

The Role of Influential Groups in America's Relations with Iran during the Presidency of Bill Clinton

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Abstract: There is third variable which has always been the main obstacle to establish relations between Iran and America. This variable is Israel. In other words, as long as this variable is ignored, despite all good intentions and efforts of both the Iranian and American sides for establishing relations, it seems almost impossible to do that. In the past 30 years, it has been proven in different periods.

Keywords: Influential Groups, Relation, Iran, Presidency.

Introduction

In addition to the objectives of Iran and the America, there is a third variable that has always been the main obstacle to communication between the two countries. The third variable is the role of influential groups. In other words, as long as the third variable is ignored, regardless of any intention and effort on both sides of the relationship, it virtually seems impossible.

As we see in explaining the place of influential groups in the last 30 years, in the relationship between Iran and the United States, from one hand we should consider to the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran against influential groups, for example AIPAC (Zionis influential groups) and on the other hand, the role of these groups in limiting the America's relations with Iran and urging the U.S. to deal with Iran.

Therefore, we can assess this issue from two angles: Policies against the interests of these groups in Iran which can be the topic of a research and assessing the role of these groups in structure and foreign policy of America and also evaluating the role of the foreign policy of this country especially in Iran (Khorramshad, 2004).

Now through evaluating the effect of influential groups, their place in American foreign policy and its impact on understanding the relations between Iran and the United States, we can offer appropriate procedures, reduce the negative effect of this lobby and change the threats to the opportunities in the foreign policy of Iran.

Foreign policy of America is a complex social, political system which includes the individuals, groups and organizations. These decisions are formed so that they are influenced by both formal and informal institution. The effective formal institutions affecting the America's foreign policy includes the executive branch, Congress and the bureaucracy (which would act as a single unit), and the informal policy makers contain several influential groups. Another factor in the complexity of American foreign policy refers to the diversity of organizational (institutional) actors and personal ones. Major players in this field are:

An important factor, that could have a major impact on decision making of foreign policy, is the public opinion. This factor, in democratic countries as the authorities know, means voting of people as the only way to

keep the rulers in power. All efforts should be focused on attracting people which is more important issue.

Meanwhile, we can say that the media play the role of an interface. It means that from one hand, by reflecting the needs and concerns of people, make the decision makers familiar with public opinion, and on the other hand, with showing the speeches and news related to the politicians, make people aware from their performance. Another aspect of the relationship is that the media can form the public opinion and thereby impact the decisions of officials (Naimi, 2006).

Lobby Firms

Lobbies are active political groups who benefits from especial interests. This term arose in the 1830s and was applied to population in specific groups that were gathering in lobbies Congress, the White House and executive agencies (Karim Nia, 1999). Lobbyists, who are aware of the issues related to them, can be very effective in shaping the policy. They are hired for defending the interests of the influential groups and are in relation with the White House, Congress employees and legislators. It is said that lobbyists, working for the special interests, affect the foreign policies more than ordinary citizens because they are present in Washington scene and fully aware of the issues. Lobbyists, with a particular expertise on how to deal with issues, have accurate information about the relevant laws and regulations. They are in personal relationship with regulators and authorities and have online information and rapid communications. American Jewish lobbies like Cuba -America Public Affairs Committee and Ireland- America Lobbies are the most influential lobbies working in the field of foreign policy (Aalam, 2009).

Israel

From the very beginning, Israel realized the importance of influential lobby groups in the United States and that is why it allocated considerable sources in this field and tried to study their performance in political system of America. Unlike the Arab states, the Israeli government periodically manages the attempts and plans of various lobby groups in the U.S., and tries to increase the effectiveness of their programs through avoiding the parallel works. Being familiar with the American political system makes the Israel embassy to efficiently exploit the political realities to their advantage (Ardestani, 2002).

American Jewish organizations

Only a small percentage of American Jews are active in Zionist activities. Perhaps the number of American Jewish who provides financial assistance to Zionist plans, are one third or less. In 1990, 78 percent believed that Israel must stop building Jewish settlements and 79 percent supported from establishing the civilian government of Palestinian. The majority of American Jews, although they are emotionally sympathetic towards Israel, they do not follow the radical attitudes of Likud Party which strongly opposed with forming two states or tried hard to maintain the occupied territories.

Two third of American Jews say they are emotionally dependent on Israel, while only 35 percent have seen the state of Israel. However, since the 1990s, most of the Zionist lobby groups have not detected such an attitude and tendencies and since that the American Jews deeply care try not criticize Israel in public meetings and do not reflect the conflicts within the group, often the Extremist based on the this principle (Bagheri, 2000).

American Jewish, with the efforts of each other, established various organizations to provide social welfare programs in support of Zionism. American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC), which was active from 1940, was renamed as the American Zionist Council. After World War II, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) was founded by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver's leadership, as an experienced Israeli Extremist. Rabbi Silverstein met Eisenhower and was regularly in contact with foreign secretary, John Foster Dulles (Mousavi, 2011).

AIPAC acts as a coordinator for the pro-Israel organizations to support policies of Zionist in the White House and Congress. AIPAC's mission is to create confidence in the strength and continuity of the American-Israeli relationship. In 1985, AIPAC with 75 employees had 7.5 million dollars budget. Although AIPAC claims that it has 50 thousand members who pay 50 dollars an annual membership fee, they have registered 15 million dollars budget, 150 full-time employees and six lobbyists (Mousavi, 2011).

Jewish lobby focuses on the most important decision makers in the executive branch of the U.S. that is President Bill Clinton. We can identify two different tactical approaches during the Clinton presidency. First tactic is the impact on personal approach of Clinton and second tactic refers to the influence on organizational approach of Clinton.

Impact on Organizational Approach of Clinton

Within the second tactic frame, the American Jewish lobbies, trying to keep pace with first tactic and also along with the effect on Clinton's personal approach, tried to prepare a situation for him as the chief executive to perform the Jewish lobby desired behavior in organizational behavior.

Thus, from the Jewish lobby perspective, Clinton, as the president and chief executive, must behave in the organizational context so that its logical consequence should lead to boycott of Iran by the American Jewish. According to the second approach, the Jewish expectations were met in organizational behavior by Clinton (Ibid).

Technocratic approach adopted by the American Jewish

Technocratic approach is one of the approaches that along with direct lobbying technique, it is used by the influential groups in order to achieve their objectives (Mousavi et. al, 2011). Within the technocratic approach, influential groups try to transfer their communication and influence networks to the intermediate level of decision makers.

Within the access to power context, the focus of interest groups is on the first -level of decision makers, while within a technocratic approach, they focus on the intermediate levels of decision maker. Technocratic approach adopted by influential groups because the mid- level decision makers advice to the first- level decision makers. It means that they collect and analyze the data and give them access top decision makers. Decision makers in intermediate levels are entirely familiar with decision making process in bureaucratic structures and they know how to behave in the special times in the face of political and legal hard conditions.

In fact, within the technocratic approach, influential groups, through getting away from the official and high responsibility of top decision makers, can enter the less official media of mid-level decision makers and achieve their goals. Middle-level decision makers are located both in the executive and legislative branches and because of their specialized knowledge in technical and legal feilds, they can cause very impressive relationships (Ranjbar, 2000).

Along with the first phase, that is creating conditions for the selection of Jews in key positions, it must be said that the number of Jewish members in the executive branch during the Clinton period reached an unprecedented record in American history. Despite the fact that the Jewish population in the U.S. is about 2 percent, but 42 percent of Clinton administration authorities were the Jews. According to statistics, 45 Jews were members of the Clinton administration. Despite the fact that Jews includes only 2% of the U.S. population, this number is much higher than the ratio (Ebadi, 1989).

Conclusion

In looking for the reason of sustainability in the above mentioned situation, which almost lasted about thirty years and still continues, there have been a number of variables and hypotheses about the causes of deteriorating relations between the two countries. In this research we focus on the following points:

- Islamic Republic Iran's support from terrorism;
- of human rights violations;
- Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear technology;
- Iran's opposition to Israel and the Middle East peace process (Sardari, 2005).

Studying the terrorism issue in the relations between two countries, we see that although in recent years, terrorism has been at the forefront of American foreign policy and as a measure for ranking the countries, about Iran the considerable issue is that in all reports and statements of U.S. senior officials, when they talk about Islamic Republic Of Iran supports from terrorism, they directly name Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian militant groups as its instances so that charge of supporting terrorism and training these groups mainly related to Islamic Republic of Iran. The main issue is that Iran supports some groups who fight with Israel, while event, which made the fight against terrorism as a global issue, is terrorist attacks of al-Qaeda-linked Taliban on September 11 in 2001 in the economic, political and military centers of America. This was strongly supported Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The origin of Taliban, in terms of both intellectual and developmental, is these two countries. Their financial support and feed of these two countries, as the CIA says, still continues (Zahraei, 2000).

But opposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran with Israel and the Middle East peace process are different issues. Importance of Israel and its security for the U.S. is an issue which is not possible to compromise. No matter that this situation roots in the actual alignment of the interests of Israel and the United States, or due to the influence of the Israel lobbies in America. In other words,

Either this support is along the national interests of America or as Noam Chomsky says, among the strategic allies of the United States, it mainly follows the role of Israel in forming the America's perception from their interests in the Middle East, it does not have effect on the nature of this issue, because the Iran's foreign policy is precisely aimed America's vital interests in the Middle East because the Middle East, according to the U.S. classification, is critical for the U.S. for two reasons: One refers to oil and energy and the other refers to Israel.

Through achieving the peace, American statesmen will prevent the discontent of Arab countries: owners of the world's major energy reserves. They will not be worry about security monitoring threats to the West. This issue, in addition to common political, social, ideological and economic interests, caused the United States to be sensitive about any movement against Israel's security crystallized in the Middle East Peace Process, while the practical policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite some marginal, pale and informal comments is based on non-interference, sabotage in the peace process, following the referendum results, which in a real sense definitely will not be held, and moral and material support of militant Palestinian groups and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Iran has become an opposition symbol in Middle East Peace Process and tries to get the other Islamic countries to follow this idea. By this, Iran has targeted the base of U.S. policy in Middle East. On the other hand, Israel who knows Iran not the Arab countries as the main regional threat and rival, it uses any instrument for weakening the main enemy. Using the unique power and influence of lobbyists who have infiltrated in the U.S. government body, they can intensify the pressure of U.S. on Iran. Therefore, in a realistic look, in spite of the persistence of hostile attitudes towards Iran and Israel, we can expect end of hostile relations between the U.S. and Iran, because the uncompromising behavior of the U.S. with Iran is reflected in opposition with the nuclear program, supporting terrorism, human rights violations and opposing with the Middle East Peace Process (ibid).

But it mostly refers to the following reasons related to Israel's security issue:

- Iran's support from the terrorist operations against Israel
- Iran's financial help to Palestine Jihad, Syria and the Lebanese groups for fighting against Israel.
- Strong opposition with the Middle East Peace in comparison with the Palestinians and even Lebanese

Strive for full access to nuclear technology and finally changing the balance of power in the region against Israel (Taaeb, 1997). So we conclude that U.S. pressure on Iran, with a focus on nuclear issues and terrorism mainly aims to change the Iran's procedures towards Israel and the Middle East Peace. The U.S. policy toward Iran changes only if Tehran's policy towards Israel changes. Nuclear issues, terrorism and human rights, despite their relatively heavy weight in relation to Iran and in comparison with the opposition of Iran with Israel and the Middle East peace process have less importance.

Iran's opposition to Israel and he pictured situation in the above continues now. In the Obama government, despite emphasis on policy change, particularly in the Middle East and Iran, we see the continuing hostile attitudes of two countries.

So if the United States stands with all its power against Iran's access to nuclear technology andIf accuse Iran of sponsoring terrorism and controls the global leader of convicting the Islamic Republic of Iran from the human rights Organizations, it is done not just for supports of Iran from the terrorism and opposition of America with nuclear proliferation and human rights violations, but it is because of Iran's opposition to Israel and supporting the opposition groups in the Middle East peace process.

What determined this government to prevent Iran from developing nuclear technology is mainly jeopardizing the Israel's security and disturbing the military balance in the region, not just nuclear proliferation. Criticism of human rights and its pressure are used as an instrument to weaken the main obstacle of performing their foreign policy in the Middle East. That is Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, we can say that evidences and findings of this study verify the main hypothesis. It means that the main reason for continuing deteriorating relations between Iran and the U.S. cutting the diplomatic relations and closing the embassies, all refer to Iran's opposition with Israel and the Middle East Peace Process. The other hypothesis which are mainly follow the main hypothesis show that If the two countries resolve the conflict over Israel's policies manifested in the Middle East peace, as we saw in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and India cases, they will be resolved so that it can be seen in the prepared report for the Obama state and also was considered in International crisis. They also offered some solutions for solving this problem.

This group in their report to the Obama administration's policy entitled "starting the relations between Iran and the U.S.: Tehran Look stresses and emphasizes that Iran and the United States, through recognizing the sensitivities and uncompromisable guidelines of each other, Israel's security for the U.S. and supports of Iran from the desires of Palestine, negotiate and try to establish relationships and engage in problem solving (crisisgroup.org). Therefore, we can say that Iran and th U.S. problem is based on the Middle East peace process and Iran disagreement with Israel. The continuation of current policies by both sides, Iranian officials' insist on their positions and unchanging strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Israel and Palestine, never let us predict a bright future and a clear improvement in relations between two countries.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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