Causes the formation and nature of political movements in Bahrain

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Abstract: Bahrain Political movement is one of the main movements in the Middle East that has begun following recent popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt and some other countries in the Middle East and is calling political and social reforms in the country. In this paper we try beside searching dimensions of this political movement, answer to this question that what are formation causes and nature of this political movement?

Introduction:

Political movement in Bahrain is one of the main movements in the Middle East that has begun following recent popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt and some other countries in the Middle East and is calling political and social reforms in the country .In this paper we try beside searching dimensions of this political movement and its regional effects, answer to this question that what are formation causes and nature of this political movement?

A. Conceptual discussion

Social movement is one of the main organized collective actions that have emerged from the society that with favor or special discourse agitates or mobilizes part or all people of a country for changing or modifying aspects of social life (including political, cultural, economic, environmental, etc). In the new societies, social movements are as one of the intermediates groups that cause kind of collective intelligence and knowledge in a society or parts of it. It is through these movements that people in a society can keep or obtain their personal and social interests and rights and with movements' pressure on their society's power and political elites realize their political- social values and ideals and thus in this way take part in their society's historical action. Also these movements cause mental development and formation of an ideology or training new elites for the society that these people may be among the influential leaders in their society in the future.

There are different approaches for analyzing causes of social movement's emergence. Some of these approaches in analyzing formation causes of these movements emphasize on internal situation such as political, social, cultural and economic conditions of society and others emphasize on mental development and formation of a new ideology or emergence of political leaders. And other groups of researchers think that external factors and international system and globalization are effective in formation of these developments. But it seems that integrated approaches can better explain the formation causes of these movements, that is if we believe in a kind of interaction between the mind and object and between thought and social action, we should say that social action is as a result of change in the minds of actors and indeed any social action as a product of social movements is result of new thought growth of these actors but the thought is not emerge in the vacuum, but there is a kind of interaction between thought of actors and society's internal conditions that its production is a social action. But all these actions take place in a global environment, because in today's world with developing communicative technologies and nearness of societies to each other that are result of globalization trend, any kind of social action in the societies will be strongly influenced by this global environment. And so, for analyzing social movements three important factors are needed that include internal conditions of societies, ideologies and thoughts and at the end regional and global conditions that based on this we attempt analyze these movements and in analyzing the Middle East developments and especially Bahrain we should consider to these factors.

B. Bahrain's social- political situation

Bahrain is a relatively large island that is located in angle of west south of Asia in the Middle East region and Persian Gulf area. Bahrain Archipelago is composed of 35 large and small islands and with an area of equivalent to 659 square kilometer that the largest island of this country that is also its capital is called Manama. This country has no soil border with another country and is neighbor with Saudi Arabia from south and west and from east and south east with Qatar and with Iran from north. Bahrain's population is over than 690000 that about one third of them are foreigners. Of this total population about 83% are urban and others are rural.

Most of the Bahrain's populations are native Arabs. Islam is official religion of Bahrain and more than 98% of inhabitants of this country are Muslim and more than 70% of them are Shia. Political features of Bahrain are as follow:

Monopoly of political power and dependence

A monopoly of political power can be seen in Bahrain. Nature of political regime in Bahrain is kingdom and in action all of the three branches are under direct observation of Bahrain's Emir and Bahrain's Emir with the crown prince and the prime minister are governing the country. According to the constitution of Bahrain, this country's Emir is ruler and head of the country and the government is inheritance in his family and the eldest son of the Emir appoints as his successor by then Emir and generation to generation. He has the right to appoint or dismiss any governmental official. Judicial official and military officials are appointed by the Emir and prime minister is responsible for municipal elections that is done with cabinet approval (Kazemi Dinan: 1388, 193). From other hand dependence of Al Khalifa's regime to the west is one of the main factors of oppositions to Bahrain's kingdom system. And England in 1919 officially announced that Bahrain is its protectorate and after that Bahrain was governed under the supervision of a British counselor that this issue caused an unsuccessful uprising by Bahrain's people in 1951 that in which people were demanding expulsion of the British ruler of Bahrain. Also after independence (1971), dependence of Al-Khalifa's regime to new colonial i.e. America was continued and a contract in this field was sighed by the new government of Bahrain and America for the consolidation and expansion of using exiting facilities in Bahrain and this issue spread propaganda against the military presence of America in the region by Communists and dissidents.

Political limitations

Loss of political freedoms and exiting of closed political space is one of the features of Bahrain. So return of exiles , freedom of political prisoners, lifting the ban on formation of parties and religious – political activities, freedom of expression and press, stop arresting of liberals and abolition of censorship are the most important political demands of Bahrain's people and to fulfill these demands they repeatedly have uprisings. Apart from political – social limitations that have been imported to Bahrain's people by Bahrain's kingdom regime, Shiite in Bahrain are suffering from more restrictions (Kazemi Dinan, 1388: 210-211 and Akhavan 1390). Exiting political attitudes in Bahrain based on their nearness or farness to ruling structure have more or less freedom. In other words, although there are parties in Bahrain, this doesn't mean that there is

freedom in this country and this country's king has very high rule in restricting political activities in this small country.

No warranty of the government to reform promises

Bahrain's people have upraised and struggled many times for obtaining more political freedom and limiting king's power. Their last uprising is in current year. Based on the obtained agreements between opposition's leaders and the king and the prime minister during the last popular uprising in the 90s, this country's government was obliged to establish a system of constitutional monarchy, establish parliamentary elections and grand political and religious freedoms and recognition of speech, and permitted drafting of the constitution and establishment of parliamentary system. This order was a part of a strategy that was seeking people's satisfaction in rendering Bahrain from an emirate to a monarchy from reforms. In 1999, the charter as a new social contract between Al-Khalifa and people was rendered well and was supported by most of the people. 98/4% in a national referendum that was held on February 2001 fourteenth and fifteenth voted to the mentioned charter. However, political trend was soon faced with a major disaster. A few days after referendum, the government of Bahrain in a surprising movement proposed a reformed version of constitution in 1973 that this amendment to the constitution would strip the power from parliament and also ultimately , the government of Bahrain after passing the crises and after negotiations and agreements didn't execute any of these demands and now after many years of the last agreement, the first and the most important demand of protestors is a constitutional monarchy in this country and free parliamentary elections that will lead to appointment of prime minister (www.khabaronline.ir,1390). And the main demand of protestors in Lolo square and political demands of Bahrain's people are changing the constitution, disappearing tribal and ethnic discriminations, returning exiles, the abolition of ban of parties formation and political social activities , freedom of express and press , stop arresting of liberals and abolition of censorship and also freedom of political prisoners.

Economic- social discriminations

In the case of economic situation, statistics also indicate to the wide spread discrimination in distribution of this country's national wealth. Since 1990s, unemployment has been the main factor of discontent, especially among the majority of society's population. Official statistics say that the rate of unemployment is 15%, while actual figures

especially among Shiite are much higher than this rate.

Social and economic problems such as unemployment, poverty and even health problems are increasing, in a way that most of the population of Bahrain are living in the poor villages around Manama and don't have allow to reside in residential and large area of ″Alrfa″. While the most part of the foreign countries' investment is done in this region that ruling family live in this place. A transient look to the condition of employment in the public section that is fully under government control shows that the condition is fully discriminatory (Motaghizadeh, 1384:140 and Hamidpour, 1390).

Despite this fact that this country's Shiite are the majority of people, but they always have been in the position of second class citizens. Government has adopted immigration policy in order to disturb the population equilibrium that this issue has always caused objection of Bahrain's people especially Shiite (Daghagh, 1389:15 and Hamidpour, 1390).

B) – Ideology of social movements in Bahrain

It can say in general that political streams in Bahrain have different nature such as Shiite and Sunni Islamists and liberal stream, social democrats and Arab nationalism. But the Shia movements have more strength and range. Despite the diversity of religion and ideology, all of them have a consensus in the fight against the totalitarian rule and defend from establishment of a democratic government in the country. On the other words, given that in the demands of Bahraini movement stress in on demanding equal rights and opposition with political monopoly power, so it is not only a religious movement. Hence despite Shiite are majority of protestors and majority of the Sunni because of comply with governance propose criticisms about government with a very gently conservative manner, but it must be said that Islamic movement in Bahrain is ultra-religious. In simple words, although religious trends have impact on demands of Bahraini movements (including Shiite and Sunni), but focus of these movements is not on religious and sectarian demands and in most of these movements we can see different ranges of Sunni and Shiite beside each other. All we can say, this series of movements with different orientation have created a large coalition against the ruling regime and its political monopoly.

There are many Shia groups in Bahrain and majority of people are supporting them. These groups include a wide variety of moderate, democratic and extremist. In total, there are 11 Shia groups in Bahrain that of course some of them are not considered major power. Islamic Consensus Population is the most prominent political party of Shia in Bahrain. This population that was established in 2001 is the main driving of objections between 1994 and 1998. And in recent objections (February 14, 2011) is Bahrain's main opposition party. Right movement and Ahrar movement that are activating with the aim of establishing freedoms and democracy movement beside of Islamic Consensus (Alvafagh islami) are the main and the largest movements of Bahraini opponent's movements.

In Bahrain apart from the Shia Islamist political conflict stream, there are also Sunni Islamic-political movements and secular social movements in the political arena. Though these currents have not been as critical as Shia groups for example Shiite populations of Islamic Consensus for Bahraini rulers, but they have important impact in the trend of Bahrain's political and social developments.

The main Sunni political activists that activate in Bahrain with religious trend are Ekhvanol Moslemin (Muslim Brotherhood) relatives, but parts of Sunni non-religious forces also are highly active with the incentive of defense of democracy and freedom. And indeed, sources of social uprisings in Bahrain are not only religious Islamists but these unrests also include objections and activities of liberals, nationalists and the leftists. Of these groups we can mention to the homeland liberation front and Alvaed Population and popular front for Bahrain's freedom and movement of defense of human rights (Bahrani, 1378:109).

C)-International and regional situations affecting Bahrain's developments

Bahrain has a special geopolitical situation that this issue causes that this country's development has special importance for big powers like America and region's conservative Arab governments like Saudi Arabia. Presence of America's fifth fleet in this country and presence of Saudi forces and the island shield forces associated with cooperation council in this country for suppression of opponents shows this issue clearly. The western governments including America in contact with Bahrain's development have to change their high stances about democracy and human rights and because of their own benefits don't pay attention to Bahrain's situation and support Bahrain's government in suppression of opponents . So, international conditions have created dual situations for Bahrain. From one hand global and regional development has intensified democratization and awakening wave in Bahrain and from other hand interests of current situations in Bahrain for the western governments have encouraged them to support this country. Admission of White House spokesman confirms this added dependency he says that "if it was not Bahrain's government assistance, by no means we were not able to remain and resist in the Persian Gulf". Presence of America's fifth naval

fleet in Bahrain is a crucial issue for Washington. About 3000 American military dependants are in Bahrain. They guide about 30 ships and 30000 sailors in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Bahrain is one of the main America's allies in the Persian Gulf, so it is for this reason that any crisis in Bahrain is somewhat risky for Washington's regional interests (Mojtahedzadeh, 1373:197 and Hamidpour).

D) - Conclusions and future prospects

In total, Bahrain like other countries of Persian Gulf region during its history has witnessed different crises such as a crisis of legitimacy and identity crisis and identity crisis, efficiency identity, etc. political monopoly of ruling class, the lack of political freedom, development of social and economic discriminations between majority of the society and minority of ruling and continuous repression have provided the background for the growth of different political reformist currents that these groups despite their sectarian and religious attitudes are common in strengthening individual and social freedoms and strengthening democracy in the country. But regional and international conditions have provided a dual condition for Bahrain and has created opportunities and threats for growth of movement, because from one hand mottos of the west about growth of democracy and human rights in the region and new developments of the region has provided the context for strengthening people's pro-democracy uprisings , but on the other hand strategic and deep relations between benefits of the west with region's conservative governments has caused that exiting system in the world and the western governments are not wiling to support these developments and popular uprisings practically and in practice with breaking their slogans support democratization suppression in Bahrain. With regard to this dual and contradictious condition, it doesn't seem that Bahrain's developments easily reach to the desired results and finally with increasing popular pressures we will see some limited political reforms.

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