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Identity and sociology in the Middle East

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Abstract

In this study, we are looking at a structuralists' view of discerning identity in the Middle East with regard to theoretical methodologies such as the analysis of literature. Ibn Khaldun believes the historical sociology as the science of the transformations of society. He considered all the elements of society, including social groups, science and philosophy, arts and literature, education, society, mythology, mysticism, medicine, pharmacy, etc., in the compilation of the books of the sociology of history. Hundreds of years before the sociologists of the twentieth century, Ibn Khaldun concluded that the history of sociology must necessarily be descriptive and analytic.

Keywords: Middle East, Structuralism, Society, Sociology.

Identidad y sociología en el Medio Oriente

Resumen

En este estudio, observamos la visión estructuralista de la identidad discerniente en el Medio Oriente con respecto a metodologías teóricas tales como el análisis de la literatura. Ibn Khaldun cree que la sociología histórica es la ciencia de las transformaciones de la sociedad. Consideró todos los elementos de la sociedad, incluidos los grupos sociales, la ciencia y la filosofía, las artes y la literatura, la educación, la sociedad, la mitología, el misticismo, la medicina, la farmacia, etc., en la recopilación de los libros de la sociología de la historia. Cientos de años antes que los sociólogos del siglo XX, Ibn Khaldun llegó a la conclusión de que la historia de la sociología debe ser necesariamente descriptiva y analítica.

Palabras clave: Medio Oriente, estructuralismo, sociedad, sociología.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the functioning of sociological and historical developments shows that sociology and history are two sides of a coin. In other words, sociology is a historical understanding of the culture and civilization of the human community throughout human life. History is the recognition of the social relations of the culture and civilization of the human society, which embraces a period of human life that has a limited and definite time and place. Sociology when joining history is capable of describing and analyzing the history of the

culture and civilization of human society. "New Sociology" is capable of explaining and analyzing events through the logical link between historical factors and international developments, and therefore it can help the science of politics.

There are important elements which affect the recognition of social realities. One of these factors is value system. In the social sciences and sociology, values are the beliefs of the people of society about good and bad, right and wrong, what should be and what should not be. These values play a very important role in social life. Most human relationships are not based merely on realistic and objective facts, but on mental judgments. So this is in conflict with the traditional scientific approach which believes human relationships must be relied upon by realistic laws. However, in the social sciences, given the temporal and spatial conditions, this problem can be resolved to some extent. In terms of values, the true value of a society can be democracy. So, the ruling apparatus and the rulers are judged on this basis. However, if the general belief is that a centralized and powerful government is needed to establish order and maintain security, because the value criterion has changed, then judgment about power and rulers will change, as well. Measuring the impact of values on human behavior in society is important in determining their degree of profitability. Despite the shortcomings, the social sciences are on the path to the empirical test of social data and allow the researcher to study the causes of some social phenomena through scientific methods (Farahani, 2006).

The concept of identity in sociology

A brief overview of some sociological issues in international relations reveals the role of sociology in studies of international relations. The framework of international relations has always shaped identities that range from race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, age, income, etc., and each of these has worked in ways that have an impact on international politics. The "identity" debate in the sociology of international relations has always existed, but some of the important events on the world stage have made this discussion more important than before. The most important of these events was the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, coupled with the end of the Cold War, which was the cause of a number of important nationalist strife in Europe, as well as the emergence of a significant number of new ethnic nations based on ethnic identities. Since the 1980s and 1990s, international relations analysts have been analyzing the meaning of the international Islamic fundamentalism movement, which emphasizes a particular type of religious identity (Arianpour, 1974).

In Durkheim's sociological analysis, we can find serious discussions about "identity" and "collective identity". The most fundamental concept in his opinions which is closely related to the notion of "conscious identity", is "collective conscientious". Collective conscientious in his view includes a set of shared beliefs and feelings in people of the society that constitutes a specific system. By declaring loyalty to this set of beliefs and common feelings, they obtain an

identifier representative through which they identify themselves and to which they have committed.

In sociology, there are several definitions of identity. This is the same for social and collective identity. The difference between the sociologists' point of view in discussing collective identity roots in their differences in the ontology and attitudes of society. While modern sociologists are convinced that the conditions of the environment restrict the choices of individuals, postmodern sociologists, like Kiddens and Habermas, take both structure and actors into account and consider both of them as important. They believe that it is better to consider structure-action rather than structure or action alone. This is the same issue that we will discuss in part 3 of this chapter titling the issue of structure-brokerage in constructivism (Azadegan, 2001).

Mofy believes that even the existing actual identity is not precisely defined and delimited in terms of subject matter since there are subtle links between the forms of identity and the interconnected network and the complexities of the differences. In his view, in order to provide a proper and, to some extent, the correct definition of identity, one must pay attention to the plurality and variety of discourses, as well as to the structure of power that affects it. In addition, the complex dynamism of participation and resistance that underlies the actions that this identity involves should be taken into account.

It is possible that social change brokers appear out of these cultural communities and build new identities through the use of accessible cultural materials in order to redefine their position in society and gain the ability to emerge from the domination of interests in global flows of capital, power, and information. People resist the process of individualization and social decomposition and are willing to come together in communities. In many cases, feelings of belonging ultimately over time lead to a cultural and universal identity (Azghandi, 2004).

Structuralism and Identity in the Middle East

A review of constructive approach brings us closer to a greater understanding of these factors and the relevance of sociological factors to the ineffectiveness of the Great Middle East project. As a result of the functional dimension and the ability to analyze the developments in the Middle East, we see that the constructivism has found some fans in the Middle East countries including Iran. Before being practiced in international relations, the constructive approach had existed in sociology, epistemology, and meta-analysis. Its origins in sociology go back to the Chicago School of Philosophy and Phenomenology. In other words, although constructivism in the field of international relations and foreign policy has become more widely known since the 1980s, it was first mentioned in the works related to sociology and was first discussed in the form of social constructivism. In this attitude, the world is considered to be made and invented, and not something that

can be considered natural, definite, or existing before. From this perspective, there is no independent and immediate access to the world. All human actions develop in a social atmosphere and make sense. And this is the meaning that more or less shapes the reality of the world (Esposito, 2006).

The origin of constructivism

The understanding of the origin of constructivism in the field of science and its emergence in international relations can be sought in relation to the challenges of the advancement of "positivism" and the critique of modernity. During the 1990s, a constructivist plan was viewed as the middle ground between two major perspectives in international relations: rationalism and critical theory.

Structuralism can be seen as the result of several important events in the field of international relations: first, rationalists' requests from critical theorists to go beyond theoretical critique and to analyze the content of international relations. This provided an opportunity for constructivists to prove the practical strength of non-rational hypotheses.

Second, the end of the Cold War showed the inefficiency of explaining the power of neo-realism and neoliberalism, because they could not predict events after the end of the Cold War. Indeed, these events challenged the explanatory power and the mainstream

predictions in the field of international relations and revealed their shortcomings, thus preparing the conditions for the presentation of alternative theories.

Third, since the early 1990s, a new generation of young experts of international relations has emerged. The new atmosphere has not only raised new questions, such as the dynamics of transformation in international relations, the nature of basic institutional procedures, the role of non-governmental agency, and the issue of human rights, but it has also led these experts to retrieve and redefine the old questions.

And, fourth, the failure of mainstream specialists helped adopt a new constructive view, which goes from the margin to the mainstream of theoretical debate.

An approach based on the role of identity, culture, and constructivist norms influenced by writers such as Anthony Giddens has moved toward the Middle East and related studies which emphasize on the role of values, norms, culture and identity in aligning regional and international policies.

Social constructivism is struggling to be a moderate solution to include some of the features of global politics that play a pivotal role in neorealism and neoliberalism, and to take into consideration the ways actors act on the issue of "identity". Therefore, one of the most important topics at the level of ontology for constructivists is the issue of the identity of the actors (Smith, 2004).

Nevertheless, some do not consider constructivism as a theory. They regard it as a response and viewpoint about international debates which seeks to have a new look to the existing issues in international relations by questioning the foundations of some of the intellectual and analytical foundations of its schools, especially neoliberalism, and Neo-Nationalism. From this perspective, the importance of the constructivist study is that the emergence of this view makes international relations debates focus on ontological and empirical issues and disrupts the debates of the 1980s.

The emergence of Islamic radical and fundamentalism and its role on the world stage, especially after the disaster of September 11, 2001, and the developments in the Greater Middle East, have given rise to a greater popularity of constructivist attitude that emphasizes on ideology, culture, values and norms. Consequently, in the world, these kinds of studies have also analyzed global politics in the context of the impact of civil and religious norms.

Basic features of constructivism

The emphasis on language in the form of "spoken activity" and its effect on social sciences are among the interests of constructivists. The inseparability of "objectivity and subjectivity" is one of the other foundations of constructivism. Behaviorists believe that the universe can exist as an objective entity independent of the observer, and argue that objectivity is based on the understanding of reality. Contrary to

this, constructivists do not deny reality and do not consider the world as a human creation. Rather, they believe that there is a pre-existing objectivity in the universe. Here, there is no assumption that biologists, psychologists, anthropologists, or physicists have discovered reality through the description or formulation, but what is happening is that using the term "objectivity", they try to validate their scientific arguments (Aghae, 2009).

Constructivism refers to the issue of "self-awareness" of man. 122. Many constructivists recognize international relations in terms of goals, threats, cultures, identities, and other factors related to social reality on the level of international relations. From the point of view of these theorists, what exists in international relations has been created by identities, and language and speech in the international arena have evolved and are in fact revealed as reality. Therefore, they do not have material and algebraic nature, and there is the possibility of change and promotion. In other words, constructivists' attention is focused on ideas, meanings, rules, norms, and procedures.

Ontology and epistemology

Cognitively, constructivism relies on the creation of knowledge while ontologically; it relies on building social reality. The neo-Realists regard the structure of the international system as the distribution of material potentials, because they have a material look.

Neoliberals see it as empowerment with institutions, because in addition to the material look at things, they believe in the institutional superstructure.

Government's role

One of the most important reasons for the constructivist view of international relations is the dependence of this approach on the issue of "government identity" although more emphasis is placed on nongovernmental actors. Ragey believes that in constructivism, the government is again the most important unit in explaining international conflicts, with the difference that in constructivism, the government is a broker and is limited by networks of perceptions, practices, identities and interests of others.

Here, governments are not "static" subjects, but are "dynamic" brokers whose identity is not fixed. The identities of governments are rooted in the viewpoints that actors share collectively about themselves and others and shape the structure of the social world. These identities are variable and different (Chomsky, 2004).

Anarchy

Waltz (1959) in his book, "Man, State, and War," mentions anarchy as the status of the possibility or the prescriptive cause of war, and states that wars happen because there is nothing to preclude.

Unlike neo-realists, Wendt (1992) thinks that "self-help" and "power politics" are not fundamentally important, but are institutions in international relations. Anarchy is what governments make. Wendt believes that power and self-government policies are neither anecdotal, nor causally based on anarchy, and if we observe such phenomena today in the world, it is related to the process rather than to the structure. He emphasizes, "There is no logical anarchy apart from the process and it is a kind of structured interaction" (Wendt, 1992: 21). According to Hussein, Wendt says: "it is the interactions of the activists that determine their identity. Thus, they feel hostile and insecure with a series of signs, procedures, and actions while with the other series of procedures, they feel comfortable. Anarchism is by itself an empty container and without any kind of internal logic" (Hussein, 1999: 38).

Culture

Constructivists emphasize the role of culture in international relations and conclude that, without a globalized political culture, one cannot explain the stability of the state system and the reduction of the diversity of political forms. In the interpretation of constructivists, culture is a common social recognition.

This recognition is both common and interlinked. Culture has several forms, including norms, rules, institutions, ideologies, organizations, threats, etc. But the focus of all of these is that culture exists wherever a common recognition exists.

Identity

Constructivism's look to cultural characteristics, identities and interests created an atmosphere for revival in the study of history and global politics. Constructivism considers identities to be a factor in the formation and the definition of interests. Constructivists argue that interactions between activists create inter-personalities of common norms and ideas which strengthen the identities and identities define the interests of actors.

One of the most important issues that arises in constructivism ontology and in general in normative theories is the identity of actors, which is at the center of constructive discussions. Since this study considers identity factors in sociology as one of the main sources of inefficiency in the Middle East, the meaning of "identity" in constructivism has an important influence on the overall trend of this study.

The framework of international relations has always been shaped by identities that range from race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, age, income, etc. Each of these, not necessarily, but automatically, has worked in a way that has influenced international politics. Thus, the issue of "identity" in international relations is not a new issue, and it has always existed. However, some events like the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, along with the end of the Cold War, resulted in a number of important nationalist strife in Europe, as well as the emergence of a significant number of the new nations based on ethnic identities.

As mentioned earlier, in the analysis of Dürkheim's sociology, there are serious issues in the collective identity. In constructivism, the discussion of identity is at the heart of the debate.

The definition that Wend suggests for social identity is roughly the same as that of James Jayce Davis in sociology. Accordingly, social identities have a social and individual structure.

A cognitive pattern enables an actor to answer the question "Who am I / who are we?" in a social structure of common understanding and expectations. Some views constructivism as a particular type of study of cultural and subjective phenomena that seeks to find out how their values and norms of identity develop and how they affect national security.

The emphasis on identity varieties is different. What was happening in Europe and beyond Europe in Australia, between the Sikhs in India, the Black people in South Africa, and the Tamils in Sri Lanka, emphasized ethnic and racial identities, and in some cases emphasized the right for special land ownership. But when an Arab emigrated from the Arab lands to Afghanistan to fight guerrilla groups against the Soviet Union, it would probably have been done on an identity basis, called Islam. On the grounds that he was a Muslim, he defended the people who shared his religious identity. The presence of some Muslims and Shiists of Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine in the Iraqi imposed Iraq war against our country to help Iranian side can be analyzed in this identity framework.

Identity is not limited to only these cases; identity has many faces. Chantal Mauffi refers to another type of identity called political identity, which he regards as fundamental to democratic politics. He believes that because of the change in the meaning and function of identity, it must be redefined. Castles are also focusing on "collective identity". He distinguishes between three types of constructive collective identities:

1. Legitimacy identity
- 2- Resistance identity
- and 3- Planned identity (Tavasoli, 2004).

According to Castells, resistance identity is created by those who are in a state of affairs and circumstances that are considered worthless by the logic of domination, and are beaten with a severe

disgrace. Hence, based on this identity, trenches for resistance and survival are made based on different principles or contrary to the principles supported by the institutions of society (Haji Yousefi, 2004).

Identity allows any state to have an understanding of other states, their nature, their motives, their interests, their possible actions, their attitudes, and their role in any hypothetical political structure. Structuralists believe that social identities play a significant role in shaping the interests and behavior of actors. Each identity is an intrinsically social definition of the actor, which has grounds in theories which actors collectively have about themselves and each other and use to form the structure of the social world. Identities are the bases of benefits. In the great Middle East, rulers are trying to realize their political survival by relying on Arab and Islamic identity.

What is identity?

There are numerous definitions for identity in sociology. This is the same for social identity. The difference between the sociologists' point of view in discussing collective identities is based on their difference in the fundamentals of ontology and their view about society. Modernist sociologists consider the level of analysis structural and make it overcome social action. They believe that environmental conditions limit the choices of individuals. On the contrary, the late sociologists, like Kiddens and Habermas, take both structure and actors

into account and considers both of them as important. They believe that it is better to consider structure-action rather than structure or action alone. This issue will be discussed later in a part titling the issue of structure-brokerage in constructivism.

Identity determines how you are behaved, what you are expected to do, when you are known as a friend or an enemy. In constructivism, the claim is about an identity involving an emphasis on the legitimacy of collective behavior and behavior without distortion and inequality. In constructivism, benefits are the result of identity.

Identities play a role in shaping political behavior and inspire interests and, as a result, actions. So it is important to understand how immaterial structures restrict identities. In order to determine the benefits, the social identities of governments or individuals are the focus of attention. According to Wendt (1992), identities are the foundation of benefits (Salimi, 2007).

The process of identity formation

Considering the identity process in recent modernity, Giddens believes that the more tradition loses its foundation, and the more daily life is redefined based on a logical local and global interaction, the more they are forced to choose a different style from a variety of lifestyles

In terms of identity formation, constructivism, suggests a different form. Neo-Nalalism only has one understanding of the identity of governments that assumes the interests of governments with respect to itself. Since the foundations of the theory of Neo-Nalalism are based on material factors, according to the constructivists, they do not have much to say in defining identity.

The meaning of identity suggests that each identity is different from one another, while in Neo-Nalalism of the international structure, the function of governments as the main actor is assumed to be similar.

Constructivists examine the formation of identity in different social, cultural, and historical forms, and argue that identity forms social benefits through social action.

Wendt (1992) considers four major variables as factors of collective identity formation:

Interdependence, joint destiny, homogeneity, and self-restraint. He describes the first three variables as the active or causal causes of the formation of a collective identity and the last variable as the facilitator of collective identity.

Identities in the community have three functions: telling you and others who you are; telling you who the others are; and finally, identifying a set of interests and priorities for acting on a specific realm. In constructivism, as identities and interests are created through

social procedures, the loss of interests is also understood through social procedures and structures. Identities and interests interact with social practices, such as structure and brokerage.

Constructivists believe that identity is, in turn, created by international interactions. Identity politics is a process in which both the person seeking to find the answer for the question "who am I" and those who want to influence the response are in conflict with each other.

“We have always behaved with identity as a personal issue, Zalsky says, while the issue is not so simple. Identity is saying who you are, knowing how to introduce yourself and tell where you belong” (Ahmadi, 2010: 9).

Wendt (1959) believes that joint fate is sometimes good, but in international politics, it is usually bad and typically forms a threat to the group. Identifying others, for example, as Nazis by the Jews between 1930 and 1940 means that your life is in great danger, even if you have been introduced as a German. Similarly, if your identity was designated as "foreigner" in America's McCarthy in the 1950s, it would increase your likelihood of being attacked or being called anti-American in spite of your insistence on being an American.

Structure-broker issue

Fundamentally, rationalist theories do not confer any link between the broker and the structure. Realists and liberals emphasize

the appointment of a broker, and they are therefore accused of being reductive. Structuralists emphasize the role of "structure" and are famous for generalism. Neorealism and the theory of the global system are structuralist Wallerstein (2004), in the theory of the world system, emphasizes the determination of a systematic structure of capitalism in the international system.

Similarly, constructivists are also reluctant to determine a one-sided structure for the perpetrator. They emphasize the constructive and consistent relationship between the structure and the broker. Wendt (1992) believes: The relationship between broker and structure should be a relationship based on mutual consistency. Williams (2013) is convinced that if both the concept of "brokerage" and the conception of power which is often eliminated from the structuralism analysis, are to be restored, the revival of the "strategic nature of culture" is necessary and a fundamental step. Structure in constructivism is defined as a relatively stable phenomenon with interactive interaction based on which actors define their identities and interests. The importance of such a structure is of interest to constructivists in various aspects. It creates consistency of identity and interests; helps actors to find common solutions to problems; defines expectations for behaviors.

The general concept of "structure" in social terms is a mixture of ideological factors. The barriers to international reality structures are as immaterial (and also idea-based) as materialistic. As much as they are instrumental, idea factors are also normative; they not only emphasize

collective process but also individual production. In addition, the meaning and concept of idea factors are not independent of time and place

The Giddens's Structural thesis is the base of some of the theories in constructivism. Giddens (1979) sees a two-way relationship between the brokerage and structure. On this basis, social fabrication is both a means and a result of actions that make the social system. The universe is a unitary whole, in which institutions, norms, and practices constantly create irregular and random situations (Paymond, 2007).

Wendt (1992) entered the problem of "whether structures or brokages are effective?" In international relations, the solution it offers is a degree of interaction between the structure and the broker, and how the structure itself is the result of the actions of the broker, but at the same time limits it, and yet gives it an opportunity. Wendt (1992) says his position on the structure is largely based on the theory of constructivism and symbolic interactionism. What Wendt (1992) thinks is needed here is taking both factors, the structure and the brokerage, into consideration when analyzing. Whenever we analyze a phenomenon in the world of politics, we must examine it both in terms of structure and in terms of the broker. In this case, we can come to the conclusion that each of them has an effect on the other.

CONCLUSION

Constructivism look is a change based on the shifts in procedures, rules, and identities. According to Wendt (1992), it is the governments which determine the nature of international anarchy, but here, again, what governments do depends on what their identities and interests are. These identities and interests also change. This change in identity affects both governments and the identity of the international system. As a result, what matters is how the identities and interests are affected. What is required for their understanding is perceptual perceptions. Thus, in constructivism, the change in structure, although difficult, is possible. It can be achieved by changing perceptual perceptions.

Constructors believe that when one of the brokers is faced with increasing power, he or she can minimize the structural constraints and maximize the freedom of action based on their interests and wishes. This made Bush, the father, name the 21st century as the American century, in the form of the doctrine of the New World Order, and help him seek to revise and reform the international system in the context of the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Great Middle East. Constructivism begins its attitude to international relations with its definition of "human". The rationalist theories consider the human being as economic, and thus, classify actors as "profit-centered", who acts based on the calculation of profit and loss. On the contrary, in constructivism, man is a social being, and society has a direct impact

on human behavior in such a way that human behavior is shaped in a perceptual and "identity-centered" relationship.

As was mentioned, at the heart of constructive discussions, there are three concepts of identity, structure-broker, and change. The concept of identity is one of the main issues of theories against racism. In the review of this study, the details of the nature of identity, the development of identity, and the function of identity were presented. Getting this concept right will help us first and foremost find out how to restore this identity and its internal elements, which play the role of internal cohesion, and, secondly, help us know the existing structures of the actions of this identity.

The structure-broker discussion helps us understand the true nature of international and regional structures, how they operate, and how to communicate with brokers as active actors. Ultimately, the issue of change helps us to find out that existing structures are not static structures. This topic will also help us to understand the correctness of the element of "identity" in terms of levels of analysis. In this context, the level of analysis goes beyond the "individual" and "territorial state" and refers to the "Islamic society". In line with the culture of "Islamic identity", meaningful norms such as "justice", and "denial of domination" have emerged in the Middle East, which are in conflict with the goals of the great Middle East plan.

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