



## A study on the Relation between Islamic movements and Liberalism and also its Effects on the Middle East

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### Abstract

*The aim of present paper is investigation of the relationship between Islam movements and liberalism and the effect of them on Middle East. In order to achieve the goal of study, at first collection of references, books, articles and library studies has been done and then this study concluded by comparison of texts. The reasons of contrast between 2 Ideologies :After collapse of Marxism, liberalism propound himself as an ideology without litigant in political scene of the world such a way that some of the thinker believe that at the end of history is associated with liberal democrat governance and it will finish the conflict of civilization all over the world. The conflict of sects such as what happened in 11 September is in the structures of both ideologies because the structures of them have some differences with each other. The present paper intends to explain the various manners of Islamic movements, groups and liberal parties in western countries, and then it will study the various effects of movements and groups on Middle East.*

**Keywords:** Middle East, Islam, liberalism, Islamic movements, parties.

### Introduction

There are various Islamic groups and movements in Middle East which three main parties of them can be called Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic modernism and Islamic secularism<sup>1</sup>. According the idea of Firahi, three main flows which are named Islamic modernism, secularism and radicalism can be recognized in modern world<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, there are some of the flows such as liberals in Middle East which create conflict between them and some of the flows in Islamic world<sup>3</sup>. The conflict sometimes has not solved by discussion and peace situation and it has become a battle in the world such as the war of 11 September which has been formed by one of the mental flows in middle east against a leader of liberalism (America)<sup>4</sup>.

Middle East: the term of Middle East was in common use after 1900. It became more widely known when American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan used the term in 1902 and the meaning of it according the Alfred's thought is the area around the Persian Gulf. Since the world has been seeing from the Europe, it cannot account near to east or far to east. However, in modern time, it is customary to refer to areas which are wider than the idea of Alfred. The importance of this area refers to the oil because it comprises a quarter of the world's oil production and 60 percent of known reserves<sup>5</sup>. The countries of Middle East have some historic and cultural similarity with each other and the language of them is Arabic except Iran, Israel turkey and Cyprus that is considered as non-Arabic countries in region. Also the religion of most countries is Islam except Israel, Cyprus and Lebanon.

Liberalism: the term is apolitical philosophy on ideas and theories regarding the state and the private freedom are the main object of it. Overall, liberalism emphasize human rights and equality of opportunity, therefore the various branch of liberalism may propose different policies but all of them generally have some unite rule such as expansion of thought freedom and freedom of speed, role of law, free exchange of ideas market economy or mixed economy, and a government transparency system<sup>6</sup>.

All of liberals support the freedom and equitable elections and equal right for all of citizens by the law. Liberalism has had many meaning as a term of political though but it never separate from freedom. Liberalism has followed the ideas of English philosopher, John Locke who believed the natural situation and the rule of nature. According the ideas of Locke, no one should damage the health, life and properties of others<sup>7</sup>.

Islam: there is the focus of Islam in Mecca which is one of the cities in Saudi Arabia. Islam has been named by Muslims as the unity religion which prophet and holy book of them are Muhammad and Quran respectively. Muslims are encouraged to emulate Muhammad's actions and Quran in their daily lives. Muslim roughly separated by classify of Sunni and Shia and 10 percent of Muslims are shia which live in Iran, Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain and other religious minorities are in Lebanon, turkey, west of Arabia. The differences between shia and Sunni began from succession to Muhammad<sup>8</sup>. Shia believes that Muhammad explicitly named his successor Ali at Ghadir Khumm but Sunnis considers Ali as four caliphs. However, Shia are divided into many sects and the differences of them is based on the succession route, but the main group of Shia is Twelver or

Imami Shia Islam who believe the absent imam (mahdi) by his appetite will make justice and peace in the world. Also there are other sects of Shia such as Alawi, Ismaili, and zaidi who live in Lebanon and Syria<sup>9</sup>.

**Islamic movements:** the main object of Islamic movements is battle against imported imposition by east to Islamic world. According Farah's point of view, the classification of Islamic movements consist of the following:

**Islamic secularism:** Attempt to new science, quantity-oriented and positivism. Attention to worldly life and rationalism. Nobility, freedom and centrality of human. Originality and individual freedom (economy, policy and religious). Criticism and doubt toward position and ideas of previous people and concentration to innovations and new things. Negation of absolutism. (Abdolrazagh-hosseintaha, Akhundzadeh, Taghizadeh, Agha khnkermani, mirzamalek khan bazargan, soroush)

**Modernity:** Modify the Muslims' idea from superstitions. Refer to return to primary and original Islam. Unity and solidarity. Concentration to west and civilization of west countries. Apply logic to religious matters. Freedom of thought and having individual mentality. (Seyed Jamal, Kavakebi, Eghbal, Naeini, Shariati, Motahari, Ayatollah Khomeini)

**Fundamentalism:** Veneration and worship of the ancestors and return to early Islam. Negative view to intellect and wisdom. Negative view to west (Taliban, al-Qaeda, Wahabiat).

**Liberal is introduced in three manners:** i. Freedom from religious constraints, ii. Political freedom, iii. Economic freedom are based in Omanism and secularism that Islamic view is opposite of them. Islam is the most complete religion which guide human to correct direction and it can supply the least need of man. Islam emphasize on perfection and salvation, and it believe to achieve these goals the human must follow all of the religious commandments, but secularism negate this idea and it introduce social –political structure and connection of them in Islamic countries. Islam and liberalism have-2 distinct culture and thought which completely are at odds with each other. Today, some of the rules and policies which have been adopted in few Islamic countries, nearly arising from liberalism and this problem make a question in mind<sup>10</sup>. Does it represent Islam is in conformity with liberalism? The answer of question, is in the structures of these ideologies, however, the structures of both ideologies are different with each other. There is a phobia regarding Islam in western countries and the term of terrorism in books, articles, and journals has been associated as prefix and suffix of Muslims. Unfortunately, the events of 11septembers and other subsequent attacks after that make a negative attitude about Muslims and Islam in western countries. This study consider the relationship of western countries with few countries of Muslims which are different in attitude with west to know

which one of ideology make problem; ideology of Muslims or west ideology:

**Turkey (Islamic secular):** Turkey is a Muslim country and separation of religion from policy has been done by Ataturk. During 15 years of Ataturk's presidential, various changes in politic, economic, social and cultural scene took place in turkey and it kept away the country from Islamic matters. Elimination of Islamic courts, deletion of Islamic schools and unveiling of women are counted as the affairs of Ataturk. Fighting against Islamism is irrefragable basis for politicians and it is the most important matters which keep away turkey from battle with western countries<sup>11</sup>. With the rise of justice party in turkey which is a moderate Muslim party, many tensions began with Israel and other eastern countries such as Iran but the west will never conflict with turkey because of three reasons: i. the army of turkey support from profits of turkey and secularism. ii. the influence of west in turkey from the period of Ataturk chanced the style of people life. iii. turkey tends to join European Union.

In 2003, the justice party attempted to change some of rules but the army of turkey preserved the basis structure of turkey, so for this reason, Turkey has many convergence with west and thoughts of liberalism, as far as turkey consider as an important member of NATO. Turkey performed the main role in battle of America with Iraq and Afghanistan, also in cold war<sup>8</sup>. Since there are the convergence between turkey and liberalism, it has created the interference of turkey in affairs of Middle East such as interferences of turkey in Arabic movements<sup>12</sup>.

**Iran (modernism):** The formation of parties in Iran can be studied in 2 directions: i. Different classes of society participated in Islamic revolution of Iran. ii. after revolution victory; a constitution was approved based on Islam and democracy which were essential elements to formation of parties. In addition, economic modernization in reconstruction era creates a medium class in Iran which helped to formation of parties in next years<sup>10</sup>.

Various ideas and thoughts influenced on the formation of parties such as thoughts of ayatollah Khomeini, Shariati and Motahari. In this regard the thoughts of ayatollah Khomeini affected the foreign policy structure of Iran about west. After revolution of Iran created many Islamic patterns against west ideas and patterns and these patterns consist of following example: Islamic religious democracy, theocracy, Islamic system, and Islamic government<sup>13</sup>.

The most important differences after revolution in Iran with liberalism can be dividing in 2 groups: i. Religious democracy is a form of government where the values of a particular religion have an effect on the laws and rules, often when most of the population is a member of the religion. Also it can be said this governance is a type of equilibrium between Islamic governance and republican governance. In contrast, western governance based on the omanism and religious government has not any

role in western societies. ii. In religious government in Iran policy and religious are inseparable bases and there are a type of symphonious between them. In contrast, religion is separate from policy in west.

With the rise of Islamic republic and religious thoughts, conflict were clearly observed with west liberalism, however, based on theoretical bases in Islamic republic constitution and forth-four-year performance of political system may be showed the effect of bases and foundation of dominance thought on Iran political structure by a inductive method. To prefer nations instead states in national relations. To choose causes instead states in national relations. To combat against Israel and vindication of Palestinian Islamic causes. To combat against America. To disagree with Veto system in UN. To emphasize the multilateral political freedom in planning and policy. To prefer beliefs instead commercial and economic profits in bilateral relations. To keep distance from strategies, profits, and policies of superpowers. To emphasize political justice in relations between states.

## Results and Discussion

The conflict between Islamic movements of Iran with west strategies can be classified in 4 groups:

Iran's Foreign Policy has not connection with economic system and Iran's external economic relations. Foreign policy of Islamic republic of Iran has been planed based on fight against west and protection of causes which require any changes to manage its economic. Iran's economy and policy are apart from each other and each one moves in its direction. Overall, Iran with natural resources does not need to coordinate with international elements and in fact it can preserve what it believes in foreign policy domain.

Nature of power in Islamic republic system is connected to history of Islamic revolution .the main important bases consist of battle against Israel and vindication of Muslim rights, but all of these tendencies are hidden in policy of Iran and it has been going on since the early Revolution so far. However, if the Islamic republic converts the above positions, itbecomesanother system.

Like many other countries, protection of present sovereignty which has been accompanied with thoughts, ideas and tendencies, has direct relationship with preservation of foreign policy. Anybody who intercommunicates with power should remain loyal toward these beliefs. Iran's foreign policy has some features and powers in Islamic republic governance should be responsible to support these features. In spite of some ups and downs of countries, tendencies and general structure of foreign policy preserved its firmness during the last two decades. If foreign policy of Iran change the general tendencies in international and regional level, other policies of power will alter and it make new thoughts and ideas in Iran societies. The

present tendency which has its own protectors and advocators is based on the principles of Islamic revolution. Iran cannot have any relationship with America because one of the most important point to establish communication with America is to convert bases structures of Iran which these structures are in governance of Islamic republic system and these changes in security and military organizations is beyond imagination.

Today National security in Islamic republic of Iranis inseparable element in foreign policy of country. Policy freedom of Islamic republic has been created by a distance from superpowers of the world and it made a security and freedom in country. A country such Iran which has Islamic identity cannot to make a confederacy with liberalism and capitalist system because the origin of Islam differs from origin of liberalism. So it is obvious the contraction between Islamic republic and west (also Israel). What make Iran different from other middle- east countries is its foreign policies structures, therefore protection from Muslims and Islamic causes especially Palestine make national security for the country. Suppose the Islamic republic of Iran become a member of Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (G-20) that are the most effective group in economy, policy and international, then with this membership, all of the acts, priorities, tendencies, regional and international coalitions of Iran will change. A religious government like Iran cannot be secular, although the world is managed by secularism and all of the memberships of G-20 accepted secularism not only in philosophic base but also instructures of policy and management. Therefore, theoretical attitude of Islamic republic of Iranis more diverse than west. After Iran-Iraq war, Iran has been governed by three states and six National Consultative Assemblies with various executive management and legislations. None of tendencies of states and legislatures was not determinative in the area of foreign policy especially west matter since fundamental alteration occurred in foreign policy which was bigger than alteration in states and legislatures. In the international level, there was cooperation between Iran and west, but economic relationship was more than political, cultural, social relationships. Although there were many ups and down in relationships between Iran and west over the last three decades but Iran was not unified with the west. Iran considers as the most important power from the viewpoint of regional level, especially its dominance on Persian Gulfled the country to be counted as the most influential country in Middle East.

Today, Taliban and al-Qaeda consider as the most dangerous enemies of west (liberalism) and their access to the most Islamic countries has been increased. Every time, al-Qaeda in frontier of Afghanistan and Pakistan establish a outpost. Al-Qaida and Taliban always are ready to increase their influence in inconstant countries. Since 2005, 40 various organizations has been established in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Marrakesh, and Arabia and they declared their allegiance to Al Qaeda and its strategic goals. Unfortunately, in recent decades, Taliban and al-Qaeda had the greatest impact on Middle East and since they caused the attack of America toward

Afghanistan and their influence made insecurity environment in middle east.

## Conclusion

Islam and liberalism are against with each other but it is been seen difference relationships of Muslims countries toward liberal countries which are related to various Islamic groups in Middle East. Difference relationships of Islamic groups can be observed in Iran and turkey during the time of Taliban, even various approaches of parties with liberal countries is observed in Arabic movements. With the begging of mutations movement in Arabic countries, these movements in west considered as third and fourth mutation of Democratization, but considering Islamic dimension of the matter, it can be said in these countries simultaneously there is a tendency toward democracy from one side and deep attention to religion from another side. With deep concentration to regional transitions, it easily can be perceived which return to religious ground is the most important priority of people. Overall, three flows play the main roles in these countries. First, secular-liberal flow that don't believe intervention of Islam in social and political issues of country, consider religious as the individual and private affair. Second, moderate Islamism that first appeared in Muslim brotherhood and they combine Islam with democracy. Third, traditionalist flow that showed off in Salafy groups and the leaders of it believed modernism and democracy is contrast with Islam. However, Arabic countries consider the most important role of two groups in policy scene and turkey try to fall the Bashar al-Asad's government.

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