The role of Islamic identity on political development in Middle East

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Abstract
In the international relations specifically since 1990s till now numerous and extensive discussions about identity have been proposed. The persons with having different identities always have sought to distinguish between themselves and others; in recent years, Islamic identity has had significant return in political development. The main question of the research: what has been the role of Islamic identity on political development of Middle East? For this purpose, at first the importance of identity, Islamic identity and political development in recent decades has been considered by using of English and Persian references from the view of constructivism. Then the elements of Islamic identity, components of political development, challenges and opportunities have been considered and in this research, constructivism is used for explanation of the issue to indicate the desired political development model isn’t possible for Middle East’s people except with help of relying on Islamic norms and identity of these people. Therefore, with protection of Islamic identity, political development can be achieved and the challenges ahead can be removed.

Keywords: identity, Islamic identity, political development, Middle East, norm, constructivism.
1-Introduction

In recent years, identity has had an important place in social sciences and also in the international relations since 1990s till now, numerous and extensive discussions about identity have been proposed, National, religious and Islamic identity (Moshirzadeh and Masoudi, 2008).

But after the incidents of 11th September in 2001, religion has been converted to the main issue of discussions about international politics, when the pseudo-Islamic terrorism embossed the religion in the international arena (Snyder, 2014). It seems, the constructivism theory of international relations provides proper context for the role of religion in the international politics by emphasis on idea, norms, identity and culture.

Religion especially Islamic identity in the region with supplying a base with common behavioral rules and provisions can create a firm institute for attraction of followers (Hitz, 2014). So Islamic identity as a base in the Middle East region can cause convergence and political development and convergence factors are: Social-technological, economic, geographical and political factors and values (HosseinMghaddam and Ejlal, 2012).

In this research, we have had a brief look on the history of identity and development, then the role of Islamic identity on political development from the view of constructivism has been explained; but with regard to the identity-centered attitude, the identity concept is considered specifically and the political effects of identity on the power categories, governance and its normal effects on the morals category are considered and the west's imaginations and assumptions from political Islam and identity are studied and finally the future challenge and perspective of development and transformation in the Middle East are drawn.

1-1-Constructivism

Constructivism in the international relations and insights gained from it can not be understood except with philosophical constructivism (Von Glasers, Fled and Delanty, 1997). Constructivism believes that the identity of a government is formed with value referrals to the past and future of a country. The governments with «narration» of history with specific method place it as a supporter of their today's performance (Parcel Quero, 2001).

Constructivism believes in the constructed reality and the role of social interaction in formation, protection and change of identities. Constructivists know the identity as concepts and expectations about themselves which are special for their role. With emphasis on social nature of actors, they believe that governments in the international relations domain have a social identity arising from the interaction between them (Sazmand, 2005).

1-2-Definition of identity

1-2-1-Identity from the view of constructivism:

In definition of identity, it has been known as «the definition of oneself» or definition of «individuality of oneself» versus «another one». In this definition, self-conscious entity refers to the history, gregarious common memory, territorial place and culture and
distinguishes himself/herself from others who don’t have these properties. So generally, identities are formed according to refer to «the fields» (Jankingz, 2002, and Karami, 2004).

1-2-2- identity in Islam

Islamic identity in fact indicates the feeling of belonging and commitment to the religion and religious society. The most important achievement of Islamic identity is to respond to the fundamental questions, give direction to the life, unity of faith and give meaning to the world (Sharafi, 1995; RafatJah and Shakouri, 1999).

1-3- Development:

It is a process which transforms the society from a historical period to another historical period.

Two important points in the above definition are the passage stage and historical period. Development is a process that disrupts the balance of the society and causes it to enter to the passage stage. All societies such as a society which is in the historical proceeding are affected by crisis necessarily.

-Developed society has a developed political structure and its culture relies on two axes: one science or wisdom of intent and another equality and freedom or the individual's genuineness (Alavi, 2010).

1-3-1- The concept of political development:

From the view of Almond, if political system solves 4 existing problems, there will be the possibility of realization of political development in the society and those 4 problems are:

A) The problem of penetration of political power and integration

B) Creation of loyalty and commitment sense to the nation and national beliefs and political system among the masses

C) The problem of participation which causes to appear new demands especially about partaking in the power and decision-making affairs.

D) Creation of the procedure of distributing the sources and material facilities and different opportunities of life like education opportunity and earning and creation of new speech should be controlled (Almond, 1966).

1-3-2- The indexes of political development

The indexes which have more acceptance can be accounted as follows:

1-The amount of the system legitimacy and people's effort to the politicians.

2-People's participation through social and political institutes like election of the parties assembly, non-governmental political institutes, the press and governmental selection power arising from people on people and the amount of their freedom.

3-Governance of law and not governance of individual in despotic, dictatorship and impersonal form of political system.
4-The amount of power in satisfying the people’s needs through creation of efficient and active administrative network and legal solvation of political problems and difficulties of the society, what seems is this issue that with political development, many problems of traditional societies are solved and some openings are provided. The existence of the indexes that we accounted all indicate a society which has reached to the political development.

1-3-4-Political development in the Middle East

Therefore, political development in the Middle East is complicated due to five general factors. First, existence of a fragmented, character-oriented and special-oriented form of long historical participation in the Middle East. The tradition remainders often paralyze the participative democracy. Second, no society in the Middle East has reached to the repose in its search for development and third, there is not any special political or ideological way to guarantee the development, therefore the kingship, republic and democratic participative systems can not guarantee the political development and fourth, the complexity of development is related to the historical and cultural background that development should be accomplished for it. Islamic experience of politics indicates that Islam as a political opposite ideology has been already more efficient than political governance ideology (Bill and Springborg, 2002). And fifth, the issue of political development in the Middle East due to the inter-regional and international considerations becomes more complex.

2-Methodology

2-1-The research method

-The collection method in this research is in the form of information collection, documentary, library and archive method.

-The research method has been theoretical and the research has been explained in descriptive-analytic form. It is necessary to be mentioned that the content analysis is one of the customary methods for precise and systematic study of kinds of texts especially media texts and it has application in all branches of social sciences.

-One of the concepts which nowadays is often proposed in the selection of data collection method is the concept of «triangulation». Triangulation means that researcher uses of several different methods for data collection (SeyedEmami, 2012).

2-2- The research variables

Independent variable: Islamic identity

Dependent variable: political development

3-Analysis

3-1- The concept of religion in the international relations

International relations on five kinds of logic relation between religion and international relations have considered the concept of religion. 1-religion as a security problem and threat. 2-Religion in the form of a part of international relations in the frame of culture concept. 3-Religion as the essence and foundation and focuses of international relations. 4-Religion as
the disputation and semantic system governing on international relations. 5-Religion in the frame of international political theologies.

The approach of power-centered and security-centered of realism has the most emphasis on this concept of religion, in a manner that considers religion as a tool for pursuing the national and material purposes and benefits in the hand of governments and quarrelsome groups. Religion is considered as the factor of conflict in the international relations.

Religion is considered as an independent variable in the frame of fashion culture, it is not accounted as the thickener and substantial element of international relations, in a manner that religion doesn’t claim the determining place and role in the public domain to challenge the politics-centered tradition of international relations and its logic, therefore politics and religion in the international relations aren’t merged in each other rather they act hands together.

From the view of Huntington, «civilization is the highest cultural aggregation and the vastest level of cultural identity that human has it» (Khorramshad& et al, 2011).

This means complete return of religion to the public domain and merging the international relations in the religion. Each international phenomenon or incident finally has religious nature and content and it gains legitimacy and meaning in the frame of religious traditions and values. Consequently, religion is able to both explain the international relations and present solution for international problems. According to the international political theologies, religion is a system of acts, procedures and rules which are guide for explaining the meaning of existence such as identity and suppositions about the role and place of individual in the world that provokes and directs the behavior of individuals that due to their faith, believe in the value and correctness of these rules. Religion as the rules is expressed through verbal-explanatory acts and guide and educational rules. Therefore, faith is a kind of reasoning which is not according to the self-indulgence and desirability-orientation (ibid reference, 172 & 173).

3-2- Democracy

Democracy is as the right of people’s participation in determining their fate. Generally passage to democracy and its procedure in modern societies considers the establishment of activities and the deputy governance institutes and kinds of liberal democracy and this issue refers to the governments which are selected by election and according to the people’s votes (TohidFam, 2005).

3-3- Islam, democracy

Democracy is considered as the foundation of western civilization and strongly is recommended to the rest of world and humanity. In fact, in some situations, democracy is often promoted to a panacea. The disputes related to Islam, Islamic identity and democracy are increasing. But how is the relation between Islam and democracy really? Are they compatible with each other completely? (Esposito, 2013, page 101).

It seems that there are four main groups in this regard:
3-3-1- First group

First group is among non-Muslims that are often Islamophobic. The first group believes that Islam basically is autocrat and despotic and doesn’t have necessary philosophical and historical foundations for training any kind of reliable democratic tradition, therefore it doesn’t consider a place for political development.

3-3-2- Second group

Second group is among the Muslims that are often west-phobic. Generally, although in different reasons, they believe that Islam and democracy aren’t compatible with each other. Second group believes that the democracy of political system is rotten and distorted of west and religiously it is incompatible with Islam basically.

3-3-3- Third group

Third and fourth groups in the opposition direction have general agreement. So third group which includes non-Muslims (individuals and institutes) believes Islam is compatible with democracy completely and due to the global peace and prosperity, today’s unorganized situation should be formed according to a new base.

3-3-4- Fourth group

Fourth group embraces the Muslims who have the similar belief with their non-Muslim fellows, some proceed more and reason that democracy is the inseparable part of Islamic life method. Therefore a lot of interpretations and misinterpretations are accomplished.

Finally it is necessary that Muslims who imagine that Islam and democracy are incompatible with each other to leave the perverted and bias position and misinterpretations. In addition, those who think these two cases are compatible with each other should discard their defensive approach. Although Muslim sees enough conformity between Islam and democracy, but it is not due to this issue that some or many Muslim or non-Muslim scientists think like this, rather they want from us to proceed the democracy way. Vice versa, Islamic government is according to the constitution (Koran and religious law), it is participative (council), accountable and basically it is according to the satisfaction of people or governed ones, therefore democratic experiences are useful for us. We shouldn’t follow the west, rather we should eulogize the governance according to the satisfaction. A governance which is according to the axial principles and values of Islam (ibid reference, page 110).

3-4-Political Islam in Middle East

SheikholEslami, Reza has said in the definition of political Islam: «political Islam means that in «injustice world», we can not remain «just». Political Islam means the application of political standards to the religious values of political Islam namely we shouldn’t only think about the hereafter. Among the Muslims, people want independence, security, food and welfare for their children and they want the same that west has» (SheikholEslami, 1997). Political Islam is the missionary and ascension of spirituality, justice, independence, freedom and innovation. Political Islam is the reliance, solution and program for recovery and reconstruction of identity in Islamic societies: religious-Islamic identity, cultural-religious identity, Islamic-civilization identity and Islamic-political identity. Political Islam seeks to reconstruct the society and government according to the Islamic principles, today’s society
and government of religion namely advanced and progressive but Islamic and genuine (Khorramshad & et al, 2011).

3-5- Unity in Middle East from the view of theory

Question about the reason of convergence and unity of countries is accounted as one of the most important questions in the studies arena. From this view, many theoretical studies are according to the effort for understanding this point that why and how some governments establish a unity with each other. Many theories have consensus on this issue that basically unities are formed for facing with threats. Therefore when security scholars identify the dynamisms of unities formation, they usually concentrate on two manifests of strategic calculation:

1-Determining the threat identity, 2-Determining the unity nature

According to this, with combination of two mentioned components, we should seek that whether we should be united with others or not. If the response is positive, another question will be proposed and this issue that we should be united with whom. In this regard, the employment effect of Walt entitled «unities roots» has significant importance. Walt assumes that threat is originated from a combination of geographical and military factors and transgressive intents. Determining this issue that whom is accounted as a threat against physical security and relative power of a government, depends on the existence of a combination of abilities and intents. Walt provides a firm reliance in confirmation of the role of semantic forces (and not materialist) as the motive force in formation of unities, but he leaves this issue in insolvable form. How is intent determined? What does thicken a threat? (Barnett, 2011).

Mental factors such as ideological and identity similarities are accounted as the variables that some of the theorists of international relations have considered them for explaining the process of formation of unities. In this regard, an approach that in comparison with other approaches often emphasizes on the role of identity variable in the politics arena is constructivism (HaghPanah, 2011).

From the view of constructivists, social, biological and physical environment in which humans live is empty from meaning so that humans to open a meaning for it (Kolodziej, 2011). From the view of Wendt, immaterial suppositions direct material conditions, material conditions form and eclipse the social life.

Constructivists believe that phenomena are constructed; therefore, culture here is much more important than nature. While for realists, culture and identity in the best state are the product of distribution of abilities and they don’t have any independent explanatory power and actors place the culture and identity in the strategic position like any other source merely for progress of their personal benefits (Moeini and Rasekhi, 2010). For constructivists of civil structures, cultural factors and governmental identities with this issue that how form the government’s benefits are important. These factors create a kind of worldview and influence on international interaction models (khezri, 2010). From the view of this theory, ideas, norms and values form the culture and identity of country and these identities thicken the external benefits and politics of a country publicly and the unities of a country specifically, namely identity is a mental feature which has root in the perception of actor from himself. Of course, it should be seen that whether actors also assess this actor as he exists or not. Therefore, two
kinds of suppositions enter to the identity, his supposition and others' supposition (Wendt, 2005).

Identities refer to this issue that who the actors are or what they are and the benefits refer to what actors want. Identity and benefits are in relation with each other. Identities without benefits are empty from any kind of motivational force. Without identities, the benefits don’t have direction; therefore these two cases have complementary roles.

Adler expresses that countries like persons to high extent are the prisoners of identity and their value classification from the world. These value judgements influence on action through penetrating on understandings from special situations and also giving direction to the selections (Mottaghi and Kazemi, 2007). In Wendt’s belief, conformity of identities can cause cooperation. Another aspect of this speech is this issue that unconformity of identities cause the conflict or at least doesn’t cause the cooperation (Asgarkhani and MansouriMoghaddam, 2010). Therefore the specified features of identity and culture in each society determine that how the actors of that society behave and they indicate more tendency toward what countries for unification.

Many researchers believe that identity conformities that have been taken from norms, values and common culture of Middle East countries underlie to form the strategic unity between the region's countries and usually if the existing unity to an extent is established between multinationality links of society such as common ethnic or cultural field or common historical experiences, it will have more eternity.

Ideological cohesion and common identity also cause the stability of unities, because political and ideological similarity and cohesion cause to form the common identity and increase the trust between the unity's members (Ghavam and Imani, 2010).

Generally, better identity can predict that whether two governments will be friend with each other or enemy, whether they will be revisionist or the partisan of existing situation and like them, in this regard a common identity can cause a common definition of threat.

And in other words «common fields» seek to create solutions for analysis of contradict incidents in the regional arena; the incidents that incrementally are influenced by Islamic identity components. In fact, in this stage, the identity and priorities of governments are neither fixed nor unchangeable and they differ from a government to another government. Undoubtedly, the contradictions existing between the region's countries aren’t only the result of a conflict but also they are deeper and vaster and include vaster dimensions. This is a mutual path. Identity and benefits of governments and the features of systems influence on each other (Chernoff, 2009).

In the relations of Middle East countries, existence of structure of each one of parties is precedent and prior on existing contradiction. Because the conflicts existing between the countries are historical, constructed and have political identity. The sensitiveness and conflicts despite of having Islamic identity of countries are the result of processing the image of region's countries from each other which are prevented entitled ideological interference or penetration from political development. So relation according to their understandings from each other in a social action is divided into four axes: first, «oneself» is according to aprecedent definition of his/her situation and interaction. This is a sign to «another» about a role that one wants to undertake in evolution. It has the corresponding role that wants to learn
in «another». In the second axis, another assesses the meaning of action in «oneself» with changing himself/herself. «Another» according to the definition of his/her prediction from situation and also the kind of existing information in the sign of «oneself» directs the interpretation of «another».

In third axis, another does an action according to the new definition of situation. This affair like the action of «oneself» thickens a sign about a role that another wants to undertake and the corresponding role that wants to place «oneself» in the frame.

In fourth axis, «oneself» makes «another» ready for his/her interpretation and response (Wendt, 2005). Through repetition of these interactive processes, the identities and expectations between the region's countries about each other have been stabilized and developed. Indeed, Islamic identity causes to expand the political development, the images of region's countries are the result of the actors' mentality of each country. Therefore, actors construct and protect the social structures that consequently limit the selection circle.

Finally, the Middle East countries should consider three significant principles. First, production and reproduction of identity; second, presentation of clear image; third, their interaction with others and vice versa. In this case, they will reach to the intent which is indeed «reality» (Mortazavian, 2012). This reality is the same thing that Middle East countries with Islamic identity seek it for political development which has been defined in the form of repose and developed Middle East. In addition to guarantee the internal stability of countries, it will cause the stability and development in the region. Middle East can provide its special model for gradual development in all fields by relying on local models of reconstruction and emphasis on regional convergence models which have been established according to the common culture, Islamic, economic, political and social identity and Middle East doesn’t need the model of compulsory and trans-regional development anymore (Jomehie, 2009).

4-Conclusion

Identity in different scientific courses in each course is applied in special and distinct meaning in comparison with other courses. Generally, identity is our imagination of ourselves or a general image of our existence in facing with others. Therefore, identity is our recognition of ourselves and this recognition is gained when we face with «another» (Ghoreyshi, 2002).

In expressing the identity components, different views have been mentioned, but in a macro and formulaic view, ThermiTevan mentioned the history, language, religion, tradition, modernity (in modern days) as the significant components of identity. Constructivism theory has considered the most importance for the identity factor in comparison with other approaches, constructivism knows the identity as a relative stable inter-mental structure that each government in its frame defines the benefits, role and expectations from «itself» in interaction with «others concerned» (Majidi and AzimiEtemadi, 2015) and Castells believes since the social identity structure is accomplished in the context of power relations, he considers three forms and origins for the identity structure. 1-Legitimizing identity: it is created by the dominant institutes of the society. 2-Resistance identity: this identity is created by actors who are in the situations or conditions that are known valueless on behalf of the domination logic or are stigmatized. 3-Programmed identity: when social actors define by
using of any kind of materials and therefore seek to transform the whole of social structure, but what is Islamic identity? Islamic identity has root in the early Islam and prophet (peace be upon him) (Aref, 2010).

Islamic identity is a combination of all Muslim’s findings about Islam and its historical experiences and it has bitter and sweet past. Islamic identity: world’s Muslims in the shadow of common religion like belief in monotheism, prophecy, resurrection day and other principles define their quiddity and convert Islamic nation to «one I» in facing with other gregarious identities to be in the hierarchy of this quiddity of themselves and due to the Islamic policy, they are placed in the unit queue against Islam enemies (Mozayyenani, 1997).

Construction of the Islamic identity is formed as a reaction against inaccessible reconstruction, harmful consequences of globalization and decline of nationalism program of post-colonialism.

Islamic identity with its elements and components and with the idea of global development management of Islam has the ability to mobilize the people for political development, also local reconstruction isn’t realized except with protection of cultural identity of a society.

Culture includes religion, language, history, arts, literature, customs and traditions of a nation which has been born a long time ago by the ancestors of that nation (Mojtahedzadeh, 2005).

The dominant religion of Islamic region and dominant culture is Islamic culture and on the other hand Middle East countries which have a several-year history are accounted as the cradle of civilization and humanity culture and in the interpretation of Will Durant, they should be considered as the cradle of humanity civilization (Will Durant, 1986).

Middle East’s people in this cradle of humanity civilization have severe interest to their national and religious culture and due to the existence of Islamic identity in facing with reconstruction and development models that don’t have much attention to their local culture, people repel them severely. Perhaps one of the reasons of emergence of religious fundamentalist proceedings and their success in promoting the culture of conflicting with west has root in the same trans-cultural and Europe reconstruction models. Desired local reconstruction model for Middle East’s people isn’t possible except with help of relying and emphasizing on Islamic identity of these people and unilateral, west-oriented and imposed reconstruction will not find the opportunity of acceptance, the proceeding of transformations formed in the region indicates this issue well (Jomehie, 2009).
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