

Religion, Sectarianism, and Disputation in Southwest Asia

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Received Date: February 23, 2014

Accepted Date: May 20, 2014

Abstract

Nowadays, researchers underscore the role of religion in generating political events, relations, and changes throughout the world, especially in Southwest Asia. In particular, you cannot connive at the role of religion in resolving or intensifying the disputations, because religion is a prevailing factor in formation of individual and social values. Hence, it could similarly play a determining role in the methods of setting policy inside and outside the country. Although allegiance to a certain religion has occasionally had a positive impact on enhancing the regional interactions, in most cases invigorating the talks based on religious and sectarian commitment results in distance among countries and the tension of straining the relations among the regional countries. Thus, this is known to be the most important obstacle of forming institutional structures and regional agencies in southwest Asia. Religious values have inflexible frameworks, and you cannot scale values; therefore, the more you reinforce the religious and sectarian talks in the region, the more increased dispute and insecurity you will face, and this leads to problems in establishing regional structures.

Keywords: Religion, Sectarianism, Disputation, Southwest Asia

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Introduction

In spite of prospering much natural and human resources, southwest Asia is one of the regions which has kept away from the experience of regionalism. Although structures like Echo has been built here, it could not meet the designers' expectations in regional development. Despite having energy resources such as petroleum and gas, mines and human resources, southwest Asia could not enjoy experiences like NAFTA in North America, ACEAN in Southeast Asia and etc. Apparently, one of the main variables of not forming such important institutional structures results from the political culture of the regional countries.

The political culture of people in this region is closely related to the religious and sectarian values; these people respect both posterior and anterior values. Posterior values involve commitment and allegiance to religion, sect, race... and anterior values are those which include nationalism and separation of religion from politics. By studying various layers of social behavior and negotiations across the region you can find out that most of southwest-Asian people are influenced by posterior values and are committed more to sect, religion and race than nation. Thus, it has even been observed that people who are in impressionable state of sectarian and religious commitment have taken anti-security actions against those fellow citizens who did not follow their religion.

Believing people have posterior values, so they have rough and inflexible ideas. They weigh up the outside world according to the level of beliefs, and due to being believing they would not like to scale and negotiate because they think beliefs are not negotiable. The inland situation of religiously heterogeneous countries in South-West Asia represents the role of religious and sectarian loyalty in security and political processes. The major security crises in South-West Asia have occurred in countries which are more religion-diverse.

1- The role of religion in Politics

Today, many authors pointing out the background and the current affairs of international system in different analyses claim that a global religious movement is going to develop (Petito&Hatzopoulos,2006). The role of religion in previous centuries was so fundamental and pivotal that it could influence both inland and outland relations. However, the role of religion got weak after Snabruk and Monster treaty (Westphalia 1648) and rising government-nations based on secularism logics and also to some extent due to outspread of colonization in the world.

New values developed after secularism movement and scientific concepts were generated. Schools like Liberalism and Communism, and theories such as Modernization and Dependence and Interdependency and etc. all have been made and polished based on modern conception. Now, many there is mounting evidence that religion is finding way back to politics, although this return has appeared in the shape of a comprehensive movement. This is a cardinal point for the world's thinkers as it has revolutionized the values in the systems and consequently it will have a determining impact on the quality and face of the international system.

During the two last decades, the process of returning religion to the general areas accelerated. But, as a matter of fact, waves of returning religion were appeared in the 60s and 70s of the previous century. World War II is known to be a turning point in this respect, since the process of decolonization was generated after that. This is a process in which tendency to religion has evolved as a value link which can be adhered to for emancipation from the dominance of Colonization in a vast area from Indonesia to Algeria and Morocco. Therefore, ethnic nationalism had combined with religious movement.

The second process of introducing religion into politics goes back to the 60s and 70s revolutions during which the battle between Arabs and Israel took place and it lasted until the victory of Islamic Revolution in Iran. In that period it was revealed that the attempts of the secular governments to achieve secularism –particularly in the Middle East – had not had a favorable result, and it would even result in the fall of the political regime. Secularists, who attained power, took up a position against religion and religious people. An obvious example of this is the clash of secularists and Islamic parties in Turkey and Iran before the revolution.

The third period of the strengthened role of religion in the political processes goes back to the changes in the international system respecting the politics after the fall of the Soviet Union. Attempting to reorganize the world after the fall of the Soviet Union through overestimation of the culture-civilization disputes, Huntington introduced the role of religion as a foundation of civilizations (see Huntington 1378). He believed that multipolar ideological system in the cold war period has substituted the bipolar system which has been demarcated with a religious feature based on civilization and culture lines (Huntington, the same 149-160). He

supposed that after the fall of the Soviet Union, global disputes more than anything else would form in the intersection of Islamic and Western civilization, and he exemplifies the Iraq War (1990-1) in this case. It was about 90s that Islamic regimes gained control over some Islamic countries (e.g., Afghanistan) which was considerable from the viewpoint of such thinkers.

The fourth period started with suicide attack to the world trade centers and Pentagon on September 11th 2001. Consequently, Afghanistan and Iraq were occupied. Christian countries' leaders like Britain, Italy, Spain, etc. patronized America's actions, but many Muslims in South-West Asia have called it as iniquitous and disgraceful. After September 11th Americans changed the way they treated Muslims; they disrespected the Muslims in the media and the political positions, which provoked their religious identity.

Another wave of projecting the discriminative religion and religious identity in treating the Muslims takes its rise in European countries. They took the presence of the minority Muslims in their land as a security threat (Simber, 1385: 77-9). From the viewpoint of some European extremists, Muslims by immigrating to Europe and residing in countries like France and Britain did the same thing as their ancestors (Tariq-ibn-e-Ziad and Mousa-bin-Nasir) did centuries ago by a military expedition to Europe. Encountering the Muslims in France after Sarkozy sovereignty illustrates such deep thoughts.

What mentioned above is a synopsis of the processes and the projects that played a role in raising the religion and the religious identity in the world (in general) and in the Islamic world (in particular). However, in a geographical approach, the effects of highlighting religion an religious identity shows itself more clearly in inside political-Islamic societies in South-West Asia than anywhere else. Islam by itself is classified into different sects, thus distinguishing the variable of identity and religious and sectarian talks will have its particular effects on political and social actions and reactions inside the countries of South-West Asia. In fact, the political culture based on religious and sectarian loyalty lays the ground work of distance and hostility between the government and the majority in the society.

2- Religion and the inter-government disputes in South-West Asia

Much political interplay in South-West Asia roots in the religion and religious tendency of the governments in the region. In general, the generation of the countries in the Middle East and West Asia is deeply related to the religious allegiance, whether Sharif Hussein who was a religious leader and considered his family related to the Caliphs, and attempted to emancipate Arabs who were under the dominance of Osmania king, or the formation of Pakistan which is a result of subcontinent people's religious distinctions. Also, National identity of Iran is intermingled with the Shite values in a way that as 'Olivia Roy' has interpreted, all the world know Iran as a step father of the world Shias (reported from Nasri Meshgini, 1377:21). Therefore, religion is a ponderous social power which, in principle, makes it impossible to understand policy in internal and external levels of the countries if its place is remained unconsidered.

There are numerous examples illustrating regional competitions influenced by religion, and due to research restrictions we will cover the most important levels. Perhaps there has never been an event like Islamic Revolution in Iran to high light the role of religious allegiance in the region. Up until then, in none of the regional countries, religious leader had not been the top drawer and in some countries they played the role of political regime ideologues (e.g. Al-e-Saud and Wahhabi authorities). However, after Islamic Revolution and direct participation of Shiite religious authorities in the process of political decision-making, the relations between religion and politics has started a new phase.

Along with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, there were increasing concerns in the regional countries regarding the flowing waves of the revolution which on their own led to provoke religious and sectarian beliefs. The Shiite unrest that happened in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia in early 80s was imputed to Iran, and as a result a sense of pessimism and hostility dominated the relation between the parties.

In intergovernmental level we can point out the regional competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The two parties started expanding competitions in direction of the Islamic world, and undertook exorbitant expenses in order to support Islamic nations, movements and governments. Therefore, the position of religious and sectarian loyalties

in the analysis of the relations among the regional countries (generally) and relation between I.R.I and Saudi Arabia (particularly) should be understood appropriately.

Although the regional competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia did exist before the Islamic Revolution, as mentioned before, the range and depth of the competition increased as a result of the revolution, because I.R.I and Saudi Arabia are in contrast to each other in terms of Ideology and the talks dominating power and political legitimacy. Basically, Iran's government is structuralized according to the theories of two outstanding Shiite authorities (Imam Khomeini who proposed the theory of jurisconsult government and Sadr who introduced the theory of Islamic Republic), while the fundament of Saudi Arabian government goes back to the union of Mohammad Bin Saud and Mohammad Bin Abdolwahab. According to the opposition and enmity between Wahhabis and Shiites, I.R.I and Saudi Arabia will spontaneously be against each other.

Research restriction does not allow investigating the details of the religious oppositeness of Wahhabis and Shiites; however, we attempt to give a brief summary of the mentioned collision lines and ideational challenge. The formation of Wahhabism results from the votes of some religious Hanbalite scientists including Abu-Mohammad Barbahari (4th century), Abdullah Ebn-e- Mohammad Okbari (4th century), Ebn-e-Timieh (8th century) and his trainee Ebn-e-Qayem Djouzieh. Of course the founding father of Wahhabism, Mohammad Abdolwahhab, was more influenced by Ebn-e-Timiyeh (Faqihi, 1366: 16-17). One of the most important books of Ebn-e-Timiyeh is "Monhaj ol Sonat el nabovah" which is in fact similar to "Monhaj-ol-Keramah Fi Marefat-el-Emamah" written by Ebn-e-Motahar (Allameh) Helli (Qaderi, 1380: 104-5). In addition, Wahhabis by themselves do not consider Wahhabism as a new religion, but also they say this is a religion of the righteous self and thus, they call themselves Selfi (Faqihi, 1366:17).

Selfis consider visiting the tombs as a reason of blasphemy and so they do not tolerate shiites' devotion towards Imams in the form of visiting their shrines. One of the Wahhabi Scientists, Sayed Mahmud Shokri Olusi, states: "Whoever observes the heretics' (what they call Shiites) visiting the shrines of Reza, Ali, Hossain, Musa Kazem and Mohammad Javad, he will realize that they are the most ignoramus and the most misled people and they are in the highest grade of blasphemy and polytheism (Faqihi, the same : 137). Of course, this was a pretext for

them to attack the other parts of Saudi Arabia and take the power. In addition, emphasizing on the Prophet's Sunnah, Selfis consider Shiism (operatively, verbal, etc.) as a religious innovation (Qaderi. 1380:105). Hence, Iran and Saudi Arabia which are formed based on Shiaism and Selfism (Wahhabism), are Ideological and religious adversaries. From the beginning of the political ties between the two countries so far there was a break-off in relations a second time and each time it was due to religious events. The first event happened years before Iran's revolution in which Wahhabi extremists sentenced an Iranian Haji to death in public, and the then governor of Saudi Arabia supported this action. The second event goes back to the massacre of the Iranian Hajis by Al-Saud in 1367.

Hence, an expanded regional competition was and is still going on between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which aimed at outspreading one's influence and alleviating the other's. An obvious case of this is Iran's supporting the North union in Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia's supporting the Taliban. Occupying Afghanistan and eliminating them by USA (2001) is a great failure for Riyadh which means wasting the enormous expense Riyadh had spent on Taliban. Taliban was mainly formed and reached to the power under the care of Saudi Arabia (UAE and Pakistan). This support was so much wide that Taliban provided a large proportion of its forces from schools which received financial support from Saudi Arabians. In addition, Saudi Arabia had a vital role in providing the cost of war and purchase of weapons for Taliban. Also, Riyadh supported Taliban politically in a way that after the first occupation of Mazar Sharif in May 1997, Riyadh officially recognized Taliban as a legal government of Afghanistan. The motivation of Saudi Arabia's supporting the Taliban can be summarized in two points: firstly, Saudi Arabia knows itself as a source of the Islamic world, and it considers helping the Muslims a kind of duty.... Secondly, it wanted to challenge the regional influence of Iran in Saudi Arabia and, hence, isolate Iran in Saudi Arabia and Central Asia (Ahmadi, 1377:32).

After Iraq occupation by USA (2003), when Ibrahim Jafari's Shiite government was established, [Riyadh] did not even send a letter to the new politicians. ... They [also] proclaimed that they wouldn't offer loans and financial support to Iraq's new government (Cochran, 2007). Thus, the unfriendly behavior of Riyadh toward Ibrahim Jafari's Shiite government was clear from the very beginning. On the other hand, in order to influence on changes in Iraq and to put it other words, alleviate

Iran's regional influence, Riyadh started to support the Sunni rioters. For instance, Saudi authorities welcomed the leader of Iraq's board of Muslims, Hares Alzari, who is said to be related to terrorists and the combative; and so they warned Iran [and the Shiite government of Iraq] that they will support Iraqi Sunnis who are against the government (Baztab, 1385). The research group of Iraq (called Baker-Hamilton) in a report has criticized Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries' reluctance to cease terrorism in Iraq and help the country's stability (Cochran, 2007).

Some non-governmental groups in Saudi Arabia and other countries of the region freely interfere in the interior affairs of Iraq due to their financial potentiality and employ people to intensify the strife or support some Iraqi opponent groups. Some time ago an Iraqi newspaper published that some sheikhs gathered in one of the southern countries of Persian Gulf under Arab influence and allocated 6 billion dollars to cause a disturbance in Iraq. Another action is to prevent Iraq from sending petroleum to international markets. Such actions aim at creating impediments for the national conciliation in Iraq and confronting the Shiite government of this country (Mehr News, 1386).

The competition of the regional powers is also understandable based on the framework of religious allegiance a clear example of which is Israel's attack to Hezbollah positions in South Lebanon and adopting positions by the regional countries. This war from Israel started targeting the eliminating Hezbollah out of the political map. To the greatest surprise of the critics of the issues in Middle East, Tel Aviv was unsuccessful in realizing its desired objectives and returned to its own positions. Riyadh which feared the increase in Shiites' power in the region, hoped eliminating Hezbollah would decrease the power of Shiites. Saudi Arabian authorities (along with Egypt and Jordan) considered Hezbollah undertakings [abducting two Israeli soldiers which was a pretext for Tel Aviv to start the war] as an adventure to provide an Arabic layer for attacking Israel as stated by foreign secretary of Qatar. Most surprising of all, was the position of Saudi's high Mufti. He said praying for the victory of the Shiites (heretic)' renitence was religiously prohibited, let alone helping them.... Based on the same reason, Israel's Prime Minister said Arab governments would support Israel's position [in war] (Sadjedi, 13850).

Since the operation of Israel ended, during the political crisis inside Lebanon, Saudi Arabia with Jordan, Egypt and some other Arab Sunni

countries (and West) have supported the Sunni government of Seniora. Without the support of Saudi Arabia and Sunni governments (and West), Seniora government would have fell. The opponents, the majority of whom is Shia, are under the support of Iran. Lebanon is a penetrable country and is a command room for regional policies in the Middle East and properly shows the powers and the quality of arranging the forces. During that crisis the regional competition of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sunni Arabs is well illustrated.

According to what mentioned above, the ruling atmosphere of the South-West Asian countries is closer to Realism. The balance of power in this area (especially the Middle East) is completely influenced by the balance of religion and sects. After the recent changes in the Middle East which caused an increase in Shiite power, Jordan king, Abdullah, introduced the Shiite crescent a threat to the Middle East Sunnis. After the events of Iraq occupation in the arrangement of the forces in the region, we can point out the Shiite block (Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah), Sunni block (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, etc.) and Western block (the USA, and Israel), accordingly you can see how religious and sectarian loyalty has illustrated itself in the political categories and alignments. However, religious and sectarian competitions have caused a hot war not only in the relations among countries but also inside countries.

3- Religion and interior contestation

Religious and sectarian allegiance caused a vast wave of security breaches in South-West Asia. These contestations put the nation in the opposite of the nation and as a result they obviate the basis for the national consensus and hinder exploiting the opportunities to record values, and use the country's forces for invasion and slaughtering the fellow citizens. Therefore, the politicians' attention will be more focused on the interior environment, and this will confine the possibility for studying the aspects of establishing an interactive and expansionist foreign policy in transnational levels, which by itself is a great obstacle for the formation of the regional arrangements to develop and expand the South-West Asian regions. Such event has occurred in countries with heterogeneous population form.

Sectarian hot war in Iraq has turned to be the most important preoccupation of the new politicians of the country. Various groups are fighting in an internal battle and a majority of them has religious and sectarian principles (attachment 1). These disputes are formed and

developed according to religious and sectarian fissure lines, and have had catastrophic consequences for the Iraqi society in a way that it had never happened in the history of the country and South-West Asia. Generally, these disputes kill 50 to 100 people (Richard, Norton, 2007).

Additionally, according to the reports, from the time the country was occupied to the early 2007, about 2 million people left the country due to sectarian hot war. This was the greatest flood of the refugees since the Palestinian homelessness. Out of 8 Iraqis, almost 1 person has been or will be homeless... According to the reports, about 40 to 50 thousand people get homeless every month, this amount has reached to over half a million homeless merely in 2006. At the present time, nearly 1 million people of Iraqi refugees live in Syria, 700 thousand in Jordan and some smaller groups in other countries (Ferris, 2007).

The refugees who live in the neighboring countries, besides the particular social issues they impose on the receptive country, they may also cause some security concern. This concern results from arming refugees; a clear example is establishing Fath-ul-Islam group by Palestinian refugees in Nahr-ul-bared campground in Lebanon. The group challenged the central government for a few days. They are even accused for the murder of Seniora's former minister of industries, Pir Jamil. Long ago, two researchers warned the Iraq of the consequences of internal war and said: "... a glance at Taliban background shows that the refugees' camps are often a suitable place for employing militia (soldier-like) and consequently, they cause contestation to spread to other countries" (Byman & Pollak, 2007).

Another effect of the sectarian hot war in Iraq was polarization of the Iraqi society; people move from the places which are heterogeneous in terms of sects and races to the places which are mainly the habitat of the people of their own sects, because they feel more secure there. Arab Shias immigrate to the Shiite-living areas, Arab Sunnis to the areas where Sunnis are settled, the Kurdish to northern states, and Christians to Nainava (Ferris, 2007). For instance, after the first explosion of Imam Hassan Asgari's shrine in Samara, tens of Shiite families moved to southern Iraq, because Samara is generally a Sunni-settled city.

Such disputes lay the groundwork for redefinition of the national boundaries based on racial and sectarian boundaries, and in case of their deepening and institutionalization Iraq will be disintegrated. However,

such situation will certainly not concentrate on Iraq; it will make the whole region teeter on the abyss of the racial and sectarian fights.

The war between extremist Shias and Sunnis has caused bloody events in Pakistan. Sectarian disturbance is seen in parts of cities in Karachi, Kuwaita, Punjab state, north-western borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2007). Since 15 years ago, 1200 Pakistanis particularly Shias and Deobandi sects of Sunni have been killed. Shias compose 20 percent and Sunnis 77 percent of Pakistan's population (Gall & Masood, 2006).

Developing and growing of the sectarian fights in Pakistan was simultaneous with the settlement of Islamic Revolution in Iran. Due to the relation of Pakistani Shiite scholars and Iranian religious leaders, Pakistani Sunnis started to worry about the increase in Shiite power. There were also rumors about the mysterious murder of Zia-ul-Hagh by Shias (Ahmad, 2007). But in fact, one of the most important reasons of developing and growing sectarian battles in Pakistan should be sought in religious schools of the country.

Pakistan was separated from India due to religious distinctions, and in fact religion is the base of national identity in this country. In addition, Islam Abad has exploited militias and extremist religious groups for the war with India over Kashmir. These people are more trained in schools which are mainly financially-supported by Saudi Arabia and wealthy Arabs. Respecting the opposition of Wahhabism and Shiism, development of such bloody disputation in Pakistan is not incomprehensible. For example, recently 30 people were killed and 130 were injured as a result of the sectarian battle between Shias and Sunnis in Prachinar. Sunnis accused Shias of raiding one of their mosques with a handmade bomb, and Shias accuse Sunnis of sectarian fights in the city and attacking their homes and mosques with rockets (Sectarian war, 2007). Among Pakistani militias, companion corps played a vital role in murdering the Shias of the country.

Although Afghanistan is an independent country, it is influenced by the internal changes of Pakistan because it is under the political and military influence of Pakistan. Additionally, what is known as the Durand line (border line) is only drawn in our map and in fact such a line does not exist objectively. The borders of two countries comprises tribes that are not under the control of the central government (influence crisis) and so extremists have only one problem commuting to and from those areas

and that is natural obstacles. Many militias against the current government of Afghanistan have hidden in those tribes. There is also a rumor that Osama Bin Laden is living in those tribes. Such contexts pave the way for terroristic events in Afghanistan (and Pakistan). Southern Afghanistan has turned into a focus of developing Extremism and Sectarianism.

One of the crucial talks in multi-national Afghanistan is sectarianism. The whole history of Afghanistan has observed racial and sectarian contestation. During the period in which Taliban was seeking settlement of its forces in the whole region in Afghanistan, the most torture and inconvenience was directed toward Shias. Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, stated that Shias were something between the infidels and the real Muslims. According to what Taliban claims, Shias are innovators who can be tormented because of their religious beliefs. The Taliban group, like Pakistani scholars and Wahhabis, deprive Shias of all the worthy rights of a citizen by calling them heretics (Nasri, 1377:21). That's why a large population of Shias was massacred by them in Mazar Sharif.

One of the best points for understanding the position of religious loyalty in South-West Asia is the political situation in Lebanon. The agreement made after the internal war of 80s in the previous century, set religious and sectarian faith as the basis for political distribution; in a way that, three important Maronite Christian minorities were appointed as president, Sunnis as prime minister and Shias as the chairman of the parliament. In recent years, the political and security situation of Lebanon has become more complicated and critical than ever, which shows developing and fathoming the identity talks based on religion and sect. The basis of this crisis was created by assassinating Rafiq Hariri, one the people against Syria. Hence, Syria was suspected to be the murderer. Finally, on December 1st 2006 the political crisis was markedly notable; the conflict was generated between two parties: the majority was led by Sa'd Hariri (the union of March 14th) which rules the parliament –a Sunni of Daroz- , and the minority was the opponent group including Hezbollah, Amal movement which is Shia and supports Syria and Lebanon. Christians dispersed between the two parties. This crisis was also generated based on religious and sectarian fissure lines while illustrating the regional contest mentioned above.

Religious and sectarian tension is also present to some extent in southern Persian Gulf. Especially, suzerains and traditional rulers in those regions are so worried about their Shia followers that may be a means for Iran to use its influence. 10 percent of the population in Saudi Arabia is Shia. Duodenary-Imam Shias are living mainly in eastern province of Saudi Arabia, especially in Ahsa and Alghatif, and Zeidieh Shias live in the suburb of Mecca (Zra'atpisheh, 1380:93). Saudi Arabian governors and Selfi extremists have tormented Shias several times. As mentioned earlier, Wahhabism (or so-called Selfis) was basically formed against a Shiite thought; hence, Al Saud that is firmly related to Wahhabi scholars is concerned about the increasing power of Shias in the region which is a threat to their values in their own point of view.

Other governors of the countries in Southern Persian Gulf do also think of Shias as a means for Iran to use its influence; especially in Bahrain in which the number of Shias is much more than Sunnis. The population of Bahrain was 727 thousand people in 2005, and 70 percent of its Muslims are Shias and the rest are Sunnis. Generally, Muslims comprise 80 percent of the country's population (Wikipedia [A], 2007).

In Central Asia, also, the groups with Islamic and religious tendencies challenged the governments who were after power. A clear example of that is the internal war in Tajikistan which happened between Islamic-National forces on one side and Communism supporters on the other (for more details, see Colay, 1376:89-93).

In recent years, the regional role and position of Iran has been highlighted due to the America's attack to Afghanistan and Iraq, the victory of Hezbollah over Israeli army and victory of Shiite parties in elections of Iraq and Bahrain. However, Sunni leaders, of course with the help of trans-regional powers, similarly mustered up all their energy to prevent Iran and Shias from reaching power. Recently, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt have formed a political union to confront the increase of Iran's and Hezbollah's credibility in public opinion. Therefore, comparing the current situation of the region to the early years of the victory of the revolution, it can be stated that the more powerful Iran and Shias have got, the more worried Sunni governors have got. Iran's support is more than anything toward Shiite groups, Sunnis, too, support their own coreligionists. This by its own shows the role of Religion and sectarianism in the policy of the regional countries.

Conclusion

The most evident feature of the cultural environment in South-West Asia is that the religious values still have a special position in forming the political behavior in internal and external districts. Considering the fact that religious beliefs have illogical frameworks and it is not possible to negotiate over them, reinforcing religious and sectarian talks was the cause of many tensions, crises and hot wars in internal level (like Iraq, Pakistan and Lebanon), or it generated a security, Realistic and competing atmosphere among the countries of the region (an obvious example is the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, and the contest between Iran and Saudi Arabia to expand regional and religious influence). According to the documentation, whenever the power of one of the countries in the region increased in a certain period of time, it was considered a threat to the values due to the deep relationship between religion and policy and thus it directs the ruling atmosphere of the regional countries toward tension and strife. So, destructive tendency toward religious and sectarian allegiance is considered a preventing and privative factor in establishing institutional and organizational structures to expand South-West Asia. Of course, this obstacle is not resulted from religions and sects, but from the method of including such values; as the regional countries (especially Sunni governors) can focus on religious similarity than religious distinctions.

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