Deal with Iran's Nuclear Issue

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Abstract

In December 2006, the UN announced the first resolution against Iran's nuclear activities. After many sanctions and negotiations, there still exists no definite agreement between parties over Iran's nuclear program. The objective of this study is to determine whether Iran's nuclear program has become Iran's identity. It is assumed that if the nuclear issue has not become Iran's identity, negotiation would be a useful threat. The Constructivists' approach for shaping states' identities was used in this study to analyze Iran's behavior toward the nuclear issue.

Iran has a long history of civilization. Iranians can trace heritage back to The Persian Empire, which brought strong national identity among them. The main segment of this identity is an inclination to prosperity, as well as the retrieving of political power and reputation. Nuclear energy is an alternative for Iranians which makes it possible for Iranians to reach their national goals. The Iranian government admits that nuclear energy is an effective tool to achieve their national ends, but, once they realized that the cost and benefit of this tool is not compatible with their national goals, they sought substitutes that fulfill their national goals.

Negotiation is a good option if it brings economic growth and retrieves Iranian reputation and power. It means that negotiations which do not remove economic sanctions make it difficult to comprehensively settle because it does not lead to economic growth.

Keywords: Iran, state identity, national identity, negotiation, nuclear issue

1. Introduction

Iran's persistence on the nuclear issue is one of the most controversial subjects of the last two decades. Continual negotiations between EU-3 (European representatives to negotiate and limit Iran's nuclear program) and Iran started in 2003. The EU-3, in October 2003, offered an economic incentive to Iran, if Iran suspended its Uranium enrichment, and allowed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear facilities. However, even the EU-3's second proposal, made on 5 August, 2005, could not convince Iran to stop its program. Iran resumed Uranium enrichment at Natanz, and conversion at Isfahan.

The UN Security Council voted to impose sanctions on Iran some months later, on 23 December, 2006. The first Sanction bans the supply of nuclear related materials and technology. Though, Article 41 of the UN charter states the obligatory enforcement of the sanction, it was limited to non-military use. Reports by the (IAEA) showed that Iran did not stop their Uranium enrichment rather, expanding their program) during the 60 given days to comply the resolution.

Widening sanctions were imposed by Resolution 1747, on 24 March 2007. These sanctions block Iran's arm exports and freeze overseas assets of those involved in nuclear and missile work. Again, The UN gave Iran 60 days to suspend its nuclear enrichment; but Iran was instead expanding their program.

Development in Iranian nuclear enrichment caused wordiness among the International community, which lead to the UNSC Resolution 1803 that caused Iranian financial institutions, especially Bank Mellat and Bank Saderat to cease to function. Fears of Iranian disruptive capability intensified in February 2012, when diplomatic negotiations over fuel swap proposals failed to avert Tehran's achievement of 20 percent-nenriched uranium. Unproductive negotiations, after the fourth round of UN sanctions, lead the United States and the European Union to global cooperation on new sanctions. This time, purchases of Iranian petroleum were banned. However, after all sanctions and even more negotiations in Istanbul, Baghdad, and Moscow, there exists no acceptable achievement on Iran's nuclear issue. On 24 November, 2013, the Geneva agreement, as an interim deal, was achieved, in which Iran agreed to temporarily stop parts of its nuclear program in exchange for reduction on

some sanctions; this went into effect on 20 January, 2014.   The parties agreed to extend their talks with a first extension deadline on 24 November 2014.

Based on the April 2015 negotiations on Iran's nuclear deal framework, parties achieved an agreement which was historically unique; Zarif, the foreign minister of Iran announced that "we found the solution". However, there is still a hard way to achieving the comprehensive agreement, as both parties faced many barriers. There exist some disagreements on the details, which caused problems to enforce the agreement. Iran's government does not accept increased intensity of international inspections, and they also ask for the removal of all sanctions. Ayatollah Rouhani, in his speech, claimed that the nuclear agreement depends on removing the sanction, while many nations, including the USA, persist in continuing sanctions against Iran. Indeed, Many Congressmen are supporting Israel's perspective, which has said the framework proposal will not stop Iran from developing atomic arms; in this respect, Ayatollah Rouhani said it was a domestic U.S. issue that should have no affect on the negotiations.

After many years of negotiation, coping with Iran's nuclear issue is still controversial. The principal objective of the present study is to determine if the nuclear issue is Iran's identity. This study proposes that negotiation will be a useful tool to deal with Iran nuclear energy, because nuclear issue is not the Iranian identity. To find whether the nuclear issue is the Iranian identity, definition of national identity which state's identity is based on it should first be clarified.

1.1 What Is Identity, National Identity, and State Identity?

Identity is a key term of contemporary politics and society. It is something that all people have, seek, construct, and negotiate. Identity is something public and produced in relation to others, and it varies in different contexts. Hence, defining identity is a difficult task.

Scholars define identity in several ways; Brubaker notes, "…identity in general is not a thing that people can be said or have, or that they can be, thus it is not real either." Charles Tilly defines it as experiences of people's different roles in different categories or groups, which combine with public representation and shape the shared story. Brubaker and Cooper admit the difficulty with definite description for identity, and decide to define it in 5 categories, which have some overlaps. Adler and Barnett agree with Tilly's definition and describe identity similar to his definition. Barbara Lal divides identity in two categories: a category of practice and a category of analysis. In the first category, the populace uses identity to realize how they and their activities are similar or different to others. Actually, this category causes them to make sense of themselves. This self-understanding is the one that policy makers use to encourage people to understand their identity and interests in a certain way and for certain purpose, or collective action. Later (in the process of identification), we will discussed it more.

For the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to go further and define the identity, which, in terms of the aforementioned, includes; National identity.

National identity is defined as the identity of people who have collective and shared experiences across the nation. These people posses the same memories, expectations, particular ties, self-understanding, stories, trajectories, histories, and predicaments; or cultural dominance, a belief in shared destiny, as Wendth mentions. As Nasaji states, national identity is the sense of belonging and loyalty to common symbols and elements in the whole society or across the nation. Collective identity can be defined as national identity when the political practice of the elites to push populace in a certain way and to persuade them for a certain purpose, through social context, not only causes people to realize their interests, but also brings a strong sense of loyalty to those interests. In that way, the populace can sacrifice many other interests in favor of the collective persuasion.

State Identity: States' identities are constructed through the process of interaction on both the domestic level and the external level. The domestic level of this identity is the national identity of that state. The external aspect is part of an International system. As Gery points out, to realize states' behavior in international relation, it is necessary to consider both internal and external aspects and conditions. As states act according to their identity in the systemic level, researchers should consider both aspects of this identity.

This paper is organized as follows: First, the definition of identity is reviewed briefly. Then, causative factors of the state identity in the perspective of the constructivism approach are described. Results and findings are discussed next, followed by providing a framework for future study.

2. Method and Materials

This study covers the relationship between contemporary Iran's identity and the nuclear issue. Data was collected through library study and information was gathered from books, articles and scientific notes. The resulting case study analysis was examined using the constructivist approach.

Constructivists' main concern is the processes in which identity is constructed. They discuss that, during this process states' identity are shaped and reshaped. This identity is shaped through an intertwined process. Many constructivists' scholars believe in the importance of environmental structure impact; both domestic and external, specifically, on an international environment level, which leads to the constitution of the identity. The International environment causes states to compete for their norms and interests. As Krotochwil mentions according to the role of the norm, states' inquiry are changed, and consequently their interest are renewed. Then, states, according to these norms and interests, constitute and reconstitute identities through internal environments and social process.
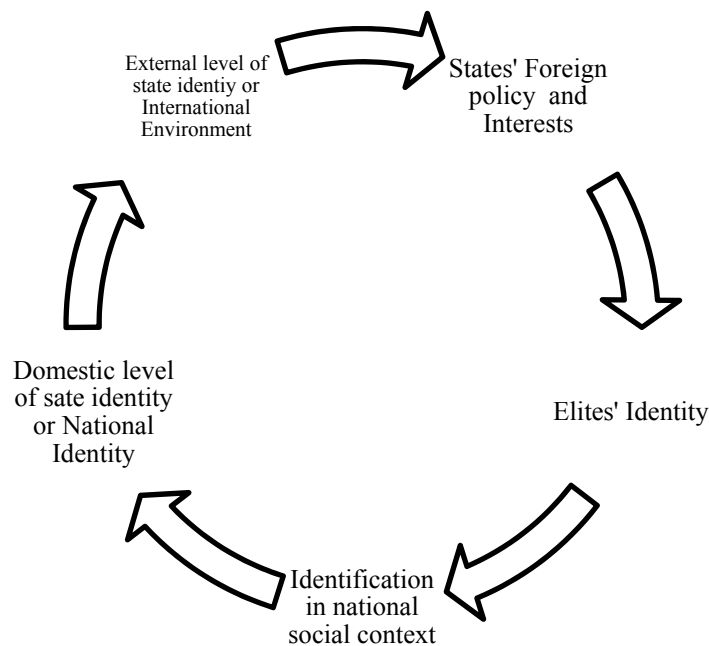
Figure one clarifies this intertwined process:

Figure1. The process of shaping states' identity

At the very beginning of the process, it should be considered that each state has its own national identity. Actually, national identity is admitted as a domestic environment, national identity is described as shared history and narratives that carry "we-ness" through time. As Weldes mentions it is an image that states' government posses concerning the international system, and the place of their own state in it, rooted in their internal political, social, and cultural contexts and norms. Jervis concludes that "it is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision-makers' belief about the world." Hence, this perspective clarifies the relationship of states in the international environment. It means, according to that ideology, states define their friends and enemies. They define their future plan in the international environment.

Once a state finds itself in the international system, it chooses its policy according to its national identity. According to this foreign policy, states interact in the international system. During these communications, states' political strategies and interests are shaped. States' interests and strategies will create common standards for action.

Katzenstein declares that states' interests are constituted through interaction in social contexts, hence it is not a thing that can be uncovered by rational actors. It means that interaction on the systemic level leads to clarifying states' interests, which, in turn, motivate their actions.

Actually, understanding their interests is the same as recognizing their identity. There exists a tight relationship between these two. Jenkins mentions that making sense of our identity is the same as defining our own interests. These interests will persuade people to identify themselves in a particular way. Consequently, interest and identity claims are closely connected. Things which shape who I am are the same things that I want. For Wendt, Interaction is a process which causes people's interests and identities to appear. Consequently, identities and interests in the systemic constructed intersubjectivity. In other words, "the meanings in terms of which action is

organized arise out of interaction".

The next step is identification. This is an object which mostly the elites try to impose upon the populace. In practice, during this process, elites, states' officials, encounter the societal group, who, in turn, discerns that they are being asked to switch their loyalty and to make political and economic clarity. Snyder acknowledges the importance of the elites, mentioning the following:

"Elites manipulate mass publics through propaganda. In this view imperial ideologies are rationalizations for parochial interests. Products that entrepreneur sell in the political market. He acknowledges that in passing that the blowback of propaganda, the blurring of the line between fact and fiction…sincere beliefs and tactical arguments, enrapt political leaders not only in their own confusion but in the political context that they helped create".

Elites cannot impose shared ideas to the populace without power to produce national identity. However, what is power and shared idea? Williams describes power as the potential to generate the meanings and categories of legal action, the capacity to produce the game's fundamental rules, to clarify what is established as an acceptable game, and the capacity to make people to obey these rules as they are now are a part of this self-understanding process. Power here means the ability and legitimacy to achieve the trust of populace, and then impose the shared idea to them, in the way that people conspired to act collectively to fulfill policy makers' desire. It is clear that trust comes prior to identification.

Yücel Bozdaliolu also admits the domination of the intellectuals or most powerful group on the shaping of definition of national identity. These groups attempt to force their own idea and identity through the identification process, and try to establish them in the legitimate structure. Their success in this effort is based on their power in regards to other groups and their relations with society.

Ideas constructed interests in part, as a result; demonstrating that a shared idea has a key role in generating the collective identity. Wendth considers this shared idea prior to material forces, in order to constitute a human organization, and believe that target actors' identity and interests are constituted via this shared idea rather than given by nature. From this, some scholars claim that constructivism rests on the intersubjective dimension of human action. Wendth further lessens the category of idea to knowledge, which sociologists describe as any right believes.

Social learning is the only way through which those actors can reach to share knowledge. Because this shared knowledge is originates in the practical contact of actors in social context. Social learning is regarded as the potential and incentive of social actors to convert and manage reality by aligning their beliefs of the material and social world with their identity.

Trough proceeding and changing through social contexts, people interact, and their understanding of reality, normative expectations, and events themselves are shaped. This kind of communication is crucial and impressive in Wiener's point of view, in that he claims that this interaction is enough alone to give a chance to a group of people to act or think together. Adler also admits it as a vital process to the progression of the asters understanding which leads to an intersubjective perception on which the government's interests and endeavor are based.

Hence, this shared knowledge can be achieved and understood through interaction, and can change the understanding of collective value.

Any disparity over the definition of shared ideas or identity between the populace and officials leads to controversy on what constructs the collective identity and might cause no identity to be shaped. Avoiding this kind of disparity creates tight relationship with political discourse. In this view, social learning is not just a simple learning to adjustment. It is an effective tool that policy makers use to reach their aims as a reaction to international system changes.

Once identity is constructed through the society, it will shape the interests and preferences of states. Constructivists even believe that the way that we constitute the meaning of material objective through society leads to material consequence for us. This identity clarified states' policy in an International environment. As Roxanna Sjöstedt states, Government's officials are members of the society. The value of the society that is created by the domestic identity of this society influences them as much as other members; furthermore, these values and this domestic identity affect their understanding of the international system.

3. Results and Findings

Iranian people have long history and culture. As Ghamari notes, from the ancient times, Iranians have a long

history of strong national cohesion. Through different historical periods, they bore many shared experiences which caused many shared memories. These memories include of their defeat in the wars, the invasions, their fight for the national parliament, the national oil industry, and the Islamic revolution, etc. Thousands of years of independence, and civilization help shaped Iran's national identity. The Iranian national identity is a combination of their Iranian heritage, and Islamic religion. Iranians mostly ventures for their ancient heritage and glory, which the Persian Empire brought for them. They believe that by reviving the Persian Empire, they will retrieve their past glories, and this part of national identity encourages them to achieve more power in the Middle East region. As Zahed states, the most important segment of Iranian national identity is the willingness for progress. From the view of religion, Iranian people are mostly Shies Muslims, who according to their Islamic doctrines, believe that their leader is the representative of their absent Imam (Mahdi) in the earth. Hence, this leader will be a future leader of the Islamic world, and will lead all other Muslim nations. However, as Amuzegar notes, from the leadership of President Akbar Rafsanjani, "national economic progress" was substituted for Islamic and revolutionary ideology. In the 1991 International conference in Iran, Velayati (Iran Foreign Minister) also announced that, when it comes to economics, the revolution was over, and Iran had to rebuild and dig out of debt.

The most important part of the Iranian national identity is the inclination to progress Iran's power in both political and economic aspects. Hence, the domestic level of Iran's identity pursues these elements. In recent decades, international interactions show Iran that there exist many rivals against their national ideology. The Middle East's nations are playing a zero sum game, in which all countries are looking for more power and interests. Because of this, Iran faces many barriers to becoming a regionally dominant power.

War between Iran and Iraq caused thousands of deaths for Iran, and this intensified the Iranian inclination to reach more power. Other intentions in the region, such as war between India and Pakistan, and the emergence of the Taliban made the region unsafe.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, Iran is primarily Shies Muslim, while Sunni power is the dominant power in the Middle East. Hence, Middle East safety is unstable as a result of this difference of religion ideology. Iran undertook lots of rigidity as a result of its anti-Shies neighbor, Pakistan, with nuclear power and insecure politics. In the last few decades, some Iranian reporters and diplomats were killed in Pakistan, although Pakistan assured Iran of diplomats' safety. In addition, several Sunni Arab leaders have expressed serious concern over Iran's expanding influence in the region. In the recent past, Arab countries tried to grasp some of the Iranian southern territories. The most famous attempt is their effort to change the name of Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf is the most important source of oil for Iran, which brings economic stability for them.

Moreover, the hegemony of the USA in the Middle East, and the potential threat of a USA attack on Iran after Syria, along with the existence of Israel, which poses a long history of opposition with Iran, intensifying the rivalry for Iran. Israel is an ideological threat for Iran and other Islamic world, rather than military threat.

With these obstacles, Iranians with the identity of progress and glory are seeking some means which will lead them to achieving their end, bringing both security and prosperity. Mostafa Tajazade considers atomic energy as a means that will lead to equilibrium in the region. He claims that without the nuclear bomb, Iran is unsecure. Policy makers found nuclear energy an appropriate tool for this purpose, and as a result, Iranian investigates lots of resources on that.

Policy makers and the elites realized that nuclear energy is a tool which fulfills their interests in the environment. Takeyh admits the importance of this nuclear energy for Iran and asserts that this energy is a wise and practicable device for Iranian to restraint potential threats.

Ayatollah Khamenei, in one of his speeches, declared that independent nuclear energy enables Iran to compete with others superpowers, such as the USA, and other smaller countries, which are the barriers for Iran's glory.

With this perspective, Iranian elites attempt to impose this belief as a shared knowledge to the populace. They created several broadcasts to convince people. Nuclear energy was mentioned in many elites' speeches during different eras, as a necessity for Iranians. For instance, Manuchehr Mottaki (Iran's Foreign Minister), in his speech, declared that the sanctions are unlawful and unjustifiable, and the limitations would not force Iran to abandon its right. Ayatollah Rouhani states that "nuclear energy is compatible with Iranian prestige in the world." They indeed, attempted to clarify the advantages of posing civilian nuclear applications (e.g. nuclear electric battery, nuclear medicine, industrial applications, Oil and Gas Exploration, Food processing and agriculture, etc). Iranians mostly agree with the need for nuclear energy and found it to be a tool which brings progress in many aspects of their life, such as economic growth, more independence from other nations, better prestige in world, and generally national interests. Iranian people mostly (89 percent) consider it as a tool to prosper Iran's

economy. Besides, 80 percent of Iranians agree that it is a safe source of electricity. As a result, this led to national cohesion. The Iranian people are mostly accepting it as a tool to fulfill their national identity, but continual economic sanction interrupted that. As mentioned in the introduction, plenty of different sanctions spill over Iran, and gradually destroy different aspects of Iranian life in social, economic, and political prospects. One of the consequences of sanctions is the sharp increase in exchange rate of Iranian IRR to USA dollars. While this increase was about 30 percent for ten years (2000-2009), this rate increased by 300% during 2009-2014. Additionally, as a result of these sanctions, especially Iran's oil industry sanctions, many intrastate companies were forced to abandon their businesses. Hence, Iranian faced a sharp increase of inflation rate in less than a decade. Also, according to World Bank, it rose to 40.1% in 2014. Indeed, Iran's Gross Domestic Production also dropped during recent years, as is shown in table below:

Table1. Iran, GDP (USD)   2009-2013

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2013
GPD Rate	7,006.05	6,578.12	4,763.30	4,006.3	40.1%

Source: Word Bank

In addition, many private firms and governmental companies fired their employees because they were unable to cover their costs. This huge unemployment poses terrible impacts on Iran's society. Moreover, in political aspects, Iranians who were looking for the International glory and reputation were faced with completely different results. Eventually, they realized that not only, does nuclear energy fail to bring glory for them, but that is also destroyed their previous reputation and authority. It is clear that economic sanctions in this step play a crucial role. They caused Iranian to realize that their mental value and recognition about nuclear energy were not parallel to real value. This results in lots of changes in Iranians' attitudes. It is a point which Goldstein and Rayner mention: It sometimes happens that, during purifying my interests, I start to define my sense of self in different way. Hence, there exists a drastic disparity between objectives that do not threaten my identity and those that do.[51] Actually, Iranians who base their national identity on economic progress and political reputation and power realized that the cost and benefit of this means is not worthwhile, and even a nuclear energy program is threatening their identity. Therefore, Iranian is beginning to think about better ways to fulfill their ideology. Negotiation is a positive option. 75 percent of Iranians are in favor with negotiations with the US, especially in large cities, and Iranians desire an improving relationship with the US.[52] Recent reactions and happiness of Iranians after the Lozano negotiations proved this.

4. Discussion

Through a literature review of Iran's nuclear issue, the scholars mainly ignore the constructivist approach. Scientists such as Mani Parsi And sYetive (2008), on their scholary work, Unequal Contest: Iranian Nuclear Proliferation Between Economic and Value Symmetry; Paul K. Kerr's (2015) Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations; Vaez and Ferguson's (2011) Towards Enhanced Safeguards for Iran's Nuclear Program are mainly based on the realism or liberalism approaches. These scholars ignore the role of Iranian people's culture and identity in shaping Iranian political practices. In fact, they ignore the role of domestic level of shaping states' identity. The present research focuses mainly on the constructivist approach. The approach is important because it manly focuses on state culture, which is mostly ignored by other approaches such as (neo) realism or (neo) liberalism. In the case of Iran, scholars mostly neglect this approach, as well. Still, considering this approach can assist in analyzing the Iranian attitude toward this issue.

By considering the results, this study proposed that Iranian did not "pass" the step of identification in the states' identity process, and peaceful nuclear energy is just a means that assists them to achieve glory, and progress as a part of their national identity. While Iran once found that negotiation could be a possible substitute and fulfill their national goals they gave the possession of nuclear energy up.

According to the constructivist approach, identity is something that produces and reproduces during social interaction and social cognition. Hence, it is useful to mention that identity is not given for granted in this perspective, similar to as the Neorealist's assumptions.

Iran's nuclear issue has been a controversial topic through the last decade, and defining the precise resolution is not easy, particularly because this is an worldwide issue, in which different countries get the unique advantage of different and varying solutions. This causes difficulty in analyzing the subject.

5. Conclusion

The study of the Iranian nuclear issue, based on the constructivists 'approch, reveals the impact of Iranian culture and national identity on Iraninan political practice. Iranians, whose national identity focuses on progress, prosperity, and growth in all aspects of their social, economic, political life, are always seeking the means to achive their goals. Nuclear energy is one of the tools that they chose, but when they were faced with economic sanctions, they realized that their subjective of nuclear energy is not parralel to the objective events, and as a result, they substituted it with another tool: negotiation.

The important matter that should be considered by policy makers is that Iranians admitted negotiation as a tool for growth and prosperity in their life. It means negotiations which do not remove the economic sanctions are not compatible with their idea, andit is hard to achieved a comprehensive agreement.

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