MUSLIM WORLD AND THE THIRD MILLENNIUM WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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ABSTRACT

The international arena is facing rearrangement of power factors. Recognizing this fact, all powers are trying to enter games and coalitions to form restorations and obtain a greater share in future. In this regard, the present study aims to answer following question: “given existing potentials, what is the position of Muslim world in the new world? Considering the current situation, how the Muslim world will contribute in the international arena of modern relationships? It has also been tried to consider position of Iran in this puzzle. Reviewing opportunities and threats for the Muslim world, the present study examines challenges in the Muslim world to find appropriate solutions. According to historical documents of the Golden Age of Islam as well as strengths and weaknesses of the Muslim community, it seems that the missing link and salvation of the Muslim world is unity and empathy and reliance on basics, avoiding disputes and ignoring differences in minutiae. In this regard, Iran can play an unparalleled role due to its cultural and scientific background.

KEYWORDS: Muslim World, Arabic Spring, International System, Unity

With the rise of the Golden Age of the Islamic nation in 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} centuries AD, the following questions have always occupied the minds of thinkers: “how this golden age was formed for Islam?” “Is it possible to set back another golden era for the Muslim world?” “Can Islamic nations again produce science, culture and wealth?” “Are they able to become again excelled and exporters of culture and cultural symbols to the rest of the world?” This article tries to examine the main reason for formation of the Islamic Golden Age. Then, opportunities and threats in the present world for the rise of Golden Age of Islam are studied. In addition, by examining historical texts and findings of Islamologists, the present study tries to find an approach to exit from current challenge in the Muslim world, i.e. division. There is no doubt on the importance of this topic, because the relief of Muslim countries from this situation depends on unity and grabbing unity origin or divine string as well as communication of Muslim countries in international community together and with the rest of the world.

THE GOLDEN AGE DEFINITION

Moein dictionary defines the golden age as follows:

"The golden age is an era in the history of a country in which literature, science, industries and other factors of civilization have been completely developed" (Moein, 2004).

Accordingly, the golden age in any country or culture is evaluated based on some indicators (some of them were noted in definition of the golden age). The golden age in any country may occur in several periods with several different courses satisfying definition of the Golden Age. For example, Achaemenid, Samanids and Safavid periods shaped a golden age in Iranian civilization region in different historical periods.

METHODOLOGY

Due to the nature of the subject, data was collected referring literature and analyzing research notes. Given desk study method used in this research, information resources were library and Internet resources. Due to shortage in printed resources in this area, the main information source was Internet resources. Moreover, descriptive-analytic approach was adopted so that issues were described and explained and then analyzed in some cases.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAM

The fall of the Umayyad dynasty and the rise of Bani Abbas led to a new period of historical, cultural and scientific development in all countries of the Islamic caliphate. This period is called the Golden Age of Islam, the period of Islamic civilization and the Golden Age of Islamic civilization and culture (Mohammadi, 1995: 138). Due to transfer of the caliphate capital from Damascus to Baghdad and its proximity to Jundishapur scientific center

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and the presence of selfless Iranian ministers and advisors in the court of Islamic caliphate as well as the passion of Bani Abbas caliphs for science, literature and culture, great scientific and cultural movements of the Muslim world flourished (Ahmadi, 2000: 86).

During the Muslim conquests, Army of Islam established Islamic empire or caliphate as one of the largest empires in history and gradually expanded it. During this golden period, Muslim world became the hub of knowledge, research and the intellectuality. Thus, science and technologies such as agriculture, art, business, music, architecture, industry, law, history, sociology, biology, mathematics, literature, navigation, philosophy, chemistry, physics, medicine, astronomy, religious science, ethics, logic, etc. were expanded. During the reign of Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid, Baghdad reached zenith of progress and prosperity (Jafari, 2011: 17).

Despite problems and crises existed at the beginning of the reign of Harun al-Rashid, the powerful caliph who trained by competent experts like Barmakian dynasty overcame difficulties very soon. Thanks to his soundness, he ended all turmoil and excitement in subsidiary territories and backed peace to all internal and external borders once again (Ben Ghassan, 1933: 2). Active presence of intelligent Iranian advisors created one of the most brilliant historical eras of Islamic caliphate, a period which is called the Golden age, the golden age of Islamic culture and civilization as well as vintage period of Islamic caliphate (Mohammadi, 1995: 138). A full of wealth coffer, peace and tranquility due to centralization of power as a requirement for cultural and scientific affairs as well as the presence of Barmakian who were a mixture of culture and literature converted Baghdad, the capital of caliphate, to the city of Tales of the Thousand and One Nights (Zarrinkoub, 1994: 420).

Harun’s sudden death in Toos not only caused political crisis in the Islamic caliphate, but also disrupted economic, social, cultural situation of affiliated countries. Part of confusion and inconsistencies was due to doubt of caliph in the last years of his caliphate to determine the successor. This led to family conflict among caliphate heirs to seize the power. The winner was Ma’mun, a strong Abbasid caliph who put away opponents and relied on the seat of caliphate like an unrivalled conquer with the help of his Iranian minister, Fadl ibn Sahl (Massoudi, 1986: 318). Specific policies adopted by Ma’mun and features like soundness, generosity, foresight, knowledge and wisdom and establishment of Hekmat House, as the first major scientific academy in the world created a brilliant and unique period in the history of Islam in the early centuries (Bigdeli, 1993: 42). Accordingly, the golden age of Islam started in the era of Harun al-Rashid are reached its fertility and prosperity in the era of Ma’mun.

THE NEW ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

To better understand circumstances, it is necessary to understand current situation of the Muslim world as well as opportunities and threats to get rid of current situation and to begin another golden era in the Muslim world.

Current situation of the Muslim world

Unfortunately, the current situation in the Islamic world is painful and sad. Although a series of cross-sectional changes like the Iranian Islamic Revolution with charismatic leadership of Imam Khomeini greatly enhanced the position of the Muslim world, Muslim world is still in a state of stagnation compared with the vast changes in the world.

From intellectual and cultural point of view, Muslim world has been widely invaded by western culture in recent decades. Dimensions of cultural invasion are extended due to modern technology. Secularism plays a key role in cultural invasion. The secular enemies of Islam have focused all their efforts to neutralize the social and political role of Islam. Meanwhile, many elites in Muslim world are intimidated by the West or are not able to innovate and compete with invading culture (Nasr, 2000: 230). Many governments in Muslim countries suffer from incompetent and corrupt authorities. On the other hand, fanatical extremist ideas exploit weaknesses in cultural systems in some Islamic countries as well as lack of understanding of some Muslims, thereby lead to backwardness and passivity of the Muslim world.

From economical point of view, Muslim world is struggling with poverty for a long time. In the past half-century, although the colonization of Muslim countries has been truncated, a covert colonialist has been formed and newly independent Muslim states became consumers. Capitalist countries export their second-hand and obsolescent technologies to Muslim countries. Today, modern chain markets or towers can be observed even in the poorest Muslim countries. But another reality lies
behind this seemingly decent. Beyond the manicured appearance, there is poverty and class gap in beneath layer in most Islamic societies. Accordingly, most Muslim countries are spectators rather than actors in the economic sphere. In other words, these countries provide a land for westerners, because they are not essentially actors to be able to play.

From political point of view, Muslim world involves with division and difference. On the one side are Sunni nations led by Saudi Arabia and supported by the West and one the other side are Shiite countries led by Iran. The majority of problems are left unresolved by involvement of religious differences. Some countries with Muslim majority are secular and disregard Islam and know themselves separated taffeta and follow policies of oppressors. Azerbaijan is a clear example of such countries. The Palestinian issue is more complex. While the idea of free Palestine should be fully supported, the lethargy of Arabic countries has created a wave of disappointment. In such circumstances, the only hope for the Muslim world is Arabic Spring and efforts made by Palestinian warriors.

Eleventh September which is resulted in Afghanistan and Iraq invasion so far is a great continuing project that has arrived all the world a new game at a deeper level. Murder and persecution of Muslims in the name of fighting terrorism and assassinating their character, especially in Europe and America to undermine public face of Islam and isolate Muslims and threat Iran with pretext of acquiring nuclear technology are problems that have been applied in a coordinated and planned manner by the enemies of Islam to undermine Muslims (Gholami, 2006: 74).

Internal problems have plagued many Muslim countries such as the separation of South Sudan from the North Sudan, Arabs’ claim about three Iranian islands in the Persian, disruption in Syria-Lebanon relations and more recently numerous involvement of Arabic countries and Turkey in Arabic Spring issues and attempts to change the Syrian regime and many other big and small issues are among items that have already occupied Muslims. The role of West, USA and Zionism is quite obvious and undeniable in all above issues.

The current situation of the world

In the current world, the changes are rapidly taking place and modern communication methods replaced old ones. Major economic crisis and public revolutions in Arabic countries called Arabic Spring and emergence of new political and economic powers in Asia and Latin America give the hope that the world is in a transition state and a new system is emerging at international level. On the one hand, powerful countries are trying to maintain their current contribution in the power game. They are trying to create a new order in the world and strengthen their dominance. On the other hand, the majority of countries are tired of division of power and calling for creation of a new order in the world based on equality and realities of today's world, not based on equations and coordinates after World War II which were different from that of the today's world (Bina, 2011: 42).

Today, with emergence of new economic powers such as Brazil, Indonesia and South Korea and so on as well as creation of new political coordinates such as 99% movement in USA and Europe's far-right power and Arabic Spring which changed Arab world and their family governments and created a wave of freedom and respect for human rights in traditional Arab world, the religious background of global changes should not be ignored. Human societies are returning to religious belief. When protesters in the streets of Tunis and Bengazi in Libya, Tahrir Square in Egypt and Pearl Square in Bahrain chant Allahu Akbar (God is great) slogan, the religious theme of these protests became obvious. However, oppressors believed that these slogans are due to repetition and habit. But following elections after the fall of Arab dictatorships and establishment of governments by Islamists, they had no pretext and found that the aim of public revolution is to achieve rights and freedom, not to escape from religion and not taking refuge in secularism. The public revolutions have a religious glaze and look for public wishes based on consolidated concepts.

To understand the current situation of the world in terms of opposition to the current order, Ayatollah Khamenei’s speech in Non-aligned Movement (NAM) summit is cited:

"Fortunately, global developments promise a new multi-faceted system in which traditional power poles are replaced by a set of diverse countries, cultures and civilizations with different economic, social and political origins. Dramatic events that have been witnessed in the last three decades clearly show that the rise of new powers has been associated with onset of weakness in old powers. The gradual shift of power
allows NAM countries to play an effective and proper role in the global arena and provide the context for a just and truly participatory management across the world "(Bina, 2012: 26).

In addition, Supreme leader of Islamic Republic of Iran noted that:

"The current situation of the world is an unrepeateable opportunity for NAM. We believe that the control room of the world should not be governed by dictatorship of some western countries. A global democratic participation should be formed and secured in the field of international management. This is a need for all countries that are directly or indirectly suffering from manipulation by bullying and hegemonic countries. UN Security Council has an irrational structure and unjust and completely undemocratic mechanism. This is an overt dictatorship and obsolete expired state. All are tired of this wrong international geometry" (ibid.).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSLIM WORLD

From cultural and intellectual point of view, Islam has always encouraged scientific and intellectual activities. In addition to scientific background and translation movement that entered the world into a new stage of human civilization, Muslim world has an impressive track record in this field. Without a doubt, if religious differences emerged from fanaticism of some Muslims and enemies of Islam are removed, scientific and cultural fields will be on the hands of Muslims due to divine worldview of Islam. "The main asset of Muslims is deep and dynamic Islamic thought and culture. However, it is not properly used. Looking back on the history of Islamic civilization, it is obvious that this civilization reached its zenith when the Islamic culture and thought were not captured by misunderstandings of Muslims and wise and far-sighted rulers managed Muslim community. Islam is a research-based religion such that faith without investigation is not valuable"(Gholami, 2006: 74).

In the economic field, majority of Muslim countries are poor. However, they have natural resources such as oil and gas and special economic situation. Moreover, Muslim countries enjoy from young and well educated population as essential accessories of sustainable development and as an unparalleled wealth. In addition, a market with a population of a billion and a half Muslims that requires its certain goods could be a massive opportunity for Muslim manufacturers who are familiar with this market.

From a political perspective, Muslim countries with high vote power in international conventions and organizations such as the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement can play an influential role in shaping the new world order. In addition, high economic potential offers many capacities to Muslim world in political arena. The liberation movement in Arabic countries and arising public governments in these countries can be considered as a great capacity in foreign policy of Muslim world.

THREATS FACING THE MUSLIM WORLD

Without a doubt, one of the major challenges facing the Muslim world is divisions between Islamic groups and increased tensions among these groups that results in waste of time. "Currently, globalization widely spreads western thought and culture and neutralize Islamic culture and thought, especially among young generation. It seeks to undermine independence and sovereignty of Islamic countries both economically and politically. It is considered as a major threat. Note that globalization has two main dimensions including process and project aspects. Realistic judgment is not possible without separating this phenomenon into these two dimensions. (Gholami, 2004: 9).

The growth of fanatic and extremist groups in the Muslim world endangers dignity and security of the Muslim world. Many people are attracted to extremist groups and this process is still continuing. Obviously, if there is no true knowledge, the best opportunity will be prepared to show off radical groups whose function is detrimental to Islam and Muslims (Gholami, 2006: 74).

Neglecting cultural and economic infrastructure resulted in backwardness of Muslim countries and disintegration of Islamic culture. It appears that if this trend is maintained, the Muslim world will go to stall. This threat should be resolved by careful consideration of Muslim rulers and authorities.

IRAN AND THE MUSLIM WORLD

Iran has played an impressive and unique role in formation of Islamic civilization during the Islamic history. Undoubtedly, Iran can also affect formation of modern civilization and be a pioneer in the Muslim world given potentials and scientific and cultural background in
the Muslim world. This flow started with the onset of The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1978.

In general, awakening of the Muslim world is divided into three periods. The second awakening period is at the same time as the Islamic Revolution of Iran (Khorramshad and Kiani, 2012: 35). Iran's Islamic Revolution is founder of modern Islamic civilization based on ancient Iranian-Islamic heritage which removed dust of oblivion and forgetfulness and brought new blood into movement vessels. However, charismatic leadership of Imam Khomeini at this point in the history of Islamic awakening should not be ignored. Michel Foucault calls Imam Khomeini the legendary leader of the Iranian uprising (Khorramshad and Kiani, 2012: 40). Arvin Toffler, famous theorist, calls Imam Khomeini the man of twenty-first century who died in the twentieth century (Salehi and Shahabi, 2012: 58).

The third wave of Islamic awakening began in the Middle East and North Africa and then swept countries in the region one by one. These protests caused surprise of foreign policy systems of regional and trans-regional countries. Thus, confusion arose on the nature of protests. Some believed that these protests are plots of extra-regional powers and Zionists. On the other hand, some believed that these protests are the voice of oppressed people who cannot longer tolerate humiliation of their values. People in these countries believed that humiliation and backwardness is due to tyranny and oppression of ruling dictators and sought to change the status quo (Khorramshad and Kiani, 2012: 43).

Over time it became clear that the second analysis is closer to the truth. The fall of dictators and rise of Islamist parties transmitted a clear message to the world. Muslim nations are tired of the status quo and seek to change it based on Islamic thoughts. In this position, to change the status quo, Muslim nations need a model of governance which includes their needs and desires. Given the second wave of awakening that resulted in Iranian Islamic Revolution, Iran's ruling regime can be considered as a worthy ideal model. This choice can be justified by the following reasons.

A. Emphasis on Muslim nation interest rather than national interests.
B. Dynamic and inclusive culture as one of the main factors of unity.
C. Religious democracy and providing both divine sovereignty and the right of people.
D. Scientific and economic development with an emphasis on local power.
E. Providing ideas and concepts in the world based on Islamic teachings (Deraksheh and Ghaffari, 2011: 18-24).

According to above specifications and noting that the third wave of awakening seeks return to Islamic teachings, IRI model as the first modern Islamic state formed based on the principles of Islam can be a potential proper model for countries involved in Islamic Awakening. Thus, Iran and its governance model, namely The Islamic Republic can be considered as scout of unity in the Muslim world.

CONCLUSION

The world is in transition to a new stage and world powers are being displaced. Many researchers liken the current state of the world to post World War II period so that the current period experiences formation of a new discipline in the political world. If Islamic countries with over a quarter of the world's population and massive economic capacities do not contribute in this new system, this system will be established in the absence of Islamic countries. In this regard, it is better to leave aside lethargy and sluggishness to build future world in which we live or be involved in its creation. Looking at history, we discover that the most fundamental issue in development of Islamic civilization is unity among Muslims. This principle and need is the first block of every human civilizations.

Muslim world needs to develop solidarity and empathy. This unity should not only be a political issue between states. Due to poor conditions prevailing in Muslim countries, traditional and non-governmental bases of unity and solidarity among Islamic nations should be extended. On the other hand, promotion of any kind of stressful thinking and behavior should be avoided. Moreover, disparities among Islamic groups should be eliminated.

In this period, unity and empathy could be different among Islamic societies. A common foreign policy will increase leverage and bargaining power for Islamic countries. Opening markets of Muslim countries for other Muslim countries can lead to economic
prosperity of Muslim nations. Establishment of joint research centers may create intellectual and cultural understanding among Muslim countries. Muslim countries require a leadership to achieve unity. Unfortunately, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has failed to show its efficiency and to have a suitable position. This is why it appears that formation of an organization whose purpose is unity of Muslim nation is necessary.

In addition, Islamic countries can act as a political and economic superpower through political and economic unity and show itself as a major player in new international arena. Due to enormous potentials, Iran can serve as a model for Muslim countries and as the flagger of Muslims in the modern world. Undoubtedly, this aspiration is not out of reach in light of unity and teachings of Islam.

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