



Three Trajectories in Analyzing Identity and Political Behavior: Theoretical Critical View

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Abstract:

This paper sought to analyze the relation between identity and political behavior (both violently and nonviolently). To answer the research question, the paper utilized three theoretical trajectories: 1. Cultural theory, 2. Rational choice theory, 3. Political opportunity structure theory. Feminist theory is used as a “constant” and is discussed in relation to all three trajectories. The paper showed that violent and nonviolent political behavior is influenced by the form of identity depending on each single trajectory. Each trajectory depending on its factors helped analyze one angle of the phenomenon at a different level and scope, makes it important to synthesis all trajectories. The paper concluded that the integration among all trajectories in explaining the relation between identity and political behavior is significant in reducing the bias towards one trajectory among others.

Keywords: Identity, Political Behavior, Violent and nonviolent Political Behavior, Culture, Political Opportunity, Rational Choice, Feminism.

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Introduction

Analyzing identity and political behavior is among the tangible and complex phenomenon in the field of political science in general and comparative politics. Violent and non-violent Political behavior is correlated to multiple factors, this paper will focus on the factor of identity (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979; Tilly 1978). Revolutions such as in France, China, and Russia; Genocide such as in Rwanda; Terrorism such as Islamic Fundamentalist in Central Asia and the Caucasus and Middle East; and rebellions such as in Uganda, Mozambique, and Peru are classic examples of violent political behavior. Whereas voting such as in the United States and the rise of women movements such as in U.S. and Turkey are other classics of nonviolent political behavior. Those examples will be discussed and analyzed throughout the discussion of the theoretical frameworks in explaining the relation and analysis of identity and political behavior.

Research Question

This paper attempts to answer the following question: what are the analytical theories and trajectories that analyze and correlate identity and political behavior?

Significance of the Study

This study tackles the importance of different theoretical frameworks that analyze identity and political behavior. This will help researchers and readers understand the motivations and incentives of violent and non-violent political behavior across the globe in relation to one's identity. The paper provides multiple trajectories that help with better insights and envision of political behavior.

Methodology

The paper's analysis utilizes three theoretical trajectories to answer the research question: 1. Cultural theory (subculture, religion, ethnicity, language, and nationalism), 2. Rational choice theory (interest, preferences, and utility), 3. Political opportunity structure theory (structural opportunity). Feminist theory will be used as a "constant" and is discussed in relation to all three trajectories when analyzing identity and political behavior.

Theoretical Framework in Explaining Identity and Political Behavior

I. Literature Review

The literature on identity and political behavior is vast in the field of comparative politics. Among this wide array of literature, the paper will focus on three major trajectories in explaining the linkage between identity and political behavior. The first trajectory is the cultural theory (Edelman 1985; Franklin et al. 1992; Knutsen 1995; Laitin 1986, 1992; Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997; Weber 1958). In the cultural theory, the paper will focus on factors such as sub-culture, religion, ethnicity, language, and nationalism. The second trajectory is the rational choice theory (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003; Dahl 1989; Jackman and Miller 2004; Mansbridge 1983; O'Donnell 1994; Posner 2006; Scott 1976; Simon 1985). In this framework the paper will focus on factors such as interests, preferences, utility, and its relation to identity and political behavior. The third trajectory is political opportunity structure theory, focusing on structural and environmental opportunities that shape one's identity and affect political behavior in occasions of rebellion, protest, and revolution (Huntington 1968; Katzenstein 1998; Klandermans, Roefs, and Olivier 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1997; Tarrow 1994; Tarrow and Meyer 1998; Skocpol 1976, 1979).

II. Analytical Framework

1. First Trajectory: Cultural theory

The identity of the individual, as part of the society, is affected by culture. Here, culture means “the basis of social and political identity which affects how people stand and how they act on a wide range of matters” (Lichback and Zuckerman 1997: 10). According to this definition, culture is the foundation of people’s identity and action. Culture is a combination of multiple factors such as sub-cultures symbols and values, religion, ethnicity, language, and nationalism. Those factors what form and influence identity and then correlates it with political behavior.

1.A. Sub-culture

Sub- culture symbols and values, as a factor of culture, influence identity and political behavior. In this context, culture is defined as “system of meaning to make sense of the actions and motives of opponents and a mechanism for building and maintain identity” (Ross 1997: 59). Laitin (1986, 1992, 1995) shows in his works that sub-cultures play a central role in explaining the level and form of political violent and conflict.

For instance, in studying the national revivals in Spain, Laitin (1995) shows that protests in areas such as Basque and Catalonia in Spain differ due to their subculture traditions. When Franco eliminate any cultural differences and tried to unit both Spanish people and migrants, people in Basque and Catalonia refused such cultural loss. As a reaction to Franco’s policies, people in both areas protested in the 1960s to raise their own identities and values of their sub-cultures. Despite these historical similarities, the type of protest differs in degree. Protestors in Basque adopted violence and coercion protest “violent protest” (Rucht 1998), whereas people in Catalonia led more peaceful protests “demonstrative protest” (Rucht 1998). Understanding each subculture of those areas can help explain the differences in degree of the outcome. Basque in Spain is featured by the subculture of norm of honor and dominantly male community where violence in these types of areas and protests are self-sustaining especially in the absence of centralized authority, whereas these norms are absent in the subculture of Catalonia. This example shows that sub-cultures within same country (Spain) shape people’s identities and lead to different political behavior, violent like in Basque and nonviolent like in Catalonia.

1.B. Religion

Religion is the second factor in this trajectory. Literature is massive on religion and its influence over identity, action, and political behavior. Weber’s book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958), tends to link Protestantism (Calvinist in particular) to capitalism. This example although does not attempt to discuss political behavior directly, it does form people’s identity. By which adopting the Protestant ethics will lead to implementation of democracy’s ethics such as a better socio-economic and political life and gender equality.

Subsequently, Laitin (1986) develops the idea introduced by weber to explain “the first face of culture” by focusing on the nature of religion and its impact on society in the Yoruba. The incident started when federal court was to be established in Nigeria in 1976 in which both Muslims and Christians alike feared the loss of their religious identities. The disadvantaged people of each religious tradition decided to mobilize and act along one’s religious ethics. Laitin (1986) stresses the influential role of religion by studying symbolic meanings of each tradition, understanding their socio-economic origins, and the culture of the community. This example shows that mobilization, as a nonviolent

political behavior, of the people in the Yoruba was based on religious traditions, in which affect their social life, family and political relations in society.

1.C. Ethnicity

Ethnicity is the third factor in this trajectory. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994, as an example of violent political behavior is to illustrate the correlation between identity and political behavior. Civil war, state power, and the history of ethnic and tribal cleavages among the Hutus and Tutsi are among the major causes of the genocide in Rwanda. The hatred between the Hutus and Tutsi as different tribes in Rwanda started when the minority Tutsi 9-15% were ruling the country and having wealthy and luxurious life, whereas the majority Hutus 84-90% were the oppressed and were excluded from social, economic, and political rights (Straus 2006).

This discriminate social structure has led to Hutus revolution act with the support of Belgium to overthrow the Tutsi government and place a Hutus leader to represent the majority. This new formulation led the hardliners “military”, which belongs to the Hutus tribe, to kill and oppress the Tutsi. In 1994, when the genocide happened, it became clear that the Tutsi elimination and overthrow is the aim. Straus (2006: 49) defines genocide as “systematic and coordinated attempt to physically eliminate the entire Tutsi population of Rwanda.” The violence against Tutsi civilians was massive; the ethnicity and tribal anger had led this genocide to an extreme level. The example of genocide, as a violent political behavior, illustrates that ethnic and tribal conflict has influence both Tutsi and Hutus ethnics and construct their identities with the rise of hostility.

1.D. Language

Language is the fourth factor in this trajectory. Linguistic cleavages help understand how linguistic group influence identity and political behavior. Laitin (1992) shows in his work *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa* that cybernetic theory, as one alternative above two others¹, help explaining nation building via communication. From the Deutschian perspective, social mobilization and assimilation are processes “of cultural unification in the wider society in which people are becoming socially mobilized” (Laitin 1992: 27). Thus, homogenous, and united societies that share similar language tends to assimilate and mobilize more peacefully.

Despite that the language unification among the state is an advantage (e.g., United Kingdom, Japan, China, France) yet rationalization strategy of the state in accommodating multiple languages “language reform” is also a strategy in multi-linguistic societies such as in Somalia and India. Laitin (1992) shows that his formula of 3 ± 1^2 , as a reform to African language, will affect their identity and political behavior. For example, Somalia, after its independence in 1960, has adopted such formula (trio: Arabic, English, Italian languages) as a strategy to serve their interest, enhance political and economic progress, and to eliminate linguistic cleavages.

From the previous discussion, it is asserted that language is among the most important tool for social mobilization depending on the social context of a given country. It helps form one’s identity and influence political behavior.

1.E. Nationalism

Nationalism is the last factor of this trajectory, in the attempt of analyzing identity and political behavior. The rise of Arab nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s was due to two aspects. First, Arab nationalism was like an ideology that units Arabs worldwide against their “enemies” (Choueiri 2000; Davis and Azizian 2007); second, charismatic leader such as Abdel-Nasser in Egypt also helped the

rise of this movement and raises followers of such an ideology. The rise of all national movement such as those in Palestine and Egypt were influenced by the previous two aspects. For instance, the Arab nationalism movement that rises in Palestine against Israel was based on such ideology. Islamic Fundamentalist in Central Asia and the Caucasus are based on Arabic and religious identities. These examples illustrate that Arab nationalism is one important factor that shaped the Arabic-Islamic identity and lead to terrorist attacks and violent actions such as the suicidal bombers in Palestine for the sake of their independence.

Feminist Theory Versus the First Trajectory

Women movements in Turkey show how does re-shaping of cultural factors influence women identities and political behavior. In the lenses of the cultural theory women's identities are influenced by their cultures and sub-cultures. For example, women under the Western-Christian cultures are assumed to have political and civil rights, in which Arabic-Muslim women lack due to their political rule and their conservative culture. This then influence their identity passively and lead them to be inactive politically.

Recently, however, women in Turkey are mobilizing in a positive manner. There are multiple aspects that had helped women in Turkey to mobilize. First, the policies of Kamal Ataturk of gender equality, that led to women political rights and suffrage. Second, financial, and political external forces by the European Community. Third, the military has risen against un-democratic policies in 1980 in which reform to include pluralistic women movements became a priority (Gündüz 2004). Fourth, the rise of modernization, westernization and economic development led women to demand further civil rights (Lipset 1959; Rustow 1970). All these aspects have led women to stand to the negative status quo, reject the enforcement of negative cultural rules and regulations, reject the male dominance and patriarchy socially, economically, and politically.

The mobilization of such efforts resulted in major initiative and acts. First, Turkish feminism led a protest in Istanbul in 1987; second, they demanded in a petition of 7000 women the implementation of the UN Convention for the Elimination of any Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Gündüz 2004). This example shows that the factors of external force and domestic reform in Turkey have led a change in the cultural characteristics that re-shaped their identities and led them to participate in protests, as a political behavior, to enhance their political and civil rights.

2. Second Trajectory: Rational Choice theory

Rational choice theory has major pillars that will be discussed in this section. First, the assumption that individual actor possesses a goal and a cognitive ability to weigh choices of actions, assuming perfect information and tentative among individuals (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003; Levi 1997). Second, interest and preferences that help explain how preferences tend to influence political behavior.

2.A. Interest

According to Dahl (1989: 180) "A person's interest or good is whatever that person would choose with fullest attainable understanding of the experience resulting from that choice and its most relevant alternatives." Another definition of interest is by Mansbridge (1983: 25): "enlightened preferences' among policy choices, 'enlightened' meaning the preferences that people would have if their information were perfect, including the knowledge they would have in retrospect if they had had a chance to live out the consequences of each choice before actually making a decision". Third, in some

societies (e.g. delegative democracies), it is assumed that individual will calculate the cost of improper behavior (O'Donnell 1994).

Based on the key assumptions of rationality, types of rationality become relevant to the analysis. Scholars such as Jackman and Miller (2004), Simon (1985) discussed types of rationality: substantive, procedural, and bounded rationality. Substantive rationality tends to focus on behavioral outcomes (e.g. voting or expressive participation), whereas procedural rationality tends to focus on institutions. Bounded rationality of Simon or “satisficing” is “maxi-min”; i.e., maximum gain and minimum loss. All types of rationality can be useful in the analysis of identity and political behavior, yet from different perspectives.

2.B. Preferences

Moral economy³ (Scott 1976) is another factor of this trajectory. Rational choice has had explained multiple cases considering motivations, interests, and preferences. Personal interest based on identities of the peasant for instance, has affects their political behavior by engaging in revolutions, rebellions, and protests to get desired outcomes. Maximizing welfare, increase social standards of living, eliminating the problem of free rider, gain political power for those radicals are all the incentives for political behavior (Moore 1966; Popkin 1979; Skocpol 1979; Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1998).

2.C. Utility and Voting

The Logic of Political Survival by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) reflects the utilization of rational choice theory. For him leaders' main purpose is to stay in power. Hence the idiosyncratic preference and the dominant belief system of the decision unit (leaders in this case) will shape the menu of choices and actions. In other words, rational choice theory is focused on individuals and their roles in influencing the outcome whether it is “nonviolent” political behavior or “violent political behavior” (Allison 1969).

Voting is an example, of a nonviolent political behavior, involving rationality. Individuals tend to vote to support the notion of political participation and expression (Dalton 2008; Jackman and Miller 2004; Putnam 2000). Focusing on institutions and electoral laws, it is argued that those institutions influence and shape the incentives of people and lead them to participate in the political realm. Where competition and participation (Dahl 1971) are key motivations in some societies (e.g. western democratic), these motivations tend to form their identities and influence their political actions.

Posner's work (2004) is among the vital ones in discussing voting in Zambia. Posner combines multiple theories in this work, focusing on rational choice theory as a crucial theoretical framework. In analyzing the electoral system and the voting patterns in Zambia, tribal, language accounts and economic interests are considered. Zambians identities are analyzed along tribal and linguistic accounts that tend to influence their voting behavior. Voters and politicians alike tend to alternate their multiple identities to serve the size of winning coalition that serve their interests. Tribal identities tend to prefer one party system, whereas multi- language groups tend to prefer multi-party system. Political entrepreneurs tend to adopt the identity that best serve power and interest. Therefore, Posner argues that due to the fluidity and instrumentality among Zambian voters and politicians, they tend to manipulate their multiple identities to maximize one's benefit.

Feminist Theory Versus the Second Trajectory

Women movements in Africa can be explained in the lenses of rational choice theory. In this theory, women calculate their preferences, benefits, interests and find that engaging in political life will enhance their socio-economic and political status. Under the assumptions of rationality women are motivated to get engaged in political life, hence their rationality re-shapes their identities. For example, women in Ghana have been neglected by their government, they tend to have less civil, political and social rights.

With the occasion of economic decay in 1980 and with the co-optation between women in Ghana and NGOs 1981; the women movements rise and challenge the regime priorities (Fallon 2003). These incidents have caused political reform in which women were given civil, political, and social rights. This example is two-fold: one, it shows that in transitional democracies the external forces influence domestic identities and enhance their political behavior; e.g. peaceful women movement. Second, it shows that women, as rational individual, tend to demand and initiate preferences that best serve their interests.

3. Third Trajectory: Political Opportunity Structure Theory (POS)

The concept of political opportunity structure has been established by Sidney Tarrow and then was adopted by other scholars of culture, structure, identity, and political behavior. In defining political opportunity structure, Tarrow (1994: 85) defines it as “consistent, but not necessarily formal or permanent, dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success and failure.” In discussing this trajectory, this section will illustrate three examples.

3.A. Protest

The first example is South African population which was known to its use of protest against hostile government. The change of the political structure had brought changes in the outcome as well. With the engagement of banned movement in South Africa the African National Congress (ANC) in 1990s, having Nelson Mandela as the president for South Africa in 1990, and with the establishment of Government of National Unity (GNU), the ANC had gained more power. Post entering office, the ANC given their background tend to influence people’s identities by adopting demobilizing policies in which influence the level of protest and caused to a decrease (Klandermans, Roefs, and Oliver 1998). This example illustrates that when the political structure changes and when the opportunity rises for such a change, the new public leaders tend to influence the population’s identities and hence their political behavior.

3.B. Rebellion

The second example is illustrated through Weinstein’s work *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (2007). In his book Weinstein discussed rebellion organizations in the lens of political opportunity structure in transitory periods. For instance, political opportunity structure influenced identities of people’s in different countries and led them to organize in a rebel groups due to similarities in backgrounds and dilemmas. The rebel organizations in Uganda, Mozambique, and Peru emerged as a reaction to conflict. Second, they emerge as a result of the exclusion policies toward certain groups in those countries, e.g., southern ethnic in Uganda; northern groups in Mozambique, and rural peasants in Peru. Third, limitations in the public good among the people influenced these

organizations. Despite they all share similarities in their emergence, they differ in motivations that influenced their identities.

In Uganda, ethnicity, and external factor (Tanzania) played a central role in their formation to overthrow Idi Amin, whereas ideology was the center core for the organization in Peru. The political opportunity structure in those countries allow for the emergence of rebel organization and caused to different degrees in their political behavior. In Uganda, The National Resistance Army did not depend on violence as their goal, violence was a mean to an end. Whereas in Mozambique, Renamo, took the route of coercion and violence against civilians, children, and women to justify their ends. In other words, all these rebel groups faced a political opportunity in transitional periods categorized by extreme poverty, however, due to their goals and characteristics the level and degree of violence varied. of

3.C. Revolutions

The third example is Skocpol's seminal work on revolutions (1976, 1979) that help explain why revolutions in France, Russia, and China did occur. Due to the scope of this paper, the longitudinal historical background of each revolution will not be discussed. The focus will be on the incentives that motivated the people in those countries to revolt. Huntington (1968: 264) defines social revolutions as "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies" and Lenin adds "revolutions are effectuated through class upheaval from below" (Skocpol 1976: 175). The French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions, reflect on parts of the definitions provided in the former definitions.

Although the French revolution in 1789 was based on the revolt of the bourgeois class (middle class), revolutions in Russia 1917 and China 1911-1949 were heavily influenced by the communist party's ideology; in which the outcome of those revolutions differ. All three revolutions were similar in their causes. First, failures to offer public good and promote equal socio-economic level; second, having peasant and marginal elites in agrarian societies against the landlords-upper classes; third, the threat of military against civilians had helped establish these revolutions. Despite these similarities, the outcomes differ due to the engaged class and ideology, reflecting their values and identities and shaping their political behavior.

Feminist Theory Versus the Third Trajectory

In this section two examples will illustrate how does political opportunity structure shape identity and influence political behavior from feminist lens. The first example is women mobilization in the history of the U.S. Not only women were institutionalized and active, but also pressure group activism in the U.S. has demanded for more opportunities for women, especially in military. Consequently, this type of pressure group influenced the American law and legislation in which women were given the opportunity to lead in military. Women were given direct authorization and Rosemary Mariner was the first woman to be a commander in 1990 (Katzenstein 1998). This example illustrates the importance of political opportunity structure and its relationship towards the population in reciprocal relation. The women pressure group in the U.S. influenced the law causing legislative changes. The implantations of inclusion policies like the one in the military influenced women identities and led them mobilize towards more gender equality policies.

The second example is the role of women in bringing change to the Church in the history of the U.S. The incident of Sister Rosa Martha, who sued the Catholic Church for its discriminatory policies

was the first act. The second incident is the speech of Vatican II about the role of participation in the modern world, which provided the base for opportunity for women to be active and helped re-shaped and influenced women's identities. Under this institutional form, where Church has a power in shaping identity and influencing political behavior, women played three major roles. First, lead religious congregations and spiritual missions. Second, established the National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR), in which feminist voice was heard and social justice was somewhat reached. Third, led the Church as academic institutions housing, having women theologians in the Church (Katzenstein 1998).

Conclusion

David Easton defines politics as: “the authoritative allocation of values” (Robinson and Majak 1967: 177). In which each term of the definition corresponds to each trajectory and theoretical framework used in the analysis. The “authoritative” is the structure (political opportunity) of the government, the “allocation” is a tool of the institutions to distribute (rationally), and finally the “values” are the reflection of the (culture) within the society. This definition illustrates how important each term and trajectory to the analysis of the paper.

The paper analyzed the relation between identity and political behavior by proposing three trajectories and theoretical frameworks: cultural, rational choice and political opportunity structure theories. Each of these trajectories depend on number of factors and elements that help better answer the research question. Feminist theory was used as a “constant” and was discussed in relation to all three trajectories; to help clarify that theories meet on different points, level, and plausibility, and to reflect on the importance of such a theory on all analytical aspects.

The paper showed that violent (revolution, rebellion, and protest) and nonviolent (voting and women mobilization) political behavior is influenced by the form of identity. Each trajectory depending on its factors helped analyze one angle of the phenomenon at a different level and scope, makes it importance to synthesis all trajectories. Due to different incidents, scops, level of analysis, time and place of the political behavior, and the complexity the nature of the correlation; the paper concludes that the integration among all trajectories in explaining the relation between identity and political behavior is significant.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. This paper provided some significant examples of violent and nonviolent political behavior depending on different trajectories of identity. Scholars can investigate more cases for further research.
2. The current paper depended on three trajectories to analyze the relation between identity and political behavior, future studies can do similar analysis but focusing on different theoretical perspectives.
3. Identity and political behavior can be studied via general examples that includes revolutions, protests, rebellions, women mobilization, and voting. Future research can focus on each of those examples as a single case study or provide a comparative case study on a single phenomenon. For example, comparative case study on the revolution in Syria and Egypt, voting behavior in Kuwait, and women mobilization in the GCC.

المستخلص

ثلاثة مسارات في تحليل الهوية والسلوك السياسي: منظور نقدي وفاء عدنان العرادي

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل العلاقة بين الهوية والسلوك السياسي بشقيه العنيف وغير العنيف. ارتكزت الدراسة على استخدام ثلاثة مسارات نظرية للإجابة على التساؤل البحثي، هي: 1. النظرية الثقافية، 2. النظرية العقلانية، 3. النظرية البنائية (الفرصة السياسية). تم توظيف استخدام النظرية النسوية كعامل ثابت يتم تحليله ضمن كل مسار نظري. أظهرت النتائج أن السلوك السياسي (العنيف و غير العنيف) يتأثر بنمط الهوية لدى الشخص، وبحسب تفسير كل مسار نظري. ارتكزت المسارات النظرية على عدة عوامل من شأنها أن تركز على جانب محدد من الظاهرة محل الدراسة، مما يجعل التركيز على شمولية المسارات النظرية شيء أساسي في التحليل. خلصت الدراسة أن التكامل فيما بين المسارات النظرية المختلفة من الركائز المهمة عند تحليل العلاقة بين الهوية والسلوك السياسي، الأمر الذي يقلل من التحيز لمسار نظري دون آخر.

المصطلحات الأساسية: الهوية، السلوك السياسي، العنف واللاعنف السياسي، الثقافة، الفرصة السياسية، العقلانية، النسوية.

References

- ¹ Primordial and strategic theories.
- ² It refers to minimum one colonial language and up to multiple languages depending on the social groups in Africa.
- ³ Moral economy refers to economic activities viewed through a moral, not just a material lens (Scott, 1976).
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