

The Role of Islamic Republic of Iran's Soft Power in the Middle East

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Abstract

Countries have international dignity and prestige in the light of identification and operating power components in the national and international levels and since the discursive change of power and modern approach of countries in the field of foreign policy to power tool has doubled the importance of soft power, accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran also needs to examine components of generating its soft power and increase its international influence and authority by proper policies. Accordingly, the main purpose of this paper is to investigate the abilities and capabilities of Iran in the field of soft power and how to use them in regional diplomacy to provide national interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Due to the nature and subject studied, information collecting is done using news sources on the basis of objective – historical data. According to what was mentioned, the main question of this article can be stated such this that, how can Islamic Republic of Iran be effective on region countries using the cultural resources in the form of cultural diplomacy? Data analysis method in this research is descriptive - analytical and data collection method is library. Accordingly, it is assumed; the way of applying Islamic Republic of Iran's soft power and influence in the region countries and the Middle East is a process that is formed considering geographical proximity, historical records and the common cultural and religious ties and in fact, influence and apply Iran's soft power in the region and the Middle East is based on the belief and behavioral principles that is associated with the identity of the Islamic Revolution. The results of this study indicate that, free Iran and at the same time adhere to Islamic values and principles will be followed by additional attractiveness. This position can increase general influence of Iran in the framework of cultural diplomacy in regional and global levels and improve Iran's soft power level.

Key words: Soft power, Cultural diplomacy, Islamic republic of iran, Middle east

INTRODUCTION

Due to the developments of Islamic world, closeness of Muslim communities is felt as a crucial necessity in the international arena; however, the soft power is raised as new forms of applying power in the international level that indicates the necessity of using accepted practices and at the same time, more legitimate in order to achieve the objectives in the field of foreign policy with emphasis on the intangible foundations of power. In the periods after the victory of Islamic Revolution, Islamic Republic of Iran can utilize the soft power resources by considering value

targets for other Islamic societies (Jamshidi and Gahrouei, 2014: 61).

Today, public opinions are considered one of the key factors in decision making of countries in various fields. Therefore, the countries cannot rely only on intergovernmental exchanges in the form of traditional diplomacy as past time and need targeted communication with the general audience and especially the elites. So they use variety of methods and tools in this regard that one of the main tools is the use of components of soft power in foreign policy of various countries. Accordingly, major effort of policy makers is to communicate with the general audience and the elites to guide public opinions. In this regard, soft power is considered a source of cultural diplomacy. By the development of cultural diplomacy, soft power of a country can be improved and strengthened. In this regard, Iran also has proper soft power resources considering the civilization, historical, religious and cultural background, which can be one of the successful countries

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in the application of cultural diplomacy in the region and the world in the case of considering and planning for targeting and exploiting potential resources. According to various causes and geographical differences, regional countries need cooperation in the cultural fields. Iran could be a model and inspirational in the world of Islam and the Islamic nation and create strategic depth due to message and values that emphasizes on them. Support of the masses of people and the influence of soft power of the Islamic Republic in the geography of the Islamic world has created another protection to defend against hard and soft power that the West imposes against the revolution. Therefore, the use of soft power in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of the policies of the Islamic Revolution can be considered the new forms of power, which including cultural, ideological, political, and intellectual components. Values such as religious democracy and humanitarian assistances to liberation movements and promote scientific and cultural capabilities can be considered as the effort to soft power. It should be noted that soft power in the process of Islamic Revolution has been something more than encouraging or inciting nations, because in addition to it includes the concept of ability to attract people that generally leads to consent and satisfaction (Jahanbin and Parsa, 2013: 156).

In this article, we are going to study the extent and how the effectiveness of Iran's soft power components in the region in order to determine and increase the extension of effectiveness of this dimension of power in the region countries and the Middle East and to be responded the question; how can Islamic Republic of Iran be effective on regional countries using the cultural resources in the form of cultural diplomacy?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Soft Power

Power is considered one of the important issues in international relations and is naturally a controversial concept because there isn't an inherent and essential relationship between signifier and signified and power concept seeks its examples in different discourses (Rahbari, 2006: 11). Michel Foucault studied three faces of power, "the discursive power", "disciplinary power", "power of overlooking life" in his genealogical topics. In the view of Foucault, discursive power or sovereign power is a power that instead of applying on bodies, applied on the assets of the society on the ground, and it continues independent of interaction with the body of society that makes nation and considers its identity with it as the same. In general, the modern era investigates the nature of power and what it has been relevant with government and how to adjust the

relationship between government and civil society or how to distribute power (Eyvazi and Parsa, 2013: 102).

The most important definition of soft power is presented by Joseph Nye, an American distinguished scholar. In 1990, he wrote in his article in *Foreign Policy* magazine: "soft power is a way to achieve the desired results without clear and tangible threaten and encourage. On this basis, a sovereignty country can achieve its intended purposes. "Because other countries accept its values and impressed by its idea and development and thus want to follow it, in this sense the most important thing is to set an instruction to attract others. So soft power is to achieve what you want through attraction rather than through coercion or reward." (Nye, 2002: 60). In other words, "soft power is referred to those capabilities and resources of a country such as culture, ideal or ethical values, which indirectly affects the interests or behaviors of other countries.

Hence, including the important and yet not stipulated goals of diplomacy of countries in the international system is to achieve credit, international prestige and influence in public opinions or in other words, achieve soft power (Alipur, 2008: 1), it is divided into two categories; soft power based on seduction, that evil power is used to deceive and dominate the masses and soft power based on guidance, that the divine power is used to guide people. According to this classification, the Islamic Republic of Iran's soft power from the kind of growth-oriented soft power is considered as the ability to influence the behavior of others without threat or seduction mainly based on guidance (Harsyj, 2011: 158-157).

Cultural Diplomacy

Different definitions are provided from cultural diplomacy in the literature of international relations and foreign policy that the following definitions are the most expressive definitions. Frank Ninkovich considers cultural diplomacy as "effort to promote communication and interaction level among nations of the world to design and establish agreements on shared values", despite the fact that, based on the definition of Gifford Malone, "Cultural diplomacy is the architecture of a two-lane highway, in order to create channels for introducing the true image and values of a nation and at the same time, trying to get real images of other nations and understanding their values." Finally, according to Milton Cummings "cultural diplomacy is to exchange ideas, information, art, lifestyles, value system, traditions and beliefs in order to achieve common concepts and strengthen mutual understanding between nations and countries."

By an adaptive understanding of the common elements of these definitions, it can be concluded that cultural

diplomacy is the story narration of a civilization for owners of other civilizations using the tools from the same civilization in other words, cultural diplomacy finds its true meaning and concept when a country to transfer hidden richness in its culture and civilization by using the mechanisms and tools from the same kind introduces and transfers it to other nations and considers it as its own foreign policy (Khani, 2003, p 137-139).

SOFT POWER AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Cultural diplomacy is called "soft power" in international politics. Soft power has the ability to form the preferences of others and it is from "persuasion" kind. Soft power tool is media, music, literature, transfer beliefs and exchanges. Cultural Diplomacy in today's world requires new tools of communication; "Harold Nicholson" presents a comparison of old and new diplomacy that can indicate today's changes of diplomacy. According to Nicholson, " features of soft power diplomacy include: secrecy, undemocratic, bilateral relations, pragmatic and a condition that run and led from a few of the big states. But new diplomacy inversely with features such as: openness, democratic, multilateral, fundamentalist and is conducted with partnership of many governments"(Haghighi, 2007: 87-95)

New diplomacy refers to people, not the government. New diplomacy tactics is greater respect for the people to the government. Cultural diplomacy requires new tools that can be named the most important tools of cultural diplomacy in the cases below:

1. The mass media and public diplomacy
2. Cyber diplomacy and Internet
3. Strengthening organizations and transnational scientific and academic exchange
4. Increasing the capacity to accept tourism
5. The establishment of cultural centers in abroad
6. Symbolism, joint myth-making
7. Extending language

According to some experts, soft power emanates from a liberal approach, because attention to human and person, emphasizing peace and the role of international organizations are the most important common points of these two. In general, the essence of liberalism is the separation of state and society spheres and limitations of state power over the individual in society. Liberalism since the beginning has been an intellectual effort to determine the private sphere against governmental authority (Bashiriyeh, 2007, p. 11).

According to Joseph Nye, soft power theorist, positive policy values of a country in the domestic and foreign

dimension can increase a country's soft power. In domestic dimension, accountability to the people, considering ethics, and implementing justice are all positive values of a government. In the foreign arena, any government that its engagements and relations in the field of international and regional arena to be more measured and more converged with other institutions and minimized the differences and adhered to international treaties, its soft power will be increased; Because it causes to attract the trust of others and show positive outcome from the face of a country and this issue in foreign policy dimension leads to attract others and increase power and influence of a country (Biki, 2010, p 59-61).

Today culture forms the identity and spirit of international relations. And the Islamic Republic of Iran since the beginning of the formation has the cultural and Islamic components and characteristics, and this issue caused to follow applying cultural power in global politics. Today, the greatest resistance in the Islamic world is done from the culture and this caused west culture and civilization feels risk (Pourahmadi, 2010, p. 319).

Huntington, the famous Western theorist, acknowledges, economy and strong arms in the Muslim countries not challenged us, but their culture is such that they are standing in front of us and threatens our civilization (Bylis, 2004, p. 1035). As well as Joseph Nye, soft power's renowned theorist, suggests that a country like the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot be failed with hard power, according to its cultural context, which its basis is Islam and Shi'ism (Nye, 2010: 76).

IRAN'S SOFT POWER AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Based on the theory of constructivism, nature, identity and culture is an issue constructed in a participatory process in mass and social meanings. In this context, identity and culture specifies their ideas from others and their objectives and react as actor of international arena and form the mental structure, i.e. the actors create special identities from each other in their mind based on interact with each other and inter-subjective meanings that can be exchanged between them (Asgari, 2005: 34).

It seems that with the new developments of policy- security and geopolitics, making power and politics in the Middle East is changing in favor of Iran. Increasing the role and influencing Iran in the Middle East and after the events of September eleven and the crisis in Iraq, primarily returns to the increasing importance of Middle East issues in the international security system. Accordingly, and secondly,

Iran as the most important country affecting region and Middle East issues has importance because of having a series of natural features of geopolitics on the one hand and cultural, religious and historical components of soft power and politics on the other hand (Barzegar, 2008: 654-655). Little reflection and review, indicate the fact that Iran's regional influence and position is in a way that regional and extra-regional countries are forced to accept it. In other words, the countries of the region and even America have concluded that Islamic Republic of Iran's soft power should be controlled and managed through their soft power and threats. In this regard, Obama's efforts after presence in the White House have been developed and running on the basis of this strategy (Kateb, 2009, soft power and political collapse, strategic review).

Evidence shows that the spiritual and cultural position and the so-called Iran's soft power in the region have increased and it is changing to an effective cultural hub in the region. Iran has provided the required context and conditions for achieving spiritual power and improving its popularity among the countries of the region (Harsyj and Toyserkani, 2009: 183-182). Iran's active diplomacy in recent years leads to adopt, resuscitation and stabilization of specific policies that in general can help to positive image from it in international and regional public opinions and remove some ambiguities and in a word cultural hegemony (Sharafuddin, 2005: 56-54). In the years after the invasion of Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy that is mainly based on software components of power has been to support the unity and integrity of this country. Frequent trips of the President, Prime Minister and political activists and party and tens of members of the Iraq cabinet to Tehran and, conversely can be considered the beginning of new period in the bilateral relations. By informing these facts, the Islamic Republic of Iran in the years after the fall of Saddam tried to influence on developments of the neighboring country using soft power resources and factors. This strategy is based on Iran's consideration from new Iraq as a country that historically, culturally and geopolitically and by highlighting historical commonalities considers the two countries as a civilizational area (Mozaffari, 2005: 112-118). In fact, Iran has attempted to use components of soft power for influencing developments in Iraq in particular and the region equations in general.

Thus, the objectives of Iran's cultural diplomacy in the Middle East, in hierarchical order are:

1. Create a good image of Iran and Iranian identity in the minds of the people of the Middle East;
2. Change negative attitude of peoples of the Middle East towards the culture and civilization of Iran.

Weaknesses of Iran's Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East

Iran's cultural diplomacy in the Middle East despite strengths has had little attention to some aspects of cultural diplomacy. These weaknesses are evident both in cultural diplomacy approach and following it in the use of appropriate tools, including:

1. Weakness in the approach: approach of Iran's cultural diplomacy in the Middle East has been decisive and focused on a short-term return. This approach is caused to pay less attention to the impact and role of cultural diplomacy in the making and representation of identities, ideas and images because identity, changing identity or representation and its evolution is a time-consuming process and requires a long-term and integrated approach. Disregarding the long-term approach and not enough attention to the identity and the notion caused, small political and cultural differences have a significant impact in relations between Iran and the Middle East countries.
2. Weakness in using tools: weakness in cultural diplomacy approach leads to the lack of sufficient attention to new tools and affecting identity, ideas and imaginations in the diplomacy. Globalization and expand communication between human societies (to the public and formal relations) has doubled the necessity of using new tools related to virtual space and the notion such as media, cinema and tourism (Shekari et al., 2013, 8 29).

Components of Iran's Soft Power in the Middle East

Various categories are taken place from Iran's soft power tool in the Middle East by domestic researchers and sometimes foreign that we mention a few examples:

Blake along with Golshan in an article titled soft power, soft threat: a proposal in line with the policy, has mentioned Iran's soft power resources in several directions. In the view of him, Islamic Republic of Iran's soft power resources include:

1. The political legitimacy, which includes themes such as efficacy, acceptability and national trust.
2. Cultural and ideological values which involve frameworks such as ancient civilization, creating science and art and also funeral ideology.
3. Good reputation which mainly related to prestige and image of system in the international relations arena.
4. Social and political integrity that can be reviewed and analyzed around two areas of unity and national unity and also national self-confidence (Blake et al., 2010: 128).

Hersyj with Toyserkani in an article titled, the impact of Iranian identity components on the Islamic Republic of Iran's soft power, has investigated effective components in

Iran's soft power in four different areas. He has mentioned components of Iranian identity on Iran's soft power in 4 areas that include: 1. History of civilization and Iranian common culture; 2 - Persian language and literature 3. Shared land and Iranian geography 4. Shared myths.

He has mentioned identity components of tradition on Iran's soft power in two areas, include: 1. justice, anti-oppression, justice and equality 2. Chivalry and generosity. Identity components of Islamism on Iran's soft power are mentioned in two areas, include: (1) the spirit of spirituality, devotion and monotheism 2- Islam based on knowledge of Quran and amity of Ahle-Bayt (AS). Modern identity components on Iran's soft power are mentioned in three areas, include: 1. National Government 2. Democracy 3. The rights and liberal (Hersyj et al., 2010: 172-160).

Pishgahifard and colleagues in an article titled, the status of soft power in national power with emphasis on the Islamic Republic of Iran, have mentioned the most important sources and capabilities of soft power of Islamic Republic of Iran in the following: 1. Territory and name of Iran 2. Geographical and strategic position 3. Mineral Resources 4. History and cultural attractions 5. Religion and ideology 6. Ethnicity, race and their peaceful coexistence 7- attract emigration especially foreign students 8. Active and effective diplomacy 9. Grant and friendly helps 10. Participation in international forums (Pishgahifard et al., 2011: 204-201).

In general, in this paper and according to the analysis conducted, sources of Iran's soft power in the countries of the region and the Middle East can be divided to the following cases, and examined:

Islamic Revolution: The Revival of the Identity Discourse

Different definitions are presented about identity in the sociology. Manuel Castells argues: "Identity is the source of meaning and experience for the people. My impression of the identity, if it is speaking about social actors, is the process of meaning-making based on a cultural feature or an interconnected set of cultural features that are prioritized on other meaning resources."(Castells, 2001, vol. 2, p. 22). Tajfal ties social identity with a group membership and considers it consisting of three elements: Cognitive element (informing that the person belongs to a group), the value element (assumptions about positive or negative value consequences of group membership), and emotional element (feelings toward a group and to other persons that have a particular relation with that group). On this basis, social identity from Tajfal view is "that part of a person's impression from self that origins from his awareness to membership in other group (s) along with

the emotional and value importance attached to that membership "(Golmohammadi, 2002, 222).

Identity has been the factor of superiority and victory of the Islamic Revolution. But from the other perspective, victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran led to the revival of Islamic identity in the Islamic world. Revolutions have various reflections around the world. The most impact of revolutions should be searched in the common culture areas. Muslim world as a common cultural background with the people of Iran has been affected by the Islamic Revolution. The manifestations of such impact can be observed in growth and extension of Islamic movements at the same time with victory of Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Despite the claims of some western analysts in failure of political Islam, political Islam has had increasing growth in recent decades. The rise of Islamist movements in Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, African countries like Sudan, Pakistan and the subcontinent, South East Asia, and other regions of the Islamic world all as clear aspects of revival of Islamic identity in the Muslim world in some ways indicate the reflections of the Islamic Revolution. The decline of Marxist ideology and crisis in liberal democracy systems all has provided the field of growing Islamism in the Muslim world. (Rava, 1999: 177) Some Western scholars of the Islamic Revolution have tried to show the impact of Islamic Revolution in the Muslim world as insignificant in the study of its reflections by investigating the details of Islamic movements in the Muslim world. Long, one of the authors of the Proceedings of the book of Iranian revolution and its global reflection, by rejecting hasty assessment of the risk of influencing Islamic Revolution of Iran in the Arabic Middle East, concludes "The Persian Gulf Sunni Muslims not shown much acceptance to the revolutionary movements as a means for expressing dissatisfaction. While the Iranian revolution awakened many Shiites and especially it caused the political awareness of younger generation and greater courage to identity and rights, but intellectual and belief reflection of Iran has been limited "(Esposito, 2003: 20).

Esposito and Piscatori in the final chapter of this book have considered the impacts of the Islamic Revolution on the Islamic world from four types. Tangible and significant impact (in Lebanon and Bahrain), patterning and encouraging the countries Islamic trends and accelerating them (in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the Philippines), general and wide influence in motivating Islamic ideology and Islamic political thought (in Egypt, Sudan, Malaysia and Indonesia), and finally, excuses of some Islamic states because of afraid of the Islamic Revolution to suppress Islamist oppositions (in Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, and Indonesia) (ibid: 331).

In general, "the most influence of revolutionary Iran on the Islamic world is at the level of thoughts and ideology. Islamic revivalism has been the evident feature and global aspect of thoughts and some Sunni ideologues such as Hasan al-Banna and Seyed Qatab from Egypt, Abul A'la Ali Maududi from Pakistan and Abu Hasan Nadui from India. As a result of the revolution, the works of two Iranian ideologues, i.e. Emam Khomeini and Ali Shariati, were translated and distributed widely in Islam and non-Islamic world. Certainly we not mistaken to say that the Muslim generation after the revolution around the world have accepted that Islam plans for political and social reform"(ibid. 331-332).

However, despite the acknowledgment of the important effects of the Islamic Revolution in this book, what seems to have not been seriously considered is inattention to challenge of Islamic Revolution with dominance of Western modernism. Undoubtedly, what only the Islamic Revolution could do in this stage and as it passed, it provoked the attention of postmodern thinkers like Foucault has been the deconstruction nature of the Islamic Revolution to the dominance of Western modernism. Regardless of such an effect, the other effects of Islamic Revolution will not be so fundamental. Bobby Saeid has tried to explain this point inspired by Lyotard's discussion in denying grand narrative and by combining it with the idea of Yong in considering postmodernism as the decentralization from the West (Bobby Saeid, 2000, 121-125). In this respect, Islamism discourse in the Islamic Revolution actually led to the rejection of Eurocentrism or the West-oriented that has raised Islamism as a pattern. He says "by developing this argument I've asked to show that the Islamism is largely raised in line with the destruction of Eurocentric logic. My argument has been such this that the rise of Islamism is understandable only in an atmosphere in which the West is decentralized. It is noteworthy that his purpose of Eurocentric has not been the geographical regional view, but it is an intellectual discourse "(ibid: 149).

Iran's Islamic Revolution is continuity and a turning point in the contemporary Islamic revival movement. Two fundamental changes in recent decades are led that the vision of revival of the Islamic identity to have more favorable areas. The emergence of postmodern attitudes in the West and the rise of globalization are two factors that both lead to the gradual weakening of the dominance of Western modernism. It seems that the new requirements will provide more opportunities for movement of contemporary Islamism (Behrooz Lak, Islamic Thought and Culture Research Publications, 2007).

Religion and Morality (God- Centered)

Relying on the power of God that means to accept the God's guardianship and will and power causes to strength

soft power. Hence, the verses of Qur'an and hadith do not recognize any power except God essentially because diffusion of power and authority in Islam is from the top to the following; ie the main authority is for God, in contrast to the materialistic views that consider sovereignty for human (Zarshenas, 1999, p. 23).

Iranians consider relying on the power of God as the most important national and religious symbol. Thus, in Iranian culture, God- centered has a special place, so that when entering Islam, they followed Zoroastrianism, and believed in God. Iranian from pre-Islamic periods up to now could create integration factors in their system and community relying on two strong supports, i.e. nationality and religiosity, which monotheism is its head (Golshan Pajuh, 1999, p. 315).

Iran's Islamic Revolution accepted absolute sovereignty of God in all its plans as a principle with a movement that created for God and with the purpose of enforcing divine provisions and the monotheism values and used it as a stimulus to achieve the goal. Some cases are mentioned in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran that indicate the acceptance of God's sovereignty on the world and human beings and has obliged the necessity of submission against God's power. Therefore, all policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the rule of God on existence. Article 56 and paragraph 1 and 2 in principle 2 also implies this subject.

Considering Mortality

One of the components of soft power in the dimension of political values is the subject of considering mortality that has great importance in Islam. The relationship between morality and power in the perspective of Islam is not a contrast relationship, ie considering the view that policy is not retractable with morality, is unacceptable because, in Islam, attention to both is necessary. Ethical principles in Islam are subject to certain principles like compassion, honesty, integrity and troth; ie in conflict with a matter like politics or expediency precedes it; therefore, the implementation of mortality is a goal, not a function of a target. In Islam, there is a belief in the interconnectedness of politics and morality, but at the same time, considers mortality prior to politics, and it is not allowed a moral issue to be manipulated by politics. In other words, what is morally wrong cannot be politically correct and give the desired result (Alam, 2002, p. 74).

Islamic Republic of Iran, according to its Shiite and Islamic identity, has placed tradition and nature of Imams as its pattern. Therefore, it considers mortality as integral part of political, economic and cultural planning. Contrary to what there is in the former regime or the Western countries,

considering ethical principles is considered a value in the Islamic Republic of Iran. For example, the issue of strengthening the moral virtues and faith with components such as the spirit of sacrifice and hope for the future is expressed in the general policies of the fourth plan. This issue represents valuing moral values with other matters, such as politics and economy and so on. Also in paragraph 1, 6, 9 and 16 from Article III of the constitution, the issue of mortality is investigated.

Enforcement of Justice

Islam has global claim, so it is not specific to a country or a particular group of Muslims and it is for total human. Imam Khomeini says on the ultimate goal of Islamic Revolution: "We want to establish Islamic justice in this country. a kind of Islam that is justice-centered, an Islam where there is no violence." (Mousavi Khomeini, 1991, vol. 9, p. 21).

In addition to Islamic topics and views of the Islamic Republic of Iran, justice is rooted in Iranian culture and civilization, that Shi'ite Islam has strengthened it. Justice has been one of values of Iran's society, before tending Iranian to Islam; so that justice is one of the constitutive elements of Iranian identity and Iranian includes and involves justice (Mojtahedzade, 2004, p 222- 244).

Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers an important role for justice in divine position that considers its source and basis of power and sovereignty attributed to God, even if in practice, justice has not been fully implemented or is faced with shortcomings, but the foundations of the system are based on justice and at least in the most basic theories and laws are emphasized on it. In principles, 2, 3, 6, 19, 20, 43 and 107 of the Iranian constitution, the values of justice, equality have been emphasized.

The Common-Land and Geography of Iran

Privileged geopolitical situation of Iran as one of the factors affecting the formation and consistency of Iranian national identity is led the country during history in the field of foreign policy to have multiple and often peaceful interactions with near and far nations.

Iran has been the resort of various groups and tribes that during history have lived together with peace and tranquility. Today, the Iranian land is the host of many immigrants and refugees, particularly from neighboring countries.

Based on the estimate of 2005 of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Iran has been the host of the third large refugee population in the world (3 million people). Afghanistan (80 percent), Iraq (18 percent), Pakistan

(1 percent), Azerbaijan (25.0%), Turkey (25.0), Armenia (25.0), and Turkmenistan (25.0) have the largest number of immigrants in Iran (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2008).

Islamic Awakening and Islamic Identity

Many experts in the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic movements believe that Islamic Revolution of Iran has been one of the major and influencing factors in promoting the awakening process and awareness of Muslims and increasing activities effective in Arabic and Islamic societies. Theory of influencing Muslim countries from revolution is based on the statements of the leaders of liberation movements and their modeling from the Iranian revolution and studying developments and events that occurred in Muslim countries. The journalists a month before the revolution ask Imam Khomeini: "Do you think Iran's events will be led to Turkey? Imam (ra) responded: Movement of Iran is an Islamic movement and therefore it is evident that all Muslims of the world are affected by it." (Sahife Noor, Vol. 4: 114). Self-awareness of Muslims, especially in Islamic countries from their power, return to the Qur'an, relying on the rich Islamic culture and inspired by the Iranian revolution was an issue that understand it was difficult for authorities. Alexander Hick says: "In my opinion, more dangerous than this (international problems) is the consequences of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism that is occurred in Iran and now threat Iraq and stability of all moderate Arab regimes in the region. If this phenomenon gets out of control, it will jeopardize the interests of the superpowers in the most dangerous aspect." (Newspaper of information, 1982).

Islamic Awakening is an issue that was began at the same time with massive invasion of West in the Muslim world and colonial era and is occurred as a phenomenon affected by intellectual movement of the Islamic Republic in today's era in the form of a social and organizational movement. The issue in the field of political and security conflicts converts to undisputed power in the world in addition to proving its existence and influence. Today the Islamic awakening is rapidly advancing around the world and Islamic values are being revived. Islamic Awakening is become a political behavior as a collective consciousness based on public will and influenced by origin Islam under the management of Islamic Republic of Iran in the present circumstances and it is organized in the form of a political idea. The status of regional equations in moving forward in line with the interests of Islam and Islamic movements and completely contrast with the programs and west ideals is happening. This issue changes the balance of power in favor of the Shiites movements of region with the cultural background of the Islamic Revolution. Islamic Awakening movement at the beginning of the revolutionary upsurge experiences

rapidly an evolutionary movement. A movement that whatever goes forward closes to its ideal prospect and is destructing all political and legal foundations of the West in the region with total self-confidence (Dust Mohammadi, 2001: 77 -102).

The Ability of Media

The performance of cultural diplomacy is in a way that governments require extensive and professional networking. A message that the network reaches to an external audience represents the identity and a country's public opinion and it must always have dimensions of compatibility and continuity in its own. The use of efficient media in the issue of cultural diplomacy is very important. The media are capable to create positive or negative image from a country in the world with tremendous influence power in different communities and this is caused the media management to be considered by government (sheafer, 2009: 449-450).

Nowadays the communication tools have created this possibility to be able to directly communicate with the audience in every corner of the world. Accordingly, the media use complex methods and mechanisms in attracting audiences. In addition, the number of television channels and radio, websites, newspapers and magazines and other communication tools is to the extent that audiences have the possibility to compare and validate the information in addition to achieve information in the shortest time, so media are more successful in this competition that have powerful tools of technical and language and on the other hand, they have high knowledge towards the mood and spirit of their audiences, in Iran, the focus of media activities is on IRIB and the organization has a huge volume of tasks that in addition to communicate with domestic audiences in Farsi language, is attempting to communicate with foreign audiences by launching satellite channels in foreign languages, such as Al-Alam and Press TV network. Starting the work of news network of Press TV in July 2007 created a hope that Iran be able to convey its message to international audiences through a national professional media.

Network officials have announced the purpose of setting up Press TV to "break the dominance of the West over the world media," and expressed the hope that this network be able to compete with 24-hour English-language television networks such as BBC, CNN and Al- Jazeera (Mehr News agency, 2008). Islamic Republic of Iran spreads six newspapers in English and Arabic languages in order to reflect the news and familiarity of citizens of other countries or residents in Iran with culture and domestic and international policies of Iran, in the meantime, newspapers of Al-Wefaq and Arabic Keyhan seek their audience in the

Arab countries of the Middle East and Africa as well as IRIB also has five global networks of Jame Jam, Al-Alam, Sahar, Al-Kosar and Press TV in exterritorial dimension that covers Muslims and other audiences of Islamic Republic of Iran in abroad, Al-Alam network is a 24-hour news Arabic-language television network in the Middle East that was opened in 2003, Arabic countries such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Egypt, Mauritania, Algeria, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine are the main audiences of this network. Al-Alam network not only in Gaza and Ramallah has news office, but also in occupied territories so-called 1948 has journalist. This network in the 33-day war of Israeli against Lebanon reported directly from the missile strikes to Haifa. Al-Alam has news bureau in Washington and New York. Al-Alam network now has 52 journalists in 40 countries and can reflect most of demands of audiences (Al-Alam News Site, 2005). Arabic language network of Al-Kosar is the other cross-border networks of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting that broadcasts in the worldwide and covers Arab countries of the Middle East and Africa.

Educational Activities

Another policy that must be considered in the context of Iran's cultural diplomacy is the issue of education as well as accepting foreign students. Accepting foreign student is including issues that are considered by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and the Council, in legislation of organizing cultural – social activities and extra-curricular of foreign students, in April 2006, has emphasized: "One of the main goals of attracting and training foreign students in universities is scientific - cultural and administrative interactions after their graduation. This issue will be depended on an image that forms in the minds of the students from Iranian - Islamic culture and the Islamic Republic of Iran during their staying in Iran that place them in the position of cultural ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran in its positive side "(Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2006) Islamic Republic of Iran has already established academic mutual cooperation with some countries, including the six countries in the Middle East. Also in four countries in the region, academic units have been established affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology or Islamic Azad University (International Scientific Cooperation Office of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, 2006). Now 16 thousand foreign students are studying in Iran. 3 thousand and 500 students are studying in universities of country and the rest in Jameh al-Mostafa University and seminaries in academic sciences and Islamic sciences. However, among them, 800 students are scholarship and other is studying with personal cost (Mehr News Agency, 2010). Foreign students from Afghanistan, Iraq, Central Asia, Arabic

countries, African countries and some other countries have come Iran to study, one of the largest academic centers is International University of Imam Khomeini (IAU) that has a high capacity to accept foreign student and one of its most important objectives is to attract students from different countries of the world.

Another point that is important in attracting foreign student and positive impact on them from an image that Iran presents in its country is proper cultural underling for the presence of foreign students among the people.

CONCLUSION

Iran's Islamic Revolution that from the beginning had cultural nature, relying on Islamic principles could create a positive outcome on public opinion of inside and outside. This increases the power and authority of our country. Islamic Republic of Iran accepted distinct identity in its cultural and politics nature that was entirely based on Islam, a pattern that was not similar to structure of thought of secular; i.e. it has intellectual foundations, objective, historical process and evolutions distinct from secular discourse and it was the founder of epistemic process, by providing new discourse. West also seeks to challenge the outcome by understanding the issue.

Iran Cultural Diplomacy can be successful in the Middle East if first, to know its action area (Middle East) from good intellectual aspects, then according to this knowledge and understanding the challenges and opportunities to specify considered objectives of this type of diplomacy and then to use the best methods and new tools achieve these goals.

What were mentioned in this article were the components of Islamic republic of Iran's soft power in the Middle East region, in addition to these principles, strategic and geopolitical position and history of civilization and considering science and having initial rich resources has made a powerful and effective Iran in the developments of the world after the revolution.

This issue caused that today the Islamic Republic of Iran changes as a model for all liberalism countries of the world, especially Muslim countries; because the Islamic Republic of Iran chose an approach for political issues that has been considered by all countries, and that was cultural and religious approach to domestic, regional and international issues. People revived matters that nature of every Muslim and liberalism was following it.

In the meantime, Iran has attempted a lot to increase soft power among the countries of the region by its principles,

values and cultural attitudes. Existing important cultural and religious properties has attracted people beyond the borders of the Muslim world. As it's clear, the Middle East and countries in the region has been the scope of cultural influence and Iranian civilization, and if this point to be considered in political and diplomatic equations with more organizing and tact, it will be seen very close political and cultural relations with its neighbors. Attention to historical, national, cultural roots of Iran in the region with religious similarities as a criteria of creating good relationship with the region countries and the Middle East and the correct and optimal use from religious, cultural, social and historical capabilities in bilateral or multilateral relations will lead to expand sphere of influence and soft power of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Middle East and region countries.

In total, while confirming the hypothesis raised at the beginning of this article, it can be said undoubtedly, a free Iran and at the same time adhere to Islamic values and principles will be followed additional attractiveness. This position can increase general influence of Iran in the framework of cultural diplomacy in the regional and global levels and enhance the soft power of Iran. Therefore, the strengthening of Iran's soft power components and the use of its advantages with attention and protection of religious, historical and traditional elements of national identity of Iran will be followed more effective soft power in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Accordingly, with serious investment on components of soft power and accept responsibilities that its success depends on overcoming structures of undesired relations and create symmetry of relations and having soft power, it can be improved style of desired foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran with low-cost and much benefits.

Considering the current global space and the advancement of information technology, Iran's cultural diplomacy requires applying new methods and tools.

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