

**IRANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE
CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION:
DIALOGUE OR RESISTANCE?**

Saeid Zahed

CSGR Working Paper No. 162/05

May 2004

Iranian National Identity in the Context of Globalization: dialogue or resistance?

Saeid Zahed (Ph.D)

Head of Sociology and Social Planning Department, Shiraz University

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Visiting fellow of the Center for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation

Warwick University (June- September 2004)

CSGR Working Paper No. 162/05

May 2005

Abstract

People in the local areas varyingly but usually are willing to keep their cultural distinction from other cultures in further geographical areas. National collective identity is a broad title for personality of each nation which identifies that nation from others. Identity is a matter of change through the time and there are different types of identities. Globalization introduces new cultural aspects to the local ones some of them altering the local identity. In other words there is a challenge between cultural globalization and local identities. There are three main policies toward globalization: selection, adaptation and rejection. Each society decides which policy or a particular combination of these policies to be applied in it. Iranian national identity in last 150 years had great cultural challenges moving among three main cultural spheres: Persian, Islamic and modern. There were different social movements the last one Islamic revolution because of these challenges. This paper reviewing the contemporary history of Iran will conclude the on going policy which is standing on Persian aspects and moving on a continuum between two points of adaptation and selection of modern parts with the main tendency toward selection or glocalization. The means of decision making for them is Islamic ideology.

Keywords: *Persia, cultural globalisation, national identity, modernity, glocalisation.*

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Saeid Zahed

P.O.Box 71345-1815

Shiraz University

Shiraz

Iran

E-mail: Zahedani@Shirazu.ac.ir

Introduction

Localization can be considered as a counter-force to globalization. To varying degrees people in localities defend their norms and values against the perceived external encroachment of new social mores. To be sure, globalization holds in train economic and political change. But for many it is the effect on cultural norms and artifacts that is more pressing. One way to understand the clash of values in global context would be to consider economic and administrative processes as deeply embedded in cultural norms and values. In this respect resistance to globalization may be evident but the degree and appearance of such resistance will be different across nations and regions. For these reasons and others, the cultural dimensions of globalization have become a central concern of recent scholarship on global politics rivaling the earlier dominant - *primarily economic* - debates (Wallerstein, 1974, Sklair, 1991). According to Waters (1995), economic and political globalization also requires cultural acceptance in local areas: globalization will consolidate when cultural globalization occurs. A central argument of this paper is that greater attention to cultural matters will broaden our understanding(s) of globalization.

According to Cohen and Kennedy (2000: 38) there are three possible cultural responses to the challenge of globalization: selection, adaptation and resistance. Some cultures may 'select' those aspects of global processes which best suit their own circumstances. Robertson (1992: 173-4) terms this trend glocalization. Some cultures 'adapt' themselves to the new rules or values. While other cultures simply 'resist' processes of global homogenisation. At issue is the shape and importance of local identity as a formative characteristic of a particular culture. Different and sometimes over-lapping identities will provoke different responses to globalization.

Collective identities can be considered as a kind of personality. They express communal solidarity and social identification. In many cases communities can become proud of their 'own' specific identity. Globalization has been considered by some as a threat to local identity: a homogenizing force that undermines social difference. Conversely globalization can act to make people aware of their identity – and even, in some cases, improving their loyalty to it. To this end, multiple identities have emerged under the force of globalization, a trend that some have used to question of the continued viability of nation-states (Cohen & Kennedy 2000: 340-356).

This paper examines the relationship between Iranian identity and globalization. The aim is to find out the constituent factors of Iranian identity and their positions toward globalization. A central proposition is this: that, for the most part, modernity is one of the main components of Iranian identity; *and*, however, that Iranians are willing to select which aspects of global processes are best suited Iran, i.e. to ‘glocalize’ to use Robetson’s terminology. The relationship between glocalization and other responses within the Iranian context is a key question if we want a sophisticated and nuance appreciation of the dialogue between global and local processes in Iran.

The focus of this study is ‘Iranian National Identity’, as one amongst many identities including ethnic identity, historical identity, religious identity, and etc.. National identity is a matter of historical evolution. As historical experiences amass, the constituent factors of the identity will evolve and change. Iranian culture has been under the influence of three major civilizations: Persian, Islamic and Western. This article will discuss how Iranian national identity has changed under the influence of these three forms.

This is a secondary historical document analysis research. Going through the chronology of Iranian history, presented by authors mostly in search of Iranian identity, the article will point to the main parts of Iranian national identity. It assumes modernity as the main stream in cultural globalization processes. Reviewing historical documents will show that modernity is one of the constituent factors of Iranian national identity. The role which modernity is playing in the identity and the position of the other parts toward it reveals the type of dialogue between Iranian national identity and globalization.

In part one after presenting the article's definition of globalization the paper discusses various perspectives on cultural identity. In part two I present a review of prominent literature on Iranian identity. Part three is a historical review of Iranian identity formation, which highlights the constituent elements of Iranian national identity. And the conclusion will discuss the relationship between the Iranian national identity and the process of globalization.

Definition of Concepts and Theoretical Framework

This part will define the study's two main concepts: globalization and identity. With regards to globalization a brief definition of the concept as well as an operational definition will be presented. But for identity our discussion is lengthier in order to address more fully the article's theoretical framework.

Globalization

Modernity in the form of modern ideas had spread throughout the world from late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. After the 2nd world war the implementation of modernization theory contributed to economic convergence around the world. This was followed by other types of convergence such as political, cultural, communicational, social, geographical and so forth. At the last decade of the 20th century some scholars anticipated that the new century would be the age of globalization (Waters, 1995: 1). There is no strict conformity on the concept among different writers but what can be summarized from different points of views is what Scholte is presenting for the word of global-ness as supraterritoriality or transworld or transborder organisation (Scholte, 2000: 41). From this point of view globalization is introducing a new social geography to the world. It is a stage of weakened boundaries, geographical, political, cultural and/or economic.

This study deals with cultural globalization and I think that *modernity* is the core and dominant stream of this dimension of globalization. Therefore 'modernism' is considered as the operational definition of globalization in this study

Defining Identity

Conceptualizing identity as a socio-psychological product can be dated from the 1970s (Turner, 1999: 6). Although the background of this concept can be read back to Antiquity and Delphi's phrase 'Know Thyself' (Deshamps & Devos, 1998: 1), the first scholar to formulate a coherent theory of identity is Tajfel (Turner, 1999: 6). In order to gain a clear understanding of the

concept we will outline four major schools in the sociology of identity: structural-functionalism, symbolic interactionism, critical theory and feminism.

Tajfel argues that individuals and groups know each other via their identities. Individuals and groups portray themselves with distinct characteristics that separate them from others. He thinks that individuals define themselves in such a way as to retain a positive self-evaluation in comparison with other groups (Tajfel, 1978).

Structural-functionalists believe that a change in underlying social or psychological conditions will lead to change in identity. Identity changes gradually when society evolves from traditional to industrial and modern arrangements. In this process national identity will change to a more general and diverted one. This change will continue to a degree that a common collective identity would dominate over all members of the society. This identity will remain stable and form the basis of order and solidarity in society (Abdollahi, 1375: 131).

According to symbolic interactionists identity is a perception of who we are, through others; identity is a dynamic factor of a person's understanding of themselves and others. Identity is the result of agreements and disagreements (Capozza & Brown, 2000). Jenkins believes that without a framework of personal or collective identity, everyone will be alike and nobody will be able to have a meaningful or stable relationship with others (Jenkins, 1996: 15).

This school pays close attention to the relationship between individual and collective identity. Scholars such as Mead (1934) and Goffman (1956) studied the self and its role in different social conditions. Mead devoted particular attention to the social components of self (Deshamps and Devos, 1998:2). Symbolic Interactionists believe that all individuals have a tentative identity at the beginning of their life which can change to form new identities via processes of socialization and social interaction: identity is not fixed and but can change over time (Turner, 1998:375-382). From a structural-functionalist position, identity is a stable quantity that can change over time if conditions change. For symbolic interactionists, identity is dynamic. On this view identity is the sum of meanings and understandings of groups and individuals in dynamic interaction. In this sense identity develops and changes through the time and in space; it continuously renews.

Giddens's understanding of identity develops from this school of thought. In his book *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Ages* (1991) Giddens argues that self-identity is a kind of social identity because it builds through processes of socialization:

“Self-identity is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual's action system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual” (Giddens, 1991: 52).

An agent has subjective reasons, based on his/her interpretation of the actions of others and regularities of social behavior, for each action. The agent's identity forms in this process. It is not something that is given in childhood, but is made and re-made through every day life. Importantly it can also be guarded through reflexive interpretation/action:

“Self identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography” (Giddens, 1991: 53).

Progress in communications technology – a key source of indirect experiences - have affected the process of identity formation. Due to the development of mass communication, particularly electronic-communications, the potential for interference of self-identities and social systems by global indicators is greatly enhanced. As Giddens argues,

“In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options.” (Giddens, 1991: 5)

From a critical point of view, social orders consist of different and sometimes contradictory forces. For Marxists the central social struggle is between the dominant and subordinate classes. The ruling class uses its authority to foster a false consciousness of relating to class identity.

When the ruled class become consciousness of its false identity it may become able to fight against the present order and build a new one.

If the social order is a product of human beings and is itself the source of alienation, human beings are able to change it by individual and collective action. Through critique of the prevailing order mankind is able to envisage a new order and potentially realize its own true identity. Revolutionary ideas can be read in the work of Althusser, Habermas, and other critical sociologists.

Manuel Castells can also be placed in this stream of thought. He introduces three different kinds of identity in his book: *The Power of Identity* (1997 revised 2004).

1. **Legitimizing identity** which is “introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination”
2. **Resistance identity** “generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society”
3. **Project identity**, “when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure.” He gives feminism as an example (Castells, 2004: 8).

Feminism is based on an objection to inequalities and biases between men and women. By asking several questions: what do you know about women? What part do women play in research? How do women experience their position? What do those positions mean to them? They try to introduce a new identity for women. For feminists, identity awareness is an important aspect of inequality between women and men; if women were conscious of their genuine identity they would be more able to gain personal and social rights

The above shows that identity is a matter of social change and has various and varying components throughout the lifetime of agents or societies. Identity has a close relationship with the consciousness of individuals or nations and is informed by them. They may be revised or changed by manipulation of their components by appropriate agents. Taking this understanding of identity in mind we will review the literature on Iranian national identity to show how this research may contribute to the present literature. Examination of documents about Iranian identity will make us aware of its constituent elements. Then we will attempt to reach an understanding of the relationship between Iranian identity and globalization: to see if they are in tension or dialogue.

The Literature on Iranian Identity

In this part we will take a look at major literature on Iranian identity. Writers who deal with Iranian national identity have not yet provided a distinctive definition of the concept. According to Brojerdi this weakness has three root factors:

1. Most writers are experts in literature rather than history. Their writings are good in text but they are not written according to historical or scientific traditions.
2. They are examined along political or ideological lines not a critical or scientific one.
3. They have considered Persian literature as the main element of identity to the expense of other items.

Ahmad Ashraf believes that Iranian identity first formed in ethnic, political and religious movements of the Sasanite dynasty – which ended around 630 AD. It struggled during the Islamic era, only to reemerge in Safavid dynasty - 907-1135 AHL, 1501-1722 AD - and found its new position in modern Iran (Ashraf: 1378 AHS). Iranian identity emerges from three spheres of tradition: Persian, Islamic and modern. (Roholamini: 1379: 47). Scholars have pointed to different elements of these three spheres but there is no conformity on the different implications of each tradition for Iranian identity.

Zabihollah Safa identifies ‘Persian language’ and ‘the institution of the kingdom’. Motahari emphasizes the ‘Iranian’ and ‘Islamic’ factors. Meskoob thinks of ‘history’ and ‘language’ as important aspects of Iranian identity. Soroosh names ‘Iranian culture’, ‘Islamic culture’ and ‘western culture’ as three major components of Iranian identity. Farhang Rajaei, adds ‘traditions’ to the Iranian, Islamic and modern aspects (Rajaei: 1382 AHS). And Nikki Keddi points to the ‘geography of the Iranian plateau’, ‘Persian language’ and ‘Shiite belief system’ as the constituent factors of Iranian identity (Keddi: 1998, 4).

In his book Rajaei answers the question - *what are Iranians?* – by referring to two related dimensions: character traits and concrete historical structures. In general, Iranians have insisted on generosity, genuineness, truthfulness, chastity and virtuousness. He also thinks that in

Iranian's collective life there are two continuous characteristics: 'Gnostic individualism' and 'cultural indulgence and interaction'. Concretely, Rajaei traces a line from ancient Iran that identifies the kingdom's political, cultural and religious structure before Islam. He is concerned with how the traits work themselves through these structures, continuing the discussion to post-Islamic Iran. According to Rajaei, Iranians turned their back on ancient Iran because of a growing belief in a monotheistic God and the equality of all human beings. Then, reviewing historical events, he deals with Islamic changes in Iran and Iranian ideas. The emergence of the Safavid era is the greatest change after Islam. Shiism became the central political and social media of Iranian society. Finally, he points to the importance of modernity in contemporary Iran (Rajaei: 1382 AHS).

According to Rajaei, Iranians have inherited Gnostic individualism and cultural indulgence from their ancient heritage. They added to it Monotheism, justice and equality in the eyes of the law, from the Islamic era. They got temperance and moderation from their traditions, and responsible individualism and rational freedom from modernity. He believes that Iranian identity and culture is made up of different combinations of these factors and values (Rajaei: 1382 AHS, 243).

Bashiriye deals with Iranian identity after the Islamic Revolution in his article. He is mostly concerned with the political identity of the Iranian people. He distinguishes between consciousness and identity considering the former subjective and the latter as consisting of more concrete aspects. He believes that Islamic Iran has passed through three ideological phases: populist, constructive and democratic. In the first phase Islamic identity covered almost the whole nation. In the second phase, people rethought their identity. And in the third phase, democratic discourse and a growing consciousness of difference created a mosaic identity in the country (Bashiriye: 1381 AHS). We will deal with his ideas in more detail below.

Looking at the different writer's views in Iranian identity there are four important common aspects:

- 1- Geography of Iranian plateau.
- 2- Persian language

- 3- Islam
- 4- History

A summary of their ideas reveals that Iranians are those ethnic groups living in the boundary of the Iranian plateau for several thousand years. They have always associated themselves with this geographic area. After Islam, the Persian language became the main medium of interaction producing a vast sum of Persian literature in comparison with the worlds other central languages. Ethnic groups with different dialects and languages came to speak and write in Persian as their main language. Islam with all its different branches has a stable core that renders all its different varieties unique. After the Islamic era Iranians informed their identity with Islam in such a way that, according to Saghebfar, they have made a spiritual and physical unity in their historical identity (Saghebfar: 1379 AHS).

As mentioned many writers are in agreement with three main cultural periods that pertain to Iranian identity: Persian, Islamic and modern realms. But none of them are informing us how these three realms are playing their part in Iranian identity. In the following, and moving through history we can see how Iranian national identity has developed, how consciously these changes occurred, and what the legitimate identity of Iranians is at present time. We would also like to find out which part of Iranian identity of today is borrowed from Persian, Islamic and/or modern spheres. In other words, attempts to outline the different *role* that these three civilizations have played in the emergence of Iranian national identity.

Iranian Identity in Time

In this part historical documents will help us to see how different important parts of Iranian identity formed and what their characteristics are in the over all national identity.

The first king of Iran was Cyrus the Great, about 2500 years ago. His kingdom had two important characteristics that inform Iranian history. According to relics, he was a saint and his kingdom was a religious one. Since then, religious political structures have gained legitimacy in Iran. Cyrus's religious reputation is such that many historians consider him as *Zolgharnain*: a

hero mentioned in the Quran. A dynasty that preceded Islam – the Sasanites - took Zoroastrianism as an official ideology.

Justice was a very important characteristic of Iranian kings. *Ibn-e Khaldoon*, a 14th century Arab historian and sociologist, believes that Iranian kings were some of the most just in history (Ibn-e Khaldoon, 1357AHS: 1363). Acting against injustice and taking care of the oppressed was a trait of reputable Iranian political and social activists. A content analysis of Iranian myths, mainly written in *Shahname* by *Ferdousi* (Early 11th century Iranian poet), confirms this understanding. In a very general sense, ‘Kingdom’, ‘religion’, ‘justice seeking’ and ‘support for the oppressed’, are the most important aspects that remain in Iranian identity from ancient times.

After Islam the adoption of Shiism caused Iranians to sustain their traditions whilst – at the same time - also maintaining a distance with Arab Muslims. For instance, loving the Prophets family, a distinguished element of Shiite Islam, was considered a central difference between Iranian and Arab Islam. Two Arab dynasties in Iran *Bani-Omaye* and *Bani-Abbas*, who are considered by Shiites to be against the Prophet’s family, were keen to show their separation from other ethnic groups, including Persians, insisting on the superiority of Arabs. They called others *Ajam*. And the emergence of the *Shoeobi* movement, which insisted on the superiority of ajams could be a reflection reaction to this enforcement.

Shiite values and traditions were compatible with Iranian ones. Shiism’s central characteristics are religiosity, justice seeking and support for the oppressed. *Imam Ali* and *Imam Hossein* are two symbols of these values in the minds of Iranian Muslims and even non-Muslims. Shiism underpinned a new political regime which was founded ideologically by *Sheykh Safieddin Ardebily* and established as a new dynasty by *Shah Ismaeel* Safavi, about one hundred and fifty years later, at 1501 AD in Iran. The Safavid dynasty caused Shiite Islam to become one of the most important elements of Iranian national and political identity.

The Persian language and writings in Farsi with Quranic alphabets compounded the sense that Iranian Islam was different from other Islamic currents in the Middle East. An extensive body of texts were produced which made Persian literature one of the main sources of Iranian culture and

identity. Writing in Farsi started about two hundred years after Islam took hold in Iran. *Avestaei* was the most important written language before Islam. All writings by Iranians stopped after Islam and there was no writing except in Arabic for about two hundred years when Farsi, based on *Dari* language, was employed.

From the mid-Safavid era Iranian civilization, which had gained a part of its reputation in that time, began to decay. This was a time when western civilization started its rise. It was in mid *Qajar* (1210-1344 AHL, 1796-1925 AD) period that Iranians got in touch with Western civilization and aspects of modernity began to enter. From the beginning of *Naser-ed-Din* shah's period (1264-1313 AHL, 1848-1896 AD) nobles of Iran got in touch with western cultural aspects. At the end of this kingdom's rule it was the populace who asked for democracy and political freedom.

From that epoch, 'the quest for modernity' became a constituent factor of Iranian identity. The demand for modernity was such that it caused a revolution: the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1906). And in this time, contradictions between religious ideas and modernity created a new political and cultural environment that has lasted till the present time. The first by product of these contradictions was to create two new political wings in the Constitutional Revolution named *Mashrote Khah* (Constitution Seekers) and *Mashroe Khah* (Religious Seekers). Their struggle caused weaknesses on both sides and the result was the return of dictatorship under *Reza* Shah (1926- 1942), the founder of *Pahlavi* dynasty (1926-1979).

The Constitutional Revolution is considered by many as one of the pivotal points in Iranian national identity. Ahmad Ashraf believes that: since the Constitutional Revolution and the establishment of a kind of nation, Iranian nationality, which had reemerged in Safavid era, appeared as a national identity in the modern sense of the term.

Tajik believes that during the Constitutional Revolution Iranian national identity swung between Islamic, Iranian and western discourses. Heresy and traditionalism were two diverted cultural strategies for socialization, knowledge and reinforcement of the identity. But the final strategy of Iranian entrepreneurs was to amalgamate a collection of these three discourses and to make a

compound identity. In this sense, pioneers of change in Iran chose the strategy of one step forward (to the west) and two steps back (to ancient Iran). This was an unconscious understanding of the matter and caused a disharmonious diverted identity for Iranians (Tajik, 1379: 169).

According to Shaygan there were two main themes within the ideas revealed by clergy-men and entrepreneurs of the time:

- a) criticizing Iran from within; complaining about backwardness and delay in contrast to western societies, and
- b) arguing about the status of Iranian Islam vis-à-vis “real” Islam; if Iranians are backward, maybe it is because of the eradication of real Islam.

All writings, itineraries and diaries remaining from this time indicate that Iranians had a feeling of contempt and backwardness towards the west. Seyedemami believes that Iranians felt removed from civilization and therefore desired progress. This was a shared feeling for all activists that their own identity originated from the ancient Iranian or Islamic era (Seyedemami, 1379: 45-46).

Jaafarian thinks that during the Constitutional Revolution two important parts of Iranian identity weakened: kingdom and Islam. According to him the monarchy had acted as a factor towards solidarity for the Iranian populace (Jaafarian, 1379:43). This tradition came under question in the Constitutional Revolution. The Qajar kings were partly responsible because of their bad behavior towards the people. Another reason was the growth of new political thinking in which monarchy - in its Iranian sense - did not have any place. Bad handling by the kings caused the people to protest against them, but the new thinking failed to introduce any replacement. The monarchy has not regained its past reputation since then (Jaafarian, 1379: 44).

For Jaafarian, religion lost its importance too; however, there was no way to reject it. This was the case in those strata that favored the Constitutional Revolution; religion’s role, in its Safavid and Qajar era sense, was questioned. New social thought meant that religion was increasingly

considered as a personal matter. Although many could not accept this new understanding of the religion it persisted (Jaafarian, 1379: 44). Many did not agree with the political and social characteristics of religion and it was not considered as a source of stable and comprehensive values. It was weaknesses in these two important parts of Iranian identity that caused a national crisis which lasted about twenty years. This crisis grew because Iran was increasingly influenced by new cultural aspects entering from the west. This acted to change Iranian habits during these twenty years; from the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution through to the start of Pahlavi regime. The result was the division of Iranians into two groups, modernist and traditionalist (Jaafarian, 1379: 44-45). Iranians were also influenced by ideas coming to Iran by entrepreneurs through medias of the time such as newspapers, books, and speeches.

Summing up these ideas about Iranian national identity at the end of Qajar dynasty, one may say that after the Constitutional Revolution two constituent factors of Iranian identity, religion and monarchy were under question as new ideas entered the cultural spheres of Iran. The result was a crisis and the pendulum swung between Persian, Islamic and modern cultural aspects. Many flash-points occurred and the political instability caused a shift from the Qajar dynasty to the Pahlavi government.

The Pahlavi regime tried to solve the identity problem of Iranians by putting more emphasis on Persian and modern parts of Iranian identity but a new imbalance had emerged. Scholars report the situation as follows.

During the Pahlavi period a particular meaning of national identity was propagated, according to Ashraf. National identity retained its old sense of “Iran-city-state” and the monarchy was considered as its guardian. This was almost the same as that ancient Iranian concept of ‘holy charisma of the king’ which was propagated during the Sasanite dynasty and represented the collective solidarity of the nation. In this meaning there was no place for a free citizen. The people were considered as a flock and the king was their shepherd. One extreme interpretation of this idea talked about a ‘pure’ Iranian race and infused a racial identity to the nation (Ashraf, 1379: 554-555).

The second realm of Iranian identity was under pressure in Pahlavi era. Through his modernizing program Reza Shah reduced many Islamic powers (Zahed, 1381: 154). Indeed, Seyedemami believes that a kind of religious refurbishing or anti religious action began. Shiite elements of Iranian identity were waved in such a way as to create the possibility of reaction (Seyedemami, 1379: 46).

Jaafarian reports the situation as follows:

“Reza Khan adapting an imitative modernization policy started changing national institutions toward western modernism. Religion, in its old sense, was no more a means of national solidarity. He tried to find another base for national unity.

“... They valued Zoroastrianism and the restoration of Islamic relics. It was a kind of nationalism with a holistic idea of Iran.

“At the time of Reza Shah Iranians experienced two different policies: first modernism and second ancient-ism. The shared point was deviation from Islam. The insistence on nationalism, from its cultural point of view, fostered localism. Therefore, regardless of these centralizing policies, the condition for the segmentation and separation of Iranian identity improved. Reza Khan tried to crystallize Iranian identity in a centralized state with certain ideas. Reza Khan tried to condense a large population with many varieties into a small cultural sphere. But when the force was removed an explosion took place; ...

“Therefore, western oriented development based on force was ultimately not accepted by the people. His policy was to make a new society by force. This policy could not arrange a cultural identity. On the contrary, it led to an identity crisis” (Jaafarian, 1379: 52-54).

Summing up, in Reza Shah’s period, he tried to use the cultural environment after the Constitutional Revolution to enforce western modernism and ancient Persian identity at the

expense of Islamic feature. He was dismissed by allied forces, who occupied Iran during and after Second World War, and his son, *Mohammad Reza Pahlavi* took the throne in 1942.

Mohammad Reza Shah's period, in regard of Iranian national identity, can be divided into three distinguished phases: 1) semi-democratic phase (1942-1953), 2) oppression (1953-1963) and 3) revenge preparation period (1963-1978). In the first phase, allied forces occupied the country and the nation was shamed by its occupation (Bavand, 1379: 49). In order to avoid opposition, allied forces opened the political environment of the country. At the same time, they tried to support Mohammad Reza Shah by oppressing two communist movements in Azarbaijan and in Kordestan (Hassanpour, 1994: 78-105). Active political parties rose. Newspapers and periodicals enjoyed press freedom for the second time after the Constitutional Revolution. Translation of books increased. Regardless of Reza Shah, the Iranian parliament was constituted of elected members; it became progressively more efficient. This caused the parliament to become an effective organization, which underpinned the movement to nationalize the oil industry. In the process of this movement, Iranian activists, no matter if they were Islamic, nationalist or communist, united and made the movement successful (Zahed, 1381). Seeking nationalization of the oil industry made independence discourses the main discursive framework of the time and emphasized national identity. The coup of 19 August 1953 put an end to this period.

In the second phase a dictatorship ruled over the country. The secret police of the Shah (SAVAK) became a terrifying agency and freedom of speech was banned. An American development plan, called the fourth principle (fourth principal of Truman's Act) was enacted. The USA assets which entered the country added to the oil revenues. The country had not experienced such wealth for about 200 years. Inflation was the result of that wealth (Bavand, 1379: 50). Westernization and ancient-ism were the key discourses of the economy and formal national culture.

The third phase began with the White Revolution in February 1963, which was followed by the 5th of June upheaval led by Ay. *Khomeini* a few months later. The White Revolution was a program aimed at completing the semi modernism policy had started by Reza Shah and followed by Mohammad Reza Shah. Its major focus was on women's freedom, abolishment of feudal

relations in rural areas and increasing investment in industrial sector. Ay. Khomeini was a new *Marjaa* (An Islamic expert with many followers) and political activist opposed the plan because of its dependency taste. He asked the Shah to rely on internal forces for development regardless of foreign supporters. The movement was severely suppressed and the White Revolution plan pursued forcefully (Zahed, 1381: 104-119). A result of 5th of June outburst was to revive Islamic political forces within the core of the political opposition that had stood against the Pahlavi regime. They prepared a revenge which took place in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In this period semi-modernization policies followed forcefully by the Shah's government and Islamic part of the culture was preparing for a great resistance. In other words in the third phase of the Mohammad Reza Shah period there was a despotic enforcement of western culture alongside ancient cultural aspects in the formal culture of the country. The popular culture, which desired independence, favored Islamic values. A new generation of *Ulama* (Knowledgeable), under the influence of Ay. Khomeini prepared the populace for a final act against the Pahlavi reign. The Islamic Revolution marked the end of this period.

Cultural policy during the second Pahlavi continued in a similar way to the first Pahlavi. The only difference was the tactics of enforcement. Mohammad Reza Shah's method was most thoughtful and gentle, regardless of Reza Shah's brutal techniques. According to Jaafarian, in time of the second Pahlavi some Iranians, mostly modern educated ones, had adopted the new identity: a combination of western and ancient oriented characteristics. They were used as a means for propagating the identity throughout the nation (Jaafarian, 1379: 54). They, mostly, migrated to western countries after Islamic revolution.

There were other groups of nobles who had another understanding of the relationship between traditions and modernism, in Pahlavi times. They sought another type of identity. They actively supported the Islamic Revolution. Dr. Ali Shariati was one of them. Masjed Jameei believes that he called youths and university students to Islam by insisting on a return to the self: to Iran's 'own' culture. He defined this as a return to pure Islam: the Islam introduced by the Prophet, Imam Ali (son in law and son of the uncle of the Prophet), *Fatima* (daughter of the Prophet), and Imam Hossein (Ali and Fatima's son). Masjed Jameei argues that Shariati introduced several concepts to the religious, political and cultural literature of the country. He introduced the

concept of religion against religion; *Alavi Shiite* versus *Safavid Shiite*; as well as, certain historical personalities of Islam like *Hor*, *Salman*, *Aboozar*, *Meysam*, *Meghdad* and *Malek Ashtar*, in order to create a new Islamic identity for the youth.

Shariati believed that the ancient Iranian national identity belonged to the past and was no longer relevant. He thought that people had no idea about that identity, whereas religious identity was active in the spirit and conscience of the society. According to Shariati the Islamic identity was alive and certain aspects - justice seeking; asking for rights; martyrdom and the struggle for values – could make up the essence of life for Iranians (Masjed Jameei, 1379: 37).

At the end of Pahlavi regime Islamic discourse became the most important political dialogue of the country and Islamic Revolution took place in search of Islamic identity. Islamic sentiments and institutions, such as mosques, could mobilize masses of the people. Clergy showed that was the most legitimate political strata for this mobilization. Islamic entrepreneurs believed that returning to the Islamic identity was the main road for emancipation. Islamic symbols were familiar to the masses. People believed that they could gain their glory and prosperity by seeking their Islamic identity. This feeling improved as they passed each step of the revolution successfully (Seyedemami, 1379: 59).

As it was briefly mentioned in the literature review, Bashiriye divides post-Islamic Revolution Iran into three phases. He insists on three different ideologies for these three phases:

- 1- Populist ideology, which rejected other ideologies operative in the 80s and war period.
- 2- Constructive ideology, a revision of the populist ideology, activated in 90s.
- 3- Democratic ideology which replaced ‘rejecting others’ with ‘looking after others’, started from the beginning of the new century (Bashiriye, 1381: 121).

According to him, in the first phase Islamic groups ruled and dismissed liberal and leftist groups. They worked on certain Islamic concepts such as: Islamic *Omah*, Muslim nation, Islamic Republic, *Omah* unity, Islam vs. the West and so forth, in order to foster a new identity for the nation. Islamic formalism increased its influence over social and cultural affairs. Iranian nationalism – in its Pahlavi guise - was rejected. Attention was not given to Iranian literature.

Such insistence on Islamic identity weakened a part of Iran's historical identity as well as its relationship with the other nations. The Islamic ideology was able to produce subjective rather than practical meanings and was separated from other structures of meaning like liberalism, democracy, modernism and Westernism. Thus, to make their messages meaningful, ideological speakers for the Islamic Republic learned to use the mystical language of religion; and this became the central discourse. This was during the war. The ideology of the Islamic republic was not able to solve the problems of the public and alienated other groups such as nationalists, liberals and democrats. It was not even able to satisfy ethnic, religious and local identities within the country (Bashiriye, 1381: 122-123).

Bashiriye continues that, in the second phase, after the break down of the Soviet Union, globalization accelerated. Some groups inside Iran were convinced that they should adjust the first decade's identity in order to repair Iranian international relations – especially economic. The reconstruction of the country after the war and the reform of Iran's international relations caused a further revision past identities (Bashiriye, 1381: 123). Overall, Bashiriye believes that to use the new global environment and the need for economic relations with other parts of the world caused these changes in cultural and political policies.

For the third phase Bashiriye notes that the new idea was not sufficient to solve the problems. Therefore a kind of democratic discourse emerged which underpinned a mosaic identity in Iran. The second phase identity could not account for all elements in the society. New identities emerged in the process of globalization, which were not completely compatible with the dominant one. A new crisis emerged.

Khatami as a representative of religious and university entrepreneurs came onto the scene as president. He tried to solve the problem by opening up certain structures that were not previously approachable for some parts of society. He introduced the concept of civil society as a way of capturing diverse social identities. He also introduced the notion of “dialogue among civilizations” in order to show a new identity to the world. The past Islamic identity had had bad connotations both internally and externally. The concept of civil society enabled a new environment in which different identities could act in a democratic manner within an Islamic-

national context (Bashiriye, 1381: 125-126). Bashiriye did not predict what would happen in the future but from his and other writers' work, one can argue that fundamentalism cannot solve the problem of the Iranian national identity (Seyedemami, 1379: 64).

Summing up these points, the Islamic Revolution elevated the Islam to the level of being the central discourse of emancipation of the Iranian nation in the last 150 years. After the main elements of the Islamic Republic were institutionalised this feeling felt into reduced, but war made it active again (Seyedemami, 1379: 59). The first decade of the Islamic republic was an age of self-realisation that insisted on an Islamic identity Iranians. In the second decade, which is famous as the construction decade modern outward looking elements of Iranian identity emerged. This attitude increased to such an extent that reformist movements like the Second of Khordad movement - led by Khatami – could emerge. At present this movement is slowing down and Islamic identity waxing although not at First Decade levels.

Conclusion: Iranian National Identity in the Context of Globalization

Historical documents show that consideration of Iranian identity has been mostly political, since the mid-Qajar period. This could be a source of identity crisis in different periods of time. Identity creation by states has been unsuccessful in other nations as well. China, and Israel are some examples.

Identity is a cultural matter, a fact that should be considered by state policy makers. Inventing Iranian identity was a policy of the authoritative modernist state of Reza Shah. It was a cause of tension with other elements of Iranian identity and was the source of emergent Islamic movements in Iran. After the Islamic Revolution a similar mistake was repeated causing new tensions and responses (Bashiriye, 1379:305-306).

Identity is a multidimensional matter and policy makers should consider all dimensions. They should identify each dimension in relation to the others and give the appropriate weight to each aspect. As Rajaei and Bashiriye - in line with the symbolic interactionists – argue, identity is a current subject. It is continuously shaped and re-shaped throughout history. Each element

combines with the others over time. In Iran the religious aspect of identity has developed from monotheism to Zoroastrianism to Islam and then Shiite Islam. The political system was supposed to protect these ideologies and in its development has arrived at a new type of democratic republicanism called religious democracy. Values, such as justice, have adapted to new conditions over time. This had happened in the plateau of Iran in which Persian is the medium of communication for all ethnic groups. And finally, the pursuit of modernism including the use of modern technology and practices has become a national aim. Using modern achievements of human beings is Iran's target. The central challenge that Iran faced in the last century was how to fit modernity with other parts of its identity. And this challenge continues in the process of globalization.

Challenges between the three main sources of identity - Iranian, Islamic and Western civilization - have been an important factor in Iran's search for national identity. Reza Shah's concentration on only two - Iranian and modern - was not the answer. This policy was practiced for nearly fifty years but was not successful. Islamic identity became a *resistance identity*, in Castells words, and emerged as a credible social movement. Equally, early emphasis on the Islamic dimension of Iranian identity during the Islamic Republic could not solve the problem. A combined policy is needed. Ancient Iranian civilization is the standpoint for Iranians. They recognized themselves as different ethnic groups living in the plateau of Iran several thousand years ago. This civilization is the foundation of their identity. They have chosen Islamic ideology on the basis of that foundation and have made it a reasoned and reasoning aspect of their identity. Thus new cultural influences should establish some relationship with this ideology: adjusting if necessary. Modernism can provide the tools for a new life. No one is able to live in isolation from other parts of the world.

Globalization - as socio-cultural process - introduces modernism and its products to different nations. Historical documents show that Iranians would like to embrace this process but they are not interested in just mimicking the new civilization. The ideology of the Islamic Revolution was rooted perceptions like *westoxication* introduced by *Ale Ahmad*, a famous writer of the country (Zahed 1381: 132-140). Iranians' tendency is to adopt new items for their own culture. The means of their reasoning in this process is their religion. They would like to pass everything

through their Islamic ideology to accept or reject. According to Giddens's phrase a "dialectical interplay of the local and global" takes place. An example of this kind of negotiation is religious democracy. Iran established this process in the political structure by converting to a form of democracy, naming it the 'Islamic Republic'; a challenge which took around one hundred years. This process is similar to Robertson's glocalization.

There are different communities and strata living in Iran. They have their own identity but live under the surveillance of Iranian national identity. The positions of various communities toward globalization are different. For example a university professor is mostly affiliated with modern ideas and less reluctant to use global commodities. Conversely a clergyman is typically Islamic and is more suspicious of foreign cultural imports. A merchant works by importing global commodities but an artisan's profession could be under threat of importing the same commodity. But, overall the dominant ideology decides public opinion; regardless of any temporal moods that could be develop from time to time.

The process of glocalization has accelerated after Islamic Revolution. As it was mentioned one (nearly successful) example is religious democracy. From Constitutional Revolution, it took a century of struggles and between socio-political movements for Iranians to reach a resolution in the Islamic republic as the practical religious democracy (Zahed 1381). Also, Islamic associations and traditional groups like the guild organizations may shape civil society. An example for it is *Komiteye Emdad Imam Khomainy* (Imam Khomeyni's Welfare Committee) which built on a traditional means of donation to the needy but used a modern organizational structure. Developing Islamic banks is another effort to adapt global monetary standards of organization to Islamic values and norms. In other political, cultural and economic parts such encounters are perused. Research on this process will give us a better purchase on the situation and highlight any future challenges.

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University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL,
UK

Tel: +44 (0)24 7657 2533

Fax: +44 (0)24 7657 2548

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