Power from Revolution: The Configuration and Evolution of Iran's Political Identity Reflected in the Supreme Leaders' Hajj Messages

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Abstract

This research sheds light on what has constituted and defined Iran's post-revolutionary political identity and provides insights into its development with important socio-political implications. In order to understand the configuration and the evolution of post-revolutionary identity in Iran, we examined Hajj Messages issued by Iran's Supreme Leader through a content analysis within the framework of a threefold typological model of identity advanced by the authors: empiricistic, rationalistic, and idealistic. The passages selected from the Supreme Leader's Hajj Messages are classified into the above-mentioned three categories based on the model. Results indicate that in the post-revolutionary Iran, a rationalism that inherits the doctrines of anti-despotism, anti-colonialism, and return to Islam prevails. It is also observed that the post-revolutionary identity of Iran has both empiricist and idealist factors, in the narrations of which the rituals of Hajj and the history of prophets are underscored respectively. This research also concerns ebbs and flows in the process of identity development in post-revolutionary Iran. Whilst the rationalist factor keeps stable and is gradually strengthening its preponderance, idealism is ebbing away and empiricism is flowing in.

Keywords: Iranian political identity, Leader's Hajj Messages, Nationalism, Typology of nationalism

1. Introduction

Nation-state is a dominant political structure that forms today's world map. Sovereignties, territories, as well as political affairs are legitimized by and organized in the name of a nation. National identity, a feeling of belonging to a nation, is one of the most crucial subjective factors in the making of a nation-state. The concept of national identity, as developed, portrayed and understood in the last four centuries, can be radicalized as nationalism, a dangerous ideology against universal justice and humanity, or eulogized as patriotism, a necessary virtue for being a decent citizen (Keane, 1993). Although Fukuyama (1989) once predicted that Nationalism will be a "stumbling block" in the way towards the end of history, thirty years later, whilst populist politicians such as Donald Trump in the U.S., Viktor Orbán in Hungary, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey won elections time after time, it appears that the political identity has encroached the Western liberal order. Liberalists reluctantly admitted that the centre of political struggles is shifting from economy to identity, and claimed that "identity politics has become a master concept that explains much of what is going on in global affairs" (Fukuyama, 2018).

Throughout the Iranian history, any change of political identity might trigger a major transformation of political landscape. During the 9th-11th centuries, the revival of the Persian cultural identity under the Iranian regional dynasties eventually led to the de-centralization of the Caliphate powers. The making of an official Shia identity in the Safavid era (1501-1736 CE) gave birth to the embryo of a modern state on Iranian Plateau. But that state named after Persia had not been endowed with the modern national identity until the period of the Constitutional Revolution. The administration of Reza Shah officialised Aryan nationalism and

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even changed the English title of the nation from Persia to Iran. The Islamic Revolution in 1979 was also a turning point that changed the discourse of national identity. Now in continuation of that historical line, Iran's profound and vivid national identity is a thought-provoking socio-political phenomenon. At a time when the region was enduring the pain of political transformation to step into a world of nation-states, Iran, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state, combined religious identity and national identity in a relatively stable way.

In the era of "identity politics" in Fukuyama's terminology quoted above, Iran's identity becomes a hot spot of Iranian studies and raises an important question: How and in what tendency has Iran's political identity shaped and evolved in the post-revolution era?

The aim of this research is to explore the configuration and the evolution of Iran's official national identity since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. We have chosen Iran's Supreme Leaders' Hajj Messages (LHMs) as the object of analysis since they have two merits in a study of political identity. First, LHMs are valid and accessible identity-related texts (Rajaei, 1392 [2013 A.D.]). Second, they represent the official discourse of the Islamic Republic and therefore the functional political identity of today's Iran.

It is expected that the findings of this research could add to the understanding of Iran's political identity. Grounding in publicly accessible official texts, we will scrutinize the composition of various key elements' in Iran's political identity from a comprehensive theoretical base. It should be noted that the term "identity", as used in this research embraces "national identity", "political identity", or "identity that is functional in the political

structure of nation-states". We will examine the main question in the main body of this essay including three main parts, theory, methodology, and the result.

2. Theoretical Framework

2. 1. General Theories of National Identity

Born in the Enlightenment era, the spirit of nationalism resembles the philosophical trend of thought at that time. The most significant philosophical thought in the Enlightenment era revolved around the epistemological questions about the source of knowledge. Empiricists claimed that knowledge comes from experience; rationalists insisted that knowledge comes from reason; and idealists argued that *esse est percipi* and knowledge comes from the process that the mind constructs, the *Lebenswelt*. Thus, a comprehensive typological model of national identity would better manifest itself on its philosophical base—questions on how to understand national identity: whether national identity is a result of natural evolution or artificial construction? Whether national identity is perceived through experience or through reason? The answers to these epistemological questions divide the main source of national identity into three types: empiricism, rationalism, and idealism.

In general, integrating with available literature that categorise nationalism with a temporal or spatial perspective, we are able to build the threefold model. In the cases of empiricism, nation is understood from experience and is spontaneously generated from religious rituals, legal customs, or political institutions. This kind of national identity first appeared in traditional societies before the French Revolution in the 1790s, for example those in England and America. Promoted by nobles and landlords, these aristocratic

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national movements challenged royal and ecclesiastical powers by underscoring the sovereignty of the nation. Empiricism is characterized by a moderate centralized and civic stance of gradual nationalism, which values the continuation of the system, customs, and norms from the pre-nation society. The goal of empiricist nationalism is to coordinate different classes and interest groups within the society.

However, in the cases of rationalism, the notion of nation is based on the faculty of reasonable knowledge. Rationalistic nationalists reject the rotten system of *ancien régime* and design a utopian polity for the nation-state. This kind of national identity first occurred in emerging modern states at the age of revolution in the first half of the 19th century, for example those in France and Haiti. Supported by bourgeois, these democratic national movements aimed at ending the *ancien régime* in the name of nation. Rationalist nationalism is featured by a strong centralized and civic stance of territorial nationalism, which emphasizes the progressive design of the rationalist nation in contrast with the regressive system of the rotten pre-nation state. The goal of rationalist nationalism is to mobilize the mass in the state.

In the cases of idealism, nation is created from ethnic myths, language, and history. It embraces all possibilities of inventing a nation, and the threshold of being a nation is lowered. This kind of national identity was first realized in established modern nations after the Franco-Prussian war, especially in Germany and Italy. Initiated by intelligentsia, these cultural national movements centred a language, either a vernacular of peasants or a sacred language sealed in scrolls, to fight against foreign occupation. Idealism is marked by a weak centralized and non-civic stance of ethnic nationalism, which stressed the bonds between language and

nation. The goal of idealist nationalism is to gain legitimacy for the nation.

This threefold typology of national identity is manifested in numerous models built by scholars (See Table 1). The most influential dichotomy, Western nationalism versus Eastern nationalism, was proposed by Hans Kohn (1965: 30). It is argued that in order to assimilate diverse citizens into a shared cultural identity and an integrated national economy, Western Europe developed civic institutions and Eastern Europe constructed ethnic myths (Snyder, 1968). Gellner and Breuilly (1983, pp. 83-111) singled out Western Europe's empiricistic nationalism in their typological model, which depends on the "marriage" between state and culture. According to them, there are at least four zones of nationalism. In Zone I (Western Europe), states had coexisted with a corresponding high culture for a long time when their nationhood was claimed, while in other zones, called emerging nations, state or high culture were absent. Benedict Anderson, an anthropologist born in Southeast Asia, investigated the role that culture in the making of nation and divided nationalism into two groups: that modelled on America and that which imitated the example of Germany. According to Anderson, the most pronounced feature of American nationalism is the function of geographic centres as the national pilgrim destination. However, when Middle European rulers began to manipulate "official nationalism" within their dynastic land, language as the cultural core became the most important element in nation-building.

Perennialists anchored their dichotomy on the rift between the empiricistic identity and other types of identity mentioned above. Adrian Hastings traced the birth of a nation back to the Medieval Ages and proposed the importance of empirical social customs, especially religion, in the formation of a nation. According to him,

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England is the prototype of all nations and in the late eighteenth century England's model spread eastward and became "the example of the world's only seemingly thoroughly successful political-social system" (Hastings, 1997, p. 96).

Most of scholars did not have any preference to empiricistic identity or idealistic identity because it is a dualistic discourse and promotes a holistic typological view matched with the threefold model. Carlton Hayes is one of the earliest scholars who investigated the threefold configuration of nationalism. He recognized three main kinds of nationalism inspired by the zeitgeist of the Enlightenment: John Bolingbroke's aristocratic nationalism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's democratic nationalism, and Johann Gottfried von Herder's cultural nationalism (Hayes, 1931, p. 42). Political scientist E.H. Carr developed a three-stage model of nation as a political entity. He wrote:

> the first was terminated by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, having the Congress of Vienna as its tail-piece and swan-song; the second was essentially the product of the French Revolution and, although its foundations were heavily undermined from 1870 onwards, lasted on till the catastrophe of 1914, with the Versailles settlement as its belated epilogue; the third period, whose main features first began to take shape after 1870, reached its culmination between 1914 and 1939 (Carr, 1945, p. 2).

Marxist historians contributed to political and economic explanations. Tom Nairn argued that nation is the "uneven development of history," which has three phases regarding the relation between modernization and nation. During the first phase, from the sixteenth century, the system of the "traditional nation" that was associated with the genealogically connected aristocratic

ruling classes represented a slow, conventional growth, not like the others, which was the product of deliberate invention, resulting from a theory (Nairn & James, 2005, p. 10). During the second phase, the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries, "emerging modern nations" rose before most of the old absolutist states, kingdoms and empires and began to see themselves as territorial nations; "the original concept of nation was adapted from France, imbuing the air we still breathe today" (Nairn & James, 2005, pp. 4-11). During the third phase, the late nineteenth century, the uneasy conjunction of national citizenry and abstract state "established modern nations" (Nairn & James, 2005, p. 11). Conjointly, Eric Hobsbawm believed that national identity is an "invention of tradition". He singled out the French Revolution in the 1790s and the Franco-Prussian War in 1870s as the two turning points in the history of nationalism. Before the French Revolution, the proto-type of nation, lacking modernity, was either supra-local forms of popular identification or political bonds and vocabularies of select groups (Hobsbawm, 1983a, pp. 6-7). The modernity of nation was shaped in the era of the French Revolution, in which the old feudal order broke down and nation became the new source of legitimacy. After the 1870s, ethnicity and language became the "central, increasingly decisive or even the only criteria of potential nationhood", and "almost certainly in connection with the emergence of mass politics, rulers and middle-class observers rediscovered the importance of irrationalist elements in the maintenance of the social fabric and the social order" (Hobsbawm, 1983b, p. 268).

John Breuilly, a modernist who saw nationalism as a form of politics, has an insight on the three functions of national identity (Breuilly, 1993, pp. 165-167). The first function of nationalism is "coordination", by which Breuilly means the promotion of

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common interests amongst elites to establish collaboration in the private society. The second function of nationalism is "mobilization", through which he refers to the incorporation of non-elite groups into political process to realize centralization in the enlightened state. The third function of nationalism is 'legitimacy', by which he means the justification of the actions of the political movement to inherit the history of the pre-linguistic nation.

The typology of nationalism advanced by ethno-symbolist schools may be traced back to empiricism, rationalism, and idealism. By examining the religious organization, mythomoteurs, polity structure, reciprocal influences, and ultimate ethnic identity, J. A. Armstrong (1982, pp. 288-289) sorted nations into six types, three of which occurred in Western Europe. Armstrong argued that France is the prototype and model of nation states, characterized by strong civic consciousness and strong centralization (Armstrong, 1982, pp. 93-128). Unlike the French type, both Spanish and Polish types are of moderate centralization. However, the Spanish type has strong civic consciousness similar to the French type; but the Polish type has weak civic consciousness (Armstrong, 1982, pp. 168-200). Another leading exponent of ethno-symbolism, Anthony Smith (1991, pp. 357-358) opposes the argument that nation is invented and emphasizes that nation's ties with pre-national ethnicity. He simply divides the formation of nations into three types: gradual nationalism, territorial nationalism, and ethnical nationalism. Gradual nationalism is the original type that dynastic polities, which gradually transferred themselves into nation states. There were two routes towards nation-states when nationalism rose in the eighteenth century: a French-style territorial route from state to nation and a German-style ethnic route from nation to state (Smith, 1991, pp. 130-144).

Table 1: Typology of National Identity (summary of the reviewed literature)

	Empiricism	Rationalism	Idealism
H. Kohn (1965)	Western	Eastern	
E. Gellner& J. Breuilly (1983)	Zone I		Zone II, III & IV
B. Anderson (1983)	American model	European model German model	
A. Hastings (1997)	prototype	Eastward	
C. Hayes (1931)	aristocratic	Democratic	cultural
E. H. Carr (1945)	before 1792	1792-1870	after 1870
T. Nairn&… (2005)	traditional	emerging modern	established modern
E. Hobsbawm (1983a)	before 1789	1789-1875	after 1875
J. Breuilly (1993)	coordination	Mobilization	legitimacy
J. A. Armstrong (1982)	Spanish type	French type	Polish type
A. Smith (1991)	gradualist	Territorial	Ethnic

2. 2. Empiricistic, Rationalistic, and Idealistic Elements in Iran's National Identity

Throughout the modern history, it could be argued that Iran's national identity has undergone three phases, which are dominated by empiricistic, rationalistic, and idealistic elements respectively. Empiricistic identity sprouted from the late Qajar era—the first phase—in which the nobles attempted to shape their own nation-state. The customs, conventions, norms and the lifestyle of Qajars, including the reading of Persian literature and poetry, the urbanization of Tehran, the pilgrim to Mashhad, and Naser-ol-din Shah himself, eventually became the symbol of the nation. Amanat and Bonakdarian (1995) argue that Iranian identity derives from

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this phase and is thus of historic and religious background. While Qajar monarch sought to coordinate local elites and clergies, national identity developed gradually and spontaneously.

Idealistic identity or "romantic nationalism," as called by Ashraf (2006), became the main element during the Pahlavi era—the second phase—in which orientalist researches that rediscovered Achaemenid heritages offered linguistics evidence to the Iranian national identity. The idealistic notion of identity claims that the Iranian identity has persisted from Herodotus's decades to the Islamic era (Matini, 1371 [1992 A.D.], pp. 233-268). Reza Khan adopted this idealist nationalism to seek legitimacy for his tyrannical rule. With the propaganda of the Pahlavi government, Persian language and imperial history became the two pillars of Iran's national identity.

Rationalist identity was born in the vehicle of liberalism and Islamism in the early 20th century, laying the foundation of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, and hitherto becoming the major part of Iran's national identity since the 1979 Islamic Revolution— the third phase. Beside liberals and Islamists who inherited their pioneers since the Constitutional Revolution, leftists, with the back of communist Soviet Union, also joined the bloc of rationalist nationalism. Ashraf (2006) argued that the liberalism, socialism, and Islamism are the major opponents of romanticism. Liberals spoke of anti-despotism, leftists advocated anti-imperialism, and Islamists appealed to the restoration of Islamic rule. As Satariyan-Pur (1394 [2015 A.D.]) notes, the ideas and beliefs of Ali Shariati, Mehdi Bazargan, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad, and Imam Khomeini finally converged into contemporary national identity.

3. Methodology

3. 1. Sampling

LHMs are annually issued series of speech text, amounting to 41 independent essays and temporally ranging from 1399 AH (1979 CE) to 1440 AH (2019 CE). Not all messages issued during the Hajj season are intended to be analysed here. Two exceptions guide the selection of LHMs used in this research. In Dhu al-Hajjah 1398 AH (Islamic Hijri Lunar Calebdar), Imam Khomeini (1357 [1978 A.D.]) wrote a massage, *Message to Pilgrims to the Sacred House of God: The Difficulties of the Iranian Nation*, accusing the Pahlavi regime of damaging the Iranian nation and asked the Islamic world for help. Given that neither the time nor the topic of this Hajj massage is related to post-revolutionary Iran, it will be excluded from our definition of LHMs. Moreover, in Dhu al-Hajjah 1408 AH, Iranians boycotted Hajj due to the previous year's bloody event, and Imam Khomeini (1367 [1988 A.D.]) published a message in the name of *Message to the Iranian Nation on the Anniversary of the Bloody Killing of Mecca* to criticize the mismanagement of the Saudi government and mourned those who martyred in their Hajj pilgrimage. It is specially entitled as a lamenting message and is thus not counted as LHM in this research.

3. 2. Categorizing and Coding

Based on the threefold model of national identity discussed above, every relevant clause of LHMs will be divided into three groups: (1) empiricism; (2) rationalism; and (3) idealism.

Empiricism is manifested in the conservative narration, in which the author defends the values, customs, and polities of the present society. In the case of Iran, the narration of empiricist identity

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mainly focuses on religious and secular custom—for example the ceremonies of Nowruz, the rituals of Arbaeen, and other Iranian cultural events. In the text of LHMs, the procedural details of Hajj ritual and Supreme Leaders' representative to Hajj pilgrim account for most of the narration of empiricist identity.

Rationalistic identity is illustrated by the revolutionary narration, in which the author is distressed by the current weakness and seeks independence, liberty, and other progressiveness in the future state. In the case of Iran, the narration of rationalist identity is mainly constituted by three kinds of discourse: anti-imperialism—especially the battle against the exploitation and colonization of the West—and advocacy of the independence of nations; anti-despotism—the frustration of dictators' arbitrary rule—and longing for democracy, freedom, and rule of law; and Islamic discourse, which is characterized by the arguments that the state shall be ruled based on an Islamic system established within the framework of Sharia and that of *omma*t—the entire Muslim community—shall be united as a single polity under the banner of monotheism. In the text of LHMs, there is much narration of rationalist identity: the accusations against Shah and other autocratic rulers in the Islamic world, especially Saddam Hussein on the destructive war and Al-Saud on the mismanagement of Hajj pilgrim; the opposition against American imperialism, Zionism, and other foreign forces that were meddling in Iran's influence sphere and that of the Muslim world; and the emphasis on the spirit of Iran's Islamic Revolution, the promotion of the Islamic awakening movement, and the support for other Islamic campaigns, including those in Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Kashmir, Chechen, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar.

Idealism is revealed with the romantic narration, in which the

author often refers to the language, history, and glory of ancient past nation. In the case of Iran, the narration of idealist identity is centred on the two strata of the Persian language. The pre-Islamic stratum, which is one of the greatest achievements of orientalist is reflected by the retrospect of the 2500-year-long history of Persian empires. The Islamic stratum that has an abundant literature heritage is indicated by the remembrance of the teachings and stories of prophets of God, especially those of the Prophet of Islam.

3. 3. Quantitative Analysis

The coded data will be quantitatively analysed through descriptive and comparative statistical methods. The "issuer" (Imam Khomeini or Ayatollah Khamenei) and the "decade" (1980s, 1990s, 2000s, or 2010s) are considered as independent variables, while the proportion of the "type of identity" (empiricism, rationalism, or idealism) is the dependent variables.

In the section of descriptive statistics, we will illustrate the frequency and percentage of each "type of identity" in each LHM. In the section of comparative statistics, we will group data by either "issuer" or "decade" and examine by independent samples t-test, a method used to infer whether the two groups are different. Assuming the equalities of the means of two groups of data, we will compare their means and standard deviations. In case of 95% confidence to reject the assumption of equality, we will able to claim that the two groups are of directional difference.

4. Results and Discussion

4. 1. General Findings

7405 clauses have been analysed in this research, 7237 of which are related to political identity. Among the clauses related to

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identity, 4957 relate to rationalist narration, accounting for more than a half of all clauses; 1557 are narrated in an idealist way, accounting for one fifth of all identity-related narrations; and 723 represent the narration of empiricist identity, accounting for approximately one tenth of all identity-related narrations. (See Table 2).

Table 2: The Frequency of Clauses by Three Types of Identity in LHMs

Year	Empiricism		Rationalism		Idealism		Non	Sum
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)		
1399	4	7.3%	40	72.7%	6	10.9%	5	55
1400	5	2.3%	169	79.3%	39	18.3%	0	213
1401	9	6.3%	119	83.2%	15	10.5%	0	143
1402	8	4.0%	149	74.5%	43	21.5%	0	200
1403	22	5.6%	214	54.6%	139	35.5%	17	392
1404	34	8.7%	227	57.9%	118	30.1%	13	392
1405	3	1.0%	227	72.5%	65	20.8%	18	313
1406	116	31.8%	112	30.7%	130	35.6%	7	365
1407	26	3.0%	663	75.4%	175	19.9%	15	879
1409	13	2.8%	271	57.9%	165	35.3%	19	468
1410	17	17.0%	68	68.0%	14	14.0%	1	100
1411	63	11.0%	382	66.8%	117	20.5%	10	572
1412	25	10.3%	161	66.3%	55	22.6%	2	243
1413	24	8.0%	239	79.7%	34	11.3%	3	300
1414	14	8.2%	132	77.6%	21	12.4%	3	170
1415	16	12.9%	68	54.8%	32	25.8%	8	124
1416	13	7.2%	115	63.5%	50	27.6%	3	181
1417	13	7.4%	133	75.6%	29	16.5%	1	176
1418	20	8.9%	130	57.8%	72	32.0%	3	225
1419	4	3.2%	110	88.0%	11	8.8%	0	125
1420	9	7.4%	92	76.0%	20	16.5%	0	121
1421	19	29.7%	45	70.3%	0	0.0%	0	64

Year	Empiricism		Rationalism		Idealism		Non	Sum
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)		
1422	19	18.4%	45	43.7%	39	37.9%	0	103
1423	13	11.6%	94	83.9%	1	0.9%	4	112
1424	4	4.0%	85	84.2%	6	5.9%	6	101
1425	25	17.7%	87	61.7%	29	20.6%	0	141
1426	18	14.9%	76	62.8%	26	21.5%	1	121
1427	17	16.5%	80	77.7%	5	4.9%	1	103
1428	27	27.6%	53	54.1%	16	16.3%	2	98
1429	6	7.2%	64	77.1%	2	2.4%	11	83
1430	7	11.7%	46	76.7%	7	11.7%	0	60
1431	2	4.2%	38	79.2%	7	14.6%	1	48
1432	7	6.0%	83	71.6%	23	19.8%	3	116
1433	25	27.5%	49	53.8%	16	17.6%	1	91
1434	13	13.1%	86	86.9%	0	0.0%	0	99
1435	8	13.3%	52	86.7%	0	0.0%	0	60
1436	9	19.1%	34	72.3%	3	6.4%	1	47
1437	7	8.6%	58	71.6%	10	12.3%	6	81
1438	8	22.2%	23	63.9%	5	13.9%	0	36
1439	16	42.1%	13	34.2%	7	18.4%	2	38
1440	15	32.6%	25	54.3%	5	10.9%	1	46
All	**723**	9.8%	**4957**	66.9%	**1557**	21.0%	**168**	**7405**

It can be observed that there are a few changes on the frequency. We compare means of the proportion of each type of identity every year with t-test to examine whether it is convincing enough to claim these changes.

The proportion of empiricist identity has doubled in past 40 years. According to statistics, empiricist identity only accounted for approximately 7.77% of all clauses made by Imam Khomeini; this proportion rose to 14.14% in the LHMs issued by Ayatollah Khamenei. The difference between the two authors is 96%

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statistically significant (See Table 3). If the statistics are classified by 10-year-long period, it may be claimed that the share of empiricist identity is rising steadily. In the 1980s, only 7.27% of the contents of LHMs concerned empiricist identity; in the 1990s, this indicator rose slightly to 9.41%; in the 2000s, this value increased sharply to 15.15%, and in the 2010s, it grew to 18.89%. The difference between 1980s and 1990s, as well as that between

Table 3: Compare Means of Empiricistic Contents by Authors

	Description		T-test for Equality of Means	
Author	Mean	Std. Dev.	khomeini	khamenei
Khomeini	7.77%	9.34%		
Khamenei	14.14%	9.39%	**-1.806 (.040*)**	

*$p < .05$, 95% statistically significant.

2000s and 2010s is not significant. However, the growth from 1980s to either 2000s or 2010s is more than 97% and thus statistically significant; and the increase from 1990s to either 2000s or 2010s is more than 98% and therefore statistically significant (See Table 4).

Table 4: Compare Means of Empiricistic Contents by Decades

	Description		T-test for Equality of Means			
Decade	Mean	Std. Dev.	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
1980s	7.27%	8.94%				
1990s	9.41%	3.72%	-0.699 (.247)			
2000s	15.15%	8.10%	**-2.121 (.024*)**	**-2.051 (.027*)**		
2010s	18.89%	12.31%	**-2.415 (.014*)**	**-2.331 (.016*)**	-0.828 (.209)	

*$p < .05$, 95% statistically significant.

The power of rationalistic identity has been maintained during 40 years. According to statistics, the rationalistic identity accounted for approximately 66.77% of all passages asserted by Imam

Khomeini and this proportion rose to 68.71% in the LHMs issued by Ayatollah Khamenei. The change between Imam Khomeini's version and Ayatollah Khamenei's version is statistically non-significant (See Table 5). If the data is explained in a decade-long scale, it can be observed that its proportion is growing steadily. In the 1980s, 65.88% of LHMs were connected with rationalist identity; in the 1990s this value rose to 69.81%; in the 2000s, this number reached at 69.83%; and in the latest decade, this proportion has marginally receded to 67.45%. Statistically speaking, the proportion of rationalistic identity keeps unchanged (See Table 6).

Table 5: Compare Means of Rationalistic Contents By Authors

	Description		T-test for Equality of Means	
Author	Mean	Std. Dev.	khomeini	khamenei
Khomeini	66.77%	16.43%		
Khamenei	68.71%	12.93%	-0.374 (.355)	

Table 6: Compare Means of Rationalistic Contents by Decades

	Description		T-test for Equality of Means			
Decade	Mean	Std. Dev.	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
1980s	65.88%	15.75%				
1990s	69.81%	10.31%	-0.659 (.259)			
2000s	69.83%	12.85%	-0.632 (.268)	-0.005 (.498)		
2010s	67.45%	16.38%	-0.218 (.415)	0.385 (.353)	0.373 (.357)	

The share of idealistic identity has been decreasing. According to the results, it accounted for approximately 24.73% of all passages stated by Imam Khomeini, and this proportion fell to 18.75% in the LHMs issued by Ayatollah Khamenei. The shrinkage of idealistic identity between the two Supreme Leaders is approximately 76% significant (See Table 7).

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Table 7: Compare Means of Idealistic Contents by Authors

Author	Description		T-test for Equality of Means	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	khomeini	khamenei
Khomeini	22.56%	9.38%		
Khamenei	14.97%	9.99%	**2.037 (.024*)**	

*p <.05, 95% statistically significant.

If the statistics are categorized by 10-year-long time, it is clear that its proportion is steadily declining. In the 1980s, 26.17% of inks were consumed for discussing idealist identity; in the 1990s, this value drastically fell to 19.47%; in the 2000s, its number was only at 13.29%; and in the 2010s, it was at 11.48%. Any contraction between two adjacent decades is statistically non-significant. The decrease from 1980s to 2000s is 97% statistically significant whilst the difference between 1980s and 2010s is nearly 99.8% statistically significant. Meanwhile, the decline from 1990s to either 2010s is 98.4% statistically significant (See Table 8).

Table 8: Compare Means of Idealistic Contents by Decades

Decade	Description		T-test for Equality of Means			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
1980s	23.83%	9.72%				
1990s	19.15%	7.77%	1.191 (.125)			
2000s	12.59%	11.47%	**2.410 (.013*)**	1.517 (.073)		
2010s	11.39%	7.16%	**3.260 (.002**)**	**2.322 (.016*)**	0.285 (.3895)	

*p <.05, 95% statistically significant.
**p<.01, 99% statistically significant.

4.2. Discussion

The results of this research give a panorama of the configuration and the evolution of Iran's post-revolutionary political identity. The major body of Iran's identity consists of rationalistic elements,

which are in line with the country's revolutionary ambitions. In the narration of the rationalist identity, Supreme Leaders focused on the sufferings of Muslim nations and their resistance against the exploitation and colonization conducted by imperialists and Zionists out of the nations and tyrannies and traitors in the nations. It should be noticed that the rationalistic element in Iran's political identity is not only an identity of a nation (fa: *mellat*) but also an identity of the Islamic community (fa: *ommat*) and all oppressed nations (fa: *mellat-hā-ye maẕlum*) in the world. Both Supreme Leaders annually express support for oppressed nations within the Muslim world. There are 152 clauses referring to Palestine, 111 clauses referring to Iraq, 51 clauses referring to Lebanon, 40 clauses referring to Afghanistan, 16 clauses referring to Bosnia, 13 clauses referring to Libya, 12 clauses referring to Syria, 11 clauses referring to Kashmir, 7 clauses referring to Yemen, 5 clauses referring to Bahrain, 3 clauses referring to Muslims in Myanmar, and 2 clauses referring to Chechnya. Both Supreme Leaders (Khomeini, 1366 [1987 A.D.]; Khamenei, 1368 [1989 A.D.], 1366 [1991 A.D.], 1381 [2002 A.D.], 1391 [2012 A.D.] & 1398 [2019 A.D.]) emphasize that, among them, the Palestinian issue is the most important issue in the Islamic world. They also reprehend the "enemies" of oppressed nations. According to the data, America is mentioned in 635 clauses, the Soviet Union in 15 clauses, Zionists in 140 clauses, and the name of the proxies supported by major "enemies", such as Saddam Hussein and Anwar Sadat, are mentioned in 41 and 5 clauses respectively.

Ayatollah Khomeini (1359 [1980 A.D.]) summarized the spirit of Iran's rationalistic identity in an LHM in the following manner:

> Rise up, global Muslims who believe in the truth of Islam; get together under the banner of monotheism and the teachings of Islam; cut off the hands of the treacheries for great powers from your land and rich treasures; restore the glory of Islam; and take

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away the differences and sensual air since you have everything. Rely on the culture of Islam; fight against the West and Westernization; stand on your own feet; attack the Westernized and Easternized intellectuals; find your own identity; know the disaster that has been brought by those mercenary intellectuals to your nation and land; and it will not be over for you as it has been so far until you unite and really rely on the true Islam exactly.

Iran's rationalist identity has three topics: freedom, independence, and Islam. Freedom is an inevitable topic in 1980s. The discourse of the Supreme Leaders illustrates this synthesis of the same directions of thoughts. There are 72 clauses referring to "freedom" (fa: *āzād*) and 40 clauses referring to "independence" (fa: *esteqlāl*). Islamic terms are also eye-catching. There are 94 clauses in LHMs involving the unity (fa: *vaḥdat*), 101 clauses pertaining to monotheism (fa: *towḥid*), and 79 clauses connected with the awakening (fa: *bidāri*) of Islam.

By abolishing Shah's autocracy and resisting Saddam Hussein during the imposed war, Iran demonstrated the possibility of achieving freedom of a Muslim nation. After 1990s, as the situation of Iran stabilized, the frontline of battle for freedom became Palestine and other Muslim nations. In contrast, the topic of independence continues. Imam Khomeini (1362 [1983 A.D.]) proposed theory that "Iranian and Afghan nations are the vanguards of Islamic nation resisting the colonization and invasion of the United States and the Soviet Union". According to Ayatollah Khamenei (1368 [1989 A.D.]), the threat from the United States "has even penetrated into the religious field". He (1397 [2018 A.D.]) distinguished "American Islam" from "True Islam" and suggested that Muslims should be aware and nullify the satanic policy of America that fuels appalling conspiracy to make infighting in Islamic community.

Combined by Islamic, liberal, and socialist philosophies, rationalistic identity in Iran is particularly characterized by its revolutionary aspiration against Western and Eastern oppressors. There are 290 passages containing the term of "revolution" (fa: *enqlāb*) in the analysed LHMs. Certain scholars (Tavakoli-Toroghi, 1361 [1983 A.D.] & 2000; Deyhime, 2000) argued that there is a deep influence of French revolution on Iran, and that both states centre their national identity on a revolutionary discourse. In the French case, the target of the revolution was *ancien régime* in Europe and the war against other continental monarchical powers became a justification of the existence of the French nation. In the Iranian case, the target of the revolution was the Arrogants (fa: *mustakberin*) in the world and the struggling against great powers became a justification for the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The hostility against the target of the revolution is vital to these revolutionary nations because it is the most functional way to mobilize the nation and to keep national identity.

If we analogize Iran's post-revolutionary political identity to a physical disk in a computer, rationalistic elements are the basic disk while empiricistic and idealistic elements constitute the dynamic disk. The impact of empiricistic and idealistic elements on Iran's political identity has been minimized and limited within an Islamist discourse. The narration of empiricist identity revolves around the text about Hajj rituals. In all LHMs, 422 passages contain the word "Hajj". The connotation of empiricism identity is also depicted by the procedural detailed of Hajj, including "Talbiyyah" or "Labaik" in 31 clauses, "Barāʾat" in 78 clauses, "Iḥrām" in 16 clauses, "Ṭawāf" in 25 clauses, "Minā" in 11 clauses, "ʿArafāt" in 18 clauses, "Saʿi" in 26 clauses, and "Rami" in 17 clauses. Imam Khomeini (1365 [1986 A.D.]) clarified the significance of the Hajj ritual in a message following a rationalistic rhetoric:

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Muslims in the situations and rites of this worship, one of the great goals of which is making Muslim of all over the world assembled for the benefit of the global oppressed, the benefit of which is greater than cutting off the imperialist hands from the Islamic world.

Compared to the rationalistic and idealistic narrations in LHMs, which reflect the opinions and viewpoints of Iran's Supreme Leaders, the empiricistic part of LHMs reflects the place of religion, which is affinitive to Muslim readers and which can never be denunciated by them. Thus, it shortens the distance between Muslim individuals and, in Anderson's words, coins an imagined community among all readers.

Most of the idealist identity echoed in Iranian Supreme Leaders' discourse is reflected in Quranic stories. It is clear that both Supreme Leaders sought legitimacy by reviewing the early history of Islam. Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and Prophet Abraham (pbuh) are mentioned in 54 passages and their deeds and words become the legal basis for Iran's ambition within the Muslim world. In contrast, Aryan nationalism—the main stream in the Pahlavi period—is completely abandoned. In fact, Imam Khomeini (1362 [1983 A.D.]) directly criticized the construction of Pahlavi idealist identity:

> However, the great nation of Iran, which was lack of military power and equipment for battle and weaponries, with an empty hand, a strong faith in Islam, and a firm commitment to the highest and trusted God, miraculously crushed the imaginary idols constructed and paid by Westernizers in a short time, wrapped 2500-year-long scroll of despotism, and nullified the myths of history-builders and idol-makers.

To the Supreme Leaders of the revolution, the 2500-year-long

history of Persian Empires is nothing less than an invention of the Pahlavi House. As a part of corrupted past, it must be rejected in the post-revolutionary narration.

5. Conclusion

On the whole, rationalistic elements that take general forms of struggling against colonialism and anti-despotism, pursuing liberty and independence, and returning to Islam's guidance, remain predominant in the configuration of Iran's post-revolutionary national identity, whilst empiricistic elements that take general forms of respecting for conventions and customs as well as idealistic elements that take general forms of referring to history and culture are qualitatively and quantitatively limited in the analysed LHMs. During the 40-year-long development, Iran's national identity did not undergo essential change. In the massages delivered by both Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, most arguments revolve around the rationalistic discourse, into which liberalist, socialist, and Islamist discourses converge, for example, "neither Western nor Eastern, the Islamic Republic" (Khomeini, 1361 [1982 A.D.], 1364 [1985 A.D.], & 1366 [1987 A.D.]; Khamenei, 1368 [1989 A.D.]). We also observed some marginal changes on the empiricistic and idealistic elements, both of which focus on Islamic materials. Ayatollah Khamenei's messages contain more empiricistic and less idealistic elements than those stated by Imam Khomeini.

There are three explanations for the predomination oft rationalistic elements. First, a Hayesian explanation mentioned above, might give first place to the socio-political environment. The late twentieth century was an era of democracy and there was no adhering class of aristocracy or culturalist autocracy in Iran.

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Therefore, rationalism, one of the political persuasions of which is democracy, won the competition. Second, a Breuillyian explanation might connect the function of national identity with it. The capacity of mobilization is a key element to a successful revolution. Contemporary Iran, unlike the Qajar Persia that laid emphasis on the coordination among interest groups and Pahlavi Iran, which zoomed on the legitimation of its source of sovereignty, is constructed on the foundations of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Accordingly, rationalistic identity in the form of enhancing the revolutionary spirit is prevalent. From 1980s to 2010s, the proportion of empiricistic elements is doubled and the percentage of idealist elements is halved. Their position in Iran's identity has swapped, which indicates that to Iranian politicians, the need for seeking new legitimacy is ebbing away but the necessity of maintaining the present coherence is rising. Third, a Smithian explanation might be applied in Iran's case. Going through the revolution in 1979, Iran's official national identity transformed from an ethnic, Persian-centric nationalism that triggered severe separatist crisis in Azerbaijan and Khuzestan to a territorial, Islam-based universalism that silenced ethnic questions that Pahlavi was unable to handle (Bayat, 2005); most features of Islam-based universalism are rather rationalistic than empiricistic.

It can be expected that, in the coming decade, the pre-eminence of rationalistic paradigm in Iran's political identity will continue. As a result, Iran will continue to value its revolutionary spirit, which has been a synthesis of liberal, socialist, and Islamist aspirations since the 1979 revolution. This observation might help explain the reason for which Iran would rather bear severe sanctions than yield to the United States. It would not be astonishing if the "maximum pressure" policy of the United States against Iran only increases Iran's national solidarity. The

restoration of Iran-American pre-revolution relations is actually contrary to Iran's increasingly rationalistic identity.

Finally, it ought to be noted again, that this paper only focused on Iranian political identity from the perspective of the Supreme Leaders. This is only one perspective among many. However, given the highest political and legal position of the Supreme Leader in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, this perspective seems to be the most influential on Iranian domestic and foreign policy.

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