

Relationship between Islam world and Democracy

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Abstract: Very few studies have attempted to empirically examine the relationship between Islam and democracy in the Islam world. Islamic democracy refers to several kinds of democratic government or states that can be renowned in the Islamic countries. The basis of this division has to do with how comprehensively Islam is incorporated into the affairs of the state. A democratic state which recognizes Islam as state religion, such as Iran, Pakistan and other countries are examples of Islamic Democracy. Some religious values are incorporated into public life, but Islam is not the only source of law democratic state which endeavors to institute sharia. Islamic democracy offers more comprehensive inclusion of Islam into the affairs of the society. This article explains the Relationship between Islam and Democracy in the Muslims' world.

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1. Introduction

Islam is one of the living contemporary religions, which is covering more than one fifth of the earth surface. On the other hand, democracy is one of the most desired and current methods of political sovereignty in the contemporary world. The degree of development of democracy in each society is the criteria for the development of that society. Of course most societies in which Muslim have the majority, are not ruled in a democratic way. There is no doubt that the low degree of democracy in the above mentioned societies, is due to many reasons. One of the probable hypotheses in this regard, is the incompatibility of Islam with democracy, but we see that the study of Islamic political and social movement in the last one hundred years show that democracy is one of the demands of the Muslims along with independence and freedom. While the above mentioned movements had complete religious nature, and were supported by the Muslim exegetes. The analysis of the ideals of these political movements show that in the belief of these movement leaders, there is no contrast between Islam and democracy and we can have an Islamic and democratic society, for example, Imam Khomeini, made a revolution against the tyrannical Shah regime and established a Islamic system. On the other hand, Islamic societies in the last half centuries face another intellectual movement which emphasize on Islam and do not have a good intention toward democracy in line with their challenge with the west. From this fundamental genius point of view, Islam is not compatible with democracy, and demanding democracy is seen as negligence from Islamic teachings. It is a sort of lower hand in the face of western renewal movement. Meditation over these

realities shows us the importance of the examination of the relationship between Islam and democracy.

2. Democracy

Today, modern man tries to participate in his fate. From this point of view, democratization of the societies has had great development, and democratic governments form in different ways. The considerable point in this method of ruling is its universality, and disagreement with democracy, and the establishment of autocrat systems are the signs of lack of development and leads to this idea that the violation of the primary human right basics is a current issue in the non democratic political systems. Considering the world unanimity on the globalization of democracy, Islamic world, has to prepare itself for the democratic changes. So, the process of democratization in the Islamic world is inevitable. Recently, several times, and from different viewpoints, the issue of Islam and democracy has been under consideration. Considering this is also important and necessary, because its foregrounds and motivations are not abstract but social and inevitable. In this article, we try to give a report regarding the trend of world democracy and the reasons for its preference, and then we express the reasons for the existence democracy in Islam and reach a conclusion. Samuel Huntington, interpreting the changing processes of democracies, is talking about the waves of democracies, although talking about the waves of democracy is not extracted from his ideas and writings, the fame of his division is more than that of others. By democracy wave, it is meant the changes which have been have happened in the world political systems and different areas and some effects which it has left in the democratization process. Huntington has explained about the history of democracy waves

in this way. The first long wave of democratization was from 1828 to 1926 and the first backward return was from 1922 to 1942. The second short democratization wave was from 1943 to 1962, and

the second backward return was from 1958 to 1975. The third democratization process started in 1974 and lasted to the time of writing of his book. (Huntington, 1994:18,29,30).

Waves and anti waves of democratization	The history of the rise of wave	The most important examples- criteria
The first long wave	1828-1926	-It origins from American and French revolutions - the cancellation of rights in American 1828 elections -the increase in the voters in European countries
The first long return wave	1922-1942	-Martial parade in Rome in 1922by Mussolini -Hitler's empowerment in 1933 -Totalitarianism in Europe -The emergence of communism, Fascism, and Militarism
The second wave of democratization	1943-1962	- The beginning of world war II -increase in democratic institution in many Latin American counties
The second return wave	1958-1975	Empowerment of the autocrat military in Latin America and Asia and The gas of Military coups
The third wave of democratization	1974- (1991) (the date of his book)	-The end of dictatorship in 30 European Asian, Latin American countries in 1974 - The improvement of democracy in the form of movements- the widespread wave of democracy in communist world

According to Huntington, considering the fact that democracy waves, and opposite waves have acted according to the model of two paces forward and one pace backward, generally speaking, democracy movements have changed into universality and has swept most countries. This has caused tyrannical countries to decrease till 1990, but according to Huntington, the third wave of democracy in 1990 has not increased the number of democratic countries. (Huntington,1994:18,29,30).

Islamic world has not been unaffected in the democratization process. It seems that the Islamic traditions hinder the growth of democracy in the world of Islam. This is not the fact. In this article, we try to examine the effect of Islam on the tendency to democracy. Popular movements in Arabic countries in the world of Islam against monarchy regimes could be examples for this claim. First, we will study the advantages of democracy and then talk about the democratic characteristics of Islam.

2.1 The advantages of democracy

The reason for the superiority of democracy over other modes of government can be studied in 15 parameters :(Sivitz, 2001).

1- Collective wisdom: a democratic society prepares a suitable foreground for using collective reason; in other words people, use the collective reason because they are entitled with the necessary capacity in governing themselves. In this regard the people living in a democratic society have higher levels of ability in comparison with a genius or small group of genius.

2- Self- realization of the individual: Human beings can improve their inherent capacities in the

best way possible in a society in which capacity for self determination has grown.

3- Self Determination of the people: in a democratic society, people have right to control themselves and they are the best arbitrators and supporters of their rights.

4- Popular capability and trust worthiness: in democracy, people are capable in defining their common interests. The people are the highest position to support their interests.

5- Equality: Each person is born with a political equality; that is to say that there is no any inherent right to govern or obey others; so person has an equal right in participation in the government. In a democratic society is right is satisfied to a high level. In these societies, according to the principle of quality, each one person of the members of the society should be regarded as one person; and nobody is more than one.

6- Liberty: in a democratic system, People's liberty is kept better because people cannot tolerate violation of their liberty. In other words, in the situations in which power is reexamined through free election, liberty is better guaranteed. Democracy is a guarantee for the basic liberty. Democracy can be a protection for the freedom of speech, freedom of political parties, and the freedom of immigration.

7- Justice: Human beings inherently are inclined to judicial behavior. The participation in the matters of self governing can produce the capability in knowing their rights and equality.

8- Human rights: In democracy compared to other political systems, rights enjoy more protection people preserve their rights and they emphasize on their rights. Since the preservation of human rights constitute the foundation of democracy, and the

violation of democracy is the violation of democracy, so democracy is a means to protect the primary rights.

9- Accountability: in a democracy all the power originates from the people who have elected representatives so the representative are responsible for the power they use. In other words, democracy is a means to the official's accountability to people in regard with what they have done.

10- Respect for the individuals: the power of the citizens' trust to the decisions about the political affairs and their performance leads to the flourishing of judgment and their power in election. This will lead to a guarantee the respect for the individual.

11- Personal responsibility: political participation needs individuals who not have the capacity in meditation in the affairs, but also have the power of action. In Other word having the power of action is along with their power for accountability in regard for their performance. In this way personal responsibility will get improved.

12- Peaceful change: the final source for the political power is elected by the people, so its withdrawal and change through election will lead to peaceful change.

13- Legitimacy: in a democracy, usually all the members of the society are counseled in political processes. So, the issues which are accepted under the law are the matters about which all the people have been counseled. It is natural that a democracy has a higher chance for legitimacy.

14- Innovation and commitment to progress: since democracy is committed to self criticism, there is a constant dialogue about the correction and improvement of its functions. The result of this dialogue can be innovation and new ways to reach solutions for public issues. Social reformation has always been under consideration by democracy. In democratic system, malfunctioning policies or politicians are omitted through lawful and peaceful processes; and through this, social reformation is guaranteed with unrest or the collapse of the government. In non democratic systems, the omission of the main factors, happens along with unrest or the collapse of the government.

15- Stability: in a democracy, because of the possibility for all the people to participate in political activities, or they can play a role in the decision making process, it is provided with popular support. As a result, gaining stability in a democracy is more probable than that political system which is run by a limited number of the members of the society.(Sivitaz,2001).

Generally, the reasons for the superiority of democracy are theoretical which have been proposed considering the potentiality of democracy. And the

experts, who have propounded this theory of superiority, have defined democracy apart from the realities of the society. If we want to consider the realities of democracy in the societies which have enforced it, we'll face many problems. Some of these problems facing democracy are mentioned as example:

3. Problems of democracy

A-The tyranny of the majority, which according to Tocqueville, because the persons' interest stand opposite to each other, it is possible that the majority may take hold of power in an unlimited way to suppress the minority.(Cunningham,2002).

B-Incapacity of the government: a government is incapable when it does not adopt suitable criteria or means to reach to social goals. Usually in a democracy the leaders who are elected who are serving the slogans and even if they are good, they are not practically able to follow long time and widespread projects, because people with different interests, can change the president or the government's capabilities. (Cunningham,2002).

C- Opposition: if a democracy tries to be active in an efficient way, it needs a kind of harmony. The existence of versatile and even opposite political parties can amplify differences, because each of the parties tries to divert the government toward their interests. (Cunningham, 2002).

D-Demagogy: in a democracy the power could fall into the hands of those who can easily affect and cover their true policies under the disguise of democracy. In this way some specific advantages may be given to specific groups. According to Aristotle, this is a kind of polite hypocrisy. What makes Aristotle worried, is the unleashed power which can easily deceive the public by affecting their thought.(Cunningham,2002).

E-Democracy endangers justice: democracies and specifically liberal democracies, respect individuals and their rights. This is always accompanies the idea that persons have equal rights for supporting their rights. This accompanies the wrong presupposition that persons have equal opportunities for enforcement and the enforcement of their rights. The emphasis of the democracy on individual property and private law and the lack of suitable capacity for the use of these rights may leads to an unequal distribution of power and resources.(Sivitaz,2001).

Generally speaking, understanding the above mentioned point which have only parts of the analyses of the advantages and disadvantages of democracy can be regarded as guide for a reasonable

decision making about democracy and getting immunized against its probable harm.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages of democracy, we can regard three specific parameters for democracy: reason, law, and justice. All the changes which have happened in democracy have been in line with the improvement of the three mentioned factors. The best reason for this can be seen through mediation in the process of the changes which have happened in democracy throughout history. Since the time of classic democracy in Athens changed into supportive democracy and after that evolutionary democracy in a modern process continued to the contemporary time. Basically, democracy means, the belief in the human sovereignty by a collective will power, and believes in the idea that collective reason is capable of distinguishing right from wrong. We know that religious and divine improvement should be an extract from a revealed religion. The unique legislator of the world is the Almighty God. This paradox gets formed in human mind regarding how it is possible that democracy with humane origin and religion with divine are compatible; but as democracy does not have a constant meaning, religion also has different interpretations. For example, when we think of religious government, which one of the following can be our purpose:

- 1- The religious people rule,
- 2- The religion which provides people with freedom and respect rule,
- 3- Religion rules democratically,
- 4- Reasonable governing of the society will be according to the religious law,
- 5- Religious understanding in harmony with collective reason,

Now we try to explain the three factors of reason, law, and justice in religious democracy.

Reasonable religion is the religion whose principles, methods, and ideas are in line with reason. It means that human reason can understand it and cooperates in a mutual dialogue. Finally, it is a religion which confirms and encourages the reasonable findings.

Law in religious democracy is under full consideration, and religion as law has lawful outcomes and performances. In religious democracy, the content of law has been taken from the religious and human reason and this is in harmony with Islam and it is called religious democracy.

Justice in religious democracy is searching for the following parameters

- 1-Generalization and institutionalizing justice
- 2- Justice is the best way for decentralization of the power.

3- Justice is the method for equal distribution of opportunities and financial, cognitive, legal capacities.

4- Justice is the efficient way for production and distribution of human scientific data.

5- Justice is the cause for the development of person and the society whose conclusion is the overall development of human society.

6- along with the establishment of the overall development of justice, freedom flourishes, so justice will be the foreground of the birth of freedom.(Aeyvazi,2010:298-301).

4. Compatibility of Islam and democracy

Considering the concepts and definitions of democracy and religion, in the first look, there is incompatibility like a contrast between them. Democracy limits any type of interpretation in government to the man's will, and rejects any type of non human interference in his fate. Any political system which people welcome is right and any system people reject is unjust. If democracy means a free and anti tyrannical political system in which the people are right is respected, in that case it does not have any contrast with Islam. Islamic government is a popular and divine rule. Islam contrasts fascist and tyrannical political system. Democracy in the meaning of inherent contrast with tyranny is the nature of religious government. In the natural case, non popular government is no religious. The nature of democracy, as a collection of ways enables it to harmonize itself with many political institutions. As shown by experience, a democratic political system may be compatible with the governmental rule of republic, bi party systems, multi party systems, capitalism, socialism, welfare state, and even monarchy which may have religious or non religious beliefs. (Emblestein,1987:240). John Stuart Mill believes that apart from this the expression, "people's will power" practically refers to a part of people whose number is higher, or they are more active, their will should be imposed on the rest of the society. In case the fate of the society is in the hands of a group who have regarded themselves as the majority.(Stuart Mill,1990:31). According to Stephan D. Tennessee in modern liberal democracies democracy in the first look is regarded as an opportunity for the people to elect the rulers freely. So the people have no power to make governmental decisions.(Arabluster,2002). According to Arabluster, liberals have always had a negative look at the masses and did not accept democracy freely. They have tried to present interpretation of democracy in which the role of masses is very low. They tried to make people to follow them instead of following them. They also determine their direction and their

demands. The famous neo liberal, Milton Freedman says, because being after benefit is the nature of democracy, any government which follow the anti market policy is anti democratic. And the people's support does not have value; so the most important characteristic of liberalism is freedom in economy.(Freedman,2001:11). The criteria of democracy for the liberals is lawfulness, but majority. The law which has been enacted according to the will of the chosen not public. (Bashiryeh, 2001:31).

5. Conclusion

In regard with the compatibility between Islam and democracy, this point looks necessary to focus. Democracy as a method, opposite to tyrannical political systems is completely flexible, and finds the suitable mold under the influence of traditions and cultures. For example, democracy in combination with liberal culture makes liberal democracy. Considering the fact that liberals do not have on specific culture, we can see diversity in the liberal democracies. For example, liberal democracy which I dominant in France, is different from what we see in England, and both them are different from that of USA. Meanwhile, there are many similarities which cannot be ignored. According to John Stuart Mill, democracy is an unmade cloth which is made based on the stature of one nation based on that nation.(Stuart Mill,1990).So democracy does not have a single one meaning. What is important is the existence of principle criteria of democracy which has change tyranny into popular rule. In a democratic system, as oppose to a tyranny, the people welcome rules, especially in Islam, whose rules are the extracts of Quran and the Muslims not only obey the rules but also believe in them. In a religious society, the religious people do not look at the rule just as social contract, but they believe in it from the bottom of their heart. Because the primary principles of democracy exist in Islam, it does not have not contrast with Islam. Each free thinker who supports democracy, based on the principle and essence of democracy, should give right to religious governments to administer democracy based on their culture and traditions.

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