

Factors of Changing Iran's Foreign Policy Approach of Idealism to Pragmatism: The First and Second Decade of the Islamic Revolution

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the origins of Iran's foreign policy approach from idealism to pragmatism relying on comparing the first and the second decades of the Islamic Revolution by using discourse analysis. Due to the nature of the Islamic revolution and the taking over of sovereignty by the Islamists, expressing idealistic slogans and the dominance of idealism in the field of internal and external discourse in the early years of the revolution were seemed commonplace. But the war and the destruction of the Iranian economy, international situation and the isolation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the global arena and also the circulation of political elites in 1368 and the rise of pragmatic economy-driven of Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's foreign policy shifted from the approach of idealism in the first decade of the Islamic Revolution to pragmatism in the second decade.

Keywords: Islamic Republic of Iran; Foreign policy shift; The first and second decade of the Islamic revolution

Introduction

In the context of the dominant discourse in the first decade of the Islamic Revolution, some changes in economic and political structures had been seen, regarding the domestic and external challenges that were created for idealism (Iraq war against Iran, the death of Imam (RA), revision of the constitution, the isolation of Soviet union, etc.) and because of this discourse did not have ability to empower itself, its theoretical renewal and its consolidation, the country witnessed the transformation of the discourse of first decade of the revolution and the emergence of pragmatic discourse in second decade in which adjustment in domestic policy and detente in foreign policy were adopted. But it should be noted that in addition to internal factors that played an important role in the changes after the revolution, the structure of the international system had a great impact on these changes. In fact, the adoption of Resolution 598, the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the collapse of the Soviet Union and its impact on international relations were among the factors that in both domestic and international levels strongly influenced on policy-making process system, the way of people thinking and the way of the elite decision-making on major issues. In addition, the destruction of war and the ensuing financial and moral problems, destruction of production facilities and reduce the national capital, economic blockade, general economic turmoil and domestic political constraints were severely threatening the existence of the Islamic Republic, and also pursuing the policy of disregarding international arrangements during eight years of war, none of them could provide the revisionist International demands of Iran. Under the influence of these factors government gradually accepted the realities of the international system and internal situation of crisis with compulsion and regulating the internal situation and the country's economic reconstruction, economic reform (i.e., the transition from a war economy to a planned economy) and in the political arena, the normalization of relations were adopted by the government [1].

The Impact of War on the Foreign Policy Idealism Discourse of the First Decade of Revolutionary to Realism Discourse of Second Decade

The analysis of foreign policy discourse during the war

Basically, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran from

1359 to 1368 has two distinct features: the war conditions and the presence of the charismatic character of Imam Khomeini. These two factors together in highlighting the marginalization of the Islamists and other influential discourses had a great impact on the direction of foreign policy [2].

War and interaction with the international system

Idealism discourse during the imposed war caused Iran created "built-in isolation" in its international relations [3]. So that in addition to the two poles of the world, the Soviet Union and the United States of America, major European countries as well as countries in the region, particularly members of Persian Gulf Cooperation Council besides reducing the level of their relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran sought to harness it. In the advent of Iraq attack to Iran in violation of its international borders, this was an opportunity for US to put Iran under pressure and tried to inhibit its revolutionary tendencies. Satisfaction of big powers including the US and the Soviet Union of Iraq invasion to Iran in September 1359 was clear in the declarations and requests of the United Nations from Iran and Iraq for exercising restraint and lack of Iraq conviction by the Security Council was evident. And European countries including Britain and France did not consider the ideals of the Islamic Revolution in line with for the world benefits of West industry and in relative harmony with the US joined to economic embargo of Iran and also during the war with Iraq practically tried to prevent Iraq's failure by equipping it with French Super-standard aircraft, French missiles, and German chemical weapons etc., And to neutralize the effects of the Islamic Revolution in area with isolation and harassment [4].

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Soviet Union was pleased of the Islamic Revolution and the loss of US influence in a neighboring country but regarding the new political system of Iran's Islamic ideological and its hostility to the Marxist ideology and by sovereignty of neither East nor West slogan in foreign policy, the Soviets actually joined the ranks of countries opposing the Islamic revolution and due to the occurrence of some of the changes their relations strained more than ever. The suppression of the Tudeh Party of Iran, which in the past were known as agents of Soviet influence in Iran and more importantly Iran opposition against the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan and supporting the Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet occupying forces and the ruling Communist regime in Afghanistan were the factors that raised Moscow's anger towards Islamic Iran. As a result, during the war, the Soviet Union was the main arms supplier to Iraq. Also, at the end of the war, by giving Scud missiles to Iraq played a prominent role in weakening Iran's economic and military power [4].

War and Iran's interaction with the United Nations and the security council

Distrust and cynicism of Islamic Republic of Iran toward international organizations, especially the UN and its Security Council is considered one of the important features of wartime in foreign policy. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran based on its anti-domination approach considered International organizations as a tool of great power that legitimizing the status quo in favor of great powers. But the start of the war and the UN biased stance in favor of the aggressor during the war was the most important factor in the rejection of international organizations by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Virtually Islamic Republic of Iran boycotted the UN Security Council as the sole source of international recognition and international peace and security.

The war-torn economy and the issue of country's reconstruction after the war

With the onset of war and damaging oil installations and refineries in the industrial centers of the south and southwest of the country, and despite the high price of oil in world markets, Iran's oil revenues had declined due to lower exports. Economic sanctions from the West and blocking foreign exchange reserves were major reasons for the stagnation that has lasted 60 years. The country's economic problems affected different sectors and industrial activities due to their specific issues such as shortages of raw materials and imported raw materials and their high price in global markets, shortages and lack of access to machinery components and spare parts requirements, financial difficulties and a shortage of skilled manpower declined [5].

But at the end of the war (1367-1365) by Iraq escalation attack on economic centers, the expansion and escalation of oil tankers wars and the presence of armada powers of the East and the West, oil prices and oil revenues declined sharply. In this situation due to the escalation of restrictions on imports of capital and intermediate goods and raw materials, the cost of war and production costs had risen sharply. Therefore, government by increasing revenue and reducing costs eventually faced a budget deficit. In this period, economy of Iran had a great depression. Thus, in the wake of growing pressure from the political economy of war, the activity of various economic sectors was reduced and this trend continued until the end of the war [5].

Demise of Imam Khomeini (RA) and Revision of the Constitution and Its Impact on the Foreign Policy Discourse

Demise of Imam Khomeini (RA) and its impact on the foreign policy discourse changes

Iran's foreign policy which influenced by the strong leadership of Imam Khomeini took on ideological and idealistic dimension.

The changes in the second decade indicates that the demise of Imam Khomeini, and election of Ayatollah Khamenei in 1368 as his successor and the changes that occurred in the constitution, the idealistic view of revolution was decreased in favor of pragmatic and realistic view. In addition to the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei, the fifth presidential election was held in 1368. And in this election, Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani became president with 5/94 percent of the vote and he selected his cabinet members also from political moderate faces and mostly technocratic and executive persons in order to fulfill his promise to rebuild the war destruction [6].

The revision of the constitution and its impact on the change in foreign policy discourse

Another change in the late 60s that affected on the foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran from revolutionary idealism to pragmatic realism was the revision of the constitution in 1368. The chapter on foreign policy and the general principles relating to this policy into the constitution of 1358 can be considered a sort of manifesto of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution in dealing with the international system. The principles on which international relations and revisionism are emphasized from the Iranian nascent revolutionary; however, in its revised version remained unchanged, but institutional changes in the power structure of the leading and the Presidential bodies that occurred in revised constitution, the situations were provided to take practical and realistic views from principles. The new leaders of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, on the one hand, given the authority gained according to the modified constitution, and on the other hand, according to internal and external conditions and changes the new interpretations and model were adopted in accordance with the terms of the second decade of the revolution to meet the aspirations of their system in which these interpretations had fewer conflicts with existing structures in the international system and sought advancement of the goals of the revolution in this context.

The Impact of Hashemi Rafsanjani's Technocrat's Government in Foreign Policy Discourse Changes from First Decade Idealism to Pragmatism of the Second Decade of Revolution

The construction period of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1368-1376) is an important period in the history of the Islamic Republic. At this historical period, foreign policy officials of Islamic Republic of Iran have adopted a pragmatic approach to constructive engagement with the outside world while adhering to the principles of Islamic fundamentalism. This was leading to the era of détente and by announcing détente was tried to adopt objectives in foreign policy, while meeting domestic demands, the foreign policy goals became consistent with existing international environment and one of the most important variables that had a significant impact on the adoption of pragmatism in foreign policy of the Iranian revolutionary regime in the second decade of the revolution was the emergence of Hashemi Rafsanjani's government and his technocratic brokers.

The discourse of Hashemi state on foreign policy

The understanding of the political elites from world politics in the eight-year presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani was more geopolitical than ideological. Therefore, great efforts with the flexibility and interest orientations were made to remove the political isolation of Iran. And a powerful Islamic Iran was held that can attract the attention of the international system [7]. The following principles can be named as the characteristics of this discourse:

1. Priority in relations between the states than relations between nations;
2. Conservatism and instrumental rationality in foreign policy;
3. Realism and paying attention to the mandate power and specifically to economic power;
4. Priority of vital national interests;
5. Accepting the primacy of the Islamic interests, ideological and national interests;
6. Inauthenticity of the status quo and deployed international order and accepting it as the secondary principle and expediency;
7. Consolidation of internal revolution and issuing it through economic patterning;
8. Being counter-arrogance by protesting on their intervention and developmental policy; and
9. Refuting interference in other countries' internal affairs [8].

It should be noted that during the construction period, reconstruction and economic development priorities is the subject that preoccupied the most senior officials of the Islamic Republic's mind. Hence, it was natural that in this regard, policies to realism were adopted in foreign policy of Iran because the reconstruction and economic development in an area that was considered by the macro policy-makers of the Islamic Republic should take place by making trust in the domestic, regional and international levels, the trust had vanished mostly due to revolutionary rhetoric and harsh slogans (and of course natural) at the beginning of the revolution. But Iran by using its geopolitical position in the world and enjoying it realized its position in the Middle East.

The Impact of International Economic and Political Developments on the Foreign Policy Discourse of Revolutionary Idealism of First Decade to Pragmatism of the Second Decade

The collapse of the bipolar system and end of the Cold War

The Islamic Republic of Iran with emphasis on core utility extensively tried to achieve their design principles in a bipolar system, regardless of the structure of the international system. But with the collapse of this regime, Iranian foreign policy has entered a new phase. Therefore, by changing the structure of the international system, desires of Islamic Republic of Iran was changed realistically. The priority of economic development that was crucial priority for national security in the aftermath of the war requires détente and expanding relations with different countries and in particular stabilizing the environment and security of Iran. This was the priority of Hashemi's discourse on foreign policy. To achieve this goal, détente and trust-building with

neighboring countries and the region as well as with the less palatable countries was among the foreign policy priorities of Hashemi and thus, Iran entered a new phase of relations with neighbors and regional countries. And also relations with Europe and Asia were expanded so that these countries have participated in many economic activities. On the other hand, the cooperation with the Muslim world was expanded, so that Iran was chosen as the host of the summit of the Islamic Conference. Regarding regional cooperation, by the innovation of Islamic Republic of Iran Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was spread and during the summit in Tehran, its members increased from three to ten countries. Another indicator of the Hashemite' state, the active and constructive participation in regional developments can be mentioned. In this era, he has played a constructive role as a mediator in the Karabakh conflict and civil war in Tajikistan.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of the Soviet republics led Iran to new political geography of the area. Iran was the neighbor of just one country in the north and northwest borders (the Soviet Union) after collapsing Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, Iran became neighbor with central Asian republics and the Caucasus. After that changes in the international behavior of the United States about Iran happened that after Iran cutting ties due to Islamic revolution and the withdrawal of "CENTO alliance" and the dissolution of the alliance (NATO as the eastern branch), United States of America on the one hand sought to isolate Iran by embarking a strategy of dual containment that Iraq imposed war on Iran is one of the objectives of the strategy in which weakening economic and military fundamentals of the two opposed countries to US in the region for 8 years [9]. On the other hand, divergence tendency of former Soviet republics from Moscow's sphere of influence caused the opening of foothold of West, especially US and NATO in which influenced these republics by the promise of improving economic and social conditions in their areas. With this process, the United States and NATO allies, have expanded their influence in new republics and together with their Muslim ally in the region (Turkey) increased their influence in northern Iran, particularly in Caucasus and reduce Iran's presence and influence in the political-economic equation of these Republics. This issue demands high diplomatic activity to undo security threats of America and its regional allies by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Along with the collapse of the bipolar system, the Persian Gulf War (1991) waited for an opportunity that Iran redefines its national security and represents new approach of foreign policy of the administration and shows its determination to show the change in the face of the international system. The new president pursued his work by avoiding enemy making, refusing to give an opportunity to the Iranian oppositions, détente, and expanding relations of Islamic Republic with other political units in the region and the world with the development of relations with European countries, the Soviet Union and Persian Gulf countries, the Middle East and northern and western neighbors of Iran and also reducing areas of divergence with US foreign policy.

As Ruhollah Ramazani said, "Iran's experience during the first decade of the revolution led to the new ideas that could be shown Iran how to deal with the new world without sacrificing Islamic ideals". In fact, the new foreign policy of the Iranian revolution principles was flexible and the trend toward governments more increased, and orientation of the external behavior of Iran-oriented was established on the basis of pragmatism. In the new framework, "the principles of peaceful coexistence and cooperative policy based on trust" was regarded as a priority. On the whole, relations between Iran and Europe, Soviet Union, China, Japan and countries in the region expanded [4].

The impact of economic developments on the international system

The programs and neoliberal policies that are called "structural adjustment" policies rooted in the "Washington Consensus" were taken seriously under the same name by Hashemi Rafsanjani government to rebuild the destruction caused by the war. A year after the war between Iran and Iraq, "reconstruction" time had come. The government needed budget and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank announced their readiness to meet these needs, but with a precondition: implementing policies of "adjustment." In fact, Hashemi Rafsanjani technocratic cabinet realistically concluded: The political and economic reconstruction of the country depends on creating a secure environment and to achieve this important goal, political detente and as Professor Alireza Azghandi said, abstaining from inciting others in order to open the World Economic Capital in Iran should be considered the first priority.

Conclusion

The Islamic Revolution in February 1357 expanded the Islamism and religious tendencies and with a touch of idealism, broadened its revolutionary movements. Ideological and idealistic space from 1357 to 1367 that was exacerbated by the outbreak of the war is not covert to anyone. In the second decade of the changes that occurred in the realities of environmental and social values basket, the kind of challenges facing the system was changed. Several developments in the domestic and international levels led to the transition to the second period (pragmatism). Unprecedented coincidence of dramatic changes in the power structure inside and outside of Iran (internal structure and the structure of the international system) has gradually changed the policy of revolutionary Iran. Inside of Iran, the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Imam Khomeini's death on June 68, and the emergence role of Ayatollah Khamenei as a leader, amending the constitution and increasing executive powers, and outside of Iran, the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, slowly but firmly changed the teachings and practices of Iran in the field of foreign policy. Structural changes in the international system that was started from détente and the subsequently, end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union and finally led to the end of the bipolar system and the international system was in transition, and collapsing bipolar system imposed the unexpected local and environmental conditions on Iran. The factors are mentioned above as sources of internal and external environmental changes, had its dramatic effects on both the value construction and the realities of environmental. The end of the Iran-Iraq war, the demise of the founder of the Islamic Revolution, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union were on top of these changes.

In Iran's foreign policy orientation, by taking power by the revolutionary forces and creating the civil and political cohesion,

especially after the end of the war, the importance of accuracy and computing in domestic and foreign politics was felt more than ever which began with the launch of the government of Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani. He began to underpin coherent and purposeful foreign policy carefully and with knowledge of country priorities and constraints with regard to domestic, regional and international conditions. And in this process, he insisted on the principle of détente especially at the regional level. Regarding pragmatism of Hashemi Rafsanjani along adherence to the principles of the revolution for the establishment of a powerful Iran to attract attention of the international system, a major effort was done by him with the flexibility to come out Islamic Republic from political isolation that imposed in eight years of war. To this end, Hashemi in order to be closer to West and use their support began critical dialogue with European countries. And to reduce the risks of dual containment policy of America, improved trade relations with America and signed the lucrative contracts with US companies so that in practice until 1371, America was fifth exporter of goods to the Iranian government and American oil companies became the main buyers of crude oil. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani also emphasized the preservation of Amalaqra to avoid further confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Arabic-Islamic countries refused to continue to express the slogan of "spreading revolution". Construction elites asserted that "if the Islamic Republic succeeded with the reconstruction and economic modernization to achieve the necessary economic growth and development, it will encourage Muslims to follow and emulate it." Therefore, the revolution lost the physical and military content and was defined as synonymous with the pattern of offering economic development of the Islamic Republic to other countries, mainly Muslim countries.

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