

Social Change and Development in Qatar

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ABSTRACT: Qatar, a small country, in southern Persian Gulf, in recent years has appeared as a most welfare state with high per-capita revenue. In some infrastructures, like Air lines, Qatar is one of the best in the world, and Aljazeera Network, is the prominent televised news channels in the region. It favors huge resources of oil and gas and then has been dependent in its budget on exporting this natural resources, but some other countries in the region have this kind of natural resource and now are in many troubles. The political structure of Qatar, like many other Arab states, is inheritable. Although there are controversial theories about these development, it's worthy to study the developmental process of this state. The social structure of the country, as an ex-traditional socio-cultural context, it seems has been changing to a different formation. What are the causes of this social change? Which consequences has produced or probably will produce in other spheres of the country?

KEY WORDS: Qatar, Social change, Socialization, Development.

1. PROBLEMATIQUE

Qatar is located in southern shores of Persian Gulf region. Its topography doesn't differ from other states in the region. Qatar has 12% gas reserves of the world and a little population, but has a high level of per capita revenue in the world. Due to high revenue from petroleum exporting and good management, it established modernized infrastructures and its feature changed rapidly to an urban society. Here is an important subject for scientific study: How social change has occurred and which consequences it may bring in social, economic and political spheres?

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Social change can be studied from view points of macro and micro sociology, both, but here I concentrate more on the micro sociology, and focus on some dimensions that a part of them is related to "role". Joas finds himself confronted with two conflicting definitions of the role concept:

(1) the structuralist definition: 'social roles are clusters of normative behavioral expectations directed at the behavior of position-holders', and (2) the interactions position, which Joas ties to Mead as well as to 'critical' role theory, which stresses the 'need ... for role-taking in the sense of situationally specific anticipation of alter's behavior. Joas undertakes the task of closing the gap between these two definitions by introducing the concept of the situation. Role thus becomes 'the normative expectation of situationally specific meaningful behavior.' (Helle, 1985, pp. 1-3). This is a socialization study. Here I examine some dimension of social change, its factors and agents, and then the impacts on these changes on socio-political arena of Qatar.

3. AN OUTLOOK OF QATAR

Qatar, a country which attained independency at 1971, is with total area of 11,586 sq.km and in 164th rank of country comparison, with 87 km border line with Saudi Arabia and 563 km coastline in Persian Gulf, arid, mild, pleasant winters and very hot, humid summaries, and natural resources of petroleum, natural gas, fish, with 1.1% agricultural land, without forest, 130 sq. km (2012) irrigated land, it is a peninsula located in the central part of Persian Gulf, adjacent to petroleum reserves and has 12% gas deposits of the world. Population estimation of the country at 2.21 is 2,479,995. The ethnic composition of population (2015) was 11.6% Qatari, 86% non-Qatari. From the view point of religion, at 2020, 65.2% were Muslim, 13.7% Christian, 15.9% Buddhist, 3/7% folk religion, 1% Jewish, 1% others. Its age structure, is 19% (male 19,067/ female 287.5705), 25-54 years with a 23% population, and so on. 99/3% of its population are urban; unemployment rate is 0.4%, its legal system is mostly civilian and in family and personal matters is Islamic law ("Shariaa") (see: CIA-Factbook).

Some believe that Qatar is "a fascinated and understudied case study for both sociologists and anthropologists"(Harkness, 2021).

4. EDUCATION

Before the reformist movements, like most of the Muslim Countries, in Qatar education was religion-based. Now education is free, students in governmental schools are provided books and transportation to and from schools. The 12-year public school system consists of a six-year primary cycle followed by a three-year secondary cycle and then a three-year tertiary cycle, taking students up through the secondary level by western educational standards. "After the oil exports, boys could go to school, in 1952, and the Ministry of Education, as one of the first ministries established in 1956. Girls' schools have begun their works in mid-1956. During 1980s, the educational system was nearly well-educated. Students of the secondary level, had options among vocational, commercial, and religious training kinds. The milestone of the University of Qatar was put down in 1973, and then in 1977 became the University of Qatar. In 1960s, the majority of teachers were foreigners, and Qataris, mainly Qatari women, nearly half of the teachers was working in public schools. Due to free education and comfortable situations, there was rising expectation among young people, in education, work, settlement and so on. ' Such a socialization in to the welfare state mentality partly explains the overwhelming reliance on expatriate labor in the Persian Gulf countries with an estimated 83 percent of its work force comprising foreign workers, Qatar is somewhat in the mid-range as compared to other Persian Gulf states (Silk, 1979). As there is good payment in governmental sector, people don't include to work in vocational and so, jobs with "manual" labor. At the recent years, the Qatari education focused on "the quality of education available, the Qatarization of the workforce, the high failure rate of students in government schools, and the correlation of training and educational curricula with actual labor market needs(see: State University). According the information of its official website, the College of Education (of the Qatar University) building completed in April 2021, and win Award of Merit in the Education/Research Category at the Engineering News-Record 2021 Global Best Projects awards. "The new building fulfills our ambition to improve the education system and become one of the leading educational institution in the region (see: Qatar University, 2021, College of Education). Some good technological infrastructures which has been already prepared, since the onset of Covid-19, students in Qatar could be attached to distance education sooner and easier than many other part of the region ' selecting Microsoft teams as the central distance learning platform, Ministry of Education and higher education made sure that all students and parents received user accounts, tablets, and home broadband Internet access, devices were distributed to students who lacked such assets. Also they supervised over the private schools meet all requirements (see: All-Nuaimi, 2021; Ibrahim bin Saleh Al-Nuaimi).

New technology that entered the educational sphere (see: Poshka, 2014) affects on educational relationship. These effects although may have negative consequences, but it's clear that increase the extension and educational production. Socialization is a key factor in transferring of national and ethnic culture, it may support or change the traditional culture and is a main cause of social change. In a country like Qatar with its already traditional socio-cultural structure, it is obvious that such a modernized educational apparatus makes changes, but we should pay attention that infrastructure and technology is one of the factors and intellectual factor that is ideas, thoughts, views and opinions is also important in educational process and then in social change.

Scholars who seek for the causes of success or failure of students and schools, mentioned that social capita may be a factor among these causes. This term, nowadays, refers to an intangible resource that may be present or absent in social relations and social structure. Dewey, who was a leading thinker in this area, related this concept to economic and social changes in America (see: pelagens, 2011, pp. 40-64). Before exact polling and studies about this case in Qatar, we can suggest some ideas. I think in a country with this limited territory and population, and high rank in social welfare and a modernized structure of education, there are something prepared that people can trust on social work, relations, transactions and hope for a better future. When public requirements for individual and social success are met, persons as students, teachers and professors can do their job better and output of the education system and at total output of social structure would be more acceptable.

Social development may lead to several routs, but one that is very important for a society, is reaching to a civic political culture. One of the required elements for this, is a good or enough public knowledge about the history and political structure of the country. Some polls in USA showed that young people in a high range, don't have the least level knowledge in this field, and so some press, like "Christian Science Monitor" asked: what kind of democracy can we expect in the future when only 26% of seniors have more than a rudimentary understanding of political process?(see: Ross, 2000). In developing countries, this political knowledge, I think, must be double, about own system and about democratic structures. In countries like Qatar people must know about their traditional and Islamic history in political field, and normally they are familiar with the political process in their country, at least about clear political process, and due to modern media like social networks and news agency like Aljazeera and high access to high technology, they can receive political knowledge, but the question is that : Do they try to extend their political knowledge or just they use for matters like style news or spending leisure time? Some times may government try to lead them to apolitical (unpolitical) affairs.

Access to modern technology has some consequences which at first may be dis-anticipated. A study shows that in Qatar and some Arab states of the Persian Gulf, due to this increasing access, the traditional genre of short story, that was concentrated on " weak conflict and naïve plot" has been changed to a pattern, which fit into the concept of modern short story. One social consequence of this tendency is that emancipation of Qatari woman, her right to have her own voice, get an education, and choose a profession, has appeared(see: Akhmedova, 2020).

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5. MEDIA

There has been different theoretical approach concerning roles and impacts of media. One is functionalist approach which focuses on the social integrating function and maintaining consensus through reinforcing central values in a beneficial way to society. "The media comprise a socially recognized and structured form of communication which is technologically mediated. This, in turn, generates distinctive patterns of social relationships, routines and cultural meaning." And also pluralism shares this idea that media help democracy and serve to meet the needs of it's consumers, but this approach recognizes the differences of individuals and groups in a society rather than a uniform making role of the media(see: Dutton, 1998,pp.2-6).

In recent decade world has observed increasing of social networks, that can be considered a most influential kind of media, and it needs to be more studied. A study about social media by two researchers " proposes a multidimensional conceptual framework of social media literacy that includes the practical, cognitive, and effective competencies needed to deal with information of social media, to communicate with others through social media, to create content on social construction of social media literacy including it's link with the educational system is based on the notion of cultural capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu"(see: Vanwynsberghe and Verdegem, 2013).

Qatar, in 1996, established Aljazeera Network. It became famous after broadcasting some videos of Osama bin Laden, relating 11/9 accidents and now is a leading and may be the most influential TV news channel in the Arab world and Persian Gulf region, and has a professional and nearly independent political approach.

In recent years, not only in a rich country like Qatar, but also in poor countries, users of smart phones have been increasing, and especially middle and high class users have access to a high level kinds of this technology. Facebook, Instagram, What's-app, Telegram, Twitter, and many other social platforms are evolving and provide and introduce new services.

6. NON-QATARI RESIDENTS

As above was mentioned, most of residents in Qatar are non-Qataris, because of the work market of Qatar are attractive for foreigners and also Qataris need their work force. But considering the positive and negative impacts on the social and political sphere of the society is important.

A study on domestic workers in Qatar, indicates" negative aspects of non-parental children on children's growth. The findings shows that in Qatar, people have between 1 to 3 domestic workers. They find domestic workers to be high level important in their lives, but do not consider them trustworthy. Yet many people give full responsibility of their house and chores to the workers, especially the responsibility of taking care of their children. Moreover, a high percentage of domestic workers spending more time with children than their parents do, and children are losing touch with their mother language, due to the non-parental care"(Aldahri,2018). This means that traditional and ethnic customs is less probable to be transferred to children, and they adopt some parts of foreign cultures in a crucial period of their socialization.

7. ECONOMIC AGENTS

Most of persons' time during day is detected to economic field of the life. Due to self-security and self-maintenance, persons are very sensitive, rational and conservative in their economic activities and jobs, because they are dependent on the revenue and failure in this field, may leads them to feel failure in other parts of life, this can be understood also on the basis of the mentioned suppose about interdependency of different fields of life.

Recent studies show that culture impacts on economic behavior. "Culture influences economic behavior in all three areas of economic activity: work, consumption, and leisure...humans are more than the one-dimensional, autonomous, individuals, premised in main stream economics, whose very existence is temporal, whose role in economic affairs is strictly instrumental, and whose behavior is virtually the same across cultures. Humans are self-made and culture-bound, autonomous and dependent, rational and emotional"(O'Boile,2016).

Considering the kinds of economic activities in Qatar that are related to sectors like gas and petroleum exportations and residence of a great number of foreigners, it is obvious that economic activities, in all these categories are affected by cultures which are most of them, foreigners' cultures. So, a person who spends most of his/her time in job place, is influenced by these cultural attitudes and when arrives home, is influenced by other agents like satellite television channels and social media networks. This can bring global cultural attitudes or a combination of different cultural attitudes or a cultural resistance towards foreign cultures.

8. CONCLUSION

This media functions, and other socialization agents that was elaborated above, we can say that in Qatar can aid a uniform social trend that is increasingly towards universal or at least west- oriented social life style, as a dimension of globalization, and people, especially the young and women, are attaining more information and perspectives about social and political rights and trends. Now we see these social impacts and as I think a socio-cultural poll may shows that there is a trend which the share of western or global elements in the public culture of people in Qatar is increasing. Beside we must consider that most of the residents in Qatar, are foreigners, so it's natural to expect that a combination of cultures appears, and parts of Qatari society will probably renew and

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interpret traditional elements of their culture in the light of this experiences, and some also may adhere to their traditional culture and take fundamental (Islamic or ethnic-Arabic) positions.

Also we may observe two political trends in a country like Qatar, some may encourage people to enjoy welfare and continue to acquiesce with the current political structure of the country, and others may go to take a changing position, among them a friction go to Islamism and fundamentalism, and some to Arabic ethnicity-ism. But I think, due to failure of the past experiences, in Arab world, before and after Arab Spring for example in Egypt, nationalism, Arabism and Islamism, had failed, and nearly all of the countries that entered into revolution after Arab Spring are now in many troubles, and due to certain features of Qatar that most of its residents are foreigners, it's not of much possible. We will, probably, observe a gradually and very slow restructuring in political arena, but the social context will rapidly changing. If we suppose an interrelation among different structures of a society, and consider that western culture is not necessarily connected to democracy, a political structure that is not participative in political arena but allows participation in socio-economic and management spheres and is alongside with welfare and social freedom, is more possible to continue in Qatar and also UAE.

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