



Identity and Foreign Policy

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Abstract:

The culture and identity have occupied the second place in international theories and foreign policy analysis. At first, the structuralism approach as a social theory and subsequently in international relations and foreign policy, has attempted to analyze non-corporeal factors such as culture, the norms, identity, and values on foreign policy. Since culture, identity, norms, and values were an integral part of Iran's Revolution, it has also influenced Iran's foreign policy as a result of these issues. In this research, I attempted to study the elements that form the identity of Islamic republic of Iran's system, such as being Iranian, Islamic and global, and then, we analyzed the effect of Iran's political system in foreign policy. Thus, the author's goal is to analyze Iran's foreign policy by using a descriptive analytical method in terms of structuralism. The author believes that structuralism may have a better way of describing the behavior of Iran's foreign policy and national interests.

Keywords: Structuralism, Identity, Foreign policy, Iran, Islamic Republic

Introduction

Perhaps, realists were among the first theorists of international relations who endeavored to explain the actions and intellect of the government's foreign policy, and they differentiated the governments conduct based on their power. But, it was made clear that neither realists nor other rationalists' theories are able to specify and explain the conditions of all governments' actions in international relations. Because of their inability to understand international transitions in final years of cold war, some intellectuals have focused

on secondary factors and elements of international policy and relations such as social and cultural factors of countries, and the non-corporeal role of power such as norms, values, culture, and identity can have in the government's foreign policy. T. S. Eliot says: "Today, we observe that culture attracts the attention of politicians. It is not because the politicians are always immersed in the culture, but because culture is like a tool for known political actions and it is ideal for society and a duty of a government to promote

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it.” (Golshan Pajoo, 2008: 291). Even Morgenta, who is considered one of the "found-ing fathers" of the realist school, states in the book titled *«Politics Among Nations»*: “in studying the national power and its elements, the emphasis is put on the impact of cultural components on national power by reciting some elements of national power, such as national characteristics, morale, ideology, the quality of society and government on affect-ing cultural components of national power” (Morgenta, 2010: 227).

The line between cultural, subculture and foreign policy variables can be studied through emphasizing on three cultural dimen-sions: the first category consists of beliefs and myths which relate to the historical expe-riences of nations and its leaders, and also their views towards the current role and the position of their country in the world. The second category relates to representations and impressions that political elites and people have of other nations and world politics ac-tors, such as international institutions. The third category includes habits and attitudes towards solving problems for the most part, and dealing with disagreements and interna-tional conflicts in detail (Qavam, 2005: 293). Culture is one of the indicators and elements that form a country’s national identity. The national identity can be regarded as a devel-oping sense among people who naturally be-long together and enjoy their shared values, history, and destiny.

In order to analyze the relation between «national identity» and «national values» in particular, and notably in Iran’s foreign poli-cy, we need to have a particular analysis framework, which has multiple features:

1. It considers human a social and cultural creature, which has a sig-nificant power, that distinguishes him from an animal.
2. It defines a country as a social ac-tor that its identity and interests are defined and determined based on national norms and beyond them in a social interaction process.
3. It is interested in the role and im-pact of social and mental structures in processes and issues of interna-tional and foreign policy.
4. It considers the superior interests of countries’ endogenous and post-erior.
5. It allows the interaction between foreign and domestic policy (Dehghani Firooz Abadi, 2015: 109).

Structuralism as a Conceptual Framework

Structuralism is a compromising theory be-tween classic international theories on one hand, and reflective theory on the other hand. Like critical theorists and post modernists, structuralists believe that there is no seem-ingly objective social reality. The key belief is that the social world and international rela-tions are human constructs, which means it is a context that is meaningful for those who made it (Jackson and & Sorensen, 2005: 305).

In structuralism, the government’s inter-national relations is a social agent, therefore, the government is not specified beforehand as a social agent of identity and its interests but, rather acts in a context of social regula-tions, and the domestic and international con-text exacts rules on a government and forms its identity. The identity is a characteristic of intent agents, which creates motivational and behavioral inclinations. Identities implicate the identity and essence of agents. The inter-ests require identity. Because as long as an agent is unaware of its identity, it cannot know what it wants, and since identities pos-

sess cultural content to various degrees, so do the interests (Vent, 2005: 325).

One of the structuralists' efforts is to return culture and domestic policy to the international context. In this process, they attempt to study the attributes of culture, policy and society, which relates to identity and behavior of the government in international affairs (Qavam, 2005: 299).

The structuralism approach to foreign policy is different than rationalism in terms of agent model and logic of actions. Despite the emphasis of rationalism on the «economic human» model, the structuralism is based on «social human». Structuralism through identity policy attempts to define the role and effect of intersubjective concepts, such as nationalism, religion, culture, gender, and race in international policy (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2015: 47).

Structuralist believes that international policy and relations between countries develop based on corporeal, structural and also moral and identity components. So, the order of structuralism claims:

1. Mental and normative structures are as important as material structures.
2. Identities form interests. Social identities that stem from governments' views towards them and others, and material and social structures of identity formation, play an important role in creating interests and behaviors with others.
3. Agents and structures consolidate each other. So, regarding the triple principles of structuralists, a country's foreign policy is built on intersubjective concepts and affected by material and semantic

structures (Molavizadeh and Javadi Moghadam, 2008: 187).

Iranian Culture and Identity

Concerning Iranian culture and identity, intellectuals and experts have posed various views. Abdul Karim Soroush states in intellectualism and religious conviction: "we, the people of Iran inherited three cultures" as following:

1. National Culture

Before the Islamic conquest, the Persians had mainly their own literature, religion, and customs, and after they had become Muslim and Shia, they remained Iranian and kept their previous customs, specially the Farsi language, which is the most important pillar of our nationality. Even Zoroastrianism is an ancient Iranian religion in pre-Islamic Iran, is acknowledged by Islamie and is still preserved to this day.

2. Western Culture

At the beginning of the Persian Constitutional Revolution, this culture was introduced to Iranians. No one is to blame for the coming of this culture. Indeed, this was a contact with a strong culture. Today, Iranians are familiar with western culture, western philosophy, science; technology and literature have found their way in Islamic Iran. Western customs, their world view and understanding of life have followers. The authors of the Persian Constitution of 1908 noticed the slogans of the French Revolution. Founding the parliament, legislation of constitution, constitutional monarchy, separation of powers, religious tolerance, legal equality of various denominations were the results of western liberalism manifestations.

3. Religious Culture

Religious Culture has roots stretching back thousands of years to Iran. Since Iranians became Muslims, they have never forsaken it; rather, they have enriched and served Islamic culture. Afterwards, Iranian customs, art, architecture, marriage, divorce, education, entertainment, mourning, wedding, etc. became Islamic in essence (Soroush, 2000: 185). Regarding this, we should refer to the relation between culture and identity. The relation between culture and identity is a relation of bottom-up, and the general culture encompasses all parts of identity. Identity is a characteristic of being human that clarifies a human's stance towards the world and humans. Every culture impressions by humans and determines by human values. The assortment of these impressions and values form cultural identity. -Indeed, cultural identity is a collection of cultural components that individualize a person or a group. Therefore, identity is the heart of every culture that simulation of each culture is created from other cultures by noticing this matter.

Culture and Foreign Policy

Cultural influence on foreign policy is in various ways:

1. Through agents and decision makers: Through general culture and public conscience that bear value systems, moral principles, beliefs, and values are the decision makers; these elements are presented in a decision maker's unconscious mind.

2. Through organizations and institutions:

Many governments have taken measures to include cultural counselling in their embassies and have signed formal contracts stating that the culture

formally plays an active part in foreign policy.

3. Through ideology:

It is not probably a wrong to say that each government follows an ideology to various degrees, but some governments follow an ideology as their guiding principles in an official manner. If the Islamic Republic of Iran can be introduced as an ideology, we have to place the basis of this ideology in Iranian national culture.

4. Foreign policy as a reflection of national culture and temperament:

Stanley Hoffmann states that "every nation has its own way and customs, and these are clearly reflected in their foreign policy" (Naghizadeh, 2002: 247).

Iran's Foreign Identity and Policy

Based on structuralism view, one may look for attitudes, opinions, and ideas that exist in a country and forms their normative system to find the roots of a nation's identity.

The identity norms of Islamic Republic of Iran are derived from 4 four sources and intersubjective semantic system:

1. Nationalism or Iranian nationalism
2. Shia Islamism
3. The third world attitude
4. Discourse or international value system governing international relations

Each of these semantic structures is formed around a focal point.

- Nationalism is based on Iranian nationality, and (Iranianism) on its focal and consolidating point.
- Shia Islamism, its essence is based on Shia Islamic teachings and Islamism is its focal point.
- Third world attitude is based on non-aligners' movement principles

and goals, and its main notion is non-alignment.

- The international discourse is based on the concept of national government and on its underlying element (sovereignty). (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2015: 125).

1. Nationalism or Iranian Nationality

The return to historical myths on the creation of universe and the emergence of humans indicate that some Iranians believe in a mythical geography, in which (AIranem Vaejah) had located, favored by Ahura Mazda in particular (Yaghooti, 2011). Patriotism is a part of Iranians' political culture, which stems from Iran's history. Defending the country is highly valued among Iranians and many slogans are devoted to this:

There will be no life left in me if not for Iran

Let there be no life left if it is gone!

When this patriotism is entwined with religious slogans, it is deeply original and powerful. There is a popular saying of Prophet Mohammad: "the love for the country comes from faith". (Naghizadeh, 2002: 247). Richard Cottam says: "sometimes Iranians' awareness of their cultural heritage, such as their history, plays an important role in Iranian nationalism... An Iranian is expected to have respect and admiration by international community through awareness of his culture. The sense of unity and uniqueness stirs a united nationalism in people's minds (Naghizadeh, 2002: 228). Imam Khomeini acknowledges the nation as a socio-political unit of the modern world, and considers it an identifying factor of human societies. Based on this, he speaks of an Iranian-Islamic identity and demands its restoration (Sanieh Jalal, 2005: 92). Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is one

of the sources and elements that is crucial to the Farsi language and Iranians' identity.

Regarding this, an orator refers to three elements in Shahnameh that establish identity:

- The solidarity of historical chronicles means that the stories in Shahnameh won't contradict each other.
- Political integrity
- Geographical unity

These formed the fixation of Iranian mentality, until they manifested in Safavi reign (Atayee and Baharestani, 2010: 79).

One of the most important cultural components of Iranians, which some of cultural scientists believes it as saving factors of Iran's culture is Iranian adaptability. This cultural identification is believed by some to be affected by Iran's geopolitical state of commerce and incursion of various formed nations in history. Iran has been invaded by Greek, Turkish, Arabs, Moguls, and Afghans and so on but, Iranians have been able to preserve their identity through symbiosis and consistency with various groups of people. Peaceful coexistence and cooperation with other countries, acceptance of international system structure, international standards and engaging In other governments can be referred to as an indication of this cultural characteristic in foreign policy (Molavizadeh & Javadi Moghadam, 2008: 21).

Regarding the elements of nationalism identity formation, we will refer to Iran's national sovereignty, national independence, anti-colonialism, and freedom in international stage.

2. Shia Islamism

Monotheism is one of the constant components of Iranians' national culture, and this feature is deeply rooted in unity of religion

and government with monotheism in Iranians' political culture. This cultural attribute was preserved in Iranian culture and also in Islamic age. In Islamic Revolution, monotheism and unity of religion and politics is the most considerable element. Seyyed Hassan Modarres has a famous saying: "Our politics is the same as our religiosity; and our religiosity is the same as our politics". Imam Khomeini said: "there is nothing more than Islamic that is worth honoring." (Sadeghi, 2008: 262). Thus, when there is mention of the Islamic Republic, the primary determiner of values of norms is the "Islamic quality" of Islamic Republic, that determines its interests and foreign policy goals and sets the course for its foreign policy to great extent (Mosafa, 2007: 17).

The discourse of Islamic Republic and ideological influence on Muslim nations has evolved Iran's geopolitical state as an agent for Islamic movements. Although Iran's physical geography position has not changed, its geopolitical state has been significantly evolved. The victory of Islamic revolution in Iran has actualized the potential aspects of Shia religion ideology, and through restoring Islamic identity, Islamic world unity against the west and issuing the Islamic revolution, began Muslims' and Shia look for identity, especially in the region, and caused many major political changes in the Middle East (Dehshiri, 2014: 73). Iran has the first successful political (Islamic) Revolution in the world. A revolution which was in the name of Islamic, and with Allah Akbar (God is [the] Greatest) a common Islamic Arabic expression, and based on Shia ideology, symbolism and Islamist clergy and non-clergy leadership. Islamic ideology principle of Iran was based on the following:

1. Further emphasis on Islamic, as a full-fledged lifestyle

2. Belief in accepting a Western and non-religious style of separating religion from politics is the source of all social, economic, military and political disasters in Muslim societies.
3. The conviction that Muslims' return to power and success require the return to Islamic and religion sovereignty, instead of western capitalism and Russian Marxism and socialism.
4. Reintroduction of sharia (Islamic law) is the likeness of Islamic design for an ideal society with fair and moral believers.
5. The willingness to fight (Jihad) against all wrongs, even if it is necessary to endure hardships and if it is required, being martyred in the name of god (Esposito, 2003: 49).

The following items are among the elements that form Islamism identity:

- A) The juridical rule of disavowing domination:
Based on this rule, every dominating relation that foreigners have in any form with Muslims is forbidden. This rule is among the rules that rigidly supervise the international relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is considered prevalent in Islamic Republic of Iran's revolution with other countries since the Islamic revolution (Molaeifar, 2003).
- B) The juridical rule of defending the weak and fighting tyranny:
Imam Khomeini, said, "We support all freedom movements that fight in the name of God, truth and freedom. We defend the oppressed". Imam Khomeini used the words oppressed, world arrogance, arrogant plutocrat, colonization for 133,969,113 and 557 times respectively. This frequency shows the Jihadi dimen-

sion of the Islamic Revolution and its international goals. (Naghizadeh, 2002: 225).

C) Focusing on Muslim affairs:

Based on the Prophet Muhammad's Hadith ("News" or "Story"), "The one who wakes up in the morning and is not concerned about the Muslims affairs, then he is not of them." Helping Muslims with their troubles have been among the primary principles of Islamic. Hence, Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself the supporter of Muslims in this regard (Pishgahifard and Rahmani, 2009: 1973). Article 152 of constitution: The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, nonalignment with respect to the hegemonist superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States.

Devotion of justice:

Many authors have discussed the original position of justice in Iran's foreign policy. This topic dates back before Islam, and Islamic asserts it, and has made it into a determining value, which plays a part in forming what we believe as Islamic identity. Islamic Republic is introduced as an upholder of justice that its effect can be seen in defense of the oppressed (Mosafa, 2007: 18).

3. Third world attitude:

Regarding the elements that form this attitude, we can refer to adopting non-alignment in form of "no alignment with West or East" as a general direction of Iran's foreign policy.

The non-alignment strategy can be referred to as a balance and historically when Amir Kabir first established this principle during his short time as chief minister to Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (King of Persia), during the years 1848-1851, as opposing the European principle of power balance. After Amir Kabir, Mosadegh also attempted to pursue a negative balance policy, and at the beginning of Islamic Republic, Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, was another who tried to fulfill this goal.

Bazargan maintained a non-alignment policy. He believed that Iran's policy towards world powers must be like Mosadegh's policy. Mosadegh's non-alignment policy was more known as a negative balance policy, and its aim was to preserve Iran's independence through ending England's dominance. Karim Sanjabi, minister of foreign affairs at Bazargan's government, stated that negative balance policy is based on four principles:

1. History,
2. Geopolitical state
3. Spiritual and human ideals of Islam
4. Full retaliation in the affairs with other countries (Ramezani, 2002: 60).

Adopting the non-alignment policy by Bazargan will be analyzed in the form of «no alignment with West or East» principle. Jalleddin Farsi introduces the «no alignment with West or East» strategy as a way of life, not as a method of opposing East and West. He, says, "no alignment with West or East» signifies a trait of Islamic Republic and doesn't indicate hostility with West or East, but expresses the method of Iran's foreign policy is not the Eastern nor Western" (Ehtesham, 2009: 119). Regarding the «no alignment with west or east» policy, Imam Khomeini, said, "From the beginning of Islamic revolution, we chose the way of the Prophets.

The right way was « Neither East nor West but the Islamic Republic», and until now, our nation has followed this path” (Yazdani, 2009)

4. Discourse or international value system governing international relations

International Trend

During the last three decades, Iran’s foreign policy towards international norms and structures wasn’t based on utter refusal or acceptance, but consisted of dual stance, that while it considers international structures and often its norms to be lacking in legitimacy, it will accept many of them for the purpose of preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Yaghooti, 2011)

One of Khatami’s foreign policy indicators emphasize on the concept of national interests in foreign policy. For this purpose, Khatami had a more active and instrumental participation in international organizations. In 1997, Iran hosted the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In 2001, United Nations passed Khatami’s proposal unanimously as the year of Dialogue among Civilizations, while the same United Nations was believed to be a pretext for world powers (Milani, 2004, 195). Regarding Iran’s nuclear program, Iran declared the multiple sanctions passed by the Security Council and the International Community to be unjust, but never left the negotiations, and ultimately managed to reach the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement with the framework of international law norms.

Conclusion

To analyze Iran’s foreign policy in terms of international affairs, structuralism theory is perhaps the best to utilize in this regard. One of the most important features of this theory

is using non-corporeal components such as culture, identity, values and norms besides material elements to analyze the foreign policy of the governments. If we scrutinize Islamic republic of Iran’s foreign policy, we observe a continuity that clearly demonstrates historical, cultural and religious roots. These roots had affected Iran’s foreign policy to various degrees at different times.

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