Review Article

Study on the Effect of Structures and Interests on Social Cognitions and creation of Political Ideas (With critical approach)

Alireza Golshani¹, Masoud Jafarinejad² and Abdollah Rasekhi³*

¹Islamic Azad University, Shahreza Branch, Politics Department; Shahreza - Iran
²Islamic Azad University, Shahreza Branch, Politics Department; Shahreza - Iran
³A Doctoral student in Politics, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza Branch- Iran

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Abstract

This paper studies the effect of structures and interests on social cognitions and creation of political ideas. Idea is an inner thing and is used to express belief. Ideology means the science or study of idea. Cognition is a mental thing and means understanding, comprehension or perception of something. Social cognitions are constructed by how individuals talk or think about reality. The main question in this research is how social cognitions form political ideas. This research attempts to set forth sociological issues of cognition in the theory of politics, to study the effect of social aspects on

* Correspondence should be addressed to Abdollah Rasekhi, A Doctoral student in Politics, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza Branch- Iran; Rasekhi1352iran@gmail.com.
cognition, and to use epistemology and constructivism for social cognition. The cognition issue in Islamic philosophy and with assistance of “structuration” and “explanation and explanatory sociology” and constructivism will be investigated. The research data has been collected by library method and analyzed by constructivism method. The findings achieved by the research reveal that a combination of factors, such as structures and interests, in forming political ideas from social cognitions will be effective.

**Keywords:** Social Cognitions, Political Ideas, constructivism, Structuration, Explanative Sociology

1. Introduction

Cognitive sociology is a science that studies the relations between thinking and society. In West cognitive sociology has stemmed from two important European schools of thought in 19th century: Marxism in Germany and Durkheim in France. Most of theoretical start to work from these two schools of thought. Pragmatism and Social Behaviorism in the US can be regarded as the third factor in the growth and development of sociology. The contemporary American thoughts in the field of cognitive sociology is a combination of primary European traditions with an American thought in Pragmatism and Behaviorism approach [3]

2. Statement of the problem

The primary questions in the research are: what is idea? And where does social cognition stem from? The main question of the research had been: what is the relation between political ideas and social cognitions?. There may be two attitudes towards the relation between political ideas and social cognitions: A) ideas are prevalent in political analyses and thoughts; B) political ideas are considered in relation with social cognitions; cognitions form ideas and hence political ideas are considered in relation with social cognitions. The paper deals with the second attitude. We do not intend to reduce political ideas into social ideas and do not say that political ideas lack of value, and social construction but we say that these ideas are social fundamentals resulting from different effective factors which cannot be treated as neutral. In this paper, the problem will be investigated by use of Islamic foundation methodology and by help of constructivism. In fact, the main question is how the relation between social cognitions and political ideas is established. The questions we want to answer under constructivism are: what opinion does constructivism have in connection with idea and cognition? And is there any relation between knowledge and culture?. Considering what was mentioned above, the question of research has several aspects. However, we can organize it into a central question. Therefore, the main question of the research is: “how do political ideas result from
social cognitions?” In order to find a suitable assumption for answering the main question, we were looking for explore hidden aspects of the relation between political ideas and social cognitions. For this purpose, took help from Godden’s structuration and Weber’s perception sociology. The “Structuration” theory of Giddens had removed the structuralism approach which disregarded the subject (human) and gave priority to object (society). But Gidden’s theory of structuration the paid attention to both structure and agency simultaneously, and was therefore criticized that, though being closely connected in social world, structure and factor are separated from each other on the other hand, and that simultaneous consideration to both of them makes it impossible to investigate their mutual relation over time. Also, Weber had been criticized for lack of attention to the role of society (structures and institutions). Compared with Manheim and Plamenatz opinions, however, it has the advantage of considering the interests of social forces. The opinions of Giddens and Weber give us good assistance in the field of theorization. Though finding their opinions to have some defects and problems and to be unable to give answer to our main questions, therefore the utilization of a combination of them to develop a series of concepts and relations between the phenomena gave use also of assistance. We could find answer to many of our questions. In this research we will use cognition theory in Islamic philosophy. To explain, delineate and interpret real conditions. There are various factors in answering the main question and achieving a correct assumption. The first factor is structures, including social, economic and political structures in society. In this matter, structuralism and structuration theory are intended. The second is the interests of social forces and elites, including Weber’s theory of “explanation and explanation sociology”, Mannheim’s beneficial opinions and Plamenatz thoughts. By use of Islamic thought and help of political and sociological fundamentals and constructivism and by combination and coordination of theories, in such a way to give answer to the main question and make necessary explanation from different viewpoints, such research is formed by use of Islamic thought and by help of constructivism. With respect to innovations of the research, we can say that it presents new aspects: the use of epistemology and constructivism for social cognition; emphasis on new achievements in the framework of philosophy of sociology and presenting them in the framework of politics, including investigation of the relation between subject and object in sociology epistemology, and the relation between political study and sociological methods and analysis of political ideas based on social science methods; avoidance of mere theoretical topics and paying more attention to the relation between political-social transformations and political concepts. Political-social transformations are: the role of individual in the society and its transformation over history, situation of political-social institutions and social-political role of power over history, put emphasis on inter-subject and pass from duality of subject and object. The main question of this research is: how do social cognitions form political ideas? The main assumption of the research is: social cognitions are affected by a combination of factors such as structures and interests and cause political ideas. With respect to method of research data has been collected by library method and then analyzed by constructivism method. The reason why
constructivism has been used is that this method establishes a relation between reality and mind, avoids raw combination, avoids abstract discussions, is less valuable, is prevalent in politics, is scientifically efficient and meets the modern science. Here, because of the importance of subject we explain the cognition in Islamic philosophy, constructivism and present the theory of “structuration” and explanative sociology”.

3. Cognition in Islamic Philosophy
Base on Islamic philosophy, cognition, is an inward or mental event and means understanding, comprehending or receiving something. The means of cognition are such as: sense and wisdom. Resources cognition are such as wisdom, heart, nature and history [15] the methods of cognition is consists of inner self, sense, wisdom, heart and revelation. Natural cognition is expressed as the root of cognition. Inner self propositions are in the unconscious mind of humans, ego, which reach to self-awareness level with the perfection of ego and mind. In other words meanings and images like GOD is in inner self of human, that spirit perceive that from internal being of itself [20]. Sensuous cognition: from Koran point of view, senses have granted to human beings, after burning and means to present knowing. So Koran refers to eye and ear. In this kind of cognition, transferring of matter is through senses to mind. Sensuous cognition has characteristic such: it is slight and belongs to person, it has (superficially) look, and isn't in search of entity and internal relationship. It doesn’t comprehend the dominance necessity between cause and effect, it belongs to the present time and is not relate to the past and future, it is limited to the special arena, [15]. Sensuous cognition is called sometimes, with the titles of shallow cognition and potential wisdom. Sensuous cognition is the introduction of rational cognition. Molasadra presents, the theory of promotion in converting, the sensuous cognition to rational cognition: mind with converting the quantity to quality, passes from the sense level to higher level, without changing entity. AbuAli Sina and Khajeh Nasiredin Toosi, called it in title of hidden comparison: intellecton and direct comprehension, without the existence of sense and experience [15]. Empiricism: This thought approach has described in sensuous cognition. The belief in this approach is based on this view, that human is empty of every perceptions at birth, and humans' field of thought is limited to experience, circumstances of thought is from detail to general (inductive); principles and general rules are the product of experiences; universally obeyed cognitions and common rules are probable and are not absolute, the probability of their rightness certainly is according to much experiences, which are based on them. Experimental views are based on independent rational propositions, that experiment is unable to reach them. Empiricism has two stages: first, sensuous stage, second, paretic and theory stage (experiment, comprehendible and conclusion) or rational. Sense, experiment and action are, start point of cognition, so they are continuation and complement of making the theory and meaning in mind.
According to Ayat Allah sadr’s idea, the transformation of sense cognition, to the stage of paretic and theory is done by the primitive knowledge that is independent from experience and give us the probability of conclusion and getting the meaning [20]. Rational Cognition: Divinitism doesn’t consider the source of cognition, limited to senses, and knows the wisdom as an independent source, for cognition [14]. Deep or comprehension cognition takes place in wisdom [15]. Human cognition has rational source, so rational perception is in direct form. In rational cognition, two types of propositions are explained: clear propositions (necessary and primitive) and theoretical propositions. The first one is accepted without any reason. The second is accepted by means of the first one. Rational cognition the first one accepted with has specification such as: to be living that cognition has been, before experience (inner self) and the limitation of cognition goes higher than sense and experience. In other words, wisdom is second stage of cognition and exists after sensuous cognition in fact; there is probability of testing the metaphysic propositions; the movement of thought is from details to generals (comparative); the belief is based on causality relationship [19]. Cognition by means of heart: Theosophists knows the way to getting to real cognition by means of heart. From their point of view, the path of sense and wisdom reach to detailed cognition real cognition is by means of ego purification and heart inspiration. [14].

Allameh Mohammad Taghi Jafari, called cognition by means of senses and theoretical ordinary wisdom, detailed cognition and cognition by means of witness, purification and complementation of sprits, is called total cognition. So he knows all kinds of knowledge, related to the first one and believes that total cognitions, are the products of supreme comprehension and exalted wisdoms [9]. Some elements are effective in cognition. So in primitive cognition, normal and mental constraint, and in supreme cognition to benefit from life opportunity, to benefaction from social and economic status, gaining interests and power, inward enthusiasm, morality (blossoming of positive dimensions for logical life), love, believe to the realities and faith to truth [10]. Allameh Jafari refers to different kinds of cognition: exploratory cognition accompanied by effort and interest to reality, achieving the necessary knowledge, reaching to an unknown mental agent), illumination cognition (getting rid of belongings completely and avoiding of passions and selfishness, research about meaning and present relationship, to search for matters with excellent emotions, together with eminent love), witness cognition (cognition in a dramatic and abstraction state), revel cognition (mental spark which contains the conception of visual matters and solve scientific issues and events of life), documentary cognition to revelation (which is formed from reality by means of prophet on behalf of God) and Mystic cognition (cognition by heart). He mentions some cognition from approach of Koran: Direct cognition (direct relationship of human with realities such as, relationship with appearances and parts, and their relationships), indirect cognition (speeches, books and different trainings), perceptive cognition (to put into action the result from introduction) and certain cognition [10].
4. The School of Constructivism

Constructivism is a methodological approach being used in the area of sociology, psychology, international relations and. It puts emphasis on how social-political reality forms in mind, considering it as the basis for conceiving the reality and, at the same time, considering the reality as an inter-subject and constitutive social thing. From constructivism point of view, ideas are entangled or interacting with material affairs. Social world is constructed in us and cognition results from mind reaction which is achieved by active participation of social world. Mind is a developed thing which, in the framework of society, makes the history and the identity of social world and attains cognition [11]. According to constructivism, human activities not only transform physical environment but also form social relations, structures and institutions. More importantly, they construct social reality. This political and social reality makes sense based on how individuals talk and think. Reality is produced when it becomes meaningful. Constructivism sereaches the methods of such meaningfulness and production and re-production of reality. Furthermore, constructivism deals with how social reality and its re-production are understood. We should also bear in mind that reality is constantly being produced. Constructivism considers social affairs as constitutive social. Moreover, cognition is not a mere mental thing but is on a social basis and is formed in community. Therefore, we can talk about production of reality in the framework of a social thing which has been reflected in cognition. In constructivism, cultural and interpretative components are paid the highest attention. Also, an emphasis is placed on belief and knowledge. Belief is connected with meaning and knowledge is not an absolute thing. Science is considered as representation, i.e. the image of reality together with reality. Intention and actions of scientist's actions become important. The field of theory is the domain of idea. Science turns to the manner of phenomena. In constructivism, representation supersedes objectivity, based upon which new theories have been developed in politics, e.g. interpretability rather than absolutism in politics, paying attention to subjects as well as values in discussions, and the role of subject in production. From constructivism viewpoint, social science is produced under social circumstances, so that the position of discovery has become important and is connected with object process. There is a relation between knowledge and culture. In constructivism, mental order supersedes casualty. There is relation between functional and semantic affairs, which contributes to the formation of social structures. Truth is formed and justified in scientist’s mind and is turned into belief in the framework of social structure. In constructivism, ideas are fully mental and are formed along with reality. Contemporary realities are the product of our values. Reality is an inter-subjective thing whose formation is influenced by agency. Also, cognition is an inner thing and is developed in society. Reality is produced in community and is reflected in cognition. From authors view, contemporary reality is due to our values and knowledge (social sciences) is related to social condition. Knowledge and cognition cannot be a superficial
thing. Constructivism has gone from structuralism, but pays no attention to agency. While in Islamic philosophy view, the agent is the main point.

5. Structuration Theory

In Structuralism theory of Altoser, structure has higher effect than agent (while the authors believe the reverse is true) and the time is dead [13]. For Sarter, Blumer and Gaffmann the relation between structure and agent is set forth. Structuration theory, however, believes that there is a mutual inter-relation between structure and agent, so that structure and agent are mutually dependent, through which structure and awareness (cognition) are developed [17]. Giddens deals with dialectic delineation of the mutual relation between individual (agent) and society (structure) and defends dialectic interpretation. Structure is being constructed and transformed continuously [21]. Therefore, structure is an essential factor in production of action. Structure has power and is thus the owner of cognition and can produce idea (to criticize this subject we can say that structure cannot be deep structure and cognition be surface structure, so cognition is affected by structure but structure can not produce cognition). Structure forms social life. It also constitutes “personality” and “community” simultaneously. Structure exercises its influence through the laws, financial resources and power. Also, structure is binding and gives power [5]. To criticize this subject, we can say structure has a great role to form social life. Positivists and structuralists, such as Durkheim, Marx and Parsons, believe that human can be known in the form of structure. While the attitude of non-positivists can be investigated in two minor, or hermeneutic, and major Marxism levels. As the result of the relation between structure and agency and its transformation, the concept of agency becomes important. With respect to structure-agent relation, Giddens believes that agent is not generally an individual and is not a subject, but is anything that causes change. In other words, agent has the capacity for making changes. Agent can make difference and this is an obvious confliction with structuralism. He (it) is effective in the world transformation owing to his knowledge. Also, agent can transform structure and this is the power which knowledge acts in it. Agent has some skills. He continuously monitors his actions by supervising the world. Agent is able to do things through his agency role. He possesses knowledge and awareness. He interprets the social world. Human is agent because he has the power to take action. He uses his mind and therefore cannot be disappeared into structures (Giddens, Weber, Simmel and Nietzsche). Agent has purposeful action. Actions are continuously repeating in life. Ability and authority have important role in action. Agent intervenes the performance of things through purposeful action. Agent’s action is essential for reconstruction of structure. Action is interrelated with power. Power contributes to mutual action process and is used to achieve consequences in strategic behavior. Both agent and action have the power. Power is logically prior to mentality because action entails power to ability to change situation. Power is described in terms of capacity or power of agents in achieving the results. Power in social system
entails re-produced relations of independence and dependence in social interaction. Power occurs in the text of conflict. There is a relation between power, conflict and interests. Interests are considered to be the foundation of demands. Power is able to transform. Power is placed between the ability of transformation and domination. Though developed by domination structures, power is inherently connected with human agency owing to the capability of transformation [18]. Agency transforms structures and institutions owing to possession of knowledge (cognition) of social world. Institutions are combination of functions and include symbols, Law and political and economic institutions. Institutions are organized and transformed in line with time and location. Leaders play a role in transformation of social patterns [6]. In structuration theory, structure and agent are interconnected, though which structure and cognition are produced (to criticize this subject, we can say that structure plays a role in cognition formation but not in its creation). Since structure is constructed as agent has purposeful action and action is an essential factor in re-construction of structure. Agent possesses knowledge, skill, power, cognition (awareness), idea, ability to create, purposeful action and supervision and is therefore changed into agency.

6. Explanation and Explanative Sociology

Explanation means understanding an action or social relation. In Weber’s opinion, it means imagination of oneself as agent or agents in the history or society, whereby feeling historical or social action from inside. [8]. Mentality is a component of social reality which can be objectively studied, in such a way that an object appears in our vision [2]. In the theory of explanation and explanatory sociology, Weber believes that man has social relation which is defined by the intentions and interests found in it and different meanings that it has been given. With respect to social groups, Weber believes that there are three social groups and power sources: class, dignity and membership in a party. The first has economic dimension. The second has social-cultural dimension and the third proves political power. The said three sources may be concentrated in one place. To criticize Weber’s explanatory Sociology we can say that it is stopped in instrumental wisdom, so make us unable us to give an answer to the problem and the main research question.

7. Political Ideas

The question here is: what is idea and what relation does it have with ideology? In reply to these questions, we can say that idea generally refers to any kind of thought. It is no problem if we define idea as belief, but sometimes it means concept and anything used for expression of belief, not belief itself. Idea is formed in interactions among people. Though differing from belief, concept is always either used to express belief or used to express something like intention or contact, depending on the
belief of the person saying it. The concepts used by people conform to their beliefs. The word “idea” usually refers to both concept and belief and it does not make any different between them. Sometimes beliefs result in contact. Contact is defined as a position or behavior denoting a specific belief, feeling or action. People use concepts in their contacts and express beliefs. Contacts result from beliefs. The behavior which denotes contact is mainly a verbal behavior and the use of words means the use of ideas. Ideology can be generally defined as all ideas and beliefs of the people. It became prevalent in the late 18th century and the early 19th century. After that, ideology became more important and was used to denote a combination of beliefs or even contacts which were closely interrelated and were considered as characteristics of a certain group or community [6]. Here it is said that political ideas stem from social cognitions.

8. Social Cognitions

Here the questions are: what is cognition and how is it created? What is social cognition? What is the meaning of epistemology, social epistemology and cognitive sociology? In response we can say that cognition means understanding and perception of a thing. Social cognitions contribute to the formation of social facts. Social cognitions are constructed by how individuals talk and think about reality. How to talk not only forms cognition of reality but also forms a specific discourse about it. Therefore, facts are not independent things but appear in the framework of our cognitions. Epistemology is defined as research on equipment, limitations, structures and credit of our knowledge in the world. There are a great number of epistemologies due to difference in cognition source. Historicists consider creditable knowledge in the world from historical point of view, and realists consider knowledge in conformity with reality. Mind can reach cognition of the world by reasoning. Alvin Goldmann believes that epistemology is influenced by social components [7]. The domain of epistemology develops a social path. Social path is based on two components of sociality of thought and smoothness of social thing by means of thinking. Social epistemology states that social aspects influence cognitive consequences. In Manheim’s opinion, three points are important in social epistemology: first is “being”, which is completely social. Social being is applied though knowledge. Manheim believes that “awareness” and “being” are in conformity with each other. Idealism is recognized by investigation of world transformation process in the form of ideas transformation process. The second is mind. Thinking is a mental and individualistic thing and individualistic mentality produces the meaning. Mentality is important and meaning is basically a social thing. The third is subject. When we enter the field of reality, we have to deal with practice. We cannot see reality as a mere material thing, but it is like a pattern [12]. Cognitive sociology establishes a relation between the history of thoughts and the manner of historical transformation of thoughts from epistemological point of view in the society. Cognitive sociology also points to two things: the mind which understands the world and the objects which result in cognition outside of the
mind. In Carl Mannheim’s opinion, cognitive sociology includes scientific cognition, concepts, categories, and mental perspectives. Spenser considers cognition to consist of three stages of feeling, philosophy and science [15]. Social structures and social interests are important in creation and social cognition.

9. The Relation between Political Ideas and Social Cognitions

Sophists and atomists basically considered different aspects of cognition as mental and relative things influenced by personal and social interests. Confucius in China and Indian philosophies in India continued such attitude, emphasizing social realities and necessities. Plato believed that there is a relation between the being and cognition. In his opinion, there is a dialectic relation between material and idea and feeling and concept, which result in cognition by finding the common aspect [1]. Ideas, beliefs and theories are developed or become prevalent in some conditions. Some social conditions help or prevent the growth of some fields of science. What is dependent on social situation or the attitude of knowledge seeker is the content of some field of knowledge. Here the sociological fundamentals of political thoughts are investigated. Durkheim believes in “social being”. In his opinion, social structure and cognition are interrelated. Also, Montesquieu emphasizes the relation between community and culture and the balance of social and political structure. Therefore, cognitions form ideas. Antony Giddens states agent possesses three modes of awareness: the first is logical awareness which entails Dewey’s pragmatic account; the second is practical awareness (semi-aware level of Freud mind) in which agent takes action based on social structure; third is hidden awareness which functions in emergency conditions [4]. In his opinion, cognition should be understood as practical awareness and discursive awareness. Laws, financial resources and power are components of agent’s cognitions (awareness) of external realities. Social experience of agents is based on social cognition and awareness. Also, structures are the result of actions which are developed in social experience [22]. Giddens states that power is related to human agency. Agency has power and power results in cognition and idea [6]. (Authors believe that power has influence in creation of idea and cognition). Max Weber states that the importance of ideas is based on power and interests. In his opinion, cognition depends on dominant values. Weber believes that human has social relation due to his intentions and pursues his interests though different meanings. John Petrov Plamenatz, like Weber, believes in social relation, people’s interests and a combination of beliefs. In his opinion, social classes have some interests and beliefs based on wealth, dignity and power. They pursue their interests, so that interests determine their beliefs and ideas [6]. Mannheim believes that thoughts, beliefs and ideas stem from historical conditions, location and situation of social structure and historical process. In his opinion, social cognition is a product of social structure. (In authors’ view social structure cannot be deep structure and social cognition is surface structure. In other words, social structure cannot be the creator of social cognition, but social structure can play
a role in social cognition). Social situation has influenced the awareness of parties and groups over
time. A theory or a school of thought, interests, wishes and characteristics of social groups and
social classes from one side and the process of historical transformation of situational condition on
the other side represent. Mannheim attributed the ideas to social context. His approach is similar to
that of Weber. He considered the position of interests to be based on economic class; the mode of
thinking is interrelated with substructure and mental motivation of social group and stratum. Values
are conceptualized on the basis of their function in social group. Mannheim states that the elites make
decision about the content of cognition, the manner of production and the methods of achieving it.
Here, two groups of elites are presented: social elites and mental elites. Mental elites play a greater
role owing to their situation. Mannheim believes that social groups pursue their own interests and
values.

10. Conclusion

Idea is an inner thing and denotes concept and belief. It can also be considered a social thing.
Ideology is a combination of ideas, beliefs and contacts. Cognition is a mental thing which means
understanding and comprehension or perception of something. Social cognitions are constructed by
how individuals talk and think about reality. Realities appear in the form of our cognitions.
Cognition and idea are two interconnected concepts, in such a way that cognition forms idea and
influences it. Furthermore, cognition helps to deepen idea in different manners. In structuration
theory, structure and agent are separated on the one hand and interconnected on the other hand.

Structure ↔ Agent (Agency)

There is a relation between structure and agency. In addition, subject is present in both of them.
Therefore, the relation between structure and agent is inter-relative and dialectic (by dialectic we
mean the old dialectic not the new one presented by Hegel). In other words, dialectic means contact
of thoughts but not contact of forces. Here companion and emergence of one in the other is intended.
There is an interconnection between them, through which structure and cognition are formed. In
explanative sociology, Weber also believes there are three power sources: class, dignity and party
membership. According to structuration theory, structure exercises its influence though laws and
resources (financial resources and power). In this theory, both agent and action have power. Action
is interconnected with power. Here, cognition and idea can be related to structure and
power. Structure and power cannot be producers, but they have impact on creation of social
 cognitions and political ideas. In the theory of explanation and explanative sociology, Weber
believes that man has social relations and pursues its interests. Plamenatz states that social groups
and classes (social forces) have some interests and beliefs based on their goal and power, so that
they have ideas based on their interests. Elite group make decision about the cognition and how it is
produced. Hence, interests of social forces and mental elites have influence in social cognitions and political ideas. Islamic philosophy approach in responding to the relationship of political ideas with social cognition is more than constructivism. Western foundations help on the surface structures but are unable on the deep structures. Weber in explanatory sociology presented deep structure as instrumental wisdom and surface structure as cognition. While in Islamic philosophy, foundation is based on experience, wisdom, statement, and witness and cognition cannot be surface structure. Therefore, a combination of factors such as structures and benefits influences social cognitions and causes the formation of political ideas.

References


