historical relations with Western countries. Moreover, the event itself is one in which Iran strengthens which Iran continues to strengthen its identity though interaction with another agent, so it makes the most sense to understand the event taking the expression and evolution of identity into account.

Specifically, three aspects of Iranian identity will be analyzed in: Iran's political history and the relationships between its different political groups, Iran's history with sports, particularly the way soccer has been politicized in the past, and lastly the negotiation of the female identity within Iran. Undoubtedly the identity of Iran as a Muslim country will play a role in the formation of all three elements that will be discussed. Ideally, the cross section of these three pieces of Iranian identity will help shed light on why and how the events surrounding the headscarf based disqualification played out.

Methodology

The heart of this paper is to understand how Iranian identity has evolved to create the tensions that may have led to the headscarf incident. To do so, this paper will trace the development of three elements of Iranian identity; Iranian politics, and Iran's relationship with sports and women. Regarding Iranian politics, this paper will look at the various political groups in Iran and the issues around which they have been divided. There is also a vast overlap between sports and politics that will be explored: mainly, how the politics of Iran have affected the popularity and timing of sports and how international politics have affected Iran's behavior in the

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[16] Wendt, 403.

international sports world. Lastly, because the incident concerned the women's soccer team, the paper must look at how Iranian politics have dealt with women's roles and identities over time.

The evolution of Iranian politics will be key to understanding the other two elements of Iranian identity because it serves as a driver for change in both the treatment of sports and women's identity. The politics of whoever holds power in the country determine what sports will be promoted, if any, and any policies affecting women's identities including their participation in the social and athletic sphere. One of the most recurring themes in Iranian politics is a constant battle between tradition and modernity. Throughout the course of Iran's history political groups and political leaders have taken different positions on whether Iran should uphold traditional values or welcome modernity. As groups and individuals with a particular preference on this issue came to power their ideas were imposed on the Iranian people, defining the identity of Iran according to their beliefs on tradition and modernity. This tension will be significant in understanding how different sports have entered and exited Iranian culture, and even more important in explaining the varying treatment of women by traditional or more modern policies. The battle between tradition and modernity is also intrinsically tied to the issue of Islam and its various interpretations, some stricter and more traditional and others more lenient and in line with western values. The idea is that the overlap of these three elements of Iranian identities will provide several clues to explain Iran's side of the headscarf debate and why it happened now, although it was not the first game that the Iranian women have played.

Literature Review

Extensive scholarly work exists on Iran, especially in regards to its politics and the role of women. The intersection between sports, Iran, and international relations has been studied less

intensively, as sports in general have not been given a significant role in international relations theory. As pertains to this paper, there is a good amount of literature on individual elements of identity that will be analyzed. The convergence of all three elements however has not experienced the same popularity. This section will attempt to expose the gap in the literature that this paper aims to fill.

While sports and politics is a field that has been extensively explored, Victor Cha argues that the intersection between sports and international relations has not been well covered.[17] The framework Cha lays out for understanding how sports and international relations work together is very helpful and will be analyzed later in this paper. In short, Cha argues that sport can help create identities, be used as a diplomatic tool, and to facilitate change.[18] Cha's piece is one of the few pieces creating explicit links between soccer and international relations. Although it does not directly address the relationship between sports and world politics, H.E. Chehabi has written a piece detailing the political history of soccer in Iran highlighting the struggles between individualism and cooperation, and traditionalism and modernity.[19] These struggles play an important role in Iran's foreign, as well as domestic policy. This paper will further expand on the connection between sports and international relations as it relates to Iran.

The work on Iran and politics is immense. With Iran growing as a power in the world countless books have been written discussing its history and the evolution of its politics over time. Elton L. Daniel in *The History of Modern Iran* provides an overview of Iran and how it has

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[17] Victor D.Cha, "A Theory of Sports and Politics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (2009): 1581-1610, Accessed February 9, 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09523 360903132972.
[18] Ibid.
[19] H.E. Chehabi, "A Political History of Football in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 35 (2002): 371-402, Accessed March 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/10.2307/43 11479?origin=api.

changed by studying its history and culture.[20] Nasrin Alavi provides a unique window onto Iranian politics and identity through his book *We Are Iran: The Persian Blogs* which discusses political and social issues through the eyes of Iranians and their online blogs.[21] In Alavi's book one can see the tensions that exist between the older generations and the Iranian youth who seek a more modern, democratic Iran. *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, and Politics* edited by Ali Ghessari provides insight into the social changes and developments that have been taking place in Iran and may have been overlooked by the research community.[22]

Many of the works that approach Iran's politics and society also address the issue of women in Iran and how the change in their role in society over time. There also exists substantial literature on women's rights in Iran and how women have chosen to approach the fight for increased privileges in society. Roja Fazaeli's "Contemporary Iranian Feminism: Identity, Rights and Interpretations" explains the various types of feminisms in Iran based on varying religious beliefs among women.[23] A series of studies have been conducted on how Muslim women experience sports, including a detailed study of how Muslim women in Egypt understand their participation in sports.[24] In their study Fasting and Walseth found that Egyptian women believed that Islam promoted their participation in sports, and that the strictest adherents to Islamic traditions were also those who felt most strongly about their need to participate in sports. This paper will attempt to help highlight how sport has been used by the government to push back the role of women, and how women have used sport to fight against that repression and engage in a fight for their rights.

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[20] Elton L. Daniel, *The History of Ira,*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. Back cover.

[24] Kari Fasting and Kristin Walseth, "Islam's View on Physical Activity and Sport: Egyptian Women Interpreting Islam," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38: (2003) 45-60, *Sage Journals* (accessed February 5, 2012).

There is a fairly large body of literature on all three areas of Iranian identity that this paper plans to explore. There is even some literature which looks at the intersection of two or more of these elements, something unavoidable when discussing the status of the woman in society and politics. What is lacking is a combination of these three pieces of Iranian identity to explain recent phenomena in Iranian women's sports. Literature on Muslim women and sports focuses the health effects of exercise as well as the social implications of participation in sports. Babak Fozooni, in "Iranian Women and Football", examines precisely the issue of soccer as a sphere for social confrontation for Iranian women.[25] Moreover, there is an extreme lack of academic research looking at this particularly recent event of the match versus Jordan. This paper seeks to add to the large and growing body of work on Iran by using these existing explanations of Iranian identity and applying them to understand this particular event. This is significant for much more than just understanding a soccer game. Firstly, because it will show that soccer is not just a game but reaches into the political realms of countries. Additionally, while offering an application of Iranian identity to actions in the international sphere, this paper can also help better the understanding of Iran's relationship with the West in international politics, where sport and specifically soccer are becoming key arenas in which to study international relations.

Iran and Sports

Theoretical Background

In order to fully understand the dynamics between Iran and sports, it is first necessary to lay out the basics of how sports and politics are interrelated in general. Victor Cha lays out a

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[25] Babak,Fozooni, Babak, "Iranian Women and Football,"*Cultural Studies,* 22(2007):114-133, Accessed March 24, 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502380701480634. 114.

very useful framework through which to understand the relationship between sports and international politics. As was previously discussed, international politics can be experienced through one of three mainstream lenses: realist, liberal, and constructivist. Each of these schools of thoughts interprets the role of sports and international relations differently. For realists, who believe that the world is organized by states that are rational actors and act to promote their self-interests, sports offer another avenue for states to compete for power or collaborate with allies.[26] Moreover, the results achieved in sporting endeavors prove the wealth and strength of the victorious country according to realists.[27] The Liberal perspective, which emphasizes the importance of interstate cooperation in world politics, sport exemplifies how interconnected the world has become.[28] Because the liberal school of thought views international organizations as legitimate actors in world politics, international sporting organizations, like FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) are treated as significant actors in international relations.[29] These rationalist understandings of the role sport in international relations are not conducive to analyzing this event and reinforce the justification for a constructivist approach. The Iranian disqualification is not an instance where a state was competing for greater international power or working with allies, so the realist understanding does not help provide useful insight. The situation also cannot be explained by the interconnectedness of the world. Thus, although, the liberal approach, provides the useful tool of viewing FIFA as a significant international actor, it does not help explain Iran's behavior.

Constructivists understand international relations as a series of social constructs brought about by different values in the world. Constructivists would argue that the entire world political

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[26] Cha, 1583.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

system relies on people and their identities. As Wendt explains, constructivists believe that states' actions are determined by their identities which are in turn developed out of interaction between actors. Moreover, state identities can change depending on the context, they are not static.[30] A state will make a decision to change its identity when there is the opportunity for a new identity, some sort of new situation that the state had not been experiencing, and when the benefits from this change in identity outweigh the potential costs of changing identity.[31] The identity a state chooses depends heavily on how much threat it perceives from the other actor involved.[32] When two actors meet for the first time a constructivist would understand states' initial action as a response to an analysis based on the probability that the other state will be friendly or threatening, whereas as a realist would assume that the state would respond to a worst case scenario.[33] In terms of sport this idea can help explain why some sporting events can be more politically charged and tense than others. A soccer match between the United States and Iran, who have a fairly threatening perception of each other, is going to bring forth a much different American identity than would a match between the United States and Canada, who have extremely friendly perceptions of each other. Constructivists would also argue that the identity of a state will determine its interests, and that institutions are simply a set of these identities.

According to Cha, for this group of thinkers, sport "is a source of pride" and "becomes interwoven with a nation's view of itself".[34] As identity is key to how constructivists understand international relations, they view international sport as an additional field where state identities can be created, modified, and strengthened. Cha also discusses a fourth understanding of

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[30] Wendt, 397.
[31] Wendt, 419.
[32] Wendt, 396.
[33] Wendt, 404.
[34] Ibid.

international sports which promotes a reciprocal influence by international actors and the international system. [35] They place a large emphasis on the role that transnational phenomena playing international politics.[36] This understanding is outside the traditional system of international relations, and its discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Cha himself appears to take a fairly constructivist view on sports, especially in his discussion of the role of sport in creating identities. According to Cha sport in world politics serves to help create identities, act as a diplomatic tool, and can help bring about change.[37] Sport causes emotion amongst citizens which can help create national pride and unity amongst citizens be creating and cementing a positive national identity.[38] The opposite effect can also be achieved by sport; it can help groups assert their independence.[39] Additionally international sport can help set global standards for countries to aspire to meet, as well as be a vehicle for soft power as countries can alter their reputation via their performance and behavior at international events.[40] Through these various roles sport can help form identities which are crucial to world politics.

Cha mainly discusses identity in sports by discussing how strong emotions tied to sport can lead to pride in one's nation when it is successful and can thus strengthen feelings of nationalism and national identities. This paper seeks to explore a slightly different understanding of identities role within sports. Mainly, it does not look at the sporting event as an identity forming event, but rather a moment when a state can assert a chosen identity. The disqualification from the Olympic qualifier did not really increase nationalist sentiments in Iran,

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Cha, 1582.
[38] Cha, 1584-1585.
[39] Cha, 1587.
[40] Cha, 1589-1590.

but did provide Iran with an opportunity to demonstrate its chosen identity to the world. Sports can provide a stage on which states can perform their identities.

Although understanding the role of identity in sport is the most important lens for this paper, it is important to note some of the other effects of sport in international relations. Sport can be used as a diplomatic tool because it offers opportunities other than official meetings between delegates where countries can work on their relations.[41] The United States and China took advantage of this tool in the 1970's when the USA's ping-pong team became the first Americans to enter China in over twenty years.[42] The visit was seen as a first step in the road back to friendly relations between the two nations and a series of political decisions that followed, including Nixon's trip to China in 1972, helped further the feelings of goodwill that the ping-pong trip had produced.[43] Furthermore, sport can be used as a tool of more coercive diplomacy through boycotts and sanctions.[44] For example, in 1964 the IOC banned South Africa from participating in the upcoming Olympics due to its refusal to end apartheid policies.[45] Additionally, the United States initiated a boycott of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the year before.[46] As diplomacy, the relations and dynamics between actors, is key to world politics, it is important to all schools of thought of international relations.

Similarly to coercive diplomacy, Cha argues that sport can bring about change in the world. This "change" can be the change of ideas and politics, which is usually the result desired

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[41] Cha, 1592.
[42] Cha, 1594.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Cha, 1592.
[45] BBC, "1964: South Africa banned from Olympics," Last modified in 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk /onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/18/newsid_3547000/3547872.stm.
[46] "Moscow 1980," last modified 2012, http://www.olympic.org/moscow-1980-summer-olympics.

from sanctions.[47] For the aforementioned example of South Africa, this idea would say that the

Olmypic ban helped pressure South African into changing its politics of apartheid. However, the

change can also be physical, such as improved infrastructure for nations.[48] Countries that host

events like the Olympics or FIFA World Cups must make sure that they are properly equipped.

Readying for such an event involves not only improvements such as building new stadiums but

renovations to transportation systems, points of interests to tourists, and just the general upkeep

of the cities.[49] In Seoul before the 2002 FIFA World Cup, large emphasis was placed on the

renovation of lavatories from Asian style toilets to western ones in order to make visitors from

foreign countries feel more at ease.[50]

      Moreover, another constructivist argument based around sport is how participation in the

international sports world can help shape identities. Reminiscent of the universal declaration of

human rights, the Olympic charter also establishes a link between the Olympic Games and the

liberal political tradition.[51] The Charter uses similar language as the declaration such as "the

preservation of human dignity" and that the "practice of sport is a human right".[52] Therefore

countries hosting the Olympics, and to a certain extent participating in the Olympics, are

pressured to exemplify those liberal values and show the rest of the world they possess them. As

states interact with international sports institutions, like the IOC, that press for certain values,

their identities can shift to ones that promote better interaction between the state and the

organization.

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[47] Cha, 1595.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Cha, 1589.
[51] Cha, 1598.
[52] Ibid

In summation identity and sports are strongly interrelated. Sports can provide opportunities to strengthen national identities and shape identities through participation in the international sporting world. This paper will also emphasize how sports can also provide an opportunity for states to establish their identities to the world. The constructivist emphasis on understanding state actions through identity will play a crucial role in understanding Iran's interaction with this particular sporting event.

Soccer in Iran

For the purposes of this paper, an identity focused understanding of sport and world politics is the most helpful. However, constructivists, realists, and liberalists all acknowledge that sport does not act in a vacuum, but is connected to state politics. As was described earlier, realists view sport as an additional arena where states can exert power, liberals believe sport can provide additional ground for diplomacy, and for constructivists sports is a field where states can portray and shape their identities. As pertains specifically to this study, this section will show how Iran's interaction with international sports has changed according to Iran's identity at the time. What seems to drive Iranian identity most in terms of its interaction with sports is a tension between modernity and tradition.

Iranian sports identity has also been strongly driven by Western influence, contributing to the presence of a tension between accepting Western influence and having a more closed regime.. Although most Iranians would claim that wrestling is the national sport, excitement over Iran's mere qualification for the 1998 FIFA World Cup overshadowed the victory of the 1998

wrestling world championships by Iran, in Iran.[53] The rising prevalence of soccer in Iran can be

attributed to the social and political changes desired and experienced in the country.[54] As British

influence in the late 19th and early 20th century imported Western style athletics to Iran, there was

a desire to shift from an individualistic culture to one that promoted cooperation by the

modernists.[55] Soccer, as a team sport which requires extensive cooperation was one means to do

so.[56] Soccer also served as an example of modernity by exemplifying the values of the

industrialized world such as division of labor and collective planning.[57]

Sports and soccer in particular, were particularly popular at the beginning of the 20th

century because Iran became obsessed with creating a strong healthy population. The

industrialization of the country brought forth a necessity for a large, productive population.[58] Iran

at the time was under the rule of Reza Shah who wanted to create a strong Iranian army, and the

stronger and bigger the population, the better the military. Iran, especially the middle class,

viewed sport as means to make a healthy population with a reduced death rate that would

additionally be more morally sound and harder working.[59] Team sports, like soccer, were

preferred to individual sports because they provided not only the health benefits of physical

activity bout would help create social cohesion and ease the unification Iranians under a single

identity.[60] Iran took the idea of using sport in this way from the West, showing that even before

the West began to directly import sport into Iran it already played a significant role in the spread

of sport in Iran. The role of the West in bringing sports to Iran would set up a correlation

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[53] Chehabi, 371-372.
[54] Chehabi, 373
[55] Chehabi, 401.
[56] Chehabi, 372, 401.
[57] Chehabi, 373.
[58] Cyrus Schayegh, "Sport, Health, and the Iranian Middle Class in the 1920s and 1930s," *Iranian Studies* 35(2002): 341-369,351.
[59] Schayegh, 349.
[60] Schayegh, 362.

between the West and sports that would cause Iranian sports to suffer whenever the ruling regime supported an anti Western Iranian identity.

To understand the dynamics of soccer in Iran, it is crucial to understand how it got there. In general it was the British expatriates in Iran, and Iranians who had returned from abroad that imported soccer into Iran.[61] The first recorded soccer game in Iran took place in 1898 and fielded a team of British ex-pats against a team of Armenians.[62] More specifically soccer was popularized through missionary schools, military organizations, and oil companies.[63] Each of these means of spreading soccer had different motivations and addressed a different segment of society allowing for a widespread promotion of the beautiful game in Iran.

Foreign missionary schools, British, French, and American, included soccer as part of their curriculums in order to cultivate ideas of cooperation in an Iran that had long focused on more individualistic traditions (hence the popularity of wrestling).[64] Purportedly, Iranian politicians believed that the country suffered from this inability to cooperate as adults. They believed that cementing the ideas of collaboration at a young age would help improve this deficiency.[65] However, it was only Iranian elites that attended these missionary schools and thus they were the ones who learned the skills of cooperation.[66]

In the early 1900s the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, who employed many working class Iranians, organized a myriad of sporting events, including soccer matches.[67] Although initially it was only the ex-pats who participated in the games, the local workers were eventually

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[61] Chehabi, 375.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Chehabi, 376.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Chehabi, 376.

integrated.[68]   The Iranian participation was met with hostility by more traditional members of

society who believed that because the soccer shorts did not cover the knee they did not meet

Islamic dress code.[69]   This presents an initial encounter between sports and the tension between

modernity and tradition, where the modernists were promoting sport to induce cooperation found

opposition in the more traditional clergy who saw elements of sport as infringements on Iranian

tradition.

Soccer was spread to non elite groups also by the British officers of the South Persia

Rifles who passed the game on to their troops who then shared it with their peers and the rest of

the population.[70]   Moreover, British citizens in Tehran used connections with important

organizations, like the British consulate and the Imperial Bank to arrange soccer games.[71]   These

games were attended by locals who eventually began to play in the games themselves,

undergoing a process very similar to that of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.[72] Thus, through

these means, soccer was spread to most segments of society and became very popular in Iran.

What is important to note is the one similarity between all the methods of soccer diffusion in

Iran; the role of the British. In all cases the initial introduction of the sport and its continued

practice was brought forth by British nationals. Although citizens seemed to have appreciated the

beautiful game at the time, a rejection of the game in the future because of reasons related to

colonialism and Western interference cannot be ruled out.

There have been several instances in the past where Iran has used soccer to portray its

feelings towards the West. Under the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranian soccer clubs were not

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Chehabi, 377.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Chehabi, 378.

allowed to have Latin letters on their uniform.[73] Additionally, in the 1980's the Iranian

government tried to persuade people away from soccer by contrasting the "Iranian values of

chivalry with the commercialization, exploitation, and hooliganism that characterized sports in

the corrupt West".[74] With the growing popularity of football in Iran came the increased presence

of Western influence on the Iranian people.[75] This influence made the regime uncomfortable and

pushed them to ask its people to "resist the West's 'cultural aggression'".[76] These rejections of

the West all occurred under the Islamic Republic of Iran whose emergence not only signaled a

shift from a fairly secular state to a religious one, but also represented a huge shift in relations

with the West. Before the revolution in 1979 that created the Islamic Republic the country was

governed by Mohammad Reza Shah, who had a strong relationship with the United States.[77]

After the Revolution, however, there was a major emphasis on Iranian independence from

foreign powers, and one of the revolutionary clergy's critiques of the shah was that he was too

submissive to the West.[78] So these rejections of the West in sport were surrounded by a general

context of rejection of the West by Iran has a whole.

At the FIFA World Cup, which has been rife with contests between countries

experiencing conflict, like East versus West Germany and Argentina versus England, in 1998

there was a direct confrontation between Iran and the West. During the group phase of the 1998

World Cup in France, Lyon hosted a crucial game between Iran and the United States.[79] This

case was interesting because the players and staff attempted to keep the event apolitical while the

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[73] Chehabi, 390.
[74] Chehabi, 393.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Chehabi, 396.
[77] Daniel, 157.
[78] Moshirzadeh, 536.
[79] Fernando Delgado. "The Fusing of Sports and Politics: Media Constructions of U.S. Versus Iran at France '98." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 27 (2003): 293-307. Accessed February 9, 2012. http://jss.sagepub.com/content/ 27/3/293, 293.

media and other people surrounding the event made the game into a huge political event. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and President Bill Clinton, inspired by Nixon's ping-pong diplomacy, looked at the game as a chance to improve relations with Iran through their president at the time, Mohammad Khatami, whose lack of radicalism inspired promise for good relations.[80] Additionally, amongst supporters, on both sides, there was a divide between those who were interested in soccer as a sport and were cheering for their team to do well in the competition and those who looked at the game as an opportunity to defeat an enemy.[81] Iranian exiles took advantage of the game to proclaim their support of the national team while at the same time expressing anger towards the current regime and backing up oppositionist groups.[82] Iran won the game and Ayatollah Khamenei did not take Clinton's congratulations particularly gracefully by citing the game to Iranians as an instance where the "strong and arrogant opponent felt the bitter taste of defeat at your [Iranian] hands. Be happy that you made the Iranian nation happy".[83] Despite these divisions, after the Iranian 2-1 victory, all Iranians present assembled together to celebrate this important victory.[84] This is a great example of Cha's explanation of sport as a means to solidify identity and bring about feelings of nationalism.

The ideas of these people indirectly involved in the game differ from those of the actual players and team staffs. The Iranian coach, Jalel Talebi said that the team just "came to play and show there is no problem between the people of the two countries".[85] Kohdadad Azizi, a key forward on the Iranian team, hoped that it would "be like any other game- well played and not

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[80]Delgado, 295-296.
[81] Delgado, 301.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Delgado, 302.
[84] Delgado, 301-302.
[85] Delgado, 298.

looked at from a political view."[86] FIFA itself, maybe inadvertently, did its part to render the game politically neutral, mainly by scheduling it on June 21 which had been established as FIFA Fair Play Day and by assigning the game to a Swiss referee.[87] It can be argued that because these people were being viewed as advocates of their country on the sports field, but did not hold any actual political power, it was to their advantage to stick to what they knew, soccer, and not dip their foot into the pool of politics. Politicians, on the other hand, have no real alternative to focusing on politics as that is their job.

The presence of Western influence in Iranian sports history is not limited to soccer. Iran began to give importance to physical education in 1906 because it believed that it would help foster a healthier population which would be better able to bring Iran back to the glory days of Persia.[88] Physical education was initially brought into public schools in 1916 by Mahdi Varzandah who came to be known as the "father of modern sports in Iran".[89] Varzandah had spent much time in Belgium and Turkey, where he had presumably been exposed to more Western values and ideas (in Belgium at least), and those same ideas permeated his programs, which were viewed with skepticism by many members of society at first.[90] Moreover, in 1934, Thomas R. Gibson, a Columbia University PhD was chosen to lead Iran's Education Ministry's department of physical education.[91] Gibson promoted an agenda focused almost exclusively on team sports, and with a specific emphasis on soccer.[92] Gibson established a league of sorts within which teams from different schools would compete against each other.[93] He also sought to

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[86] Delgado, 299.
[87] Delgado, 300.
[88] Chehabi, 374.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Chehabi, 376, 381.
[92] Chehabi, 381.
[93] Ibid.

spread the sport to the more rural countryside by sending coaches to the provinces and build pitches.[94] Considering that soccer was not popular in America at the time, there must have been elements inherent to the sport that Gibson thought would suit Iran best. The United States would greatly prefer to interact with an Iran who had cooperation as an element of their identity, and so trying to establish a practice of cooperation would have been on his agenda. The United States preference combined with the fact that the British had already planted the seeds for soccer popularity in Iran, could help explain why Gibson chose to focus so much of the sporting agenda on soccer.

It is also significant to look at who was in power when soccer and other "Western" sports gained popularity in Iran. Reza Shah ruled Iran from 1925 to 1941 with the objective of transforming Iran into a modern country.[95] Reza Shah's reign also saw Western influence in Iran under the form of sport. Soccer was seen as a symbol of modernization and so was able to find a lot of space in Reza Shah's Iran.[96] Starting with the very beginning of Reza Shah's rule, in 1926, Iranian soccer facilities were created and Iran experienced its first victory over a team of British ex-pats.[97] In 1934 an Office of Physical Education was established by the Ministry of Education whose purpose was to promote the creation of soccer teams in schools and foster competition between them by organizing matches and tournaments.[98] An additional organization, the National Association for Physical Education was created to cultivate sports, particularly soccer, to the general public not necessarily enrolled in school.[99] In 1939, the first national Iranian

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[94] Chehabi, 381-382.
[95] Daniel, 135.
[96] Chehabi, 379.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Chehabi, 381.
[99] Ibid.

soccer championship was played.[100] Reza Shah also used soccer as a political tool. In 1926 Iran sent a delegation of players to Baku, in the former Soviet Union, to show that relations between the two countries were improving.[101] Iran then invited the soviets to Tehran to play and the humiliating defeats suffered by Iran in both locations initially led to a down turn in the popularity of soccer, but eventually to the evolution of organizations such as the National Association for Physical Education.[102]

Soccer continued to experience immense growth in Iran after the rule of Reza Shah when his son, who was not only an avid spectator, but had also played soccer in his youth, took over.[103] Mohammad Reza Shah replaced his father in 1941, but it was not until the 1960s that he exercised complete power.[104] Like his father, Mohammad Reza Shah sought to create a more modern, progressive, and liberal Iran, in part to get in the good graces of the Kennedy's in the USA.[105] During his reign there was heavy Western influence both in the form of British and Russian presence and high levels of American financing.[106] Under another modernist, and westward facing regime soccer in Iran continued to blossom. It was in the late 1960's that soccer became a major spectator sport.[107] In part this was due to a series of international victories by Iran that qualified it for the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo.[108] Urbanization in Iran, which meant that more people could easily access games, which were usually played in cities, and the spread of television also helped propel the role of soccer as a spectator sport.[109] In 1968 Tehran hosted the

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[100] Chehabi, 382.
[101] Chehabi, 380.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Chehabi, 383.
[104] Daniel, xv.
[105] Daniel, 157.
[106] Daniel, 143-144, 157.
[107] Chehabi, 384.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

finals of the Asian Nations Cup which saw Iran face off against Israel.[110] In the midst of the

Arab-Israeli conflict, the game was easily used for political and religious reasons. A wealthy Jew

apparently bought thousands of tickets and distributed them to Jews to ensure that there would be

Israeli fans at the game.[111] The day of the game however the gates of the stadium were opened

and spectators allowed to enter for free, allegedly a move by the state to make sure that there

would be Muslims cheering for Iran.[112] Iran ended up winning the game, but amidst controversy

of whether they had paid off the referee to let them win or if Israel had intentionally lost to let

Iran have the glory of defeating them, which the Arabs had not done.[113] Riding the wave of this

victory soccer took a true stronghold in Iran. It was under Mohammad Reza Shah's rule that a

national soccer league was created in 1974.[114]

Mohammad Reza Shah was ousted in 1979 and Iran became the Islamic Republic of

Iran.[115] With this shift, soccer, like many symbols of the west and modernity suffered greatly. At

this point there was a stark change in regime from fifty years of chasing modernization to a

"government of God" which sought to put in place more traditional and Islamic ideas and

policies.[116] In the build up to the revolution adversaries to the regime accused the shah of using

soccer as a way to divert people's attention from politics and the rise of the Islamists.[117] In 1978

soccer star Parviz Qilichkhani who was playing abroad in the USA refused to join Iran for the

World Cup in protest of the regime's repressive policies.[118] The Islamic Republic made a series

of conservative changes to the Iranian sporting world. Soccer teams were nationalized, Latin

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[110] Chehabi, 385.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Chehabi, 386.
[115] Daniel, xv.
[116] Daniel, 189.
[117] Chehabi, 388.
[118] Chehabi, 389.

letters on uniforms were forbidden, and due to the requirement of scant clothing, women's sports were abolished until the 1990s.[119] In 1981 women were additionally banned from stadiums to watch soccer because of how revealing the men's shorts were and because it was thought inappropriate for them to witness the extreme behavior of the men at games.[120] The Islamic Republic viewed soccer as a cultural invasion by the West and so it attempted to create an environment not conducive to its popularity.

This interplay between Western influence and sport can help partially explain Iran's actions in terms of the Olympic qualifier. Moshirzadeh aligns a discourse of resistance to foreign powers with the discourse of independence. She argues that not only do Iranians want independence, but that certain Iranians go so far as to argue that any inkling of giving in to a foreign power is unacceptable, there must be strong resistance against outside powers.[121] Ignoring FIFA's dress code could be an exemplification of this resistance to an outside power. Japan did something similar when it banned baseball in the inter-war years to demonstrate their disdain with the United States and the West's treatment of Japan in the conclusion of World War I.[122] FIFA, although technically a global organization, tends to be representative of the West. With the exception of Brazilian João Havelange, every president of FIFA has been from Western Europe.[123] It is therefore possible that the combination of a relatively Western entity placing limitations on the Muslim headscarf tradition, and a sport brought to Iran by Westerners who held strong influence in the country, served as a catalyst for Iran putting its foot down.

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[119] Chehabi, 390.
[120] Chehabi, 392.
[121] Moshirzadeh, 535-536.
[122] Cha, 1588.
[123] FIFA, "The History of FIFA-FIFA Presidents," Last modified 2011, http://www.fifa.com/classicfootball/history/fifa/pastpresidents.html.

Potentially, Iran very well knew about the headscarf regulations and intentionally chose to ignore them to make a point that they are not subservient to the West.

The link between soccer and the West and modernity is also demonstrated by its rising and falling popularity in Iran depending on the regime. Under Reza Shah and his son Mohammad Reza Shah, who were open to Western and influence and tried to modernize Iran, soccer blossomed and became an element of Iranian culture and identity. Under the Islamic Republic, however, who wanted to turn away from Western influence and establish a more traditional Islamic state, progress in soccer was hindered. Interestingly, Iran is still the Islamic Republic of Iran, and although its views towards soccer are not as negative as they once were, there is still a constant struggle with the West and modernity. This could serve as further evidence for the idea expressed earlier that the disqualification was one Iran knew it was walking into and did so to put up a fight against the Western world and the modern world. By symbolically rejecting the West at the match, Iran solidified its identity as an autonomous country rejecting Western influence and control.

Iran and Politics

The geographical area that is currently referred to as Iran has been peopled for centuries and far before the idea of the Iranian state existed. Historian Elton L. Daniel argues that contemporary Iran's "direct historical roots go back, at most, to the 16th century".[124] The beginning of the 16th century coincides perfectly with the founding of the Safavid kingdom by Shah Esmail in 1501.[125] For the purposes of this paper, thus, Iranian politics will not be analyzed any earlier than this date. Moreover, although a general historical understanding of Iranian

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[124] Daniel, 3.
[125] Daniel, xiv.

politics is important in order to be able to draw major historical themes; this analysis will be weighted more towards more contemporary times. This limitation is in order to be able to discuss in detail recent trends in Iranian politics that may have relevance on the incident with FIFA. The politics of the country will be discussed in terms of how they display the tensions that help shape Iranian identity. Additionally, to best understand the politics of any country it is key to first have a general comprehension of the country's basic economic, social and political structure. This section will attempt to very briefly provide such an overview.

Economy

There are two important issues highlighted by the developments in the Iranian economy. The Iranian economy was initially based on the nomadic raising of animals due to Iran's meager pastures adequate for grazing which forced the constant movement of herds to new lands.[126] The *qanat* (small ground canals*)* system improved land irrigation and allowed for agricultural development.[127] As Iran industrialized and learned to take advantage of its petroleum resources throughout the centuries there has been less and less emphasis on agriculture.[128] There has been a push by the current conservative government to increase the importance of agriculture once again, in part because Iran is only able to grow seventy-five percent of the food necessary for its population[129] but also because traditionalists have been pushing for a return to old village life.[130] This highlights the first important thing to note, that there is a tension between tradition and modernity even in Iran's economics. Should it continue to pursue economic endeavors of an industrial nature and continue to exploit its oil business, or should it slow down and go back to

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[126] Daniel, 9.
[127] Daniel, 10.
[128] Daniel, 11-12.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Jamshid Behnam, "Iranian Society, Modernity, and Globalization," In *Iran Between Tradition and Modernity*, edited by Ramin Jahanbegloo, 3-14. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004, 6.

agriculture as a main pillar of the economy? This could become highly problematic if a theoretical debate over modernity and tradition hijacks what should be a discussion about what is best for the country economically. The side with the most clout that wins the debate may not have the proper economic reasoning and might result in worsening the Iranian economy.

Another important element of Iranian identity that is highlighted in its economy is its isolationism and autonomy. Iran could have taken advantage of its geographic location linking Eastern Asia with the Middle East, by becoming home to trade routes.[131] However, instead of integrating trade routes in the global system of commerce Iran isolated itself from the network of trade routes and traders found it much more convenient to go around the country, depriving Iran of a potentially highly fruitful economic resource.[132] Again, if this debate is framed in terms of Iranian autonomy versus opening up to foreign influence instead of a debate on economic benefits the result might not solve the economic problem. Looking at these basic elements of the Iranian economy helps understand some key tensions of Iranian identity.

Social

As mentioned above, in the past half century or so Iran has experienced large internal migration from rural areas to urban ones. Additionally, since the 1930's, Iran has also experienced a huge decline in the importance and role of its tribes.[133] As the main social and political units of Iranian society, tribes used to be the principal producers of soldiers and rulers.[134] They were broken down and weakened in the 1930's by the emergence of mechanized armies and the proportion of the population that was a tribe member decreased from twenty five

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[131] Daniel, 12.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Daniel, 9.
[134] Ibid.

percent at the turn of the century to only five percent now.[135] Identity in Iran in modern times is

established by language, religion and nationality instead of tribal membership.[136] The three main

groups amongst which Iranian identity is linguistically divided are Iranians, Semitic and Turkic,

with Iranians speaking an Indo-European dialect, particularly Persian and Kurdish.[137] One of the

most significant divisions in Iran regard identity are those related to religion. With ninety-nine

percent of the population being Muslim, Iran is clearly a predominantly Muslim country.[138]

Moreover, eighty-nine percent of the population is Sh'ite and only ten percent is Sunni.[139] This is

in stark contrast with its Olympic qualifier opponent, Jordan, who is majority Sunni.[140] Iran's

population has also exploded in size in the past two hundred years. At the dawn of the 19th

century only six million people lived in Iran but in the past twenty years the population has been

measured as ten times that many at about sixty million.[141] As was discussed earlier, this

population boom has caused problems because the country is no longer able to feed itself on its

own. While the issue of providing for one's population is one that many countries go through,

the current insistence on autonomy and independence makes the issue even harder to handle.

Furthermore, Iran's economy depends heavily on the oil resources of the country, which will

eventually run out, leaving Iran to figure out the problem of how to feed its people, as it makes

less money.[142]

Politics

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[135] Daniel, 9-10.
[136] Daniel, 13.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Daniel, 14.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook. Accessed April 28 2012. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html.
[141] Daniel, 14.
[142] Ibid.

For the two thousand years preceding the Iranian Revolution of 1979 Iran functioned as a monarchy and dynasty.[143] The Revolution dethroned Mohammad-Reza Shah, established the Islamic Republic, and created a new constitution.[144] This new constitution delineated all aspects of Iranian life, from politics to culture, and one of its principal objectives was to make the state Islamic in accordance with the religious ideas of the revolutionary leaders.[145] While seemingly maintaining a parliamentary structure of government, keeping the Majles (elected parliament), popular election of a president, and a prime minister appointed by the elected president, much control remained in the hands of the religious leaders.[146] The twelve members of the Council of Guardians, six of whom are religious scholars and the other six of whom are lawyers, are assigned with the task of interpreting the constitution and have the right to approve who may run for office.[147]   Their interpretation of the constitution must be in keeping with Islam and defer to the absolute sovereignty of God.[148] There have been ever increasing tensions between the Ayatollah and the president, and the informal opposition political groups that have emerged in the Majles.[149] The Revolution also serves to highlight one of the biggest tensions in Iranian identity that Iranians have been grappling with: the tension between religion and secularism, and whether the government should be of a religious nature or a secular one.

Political History of Iran

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[143] Daniel, 15.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Daniel , 16.

The Safavid kingdom was established in 1501 by Esmail when he took the title of Shah in Tabriz.[150] Shi'ite beliefs were a fundamental part of Safavid identity, and Esmail declared Shi'ism the official religion of the Safavids and replaced former Sunni religious leaders with Shi'ite ones.[151] This would lead to the large role of clerics in Iranian society.[152] Cleric presence in government amplifies the tension present between the idea of a religious versus secular government. Tensions were particularly strong between the Safavids and the Ottomans who fought the Battle of Chaldiran in Anatolia in 1514.[153] Chaldiran demonstrates another of the recurring themes in Iranian history- the struggle against modernization. In this particular instance this struggle was exemplified physically by the difference in arms between the two groups. The Safavids, with their traditional cavalry, were no match for the modern warfare tactics of the Ottomans, particularly their guns.[154] This battle marked the end of Esmail's expansionary and military ambitions and he devoted the rest of his life to drinking.[155]

In 1576, Tahmasp, Esmail's son and successor, died and was replaced by Shah Abbas.[156] Shah Abbas emphasized foreign policy more than his predecessors and recognized the advantage of the Persian Gulf as a trade route and with the help of the English and the Dutch rid the island of Hormuz of the Portuguese in 1622.[157] This brought a plethora of European travel to Iran which Shah Abbas greatly approved of.[158] In promoting and appreciating the presence of Europeans in Iran, Shah Abbas clearly took the pro-West side of the continuous Iranian debate on whether Iran should be completely autonomous or allow Western influence. Moreover, the

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[150] Daniel, 85.
[151] Daniel, 87-88.
[152] Daniel, 88-89.
[153] Daniel, 86.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Daniel, 90.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

continued presence of Europeans in Iran would eventually help spread the ideas of modernization in Iran, reinforcing another principal tension in Iranian identity, modernity versus tradition. These tensions that began at Iran's inception would continue to develop through the years, and after the Revolution of 1979 would especially come to dominate the Iranian discourse on identity.

Under Shah Abbas' rule clerical influence reached its peak.[159] Until the early nineteen hundreds, the Shi'ite clergy guided the decision making of Iran.[160] The clergy lost some power under the Pahlavi dynasty when Reza Shah focused on secularizing the nation.[161] For example, in 1928 the Iranian parliament outlawed Iranian religious clothing in favor of more European style clothes,[162] a definite sign that the clergy was losing strength. More significantly, the bans showed that Reza Shah believed that Western influence should be allowed in Iran and consequently help shape Iranian identity. In 1979, as a result of the Iranian Revolution, the clerical establishment was once again greatly transformed.[163] Under the rule of Ayatollah Khomeini the standards for becoming a cleric was raised and clerics were implored to give their full commitment to the "principle of guardianship of the jurist…Iran's system of clerical rule in which absolute authority is vested in the supreme leader".[164] The increase in regulations for determining clerical eligibility meant that politicians and society could control such regulations to only allow clerics that would further their objectives. Although the role of clerics has evolved and changed, they

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[159] Daniel, 92.
[160] Mehdi Khalaji, "Iran's regime of religion," *Journal of International Affairs,* 65(2011), 131-XIII, Accessed March 15, 2012, http://search.proquest.com/docview/910223839?account id=8285.131.
[161] Khalaji, 133.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Khalaji, 134.

are still significant in Iranian politics, particularly through the Guardian Council where they ensure that all laws, bills, and political candidates are in line with Sharia.[165]

In 1737 Nader Khan was offered the position of shah which he agreed to as long as Shi'ism was removed as the official religion of Iran and Shi'ite practices offensive to Sunnis were banned.[166] By allowing the equal practice of both sects of Islam, Nader demonstrated that he believed the Iranian identity should not be determined by either specific sect and that the government should not promote one type over another. Additionally, this showed that Nader was open to the West and willing to try and make peace with the Ottomans.[167] In this fashion Nader made clear his position on the religion/secularism tension of Iranian identity.

The Qajar tribe took control of Iran in 1796, and their rule is central to understanding modern Italian politics because it was at this time that Iran had its first contact with Western culture and an attempt was made at building a political Iranian identity.[168] Fath-Ali Khan, was crowned in 1798, and most of his rule focused on foreign policy, especially relations with Europe.[169] In 1803 the First Russo-Persian war broke out and would last for nearly a decade.[170] Additionally, Fath-Ali Shah became involved in the diplomatic games that were being played out in Europe during the Napoleonic era.[171] In the following decades Iran would be caught in the middle of a Franco-Russo-British battle for influence in the region. What followed was a series of treaties and interactions by the Europeans to further their interests in Iran, but at Iran's expense. In 1814 the British signed another treaty with Iran, the Definitive Treaty of 1814, in

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Daniel, 94.
[167] Daniel, 95.
[168] Daniel, 97, 100.
[169] Daniel, 101-102.
[170] Daniel. 102.
[171] Ibid.

which Britain promised to send military officers to help train Iranian troops and assist Iran if it was attacked by a European power.[172] In return, Iran would prohibit British enemies from crossing its territories to get to India.[173] It was the British officers that were brought over under the terms of this treaty that would eventually spread soccer and other European team sports throughout Iran.

The rule of Fath-Ali Shah highlights the recurring theme in Iranian politics and identity of struggles with the West. Firstly, it demonstrates how Western powers used Iran as a pawn in their diplomatic games in Europe. European alliances forged with Iran during this period were extremely fickle and could change in a heartbeat if there was even the slightest diplomatic realignment in Europe. Once there was no advantage to be gained by alliance with Iran in Europe, support was much less forthcoming. The best example of this is how in ending the First Russo-Prussian war, the British, who helped mediate the treaty, and were allied with Iran, allowed the Russians to walk away with nearly everything.[174] Additionally, in the same treaty, there was a clause making the Russians pledge to support the Iranian successor. In order to protect their interests, the British directly involved the Russians in internal Iranian politics. This was the first in a series of attempts by the West to control who the leader of Iran would be. Khan had been receptive to the European influence and this made it much easier for the Europeans to use Iran in their own politics. Continuous manipulation by Western powers, such as that which occurred during this period, would continue to occur throughout Iran's history, fostering a sense of animosity towards the West by some Iranians. This animosity developed into a real struggle in the search for Iranian identity as to whether Iran should be open to Western influence or pursue a

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Daniel, 103.

policy of complete autonomy. In light of the Olympic qualifier disqualification, a refusal to be manipulated by the West yet again would serve as potential reason for why Iran would not give in to FIFA's clothing regulations.

Despite these tenuous relationships with the West, in the next few years Iran imported a lot of modern and Western ideas from Europe. In the first half o the 19th century Iran sent small groups of students to study in England and France.[175] One of these students, Mirza Mohammad-Shah, organized a printing press and created Iran's first newspaper.[176] He also wrote books to help understand the way the government functioned in Great Britain.[177] Similarly, Amir Kabir, who served as prime minister under the young successor of Mohammed Shah, Naser-al-Din Shah, traveled to Russia and gained insightful knowledge into the workings of the Russian government.[178] Well versed in Russian government, and through other diplomatic experiences, the reforms of the Ottoman Empire, Amir Kabir created a set of reforms to change the Iranian governmental structure which were intentionally designed to allow Iran to implement them without depending on the British or the Russians.[179] This idea of independence was most likely a result of the deceitful actions by the British and Russians in the previous decades, but can also be seen as another early sign of Iranian isolationism. Amir Kabir sought to implement many reforms in the Iranian military and economy. These included, modernizing and enlarging the army, discontinuing bribes for government services, increasing the role of the government in

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[175] Daniel, 109.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Daniel, 109.
[179] Daniel, 110.

economic life to foster both the agricultural and commercial sector (provide new crops, encourage new techniques, urban renewal projects, etc.), and regulating the taxation system.[180]

The Iranian clergy also criticized Amir Kabir for increasing government control of religious courts.[181]The most significant contribution made by Amir Kabir was the opening of the Dar-al-Fanoun, a government funded college where students could study the military as well as a slew of other more classical subjects.[182] With the establishment of this university a desire to expand European culture into Iran can be observed. The instructors at the university would be foreign, although only from countries with no strategic interests in Iran, and be able to teach subjects like European languages and history.[183] This is a different angle on Iran's constant struggle with modernization than have been previously discussed. It shows a moment where modernization was welcomed, as long as it was on Iran's own terms. Sadly, Amir Kabir was murdered in 1952, with Russian support, and his successor fought to repress all the reforms Kabir had implemented.[184]

In the early 1870's another reformer, Mirza Hosayn Khan Moshir-al-Dowleh, was appointed as prime minister.[185] In 1872 Moshir-al-Dowleh signed the Reuter Concession of 1872 which allowed Baron Julius de Reteur, a naturalized Brit, a monopoly over Iran's mines and natural resources.[186] This started a domino effect of allowing concessions to Europeans, which brought economic rivalries between European powers to Iran, deeply entwined foreign powers in national elements of Iranian life, like transportation and banking, and did not actually bring great

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[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Daniel, 111.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Daniel, 111-112.
[185] Daniel, 112.
[186] Daniel, 114.

revenues to the country.[187] Giving a greater stake to Western powers would ease and encourage their further manipulation of Iran, further intensifying the tension between being open to Western influence and the discourse of independence.

At the turn of the 20th century Iran experienced what would eventually become a constitutional revolution, although initially motivated by the economic problems faced by the country.[188] What started as a movement against the policies of minister Ayn-al-Dowleh evolved into a request for a parliamentary body.[189] The aftermaths of this revolution exposed a split between the secular nationalists and the conservative Islamists.[190] As they fought with each other over how the country should be run, guided by Islam or guided by secular politics, they essentially were arguing over how to mold Iranian identity.

The Iranian identity crisis over religion and secularism continued in 1921 when Reza Khan become Minister of War.[191] The most important problem facing the country was answering the question of supreme leadership, with the shah having decided to leave for Europe.[192] Reza Khan encouraged the creation of a republic modeled on Kamal Ataturk's Turkish example.[193] The idea of a republic seemed to have gained support, however, when it moved from a theoretical to a more concrete realm, great opposition to the idea arose, especially after Turkey abrogated the Muslim clergy.[194] This element of the Turkish example was of course a huge threat to the Iranian clergy, and in order to preserve his political power Reza Khan agreed and

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[187] Ibid.
[188] Daniel,120.
[189] Daniel, 121.
[190] Daniel ,123.
[191] Amirsadeghi, Hossein, ed. *Twentieth-Century Iran*. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1977, 25.
[192] Amirsadeghi, 26.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.

stating that a Republic was contrary to Islam and could thus not be implemented in Iran.[195] The

compromise that was reached was to end the Qajar dynasty while maintaining the monarchical

system and making Reza Khan Shah.[196] By doing so, Reza Khan prioritized Islam in defining

Iran's identity, claiming that Iran was first and foremost an Islamic country, and the rest of its

identity would have to follow from that piece. Additionally, this event shows the role of politics

in determining identity. Reza Khan himself was not genuinely opposed to a republic, nor did he

truly believe that republican government was incompatible with Islam. He supported the clergy

more as a political tactic to guarantee his power.

It is not only the religion/secularism tension of Iranian identity that was defined. His

decision also impacted the tension between tradition and modernity. The first wave of

modernization in Iran was a call by Iranian modernists and Iranians who had spent time abroad,

for a fight against dictatorship.[197] A republican government would, for these Iranians, have been

much more modernizing than a shah. However, Reza Khan chose to become shah and so in terms

of that specific modernization debate, he chose to continue with a more traditionalist regime. To

view Reza Shah's decision in that context is interesting especially when contrasted with his main

goal of turning Iran into a modern nation-state, which was previously discussed. He did indeed

make great strides in modernizing the military[198], but the modernization that Iranians sought was

not limited to technology.

What modernity actually consists of has been debated lengthily. Mehrzad Boroujerdi

discusses the idea of Western modernity as a "Faustian bargain" where "traditional familial,

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[195] Ibid.
[196] Daniel, 134.
[197] Jamshid Behnam, "Iranian Society, Modernity, and Globalization," In *Iran Between Tradition and Modernity*,
edited by Ramin Jahanbegloo, 3-14. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004,4.
[198] Amirsadeghi, 30.

tribal, ethnic, religious and national identities/attachments" must be compromised "for the tediously monotonous materialism of the present age".[199] Furthermore there has been discussion about whether non-Western versions of modernity can exist, and most relevant to the present discussion about the Shah's decision, whether modernity is defined simply by science and technology or by recognizing "human beings as the sole source of values".[200] This conflict in the definition of modernity was played out by the Shah as he "modernized" Iran in terms of industrialization, but simultaneously neglected political elements of modernity, including a separation of church and state.[201] He remained a proponent of a very traditional ruling style where there was little legislative power[202] and did not particularly care to expand the political liberties of his citizens.[203] For Reza Shah the freedom of the people was not important, it was the pride and strength of the home country that was the main objective.[204] Reza Khan Shah's rule can thus be viewed as reminiscent of Amir Kabir's rule. While both wanted to "modernize" Iran, they were only willing to do so on Iran's own terms and did not accept an immediate full-fledged transition into "modernity". This tension between tradition and modernity, and what they mean, continued to define Iranian identity and evolved as the political leaders of the country changed.

Reza Shah's rule provides many instances of grappling with tensions that define Iranian identity. The discourse of independence was also present during his reign. As a former military commander Reza Shah was extremely nationalist and wanted to create a strong, independent Iran.[205] Reza Shah took two very simple steps to increase Iran's independence and sovereignty.

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[199] Mehrzad Borouejrdi, "Iranian Islam and the Faustian Bargain of Western Modernity," *Journal of Peace Research* 34 (1997): 1-5, Accessed April 28, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable /424826?origin=JSTOR-pdf&. 2.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Behnam, 5.
[202] Amirsadeghi, 28.
[203] Amirsadeghi, 50.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Amirsadeghi, 28-32.

He ended the immunity that had been created for foreigners, and deprived the Imperial Bank of their former right to print currency.[206] Both of these actions demonstrated a rejection of foreign dominance in Iran. Reza Shah attacked the issue of national independence from two angles. First, he tried to improve relations with neighboring nations that were not major powers.[207] In 1932 Iran agreed on a frontier with Turkey, 1937 Iran signed the Sa'adabad Pact with Iraq and Turkey, and a Treaty of Friendship and Security with Afghanistan was also signed.[208] The second avenue for ridding Iran of British and Russian influence in foreign policy was to ally with a strong world power that was neither Russia nor Britain.[209] Germany was this ally until World War II.[210] Both Russia and Britain knew that the other country would disapprove of increasingly productive relations between Germany and Iran, and so both countries supported the strengthening of the relationship because it would be disadvantageous to the other.[211] Again, Western powers were using Iran as a weapon to fight their own fights, with complete disregard for Iran's interest. Nobody really benefitted from this twisted strategy, and Iran could add this to the list of times it was mistreated by the West whose constant interference and pressure throughout Iran's history encouraged strong anti-West sentiments.

In the ensuing decades Iranians began to voice great opposition against Mohammad-Reza Shah (Reza Shah's son and successor) and the royalists. The opposition groups and the different identities they wanted to forge for Iran serve to further demonstrate the depth of the various tensions in Iranian identity. The right side of the political spectrum, particularly the conservative religious groups, opposed the shah, the secularism he tried to implement, and the heavy influence

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[206] Amirsadeghi, 44.
[207] Amirsadeghi, 45.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Amirsadeghi, 45-46.

foreign powers held in Iran.[212] From their political views it follows that they believed Iranian

identity should be defined by religion, specifically Islam, and autonomy from the West. Several

opposition groups of politically middle of the road Iranians formed the National Front led by

Mohammad Mosaddeq.[213] The National Front included nationalist factions and demanded the

end of concessions to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.[214] Like the religious right they too

wanted Iran to engage in the discourse of independence and become a strong, autonomous

nation, and not a marionette of the West. Mosaddeq eventually became prime minister, choosing

American influence over British influence and wound up alienating the same traditional and

religious groups that helped bring him to power.[215]

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the shah had two main objectives for Iran: strengthen

the military in order to become a powerful force in the region and, complementary to that,

become the United States' Persian Gulf "proxy" (the Nixon Doctrine promoted the use of

regional powers as US proxies instead of directly involving the US military everywhere).[216] Iran

under the shah, however, left the populous unhappy. The country suffered from inflation and an

ineffective economy, which combined with a decline in agricultural productivity helped bring

about an increasing disparity between the rich and the poor.[217] Iran also had high illiteracy rates

and problems reliably providing electricity and social services.[218] Additionally, the shah had

come under global critique for his treatment of human rights.[219]

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[212] Daniel, 148.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Daniel, 149.
[215] Daniel, 156.
[216] Daniel, 159-160.
[217] Daniel, 165.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.,

The battle against the shah was spearheaded by two groups: the Fedai-ye Khalq-e Iran, a strong Marxist political group and the Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran, which eventually divided into two sects, one emphasizing socialism.[220] These two groups drew largely from the same base of supporters, mainly university students interspersed with professionals and intellectuals.[221] Their main strategy was to create a hostile, unstable environment through urban guerilla tactics (strikes, demonstrations, etc.) in order decrease people's faith in the Iranian state and encourage a revolution.[222]

Variations of Mosaddeq's National Front reemerged as well. The secular Second National Front was largely overshadowed by the radically religious Third National Front.[223] Within the Third National Front there was a group called the Liberation Movement, led by former Mosaddeq supporters, including a culturally significant Shi'ite cleric believed that not only was Islam compatible with modernity and progress, but that it was the solution to the problems of modern society.[224] Key to their policy was cooperation with the clergy and in the early 1970's they forged an alliance with Ayatollah Khomeini and garnered support mainly from Iranian students studying in Europe and the United States where they could more easily spread political ideas.[225] Rather than attacking the shah directly, which would attract the attention and power of the secret police, they attacked him by attacking the West with which the shah had strong involvement and by defending traditional Iranian culture.[226] The strongest opposition groups to the shah leading up to 1979 revolution believed in an Iranian identity that was traditionalist, religious, and fairly closed to Western influence.

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Daniel, 162.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.

In January 1978 government authorities published a scathing critique and attack of Ayatollah Khomeini, condemning an alleged relationship between religious groups and communist groups[227] This incited a stream of riots and protests which the government tried to quell by issuing some economical reforms and making some political promises.[228] Peace, however, only lasted a few months. In August of 1979 there was a fire at a movie theater in a poor neighborhood which led to the death of the nearly 400 people which had been locked inside.[229] The SAVAK (secret police) was believed to have instigated the fires and the public outrage stemming from this accusation caused the shah to actually fire some of the potentially culpable SAVAK officers.[230] This attempt to make peace with the people was rendered useless by the shah's subsequent imposition of martial law, banning of protests, and arrests of several National Front members.[231] The Iranian government then pressured Iraq, where Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled, to expel him, which Saddam Hussein was only too glad to do.[232] The idea was to send Khomeini to France so that he would be isolated from Iran, but France's freer means of communication, and its proximity to Khomeini's many European supporters, increased his ability to communicate with his constituency.[233] Protests continued in Iran and the shah was simply not able to effectively combat the will of the people, neither with harshness nor softness.[234] On January 16, 1979 the shah left for Egypt and within two weeks Kohmeini was welcomed back into the country.[235]

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[227] Daniel, 166.
[228] Daniel, 166-167.
[229] Daniel, 168.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Daniel, 169.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Daniel, 170-171.
[235] Daniel, 170, 174.

It is important to briefly note the contradictory and schizophrenic behavior of the United States in regards to this incident because it adds to the history of Iran's poor relations with the West. This history, along with the association of the West with certain undesirable values, helps fuel the fire of animosity towards the West, which in turn continues to make the tension between being open and closed to the West a primary part of defining Iranian identity. When Jimmy Carter visited Iran in 1977 he praised the shah for his rule and what he was doing for Iran.[236] Carter's positive view of the shah is understandable since the United States had gained a prominent role in Iranian affairs during his rule. However, once the people revolted against him, American sentiments towards the shah became much more varied with many joining the people and wanting him gone to the point that they helped convince him to leave Iran in 1979.[237] Like the British and the Russians had been doing for the past 100 years, the United States tried to shape Iran's political situation to whatever best suited them.

When Khomeini returned from Europe, even his supporters did not expect him to gain the political importance that he enjoyed in the ensuing decade. Since the beginning of his career Khomeini had been an extremely radical Islamist, attacking clerics who believed in a separation between politics and religion.[238] He applied the velayat-e faqih, which was an idea created to provide guardianship to orphanis, to government, and he became the leader, Faqih, which for all intents and purposes made him the head of state.[239] At the beginning of Khomeini's domination a new constitution had to be written which would designate what kind of government Iran would be. Khomeini pushed for an Islamic Republic of Iran (which won with 98% of the votes), and was so anti West that he refused public calls to add the word Democratic in front because it

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[236] Daniel, 166.
[237]Daniel, 171-172.
[238] Daniel, 178.
[239] Daniel, 180.

symbolized the West too much.[240] It was also under Khomeini that the head of the judiciary Hojjatoleslam Sadeq Khalkhali held trials and executions to punish those that Khomeini referred to as "spreading corruption on earth" or who "fought God".[241] The radicalism of the Islamization of Iran not only ended up isolating Iran, but started to appall even other Muslims.[242]

It was also with Khomeini as Faqih that Iran underwent its cultural revolution in from 1980 to 1982.[243] During this time universities were shut down, school curriculums were loaded with Islamic teachings, and civil law was replaced by Islamic law.[244] Despite a brief respite between 1982 and 1984, Iran continued to experience this "cultural revolution".[245] Khomeini would eventually die in 1989, with Khamenei as his successor, but before doing so ensured that the role of Faqih would come with extreme power to control the direction of Iran's politics and that it would indeed be the Faqih to be the actual head of state.[246]

Politicians wishing to reform Khomeini's system, like former president Khatami, have emerged.[247] Khatami sought to improve relationships with Europe, and while he made some steps forward, he was greatly challenged by his opponents at home.[248] It's hard to tell if any radical reforms can be made in Iran while the conservative opposition remains so strong and belligerent.[249] Moreover, it is highly doubtful that the desired reform will take place with the current president Ahmadinejad and his nationalistic, anti-West ideologies.

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[240] Daniel, 188.
[241] Daniel, 187.
[242] Daniel, 201.
[243] Daniel, 213.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Daniel, 223.
[247] Daniel, 239.
[248] Daniel, 255.
[249] Daniel, 261.

The Revolution of 1979 marked a significant turn in Iranian political history. Until the Revolution Iran had experienced governments that were relatively secular, promoted modernity and worked on having prolonged relationships with the West. When Khomeini came to power he introduced an Iranian government that was a diametric opposite to his predecessors and introduced a conservative, and most significantly religious government that Iran was not accustomed to. This shift in regime style is yet another example of the tensions that exist in Iranian politics. The post revolutionist governments had a very clear agenda of how they wanted to define Iranian identity, hinged on the ideas of Islam and a rejection of the West. One of their objectives was to reject modernity and avoid cultural domination by the West.[250] Simultaneously, since the Revolution, the Iranian public has been engaging with democracy and the political rights that go along with it.[251] The diverging views of the government and the public demonstrate the debate between modernity and tradition. The participants of this debate can be classified into four groups according to Behnam. The first is the conservatives who view modernity as it is expressed in the West as counter to Islam and believe that the Quran should be Iran's principal guide.[252] The religious modernists occupy a more central position, and try to find a compromise between Islam and modernity, and are against the use of religion as a political ideology.[253] The Muslim intellectuals refuse a complete rejection of the West and are proponents of ideas such as women's rights and civil society.[254] Lastly, the modernists and secular promote the spread of ideas from abroad and interconnectedness with the modern world as well as an understanding of

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[250] Behnam, 10.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Behnam, 11.

modernity from the works of original Western scholars.[255] That so many different positions have been taken on this debate is evidence of how significant of an issue it is to Iran.

Understanding the various positions taken by Iranians on the subject also helps understand the way they are defining modernity. They are not talking about modern science and technology, but rather modern values for the individual. They allude to ideas such as women's rights, separation of church and state, and democracy. This is the same kind of modernity that has been neglected by Iranian leaders in the past, like Reza Shah, in favor of a more technology inspired modernity. This preference likely occurs from a tradition of despotic governance coupled with the intrinsic tie between technological modernization and economic improvements. Some intellectuals did go so far in their rejection of modernity as to advocate a return to traditional village life.[256]

Furthermore, modernity became linked with Westernization and the debate between modernity and tradition became fundamentally tied to the tension between accepting Western influence and complete autonomy. Due to Iran's history as a pawn in the West's chess game anti Western sentiments evolved. With the link between the West and modernization, this would imply that anti Western sentiments must be paired with anti modernity sentiments. This is where the search for a non Western version of modernity comes into play. Finding an alternative modernity would allow the reconciliation of wanting independence from Western influence but desiring modernity at the same time. There is also a trend in Iran of rejecting Western modernity because Iranians want their own authentic modernity, not one copied from the West.[257] This

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[255] Ibid.
[256] Behnam, 6.
[257] Boroujerdi, 4.

resulted in attempt to return to nativism and Islamicism.[258] This tie to Islamicism then further connects the tension of religion versus secularism. Not only is modernity now linked to the West, but tradition, linked with a closed attitude towards the West, is further linked with religion, particularly Islam.

. But from the beginning of the sixteenth century until today the politics of Iran have been plagued by the same issues. Should Iran have an Islamic government or should it be secular? This tension was introduced when Esmail made Shi'ite Islam the religion of Iran and increased the role of clerics in politics, and was exacerbated by Khomeini in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. Should Iran try to hold on to traditional values or should it modernize? This tension was first noticed when Iran lost at the Battle of Chaldiran because of outdated weaponry. Under the rules of Amir Kabir and Reza Shah Iran experienced some technological forms of modernization, but not the ideological modernization that the people wanted. The Revolution then swung Iran back on to the side of tradition. Should Iran engage in friendly relations with the West or should it be more isolationist? In the past most of the time Iran has tries to play nice with the Western powers, they have gotten the short end of the stick, which has created a reluctance towards Western influence by some in contemporary Iran. These three dilemmas that have burdened Iranian politics may very well have played a role in the disqualification of the Iranian national team. As was observed earlier, sport in Iran flourished under the rule of relatively secular and modern leaders, so it is not surprising that such a debacle that it be under fundamentalist Ahmadinejad that such a setback to women's sports has occurred. The situation was made only more problematic by the fact that demands on the expression of the Muslim faith were made by FIFA, especially at a time when Iran's relationships with the West are so tense.

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[258] Ibid.

The next section will discuss the development of women's rights in Iran so that a further layer can be added to understanding this complex situation in more detail.

Iran and Women

Almost every country in the world started off with a culture that gave men a more prominent role than women. Even in progressive countries like the United States women have had the right to vote for less than a century, and discrimination in employment and wages still exists. Iran is no different. In ancient Iran women were largely excluded to their homes or harems. It should be noted, however, that some women were allowed to work outside the home in the Achaemenid society of ancient Iran.[259] Like most countries in the world, Iran has been progressing over time and women have gradually been gaining rights. For example in the first half of the twentieth century, under the rule of Reza Shah, the queen played a role in social life, and the women's veil was abolished.[260] However, unlike many countries, Iran experienced Khomeini's Islamic revolution which brought about major setbacks for women's rights.

As part of his Islamization of Iran, one of Khomeini's goals was to reinforce the traditional Iranian patriarchal system and limit the role of women in public life.[261] Under Khomeini, the bodies of women, and men to a certain extent, were politicized by codes of behavior, particularly the mandatory hijab.[262] Over time, women began to push the boundaries of the government through the way in which they wore their hijab. Women began to use different

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[259] Daniel, 45.
[260] Amirsadeghi, 50.
[261] Daniel, 214.
[262] Kaveh Ehsani, "The Urban Provincial Periphery in Iran: Revolution and War in Ramhormoz," In *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, edited by Ali Gheissari, 38-76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 48.

colors, sizes, shapes, and fabrics of varying thickness in their hijabs, as a protest to the government imposed dress code.[263] They also began changing up their stockings and shoes and wearing more lipstick to push the boundaries.[264] The government savvied up to these tactics and began paying closer attention to such details.[265] What the women did was powerful nevertheless in that they were able to take a government mandated use of their body and appropriate it to reject the very same mandate. It was no longer just the government using women's bodies for political gains, but the women themselves to express opposition. Women of lower classes took particular advantage of the mandatory wearing of the hijab. These were the women wore the hijab as an expression of their religion anyways, and had felt uncomfortable in the Iran dominated by Western style clothing.[266] The mandatory hijab, in their view, evened out the playing field and made them feel like they had a right to voice their opinions publicly and they took full advantage of this newfound right in fighting for their marital and economic rights.[267] The women appropriating the hijab show a contradiction against Khomeini's argument that women's right were Western and needed to remain outside of Iran. These were traditional, Muslim, women who were fighting for increased women's rights. The ideas were emanating from Iranian women themselves. The authenticity of the movement is reflected in the fact that the rights they were demanding were connected to family life[268], which are not the principal rights claimed by Western women. In making the women's rights movement Islamic in nature, women robbed Khomeini's claim of women's rights as a Western imposition of legitimacy.

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[263] Ali Akbar Mahdi, "Iranian Women: Between Islamization and Globalization," In *Iran Encountering Globalization: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Ali Mohammadi. London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003, 12.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Nikki R. Keddie, "Iranian Women's Status and Struggles Since 1979," *Journal of International Affairs* 60 (2007): 17-XI. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://search. proquest.com/docview/220716559/fulltextPDF?accountid=82 85, 23.

[267] Ibid.
[268] Keddie.

Khomeini also used reversed gains women had made in family life in an effort to keep women at home, particularly abolishing the Family Protection Law (FPL) in 1980.[269]   The FPL came out of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule and gave women more rights in marriage and divorce, as well as increasing their rights in custody battles.[270] Interestingly, the FPL resulted in part due to pressures by the United States for policy reforms.[271] This is significant because it attached a Western tag onto these women's rights, which made it easier for Khomeini to convince those that were anti West to also be traditionalist in terms of these rights. Labeling women's rights as Western in order to demonstrate that they did not belong in Iran was one of Khomeini's main strategies in reducing the role of women to a more "traditional" and "Islamic" one.[272]

Khomeini used four important strategies to repress women in the public sphere. The tactic of associating women's right with the West was already discussed. Women's encounters with male strangers were also greatly limited by the Khomeini regime.[273] Khomeini implemented segregation by gender in education[274] as well as banning inter-religious marriage.[275] Women's spatial mobility was restricted.[276] Certain movie theaters and roads were off limit to women and they were prohibited from riding bicycles.[277] Lastly, Khomeini's attempt to "domesticate women" was to force them to give up their jobs and return to home life.[278] These restrictive policies resulted in a brain drain of women and men from the educated and skilled sector of society.[279] Ironically, Khomeini, who was in part trying to limit Western influence and increase

[269] Daniel, 213.
[270] Keddie, 21.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Mahdi, 9.
[273] Mahdi, 10.
[274] Daniel, 213.
[275] Mahdi, 10.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Mahdi, 11.

Islamic influence by implementing these restrictions, turned many people away from Islamic Iran and pushed them into Western countries. Although this did not increase Western influence on Iran as a country, it did increase the amounts of Iranians that fell under Western influence.

Additionally, at the time the clerics supported certain laws that indirectly discriminated against women. These were the permission for male polygamy, allowing temporary, arranged, and child marriage.[280] There were also different requirements for men and women on acceptable divorces.[281] It was fortunate for Iranian women that they had been granted the right to vote in 1963, as one of several reforms of Mohammad-Reza Shah's white revolution,[282] for Khomeini, although he could not deprive them of their suffrage, would never have allowed such a law to come into place. Women, many of whom had even supported Khomeini during the revolution, were unhappy with the direction of his government and were inspired to exercise their right to vote and to protest against Khomeini's discriminatory practices.[283] This included many religious women who were left disappointed by Iran's failure in the Iran-Iraq war, by Khomeini's government's failure to solve the economic problems of Iran, and by the failure to provide equality between men and women.[284] The failure of Khomeini's rule to maintain the support of these women helped dissolve the barrier between religious and secular women and united them in a fight for women's rights.[285] The union of secular and religious women demonstrated that for women the issue of their rights was outside the continuous debate over religion and secularism, it simply had to do with what they believed they deserved as human beings, and women. Secularists and those who believed in Islam's role in society could equally support the effort for

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[280] Daniel, 214.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Daniel, 157-158.
[283] Daniel, 214.
[284] Mahdi,13.
[285] Ibid.

women's rights, increasing the opposition against Khomeini's blatantly sexist policies. This is one of the first instances where one of the main tensions of Iranian identity has been diffused to support a broader issue.

Not all religious and secular women united, however, and in the face of such a hostile audience, women in Iran have had to approach the issue of women's rights from a variety of angles in order to be successful. Some Muslim women even have a hard time just labeling themselves as feminists because it is viewed as a Western term, and thus a symbol of corruption.[286] Ironically, it seems that critique of ideas as Western is raised more often for issues dealing with women's rights than anything else. Many Muslim countries have imported their colonizers legal methods for dealing with society, except when it comes to issues of the family, which are dealt with in Islamic courts that most often decide in disfavor of the woman.[287] Some women, Islamic and Muslim feminists, see the lack of women's rights as a misinterpretation of the Quran since it is only men that are interpreting the holy book.[288] For these groups successful implementation of women's rights can only result if the argument is framed through some interpretation of Islam.[289] Some Islamic feminists go so far as to claim that the Quran does not actually dictate the conservative dress code implemented by Khomeini under the guise of Islam, and does not oppose Western clothing.[290] Others, secular feminists, believe that it is precisely the relationship between Islam and the government that prevents women's rights and would like to see a complete institutional reform, where women's rights are derived from the international

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[286] Roja Fazaeli, "Contemporary Iranian Feminism: Identity, Rights and Interpretations," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 4 (2007): 1-24, Accessed March 15 2012, http://www.degruyter.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/view/j/mwjhr. 2007.4.1/mwjhr.2007.4.1.1118/mwjhr.2007.4.1.1118.xml, 2.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Fazaeli, 5.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Gertrud Pfister ,"Outsiders: Muslim Women and Olympic Games-Barriers and Opportunities," *The International Journal of the History of Sport.* 27 (2010): 2925-2957, Accessed April 30, 2012, http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy au.wrlc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/09523367.2010 .508291, 2946.

human rights discourse and not religion.[291] The feminists in immediate post-revolution Iran were mainly Islamic and Muslim feminists, because their Islam based ideas were more successful with the current government.[292] Once again, women take an issue that has been politicized by the government, in this case Islam in terms of its discourse on women, and appropriate to further their own agenda. Some religious women unified with secular women, and others remained separate, but they all had the goal of increasing women's rights as their main objective.

One of the main weaknesses of the Iranian women's rights movement is their lack of a connection with the international women's advocacy movement.[293] This could be in part attributed to a tactical move to not want to associate with the Western dominate international structure. Fighting against a government that is so anti West, the women's movement probably gains more legitimacy and credibility if they play the authenticity card and try to remain an Iranian movement. This is a crucial example of the tension between openness to the West and closing down to Western influence. The women's movement within Iran would gain strength in the form of learning additional campaign tactics and access to infrastructure if they joined with the international movement. However, the perspectives of the government they face cause them to refuse this help in exchange for a system that might be better received by their opposition.

The first decade or so after the revolution witnessed very little improvements for women, but in the late 1980's things started to pick back up. Initially, after the revolution in 1979 there was a decline in female labor force participation, however, by 2006 it had surpassed pre-

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[291] Fazaeli, 6, 13.
[292] Fazaeli, 13.
[293] Mahdi, 20.

revolution levels.[294] Women's employment also experienced a shift to the professional services, particularly education and health.[295] There was also an increase in female education levels. The gap between male and female education levels which at one point saw men with two years more education than women on average was flipped for women born between 1980-1984.[296] Women were actually more educated than men on average. Ironically, this can be attributed in part to Khomeini's Islamization. The segregation of Islamization created environments that made learning appropriate for women.[297] For example, at one point, a campaign against illiteracy was framed as a jihad, encouraging all citizens to become literate, and attend the local classes offered at mosques.[298] Women could thus, under the guise of religious obligation, learn to read and educated themselves.[299] However, for the most part, women had to fight hard against Islamization to make progress.

In the early 2000's a female Majlis proposed the Convention on Eradication of Discrimination Against Women as a bill to parliament.[300] Male members of parliament were hesitant to sign onto the convention, but were willing to compromise and sign onto a version of CEDAW that included reservations that would make it compatible with Sharia.[301] Women parliamentarians found this unacceptable because it would weaken the content of CEDAW to the point where it was essentially pointless.[302] Eventually parliament ratified some version of

[294] Hadi Salehi Esfahani and Roksana Bahramitash, "Nimble Fingers No Longer! Women's Employment in Iran," In *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, edited by Ali Gheissari, 77-122, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 78.
[295] Esfahani, 92.
[296] Djavad Isfahani, "Oil, Wealth, and Economic Growth in Iran," In *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, edited by Ali Gheissari, 3-37, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 24.
[297] Esfahani, 92-93.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Shahla Haeri, " Women, Religion, and Political Agency," In *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, edited by Ali Gheissari, 125-149, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 137.
[301] Haeri, 138.
[302] Ibid.

CEDAW, but it was rejected by the Guardian Council anyways.[303] Women were able to make some progress under Khatami, one of whose vice presidents was a woman.[304]

Iranian women, and Islamic women in general, have been fighting extremely hard to increase their rights in the field of sports. Islamic women are at a great disadvantage when it comes to sports, because they have to overcome the obstacle of being women in a male dominated world, and on top of that they suffer from regulations from a restrictive Islamic clergy. Women began participating in the Olympics in 1900 although until 1928 they were prohibited from sports that required too much exertion, physical strength and bodily contact.[305] The Muslim countries that have been most successful in the Olympics are those who have experienced relatively secular regimes, mainly Turkey, Indonesia and pre-revolution Iran.[306] After Turkey, Iran has the most Olympic medals of any other Muslim country, most of which were won between 1948 and 1976.[307] It is no coincidence that Turkey has experienced so much success in international sports. Turkey is a highly secular country who does not pose a strict Islamic dress code on its women. Iran, in the thirty years preceding the Revolution, also experienced high levels of success, especially in comparison with the rest of its sports history. At the time Iran was ruled by secular governments who aimed to modernize the country. Secularism and modernization correlate with success in international sports. Additionally, the Olympics and modern sports emerged from Western culture,[308] so it follows that when Iran experienced athletic success under regimes that were open to the West. Iran's success in sports, and specifically women's sports, depends on how the government in place defines Iran in terms of the three

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[303] Ibid.
[304] Daniel, 240.
[305] Pfister, 2927.
[306] Pfister, 2929.
[307] Pfister, 2934.
[308] Pfister, 2926, 2929.

tensions that have been discussed throughout this paper. Governments that choose to be secular and open to the West and the world, foster an environment conducive to athletic success, unlike the religious, closed, traditional government that is currently in place.

The tensions between religion and secularism and tradition and modernity are highlighted in one of Iranian women's main problems in athletic participation: Islamic dress code. The hijab precludes Iranian women from many Olympic sports due to their dress code. This was the principal reason for their disqualification in the game against Jordan. While the hijab can be reconciled with soccer fairly easily, it is much harder to participate in sports like gymnastics, swimming, or beach volleyball with a hijab.[309] Iranian women have been successful in sports like shooting where the hijab poses no conflict with performance.[310] Taekwando, a sport in which Muslim women have experienced success has recently evolved its rules to specifically allow the hijab as a demonstration of its egalitarianism.[311] There has been an entire movement by scholars of Muslim athletics which produced the "International "Accept and Respect" Declaration for Women in Sport" which asks international sports organization to compromise with the Muslim dress code wherever possible in order to augment the participation of Muslim women in international sports.[312] Additionally, to increase female participation in sport competitions like the Muslim Women's Games have been established which do not have to respond to Olympic regulations and allow Muslim women to be athletes and Muslims in whatever form they choose.[313]

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[309] Pfister, 2931.
[310] Pfister, 2948.
[311] Pfister, 2949.
[312] International 'Accept and Respect' Declaration for Women in Sport (2008). Accessed April 30, 2012. http://www.idan.dk/ Nyheder/~/media/PdfWord/Pdf2008/Press%20release.ashx.
[313] Pfister, 2950.

Muslim feminists do not believe that the Quran dictates the wearing of hijab. Because the issue is up for interpretation and there is not an objective, factual answer to the question of whether Muslim women must wear the hijab, it is not fair to say that is Islam as a religion that stands in the way of women participation and succeeding in international sports. It is more accurate to say that the current interpretation of Islam by those with cultural power in Iran, which interprets the hijab as a mandatory element of the life of female Muslims, is the major roadblock. Not only do these religious leaders like Khomeini politicize women's bodies by forcing the hijab, but they further politicize Islam by using it as the reasoning for the mandatory hijab, which becomes a means to restrict women's lives not only domestically, but internationally as well. They use the hijab to further their politics of anti modernity and anti West because it limits Iranian women's contact with the West and modern sports.

Soccer specifically has been an avenue through which women have made their discontent known. In a country where women were not even allowed to go watch soccer games until recently, it has been extremely difficult for them to actually play. Twice, when Iran qualified for the World Cup in 1998 and 2006, women joined in the celebrations despite being prohibited from participating.[314] It was not until 1998 that an official group of women gathered to play soccer for the first time since the revolution.[315] The clerics, of course, opposed this.[316] Women used soccer to socialize, bond and spread ideas that were counter to the patriarchal culture they lived in. The biggest problem that the clerics had with soccer, as with most sports, was the "nakedness" required by the uniforms (sound familiar?) not just because the lack of clothing was supposedly against Islamic values but because in addition to that it represented the imperialist

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[314] Fozooni, 114, 118.
[315] Fozooni, 125.
[316] Ibid.

West.[317] Like in other areas, women have been making slow, but forward progress in increasing their athletic rights.

It is possible that Iranian women would have many more rights presently if they had not suffered the setbacks of the Revolution, but it is very clear that they have no intention of giving up their fight. The obstacles women must overcome to gain their rights are elements of the same tensions that were present in Iranian politics. In the early 1900s feminism in Iran was tied to Westernization and secularism.[318] This is logical, considering that it was religious radicalism, and animosity towards western influence that have been the biggest opponents to women's rights in the first place. Religious clerics have provided the strongest opposition to expanding women's rights because their interpretation of the Quran leads them to believe that greater women's rights are against Islam. However, some Ayatollah's have come forward in favor of women's rights saying that Islam is about justice and there can be no justice without gender equality, thus gender equality is a necessary part of Islam.[319] Religion will be a major obstacle to women as they look to increase their rights.

Iran has had a tenuous history with the West and its influence in its country, and after the revolution of 1979, Khomeini tried very hard to stifle any potential influence the West may have on Iran. Because most western countries provide their women with greater rights, it is easy to see why Iran would associate feminism with the West. It is possible, though it would be a much harder policy line to tow, that even if religion was not an issue, Iran would use their animosity with the West to prevent the furthering of women's rights as a principle of their independence.

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[317] Fozooni, 117.
[318] Fazaeli, 16.
[319] Haeri,138.

By using both religion and western influence as an excuse, Iranians are finally doing to the West what it has done to them for years; use their relationship to promote their own interests at home.

Discussion

In discussing Iran's history with sports, mainly soccer, politics, and women, three main tensions have come up: the tension between western influence and independence, religion and secularism, and modernity and traditionalism. All three of these tensions can be used to explain potential reasons for the qualifier disqualification. We will first look at the tension between religion and secularism.

It was observed above that the more secular regimes allowed for the greatest athletic expression in Iran (the rule of leaders like Reza Shah). While the current regime is not quite as religiously radical as Khomeini's was, the team of Ahmadinejad and Khameni is far from secular. FIFA's request of adjusting the headscarves, the most prominent religious symbol for Muslim women, could be seen as the reaching hand of secularism. In order to maintain the religious standards of society, Iran may have decided not to alter the headscarves. Additionally, if the current regime is a religious one, they may be against female participation in sports to begin with. (Remember that it was not so long ago, and under the same Ahmadinejad that is now in power, that women could not even go watch soccer games.) FIFA's headscarf request may thus have simply provided the perfect scapegoat to prevent the women from playing.

The tension between religion and secularism is not only present on Iran's side, but FIFA's side as well. They have gone back and forth on explaining their reasoning as simply a safety issue of the fabric around the neck and the FIFA rule that disallows the display of religious symbols during match play. Personally, I do not buy either of these reasons because

male soccer players wear neck warmers all the time, and I did not notice much difference between the Iranian headscarves and the approved Jordanian ones in terms of "danger". Additionally, many male players make a sign of the cross as they step onto the pitch, and/or wear, a cross under their jersey. It was not the scope of this paper to analyze FIFA's side of the disqualification, but I believe there are many questions left unanswered there as well.

The issue of religion versus secularism is closely connected to the idea of Western influence versus complete independence from such influence. Religious governments, in this case Iran's Muslim governments, are often correlated with animosity towards Western influence. Khomeini is a great example of that; a religious radical who wanted to hear nothing of Western influence in Iran. On the other hand, secular rulers like Reza Khan and his son, Mohammad-Reza Khan , were much more open to Western influence. As it was under the secular rulers that soccer found greater footing, so it was under rulers who were open to the West that soccer had the best opportunity to succeed. Moreover, Iran has been a pawn of Western powers so often in its past that it is understandable for them to no longer want o be under control of the West. Well, considering that FIFA is an organization dominated by the West, their request to adjust headscarves could be seen as a form of neo-imperialism, something which Iran has been trying to escape from for decades. Their rejection of the FIFA regulation serves to cement their independent status.

Furthermore, this game was being played against Jordan, a fellow Middle Eastern, Muslim country. However, a victory by Iran would have allowed them to participate in the Olympics in Britain, who is not just a Western country, but one with whom Iran has had a long and twisted relationship with. So it is plausible that Iran chose to throw this game in order to avoid exposing the team to the Western values of Britain. Seeing the different values and culture

in Britain could increase women's discontent with the Iranian government and their laws, and if they were to organize around this discontent at home it could potentially cause problems for the government. It could also promote this scary idea of feminism amongst Iranian women that Muslim governments had so much trouble negotiating.

Lastly, there is the tension between tradition and modernity. To continue the parallel structure, traditionalists tend to line up with those who are religious and not huge proponents of western influence, while those who promote modernity tend to promote secularism and relations with the West as well. The soccer game does not lend itself to a discussion of modernity and tradition as well as it does to the previous two tensions. However, women's soccer in general is a rather modern field of sports, and it has been a hard field for even "modern" countries to engage in. Also, FIFA's requirements on the headscarf would be asking Iran to take a further step away from tradition (if allowing women to play international soccer had not been enough of steps away from tradition). The attire worn by the female soccer players is already a large leap away from the traditional black chador, and the additional changes to the headscarf would make the attire even less traditional.

Of course all this analysis depends on the fact that Iran was aware about the regulation and that it was not sprung up on them as a surprise right before the game. Moreover, this analysis only provides possible explanation for the events. Finding out the rationale behind Iran's decision has never been easy. However, these possible explanations are founded in themes that Iran has experienced in its athletic, political, and women's right history. Iran has used sport and women's bodies for political objectives before (the hijad) and there is no reason to believe they would not do so again. Furthermore, because these three themes or so recurrent in Iranian history they have become key elements of Iranian identity. Thus, understanding their role in

Iranian society helps us not only understand how the headscarf debacle came about, but helps shed light on how Iran views the world and what guides its relationships with other countries, as well as providing some explanation for its domestic policies. The disqualification of the Iranian women's soccer team is a sad event, but it can help explain much more than Iran's behavior in this particular instance. It can help understand Iran's identity and how its actions emerge from that identity.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to try to understand Iran's identity based on three tensions across three fields and how this identity helps explain why Iran chose to equip its women's soccer team with non-regulation headscarves for the Olympic qualifier against Jordan. The tensions that are identified as most significantly defining Iranian identity are the debate between religion and secularism, tradition and modernity, and being open to Western influence and a discourse of independence. As applied across the fields of Iran's relationship with sports, its political history, and the role of women in Iran, these tensions lead to the conclusion that Iran, as a nation, has currently chosen an identity of a traditionalist, religious, country closed to Western influence. These tensions have been significant in defining Iranian identity for centuries and have evolved and changed in accordance with Iran's leadership.

The tensions identified in the question of Iranian identity help explain the event as an opportunity for Iran to assert this identity in an international setting. FIFA can be identified as a Western entity for it has long been dominated by Westerners and governs a sport that was created in the West. In ignoring its request for a different headscarf, Iran demonstrates its identity as a country against the West. Moreover, because modernity has been associated with

the West over time, by rejecting the West, Iran was also able to reject modernity. The fact that the whole incident occurred over a religious symbol, and Iran defended the religiosity of its uniforms, allows Iran to insist on its religious identity. Moreover, by using the hijab as their symbol for a religious identity, Iran also turns women's bodies into political tools to express their identity. For centuries Iran had been slowly moving further and further away from its current positions on all three tensions, but the Revolution of 1979, and Khomeini's subsequent religious government, reversed the progress.

These tensions have been evolving in Iranian identity for hundreds of years and have manifested themselves not only through the sporting history of Iran, but, as this paper shows, also its politics and its treatment of women. Because they are not isolated to the specific realm of sports, these tensions not only help explain this event, but also provide a basic framework for understanding the evolution of Iranian identity and supply some explanatory factors for analyzing Iranian actions in the world of international relations.

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