

The Impact of Globalization on Development of Civil Society in Iran with an Emphasis on Political Parties & the Press

Arash Sadeghizeidi¹

¹ Department of Political Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence: Arash Sadeghizeidi, Department of Political Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: Arashsadeghi122125@gmail.com

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Abstract

Globalization as an emerging and pervasive phenomenon has had a significant impact on various aspects of human life. Development and influence of this phenomenon have been accelerated as a result of the Soviet Union's collapse, the spread of neo-liberal economics and communications, and information revolution since 1980s. Therefore, this research aims at analyzing the effect of globalization on two important institutions of civil society. Another purpose of the recent research is answering a question regarding globalization as a new and inclusive phenomenon. This question can be considered as "How globalization affects the development of Iran's civil society especially the press and political parties?" This question has been formed because previous studies indicated that globalization has led to the development of political parties and the press in Iran as a result of political culture development. To substantiate this question, dimensions and the process of its impacts in Iran have been studied in this research. Also, the impact of globalization on political culture, parties, and the press has been evaluated in this research.

Keywords: civil society, globalization, political culture, political parties, press

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, we have witnessed the increasing impact of a phenomenon on various aspects of human life that called globalization. Globalization refers to the process of international integration resulted from the interchange of world views, ideas, and other cultural factors. Today, a comprehensive range detection of globalization in various fields of human life, make it complicated so that scientists are not able to provide a precise definition and they have offered diverse and contradictory definitions. Some scientists have studied globalization from the negative comments points of view. Others have adopted a positive opinion and there were those who had interstitial treatment. The spread of democratic culture is one of the consequences of globalization in the world. Today, the majorities of people consider democracy as the best method of governance and pursue it. Democracy is in fact a system of government in which all the people of a state are involved in the process of decision making especially through voting to elect representatives to a parliament or similar assembly. Strong civil society is one the most influential cases that help modern societies to achieve democracy. Civil society is an independent department of the state that acts as a fender against government. This community is comprised of autonomous groups and has a population of diverse values and beliefs that live in peaceful coexistence. Civil society include many organizations and institutions due to its pluralistic nature such as influential groups, pressure groups, unions, associations, the media, political parties, unions and other political groups that are competing with each other for power. So we have restricted the topic of this study. In this regard, civil society has both implications of political parties and the press which compared with other institutions of civil society has sublime position in achieving to democracy. In this article, regarding the answer to the question, to what extent globalization as a new and pervasive phenomenon has affected on development of civil society in Iran particularly on political parties and the press? We hypothesized that globalization have provided backgrounds for civil society development by democratic culture development. In this course the parties have been more fortunate than the press. Albeit, it is worthy to say that the time domain of this article is from 1997 to 2013. So parties and press are studied in two 8-year period. It is essential to consider different dimensions and aspects of globalization for understanding its impact on civil society. Then we can find out various indices and influential aspects of this phenomenon based on these cases. In discussing globalization dimensions, it is important to note

that this is simultaneously a political, economic, cultural, social and technical phenomenon. However, in this article, we introduce two dimensions related to the research.

1.1 Cultural Dimension

One of the aspects of globalization is cultural dimension and its impact on political, social and economical structures of countries and nations. Many intellectuals and analysts have considered globalization phenomenon based on cultural dimension and its social impacts. We are witnessing the emergence of global civilization on the cultural level. Détente and coalition for peace are major concepts that have priority in this global culture. We are also seeing the emergence of universal identities and cultural pluralism in our societies. It has contradictory appearance. Because on the one hand, we are witnessing the emergence of universal culture elements and on the other hand, while continuing particular cultural identities such as fundamentalism, nationalism and ethnicity, we even witnessed the intensification of this particularistic. (Ahmadvand, 2005-2006)

Cultural and human response is different depending on social, economical and political conditions and the influence rate of globalization process and this matter has been placed in the range of absolute to fight violent reaction (Tohidfam, 2002, p 81). Despite such differences, culture and globalization relationship or cultural reactions to these processes have been classified into three categories: Cultural assimilation (Universalists), Cultural particularism, cultural amalgamation and evolution (Tohidfam, 2002).

1.2 Universalists Characteristics

- 1) Development of Western modernity including features such as capitalism, Industrialism and surveillance of Universalists main features
- 2) Consumerism
- 3) Expansion of European languages, especially English
- 4) Covering patterns
- 5) Nutrition and Architecture
- 6) Urban and industrial life
- 7) A series of cultural values and approaches about individual liberty, human rights and secularism (Golmohammadi, 2002).

1.3 Particularism Characteristics

- 1) The first feature of cultural particularism is its opposition against globalization and negation.
- 2) The second feature is emphasis on location, and specific land.
- 3) The third feature is emphasis on distinction and specification of borders. In all cultural particularism, there is more or less emphasis on the reconstruction of borders and reconstruction insider-outsider place as an agenda for particularism movements.
- 4) There is a prominent anti-relativity in particularism ideology and various types of absolutists are emphasized. In fact, the key feature of the fundamentalist and the most important one is tradition that is done in traditional way.
- 5) The fifth feature is rejecting any blending and emphasizes the purity.
- 6) Another feature of cultural particularism is the Community-oriented one that is considered as a contemporary social movement and a political philosophy and Reaction to growing individualism in recent world (Golmohammadi, 2002).

1.4 Political Dimension

Political globalization is a process by which social, economic and cultural affairs are released from limited fence of nation-state. And people see themselves subjected to various variables impact and particularly beyond the nation ones.

From political point of view, globalization affects greatly on culture and political relations in the world. Promoting cosmopolitan ideas in relations between nations and kinfolks, Promotion of democracy and political culture in the world, conversion of communities traditional authority to competitive and systematic power, promotion and development of citizenship rights, growth of awareness within civil society, transformation of the political insights, change of attitudes toward political life, shaping pluralist and anti-authoritarian attitudes in relations between nations and governments, Exchange of information, ideas, thoughts and political values at the

macro and international level, Being institutionalized, diversity and freedom of choice in terms of policy development and civil society, all are significant impacts of globalization in political arena in the world (Mirmohammadi, 2002).

1.5 The Impact of Globalization on Iran Political Culture Changing

Structural changes in the population growth, urbanization, the urban middle class formation, literacy spread were associated with a kind of intellectual development after 1961. And led to create new civic ideas and concepts, grow political and participatory demands and change the political climate or introduce political space (Sardarabadi, 2001).

Necessary social structures were provided by economic developments for objectification of participatory teaching in civic culture during Reconstruction period. In this period, the number of publications and the number of students gradually increased and public education was emphasized. At the beginning of the process of globalization that cause to expand public awareness toward political matters; fairly substantial changes appeared in the general attitude of the people, especially the educated classes. Emphasis on democracy, rule of law, and practice of the law, political participation development and fundamental freedoms in the political discourse that emerged after the May Second are among the signs of change (Ibid).

These structural changes along the growth of globalization indices, made essential the need to interface with the international community which ultimately led to the transformation of political culture. At this time, the political culture of Iran went toward an active and participatory one.

Arman Zarei investigates about the impact of globalization on Iran political culture and four formations of Combatant Clergy Society, Association of Combatant Clergymen, Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution and OCU. He concluded that until the beginning of 1991, political elite tended toward the implications such as emphasizing the pillars of the Islamic Republic regime, social justice and protecting the weak, opposition to capitalism, liberalism, and imperialism and requested politics that was comply with such trends. From the mid 1991, statements and declarations of these groups showed a turn in the political attitudes and orientations of its members. Thus, unlike the first round that Iranian elites organized their attitudes and orientations on the basis of the passage of an Islamic leftist attitude, this time they organize their attitudes based on a democratic one. It began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of leftist attitude and a new wave of globalization. They directed their attitudes toward freedom, pluralism, opposition to tyranny and totalitarianism, emphasizing on republican system and popular sovereignty, public participation, civil society, policy development, human rights and democracy. All of the above mentioned concepts are among the requirements of democracy. One of the causes which led to this relative change is the phenomenon of globalization and its processes and affects on political culture and Iranian political elite orientations by broad-based democratic attitudes in the world (Zarei, 2009).

In this period, the tendency to accept the legitimacy of the political system and its components has increased compared to previous periods. Emphasis on the rule of law, civil rights, government accountability and political institutions, and ... was effective in changing the political discourse. These implications became major political values of this period. So new social concepts and political values such as freedom, rule of law, meritocracy, criticism, tolerance, civil rights, political participation, the rule of man and democracy, civil liberties, political development and social security emerged in the political culture of Iran after the Khordad 2th (Sardarabadi, 2001).

Thus, we are witnessing the emergence of a pattern of horizontal participation in politics that has been replaced with vertical populist participation in the first and second decade of revolution. (Sardarabadi, same reference) General indicators of globalization grew by new wave of this phenomenon in Iran and caused political culture conversion. Finally with the election of Mohammad Khatami as president in 1997; discourses of democracy that has always existed as a discourse of resistance became the dominant discourse in society. This debate domination has continued until 2005 in Iran. By globalization, foundations of traditional and ideological discourses undermined. Notions such as freedom, civil society and political participation was replaced the traditional authority basis.

So that changes that was seen in the traditional groups such clergymen and modern groups such as academics, intellectual clergymen during the elections in 1997 were another sign of political culture transformation. Democratic values have a superior position among new groups (Shahramnia, 2006).

These changes caused the traditional society to react. So that during the dominance of the discourse of democracy in Iran, the values presented in this discussion were opposed in different ways. Finally, by end the

dominance of the reformist discourse of "value-oriented", that is rooted in traditional discourse and ideology were established decades after the advent of the Islamic Revolution in 2005. In fact, "value-oriented" discourse was the product of the contrast of traditional groups' values with the universal values of globalization. While the discourse of democracy emphasizing on the modernity and freedom, this new emerging discourse emphasizing on justice and tradition. If the discourse of democracy in Iran was a direct product of political globalization, the value oriented discourse should be an indirect product of the globalization and particularism was propounded by negative looking at the universal values of globalization. Principles and religious beliefs, fundamental principles of the constitution and the political identity of Iran are of the main factors that fueled the particularism in the political culture of Iran in the process of globalization. And it causes many restrictions on the acceptance of the political aspects of globalization. Universal attitude has been occurred by globalization process rather than cultural issues. However, a particular situation occurred due to the reasons mentioned in the political culture and has led to redefine political issues. (Emam Jomeh Zade & Musavi, 2010).

To understand the value oriented discourse, it is better to consider Ahmadinejad's position in relation to globalization has been published in the official state newspaper (Gazette). According to this writing, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the face of the university announced that he does not believe the assimilation and integration into the globalization process. He explicitly stated that "modern globalization impose culture, literature, and a special life on all nations. In fact, it ensures the continued dominated regime in the world and maintains the gap between the rich and poor countries. Globalization means removing the last cultural barriers of the nations against dominated regime. First economic development plan were not enough then they developed the political plans. That is the dominated regimes of the countries must follow an imported pattern. And today, they follow cultural development. That is cultural barriers, traditions barriers and standards and national identity against foreign domination wave should be removed to have the Omnipotent. (Iran newspaper, 19 September 2010)

As it is obvious, Value-oriented discourse, considers globalization as a Western project and not as a process in which the "domination system" has been set up. It is looking to spoil the rest of the world. Doctor Azqandi writes about Ahmadinejad: "He interests in serious fulfillment of fundamentalism in domestic politics and seeks to exterminate the existing global regulate through the revolution. He is an ideologically oriented person who has a strong belief in the ideas of the founder of the Islamic Republic and a nostalgic-oriented one that emphasizes on the Islamic Golden Age with an aggressive spirit. Clearly such characteristics are not analog with participatory political culture and only led to institutionalize consequential culture. As can be seen, Iran political culture which could direct itself toward participatory political culture and democracy after many years, once again was deviated by the emergence of value oriented discourse.

1.6 The Impact of Globalization on Iran Civil Society (In Two Requested Periods)

In the periods examined in this study, a total of 16 years, there are two 8-year periods that are essentially different from each other. The first 8 years includes the seventh presidential election in 1997 to the ninth presidential election in 2005. In this period, the dominant discourse of democracy that is influenced by democratic culture has been developed because of the effects of globalization. Globalization development causes some Iranian groups to direct their attitudes and orientations toward matters matching with democracy, freedom, public participation, civil society, political development and human rights. These groups have won the seventh presidential election in 1997. By the election of Mohammad Khatami as president in this period, the situation of the parties and the press were changed in the country. Parties and the press grew in this period. Khatami's political slogan that was based on the development of political and civil society, led to develop political parties and press. The opponents of globalization strengthen themselves and criticized globalization advocates after this period. They attributed the causes of the problems to the reformists. And finally they won the majority in the ninth presidential election. Ahmadi nejad recovered the ideological and traditional discourse in the society by proposing value oriented discourse. Ahmadinejad explicitly rejected political development toward democracy. During his reign, all the actions that took place prior to the consolidation of political parties and the press began to reverse. He repeatedly rejected the plurality of parties and said as there is only one party in the country and it is also the leadership (Velayat-e-faqih) party, started to criticize the parties and banned them interfering in the affairs of state and government. Ahmadinejad cut subsidies of the parties to prove his words. License issuance for the parties faced some problems in this period. The number of parties which could take the license was less than reforms period. Besides, the biggest and the most effective reformist parties were dissolute. The press which had experienced a period of growth in the reformers government, was faced some problems during this period. Opposition toward the press that had been started from the late 1991, intensified. Subsequently, circulation of the press which was approached to 4 million for the first time after many years was reduced by 2 million. Oppositions against journalists and successive press seizing had been existing difficulties of the press in recent

years. These oppositions were to the extent that more than 450 journalists could not resist and forced to leave the country after the tenth presidential election by 2009. Other ones which are in the country are not capable of continuing their activity for many economical problems. While the government should be supporting these publications, hum that want to cut the subsidies and provided many concerns for them. Although the press subsidies were not cut, however the low amount of subsidies against rising amount of inflation was led to close or reduce their activities.

2. Conclusion

Having arrived globalization, its public values such as freedom, civil society, Democracy and human rights were developed in Iran. So that political groups attitudes matching with globalization public values, changed in the middle 1991s. So the group which was advocate of the mentioned values could win in the seventh presidential election and dominate democracy discourse in Iran. This group could also introduce political development as its goal and recover civil society in its possible extent that it had. The press and the political parties could reach to desirable growth in democracy discourse period that was unprecedented in the history of Islamic revolution. This period is the only one during Iran modern history that has had both the press and the parties' growth along with government stabilization and dominance. These two institutions have ever had a reverse procedure in relation to government. After this period, the traditional groups that saw foundations of their authority shaken due to the globalization public value redefined the traditional - ideological discourse. So, value oriented discourse emerged by Ahmadinejad leadership. Like ideological discourse, it is in contrast with many globalization values. For these reasons, political parties and press as civil society institutions, not only not supported but they faced enormous obstacles. Therefore, during the rule of the group, once again, Iran was diverted from the road to democracy. And democratic values advocates also suffered from many disasters. In general it can be stated that walk along the global values path has brought smoother procedure for development of civil society in the process of globalization. In contrast, resistance and conflict with these values, not only drawn the civil society, but also it is much more difficult to achieve democracy and popular sovereignty. However, civil society has relatively well-developed since the first 8 years of the study and it has concrete implications for Iran. Today, after eight years of opponents' domination of globalization, Iranian people have elected a person as their president with favorably idea toward global values and calling back to the period of development of these values.

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