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ATATURK VS. SOLEIMANI: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY & CONTEMPORARY  
ARCHETYPES

by

Rachel R. Tolhurst

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Political Science

Approved:

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Logan, Utah

2021

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## ABSTRACT

Ataturk vs. Soleimani: Political Philosophy and Contemporary Archetypes

by

Rachel R. Tolhurst, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2021

Major Professor: Dr. Robert Ross

Department: Political Science

This project is a comparative case study of the lives of the late Iranian General, Qassem Soleimani and former president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The study is intended to reveal multiple similarities between these two historic figures through the scope of prominent political philosophy derived from the works of Plato and Machiavelli. Not only will it be identified that both men were devoted to a lifestyle of continuous study of military matters, a practice championed by Machiavelli's conceptualization of the perfect prince, but their characters served as exhibitions of Plato's "timocratic" man. However, near the end of their pre-political careers, only Ataturk was able to ascend to a position of political authority while Soleimani suffered an unprecedented assassination. The goal of this project is to demonstrate support for the argument that Machiavelli's prescriptions for constant militant vigilance promotes a sense of paranoia that hinders the pursuit of peripheral ambitions within a militant career. Thus, while Soleimani followed a primarily Machiavellian path to leadership, Ataturk, by virtue of his use of Platonic principles at the outset of his military career, became the better equipped man to enter the political world, martial as he was. By applying the

paradigms established by fundamental frameworks of political philosophy to contemporary figures of power, this study will not only demonstrate the manners in which the theories of these very different philosophers can work in conjunction with one another, but it will also provide an examination of how well the principles inspiring Plato and Machiavelli's ideas withstand the challenges associated with modern security threats. This study will draw evidence from the works of Plato & Machiavelli to provide a substantial theoretical background for this analysis and will also focus upon biographical accounts of Soleimani and Ataturk to elucidate anecdotal evidence to substantiate the major claims.

(64 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Ataturk vs. Soleimani: Political Philosophy and Contemporary Archetypes

Rachel R. Tolhurst

This thesis is an examination of the lives of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk through the lens of the political philosophies of Plato and Niccolò Machiavelli. Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk were noted for their militant lives and share certain qualities of character in their pre-political careers that provide a unique opportunity for a direct comparison and the formulation of a normative claim assessing their relative successes and/or failures despite their many similarities. Through the course of this research the conclusion asserts that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was a more capable man than Soleimani to ascend to a position of political power specifically due to his prioritization of Platonic principles from an early age which guided his pre-political career. Soleimani, on the other hand, pursued a militant path more consistent with the values of a Machiavellian prince and was therefore faced with a greater degree of difficulty in attempting to transition to political life. The theories of Plato and Machiavelli each propose strategies for moving toward an ideal state of governance but apply very different methods for achieving it. While Plato values the pursuit and inclusion of reason and enlightenment for all leaders, Machiavelli assigns more importance the object of power regardless of societal consciousness. Plato's most realistic model of a leader that is not the famed philosopher king, is the timocratic man, largely militant but not a stranger to the pursuit of reason. Machiavelli's model is a militant expert with a mastery of cunning and possibly duplicitous management of personal affairs. Ataturk more closely resembles the timocratic man than Soleimani in his early dedication to the goal of broad societal education and altruistic notions of political reform. Soleimani's life was more characterized by militancy and the elements of conflict and deception that arise in Machiavelli's model of leadership. As a result, Ataturk was more prepared to face the challenges of the political sphere and Soleimani was left vulnerable and ill-equipped to tackle international disputes.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to my brilliant committee members without whom this research project would not have been made possible. Dr. Robert Ross inspired the theoretical basis of this project and dedicated significant time and effort on my behalf to aid me in completing this goal. Dr. Anna Pechenkina provided critical input on my initial submissions which would ultimately shape the key elements of my thesis. Dr. John Pascarella not only provided precise analysis on the components of the political theories I utilized but also agreed to serve on my committee regardless of our never having met in person. Their tireless efforts and instruction guided my work, and their generous and patient dedication will astound and deeply touch my heart for the remainder of my days.

I give thanks to my mother who ceaselessly encouraged me as she has done in all other aspects of my life, and I credit the finalization of this long-term life goal entirely to her boundless love and support. I want to thank my friends and fellow students, Caden Thomas and Zachary Schmutz, who both made this experience so rewarding. They revealed themselves to be the truest of friends and I feel blessed and privileged to have obtained my education by their sides.

Rachel R. Tolhurst

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## INTRODUCTION

The assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in January of 2020 signified, for Iran, the loss of not only a major defender of Iranian dominance and sovereignty, but a man who symbolized the Shia values that underpinned the society's broader collective identity.<sup>1</sup> Following the fatal United States drone strike that claimed Qassem Soleimani's life, the world at large recoiled in shock and began to prepare themselves for the long years of conflict which would surely ensue due to this extrajudicial, targeted killing.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent studies and remembrances of his life, however, have each taken note of the extensive depths of Soleimani's militant lifestyle and have even gone so far as to label his methods as "Machiavellian".<sup>3</sup> Assigning distinct philosophical frameworks derived from historic political thinkers instantly contextualizes political behavior within the bounds of an established academic framework of interpretation. Such terminological depictions are accompanied by the associated traits with which they were contrived and therefore communicate a large breadth of information within the confines of a single word. Therefore, in order to avoid the promulgation of reductive understandings of prominent political theories, developing studies which clarify the inner workings of such concepts is an imperative step in identifying why this terminology is still relevant and important to this day. Modern studies of leadership are largely reflective of the standards of contemporary societies, however the regular application of historic political theory in examining leaders in the modern day demonstrates that these paradigms remain central in

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<sup>1</sup> Aslan, Reza. 2009. *Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious Extremism in the Age of Globalization*. Random House Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Osnos, Adam Entous and Evan. 2020. "Last Man Standing." *New Yorker*, February 10: 40-51.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, Michael. 2019. "Iran's Qasem Soleimani is the Mastermind Preparing Proxy Armies for War with America." *The Daily Beast*.

conceptualizing our ideas on differing leadership styles and categorically defining the traits that are often present within these heavily theoretical frameworks.

This study directly explores the impacts of applying the leadership paradigms of Machiavelli and Plato to the pre-political behaviors of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, two major militant figures in Middle Eastern history whose comparative legacies reveal stimulating insights on modern leadership. In formulating a normative claim concerning the relative efficacy of Qassem Soleimani's style of leadership as compared to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's, this research identifies that after applying the frameworks for effective leadership from the theories of Plato and Machiavelli, Ataturk was the better equipped man to transition from a militant lifestyle to a politically based career. Being a closer example of Platonic ideals than Soleimani, Ataturk, known for consistently exhibiting state-minded ambition for the betterment of the Turkish nation, was ultimately better prepared to engage with the challenging territory of political life. Alternatively, Soleimani, a militant expert and a true testament to Machiavelli's transcendent student of warfare and opportunity, did not possess an equivalent interest in broad reformation or educational and political efforts, and subsequently found the transition into the political sphere a much more difficult path to tread. The major conclusions of this research clarify the many distinctions between Machiavelli's concept of an ideal leadership figure and Plato's, arguably, most realistic model of practical leadership, the timocratic man. In retroactively comparing the leadership initiatives of two very similar subjects, this research uses Machiavelli and Plato's philosophical frameworks to assign meaning to these distinctions in a manner that produces significant analysis with regards to contemporary political behavior. It is observed through this study

that Ataturk's early interest in political change and community-wide improvement are indicative of several major Platonic principles championing state-minded selflessness and reason-based thinking which directly aided him in reaching his ultimate goal of a political career. Alternatively, Soleimani's primarily Machiavellian career path, shrouded in a constant state of warfare with little thought toward a political future, left him vulnerable and somewhat unprepared for the volatility of the political realm. Thus, Machiavellian efficiency with respect to militant vigilance, is perhaps best wielded in conjunction with Platonic principles which propel the broad cultivation of society-wide progress in the pursuit of higher reason.

### **Question**

*What characteristics are exemplified by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Qassem Soleimani that are consistent with the standards of Plato's prescriptions for effective leadership as opposed to Machiavelli's?*

The process of applying fundamental political theories to the observable behaviors of globally surveilled authority figures offers researchers the chance to test these theories for their ongoing relevance and to draw conclusions based upon the inferences that accompany the theoretical material. This project initially examines the work of Plato and Machiavelli separately to identify the relevant attributes that are present in the study subjects, Soleimani and Ataturk. The research discusses the theorists' perspectives on the utility and definitions of both ambition and leadership. It posits that Plato's version of realistic leadership re-centers personal ambition to include state-minded selflessness, while Machiavelli's advocates for the internalization of ambition to such a degree that it generates an overly defensive mindset, inhibiting the leader's ability

to adapt to the realities of the fluctuating political world. Plato and Machiavelli's theories are then examined together, identifying that while both Soleimani and Ataturk satisfy Machiavelli's standards by way of constant military study, Ataturk more completely fulfills the category of Plato's timocratic man. Analyzing these concepts in tandem reveals several possible explanations behind the very different demises of these astonishingly similar men.

This study was conducted in full knowledge of several assumptions which could have potentially influenced the resulting conclusions. Firstly, the death of Qassem Soleimani came at the hands of a foreign adversary and was violent in nature while Mustafa Kemal Ataturk died of natural causes long after his military career had come to an end.<sup>4</sup> This research assumes that Soleimani's assassination, although admittedly originating from an unprecedented<sup>5</sup> and impulsive political decision, could signify some degree of failure in terms of Soleimani's pre-political career as compared to Ataturk. However, this research will demonstrate that the argument positing that Ataturk had long possessed a greater capability than did Soleimani to ascend to a political career, originates from an in-depth analysis of political theory and considers the assassination to be a side effect rather than the reason for Soleimani's relative relegation for the purpose of this study. Indeed, the focus of the biographical examinations is restricted to the pre-political careers of each man to eliminate any bias based on the assassination event itself. Isolating the pre-political experiences of Soleimani and Ataturk is an effective method for drawing direct comparisons between the circumstances contributing to their character

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<sup>4</sup> Mango, Andrew. 1999. *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey*. The Overlook Press. Pg. 525.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Osnos, A. E. Pg. 40-51.

development as well as the nature of their extensive military occupations that preceded substantial political engagement. Secondly, this research assumes that the burden of proof which must be fulfilled to draw conclusions based upon the political theories of Plato and Machiavelli, is a sufficient analysis of the referenced components such that the anecdotal evidence is largely consistent with the nuances of the timocratic character and prescribed continuance of military study. From this analysis this research provides normative contentions in support of the argument that while both men were largely timocratic archetypes and consistent students of war for the duration of their pre-political careers, the differing utility and theoretical definitions of personal ambition appropriately serve as sufficient grounds to determine the concluding suppositions of this research.

The following sections of this project paper will begin with a review of the existing literature surrounding the subject of modern leadership analysis and describe the ways in which this research project departs from the prevailing academic narrative. Secondly, the paper will include a discussion of theory, offering explanations deciphering specific theoretical elements that serve as comparative tools supporting the research contentions. Subsequently, the paper includes a description of the case studies in the form of a detailed biographical account of Qassem Soleimani followed by that of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk with particular emphasis on each subject's pre-political career. The next section contains a discussion of the central normative contentions, utilizing theory and examples from each case study to compose a structured argument and draw conclusions about the research. Finally, the essay concludes with a summary of the findings and a discussion of areas for potential future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern research concerning leadership deals largely with issues of interpersonal communication and conflict resolution. Any setting within the confines of a hierarchical system is bound to have its difficulties. However, contemporary research concerning leadership styles and initiatives demonstrates the ways in which leaders are not only expected to behave under specific pressures but further promotes the growth of discussions surrounding the standards of contemporary societies and why emphasis on examining leadership matters. The breadth of modern research relating to leadership not only identifies the many ways in which average individuals are able to take initiative in a leadership role but also establishes the importance of leadership as a fundamental structure for establishing order and maintaining efficiency. The following sections contain broader descriptions of such research as well as a discussion of the use of political philosophy in evaluating leadership styles.

Existing research on the issue of leadership deals largely with communication and human-oriented decision making. A study published in the *Journal of Business and Psychology* in 2010 demonstrates how differing methods of communication between leaders their subordinates produce varying results in production outcomes and lends credence to arguments demonstrating that leaders possessing decisiveness and an aptitude for supportive and precise language are more capable of eliciting a positive and efficient work atmosphere.<sup>6</sup> The study's major implications are offered as reference material for the purpose of future training exercises for leadership roles in various settings, indicating

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<sup>6</sup> Reinout De Vries, Angelique Bakker-Pieper, and Wyneke Oostenveld. 2010. "Leadership = Communication? The Relations of Leaders' Communication Styles with Leadership Styles, Knowledge Sharing and Leadership Outcomes." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 367-380.

that modern studies on leadership initiatives regard leadership as something to aspire to and continually improve upon rather than something that comes as a natural ability.

Another major area of focus is the subject of conflict management. An examination of this dynamic conducted by Sameer Limbare in 2012 identifies that individual leader's methods of conflict management are often directly linked to their style of leadership.<sup>7</sup>

This directly impacts the relationships within authority structures and can reveal traceable outcomes of specific conflict management behaviors. This study was intended to indicate the most effective ways of dissolving internal disputes in a manner that improves the major professional mechanism but also helps leadership figures to adapt their modes of resolving disagreements to increase functionality and cohesiveness. While both of these major themes in modern research of leadership allow for the application of common principles of ideal leadership styles, the inclusion of political philosophy in support of the quantitative methodologies of studies such as these would provide additional leverage for researchers hoping to convey a meaningful precedent for the significance of leadership as a subject of study. Political philosophy stemming from historic leadership structures that still affect us today lends valuable insight to the inferences that are made with respect to such hierarchies and the principles they represent.

There are also multiple perspectives regarding the utility of political philosophy in the context of evaluating modern leadership initiatives. The value of Machiavellian notions is predominantly referenced as advocating selfish deviousness in his prescriptions for effective leadership under the burdens associated with unilateral authority.<sup>8</sup> Although

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<sup>7</sup> Limbare, Sameer. 2012. "Leadership Styles & Conflict Management Styles of Executives." *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 172-180.

<sup>8</sup> Caron, J. 2019. *The Prince 2.0: Applying Machiavellian Strategy to Contemporary Political Life*. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Machiavelli's work is credited by some scholars for reconstructing the bases of fundamental political thought at the time, others contend that Machiavelli's goal in writing *The Prince* was to apply these concepts within the context of observable history<sup>9</sup> rather than to discredit political philosophies already in existence. Machiavelli's theories depart from the traditional structure of Roman civil science as a technique for political study and instead utilize evidenced behavior of political figures to construct new interpretations and postulate explanations based upon the primary foundations of a secure civil society.<sup>10</sup> Machiavelli's work demonstrates the value of preserving a society in which law and order can be rapidly restored and upheld, and advocates for closer examination of political action as indicative components of human behavior. Machiavelli's arguments are largely empirical observations of recorded history and calculated human choices.<sup>11</sup> Concepts originating from moral tenets such as Machiavellian virtue<sup>12</sup> and ethics have been largely swathed in prima facie conversations that restrict the scope of psychosomatic reactions to political challenges in a world of ever-evolving social issues.

The broader discussion of Machiavelli's major contributions contends that Machiavelli is largely motivated by realism without regard for sentimentality in his hopes for peace in Italy. However, some scholars have taken extra care to examine his theoretical derivations and possible inspirations that deviate from popular assumptions. One such perspective comes from the writing of Isaiah Berlin who argued that

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<sup>9</sup> Viroli, Maurizio. 2004. *Machiavelli*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Viroli. Pg. 117.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Viroli. Pg. 123.

<sup>12</sup> Molchanoy, Mikhail A. 2016. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Leadership*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.



Machiavelli's prince is not amoral after all, but rather an ode to the tenets of moral values in ancient Greece as opposed to modern notions of morality.<sup>13</sup> Thus, for Machiavelli's purposes, the wellbeing and glory of the state is placed in higher regard than matters of individual virtue. This indicates that Machiavelli's princes need not worry about their personal salvation so long as their efforts toward the preservation of the state are in earnest. Another famous account of Machiavelli's motivations comes from Baruch Spinoza<sup>14</sup> who asserts that Machiavelli's work was not meant as a directive manual but rather as a warning intended to reveal to the citizens the ways in which leaders have and can continue to take advantage of the society for their own personal gain. These conclusions are drawn largely from the fact that Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* while in exile, and thus suggests that this work is intended to serve as a scathing critique of how the state truly operated. Nevertheless, this project's rendering of Machiavelli's philosophy subsidizes existing academia by demonstrating how the application of philosophical principles in the face of contemporary security concerns may allow for the evolution of these theories. Furthermore, such analysis may help to produce actionable intelligence and useful forecasts concerning the political behaviors of other non-democratic leaders.

Platonic exploration is conceivably the most prevalent when seeking observations concerning exhibitions of wisdom and virtue amongst rulers in modern history. The key narrative encompassing Plato's contributions to these discussions is couched in his depiction of the philosopher king whose mastery of inner equilibrium and wisdom make

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<sup>13</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 2013. "The Originality of Machiavelli." In *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, 33-100. Princeton University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Steinberg, Justin. 2008. "Spinoza's Political Philosophy." In *Stanford encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford University Press.

him the ideal leader to bring about harmony and profound development in civil societies.<sup>15</sup> Plato's representation of the republic illuminates the indispensable functions of cohesive societal components such that justice is ultimately demarcated as a condition in which both the society and the individual governing it has attained equilibrium between instinctive, primal urges and the will to pursue reason and enlightenment<sup>16</sup> primarily for the purpose of aiding the growth of a society unless its leader is a conduit for the completely pure, untainted, and unabated knowledge of the good.<sup>17</sup> Another approach to research applying Plato's leadership paradigms to modern leadership dilemmas is by dissecting the epistemological roots of Plato's major ideas. One study published in 1998 examines the foundations of Plato's ethical arguments identifying the primacy of self-sufficiency and moral reasoning as central but not independently sufficient attributes that assist a good leader.<sup>18</sup> It concludes that a managerial viewpoint on matters of organization and justice in tandem with charisma and transparency each have something invaluable to contribute to evolving modes of leadership behavior with respect to the ethical codes that define modern societies and restrict certain activities such as reality distortion and tyranny.

Another major discussion dissecting the finer points of Plato's dialectic is the subject of the role of military figures in civil societies. The research of G. R. Lucas opens a discussion surrounding the appropriate subject and functions of the guardians and warriors in the ideal state, clarifying that "The role of the modern warrior is the never-ending struggle against the abuse of power by tyrants and criminals and the protection of

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<sup>15</sup> Bloom, Allan. 1968. *The Republic of Plato*. Basic Books LLC.

<sup>16</sup> Miller, David. 2017. "*Justice*". University of Stanford.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 221-250.

<sup>18</sup> Takala, T. 1998. "Plato on Leadership." *Journal of Business Ethics* 785-798.

the vulnerable rights and liberties of their prospective victims. Warriors, as distinct from tyrants and criminals, use force reluctantly, and only when necessary, for this sole purpose: to protect the well-being of others, and never simply to harm them”.<sup>19</sup> His work pulls from a discussion of higher moral callings in the pursuit of justice and proposes that these principles are often overlooked in modern research. This research project departs from such studies and draws analytical support from Plato’s predeterminations of the timocratic<sup>20</sup> man in tandem with the moral values associated with Platonic principles to provide explanations for political actions and to further assess this framework in the context of security challenges that had yet to exist at the time of this theory’s conception. Furthermore, this research is similarly examined through the lens of Machiavelli’s notions of militant responsibility and appropriate methods of societal engagement.

This project provides supplementary comprehension to current political research on the applications of historic philosophy by presenting several consistencies in the characteristics of non-democratic leaders that generate useful inferences and could promote the development of forecasting matrixes for political actors in like administrations. If it is observed in the case studies that the conditions described by Plato in the creation of the timocratic man are applicable to the origins of either or both Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, it will then be concluded that the decisions made by each subject were likely partially inspired by the principles of Plato’s timocratic theory. If it is observed that in conjunction with the elements of Plato’s timocratic man, either or both subjects exhibit a pattern of regular engagement with

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<sup>19</sup> Lucas, G. R. n.d. *"Forgetful Warriors": Neglected Lessons on Leadership from Plato's Republic*. Annapolis: Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership. U.S. Naval Academy. Pg. 14-18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 226-227.

Platonic concepts championing altruism, education, and state-minded reformative efforts, it will be concluded that the subject in question is largely consistent with the values of leadership most closely associated with Plato's prescriptions for leadership.

Alternatively, if either or both subjects display a departure from these notions in pursuit of personal achievement and duplicitous activities, the conclusion will reflect that the behavior of the subject in question is more consistent with a Machiavellian model of leadership. If one subject is found to reflect Platonic values and the other exemplifies Machiavelli's prescriptions, it will then be concluded that this distinction is a major element in determining the overall effectiveness of the leadership styles that are described in each case study.

## THEORY

The philosophies of Plato and Machiavelli in describing the attributes of competent and effective leaders each call for differing qualities of personal character with the common goal of reaching an ideal state. Machiavelli's depiction of the perfect prince conjures imagery of a master tactician with an extraordinary sense of situational awareness and an unmatched ability to wield the best and worst aspects of human nature to manipulate his reality and secure his position of authority. Alternatively, Plato's philosopher king is a man swathed in the pure intention of the pursuit and dissemination of truth in the face of the warped realities created by lesser ambitious men, tasked with applying this knowledge to faithfully guide civilization toward an elevated level of conscious equilibrium. While there are certain complementary elements from each philosopher, it is imperative to clarify the fundamental distinctions which separate the underlying connotations of these concepts. Firstly, Plato's work includes a detailed description in descending order of the regime types and leadership styles that follow the decay of the ideal state beginning with the timocratic man, molded by the circumstances of his upbringing. Although this Platonic figure is not the ideal philosopher king, he is nevertheless still capable of accessing the components of his soul that are guided by reason and can therefore act in accordance with several Platonic principles despite being a largely militant figure by nature. Secondly, Machiavelli prescribes vigilant attention to the continual study of military strategy for leaders hoping to take and maintain control in their respective realms. This militant figure, however, departs from Plato's timocratic model by virtue of its being a broadly accessible directive toward dominant sovereignty in full acceptance of duplicitous and manipulative practices. The following includes a

synopsis of the theory components which have been applied for the purpose of this research.

### **Plato and the Timocratic Man**

The biographical study of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk reveals striking similarities in the characteristics of each subject, namely their early subjection to governmental blunders, ascension to power from humble origins, and distinct proclivity for combative strategy. Plato's depiction of the timocratic man illustrates the circumstances in which astutely militant figures can develop and provides analysis concerning the accompanying personal attributes that influences their behavior. Plato's character profile of the timocratic man portrays a martial epitome whom, despite the contentiousness and natural ambition<sup>21</sup> that accompanies his temperament, is an honor and victory seeking<sup>22</sup> man, a remnant of the "Laconian regime".<sup>23</sup> Though he aims to serve a greater purpose, the timocratic man is "not single-minded towards virtue"<sup>24</sup> and is apt to indulge in his vices more so than the archetype of the philosopher king. For Plato, Timocracy, termed as the government of honor, is a degradation of the ideal state in which the inequities which are bound to arise in any growing population create internal conflicts and forge characters of a different constitution than those in Plato's ideal state under the philosopher king.<sup>25</sup> As for the society itself, many cultural aspects of the previous governmental era would remain, however, "the fear of admitting philosophers to power"<sup>26</sup> would result in a departure from the peaceful, reason-governed logos that once

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<sup>21</sup> Jowett, Benjamin. 2021. *The Republic*. Monee, Illinois. Pg. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 223.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 223.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 158.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 159.

prevailed and instead lead to a convergence of passion-driven and warlike tendencies.<sup>27</sup>

The timocratic man that develops from such societal origins is likely to witness the hardships of his father under the strain of ineffectual governance<sup>28</sup>, and observe the frustrations of his family<sup>29</sup> and servants in witnessing his father's ostensible submission to subjugation in the face of foolhardy governmental policies and ill treatment from his fellow men.<sup>30</sup> It is only when he grows older and steps out into the broader world that his latent desire to escape the condition of being at another's mercy comes to fruition.

The timocratic man observes that the ambitious and appetitive behaviors of some produce more success and respect than the more subservient and rational principles championed by his father.<sup>31</sup> He therefore places great stock in behaviors which bring him recognition and triumph and he embraces his personal aspirations often in pursuit of militant excellence and sustained wealth.<sup>32</sup> Plato describes this timocratic figure as remarkably obedient to authority; "he is a lover of ruling and honor, not basing his claim to rule on speaking or anything of the sort, but on warlike deeds and everything connected with war".<sup>33</sup> The characters of timocratic men in Plato's view, are largely the result of having placed priority upon physical and combative accomplishments whilst neglecting exercises in philosophical reason. "They weren't educated by persuasion but by force - the result of neglect of the true Muse accompanied by arguments and philosophy while giving more distinguished honor to gymnastics than music".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 225.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 160.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 227.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 161.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 161.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 225.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 227.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 225.

Nevertheless, the timocratic man, in Plato's mind, is still able to ascend to the portion of the soul that is midway between reason and desire, proving himself to be courageous if perhaps somewhat aggressive in achieving his goals.<sup>35</sup> "He doesn't have a bad man's nature"<sup>36</sup> and is not so far removed from Plato's ideal as to be selfish and greedy like those dwelling within an oligarchy.<sup>37</sup> The timocratic man is a realistic portrayal of an ambitious, physically inclined being whose aspirations surpass those of his predecessors and whose actions are guided by this desire to rise.

### **Machiavelli and the Study of War**

In researching the lives of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Qassem Soleimani, there appears a shared ethical motto which guided their military careers and ensured their ascendancy as prominent martial experts: consistent dedication to the study of military strategy. In the words of Norman Schwartzkopf, "the more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war".<sup>38</sup> Machiavelli emphasizes that an essential element of protecting and constructing a fearsome and respectable reputation as a leader is the continual study of military subjects. "A prince who is ignorant of military matters [...] cannot be esteemed by his soldiers, nor have confidence in them. He ought, therefore, never to let his thoughts stray from the exercise of war; and in peace he ought to practice it more than in war, which he can do in two ways: both by action and by study".<sup>39</sup> Machiavellian efficiency is largely measured through manifestations of militant success despite possible violations of ethical boundaries. However, more than simply making constant

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Jowett. Pg. 160.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 227.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 228.

<sup>38</sup> Norton, Monica. 1991. "Naval Academy Graduates Get A Schwartzkopf Send-Off "The More You Sweat in Peace, the Less You Bleed in War"." *The Baltimore Evening Sun*, May 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ricci, Luigi. 1921. *The Prince*. Oxford World Classics.



demonstrations of military might, Machiavelli stressed that it is essential for leaders to make a habit of the ceaseless study of history and warfare such that the lessons thereof may assist him in forming pre-emptive battle strategies. He prescribes that even and perhaps most especially during periods of peace, leaders must be contemplative of potential threats and be actively developing tactics for defending his territory. “He must [...] learn the nature of the land. [...] This knowledge is useful in two ways. In the first place, one learns to know one’s country, and can the better see how to defend it. Then by means of the knowledge and experience gained in one locality, one can easily understand any other that it may be necessary to venture on. [...] From a knowledge of the country in one province, one can easily arrive at a knowledge of others”.<sup>40</sup>

The centrality of martial expertise was central to Machiavelli as an article of leadership. “A prince should have no other object, nor any other thought, not take anything else as his art but that of war [...], for that is the only art which is of concern to one who commands. And it is of such virtue that not only does it maintain those who have been born princes but many times it enables men of private fortune to rise to that rank”.<sup>41</sup> He cites the success of Francesco Sforza in becoming a duke due to possessing adequate arms to do so and clarifies that the condition of being unarmed makes a man contemptible and unlikely to inspire loyalty.<sup>42</sup> Machiavelli also praises Philopoemen, prince of the Achaeans for ceaselessly pondering modes of war, noting that this continued cogitation prevented the occurrence of any situation which he could not overcome with his soldiers.<sup>43</sup> The constant pursuit of military knowledge must therefore be conducted

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Ricci. Pg. 54.

<sup>41</sup> Mansfield, Harvey C. 1985. *The Prince by Niccolò Machiavelli*. The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 58.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 60.

through deeds and study. “Besides keeping his armies well-ordered and exercised, he should always be out hunting, and through this accustom the body to hardships, and meanwhile he should learn the nature of the sites. [In this fashion] one learns to know one’s own country, and one can better understand its defense”.<sup>44</sup> As for mental engagement, Machiavelli insists upon intensive reflection of historic battles and the emulation<sup>45</sup> of great men whose wartime victories brought them long-term success. Remaining in continual observance of history and actively engaging with the nuances of battle strategy is, in Machiavelli’s view, a surefire method of making oneself prepared to face the challenges of changing fortunes and external dangers.

The value of having access to two distinct martial profiles from Plato and Machiavelli depicting an idealistic military figure is found in a broader discussion of the motives behind their conception. The function of keeping Plato’s timocratic man separate from Machiavelli’s conceptualization of a vigilant military expert is a matter of distinguishing between one’s nature and the voluntary pursuit of power. The timocratic man is a figure whose roots from a struggling, subjugated family simply instills in him the desire to acquire general respect rather than an innate instinct for martial strategy. This, in Plato’s view, usually results in the timocratic man’s pursuit of athletic demonstrations of greatness such as military endeavors, but he is not violent by nature and his skills come only as a result of his engagement with physical modes of routine. Alternatively, Machiavelli’s recommendations for the ideal prince are composed as a manual for success regardless of the nature of the man in power. His depiction of a militant expert is simply a man who consciously engages with the strategies he outlines

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 59.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 60.

as a matter of prudent choice. Indeed, one of Machiavelli's goals in writing the prince was to demonstrate that nearly any figure of authority that was willing to commit to the prescribed regimen of study and adapt his instincts would be able to succeed and defend his sovereignty. Alternatively, Plato contends that a timocratic man could only arise from a very precise set of circumstances rendering this character far more unique. This distinction between the major theoretical tools being applied is essential in accurately communicating the significance of these concepts in the context of the case study subjects.

## CASE STUDIES

The cases I have chosen to evaluate are the pre-political careers of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk; two prominent military figures hailing from non-democratic regimes in the Middle East, born into nations on the cusp of major political and social change. The specific development of revolutionary societal movements as a direct response to ineffectual governance in the early stages of both cases presents a similar narrative to the events that were occurring during the historical eras in which Machiavelli and Plato wrote their theories concerning leadership and authority. Machiavelli's, *The Prince*, was partly inspired by his desire to see a martial hero like Lorenzo de 'Medici<sup>46</sup> rescue Italy from the hands of barbarous invaders that had long plagued its shores. Plato's *Republic* was written in a time when Athens was experiencing multiple violent and abrupt governmental shifts that often cast the entire community into chaos.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, these biographies reflect the two major philosophical elements being utilized in substantiation of the essay's major claims, Plato's classification of the timocratic man and Machiavelli's prescribed vigilance in pursuit of militant wisdom. Both Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk exuded these qualities, but only one was able to successfully apply them for the purpose of transitioning from a military profession to a political career.

Though the concepts of the timocratic man and Machiavelli's perfect prince are used to identify the many similarities between both study subjects, these classifications represent two very different leadership methods. While the timocratic man is still a model of militant efficiency, he remains rooted to platonic concepts such as selflessness and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Rubin, Gil. n.d. *Historical Context for Plato's Republic*. Department of History Columbia University.

transparency for the good of those he leads. Machiavellian princes, on the other hand, embrace the use of duplicity and rely upon force rather than reason-based persuasion to guide their constituencies. Through the course of this study, it can be observed that both Soleimani and Ataturk were dedicated students of war and shared similar timocratic characteristics arising from like circumstances. However, overall, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk more fully embodied the breadth of Platonic principles than Soleimani, whose path more closely mirrors that of Machiavelli's militant prince. This observation lends credence to the idea that leaders who more readily embrace concepts consistent with Platonic wisdom and ambition in their pre-political lives are better equipped to field the challenges associated with political careers. Alternatively, leaders that assign higher value to matters of warfare and conflict over matters of the mind and societal enlightenment have a higher degree of difficulty when faced with the realities of the political world. The next section is a summary profile of Iranian political development, followed by the biographical account of the Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. This will precede a summary profile of Turkish political development, and a subsequent biography of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

### **Iranian Political Development**

The history of the Iranian nation is largely characterized by its ancient Persian roots; where "one of the world's oldest nations, heir to a tradition that reaches back thousands of years, to periods when great conquerors extended their rule across continents, poets and artists created works of exquisite beauty, and one of the world's most extraordinary religious traditions took root and flowered. Even in modern times, which have been marked by long periods of anarchy, repression, and suffering, Iranians

are passionately inspired by their heritage".<sup>48</sup> Modern political development in Iran is largely colored by the oil stalemate between 1951 and 1953 in which Iranian oil supplies were nationalized by Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in response to rampant economic exploitation by its western partners.<sup>49</sup> However, this decision ultimately resulted in an economic and governmental crisis and the Prime Minister was forcibly ousted from power at the behest of covert American action, and the Iranian Shah was restored to power, an appointment which would precipitate the beginnings of the Iranian Revolution.<sup>50</sup> The era under Reza Shah Pahlavi is marked by oppression and widespread corruption, and the Shah's overtly western orientation left the people and the clergy with the sense that secularism and western influences were distorting the sanctity of Iran's Islamic identity.<sup>51</sup> This discontentment was further exacerbated by an economic system which favored the middle classes but prevented further economic development and by the Shah's harsh authoritarian retaliation against public criticism and dissent.<sup>52</sup> This angst culminated in the 1979 Revolution in which the Shah fled Iran in defeat and the rule of Iran was transferred to the hands of Ayatollah Khomeini whose primary goal was to transform the Iranian nation to into a society governed by the central pillar of Shiite Islam.<sup>53</sup> The Iranian nation, though religiously reformed, has since faced no shortage of

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<sup>48</sup> Kinzer, Stephen. 2008. *All the Shah's Men*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

<sup>49</sup> Ochsenwald, Sydney Nettleton Fisher & William. 1990. *The Middle East: A History*. 4th. McGraw-Hill Inc. Pg. 513-530.

<sup>50</sup> Matin-Asgari, Afshin. 2012. "The Pahlavi Era Iranian Modernity in Global Context." In *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, edited by Touraj Daryaee. Oxford University. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199732159.013.0016.

<sup>51</sup> Devos, Bianca. 2014. *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of Modern Society in Iran*. Edited by Christoph Werner. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

<sup>52</sup> Jahanbegloo, Ramin. 2013. *Iran: A Century of Undemocratic Violence*. London: Plagrave Pivot. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137330178\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137330178_2).

<sup>53</sup> J. S. Ismael, T. Y. Ismael. 2014. "Social Change in Islamic Society: The Political Thought of Ayatollah Khomeini." *Social Problems* (Society for the Study of Social Problems) 27 (5): 601-619.

international conflicts; it was first challenged by the long Iran-Iraq War in the 1980's and has faced ceaseless conflicts since in the surrounding regions and internationally as its engagement in proxy warfare and pursuit of nuclear weapons<sup>54</sup> inspire global terror.

### **Qassem Soleimani**

Qassem Soleimani's life is largely characterized by his singular adeptness for wielding his remarkable martial skills in exacting the will of the Iranian state with brutal efficiency. His lifestyle was reminiscent of his urban roots from which he developed an unparalleled knowledge of tribalistic conflict resolution and communication skills. Soleimani was widely revered for his complete and unrestrained devotion to his role as a wartime tactician and protector of Iran's regional goals. For the Iranian people and the Ayatollahs under which he so faithfully served, he represented the very purpose of the 1979 revolution. "Soleimani might not have been part of the urban social and intellectual elites, but he was exactly who the revolution had championed: the ordinary downtrodden".<sup>55</sup> He is remembered for possessing a fierce commitment to his position and is characterized as a man devoid of fear, often desiring to be directly engaged in the heart of combat amongst his fellow soldiers, truly a lion among men.<sup>56</sup> These extraordinary characteristics are at least somewhat derived from the conditions in which Qassem Soleimani was raised in combination with his early fascination for the intricacies of physical combat that carried over into his military career. Indeed, military study would ultimately become the singular mode by which Soleimani lived his life, a true manifestation of Machiavelli's ideal expert in matters of combat.

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<sup>54</sup> Jett, Dennis C. 2018. *The Iran Nuclear Deal: Bombs, Bureaucrats, and Billionaires*. Pennsylvania: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 66.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 142.

Likened to the timocratic man, so carefully described by Plato, Soleimani's ambition is largely a product of his desire to rise above the circumstances of his own family, to surpass the accomplishments of his father such that he need not toil at the hands of those with the power to make his life difficult. "Qassem grew up with a father who had to live with debt and could not provide for his family the way he wanted".<sup>57</sup> Hailing from a miniscule rural community in Qanat Molk, and on the outskirts of any influential Iranian circles, Soleimani was a member of the downtrodden who had suffered the consequences of multiple detrimental land reform attempts by the incompetent Shah during the White Revolution<sup>58</sup> that took place in his youth.<sup>59</sup> The Soleimani family was not only deprived of the lands so intently promised to them by Reza Shah, but the overwhelming debt they descended into due to this unfulfilled promise left them shrouded in a veil of shame.<sup>60</sup> Despite their financial difficulties, Qassem worked construction-based jobs around the region in the summer months and he was able to complete his high school degree which would grant him access to a wide range of employment opportunities. By 1975, Qassem found an occupation which would take him far from his home and on to the next transformative phase of his young life in the city of Kerman.<sup>61</sup>

As Soleimani experienced the vibrant cultural expanse that urban life had to offer, he stumbled upon the practice of martial arts which not only fascinated and enthralled him but would play a crucial role in distinguishing him as a superb physical combatant in

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Shahbaz, Kurush. "Iran's White Revolution." *World Affairs*, vol. 126, no. 1, 1963, pp. 17–21. [www.jstor.org/stable/20670270](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20670270). Accessed 12 Aug. 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 14.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 16.



his early military career. “Kermani karate had found a most enthusiastic student and Qassem had found a pursuit that gave his life meaning, perhaps more than any other thing he had ever done”.<sup>62</sup> Having worked for much of his life on construction sites that required demanding manual labor, Soleimani spent a great deal of time at local gyms and was the physical superior of many Kermani locals which only encouraged his interest in leading a highly athletic life.<sup>63</sup> Not only did this allow him to pursue his keen interest in Iranian karate but he also bonded with boxers and other athletes that would eventually become his close military companions such as Ali Akbar Pooriani<sup>64</sup>, his future deputy. Timocratic in his obsession with physical demonstrations of power in exchange for recognition and respect, this marked the beginning of Soleimani’s continual study of militant strategy, as is required of Machiavelli’s perfect princes, and would ultimately signify a major departure from Platonic ideals and a convergence with the latter.

However, the mid 1970’s in Iran would present an altogether new area of interest for Soleimani as a wave of revolutionary clerics began to gain popularity amongst the populace. As he wrestled with his role in this unfamiliar urban society, Soleimani began attending mosque services, “Qassem wasn’t particularly religious but where else would an ambitious young man who didn’t quite match with the Jack London-reading crowd fit”.<sup>65</sup> He was particularly struck by Seyyed Reza Kamyab’s criticism of the Shah’s white revolution in 1977.<sup>66</sup> “The rising economic difficulties of the country and an apparently wobbling shah had given the revolutionary movement a new lease on life. [...] Qassem

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 23.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 23.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 25.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 26.

Soleimani would later say: ‘My revolutionary struggles began when I heard a speech by Martyr Kamyab’”.<sup>67</sup> By the end of 1978, tensions between the Shah and his people were at the point of no return after brutal crackdowns on clerical figures unleashed an irreversible torrent of outrage and radical efforts. “Now was the time to make history, to be part of something bigger than the tribe or the village, bigger than the world of karate even. Qassem had not helped make the revolution, but the revolution was sure to help make him”.<sup>68</sup> Invigorated by the thrall of the changes to come and bolstered by a confidence in his own physical prowess, Soleimani’s dedication to military matters became all but a permanent fixture which would define the course of his life.

Eager to aid to revolution, Soleimani seized his opportunity upon the emergence of the Iran-Iraq war. Following its genesis in 1979, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) became the “most consequential militia in the history of the Middle East”<sup>69</sup> and immediately began recruiting volunteer Muslims. Although Soleimani was initially rejected for the corps itself, he joined a local reserve corps connected to the IRGC but was soon granted his wish when the revolution fell under threat of a foreign enemy: Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.<sup>70</sup> The full Iraqi offensive began in September of 1980. “By attacking and occupying Iranian territory, Saddam Hussein had triggered forces beyond his imagination. The Iran-Iraq War became not the undoing of the Islamic Republic but a cauldron of fire in which the nascent republic consolidated itself and bolstered its rule. [...] The fierce patriotism of Iranians had been awakened against a

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 26.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 27.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 47.

foreign invader”.<sup>71</sup> In 1981 Soleimani was one of three hundred Kermani soldiers sent to fight. His physical prowess, thanks to his martial arts background, was quickly detected by senior figures and less than one month after Saddam Hussein’s forces attacked Iran in 1980, Soleimani was sent to coach physical education at the Quds Training Barracks<sup>72</sup>; the term “Quds” here signifying Jerusalem and the existential goal of reclaiming this holy ground from the Israelis. The training of physical ability as well as ideological attitudes was a key component in the shaping of the IRGC<sup>73</sup> and would in due course play a major role in determining Soleimani’s fearsome reputation in the eyes of Israeli leadership and ensuring the respect and loyalty of his men. “He was physically strong and had this sense of determination that made him noticeable. [...] He learnt how to say the right things about Islam and the revolution, but his focus was on the military matters”.<sup>74</sup>

Soleimani’s physical prowess, commitment to the Quds force, and determination to push back Iran’s enemies helped him surge forward in his career at a young age and highlighted his ability to mobilize large groups of soldiers in the spirit of brotherhood and unity for the purpose of serving a higher cause. “The young commander spoke of love and God in his first real speech. The words of God asking for love and death were central to Soleimani’s [addresses]”.<sup>75</sup> His ability to appeal to religious tenets in conjunction with heroic military attitudes was perhaps unparalleled and remained a key aspect of his rhetoric through the entire course of his life. Soleimani, being a member of the fray from his birth understood that one did not have to be an intellectual in Iran to speak the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 63.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 72.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 72.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 73.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 82-83.

universal language of Islamism that could be understood by all Iranians in an instant. This is the lightning rod which was utilized to rally warriors and encourage the sacrifice of life and limb from Iranian soldiers that made Soleimani such a decisively effective leader. His charisma and quiet sense of purpose gripped all those in his audience and his efforts in this regard inspired strength and national pride throughout the entire nation for the holy sacrifices that had been made for the sake of national security. “Thus, Soleimani gave hope to the soldiers while also initiating them into the world of martyrdom”.<sup>76</sup> The idea that wartime goals were not simply for earthly gains but for elevating the reach of Islam into the world is not a new notion in the middle east, but Soleimani’s use of the concept of cosmic war<sup>77</sup> was strikingly effective and bolstered his reputation in Iran as a defender of the nation as well as the faith. However, Soleimani’s application of religious tenets in motivating and directing his forces is reflective of a major Machiavellian stratagem in which leadership figures were advised to take advantage of religion<sup>78</sup> to manipulate one’s followers and serve one’s own purposes. Though the invocation of religious terminology hearkens back to historic cultural practices in Middle Eastern warfare, Soleimani’s willingness to regularly wield this power to deadly effect indicates and alignment with Machiavelli’s standards in complete opposition to Platonic principles.

After proving himself as a leader in the IRGC with the men in his charge being the most disciplined and responsive to military commands, Soleimani was given command over two battalions by the age of twenty five, jumpstarting his career and catapulting him into the spotlight where he spoke words of encouragement and faith to

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 83.

<sup>77</sup> Aslan, Reza. 2009. *Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious Extremism in the Age of Globalization*. Random House Inc.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 68-71.

thousands of soldiers at a time. In 1982 he accomplished successive battlefield victories at crucial locations beginning in the besieged city of Shush, aiding in turning the tide in Iran's favor and prompting his commanding officers to grant Soleimani authority over his own independent IRGC brigade which was composed of thousands of soldiers.<sup>79</sup> Hassan Bagheri, a gifted war tactician himself and Soleimani's overseer, tasked Soleimani with the liberation of a contested area in the Ilam province of Iran in what would be called Operation Manifest Destiny<sup>80</sup> which Soleimani would later come to call the "best operation of his life".<sup>81</sup> With his battalion whittled down to roughly a hundred men, Soleimani devised an ingenious ploy to trick the Iraqi forces and gain the advantage. They assembled a massive collection of vehicles with no fighters in them and set them on a path toward the Iraqis in the border village of Abu Gharib prompting the Iraqi forces to flee from their strongholds and cede the position. Soleimani remembered the incident with pride recounting that "despite the lack of weapons, we, the militants of Islam, had been able to take 3,000 Iraqis prisoner".<sup>82</sup> His legacy grew with each conquest and so did the impact of each triumph; "the Iraqis seemed to have little defense when faced with human waves of armies with revolutionary zeal, not least because these armies were fighting in the occupied territories of their own country".<sup>83</sup> Soleimani maintained a fearsome reputation throughout the duration of the Iran-Iraq War, a truly masterful tactician with a keen sense of military matters as a credit to his vigilant attention to the study of strategy and its applications in battle.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 87.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 88.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 89.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 89.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 89.

Soleimani's devotedness to the cause of Ayatollah Khomeini was particularly apparent through the late 1980's<sup>84</sup> when Iran was truly alone in battling its many enemies. Upon having received no support from the UN or the US despite them each having knowledge of Iraqi forces using chemical weapons on Iranian civilians and after suffering the loss of Iran Air flight 655, the Ayatollah accepted a ceasefire in 1988 and described this concession as having drunk "a chalice of poison".<sup>85</sup> In the days after Khomeini's death, Iranian society had undergone yet another transformation in which the role of the IRGC came into question. Soleimani returned to his home province of Kerman where he reconnected with his roots in tribal culture with members of the IRGC to police the areas that had been polluted with drug lords, bandits, and outlaws.<sup>86</sup> It was through this endeavor of regional pacification that Soleimani carved himself an enduring role in repairing post-war Iran. Not only did he protect the nation from internal and external threats, but he applied several of Machiavelli's defensive concepts in using his prior knowledge of tribal societies and local geography<sup>87</sup> to negotiate regional peace with tribal communities as well as improve these areas with the promotion of agriculture<sup>88</sup>, an effort that did not go unnoticed by President Rafsanjani, with whom Soleimani would come to forge a lasting bond. In 1992 Soleimani solidified his religious codification by taking the holy pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and in 1998, Hajj Qassem Soleimani was named the commander of Ayatollah Khamenei's Quds Force and would "turn the nondescript force into the most ambitious expeditionary army in the history of the Middle East".<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Madj, Hooman. 2008. *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ*. New York: Anchor Books.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 116.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 124.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 59.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 128.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 134.

Soleimani's influence spread through the years<sup>90</sup> to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Afghanistan, uniting an integrated transnational army under largely sectarian Shia sensibilities and common purpose.<sup>91</sup> He forged lasting connections with regional leaders through his knowledge of historic cultural ties and avoided rash decisions based on Quranic whims and instead became known for his calm use of strategic patience.<sup>92</sup> By the time Soleimani had entered what would become the final decade of his life, he had established a legacy of protecting national interests whilst simultaneously advancing Iranian pursuits across the Middle East despite considerable and nearly constant opposition on multiple fronts. Having become the hub of anti-Zionist sentiments by 2011<sup>93</sup>, the Iranian footprint came to be recognized globally for its brutal efficacy and its leaders for their capability to preserve the narrative of protection for Islamists everywhere from oppressive dictatorships. By 2013 global debate over the threatening status of Iran's nuclear program and its bitter feud with Israeli leadership took center stage in global political discussion.<sup>94</sup> Soleimani's role over the following 7 years would encapsulate the pinnacle of his power and craft for him a widely recognized reputation of greatness and talent, an essential element of Machiavelli's recommendations for princes to be held in high esteem.<sup>95</sup>

The rise of ISIS in Syria created a unique opportunity for the Islamist regime to expand its power and influence win the region. Soleimani's Quds force dedicated itself to

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<sup>90</sup> Zimmt, Raz. 2015. *Portrait of Qassem Soleimani, Commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Qods Force, Instigator of Iranian Subversion and Terrorism in the Middle east and Around the Globe*. Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 167-188.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 189.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 212.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 221.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Mansfield. Pg. 89.

combatting advances from the Islamic State and Iran established several unlikely coalitions not just with the United States and Iraqi militias, but also with Kurdish forces who had an open alliance with Iran's sworn nemesis; Israel.<sup>96</sup> "Soleimani's rushing to the scene brought him praise at home and abroad. [...] Many young people in Iran who would have never gone anywhere near an IRGC figure now loved to share the heroic images of his presence in the battleground".<sup>97</sup> However, this seemingly robust joint venture was not to last as Iranian leaders rallied the Shia from Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq to defend one of the world's most hated dictators: Bashar Al-Assad.<sup>98</sup> The Syrian conflict in conjunction with growing concern surrounding Iran's nuclear ambitions and ballistic missile capabilities ushered in the end of cooperation between Iran and the United States. Despite the ratification of the JCPOA in 2015, Iranian friction with American forces and regional<sup>99</sup> enemies in the Middle East only grew and by 2017, the Trump Administration and Soleimani himself traded political blows via social media and through proxy conflicts within the territory.<sup>100</sup> The Israeli threat<sup>101</sup>, in tandem with President Trump's maximum pressure campaign was unleashed in 2019 and the Quds Force, under Soleimani's command, continued its pursuit of regional expansion and exerted defiant, aggressive responses to these assaults, namely the asymmetrical warfare used to attack oil installations in Saudi Arabia.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 234.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 234.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 239.

<sup>99</sup> Soufan, Ali. 2018. "Qassem Soleimani and Iran's Unique Regional Strategy." *CTC Sentinel* 1-10.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 249.

<sup>101</sup> Roshan, Parisa., Nader, Alireza., Kaye, Dalia Dassa. *Israel and Iran: A Dangerous Rivalry*. United States: RAND Corporation, 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 249.



Although the feud between Donald Trump and Qassem Soleimani escalated throughout 2019 and was undoubtedly the inspiration behind the decision for the general's assassination, it was clear that Soleimani did not believe his work in Iran would come to such an abrupt end. In his final months, the famed general took a more active role in engaging in social media and addressing ongoing cultural issues such as defending women who chose not to don a hijab and lending personal assistance in Khuzestan after local authorities had failed to effectively respond to a flood in the area.<sup>103</sup> He even considered for the first time positioning himself for a future in government, going so far as to have his men investigate the possibility of his candidacy for president in 2021.<sup>104</sup> However, events spiraled out of control in December of 2019 as the US and Iran traded strikes against one another<sup>105</sup> in a variety of forms. Soleimani's refusal to cease his aggressive stratagems against the United States was repaid by January 3, 2020, with the fateful drone strike that ended his life. Millions took to the streets across the Middle East, some in misery and others in celebration, but one thing was certain; Soleimani's assassination came in an unprecedented fashion and this event would scar the Iranian nation for years to come.

At the beginning of his life, Soleimani's choices were somewhat consistent with the characteristics of the timocratic man. Born under lesser circumstances and desiring to surpass the accomplishments of his father, Soleimani sought out physical demonstrations of greatness early on and gleaned respect from activities such as karate and wrestling

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 249.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 250.

<sup>105</sup> Makhura B. Rapanyane., Shai, Kgothatso B. 2020. "The Dynamics of Seven Days of "War of Words" and its implications on USA- Iran Relations." *Gender & Behavior* (University of Limpopo: Department of Cultural and Political Studies) 18 (2).

before transitioning to a militant career. In his adult life, he encouraged the cultivation of agriculture to the remote tribal regions he became familiar with in his youth, promoting a community-minded improvement for the better of the nation. In his final months, he took more of an open interest in political issues and began to engage in broader discussions of cultural change. However, the majority of Soleimani's life was ultimately defined more by Machiavellian concepts than Platonic. A student of warfare from the moment he took an interest in karate, his military career occupied the lion's share of his life and within it he displayed a willingness to manipulate and alter the fabric of his reality to accomplish his wartime objectives. Soleimani's intricate knowledge of regional geography aided him in not only defending Iranian territory but also in planning offensives in neighboring regions to wage proxy warfare. His life was consumed by combat on all fronts and though his mind turned toward politics in his final days, his assassination leaves nothing but unanswered questions regarding what form his political career might have taken.

### **Turkish Political Development**

The modern Turkish state is marred by violence and political unrest under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan<sup>106</sup> whose reform of Turkish society signifies a significant departure from the secular principles that had been established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>107</sup> However, despite this current political reversion, Turkey's Ottoman and Byzantine<sup>108</sup> roots still underpin the broader societal norms of Turkish society to this day. The legacy of the Ottoman Empire is a centuries-long era of conflict and

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<sup>106</sup> Metin Heper., Toktas, Sule. 2003. "Islam, modernity, and democracy in contemporary Turkey: The case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan." *The Muslim World* 93.

<sup>107</sup> Rabasa, Angel, and F. Stephen Larrabee. "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey." Product Page, 2008. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG726.html>

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Ochsenswald. Pg. 137-160.

exploration; threatened by Mongol invaders in the early 1200's, warring with Iran in the 1500's, Italy in the 1600's, Russia and Austria in the 1700's, and so on, experiencing constant shifts in political culture in the face of the declining global influence and domestic efficacy of its Sultans.<sup>109</sup> Efforts to reform the failing Ottoman Empire and adapt to increasing levels of international business culminated in 1845<sup>110</sup> as *Tanzimat* was initiated. *Tanzimat* was a major indicator of growing societal acceptance of several western values<sup>111</sup> in adherence with modern concepts of economy and trade, however, not all elements of modernization were cohesive with the laws and preferences of the Ottoman Sultans, thus the empire continued its slope of economic decline and stagnant societal progress until the final days of the languishing empire. The Ottoman Empire and its growing collection of inadequacies in dealing with wealth disparities and social issues, grew oppressive in its surveillance<sup>112</sup> of the populace, and corrupt in its legal structure. Not only did the Sultan Abdulhamit II attempt to suffocate intellectual material discussing freedom and independent activity, but he employed the use of brutal policing to punish all those accused of undermining autocratic rule.<sup>113</sup> These behaviors gave birth to the beginnings of revolution and the ultimate demise of the Ottoman Empire. With Mustafa Kemal Ataturk at the helm at the close of the first world war, the following era

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<sup>109</sup> Palmer, Alan. *The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire*. United States: Barnes and Noble, 1994.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Ochsenwald. Pg. 305-306.

<sup>111</sup> Malcolm, Noel. *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450-1750*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2019.

<sup>112</sup> Cosmopoulos, Michael B.. *Macedonia: An Introduction to Its Political History*. Canada: Manitoba Studies in Classical Civilization, 1992.

<sup>113</sup> Rogan, Eugene. *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East*. United States: Basic Books, 2015.

would come to be recounted as one of the most prosperous in Turkish history<sup>114</sup>, and Ataturk's reforms lifted the Turkish nation from the ashes of the Ottoman collapse.

### **Mustafa Kemal Ataturk**

The impact of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's devotedness to the reformation of the Turkish state remains a key element of modern Turkish identity. In 1923<sup>115</sup>, Ataturk founded the Republic of Turkey, and his presidency is marked as a period of major societal reform and modernization that launched Turkey into a new era of prosperity. During his time as the leader of the Turkish republic, Ataturk re-designed the political and legal system, revitalized the economy<sup>116</sup>, secularized both government and education in abolishing the caliphate, granted equal rights to women, altered the alphabet as well as traditional attire requirements, and finally, advanced the cultivation of wisdom from the arts, sciences, industry, and agriculture.<sup>117</sup> Ataturk had long believed himself to be the savior<sup>118</sup> of the Turkish state and he was determined from an exceedingly young age to see this conviction come to fruition. These fundamental alterations to Turkish civilization helped to create a thriving, forward-thinking society in the generations to come that signified a significant departure from the failings of the Ottoman Empire that preceded it. He passed away in 1938 after only 15 years of ruling, but it is still remarked that though he was born an Ottoman, he died a Turk. However, his rise to political power was supported by his extensive military career and impressive contributions on Turkey's behalf during the first world war. His battlefield successes coupled with a keen knack for

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<sup>114</sup> Ghosh, Indranil. *Powering Prosperity: A Citizen's Guide to Shaping the 21st Century*. N.p.: Bombardier Books, 2020.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 384.

<sup>116</sup> Singer, Morris. 1983. "Ataturk's Economic Legacy." *Middle Eastern Studies* 301-311.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 377-441.

<sup>118</sup> Gingeras, Ryan. 2017. "Implications Behind Erdogan's 'Second War of Independence'." *NEW AGE (NEW AGE)*.

military strategy launched Ataturk onto a path of militant legacy, and his early fascination with political and social issues guided his career toward meaningful political engagement. Indeed, though Ataturk's pre-political career was largely militant, his motivations were underpinned by a constant desire to forge opportunities for the intellectual growth and liberation of Turkish society. A timocratic figure from the outset, Ataturk exhibited a superlative sense of Platonic, state-minded ambition and would go on to reshape the Ottoman Empire with this principle in mind.

The Ottoman Empire that preceded the new Turkish republic was known as the sick man of Europe; a decaying society in which the disparity between the rich and poor only grew<sup>119</sup> as the Islamic theology that directed the finer points of Ottoman identity simultaneously stunted Turkey's ability to embrace modern advancements. Ataturk was born into a police state controlled autocratically by the Sultan and Caliph following an unsuccessful attempt at establishing a constitutional democracy in the late 1800's. He grew up observing corruption and despotism and despised the public regression that tyrannical headship and archaic religious principles had created. His father, Ali Riza, was certainly no stranger to the difficulties of attempting business ventures in the fragmented chaos under the rule of Sultan Abdulhamit II.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, he died at the early age of 47 after continually failing to succeed in his commercial schemes, branded a failure in the eyes of his grief-stricken family that had already been afflicted with the loss of several children.<sup>121</sup> Ataturk, a young boy at the time pursued an education in the civil service through the military academy of Salonica<sup>122</sup>, a major Turkish port city known widely for

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 7-15.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 30.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 30.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 35-56.

its multiethnic structure and diversity. “Military education reinforced in him an already masterful disposition. As the only surviving male in a fatherless household Ataturk was the most important person at home”<sup>123</sup> and was further determined to avoid the failures of his late father. This attitude of somewhat inherent superiority only grew as he excelled in his prep school studies and quickly developed skills in writing<sup>124</sup> and making public addresses. This dexterity was also evident in his singular command of religious rhetoric, instilled in him through years of religious instruction and practice.<sup>125</sup> In his transition to the War College in Istanbul in 1899<sup>126</sup>, his interest in literature and the works of banned philosophers<sup>127</sup> became a major aspect of his political foundations. He engaged with the works of Rousseau and Voltaire in an effort to better understand the issues facing the Ottoman society and found the arguments unsatisfactory. Although he was determined to eventually find better solutions to the nation’s plight than those posited by modern political philosophers, his primary focus was on his military career.<sup>128</sup> Ataturk’s path toward leadership exhibited incredible command of strategic military tactics<sup>129</sup>, a study which was continually pursued throughout his lifetime. Ataturk’s vast collection of impressive battlefield victories served as the major conduit through which he was ultimately able to ascend to a position of political power. However, his engagement with political philosophy in his early education birthed within him a steadfast determination to apply his intellect and mastery of strategy toward the betterment of the Turkish nation and the enlightenment of its constituents.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 35.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 41.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 45.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 43.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Mango Pg. 55.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 41.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. Mango Pg. 140-180.

In observance of the corruption and incompetent handling of the Ottoman military at the hand of the Shah, “Mustafa Kemal combined political agitation with concentration of his military studies. He was fashioning himself into a politically aware and politically ambitious professional soldier”.<sup>130</sup> Ataturk entered the war college in 1899<sup>131</sup> in Istanbul, the heart of the Ottoman Empire. There he witnessed Turkish citizens being forced to live like prisoners, lowly in the eyes of rich despots and foreigners that sought to take advantage of the frail societal structure. Social mobility was extremely limited, and people often betrayed or even preyed upon one another to gain a lucrative position. Conditions at the Imperial War College were similarly depraved due to a lack of infrastructural foundations and a restricting network of the Sultan’s spies and edicts.<sup>132</sup> Ataturk soon made friends who had high-ranking fathers, allowing him access to useful connections which helped propel him into the political sphere later in his life.<sup>133</sup> These friendships provided him with opportunities to foster a greater appreciation of independent activity and a loathing for the dictatorial chokehold of the Sultan’s policies and military restrictions.<sup>134</sup> “Mustafa Kemal believed that Abdulhamit’s fear of military maneuvers and his refusal to allow the use of live ammunition in training exercises had left the Ottoman armed forces unprepared for modern war. When the ban on the use of live ammunition was lifted during Mustafa Kemal’s service in Syria, he is said to have compiled a firing manual from such Turkish language sources as he could find”.<sup>135</sup> In

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 49.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 44.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 44.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 72-75.

<sup>134</sup> Uyar, Mesut, Edward J. Erickson. 2009. *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Ataturk: From Osman to Ataturk*. California: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 85.

fact, he regularly engaged in legally prohibited activities such as drinking in public<sup>136</sup> whilst being a soldier and secretly publishing multiple political papers<sup>137</sup> detailing the issues within the Ottoman Empire and openly criticizing the Shah's governance. His publishing activities resulted in his arrest<sup>138</sup> at the age of 24 and he was exiled to Damascus for three years where he was able to observe firsthand the damages created by despotism and corruption<sup>139</sup> in an environment of extreme militancy. Ataturk's dissatisfaction with the existing political order undoubtedly encouraged much of his defiant behavior, but his attempts to broach the subject of political reform in the hopes that his work might benefit and enlighten the broader society is an example of the Platonic principles that inspired him throughout his pre-political life.

Ataturk's political thinking remained central to his engagement with his military career. He sought to foster a more comprehensive sense of the effective uses of military strength and inspire an ethos revolving around politically radical concepts at the time. "Mustafa Kemal was passionately interested in the art of war [...] and he believed that the safety of the fatherland and the happiness of the nation require[d] above all that the world should be shown that [the Ottoman army was] still the same army that had planted its lance in the walls of Vienna".<sup>140</sup> He decided to form a secret society prioritizing freedom and idealizing the concept of the militant strength to be found in the fatherland, but in 1908 another secret society that had been formed rose to the forefront and his own committee became peripheral. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)<sup>141</sup> pressured

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 45.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 51.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 55.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 60.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 90.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 81.



the Sultan to restore the former constitution<sup>142</sup> of Turkey which had been dismissed some 30 years prior. However, despite the reformative efforts of what would become the Young Turk Revolution, many of the problems facing the nation remained. Atatürk, still concentrating on military matters and the collection of intelligence<sup>143</sup>, insisted that measures should be taken to create a more defensible structure for the empire. “Mustafa Kemal was suspicious of the Bulgarians. [...] Mustafa Kemal warned that the Bulgarians still hoped to regain Edirne. He argued that the Ottomans should respond by giving their officers better training, and by instilling in them a spirit of initiative and the desire to take the offensive”.<sup>144</sup> His ideas were originally criticized heavily by other members of the committee resulting in Atatürk’s separation from the CUP.<sup>145</sup> Whilst governmental control reverted to a dictatorial oligarchy for a time, his moment to shine arrived at last with the onset of the first world war.

Having received a thorough militant education in the Ottoman Military College, Atatürk’s keen use of martial strategy aided him in liberating two provinces in Turkey and doling out a historically devastating defeat to British forces at the battle of Gallipoli in 1915<sup>146</sup> which facilitated his emergence from WWI as the sole Ottoman Commander to have never suffered a defeat on the battlefield.<sup>147</sup> Superiors recalled that, “Mustafa Kemal [...] was a commander willing to take on duties and responsibilities. On 25 April he used his own initiative to join the battle with his 19<sup>th</sup> division and push the enemy

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<sup>142</sup> Zürcher, Erik J.. Turkey: A Modern History, 4th Edition. United Kingdom: I.B.Tauris, 2017.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 95.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 131.

<sup>145</sup> Hanioglu, M. Şükrü. Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pg. 91-94.

<sup>146</sup> WWI Document Archives. WWI Biographical. 2009. *Mustapha Kemal*. Brigham Young University. [Alphabetical Index of WWI Biographies](#). [Ataturk - World War I Document Archive \(byu.edu\)](#)

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. WWI Document Archive.

back to the beaches. Then for three months he put up and indomitable resistance against constant violent attacks. I was thus able to place total trust in his energy and determination".<sup>148</sup> Ataturk's experience in the territories of the Balkan Wars granted him a unique perspective<sup>149</sup> concerning at which locations the Allied forces were most likely to make advances in the peninsula and he used this geographical expertise to take an active role in formulating defensive strategies and attempting to prevent major losses throughout the duration of the war. His mettle as a military commander was tested again four years later as he successfully led his forces against an invasion from the Greek army and subsequently won back Turkish independence<sup>150</sup> in 1919 which defied the existing Sultan's government and established the basis for the new national effort under Ataturk's leadership. A proven military expert and a master in matters of diplomacy<sup>151</sup>, by the end of the war Ataturk had been given command of eleven separate divisions as well as a cavalry brigade.<sup>152</sup> Ataturk's militant skills were undoubtedly the result of his extensive and continual study of military matters and his tactical use of geographic opportunities throughout the region is an ode to a Machiavelli's prioritization of the mastery of battle strategy. To this end, although his actions were primarily derived from state-minded political aspirations, Ataturk demonstrates the ways in which even the timocratic man can channel Machiavelli's principles of expert militancy.

Ataturk is one of the most revered military tacticians in Turkish history. He had led several major offensives in-person<sup>153</sup> with his soldiers by his side and is remembered

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 151.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 145.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 75.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 364-387.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 153.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 152.

as “the outstanding front-line commander in the northern sector. [...] Mustafa Kemal was not alone the savior of Istanbul, but he made a notable contribution to the defense of the capital. He displayed personal courage and inspired his men who were fighting in appalling conditions. Although his ambition [made] him a difficult man to work with, [...] his ability was never in doubt”.<sup>154</sup> Following the cessation of the great war in 1918, Ataturk’s attention was devoted to the preservation of the few Turkish assets that were still in the hands of the Turkish nation: the populace, the land, and a military force capable of defending them.<sup>155</sup> This was the driving motivation that he carried into his transition to political life. Ataturk had proven time and again his nationalistic dedication to defending the Turkish nation, but he made a concerted effort to establish the importance of the tactful employment of armed forces in order to regain a sense of national pride and to effectively defend the changes promised in a revolutionized society. His goals came to fruition in 1920 as he was elected to the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly and the days of the old Ottoman Empire came to a long-awaited end.<sup>156</sup> By 1922 the armistice after a long war had been signed and by 1923 the Lausanne Treaty<sup>157</sup> was ratified by several European powers. Turkey entered a new age of growth and prosperity and with Kemal’s unanimous election to the presidency of the newly proclaimed republic, the nation evolved to such a degree that Ataturk retains his title, “the Father of the Turks”, to this day.

Ataturk came into the world under the strain of ineffectual governance and the subsequent suffering of his family. Desiring to supersede the accomplishments of his

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 156.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 182.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 212-214.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. Mango. Pg. 559.

father, Ataturk's timocratic nature prevailed in encouraging his embrace of military education. His early fascination with the works of political philosophers coupled with his dissatisfaction of the governance in the Ottoman Empire inspired Ataturk to not only develop a strong political foundation, but to wield it in the service of the Turkish constituency. Militant though his pre-political career was, Ataturk's major goals of a cultural overhaul underpinned every decision that he made in achieving military greatness. Although Machiavelli's militant prince bears some similarities to Plato's martial timocratic leader, the key distinction elevating Ataturk's relative success is the consistency with which he displayed state-minded ambition in the hopes of promoting widespread enlightenment and cultural liberation. From his publishing activities to his suggestions for military reform, Ataturk's hopes for the nation promoted the long-term salvation of the historically oppressed Turkish state. His engagement with Platonic notions represents a compounding of state-minded, reason guided thinking that begets realistic manifestations of Platonic leadership.

## DISCUSSION

Upon analyzing the biographies of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, it becomes palpable that both men were largely personifications of the timocratic man and resolute students of warfare for the length of their pre-political vocations. However, in developing divergent ethos with regards to their personal ambitions, Ataturk's early and consistent engagement with political issues left him better equipped to broach the political sphere than Soleimani. Indeed, Soleimani's inexperience in engaging in global political discussion due to his prioritization of militant matters above all else left him vulnerable and unprepared for a future in politics. The philosophies of political theorists like Plato and Machiavelli help to generate the paradigms by which political actions can be evaluated and explained. The examination of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk as a comparative case study lends itself to the basic foundational elements of political theory that promotes the elevation of existing research in the field.

This assessment has exposed multiple distinct parallels between the lifestyles and behaviors of these historic figures whilst simultaneously bridging theoretical components from two very different theorists. In addressing the research question concerning the relative efficacy of Ataturk as opposed to Soleimani regarding their methods of Machiavellian and Platonic activities, it is my contention that Ataturk was a more effective leader than Soleimani in his pre-political career directly due to his prioritization of long-term, state-minded reform. Although the pre-political careers of both Ataturk and Soleimani were similar in origin, militant distinction, and charismatic styles of authority, they differ with respect to their approaches toward the political sphere. While

Soleimani's priority for much of his life was simply maintaining a high-profile military career, Ataturk used the Ottoman Army from the beginning as a conduit for his goals of ascending to political office and reshaping the Turkish nation for the better and was thus a more complete fulfillment of Platonic leadership concepts. Consequently, Soleimani's leadership style is more consistent with the tenets of Machiavelli's prescriptions for leadership. Furthermore, in applying the nuances of the theories of Plato and Machiavelli as frameworks for evaluating political conduct, the inherent definitional discrepancies of the concept of ambition generates opposing behavioral directives. While Plato's version of headship re-orientes individual ambition to incorporate state-minded altruism, Machiavelli's advocates for the internalization of ambition to such an extent that it engenders an excessively defensive mentality, impeding the leader's capacity to acclimate to the complexities of the shifting political world.

As for the more specific theoretical components, one of Plato's overt desires in writing *The Republic* was to promote an environment more conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of reason as a central governing agent in civil societies. However, even partial exhibitions of Platonic principles through the pursuit of state-minded reform have the potential to ease the process through which military figures ascend to positions of political influence and achieve success in their pre-political careers. Both Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk grew up during times of major political and governmental instability and therefore possess several qualities reflective of Plato's timocratic man. While Soleimani witnessed the hardships of his father due to the ineffective land reforms of the Iranian Shah, Ataturk observed gross inequality in wealth distribution as well as highly restrictive religious codes that hindered

the Turkish nation as well as his own father. Both men developed a keen interest in martial strategy, recognizing that military figures were widely revered as both heroic and honorable. Soleimani became heavily involved in Iranian martial arts and Mustafa Kemal pursued a thorough education in multiple military academies before both formally began their military careers. For Soleimani and Ataturk, military career paths served as opportunities to not only garner respect in otherwise restrictive societies but also provided a chance for them to play a part in the ongoing societal changes that were occurring. Soleimani wished to become involved in the new Iranian culture that was forming after the 1979 revolution and applied his natural skills with such success that he quickly rose through the ranks of the Iranian military and would ultimately train one of the most highly effective military outfits in the Middle East. Ataturk, being highly dissatisfied with existing philosophy on effective governance, sought to one day affect meaningful changes of his own and used his extraordinary strategic skill to prove his worth in the first world war and continue defending the Turkish state against its enemies with fierce efficiency for years to come. Both men reveled in their military successes and took pride in the respect of their fellow countrymen. Neither would have achieved such success had they not applied their natural senses of ambition and their desires to live a more prosperous life than that of their fathers.

However, while Plato's model of the timocratic man bears several characteristics that are reminiscent of his concept of the philosopher king, it remains a far cry from Plato's preferences for ideal leadership. The timocratic model is described as a product of the decline of the ideal state and is not as highly engaged in philosophy and yet he is not so utterly detached from the ideal philosopher model that he cannot engage with certain

elements of reason and altruism.<sup>158</sup> Plato's ideal manner of leadership prizes forms of ambition that take the shape of selfless, state-minded improvement and further encourages the dissemination of truth wherever possible. To this end Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is a more cohesive fit with Plato's description of the timocratic man than Qassem Soleimani. Soleimani's life is more consistently aligned with Machiavellian concepts and the behaviors associated with Machiavelli's princes are categorically classified as an inferior style of leadership to that of the timocratic man. Hence, although the timocratic model is not the ideal in Plato's eyes, it would still maintain a higher status than a Machiavellian prince. While Soleimani's militant career was certainly derived to some extent from his timocratic roots, his engagement in his adult life with religious manipulation and deceit in his world of everlasting warfare makes him more appropriately suited to Machiavelli's ideals than Plato's. The militant timocratic figure that Plato describes is perhaps not the perfectly balanced philosopher that he so admires, but it does provide a practical template from which analytical conclusions about militant figures in history can be made in conjunction with other philosophers specializing in militant efficiency. While Atatürk's military career illuminated his skills in martial strategy and his dedication to the study of warfare, his political motivations for the purpose of elevating the collective consciousness of the Turkish nation more appropriately characterize him as a timocratic figure, exuding Platonic ideals.

Finally, the details provided in the biographies of Soleimani and Atatürk, are sure indications that both figures undoubtedly excelled in the realm of military study which was so essential in the eyes of Machiavelli. However, to his peril, Qassem Soleimani was

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 223-227.



a more complete embodiment of Machiavelli's leadership principles than Ataturk in a variety of ways. One of this philosopher's primary intentions in publishing *The Prince* was to ensure that leaders maintained a high level of domestic control such that a prince's reign would never be threatened by the potential of revolution.<sup>159</sup> As such, internal stability combined with rigid military excellence was meant to defend the realm from any outside threats no matter the number of international rivalries.<sup>160</sup> However, there exists within Machiavelli's studious soldier framework an inherent mechanism for maintaining a constantly proactive, defensive mindset. While this principle is undoubtedly a major contributor to battlefield success and the maintenance of the territories one is charged with defending, the vigilant sense of awareness and suspicion that Machiavelli requests creates a sense of obsession that has the potential to overrule peripheral ambitions. The psychological demand placed on Machiavelli's ideal prince figure to maintain a relentless state of primed consciousness concerning potential threats could be a major contributor to the divide between military and political careers. Soleimani's prevalence as a prominent leader was directly intertwined with his ability to defend the Iranian nation and its soldiers to such an extent that this mission dominated his life's ambitions and contributed to his arrogant and abrasive approach to political discourse. Nevertheless, Soleimani suffered an abrupt death as a direct result of his heavily militant attitudes when faced with political engagement, leaving chaos in his wake.<sup>161</sup>

Although both Soleimani and Ataturk each proved their commitment to the cultivation of military knowledge beyond a shadow of a doubt, Machiavelli's strategic

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Ricci. Pg. 66-71.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Ricci. Pg. 67.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 253.

principles as a whole entail more than a simple engagement with military matters. They advocate for social manipulation where necessary and promote the use of personal ambition to achieve individual power more so than to provide society-wide enlightenment. While Ataturk exhibited martial skill and ceaseless military study, Soleimani's entire life was defined by his military career and his brutal, Machiavellian leadership style. Soleimani was willing to apply some of the more duplicitous recommendations of Machiavelli's prescriptions through his frequent manipulation of religious rhetoric as well as in his careful crafting of his international and domestic reputation. He sought above all to be respected and loved by his soldiers and gravely feared by his enemies and subsequently went to great lengths to accomplish this. However, Machiavellian as he may have been, Soleimani's final months were characterized by his abject failure to engage in peaceful international discourse with foreign powers as he turned his eye toward politics. This shortcoming has been argued by some to be a result of his overwhelming hubris stemming from his extensive battlefield experience and routine dealings in the realm of conflict itself.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, it is widely claimed that Soleimani "allowed his ego to overcome his judgment".<sup>163</sup> Defensive and bold, Soleimani increasingly spoke in a threatening fashion and his "progressively boastful rhetoric"<sup>164</sup> in his dealings with President Trump demonstrated a fundamental lack of diplomatic tact that would come to play a major role in his ultimate demise. However, it is my contention that this failure is indicative of Soleimani's broader lack of

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 247.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 251.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. Azizi. Pg. 248.

engagement with Platonic principles, and his obsessive Machiavellian approach to addressing conflict on and off the battlefield.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Qassem Soleimani both exhibited, at least partially, qualities valued by both Plato and Machiavelli in their conceptions of ideal leadership, but the value of assessing the degree to which these men fulfill each philosopher's standards is indispensable in elucidating the significance of these concepts as they apply to modern evaluations of leadership. This research addresses what it truly means for an action to be classified as Machiavellian and demonstrates examples of how this behavior manifests amongst modern leaders such as Qassem Soleimani. Although Ataturk was similarly militant in his pre-political career, his actions even on the battlefield were constantly guided by his deep-seated aspirations to rise to a position of political influence and alter the displeasing conditions which he observed within the Ottoman empire. The examination of the distinction between the militant prince and the timocratic man identifies the key elements distinguishing leaders like Mustafa Kemal Ataturk from other prominent martial leaders in history. Ataturk's early-prioritization of state-minded motivation, an attribute that even Plato finds essential in a leader, is very likely to have majorly eased his journey toward a career in politics. To this end, it can be argued that pure, unfiltered exhibitions of Machiavelli's leadership principles cannot secure long-term invincibility to international threats against one's sovereignty. Indeed, such behaviors, if not tempered with certain Platonic concepts to enhance societal progress can result in the loss of one's authority altogether.

## CONCLUSION

Upon reflection of the information gathered throughout the course of this study, it can be conceivably argued that a key determinant in the differing fates of Qassem Soleimani and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was the theoretical ethos by which each man lived his life. While Ataturk was guided by principles of a more altruistic, Platonic nature, Soleimani's inherent Machiavellian mentality drove his career toward a less desirable end. In the context of existing applications of political theory in the interpretation of political actions, this study provides a comparative analysis that not only engages with the nuances of the detailed characteristics described by Plato and Machiavelli but goes a step further in connecting these profiles to explain psychologically based behaviors that are derived from these frameworks. Plato's conceptualization of the timocratic man presents realistic and observable traits that can be applied to both Soleimani and Ataturk as militant figures whose origins served as inspiration to surpass the accomplishments of their fathers before them. The total entrenchment of Soleimani and Ataturk in devoted and ceaseless study of military strategy both in their careers as well as their lifestyles is a clear ode to Machiavelli's recommendations. While Qassem Soleimani maintained singularly militant aspirations in his pre-political career, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk possessed long-term political goals that underpinned every aspect of his military career, demonstrating the continued value of Platonic principles in observed political behavior. Thus, while Soleimani's accomplishments in combat secured him a place in history, the inherency of Machiavelli's defensive stratagems and the hubris that often accompanies a militant lifestyle drove him toward dangerous conflicts on the international stage and hindered his attempts to ascend to a position of political power.

Future research relating to this subject could examine several areas of inquiry left unanswered through the course of this study. In drawing comparisons between the Turkish and Iranian societies at these points in history, both reveal themselves to be revolutionary societies with repressive elements. However, as Turkey was a secular community and Iran, theocratic, it must be asked whether cross examinations of political behaviors stemming from such dissimilar civilizations broadens or limits the capacity for political theories to be effective metrics for examination. Furthermore, given the fluctuations in political and cultural standards in both nations in the modern day, there exists an opportunity to evaluate not only the scale of the improvements men like Ataturk have contributed to their societies, but also the relative effectiveness or lack thereof if these alterations fade over time. For instance, does the current reversion of secular values in modern Turkey indicate a sense of failure by Ataturk himself or simply represent the natural evolution of cultural norms in the face of a changing political world? Furthermore, Ataturk's leadership behaviors, though found in this study to be more consistent with Platonic values, also reveal certain departures from Plato's ideal standards in the inherent flaws associated with the timocratic man. Having been raised under economic strain due to the failures of his father, the timocratic man is noted to be stingy with money<sup>165</sup> and acquire his wealth with a certain degree of secrecy. Given the knowledge that in Ataturk's later political career he was known to conceal his wealth<sup>166</sup>, this might indicate a difficulty in claiming that most of his political aspirations were based in Platonic altruism and selfless motivation. Further research might inquire whether

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid. Bloom. Pg. 225

<sup>166</sup> Ozyurek, Esra. 2004. "Miniaturizing Ataturk: Privatization of State Imagery and Ideology in Turkey." *American Ethnologist* (American Anthropological Association) 31 (3): 374-391.

Ataturk's late political ambitions stayed true to his originally altruistic ambitions or if these goals were distorted by the lure of wealth that he had been deprived of in his youth.

Another area of inquiry lies in a discussion of the circumstances of Qassem Soleimani's death. The unprecedented nature of the targeted killing was undoubtedly a shock to the international community, but inquiries could be made concerning whether Soleimani's mercurial behavior in response to American aggressions truly triggered dire concerns warranting his assassination, or whether he was simply the victim of a historic political blunder. It might also be a useful examination of the relationships depicted in Machiavelli's writing concerning rulers and those who serve them. Soleimani was used for the purpose of this research to examine own leadership behaviors, however, as a close personal agent of Ayatollah Khomeini, Soleimani was regularly deployed to exact brutal and violent retaliation upon the enemies of the Ayatollah and the state. This hearkens back to the example of Machiavelli's archetype, Cesare Borgia and his exploitative relationship with Messer Remiro d' Orco<sup>167</sup>, prompting questions as to whether or not this relationship would be a more effective example in which to showcase Machiavellian principles regarding the protection and management of one's own reputation. Regardless, the lives of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Qassem Soleimani are exceedingly thought-provoking examples of the many ways that militant figures can change the world and contribute to modern political research in expanding the application of political philosophy to contemporary archetypes.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid. Ricci. Pg. 25.

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