



Student Activism in Iran (The Necessity for a Transition from Factional Dependencies to Movement Independency)

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ABSTRACT

The student movement is considered as one of the important issues of Iranian political sociology, but its role and its nature and its relationship with other movements and movements in Iran have been discussed. The present article is trying to answer the role and function of the student movement in Iran. Using a descriptive-analytic approach, political currents have become instrumental in most of the contemporary social-political changes of the student movement and have functioned and functioned in terms of activity, as in the era of this movement, it was subjected to three streams Left (Marxism), nationalistic and religious, and in the era of the Islamic Republic in some time Fold influenced by Marxism and liberalism and then under the influence of Islamist currents, both reformists and conservatives, respectively. In other words, the student movement in the political-social developments of Iran as the easiest financier of deceit accounts has always been in the flow of political currents and more than an independent stream, a movement that has been affiliated with political factions and political movements.

Keyword: New Social Movements, Urban Middle Class, Student Movement, Islamic Revolution, Reformism, Fundamentalism.

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INTRODUCTION

Although student activism is a global phenomenon but it has taken various forms in different countries and universities. Student activism in Iran, that had to feature an original social movement's characteristics and be a continuation and a branch of enlightenment, was not developed as expected. Such a movement both before the Islamic Revolution and afterwards, has suffered from a great many of harms such as dependency to the political factions and groups; of course, in the other spots around the globe, as well, the student activism in its exact sense as it was customary in 1960

s Europe cannot be found anywhere; but, criticism and reparative healing can restore the student streams to their originality and effectiveness in their roles and identity.

Independence in mindset and policies, knowledge-orientation, distantness from extremism, avoidance from impulsivity and emotionalism and intellectuality are features on which the corroboration or weakness of the student movement's originality depend. Meanwhile presenting a succinct survey of the student activism history and elaborating and analyzing its position in Iran's sociopolitical alterations, the current research paper takes a genealogical and pathological approach to the role identity of student movement in connection to the political streams and parties in pre- and post-Islamic Revolution Iran.

1. Study Theoretical Principles

Fundamentally and theoretically, student movement is a synthesis of three topics, namely social moves, enlightenment stream and other streams stemming from new middle class (Khurramshad, 2005: 6-7). These are dealt with below:

1.1. Student Activism as a Sort of New Social Movements

In scientific discussions on social moves, especially the new social movements, the seminal and exemplary sample that is mentioned for such social moves is the student activism; better said, in the sequence of the novel social moves that were initialized since 1960s, especially late 60s, student activism and movement has been the preliminary chain or the founding chain. More evidently, it is from May, 1968, on that with student movement in Europe, particularly in France, the new social movements are commenced and the other movements such as feminism, bio-environmentalism, peace movements, antiracist moves and so forth are the continuations thereof (Bashiriye, 1989: 248).

Collective move and effort for bringing about a change in the social movements is to be characterized by certain features distinguishing it from the other collective moves for purposes such as change and evolution: 1) such a collective move is formulated based on an informal interpersonal, intergroup or inter-organizational interaction network (Nash, 2005: 152); 2) it is based on a common collection of beliefs and attachments (Tilley, 2006: 80-85); 3) the collective move is concentrated on disputes, including social, political or cultural, in social moves (Nash, 2001: 148-149); 4) social moves typically feature an decentralized organization and ,multiple-head leadership; 5) social moves possess their own specific ideologies that defines

certain values and objectives and provides for a coherent conceptual network for the interpretation of the experiences and incidents; 6) social moves form in the individuals' commitment and liability towards the movement, its goals and ideology via certain activities or experience and it is in this way that the individual's position within the organization is determined and they get familiar with new values, commitments and behaviors; 7) rivals cause unification and cohesion as well as commitment and dynamicity in the movement; 8) social moves are fluctuating between long latency periods and short periods of contention or acute public activity; and, 9) political moves in social activism are either peaceful and calm or radical and revolutionary (Zahed, 1998: 245; and, Omemn, 2007).

1.2. Student Activism as Part of an Enlightenment Stream
In such a state, the student activism is studied as a collection of enlightenment moves. Szezepanski has investigated sixty different definitions by intellectuals. These definitions can be divided to three main sets: in the first set, the intellectuals are generally those who take part in creating ultimate unchangeable values in areas like truth, aestheticism and justice; the second set of intellectuals are recounted as the preachers of the beliefs, founders of ideologies and the criticizers of the current status; and, the third set of the intellectuals are considered sociologically as the new middle class and they play a role in the development and advancement of the society's culture (Szezepanski, 1961).

This way, student activism is a part of enlightenment movement that is in the course of higher education and they feature a great many of the aforementioned enlightenment characteristics.

1.3. Student Activism as a Stream Stemming from New Middle Class

Renovation theoreticians like John Johnson, Morroe Berger, Manfred Halpern, Rafael Patai, Charles Issaw, P. M. Holt, T. Cugler Young, James Allan Bill and Samuel Hontington realize the new middle class in the developing countries as the impetus and the propeller of development and renovation hence they are fans of evolution, cause evolution and are even revolutionary. In their minds, the new middle class plays an effective and determinant role in leading and initializing sociopolitical moves within developing communities. Halpern knows the new middle class as the leading cause of social changes in the Middle-East countries, including Iran. He defines social classes based on the effect they exert on the society and he states "every class should be defined according to the political, social and economical role it plays in the process of social change" (Halpern, 1963: 51).

2. The history of Student Activism in Iran

2.1. Before Islamic Revolution

2.1.1. In the First Pahlavi Era

Although the first university was built in 1934 in Iran, according to Reza Khan's despotic government in this time span and the impossibility for the emergence and expression of the social moves as well as for such reasons as the inaccessibility of higher education for part of the middle class and the lower social classes and the exclusivity of such a right to the elites and the classes associated with the government, practically no serious university and student movement coordinated with the social and political activities can be traced in this era (Abrahamiyan, 2000: 348).

2.1.2 In Second Pahlavi Era

The formation of student activism in this time span of history should be evaluated according to several important attributes:

The auspiciousness of the conditions for the presence of the middle and lower social classes in univeristy (Karimiyan, 2002: 157-162).

The leftist (marxistic) ideology's taking position among the prevalent ideology for a fight within the developing countries' discourse space (Zia'a Zarifi, 1999: 154).

The proposition of religious ideology as a solution to critical-campaing activities (Ibid, 307-316).

In a general conclusion, student activism before the victory of the Islamic revolution, disregarding its intellectual rising point, has been in pursue of fighting despotism, colonialism and superpowers and struggled for the establishment of the social justice system. The advent of brilliant days such as 16th of December and 13th of November in student activism's report card in this historical epoch, is owed to such an idealism by the young generation of university students; however, these movements were confronted with discomfitures due to their lack of precise awareness and recognition of their cultural role.

2.2. After the Victory of Islamic Revolution

2.2.1. From the Victory of Islamic Revolution Till the Onset of Imposed War

One of the important events in this time span of Islamic Revolution history and student activism was the capturing of the US's espionage nest by the university students following the lead of Imam Khomeini (may Allah sanctify the sacred soil of his tomb) and it is enumerated as an important measure in the history of Islamic Revolution.

Defending the revolution and system, safeguarding the revolution's accomplishments, fighting the east and the west imperialism were the gists of student activism discourse during the preliminary years since the victory of islamic revolution.

2.2.2. Imposed War Time Span:

In this time span, student activism was ghgly manifested in such areas as defending the Islamic Revolution and it was well embodied in student awareness. In this period of time, student activism's gist of discourse was justice-seeking from a leftist standpoint and adoption of a religious-ideologic approach and it was the formal representative and the main declarant of the "unity solidification office" or the same "university students' Islamic Associations Union" (Bashiriyeh, 2002: 139).

2.2.3. From the End of Imposed War Till September, 1997

After the termination of the imposed war and, especcally with the turn of 1990s, the Islamic system was exposed to responding to the social, cultural and economical demands of the society and the universities as the constructive arms, following this same trend, as well, were not left portionless of these demands. "The University Students' Society" and the "University Basij (Mobilization)" were the student formations that came to existence in this arena of political life and each somehow influenced the student activism.

2.2.4. Reformations Era and Reformism

Undoubtedly, the fourth era, spanning from 1997 till 2005, should be considered as a critical era in the arena of student movements' political activities, particularly at the time of elections. The active participation of the university students and adolescents in such areas as political and university and their

extensive participation in tribunals and seminars and circulation of student journals made the student activism look specific and grandiose in such a manner that in 1998, about 260 student journals were published in the universities countrywide (Martaji, 1999: 142).

After the second of September, some political streams needed to exert pressure from below for advancing their political bargains and due to their weak and shivering position among the general public, they, meanwhile turning universities to their battlefield, were seeking to change universities to an instrument of factions and parties; though, the strategy had no and will not have any result but scientific stagnation and political boredom of the universities.

2.2.5. Ahmadinejad Presidency Era

In preparation for the ninth presidential election, the student activism once again, and, of course, subject to political streams and discourses, experienced a period of turbulence in its activities and political and social decision making. The important point in this era was segregation and factionalism in the student activism subject to pluralistic political streams and discourses in the country. In summary, it has to be said that the student formations, such as students' Islamic Society, Student Mobilization and Student justice-seeking movement believed in the slogans of Ahmadinejad more than the ones by other candidates due to their young and idealist nature and also for such reasons as upholding justice and defending deprived classes and they worked for him to the maximum extent of their capabilities. It is not far from truth if it is said that what the four abovementioned formations did in the ninth election for Ahmadinejad is the same as what was done by Unity Solidification Office and the other student formations in the second of September election, in 1997, for Khatami.

In this period of time, the majority of the gatherings and sessions by the university students were ordered and the proponents of a political party used the students' power to beat up the other rival parties. Besides such a feature, this latter period can be characterized by the following attributes:

1) Governmentalization of a Fraction of Student Activism

With the onset of the ninth government's tenure in 2005, part of the student body was allowed to enter the executive arena in the format of young counselors of the various institutions and ministries. Such a method of students' entrance to executive bodies is both prone to advantages and disadvantages. It is advantageous in this sense that the university student could largely get familiar with the way the country was administrated the precious experience of which could be used in future; but the disadvantage lies where parts of the university students' nationalism and demand in regard of the government performance underwent a substantial decrease with their entry to the executive arena even as advisors and the university students gradually joined the group of government agents.

2) Student Activism's Performance in regard of the Vital Issues:

In this eight-year period, a great many of the important issues were proposed in domestic and foreign areas. Tenth presidential elections, eighth and ninth elections, Islamic awakening in some of the Islamic countries, economical crises in the West, 3000-billion embezzlement and so forth are only parts of such issues. The performance and the activity of the student movement in respect to such issues sustained abundant weaknesses during these years. As for a great many of these issues, the student activism could not take an effective and

streamlining measure. Of course, there were some steps taken in this period of time in which the student activism can be considered as highly effective and efficient. The university students' gathering in airport to be dispatched to Gaza is among the student activism' streamlining measures taken in this span of time. Such a move was a very appropriate and timely advertisement and it could revitalize the student idealism spirit to some extent.

2.2.6. Rohani's Presidency Era

After Doctor Hassan Rohani conquered the presidential election, a group of the university students, the former critics of the conditions in the ninth and tenth government, now joined the followers of Hassan Rohani and expected him to fulfill their political wishes and wants. This spectrum which happened to have voted for Dr. Rohani in 24th of September, 2013 (eleventh round) and 29th of May, 2017 (twelfth round), now features an idealism of bringing about a change from the past status of affairs to shift the status quo from moderation which is half way to fundamentalism and half way to reformism, towards complete reformism; this is a direction that is well beyond the government's red lines. On the other hand, there is a spectrum of the student activism such as student mobilization that is quite opposite to and of course with the same fervor of the rival stream.

To put it differently, now that the society's political space is undergoing a tangible separation to two poles featuring two completely different mindsets, the student activism will surely bear witness to the same internal bipolarity through it being influenced by Iran's society political atmosphere and, of course, in a more intensified and more rapid pace. In a sense, it might be possible to say that the political factions and formations will do their best to take advantage from such an effective weight and they may play a catalytic role in doing so to the extent that convert these two poles of the movement to two parallel lines that renders their intersection really difficult or impossible.

3. Student Demands' Pathology:

According to the material posited so far, it becomes clearly necessary to run a pathological survey in line with safeguarding the movement and creating dynamicity and preventing contingent deviations for the benefit of "student activism direction". Therefore, the current major pivots of student movement pitfalls are:

3.1. The Elimination of Multi-Factionalism and Multi-Partisanship

The most important and most essential demand posed by the student activism is the political participation. The truth is that the university students, as a scientific community, participated in the political life in the form of a "political mobilization" and a mass mobilization; meaning that the process of students' political presence in the revolution has not been turned into an "institutionalized participation" and within the format of a "civil community" and their political participation is still concealed under a cloud of affections and emotions.

3.2. Downgrading the National Discourse of the Student Activism to Factional Literature:

Student movement enjoys abundant advantages in respect to the other social movements in a way that a relatively wide movement with an inclusion circle as extensive as the national geography, "penetration" and "social agreeability" and a long past history of activity make student activism distinguished from the other sociopolitical movements. Now, if such a capacity is to yield to the political factions, there is no doubt that it will

be given no responsibility except designing and preparation of an organization for absorbing votes for the success of certain factions in the presidential elections. This is an issue that is essentially not to be given a way in the functions outlined for the student activism as an independent and syndicate movement because the student activism is fundamentally not in pursuit of power. Now, if the student activism is to act as an advertising lever for advancing the factions' goals it will lose the track of covering the syndicate needs and national interests of its members and it will be soon urged to downgrade its national discourse to a local, branched discourse converging with the political wants.

3.3. The lack of a Strategy and a Doctrine:

Despite holding the lead in its reaction in the course of its political activities, the student activism has not been a theorizer, particularly because the universities in Iran as compared to the other countries around the globe are both young and continuously subject to political schools and streams inside the society (Asgari, 2001: 21).

In Iran, the student activism somehow lacks the strategic doctrine and mindset so as to be considered as having the necessary power in confrontation with the challenges and in seizing the opportunities and it can be said that it does not have the facilities for a constant political activity so as to be able to attain its predetermined objectives.

3.4. Confrontation in Lieu of Interaction:

The most important characteristic of Iran's student activism in pre-Islamic Revolution Iran is confrontation and fight against the despotic and imperial regimes; thus, the movement has spent most of its life for protecting the revolution and this has caused the movement to become intensively radical hence it has been less in thought of interaction with the political system and participation and conversation with the political powers. It has been only during the post-Islamic Revolution years that the student activism, for the legitimacy of the government, has entered the political conversation and participation.

Student activism should learn the participatory political culture the prerequisite of which is conceptual intellectuality and then institutionalize its learning as a movement intra-organizational training; the second necessary point is having a strategic thought and an effective doctrine; the third point is having a codified plan that allows systematic and organized conversation and "exchange of plans and notions" with the politicians and statesmen parallel to its doctrine and theory.

3.5. The Risk of Deviation from Religious Principles:

Another reason behind the emergence of social movements is the existence of intellectual paradigms or, in another word, the very ideologies. Based thereon, some of the student movements in various time durations have only formed according to their own beliefs whereas the prevalent aspect of the student activism's intellectual area is Islam. Of course, such a belief is not permanent and immune from deviation because there the factional activity and the downgrading of the intellectual creativity hidden behind the curtain of the student activism might lead to the acceptance of rock-ribbed intellectual rules and this, if takes place, will be the first step opening the avenue of religious deviations for the academic community of the country (Salami, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

Student activism in Iran should place the science at the center of its activities and analyzes the atmosphere via scientific data and

predicates, if it wants to reach to movement independence and wishes for getting passed the political streams' dependencies.

Political analysis based on knowledge and awareness should be placed atop of the student activism activities and programs and it has to be given utmost superiority because the students' involvement in political objections and political moves if not being concomitantly accompanied by precise political analysis will face them with crises that they will need to tackle more serious problems to get rid of them. Any movement in the universities certainly cannot provide the society and students' minds with an accurate analysis when it is directed at a wave of false emotions. Any sort of deconstructive confrontation makes the university space derailed from intellectuality and causes the students to take unreasonable measures subject to feelings.

The important point is that the radical and exclusivist performance of some student groups has been an effective factor contributing to the students' apoliticism. Many of the university students are reluctant to take part due to the results and the costs that have been incurred by these groups' radical measures and in fact the domination of "emotions" over "intellectuality" in students' sociopolitical activities has caused the expression of such extremist and unethical behaviors.

Freedom of thought and clear view of the various parts of the society pave the way for reaching to an ideal society and, accordingly, the scientific and academic atmosphere of the universities should be navigated thereto so that every student, if appearing as an objector, protests based on knowledge and fairness because Muslim student activism's prestige demands such a behavior. His Highness Supreme leader requires student activism's participation in the centers of science generation and software movements as well as justice-seeking and His Highness's consecutive insistence addressing the corresponding organs involved in higher education on paying more attention to the talented and elevated classes of the society in sociopolitical areas is per se a document assertive of this reality. Under such a circumstance, student activism, in line with accomplishing its objectives through equipping its demands with piety and science, should act out a novel form of student activities and it can be ascertained that we will never bear witness to exploitation and instrumental use of such a movement by the other streams, factions and political entities outside the universities by adopting such an approach.

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