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OPEN PEER REVIEW

Citizenship Rights and National Unity: An Analysis of the Role of the State in the Transition from Crisis-Induced Solidarity to Sustainable Social Capital

Sepideh. Bouzari[1*], Ehsan. Salimi Ghalei[1], Ali. Jelvegar[2], Maryam. Shabani[3]

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Law, Faculty of Humanities, Maragheh University, East Azarbaijan, Maragheh, Iran
[2] Ph.D., Department of Public Law, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran
[3] Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: bozari.s@maragheh.ac.ir

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EDITOR:
Tahereh Ebrahimifar
Head of Sociology Department, Faculty of Arts, Helwan University,Cairo, Egypt. Email: Tah.Ebrahimifar@iauctb.ac.ir
REVIEWER 1:
Thanuja Kulasooriya
Department Soil Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana, Kamburupitiya, Sri Lanka. Email: thkulasooriya@soil.ruh.ac.lk
REVIEWER 2:
Sandeep Kotwal
Knowledge ManagementDivision, National Health Systems Resource Centre, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi, India. Email: sandkotwal@gmail.com

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The literature review in the final paragraph of the Introduction requires substantial expansion and systematization. The paragraph beginning “With regard to the subject of the present article, several studies have addressed national unity” primarily lists previous publications without critically comparing their theoretical perspectives, methods, findings, and limitations. The authors should replace this descriptive enumeration with a structured synthesis showing what prior research has established about national unity, what remains unresolved concerning citizenship rights and institutional trust, and precisely how the present article advances the literature. The statement that “no study was found specifically addressing” the exact title or combination of concepts is insufficient by itself to establish research novelty.

The manuscript should reconsider the analytical framing of the section entitled “National Unity During the Twelve-Day Sacred Defense: Arising from Satisfaction or Political Insight?” The title establishes a dichotomy between public satisfaction and political insight that may be theoretically restrictive. The two mechanisms are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and national solidarity during external conflict can plausibly emerge from multiple simultaneous factors, including threat perception, patriotism, identity, collective memory, institutional loyalty, strategic calculation, and temporary suspension of internal grievances. The authors should acknowledge competing explanations and justify why “political insight” is treated as the principal explanatory factor.

The manuscript should improve the legal precision of the statement that Articles 33–35 of the Citizenship Rights Charter "prohibit restrictions imposed without an explicit legal basis." The authors should quote or accurately paraphrase the relevant normative provisions and distinguish between recognition of digital rights and the legal consequences of their infringement. Moreover, the manuscript should explain whether the Charter itself provides judicially enforceable rights or primarily expresses administrative and policy commitments. This clarification would strengthen the legal argument concerning the relationship between digital governance and citizenship rights.

The section entitled "Illegitimate Filtering as an Instance of Conflict Between Citizenship Rights and National Unity" requires an explicit legal definition of "illegitimate filtering." At present, the term carries a normative conclusion before the criteria of illegitimacy have been fully established. The authors should specify the legal test used to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate restrictions, preferably based on legality, legitimate aim, necessity, proportionality, procedural safeguards, duration, independent review, and access to remedies. The analysis would then become considerably stronger if specific filtering practices were assessed against these criteria rather than being characterized collectively as illegitimate.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The paragraph linking electoral participation to public satisfaction requires methodological caution. The manuscript states that "when participation in the country's most important election reaches approximately 40%, it clearly indicates that one cannot insist upon the existence of complete public satisfaction with political governance." Although electoral turnout may provide relevant information about political engagement, it cannot be treated as a direct or unidimensional measure of governance satisfaction without further evidence. Turnout is influenced by candidate competition, political efficacy, electoral rules, mobilization, perceived stakes, socioeconomic factors, and strategic abstention. The manuscript should therefore qualify this inference and support it with appropriate empirical or theoretical evidence.

The subsequent distinction between "dissatisfaction with performance" and "opposition to structures" is analytically important but insufficiently substantiated. The manuscript states that "much of this dissatisfaction is directed toward functional, managerial, and executive issues rather than toward the principles and foundations of the political system." This conclusion requires evidence from surveys, public-opinion research, electoral studies, or other reliable sources. Without such evidence, the argument risks converting an interpretive assumption into an empirical conclusion. The authors should either provide supporting data or explicitly present the proposition as a theoretical interpretation rather than an established empirical fact.

The paragraph explaining national unity through "three historical-cultural layers" should be developed into a more explicit theoretical framework. The current categories—historical collective wisdom, religious insight and Islamic culture, and lived experience of resistance—are plausible but appear to have been generated narratively rather than derived from an identified theoretical model. The authors should explain the epistemological basis for selecting these three dimensions, whether they are exhaustive or illustrative, and how each contributes differently to crisis-induced solidarity. Linking these elements to collective memory theory, social identity theory, political socialization, or resilience scholarship would significantly strengthen the analytical architecture.

The manuscript needs to clarify its use of the concept of "political legitimacy." The sentence stating that "the unity demonstrated by the Iranian people during the Twelve-Day Sacred Defense generated substantial political legitimacy for the political system" appears to infer regime legitimacy directly from national solidarity in response to external aggression. These phenomena should not automatically be equated. Citizens can demonstrate national solidarity while simultaneously maintaining critical attitudes toward governmental institutions. The authors should distinguish state legitimacy, regime legitimacy, governmental performance legitimacy, national identification, and patriotic solidarity to avoid overinterpretation.

The theoretical section on "Social Capital and Institutional Trust" should engage more deeply with the multidimensionality of social capital. The manuscript currently defines social capital as "stable networks of trust and institutionalized norms of voluntary cooperation," but it does not distinguish bonding, bridging, and linking social capital or interpersonal versus

institutional trust. These distinctions are particularly relevant because crisis solidarity may strengthen bonding social capital while doing little to improve vertical trust between citizens and government institutions. Incorporating this distinction could provide a theoretically compelling explanation for why intense solidarity during crises does not necessarily become sustainable institutional trust afterward.

The section on procedural justice contains a strong conceptual premise but requires clearer application to the manuscript's central argument. The paragraph states that citizens show "higher levels of trust, participation, and cooperation" when procedures are perceived as fair, transparent, and law-based. The authors should explicitly identify how procedural justice mediates the relationship between citizenship rights and institutional trust. At present, citizenship rights, procedural justice, and trust are presented as mutually reinforcing constructs, but the directionality remains ambiguous. A conceptual model or clearly stated propositions would improve the explanatory precision of this section.

The discussion of citizenship rights should distinguish more carefully among constitutional rights, statutory rights, policy documents, and legally enforceable entitlements. The paragraph beginning "Within the context of the present study, citizenship rights, as a modern legal and institutional framework…" places constitutional provisions, ordinary legislation, and the Citizenship Rights Charter within a common normative framework. The authors should clarify the respective legal status, binding force, institutional enforcement mechanisms, and hierarchy of these instruments. This distinction is particularly important in a public-law article because the enforceability of a citizenship right depends substantially on its normative source.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.