Iran and Security Complex in the Persian Gulf

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Abstract

This article enters into the debate on the link between security and identity by looking at the security context in the states surrounding the Persian Gulf, particularly Iran. Earlier scholarly works have approached security and identity separately, but lack a framework that connects them in a single account. The process tracing method offers a scientific approach to connect various notions in a single study, allowing the synthesis of diverse disciplines to establish links connecting them. Applying the method to the current security and identity issues of the regional states with Jundallah _a terrorist group in the eastern border of Iran_ has established a link between them and has thus enriched the current studies of the region. The main findings are that the Persian Gulf region is a heterogeneous security complex with diverse actors wielding power, and that societal threats have increased since the 2003 Iraq War. Since that year, a conflictual security complex has predominated in the region, which has destabilized the region more than before.

Keywords: Heterogeneous security complex, Identity, Iran, Security threats, Terrorist groups

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War has changed the face of international security, and after two decades, the security studies are still at the center of attention in international relations (IR). The contemporary security context, particularly with diverse actors, threats, and risks provides an opportunity to focus on the regions and their security threats to the global arena (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 3). Among the sub-regions of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf emerges as one of the pivotal regions due to its conflict formation, post-colonial modern states, cultural and religious features with the autonomous regional level of security and numerous threats over several decades.

The three Persian Gulf wars, including the Iran-Iraq war, the Kuwait invasion by Iraq, and the 2003 Iraq invasion by the United States (US) have hiked the conflictual environment in the region between 1979 and 2003. Taking an example, the first two Persian Gulf Wars intensified the regional arms race competition and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have become a trading partner of the US and the European countries (for example see, Byman, 2011, pp. 144-165; Fürtig, 2008, pp. 121-141).

In the aftermath of the Iraq War, the perceived security and identity have gained shape and importance, and this phenomenon is perhaps more evident in the Persian Gulf region, specifically in Iran, with the emergence of the new terrorist group of Jundallah in the eastern border. While certain scholarly works have shed light on Jundallah's activities in Iran, given that Jundallah is a relatively new terrorist group, the body of literature on the subject remains slight. Studies on the topic can be grouped into three broad research areas. In the following sections, these three areas will be delineated, covering the relevant literature exhaustively, to the best of our knowledge.

The works in the *first* category examine socio-economic reasons for Jundallah's terrorism. For example, Chris Zambelis argues that the socio-economic problems experienced by the Baloch people are a frequently cited cause (Zambelis, 2007, p. 7). The author further posits that poor climatic conditions and economic mismanagement have intensified social and economic problems, which are caused by the lack of public services compared to the other parts of Iran. Members of Jundallah, as well as non-affiliated Baloch, have also claimed that they are being marginalized by the Iranian state on the basis of their ethnic and religious identity (Zambelis, 2007).

The *second* research stream in this field aims to explain the extent of Deobandi influence in Iran. Audun Kolstad Wiig has argued that the "transformation of Sunni Islam through the growth and success of the austere Deobandi current underlies radicalism and sectarian strife in a number of Muslim countries" including Iran (Wiig, 2009, p. 8). However, the analyses in this article indicate that Deobandi has not influenced the Iranian society as a whole, but rather only Sistan and Balochistan residents, and thus Jundallah. The Deobandi movement follows Hanifa jurisprudence, opposing the Shia ja'fari school of law. This trend of the transformation of Sunni Islam through the growth of Deobandi has been apparent among the Iranian Baloch (Nasr, 2007, pp. 327-333). The Deobandi Movement initially emerged in Pakistan, and exerted its influence among the Baloch in Pakistan and later in Iran. The 1979 Islamic Revolution and Iran's embarking on Shia advocacy campaign in the whole country, as well as the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, have increased anti-Shia sentiment in Sistan and Balochistan, which was fueled by Jundallah as Sunni and Deobandi extremists. Both Deobandi members and Jundallah have had close ties with extremist anti-Shia movements such as Sipah-e-Sahaba, as mentioned above (Dudoignon, 2018, pp. 177-189). In this sense,

Jundallah is both anti-Iranian (see above) and anti-Shia; these two perspectives are examined in this article.

A *third* body of literature focuses on the threat of Iran to Jundallah. Abdol Sattar Doshooki, has broadly examined the relationship between the Baloch and Jundallah in Iran. He has argued that the acts of terror perpetrated by Jundallah are a result of frustration with Baloch isolation and economic marginalization in Iran (Doshooki, 26/4/89 [17/7/2010], pp. 2-8). The nature of Doshooki's research is generally sympathetic to the Baloch people's perspective, as he does not critically engage with the story of Jundallah from the perspective of Iranian political authorities. This article takes a different theoretical approach to specifically understand and explain the responses of the Iranian state to the perceived threat of Jundallah. Moreover, this article is a humble contribution to Bennett's process tracing method and analyses of the Persian Gulf region (Bennett et al.,1994, pp. 39-75), as his most recent work provides the framework for the analyses (see also the subsequent sections).

Taken together, while this article benefits from these studies, it also develops a better understanding of the issues using the Process Tracing Method to link security and identity in the case of Jundallah. The article combines empirical analyses and a methodological approach to create a better way of understanding security and identity in the Persian Gulf region.

Making this claim, the main research question in this article is: *how does process tracing contribute to understand security and identity in the Persian Gulf region, specifically Iran, as it stands after the Iraq War*. It is suggested that the region is a security complex because the security threats perceived by each regional state depend on and affect the threats of the others in a way that no

single state's security issues and threats can be resolved unless those of the other states are also resolved (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 492). This proposition will be examined through the analysis of primary data from the US Department of State, and Iranian documents, newspapers, news agencies, as well as secondary data.

The next part of this article first illustrates the way in which Process Tracing Method can help illuminate security and identity in the Persian Gulf, as it exists today. The second section of the article proposes alternative hypotheses to probe security and identity in the region. In the final sections, the hypothesized causal processes are examined within the context of the current security complex in the Persian Gulf and the case of Jundallah – a recently emerged terrorist group in the eastern border of Iran. Few concluding remarks will summarize the article in the end.

2. Process Tracing Method and the Persian Gulf Region

In the last few decades, Process Tracing has achieved increasing recognition and widespread use by IR scholars. Andrew Bennett observes that Process Tracing involves the examination of diagnostic pieces of evidence within a case that contribute to proposing alternative hypotheses, and understanding the changes that have taken place over time. A central concern in Process Tracing is *causal mechanism* (Bennett, 2010, p. 8). Chekel defines causal mechanism as "a set of hypotheses that could be an explanation for some phenomena and this explanation is in term of interaction between individual and other individuals or between the individual and some social aggregate" (Chekel, 2008, p.115). He provides a referent to find a link between theories from different disciplines. In this article, the objective is to investigate whether there is a firm link between security and identity; the causal

mechanism provides a framework and an opportunity to discover if and how the eclectic theories combine agents in a specific structure (Bennett, 2010, p. 8).

This approach allows to consider agent-agent (the interaction of diverse actors and the way in which they exercise power) and agent–structure (the way in which the nature of the region influences actors' decisions and attitudes) approaches in the analyses, thus understanding how the regional actors exercise power in their spheres of influence. According to George and Bennett (2005, pp. 206-207), the causal process refers to "the causal chain and the causal mechanism between independent variable(s) and the outcome of dependent variable(s)". In other words, independent variables are the *'causes'* and dependent variables are the *'effects'* (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 206-210). Certainly, Process Tracing helps identify a specific causal process for a particular phenomenon as well as its underlying *causal mechanism.*

Process Tracing as a method was chosen in this article because it brings additional depth by uncovering causal processes, and clarifying how such logics operate. This article uses *hypothesized causal mechanisms*. This means that hypotheses are formulated as mechanisms to follow causal processes and changes. The benefit is its capacity to establish a link with the theoretical framework, in particular with securitization process. It provides an opportunity to divide the analysis of a case into two parts. In the first part, a stable situation is discussed. When a fundamental change takes place and a new condition appears, it is examined in the light of the hypothesized causal mechanism as part of the process tracing. A 'fundamental change' in process tracing represents a turning point in a causal story.

Linking security and identity by benefiting from the Process Tracing Method, it is useful to employ theoretical approaches taken from IR and sociology disciplines. The first contribution to the collection of theories is the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), as suggested by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003) and their contribution to the Copenhagen School of Security in the IR field of study.

The Persian Gulf Regional Security Complex (RSC) under scrutiny includes Iran, Iraq and the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates). The RSCT examines the interaction of these states and accounts for the fact that security threats in one state are threats for all the states in the region. The Copenhagen School Security Theory also uses the term securitization defined as "the construction of an existential threat to a valued referent object legitimizing the imposition of exceptional political rules" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 491; see also, Buzan et al. 1998).

Essential elements of securitization used in the analysis of this article include *securitizing actors, threats, referent objects, audiences*. Regarding the *first* component of securitization, *securitizing actors*, are "actor(s) who securitize issues by declaring something actually threatened" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 3). Securitization occurs "when a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is normal politics" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 3) In Iran, these include political, governmental, and religious leaders. The actor primarily responsible for the securitization of the Jundallah issue is Mohammad Khazaei, the representative of Iran to the United Nations (UN).

The *second* component of securitization, *referent objects*, includes those that "are portrayed as being threatened and who

have a legitimate claim to survival" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 29). The referent objects in the presence of the current discussion on security are the state, on the one hand, and Shia societies and their members on the other. According to Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde, for a state, the focus is on the survival of its sovereignty, while society is primarily concerned with its identity vis-à-vis threats (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 21). In this article, it is argued that Jundallah has threatened the referent objects of the sovereignty of the Iranian Shia state by challenging it through the use of acts of terror and force. It has successfully threatened the Shia inhabitants by committing a number of terrorist acts on the eastern border of the country since 2003, such as acts of terror in Chabahar in 2008 and bombing of the Great Mosque of Zahedan in 2009. Thus, Jundallah - by committing acts of terror - threatens both the sovereignty of the state of Iran, and the identity of its Shia inhabitants. Overall, the role of referent objects is significant in the process of securitization because one can learn what referent objects appeal to and study outcomes to see which hold security legitimacy; as a result, an appeal to their necessary survival is able to mobilize support.

According to the third factor of securitization, *audience* is the target of securitization. In other words, an issue is securitized when relevant audiences accept it as a threat. A significant problem in Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde's work is that the authors do not adequately discuss this concept, failing to elucidate – who the target audiences are and what their significance may be. This discussion seeks to extend the theory by specifically elaborating on this component (Léonard & Kaunert 2011, pp. 50-55). In particular, it is argued that audiences are differentiated from securitizing actors in that audiences must agree with the claims made by securitizing actors in order for a successful securitization to take place (Buzan et al., 1998).

As audiences vary, depending on the context, securitizers can garner formal support from multiple sources, be they members of a ruling elite, members of parliament, etc. The public is also an important audience, as it can provide moral support for government actions (Léonard & Kaunert 2011, pp. 60-65). For example, while members of the Iranian public generally condemn acts of terror such as those perpetrated by Jundallah, they do not possess any formal means to exert influence on how the state responds to these acts. In this case, the support of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was the central audience for Ayatollah Khamenei's securitizing effort. There is a wide range of potential audiences in this case, such as members of the political establishment and representatives of the various Iranian councils. This analysis focuses on the three most important audiences for the securitizers in Iran: the IRGC, the Minister of the Interior of Iran, and the Iranian representative to the United Nations (UN) Council of Human Rights. These individuals and bodies have formal influences both in Iran and in the UN.

Sociology, the second contributing discipline, holds that people see threats as phenomena that affect their common identity, detecting them during social interaction where the boundaries between the Self and the Other are created (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 123). A promising approach for IR scholar is to consider concepts of identity, Self and Other as factors affecting politics – social issues include political issues, in order for identity to be legitimately included when discussing about politics. Vilho Harle (2000) and Bill McSweeney (1999) provide an insight into identity by a reference to the Self and Other examination in this article.

The pivot of political identity indicates strong concerns that human actors engage in a socially and politically constructed

struggle between good and evil. The enemy is perceived as evil and therefore cannot be equated with *us* (Harle, 2000, pp. 5–10). Taking an example, Jundallah, labeled as enemy, is perceived as a threat to the Shia identity of the Iranian state, to be removed from *us* – the Iranian people and state. This notion will be discussed in the following sections.

Richard Lebow's, Frederick Kratochwil's and Peter Katzenstein's works are also worthy of note in relation to society, identity and security because of their emphasis on social constructivism and psychological constructivism. They state that constructivism recognizes that culture and ideology do more than rationalization for the behavior that actors engage in for other reasons. They provide people with identities that offer meaning. Identity can be regarded as a vehicle for attaining self-esteem. For this reason, people want to belong to high status groups (Kratochwil, 2012, p. 9; Lebow, 2008, p. 25). Peter Katzenstein also argues that culture, norms and identity matter in national security. He discusses the role of domestic norms in the area of national security. The emphasis is on the domestic normative structure and the way in which it influences state identity, interest and policy, as well as the way in which the internal make-up of actors affect their behavior in the international system (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 129).

Process Tracing in the context of the Persian Gulf security complex consists of suggesting alternative hypotheses, selecting a suitable case, and identifying independent and dependent variables that can seek outcomes in the context of the RSC by making a causal story (Appendix 1, Figure 2). Finally, for reporting security and identity processes, agent-agent and agent-structure approaches synthesize the relationships of power and threats (see Table 1 and the analyses below) in the case of Jundallah in this article.

Approach	*Agent to agent*	*Agent to structure*
Regional security Complex theory	Securitization of Jundallah by the Iranian state	Rise of cross-border actors in the Persian Gulf region
Societal threats and the Self and Other concepts	Jundallah as an enemy, conflict between the Shia and Sunni	Rise of Jundallah as threat by the Sunni extremism to the Iranian state and Shia population
Discipline of study	International Relations, Sociology	Sociology, International Relations,

Table 1: Taxonomy of causal mechanisms. source: Adapted from Bennett 2010, 8. Examples in the table will be discussed below in this article

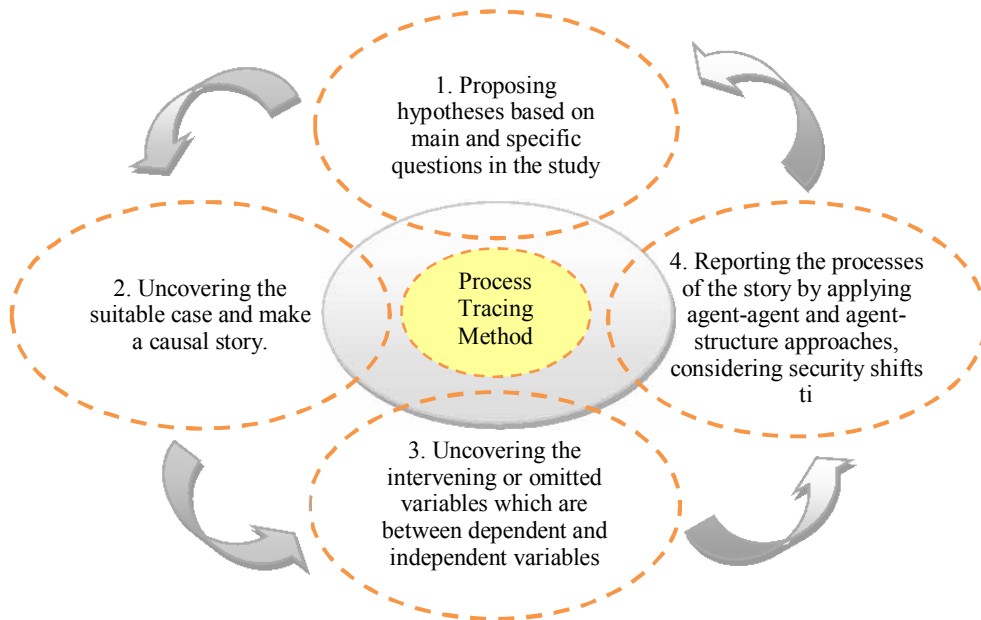Figure 1 summarizes the application of process tracing in the Persian Gulf region:

Figure 1: Process Tracing and Security Complex in the Persian Gulf
Source: author

3. The Iraq War and the Security Shift in the Persian Gulf Region: Alternative Hypotheses

To examine the link between security and identity in the aftermath of the Iraq War, this article proposes two hypotheses for the RSC and tests their consistency. Because the current Persian Gulf security context is complex, no mono-causal hypothesis could adequately examine security and identity.

The first hypothesis proposes that the strong US military presence, established to maintain energy supply security, has changed the RSC with consequences for both security and identity. The oil weapon is considered as a blunt instrument wielded by the GCC oil producers, led by Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to influence the US (Ayoob, 2011, p. 171). Yet, although security of energy supply is one logical reason for the presence of the US military, as believed by certain scholars, the effects of identity threats are not explained by this hypothesis. To overcome this limitation, Mohammed Ayoob extends the analysis to make a connection between the US presence in the region and the connection between political Islam and the regional states' perception of the US with its non-Muslim identity (Ayoob, 2011, p. 132).

Such an extension explains the US presence in the 1970s and the regional states' reactions to it, but cannot completely depict the way in which the US presence in the region has strengthened security and identity. There is a weakness in the extended hypothesis's inherent logic. Moreover, the US military presence is coupled with the perception of hegemony in the region and consistent with the Bush Doctrine of preventive war that sanctions American military action against the threat (Ayoob, 2011, p. 132). Analysis indicate that the US military presence is a sufficient, but not necessary, condition to represent security and identity in the

Persian Gulf region. They have penetrated the region, but cannot reorganize the region and influence its security and identity as a whole (e.g Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 27).

The second hypothesis proposes that the Iraq War in 2003 is a dramatic shake that has destabilized the region in two major ways. First is the change in the regional balance of power: before the war, the RSC depended on the balance of power developed over several decades across – Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia – the three main states, with the US acting as a balancer. The 2003 Iraq War changed that balance, and it is therefore vital to study the relationship of power among different actors in the region.

The other serious effect of the 2003 Iraq War on the region's stability is the change in the type of threat. Before the war, the threats had been mainly military; now various societal security threats predominate. For example, a sectarian threat now exists along the borders of neighboring states in a way that the *destabilized cross–borders* have become a security threat to the central states (Ulrichsen, 2011, p. 26). It is therefore understandable that the Iranian government has declared Jundallah as a terrorist group: with the Sunni extremist ideology and Jundallah's geographical situation, located in the eastern border of Iran, the group is regarded as an existential threat to Iran's security. This notion will be discussed later in this article.

The Iraq War caused economic and environmental security changes as well as a security shift; these effects could each generate hypotheses on their own, but such hypotheses are beyond the scope of this article. This hypothesis attributes the security shift to the Iraq War and is consistent with the actual security context in the region. By following the processes, it is discovered that the hypothesis is strong enough to explain the powers of the various

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actors and to identify the threats that the shift has generated. The Iraq War and its related security shift therefore provide a sufficient and necessary condition to examine regional security and identity, enabling us to determine the link between them by constructing the causal story (see the analyses below in this article).

3.1. Security and Identity in the Persian Gulf Region

The causal story (see also Figure 2) analyses two relationships and serves both agent-agent and agent-structure approaches. It takes account of structure-actor's relationships, events, and is based on the idea that threats cannot occur in a vacuum and the structure dictates the sequence of events (Balzacq, 2011, pp. 36-37). It is required to analyze the security and identity positions both before and after the Iraq War: before the war, the Baloch minority posed a potential threat to the Iranian state; but since 2003, the Jundallah terrorist group has been established and posed an existential threat.

The First Process: Baloch Minority in Iran

Before the 2003 Iraq War

Baluchistan straddles the borders between southeastern Iran, western Pakistan, and southeastern Afghanistan. Sunni groups in the Iranian area, desiring ethnic separation, pose a potential threat to Iran as a whole. Different accounts document the area's history of political movements aimed at achieving independent statehood; their strong connection across three nations' borders contributes to the threat to the referent object of the Iranian state and Shia population. Between 1925 and1945, Baloch indignation was fueled by Iran's imposition of a new dress code, the mandatory teaching of the Persian language, and later the de–ethnicization of

minorities, all measures designed to modernize Iran. In 1950, Iran started to take account of minorities, and a number of their members even attained political job opportunities (Sanasarian, 2000, pp. 6-14). The Iranian Baloch people, therefore, think they were deliberately weakened, since according to them, minority groups were prevented from exercising power. The eastern borders of Iran were in a state of only partial normalcy.

Iran has recognized Baloch instability as a potential threat for many years, but potential became existential with the establishment of the Jundallah terrorist organization, supported by the US, Israel, and the GCC states, according to Iranian literature (for example see, Haji Naseri, 1395 [2016 A.D], 2016, pp. 51-68; Mohammadi & Ahmadi, 1395 [2016 A.D]), pp. 129-156).

The Second Process: A Dramatic Shift

Jundallah an Existential Threat between 2003 and 2011

As an actor, the transnational terrorist organization, Jundallah, exercises power on the eastern borders of Iran, posing a threat to the state and the population with the Shia identity as the referent objects. The state therefore needs to react to ensure its own security (Habeeb, 2012, p. 46). Mohammad Khazaei – Iranian former representative to the United Nations (UN) – as the securitizer performs a securitizing move to the threat of Jundallah:

> Iran is a victim of terrorism. It has taken practical and effective measures in its fight against terrorist and extremist groups including al-Qaeda and Jundallah (Khazaei, 03/05/1387 [24/07/2008 A.D]).

Iran blames Saudi Arabia and the US for providing aid and support to Jundallah members, thus creating and maintaining the

threat. The US denies its own involvement in direct funding, recognizing Jundallah as a terrorist organization, but saying that its sources of external aid are unknown. On August of 2011, the report of the Office of the Coordination for Counterterrorism and the Secretary of State recognize Jundallah as a terrorist organization in accordance with the section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. However, the source of the external aid to Jundallah is left unknown (US Department of State, 2011). Jundallah's former leader, Abdol Malek Rigi, who was in regular contact with the US Intelligence, stated that instrumental and financial supports came from Pakistan, a statement denied by Pakistan (US Congress, 2010). The US view falls out of Iran's former Chief of Police, General Esmail Ahmadi Moghaddam by announcing:

> Washington and London are trying to revive the Jundallah terrorist group after the group lost most of its power due to the strong measures adopted by the Iranian Police. These services have spent a great amount of money on Rigi's group, as they feel compelled to make efforts to revive and reorganize it (Ahmadi Moghaddam, 27/8/92 [18/11/2010]).

Mark Perry's proposal, on the other hand, acknowledges "how Israeli Mossad officers recruited operatives belonging to the terrorist group of Jundallah by passing themselves off as American agents" (Perry, 2012, pp. 1-5). At the same time, Perry is careful to stress that Israel is supposed to work with, not against the US (Perry, 2012, pp. 1-5) and both of them have supported Jundallah. The terrorist group Jundallah, with its status as a threat, was supported by external states and has committed numerous acts of terror in Iran (For example see Rokna and Fars News Agencies). Many civilians are said to have been killed or injured in Chabahar – a city located in the east of Iran – in 2008 (Rokna, 15/05/1397

[06/08/2018 A.D])); twenty-seven citizens were killed and 306 people injured in the Great Mosque of Zahedan (*Ettelaat Daily*, 11/09/1390 [02/12/2011 A.D]).

Jundallah and its sub-terrorist roups such as Jeisholadl still continue their acts of terror inside Iran. In the mid-February 2019, a group of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) personnel was martyred by them. Fars News Agency reported that twenty-seven IRGC members were martyred and wounded after their bus confronted with a terrorist attack in Sistan and Baluchistan. The bus was on the road from the city of Khash to the provincial capital of Zahedan when a truck, moving alongside the bus and loaded with explosives detonated (Fars News Agency, 2019 a). Ayatollah Khamenei, the Iran Supreme Leader, issued a message to honor the martyrdom of IRGC personnel and stated:

> There is a definite relationship between the culprits behind the crime and the spy organizations of certain regional and trans-regional states; the relevant responsible bodies in the country should focus on it and pursue it seriously (Khamenei, 25/11/1397 [14/02/2019 A.D]).

Ayatollah Khamenei also ordered the IRGC commanders to investigate any negligence and soft point, which could have been at work in the incident. He continued to say that there is a definite relationship between these terrorist groups and other states such as Saudi Arabia and the US. Ayatollah Khamenei extended his condolences to the family members of the martyrs as well as the IRGC commanders and personnel, praying for the rapid recovery of the IRGC members wounded in the incident (Khamenei, 25/11/1397 [14/02/2019 A.D]).

Iran's senior Sunni scholar and the Friday Prayer Sunni leader in Zahedan, Moldavia Abdul Hamid also stated that there is no doubt that Sunni people in the eastern border of Iran favor peace in light of freedom, and they suffer from the acts of terror by Jundallah and Jeisholadl. He wished divine forgiveness for the IRGC martyrs, patience for their families, and recovery for those wounded (Moldavia cited in Fars News Agency, 2019 b).

The UN Security Council, in this regard, condemned in the strongest terms this heinous and cowardly terrorist attack in Sistan and Balochistan. The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the state of Iran and to the families of twenty-seven victims, and wished a speedy and full recovery to the thirteen injured. The Council members reaffirmed that terrorism in any form, constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. Moreover, The UN asked that the organizers, financers and sponsors of these terrorist groups be brought to justice (UN Security Council, 2019).

Regarding the terrorist acts in Sistan and Balochistan, the US officials, however, have emphasized that they take every measure to threaten Iran, including support for terrorist groups. The acts of terror explained above happened before the start of a US-sponsored security conference against Iran in Warsaw, Poland (Fars News Agency, 2019a).

Taken together, Jundallah (and even its sub-branches) have made high profile attacks against the Revolutionary Guard Units in Sistan and Balochistan, Iran and local police, and have sent suicide bombers into Shia Mosques in Balochistan (Habeeb, 2012). This evidence, according to Iranian officials, indicates that Jundallah holds the status of enemy, a threat to societal identity that must be eradicated. (For more precise perception of the notion of the Other,

see Harle, 2000, pp. 6-14). The Iranian Intelligence Force took steps towards combatting Jundallah in February 2010 by arresting the Jundallah leader and putting him on trial:

> Jundallah group Leader Malik Rigi was arrested in February 2010 by the Iranian Intelligence Forces in June 2010. He was found guilty of 79 crimes, including murder, and was executed, bombing operations and armed attacks against police and Iranian citizen (Tabnak. (10/11/1390 [30/01/2012 A.D])).

To explore the action of regional actors against Jundallah, Iranian and Pakistani statesmen such as - Mostafa Mohammad Najar – Iran's former Interior Minister and Yusef Reza Gilani – former Pakistan Prime Minister – met to strengthen the security of their borders by organizing bilateral cooperation between the intelligence services of the two countries (*Ettelaat Daily*, 04/08/1388 [26/04/2009 A.D]).

To this end, the security message calls upon the fact that insecure borders involve a threat to the states in the region and the rise of the power of transnational actors. In this sense, Rigi's death had no effect on the terrorist group, Jundallah. His brother, Abdol Raof Rigi, succeeded to the leadership. Jundallah continues to commit acts of terror in the eastern part of Iran and the cross border threat persists. Jundallah's rise led to a shift of power that proves that cross–border actors can wield power as effectively as recognized states.

This analysis allows the interpretation that a stronger state may be able to deal very smoothly with its internal security threats, but Jundallah's performance as a transnational actor and wielder of power proves that a cross-border actor with an enemy identity and alien ideology poses an existential threat to a state. Jundallah

provides an excellent demonstration of the link between security and identity in the Persian Gulf region.

By proceeding further, the distribution of power to the whole region, Jundallah's Sunni sect on the eastern borders of Iran threatens the Shia public and the entire Iranian state. This threat would involve the entire region if the region's countries were to support Jundallah. On support of such account, Sahimi believes that Jundallah, as a Sunni sect, may have links with Saudi Arabia, the center of Salafism (Sahimi, 2009, p. 17). The sectarian and ethnic connections may extend to Bahrain, Kuwait and Iraq (Gause, 2010, p. 284). The Sunni GCC states believe that the Iranian alliance with (mainly Shia) Iraq presents a politicized security threat to them and to the US (see for example, Nasr, 2006).

The Sunni GCC states naturally hold anti–Shia sentiments. For them, the Shia are the Other and pose a societal threat. As evidence of the strong rivalry between the Sunni GCC states and Iran–Iraq ties, the GCC states accused the Shia-dominated Iraq and Iran of intervening in the domestic affairs of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (cf. Al-Sheikh 2010). The United Arab Emirates (UAE), the head of the GCC at the time, polarized the sectarian threat by submitting successful request in the name of the GCC states to cancel the 2011 Arab League summit in Baghdad because, they said, Iraq had backed (Al–Sheebib, 2011) opposition protests in Bahrain.

The Shia-Sunni conflict is an evidence that proves that differing ideologies are sufficient to generate mutually perceived societal threats between states governed by their respective adherents (for example see Gause, 2010, p. 241). The link between security and identity is proven in this article, but the Shia and Sunni conflict is a single example of such a link and its consequent societal threats: further research is needed to find other examples to reinforce the connection.

4. Conclusion

In this article, Process Tracing Method was used to understand the link between security and identity in the Persian Gulf region. Its core concept is that of a causal mechanism and it can synthesize theories from different disciplines. Process Tracing Method, however, offered an option to conduct a single study in order to determine the link between security and identity in the current security complex in the Persian Gulf region. It traced the processes and changes over time, thus adding a new dimension to Bennett et al.'s analyses of the situation.

The findings reported in the preceding sections indicate that religious differences between the Shia and Sunni Islam reinforced sectarian conflicts since the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. The US interventions have been aimed at exacerbating this rift. The Baloch people view themselves as an oppressed minority that has not received an equitable share of Iranian economic resources. As Jundallah members identify strongly with this group, the organization has sought to draw attention to the issue of Baloch rights by committing acts of terror against the Iranian state and the Shia majority residing in Iran. In addition to Khazaei's securitizing move, speeches by Ayatollah Khamenei have emphasized the sectarian dimensions of the Jundallah threat.

The analyses presented in this article extend to Jundallah's threat from the societal security perspective. However, the securitization of the Jundallah threat to the Shia population, particularly in the eastern border region, by the Iranian securitizing actors, and the emergency measures adopted under the auspices of combating Jundallah, indicate that the threat of Jundallah is connected to political arguments. In this sense, it is possible to reach the conclusion that securitization in this instance has brought

together military, political and societal discussions, and thus constituted an 'aggregate security'.

In addition to these findings, the analyses also revealed that the Baloch minority's economic marginalization is a significant aspect of Jundallah's terrorism vis-à-vis the Iranian government and its Shia population in the country's eastern border. However, Jundallah is not only an anti-Iranian group, but also an anti-Shia movement, and in this sense, the existing Shia and Sunni conflict has been exacerbating within Iran since the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

The research has also illustrated that a heterogeneous security complex exists in the region: various actors wielded power (regional states such as Iran, and transnational actors such as Jundallah), and numerous threats had arisen, mainly societal and identity-related threats. Whether it is appropriate, conflictual security complex has plagued the region ever more forcefully since 2003, and its existence does not support a path towards peace, stability or communal security. The object of establishing any security community is to reduce threats, but the threats under discussion are persistent; they are politicized and securitized threats that have arose in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq War. Process Tracing Method offers thus a way for policy–makers, experts, analysts, and sociologists to work together to reduce threats and risks. Serious planning is required to initiate the configuration of a security community in the region.

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Appendix 1: Causal Plan

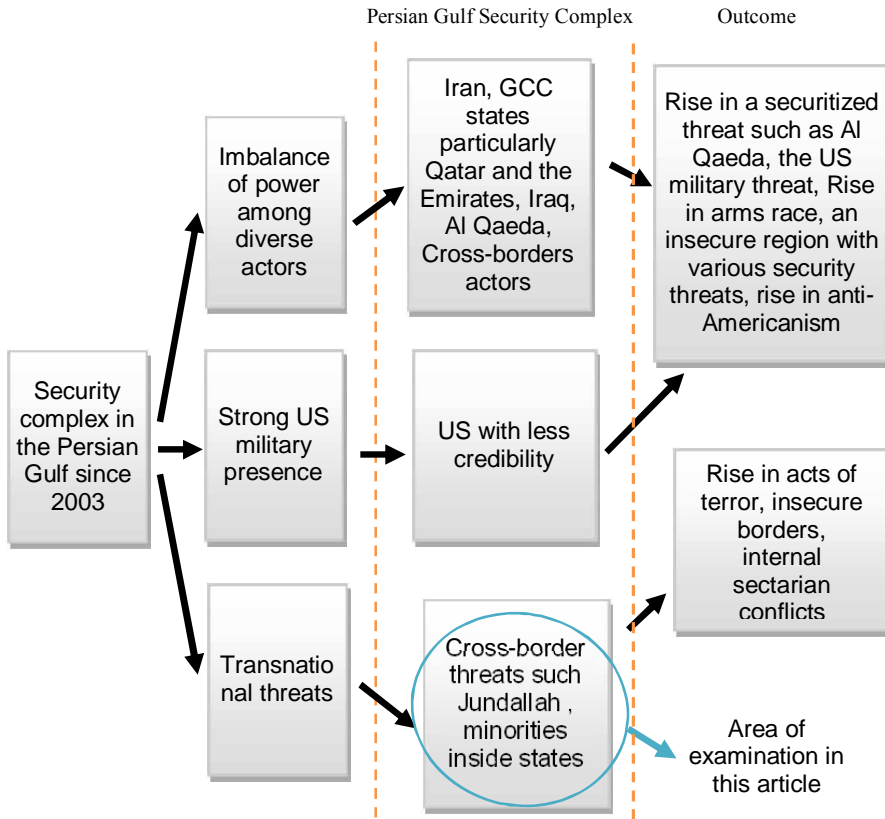**Figure 2:** The Causal Plan on the Security Complex in the Persian Gulf Region in the Post–Iraq War

Figure was proposed by author.