



# From Border to Border

Comprehensive research study on  
identity and ethnicity in Iran

**Kameel Ahmady**



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**Kameel Ahmady**

**&**

**colleagues**

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**Kameel Ahmady and colleagues**



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## **A WORD TO THE READERS**

My Kurdish background has sparked an interest in the study of identity and ethnicity that has always been present in me. My childhood experiences have been affected by various ethnic stories, narratives and wartime memories. I was born and raised in an area close to the Iraqi border and not far from the Turkish border. This border position might have helped me to reach a more vivid picture and understanding of such concepts as identity and ethnicity. Another reason for my interest in identity and ethnicity is related to the background of my studies in other geographical locations, mostly in Iran and its rural and deprived societies. These studies kept me in close contact with the ethnic groups that settle in underdeveloped and low-income areas, an encounter and a relationship that ultimately helped me to arrive at an understanding of the various dimensions and aspects of the question of ethnicity.

The third reason for studying and researching identity and ethnicity is the requirement to distinguish these ethnicities from one another, as well as the flaws and shortcomings that have long existed in centre-oriented policies leading to an unfair distribution of wealth and power among the different geographical regions of a country. Additionally, the importance of peace in the geography and history of Iran, particularly at this pivotal time, further inspired me to conduct a study on identity and ethnicity with a focus on peace. Studies for this research focused more on the elite members of these ethnic groups than on ordinary people. The study makes a concerted effort to answer issues like how these people view themselves and their ethnicities, how they use that understanding to create a sense of otherness and distinction from other identities, and how they see themselves in the current political and social structure of Iranian society, and what they presume about ideas like convergence, political cooperation, mother tongue, as well as the central and peripheral ethnicities.

There are ambiguities involved in the use of 'ethnic identity' and 'national identity'. Among some minorities in Iran, there is a great emphasis on using the word 'nation' instead of 'ethnic group'. The use of the term 'ethnic' in this study is not intended to diminish conceptual complexity. Instead, the researchers strove to respect the spirit of science and did not intend to interfere with personal values in the research process.

The formation of identities and subcultures within national identities, as well as the phenomenon of ethnicity, have taken on increasing importance in the modern world. Colonialization, territorial divisions based on the national government, and the resulting disparities, deprivations, and ideologies all play significant roles in the formation of ethnic groups within societies. According to the various studies conducted across the world, many factors have weakened ethnic inclinations among contemporary educated youth, especially after the years of World War II. These factors included the continuation of macro-plans and structural uniformity by the national states, processes and effects of

globalization, the growth of urbanization and education, ease of access to different environments, as well as the inevitable role of media which is increasingly shrinking times and condensing spaces. At the same time, such events as the autonomy in the former Soviet republics and the UK colonies, the continued pursuit of ethnic identity at the heart of Europe and other countries, and dozens of other cases indicate the survival of ethnic tendencies in the new world despite all new forces. Such instances demonstrate that the search for ethnic identity is not exclusive to the Third World and developing nations.

As a nation with a significant degree of ethnic variety, Iran places a high priority on the issue of ethnicity in comparison to other nations. Iranian ethnic groups have exhibited strong and weak ethnic inclinations. Before Iran became a modern state, it was challenging to distinguish between the Iranian government and its interdependent ethnic groups, which together formed a single system known as the Iranian identity, with ethnic groups and their leaders who were regarded as essential components of the governmental structure. The ethnic groups shared in and profited from the governmental authority, and if the equilibrium between the two was broken, it was naturally restored. The government relied on these ethnic groups to organise troops, collect taxes, distribute responsibilities and duties, and maintain borders. This situation occurred in some marginal regions of Iran, especially in the last century and in the historical periods such as the Constitutional Revolution, World War I and II, the expulsion of Reza Shah, the coming to power of the second Pahlavi, and also at the time of the Islamic Revolution's victory. On the other hand, it may be claimed that the local political-administrative organisation only existed for a short while after the radical central forces took power.

A historical review of ethnic groups in Iran reveals that they have often been offended by discriminatory laws, especially on language, religion, and civil rights. In the Constitutional Revolution, the rights of these groups were not taken into account, and during the Pahlavi era, the publication and distribution of newspapers, magazines, and books in ethnic languages were strictly prohibited. Today, the main reason and origin of these dissatisfactions can be found in the feeling of political, cultural, economic, linguistic, and religious inequality among some ethnic groups in comparison with other ethnic groups, especially Persian speakers. Kurds, Turks, Arabs, and Balochis in the political sphere feel as though they do not belong in the political system of the nation and that no representatives of their ethnic groups hold significant high-ranking positions in it. As for the economy, the non-central provinces lack the necessary facilities and it is believed that most of the country's facilities are accumulated and wasted in the central provinces. In the cultural sectors, the reviewed ethnic groups claim that there are restrictions on hosting seminars and regional conferences and that neither the national nor local media respect nor take into consideration the traditional beliefs and practices of their people. Regarding education, there are no textbooks in their mother tongues, and Kurdish, Turkish, Arab, and Baloch children are required to attend school in a language that they do not speak at home. In terms of religion, the majority of Balochis, as well as some Kurds, have religious affiliations that differ from the country's

official religion, and they see how the religious views of government officials have resulted in various forms of political, cultural, social, and economic marginalization and oppression.

What we have discussed is simply a subset of the ethnic demands of the previous century, particularly in the years after the establishment of the Islamic Revolution. These demands have always been regarded as a security threat to national unity and consensus, and they have frequently been addressed with hostile and violent reactions. As a result, aggressive behaviour in encounters between the centre and ethnic groups has resulted, causing irreversible harm to national unity and consensus.

Ethnicity and nationality are modern forms of social identification. During the nineteenth century the concept of ethnicity was used to describe groups of people living outside capitalist polis, and in the twentieth century, it was applied to groups of people with a common language, territory and history that were both defined under the umbrella concept of nation and also had a distinct language or even a territory distinct from the nation, in competition and confrontation with the nation; those who build their history, unify the linguistic pluralism within themselves and specify their territory. Nationality, on the other hand, is a historical identity formation that represents a set of obligations and duties of a group of people who belong to a certain geographical region and decide, act, and resolve collectively. As a result, political parties and social activists have two competing perspectives and interpretations of these concepts. Furthermore, given the ambiguities between ethnic and national identities, as well as the fact that some minorities in Iran place a strong focus on using the word 'nation' rather than 'ethnicity,' this study does not attempt to undermine any idea by utilising the term 'ethnicity.' Because this study attempts to follow the scientific spirit without intruding on local or personal values or processes, the author relies on a strong understanding and knowledge of both of these points of view. This research is grounded in anthropological and ethnological theories. Throughout the study, the author has used both concepts of nation and ethnicity, thus preserving a high level of neutrality and keeping the issue of identity and ethnicity away from prevalent forms of bias and prejudice.

As previously stated, this study aimed to address the following questions and analyse these examples in depth utilising scientific methodologies for analysing the extensive interviews with elites and the general public.

- What understanding do ethnicities have of themselves and of other identities with whom they feel like strangers?
- Where do they find themselves in the political, economic and social structures of contemporary Iran?
- What are their perspectives on convergence, collaboration, political engagement, mother tongue, and centralism?
- Is there greater intellectual and practical room for ethnicities to attain more independence?

By demonstrating the present demands of each ethnic group, the findings of this study can assist decision-makers in peacefully resolving associated problems thus strengthening national unity and consensus.

I owe gratitude to everyone who assisted me in carrying out this study which is a edited and shorter version of its original copy from Farsi at various stages. Members of my family, whose unwavering support never faded and who stood by my side during the hardest stages of my endeavour, as well as close friends who supported me throughout the research process. Everyone gathered together to collect and analyse the narrations of this work and undertake this exhaustive analysis. I am very thankful to my research assistants and colleagues, Roza Hemmati and Seyyed Mohammad (Jamal) Hosseini, who supported me in coordinating and collecting information and references during the study process. Sanaz Tabari deserves credit for revisiting the text and adding additional quotations. Many individuals and institutions contributed to the completion of this research; many field observations were only feasible due to exploratory journeys, field training, support, and cooperation. In this regard, I would like to thank Roza Hemmati, Dr Sanaz Tabari, Dr. H Sorkhabi, Kurdistan Shahmoradi, Mohsen Maroofi for their advice and assistance in monitoring the study's process as well as for conducting the quantitative analysis of the research, extracting field data, and drawing figures and tables. My thanks go to Marzieh Nekokar for her editing, remarks, and meticulous attention to detail, especially when it came to revising the content of my work. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr. Hassan Rashidi for reviewing the final document and assisting in making it smoother and more accurate by offering suggestions and reminders about essential adjustments. I thank Shafaqh Rahmani for reading and reviewing the theoretical literature of the text. I also like to thank Professor Abbas Vali for his suggestions on the book's original structure and text.

I owe my friends and colleagues in thirteen Iranian provinces and cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, West and East Azarbaijan, Zanjan, Ardabil, Ilam, Khuzestan, Bushehr, Semnan, and Sistan and Balochestan, for their assistance, hospitality, wise judgments, and ideas. Numerous close friends that we visited for interviews as well as many others made field coordination and communication easier. There are too many of them to list them all here, but some of them politely decided to help and asked me not to reveal their names. The clergy, religious organisations, and other societal leaders who assisted me with this study deserve my gratitude as well. I would especially like to express my gratitude to the people interviewed and their families, as well as representatives from the social and health services departments and organisations, as well as the numerous universities across the country, including the Islamic Azad University, Payam Noor University, Al-Zahra University, and Tabriz University, for their unquestioning assistance in providing knowledge and information necessary to complete this study.

*Kameel Ahmady* April 2019

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## PREFACE

One of the characteristics of the new world is that mankind has abandoned the constraints of tradition; as a result, rather than being constrained to accept the old concepts, values, rules, and standards of their forefathers, they reinterpret and define them autonomously. One of the topics that individuals autonomously want to comprehend in the new world is identity and learning to which identity group each person belongs. After all, many experts predicted that the post-World War II expansion of macro structural programmes at the national and international levels, as well as the growth of urbanisation, education, easier access to diverse environments, and the atmosphere created by the media, would result in the compression of time and space and weaken ethnic tendencies. They believed that the contemporary educated young would not be confined or restrained.

However, the process of autonomy in the former Soviet republics and the British colonies, as well as the ongoing process of identity-seeking in Europe and developed nations like the UK (Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales), Spain (Basque Catalonia), Italy (northern and southern Italy, Veneto, and Venice), Poland (Upper Silesia), Switzerland (Zora), Belgium (Northern Flanders), France (Brittany), Cyprus (Turkish part of northern Cyprus) as well as in dozens of other nations, demonstrate that, in contrast to all of these views, ethnic tendencies do exist in the modern world.

Iranian ethnic communities have revealed certain ethnic inclinations during the past century, with varying degrees of strength and weakness. During the early years of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule, the Democratic Party was able to announce its independence for almost a year and seize control of the governments of numerous areas of Azarbaijan. In Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Party was able to simultaneously take control of many Kurdish cities. The majority of the Kurdish territories saw ethnic identity strife in the years following the revolution.<sup>1</sup> Similar events took place in the Baloch lands while Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah were in power; these areas were later brought under the control of the central government. Additionally, Arabs have expressed views about the formation of ethnic identities throughout the previous century. Their most recent attempts in this regard are exemplified by organisations like Al-Ahwaziyah, whose activities are an indication of ethnic discontent with political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and religious disparity among the ethnic groups as its main cause. They achieved their height when contrasted with other ethnic groups, notably those who spoke Persian. The Kurdish, Turkish, Arab, and Baloch ethnic communities feel that they play no political role in the nation and that no major posts in any national governorships, ministries, embassies or other official positions are held by members of their ethnic group. Furthermore, there is a perception that the majority of the nation's economic resources are concentrated in the provinces

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see Cameron (2008), growth with or without equity: distributional impact of Indonesian development, *Asian-Pacific Economics Literature*, 16 (2), p. 1-17

and cities in the centre. In areas like Azarbaijan, where people have some amenities today, either such facilities are the product of the people's efforts or their industrial sites were constructed before the Islamic Revolution. Culturally, the examined ethnic groups believe that local festivals, conferences, and rituals are restricted and that neither national nor local media adequately represent nor support their local traditions. There is not a single unit for official teaching in the mother tongue throughout the whole educational process, and children from diverse ethnic groups are required to acquire their lessons in the second language in the government's schools. Due to their religious differences from the nation's official religion, some Kurds and Balochis feel that they have been unfairly treated by the government. Contrary to the numerous promises made to them, their main demands—including the denial of a Sunni Mosque in Tehran and the compensation for the absence of top administrative posts among members of these groups—have not yet been realized.<sup>2</sup>

The demands listed above are just a sample of those made by ethnic groups over the past century, particularly in the years following the Islamic Revolution. These requests have been categorised by the government as security-related, and harmful to national consensus and unity; thus, they were subject to aggressive and violent responses. As a result, violent behaviour between the centre and ethnic groups is seen which, after a while and with the weakening of ethnic groups, has turned into an unpleasant silence over the people in those lands. Also, during this period, no practical action has been taken to fulfil ethnic demands and achieve social justice and equality to prevent these violent acts. This is while the efforts of a government should always be in the direction of preventing violent acts and solving problems in a peaceful atmosphere and through peaceful interaction. A government should mobilise organisations and parties to provide a place for ethnic elites while recognising cultural diversity and addressing the requirements of various communities. When cultural distinctions are ignored, assimilationist policies are followed, and extreme measures are used by both the centre and the opposition parties, the process may spiral out of control and lead to acts of violence rather than achieving justice and equality.

Based on these principles, an effort has been made in the current study to look into the demands of various groups while looking into the subject of identity among the Fars (or Persian-speaking), Turk, Kurd, Baloch, and Arab ethnic groups. This can be a factor in achieving social equality and justice and, as a result, bring about long-lasting peace in society and point the way out of conflicts. Undoubtedly, presenting these arguments through scientific methods, conducting extensive interviews with elites and members of the public, and disclosing the current demands of each group under study may assist decision-makers in resolving conflicts peacefully and promoting national consensus.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information see Hooshamnd et al. (2002), *Development Process in the Kurd Regions*. Tehran, Human Sciences Research Institute



## INTRODUCTION

Identity is a flexible notion rather than an essential and immutable category. Every identity is the result of a specific confrontation; hence identities are not static and permanent but rather they are processes of transformation with a historical and dynamic dimension. The construction of ethnic identities, ethnocentrism, and ethnicity have all become quite significant in the contemporary world. People's dispositions to identify with ethnic groups are influenced by a variety of factors, including geographical divides based on national governments and the resulting inequalities and deprivations, as well as ideological policies or post-colonial practices. Ethnic identity is a form of social identity. A particular combination of factual, subjective, cultural, social, and emotional aspects differentiates a human group from belonging to other groups.

In the majority of countries, pluralism and a variety of identities have long existed. Today, despite modernization processes and the creation of modern institutions, the variety of identities has not only not decreased, but it has also become a contentious topic on where to draw the boundaries between identities and differences. The subjects acquired more diverse representations. Iran is a nation made up of many different ethnic groups, thus it is important to think about how ethnic convergence or divergence affects social cohesion and consensus. Ethnic and identity policies have always existed throughout the political and social history of Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's ethnic policies have changed throughout time, and oftentimes the ethnic significance has not been reflected, despite the Constitution's acknowledgement of ethnic diversity. In reality, throughout its political history, Iran's administrations have always worked to assimilate ethnic minorities; in their eyes, this meant combining many identities into a single one and placing them under the Persians as a whole. For instance, even the 1999 approval of macro-policies related to the Iranian ethnic groups (Haghpanah, 2003) did not result in the adoption of a particular procedure for ethnic groups, and the use of various tastes in various parts of the country persisted. The ethnic inclinations caused several protests and ethnic group discontent in the past, as well as declarations of autonomy in more recent years.

An adequate understanding of these ideas will be provided in this research by reviewing the theoretical literature on identity and ethnicity. It will be discussed how ethnic minority elites interpret the ideas of identity and ethnicity based on field data and the findings of interviews with them. The demands of this group will also be discussed, primarily to provide a framework for addressing social justice and equality. We will also speak about the role that governments can play in fulfilling these expectations. The research will also take into account the steps made to eliminate economic, political, cultural, and linguistic inequality as well as other problems that support national consensus and unity to establish sustainable peace. Ignoring these requirements might push the nation, as well as all of its ethnic groups, to the brink of crisis and catastrophe.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE

Life in Iranian society has long been associated with multi-ethnic and multi-identity. Without taking into account the influence of ethnicity, no general explanation of multi-ethnic communities would be sufficient. The scientific study of ethnic groups has received attention in light of the rising significance of ethnic communities in the development and strengthening of social consensus, particularly at a time when democratisation has increased ethnic and identity consciousness. Many academics hold this view, contending that ethnic communities and a long-standing conception of ethnicity as a sort of primitive nationalism are the origins of national consensus and identity. If the circumstances are conducive, ethnic solidarity and identity consensus in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies can promote peace, close gaps among groups, and foster an intellectual and practical climate suitable for ethnic independence and self-determination. Here, the collective identity of the ethnic groups in Iran is a key issue. People who identify as belonging to a group with the pronoun 'we' do so in the area of social life known as group or social identities. A sense of belonging instils a sense of obligation and accountability.

Humanities academics have explained that a government is supported by four core pillars:

- a territory or boundary that establishes a government's legal jurisdiction;
- a population or people, which refers to people who are citizens of a certain government;
- a form of governance when there is neither internal competition nor equal power with the government, nor is there any external domination or influence over the nation;
- Additionally, a country's political, administrative, and governmental structures and practices make up its government.

This definition states that a government's effectiveness will be eliminated if any one of these four elements is missing. Evidently, out of these four factors, the first two—land and population—are most affected by ethnicity and ethnic identity. To ensure stability and maintain security and safety, governments must have a thorough grasp of national identities, ethnic identities, and networks for communication amongst ethnic group members and also among ethnic communities. Activists in the fields of identity and culture as well as everyone with a sincere desire for world peace and human reconciliation recognise the importance of having a thorough understanding of how each ethnic group recognises itself and the identity that they believe sets them apart from others for a civil society.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out utilising a Grounded Theory method and an interpretative approach. In the first group, the elite were interviewed using an anthropological perspective, and in the second stage, ordinary Iranian ethnic members (particularly Turks, Kurds, Arabs, the Baloch, and Persians) were interviewed concurrently. Based on the qualitative nature of the study, purposive sampling was used, the theoretical saturation of the data was obtained from one hundred interviewees and 215 more interviews were conducted for further confirmation. Of course, we have benefited from the oversight and counsel of qualified qualitative methodologists along the way. The data of the present study were collected using in-depth and semi-structured interview techniques. The interviews and data collected were analysed in three stages using theoretical coding (open, axial and selective), and at first, the informal interview method was used to process the data to obtain the important concepts and categories of participants.

In the second stage, using Grounded Theory, the categories and concepts obtained from the interview process were adapted for theoretical sampling, and then, the general lines of the interviews were formed through the concepts and categories. The questionnaire's questions were standardised using semi-structured interviews, and this procedure proceeded until theoretical saturation was reached. Then, as data was collected, concepts, categories, and subcategories were discovered through open coding. Subcategories were connected to categories and one another using axial coding. The cause, process and consequence were determined. The theoretical results of the investigation were eventually discovered following selective coding.

(There are ambiguities involved in the use of 'ethnic identity' and 'national identity'. Among some minorities in Iran, there is a great emphasis on using the word 'nation' instead of 'ethnic group'. The use of the term 'ethnic' in this study is not intended to diminish conceptual complexity. Instead, the researchers strove to respect the spirit of science and did not intend to interfere with personal values in the research process.)

# Chapter One: Identity and Ethnicity; definitions and concepts

## INTRODUCTION

Identity has found new forms in the contemporary world, and its importance appears to be growing, particularly with the rise of demands since the 1990s. Since identity is not an essential and fixed category, but a fluid concept, each identity is the product of a particular discourse, and accordingly, identity is not static but can be understood as a process with a historical trajectory of becoming. Ethnicity and ethnocentrism have found close associations with the formation of identity to make it doubly important in contemporary times, and factors such as territorial divisions based on the national government, inequality and deprivation, ideologies, and postcolonial policies have played an important role in the ethnocentrism of human societies. Ethnic identity is like social identity; it is a special set of objective, subjective, cultural, social, ideological, as well as psychological factors that are manifested in a human group and distinguish it from other groups. In contrast to the general society, this type of identity fosters stronger emotional connections among its participants and has a higher degree of uniformity and homogeneity. In this view, ethnic identity is lower than national identity. Ethnicity is one of the modern social sources of identity that is a subset of national identity while national identity is the most comprehensive and extensive social identity that includes a set of geographical, historical, cultural, epic, and ethnic characteristics and attachments that encompass the life of its members and is their source of satisfaction and pride. Ethnic identity is a set of features and characteristics that internally diversifies national identities. Iranian identity has components and elements that define and introduce it. Some national symbols, including the flag, national anthem, myths, Nowruz, and other elements represent Iranian national identity.

It becomes clearer than ever that the type of governmental management of plurality in collective identity determines the quality of governance and management and consequently, affects the quality of democracy. It should be stated that one of the basic issues in multi-ethnic societies is how to create connected ethnic communities to create a decidedly inclusive and sustainable national community. Social cohesion and convergence in such societies are affected by the quality of inter-ethnic relations, in which case, social cohesion is formed through ethnic connections and convergences. There are various approaches to analysing the cultures and ethnicities that make up a civilization. Sociological perspectives place a priority on themes like social order, social cohesiveness, behaviour standardisation, and cultural development.

The plurality and diversity of identities are historical realities in most societies. In the modern era, this multiplicity of identities not only did not diminish but despite modernization processes and the formation of modern institutions, turned into a controversial issue over identity distinctions and differences. Additionally, during the second half of the twentieth century, processes of

globalisation, such as the monopoly of media control and management and the growing growth and extension of the media, have contributed to an increase in identity awareness and the possibility of representation. Along with other social and cultural developments, the modern media increased the diversity and plurality of identities, and along with more traditional sources, such as race, religion and ethnicity, new identities based on gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, pseudo-religious groups, and other factors, emerged and demanded to be recognized.

Since Iran is a multi-ethnic country with many different ethnic groups, the concept of ethnic convergence or divergence must be reflected in the concepts of social cohesion and social consensus. As early as the Achaemenid era, the Persian language increasingly surpassed other languages including Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, and Balochi and was regarded as the official language. These ethnic and identity policies have always existed throughout Iran's political and social history, even though some researchers attribute the official status of the Persian language to Reza Shah's regime, who constantly sought to shape linguistic and ethnic identities around a single national cultural axis. Despite the Islamic Revolution's early recognition of ethnic diversity as recorded in the new constitution, ethnic policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran became subject to the prevailing circumstances and in many cases, the full significance of their identity remained unrepresented. Indeed, throughout political history, all Iranian governments have always sought ethnic assimilation, that is, the rulers were mostly after the integration of various identities into a single identity and under the umbrella of the Fars people. As a striking illustration, even the 1999 approval of policies related to Iranian ethnic groups (Haghpanah, 2003) did not result in the adoption of a more defined and refined approach to ethnicity, and the application of subjective approaches to different regions of the country persisted.

Ethnic identity is an important element in shaping the cultural identity of any society. Cultural identity can be considered as a component of social identity that is based on cultural differentiation, a distinction with contexts that can be sought in the traditions and customs, values, beliefs, and historical memory of each nation or ethnic group (Mohseni, 2007). Ethnic identity is the constant and systematic communication of cultural differences between groups that define themselves as distinctive. This connection is established when cultural differences are related to social interactions. Therefore, it should be studied at the level of social life, not at the level of symbolic culture.

Ethnic identity is often defined based on such cultural components as language, religion, customs, and historical background, by which individuals relate to all or some aspects of a group's identity. Early in the 20th century, some social scientists viewed racial, ethnic, and linguistic interests and identities as a form of historical stagnation and aberration that either submitted to communism or was absorbed and dissolved within liberal democratic institutions. According to Golmohammadi (2007), ethnicity was seen as a stage of human society's earlier development that would eventually vanish. It was believed that as capitalism expanded, national governments were established, new forms of

communication and information dissemination were developed, cities were becoming more literate and educated, and socialisation was becoming an even more powerful trend, ethnic identities and demands would eventually join the dead archives of history. This claim found stronger theoretical support by the introduction of theories of globalization. There was the supposition that the process of globalization, especially the globalization of culture, would lead to the establishment and domination of a single culture throughout the world and the indigenous cultures and the subcultures of ethnic cultures and even their languages would eventually disappear (Tohidfam, 2003). Others, however, believed that ethnic groups would not become extinct as a result of globalisation because it also offers resources and spaces for the growth of ethnic self-consciousness, thus boosting ethnic movements. This perspective contends that rather than causing the extinction of indigenous, ethnic, and regional cultures, globalisation has encouraged the development of frameworks for sub-national collective identities, the most important of which are ethnic identities. Ethnic, racial, and linguistic identities took on new relevance as the global community entered the third century, and it might be said that the majority of countries in the world are involved in ethnic movements and conflicts (Ahmady, 1397: 65). There are 8,000 different ethnic groups and 6,700 different languages spoken worldwide, but only 192 countries are members of the United Nations (Khoobrooy Pak, 2001).

Particularly in the case of a country like Iran, national identity is such a significant and vibrant concept that affects the way people and politicians hold political views and behave, forming the general policies of the country. If we accept the central premise that people's identity affects their thoughts, ideas, and behaviours and that one of the most significant factors influencing each person's identity is national identity, then investigating the formation and evolution of national identity plays a crucial role in comprehending, analysing, forecasting, and even influencing the behaviours of the individuals as well as the general society. This assertion implies that through a proper understanding of the mechanism of formation and influencing individual and collective identity, then the political behaviours of individuals and societies can be directed. Shaping the political behaviour of others is the proper meaning of the most important central element of politics, that is, power. Power, as the central concept of politics, means the ability to influence the behaviour of others which constitutes the basis of power. According to this assertion, the primary objective of politics and, in some cases, its most effective method, revolves around influencing how identities are formed and affected.

One of the major problems in multi-ethnic countries is how ethnic identities and national identities relate to one another. This is because the attitudes of these two types of socio-political identities toward each other have broad ramifications, a factor that sustains national peace and cohesion as well as state effectiveness. If the ethnic identities could define themselves under a single identity in a given territory, that territory would move towards national cohesion through the use of all its capacities, and on the other side, if ethnic identities turn to define themselves in conflict with the broader national identity

or with other ethnicities, then national security, national economy, and the integrity of the state are at stake. In the contemporary geography of the world, few countries are there that could be compared to Iran in terms of its rich historical, ethnic, linguistic and religiously diverse like Iran. The same diversity has contributed to the most important ups and downs in the history of this territory. Political and military conflicts with the dominant ethnicity and other ethnicities/nations, as well as the emergence of nationalist perspectives on ethnic culture, are some of the consequences of this diversity of identities, that has impacted ethnic-national identities.

Although the reality of diversity and plurality of identities in Iran is undeniably true, conflicts and identity-based activities centred on ethnicity and religion have occurred over the last century as a result of discrimination and inequalities in the political, economic, and cultural structures of society. Ethnic identity has received special attention at various times due to political and military events, but since the establishment of the modern state in Iran it has remained a topic of interest to scholars from a variety of disciplines, including political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and ethnography. The massive body of research and publications on ethnic identity necessitates a re-analysis to extract and derive its core themes and ideas broadly and cohesively.

As a social issue as well as a political and security dilemma, the problem of identity, including national identity, Iranian identity, Islamic identity, ethnic identity, and other forms and names of identity, has been brought up and discussed by state authorities, politicians, journalists, and humanities scholars. This idea is supported by numerous studies on the problem of national identity and research on the relationship between ethnic identity and national identity.

National identity together with ethnic or local identity is the most significant among the various sources of identification for individuals in Iranian society. These two sources of identity emerged and evolved concurrently over the long course of this territory. They are therefore both old structures and modern constructions by nature. National identity has been supported over the long history of Iran which spans 7,000 years, as well as the preservation of its geographical borders, at least as they exist today, and its political independence. In more recent years, this has also been facilitated by cultural policies from the Pahlavi era to the present, and also by the country's shared and significant literary, cultural, and artistic heritage.

The rise of mass movements in ethnic communities, the development of local media, the effects of globalisation processes, the development of self-awareness, the influence of external power centres on ethnic elites, together with the manipulation of specific ethnic demands are just a few of the significant factors contributing to the prominence of ethnic identity. In other words, for structural reasons, a variety of identities have simultaneously emerged among Iranian actors, so besides national and ethnic identities, other formulations of identity including religious identities, modern (or globalised) identities, and regional identities have also emerged and developed here. Nation and national identity

are closely associated concepts; in essence, the development of a nation with its contemporary qualities is required for the development of national identity.

For a very long time, the dominant ethnic discourse has assimilated both ethnic and religious identities and has repressed any call for pluralism and diversity in identity. This is particularly true since the final decade of the nineteenth century, which is marked by the spread of Aryanism and Reza Shah's programs of assimilation, which continues to this day through media practices. The various governments have consistently argued for unifying identity in Iran as a means of preserving national cohesion, security, and political unity of the country, so the ground has always been ready for the exercise of censorship and the elimination of the cultural and political identities of ethnic groups in Iran. However, it is noteworthy that this approach to defining ethnic cultures and the ensuing policies, which have strong historical roots in the minds and lives of the people of this country, have had a significant negative impact on national security and caused certain ethnic groups to feel underprivileged and deprived of access to resources, wealth, and power. Indeed, the unfair distribution of wealth, status, and power among different ethnic groups as well as the promotion of a sense of deprivation among ethnic groups have both increased, and the gap between ethnicities and sovereignty has widened, giving rise to political identity organisations, groups and activists. The repression of these identity activist groups by the central government has fuelled ethnic and radical sentiments that pose a serious threat to national security and cohesion, to the extent that many see themselves as more than an ethnic group and call themselves a nation or a national minority. The central government also pressures these ethnic minorities to adopt the dominant cultural values as superior values, preventing them from introducing and promoting the ethnic-national values connected to their identity and culture. For instance, they are not permitted to receive a quality education in their mother tongue. These opposing pressures increase the divides already present and intensify the conflict between the administration and the various ethnic groups.

Historically, the problem of identity is among the classic debates. Understanding identity is a core theme of numerous disciplines, from philosophy to linguistics, psychology, sociology, and political science and covers a wide and diverse variety of methodologies, discourses, and ideas. During the nineties, identity turned to be a unifying framework for intellectual discourses and, in Jenkins' terms, a 'sign of the times' (Jenkins, 2004). Due to the simultaneity of different trends over the past two decades, a new phenomenon has emerged which is known as the rise in identity awareness (ethnic, gender, and religious), which is not necessarily rooted in political and economic discontent. In other words, dissidents and members of identity movements are not always recruited from the working class, the lower classes, or political parties (Ghahramanpour, 2009). In contrast to the modernization paradigm, which viewed modernization's effects as urbanism, secularisation, and industrialization as well as the media's role in fostering a uniform popular culture with patriotic allegiances rather than ethnic and tribal affiliations, the resurgence of ethnicity in the late nineteenth century was not only a scientific



fact to refute such a claim but also a pivotal concept for the nature of social relations (Gallagher, 2005). A discourse developed since the end of the nineteenth century when the modernity crisis first surfaced, and its full manifestation is to be found in the postmodern age and numerous postmodernist theories. This discourse is known as identity pluralism (Kachueian, 2005). This identity pluralism manifests itself in at least two ways: by recognising ethnicities and by questioning sovereign national identities.

The significance of the current study is therefore revealed in the mosaic structure of Iranian society. Iranian society has long had a multi-ethnic life and is constituted by multiple and diverse collective identities. Some scholars contend that any attempt to homogenise such a multi-ethnic society will fall short if it does not consider the dynamics of ethnicity. In multi-ethnic and multicultural societies, any step toward ethnic cohesion and solidarity can both repair ethnic divisions and promote peace. Thus, the significance of scientific research on ethnicity is becoming more widely acknowledged as a result of the continuing and expanding role that ethnic communities play in the creation and maintenance of social cohesion. The reason and quality of the collective identity of the ethnic groups in Iran are crucial issues here. The term 'collective' or 'social identity' refers to an area and territory of social life to which a person feels connected, devoted, obliged, and has a sense of duty and responsibility toward it.

## **IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY: DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS**

Ethnic identity is one of the forming factors of cultural identity in any society. The ethnic identity definition is based on cultural markers such as language, religion, customs, dress, and historical backgrounds which all people or some aspects of a group or an individual's identity are associated with. Reisman (1953) coined the term ethnicity in sociology, but it was widely used in the 1960s and 1970s (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975). In the early twentieth century, social science researchers often considered racial, ethnic, and linguistic interests and identities as a kind of historical regressionism and abnormality that had been destroyed by surrendering to communism or being consolidated and dissolved within the framework of liberal democratic institutions. According to Golmohammadi (2007), ethnicity was seen as a byproduct of early human social evolution that would eventually vanish. It was also thought that ethnic identity would be remembered in history as a result of the development of capitalism, the creation of national governments, the escalation of urbanisation, the rise of literacy and education levels, and the process of socialisation. This claim found stronger theoretical support by proposing related theories of globalization and the formation of the global village. It was believed that the process of globalization, especially cultural globalization, would lead to the establishment and domination of a single culture over the universe and the indigenous cultures, and lifestyles. They believed that even the languages of the various ethnic groups would be forgotten (Tohidfam, 2003). However, another group holds that, through the tools it offers, globalisation will not only prevent ethnic communities from becoming extinct but will rather help them expand in terms

of ethnic self-awareness and the power of their activities. The national identity is a very key and evolving concept that, especially in the case of a country like Iran, plays a fundamental role in forming the behaviour and political positions of people and politicians, and by extension, those of the nation as a whole.

Ethnic diversity has contributed to some of Iran's history's ups and downs. This variety in identities with concurrent influence on ethnic/national identities leads to political and military confrontations between the dominant ethnicity and other ethnicities/nationalities, as well as the development of various nationalistic ideas on ethnic culture and other things.

Frederick Barth's understanding of cultural differences is significant in this context. He defined ethnicity from the outside to the inside as follows: according to his definition of ethnicity, belonging to a certain cultural group does not produce a difference in a social group; rather, it is social contact with other groups that makes the difference feasible, obvious, and relevant from a social point of view. Accordingly, ethnicity is interpreted differently in relation to others. According to Barth, the boundary of ethnicity is determined by the distinctions formed, developed, and maintained by interaction with others rather than the major emphasis of a study project being defined by the membership of certain tangible cultural features to a specific group. The cultural difference does not generate ethnic societies by itself; it is social contact with others that leads to the definition and categorization of 'us' versus 'them'. Group identities should always be defined by what they are not, that is by the people who are not members of the group (Eriksen, 1993).

In addition, there are few concepts with as many meanings as identity. The trace of this concept can be found in daily disputes as well as scientific and academic debates. The existence of many synonymous or close and related concepts for identity like I, me, we, self-understanding, self-image, self-representation, self-awareness, self-concept, ego, super-ego and personality also originate from here (Doran and Mohseni 2003, p. 81).

Contrary to the opinion of psychoanalysts, social psychoanalysts and sociologists emphasize the fact that the sense of individual identity is formed dialectically between the individual and society. Although they agree that identity is usually manifested in an individual's feelings and attitudes, it is formed based on social and group life. Social identity manifested in a personality separate from the social world of other people has no meaning. The individuals are unique and changeable, but personality is constructed in a completely social way and through different stages of the process of socialization (Gol Mohammadi, 2002, p. 222 and 223).

Ethnic identity is a type of collective identity that refers to a set of characteristics distinguishing an ethnic group from others, creating a sense of belonging between its members and uniting them under a specific ethnicity. This type of collective identity in countries with ethnic and cultural diversity is so important that it is juxtaposed with other identities such as local, regional, ethnic and cultural identity and is intertwined with concepts like ethnic group and ethnicity.

Works related to ethnic studies in the Middle East not only deal with the problems arising from the definition of ethnicity and conflicting criteria that determine the nature of ethnic groups, but they also ignore the historical features of ethnic and tribal societies and their relationship to the government. The main reason is that in these studies tribes and ethnic groups usually have the same meanings and the features of ethnic groups are attributed to tribal societies. Thus, the linguistic and religious groups in the Middle East, formerly organized by their ethnicity, are now considered distinct ethnic groups in constant struggle with the government to become a nation. As stated by Bassam Tibi, the terms tribal and ethnic group cannot be used interchangeably in the context of Middle Eastern studies. Scholars in social sciences interested in the Middle East have used the concept of ethnicity as an analytical tool to represent social divisions in countries without national communities (homogenous countries). It is important also in research on Iranian ethnic groups to consider the conceptual distinction between an ethnic group and a tribe.

## **IDENTITY IN IRAN**

Given the multiplicity involved in collective and linguistic identity in Iran, a definition needs to be provided for national identity before identity can be discussed with respect to the concept of Iran as a shared homeland. National identity denotes a sense of belonging and loyalty to the common elements and symbols in the national society (the society as a whole) within the politically defined borders. According to Ahmad Ashraf, national identity has been dominant since the second half of the past century to replace the concept of national character and is regarded as a constituent of social science (Ashraf, 1999: p. 522). Due to the particular geographic location, Iranian identity has been influenced by three domains of civilization: Iranian, Islamic, and Western.

What most Iranian scholars agree on is that the three major components of national identity in Iran are:

- 1) Geography and land, including the variation between the Iranian Plateau and its mountainous regions
- 2) Persian language, with all the changes it has gone through in contact with Turkish, Mongolian, and Arabic
- 3) Islam has remained the same despite all the sectarian discrepancies.

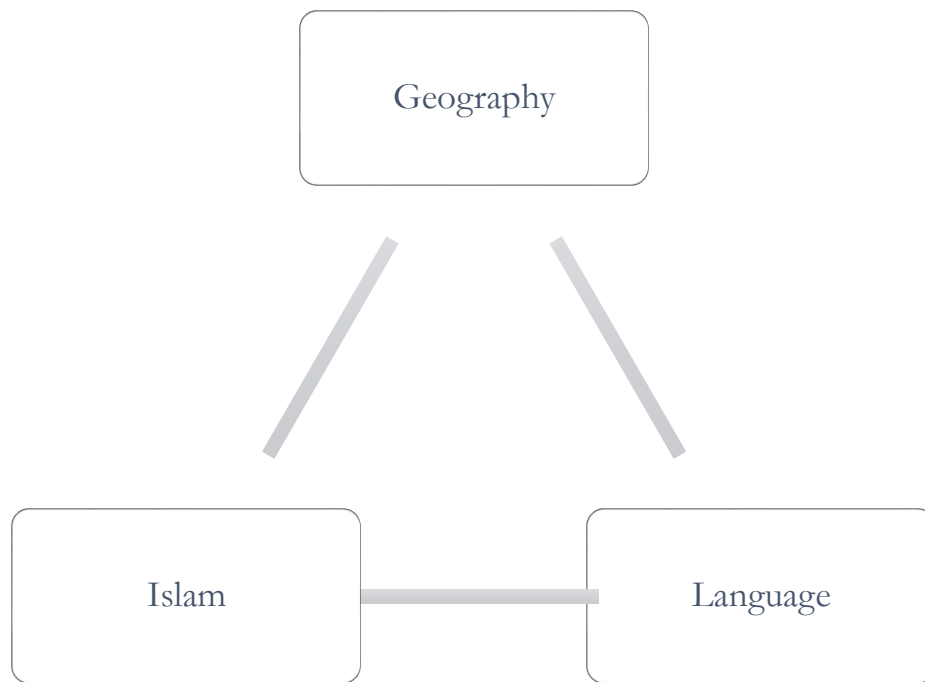


Fig. 1. Components of Iranian national identity

It should be stated that what led to integrity and formation of political unity on the Iranian Plateau was a requirement for the inhabitants of the land to confront invaders residing on the edges (Diakonoff, 1966, p. 187).

Throughout history, the Iranian nation has purified the main elements of its identity and abandoned any element that has lost its effectiveness to replace it with functional elements. For instance, religion has evolved in Iran from monotheism and then Zoroastrianism to Islam and Shia. This has happened on the Iranian Plateau, located between and along Alborz Mountain Range in the North and Zagros in the West.

Even though each ethnic group speaks its language in Iran, Persian has been considered as a means of communication unifying different ethnic groups living on the Iranian Plateau with the advent of modernity and the formation of public education and comprehensive national policies.

Modernism and progressivism are also part of the current identity of the Iranian nation, and Iranians have focused their efforts on the achievement of the highest levels of civilization and the renewal of the glory and magnificence of their past civilizations.

### *Diversity of collective identity in Iran*

Given the ambiguity involved in the application of ethnic identity and national identity and the observation that there is a great deal of emphasis among some of the minorities present around Iran on the use of the term *nation* rather than *ethnic group*, this study is by no means intended to reduce the latter term conceptually. In other words, *ethnicity* and *nation* are applied differently in different definitions, and *nation* applies to any of the Iranian ethnic groups.

Once the political specifications are considered, however, which constitute an essential element in the nation-state relationship, established in the specification of geopolitical borders, Iranian identity can be regarded as a national identity for a set of common characteristics identifiable under Iranian culture and society, with respect to the collective identities present in Iran. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this idea also has pros and cons, and this study seeks to observe the scientific spirit attempting not to let personal values interfere with the research process. There are cultural and religious relationships between different collective identities in Iran, such as the Lur, Baloch, Turkmen, Azari, Arab, and Persian, and ethnic groups in the neighbouring countries, as they mostly reside near the borders. For example, the Baloch live in the Southeast, near the Pakistani border, the Turkmen live in the Northeast, neighbouring Turkmenistan, the Azari live in the North and Northwest, sharing borders with the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkey, the Arabs live in the West and Southwest, and the Kurds live in the West and Northwest, neighbouring Iraq and Turkey, and the political borders have passed through the settlements of these ethnic groups (Jalayipour, 1993). On the other hand, the corresponding ethnic groups in the neighbouring countries, including the Arabs and Kurds in Iraq, the Azari in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Baloch in Pakistan, can be regarded as the origins of conflict and crisis (Fuller, 1993). It should be stated that Iran is a heterogeneous country in terms of social structure, in which different ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious identities live, with similar ethnic groups residing in the neighbouring countries. From the perspective of social studies, there are separatist forces in Iran, particularly along the borders, that can be considered as the origins of the crisis in certain sociological cases and situations. The correspondence between these ethnic groups and those of the same ethnic groups or religions across the borders is more than that between them and any other group with distinct collective identity within the country from various, such as cultural, linguistic, and religious, aspect

s, and it is for the same reason that these groups have tended to cross the borders to establish family relationships both in the past and at present. This accounts for the abundance of kinship among these groups, particularly among the people of the border towns on both sides. Upon ethnopolitical conflicts or movements by the ethnic opposition, it has triggered support from neighbouring countries with shared ethnocultural characteristics.

### *Ethnic and religious identities in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*

According to the Constitution, ethnic minorities are divided into three groups:

- 1) The ethnic identities that constitute a particular group solely in terms of ethnicity and distinctive characteristics, apart from religion, such as the Azari
- 2) The identities of ethnic-religious minorities, such as the Baloch and the Kurd

3) The identities of religious minorities, such as Armenians.

In the Iranian Constitution, the twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth, and nineteenth articles are concerned with the equal rights of ethnic groups, the official religion, and the religious and linguistic diversity of ethnic groups and minorities.

Besides the above, the seventh and sixty-fourth to one hundred and sixth articles of the Constitution, the basis of social order and the behaviour of social and ethnic identities, make direct or indirect mentions of the rights of ethnic groups and minorities.

Clearly, the articles included in the Constitution are brief and general, as required for the establishment of an inclusive, fundamental law, and finer, subtler points will naturally be opened upon implementation and development of bylaws. On the other hand, the ethnic movements and crises that occurred soon after the Islamic Revolution in the ethnic territories of the country due to religious, linguistic, and ethnic gaps led to significant changes in the process of developing ethnic policies, where maintenance of national unity and territorial integrity were prioritized. In the process of codifying laws, acts, and instructions, therefore, the preservation of social harmony and solidarity, concern for nationalism and unifying factors, and ethnic and national commonalities were focused on by the legislator, turning into the dominant discourse in the codification of laws, as evidenced by the first, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-second, twenty-third, twenty-fourth, twenty-sixth, thirty-seventh, and thirty-eighth articles of the Constitution.

### *Geographic locations and ethnic features of the ethnic groups living in Iran*

The degree of cultural diversity in cultures has been significantly influenced by the quality of geographic surroundings. The characteristics that define the environments have been drawn from the (absolute and relative) geographic positions of various bodies of land, which are the sources of distinct civilizations and the foundation for their growth. As a result, Iran is recognised as a nation with a variety and plurality of collective identities, of which the five most important are examined in this paper.

### **ETHNICITY: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL SURVEY AND ITS DIVISIONS**

The term ethnic is derived from the Greek word ἔθνος / *ethnos* and more precisely, from the adjective ἔθνικός / *ethnikos* was commonly used to refer to pagans outside of Hellenic civilization and then to non-Jews or non-Christians and second-class people, but its scientific and general use is relatively new. The term 'ethnicity' was first introduced in sociology by David Reisman in 1953, although it gained its full popularity in the 1960s and 1970s (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975). However, the sociology and anthropology departments have long focused on the word 'ethnicity' as a hot issue. Although the word 'ethnicity' was first introduced to describe some specific forms of cultural characteristics,

it found a set of relatively different connotations. While in the Anglo-American tradition, the idea of 'ethnicity' was employed to refer to minority groups within the larger nation-state, in the European tradition, the term was used as a synonym to the concept of 'nation,' which was determined by history and based on such concepts as 'origin' and 'territory'. The common objective of both traditions was, however, to develop an alternative to the concept of 'race,' which had become popular at the time but had been seriously compromised and damaged during the reign of the Nazi Party in Germany. However, the term 'ethnicity' has acquired racial implications in the general discourses of Europe and North America, which implies that 'race' has retained its biological meaning and has thus far been used synonymously with 'ethnicity.'

Additionally, the dissolution of the colonial empires in the 1950s and 1960s added to the ambiguity surrounding racial, cultural, and ethnic issues. New immigrants from the former colonial areas—who were distinct from the people of Europe—flocked to the country of the former European colonisers, and following the consolidation of North America's public and legal discourse, these groups were designated as 'ethnic groups.' Consequently, a new definition of ethnicity as an immigrant minority group evolved (such as Pakistani, West Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.) while maintaining the earlier definitions of ethnicity based on origin and region (such as Welsh, Flemish, and Walloons, etc.).

The collapse of communism and the consequent dissolution of soviet federations that were found on 'ethnic lines', as well as the emergence of 'ethnic cleansing' policies in the Caucasus and the Balkans are among the factors that made it even more challenging to define such terms. With the escalation of violence in the former Yugoslavia and the extensive and powerful media coverage of the 'ethnic struggle', the term ethnic ostensibly turned into a pejorative shorthand for such concepts as tribal, primitive, barbaric, and backward.

Another development that brought ethnicity into policy circles was the rising flow of refugees and economic migrants from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, North America, and Australia. They had no significant physical, cultural, or religious differences, but they were in a precarious legal situation—for instance, they were waiting for their applications to be accepted. The word 'ethnicity' is still occasionally used in this context to describe non-citizens residing in 'our land,' just as it was used in ancient Greece to refer to the Judean people.

Even this very brief history of this term demonstrates the fact that ethnicity has a wide range of connotations. This conceptual versatility and vagueness can foster political misconceptions that lead to political abuse. Although the concept is reserved for academics, when terminologies like 'ethnic minority' or 'ethnic groups' enter the sphere of legislation and regulation, their more catastrophic implications become apparent. Institutional and bureaucratic definitions of ethnicity, such as the formal classification of a group of people as an ethnic minority or ethnic group, are not only a powerful factor in the usually dynamic objectification of group and individual relations, but they also serve as

repressive elements, trapping people in a cage of involuntary attachments. Thus, in such a context, the same cultural distinctions that are often fundamentally dynamic, flexible, and ambiguous become fascinating and institutionalized, posing a barrier to social transformation. As a result, it is possible to assert that modern perceptions of both individuals and lawmakers of different ethnicities have been subjected to substantial inaccuracies that are rooted in a fundamentally non-sociological characterization of cultural differences. To clarify all of these historical and geographical misperceptions and abuses, it is critical to explain how and to what degree the notion of 'ethnicity' can be appropriately employed, as well as what are the actual connotations of the term ethnicity as used in current sociology.

Traditional sociological academics, except for Max Weber, devoted little attention to the idea of ethnicity. Thus, sociologists appealed to anthropology and the early writings of Fredrik Barth (1969) to explain the historical and geographical implications of cultural diversity. Before Barth, cultural differences were generally explained from the inside out. For example, it has been stated that groups have distinct cultural features such as common language, lifestyle, origin, religion, physical signs, history, nutritional habits, and so on, that differentiate and distinguish them. Culture was thought to be mostly or generally unchanging, continuous, and uninterrupted phenomena. Cultural distinctions were understood in terms of group affiliation (for example, being French was seen as belonging to culture distinct and different from the English). *'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'* by Barth was nothing less than a Copernican revolution in the study of ethnicity.

Barth reverted to the traditional understanding of cultural differences. He defined ethnicity from the outside in, explaining that ownership of specific cultural characteristics does not differentiate one social group from the other, but rather social interaction with other groups makes the distinction conceivable, evident, and socially significant. From this point of view, the main focus of research is not the belonging of certain material-cultural characteristics to a particular group, but the ethnic boundary that represents the group. Cultural differences do not create ethnic activities. It is the social contact with other groups that leads to the definition and categorization of us and them. Differences are created and developed only through interaction with others. For example, French identity becomes culturally and politically relevant when confronted with English, German, and Danish. As a result, the focus of research on ethnic distinctions has switched from the study of its carriers (e.g., linguistic structure, unique customs, eating habits) to the study of cultural boundaries and social interactions. Ethnic boundaries are primarily considered a result of social actions. Cultural differences do not necessarily generate ethnic communities; it is the social interaction with others that leads to the definition and categorization of 'us' versus 'them'. Group identities must always be defined in terms of what they are not, that is, people who are outside the group (Eriksen, 1993) and these distinctions also define the direction of intercultural boundary distinctions.



In addition, Barth's research provided a basis for understanding ethnicity in terms of holistic rather than speculative perspectives. Since culture and social groups are formed only as a result of interaction with their peers, ethnicity cannot be limited to majority groups. Jenkins (1997) and Isajiw (2000) have rightly argued that minority ethnic groups cannot be studied without examining majority ethnic groups in a country. The prevailing modernist paradigm in post-war sociology (school of modernization) has traditionally defined ethnicity as a residual of a limited view of the past that will largely disappear with the spread of industrialization, urbanization, the development of national education systems, and the modernization of society. According to this paradigm, ethnic differences were analysed in terms of particularistic views. On the other hand, even the staunchest critics of the modernization paradigm have maintained this particularistic view of ethnicity. These critics, while trying to discredit the modernization theory by highlighting the resurgence of ethnicity in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, were also responsible for limiting the concept of ethnicity to minority groups. Their argument that the 'awakening of ethnicities' discredits the idea of the melting pot is similarly flawed because this purely historical argument is simply based on a particularistic view of ethnicity. Believing that ethnic identities are more enduring than what modernists imagine, these critics try to continue their research by preserving both particularistic and essentialist views of cultural differences. If ethnicity is analysed from a holistic point of view and as a subject for social, cultural, and identity interaction, it means that there is no social group with cultural and political consciousness that could present an eligible narrative of a common ancestor without emphasizing any form of ethnic tendency. In other words, as long as there is social interaction and acculturation by resorting to religion, language, originality, and such indicators, there will be ethnicity, and in fact, this is the point where sociology and social anthropology can intervene.

Ethnicity is not a specific or collective property and does not belong to a specific group. Social actors recognize their cultural differences through their social relationships and interactions and are thus recognized by their peers. Although Barth explains that social contact is a precondition for ethnic group differentiations, contact alone does not create a sociologically meaningful sense of belonging to a group. As Weber (1968) has emphasized, if social interaction becomes effective and, more importantly, finds a political dimension for the collective action of human beings, then 'belief in common ethnicity' of the members of the group will become possible and will form a political community.

Sheila Croucher defines the ethnic group as 'a group of people with a common ancestry and a shared culture. The cultural attributes that an ethnic group is purported to share commonly include language, religion, kinship patterns, and physical appearance' (Croucher, 2004). According to her, there are two groups of primordialist and instrumentalist theorists about ethnicity. The primordialists emphasize the role of kinship and blood relations and basic social affiliations and also on the psychological and cultural dimensions of ethnicity. While instrumentalists, attribute the persistence of ethnicism to the functions

performed in pursuit of political or economic achievements in terms of the accumulation of interests and the movement of groups.

In sociological terms, unlike the apparent diversity between ethnicities, ethnicity is the product of a culture that has become politicized. Thus, the purpose of studying ethnic group behaviour is not to identify cultural differences resulting from group relations. We are interested in examining such diversity only when cultural differences are mobilized to achieve political ends, when social actors, through the process of social action, recreate the narratives of shared originality in response to the changing social environments. Cultural differences, defined in terms of ethnic differences, become meaningful when there is a difference in the practice of group mobilization and dynamics, and it is directed towards action. Otherwise, the difference itself is not important. However, since ethnicity, like other aspects of social relations, is often a dynamic and fluid force, the scope of sociological and social anthropological research is broader and more pervasive than the study of static phenomena.

## **DEFINITION OF ETHNICITY AND RELATED CONCEPTS**

Eli Kedourie writes that in an old edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, lexicographers have defined the word ethnicity as synonymous with blasphemy or blasphemous fantasies; a definition that has no application in contemporary times.

According to *Webster's International English Dictionary*, the word 'ethnic' has two meanings: 1. of or relating to the Gentiles or nations not converted to Christianity: pagans who oppose Judaism and Christianity; 2. attributed to the physical and mental characteristics of races or the distinction of human racial groups based on common customs and characteristics. While the first definition seems invalid today, the second definition still applies, referring specifically to 'races,' 'racial groups,' and the physical and mental characteristics of races. In other words, the first definition, 'nations not converted to Christianity', has lost its use in favour of the second definition, 'human races' (Ahmady, 2018, p. 30). Thus, the substitution of a racial criterion with a religious one was not the only change in the definition of ethnicity. Since the middle of the twentieth century, social scientists have turned their attention to other criteria, including cultural criteria for defining ethnicity or ethnic groups. According to Lewis W. Snider, the application of the cultural concept of the 'ethnic' become so widespread that the compilers of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* added two new definitions to the definition of ethnicity: 1) rooted in the racial, linguistic, and cultural interests of a particular group, such as blacks, Irish, Italians, Germans, Poles, and others; and 2) rooted from an original alien culture.

George Theodorson, in his *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology*, defines an ethnic group in the following terms: 'a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a subgroup of a larger society. Members of each ethnic group are different from other members of their community in terms of specific cultural characteristics.' (Ibid., p. 31).

The number and type of characteristics considered to define ethnicity or ethnic group appear to depend on the researcher's purpose in using that definition, and the precise definition of ethnicity and conceptualization has yet to be provided. According to Isajiw, only thirteen authors have provided definitions of ethnicity in sixty-five extensive sociological and anthropological studies published to date. The main reason for the difficulties in the definition is that ethnicity is a relatively new term in the social sciences, and its meaning has changed as this field of study has expanded. The truth is that, like many other social science concepts, there is no agreement among social scientists on the characteristics of the definitions of these words or terms. In Ashley Montago's definition (1962), ethnic characteristics include religion, language, and distinct social institutions, rather than race. Montago used these characteristics in his definition to demonstrate that race is not an important criterion in the 'groupings' of human societies.

Milton Gordon used race, religion, and national origins in his definition to attest that religious and racial groups in American society constitute sub-communities. Oscar Handlin's definition was limited to the criterion of culture because his primary objective was to explain the survival of ethnic groups across generations through cultural transmission (Handlin 1975).

However, using cultural criteria to define ethnicity is not widely accepted. Given the concept's basic racial and biological characteristics, some have criticized the inclusion of cultural identity as a criterion in defining ethnicity. According to these critics, considering a vague cultural criterion in defining a word whose meaning is based on inherently biological features is unjustifiable. Snider, for example, emphasizes that the original definition of the term 'ethnic' refers to physical and mental characteristics shared by races or racial groups. As a result, the definition of 'ethnic' becomes synonymous with the definition of 'racial,' and as a result, it faces all of the difficulties associated with the concept of race. The problem became more complex when the definition of 'ethnic' took on cultural as well as racial characteristics and was used in this sense. Snider complains that sociologists and anthropologists moved the word ethnic from its original meaning and used it in a cultural sense, while this practice is incorrect according to the semantics.

The term 'ethnicity' was originally coined to study a specific historical context, the United States of America, where different racial, linguistic, and religious groups lived with different nationalities. Isajiw examined twenty-seven definitions from related theoretical works and found that the majority of these definitions refer to North American ethnic groups. Indeed, the majority of early work on ethnicity and ethnic groups was based on case studies in the United States. These works are associated with the era of the 'melting pot theory,' which held that various ethnic groups in society would eventually settle into American culture and way of life. Interestingly, when Glazer and Moynihan published their study of American ethnic groups in 1975, the term 'ethnicity' became commonplace. Following that, the term became popular. According to Snyder until now, the term 'ethnicity' did not exist in any dictionary or social science

encyclopaedia. References were made to ethnic identity and ethnic groups, but not to ethnicity. The new term quickly appeared in nationalism studies (Ibid.).

The popularity of the melting pot theory resulted in dozens of case studies of ethnic groups in the United States, as well as methods to merge ethnicities into the larger society. The disapproval of this theory also marked the start of a new era in ethnic studies. In their study titled 'Beyond the Melting Pot,' Glazer and Moynihan discussed the survival of ethnic identities of New Yorkers such as blacks, Puerto Ricans, Jews, and Italians. Around the same time, Marcus Lee Hansen's hypothesis about the 'third generation,' or the survival of ethnic identity in the United States, inspired many ethnicity researchers and scholars to investigate this phenomenon in the United States. Since then, hundreds of books and articles in academic and specialized journals have touched on the subject of ethnic identity survival. The majority of theoretical concepts of ethnicity are based on ethnic issues in North America. The majority of the examples used to theoretically justify the two main approaches to ethnicity theories (primordialism versus modernism or instrumentalism) in the early works are derived from North American or European experiences.

To refer to ethnicity and ethnic group, Ashcraft and colleagues assume a collective within a large community that has a common or presumed common ancestry as well as a common consciousness of a distinct ethnic identity and a cultural centre or resource in one or more symbolic elements. These cultural characteristics (shared historical memory, origins, or history, and historical experiences) will always be in dynamic coordination with the specific language and location that the ethnic group experiences (Ashcraft & Griffithin, 1998, p.84).

In the 1970s, a new generation of social scientists focused on the more political aspects of ethnicity, attempting to provide homogeneous definitions of ethnicity and nationality. Construction and use of such new terms as 'ethnic nationalism' and 'ethnic politics' by these researchers added to the existing ambiguity and confusion about the subject of ethnicity. Despite their methodological and theoretical differences, the central theme of these works was to equate ethnicity with nationality and state-building. 'Ethnic nationalism' and 'ethnic politics' were introduced by Walker Connor and Joseph Rothschild, two political scientists whose main questions for their studies were national government 'in the international arena' and 'domestic politics.' The extension of the political dimensions of ethnicity and the synonymous terms to the term 'nation', particularly after attempts to explain the internal problems of non-Western societies through using the terms ethnicity, ethnic groups, and ethnic nationalism, exacerbated the confusion around ethnic studies and distorted it.

The unity of the concepts of ethnicity and nation was introduced in some studies before Connor's publication, but the construction of the term ethnic nationalism and its generalization is the result of his efforts. In his article entitled 'Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying' Connor challenged the concept of nationality as well as the idea of development studies as introduced by Karl Deutsch. According to Connor, there is no such pure entity that could be called the

national state, and the real nation is the same ethnic group. He criticized those, such as Glazer, Moynihan, and Theodorson, who saw ethnic groups as minority groups, arguing that an ethnic group was a group with a cultural tradition and a sense of shared identity as a subgroup of a larger society. While pointing to the Greek roots of the word ethnicity in Max Weber's definition of the word, which is the same as nation in both cases, Connor defines the nation as a self-conscious ethnic group. The ethnic group, according to Connor, is a fundamental human category (rather than a sub-group) that enjoys racial and cultural unity. Self-consciousness is that unique factor that confers a national identity to an ethnic group. Given such a definition of a nation, he criticizes those who define nationalism in terms of the degree of loyalty to the state. The major error in scientific approaches to nationalism, in his view, is the tendency to equate nationalism with government loyalty rather than loyalty to the nation. Connor's criterion for equating the concepts of ethnicity and nationality is racial, because an ethnic group, in his opinion, is defined by the unity of race and culture (Ahmady, 2018: 38).

The definition of tribe is fraught with the same ambiguities that surround the definitions of ethnic group and ethnicity. The main issue is that in some cases, the same characteristics that are attributed to ethnic groups are also attributed to tribes, and thus they are frequently mentioned as distinct and differentiated groups within a larger community. This problem is more recognizable in anthropological and sociological texts, where the concepts of tribe and ethnic group are mixed up and the differences between them are overlooked. What makes the difference is that in Iranian society, the debate is not about tribes with their characteristics, but about tribes with all of the characteristics that have been attributed to them.

Tribal societies, according to some anthropologists, are distinct groups and cultural units that operate independently and are fully autonomous. Raoul Naroll defines a tribe in his famous work as a group of people whose shared and acquired ways of life form a general culture rather than a subculture. Patricia Crone writes:

Few would disagree that a tribe is a species of that genus of societies which create all or most of their social roles by ascribing social importance to biological characteristics, or in other words, societies ordered with reference to kinship, sex and age. No society which makes extensive use of non-biological principles of organization is a tribal one, for all that kinship, sex and age may still regulate numerous aspects of it; conversely, no definition of the tribe which omits reference to the biological principle of organization can be said to do its job; it is the organizational principle itself, not the various factors which underlie, accompany or result from it, which demarcates a tribal from a non-tribal society. This is obviously not to say that tribal societies are characterized by perfect correspondence between biological and social relationships: biological facts being innumerable, most have to be ignored for organizational purposes, while others may have to be denied outright, and a great many usually have to be invented. But the overlap between biological and social facts is

nonetheless both considerable and significant; the reason why the discrepancy between the two is subject to manipulation is precisely that no discrepancy is supposed to occur.

A tribe is thus a primitive society. It is primitive in that biologically based organization, however diversely elaborated, is given by nature in respect of its starting point (kinship, sex and age inevitably have some organizational importance in all human societies); further, in that it costs nothing to set up or maintain (indeed its beauty lies in its capacity for fully automatic operation...

The similarity of the concepts of tribe, nation, or ethnic group is also reflected in the works of those social scientists (including sociologists, historians, and political scientists) who have borrowed anthropological approaches to tribal and tribalism. But the plain fact is that anthropologists cannot agree on a definition of the tribe because of their different conceptual frameworks. A tribe, according to earlier definitions, is a homogeneous and unified cultural group whose members speak the same language, share a unified and stable political and social system, and have a permanent territory. A common ancestor with a specific kinship basis is the primary element in defining tribal groups.

Another feature that most social scientists attribute to tribes is their isolation from the central political system or government, as well as their hostile relationships with this institution. Most social scientists accept this dichotomy between tribe and state as a kind of conceptual division. According to this view, the tribe and the state conflict with each other. The state is the source of order and production, whereas tribal society is the source of revolt and rebellion. As Christensen points out, this perspective was first adopted by colonial authorities, who had a clear understanding of the role of the state due to their educational background. Later, local rulers, including Middle Eastern rulers and officials, embraced this view as they sought to consolidate the power of their governments.

Patricia Crone, who refers to the tribe as a biological organization and a primitive society, while acknowledging the nature of tribal confrontation with states, emphasizes that 'tribes and states are diametrically opposed types of organization' and that 'tribes do have to be destroyed to make way for states'. In his view, tribes do not develop and do not play a role in state formation (Ahmady, 2018: 42-43).

Social scientists define tribes in terms of their socio-cultural structure and relations with the state, which are similar to ethnic groups, thus justifying the synonymy of the tribe and ethnic group, giving it legitimacy and, as a result, the potential to become a nation. This is especially true in Middle Eastern tribal and ethnic studies.

### *Identity*

The question of human nature and its relationship with others (the identity) has constituted the major essence of human thought and thinking and has been a

primary concern for human beings throughout their psychological, intellectual, and social life. Although the human mind has been preoccupied with identity since the dawn of civilization, it has never been exhausted and has manifested itself in various forms throughout history. In this context, the term identity literally refers to existence, existence, and nature (Farabi, 2014: 10-12).

The word identity is derived from the late Latin *identitas* and Latin *idem* meaning 'same'.

In one sense, the term refers to the characteristic of singularity and individuality, the fundamental differences that distinguish one person from others in terms of the identity of 'the self', and, in another sense, to the identical characteristic through which individuals can be interconnected as a group or social category that entails joining others based on prominent common features such as ethnic, cultural, etc. (Byron, 1997, quoted in Fakuhi, 2001: 63-64).

The existential roots of the concept of identity can be found in the depths of human history, demonstrating that this concept has a long history in the history of mankind.

The problematization of identity began when humans started to recognize themselves and were confronted with the question, 'Who am I?' Humans have always sought to discover their identity and questioned their place in the world. Problematization of identity started when humans began to know themselves and were confronted with the question of 'who am I?' Man has always sought to discover his identity and questioned his position and position in this world. As a result, they have always had to deal with the issue of identity in their personal and social lives, a question that has been regarded as one of the primary concerns of human beings throughout history, so much so that the roots of many conflicts and struggles throughout history can be regarded as 'identity expressions' and 'revealing one's identity' (Rahbari, 2009: 15). In other words, the thought of simultaneously identifying and differentiating oneself with the others have been associated with human beings since childhood. It is also traceable from the individual to the macro-social levels how humans identify differences and similarities with others based on their characteristics, thus classifying themselves as individuals and groups.

Few concepts have as many layers of meaning as identity. This concept can be found in everything from everyday conversations to scientific and academic debates. Existence of numerous synonyms or closely related concepts for identity such as the 'I', 'me', 'we', 'our perception of ourselves', 'self-image', 'self-representation', 'self-awareness', 'ego', 'superego', and 'the person' also originate from this plurality of meanings of identity (Doran and Mohseni, 2003: 81).

## Identity from the perspective of different sciences

Science	The Main Focus of the Discussion	Type of Identity	The Main Focus of the Discussion
Logic	Personal Identity	Individual	Nature, existence, and cause
Philosophy	Existential Identity	Individual and Collective	It seeks the 'existence' and identity of the centre of the circle of ideas.
Mysticism	His Identity	Individual and Collective	The true identity belongs to God and is known by God alone.
Political Sciences	National Identity	Collective	State, nation, government, and their relationship to national identity
Psychology	Personal Identity	Individual	Self, I, conscious mind, the limits of individuality
Sociology	Collective Identity	Collective	Integration with oneself and with others, identity in all kinds of communities and groups
Anthropology	Personal Identity	Collective	Identity in a variety of micro-communities and groups

Psychologists such as Erikson and Freud are frequently cited as pioneering commentators on this concept. Erikson provided the first definition of identity in psychology in 1986. Erikson defines identity as the flow of individual change and social needs for the future. Erikson defines the formation of identity as the emergence of a sense of identity and the unity of personality that one feels and that others recognize (Adibzadeh, 2004: 184). Identity has been studied in a variety of fields, including psychology, sociology, political science, and others. Identity can be defined as an interdisciplinary subject and the relationship that a person forms between his mental worlds and reality (Feirahi, 2004; Noheh Fallah, 2004; quoted in Javadzadeh Shahshahani, 2004: 58). In adolescence, the formation of identity starts by asking such basic questions about the meaning of life, the purpose of life, and so on. A person who has found answers to these fundamental questions and established an identity will be able to make much easier and better decisions in various situations and dimensions of life and will experience less moral and intellectual bewilderment and confusion. This is while contemporary adolescents and young adults face problems such as lack of purpose or meaning in life, difficulty in making decisions, frustration and anxiety, and other problems that have turned into major crises for those in charge of social affairs.

Researchers in various fields, particularly psychology, sociology, and political science, consider the concept of identity as one of the most intricate in the social sciences. The concept of identity, as it is currently presented in scientific and academic literature, has its roots in psychological studies. Although its application in theoretical education, particularly philosophy, has a long history, its psychological application has become more common (Mir Mohammadi, 2004: 89).



Social psychologists and sociologists, contrary to the ideas of psychologists, emphasize that the sense of individual identity is formed through the dialectic between the individual and society. Although they acknowledge that identity is usually expressed through individual attitudes and feelings, the context in which it is formed is collective life. The social identity expressed in personality has no meaning apart from the social world of other people. Individuals are unique and changeable, but personality is a social construction constituted through various stages of socialization and enculturation (Golmohammadi, 2002: 222-223), which is rooted in differences in attitudes and methods for studying humanity and actions, with psychology focusing on the individual and sociology on society.

### *Theoretical approaches to identity*

Because the current study emphasizes the discussion of identity in the form of social identity (national, ethnic, and religious), the main focus will be on the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of social identity, as well as addressing the approaches and ideas of sociologists and psychologists on social identity. In a general division, theories can be studied in three structural, activist, and integrationist or agency-structure paradigms.

The structure is the unit of analysis in the structural paradigm, and in their theory, the structure has superiority over the individual. According to this viewpoint, while the social system is made up of a variety of individual actors, in the end, these actors have no authority to make decisions and are completely passive, being influenced by structural, economic, social, cultural, and historical factors. According to this viewpoint, the actor is a product of the social system. As a result, identity is a social fact that is influenced by social structure and conditions, and the individual does not play an effective role in shaping his or her identity. Changes in identity are also a result of environmental changes. The identity will not change unless the environment changes (Abdullahi, 1996: 131).

Although classical sociologists, particularly structuralist sociologists, have not produced a coherent theoretical work on the identity project, there are some discussions in their works that may reflect their views on the subject. Emile Durkheim, following the division of societies into primitive and advanced industrial, raises the issue of the emergence of the division of labour, the spread of specialization, and the growth of individual identity. In addition to these phenomena, he discusses the emergence of a form of solidarity and distinguishes between organic and mechanical solidarity. This form of solidarity, in his opinion, promotes social unity through inclusivity. Amid this newly formed unity, he seeks a type of moral harmony, one that makes one loyal to society or government (Alagheband, 1993: 41). Thus, such a society starts to fortify a sense of collective identity.

In expressing his ideas and after contrasting traditional societies with modern societies, Weber refers to the development of instrumental rationality, rational actions based on general standards, and the growth of collective identity in modern societies. The increasing growth of rationality, particularly instrumental rationality, according to Weber, is a distinctive feature of the

modern world. As a result, identities also grow and change from their traditional and emotional state to rational identities (Abdullahi, 1996: 123). In fact, according to the significance of this rationality factor in Weber's theories, unlike the traditional era where identity was based on attributes where the individuals took their identity characteristics from their ancestors, in the modern era, people independently seek to redefine their identities throughout their lives. Thus, in contemporary times, it is no longer the traditional and cultural origins that shape an individual's identity, and the process of modernization has created the conditions for the liberation of the individual from the constricting loop of traditional institutions and factors of identity formation.

Simmel in his *Sociology* defines the forms of social relations as social geometries. There are distances and numbers in his geometric account of society; that is, in the interaction between the individual and the group, he analyses the social volume or size as well as the degree of similarity and comparability of social distances. These elements cooperate to dissolve the individual into the group, but there remains a small collective identity mark on his or her forehead. While in industrial society, the cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions are differentiated and the individual, while dealing with different dimensions, is not under the dominance of any particular unit or sector. These factors at the same time make it difficult for the individual to be accepted in other communities and his or her personality dimensions become more distinct and wider. As a result, the individual is more independent and autonomous. This enables the individual to act on more general formal and rational rules. Therefore, intergroup solidarity and collective identification become increasingly widespread as the size and diversity of social forms expand (ibid., p. 125).

The social action and interactionist approaches, in contrast to structuralists, give the agency or social action a key role. According to this theory, it is the people who shape the structure and they are the ones who make the changes in the structure. In this view, identity is seen as an emerging and new phenomenon that will not be fixed at any time and place and is always being formed and transformed. The fundamental premise of symbolic interactionism is that people attach symbolic meanings to objects, behaviours, themselves, and others, and transmit and expand these meanings through their interactions. People make decisions based on what things mean to them, not on the non-abstract qualities of the items (ibid., p. 132). They hold that people have a fundamental core, or an initial relative identity, that they build upon every day when they engage and socialize with others, thus creating new identities. Identity is constantly being developed for adherents of this school and is never fully established. Action-oriented theorists base their analysis on the individual, and their philosophy holds that the individual is superior to society (Turner, 1998: 375-382).

According to Mead's theory, the self has two sides or phases: 'me' and 'I.' The 'me' is considered the socialized aspect of the individual. 'I' is the 'active self' and 'me' is the indicator of the 'passive self'. The 'active self' deals with the symbolic and creative aspects of 'us' and the 'passive self' is the result of social

communication and the network of social interactions and processes. According to Mead, the 'active self' is the individual identity, unformed and searchable in its motivational dimension, and the 'passive self' is a collective identity, organized and developed during the process of socialization, which is the result of other people's conceptions of the person. The dominance of each of the aspects of the 'active self' and 'passive self' depends on the individual's circumstances and social life. According to him, because individual acts are reliant on broader social actions, it is only possible to comprehend an individual's conduct through grasping the general behaviour of his or her social group. Therefore, an individual is dependent on his or her social structure and organization. He discusses how, in a social framework, a person's individuality, or 'self,' emerges from the roles that the people perform. According to him, a person's self cannot exist without a relationship with another, which appears during social interactions (Abdullahi, 1996: 133).

The 'looking glass self theory' of Charles Horton Cooley, which Mead also expanded, is one of the earliest theories that serve as the foundation for conceptions and theories of social identity. This idea explains how society shapes people's identities, particularly those of adolescents. Cooley believes that humans use gestures and signs of others to see them. According to him, people's perceptions of themselves are similar to the reflection of a mirror. People are exposed to the reactions of others to their behaviour. Therefore, human beings see themselves as an object by reading the movements and gestures of others (Ashrafi, 1998: 16). Cooley believed that the self is the result of engaging in the social process and is the dialectical result of the individual self and the social self. The individual self and the social self are twins, as Georges Gurvitch puts it, equally present in each individual. The self is the human identity, and when a child or a type of human society could acquire this identity, it also arrives at an understanding of this self. When a child makes a distinction between herself and her possessions concerning the outside, the self is formed (Tanhaee, 2008).

According to integrationist sociologists, society is a place where micro and macro elements coexist, with the acceptance of heterogeneity and the existence of several collective identities serving as its objective manifestation (Tavassoli, 2019: 16). As an integrated sociologist, Giddens has undertaken one of the most well-known and thorough attempts to combine agency with structure. Giddens seeks to explain the idea of identity in terms of structuration theory. The actor assesses his or her activities in the social construction reflectively; that is, the capacity of individuals to reflect on their conduct is what primarily influences and changes the social conditions of people, (Zakae, 2002: 3).

Human beings attempt to define themselves according to the customs and norms of the society in which they live. In this sense, interactionist theory highlights the position of each individual in society. In other words, they believe in a form of personal identity that stems from society. Giddens does not view personal identity as the result of the continuation of the social actions of the person that are entrusted to him or her, but as something that is created daily and is protected and supported in his reflective activities (Giddens, 2019: 1). Giddens suggests that the identity of a person is not always inherent in them.

Identity is not a function that is assigned to the individual by society, but a process of meaning-making that develops through daily life and its mechanisms. Identity is never fixed but is an evolving or 'dynamic' subject (Altaie, 2003: 39).

The study of group and social identities has recently grown to be a key social science topic as a result of developments in the modern world and the global division of labour, the end of the Cold War, the rise of migrations, and other factors. The postmodernists' concerns about the current cultural decline are particularly noteworthy.

Giddens contends that social circumstances, historical contexts, and self-awareness all play a role in the formation of an individual's identity. In his opinion, social practices, the reflection process, individual rationality and self-awareness, as well as their rethinking always involve the individual in the structuration process, particularly in the modern age when contemporary is also involved. According to him, every aspect of social life—from the systems at the global level to what is conceived of as a person's mental state—is the result of social practice and action. Giddens holds that an individual's identity is developed during the structuration process and following social and economic conditions and circumstances, as well as the self-awareness of the actors (Giddens, 2019: 81).

Castells defines identity in relation to the social contexts and environments whose policies should be examined in their historical context. According to him, the opposing currents of globalization and identity shape our world and our lives. A new type of society, the network society, has been developed as a result of the information technology revolution and the reconstruction of capitalist institutions. Identity is people's source of meaning and experience and should be distinguished from what sociologists have called roles and role sets. Castells (1997) defines Identity as 'the process of construction of meaning based on a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning'. For a collective actor, there may be several identities, but this multiplicity of self-representation and social action is a source of tension and contradiction. Meaning is the symbolic union of social actors with the objective and purpose of action. He attributes unique characteristics to the modern information and network society that produce distinct identities from pre-modern times, as with the growth of interactions under the influence of globalization and, on the other hand, the emphasis on local identities (resistance), the process of individualization is transformed and is reconstructed in consonance with the dialectical interaction between the local and the global. Social activists react according to a sense of declining legitimacy of their political system and a sense of unfair political, economic, or social discrimination. They derive their identities or identities from groups that seek to present a new identity with a defensive or planned nature, in two specific ways that are particularistic and universalist (Castells, 1997).

It was Henry Tajfel and his associates who first put forth the theory of social identity. However, this notion has its origins in Muzaffar Sharif's theory of 'realistic conflict,' which holds that conflicts between groups typically centre on

the distribution of limited interests. Sherif's definition states that group members engage with people outside the group in terms of the common goals they have established for themselves. He believed that in challenging times, people are drawn to groups that have idealistic principles for a better world and an antagonist that must be defeated to realize those idealistic principles (Nazari and Pirani, 2017: 80). Tajfel associates social identity with group membership and considers it to consist of three components: cognitive, evaluative, and affective. According to this definition, social identity is a person's cognition of who they are concerning their knowledge and awareness of their group membership as well as the evaluative and affective component of that membership (Golmohammadi, 2007: 233). This viewpoint allows us to think of social identity as a type of self-knowledge in relation to others. This procedure determines the psychological and social identity of the person as well as their status (Tajik, 2005: 52).

Tajfel contends that society is made up of individuals who relate to one another according to their status and power and that the nature of these relationships is essential for the development of identity. He refers to the act of distinguishing the inner group from the outer group as social classification and argues that one of these stages of the internalization of social classifications is where social identity is established (Iman and Kizqan, 2003: 82). Tajfel and colleagues come to the conclusion that social classification has a form of bias since it encourages group advocacy and favourable assessment inside the group. This bias can be seen, for example, in the distribution of interests relative to the group. This theory places a strong emphasis on the notion that classification is a dynamic and text-based process that is influenced by comparative references to a specific text. The difference between groups is always greater in classification than the difference within groups (Javadi Yeganeh and Azizi, 2008: 196). Classification fosters intergroup social competition. People who continue to have a positive view of their group as compared to other groups invest in persistent biases and discriminatory practices, which promotes conflicts (Katem et al., 2007: 232-233).

Richard Jenkins is one of the other thinkers who has investigated the issue of identity in the paradigm of social definition, influenced by the theories of George Herbert Mead. He claims that social identity is a belief held by all humans and that, in this sense, it is the source of meaning and experience for people and that identity is constructed. Jenkins views social identity as a game that is played 'face to face.' Social identity is the term used to describe how we perceive ourselves and others, as well as how other people perceive themselves and others. Because of this, social identity could be negotiated and is also the result of agreement and disagreement rather than being as essential as meaning (Jenkins, 2002: 7-8).

A human group can be recognized by the similarities that distinguish them apart from the other groups. Similarities and differences are the meanings that people construct. The culture of human societies objectifies the process of difference and similarity. Categories of identity development among human cultures as a result of cultural identity-making tools. Language, religion, clothing, aesthetic

interests, recreation and entertainment, sports, nutrition, and others are cultural materials that create meaning for the life of each group and cause similarities within the group and differences from other groups. As a result, a group or even a single person can adopt different identities depending on the circumstance and perceive themselves to be belonging to a group. 'Social life is basically inconceivable without a way of knowing who others are and without a sense of who we are.' Jenkins in developing his theory of social identity was influenced by the ideas of the likes of George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, and Fredrik Barth, the anthropologist. Jenkins offers the following summary of the development of his theory:

If identification is a necessary prerequisite for human life as we understand it, the reverse is also true. Individual identity – embodied in selfhood – is not a meaningful proposition in isolation from the human world of other people. Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed: in the processes of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others, throughout their lives. Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed: in the processes of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others, throughout their lives. 'This view derives from American pragmatism, via the seminal contributions of Cooley (1962; 1964) and Mead (1934). From their work, an understanding emerges of selfhood as an ongoing and, in practice simultaneous, synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others. This offers a template for the basic model, which informs my whole argument, of the internal-external dialectic of identification as the process whereby all identities – individual and collective – are constituted. (Jenkins, 2014: 42-43)

### *Levels of identity*

The concept of identity can be divided into individual and collective categories. The main distinction between the two is that the former emphasizes distinction and difference, whereas the latter emphasizes similarity and integration. Individual identity, in other words, is unique and specific to each individual and is defined as a set of characteristics that, by attributing them to oneself, one distinguishes oneself from others and thus finds a sense of continuity and personal independence (Ahmady, 2007: 86). Collective identity, on the other hand, is realized through assimilation with the members of the group and includes that aspect of social life to which the person with the conscience of 'we' considers himself to belong and to which he commits (as we Iranians, we Orientals, etc.). Humans have multiple social identities as a result of their various roles and membership in various 'us' groups (Razazifar, 2000: 102). Thus, social identity is a set of dependencies of an individual on the social system that is related to gender, age, social status, ethnicity, nation, and so on (Gampers, 1982: 97). According to these explanations, the sources and tools of

social identity include a shared culture, a shared land, a shared language, and a shared history, whereas the sources and tools of individual identity include a coherent self-portrait and self-esteem. Of course, it should be kept in mind that identity, whether individual or collective, is a social concept; because individual characteristics such as naming a child are formed based on historical and social background, and because we want to examine the discussion of identity on social categories and groups, we have added the social suffix to this concept.

Collective identity refers to the sign of that sphere and territory of social life to which one feels as belonging, and to which one feels an obligation and duty, such as we the Abdullahs, we the Lors, we the Elamites, we the Iranians, we the Muslims, we the Easterns, we the humans, and so on. I introduce myself most frequently and feel most committed to my dominant collective identity. These collective identities can be arranged into categories that range from the small and specific, such as the family, neighbourhood, or school, to the wider and more general bases of identities, such as city, ethnicity, region, language, religion, and so on. During the process of socialization and adjusting to life in society, the individuals develop a collective identity, and the nature and dimensions of this identity depend on the characteristics of both the person and the society as well as the degree of reciprocity between the two (Abdullahi,1377, p63). The current study takes into account the analysis of various levels of identity. Ethnic identity is the most basic form and the lowest level of identity. At the next level, faith and religion are considered as other components that help conceptualize religious identity. The higher level of identity formation results in national identity, which, in the society we studied—Iran—is a level that is encompassing all the nationalities and religions under consideration. Each of these levels will be thoroughly explored to examine the concepts behind them.

### *Ethnic identity*

An ethnic identity, some kind of collective identity, is a collection of characteristics that set one ethnic group apart from others and foster a sense of belonging and cohesion among its members. One of the most significant forms of identity is ethnic identity, which is particularly significant in nations with a diversity of ethnic and cultural groups. This type of identity is positioned among other identities, such as local, regional, racial, or cultural identity, as part of the social identity of an individual. Ethnic identity is intertwined with a family of interrelated concepts, such as ‘ethnic group’ and ‘ethnicity’, without defining and identifying them, understanding ethnic identity is difficult.

Since the 1960s, the term ‘ethnicity’ has come to refer to human differences in terms of culture, tradition, language, social structures, and lineage. The word ethnic is derived from the Greek word ἔθνος / ethnos which signifies nation. In the English language, the term ‘ethnic’ was originally used to describe the cultural differences among those within a common nation. Ethnicity is a unique form of social connection between individuals who are identified as culturally distinct from members of other groups and who yet maintain a minimal level of regular interactions. Ethnicity can also be defined as a social identity (caused by

a distinction or difference with others) by mythical or metaphorical proximities. Ethnic groups frequently share myths of a common origin (Hajiani et al., 2015: 2-3).

There is the idea that ethnic identity implies the homogeneity of a group of people who share a common origin, destiny, historical experience, feeling, and in some cases, a common geographical residence. There is also the idea that racial, genetic, symbolic, and cultural variables are what primarily influence ethnicity (Michael and Steve, quoted in Massoudnia et al., 2014: 144).

There is little agreement on the definition of ethnic identity, and every researcher or theorist has defined it by emphasizing a particular aspect of identity. The study of these variations reveals that the central idea affecting the definition of ethnic identity is the components and elements of ethnic identity. Thus, ethnic identity is defined based on such cultural indicators as language, religion, customs, as well as historical contexts, with which people identify with all or some aspects of group identity (Golmohammadi, 2002: 159). Of course, these components and elements themselves are diverse and with diverse roles in the identification of ethnicities. In the modern social sciences, an ethnic group is typically understood to be the expression of a variety of attributes resulting from many components, such as religion, sect, caste, territory, language, lineage, race, culture, and others. Sometimes an ethnicity contains and corresponds to only one of these components, and sometimes it includes a combination of them.

### *Religious identity*

In conceptualizing social identity, the main and common element about the basis of forming a collective identity is considered as a 'sense of belonging' and religious identity as a level of different levels of identity can be considered as a sense of belonging to a religion accepted by the general public. According to Mircea Eliade, there are so numerous and various definitions of religion that it would be difficult to compile a list of them all. If we collect and extrapolate the existing definitions of religion together with the fallacies and ambiguities surrounding them, we would discover how difficult it is to define religion. This is because religion is a complex phenomenon with diverse dimensions. In any case, the common views about religion are posterior and have emerged after the considerations and information provided by such modern disciplines as anthropology and sociology, which are very diverse (Thomson, 2011: 30). This study will not examine all of these intellectual diversities, but will focus on a few of them to demonstrate how this social component plays a role in the establishment and maintenance of collective identity.

Adherence to shared religious principles, belief in and adherence to such a religion, and credence to attend pervasive religious ceremonies and rituals are all enormously effective in the process of developing national identity. In addition to being a functionally significant aspect of social relations, religion increases encouragement, vigour, vivacity, and general enthusiasm. At the same time, in the sociological sense that emphasises the objective and external



dimension of religion, it is frequently combined with other national components, including the government, history, and cultural heritage (Hajiani, 2000: 203). Although religion has lost its significance as a significant factor for solidarity in some parts of the world, it remains an important component of nationality because it has such a strong impact on the culture, customs, and traditions of many countries (Alam, 2004: 155). It is true that as we get closer to the modern era, this agency of religion is decreasing, yet different research shows that religion is still effective in the development of collective identity.

Religion, as a cultural system of ideas, values, customs, and rituals, has always developed a collective 'us' around itself that is a non-spatial and non-territorial society, something termed as 'ummah' in Islam (Taleban, 2009: 26). Thus, religious identity defined as a person's definition of his or her degree of religiosity (religious self-assessment) as well as a sense of belonging to the religious community and 'us' of Muslims and also a sense of commitment to the religious community (Safiri et al., 2014: 166).

As a result, religious identity can be analysed in three dimensions: religious self-assessment, religious community membership, and religious community commitment. Religiosity can be explained, at least in part, by the intellectual and emotional values that are specified by membership in a religious group. In this sense, a person's perception of being religious is a key attribute in measuring religious identity (Hajiani, 2009: 453). Belonging to a group has the same emotional value and significance of social identity, a keyword in the definition of Tajfel. This empathy or sense of common belonging is the main ingredient of the feeling of 'us' (Chalabi, 1996: 20). This sense of belonging distinguishes between a group of believers as 'us' or 'insiders' from 'others' (non-believers in that particular religion) as 'outsiders'. Thus, belonging to a religious community 'creates' a sense of identity between the individual and the religious community, and the stronger the individual's affiliation with the religious community, any insult to fellow believers (for example, Muslims or Shiites) is perceived an insult to the self, eliciting reactions – albeit to varying degrees (Taleban, 2009,24-30). Commitment, conceptually, conveys a sense of necessity, a need for someone to accomplish something (Chalabi, 1996: 70). Commitment to identity can be assessed by the costs paid for those relationships that are associated with the identity. 'Commitment to a religious community' means that one is willing to incur material and spiritual costs to support one's religious group because one feels responsible for the fate of one's fellow believers and religious group, as well as the future of one's religious organization (Taleban, 2009: 25). This demonstrates the coherence, agreement, and distinction to which identity refers. This point to how religion plays a significant role in the construction of the collective identity of societies and social groups.

The principle of continuity is critical in recognizing religious identity. Many childhood identities remain substantially the same throughout life, however in the case of religious identity, 'identity change' occurs primarily during the adolescence period (Duan et al, cited in Safiri et al. 2014: 169).

## *National identity*

Nation is a concept for understanding national identity; despite numerous definitions of nation, Anthony Smith's definition is very comprehensive. In his view, a nation is a 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.' (p. 14). National identity is the highest level of collective identity and due to the existence of the nation-states are hierarchically superior to other levels of identity. National identity originates from the belonging of individuals to a land and a national state, or in other words, to a particular country, in such a way that they are aware of its existence and feel loyal toward it (Abbasi Qadi and Khalili, 2011: 50). In another definition, national identity means a sense of loyalty to common elements and symbols in the national community and within defined political boundaries. According to this definition, the degree of belonging and loyalty of individuals within a national community to each of the elements of national symbols, land, religion, customs, history, language and literature, people and government, specifies the intensity of national identity of the members of that national community (Yousefi, 2001: 18). Some thinkers consider national identity to mean passing from traditional identities, such as religion, ethnicity, and tribe, to more comprehensive identities (Rajaei, 2003: 12). Accordingly, national identity is an identity in which individuals instead of recognizing themselves based on ethnic and tribal interests, identify themselves as belonging to a particular nation with a specific geography and a system of government. National identity must be so pervasive that it would not create conflicts between the original (individual-ethnic) and the comprehensive (national) identity. According to this definition, the characteristics of national identity can be summarized as having a specific nation, territorial geography, and a system of government (Banihashemi, 2004: 15). Emad Afrough considers national identity to consist of four levels: the level of worldview and ideology, the level of values, the level of norms, and the level of symbols. He considers the level of worldview and ideology to be the most important aspect of national identity. He has a cultural approach toward national identity and considers culture as the primary component in the construction of national identity. He strongly criticizes the views that consider the basic component of national identity to be such components as race, blood, and lineage (Afrough, 2001: 17). In general, and in a more practical definition, national identity can be considered as a growing sense among peoples who naturally belong to each other and have common interests, common history, and common destiny. National identity is a two-sided concept that implies on the one hand, by emphasizing the commonalities and connecting criteria, it entails both similarity and distinction, it unites and commits 'us' around the axis of a single unit, and on the other hand, recognizes this 'us' in internal similarities and external differences with the others (Sanie Ejlal, 2005: 10).

## IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY

### *Ethnic identity in the world*

In the existing theoretical literature, sometimes the formation of ethnic identities and increased attachment to subcultures of sub-national identities during the globalization process is associated with the weakening of territorial ties and dominant culture, described as a threat to national integration and cohesion and thus a challenge to national security. In contrast, there is also the idea that ethnic and linguistic diversity in a society reflects the tolerant spirit of the citizens who live together in peace. In sociological culture, identity means a relatively stable perception of the identity of the self that is shaped in relation to other individuals and groups and transforms through social interactions and in the process of socialization (Johnson, 1977). This is the process that has resulted in multiple varieties of social groups throughout diverse human societies throughout history, and we now see races, and nations, with multiple large or small divisions among them all over the world.

Ethnic identity is a type of collective identity that refers to cultural features that separate one ethnic group from others and foster a sense of belonging and cohesion among ethnic group members. Ethnic identity is at a lower level than national or social identity. Essentially, terms like ethnicity and ethnic group are relatively recent ideas that were rarely used in sociological and anthropological inquiries before the twentieth century.

In the language of ordinary people, very much like the dominant discourse among the active scholars, terms such as 'ethnicity,' 'race,' 'nationality,' 'ethnic group,' or regional and mainly continental identities are used interchangeably. This explains how in British society, terms like 'Asian' are more typically used to refer to an ethnic group whose origins can be traced back to a specific geographical location in the Indian subcontinent – Punjab, Sindh, Pashtunistan, and Balochistan. The term can also be a 'racial' description of a person with dark skin, brown eyes, or straight black hair. At the same time, this designation can be applied to nations such as Pakistani or Bangladeshi, but in most cases, it refers to a specific religious mark that is typically used to represent Muslims. Finally, the name suggests a location other than Europe. Likewise, for the people of Northern Ireland, labels such as these are used to identify them: certain religious groups (Catholic or Protestant); their nationality, which indicates their loyalty to the nation or their specific government and their type of passport (Irish or English); their geographical origin (Ulsterian or Northern Irish); ethnic and political terms such as republican, monarchist, unionist, and nationalist are used.

The word ethnic is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* and *ethnikos*, which has strong connotations of infidelity and atheism. The word has a strong negative and repulsive connotation in Greek. By the eighteenth century, the word had lost its negative connotations and had become a neutral term having the same meaning as race. Even in the United States on the eve of World War II, Jews, Italians, and other minorities were referred to as ethnicity and were valued

beside the majority of the British people. The word people does not have a fixed meaning and has changed along with other transformations. In an edition of the Oxford English Dictionary compiled towards the end of the nineteenth century, the word 'nation' is used to signify blasphemy or blasphemous delusions. This meaning gradually gave way to anthropological and sociological meanings. In Webster's International English Dictionary, two meanings are given for the word ethnic: First, ethnicity means non-Christians and non-Jews, such as infidels and pagans who oppose Judaism and Christianity. The term is then used to refer to the physical and mental characteristics of races or the distinction of racial groups according to some shared customs and characteristics. In this way, the meaning of the word ethnic changed from a religious thing to identify infidels or non-believers to social meaning, and things such as customs or racial characteristics became the basis of its definition. In this way, the meaning of the word ethnic shifted from religious overtones referring to infidels or non-believers to a social sense based on such attributes as customs or racial characteristics. In the middle of the twentieth century, with the incorporation of cultural characteristics in the definition of ethnicity, another modification in the meaning of the word ethnicity happened, bringing it even closer to a social concept. According to Lewis Schneider, the cultural understanding of ethnicity became so prevalent that the editors of Webster's Third International Dictionary added two new definitions for ethnicity: 1. Ethnicity based on the racial, linguistic, and cultural interests of certain groups, such as Blacks, Irish, Italians, Germans, Poles, and other groups; 2. Ethnicity that is based on a primitive foreign culture. All definitions have one thing in common: the word alludes to a minority group versus a majority (Ahmady, 2018: 30-31).

In this way, the general evolution of the word ethnic can be traced. In the past centuries, the meaning of this word pertained to religious content and the identification of non-religious individuals while in more contemporary times it evolved toward more social connotation. In the second stage, the word ethnicity separated itself from the concept of race and was more associated with connotations to define cultural differences. During this evolution, racial distinctions based on physical and blood properties were translated into cultural distinctions based on customs, beliefs, and, in general, social and cultural identity during this evolution. As a result of these changes, the term 'ethnicity' has come to refer to distinct cultural, social, and political groups.

Nationalism is frequently viewed as an effective tool in the process of nation-building; as an ideology, this concept moved nations throughout the twentieth century, resulting in the development of nation-states all over the world. However, it did not find political crystallizations as a sense of belonging, a form of decentralized allegiance, and civic obedience. Yet, the political manifestation of nationalism, which, according to Burton (2005: 248-249), can be found in the state and implemented in the national project often in conjunction with another ideology, can be classified into two major branches: European nationalism and anti-imperialist and anti-colonial nationalism. The first form emerged in the nineteenth century, concurrent with the establishment of European nation-states. Nationalism was weakened by its rather dark history after World War II

and was long excluded from politics, but it resurfaced with the economic crisis and discontent against Muslim workers and immigrants in Europe in the 1970s and continues to this day. The second form or branch of nationalism started in the former colonies of European countries, often as a reaction to the brutal and degrading treatment of the natives by the Europeans.

Anthony D. Smith, one of the founders of ethnographic symbolism, defines ethnicity as ‘a named human population with myths of common, ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members.’ (Smith, 1998: 186). According to Ronald Burton, ethnicity is a collective form of life that has more or less clear solidarity of wills and is organizable, defendable, and preservable (Burton: 2017: 101). According to Frederick Barth, the term ethnic group in the anthropological literature usually refers to a population that has great autonomy in its biological reproduction, has common fundamental cultural values that are integrated into cultural forms, creates a communication field for interaction, has a sense of belonging to an external reality that distinguishes them from others. Therefore, the most important characteristics of a people can be considered as follows: real common ancestors or belief in mythical ancestors, common name, common territory, common language, common living spaces, common customs, common values, sense of belonging to a single group (ibid., 235).

Nanda and Warms define ethnic groups as groups of people who distinguish themselves from other groups in society or larger societies as a whole. An ethnic group draws ethnic boundaries between itself and other groups in society, and such demarcations both strengthen the solidarity within the groups and separate them from other groups. These borders are usually based on a common language, racial heritage, shared religion, rituals, values, or a common homeland. Thus, ethnic identity is the subjective experience of an individual that makes the person belong to a particular ethnic group (Warms, 1998: 205) and feels that the culture in which he or she was born is the pivotal centre of world culture.

### *Ethnic Identity in the Middle East*

Many theoretical works and case studies of the Middle East reflect the problems regarding ethnicity and ethnic groups. These problems include a blurry definition of ethnicity, ethnic group, nation, or ethnic nationalism; a weak theory for explaining the phenomenon of ethnic nationalism in the West; a tendency for theoretical works to use non-examined concepts related to ethnicity or ethnic nationalism with no regard for structural, social, political and historical differences between the two social systems.

Some Middle Eastern scholars consider the concepts of ethnicity and related terms to be universal and apply them in their analysis and explanation of the linguistic and religious diversity and dispersion in the region. Such an attitude, which is the legacy of the tradition of behaviourism in the social sciences and non-historical transnational comparisons, convinces theorists and researchers

that they do not need to present a historical definition of ethnicity, ethnic group, or ethnic nationalism in their studies. For example, Akbar Aghajanian recognizes the existence of inequity among Iranian ethnic groups as a result of poverty, low levels of education and public health, and low per capita income. He uses the data to illustrate the causes of these inequalities effectively, but does not provide any definition of ethnicity and nor does he introduce a criterion for describing a community as an ethnic group. Aghajanian emphasizes that Iran is a country composed of different ethnic and linguistic communities, but does not examine the distinction between linguistic and ethnic communities. Farhad Kazemi in his paper, 'Ethnicity and Villagers of Iran' examines the functions of ethnicity in this section of the Iranian population. However, it is not clear what he means by ethnicity and, more importantly, ethnicity among the villagers. Kazemi argues at the opening of his paper that ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences are among the essential characteristics of Middle Eastern countries, and that Iran is no exception. This statement implies that 'ethnic' communities are distinct from 'religious' or 'linguistic' ones. David Menashri also argues that the introduction of Iran as a singular entity with 2500 years of political history is a myth. In his work on the Islamic Republic and Ayatollah Khomeini's politics, he discusses 'ethnic and religious minorities,' but he does not specify anything about ethnicity, its definition, or related elements, even though the title and overall content of the article indicate that he distinguishes between ethnic groups and religious minorities. When only Jews, Armenians, Bahais, and Zoroastrians are categorized as religious minorities in Iran, the reader's imagination is shattered, and the question of why Sunni Muslims should be regarded as an ethnic group rather than a religious minority arises! Political activity and the group's demand for autonomy and independence appear to be the key criterion for turning a minority group into an ethnic group. However, this criterion is not recognized as a basic criterion in textbooks about ethnic studies.

There are many methodological shortcomings and flaws in the study of ethnicity in the Middle East. The published research literature that provides some type of definition of ethnicity with a criterion for defining a group as 'ethnic' often rely on a generic descriptive framework that can encompass numerous religious and linguistic communities in the Middle East. Gabriel Ben-Do, following Clifford Geertz, applies a primordialist approach to all Middle Eastern societies in his work on ethnic politics and Middle Eastern state, where six characteristics that are important for primordialist school are introduced as elements of ethnicity: blood affiliations, race, language, territory, religion, and customs. The problem arises when such an interpretation of ethnicity as well as its broad classification system, which was originally designed to investigate a certain socio-historical framework in the developed West, is used in the study of societies with different histories and experiences. Plain definitions of ethnicity also sometimes create problems, as exemplified by the work of Esman and Rabinovich, *Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East*. They define ethnicity with their arguments as collective identity and solidarity based on such attributes as common ancestors, language, customs, belief systems, religious practices, and

in some cases race or colour. This definition is so broad that it encompasses all objective and subjective aspects of ethnicity. The difficulty with such a wide definition is that it minimizes the actual distinctions and the majority of shared components between people. Ignoring these common connections leads to contradictions and distortions when the researchers start to study a vast number of religious and linguistic groups in Middle Eastern societies. For example, while studying Syrian and Lebanese communities, they focus on the shared language and ancestor as the key criteria of ethnicity, ignoring the reality that the Alawite, Druze, and even Palestinian tribes (who are also considered an ethnic group) not only speak Arabic as a shared language but also, they claim that they reveal the existence of such differences and confusions about the role of religion and language as elements of ethnicity in the Middle East. It is the researcher who determines the ethnicity of religious or linguistic groups and it is the subjectivity of the researcher that determines this rather than some objective and scientific criteria. For example, ethnicity in Lebanon is related to religion, but in Iran, Pakistan and to some extent in Afghanistan, it is primarily a linguistic phenomenon. Thus, the Shiites of Pakistan and Afghanistan are not ethnic groups, while in Lebanon they are ethnic groups (Ahmady, 2008: 47-48).

Ethnic studies in the Middle East are not only affected by the problems of defining ethnicity and the conflicting criteria that determine the nature of ethnic groups, but they also overlook the historical features of ethnic communities and their relationship to the state. The main reason is that in these studies, tribe and ethnic group are usually used synonymously and interchangeably and the characteristics of ethnic groups are attributed to tribal communities. Thus, the linguistic and religious groups of the Middle East (that formerly had tribal organizations) are considered distinctive ethnic groups that are in constant conflict with governments to become a nation. As Bassam Tibi states the terms 'tribe' and 'ethnic group' cannot be used interchangeably in the context of Middle Eastern studies. Social scientists interested in the Middle East have used the concept of ethnicity as an analytical tool to illustrate the social divisions in countries without a national (homogeneous) society. Asked why scholars speak of an ethnic group instead of a tribe, Tibi emphasizes that European historians often refer to social groupings in prehistoric times as ethnic groups, but similar groups in non-European history were often called tribes. Thus, tribalism is an Arab or African social phenomenon, not a European one.

Social scientists in general and Middle Eastern scholars, in particular, are now avoiding the use of the word tribe and are often referring to social groupings as ethnic groups. This is mainly because they do not want to use the word tribe to accuse them of being Eurocentric. However, some social scientists use the same primordialist approach to ethnic studies in their studies of Middle Eastern tribes. In these studies, the emphasis is primarily on kinship among members of tribal groups. In other words, a tribe is defined based on kinship, and social scientists usually refer to kinship as the 'ancestor'. For example, Lisa Anderson in her work on state-building in Tunisia and Libya, emphasizes above all the concept of the tribe as a kinship group, while the evidence provided by other scholars suggests that tribal groups in the two regions were more complex than

imagined. Anderson does not explain how the kinship of these tribes developed, nor does she state what distinctive features other than 'kinship' there may be in the tribe that can be defined as elemental. As Luis Beck points out, the notion of kinship, which is one of the symbolic systems of social (and also tribal) classifications, was important at the local level in relations between tribal communities, but kinship relations alone did not create tribes or tribal policies. Thus, defining a tribe as a kin group is inaccurate because it overemphasizes the kinship element and ignores the other more important elements. Many ethnic and linguistic communities, defined by Middle Eastern scholars to be ethnic groups, were in the past divided into subgroups according to tribal boundaries. It is true that within the social system, the representative state and tribes are different and sometimes negate each other, but this does not mean that the relations between them are necessarily and constantly conflicting; particularly in the Middle East, there has often been no clear demarcation between the tribe and the state. Many states have been tribal dynasties, and many tribal communities have formed small states. As Ibn Khaldun has put it, tribes and governments have often supported each other within a single system and were rarely opposed to each other as two separate systems. There is political tension between the two, but along with this tension, there have been strong interdependencies, and through their leaders, there have been continuous relationships between them.

The rise of the modern centralist state, or, as Anthony Smith put it, 'the scientific state', has made relations between the state and the tribes hostile; This is an event that occurred in the Middle East in the first decades of the twentieth century. However, the resistance of ethnic groups against the state, contrary to the claims of many social scientists, was not a struggle for independence, but a struggle for survival. This resistance later took on an ethnic form under the influence of extraterritorial forces.

### *Iranian identity*

The study of the Avestan Gahani (verse 8 of Yasna, Ha 32; verse 14 of Yasnah, hat 51) indicates that the early Iranian community of the followers of Zoroaster, in their everyday economic activities, strongly depended on agriculture which required settlement. This formed the foundations of civilization and urbanization in Iran. The conflict between primitive life and urban life has always been a problem in Iranian history in the face of foreign invaders (Barthold & Rogers, 1970).

The word Iran means the land of the Aryans or nobles. Politically, the name is given to a country located in southwest Asia, in a part of the earth that is often known as the 'Middle East'. Geographically speaking, this name covers a wider area than Iran as it often refers to the entire plateau of Iran. Culturally speaking, this name includes all people who live according to Iranian religions and in Iranian, Persian, Kurdish, Lori, Balochi, Khorasani, Gilaki, Azari, Dari, Mazandaran, and some other minor languages.' (Mohjtahedzadeh, 2007: 155).



Thus, Iranian identity is contestable at the level of national identity, and national identity denotes a sense of belonging and devotion to shared elements and symbols in the national community (the entire society) and within the established political limits. According to Ahmad Ashraf, 'national identity' has often been frequently employed instead of the concept of 'national character' since the second half of the twentieth century and is a social science construct (Ashraf, 1999: 522). According to MacKenzie, national identity is one of four types of identity that have persisted since the nineteenth century and is defined alongside three other types of identity, namely religious identity, class, and race. Some definitions of national identity emphasize the unifying elements of an independent political unit and define it as a set of positive tendencies and attitudes towards identifying and unifying factors, elements, and models at the level of a country as a political unit. Others emphasize the psychological aspect. Some definitions have considered national unities and attachment to it as the main element of the definition of national identity and as a set of characteristics, affiliations as well as some geographical, historical, cultural, social, and ethnic bonds, which include human life and a source of pride for the members of society. (Ruholamini, 2000).

Besides the characteristics and components of Iranian identity and national identity, there are different ideas about the nature, history, and quality of Iranian identities, ranging from disbelief in the existence of such an identity to the creation of an imaginary history for it. The polemics and conflicts between these ideas are also ranging from ethnicities that talk about separation and independence from Iran, and on the other hand, some people and groups believe in the extraterritorial unity of all Persian speakers.

According to Diakonov, what led to the unity and formation of a political unity on the Iranian plateau was the necessity that the settled people in the land of Iran had used in the face of the uninhabited invaders on the margin of this plateau (Diakonov, 1966: 187). On this basis, it can be stated that the land of Iran has been a place of competition and conflict between internal and external forces, while both non-Iranian tribes have sought to conquer and dominate it, allied tribes living inside Iran were struggling to rule and dominate this territory. According to Richard Fry, the formation of Iran politically happened around the third century AD, in the Sassanid era, and all through Iranian history, the belief that all people living in this land are subjects of the 'king' is a belief that has always been the basis of Iranian political identity. The loyalty of the Iranians during the Achaemenid period was centred around the king or the dynasty, not on the country. But this principle was challenged by religion during the Sassanid era, and the loyalty of the people, which until then had been directed to the king, shifted to religion, which was further intensified and stabilized by the domination of Islam (Fry, 1994: 435-436).

Iranian identity like the identity of each of the ethnicities discussed in this study has experienced great changes in some periods of the history of this territory and each time some elements of those identities have transformed, to such an extent some early twentieth-century nationalist thinkers, including Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aga Khan Kermani, Sadegh Hedayat, Bahar, and others

have condemned, the Arabs for the devastation they incurred during the invasion of Iran (Bigdelou, 2001).

Regarding the contemporary identity of Iranians, there are often references to diversity and pluralism, which refers to the different types of discourses present under this broad identity. The idea of Iranian identity as a surface with forty pieces of constituents is the image presented by Daryoush Shaygan that provided a very popular and applicable interpretation of the contemporary meaning of the identity of Iranians. (Shaygan, 2002 and 1999).

According to Ahmad Ashraf, the historical concept of Iranian identity was moulded during the ethnic, political, and religious movements of the Sassanid era, it remained more or less stable during the Islamic era, and was reborn during the Safavid age. Iranian identity found its final form in contemporary times (Ashraf, 2009).

Due to its special geographical location, the Iranian identity has been affected by three civilizational forces of Iran, Islam, and the West (Kachueian,1387). According to Boroujerdi, mixing and connecting these three discourses in various forms toward shaping a hybrid identity has always been the main strategy of Iranian intellectuals. But so far, most Iranian writers have had major flaws in reproducing and recognizing Iranian identity, because, in the first place, they were generally creative writers and not informed historians. Therefore, although their writings enjoyed great prose that employed a sophisticated level of rhetorical devices, they failed to present historiography. For example, most of the pictures are without captions and there is no reliable system for documentation. Second, there is a manifest ideological perspective with no critical approach toward the cultural heritage of society, and they have often been associated with some political currents. Thirdly, they were closely associated with and reliant on the idea of the Persian language as the main and determining element of identity while all other elements have been neglected. For example, Fakhreddin Shadman believed that Iranian identity is built exclusively based on the Persian language (Boroujerdi, 2000).

According to the above definitions of national identity and Iranian identity, we are looking for the components of Iranian national identity in contemporary times. These components help us to identify the main common elements among Iranians to strengthen them for increased social cohesion. In other words, the demands of different ethnic groups for the realization of social justice from the perspective of peace will be analysed. It should be stated that since cultural identity is not fixed and its diversity and pluralism in Iran make it necessary to maintain a permanent inter-identity dialogue so that better cohesion and integrity or a more general identity than ethnicities and other sub-cultures could be negotiated. This is what the contemporary Iranian philosopher Dr. Soroush proposes under the concept of reconciliation between three ethnic, religious, and local cultures (Soroush, 2007: 123).

### *Components of Iranian national identity*

Most Iranian scholars agree that the three most important pillars of national identity in Iran include: 1) geography and territory with instabilities between the Iranian plateau and its mountainous areas; 2) the Persian language with all its variations and transformations as a result of mixing with Turkish, Mongolian, and Arabic languages; and 3) the religion of Islam with an untouched basic principle despite all sectarian differences.

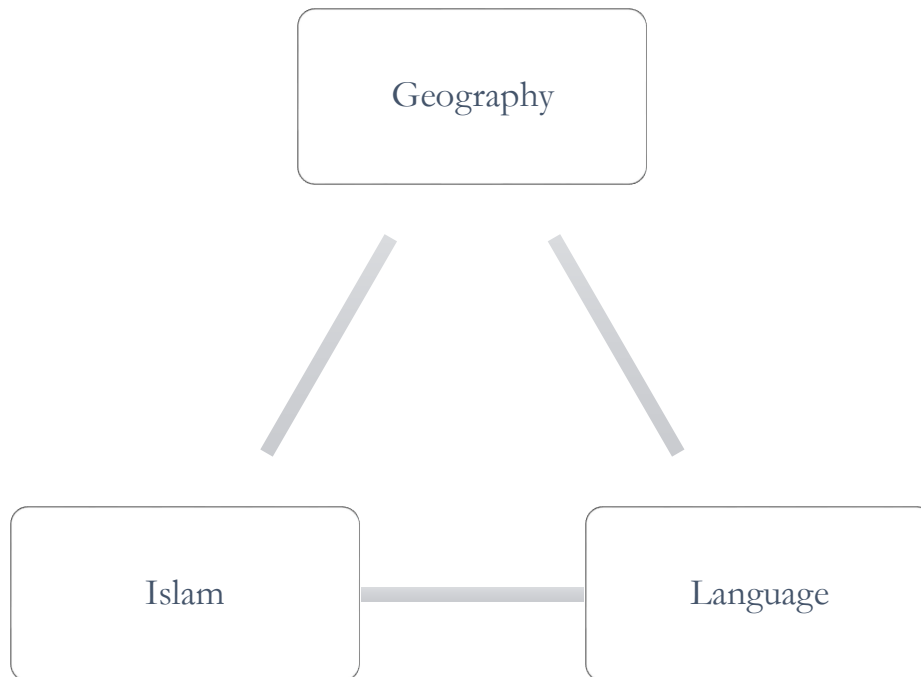


Figure 1 Components of Iranian national identity

All Iranians have lived on the Iranian plateau since ancient times, and the geographical boundaries of this plateau have marked their space of life. They have realized themselves in this territory and have adapted to it over the centuries, despite all the environmental fluctuations. For all nations, Iranians included, the common territorial land is an important element in contemporary political geography and the formation of independent political units to such an extent that the study of national identity requires considering territorial properties. In the meantime, some theories consider the same political unit as the axis as well as the main factor for the development of national identity. In the following, the geographical situation of Iran and the related ethnic groups will be further examined.

Persian (or Farsi) is a branch of Indo-European languages that is spoken in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Persian is the official language of Iran and Tajikistan and one of the two official languages of Afghanistan (besides Pashto). The official language of India was Persian until the advent of British colonialism. Persian is also called Farsi or Parsi. Persian is officially called Dari in Afghanistan and Tajik in Tajikistan.

Persian is among the top three languages in the world in terms of the number and variety of proverbs, and with the introduction of words from Arabic and other languages such as Greek, Aramaic, Turkish, etc., Persian has become one of the richest languages in terms of the number of words. Such compiled lexical dictionaries as Dehkhoda Dictionary (in 20 volumes) or Sokhan Dictionary (in 8 volumes), clearly indicate the richness of Persian in words.

Persian is the first language of twenty million people in Afghanistan, five million people in Tajikistan, and about seven million people in Uzbekistan. Given the official position of Persian in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, and the dominance of speakers of other languages as a second language, the total number of Persian speakers in the world can be estimated at around one hundred and ten million people.

Although Persian is the official language of Iran and the common language of all Iranian ethnicities, in Iran – which is the common territory of many ethnic groups – the origin of different languages is recognizable and traceable; languages that have their independent speakers in a specific location of this territory and even beyond the territorial borders. They are the offspring of the same family and have experienced the transformations of their destiny in the course of history.

Islam is another element that is often considered by various scholars as an important basis for Iranian national identity. The claim that Islam is an important keystone for Iranian national identity is confirmed by the prevalence of religious sentiments, the country's approximately 98% Muslim population, and the changes that religion has brought about throughout Iran's history. Throughout history, either the people or the conquerors have adapted the original national elements with religious principles and preserved those parts of ethnic customs that did not contradict religion. There is such a strong integration of religion into other aspects of national identity in Iran that the semantic component of religion has formed a multi-layered identity (Saghebifar, 2000). National identity also includes other commonalities such as national emblems, the flag, national sentiments, the constitution as a national agreement, customs, festivities, and holidays (Yousefi, 2001). According to this view, Iranian identity includes some elements of a national identity that includes different ethnicities that carry these elements.

### *National identity of Iranians in the contemporary times*

In Iran, the wave of modernization spread from the beginning of the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar when Iranian society faced a new civilization established in Europe and developed in the United States. This consciousness initially grew at the margins of the ruling class and then among the elites of society. Later, it was spread among the general public and led to the Constitutional Revolution. Thus, the desire for progress, or rather the desire for modernity and development emerged as a new element in Iranian identity and culture.

Thinkers and scholars that have addressed Iranian identity point to these elements in a way or another. According to Zabihullah Safa, the Persian language and the imperial institution are the two main pillars of Iranian identity. Shahrokh Moskoob considers history and language as the basis for Iranian identity. Abdolkarim Soroush considers Iranian identity to be composed of three Iranian, Islamic, and Western cultures. For Farhang Rajaee all of these elements are important and he adds the element of tradition to Iran, Islam, and modernity (Rajaee, 2003: 48-71). This is while Nikki Keddie identifies the three elements of geographical properties of the Iranian plateau, the Persian language, and the Shiite religion as the main ingredients of Iranian identity (Keddie, 2002: 10-22).

The debate over Iranian identity began with the debates over constitutionalism, which was heavily concerned with the ancient history of Iran (Muharrami, 2007: 73). Also, 'Iranian cultural identity has various components and ingredients that are related to national identity, religious identity, ethnic identity, etc. (Alikhani, 2007: 102). History makes the most fundamental element of Iranian national identity that can be classified into mythological and historical categories (Ahmady, 2004: 169). Also, language, customs, and some other elements can be .studied as the ingredients of Iranian identity

Identity and its definition is always in the process of becoming. The Iranian people have developed the key components of their identity over the course of their history, and when an element has lost its usefulness, they have abandoned it. In Iran, religion has evolved through many periods, beginning with monotheism, moving on to Zoroastrianism, and finally arriving at Islam and Shiite religion. This unfolded on the Iranian plateau, which is surrounded by the Zagros Mountains in the west and the two Alborz mountain ranges in the northern valley. The numerous ethnic groups residing on the Iranian plateau are still brought together by Persian as their primary language of communication. Modernity and development are also essential components of the identity of the Iranian nation, and modern Iranians strive to achieve the pinnacles of civilisation while simultaneously reviving the beautiful grandeur of earlier phases of the same civilisation.

For an examination of the elements of contemporary Iranian identity, Abulhassani (2008) highlights several social, historical, geographical, cultural, and political aspects. According to him, one's social relationships with the macro-social system are a direct reflection of the quality of their national identity. Belief in the existence and necessity of a national society, a sense of belonging to this society, a desire to become a member, a sense of commitment to the national community or 'a national we,' acceptance of one another as fellow citizens, a favourable attitude toward those who identify as members of the nation, belief on the origins of the national community, beliefs about its future and destiny, sense of pride in belonging to this community, interest in and willingness to pay the costs associated with membership in this community, and attitude toward the ideals of social cooperation and solidarity, are among the key elements in this regard.

In a society, there is a shared awareness of the past, a sense of commitment to it, a sense of historical identity, and a sense of affiliation with several generations that prevents the separation of one generation from the past; this is known as the historical dimension of national identity. The members of a nation would find similar interpretations and understandings of their past, similar values, and a shared sense of belonging and commitment to the same community. This does not imply that they should have the same experience. Although members of society may have shared experiences in the past, this does not necessarily mean that they should have the same understanding of it today; they may have experienced common events in the past, but due to different and conflicting interpretations and evaluations at later stages, that sharing of events may cause contemporary differences. Thus, historical identity can be considered as consciousness and knowledge about the historical background as well as belief and sense of belonging, memory and attachment toward it. The most important component is the existence of feelings and emotions common to incidents, events and personalities, resulting in a positive and honourable treatment of it, or considering the activities and actions of personalities in the history of the country as successful or failed, and feeling proud or humiliated toward it.

The definition of national identity in its geographical context is equal to a positive attitude toward land and territory, this is because we all reside in the same country and territory and hold the same position within the larger system of existence. The element of land, which is intricately intertwined with economics and politics, determines a person's survival unit in the sense that only in the presence of that specific land would it be possible to accomplish its objectives and satisfy its demands. Attachment and belonging to the motherland, which is defined by certain boundaries, has several characteristics, including willingness to defend the land in times of danger, preferring to live in one's country and accepting it as one's home, not wanting to immigrate, interest in the eternal integrity of the land, a positive approach and attitude toward the land, a sense of peace and comfort of living in it.

Culture refers to a common mental and psychological set that has been formed in the historical past and has been passed on to the next generations through the process of socialization, inherited by new generations as a legacy of the past. This set includes values, norms, symbols, beliefs and feelings, and approaches toward family, economy, politics, religion, sociability, and recreation, that are formed as collective conscience among the people of a society. In addition to its subjective aspects, culture has certain objective aspects, some of which are referred to as civilization and are available to society as cultural heritages. Cultural heritage encompasses all cultural dimensions of any social system that affect the people consciously or unconsciously and is the historical hallmark of a culture and a nation. The appreciation that society has for this cultural heritage and their judgment about the necessity of preserving and using it in society is also determined by national identity.

National identity in the political dimension means that people who are physically and legally members of a political system or structure and reside within the national borders of a country and are the subject or addressee of that

country's laws must also psychologically consider themselves members of the system. Therefore, love and affection for a political system and its values and legitimacy will be a major factor in strengthening national solidarity and unity.

### *Ethnic identities in Iran*

The first Aryan tribes originated in the southern parts of modern Russia, but as a result of many unfavourable circumstances, including the wildness of nature, lack of adequate housing, the hostile climate, and tough land, they gradually left their original home to enjoy the fertile plains, dispersing in various parts of Central Asia for farming and living. A group of them who settled in Iran and India are called Indo-Iranians, but most historians point to the migration of these people to the southern regions of their primary residence, to Iran, which is part of their migration destination. Therefore, the Iranian people are a branch of the Indo-Iranian ethnicity—the Aryans. In the late second half of the second millennium and early first millennium BC, these people gradually migrated from their homeland in the northernmost part of Central Asia to warmer lands and entered the Iranian plateau from the northeast and west of the Caspian Sea. This migration was not voluntary, but like other waves of ethnic migrations among Central Asian people, was driven by pressure from other northern and colder regions to more southern and warmer regions (Sanie Ejlal, 2005: 55). Today, different ethnic groups Lor, Baloch, Turkmen, Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and Persians live in Iran and it can be easily recognized that almost all of these ethnic groups live in border areas and have cultural and religious ties with ethnic groups in neighbouring countries. For example, the Balochis in the southeastern region bordering Pakistan, the Turkmen in the northeastern region bordering Turkmenistan, the Azaris in the north and northwest bordering Azarbaijan and Turkey, the Arabs in the west and southwest, and the Kurds have settled in the west and northwest of the country, adjacent to Iraq and Turkey, and the political borders have passed through the settlements of these peoples (Jalayipour, 1993). In this sense, it can be stated that Iran is a heterogeneous country in terms of social structure where different ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious identities live and some of these same ethnic groups stretch to and reside in neighbouring countries. From the standpoint of social sciences, several centrifugal forces may be termed crisis centres, particularly around borders. On the other hand, ethnic groups in neighbouring countries, including Arabs and Kurds in Iraq, Azaris in the Republic of Azarbaijan, and Balochis in Pakistan, are potential centres for tension and crisis (Fuller, 1993). The homogeneity of these ethnic groups with their counterparts beyond boundaries is stronger than that of other ethnic groups inside the country, a fact that in the past and contemporary situations have caused certain tendencies to the development of familial links outside borders. As a result, and especially among the people of the border towns of the two sides, extensive kinship relations have been established.

Because of this cultural homogeneity, ethnic groups now frequently turn to their fellow groups living in other countries for accommodation when they decide to pursue demands with a military bent and include armed conflict on their agenda. Since the

early years of the Islamic Revolution, this idea has been the focus of Kurdish parties in the west of the country, and they have always pursued this course. In more recent years, when Arab groups have occasionally engaged in armed conflict, they have taken advantage of this ethnic situation besides the political instability in Iraq, and have perpetrated acts of violence on the Iranian territory. Besides the west of the country, in the east and southeast of the country, Baloch armed groups have also planned most of their military initiatives on Pakistani soil and among their ethnic groups.

### *Ethnic and religious identities in the Constitution of Iran*

According to the constitution, ethnic minorities are divided into three groups: a) Ethnic identities that form a special group just in terms of ethnicity and some other distinctive characteristics such as Azaris; b) The identity of the ethnic and religious minorities, such as Balochis and Kurds; c) The identity of religious minorities such as Christians, Jews, and others.

Regarding ethnic identity and ethnic equality in law, Article 19 of the Constitution explicitly states: 'The people of Iran have equal rights, regardless of their ethnicity or tribe, and colour, race, language, and the like shall not constitute a privilege.' There shall be no discrimination made between Persians, Turks, Kurds, Lors, Balochis, Arabs, Turkmen, or any other ethnic group according to this Article, and all ethnic and linguistic groups should be accorded the same rights in this respect.

Also as for the official religion, Article 12 of the Constitution has chosen Islam and the religion of the Twelver Shiites as the official religion of the country: 'The official religion of Iran is Islam and the religion of the Twelver Ja'fari, and this principle is immutable eternally.' But in the Constitution, provisions have been made for other religions and denominations that live in the system of the Islamic Republic. In the same principle, it is stated about other religions: 'Other Islamic religions, including Hanafi, Shafei, Maliki, Hanbali, and Zaidi, are fully respected and the followers of these religions are free to perform religious ceremonies according to their jurisprudence; religious education and personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and will) and related claims are recognized in the courts; in any area where there is a majority of these religions, local regulations and the authority of the councils will be according to the laws of that religion, provided that the rights of followers of other religions are protected.' According to this Article, it may thus be concluded that in addition to recognising the religious identity of the nation's Muslim religious minority, their different rights have also been acknowledged.

In the same way, Article 13 of the Constitution, apart from accepting the religious identity of the Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as religious minorities, confirms their legal equality. But apart from the followers of these three monotheistic religions, according to Article 14 of the Constitution, 'the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Muslims are obliged to treat non-Muslims with good morals and Islamic justice and respect their human rights. This Article applies to those who do not conspire against Islam and the



Islamic Republic of Iran.’ The noteworthy point in Article 14 is that although the followers of other religions, such as Buddhists, Hinduists, and Yarsans, cannot perform their religious rites formally or in any way -for example, they cannot build a temple or to enter into a marriage contract according to their law - but they have the right to live in the country and no one should disturb them as long as they do not conspire against Islam.

Finally, while acknowledging the country’s variety of ethnic and linguistic identities, Article 14 of the Constitution also stressed the potential of employing local and ethnic languages in the press and media, as well as teaching ethnic languages and literature in schools in addition to Persian. This Article, after declaring the official language and stating that ‘official and administrative documents, correspondences, and textbooks must be in Persian script and language’, remarks on various forms of freedom for the use of local and ethnic languages that include the freedom to use these languages in the press and mass media and to teach ethnic languages and literature in schools alongside Persian. These rights make it possible for ethnic groups to preserve their identity and cultural continuity.

On the other hand, the Constitution, as the basis of social order and a foundation for the behaviour of social and ethnic identities, in addition to the principles outlined in Articles 7, 64, and 106, explicitly or implicitly refer to the rights of ethnic groups and minorities.

The constitution covers religious minorities in terms of civil rights, particularly freedom of ideas and social and political freedoms. The same rules apply to ethnic groupings as they do to the current majority; however, Sunnis or other ethnicities are not given a specific representative seat in the Parliament like other religious minorities. The question of freedom of ethnic culture and language, which is addressed in the sixteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-fourth, and twenty-sixth Articles, is the most noteworthy topic in which different ethnic rights are addressed. The twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth Articles also reference the right to organize ‘parties and associations,’ as well as the freedom of the press, which guarantees ethnic groups social independence. However, whether the parties can have an ethnic origin is a matter of law. Nonetheless, it is clear from the text of the law that there is no prohibition for such freedoms, and its interpretation is the responsibility of the related institutions. The word ‘population’ which may seem a bit vague, can still refer to a wide range of organizations, in which case it can include cultural and social associations and charities and ethnic minorities.

What is known is that the principles enshrined in the Constitution, as required by the general and fundamental law, are comprehensive and general, and as a result, it is natural that more delicate and difficult issues would emerge during the design and execution of regulations. On the other hand, ethnic movements and crises that occurred in the territory and ethnic regions of the country during the early days of the Islamic Revolution as a result of religious, linguistic, and ethnic divisions have resulted in significant changes in the process of formulating ethnic policies, with something like a stronger emphasis on

maintaining national unity and territorial integrity. As a result, the objective of maintaining social harmony and solidarity, taking into account national aspects as well as unifying factors and components, as well as common elements among different ethnicities, became the focus of legislators as the dominant discourse during the process of drafting laws, their approval, and composing regulations. In this regard, we can refer to the first, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-second, twenty-third, twenty-fourth, twenty-sixth, thirty-seventh, and thirty-eighth Articles in the Constitution.

### *Identity and ethnicity of different regions of Iran*

Most political regimes across the world strive to represent the identity of their people exclusively and officially. This is achieved and maintained through the unity of official symbols like language, religion, clothing, and so on. As a result, while a European's impression of Iran may be based on single representations such as the Persian language, the Shiite religion, a single ethnicity, and so on, the reality is that Iran has diverse ethnic types with distinct languages, faiths, and clothing customs. These ethnic groups with their specific ethnic identities have always lived side by side. Iranian ethnic groups, despite some linguistic and cultural differences, are integrated into Iranian society, and unlike many ethnic groups in the West or multinational countries around the world, almost all Iranian ethnic groups are native to Iran and have their specific religious, linguistic, or religious identities. While enjoying their regional backgrounds and linguistic identity, they have accepted the Iranian culture and language as their identity (Ghasemi et al., 2011: 64). Still, some Iranian ethnic groups live in border areas and have cultural and religious ties with ethnic groups in neighbouring countries; Balochis live in the southeastern region on the border with Pakistan, Turkmen in the northeastern region bordering Turkmenistan, Azaris in the north and northwest bordering Azerbaijan and Turkey, Arabs in the west and southwest, and Kurds in the west and northwest of the country near Iraq and Turkey, and it is just the political borders that have separated them.

Historically, scattered tribes in Iran have coexisted peacefully and without conflict. But after the rise of the modern nation-state and the global spread of identity movements on the one hand, and the marginalization and ethnic discrimination by the dominant ethnic groups on the other, tensions arose that manifested themselves in various forms. Ethnic groups were accused of different forms of divergence from the centre and inclination toward their similar ethnic groups outside the borders of Iran. These conflicts have evolved to the point that it is plausible to compare the position of Iranian ethnic groups to those of the Kurdish groups in Turkey. As Abbas Vali and others (2009) describe, Kurdish identity is manifested in differences that define the ruling identity. This identity signifies through non-signification and is present by its absence, making it a form of subjectivity in history and politics without the possibility of representation/signification.

Given that the current study focuses on five ethnic groups (Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Baloch), each ethnic identity is also examined at the local level. By local level, we mean the geographical region in which the tribes in question dwell, regardless of the national political borders. For the Baloch people, for example, the local level encompasses the places where they inhabit Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In the study of ethnic identity at the local level, the factors and contexts of strengthening or undermining ethnic identity at the local level are addressed, that is, how the relationship and interaction of individuals of an ethnic group outside the national framework and political geographical borders with each other, empower or weaken their sense of ethnic identity. This is a form of communication that may be through virtual and media communication technologies or direct and direct and face-to-face communication.

### **Azari**

This group is composed of Turkic-speaking Muslims who live in scattered regions mainly including the traditional residences of the Azarbaijani, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. The Azari mostly reside in the Northwest of the Iranian Plateau, *i.e.* Azarbaijan and Zanjan, but are distributed around Iran, in the eastern and northern parts of Hamadan and the western and southern parts of Qazvin, along with minorities in Gilan and Markazi. The most-populated province capitals with Azari residents include Tabriz, Urmia, Ardabil, and Zanjan, as ordered by population. Most Azari settlements are located in the Northwest and West of Iran, and there is also a significant number in the centre.

The Azeris in Iran are in particular conditions in the vicinity of the Republic of Azarbaijan and with a common linguistic background with Turkey, and their ethnic consciousness is deeply influenced by political issues and conflicts. Integration of the territories on the two sides of the Aras River has been a dream claim for promoters of Pan-Turkism, and the literature on the unification of the two Azarbaijans has gained popularity since the Soviet Era. Heydar Aliyev can be mentioned as a prominent example. In 1981, he lectured on the aspiration of the people of Soviet Azarbaijan for the unification of the two Azarbaijans while expressing sympathy for Iranian Azarbaijan in front of a group of foreign diplomats (Azari, 1982, p. 5 and 6).

Most of the Turkic peoples living in Iran speak Azari, and there is of course a variant spoken in Khorasan. Most of the Azaris in Iran are Shia Muslims. Of course, among the Azaris, there are also followers of Yarsanism among them.

Besides their adherence to national and religious rites, the Azaris have preserved their customs in many cultural aspects, and their common rituals have gained national popularity in some cases. For instance, the mourning processions of the Great Hussainiya of Zanjan, Tabriz, Urmia, and Ardabil are some of the best-known mourning groups for the Islamic prophet's family among the Iranian Azari in the month of Muharram. Moreover, they commonly practice rituals such as those known as *Tashtgozari*, *Ta'zieh*, and *Shah Hussain Guyan* and chest-beating and self-flagellation, where lamentation is carried out in Azari. The mourning rituals at Tabriz Historical Bazaar have also been registered

nationally. In addition, Azarbaijani music is considered an important part of this people's cultural identity, and Azarbaijani artists have presented unique music with their creativity, where those who sing their poems in Azari are called Ashiqs. To describe Azarbaijan and its heroes, they sing beautiful poetry accompanied by Azarbaijani music in celebrations and mourning ceremonies, which is greatly welcomed by people. Traditional Azarbaijani clothing is a special symbol of the Azari, which has come into existence following long cultural, religious, and other processes concerning the Azari. The clothing is not much in use in the Azari's daily life today.

## **Kurds**

The Kurds are the largest ethnic bloc in the Middle East after the Arabs, Persians, and Turks (Olson, 2003: 6; quoted from Abdullahi and Ghaderzadeh, 2009). The Kurds generally live within the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Azarbaijan, and Armenia. The majority of Kurds (more than half of them) live in the Kurdistan of Turkey followed by Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

With the long history of problems in cultural and identity indicators among the Kurds, contemporary events and developments are deeply affected by new and emerging trends such as the intensification and deepening darker effects of new information and communication technologies, the increasing permeability of social borders and global entanglement, the spread of universal values by the Kurdish satellite stations and networks, the formation of ethnic communities with nationalist themes, the internationalization of the Kurdish problems, and the intensification of inter-social and economic relations (Ibid., 2009: 2). Political and social events related to the Kurds have always affected the Kurds in all other countries. Since the abduction and imprisonment of the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey in 1999, as well as the US invasion of Iraq, the establishment of the federal government, and the recognition of the KRG in Iraq, as well as recent events such as the resistance of Kobani and Afrin against the terrorist group ISIS in Syria, and the resistance of Kurdish parties in Turkey, Kurdish solidarity and cohesion is further reinforced and reflected. The most recent political event occurred in 2017 when the concept of an Iraqi Kurdistan referendum and obtaining a majority of votes for Iraqi Kurdistan's independence sparked a surge of pleasure and excitement among Iranian Kurds. Although ethnic unity appears to be higher among Kurds in Iran and Iraq than in the other two areas of Kurdistan (Turkey and Syria), Kurds agree on their ethnic affinities and connect with the notion and identity of 'being Kurdish.'

Ghaderzadeh et al. (2009) conducted a study on the ethnic, national, and global identities of Kurds in Iran and Iraq. The available results reveal that broad collective identity, particularly at the level of the community of its communities among Kurds, has not grown or strengthened significantly, and ethnic community is the dominant form of identification among them. The Kurds investigated possessed all three forms of ethnic, national, and global identities, as indicated in Table 1.2, and there is a predisposition and belonging to collective identities at these levels among them. However, in the hierarchy of identity preferences, ethnic identity has a central and primary position, followed by

global and national identities. Thus, there is considerable consistency and commonality at the level of hierarchy and identification preferences of Kurds in Iran and Iraq, indicating the supremacy of ethnic particularity and the inadequacy of generic collective identity at the community level. Nonetheless, a comparison of the indicators of collective identity levels among Iranian and Iraqi Kurds reveals that the rate of belonging to the indicators of ethnic identity is higher among Iraqi Kurds than in Iranians, and more general collective identities, such as national and global indicators of identities, have developed more among Iranian Kurds (Ghaderzadeh and Abdollahi, 2009: 13).

Regions	Total Sample		Kurdish regions of Iran		Kurdish Regions of Iraq	
Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ethnic identity	79	13	75	14	83	11
National identity	60	20	67	19	55	21
Global identity	68	25	72	24	65	26

Table 1 The level of identity among the Kurds of Iran and Iraq

Certainly, the Kurdish media and satellite channels have had and continue to have an impact on supporting and reinforcing the ethnic identity of the Kurds. According to research on the subject, there is a considerable association between media usage and ethnic identification. As a result of the increasing amount and duration of time spent viewing satellite channels, the viewer has a greater feeling of ethnic affiliation. The ideas of Manuel Castells and Gianni Vattimo can explain this. According to Castells, media usage has a direct impact on identity (Rezaei and Mohammadi, 2015: 85).

The intensity and type of ethnic identity among Iranian Kurds is to some extent dependent on their religion and religious beliefs. Sunni Kurds have a stronger ethnic identity than Shiite Kurds. Shiite Kurds, who mostly inhabit in the southern regions of Kermanshah and Ilam provinces, identify as Kurds and have a strong Kurdish identity, but they are less divergent than Sunni Kurds and often prioritize their national identity above their ethnic identity.

### **Balochis**

Sistan and Balochestan Province, located in the Southeast of Iran, covers more than 11% of the total area of the country and is the second largest province after Kerman. It is bounded on the north by Khorasan Province, on the west by Kerman and Hormozgan, on the south by Oman Sea, and the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan. The mountains in Sistan and Balochestan are part of Iran's central mountain ranges. The highest point, in Taftan Mountain, is 4042

m high, and the lowest area is located on the shores of the Oman Sea, including the terrains on the east of Lut Desert and the highlands on the eastern and southern walls of Jaz Murian Basin. The width of the mountains increases from the north to the south and reaches its peak between Iranshahr and Kuhak (Saravan), where they are divided into two parts: the mountains of Sistan and those of Balochestan. The province has a desert climate, with a maximum annual temperature of above 40 °C. Zahedan is the coldest city in the province, and Iranshahr is the hottest. Humidity fluctuation, monsoon winds such as the 120-day winds and *Bade Haftom*, aka Gavkosh, precipitation, and huge temperature difference during a 24-h period, except in regions with moderate climate on the Oman Sea shores, particular climatic conditions, vegetation, and animal life have brought about unique sceneries in the province. The Baloch live along the eastern and southeastern edges of Iran, neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan on the east and northeast.

The Baloch are an Iranian ethnic group of Aryan origin who live in southeastern Iran today. The vast majority of the Baloch lived within the borders of Iran until the late nineteenth century. However, as the rivalry between the United Kingdom and Russia over greater power and influence in the Middle East intensified, ethnic disputes and confrontations occurred, and the borders were shifted, they began to settle in India (and in Pakistan and Afghanistan later on) as well as in Iran. Today, more than 1.3 million Iranian Balochis live in Sistan and Balochestan Province, and the rest reside in other provinces of Iran (Abdollahi and Hosseinbor, 2002: p. 104).

Since the Baloch language is spoken in different countries, there has been no consensus among linguistics on its classification from the beginning. Therefore, it has been classified in different ways. Some have considered Northern and Southern Balochi, while others have assumed Eastern and Western Balochi, and there is also a recent view involving three classes: Eastern, Western, and Southern. Despite these rather convoluted categories, it is vital to highlight the most significant and well-known Balochi dialect, Rakhshani, which is one of the most widely spoken and has speakers in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan (Tameh, 2017).

All the Balochi are Muslims, who belong either to the Hanafi Sunni majority or the Twelver Shiite minority, and there is no other religion among them. Some of the characteristics that distinguish the Balochi from other ethnic groups are listed below.

- 1) Provision of refuge and full protection for the oppressed.
- 2) Promise-keeping; the Balochi are well-known for keeping promises, preferring to die rather than break a promise.
- 3) Hospitality, is one of the best-known characteristics of the Baloch.
- 4) Provision of the best support for anyone, including neighbours, friends, and strangers, where the entire neighbourhood comes together to do something for someone for free.

- 5) Donation in cash or otherwise to a groom to contribute to the costs of marriage.
- 6) Collection of donations in cash or otherwise for someone with an urgent financial need. It is common in some regions to construct mosques and seminaries, to pay for students' costs and their teachers' wages, and to perform other religious tasks in cash or otherwise (such as the purchase of construction materials).
- 7) Revenge, for which the Baloch have always been famous everywhere. They never allow anyone to oppress them, or they take revenge.
- 8) Strong commitment to keep the word. A kind of oath is common among the Baloch where a man swears to get a divorce from his wife in case he fails to meet a claim to do or not to do something.
- 9) Meeting between the seniors of a family or families who come together at a certain place to address important issues.
- 10) Clothing made with a particular embroidery technique known as *suzanduzi*, which is an artistic-cultural product of Baloch women.

### **The Fars/ Persian**

Inhabitants of most large Iranian cities, the Persians live almost in the centre of the country. Tehran, Isfahan, Semnan, Alborz, Shiraz, Markazi provinces, part of Bushehr, Kerman, Yazd, and Khorasan provinces, as well as part of Qazvin and Hamadan provinces all have Persian inhabitants. They are geographic neighbours of four other ethnic groups: the Gilaki in the north, the Kurds in the west, the Arabs in the south, and the Baloch in the east. In other words, the Persians live in the Centre of Iran and partly in the Northeast, although other ethnic groups also live in the Centre, particularly in Tehran, which is considered a consequence of immigration in some cases, but not in others, as in the case of the Tat people.

Currently, Persian speakers are known as the dominant ethnic group. Their common language, Persian, is what enhances and connects the other Iranian ethnic groups, according to some experts. Some believe that national identity has been formed thanks to the existence of the Persian language, which is agreed on and approved of by the other ethnic groups living in Iran, but the story does not end here. The presence of Persian speakers beyond the borders of Iran (in Afghanistan and Tajikistan) and the sense of common identity revolving around the Persian language confirm that there is some sort of regional identity shared by Persian speakers.

Persian is the language of the people of Central Iran, an Indo-European language of the Southwestern Iranian branch, which is considered the official language of the country. Most Persian speakers in Iran are Twelver Shiites. However, there are also different groups of Sunni Muslims residing near some of the borders. A point to be noted in this regard is that many regions that are regarded by the public as Persian-speaking have their local languages, which have gradually been spoken less widely until replaced by Persian. Accordingly,

it is somewhat removed from historical reality to assume an ethnic group known as Persian in Central Iran.

It should be stated that some scholars believe in no such thing in Iran as the Persian ethnic group from a historical point of view. However, the concept of minority, an ethnic minority, in particular, is relevant along with the concept of majority, and it is not possible in the real world to discuss minorities without a reference to the majorities. It is stated that the majority of the inhabitants of Iran are Persian speakers, while there is controversy over their possession of specific components including identity, ethnicity, and religion. Currently, these components are reflected in the association of national/super-ethnic identity to Persian speakers under the broad title of *Iranian*. Moreover, Persian speakers' cultural elements and rituals have acquired national identity, and are practised all around Iran and even among Persian speakers outside the country, being considered in fact as national rituals, such as *Nowruz*, *Sizdah Be-dar*, *Yalda Night*, and *Chaharshanbe Suri*.

## **Kurds**

The Kurds live in Western Iran, neighbouring the eastern part of Iraq. They reside on the scattered foothills and plains of the middle Zagros Mountain Range, and their habitat includes the provinces of Kurdistan, Ilam, and Kermanshah, along with parts of Lorestan and the northern and mainly southern parts of West Azarbaijan. It is bounded on the north by East Azarbaijan, on the east by Zanjan, Hamadan, and Lorestan, on the south by Khuzestan, and on the west by Iraq. In general, the Kurds live mainly in the West and Northwest of Iran, distinguished by dialect and accent. However, exiled groups of them and those forced to immigrate also live in parts of Khorasan and Northern Iran.

After the Arab, Persian, and Azari, the Kurds are considered the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East (Olson, 2003: p. 6, cited in Abdullahi and Qaderzadeh, 2009). They generally reside within the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Azarbaijan, and Armenia. The majority of the Kurds (more than half of them) live in Turkish Kurdistan, followed by Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Although there seems to be a more pronounced sense of collective solidarity among the Kurds in Iran and Iraq than among those in the other two parts of Kurdistan (Turkey and Syria), there is great emphasis on the cultural, social, and political commonalities among the Kurd, some of whom define themselves by referring to the concept of being a Kurd (*Kurdayeti* in Kurdish) as their identity. The Kurds have been identified as the largest nation without a government.

Kurdish is a branch of the family of Indo-European languages, and most Kurdish speakers live in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Different dialects are spoken in each of these regions, with those in Iran mainly including Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji); Central Kurdish (Sorani), Southern Kurdish, Gorani, and Zaza (the latter concerning Hawrami and Zaza peoples who classify themselves and their languages as independent of the Kurds and Kurdish). There are both Shia and Sunni Muslims among the Kurds, and if the Iranian settlements of the Kurds are divided into two religious partitions, it can be stated that most of the Sunni



Kurds live in the northern half. Of course, there is another group of Kurds called the Yarsani (Kaka'i/Ahle Haqq), mostly residing in counties such as Harsin, Kerend, Islamabad, and Sarpol-e Zahab in Kermanshah Province and villages therein.

The Kurds adhere to practising national and religious rituals; they celebrate Nowruz with utmost glory and highly value religious rituals and feasts such as *Eid al-Adha*, *Eid al-Fitr*, and the Islamic prophet's birthday in particular. In some regions, food is made and distributed for free for the celebration of religious feasts, including a particular type of soup-like dish, along with ceremonies involving *daf*-playing, prayers, and particular utterances made by *dervishes* or in praise of the Islamic prophet and celebration of his birthday. In the settlements of the Kurds, various types of Kurdish clothing can be observed, each in its beautiful form, slightly different from the others. The traditional Kurdish men's and women's clothing includes headwear and footwear as well as ordinary clothes. The design and usage of each of these components vary by season, type of occupation, lifestyle, and ceremony. Although different types of clothing are used in different parts of Kurdistan, such as Hawraman, Saqqez, Baneh, Gogulawa, Gerrus, Sanandaj, Mariwan, and Mahabad, they are all the same in that they cover the entire body.

### **Arabs**

The Arabs are mostly present in Khuzestan, Hormozgan, Bushehr, and the southern parts of Ilam Province, in Southwestern Iran and to the north of the Persian Gulf. The Arab population in Khuzestan is concentrated mostly in Ahvaz, Abadan, Khorramshahr, Shadegan and Dashte Azadegan. The province is naturally divided into two distinct regions: a mountainous region and a plain. The mountainous region is inhabited mainly by the Lur, Bakhtiari, Behbahani, and Kamari Arab (Jabilat), while the plain is resided by the Dezfuli, Shushtari, Hendujani, and Arab (Siadat, 1995: p. 10 and 29).

The Arabs live in the South and Southwest of Iran and parts of Khuzestan Province. They have been considered the smallest collective identity of Iran, estimated to constitute two per cent of the total population of Iran (Amir Ahmadi, 1998: p. 32), although larger numbers have been stated in some references for the Arab population of Khuzestan. The point to be noted about the Iranian Arabs is that they share a religion with the capital, like the Azari, which diminishes cross-border identity affiliations. Thus, religion can consolidate national identity and cut down on separatist identity-nationality tendency in this group, as confirmed by various studies.

The Arabs living in Iran mainly speak Khuzestani Arabic, which is a dialect of Mesopotamia Arabic. They reside in four provinces, but most of them live in Khuzestan Province and are mostly Twelver Shiites. Of course, there is also a Sunni Arab minority in Iran, which makes up a very low percentage.

Like the other peoples in Iran, the Arabs in Khuzestan have their culture. Following the Arabs in the neighbouring countries, they find *Eid al-Fitr* of much greater significance in their public culture, celebrated with a large number of

norms, behaviours, and customs. Another ancient tradition common among the Arabs in Khuzestan is the Gargee'an ceremony, which is held in Ahvaz on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan every year. Another highly important ritual commonly practised by the Arabs is the coffee-drinking ceremony involving *dallahs*, which is held with a great deal of formality.

### *Ethnic identity-seeking in Iran*

The exclusive consideration of the Persian ethnic identity as Iranian national identity has brought about a specific definition of non-Persian collective identities, entirely affected by power relations and unbalanced communication. The particular perception of the recent Iranian nationalism of Persian speakers and the denial of their identity has led to the falsification of an exclusively national identity for their ethnic characteristics. Thus, Iranian national identity has been reduced to Persian identity, from which the official language, the official religion, the official religion branch, the official culture, and, in short, the legitimate official identity are extracted. As a result of such a process, the distinctive identities of at least half of the inhabitants of this land (the Azari, Kurd, Arab, Baloch, Turkmen, *etc.*) have been denied through neglecting of their positions in the formation of Iranian national identity, demonstrating it as natural and obvious to approve of Persian identity as a representative of Iranian national identity.

The Persians are the major collective identity in Iran that constitute about half of the country's population alone. However, many of the regions that are associated with Persian have their languages and cultures. Therefore, it should be noted that there is a problem involved in the understanding of *the Persian*, where many regions have been referred to as Persian by mistake. A large number of Iranian nationalists use terms such as *Persian* and the Persian people in their descriptions of Iran. The word *Persian* is often interchangeably used with *Farsi*. It is inferred from such classifications that Iran = Persian. One of the most recent examples of such discourse involves an interview with the President's Assistant on Ethnic Groups (Ali Younesi), published in the Ghanoon newspaper on April 21, 2018. In the interview, Younesi asserts that the Azaris are Persian, both speaking Persian and having a Persian origin. The neglect of the ethnic identities of fifty per cent of the inhabitants of this land, who are not Persian speakers, and the attribution of a super-ethnic national identity to them under the broad title of *Iranian* has paved the way for the introduction of the other ethnic identities as primitive, tribal, and marginal, and has demonstrated it as natural and essential to approve of Persian identity as a representative of Iranian national identity.

After the Persians, the Azaris have the second-largest population in Iran. Their contemporary identity demands date back to less than a century ago, most prominently exemplified by the demand for independence in the Republic of Azarbaijan, led by Seyyed Jafar Pishehvareh, which did not last long. In the past few years, the identity-seeking movement in Azarbaijan has assumed new aspects and seems to have taken on various forms too as it has expanded its

influence among people. This includes those whose identity-seeking is limited to the teaching of the mother tongue in schools and promotion of local traditions, those who define their identity through federalism, and those who find it the appropriate option to seek complete independence and separation from the country. What appears more realistic, however, is the identity demand of the Iranian Azari, which is typically social and justice-oriented, and is raised as civil demand.

The identity demand of the Kurds is slightly different and complex due to their large population in the Middle East and nearly ten per cent share of the population of Iran. They refer to themselves as the largest nation with no government, whose identity demand in Iran dates back more than a century ago. Although there has been scattered ethnic and identity demand by the Kurds in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, the specific event that led to a memorable movement was the establishment of the Autonomous Republic of Kurdistan (centered in Mahabad) in 1945, led by Qazi Muhammad. With the beginning of the protests and the rise of the Islamic Revolution, the Democratic Party was reorganized, and other parties, such as Komala and the Khabat Organization, were founded. After several years of conflict and pursuit, however, these political movements were finally suppressed, and the above groups fled to Iraqi Kurdistan. The identity demand of the Iranian Kurd has now taken on a new form. Kurdish identity-seeking is now represented as civic institutions and organizations and cultural and artistic activities. Although armed political parties are still active abroad, civic organizations are far more influential and popular than political parties.

There are identity distinctions between the Baloch, and more seriously the Kurd, and the dominant ethnic group in Iran (the Persian) both in linguistic and religious terms. The Balochis speak Balochi and are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi sub-branch. The division of Balochistan in 1879 between Iran and India (modern Pakistan) created political borders within this integrated ethnic group, and the ethnic discrimination on both sides (*i.e.* in Iran and Pakistan) triggered ethnocentric feelings and brought about identity-oriented and economic demand among the Baloch. The religious gap, economic discrimination, and core-periphery relationship have intensified the demand, to such an extent that different parties and entities have been organized in recent decades, which has led in some cases to destructive military measures and activities.

In Iran, identity-seeking and identity demand are based on religion and ethnicity (with a focus on language). The demand made by the Arabs and Azaris is different from that in regions where the Kurds and Baloch reside is that the religious and linguistic demand among the latter ethnic groups has added ideological and political aspects to their movements, and is aimed at deconstruction and modification of constitutional articles. Among the Azari, however, demand is of the civil type within the framework of the Constitution, both outwardly and inwardly. Although the Arabs are similar to the majority of Iranians in religious terms, their ethnic demand is slightly more serious and more radical than that of the Azari, and they also find themselves more deprived in terms of concern for economic development.

### *The politicization of collective identity*

Ethnic and national movements and their political applications are products of the modern era following the emergence of modern government-nations. Ethnic movements are a very old phenomenon, and the separation of each ethnic group from others based on cultural features is also a historical issue, but the political claims of ethnic groups to acquire power is often regarded as a new issue. The emergence of nationalism as a socio-political phenomenon coincided with the establishment of the first wave of national governments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that it was considered a challenging issue (Özirimli, 2004: p. 11). If political demand is based on ethnic elements, there will be identity-seeking and ethnic group politicization (political ethnocentrism). This aspect of ethnocentrism specifies the boundary between a nation and a specific ethnic group (Matil, 2004: p. 1411).

In problems concerning collective identity, political theories investigate the roles of power and lack of power to explain the phenomenon. On that basis, if there is less opportunity for an ethnic group to access the sources of power in a society, it may react by seeking independent ethnic identity.

For two reasons, the process of globalization and, consequently, the network society attenuate the national government and the associated national identity. In this process, the national government will maintain its exclusive command and, to some extent, its influence over the tools of coercion. With the globalization of the economy and capital, the government loses much of its control over the national economy. As mass and communication media develop, culture goes beyond the scope of the government's manipulation and influence. With the inevitable formation of global networks and organizations and regional unions, many areas of domestic and foreign policy-making where the government is independent fade away. As a large number of specific identities within the country are highlighted, the command of the government and its role in the definition of national identity is challenged. Among these identities are ethnic and religious identities. The global flows of capital, goods, services, technology, communications, and information have increasingly attenuated the government's control over time and space, and ethnicity leads to competition through the politicization of ethnic groups, according to Anthony Smith. Ethnic nationalism has an important subjective characteristic, which enables the selection of ethnic factors that are appropriate for politicization. This paradigm is focused on subjective elements that do not underestimate the presence of objective factors or exclude them from the scope of analysis. Instead, it more highly values the subjective elements of memory, value, emotion, myth, and symbol, thereby seeking to make an entry into the world of ethnicity to acquire an understanding thereof (Smith, 2004: p. 86).

Ethnic identity is established and maintained as a basis for collective action when there are clear privileges achievement of which can be competed over through ethnic identity.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY**

Ethnic identity refers to such cultural components as language, religion, customs, and historical background that link and unite individuals and groups. Ethnic identity is a special set of objective, subjective, cultural, social, ideological, and emotional factors that are manifested in a human group and distinguish them from other groups (Altai, 2003: 139). These variables include shared values and sentiments of belonging based on blood, race, language, region, and kinship, which strengthen emotional bonds among members and make them more homogenous than the whole society at the national level.

In the early years of the twentieth century, when ethnic movements around the world were rising, many scholars believed that the ethnic issue was the outcome of tribal traditionalism and they believed that ethnic groups would soon either succumb to the onslaught of communist ideas or be battered by liberal ideas. Later, with the hegemony of capitalist ideas, the advent of globalization, increased literacy and awareness of ethnic groups, the expansion of mass media and communication, and the consolidation of national governments, the belief in the elimination of ethnocentric concepts became even stronger. But what happened was that increasing globalization, instead of archiving ethnic ideas, intensified local and ethnic identity, to such an extent that today almost all countries in the world face a similar dilemma about their ethnicities. In other words, despite the popular belief that, as globalization continues, micro-ethnic identities will eventually become entwined with a single global culture, globalization did not diminish or eradicate ethnic identities, but rather elevated ethnic consciousness through the tools it provided. It also promoted ethnicity and helped to develop ethnic movements. Given the wide-ranging developments that have taken place as a result of the former Soviet Union's collapse, the formation of Central Asian republics, and the disintegration of the Balkan Peninsula, it is clear that the consolidation of national identity necessitates serious attention to the fair and equal distribution of economic, social, cultural, and political opportunities among citizens. There are 8,000 ethnic communities in the world today, with 6,700 distinct languages, although only 192 states are members of the United Nations (Khoobroo Pak, 2001: 18).

## **GLOBALIZATION AND ETHNIC IDENTITY**

Globalization, as a pervasive process that embraces all aspects of human individual and group life in fields such as culture, politics, economics, and so on, has had an impact that has contributed to the existing complexities and ambiguities (Hafeznia, 2006: 2). Because globalization should be regarded as one of the primary causes in revisiting the concept of national identity, this process is not simply a homogenizing force by which a single culture could eliminate other cultures. Along with the ICT revolution, two other major and historically significant events in the last two decades of the twentieth century raised the issue of identity for Iran and the progress of Iranians: the Islamic Revolution and Islamism in the form of a new identity that appeared after the 1980s, and the collapse of the bipolar world system in the 1990s, which

ultimately resulted in the disappearance of geopolitical balance in the political world.

The term 'globalisation' refers to the expansion of anthropogenic activities, reactions, and communities around the world. The process of globalisation, which started at the end of the twentieth century, is a synthesis of several tendencies that take multiple forms. The scope of the political, economic, cultural, and social components of globalisation has in reality had an impact on the social and personal lives of people in many nations in various ways. Also, the cultural and identity boundaries of countries are seriously affected by this phenomenon, causing national identities to face a fundamental challenge. In ethnic identity studies, ethnic inclinations are identified when people focus more heavily on their ethnicity than other characteristics in determining their identity. At first, it appeared that this process might result in the elimination of national, ethnic, local, and smaller cultures, but reality has emerged over the past 50 years that points to new formations and new forms of identity that are not simply a result of globalisation and the movement of the previous traditional identities, but also have a new nature that requires distinct recognition and definitions.

The formation of ethnic movements and the growth of subcultures has surprised many thinkers. This is confirmed by the several ethnocentric movements that happened in the late twentieth century. There are two main views on the impact of globalization on ethnic movements or cultural particularism.

According to the vast majority of those who analyse ethnicity through the perspective of globalisation and its theories, the growth of ethnic movements has reinforced identities. On the other hand, experts on ethnic perspectives disagree, claiming that these movements have nothing to do with the processes of globalisation. We will go over each of their arguments in the following section:

#### *A) Globalization has strengthened ethnic movements*

1. Globalization fosters ethnic movements and ethnic identities in three ways; In the first place, globalization causes the decline of sovereignty and the power of governments. While the existing transnational relations allow ethnic movements to advance their goals and demands, the same relations make it difficult for the governments quickly or violently suppress the movements. For example, the Zapatista movement quickly turned itself into a global movement by using these relationships. Additionally, some effects of globalization exacerbate and heighten ethnic sensitivities. For instance, in response to the devastation of the Amazonian forests, the Hawaiian native movement was born (Scholte, 2012: 210).

2. According to Anthony Giddens, the ground for forming identities changes over the course of modernity. As tradition loses its hold on society, people start to consider selecting their way of life from among a variety of possibilities and attempt to avoid identity crisis by turning to traditional sources and techniques of identity formation. Thus, supporters of this perspective seek out stability and peacefulness, which is provided by relatively closed social-cultural spaces in

traditional societies. Therefore, as a conservative reaction to the process of globalization, individuals are attracted to movements that promise to repair and revive such spaces. Thus, ideologies and organizations that claim to support traditional forms of identity mobilize a significant population of individuals and groups. Ethnic movements are a particular category of these movements (Golmohammadi, 2002: 266).

3. The failure of national governments, especially third-world countries, to perform their legal obligations, such as maintaining order and security, increasing the power of transnational forces and international institutions, and moving the international community from political identity to civilizational and cultural identity, are among the factors that have bolstered ethnic identities (Maghsoudi, 2003: 260-263).

4. The globalisation process has enabled ethnic groups to recognize themselves and obtain access to economic resources by generating new opportunities to enter the economic, cultural, and political spheres through the globalisation of economics and culture. This potential has increased as a result of globalization's permeability of borders and the state's waning strength, which has made governments forced to negotiate with ethnic groups. Initiatives for national reconciliation in countries like Tajikistan, Congo, Indonesia, and others are indicators of weakening governments (Ghovam, 2003: 314-317).

5. With its development of communication facilities and information networks, the process of globalization has caused transnational groups to find a variety of media outlets and a superior position over governments in promoting their culture or undermining the official culture. As the relevance of political boundaries has declined, the gap between ethnic groups inside and outside political boundaries has also decreased. As a result, these groups now play a more significant role. Technological advancements make minorities more conscious of their differentiations from other groups. Minorities start acting assertively when the central government tries to increase its cultural control in ethnic communities (Naderpour, 2003: 239).

6. The national state and national identity are playing a smaller role in both domestic and international politics in the globalisation era. Nationalized identities and states have been disrupted by the emergence of new actors such as multinational corporations, international organisations, transnational groups, and others, and globalisation has become a source and factor for the spread of ethnic consciousness and, as a result, ethnic conflicts worldwide (Mowlayie, 2001).

### **B) Ethnic identities have not been supported by globalisation.**

1. In third-world nations, the broad rise of ethnocentrism implies that ethnic identities are growing within national borders and posing a challenge to national identity. From a theoretical, practical, and methodological perspective, it is inadmissible to attribute globalisation as the underlying cause of this phenomenon (Ahmady, 2011, p.14).

2. Ethnocentrists tend to ignore theories underlying global systems, global capitalism, and global society in favour of the theoretical underpinnings of the global culture approach. Others, however, speak of the growth of universal processes like global capitalism and global awareness while making explicit or implicit references to the loss of ethnic and national identities (ibid.).

3. The primary cause of the state's declining importance and function is globalisation, even though states still play a large role in international affairs and will continue to do so. All transnational organisations lack legitimacy.

Globalization is the main cause for the diminishing role and decline of the state and despite this, the states are and will continue to be the major players on the world stage, and none of the international and transnational institutions can find legitimacy. There has not yet been any fulfilment of all the pledges made on the collapse of the government (ibid., 29).

4. The fall of multi-ethnic states like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and East Timor's independence, on the other hand, has nothing to do with globalisation and the rise of ethnic groups. Additionally, the union of these nations was fabricated because it was based on the Soviet and Cold War systems, and it ended with their dissolution. Nevertheless, the breakdown of nations and political institutions is not a recent phenomenon. British Empire, Austria, Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire were among the countries that fell apart at the beginning of the preceding century (ibid.).

5. Globalization has surfaced in the cosmopolitan interests of human beings. With the rise of cosmopolitan interests, there is no longer much space for considering ethnicity (Scholte, 2003: 201; Torabinejad, 2005: 128).

6. Globalization is inherently in conflict with ethnicity. Globalization inclines toward populism, but ethnicism escapes this populism. If globalisation has occasionally fueled ethnic nationalism, it has only been temporary and will eventually revert to its previous populist course.

7. The age of uniform and unified identities have come to an end and contemporary actors no longer have identities that are solely derived from a single community, ethnicity, or nation. Instead, they try to learn as much as they can about various cultures, nationalities, and ethnicities to make choices from them (Torabinejad, 2005: 138).

8. Global governments and international businesses do not favour ethnic conflicts because they require stability, just as they did not support the independence of the Iraqi Kurds (Ahmady, 2002: 34).

9. However, because globalisation has both benefits and drawbacks, its influence should not be overstated. By increasing wealth, establishing economic zones, and facilitating the flow of capital and money, globalisation can ultimately reduce ethnic tensions. By boosting data flow and opening up the knowledge space to various cultures, globalization can lessen some forms of racial prejudice and dogmatism while also bringing attention to the human race (Ghovam, 2003: 314-317).



Given the reference we have made to both the theories of the opposing and the views of the groups, one of these views cannot simply be dismissed in favour of the other. It is also crucial to remember that, unlike physical phenomena, social phenomena are not straightforward and cannot be easily generalised. If we examine the issue, at least in the case of Iran, we can see that globalisation will enhance ethnic identity growth and the emergence of more challenges and movements in the short term and during periods of ascendancy, but if the culture of these ethnic identities does not benefit from elements like state, global, and international support, they will eventually change.

## **1.6. SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The belief that 'justice' is the law that regulates the universe and that the foundation of existence is justice is widely held, and humans have rich experiences to support this. It is on this basis that the pursuit of justice, fairness, and the administration of justice is the most ancient ideal that has occupied the minds of wise people and social reformers throughout history. One of the few fundamental topics that are discussed across several disciplines of science and philosophy and have a high status is the issue of justice. This issue has contributed to the development of several schools in theology. Various approaches have been developed in the field of ethics that are attempting to answer the question of justice. Similar developments occur in political theory. Justice is a topic that is studied both personally and socially; in the former, it is often referred to as the 'philosophy of ethics,' while in the latter, it is referred to as the 'political philosophy.' However, the issue of justice is one of the most all-encompassing and universal issues that can be raised anywhere, following the requirements and expectations of the people. Justice may be broadly categorised into two main areas: distributive or social justice and criminal justice. As the name suggests, criminal justice refers to the application of justice and fairness in determining rewards and punishments. Therefore, in the first place, if a penalty follows the legal process it may be said to be fair. Second, it should be proportional to the crime committed in terms of both quantity and quality. Third, the severity of the punishment grows exponentially as the crime is repeated. Some scholars have used the deterrent effect of punishments and penalties to support criminal justice, while others have emphasised the punitive character of punishments (Akhtar and Zolfaghari, 2017: 109-110). Further explanation is excluded since this concept of justice has little to do with the current research. Here, distributive or social justice is taken into consideration as the fundamental question.

Social justice is a concept that has been raised and discussed in political philosophy and various views and interpretations of it have been presented. The application of the principles of fairness in the distribution of goods and social benefits is known as distributive justice or social justice. In contrast to other concepts of justice, such as natural justice, political justice, economic justice, and personal and moral justice, this compound phrase reflects a singular idea of justice.

The following are a few definitions of justice, including distributive justice and social justice:

1. The application of the concept of distributive justice to the wealth, property, privileges, and benefits that are accumulated in society. Equitable distribution, respect, rewards, and other societal advantages based on individual merit are all examples of distributive justice.
2. Social justice refers to treating every member of society with the respect and dignity they deserve. In other words, depending on their labour, and intellectual, mental, and physical talents, each individual can experience the right opportunities and blessings (ibid.).

The purpose of distributive or social justice is to explain, regulate, and justify the principles governing the equitable distribution of social rights and obligations (including civil and political rights such as the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, and the right to freedom of expression). Distributive or social justice in a sense only pertains to such tangible issues as the distribution of food, healthcare, and shelter, as well as concerns like income and wealth. There are various interpretations and understandings of the word social justice, the most important of which are highlighted here:

- **Social justice as proportionality**

Justice was defined in agreement with nature and other qualities in Greek Philosophy. Justice was viewed by Plato as the midway balance between the three elements of reason, will, and passion in mankind. As the three primary human qualities, wisdom, courage, and moderation are also emphasized by him. Justice is the harmonic link between these virtues and their proportionality.

According to Plato, social justice refers to the appropriateness and positioning of people in society according to their respective classes. Plato divides his just society into three classes: the producers, the auxiliaries, and the guardians. According to him, social justice entails that each individual belongs to his or her class, enjoy the privileges associated with that class, and fulfils the roles associated with that class. Social justice in this sense is therefore the idea of fairness, proportion, and having one's position.

- **Social justice as merit**

In this context, justice refers to the allocation of resources and positions following merit and distinctiveness. According to this theory, the allocation of resources and social services as well as the distribution of roles and positions should be based on competencies and merits. The ideas and theories developed by Aristotle support such a perspective. He considers the merits of individuals in the distribution of material resources. As a result, he supports distributive justice and believes that the middle class is the best class of people capable of running an effective government. He supports a form of economic and political meritocracy.

- **Social justice as considering proportions, rights, and competencies**

Among certain Muslim thinkers, this idea of social justice has become more prevalent. It is in some ways a combination of the first two ideas, with some additions. For instance, Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (Iranian polymath, architect, philosopher, physician, and theologian; 1201–1274) conceived of justice as the culmination of all virtues and perfections, and he saw it as a tool for regulating other forces. He defines justice as the cornerstone of the stability of the government and in explaining the first condition of justice, he writes: ‘Justice is that every class does not deviate from its deserving position and does not seek to overcome other classes, as this leads to a distortion of moderation and would end in a corruption of social affairs.’ He also writes about the second condition: ‘The second condition for justice was to look at the circumstances and actions of the people of City and to determine the rank of each over the other in terms of merit and talent.’ Thus, a combination of the two criteria of appropriateness as well as observance of merits and competencies can be read in the views of Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi. According to Muslim philosophers, justice is often understood to be the process of bestowing the rights of the rightful. For example, Allameh Tabatabaee writes in this regard: Justice is granting the right to any entity that is entitled to it and placing it where it deserves.

- **Social justice as equality**

The definition of social justice as equality has become more common in modern times, although the roots of this thinking have existed in earlier times. The Stoic school was where this idea originally emerged. They believe that all people are equal and that there is no criterion to consider one person as superior to others. One of the thinkers who has provided this interpretation of social justice is Cicero. He held the notion that social justice was nothing more than equality, contrary to the other ancient Greek intellectuals who held natural views (and beliefs in proportion to nature). He holds that all people are created equally. Equality is the fundamental component of social justice.

Even while the church’s interpretation of divine revelation established the reigning order during the Middle Ages, some philosophers at the time were creating new avenues for novel approaches to social justice. For example, we can refer to the works of Thomas Aquinas. In his view, human beings have the same right to an average standard of living. His premise in this argument is equality. Fundamental shifts in socio-political thought occurred after the Middle Ages, which will be significant in forthcoming discussions of social justice and the ensuing sociological debates.

Social justice in the sense of equality has been applied on various scales in contemporary times. Karl Marx made a strong case for equality in people’s economic circumstances as one of the most significant aspects of equality. He contends that social justice can only be attained if everyone has access to an equal standard of living, which is impossible without the redistribution of

wealth. As can be seen, this idea of social justice and economic justice are deeply associated.

- **Social justice as fairness, impartiality, and equality of opportunities**

This concept of social justice in the twentieth century is introduced by John Rawls in his *Theory of Justice*. According to him, social justice entails impartiality, and it is only possible when the government acts impartially. John Rawls proposes two principles for social justice: first, that individuals are free to exercise their basic liberties as they see fit within a fair set of rules and second, that social and economic inequalities are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society and also positions and jobs should be available to everyone under appropriate conditions and following the system of equal opportunities.

As can be seen, the first principle is about liberties and fairness in the exercise of fundamental freedoms and the second principle is about inequalities. According to Rawls, the only inequality that does not benefit everyone is injustice. Therefore, John Rawls asserts that while equality of opportunities, conditions, and fairness are acknowledged as fundamental components of social justice, some forms of inequalities—inequalities that benefit everyone—are also permitted. In the following chapter, we will go into more detail on the dimensions, guiding principles, and other theoretical aspects of justice.

Evidence from the last century in Iran demonstrates that there is not an equal distribution of opportunities and social infrastructure, a problem that has prompted particular concerns and worries among related scholars and specialists. In a society where justice does not prevail in various aspects of the social system or the feelings of individuals indicate the absence of justice, national identity will be unsteady and in crisis in all its components, because—as will be explained in detail—the formation of national identity is grounded on the formation of a national community. A community whose members see themselves as belonging to it and, in a sense, as its ‘citizens’ that, in turn, implies responsibility, commitment, affection, and belief, and is intertwined with rights and duties. On the other hand, when members or citizens compare how they get access to and use the resources, advantages, and rewards provided by the social system, they feel entitled to these advantages and demand justice. The government or the social system that organises society is largely responsible for the administration of justice.

If people do not believe in justice, it will affect their sense of citizenship identity, belief system, commitment, responsibility, and even emotions—all of which are representations of national identity. This problem entails social exclusion, social isolation, and, eventually, the collapse of social cohesion and coherence, which are essential to any society. Also, the feeling of inequality or non-recognition of the rights of individuals can breed mistrusts about the legitimacy of the government, withdrawal from social, cultural, and political commitments, and eventually result in social alienation and the loss of societal harmony and cohesion.

Certainty, a lack of fairness among individuals makes people anxious about the future and doubtful about achieving their objectives. Such situations cause citizens to feel some forms of confusion, emptiness, alienation, and social isolation so that they no longer see themselves as part of the larger society and do not feel belonging to it. Many of them look to other cultures' heroes, actors, traditions, and values as role models, or they seek to build relationships with people from neighbouring nations to define a new identity for themselves. It might be claimed that the absence of socioeconomic justice and the ensuing erosion of national identity serve as the initial stage for national divergence. The initial signs of this are evident in such phenomena such as the uncontrollable departure of the elites and the owners of knowledge and wealth as activists in the field of knowledge and practice from the country and their dissatisfaction with life in the atmosphere of society, which according to them, is full of discrimination and injustice where there is no respect to independent capacities. Despite the countless challenges of migrating, some people ultimately decide to reside in another country. This will undoubtedly impede the development process.

## **1.7. PEACE AND AVOIDING VIOLENCE**

One of the primary tasks of any government is to provide security for citizens and to establish peace in the country. No nation is capable of achieving social, economic, or political progress without peace. As a result, governments constantly work to avert conflict and provide the foundations for long-lasting peace within their nation, but some nations still choose to go to war due to their conflicting interests.

Peaceful cohabitation and non-aggression entail that there is no war. In contrast, peace is understood in political culture to be a state of serenity marked by the absence of conflict and danger and by normal relations with other countries.

In cases where it is necessary to battle, peace from the non-aggression pact, the non-aggression treaty, the covenant of peaceful coexistence, and lastly, makes sense.

Peace makes sense in instances where fighting is seen to be the proper course of action and is maintained in non-violence treaties, non-aggression pacts, and peaceful coexistence agreements. Peace implies reconciliation, and in terms of politics, it refers to the contractual renunciation of war (Mirkushesh et al., 2013). In the traditional definition, peace refers to a halt to hostilities, a ceasefire, the absence of conflict, the resolution of disputes, and the cessation of hostilities and conflicts between the two parties. As a result, when we talk of peace, we mean both the absence of war, conflict, and violence as well as the upkeep of security, tranquillity, and peaceful coexistence in a society, a country, or the entire globe.

Mahatma Gandhi is often referred to as a symbol of peace because he understood that love and non-violence are the methods by which mass

movements become capable of winning India's independence and liberating it from colonialism. Gandhi started his campaign by boycotting British goods throughout India. He was able to persuade all Indians to boycott goods once the Indian National Congress was established. He began his negative fight at a time when Britain had endured significant losses as a result of its participation in the First World War. Many other colonies in Africa and Asia sought independence. To restore the damage, they needed to manufacture and market their products in other nations, including India. He inflicted the British economy with a devastating blow with this embargo. Mahatma Gandhi was detained in 1922, 1930, 1933, and 1942. But he continued to struggle while imprisoned and retooled his method of hunger strike. He marched from Delhi to India's southern shore as part of his resistance to British colonialism. He was accompanied by thousands of people over this roughly 300-kilometre walk. They were strongly welcomed by people from many cities as well. Gandhi firmly held the following convictions: 'I shall struggle for a constitution that frees India from slavery and servitude. To develop India, I will work to instil in all of the impoverished people a sense of ownership and a sense of collective responsibility for creating a nation where all of its nations coexist in perfect harmony. The filthy curse has no place in such an India. Equal rights apply to both men and women. We shall neither exploit nor be exploited because we will establish peace with everyone on Earth. Therefore, we must have the smallest army in the world. Any interests that do not conflict with the interests of millions of Indians will be respected. This is my dream for India.'<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi thought that mass industrial production should be substituted by mass production. He promoted decentralization in economics and repeatedly emphasized that each civilization must meet its demands. Gandhi's decision to boycott British products overshadowed a major market in the country. He demanded the production of one hundred thousand spinning wheels. He even wore his hand-woven clothes and ate the milk of a goat he had raised. In the social sphere, Gandhi also pioneered a new way of uniting India's fragmented society. He had a constructive plan to build a single nation. While respecting the traditions of Indian groups, he tried to resolve their differences. Although it appears that his efforts with the separatist movements that contributed to the dissolution of the subcontinent were not very successful, he managed to solve many of their problems.

India gained independence from British colonial rule in August 1947 thanks to the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and the support of people like Jawaharlal Nehru. After the declaration of India's independence, he refused to accept any position in the Indian government and gave the leadership of the Congress to Nehru at the same time, he continued to strive for independence, freedom, and national unity in India.

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<sup>3</sup> As it is important to hear the words as reflected in the intellectual atmosphere of Iran, some of the Persian translations were back translated.

The nonviolent and nonaggressive philosophy was pioneered by Mahatma Gandhi. Violence, in his opinion, is the root of all human suffering. Thus, he promoted nonviolence through all of his ideas and actions. Mahatma Gandhi introduced free and rational dialogue as a philosophical solution to the elimination of violence, and in this way, he introduced hatred and revenge as causes of flare wars. Also, he thought that the restoration and preservation of mankind are the results of justice. Justice and freedom are the opposite of violence and revenge. Gandhi perceived the pursuit of selfish desires as a sign of revenge and violence. He, therefore, believed that exercising self-control is essential to preventing the development of disorders. In his opinion, humanity cannot advance as long as people are enslaved to the body and worldly possessions and remain in their ignorance.

Gandhi is recognized as a pioneer of nonviolent philosophy since he was a free-thinking, moral man who felt that wars are caused by violence and that happiness is brought by peace. In a way, he viewed poverty and its effects as a form of injustice, and he introduced it as the cause of human wars. He warned the powerful and the wealthy, pointing out that as poverty increases, so does pain, and the circle of injustice widens dramatically. Mahatma Gandhi considered faith in the existence of God to be essential for the advancement of human goals and introduced truth and justice as synonymous with the existence of God. Truth and justice, in his opinion, are the same thing and cannot be distinguished from one another. He contrasted a violent, pessimistic, and warlike world where humanity is debased with a justice-oriented society that is truth-seeking and working to accomplish its objectives. Since we are discussing non-violence and believe that non-violence is the basis for the human renaissance, there is a philosophical component to this discussion that needs to be addressed.

The practice of non-violence is not limited to conflict or hazardous environments because it is a universal value. The only way to determine its efficiency is to employ it in different situations. If the success of our nonviolence depends on the goodwill of the other party, such nonviolence will be false and worthless. Gandhi believed that the first condition for non-violence is justice in all aspects of life. ‘This may be a high expectation of human nature, but I don’t think so; no one should use hard standards and rigid models to determine whether to promote or degrade the qualities and capacities of a person. There is no form of piety that is solely concerned with the comfort and happiness of one person. Conversely, there is no moral transgression that does not directly or indirectly affect many others in addition to the root cause. Therefore, if one is good or bad, it is not limited to one person, it is about the whole society and the whole world. Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of humanity; this force is even greater than the power of the greatest destructive weapons made by human genius. ‘Independence must start from the bottom,’ Gandhi said. ‘Every village must be a republic. The village must be independent and could be able to run its affairs to the extent that it can defend itself against the whole world. Society must also be built on truth and non-violence, which, in my opinion, it will not be possible without a firm belief in the exalted idea of a God.

Gandhi had a modest influence, but it was driven by his love for both his nation and the human race. His peaceful approach was not welcome by many. 'Love is the smartest force in the world that is killed with hatred,' he used to repeat. Non-violence will only become possible when we love those who hate us. We know how difficult it is to practice this great law of love. Are all great and good deeds difficult? Loving someone who hates you is a great challenge, but if we want it, these hard things become possible through following the rules and regulations of love of God as introduced by Gandhi, because he considered God as the best guide and leader and tried to make this clear to everyone. He always spoke of the beauties of the world and the appearance of the light of God in the world. Gandhi knew nothing about killing and war, but he did know the secret to happiness and productive life. His atomic, mechanical and scientific world was insignificant and his world of knowledge and insight was great. He disregarded the atomic breakthroughs, and the century of the atom that had swept the West with splendour and terror and instead sought tangible goods through acquiring spirituality and inner exaltation. Gandhi explained: 'There is always a conscious and deliberate struggle within me to intentionally and continuously follow the law of non-violence.' This is the struggle that often makes the person stronger for the struggle. The more I apply this law, the more I feel happy in my life and the universe becomes a more pleasant and happy space for me. Following this law gives me peace of mind and reveals a concept of the mysteries of nature that I am unable to explain. 'The search for truth has made me engage in politics,' he said. Social reform must be started from within, and this requires freedom. Man must always be in search of the truth with which he can answer his inner questions and be saved from ignorance and attain salvation.' For Gandhi, reaching the truth is salvation. Gandhi spoke of many forms of injustice and racial discrimination, pointing out that people can behave in a way that the enemies are disarmed. We must promise ourselves to be truthful and honest people in our work so that people will trust us. We are divided into small groups and each group seeks its interests. We must unite and transcend differences (Tafazoli, 2008).

Nelson Mandela is another important leader in building a peaceful history. Gandhi is the founder of the idea of 'non-violence' and Mandela declared it as his agenda and policy. He is a symbol of the myth of struggle in modern times. Mandela spent many years of his life fighting against racial discrimination and the realization of the civil rights of blacks in South Africa. He is known as a great model for civil struggle in the world. Many consider him among such great figures as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Aung San Suu Kyi as leaders of the 'non-violent' struggle.

Mandela spent twenty-seven years in jail alongside other anti-apartheid activists, but he did not give up the battle there and kept up his active resistance. Mandela was a black man who made history and opposed apartheid and 'racial discrimination,' making him one of the most determined figures on the path to freedom. Even though 'non-violence' was one of Mandela's guiding principles, just as it was for Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian spirit 'Ahimsa,' or the 'idea of non-violence,' to end apartheid, he was forced to engage in armed resistance



activities, rebel against a system based on racial discrimination, and start an armed rebellion. Eventually, the continuation of the struggles and pressures from inside and outside the country overthrew the apartheid regime and led to the freedom of Mandela in 1990 and he enter a new phase of his 'Long Walk to Freedom'.

But what sets Nelson Mandela apart from many other revolutionary and militant leaders in the world is his approach to 'post-victory violence.' Mandela's unique role model is in his peaceful behaviour. Although he used 'controlled violence as a last resort and as a prerequisite for his campaign strategy, he entirely avoided 'post-victory violence' and did not eliminate rivals or dissidents after taking power. This is the most important teaching and legacy of Nelson Mandela for the history of civil strife and an understanding of non-violence. What may be learnt from Mandela is that the relationship between non-violence and civil unrest rests more at the farthest rejection of 'post-victory violence' than it does on the utmost rejection of 'pre-victory violence.' Mandela's peaceful spirit enabled him to bring the battered South African ship to the shores of democracy and racial equality without being entangled in an unstoppable cycle of violence and revenge.

Afghanistan is a country that has been at war continuously for the past four decades and its citizens have been deprived of the blessings of peace and prosperity. However, in 2002, there was hope for the future of peace in Afghanistan as the Taliban administration fell, but that hope was dashed by Pakistan's ongoing backing of the Taliban. The Afghan government's efforts over the past few years, for various reasons, have failed to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table to ensure peace in Afghanistan.

In later years, the issue of peace in Afghanistan has come to the fore again during the presidency of Ashraf Ghani who hosted a Loya Jirga in Kabul that was attended by about 3,200 delegates from across Afghanistan to reach a common approach to peace talks with the Taliban. He hoped that in this Loya Jirga, politicians, local elders, and people's representatives to demonstrate national unity. At the same time, the United States intensified its efforts to negotiate directly with the Taliban to end its 18-year war in Afghanistan, and Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy has met several times with representatives of the Taliban group. Despite Khalilzad's frequent meetings with Taliban representatives, the group has refused direct talks with the Afghan government and preferred to negotiate with the United States. Also, the Taliban had previously refused to join the Loya Jirga. Finally, in 2021, with the absence of a strong society or a sovereign and corruption-free state, the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan.

## **1.8. DESCRIPTION OF ETHNICITIES**

Language, geography, socio-cultural structures, political allegiances, and economic differences are some examples of features that are frequently used to distinguish between ethnicity and other forms and levels of collective identity. There are already at least 50,000 languages in use, and the world would surely

become much more fragmented if every ethnic group that speaks its language decided to create a new nation-state. Since the end of World War II, the world has witnessed the resurgence of ethnicities as a political dilemma and an important issue in the political mobilization of the people as well as a source of internal and international conflict. Currently, just 10% of the world's nations can be classified as being ethnically homogeneous (Mahkoui et al., 2015).

Two significant changes in the last two decades—one in politics and the other in theories—have prompted academics to think about ethnic concerns. A few political occurrences that increased the demand for ethnographic research were the fall of the Soviet multinational empire, the dissolution of multiethnic nations like Yugoslavia, the growth of ethnic orientations in the West, and the spread of ethnic concerns in several Third World nations. Along with these changes in the political domain, the world of political ideas also witnessed a significant transition. While modernism, the homogeneity of the world, and the prescription of a single management strategy for all societies and nations of the world regardless of their diverse historical backgrounds, sociocultural structures, and biological diversity, was the dominant theory until a few decades ago, all these assumptions have been seriously questioned by postmodern concepts like the pointlessness of all grand-narratives in the last few decades. As a result, diversity was recognised for its originality and importance, and the groundwork for greater emphasis on ethnic diversity and their distinct identities was prepared.

In terms of geographical distribution, different ethnic groups with different religions in Iran have their geographical distribution, so that in the four corners of Iran, ethnic groups with different religions live: in the northwest the Azaris are Shiites, in the northeast and west of Iran the Kurds are both Sunnis and Shiites, in southwestern Iran the Arabs are Shiites, in the north and northeast the Turkmen are Sunnis, in the southeast and south the Balochis are Sunnis, and in the central and northern parts the Shiite Persians, Lors, Gilakis, Mazanies and Taleshies are inhabited.

The spatial-geographical structure of the Iranian nation has emerged from two interconnected central and peripheral parts. The population in the centre is often homogenous in terms of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious aspects and is regarded as the primary and dominant body of the country. In the peripheral parts, the people who live in the plains and highlands of the geographical periphery of Iran, unlike the dense and homogeneous central part, there is a more fragmented population that includes a diverse set of cultural and ethnic groups. People in the periphery of the country in some variables and most specifically, in their language and dialect, ethnicity, religion, and local subculture differ from the inhabitants of the central parts (Hafeznia, 2002).

### *1.8.1. Population of ethnicities and ethnic structure in contemporary Iran*

The people of Iran are residents of Iran located in West Asia. Today, the population of Iran according to official reports provided by the official statistics organization (amar.org) is over eighty million people.

In June of 1939, the first census law was approved by the National Assembly. In the implementation of this law, the census of the population was implemented during the later two years in 33 cities of the country, but its continuation was postponed due to the events of September 1941. In March 1952, the General Statistics Cooperation Organization was established in April 1953, the law of statistics and census was approved and by 1956, the first general population census was implemented throughout the country. The formation of the General Office of Statistics and the execution of the General Census of the nation in 1956 marked a new phase in statistical activity, and each year, several statistical projects in various social and economic fields were carried out. As its first action, the Center carried out the general census of population and housing in November 1966. With the approval of the new law of the Statistics Center of Iran and the consequent revision of its organizational structure in November 1976, the Center conducted the second general census of the population and housing of the country.

In none of these years, the population size of the ethnic groups was not measured, and most of the information obtained was on the urban/rural population, male / female population, and other questions regarding marriage, age, literacy, employment, income, and housing of the population.

In 1986, the first census of population and housing in the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran was carried out, the results of which provided the necessary information and statistics to carry out social and economic development planning.

The unexpected population growth between 1976 and 1986, which highlighted the need for awareness of the trend of population change after 1976 and the existence of massive population movements as a result of the imposed war, which changed the statistical frameworks of the general population and housing census in 1986, prompted the national planning system of the country and, as a result, the Statistics Centre of Iran, to conduct a census on the country's population under the title of 'Current Population Census Plan of 1991' in a shorter period than the usual decade interval. A sampling method was used for the first time to perform the census. Since then, the Census of Population and Housing has been completed four times: in 1996 (the Fifth Census), 2006 (the Sixth Census), 2011 (the Seventh Census), and in November 2016 (the Eighth Census) thus, it was decided to perform the census every five years.

In the five censuses conducted after the Islamic Revolution, as in the pre-revolutionary period, no information was obtained on the population of ethnic groups, and only the provincial and urban populations were calculated. Based on such information, it is not possible to calculate the population of ethnic

groups, because the population of many provinces and cities of the country is a combination of different ethnic groups. For example, provinces such as Tehran, Alborz, Qom, Qazvin, Hamedan, Khuzestan, West Azarbaijan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Sistan and Balochestan, North Khorasan, and Isfahan are in such a situation, with a variety of ethnicities. This lack of accurate statistical information has led ethnic groups and sometimes even elites to express strange numbers about their population. On the other hand, in many studies on the population of ethnic groups by Persian speakers, the population of Azaris is estimated to be about eleven million and Kurds to be about five million.

As mentioned, the demographic information in the country in the post-revolutionary period has been provided only in terms of city and provincial population, and if we want to show the population of ethnic groups on this basis, we can only give estimated numbers and in the absence of official statistics, we have to cite other sources and estimates that we consider being more realistic. Table 3.1. illustrates the population of different provinces in the last three national censuses.

Regarding the population of Azari speakers, it can be said that the provinces of East Azarbaijan, Ardabil, and Zanjan are three provinces where more than 98% of their population are Azaris and about 50% of the population of West Azarbaijan province are Azaris with a total population of about 7740000 people. Now, assuming that 30% of the population in Tehran, Alborz, Golestan (including the Turkmen community), Hamedan, Qazvin, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and North Khorasan speaks Azari, we arrive at several around 1,462,000 Azari speakers. By combining these two figures, a population of 14,853,000 is determined. Now, if this figure is added to the about 2,000,000 Azaris who reside in the provinces of Fars, Qom, Kurdistan, Gilan, and others, the population of Azaris cannot be regarded as being more than 17 million people (about 21 per cent of the total population of the country).

Name	Population Census 2006-10-25	Population Census 2011-10-24	Population Census 2016-09-24
Alborz	2,076,991	2,412,513	2,712,400
Ardabil	1,228,155	1,248,488	1,270,420
Āzārbāyjān-e Gharbī [West Azerbaijan]	2,873,459	3,080,576	3,265,219
Āzārbāyjān-e Sharqī [East Azerbaijan]	3,603,456	3,724,620	3,909,652
Būshehr	886,267	1,032,949	1,163,400
Chahārmahāl va Bakhtīārī [Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari]	857,910	895,263	947,763
Eṣfahān [Isfahan]	4,559,256	4,879,312	5,120,850
Fārs [Fars]	4,336,878	4,596,658	4,851,274
Gīlān	2,404,861	2,480,874	2,530,696
Golestān [Gorgān]	1,617,087	1,777,014	1,868,819
Hamadān	1,703,267	1,758,268	1,738,234
Hormozgān	1,403,674	1,578,183	1,776,415
Īlām	545,787	557,599	580,158
Kermān	2,652,413	2,938,988	3,164,718
Kermānshāh	1,879,385	1,945,227	1,952,434

Name	Population Census 2006-10-25	Population Census 2011-10-24	Population Census 2016-09-24
Khorāsān-e Junoubi [South Khorasan]	702,852	732,192	768,898
Khorāsān-e Razavi [Razavi Khorasan]	5,593,079	5,994,402	6,434,501
Khorāsān-e Shomali [North Khorasan]	811,572	867,727	863,092
Khūzestān	4,274,979	4,531,720	4,710,509
Kohkīlūyeh va Boyer Ahmādī [Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad]	634,299	658,629	713,052
Kordestān [Kurdistan]	1,440,156	1,493,645	1,603,011
Lorestān	1,716,527	1,754,243	1,760,649
Markazī	1,351,257	1,413,959	1,429,475
Māzandarān	2,922,432	3,073,943	3,283,582
Qazvīn	1,143,200	1,201,565	1,273,761
Qom	1,046,737	1,151,672	1,292,283
Semnān	589,742	631,218	702,360
Sīstān va Balūchestān [Sistan and Baluchestan]	2,405,742	2,534,327	2,775,014
Tehrān [Tehran]	11,345,375	12,183,391	13,267,637
Yazd	924,386	1,004,770	1,138,533
Zanjān	964,601	1,015,734	1,057,461
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,495,782</b>	<b>75,149,669</b>	<b>79,926,270</b>

Table 2 Province populations based on 2006, 2011, and 2016 censuses

Consequently, if we wish to estimate the population of Kurdish speakers in Iran, we can say that, on average, 90% of people in each of the three provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Kurdistan, as well as 50% of people in the province of Azarbaijan, speak Kurdish. The sum will thus be around 5,400,000. Additionally, if the overall Kurdish population of Tehran, North Khorasan, Alborz, Hamedan, Gilan, and other provinces is around 2 million, then around 7,400,000 individuals are gained, meaning that almost 9% of Iran's population may be classified as Kurdish speakers.

According to the findings of the 2016 census, 1,600,000 people may be estimated to be the Arab population of Khuzestan province, who make up around 33 per cent of the province. Similarly, there are approximately 50,000 Arabs in Bushehr Province, 80,000 in Hormozgan Province, 60,000 in Isfahan Province, 200,000 in Fars Province, 50,000 in Khorasan, 40,000 in Qom, and approximately 100,000 Arabs in other parts of the country, making up about 2.200.000 Arabs in Iran as a whole (2.75 per cent of the population of Iran in 2016).

The provinces of Sistan and Balochestan, Kerman, Golestan, and Tehran are home to the majority of the Balochi population. The maximum number of members of this ethnic group is thought to be approximately 3.000.000, which is equal to 3.75 per cent of the total population of Iran.

Azari, Kurdish, Arab, and Baloch people together make up around 30.000.000 of the overall population. this does not necessarily mean that the remaining

50.000.000 people in the country speak Persian; there are other ethnic groups like the Lor, Gilaki, Mazani, Taleshi, Sistani, and others.

### 1.8.2. Geographical location of Iran and ethnic groups

Iran is a country in the Middle East and southwest Asia. This country has a land area of 1.648.195 square kilometres or 636.375 square miles. Iran is surrounded by Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the east, Iraq, and Turkey to the west, Armenia, Azarbaijan (including the Nakhchivan Republic), and Azarbaijan to the north. Furthermore, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates also border Iran in the Persian Gulf. One should look at the expanse of Iran's ancient regions to determine the scope of Iranian civilization from the perspective of modern geography. This civilization spans from its cradle in the highlands of the Anatolian Plateau and Armenia to the Mesopotamian Plain to the banks of the Indus River in the Indian subcontinent, from the northeast to Transoxiana to the western borders of China.

Attention should be given to the current situation and potential of Iranian civilization within both real and imaginary boundaries to strengthen the elements of national culture. Strong ties exist between Iranian culture and civilisation, including a shared sense of national identity, the Persian language, Islam, literature, historical legacy, and social history. These solid connections allow for the connection of various subcultures and climatic conditions, as well as the creation of grounds for stronger ties between them in the form of national unity. We shall now discuss the geographic locations of the five ethnic groups that make up contemporary Iran—Persians, Arabs, Kurds, Turks, and Balochis—in light of the current situation of Iran. This is just to provide a general overview of the geographical situation of Iran to start a discussion.



Figure 2 Map of Iran and its neighbours

### *1.8.3. Customs and etiquettes of ethnic groups*

Language, religion, customs, and historical background are examples of cultural identities that form the foundation of ethnic identity, by which individuals are associated with all or some aspects of group identity. The customs and etiquettes of any community are a collection of religious and non-religious behaviours of a group of people who have bonded through shared religious or national goals and adhere to similar moral standards because of shared intellectual or emotional backgrounds (Goshtasb, 2012). Studying the traditions of the people in different regions of Iran is essential. The traditions have their origins in the history and culture of the Iranian people, which demonstrates the illustrious ancestry or history of this region throughout the ages.

Two key pillars serve as the basis for Iranian identity: 1. cultural heritage; 2. political heritage

Cultural heritage consists of two parts: a) Iranian customs and traditions such as Nowruz, Sizdah Bedar or Nature's Day, Chaharshanbe Suri or the last Wednesday of the year, Mehregan celebration, and in the newer period, the Islamic customs and traditions; B) Written heritage. Persian has always been the national language of various ethnic groups, even though some, like the Azaris, Kurds, and Arabs, have their unique languages. Many poets and writers of different ethnic groups such as Nizami Ganjavi and Shahriyar have left lasting works in the Persian language. The written heritage of the Persian language is the heritage of the artists of all the ethnic groups of this land and is not limited to Persian speakers. Iranian political heritage is several thousand years old. Iranian ethnic groups such as Kurds, Balochis, and others are all Iranians and have a history of governing and managing the country. The Medes were Kurds, the Achaemenids were Persians, Karim Khan Zand was Lor, and the Safavids and Qajarids were Turks; thus, the lines of Iranian history are not exclusive to any particular nation (Nasaj, 2009).

There is no consensus on the number of Iranian ethnic groups. According to the most famous tradition, Iran has six major ethnic identities, namely Persian, Turk, Kurdish, Lor, Baloch, and Arab. However, because Lori, Kurdish, and Balochi are all members of the same language family and have shared linguistic roots with Persian, some people split ethnic identities into only three linguistic families: Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. This is while even some consider Laks that are between Kurds and Lors as a separate ethnic group. Of course, some other modern linguists place the Tata dialect within the three groups of Persian, Azari, and Taleshi, or the Lori dialect among the Kurdish language and its sub-languages. According to another classification, eleven ethnic identities are listed. These ethnic groups, which are explored in this book in addition to the five ethnic groups, are addressed along with some of their significant cultural and social aspects in this section. It should be noted that a lot of these regional traditions and costumes have shifted significantly through time.

**Persians or Fars people** have multiple dialects and inhabit throughout Iran, except for specific areas of other ethnic groups (45 to 66%). In general, the aspects of Iranian-Persian culture that extend beyond Iran's governmental boundaries can be succinctly listed as follows: 1. Persian language and its dialects; 2. National holidays such as Nowruz, Yalda night, and solar calendar; 3. Shiite religion; 4. Philosophy; 5. Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, and related religions and rituals; 6. Persian art (including Persian literature and poetry, Persian architecture, and Persian food).

It is worth mentioning that some scholars believe that historically, there is no such thing as the Persian people in Iran. However, it is a fact that the idea of a minority, particularly an ethnic minority, acquires meaning and significance along with the idea of a majority, and in the real world, it is not possible to speak of a minority without a majority. Also, the majority of people in Iran speak Persian, yet there are varying views about their particular identities, ethnicities, as well as religious practices. Currently, these aspects are reflected in giving national and para-ethnic identities to Persian-speakers as Iranians. Such Persian-speaking cultural aspects and customs as Nowruz, Charshanbeh Suri, and Yalda Night have attained the national status and are observed across the nation, even among Iranian immigrant communities.

Azaris, also known as Turks, are primarily concentrated in the northwest of the country, West and East Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, and parts of the Kurdistan provinces; they are also scattered in other provinces such as Hamedan, Qazvin, Markazi, Mazandaran (Ghaemshahr), Gilan (Astara), North Khorasan, Fars (Qashqai tribes), and larger cities, most notably Tehran and Karaj (16 to 25 per cent). Most of the Azaris are urban dwellers and the largest cities of these people are Tabriz, Urmia, Ardabil, Zanjan, Khoy, and Maragheh, respectively. In addition, they include a considerable population of Tehran. Azaris live as significant minorities in cities such as Hamedan, Qazvin, and Karaj. The Azaris of Iran are religiously affiliated with Islam and the Twelver Shiites. Every year, they perform the most intricate and often exaggerated mourning ceremonies for the third Shiite Imam. However, a minority of about 200,000 people of the Turks of Azarbaijan are Sunni Muslims (of Hanafi and Shafi'i, two major Sunni sects) who live near the city of Urmia. Hanafi Sunnis also live in the city of Bilesvar and Hashtjin.

Azarbaijani clothing which has emerged from the long processes of culture and religion and other elements of the Azari people is another special symbol of Azaris. The traditional music of the Azarbaijani people is among the most elaborate folk music in the country. Those who sing this type of music along with their poems in Azarbaijani Turkish are called 'Ashiq' which means lover. Ashiqs in Azarbaijan, both in the Iranian province of Azarbaijan and in the neighbouring Republic of Azarbaijan, is a poet and musician who performs their song with an instrument. Ashiqs sing in all social and community occasions from religious to secular and everyday celebrations and mourning ceremonies in the description of Azarbaijan and the heroism of its people along with Azarbaijani music and are welcomed by the people. Ashiqs have existed among the Turkic peoples since pre-Islamic times. Azarbaijani music has various



genres and performances including ‘pub music’, ‘Tar’, ‘Balaban’, ‘Naqara’, ‘Baghlama’, and ‘Garman’.



Picture 1 Clothing culture and music of Ashiqs

**Kurds** live mainly in the western areas of the country, with the main concentration in the province of Kurdistan, and also in the south and part of the north of West Azarbaijan (Mahabad), Kermanshah, Ilam, as well as north of Khorasan. Kurdish languages include these groups: Kurmanji or Badinani, Sorani, and Southern Kurdish. Most Kurds are Muslims and others are Yazidis who do not dwell in Iran, Yarsans (Ahl al-Haq / Kakahi), Christians, and Jews. Kurds celebrate Nowruz and Nativity celebrations (the birth of the Prophet of Islam). Nowruz is an ethnic holiday among the Kurds. In some Kurdish legends, the origin of this celebration is attributed to Kiomers, the First King. Kiomers is a king that has fought with and defeated the demon in the mountains east of Diana city. He gives the order to light flames in the mountains and heights to announce the triumph everywhere and a nine-day Victory Day celebration.

The Kurds value religious customs and festivals, such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, and especially the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. People visit each other on the two days of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha while wearing new clothing and participating in Eid prayers. In addition to the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the birth of the Prophet of Islam has special glory. This celebration is held in the joyous and happy month of Rajab. Votive food is prepared as a special meal for the ceremony and served to the attendees. The visitors also greet the dervishes, play the traditional musical instrument of Daf, repeat a particular dhikr, sing the Nativity hymn, honour the Prophet of Islam, and, most importantly, glorify God.

As for the Kurds’ colourful attire, we see a variety of Kurdish outfits that with a slight adjustment find a new composition and form. This composition and shape have a long history in this country, have been modified to meet climatic and environmental requirements, and have come to play an ever-increasing number of significant and functional roles. The construction and use of each of the clothing components vary depending on the season and type of work and livelihood and rituals. Although Kurdistan’s many regions have diverse clothing styles, all of them cover the entire body.



Picture 2 Kurdish cover culture, music, and dance

Lors make up the majority of the population in western and southwestern Iran, with a higher concentration in the provinces of Lorestan, Hamedan, Ilam, Poshtkuh, Chaharmahal, and Bakhtiari, Isfahan, Kohkiluyeh, and Boyer-Ahmad, Fars, Bushehr, and northern Khuzestan. Although the Lors had already converted to Shiism before the Safavid period, Twelver Shiite has later acknowledged as the official religion of Lors. Although Lor culture has operated within the confines of Islam, many parts of supernatural belief have been supported by the open expression of popular traditions like the Imamzadeh sect and other sects, particularly the Ahl al-Haq. In geographical areas where the people did not know Arabic to recite Islamic prayers, nor did they comprehend, or were entirely illiterate, such as among the Lor nomads, the confession of faith and particularly the recitation of different prayers had a significantly higher ceremonial connotation.

Because of this, at the start of the nineteenth century, during Mohammad Ali Mirza's reign, the Lors' beliefs had become so divergent that a mujtahid was dispatched from Karbala to bring the nomads back to Islam. Although it is unclear how effective this move was, there was certainly no direct, strong institution in Lorestan that could stand up for and defend their official beliefs.

The clothing of the Lor people is homogenous, but in some cases, there are internal differences between different clans that differentiates them. Like the clothing of the Kurds, Lori dresses are colourful and cover the entire body.

**Gilaks** live in Gilan and western Mazandaran. Gilaks were differentiated in the old times according to their dominant mode of production into three categories: A) The inhabitants of the plain, whose work was aquaculture, and who mostly cultivated rice and tea, and later gardening (citrus) who were called Gil or Gilemard; B) The inhabitants of the heights of Gilan and Mazandaran, who were mostly engaged in rainfed agriculture, wheat and barley, and were called Kolai; C) The Galesh, who were either ranchers or nomads, are now sedentary despite their name remaining due to the development of modern technology and production processes. The mode of life of Gilaks has generally altered significantly.

Among the Gilaks, there are three major Iranian language groups, namely Gilaki, Taleshi, and Tati. Gilaki is the native or second language of over three million people in Gilan alone, however owing to immigration and other modern

processes, this language is becoming less and less common in many areas. According to Mohammad Taghi Rahnamaei Turkish is becoming more widely used in the north, whereas Talesh and Gilaki are becoming more prevalent in the south. Sefidrood is the dividing line between speakers of the East and West varieties of the Gilaki language. Linguistically, Gilaki belongs to the northwestern branch of Iranian languages. Among the poems of the post-Islamic period, we come across works that are close to the current Gilaki. In the past, those who sang Gilaki songs were called Pahlavi singers. Gilan folklore is a great illustration of the intricate connections between pre-Islamic and Islamic practices, with trees unquestionably playing a significant role in Gilan folklore. Shiites make up the bulk of the population, however, in the north and centre of Talesh, a sizeable Shafi'i Sunni minority is formed by certain Taleshies.

The indigenous and local plays and games of Gilaks are rooted in the social, cultural, climatic, geographical, and historical features of their region and have evolved in line with the transformation in their beliefs, rites, and customs. For a variety of reasons, some native plays and games have been forgotten or marginalised. Examples include the musical springtime comedy 'The Bride of Flowers' as one of the native ceremonial games of Gilan, which was marginalised in more recent times but was played for millennia in the second half of March to welcome Nowruz. Others, however, such as 'Lafand' and 'Gilamardi Wrestling,' which are plays and games that were once presented at festivals and celebrations because of their dramatic and martial appeals, have survived and are being practised today. Additionally, religious and ceremonial performances like Taziyeh, which are presented in the months of Muharram and Safar, continue to have popularity among the traditional strata of society and are supported due to their ideological and theological content. Many of these people's rituals and beliefs were strongly tied to their economy, way of life, and production; as a result, when these factors vanished, so did the rituals and ceremonies that were associated with them, leaving only historical recollections. However, many of these customs and rites associated with fishing, farming, and rice production are still practised in some Gilan villages and municipalities today.

Black is seldom used by ladies as part of their attire in Gilan because of the visual splendour of the local landscape. Old ladies are the only ones that use this colour for their lachak, a hat-like headdress worn by women in the past. Gilak people utilised their shabby clothing to express sadness during funeral rites instead of wearing black garments. The Shaliteh, chador kamar, robe, coat, skirt, and pants are the primary pieces of clothing worn by Gilak women. The Gerd-e Tuman, also known as the Shaliteh or Kutah Tuman, is a short-pleated skirt. The skirt is worn with classic wide pants that go tighter at the ankles. Chador Kamar, also known as Kamar-Dabad, is a fragment of Chador Shab, a vibrant checkered fabric. The Gilak women use it to wrap around their waists when they are farming and to carry their infants on their backs.

In the eastern, western, and central regions of Gilan Province, there are three basic forms of traditional clothing. Eastern Gilan refers to women's clothing as 'Qasemabadi.' In the western region of the province, the costume is known as 'Taleshi,' while the Gilak woman in the centre's outfit is known as 'Rosukhi.'

While the Qasemabadi costume is composed of a single colour cloth and is embellished with multicoloured ribbons, the Taleshi costume is built of flowery, vibrant materials. The Taleshi costume consists of a long, flowy garment with long sleeves, a white scarf, a vest embroidered with coins, and a long skirt. The skirt varies in length depending on where they reside. In Qasembad, ladies dress uniquely. They wear a headdress called a 'mandil' that serves as a hat underneath their scarves and is ornamented with several coins. They dress in a long, flowing dress with a modest neckline and beautiful ribbon ornamentations.



Picture 3 Gilak women cover

Due to the climate the Gilak women lived in, they utilised various types of material for their clothes. Ladies that live close to mountains dress in heavier materials like cotton, whereas women in the centre of the country wear dresses with silky materials.

**The Arab** population resides in the provinces of Bushehr, Hormozgan, and the centre and south of Khuzestan as well as intermittently in the south of Khorasan (Birjand Arab district). About two and a half million Iranians are Arabs, most of whom live in Khuzestan Province and the Persian Gulf islands. Numerous Persian traits may be detected in the Arab population of the southern coastal strip. Arabs have long resided in Khuzestan as Kasravi, the early twentieth-century historian writes in his *Nameless Royals*, 'as far as it is definite and the proof is accessible, the history of Arab emigration to Iran should be studied since centuries before Islam and the founding of the Sassanid monarchy.' The Parthians opened the gates of what is now Iran to the Arabs under their rule, and it was at this time that the two main tribes moved in great numbers to what is now Iraq, with no one to stop them. Although there is no proof of this, it is possible that several groups entered Iran at the same time. The milder climate of Suziana, Khuzestan, Bahrain, Persia, and Kerman, however, made it possible for certain Arab tribes to live in the tropics of Iran during the Sassanid era; 'One

of the groups was Banu al-Alam, that was perhaps the first Arab tribe to move into contemporary Iran' (Kasravi, 1956, 131).

Similar to other Iranians, the Arabs of Ahvaz have their culture. They follow the Arabs in their neighbouring countries in giving Eid al-Fitr a considerably greater status in public culture and celebrating it following a wide range of norms, practices, and customs. A further enduring custom shared by the Arabs of Khuzestan is the 'Gargee'an' ritual, which is held in Ahvaz on the fifteenth day of Ramadan each year. On this night, Arab youngsters enter the streets wearing traditional clothes and carrying little bags that they have already prepared. At night, while singing folk songs, they enter the neighbouring homes to obtain gifts and sweets for Eid. Other very important and common ceremonies among the Arabs, we can mention the coffee-making and coffee-eating ceremonies, which are performed with many rituals.

Khuzestan, a province in the southwest of Iran, has warm, humid weather; as a result, the people who live there typically use light, cool textiles for clothes. Arab men cover their heads with a piece of cloth called a Chafieh to protect them from heat and dust, and they use a woven black ring called Eqal to keep the Chafieh. These men wear long, ankle-length clothing that is made in white, grey, brown, and earth colours. Locally, this outfit is known as Dashdasheh (Thawb). Over this attire, they wear another outfit called Besht or Khachieh, which is likewise black, brown, or dark blue.

Arab women follow the primary norm of covering their entire body when dressing, as well as adhering to the Islamic Hijab. They wear a black Chador called an Abayeh, which is similar to an Aba but gleaming. Under the Chador, they wear a scarf called Shileh, which covers the entire head and breast. Shileh is fastened with a pin called Chelab, which is made of gold or silver and ornamented with a turquoise necklace. Younger women tend to dress in bright colours, whereas elderly women like to dress in dark hues. Some Arab women conceal their faces with a Niqāb or a mask. Their so-called Soab pants are commonplace. It should be noted that henna and tattoos are also used by Arab women for decorating and apparel.



Picture 4 Arab dressing culture, music, and dance

Balochis are located in the provinces of Balochestan, Sistan, South and Northeast Khorasan (Sarakhs and Jam), south of Kerman, and Hormozgan, to the east. According to historical places like Mehregan Mountain in Saravan, Balochestan, Zoroastrianism may be practised by the Baloch people. In the Davarpanah village of Saravan city, there is a rocky hill that the locals have called Mehregan mountain for a long time and they narrate from their ancestors that on certain days they lit a fire on this hill and performed the worship of Ahuramazda. However, after the advent of Islam, all the Balochis of Iran became Muslims and now live coexist with the majority Hanafi Sunni Muslim and the Twelver Shiite minority, and there is no sect or religion other than these two religions. The minority of Iranian Shiite Balochis live mostly in the areas and districts of Iranshahr city and close to Kerman.

Due to Balochestan's proximity to Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, and the fact that parts of Pakistan (Balochestan) and Afghanistan (Nimroz) once belonged to Balochestan of Iran, Balochestan's culture and customs have had a significant impact on these countries. Besides historical and mythological stories about the impact of Balochis in such events as the conquest of India by Iran, Hindi and Afghan languages both utilise Balochi nouns and adjectives, and Balochestan's culture is strongly connected to that of Pakistan and India. The men's clothing there is also derived from the great historical transformations of Balochestan. The dress of the Balochis has changed over time, but it still shows the special clothing of the people of this region.

Balochis are famous for a special kind of elaborately embroidered women's clothing that is still widely worn in the villages. Despite necessary changes, notably in the colour schemes of the needlework, embroidery, historically created in cottage industries, continues to be one of the popular handicrafts with a thriving market.

A long, loose robe with a round neckline, a slit along the middle of the bodice, and long, broad sleeves tapering toward the wrists are the fundamental clothing items. They are worn over a chemise and wide pants that are wide at the ankles and have a drawstring at the waist. The fabric could be simple or patterned with a design all over. Backgrounds in either black or solid bright hues, primarily red, plum, and orange, are appropriate for highlighting the extremely detailed and vibrant stitching. Since the fabric is only available in limited widths, the broad chemise requires a lot of cleverly fitting seams. Sometimes the garment is constructed of broad satin panels in various colours sewn together in neat stripes. A long, rectangular headscarf made of translucent fabric—typically black—with multicoloured embroidery all around completes the clothing.

Baloch embroidery is worked on a base fabric of loosely woven cotton in panels, which facilitates detailed needlework. The cuffs of the trousers and sleeves in particular are also provided with wide bands of embroidery. The borders of the neckline, cuffs, and bodice closing are neatly finished distinctively. In some Balochestan regions, buttonhole stitching serves as the anchor for mirror work that is included in the embroidery. Alternatively, sequins, another sort of embellishment are sprinkled throughout the embroidery. The colourful and

opulent ornamentation of the Baloch dress may be a response to the harsh environment.

Men often dress in sombre white attire, as opposed to women, with long, very loose shirts over extraordinarily big pants (about 2.2 m wide), which fold between the legs and taper just at the ankles. A white turban with protruding ends serves as the headwear for men.

The Balochi clothing spread to areas of India as a result of the power of the Parthian Empire, which had its roots in eastern Iran. Also, the Parthian dress that Afghan men wear today is the same outfit that Balochis have worn for centuries.



Picture 5 Baloch culture and music

#### *1.8.4. Ethnic – tribal structure based on tradition*

In Iran, tribe and group formation and the establishment of the modern state happened at the same time. Before the establishment of the modern state, tribal groups contributed to the social and political system of Iran. Most of the governments that came to power in post-Islamic Iran came from tribal groups. One of the characteristics of the modern state is centralism in all its aspects and components. Tribal and ethnic groups coexisted in Iran in the early 20th century after the centralism of the modern state, but as a result of global processes, the crystallisation of these groups in political form and structure, on the one hand, and centralism in the process of nationalisation in Iran, on the other, tribal groups found the characteristics of ethnic groups. In fact, at this time, the process of intense centralism in every area of the modern state contributed to the emergence and acceleration of the ethnic phenomenon. This new structure came into being as a result of a lack of knowledge of the local and international circumstances during this time. The extreme centralism of the modern state in the early twentieth century, along with the centralization of tribal groups in the form of nationalism, was in political form and structure, and the totalitarian state could not afford special social and cultural tasks appropriate to the conditions of the time. After this date, the demands of the central government were challenged by the ethnic groups.

The attempt of the central government for creating unity at this time unintentionally transformed ethnic foundations and aspirations into long-term demands. This trend was manifested in various forms after the Second World

War and also at the end of the Pahlavi period. Due to their demands, these groups consequently took part in the overthrow of the Pahlavi administration. Since the political structure of governments is reflected in their constitution, the principles governing ethnic demands were also considered in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and ethnic demands were included in the principles of the constitution. These include the twelve, thirteen, and sixteen Articles of the Islamic Republic's Constitution (Zarghami et al., 2009).

Iran is among the countries with a high level of cultural, social, religious, and ethnic diversity in its political geography. However, unlike most multi-ethnic nations, like Canada, the United States, and some European nations that are the destination of different immigrant groups, Iran is a country with different ethnic groups that have inhabited it through centuries. In countries with a diversity of ethnic and religious groups, if their management is based on reason, respect for justice and fairness, and the recognition of the rights of different ethnic groups, then the foundations for eradicating inequality and discrimination, promoting sustainable development, and realisation of national convergence and cohesion will be provided.

Ethnic groups both as extensive kinship systems and as communities formed through the process of social and cultural participation, have natural growth and tend to both expand their geographical area and increase their population size. This process of ethnic growth can be observed in two main horizontal and vertical ways. The horizontal growth of a nation means the expansion of that nation over a geographical area so that over time, more and more lands will be occupied by that nation. The horizontal movement of tribes is natural and it should be considered mainly to find more sources of livelihood. Gatherer and hunter tribes gain more exploitation potential with more land and natural resources. Hence, we see territorial expansion as a permanent phenomenon in the history of human evolution, and it is this expansion that has fuelled many wars and violent conflicts. The other, a more advanced form of horizontal expansion of an ethnic group draws that group towards extra-tribal marriages and causes new individuals and groups to enter the nation. Thus, the greater the dispersion of the ethnic group in the land the more the relative cohesion of the group is reduced. However, this coherence can be maintained even at very large levels with such devices as common beliefs and values, common myths, and most important of all, a common language, but naturally its depth decreases and extra-racial marriages and marriages with other groups reduces the resistance of the group against other groups. The vertical form of expansion by contract happens when a group is forced to remain in a small, constrained geographical area due to a variety of factors, such as natural causes and problems (mountains, seas, deserts), or political factors (such as the presence of great powers in the environment). In such a case, the growth of the ethnic population naturally continues, but we are witnessing internal marriages. The gathering of these people in a small environment and the increase of kinship ties within it deepen the depth of ethnic cohesion and greatly increases the resistance of the people to the external environment. What we encounter in many cases in the history of ethnic groups is the collision of these two types of expansion. The horizontal



expansion of an ethnic group will sooner or later confront it with vertically expanded ethnic groups. In such a situation, the desire for continued growth in the first ethnicity and strong resistance to change in the second one leads to conflicts, tensions, and even great wars. This is while the horizontal growth of a nation can eventually lead it to turn to a modern state and a decrease in ethnic cohesion and kinship ties between its components makes it possible to replace national features with ethnic ones. Such a process is not possible in the case of vertical growth and consequently, the conflict between national and ethnic patterns inevitably emerges within the new national states, which are created based on multiple ethnicities (Breton, 2017).

The sense of social harmony among the various ethnic groups of society depends on the extent to which more groups, strata and individuals participate in the social interests of collective life. The social system must provide equal opportunities for different groups and strata of society and develop political, civil, economic and cultural rights for social units. The need for contemporary growth is acknowledged everywhere, just as it is in Iran. Among the concerns that affect contemporary society and the shift from traditional society are issues like alienation and its various manifestations, as well as rejection and isolation. According to an analytical perspective, the main mechanisms of modernization involve increasing structural differentiation to the point when ties to groups and connections in the social sphere become cold and ordinary. Thus, people become less attached and aware of themselves in group and collective relationships and become more isolated. National studies of ethnic groups demonstrate that some ethnic groups have a stronger sense of ethnic inequality than others, and this feeling may lead to a sense of aversion toward other ethnicities. Generally speaking, ethnic identity is a social issue in that both its importance and feeling of superiority have detrimental effects on national cohesion, as well as the tendency towards autonomy, the petrification of identity, and a closed and limited attitude toward changes. On the other hand, its lack of importance has adverse effects such as alienation and a sense of rejection from other ethnic groups, which in turn causes damage to cultural capital (Noah et al., 2017).

#### *1.8.5. The role of religions in construction of the ethnic*

Generally speaking, ethnic identity is a social issue in that both its importance and feeling of superiority have detrimental effects on national cohesion, as well as the tendency towards autonomy, the petrification of identity, and a closed and limited attitude toward changes. On the other hand, its lack of importance has adverse effects such as alienation and a sense of rejection from other ethnic groups, which in turn causes damage to cultural capital (Noah et al., 2017). Samuel Huntington asserts that in the modern world, religion is one of the primary forces—and possibly the only one—that inspires and mobilises people (Quoted in Mirzaei et al., 2014).

There is no consensus on the definition of religion. Religion, in general, is defined as a set of individual or collective ‘beliefs’, ‘feelings’ and ‘actions’ that

are organized around the concept of ultimate truth or the sacred and the transcendent. There are at least three essential components of religion: 1. Religious experiences and feelings are a unique state of being that humans find in the presence of the holy 2. Religious beliefs that pertain to religious experience and sentiments; 3. Religious practice is preceded by religious beliefs and intended to achieve religious experience. However, there is debate over how to measure religiosity; however, the Glock and Stark five-dimensional scale is one of the most often used measures that respectively point to 'belief', 'practice', 'experience', 'knowledge', and 'consequences'. The belief dimension refers to the beliefs that followers of a religion are expected to believe. The practice dimension includes certain religious behaviours, such as prayer, fasting, supplication, participation in certain rituals, and the like. The experience dimension refers to the emotions, perceptions, and feelings associated with having a relationship with a divine essence such as God or a transcendent reality or authority. The consequence dimension looks at the effects of religious beliefs, practices, experiences, and knowledge on the daily lives of followers (Taleban, 2011: 94-96).

Religious identity follows a special type of identity formation. In particular, religious identity is about the sense of group members within religion and the significance of this group membership concerning self-concept. Religious identity is not necessarily equivalent to being religious. Although the three terms have something in common, religiosity refers to the value and importance of religious group membership as well as participation in religious events, but religious identity, in particular, refers to religious group membership regardless of religious activity or participation (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010). Also, although religion is an institution based on faith, and religiosity is the extent to which the rituals of that religious institution are practised, 'religious identity' refers to how individuals perceive themselves as a religious person, a person who values and believes in religious values and beliefs within the community of believers. Religious identity is a collective identity that includes membership in religious groups, acceptance of its belief systems, acknowledgement of the importance of religious values, commitment to religious groups, and practices related to religion. This definition of religious identity distinguishes it from spiritual identity, which is part of personal identity (Seoul, 2010). Religious context, like other forms of identity formation, such as ethnic and cultural identity, can provide a perspective for understanding the world, opportunities to socialize with a wide range of people of different generations, and a set of basic principles for life. These foundations can shape an individual's identity (King & Boyatzis, 2004).

Religion has been one of the most important factors of national unity and solidarity (and disunity and divergence) in Iran (Tajik, 2005) as it has been in the world (Huntington, 2004). There are undeniable and fundamental links between religion and politics in the contemporary world. Marxist, neo-Marxist, and even rational choice theory of politics, along with their basis on economic structures and processes or utilitarian motivations, have paid attention to attitudes and values that are partly shaped by religious considerations. They

have also begun to pay attention to attitudes and values that are partially influenced by religious considerations. This is to the extent that the reflection on the importance of beliefs, values, and basic ideas including religious issues and 'links between religion and ethnicity/nationalism', after years of oblivion and negligence, has returned to the centre of analysis as an important aspect of the contemporary age (Wimmer, 2008, quoted by Behjati et al., 2014). The emergence of a categorical and noticeable divide caused by religion in the modern period has the most pronounced and significant effects on the framework of political relations in societies. A further justification for investigating the role of religiosity in the relationship between ethnic and national identity is the existence of religious sovereignty in Iran. This is because when the dominant religious-political values are congruent with the religious values of an ethnic group, the political or religious ideology prescribes values that promote the significance of that ethnic group's values in the eyes of its members.

Religion has been a major determinant in the establishment of ethnic groupings, particularly premodern ethnic groups. Primitive and nomadic tribes did not have an organized religion. In essence, they were either polytheists or pagans who worshipped natural elements like the sun, water, rain, or simple totems. The Abrahamic religions, sometimes known as 'the People of the Book' or 'the People of the Scripture,' which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have existed for around three to four thousand years. Religions that see themselves as global and transnational include Islam, Christianity, and to a much lesser extent, Judaism. The fact is that ethnic and national borders and restrictions do not matter from the point of view of Christianity or Islam, and anyone can be included in these religions. However, it is clear from practice that these faiths are compelled to embrace social and economic realities, particularly when they have completed the initial stages of their development and spread and have been presented with political options.

Because of this, distinct religions have frequently evolved into vehicles for the ethnic sentiments of different peoples and nations, either directly or indirectly. One motive for this is that some of these tribes have even mixed their name, their origin, or their ownership of the land with their religious myths. For instance, it is clear from a Jewish perspective the importance of the Great Flood and Ark of Noah traditions, which were in turn impacted by the older Sumerian mythology. The Greek myth of 'Europe,' the princess of the island of Crete, and the tale of her marriage to Zeus, who changed into a white cow, are both examples of myths. The local rites of these tribes were related to their ethnic myths and legends in Egypt and Assyria, just as the Sumerian monarchs thought of themselves as decedents of the city's gods. In ancient Iran, the language and mythology of the Iranians and the names of their cities and fire temples were closely related to the Zoroastrian religion. In general, it appears that essentially every ethnic group had its religion in premodern times. The importance and influence of the tribes' religion increased along with their age and political might. Even if many of the ancient faiths and rites, particularly those of the

nomadic tribes, have vanished, some of them have not only survived but have also expanded and become organised religions.

In general, it may be confidently stated that tiny ethnic groups and nations, more or less homogenous, may be able to rely on and promote their religion or creed without this religious preference finding significant internal effects. However, larger governments and nations will encounter severe issues inside themselves with every step they take towards open sovereignty and religious extremism, especially if they are not at the level of economic growth and interaction between cultures and religions. Naturally, religion is frequently used as justification for violent, protracted acts of provocation that might result in the killing. Up until a few centuries ago, certain conflicts and even religious wars took place in the established nations of the West, but these conflicts and disagreements are unheard of in more contemporary times. If we examine the current state of affairs in our region as well as in some countries in Asia and Africa, we can see that the influence of religion, particularly in recent years, has served as a serious justification for violent clashes between various groups of people living in the same nation, horrifying killings and destruction, and significant differences between various nations. The blood of racial and religious battles has not dried up in recent years, not even in the Balkan region of Eastern Europe. The situation of the languages and religions of the former Yugoslav countries is a good example of this. We know that the languages of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia are largely the same, except for Macedonia, Kosovo, and to a lesser extent Slovenia. In the past, this common language was called 'Serbo-Croatian'. Serbia proclaimed orthodoxy as its official religion to establish its independence following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the independence of its former allies. Croatia, which has a large Catholic population, has utilised religion to distinguish itself. Each of them simultaneously made an effort to keep their language as distinct from the languages of the others as they could to have greater grounds for separation. Naturally, if the political climate persists and this is the political intention of the state and the country, a complete split may occur, as it happened. In the meantime, the situation of the Bosnian Muslims was such that the only thing that separated them, for example, from the Serbs or Croats of the former Yugoslavia, was not their common language but their religion, Islam, which became their distinguishing factor. This was insufficient even though Bosnia and Herzegovina was home to both Serbo-Croatian Muslim speakers, an ethnically Serb orthodox group, and an ethnically Croat-Croat ethnic group, all of whom shared a language and ancestry with the Serbo-Croatian speakers. Other examples include Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, which reflect ethnic, national, and regional differences. The use of religion as a provocation is becoming more common, and this, particularly in the Middle East, makes it easier and quicker for people to start a fight than in many other regions of the world. In the majority of these instances, religion has been and is utilised to sow discord and even violence rather than to foster connection. Several countries and nations have been brought to the verge of extinction as a result of these battles. However, there are also more encouraging

instances that demonstrate how people of all religions may coexist peacefully in a single country despite historical and even contemporary issues.

There is a direct relationship between religious beliefs and the social life of people. The importance of religion is such that its themes and concepts affect the human lifestyle. Religion affects various social characteristics. The vast land of Iran with a very ancient history, in different historical periods, has experienced different religions. In other words, Iran's history is rife with the coincidence and mixing of ideologies, beliefs, and systems of religion and governance. To put it in another way, there have historically been a variety of people, ethnicities, and governments on the Iranian land, some of which were immigrants brought in by invaders from other countries. Before the arrival of Islam and conversion to Islam, the Iranian population practised faiths including Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, and Mithraism. The last religion to enter Iran was Islam. Thus, after the formation of the Safavid state, 'Shiism' turned out to be the official religion of Iran. According to Article 12 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'the official religion of Iran is Islam and the religion of the Twelver Jafari. This principle is unchangeable and other Islamic religions including Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali, and Zaidi are fully respected and the followers of these religions are free to perform religious ceremonies according to their jurisprudence and in religious education and personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and will) and related claims are formalized in the courts, and in any area where the followers of each of these religions have a majority, local regulations will be within the authority of the councils according to that religion, while protecting the rights of followers of other religions.' According to Article 13 of the same text, 'Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only religious minorities who are free to practice their religion within the law and act following their religion personally and according to religious teachings.' As a result, in addition to Islam, there are three other recognised religions in Iran: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Results of the general population and housing censuses are significant sources of data on religion in Iran.

According to the results of the general population and housing census conducted in 2011, of the 75149669 people enumerated regarding the type of religion, approximately 99.4% (74682938 people) are Muslim, 0.3% of other religions including 117704 Christians, 8756 Jew, 25271 Zoroastrian and 49101 people belong to other religions. 0.3 per cent (equal to 265,899 people) did not declare their religion. Iran, one of the main centres of the Shiite world, has a population of 75 million people, of which 94 per cent are Twelver Shiites, with the other people belonging to other sects such as Sunni and other religions.

1966	1976	1986	1996	2006	2016
Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim
Jew	Jew	Zoroastrian	Zoroastrian	Christian	Christian
Christian	Zoroastrian	Jew	Christian	Jew	Jew
Other Christians	Christian	Christian	Jew	Zoroastrian	Zoroastrian
Other religions	Other religions	Other religions	Other religions	Other religions	Other religions
Not stated					

Table 3 Religions and sects based on data from the Statistics Centre of Iran (2016)

It is impossible to get a thorough grasp of the developments in Iran's modern history without looking at the influence of religious elements. A significant portion of the changes in Iranian history may be attributed to the interactions between Iranian society and religion, namely between the clergy and the governmental system. The clergy has played an important role in the political and social developments of Iran because of their privileges, which include permanent presence among the people, knowledge of religious principles and rules and the duty to teach these rules to the public, exclusion from the political system, financial independence from the government, and their religious authority in the form of rulings and fatwas. Religion and religious authorities have had a significant effect on the majority of recent popular movements in Iran. According to Hamid Enayat (1994), the social power of the clergy plays a crucial role in political and social changes. He states, '1963, and the 1979 revolution headed by Ayatollah Khomeini indicates that many people have engaged in each of these revolutions. Religious leaders were the only ones who asked for this, and without their encouragement, it would not have been feasible for people to support and join in these activities.'

Robert Graham makes the following statement about the role of the Shiite clergy: 'The Shiite clergy has lived among the people and had a far greater and closer relationship with them, and as a result, they are more sensitive of the feelings of the masses. Even in the harshest authoritarian situations, when the clergy expresses opposition to government policy, their opinions are respected. In contrast, the clergy communication network gives them a method of communication with all demographic groups' (Graham 2000).

Over the last few centuries, however, the role of religion in societies has undergone critical changes. Due to its inevitable presence in human social life, the link between religion and society is one of the delicate and important questions that scholars have continuously taken into account. Political sociology, a field of study that focuses on the institutions and forces that shape politics, investigates how religions have shaped politics historically and socially, both at the micro and macro levels. The institution of religion and the ulema as a result have played a distinctive role in Iran's history to the point that, in the words of Lambton, an expert on modern Iranian events, 'Islam was what sustained the coherence of society' (Lambton, 2000: 140). From a sociological point of view, it can be said that the Shiite clergy, at least since the Safavid period, has been considered a powerful social force and an important pillar of civil society. Like other social forces and groups, they have interacted with political power and, in addition to playing their spiritual role, have also played political roles, such as involvement in and influence over politics, political seclusion and passivity of internal oppositions, and have led uprisings and social revolutions. Religion has frequently and in varied ways affected politics throughout Iran's modern history, often through the influence of the clergy. Mrs Lambton thinks that 'People in the religious community showed a great deal of respect for one another and turned to their leaders for guidance and support

because they believed that they would protect them from the government's threats. The clerics were the people's natural leaders because of their close ties to Shiism' (Lambton, 2013, p. 213).

From a psychological point of view, Gustave Le Bon in his *The Psychology of the Masses* states: 'The masses always find a sense of readiness to accept a belief and, consequently, to act on it, through the certainty of religion.' Le Bon writes: 'When [the crowd's] convictions are closely examined, whether at epochs marked by fervent religious faith, or by great political upheavals such as those of the last century, it is apparent that they always assume a peculiar form which I cannot better define than by giving it the name of a religious sentiment' (Le Bon, 1992: 93). Therefore, one of the most significant aspects affecting the mobility of the masses is religious conviction, and it is unquestionable that the clerics as social group play a more significant role in mobilising the masses to address the religious views and sentiments of the people.

In actuality, the clergy and the public have a common element: religion. There have not been as many political aspirations among the great religions of the world. Teachings of different religions are more or less focused on social life, and since there has been no clear separation between the social and political spheres from the previous centuries, these teachings cover the whole of socially and politically motivated. However, there have been differences between religions for various reasons as to the extent to which religious organizations, hierarchies, and authorities have claimed to be involved in political life, and in particular the administration of public affairs. The Eisenstadt typology is one of the best works on this topic. It engages in a sort of typology of great cultural systems, the origins of which can be traced to the rise of the great religions, where a distinction is made between divinity and mundanity, dividing the two sets, and where the king and the transcendent are no longer considered to be one in essence. But the kind of relationship that is established between divinity and mundanity is different between these religions.

Eisenstadt divides the great religions into three categories in terms of the relationship they establish between heaven and earth, or the transcendental order and the earthly order: one, religions that assume this relationship is broken and leave the affairs of the world in the hands of reason, without no religion to monitor their actions, like the Confucian culture where everything is assumed to be worldly and there is no reason for the formation of a religious elite group. Political power will thus have total independence from religion. Second, religions that see the observation of the heavens as continuous, like Hinduism, in which religious leaders have the authority to exercise authoritarian control over politics as representatives of the heavens on earth. Third, the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) require the earthly order to work toward achieving legitimacy and adhering to the heavenly order. This duty places the earthly order in a perpetual challenge with the religious order, which gives these societies a unique dynamic. Overall, Eisenstadt concludes that monotheistic cultural systems are essentially pluralistic because political and religious elites are separate, and this separation is the basis for subsequent divisions (Naghibzadeh, 2000: 77-78). Political

claims within the same two-dimensional religions are, of course, different on the social and political levels. This indicates that after the Renaissance in Europe, the institutions of politics and religion were separated and that this separation of the two institutions had a significant impact on the isolation of religion in Western politics. However, in Islamic societies, this separation and isolation of religion did not occur.

All of these factors point to the conclusion that Islam is fundamentally a socio-political religion; it is not only concerned with individual and otherworldly domains but also has coherent political and social agendas. The Shiite clergy also participates in politics because it does not view government and political interference as being outside the scope of its inherent competence. This is significant because theoretically, the Shiite clergy's influence should be based on the concept of the Imamate, the absence of the last Imam, and the clergies' role as representatives of the Hidden Imam during that absence (Bashirieh, 2006: 241).

The most important social and historical aspect of the clergy has been its opposition to power. Criticism of power and critical distancing from power was the most important social feature of the clergy, which of course had a doctrinal and ethical nature, and this in itself brought this institution closer to the body of society and, in a contemporary interpretation, the civil sections of society. The clergy, however, had other advantages concerning this, such as enjoying a double form of the elite as their main advantage. Double elite in that they benefited from literacy, science, and knowledge - particularly during periods when there were lower strata of the population who were literate and cultured - but they were also guaranteed the clergy never to be separated from the social body and to lose their communication with the general public. Even now, the speaking of clerics on behalf of religion adds to this feature. Religion is present in the depths of nature and within human beings and arises from the deepest desires and beliefs of human beings. Despite their political exclusion from the centre of power, the clergy among Sunnis are nonetheless acknowledged and revered by the general population and have a distinct place in the social and political system. The combination of these three characteristics, namely 'critique of power and confrontation with it', 'elitism together with communication with the body of society, and 'speaking on behalf of religion, can make the clergy an unrivalled institution that is far more effective than other institutions.

Clerics have been one of the key players in the political and social spheres among Iranian ethnic groups that have participated in such actions as protests, elections, and the settlement of ethnic and national disputes. Abdolhamid Ismaeelzahi, also known as Movlavi Abdolhamid, is one of the active clerics among the Sunni communities of Kurds, Balochis, and Arabs who has a high level of influence. He is a member of the World Union of Muslim Scholars, a member of the Mecca Jurisprudential Council, the Sunni Imam of Zahedan Friday Prayer, and the director of the Darul Uloom School of Religious Sciences in Zahedan. He has protested against religious discrimination in Iran and the lack of permission to hold Eid and Sunni prayers and to have separate mosques in cities like Tehran. He has also criticized the actions of armed groups, such as



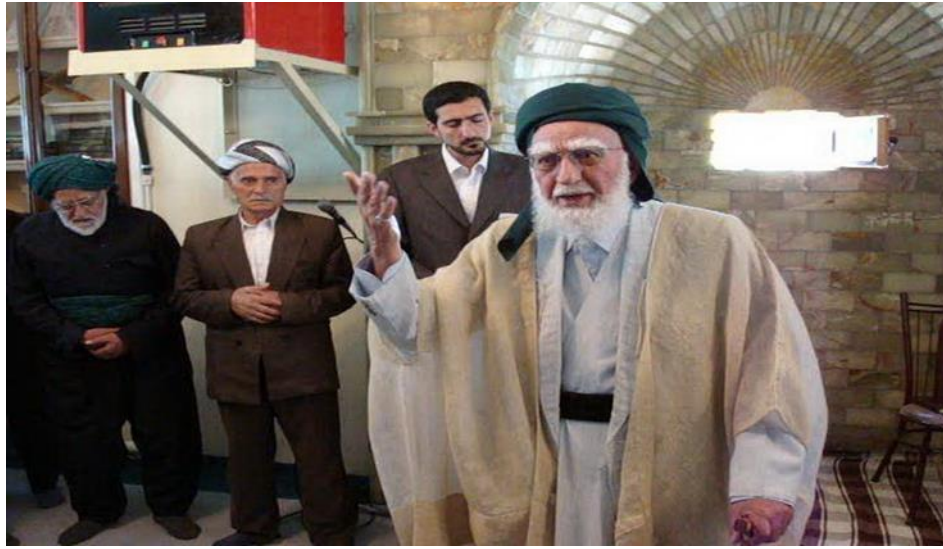
Jundallah in the Balochistan region, calling them seditions and calling on the authorities to investigate the main agents behind the formation of this group. Abdolhamid Ismaeelzahi has been the director of the traditional and hugely influential Zahedan Darol Ulum (House of Sciences) since 1977 by the order of Abdul Aziz Mollazadeh, the former founder and director of the House. Through his management, Abdolhamid has worked hard to advance the religious and political goals of the House, so that now the number of students in this school exceeds one thousand. One of the greatest events of Abdolhamid Ismaeelzahi is the massive conference of Zahedan Darol Ulum alumni, which is held every year after the academic year of Sunni schools in Zahedan and attracts hundreds of thousands of attendees. He received the Human Rights Activist of the Year Award from the Human Rights Defenders Centre in 2014 in recognition of his work 'to develop reconciliation links amongst ethnic groups and diverse religious orientations in Sistan and Balochistan Province.' In a letter to the Supreme Leader, the Sunni Imam of Zahedan Friday Prayer, Mowlavi Abdolhamid, made demands for the rights of Sunnis and marginalised ethnic groups in Iran, such as the Balochis. In response, the Office of the Supreme Leader emphasised that the constitution expressly forbids any form of prejudice or inequality between Iranians of any ethnicity, race, or religion.



Picture 6 Abdolhamid Ismaeelzahi, a Sunni leader of the Balochis

The Naqshbandi sect is a very important Sufi group in Iran with Sunni followers. The Naqshbandis, who were mainly in Kermanshah and Kurdistan, took an active part in political events, including against early twentieth-century Russian attacks on Iran and the constitutional movement. Sheikh Sayyed Taha Kamalizadeh Hosseini Naqshbandi and his son Yahya Kamalizadeh Hosseini Naqshbandi are two of the most well-known Naqshbandis in Iran. Sayyed Taha was born in 1924 while his father Sheikh Aladdin was in Baghdad. Despite Sheikh Sayyed Taha's reluctance, Sheikh Aladdin's command and will, as well as the ulema's demand, prompted him to take the position of leadership after Sheikh Aladdin's abrupt departure to Iraq in 1964 and his eventual death in 1965. He left for Iraq in 1982 as a result of the unstable political climate following the 1979 revolution. He spent more than two years in Erbil before leaving for Paris in the winter of 1984 and then Bonn, the capital of West

Germany, a month later. Sheikh Seyyed Taha wrote his book, *Islam for Human Happiness* during this period. He also took on the role of mosque director in Bonn, where he led Friday prayers as well as leading other Islamic festivities and rites. In the winter of 1991, he returned to Iran after ten years and chose the city of Urmia, the centre of West Azarbaijan Province, as his headquarters. Despite the hardships, he built a large mosque and monastery in the city and held Friday prayers and other ceremonies there. He passed away on October 2016 in the same city.



Picture 7 Sheikh Seyyed Taha Kamalizadeh Hosseini Naqshbandi, an influential Naqshbandi cleric

Among other religious sects that play a significant role in the socio-political sphere of the Kurdish people is the Quranic School centred on Ahmad Muftizadeh. Ahmad Muftizadeh or Allameh Muftizadeh (1961–1992) was a Sunni Iranian thinker and mujtahid who was active mainly in Kurdistan province. He is considered one of the leaders and religious political figures of Iran who spent some time in both the prisons of the governments of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic. One of his most obvious demands was to amend the constitution and revive the Soviet government in Islamic societies and Iranian communities. One of Muftizadeh's special and methodological approaches has been the use of the Kurdish language and literature in creating poetry to influence the teachings of religious ethics among thousands of his followers and students. With the beginning of in his words 'early', the Iranian revolutionary struggles and the alignment of the Sunnis of Iran with the revolution, his long prison experience dealt a blow to his intellectual body. In recognizing and following his original path, however, there is a council called the management of the Quranic school by Muslims where the ideas and intellectual contributions of Muftizadeh are discussed and implemented. Following Ahmad Muftizadeh's passing, the Quranic school is now run by a council system, with members chosen by the votes of the followers. All followers are required to abide by the council's choices to maintain their

unity and avoid divisions among themselves. These decisions are made following Ahmad Muftizadeh's early stage of the invitation and interpretation of the book and tradition.



Picture 8 Ahmad Muftizadeh, Director of the Quran School

Among the Shiite high-ranking clerics who are very popular and influential among the Azari speakers, we can refer to Ayatollah Mir Karim Mousavi Karimi known as Seyed Abdul Karim Mousavi Ardebili. He was one of the Iranian Shiite clerics who from 1981 to 1989 was the head of the Supreme Court as the highest judicial official in Iran. In the later years of his life, he was the director of Mofid University. Before the Iranian revolution, Mousavi Ardabili was involved in the administration and supervision of the Ardabil religious school clergy and was a member of the board of directors of the *School of Islam* magazine.

His jobs and responsibilities after the revolution included membership of the Revolutionary Council, membership of the Assembly of Constitutional Law Experts, representative of the first term of the Assembly of Leadership Experts, the Attorney General of the country and the head of the Supreme Court and many other high-level positions related to law and courts. During the 2009 protests against the results of the 2009 presidential elections in Iran, Mousavi Ardabili issued a series of statements where he wrote about the obligation to address the violated rights of the people. Mousavi Ardabili also met with the families of the political prisoners after the protests and repeatedly protested for their rights.

The other Azari cleric with a high level of political and religious authority among the Azarbaijani people is Mohammad Taghi Pourmohammadi, an Iranian Shiite mujtahid and politician, and a member of the Assembly of Leadership Experts and the Imam of Maragheh Friday Prayer. He entered the seminary of Tabriz in 1971 and in 1975 emigrated to Qom after completing his educational levels, for almost ten years, he continued attending the classes of almost all the major masters of the time. In a Friday prayer on October 31, 2011, he said goodbye to the people of Maragheh and was appointed by the Supreme Leader of Iran as the Imam of Zanzan Friday Prayer, a larger city. But at the request of a group of

clerics and religious authorities, the office of the Supreme Leader returned him to Maragheh.



Picture 9 Seyyed Abdolkarim Mousavi Ardebili, one of the Iranian Shiite high-ranking clerics

In the southern regions of Iran, Seyed Abdul Nabi Mousavi, the Imam of Khorramshahr Friday Prayer, is an influential figure. During the Khuzestan water crisis, Mousavi has personally employed to weld the pipes of the Ghadir 2 water transfer project. The spread of this news in cyberspace was widely welcomed and republished thousands of times. The consistent and active presence of Seyed Abdul Nabi Mousavi, besides encouraging the people of this city, made the higher authorities appreciate and thank him, and his work received a wider reflection across the country.



Picture 10 Seyed Abdul Nabi Mousavi Imam of Khorramshahr Friday Prayer

Among the Persian people, we can mention clerics such as Mojtaba Shahidi Kalhori known as Ayatollah Mojtaba Tehrani, as well as high-ranking clerical authorities such as Javadi Amoli, Makarem Shirazi, and Vahid Khorasani, whose positions are in line with the ruling government. Among the Persian-speaking clerics who have not been associated with strictly traditional theories of religion and government with a special reputation for his modernist views in fatwas, especially his reformist views on issues related to women's rights we can mention Ayatollah Yousef Sanei. From 1982 to 1985 he served the Iranian governmental system as the Attorney General. Ayatollah Yusuf Sanei also has

many followers among a diversity of social classes and is known for his singular and relatively modern ideas, he has many challengers among the more traditional groups.



Picture 11 Ayatollah Yousef Sanei, a contemporary and modern Shiite religious authority

## **1.9. IDENTITY DEMANDS OF IRANIAN ETHNIC GROUPS**

The overwhelming position of the Persian ethnic identity as the national identity of Iranian people has provided a specific definition of non-Persian ethnic identities that is totally affected by and depending on unbalanced power relations. The particular perception of late Iranian nationalism of Persian speakers and the denial of their specific ethnic identity leads to the forgery of their exclusive national identity out of an ethnic character. In such a way, Iranian national identity is reduced to Persian identity, and the official language, official religion, official culture, and, in short, official and legitimate identity are extracted from it. As a result of such a process, the distinctive identities of at least half of the inhabitants of this land – including Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Balochis, Turkmens, and other ethnic groups – are largely denied by ignoring their role in the formation of Iranian national identity; and accepting Persian identity as a sovereign identity is normalized and taken for granted.

Identity demands of Iranian ethnic groups in different periods have emerged and manifested in different ways. Depending on the political and social conditions of each period, these ethnicities have shown a different way of demanding identity. Various works of research on this field indicate that the weakening of the government and its confrontation with political, economic, and social crises has provided an opportunity for the ethnicities to pursue the goals of ethnic identity and has led to the conflict of those ethnic groups with the central government (Amirahmadi, 1987: 363-391). In such a way it is possible to observe the direct relationship between the reduction of the controlling power of the government and the crises of the government and ethnicities (Ramezanzadeh, 1998: 217-227). It should be added that as far as the management of ethnic diversity and acceptance of political and cultural

pluralism is concerned, the human sciences have provided practical models and also the governments have shown a reluctance that requires further investigations and studies.

In the following, we will have an overview of the identity demands of the Iranian people.

The main ethnic group in Iran, which alone constitute 50% of the country's population, are the Persians – although, as mentioned, many areas that are considered Persian or Fars have their language and culture. Many Iranian nationalists use the word Farsi or Persian when referring to the totality of Iran. Some people use it as a synonym for Fars whenever they mention the Fars people. The result of 'Iran is equal to Fars' is inferred from such classifications. One of the most notable examples of this discourse is in the interview of the then Assistant of President in Ethnic Affairs, Ali Younesi, on April 21, 2018, in Qanun newspaper where he explicitly mentions that the Turks are Persians and continues: 'Azaris have both Persian language and Persian descent.' Ignoring the ethnic identity of 50% of the non-Persian-speaking inhabitants of this land and giving them a trans-ethnic national identity under the general title of 'Iranians' paves the way for othering, marginalization, and disregarding of other ethnic identities and accepting Farsi identity as an overwhelming national identity as normal and natural.

The second ethnicity in Iran in terms of population is the Turk ethnicity. The group's major ethnic demands date back less than a century. The most prominent example was the declaration of independence of the Republic of Azarbaijan under the leadership of Jafar Pishevari, which did not last long. Pan-Turkic tendencies<sup>4</sup> influenced by the movements of the Turkish tribes of the Russian Empire in Iran have existed in the past and the contemporary period, which has led to the establishment of the government of the Republic of Azarbaijan in Tabriz.<sup>5</sup>

The identity movement in Azarbaijan has recently grown its impact among the people, assumed new forms, and taken on new dimensions. The boundaries of the identity of some people are reached by teaching their mother tongue in schools and promoting indigenous traditions. Other groups define their identity by resorting to federalism and finally consider the third branch of the identity demands, considering total independence and separation from the country as their appropriate option. But what is more real is that the demands of the 'identity seekers' of the Iranian Turks are generally social and justice-oriented demand that arises through the venue of civil demands and is stimulated and intensified by such mechanisms as satellite TV channels in Turkey and

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<sup>4</sup> For further reading, check: Anwar Khameei (2011), Pan-Turkism and its scientific and historical value, *Political-Economic Information*, 17 (81 and 82), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> For further reading, see: Toraj Atabaki, (2011), Azerbaijan and Iranian Nationalism, *Conversation Quarterly*, 33, pp. 21 and 22; Hamid Ahmadi, (2017), Ethnicity and ethnocentrism in Iran from Fiction to Reality, Tehran: Nei; Ahmad Kasravi, (1959), *Eighteen-Year History of Azerbaijan*, Tehran: Amir Kabir.

Azarbaijan. The contemporary young Azari generation is strongly influenced by these media outlets, but sometimes these civil society activists are repressed by the government and the regime and are unkindly treated by extremists. Examples of identity demands can be seen in cultural and sporting events, including football matches, most specifically in the support of the Traktor football club. Although opposition parties are banned in Iran, there are parties outside Iran, some of which pursue pro-independence goals, such as the National Democratic Union of Azarbaijan, the National Resistance Organization of Azarbaijan, and the Social Democratic Party of Azarbaijan as well as the Democratic Party of Southern Azarbaijan.

The dominant Kurdish nationalist movement<sup>6</sup> has primordialist characteristics.<sup>7</sup> According to them, the Kurdish nation is a primordial entity; a natural foundation that is rooted in the nature of the Kurds and determines the identity of the people and society throughout history (Vali, 2018: 89). The ethnic demands of the Kurds are slightly different and more complex due to their large population in the Middle East and a population of about 10% in Iran. The Kurds call themselves the largest nation without a state. The history of Kurdish identity demands in Iran dates back to less than a century ago. Kurds settle in four countries of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Although there have been scattered identity demands in Turkey, Syria and Iraq, what has led to a history-making movement, specifically happened in 1945 and with the establishment of the Autonomous Republic of Kurdistan centred in Mahabad under the leadership of Judge Mohammad. The plan was first carried out by a secret organization called 'Komola JK'<sup>8</sup>, later known as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran. With the declaration of independence of the Republic of Azarbaijan under the leadership of Pishvari, the Republic of Kurdistan also declared independence, but eleven months later, with the repression and dissolution of the Republic of Mahabad, the demands of the Kurdish ethnic groups also were ignored. With the beginning of the protests and the formation of the Islamic Revolution, the Democratic Party reorganized and other parties such as Komola and the Khabat Organization were formed, but the political movements of these groups were suppressed after several years of conflict and persecution, and they were expelled to Iraqi Kurdistan. Now the ethnic and identity demands of the Iranian Kurds have taken on a new form. The Kurdish identity is now represented in the

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<sup>6</sup> For further readings see: Amir Hassanpour (1992), Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, Mellen Research University Press.

<sup>7</sup> To pursue the theoretical development of primordialism see: K. Popper (1962), *The Open Society and its Enemies*, London; I. Berlin (1972), *The Best Twig: A Note on Nationalism*, *Foreign Affairs*, 51, pp 11-30.

<sup>8</sup> Kurdistan Revival Community (*Jamiat Zhianeh Kurdistan*) is the first political party in the full sense of the word in the Kurdish areas of Iran formed on the basis of Kurdish nationalism, and many documents and reports have been written about it, including: Chris Kuchera (1994), *National Kurd Movement* (translated into Persian by Ebrahim Yunesi), Tehran: Aghaz; Derek Keenan (2013), *Kurd and Kurdistan* (translated into Persian by Ebrahim Yunesi), Tehran: Negah.

form of civic institutions and organizations as well as cultural and artistic activities. Although extremist armed political parties continue to operate abroad, the influence and base of civic institutions are far greater than that of these political parties.<sup>9</sup>

Other Iranian ethnic groups that have always had and continue to have identity issues and challenges are Arabs living in southern regions of Iran, most of whom live in Khuzestan province. The history of the organized identity demands of these people dates back to about seven decades ago. In 1945, the Arab Nationalist Movement, the Khuzestan Front, the Arab People's Fadaiyan, and the Arab Workers' Party were formed. These groups, in different historical periods and also after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 disseminated their ideas and goals and even started some limited military operations. But with the start of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the ethnic issues of Khuzestan were overshadowed by the war situation in the region and their activity was reduced and became more secretive.

Arab identity parties and movements in Khuzestan are declaring their demands at two different levels. At the first level, they want the total independence of Khuzestan from Iran and the formation of an independent Arabic-speaking state. On the other hand, some organizations and parties demand the formation of a federal system in Iran, with Khuzestan as one of the proposed states. Besides these political movements whose parties are not active in Iran, there are several other parties such as 'Al-Jannah Al-Wefaq' and 'Afaq' that organize the participation of people in such political activities as elections, and thus a fundamental aspect of Arab identity demands revolves around the Arab people (Nabavi, 2007, quoted by Ahmady, 2004). Using the sense of belonging of the Arabs of Iran to a collective identity, these groups are inclined toward Arab nationalism outside the borders of Iran.<sup>10</sup>

The Baloch, like some Kurds, are distinct from the dominant ethnic groups in Iran in two ways: in language and religion. As mentioned earlier, the Balochis have a Balochi language and are Hanafi Sunnis. The partition of Balochistan in 1879 between Iran and India (present-day Pakistan) politically divided this united people. The existence of ethnic discrimination on both sides of Iran and Pakistan has provoked ethnic sentiments and ethnic demands from the Balochis. Religious divisions, economic discrimination, and the existence of centre-periphery relations have intensified the demands to such an extent that in recent decades, various parties and organizations have been organized, which

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<sup>9</sup> For further reading see: Hassan Arfa (1966), *The Kurds: An Historical and Political Study*, London, Oxford University Press; Mahir Aziz (2011), *The Kurds of Iraq: Ethnonationalism and National identity in Iraq*, New York: IB Tauris; Cecil J. Edmonds (1971), *Kurdish nationalism*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6 (1), pp. 87-106; Amir Hassanpour (1992), *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan 1918-1985*, San Francisco: Mellon Research University Press.

<sup>10</sup> For further reading, see: Mohsen Milani (2006), *Formation of the Islamic Revolution from the Pahlavi Monarchy to the Islamic Republic*, translated by Mojtaba Attarzadeh, Tehran: Gaam-e-No.



in some cases have led to military and damaging actions and activities. The presence of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan has intensified the identity demands of the Baloch people in both religious and ethnic aspects. In the meantime, in the last few decades, some organizations have been formed in Iranian Balochistan. The most radical of these groups was Jundallah, which was almost disbanded with the arrest of Abdul Malik Rigi, the group's leader. But now ethnic demands are mostly in the form of civic, cultural, and social activities. Also, due to the presence of Balochi activists in cyberspace, especially in recent years, their identity and ethnic demands have turned milder and more civilized.

Identity demands of the ethnic groups of Iran are based on religion and ethnicity – with a special focus on language. The difference between the demands of the Arabs and the Azaris with the similar demands in the Kurdish and Baloch regions is that because of the religious and linguistic demands of the Kurds and the Balochis, they have found some forms of ideological and political aspects. This is while for Azaris, both the explicit and implicit demands are only civil demands within the framework of the constitution. As for the Arabs, although they share the religion of the majority of the Iranian people, their demands are a little more severe and radical than the ethnic demands of the Azaris.

## **1.10. LOCAL ECONOMY OF ETHNIC GROUPS**

The central regions of Iran, also known as the Iranian plateau, have a dry and low-water climate, but the border and peripheral regions of Iran have a different and milder climate and weather from the centre. In the western part, the Zagros Mountains and in the northern part of the country, the Alborz Mountains, have created a different climate from the central desert of Iran. Throughout history, the livelihood of the Iranian people has depended on the climate and the topographic situation of the region. The majority of people's livelihoods came from livestock and agriculture. The crossing of the Silk Road through Iran also boosted trade and commerce in Iranian cities. Now, with modern changes in lifestyle, people in urban areas of Iran generally have service and industrial jobs, and in rural areas, agriculture and animal husbandry are more common. A large part of government revenue also comes from the sale of crude oil.

After the advent of modernity and fundamental changes in the economic structure, and especially with the increase in population, the traditional positions and methods of employment could not answer the job demands of an educated population. For this reason, in most parts of Iran, we have seen many migrations to urban areas, but cities also lacked the necessary employment infrastructure for the new population, to such an extent that today we observe false jobs and even cross-border smuggling, which has turned into a problem in the ethnic economy and have created a market of smuggled goods at the outskirts of the border cities. Besides, in areas such as the western borders and where the Kurds live, phenomena such as kolbari have also taken shape, a form of cross-border labour where a worker is employed to carry goods on his/her back across the borders. However, the administration has failed to come up with

even the most basic means of subsistence, which has caused further social issues to arise with the economic situation of Iranian ethnic groups. It should be noted that due to the complexity of the ethnic problems in the different provinces of the country, it is not possible to make an exact distinction between the livelihood and economy of the different ethnic groups. Therefore, in general, the economic structure of the regions will be discussed.

**Central regions of Iran:** This region is generally inhabited by the Persian-speaking people of Iran. Most of the heavy industries such as steel, automobile and petrochemical companies are located in these provinces. The highest levels of the industry are concentrated in the central provinces with the highest share allocated to the provinces of Isfahan (41.4%), Alborz (44%), Tehran (37.3%), Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari (39.6%), Qom (43.4%), Markazi (40.3%), And Yazd (47.8%). In addition to the industrial sector, in the central regions of Iran, agriculture of high-value crops such as pistachio and saffron is flourishing which has caused the central regions of Iran to have a higher share of the GDP.

**Kurdish regions:** The region is generally inhabited by Kurds. Agriculture and animal husbandry make up the majority of the region's economy. In the northern parts of the Kurdish regions, there are apple and grape orchards and other fruits, but in the southern regions, due to the lack of pastures and fertile lands, agriculture and livestock husbandry are mostly rain-fed. The Kurdish region of Iran because of its border position, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, the long war with Kurdish opposition parties, and political discrimination, as well as being far from the centre of Iran, is underdeveloped in terms of advanced industries, but in recent years, several large and small factories have been built in the region. In addition to agriculture and animal husbandry, there are many stone and metal mines in these areas, the products of which are transferred to other cities for processing after extraction, while the local and regional exploitation of these mines is more economical and will lead to economic development and growth in the region. Cross-border trafficking, which is permitted in some regions of the borderlands, and kolbary, which is outlawed, are additional activities that always put people's lives and financial stability at risk. Although there are border markets in some parts of the western strip, these markets are limited to certain goods and certain people and have not improved the living conditions of the people in general.

**Turkish regions:** Azarbaijan of Iran is a green and watery land that has created grounds for the prosperity of agriculture and animal husbandry. This region has a significant share in terms of dairy and protein production. However, the dominant economy of the people of this region is not limited to these cases and the existence of large factories and industries such as tractor manufacturing, petrochemical industries, machine montage, steel industry, and other industries have created significant capacities for employment. Also, handicrafts provide further capacities for employment and development for the Azari-speaking people of this region.

**Arab regions:** International trade and business have grown in the region thanks to the marine and border situations with the Arab countries in the

provinces of Khuzestan and Hormozgan. The important ports of these areas are Bandar Abbas and Bandar Imam, which have a major share in the country's maritime transit. Also, the oil reserves of the Arab regions and the existence of large industries have attracted labour from all over the country in these areas. This situation has to some extent disrupted the ethnic demographics of the region, and various Iranian ethnic groups have settled in these areas to find job opportunities.

**Balochestan region:** Dates, bananas, citrus fruits, mangoes, papaya, chicory, pistachios, and ruby grapes are just a few of the tropical and subtropical fruits that may be grown in Sistan and Balochestan province's favourable environment for the production of profitable export crops. The most important agricultural product in Sistan and Balochestan is wheat.

There are around four million cattle units in the province. Unlike other nomads in the nation who move about with their livestock in search of favourable winter and summer circumstances, considerable livestock raising exists in Balochestan. Instead, camel-raising is flourishing among the nomads in the region as camels are used more for loading and possibly smuggling than for keeping meat and milk.

The existence of development facilities and the creation of processing industries related to agricultural products in the province, including date packaging, production of liquid sugar from date juice, and production of animal feed from waste and date kernels are among the possible economic activities in the region. The southern beaches' abundance of marine and aquatic resources, appropriate terrain, and temperature, as well as the province's proximity to the warm seas of the Indian Ocean and Oman Sea, make them ideal locations for the development of fisheries, fishing operations, and related enterprises. In terms of mines, Sistan and Balochestan province has relatively rich and diverse mines. To create employment and development capacities in Sistan and Balochestan province and create job opportunities for border residents by focusing on the commercial and economic resources of the province in the implementation of the development plans for the eastern regions, importance has been given to trade and commercial aspects and by creating border markets such as Chabahar Industrial Centre, and thus basic steps have been taken for the sustainable development of the province (Ebrahimzadeh, 2001: 171). Accordingly, the border markets of Mirjavah and Kouhak were established in 1992.

The southern parts of Sistan and Balochestan province are adjacent to one of the country's largest water resources, the Oman Sea. This proximity has provided a special opportunity for tourism and recreational use as well as a variety of water sports on the shores of the Oman Sea, most specifically in winter times. Sistan and Balochestan province have a variety of other tourist attractions, most of them underdeveloped and unused but gradually they are discovered and introduced (Negareh, 2006: 62- 81; Beik Mohammadi, 1996: 11 – 13).

The livelihood economy of the Iranian people has always been changing and evolving. Any political change leads to a change in the economic indicators of the people. In addition to the fluctuations in people's livelihoods, another

economic challenge in Iran is the uneven distribution and redistribution of capital between different regions of the country. The bulk of the political demands of the Iranian people, which sometimes lead to violence, are rooted in this issue. A marginalised peripheral has developed as a result of centralised economic policies, and the farther out from the centre to the border a region is, the more obvious and substantial the economic and livelihood disparity becomes. Most economic policies are rooted in the privileged central outlook toward marginalized residents (Iranian ethnic groups) and it is hard to determine the living and income of the marginalized people.

According to figures from the Central Bank and the Statistics Center of Iran, inflation has surged and the value of the national currency has significantly declined as a result of the US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the restoration of overwhelming economic sanctions. People's livelihoods are directly affected, as we see from time to time a crushing increase in the price of essentials and everyday items. The people of the border areas and ethnic groups are more affected by this than those living in the central regions, where the country's major manufacturing industries are located. While in more recent years severe restrictions on cross-border exchanges have eliminated an important source of income for the people of these areas under the guise of supporting internal production, the income of the border regions of Iran has been significantly reduced. This is because while in recent years one of the sources of income of the people of the border areas was dependent on border exchanges, in more recent times an important source of income for the people of these areas was eliminated.

## **1.11. OBJECTIVES AND IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH**

Iranian society has been characterized by multi-ethnicity and multi-identity for a long time. Therefore, some analysts contend that any general explanation of a multiethnic society that does not take the ethnic aspect into account would fail to provide a true account of reality. Due to the increasing and lasting importance of ethnic communities in the formation and strengthening of social cohesion, the scientific study of ethnic groups has already received new forms of attention. In this context, many scholars believe that national solidarity and identity are rooted in ethnic communities and the very old sense of ethnicity as a basic and primitive form of nationalism. Ethnic solidarity and cohesion of identities in multiethnic and multicultural societies can bring peace and repair ethnic divisions. The importance of main issue here is the how and the why of the collective identity of ethnic groups in Iran. Collective or social identity is the identifier of that area and territory of social life that a person considers himself or herself to belong to and ascribed and indebted to, and feels an obligation towards; this is often marked with the pronoun 'we'.

According to Max Weber's definition, the state is built upon four basic components: territory or border that defines the geographical territory of a state; population or people, which refers to the people who are citizens of a state; sovereignty in the sense that internally there should not be a rival or equivalent

authority of the government and externally, the country must be free from the domination and command of any other government; and government, which refers to the political and administrative organization of the country and the method of administration of a country or political unit. According to this definition, the absence of any of these four components will abolish the efficiency of the government. As it turns out, among these components, the first two components, namely territory and population, are most affected by ethnicity and ethnic identity. Above all, to achieve stability and maintain peace and security, which is their most important function, governments need a comprehensive understanding of national identity and ethnic identities, the communication network between the members of one ethnicity with other ethnicities and with the official and dominant culture as well as with the global community. The need for a comprehensive understanding of the views of the ethnicities and identities with which they are alienated is clear to civil society, intellectuals, activists in the field of identity and culture, and all those who are committed to peace and reconciliation among the people of any territory.

# Chapter Two: Theories about identity and ethnicity

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important features of modern societies today is ethnic differences and the consequent formation of ethnic groups and ethnic identity and its relationship with social cohesion and national identity. This has been a subject of extensive study in such humanities fields of studies as political sciences, sociology, social psychology, and many others; from the beginning of the twentieth century, racial and ethnic issues have attracted ever greater coverage in academic texts (Balmer and Solomoz, 2001: 14). However, it is clear that from the earliest days of social life there have always been racial, linguistic, and many other dependencies around the people but these dependencies did not cause problems for social harmony, because in traditional societies and premodern life, human nature was assumed to be a creation of God, and human identity and subjectivity, was not considered as an important issue or subject. Identity and ethnicity are two problematic issues that emerged into the structure of the modern world only in more recent times. Since then, they have grown in importance within the context of modernity and its different aspects, particularly the process of globalization, and on the other hand, within the context of modernity and the development of nations (Jenkins, 2002: 283). Concepts like social identity, ethnic identity, national identity, and other formulations of identity do not have a long history and theoretical foundations older than two centuries can not be sought for them in the humanities.

Doing research in the humanities and social sciences is possible without studying and reviewing related theories. Theories guide researchers and protect them against falling into the wrong trap. Considering theories by the researchers not only prevents the confusion of the reader but also gives structural and conceptual coherence to the research. A systematic review and its organization in a separate chapter show the importance the author attaches to theory and theoretical foundations. Therefore, in this chapter, the basic concepts of research and related theories in different dimensions and from the perspective of various humanities, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, economics, and other sciences are studied. As the title of the research suggests, the two concepts of identity and ethnicity are keywords in this research. Both of these concepts are serious and controversial issues for various humanities scientists. Therefore, theories at the micro, meso and macro levels will be addressed and discussed.

It should not be overlooked that another goal of analysing theories in light of the research question is to create a conceptual framework and a theoretical consensus that addresses the major topic of the study. Therefore, part of this chapter is dedicated to this subject. The model or conceptual framework – grounded theory – of the research, which is the product and kind of toolbox for the research is also included in this section.

## *2.1. Identity in the humanities*

The identity of an individual or group requires an 'other' that is at the same time different from it. In this case, identity is the product of difference, but the different meanings of 'difference' like the meaning of identity itself, are constructed. So in the first place, it is the identity of the other that exists and has a consolidating or formative aspect (Grossberg, 1996, p. 93-96).

Theories presented in the humanities and social sciences in terms of their precedence or antecedence over social fact are not the same. Some of these theories take precedence over reality and seek to determine or change the direction of social realities, including the theories of utopia. These theories are not the same because they take precedence over social realities. Some of these theories were formed at the same time or with a delay from social facts and realities; however, most of the theories of social sciences and humanities are not produced in such conditions. These theories, often with a delay from social reality, seek to explain, describe and analyze social realities. Democracy is one of these social theories. Democracy is a social reality that emerged as a mode of government in societies, followed by or concurrently with some theories about democracy in the fields of philosophy, political science, social sciences, and other humanities, but in many instances we see that no theory has been able to fully explain the phenomenon and there is not any resemblance among the different theories. This shows how thinkers do not share the same theories, even while studying and analysing the same topics. In other words, social realities outside our minds cannot point to multiple truths.

Facts such as identity naturally have existential precedence over the concepts and theories that have been proposed and theorized them. In other words, the absence of theory or the failure of thinkers to address such concepts (even indirectly) is not a reason for the absence of the subject, because identity existed at the beginning of the formation of the speaking human beings.

Humanities thinkers, from philosophers and theologians to economists and psychologists and sociologists, have come up with various definitions and theories for this concept. Although the meaning of identity in the minds of ancient philosophers (both Islamic and Western) differs from that of the modern sciences, it can be regarded as the philosophical roots of the theory of identity with some minor variations.

In this research, identity is defined as the consciousness of one's individuality and social affiliation. This consciousness, while acquired through the process of individualization, does not remain merely an inner and individual feeling and is manifested by demonstrating similarities and differences with other people and groups. As a result, it becomes external and collective and serves as a crucial foundation for social and political action and communication (Jenkins, 2014, p. 6-20). In such a way, the concept of identity finds a social aspect that is widely practised in the social sciences. From a sociological point of view, identity is the perception of the border between oneself and others, which is primarily made possible through comparisons and distinctions between the intra-group and the extra-group relations (Brown, 1996, p. 9).

Identity is one of the most complex and controversial concepts in the humanities and social sciences. Perhaps in the sense that its conceptual range is widened by different manifestations. Unquestionably, taking into account the various approaches in this field aids in understanding cultural identity because each of these approaches has revealed one segment of the meaning of this concept. For example, psychology, sociology, political science, history, theology, and philosophy have all focused on this phenomenon and offered a variety of definitions based on it (Ashena et al., 2010: 158). As a result, different theories can be applied according to different paradigms and regimes of knowledge.

Erik Erickson for the first time applied the term individual identity in 1968. According to him, identity is a feeling that one develops in early adolescence that allows one to set oneself apart from others, provides one with stability and unity, and perceives oneself to be relatively similar to the perception of others. Therefore, the purpose of the idea of identity and how each person perceives it is to bring about harmony between their opinion of themselves as stable individuals and others' perceptions of them. Ericsson is mainly interested in how adolescents form their identities (Erikson, 1994).

But Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger define identity from another perspective. They view an individual's identity as including all of the traits and characteristics that he or she has acquired during the course of socialisation. Thus, identity forms, remains, changes, or even reshapes during the process of socialization. According to this perspective, identity may be seen as the outcome of the dialectic between subjective and objective reality, which response to certain social institutions and results in their preservation, modification, or reformation (Lukman et al., 2016). Giddens seeks subjective reality in self-consciousness and objective reality in social action. Identity, then, is the collective awareness of a person, a group, and a society that is progressively established via social interactions (Giddens, 2019: 81).

Identity encompasses everything from the most private aspects of the individual to the broadest collective instances of expressions. Everything is taken into account in debates on identity, from identity as the unique qualities that make each person unique and different (Olson, 2002) to identity as a social phenomenon that cannot be attained until it is understood and executed collectively (Khaniki, 2008: 10). Additionally, identity has been variously defined as the sense of personal distinction, the sense of personal continuity, the sense of personal independence (Golmohammadi, 2001: 14), a form of personal differences in relation to others (Brown, 1996, p. 78), and the nature of the ideas of perceptions of life in society (Sariulghalam, 2004: 42). All of these definitions are different dimensions of this complex multifaceted phenomenon.

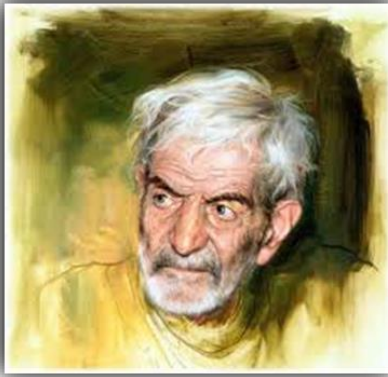
## *2.2. Identity in social and cultural studies*

Most researchers in the field of cultural studies of identity agree that while various cultures may share certain cultural traits, each society has its distinct cultural identity (Ruholamini, 2000: 110-111). We might explore certain structural-functional school sociologists' perspectives as well as conflict and



interactionist theories in the theoretical underpinnings of sociocultural identity.

At the macro level, the theory of structuralism or social reality has been proposed, according to which the actor is a creature of the social system. Accordingly, identity as a social reality has been influenced by social structure and conditions and the individual has no effective role in shaping his or her identity. Identity changes are also subject to environmental changes, and identity does not change until there is a change in the environment. As the father of sociology, Durkheim affirms this and claims that societies based on mechanical solidarity have less distinct identities and that each individual within a sector finds an identity that is similar to the identities of other individuals within the sector because they are completely fused with one another. But in societies based on organic solidarity, we see a more general form of collective identity that encompasses specific and individual identities. That is, as the volume of societies increases, the nature of the public conscience changes more because societies are wider, and the collective conscience inevitably transcends and exceeds local and regional diversity (Durkheim, 1999: 78). Parsons the structuralist thinker of American sociology, follows Durkheim and states that human identity is constantly being constructed, accepted, and transformed along with the organism, culture, and society from the very beginning of life and throughout its existence. However, these systems, depending on their nature, induce different identities in the individual. For example, in the family system, according to the system of belonging and interdependence of roles toward each other, a special form of particularistic identity is internalized, but with the adolescence period and entering higher education centres and, consequently, the expansion of social relations network, a leap in personal and emotional dependence occurs and generalized feelings and emotions are reinforced in the person as a form of universalism (Roche, 1997). The research conducted by Abdullahi (2002) addresses this question in Iran and provides further empirical sources related to identity. According to this study, people acquire individual characteristics and social status and conditions and a variety of identities that range from specific to general in the form of small and local identities such as family, tribal, ethnic, or larger and more general identities such as national and global identities (Abdullahi, 2002: 108). Hamid Ahmadi also discusses the role of the government at the macro level. He argues that international policies and conditions, the competition of political elites with the state, and the role and nature of the modern state as major structural factors play a leading role in the formation of ethnic identities (Ahmady, 2018).



Picture 12 Shahriar, a famous and popular Turkish poet

According to the view of the conflict school that is mainly based on the ideas of Marx for whom it is the class structure that determines the behaviours, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of individuals as well as their social relationships. Classes divide people into social categories, a division that is so fundamental that the relationships of individuals, their way of life, and their destiny also become subject to it. Marx considers the division of social classes to be based on the relation of human beings to the means of production. Agriculture may be thriving in society and such a society, landowners and agricultural tools form the primary social group. If it is industrial society, the owners of the industrial factories constitute the primary class. According to Marx, the relationship between classes follows a form of exploitation (Giddens, 2019: 125). Considering class consciousness, it can be argued that according to Marx, 'a social class is the most decisive basis for the formation of the social identity of individuals in a capitalist society (Abazari and Chavoshian, 2002: 6). The class structure regulates social life in the form of a system derived from the productive system.

Marx examines collective identity in terms of class consciousness and characteristics. He holds that collective identity in every age and period is the product of the ideas of the ruling classes in that age. The ideas of the ruling class in every age are the ideas of the whole society; that is, a class that dominates society in terms of material power. It is also the dominant intellectual force. The class that owns the means of material production also dominates the means of intellectual production (Coser, 2015: 180). According to Marx, this class difference, based on their economic difference, provides for the society's distinctive collective identities, and this identity of society, which is the collective identity of the ruling class, leads to anonymity or alienation of the other classes of society and offers them a false ideology and identity.

Class consciousness is the main factor in the formation of collective identity and a social class introduces and identifies itself on that basis; what Marx calls class consciousness means the consciousness of classes of their identities, aspirations, and interests. As long as the social class has not reached class consciousness, it cannot escape alienation and realise its collective identity. The class consciousness of the proletariat and working class is their salvation from false

ideology and discovering their original collective identity, and by identifying this class, society also achieves its identity. Through this identity, a society becomes authentic when society, social sovereignty of resources and means of production, equitable distribution of wealth, power and prestige, and the other social objectives are realized. Therefore, the conditions for the abolition of inequality and the ideologies that support inequality—which constitute capitalism’s collective identity—are eliminated and replaced by universal social relations, realizing the highest level of a universal collective identity (human identity and fictitious identity). This is known as Communism and has become the hallmark of Marx and Marxism.

In the face of functional and Marxist scholars, the scholars of the school of social interaction do not believe in absolute social determinism and consider the relationship between the individual and society to be dynamic and dialectically defined, with no preference for one to the other, but rather the behaviours of human beings and the formation of personality and, in other words, the social identity of individuals is the product of the interaction of the individual and his surrounding society. In general, the view of reciprocal action emphasizes the dynamics of social interaction between individual and society and the results of this process (Tavassoli, 2019, p. 268) and against macro-perspective and structuralist ideas, focusing on the micro-areas affected by social action and phenomena. In other words, the overwhelming position of macro structures, which are mostly intellectual and subjective achievements, drive social thought toward objective and factual realities.

Identity, as a phenomenon that ranges from the most private individual manifestations to the most general spheres of social sciences, is the result of the dialectic of self and the other, which is in a reciprocal movement between a range of semantic networks of subjectivity and social and cultural structures. Thus, it discovers a balance between the two poles of the spectrum; a balance that is not constant and can change at any time, a change that occurs both in itself (in the semantic network) and also in the other (the social structure). The connection between culture and identity is also influenced by this dialectical relationship to the extent that most scholars consider culture to have independent status in identity due to its privileged role in the relationship between the self and other, and also consider identity as a cultural phenomenon. In this sense, cultural identity becomes increasingly important compared to other forms of identity (Ashena et al., 2010: 158).

According to symbolic interactionists, contrary to the functional structural perspective, considers identity as a new phenomenon that will not be fixed in any time or place and is constantly becoming and changing. According to interactionists, human beings have a fundamental core or original relative identity from the very beginning of social existence that shapes new identities each day as a result of socialisation and interaction. The adherents of this school contend that identity is always being constructed and never truly established. The unit of analysis of activists is the individual, and in their theory, the individual is given greater superiority over society (Turner, 1998: 375-382). This brings us to Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead’s idea of the

process of socialisation, which holds that people always internalise the prevailing values and conventions of society and therefore become social. This process always takes place in the context of society. Groups are the reference for individual behaviour. When we identify as members of a particular group, we also identify with them. As a response, we adopt behaviours suitable to that group and shape our personalities with the support of the group. These groups in the description provided by Cooley include primary and secondary groups. In the primary groups, the individual has movements, feelings, and beliefs similar to those of his or her peers. The foundation of social determination in the study of the early groups is these emotions, which are embedded in ethnic and tribal behaviours (Tavassoli, 2019: 298). Therefore, the identity of the individual in these groups is attributive and delegated and is mostly concrete and particularistic.

In secondary group solidarity, which is founded on individuals' voluntary and realised membership, there is a stronger emotional bond between group members and interactions eventually extend beyond purely ethnic and tribal objectives to the broader global community. It follows that people within these communities develop their identities in a more general and inclusive way. By focusing on group membership, Tajfel also asserts that a collective identity cannot be developed until one is conscious of one's participation in a group or social circles, as well as the significance and value one gives to such membership. According to Tajfel, that part of our identity that originates from the group to which we belong (intra-group) is formed by comparing and preferring the members of our group to those outside the group (extra-group). When a person's social identity is unsatisfactory, they will attempt to either quit their present group and join one that is in a better circumstance or elevate their group status (Chalabi, 1996: 226).

In reality, the 'self' responds to the environment, thus in one context, nationality can be crucial, while in another, ethnicity or race might be of interest. As a result, the idea of an 'ego' is created from multiple social identities and it is always changing depending on the circumstances (Tajfel, 1978).



Picture 13 Master Hehjar and Heiman, high-ranking Kurdish personalities/poets

One of the proponents of this theory is Sheldon Stryker, who emphasises how committed people are to their identities and how dependent they are on each one; the greater the level of commitment or dependency, the higher the identity

in the hierarchy. This degree of commitment to an identity is subject to different factors; one is the extent to which others and the culture of the community evaluate that identity positively, and the other is the extent to which the expectations of others are met by someone who is attached to this identity; the third, how vast is the network of people associated with the person to whom this identity relates (Turner, 1998: 337). Another point that is important in Stryker's theory of identity is the change of identity. That is, individuals have a predisposition to change their identities when the initial framework in which they find themselves is altered by outside events, and the more identities they change, the less they fight altering a given identity. This perspective holds that people's identities contain various degrees of ethnic, national, and cosmopolitan components and are established in connection to the social structures in which they reside. People then act in line with these identities. However, the prominence of a specific identity also influences behaviour, and this prominence can change over time. For example, a person may have an ethnic identity at an early age and may gradually develop a cosmopolitan identity (Stryker, 2000).

As opposed to classical sociologists who either focused on the structure or the individual, contemporary sociologists tend to overlook this duality between the micro and the macro. Depending on the new issues that develop, it is either disproved or demonstrated to be less important in modern discussions. The divergent ontological premises and social worldviews of these sociologists explain how they approach the topic of identity differently. According to integrationist sociologists, society is an arena of coexistence of micro and macro elements, the objective manifestation of which is to legitimize pluralism and accept the existence of different collective identities (Tavassoli, 2019: 16). In reality, according to this perspective, local, national, and global collective identities are all taken into account concurrently, as a way for preserving distinct collective differences and identities while realising a universal collective identity. One of the integration theorists, Giddens, contends that in addition to self-awareness, contextual factors and situations at a given time and place also play a role in the formation of an individual's social identity. He believes that social practices, the reflection process, the rationality and self-awareness of the individual, and rethinking them, always place the individual's identity in the process of structuration, especially in the new age where social institutions also intervene. According to him, everything in social life, from what global systems include to what is considered an individual's state of mind, arises in social action and strategy. Hence, Giddens believes that social identity is formed during the process of 'structuration' and in relation to situations, conditions, and social and economic conditions as well as self-consciousness (Giddens, 2019: 81). Accordingly, we must always observe, revise, and revisit our identity based on time, place, and space, and under different circumstances. In other words, in recent times, the context of identity building is changing and becoming a reflective project. In such a way, as the tradition loses its influence and daily life is reconstructed according to the dialectical interactions between the local and the global, people are forced to bargain over their choice of lifestyle from a variety of options. Thus, an individual's identity must necessarily be shaped,

transformed, and reflected in the face of rapid changes in the social life on a local and global scale, and individuals active in larger communities must be more inclined toward more inclusive and larger identities while respecting smaller and limited ones.

Ralf Dahrendorf also introduces the concept of social man as the point of intersection of individual and society, stating that social man is the bearer of pre-formed social functions. The social man is the roles he or she plays in society, but on the other hand, these roles are the same annoying situation in society (Dahrendorf, 2002: 35). By designing the concept of 'extra-territorial' human being (transcendent, free, independent human being, and beyond geographical, historical and cultural boundaries) against the 'territorial' human being (a human being belonging to a specific land with a specific history, society and culture), he attempts to make room for the flourishing of the extra-territorial person through the rational understanding of the territorial person.

Dahrendorf believes that a territorial person has at least nine characteristics that are job, nationality, citizenship, class, geographical characteristics, sexual characteristics, self-conscious characteristics, unconscious characteristics, and individual or personal characteristics. Accordingly, the territorial human being that is limited to specific social, cultural, political, and geographical characteristics is a human being who has a specific and distinct identity and, ultimately, does not go beyond the geographical and political boundaries of a country and his identity is particularistic and limited to the existing social structures. On the other hand, the extra-territorial persons, with their spirit of freedom and the characteristic of empty spaces for daydreaming, can penetrate the governing structures and actively seek a more general and inclusive identity, so that they might exhibit a predisposition toward the most universal sort of identity that is directed toward homogeneity and empathy. In general, according to this view, people move from the particularistic identity of the territorial person to the universal extra-territorial identity. He sees this process as a totality, working for the development and expansion of justice and freedom.

### *2.3. Identity in Political Sciences*

The concept of political identity is one of the key concepts in political philosophy and political sociology. At first look, political identity reveals how people and political groups interact and communicate with one another, as well as how people are positioned within political institutions. Political identity is a contemporary invention, hence individualism is regarded to be its defining characteristic. The question and discussion of identity and political identity is a topic that is the product of the modern world. It has therefore been the subject of scientific debates to offer a new definition of people and their political and social activities. Accentuating pluralism, individualism, and independent rationality has been a defining feature of political identity in the modern world. In such a situation, by adopting political pluralism, the individual was active in the political sphere based on his or her inherent rights, freely, and based on his or her individualistic will and subjectivity, and nothing predetermined had an

impact on his identity.

Manuel Castells referring to the contradictory process of globalization and its impact on identities states that globalization while accelerating the formation of a global identity through electronic media leads to the formation of local identities in the form of ethnic particularism, religious fundamentalism and other forms of radical identities. Castells defines 'identity' as a source for the construction of meaning. According to him, the essential concern is not about the construction of identity, but rather how, why, by whom, and for what reason they are constructed. In his view, identity is always constructed in the context of power relations and has three distinct types: 'legitimizing', 'resistance', and 'project' identities. Castells' hypothesis is based on the premise that identity and its meaning depend on the type of identity that constructs it. According to Castells, legitimizing identities are created by the dominant institutions of society to expand their domination and rationalize it; therefore, it is logical to expect that such an identity would lead to the formation of a 'civil society'.

These types of identities legitimize the institutions of domination and help perpetuate their domination. These kinds of identities are constructed by individuals or groups whose interests and positions are in the perpetuation of the institutions of power and domination. The second type of identity that Castells describes is 'resistance identity' created by activists who are opposed to the dominant institutions of society and do not participate in the institutions of domination and power relations. Their constructed identities are strongholds of resistance and survival against domination. Although they might support various projects or were accepted by the institution of power over history and shifting discourse, these identities are regarded by power authorities as useless and invalid. These identities lead to the development of both ethnic communities and communal divisions. Castells identifies ethnic nationalism and fundamentalism as forms of this type of identity. The third type of identity that Castells speaks of is 'project identity'. He believes that the formation of these forms of identities occurs when social activists use all of the cultural resources at their disposal to forge new identities that redefine their place in society and work to alter societal institutions. This type of identity leads to the development of a novel type of subject (Castells, 2006: 22-27).

Identity simply attempts to answer who someone is. Two dimensions of similarity and difference are highlighted in the definition of identity. Identity involves two seemingly contradictory dimensions: the dimension of homogeneity, and the dimension of difference. Its first meaning expresses the concept of absolute similarity when something is considered similar to something else (Jenkins, 2002: 5). According to Barbara Henry, political identity is one of the various types of group identity. The identity of a group, on the one hand, indicates the capacity for reflection and negotiation with which individuals are associated, and on the other hand, includes the options and preferences that are raised by these individuals as members of the group. Eventually, Castells defines political identity according to the following categories:

- a) The general relations between citizens and institutions, as well as the behaviour and manner of participation in the political process, the criteria for allocating resources and expenses, and also their implementation;
- b) The values and symbols of 'rationality and irrationality' on which the collective narrative and the invisible consensus are based, as well as the justifications for the allocation of resources, costs and their implementation;
- c) A flexible combination of the first two categories a and b.

White Broke believed that there are two approaches to theorizing and political identity: first, as a consciousness of one's relationship with the political system; and second, the function of membership in political units and references to the specific characteristics that individuals can be grouped into a range of defining characteristics for political purposes, including nationality, geographic location, race, ethnicity, family and kinship, language, class, gender, political orientation, religion, or football advocacy.

first, it is seen as personal consciousness of the individual's relationship to the political system, and second, the function of membership in political units and reference to specific characteristics that individuals can use for political purposes in a range of The defining characteristics of a Kurdish group, such as nationality, geographical location or location, race, ethnicity and family and kinship, language, class, gender, political affiliation, religion, or football club interests. The first type refers to the identity of an individual in the political context and the other is the identity of a political subject that has been defined as a unit of political analysis, a citizen, or a member of a group. An individual is identified and attributed to some identity by belonging to the characteristics of a political organization or an organization with a political dimension (Henry, 2002). In the process of identification and the formation of political affiliations, as well as assuming a political role, the individual accepts some characteristics and finds a position with social power that also determines his or her status in benefiting from social status.

#### *2.4. Perspectives of Traditionalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism on Identity*

In traditional cultures with a collective or community-oriented structure, several cultural factors contribute to the integration of the individual into familial and local social networks in a way that segregation of the individual from society becomes almost impossible. As Giddens cogently explains, in traditional societies, calculation and time span were very limited because time was related to the place. Although all traditional societies had their methods for calculating time, before the invention and spread of the mechanical clock, time detection without resorting to certain local features and coordinates, especially to natural spatial signs was nearly impossible. For example, signs such as sunrise, sunset, and noon were not only inaccurate but also closely related to the place where they were used and could not be used to measure time (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 49). Under such circumstances, human beings could easily recognize their past and connect with the present to achieve a sense of individual and



collective continuity and stability over time.

Stuart Hall has identified six fundamental ruptures in the modern theory of identity. The first rupture, in the Marxist rupture, arises from the notion of individual agency and the importance of the context and structure of action. The second rupture is rooted in Freud's theory that identities are formed after the unconscious processes of the mind. The third rupture is discovered in Saussure's structural linguistics. The fourth and fifth rupture is located in Foucauldian, discourse analysis, and feminist outlooks (Hall, 2004; Tajik, 2004: 135) Finally, the recognition of identity ruptures by Hall leads to poststructuralist and postmodernist political theories.

The most important theorists of the traditional school of thought include Ananda Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, René Guénon, and in Iran, Seyed Hossein Nasr. Their priority is to develop a critical lens through which to examine contemporary humanity to return to the traditional world of the sacred. Their opinions on political identity are difficult to portray. This group claims that tradition does not necessarily refer to historical events but rather to a connection with the divine and the sacred. Tradition is a set of principles that have descended from the upper world and are, at their core, a particular expression of the divine essence that is adopted and applied at various points in time and under various conditions for a particular human group (Nasr, 2004: 116).

In this view, the system of existence, including human affairs, is predetermined and human actions have little role in it; whatever there is, is destined. According to thinkers like Nasr, modernity has transformed everything by building a world based on humans and their activities, and the crux of the dilemma facing modern humanity is that they are cut off from the origin of the world.

According to him, the most important problem for Western modernity in missing Eastern teachings and indeed a large share of the Western tradition itself, is that they want to study the tradition in the light of the two-dimensionally modern humans who are deprived of the transcendent (ibid: 79). The criticism of traditionalism on modern identity is that it places too much emphasis on appearance and shifting demands, which prevents modern beings from hearing their inner voice (ibid: 121).

René Guénon also examines the nature of the modern world crisis in his book, *The Crisis of the Modern World* where he explains some of the dimensions of the situation. He views individuality and individualism, which originated in the Renaissance, as the foundation of the contemporary world crisis. The Renaissance and the Reformation practically promoted individualism. Guénon's meaning of individualism is the negation of any higher principle than individuality, and consequently, the limitation of civilization in all respects to the only factors that have a purely human aspect (Guénon, 1999: 82). The essential components of individualism according to Western humanism are: limiting reason to human rationality, originality of nature and the denial of the supernatural, focusing on reality and abandoning truth, and breaking with spiritual traditions. However, its most crucial political requirement is the denial

of any authority that is superior to the individual (ibid: 91). Guénon's most incisive assessment of the contemporary world focuses on democracy's supremacy, which is founded on the fundamental idea of humanism, or to use his words, individuality.

Guénon dislikes democracy because he believes that the universe is founded on oneness and that truth should be the determining factor rather than actuality (ibid: 112). Traditionalist political identity thus stands in stark contrast to modern political identity.

The core of postmodern discourse is the idea of identity. Stuart Hall makes it obvious that one of the main breakdowns in the twentieth-century identity controversy can be found in Foucault's discourse and extended further in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis. The fundamental demise of the 'self' is evident in postmodern discourse, and important doctrines like self-rationalism and the Enlightenment, as well as the anthropocentric doctrine of the modern age, are seriously undermined if we follow the development of modern European philosophy through the approach introduced by Solomon (2000: 244). The most important issues of political identity can be found in the views of such philosophers as Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, Lyotard, Derrida, Harvey, and Rorty. These views, by macro-critique of the foundations of Western modernity and by highlighting its limitations, prepare the ground for new perspectives different from some of the principles of Western modernity on the universe, humanity and sociopolitical life.

From the perspective of poststructuralists and postmodernists, political identity is the product of social conditions that are themselves subject to change. In his studies on identity, Foucault examined how a person 'becomes a subject' or, more accurately, how a person becomes an object. He argues that identities are produced in these subjective-objective relationships. This relationship is influenced by the larger power relations in society and is manifested in various manifestations such as gender and insanity. As a result, Foucault is interested in figuring out the processes that make subject-to-object conversion conceivable. To convey such a notion and the overwhelming role of power, he employs the word 'government' (Ahmady, 1998: 70).

The essentialist and subject-oriented view of identity is rejected by discourse analysis. According to this perspective, political identity is constructed within the social setting of discourses. Every discourse produces an identity for the individuals to whom it belongs. Identities are seen to be the result of conflict and othering in society. The free, autonomous, and enlightened human being gradually disappeared through the criticism of such philosophers as Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, Saussure, Wittgenstein, and others. Political identity is always a relationship from the perspective of both discourse analysis and poststructuralism. Individuals' identities are formed as 'relationships' and 'temporary', in the process of forming 'chains of similarity and difference' in which signs are arranged and contrasted with other chains of meaning that are as changeable as discourses. Here the subject is 'fragmented and decentralized' and is always subject to 'determination'. Such an image indicates the formation

of individual identity. But in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse, collective identity and the formation of groups and individual identities are under common principles, and the boundary between individual and collective identity is blurred. Collective identity formation is the process by which some possibilities of identification are highlighted while others are ignored, and individuals are formed in groups (Rogge & Philips, 2004: 44).

In their theories of discourse, Laclau and Mouffe have paid more attention to political identity by analyzing the formation of identities within discourses. For both, identities are always formed in the political processes and power relations within a society (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Chantal Mouffe contends that a desirable political identity in a radical democracy requires the creation of radical democratic citizens according to a particular understanding of pluralism and considering the fundamental role of power and opposition. In such a system, the desired political identity is the identity of a citizen who adheres to the principles of modern pluralist democracy. However, this is not in the literal sense, which just entails passively recognising rights and enjoying legal protection; rather, it refers to the identity of a citizen who actively participates in several communities, each of which has its specific definition of what is good. It is nevertheless bound by specific behaviour standards. These rules are not to achieve a common goal but are based on the conditions that people must adhere to in the pursuit of their specific goals. (Mouffe, 1995, p. 36). So at the final point of this emergence, there is a desirable type of citizens with the correct forms of action.

Thus, in the Mouffean radical democratic system, political identity is the identity of the radical citizen, which is formed temporarily according to the logic of unstable social bonds and not the common good. Such a subject is formed according to the logic of difference and subject situations.

Approach	Time	time and space	Sources of identity	Type of identity	subject	Schools of thought
Traditional	the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Location-based</li> <li>▪ Land-based</li> <li>▪ No separation of place and space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customs, religion and structures</li> <li>▪ The need to recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fixed and stable essence and following power</li> <li>▪ Predetermined</li> <li>▪ Primordialist and personal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transhistorical</li> <li>▪ Transtemporal</li> <li>▪ Fixed essence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ folk beliefs</li> <li>▪ non-scientific</li> <li>▪ religious and transcendental</li> </ul>
Modern	Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The emergence of the state</li> <li>▪ Nations</li> <li>▪ Territories with official borders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Subject (knowing agent)</li> <li>▪ Far-sighted reason</li> <li>▪ Religious reform</li> <li>▪ Scientific revolutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Structured, following social, economic and cultural situations,</li> <li>▪ Collective (national etc.) and individual identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interaction and identification of the subject with social structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Symbolic interactionism</li> <li>▪ Structuralism</li> <li>▪ Marxism</li> </ul>
Postmodern	the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discontinuity in time and space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Micro, local and cultural actions</li> <li>▪ Discursive achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open identities, oppositional, and particularistic</li> <li>▪ Fragmented and fluid</li> <li>▪ Diverse and pluralistic</li> <li>▪ Subject to discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Various representations</li> <li>▪ Multiple and consecutive interpretations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poststructuralism</li> <li>▪ Critical discourse</li> <li>▪ Post-Freudian psychoanalysis</li> </ul>

Table 4 General framework of three approaches of traditionalism, modernism, and postmodernism (Adopted from Rashidi, 2015)

### *2.5. Identity from the perspective of other branches of the humanities*

Communitarians have also expressed their ideas in their critique of Western modernism. Their debates and discussions have often been with liberals, and in particular, they are considered the strongest critics of modernism and liberalism (Beheshti, 2001: 50). Communitarians place a fundamental emphasis on the values of society over the individual. The first theorists to be commonly considered in this group are Mike Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer. The term communitarian is mostly used by critics of this group, who refrain from using the term and call themselves civil republicans (Moon, 1998: 551-52). The liberal idea of identity, which describes people as rational beings who choose their lifestyle regardless of the social affiliations to which they belong, is the most significant communitarian critique of contemporary society. The communitarians contend that such a system does not require a real knowledge of ourselves (Beheshti, 2001: p34).

Since the 1960s, developments in societies—including those in developing nations—have been based on a movement toward participatory management systems, which call for the adherence to civic ideals and the creation of institutions accordingly. Thus, it can be stated that the main function of citizenship is to govern society based on respect for the rights of others and the commitment to perform duties to preserve the institutions that maintain and sustain these rights (Faulks, 2000: 197). Participatory approaches, however, have been used successfully in some regions, particularly in underdeveloped countries, and their adoption is growing globally today.

Citizenship principles, on the one hand, allow individuals to consciously intervene in their destinies and those of society, and on the other hand, bestows society the right to expect its members to recognize the rights of others because this will only be possible and realised through their conscious and active participation. In other words, the health of a society and the endurance of its cohesion depend not only on the justice of the institutions of society but also on the characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, and multiplicity of the identities of its members. How national, ethnic, religious, and gender identities make sense, how individuals are enabled to accept the interests of others, and how individuals participate and intervene in social and political processes are all reflected in the institutionalization of 'legal and citizen identity'. In such contexts, the community members, while being aware of their rights, can hold the government and management as well as the executive organisations accountable and transparent through dialogue and appropriate and effective behaviour. By upholding their obligations and responsibilities, the community members create an environment that is conducive to growth and development, helping to both develop the society and provide a better life and greater well-being for the people. Civil rights and facilitations like the right to participate and living provisions like cultural spaces, recreation facilities, better social services, and citizenship obligations will make it possible to solve such social problems as environmental protection, delinquency, addiction, divorce, employment, and others. With a feeling of belonging to the society or a sense of citizenship identity, as well as community members' engagement in different supervisory

and participatory domains, all these issues may be reduced and resolved. The different and various demands and expectations of the public are addressed in this way, and corruption and criminal behaviour at both the individual and organisational levels are avoided.

Citizenship identity falls under social identity. This type of identity, like other types, is significant in two ways: 1. it expresses the people's perception of themselves and reflects how others perceive oneself in society; 2. dynamic social conditions are formed as a result and the product of an identity relationship between the state and the nation. In other words, the sense of belonging to a society is the result of objective and subjective elements of the identity of the individual and the state, which can be identified by referring to the concept and components of 'citizenship'. But as we go into more modern periods, the differences blur and we get closer to the shared features of the various schools.

In the tradition of communitarianism, individuals have no morally or logically priority over society, because many derive their names and symbols from society, are nurtured in society, become conscious, and perform socially defined roles. The life of individuals and their identity as citizens is due to the survival of society, and the need for community identity takes precedence over individual identity. In such a way of thinking, citizenship means full membership in society and fulfilment of obligations and duties, which is crystallized in the form of social and political participation in society and government, so that individuals without coercion and restrictions, by acting on moral responsibility and social duties within the boundaries of the community, reach and realize their interests. In this view, citizenship encompasses obligations including dedication and allegiance to the country, nation, and government, defence of the homeland, compliance with the law, acceptance and tolerance of others, as well as active engagement in political life (Oldfield, 1990).

Unlike communitarianism, liberal thinking is individualistic where individuals have ontological, epistemological, and moral priorities and are defined as autonomous and rational beings. Citizenship identity is valuable in this approach because it grants individuals the right to pursue personal interests and personal freedoms. Citizenship is a situation in which individual rights are emphasized; accordingly, the individual's position vis-à-vis the government and other citizens is defined. These rights bestow individuals the opportunity to pursue their interests through legal means such as elections, the formation of parliamentary committees, etc. (Shiani, 2002).

The republican approach introduced by John Schwarzmantel in his *Citizenship and Identity*, by examining contemporary politics, deals with the features of political life in modern democracies and makes the explanation of liberal democracy and the critiques of it the starting point of discussion. Employing the common concepts in the Republican conceptual apparatus, he defines concepts such as the common good, the breadth of interests, and identities in the context of modern politics. Schwarzmantel points to the attempts to create a common image of democratic citizenship as the main challenge of the liberal–democratic system, which, to achieve this, requires fundamental changes in the structure of

liberal democratic institutions because citizens of liberal democracies feel less identification with the political apparatus. In defence of the Republican approach, he introduces it as a call to strengthen shared civic identity and citizenship, noting that while national identity (nationalism) is a key factor in creating shared political sentiments, it is civic nationalism that effectively fosters the feelings of citizenship and political identity. In this regard, he called for the revival of the right platform for the participation of individuals in the new republics by calling for the strengthening of democratic policies through the creation of civic institutions (Schwarzmantel, 2003). Therefore, it is important to create suitable spaces and environments for all citizens to take action in resolving the existing problems, and also to provide opportunities for the people to participate in problem-solving initiatives.

Citizenship rights are a set of civil, political, social, and economic rights that a person enjoys as a citizen of the country (Qazi Shariat-Panahi, 1991: 122). Citizenship rights in its modern sense are not only limited to the rights and interests of citizens, and in a broader view, we can talk about the obligations that citizens are bound to, and in fact, the word 'rights' in this sense has a specific meaning and it should be He considered the rights and duties of the people towards each other and towards the ruling government (Ismaili, 2014, p. 8). Before the Iranian constitutional revolution, there were no codified and revised citizenship rights in Iran. However, a lack of codified rights does not mean a lack of citizenship rights. Iran, through the centuries, was the living space of different religious and ethnic minorities, and religious minorities were subject to their religious rules and rituals in their settings. Following the constitutional revolution, Iran found a codified constitution for the first time. The constitution, as a covenant between the state and the nation, limited the absolute power of the king. In the amendment to the constitutional law, which was finally approved in 1946, in a chapter entitled 'The Rights of the Nation', the most important individual and citizenship rights were confirmed in eighteen Articles (Articles 8 to 26). The amendment to the constitutional law, while in the first article, it stated that 'the official religion of Iran is Islam and the way of Jafarian Shiite and the king of Iran should be the follower and promoter of this religion', in other Articles, it explicitly mentioned of equal citizenship rights for all the people and nationals of Iran before the law, as well as the protection of the law for all citizens and, in the words of the Article 8 of the constitutional amendment, 'inhabitants of the country of Iran'. The 18 Articles included in the constitutional amendment are considered progressive principles in defence of citizenship rights in Iran a century ago. Regarding the rights of citizens in the amendment to the constitution, two important points should be taken into account. The first point is to emphasize that all Iranian citizens have individual and citizenship rights and privileges. According to these Articles, ethnic, racial, as well as religious minorities, are equal to the majority of Muslims and Shiites, enjoying the general privileges of citizenship rights. All the inhabitants of Iran are entitled to individual and citizenship rights in the amendment to the constitution. This attitude, while conforming to the new constitutional laws of countries freed from the tyranny and autocracy of kings, was compatible with

religious laws and Islamic teachings. Religious minorities recognized in Islamic law are considered equal to Muslim citizens and they should not only live under the protection of society and the Islamic state in comfort and safety, and their lives and properties should be protected from any attack, but also they are free to follow any job they want as far as it is not against the public interest and does not violate Islamic norms. Also, They can personally pursue and be subject to the provisions of their religion in the settlement of their legal claims within their communities. The most general and most important Article in the constitutional amendment, which was prepared under the guidance and supervision of religious scholars, was Article 8 of the Amendment which stated: 'The people of Iran will have equal rights before the government law.' Also, the word 'Iranians' was sometimes used to explicitly convey that all citizens enjoy the equal individual rights of citizenship. For example, in Article 14 of the Amendment to the Constitutional Law, it was stated: 'No Iranian can be denied or prohibited from residing in a certain place or forced to reside in a certain place, except in the cases stipulated by the law.' The second important point in citizenship rights in the constitutional amendment is its relative comprehensiveness. In the 18 Articles related to the rights of the nation, the most important and general citizenship rights have been taken into consideration with proper regard to universality and some civil and political rights and freedoms, such as the formation of associations and gatherings (under the heading of freedom of associations). The Constitution of the Islamic Republic was approved in 1979, after explaining the general principles in the first chapter and defining the language, script, calendar and official flag of the country, the third chapter, deals with the rights of the nation. The most important citizenship rights include the principle of equal rights, personal security, housing immunity and freedom in choosing a place of residence, non-infringement on correspondence, freedom of movement, freedom in choosing a job, prohibition of inspection of opinions, judicial rights of citizens, freedom of education, political and social freedoms, freedom of news and information, citizenship rights, and the right to change citizenship.

The other science that discusses identity in a specialised way is psychology. Although psychology focuses more on the individual and the inner self, in terms of the background of the discussion, it has played a more significant role in the evolution of the concepts of identity and identification. Psychology introduced the dynamic psychological tradition to the social sciences with Freud's theory of identification, in which the child identifies with other personalities and characters, usually a parent, as his or her superior self. The role of Freud's theory in the emergence of the first theories of sociology is obvious. The dynamic psychological theory highlights the inner axis of a psychological structure, which has a constant (albeit conflicting) identity. Erik Erickson, the historian and psychologist defined identity as a process centred on the individual and, at the same time, it is centred on his or her social culture. In this way, Erickson established a form of relationship between the community and the individual. Erickson coined the term identity crisis during World War II to refer to patients who had lost their sense of identity and historical continuity and, as a result,

extended it to all stages of life (as part of their life model in the eight stages of human life). In this way, identity can also be seen as an interpretation of the self. In cognitive psychology, the term 'identity' refers to the power of self-reflection and self-awareness. The psychological thought of identity in human beings is related to the self-image, that is, a person's view or mental model of herself or himself. Erickson was among the first psychologists with a keen interest in the question of identity. His work, which is a dynamic psychological tradition, sought to explore the process of identity formation throughout the life of the individual. The identity of a person is formed in a series of stages in response to very complex challenges. Erickson focuses on distinguishing between the psychological sense of continuity, that is, self-identity (sometimes specifically called 'self'), the distinctive personality traits that differentiate oneself from the other and is known as personal identities, and, the social roles that an actor may assume, that is the social identities of the individual. The relationship between self and psychology is also discussed in the discussion of identity in its psychological dimension. Although 'self' is distinctive from 'identity', the literature on 'self-psychology' helps us to understand how identity is maintained. Here, identity is presented in two spheres: a) processes through which the self is formed (the 'I'); 2. The actual content of the representations shapes self-perception (the 'me'). Theorists are in particular very interested in the second sphere and have developed diverse perspectives on simple and complex approaches to organizing self-knowledge (Ahmady, 2011: 41-42).

In psychology, identity and the sense of identity are considered a feature of a person's personality and the resulting feelings and actions. The sense of identity is the perception people have of the continuity of their lives and the constancy of their sense of self in the face of shifting external circumstances. Thus, from a psychological point of view, human identity has some form of stability. The majority of psychologists and personality theorists consider identity as primarily an individual and personal matter and believe that its two basic meanings and aspects are centred on personal attributes and feelings. Most of these theorists do not devalue social identity, but they view these two personal and social categories of identities as separate from and unrelated to one another. Even from this perspective, identity is a feeling of personal uniqueness, a feeling of personal continuity, and a feeling of personal independence (Jacobson, 1998: 9). Since identity as it is investigated in this study pertains to various levels beyond the individual and involves communal identity, we are primarily concerned with a sociological outlook toward psychology.

### **2.5.1. Ethnic identity**

Ethnicity has been one of the main sources of meaning and recognition throughout human history, from the United States to sub-Saharan Africa, ethnicity underpins social distinction, recognition, and even propaganda. Ethnicity has also been and currently remains the basis of the uprising for social justice; it is also the irrational logic of ethnic cleansing and, to a large extent, it creates the cultural underpinnings of networked and monopolistic business activities in the modern world of business (Castells, 2006: 73). Ethnicity is a word that has been increasingly used since the 1960 and is still used for human



differences in culture, tradition, language, social structures, and historical lineage. The use of the term was broadened as a result of the debunking of the racial theory, which presupposed that people were members of fixed genetic species.

The general definition of ethnicity could be that 'ethnicity includes a general consciousness of common roots and traditions.' The Greek word *ethnos* in English includes different meanings from 'tribe' to 'nation' and it can be considered as a spectrum between these two. Ethnicity is the quality of belonging to an ethnic group, but the question of what an ethnic group is as compared to other types of groups is not so simple to answer. Ethnic groups are not 'races', because ethnicity can be defined much more precisely than race, and ethnicity is logically independent, as some Serbs and Croats are Slavs, and a Jew may be black or white. Ethnicity as well as membership in an ethnic group does not necessarily link a person to a specific territory. Despite this, 'ethnic conflict' can be considered similar to the conflict between nations or races.

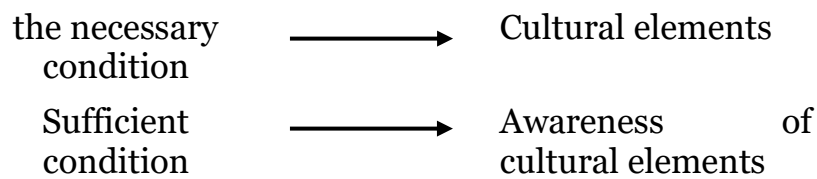
The word 'ethnic' is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* which means nation. In early English, the use of the word 'ethnic' referred to the cultural differences of common nations. Some contemporaries use ethnicity to identify national groups in Europe, but such ethnic protests as the 'Basque' protests highlighted the distinction between ethnicity and nationality. Ashcraft and his colleagues define ethnicity and ethnic group as: 'A collective within a large community with a common or assumed common ancestry (having a common historical memory with historical origins or experiences such as exploitation, migration, invasion, or slavery), shared awareness of a distinctive ethnic identity and a cultural centre and resource in one or more symbolic elements defined as a representation of their popularity. These cultural characteristics will always be in a dynamic composition concerning the specific time and place that the ethnic group experiences.' (Ashcraft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998: 84).

The main feature of this definition is in the function of symbolic elements, which may, in a sense, create ethnic belonging. Examples of some of the symbolic elements are family structures, physical proximity, religious affiliation, linguistic or dialectal forms, tribal cohesion, nationality, physical characteristics, cultural values, and cultural activities such as art, music, and literature. Different combinations of these elements at different times and places can play a role in creating a sense of ethnicity (Ibid). The role of ethnic stories, epics, and parables is also important in this context. In this framework, prominent and effective ethnic symbolic elements include biographies of ethnic heroes as well as tales of conflicts and related victories and defeats.

From a different perspective, Erickson argues that cultural distinctions between two groups do not necessarily define identity. Although two groups may share a similar culture, they may yet be distinct from one another. For instance, there may not always be an ethnic connection between two groups even though they may speak, practice, or even use a variety of different languages, religions, and technologies. (Erickson, 1993: 11). For an ethnic group to emerge, the group must have a minimum of encounters with other ethnic groups, and group

members must view the ideas of other groups as culturally different from their tradition. Without such conditions, there will be no ethnicity.

Erickson's theory has illustrated ethnic identity with the following features:



Ethnicity more than a specific attribute requires a form of communication. Ethnicity is therefore a special social connection between actors who see themselves as culturally different from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. Ethnicity can also be described as a type of social identity emerging from a distinction and difference from others by mythological or metaphorical narratives. Ethnic groups tend to share myths of common origin (Ibid, p. 12).

Ethnic identity arises from a diverse combination of ethnic components, and in many cases, even a single different component creates a new ethnic identity. As a result, the components of ethnicity vary amongst different ethnic groups, and within each ethnic group, each component has a different level of significance. Other theorists have listed features and characteristics of ethnic identities, such as Anthony Smith (1998: 186) that are illustrated here:

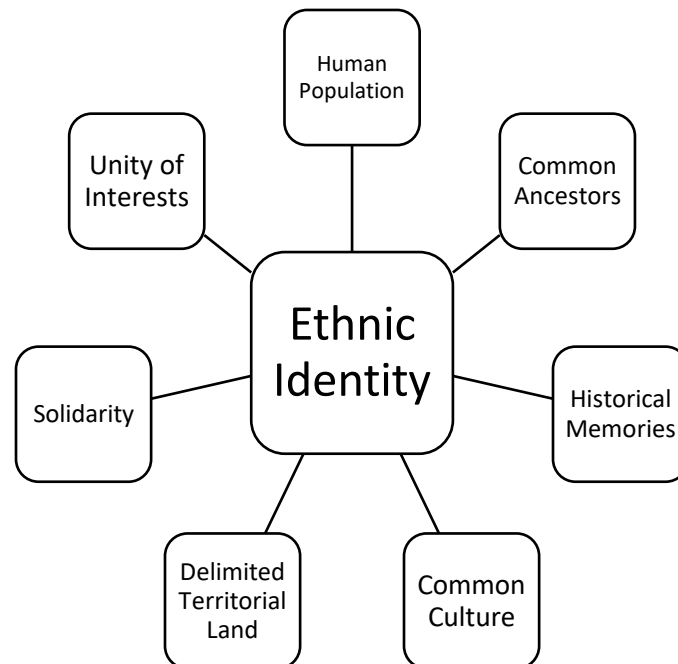


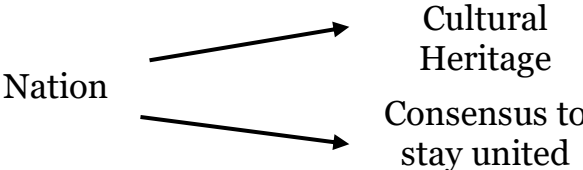
Figure 3 Components of ethnic identity according to Smith

### 2.5.2. National identity

Nationality is a new word that appeared after the emergence of European governments after the Industrial Revolution and the idea of nationalist sentiment spreading entered the vocabulary of the social sciences. For this reason, national identity can be considered a new phenomenon and a

relationship between individuals that indicate a large territorial unit, larger than the place of birth, the place of residence, and even larger than cities and provinces. The emergence of nationalism and the beginning of the political-economic rivalries that after the industrial revolution replaced imperialist-colonial conflicts, increased the feelings of belonging to a particular territory and its government. Westphalian sovereignty also helped the nation to strengthen its national identity by stabilizing the state system. Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that national identity, or the sense of belonging to a broader land with a specific state, is a unique phenomenon of the contemporary era.

The European experience is a uniquely European experience and cannot always be generalized all over the world. National identity and the feeling of belonging to it arise from two factors: a) the existence of a known territorial unit; and b. The government or political system manages this unit. As long as these two factors exist in a society and somehow set boundaries between the self and the other, national identity is also created. Since such a phenomenon was less common in the West in the past, and sovereign political organizations such as empires or religious governments controlled these areas, identities had a religious dimension and othering took place accordingly. Therefore, there is no historical evidence for the notion of national identity in its contemporary form, which is sometimes inadvertently extended to the entire world. This becomes especially important concerning the question of ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’, because, with the collapse of empires or nationwide religious governments and the emergence of smaller political units, the sense of loyalty to them gradually disappeared and was replaced by loyalty to an emerging political unit, to the nation-state (Ahmady, 2011: 65). Ernest Renan the French philosopher also consider the nation to have two features of having a common cultural heritage and a consensus on it. Ernest Renan’s central argument is that a nation is a conglomerate of people who share a common past and have derived a strong bond with an agreement to stay together and be governed by mutual consent in the future.



But if there is no ‘break’ and there is only the question of the size of political units, whether in the form of an empire or smaller forms, the sense of belonging and loyalty remains. Thus, in human history, two types of national identities can be distinguished: one is modern national identities, the sense of belonging to modern states that is found in Europe and later in the rest of the world since the fifteenth century, and the other is premodern national identity, that is, the feeling of belonging and loyalty to the political units and the ancient territory that has existed and continued since ancient times and still exists today under the same name. Most of the countries that have emerged in modern times can be considered the first type, but some other countries have very ancient roots and their names have been preserved as a territorial unit from ancient times to

the present day, including Greece, Iran, China, India, Italy (Rome) and Egypt. These are homes to the second type of national identity.

Several key elements constitute national identity as identified and addressed by theorists and researchers of national and ethnic issues. However, the most decisive factor in the national identity that distinguishes it from the old conception of identity is the existence of the political system and the state, both in its ancient form and in the modern state. According to Anthony Smith, 'National identity means a sense of political community,' and this political community in itself indicates the existence of some common institutions and a unified set of rights and duties for the community. A political community also refers to an established social space and a sphere with clear limits by which its members may recognise one another and feel a sense of loyalty to it.

The constituent elements of a nation can be classified into two main groups: the first group includes objective elements, and the second group includes subjective elements. Territorial elements belong to the first group and mythical elements including memories, beliefs, and cultures belong to the second group. Besides, two basic characteristics and aspects can be enumerated for a definition of a nation: the first one is the ethnic and cultural aspect that the nation continues through the claim to a common ancestry of its members, and the second one is the civil aspect which is based on the fact that the members of the nation have common requirements and obligations (Alamdari, 2004: 27-30) In this regard, Ahmad Ashraf refers to some basic factors for the formation of national identity (Ashraf, 1999: 139-140) that are illustrated here:

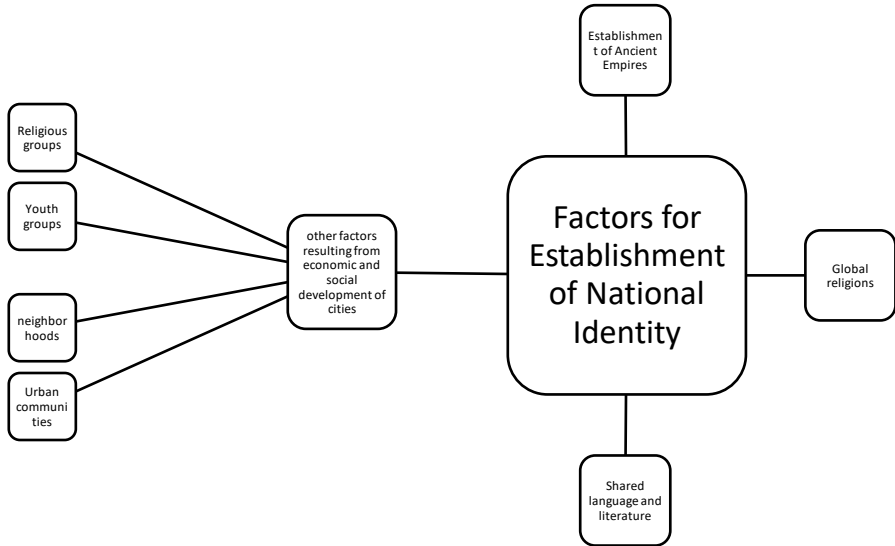


Figure 4 Components of national identity according to Ashraf

Handler also defines national identity in relation to three aspects of human experience: first, concerning human beings as individuals; second, with groups of human beings that are thought to be distinct from each other; and third, the

relations between these two and the methods through which the people identify the elements of collective identities with their unique identities. Despite the similarities and discrepancies in the definitions of national identity from the perspectives of its theorists, the fundamental components of national identity can be thought of as the following:

- 1) A historical territory that is a home
- 2) Common historical myths and historical memories;
- 3) Public and common culture for the masses;
- 4) The political institutions that govern the land, namely the state;
- 5) Common rights and duties for all members;
- 6) Common economy and territorial mobility for members.

Identity and nationality theorists have discussed the constituents of identity in much the same way. David Miller, a contemporary scholar on nationalism, argues that national identity has alien elements that, on the whole, strengthen and perpetuate it. These five elements include:

- 1) Belief in common features and mutual commitment;
- 2) Power and historical continuity;
- 3) Active character;
- 4) Dependence on a specific territory;
- 5) Common public culture (ibid: 66)

The table below illustrates the views of several contemporary Iranian scholars about national identity:

Researcher	Levels and Components of national identity	Case agent Emphasis
Sheikhavandi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Same Country</li> <li>▪ Some time (historical time and origin)</li> <li>▪ National flag and anthem</li> <li>▪ Same language</li> <li>▪ Same religion and tradition</li> <li>▪ Same laws and government</li> <li>▪ Same currency (economic integration)</li> <li>▪ Unified identity cards for the citizens</li> <li>▪ Unity in measurement scales</li> </ul>	Factors causing convergence
Ravasani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Religious elements</li> <li>▪ Historical elements</li> <li>▪ Class elements</li> </ul>	The economic and cultural dimension
Afroogh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The level of worldview and ideology</li> <li>▪ The level of values</li> <li>▪ The level of norms</li> <li>▪ The level of the symbol</li> </ul>	The level of worldview, ideology and symbols
Naderpour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Territorial bonds</li> <li>▪ Blood bonds</li> <li>▪ Cultural bonds</li> </ul>	Language

Table 5 The views of several Iranian scholars on national identity (Rashidi, 2015)

Some pan-Iranian intellectuals overlook ethnic differences and limit Iranian nationalist diversity to ethnic Farsi concerns, which cannot accurately reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country.

### *2.5.3. Internationalization of identity; globalization of identity*

Globalization has many different features, this idea allows that among the various characteristics of globalisation, the most significant to be the authenticity of diversity and heterogeneity. In the age of globalization, differences and diversity in the form of different identities can emerge. Identities no longer have the former rigidity and acquire the property of evolution and fluidity, as Castells states, all identities are constructed (Castells, 2001: 23).

More importantly, in the age of globalization, through the expansion of interactions and connections between social actors, the possibility of constructing individual and collective identities has developed simultaneously and they are constantly evolving. Globalization theory constitutes a form of unity on the one hand, and a form of difference on the other, as the main network of thinking, and humans find common characteristics and insights, while different insights, behaviours, and cultures continue to preserve identity. Ian Clark in his *Globalization and the Theory of International Relations* writes: Global developments suggest that the two processes of globalization and disintegration occur simultaneously, and that world events take on contradictory forms. For example, in the 1990s, the process of globalization conquered the field of economics, while in the field of politics, it was ethnic nationalism that intensified (Qureshi, 2000: 39).

Social scientists generally viewed racial, ethnic, and linguistic interests and identities in the early twentieth century as a form of historical aberration that either will be succumbed to communism or will be merged with and dissolved inside liberal democratic institutions. Ethnicity was considered a remnant of the early stages of the evolution of human society, which will sooner or later disappear (Golmohammadi, 2002: 159). Initially, some theorists in the field of globalization believed that this process and the subsequent globalization of culture would lead to the domination of a single global culture, and as a result, indigenous cultures and ethnic subcultures would be dissolved within the dominant global culture.

Today, globalization is not considered a factor of assimilation and integration, because globalization is a process that is not opposed to localization. These two movements are created by a single dynamic and are closely associated with each other, sometimes, the word glocalization is used to refer to this twin movement. According to Ronald Robertson, globalization always takes place in a local context, while at the same time, the local framework itself is created through the discourses of globalization. He believes that globalization should not be considered a simple process that connects pre-existing localities. He favours the word 'glocalization,' which by definition refers to a global perspective that also considers local circumstances. This is the way heterogeneity is continuously

produced and reproduced through the processes of globalization (Nash, 2001: 111).

The process of globalization with the compression of time and space, the relativization of cultures, the multiplication of social authorities, and the creation of meaningful identities, make traditional methods difficult and even impossible (Golmohammadi, 2002: 245). Through the tools, facilities, and opportunities provided by the globalization process, transnational groups, with their diverse and vast media facilities, play a decisive role in the creation of a new culture at the local, national, and international levels. This culture-building and identity-building can in some cases be in line with the unified global culture and national culture, and in some cases, diverge from the national culture and global culture. Understanding and recognizing the paradoxical situation that the process of globalization creates for local ethnicities and subcultures, that is, it has led to the convergence of indigenous ethnicities and local cultures with national and global culture, and, at the same time, it creates divergences between indigenous ethnicities and local cultures, it becomes possible to examine, analyse and understand the challenges and opportunities that the globalization process creates in the field of ethnicities and local cultures. The process of globalization, at least in the field of interaction between ethnic and indigenous culture with national culture and world culture, can have a dual effect; that is, it can simultaneously cause convergences and divergences. If we accept the authenticity of plurality as emphasized in this theory at the national level and in the framework, we can help to realize the model of pluralism and, consequently, create convergence and coherence between ethnic and local groups with national culture and take advantage of the opportunity of globalization for this field.

## **2.10. PERPETUAL PEACE**

Perpetual peace is a situation where established peace can last for a long time in a region. Perpetual peace with a focus on justice is often referred to as ‘just peace’, and therefore to achieve it, we must pursue impartial approaches to resolve crises and emphasize its implementation through revolutionary diplomacy. The concept of perpetual peace was first introduced in the 18th century in an article entitled ‘The Plan for Perpetual Peace’. This article was published anonymously. However, the concept was not considered until the late eighteenth century. The term ‘perpetual peace’ was recognized in Europe after the publication of Immanuel Kant’s treatise with the same title.

Sustainable peace is a term coined by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in a book of the same name nearly three centuries ago, where the preconditions for its realization were defined as non-interference in other countries and the prohibition of the use of force. The term later was repeated many times in different sources and was used or misused as one of the catchphrases used to resolve international disputes and conflicts. According to this theory, perpetual peace must be accompanied by justice, and peace without justice cannot be perpetual and sustainable and could not serve as a remedy to the pains caused

by the current crises. The contemporary world increasingly requires just peace, a peace built upon justice. Just peace, as an organized idea, can become a discourse by the intellectual endeavours of the elites to enter the social sphere and turn it into an international behaviour or norm.

In his small but very important treatise on perpetual peace, Kant seeks to present a sustainable plan for the unity of the nations to establish and maintain world peace and, consequently lead the world community towards a world republic. Kant considered war to be the greatest evil that could confine humanity. Hence, in this work, he has attempted to present a plan that will lead to the destruction of this evil. Kant primarily seeks to suspend as many wars and conflicts as possible, but since the mere suspension of war does not in itself guarantee the endurance of peace, he goes on to state the basic pillars of peace, the realization of which leads to the institutionalization of peace.

For Kant, perpetual peace has six preconditions (Baratalipour, 2015: 41-2) which are:

- 1) No secret treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war;
- 2) No independent states, large or small, shall come under the dominion of another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or donation;
- 3) Standing armies shall in time be totally abolished;
- 4) National debts shall not be contracted with a view to the external friction of states;
- 5) No state shall by force interfere with the constitution or government of another state;
- 6) No state shall, during war, permit such acts of hostility which would make mutual confidence in the subsequent peace impossible: such are the employment of assassins, poisoners, breach of capitulation, and incitement to treason in the opposing state.

The basic condition for observing these six points is that, in general, the minimum intention of governments should be based on moral obligation. It should be noted that among these preconditions, there is no economic theory or plan that would lead to an economic order and ultimately would result in economic security and justice. This may be due to the general objection of Kant's plan for perpetual peace, as a superstructure rather than base structure.

Following this, Kant (2001) adds three basic pillars to the realization of perpetual peace on these preconditions; they are:

- 1) The civil constitution of each state shall be republican.
- 2) The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states.
- 3) The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality. (ibid., 42).

In Kant's view, 'republican government' is the form kind of government in which law is at the heart of human life. This kind of government guarantees sustainable world peace. The establishment of a republic based on a constitution implies



that individuals, by virtue of their practical reason, have accepted a social contract. This system is the manifestation of the public will of all. The Republic is based on three foundations:

- 1) The principle of freedom for all members of society as human beings;
- 2) All the people are under the same law as citizens;
- 3) The principle of legal equality of every person as a citizen.

Therefore, respect for human rights and civil rights based on political affiliation with the government are both considered to be the foundations of the republican system (Mir Mohammadi, 2011: 123).

Perpetual peace cannot be achieved without the establishment of a republican system in which the three executive, legislative, and judicial powers are independent. However, the establishment of such a system is itself dependent on rationality, justice, intellectual maturity, ethical conduct, and rule of law. According to Kant, perpetual peace is like a child that is born in an instant, but it takes years for this child to reach maturity through care and education.

The hierarchy that Kant describes in the essential elements for the realization of perpetual peace suggests that he pursues peace first 'at home' and then 'beyond the borders'. Kant considers the remaining of states in natural conditions, lawlessness, and conflict of interest as leading to war. He also defines the solution for creating and joining a world federation (ibid., 124).

### *2.10.1. Peace in the religious perspective of Islam*

Scholars of peace studies in contemporary international relations have a fundamental definition of peace. Johann Galtung<sup>11</sup>, the founder of peace studies, often distinguishes between 'negative peace' and 'positive peace'. Negative peace is mainly concerned with the absence of violence. This means that armistice is considered a negative state of peace because it has stopped an undesirable situation. But positive peace happens when the grounds and causes of war disappear. In this view, real peace is equal to the situation with the fundamental elimination of the grounds and causes of war and the absence of structural violence (Galtung, 1985, p. 65).

Islam as a divine religion, in its epistemological system, does not consider religion and politics as two separate categories. In the definition of Islamic political society, human interaction and avoidance of war and violence have always been defined as central signifiers (Chinichian, 2017: 2). In the ontological foundations of Islam, human beings have an innate propensity toward peace.

The concept of justice has a special place in Islamic thought. Justice is listed as one of the principles of religion that is rooted in the Quran and Sunnah. In this tradition, the establishment of justice is one of the goals and the main mission of Quranic revelation (Surah Hadid, verse 25; Surah Al-Imran, verse 103).

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<sup>11</sup>. Johan Galtung

Peace is a virtue that is the result of justice. In the Quran, there are several references to the acceptance of pluralism, how political pluralism leads to unity, and it is considered to be based on the principle of unity, that the minimum consensus necessary for the formation of political life and the expansion of common understanding and language are the two fundamental conditions for political participation. Awareness of common interests develops a sense of mutual trust, and, in general, an identity based on brotherhood and the mutual unity of hearts (Feirahi, 2011: 80). However, there are different views among Muslim thinkers on the subject of war and peace, and two theories can be observed in this regard. Some religious movements refer to the foundations of Islamic law and through superficial interpretations of religious texts, like the Quranic about Jihad and the killing of infidels and polytheists, follow the path of Salafi, Takfiri, Wahhabi, jihadist, and such other movements that lead to al-Qaeda and ISIS. Many Muslim thinkers, on the other hand, by criticizing the view of the first group, emphasize the principle of peace and coexistence in Islam. This group also quote several verses of the Quran in their arguments to emphasize the priority of peace and the conditional prescription of war when there is no way to peace. Besides, the illegal use of violence, even against the enemy, is considered contrary to Islamic teachings according to the latter group.

According to Islamic doctrines, human nature has two good and evil dimensions, creating potential grounds for peace or war. In the Islamic worldview, human beings are not merely an animal in material terms but carry transcendental and divine properties. In Islamic terminology, it is only the spiritual values and principles that have authenticity. Hence, there is a certain evolutionary movement that guides humanity and human society toward stability, peace and justice (Sotoudeh, 2003: 204).

From an Islamic, all human inclinations and tendencies do not appear and have a specific direction at the beginning of creation. Human nature is ready for the flourishing of both animal and human tendencies. Reason and religion both act as effective factors in the flourishing of the transcendent desires of humans and the ground for the realization of their divine nature. In other words, man is a creature composed of the opposing forces of good and evil, and depending on the status of these forces there will either be war or peace. Thus, the Shiite approach neither accepts the extreme optimism of idealism about the purity of human nature nor does it accept the extreme pessimism of realism and the assumption that human beings are inherently evil (Dehshiri, 2000: 297).

Given the dominance of Shiite thought over the current political regime in Iran, it should be stated that Shiite thinkers consider justice and peace as two related issues and consider peace without justice as unstable and inadequate. In this monotheistic view, divine prophets were dispatched to establish justice and peace. Peace without justice is regarded as simply materialistic. Justice in the Islamic view means that everything should be in its place. A just peace is therefore a balanced situation in which all people enjoy their rights. Since Islam is a universal religion and at the same time incorporates the principles and

models of a just peace in its teachings, a just peace can be considered a version of Islamic peace that addresses all human societies.

Shiite thinkers seek the realization of a just peace in the domestic and international arena through the realization of justice. In this view, the right to peace is conditional and assumed right and it cannot be considered contingent, while justice is contingent. This is what makes perpetual peace something that is based on justice.

Morteza Motahhari, the leading theoretician of the Islamic republic who was assassinated as early as 1979, considers the principle of monotheism as the most basic principle for creating peace and harmony because believing in a just God leads to piety, self-sacrifice, concord, peace, and justice (Motahhari, 1995: 35-40).

According to Shiite thinkers, the demand for justice is intertwined with human nature; in other words, the demand for justice is based on the structure of human existence. At the same time, the universe is subject to justice in creation, realization, and perfection, as well as in the transformation from the state of possibility to actuality and from talent to action, in both the individual and social dimensions. 'Beings possess a form of balance in creation, and the existence of order in the universe indicates that man, who is himself the subject of justice, is also surrounded by justice, and there is a form of balance in the relationship between humans and also between humans and existence.' (Sadr, 1981: 176).

The most important effect of the innate and natural desire for justice is the stability and permanence of that desire at all times and situations. Humans are instinctively humble before the just destiny and avoid and hate injustice. Among the divine natures – which are inherent in human nature – one is the love of justice and submission to it and the hatred of oppression and non-subjugation in front of it. If the opposite is observed, one should understand that there are some faults in the premises, because the demand and desire for justice are natural and it does not become obsolete over time; this is a permanent and universal principle.

One of the main reasons for the stability and immortality of Islam and the invulnerability of its rules is the relationship between reason and sharia (that is, Islamic law), because Islam, according to Shiite thinkers, is a rational religion. As a result, it will not face any problems or crises at any age. This is especially true since the recognition of social and political interests and hazards of the people have always been referred to jurists and religious experts. This mechanism, in a rational way, affects the recognition of both the interests as well as the hazards.

According to Islamic teachings, the reason lays the groundwork for the actualization and activation of nature. Without reason – which Allah has created as an internal guide alongside the prophets, as an external guide – the demand for justice will not arrive anywhere. Thus, even though humans have some rights due to their natural needs, the role of reason in guiding humans to fulfil their natural rights is irrefutable. Humans have reason and intellect and should have

the power to work with the power of intellect and will. Therefore, if humans do not fulfil their duties, they cannot take advantage of the right that God has granted them.

According to Shiite thinkers, the purpose of Shari'a, the Shiite law, is to achieve justice among individual members of society and within society as a whole. Individual justice is the foundation of social justice, and social justice will promote justice among individuals.

The reality of the international community indicates that perpetual peace will not be more than a raw ideal until justice is achieved at the domestic level and its models are implemented at the international level in the format of a dynamic culture. Thus in this sphere, the level of analysis begins with the individual and then reaches the state, and finally, embraces the international community. Accordingly, for achieving perpetual peace, there is a need for a holistic approach to reach the desired state.

If the mechanisms that a state uses to achieve justice, while realistically considering the dual nature of humans, are based on laws derived from human reason and nature, they will be stable and effective mechanisms, because their sources are the same fixed natural rules that God have created in human nature. As a result, the stability of the source will lead to the perpetuity of the result, and ultimately, the desired consequence, at different times and places, will maintain its permanence, and the result will be a long-term just peace.

## **2.11. SOCIAL JUSTICE**

It can be acknowledged that the most important human aspiration in the history of society is social justice. Injustice has created countless inequalities and class gaps have exacerbated social problems. Moreover, history shows that injustice has often been the source of many conflicts and acts of violence both by the centre and the deprived. Accordingly, in the humanities, various aspects of social justice have been studied and various theories have been developed, leading to discourses such as liberalism, neoliberalism, socialism, communitarianism as well as religious discourses (Islamic, Christian, etc.). Akhtari and Zolfaghari (2017: 116-119), have summarized many of these theories in the following table:

<b>Concepts and discourse</b>	<b>Liberal</b>	<b>Neoliberal</b>	<b>Socialist</b>	<b>Rawlsian</b>	<b>Communitarian</b>	<b>Islamic</b>
Class divide	The necessity of class division for development	Blame the poor for their poverty	Denies the existence of class division	Class divide to the extent necessary for progress.	Denies the existence of class division	Denies the existence of any class division
Government intervention	No government interference in the economy and free market	Reducing the role of government in the economy	Government interference in all matters	Limiting government intervention to the extent of reducing the class distance	Extensive government intervention	Moderate government intervention, commensurate with the conditions
Deprived classes	No consideration	No consideration	Consideration	Consideration	Consideration	Consideration
Ontological	Individualism based on utilitarianism	Individualism	Collectivism	Individualism and collectivism	Collectivism	Individualism and collectivism
Ethical philosophy	Utilitarianism	Utilitarianism	Personal obligations	Personal obligations	Virtue-oriented	Personal obligations and Virtue-oriented
Ownership	Private	Private	Public	Achieving distributive justice without the abolition of private property	Public (Social Charity)	Private and public
Facilities	Unequal access	Unequal access	Equal access	Equal distribution	Equal distribution	Equal access
Income disparity	Necessary	Necessary	Income redistribution for the low-income	Income disparity to the extent necessary for the development of society	Income redistribution for the low-income	Income disparity does not lead to class divisions
Economic competition	Equal opportunity for economic competition	Entrepreneurial freedom and individual skills	No need for free economic competition	Equal conditions of competition with some restrictions	Free economic competition	Free economic competition
Legal equality	Priority of fundamental rights and socio-political freedoms	Heavy consideration of economic activities and lower rights	Equality in all socio-political rights	Equality in socio-political freedoms according to the first principle	Fair distribution of political power does not mean fair distribution of everything	Equal natural rights and differences in acquired rights commensurate with work and duty performances

Table 6 Discourse from the perspective of different sociological schools

When we speak of a just act, it means an act that is not cruel. Of course, when we characterize justice as a social attribute, that is, in social justice, we must

consider the point that social laws and regulations must be formulated in a way that does not lead to oppression and that justice is provided. In other words, social justice means observing equality in forging and enforcing the law; It means that the law should provide equal opportunities for all to develop and use welfare facilities and progress. Social justice is the duty of governments at the three levels of policies, implementation, and practice. Thus, the government should not primarily discriminate against individuals in practice and provide them with the possibility of development and social welfare (Motahari, 2003: 253).

The variables of social justice could be defined and listed as reduction of poverty and deprivation, provision of employment opportunities, meeting basic needs (such as housing, health, and education), price stability in proportion to wages, equitable distribution of income and wealth, establishing security and order, ensuring the full rights of individuals, social security as well as the provision of welfare services.

## Chapter Three: Research Results and Findings

### *Introduction*

In the previous two chapters, theoretical discussions about the concepts of identity and ethnicity were introduced and discussed and the different perspectives on these two concepts were described. It has also been demonstrated that, contrary to various theories about the weakening of these concepts, they are still in power, and that different ethnic groups are attempting in various ways to differentiate themselves and counter the attempts to assimilate them with the dominant power. The efforts of ethnic arrangements to establish cultural hegemony continue and have even led to some specific social, political and cultural issues in the geographical area of Iran. In the present chapter, an attempt will be made to describe the findings of interviews with some members of ethnic groups that were studied to record their views on the concepts of identity and ethnicity. Interviews are organized by searching for ethnic elites and people. Their demands, which are mainly around the realization of justice and social equality, will be discussed, and we will talk about the roles that governments can play in the realization of these demands. We will also argue that any effort to address economic, political, cultural, and linguistic disparities and any attempt to resolve inequalities can help build national unity, harmony, and perpetual peace while ignoring these demands can cause serious problems and crises for all the nation and the country as a whole. Accordingly, seven themes were identified from the findings, each of which with several categories, and an explanation of each of these cases will be provided here. After collecting the concepts and extracting the major and minor sub-categories, the researcher performed three coding steps on the data, and finally, using the grounded theory introduced the central phenomenon and the emergence of the central phenomenon.

The other important point is about the gender of the interviewees, especially in the interview with ethnic elites. In the course of the study, it was much more difficult to find female interviewees than male interviewees in the field. Most of the universities, local associations, civic institutions, and other centres and circles that were referred to in this research, were dominated by male professors and experts, and the number of female experts was in no way comparable to that of men. Part of the reason for this is the different aspects of the general structure of the country, which has not been able to create a suitable and equal environment for women as men, and most of the opportunities have always been available to men. However, during the last decade, the number of female students admitted to universities has grown significantly, but this group has never found an equal position with men in terms of work and scope of action. In a way, it can be said that women's role in society is more limited to the field of science and academia, both in terms of dominant social structures and in terms of their preferences and practices. It can be argued that another part of this inequality is related to the community of women themselves, who have not made the necessary effort to study at higher levels and are mainly satisfied with receiving bachelor's and maximum, master's degrees. On the other hand, some

of the reasons for the absence of women in higher social positions are patriarchal, and certain traditional duties of women as wives and mothers are often mentioned. Accordingly, in the present study and outside the researcher's intention, a kind of inequality is evident in the number of interviewees that seems to indicate gender inequality, especially around employment.

### *3.1. Religious Identity vs. National Identity: Interaction or Confrontation*

In the social settings after the 1979 Revolution in Iran and the establishment of a religious government, the question of the interaction or confrontation of religious identity and ethnic identity became the subject of discussion among scholars. Thus, some saw the two as opposed to each other, and others talked about their interaction with each other. Apart from the discussion of interaction or confrontation, another question pertains to their precedence and antecedence, with some people giving the priority to national identity while for others it is the religious identity that should be emphasized. A third group, however, contends that the alignment and dialectical relationship between these two concepts should be taken into account as a solution because of the distinctive types of each of these two concepts. Yet another group has established a new identity based on individual traits and the socioeconomic position of the citizens in contemporary life by overcoming this antagonism between religious identity and national identity.

**Yahya Shariatnia, lawyer and legal advisor, Tehran**

Although these practises have a common name, they are not national traditions, and each individual performs in their manner. Along with religious practises, these have evolved over time. Prior to attending college, I attended a religious seminary where I had good access to resources and learned that most of the religious knowledge we have was produced and funded by individuals. I have passed through all these.



### **A 50-year-old salesman, Mashhad**

Religion, in my opinion, is only theology. All religions are the same in theology. For example, we should not oppress the oppressed and we should not empower the oppressor. The Prophet himself had both Ali and Umar in his army. People's religion does not matter, theology is important and all people are the same. this is important.

Given that some believe that national and historical concepts were given priority during the Pahlavi regime, while others believe that with the Revolution of 1979, the religious took precedence over the national, in this section, the place of these concepts and their interaction or confrontation are examined. In the first part, in the form of 'National and Religious Institutions', the beliefs and attitudes of the people of the ethnic groups about these two concepts are extracted and discussed. In the 'National Identity' section, it is discussed that Iranian ethnic groups mainly define their identity in the form of national and Iranian concepts, and in the conceptual title of 'The Strategy of Iranian - Islamic Culture,' the dominant and ruling current in both governments of Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic are examined. The next title, 'The Cost of Ideological Goals,' discusses the costs that can result from prioritizing one inclination over the other. Then the discovery of 'Symbols as Tools for a Particular Identity' and the role that local and ethnic symbols can play in redefining the ethnic identity of the groups are examined. The role of 'Official Symbols as Factors of Solidarity' is then addressed from the perspective of government, including the influence that official symbols like the national anthem or flag have on local ideas as well as the role they can play in fostering national cohesion and unity.

In this study, the views of the elites toward global interest-oriented approaches will also be investigated. These cosmopolitan inclinations frequently coexist with nationalist ones, albeit with a focus on global human concerns.

**Payam Darfshan, a lawyer and a civil activist, Tehran**

We must accept nationalism. Nationalism is an influential and important parameter. Besides, I have always tried to act cosmopolitan. We must accept nationalism and not forget the common interests of all human beings. This is an issue that many global superpowers are unaware of.

This approach is also present in looking at ethnicities. In other words, individuals, having modernist thinking backgrounds, have transethnic and transnational outlooks about the issues of societies and relations between human beings, and organize their individual and social actions accordingly.

**Rasoul Nami, carpet designer, Tabriz**

Territories and geographical boundaries are not determinants of humanity. I would like to meet every human being from every ethnic group with love and affection.

### **3.1.1. National and Religious Institutions**

Religion and religious thought as an intellectual activity include the capacity to conceive and communicate high human aims and aspirations regarding human reason, features, and circumstances, in addition to offering a set of conventions, principles, and methods for individual and social life. This creates various features and contexts for human rationality, which has been the space and subject of various interactions, exchanges and disputes throughout history. Additionally, in this regard, various schools of thought have emerged in both the religious and secular contexts. In terms of the research's accomplishments, it has certainly founded its propensities and branches in the cultural, political, social, and managerial fields, particularly in a society where the majority of people practise religion and, more significantly, where its government practises religion with transnational and global ambitions. This increases the significance of the influence of religion on other fields, making it necessary for the researcher to take into account all facets of it at various points throughout the research.

**Mohammad Ali Daneshgar, theater director, Semnan**

If I was born into a Christian family, I would have been a Christian and religion has an inherited property . . . . I reject this religion because there is no thought in it. While religion is acquired and must be formed within the individual.

In this respect, the development of new religious orientations is felt in tandem with the rise of individualism, leading to a large number of people having their religious perspectives, including the traditionalists, intellectuals, as well as and modernists.

**Jabbar Rahmani, faculty member of Research Institute for Social and Cultural Studies**

In the domain of religion, new cognitive systems have always sparked change. I focus on making religion more logical and cross-cultural in my experiences with it. Although religion is a personal choice, once made, we are obligated to abide by its principles.

Thinking correctly and prudently depends on freedom from diverse intellectual restraints and free rationality (Kant, 1989). It must be noted that free reason seeks rational support for every claim and, in general matters, grants itself the capacity of judgement. This type of rationalism is also interpreted as 'independent rationality' or 'free thinking'. According to this method, experience is a way that is 'all-encompassing' and 'accessible to all' and allows a person to know reality as it is, not as it is wished or desired (Warnack, 1993; Qureishi, 2007: 66-69).

**Mohsen Goodarzi, sociologist, researcher and university lecturer, Tehran**

There is a collective reaction to the attempt to reform areas of social life through individual efforts to help others and other ways. Solidarity activists do not yet have enough power.

Immanuel Kant defines 'enlightenment' in his famous contribution to the debate on the question in an essay entitled 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' (1784), as humankind's release from its self-incurred immaturity; 'immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without the guidance of another.' Expressing convictions shared among Enlightenment thinkers of widely divergent doctrines, Kant identifies enlightenment with the process of undertaking to think for oneself, to employ and rely on one's intellectual capacities in determining what to believe and how to act. This enlightenment directs the person not to accept everything that was named revelation and not to consider every word as the word of God. This is why he rationally criticizes religious thoughts and opens his statements to rational analysis (Qureishi, *ibid.*).

**Leila Shafaei, Lawyer, Tabriz**

Iranian society is made up of many different identities, all of which are respected. To accomplish their shared objectives, it is crucial that they act in conjunction.

Islamists mention Islamic teachings and rules that are derived from divine law, whereas nationalists are more secular and frequently cite laws that have been developed by individuals.

The love, affection, and recollection of a nation's territory, language, culture, history, or race are the roots of nationalism, and these affiliations enable that nation to defend and preserve those qualities. On the other hand, Islamism refers to the politicization of Islam or the introduction of political Islam. The

concepts of nationalism and Islamism, and the relationship between them, have changed over time and conflict with each other as political ideologies. But if we look at Islam just as an institution and religion, we see that nationalism and its values do not conflict with Islamic beliefs. However, the confrontation starts from the point where Islam sees its mission as a universal religion based on the discourse of unity, and at the same time, it rejects nationalism as a factor that imagines division and separation between Muslim nations (Shahramnia et al., 2013: 198).

**Meysam Sefidkhosh, lecturer in philosophy at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran**

I consider religion as a type of rituals and ceremonies. Belief in the infinite can emerge out of this ritual, and it is very profound and humane, and I respect it. Sometimes, however, religion turns to be a carrier of conflict.

There are other Islamic theories and ideas, that consider nationalism as either positive or negative and do not perceive any disagreement, contradiction, or incongruity between Islamic thought and positive nationalism.

One such scholar who holds this view is Morteza Motahhari: Nationalism is not against reason and logic if it only has a positive aspect, i.e., it fosters more cooperation and goodwill, but when it assumes a negative aspect and divides different nationalities, it becomes repugnant (Ibid). Rashid Al-Ghannouchi, the Tunisian thinker also states: 'Unless nationalism is not opposed to Islam as an ideology, it is acceptable, and if nationalism is manifested by the denial of divine sovereignty in the world and the deprivation of man from revelation, this becomes the contradiction between religion and nationalism; like when ethnicity is concerned. In such a context, we follow the order of revelation in the framework of religion and can accept it; that is, every nation and race has a culture that is respected.

In this regard, some Islamic thinkers such as Mohammad Javad Hojjati Kermani, in his book, *The Ideological Boundaries*, attempt to define the concepts and limits of nationalism. After conceptual debates, he divides nationalism into constructive and destructive, where he argues that the contradiction arises if nationalism is used at the same time to fight against colonialism for the independence and freedom of national fields, and on the other hand, when a nation is entirely based on uneducated emotions and the theory of organized nationalism that can turn into destructive power. This is, therefore, a destructive form of nations' excesses. He describes nationalism as an outmoded concept that is opposed to the virtues and splendours of

internationalism. In his view, the Islamic community carries a global mission and must rule over the world and save humanity from captivity, and because our ideology is universal, its goal is to eliminate all conflicts among human societies. Accordingly, its unit of analysis is global. While establishing a human existence and carrying out its universal mission, Islamic theology does not distinguish between the internal and outside worlds. According to some other scholars, the combination of ideology and false political boundaries has been misrepresented and has undermined both.

**Mozafar Ahmady Dastgerdi, managing director of Sahand Gearbox Company, Isfahan**

I respect religion, but in general I do not believe in anything that does not fit with reason. Every time we made religion ideological, we damaged it . . . , like Safavids, and now we are promoting the same.

Nationalism means legitimacy of the government based on the votes of the people, which is within the framework of the law, is sometimes regarded as a form of adherence to the Western liberal system and the rejection of religion, a discourse that has been prominent since the time of the constitution. Thus, a group of ulema during the constitutional uprising, while collaborating with intellectuals to counter Qajar tyranny, had an optimistic view of the idea of nationalism, but this optimism soon became overshadowed by some religious concerns and, after some forms of political tranquillity, the same religious concerns were manipulated by the Pahlavi regime as the ruling alternative ideology, an action that had a profound effect on the conflictual relations between patriotic and religious thought.

The first manifestation of Iranian nationality can be observed in the tobacco movement, an event to ban British tobacco that had a leader who was a religious authority. In Iran, nationalism was first introduced with some inclinations toward liberalism in the constitutional era. However, this was intensified in the reign of Reza Shah who started to celebrate the pre-Islamic civilization of Iran, defining Islam as an aggressive movement against the Iranian nation and undermining Islamic values. The nationalists, by sanctifying the ancient customs and manifestations and trying to reject the Arabic words from the Persian language, as well as reviving the nation against ummah, pursued many cultural efforts with the support of Reza Khan's coercive approaches. Instead of fighting against Western colonialism and their hidden rule over national affairs, they started a full-fledged war with Islam (Basiratmanesh, 1996: 45-51). Early supporters of nationalism, or in other words, the first Iranian students in

Europe, were such figures as Mirza Mulkam Khan, Mirza Aga Khan Nouri, and Fath Ali Akhundzadeh. They defined the dominance of Western teachings as the cause of progress and a solution to the problems of society and emphasized rationalism, anti-religionism, religious tolerance, liberalism, and modernism.

In the era of the second Pahlavi, there was a style of nationalism that could be called positive nationalism, where nationalism was used as a lever against religion. Another form of nationalism, also known as independent nationalism, emerged briefly in Iran during the nationalization movement of the oil industry. When the independence and existence of the country were threatened and the necessary Islamic awakening of the people was achieved, some of the Iranian rulers and intellectuals used ideology to fight against colonialism and foreign domination, but failed to achieve the desired result and imperialism turned the demands towards positive nationalism, this situation remained until the 1979 revolution. Thus, before the revolution in Iran, nationalism took different forms following the changes in society and appeared in a variety of mass, racist, leftist, ethnic, and western forms (Babaei Zarch, 2004: 72).

During the Islamic Revolution, the main ideology was Islam, and nationalism was a faint idea. At the heart of Islamic ideology, the idea that interest in the country and the homeland is not in conflict with Islamic ideology or Islamism was reinforced, resulting in something other than nationalism. In other words, a distinction must be made between patriotism and nationalism, and what manifested itself most during the Islamic Revolution along with Islamic ideology was patriotism rather than nationalism. So, despite the strong history of nationalism in Iran, the existence of such factors as the Islamic Revolution, the religious leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the prominent factor of religion and Islamism after the 1979 Revolution have eliminated the role of nationalism in its negative aspects. Finally, in this view, it is assumed that if there is no confrontation between these two ideas, and the acceptance of positive, moderate and extreme forms of nationalism, also emphasizes the principle of unity of nations instead of nationalism in Islamic thought as well as the importance of the ummah (the desirable form of the nation in Islamic theory), Islamic internationalism is welcomed as an ideology in line with Islamic teachings.

After the Constitutional Revolution, the political power of the ulema in the government apparatus became more marginal and informal, and the constitution required a five-member panel of ulema to be responsible for enforcing parliamentary laws following Islamic law. In practice, the five-member board was not formed, and with the influx of Western ideas, the influence of the clergy diminished while the modernization of Iran intensified. During the reign of Reza Shah, as a result of the modernization of Iran in the Western style, the social position and political influence of the clergy were damaged. The adoption of western laws in various fields reduced the role and importance of Islamic law in social and political life. During the 1940s, with the collapse of the Reza Shahi government, both the socio-political forces as well as the clergies could enter the social field again and the clergies regained some aspects of their lost influence. In the 1950s, the clergy generally had no active political leanings. In this period, prominent scholars such as Ayatollah

Boroujerdi, Ayatollah Shahrestani, and Ayatollah Behbahani stayed away from the political fields. In fact, after the coup d'état of 1953 up to 1963, there was no political rift or conflict between the crown court and the clergy. However, the violation of the constitution and the intensification of the process of modernization in a western way by the crown court from 1963 onwards provoked negative reactions among sections of the clergy, and as a result, a rift was found between the government and religion, which served as one of the most important causes of the 1979 revolution. After the Islamic Revolution, some sections of the ulema and the clergy became more and more organized and took over the government. With the introduction of the idea of Velayat-e-Faqih (the theory that justifies the rule of a high-ranking clergy) and its approval as one of the principles of the new constitution, the state organization acquired a distinctly religious character (Bashirieh, 2006: 141-145).

**Bakhtiari man, 42, Ahvaz**

The idea that politics pervades everything is not a good one. For instance, neither the traditions of Arabs nor Persians nor Turks nor any other ethnic group are in any way political. Politicization has wrecked them.

In general, it can be stated that political movements in Iran have always had one of two national or religious tendencies, and if it has gained some national feature, the opportunity for political power for religion has been limited. In contemporary times, during the Islamic Republic era, there are also limitations and narrow-mindedness towards the prominence and participation of nationalists within the governmental system. Of course, at certain points in history, such as in the case of the nationalization of the oil industry, there were some forms and collaboration and interaction between Mossadegh, the Prime Minister and Ayatollah Kashani, the leading clergy of the time. This was realized in a situation when a common enemy was perceived, but with the need for consensus on minor issues, more prominent differences emerged.<sup>12</sup> In the history of Iran, and especially in the last hundred years, when nationalist tendencies have found prominence, the elites of this discourse have milder religiously tendencies and they were more attempting to align their nationalist

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<sup>12</sup> To read more about this, see: Homayun Katouzian (2000), *Mossadegh and the Battle of Power* (translated by Ahmad Tadayyon), Tehran: Rasa; Yervand Abrahamian (1999), *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (translated by Golmohammadi), Tehran, Nei Publications.



tendencies with Western modernity and to stay away from a religion that has always been associated with tradition and historical past.

**Mozafar Ahmady Dastgerdi, managing director of Sahand Gearbox Company, Isfahan**

I have always felt that I am first an Iranian and then a Muslim. Although I have a lot of respect for both.

On the other hand, until about fifty years ago, religious clerics did not enter into the territorial discourse and the view of the religious Imamate in nationalistic terms, and their main activity was to oppose the theory of nationalist modernity. But with the Islamic Revolution and the rule of the religious Imamate in a national form, they gained power and consequently, they took longer steps in the implementation of religious ideas. Therefore, the concept of nationalism lost its original power. The results obtained from interviews with ethnic groups in the present study also indicate the tendency of people to one of the two national or religious fronts. There is an official party called Islamic-National Front, but among the interviewed people, this form of hybrid identity had no considerable share. Besides this, some of the interviewees indicated some form of trans-national and trans-religious attitudes.

### *Perpetual peace*

Perpetual peace is a state of affairs in which peace is permanently established in a region. Justice-based stable peace is equivalent to a just peace. For its realization, therefore, just methods need to be found to resolve crises through revolutionary diplomacy, and their implementation should be emphasized. The concept of stable peace was introduced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in an essay entitled *Project for Stable Peace*, which was published anonymously. However, the concept was neglected until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The term *stable peace* was acknowledged in Europe after Immanuel Kant's *Stable Peace* essay was published.

**Peymane Rowshanzade, gynecologist and writer from Semnan**

And the umbrella that should be there over Iran is the Iranian identity, and everyone is free to follow his religion. One cannot claim that he is superior. No ethnic group can.

Stable peace cannot be achieved without the establishment of a republican system, with three independent components: governmental, legislative, and judiciary. However, this can be realized provided that there is rationality, the dominance of justice, intellectual maturity, ethical conduct, and the adoption of power based on the law. According to Kant, stable peace is like a child born in an instant, but it takes years to mature through care and education. The hierarchy presented by him to express the requirements for the realization of stable peace suggests that he seeks peace first at 'home' and then 'beyond the borders'. Kant argues that the persistence of normal conditions for governments, anarchy, and conflict of interest leads to wars. He also suggests that the solution is to establish and join a global federation (Mir Mohammadi, 2011: p. 124).

There were also individuals in this study, particularly among the elite, who believed in the unity of all Iranians' identities. From their point of view, identity-seeking is considered contrary to peace and cosmopolitanism.

**Akbar Yadegari, painter, writer, and theater director, Semnan**

It makes no difference. Man lives in a huge complex known as the world, and anything that happens affects everyone. Therefore, I should not differentiate myself from others as a holder of a distinct identity.

**3.1.2. Interaction or opposition: Religious identity and national identity**

The political orientations within the country have always been concerned with either the national or the religious aspect. In the history of Iran, particularly in the past one hundred years, during which nationalist orientations have gained ground, the discourse elite has hardly exhibited religious concern, trying instead to align their nationalist orientations with Western modernity while avoiding religion, which constantly brings orientation toward tradition and history to mind. On the other hand, the clergy did not have much presence in politics until about fifty years ago and attempted mainly to oppose views involving modernity and nationalism. However, after the Islamic Revolution and the dominance of the Imamate perspective in the structure of the national political system, the clergy acquired political power. They then made efforts mainly to develop religious thought, and nationalism lost the opportunity that it used to have to gain power. The results obtained from interviews with two social groups (the elite and the general public) indicated their orientation toward either national or religious attitudes. What has been termed a national-religious attitude, i.e. an aggregation of both orientations in an individual, a group, or a party, was hardly observed among the interviewees.



**Shahin Sepanta, cultural activist,  
Isfahan**

Iranian customs are divided into two categories: national and religious. A fan, promoter, and defender of the national category, I have been working in the field for about twenty years, and I am about to have a book published entitled 'Iranian Feasts....' As for religious customs, it is not the case that I am against them; after all, part of our society is religious, which is respected and cannot be opposed if we believe in freedom of thought

Rather than weakening and eliminating national thought, the adoption of such a policy resulted in further attenuation of religious thought, as evidenced by the observations. Unlike in the early years following the Revolution, when a highly religious atmosphere had dominated the entire country, and mosques and public places were full of interested youngsters enthusiastic about holding religious rituals, there is not much religious atmosphere today, and mosques and other religious places are becoming less crowded every day, with fewer youngsters showing up. Furthermore, the roads leading to Shiraz and Pasargadae get filled now with youngster fond of several thousand years of civilization on Cyrus' birthday, unlike in the early years after the Revolution, when there was not much discussion of the history of ancient times and historical figures.

**Javad Hesari, journalist and sociopolitical activist, Mashhad (Razavi  
Khorasan Province)**

Religious orientations are not in conflict with national issues. In case of an opposition, however, religious issues are more vulnerable than those concerning ethnicity and identity.

In addition, a group thinking beyond the above dichotomy, *i.e.* that between religious and national identity, have considered a modern type of identity, according to citizens' characteristics and social positions in modern life.

**Yahya Shari'atniya, lawyer and legal advisor, Tehran**

These are not national customs, and everyone performs them in his way, in a common name only. They have been transformed throughout history, which is true also of religious customs. Before university, I studied at the seminary, where I had easy access to references, and realized that what is there in religion has been made up. I have already gone through such things.

The results obtained from this study suggest that different social identities contain a common cultural context apart from theirs that takes on the form of a nation, on which basis all the involved ethnic groups define themselves within the framework of national-Iranian identity.

The dominant thought<sup>13</sup> is that the remaining ethnic groups consider themselves Aryans, who have immigrated to Iran in three major waves, called the Median, Persian, and Parthian. These are the Iranian families, mixed throughout millennia.

**Aziz Ne'mati, poet and linguist, Urmia, West Azerbaijan**

We, Iranians, speak languages of the same origin, except for the Arabic language; all the others are rooted in Pahlavi, including Arsacid Pahlavi and Ancient Pahlavi, or Avesta Pahlavi.

In *ethnocentrism where ethnicity is praised*, culture, language, descent, race, religion, and culture are of high value to people living in the society, while a passive view is held of those of other ethnic groups. In this view, ethnic identity is silent rather than following national identity. This kind of behaviour is

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<sup>13</sup> There is another view in this regard, which does not confirm the idea of Iranian ethnic groups' immigration about three thousand years ago, assuming instead a history of 6-7 thousand years, with the ethnic group being a major native of the Iranian Plateau.

manifested mainly in the Arab ethnic group, regarded by most others as separate from the national texture of the country.

Another view noticed particularly among the elite investigated in this study, concerns approaches based on human interests in the world. These cosmopolitan orientations often accompany nationalist ones but along with human benefits in the world.

**Payam Dorfeshan, lawyer and civil rights activist from Tehran**

We should approve of nationalism. It is an effective, important parameter. In addition, I have always tried to adopt a cosmopolitan view. We should approve of nationalism while having in mind all human beings' common interests. This is an issue neglected by many global superpowers.

This approach is present also concerning ethnic groups. This means that individuals with modernist thought potentials hold super-ethnic, super-national views of social issues and human relations, and organize their individual and social actions on that basis.

**Rasul Nami, carpet designer, Tabriz**

Lands and geographic borders do not determine humanity. I would like to get acquainted with any human being from any ethnic group with goodwill.

**Abdolghader Savari, researcher, Khuzestan**

When I was at the University of Tehran, my non-Iranian Arab friends would refer to me as an Arab and to others as Iranians, which meant that we were part of a different identity.

In Iran, with plenty of ethnic and religious diversity, the lack of common norms and ethnic discrimination has attenuated national solidarity and integrity, resulting in the *ethnocentrism phenomenon*. Ethnocentrism is a kind of cultural conception according to which the members of an ethnic group consider their values, norms, and lifestyles as superior to those of other ethnic groups, which they judge based on predetermined views. For this reason, *ethnocentrism* is regarded as a cultural barrier in a multi-ethnic society to the formation and expansion of inter-ethnic relations. On the one hand, it attenuates social, cultural, and economic coexistence relations; on the other hand, it intensifies relations involving conflict between ethnic groups. At the same time,

ethnocentrism prevents diversity in collective (ethnic) identity in the network of inter-ethnic relations.

Figures bellow indicate the number of ethnic ties. Accordingly, 53.9% of the elite stated that they had plenty of contact with other ethnic groups, and 28.9% said that they had less contact. Among the general public, there have been fewer ethnic ties, where 55.4% have had no ethnic ties, and 37.3% have had little.

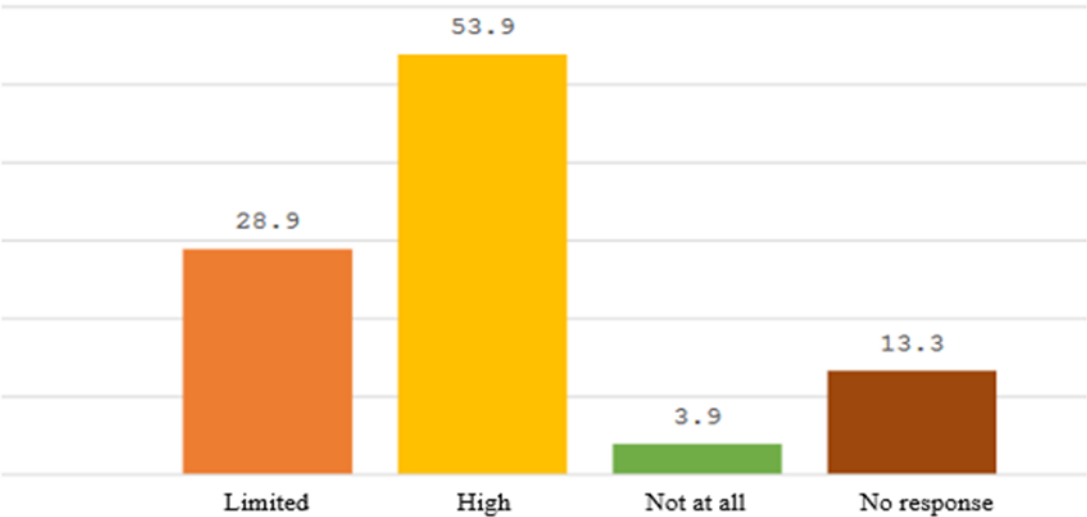


Figure 5 ethnic relationships according to elites

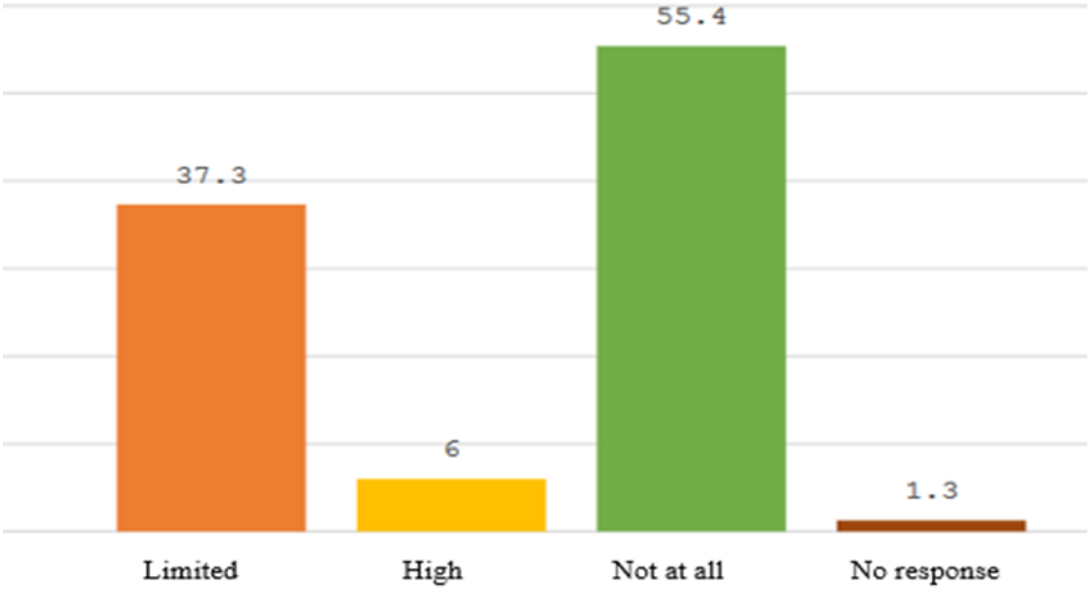


Figure 6 ethnic relationships according to general people

Before the 1979 Revolution, the first and second Pahlavi governments emphasized the national approach by celebrating various occasions, while religion was in the margins. With the rise of the Islamic Revolution, however, the dominance of Islamic norms in the public cultural, social, and political fields caused new socialization in Iran (Bowen, 2015: p. 2).

The results obtained in the present study also indicate the preference of the Islamic over the national strategy throughout these years and sometimes the respondents' regret for neglect of the national aspect of Iranians' collective identity. From the revolutionaries' point of view, nationalism is a kind of materialistic school based on polytheistic elements, which have always emerged to compete against Islamist ideas and thoughts based on the unity of the Islamic nation. In contrast, they have emphasized religious guardianship and Imamate, observance of moral and traditional values, political elitism, and cultural control. Finally, the dominance of the above discourse in the country has revolutionized all the fields of economy, politics, culture, and society.

**Ashkan Zare'i, cultural and heritage activist and writer, Khuzestan**

Iranian culture has two wings: Iranian identity, with thousands of years of history, and Islamic identity, with a history of 1400 years. Both wings should be preserved. The cultural ego death or alienation observed after the Revolution is a consequence of the improper teachings on Islamic identity and the lack of teachings on Iranian identity.

It can be stated that each of the Iranian and Islamic strategies has sometimes been dominant as ideological issues, while one of them has been ignored, both before and after the Revolution, despite Mohammad Khatami's reformist efforts and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his associates' discussions on the Iranian school.



**Fateme (Kazhal) Hawas Beygi,  
university lecturer and cultural  
activist, Ilam**

Since the reign of Reza Shah, particularly since 1966, our cultural policies have never been in line with the people's concerns and needs. They have been based, instead, on the ideals and ideology of the systems.

In religious thought, the Islamic society is regarded as a single nation, and geographic borders are of secondary importance. In this view, national historical figures and events do not matter much either, and the ways of life of the Islamic prophet and Imams are investigated rather than those of people like Cyrus. Thus, the annual commemoration of Cyrus is prevented, and there is little sign of historical celebrations such as Mehregan and Sedeh. Instead, religious ceremonies such as those of *Muharram* and *Safar* and *Sha'ban* feasts have gained ground.

Contrary to the above governance policies, the core of the society exhibits different behaviour patterns, and the results obtained in this study indicate that the relationship between Iranian identity and religion has different aspects among different Iranian ethnic groups. In other words, it cannot be stated definitely which of the above discourses is prioritized in the examined social groups, including the Persian, the Kurd, and the Azari, and each has its followers, with the individuals in the groups distributed between the two approaches, where those in the national group do not have religious concerns, and the religious individuals do not care much about ethnicity and nationality, preferably thinking in the framework of the Islamic nation. In many cases, there is a kind of coexistence between the two. After all, it can be stated concerning the Arabs and, particularly, the Baloch that the Islamic strategy can be considered a priority in their regions, and it prevails over the Iranian strategy.



**Basim Hammadi, researcher in the Arab ethnic rituals and music and university lecturer, Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province**

We have absolutely no Chaharshanbe Suri, and it is not part of our culture at all. We do not have Haft-sin, but consider it as a national feast. We do not believe in Sizdah Be-dar, but we go out in keeping with others. However, we respect Nowruz as the beginning of a new year and a national feast, while our most important feast is Eid al-Fitr, followed by *Eid al-Adha* and *Eid al-Ghadir*. We are so enthusiastic on the days of Muharram, particularly in recent years, where people compete in mourning highly esteemed among them.

The existence of such ideological objectives has caused religious minorities to feel dissatisfied in many cases, believing that their rights have not been taken into account sufficiently in the law. In other cases, they may think that their rights have been suppressed due to the ideological framework dominating government officials, while there is no problem with the law.

Along the same lines, financial compensation for a non-Muslim victim used to be one-twentieth that of a Muslim victim until fifteen years ago. As a result of such policies, even government institutions have prevented Zoroastrians from entering the city council within the past few years, exemplified by the treatment of Sepanta Niknam, elected for the Yazd City Council, demonstrating the traditional thoughts that dominate the Islamic Republic of Iran's institutions. Another case concerned Karen Vafadari, a prisoned Zoroastrian most of whose property was confiscated. He wrote in a letter to his fellow believers that they should not expect their rights as citizens to be respected. The results obtained in this study also indicate the existence of ideological views, failing to properly utilize the capabilities of the elite and their marginalization and exclusion from the core of society.

**Amir Nabavi, university lecturer and researcher in political science, Tehran**

The ideological views present all around the society leave the elite inefficient and marginalized.

Apart from the above religious minorities, the Sunni minority has always reacted to cases of ideological policies adopted by the government as a result of the official status of Shia, imposing restrictions against them. They have complained

about issues such as the lack of mosques in Tehran and the restrictions on some religious leaders'; travel outside the province or the country.

The Baha'i community is in worse conditions than all the other religious minorities in Iran. Government authorities refer to them as 'followers of the misled sect,' and have opposed them since the early years after the Revolution.

In the ideological government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where Shia has been recognized as the official religion, not only followers of non-Islamic religions, such as the Baha'i but also other Islamic groups, *i.e.* the Sunni community, complain about discrimination. According to the interviews, some of them, youngsters, in particular, cannot acquire appropriate administrative positions concerning their knowledge and academic expertise, and they have been deprived of equal opportunities to work. Furthermore, the dervish community, who are considered Shiite Muslims, have complained about inequality, as exemplified by the way they were treated by the government treatment of them can be seen in last year's protests in Tehran, as a result of which many security forces and dervishes were killed. According to the obtained results, such ideological policies have caused the elite to distance themselves from various economic, social, and cultural fields, intensifying the underdevelopment of ethnic group residences.

**Jalal Jalalizade, religious activist, lecturer at the University of Tehran and former member of the parliament, Sanandaj**

Unfortunately, the Kurd complain about discrimination, as government is in the hands of a particular religion, which is meant to be applied to all customs, ceremonies, assemblies, institutions, and government organizations. This religious gap has wasted many of the Sunni's economic, social, and cultural talents, and I think it is the hugest barrier to Iran's development, particularly to the Sunni Kurd's growth and progress.

In Iran, religious minorities consider the recognition of Ja'fari Shia as discrimination against them. This religious gap and discrimination have sometimes encouraged the formation of violent behaviours in different ways. As defined by the United Nations, religious discrimination is discrimination that is imposed on a person because of his religion. It can be reflected in the economy, occupation, society, welfare, *etc.* This type of discrimination may cause the victim to be arrested or killed in very severe cases.

Many argue that religious discrimination and gap have originated from the spirit of the Constitution. This can be exemplified by the impossibility for minorities

to be elected as the leader or a member of the Assembly of Experts, as asserted in Article 107. Accordingly, only a few of the Shia clergy have the right under certain conditions. The prohibition of access to all political, managerial, and judicial positions at all levels provides further examples. Article 115 of the Constitution has granted the right of candidacy only to religious and political figures. A particular part of Article 121, on the President's oath, identifies him as the guardian of the official religion. According to Article 64 of the Constitution, on membership in the Assembly of Experts, the Islamic Consultative Assembly admits no representatives from unrecognized minorities.

Figures below show the religious gap and discrimination in Iran from the perspective of the elite and general public interviewees. From the general public's point of view and, more significantly, of the elite, Iranian ethnic groups are subject to discrimination in terms of religion, and there are huge gaps between the religions.

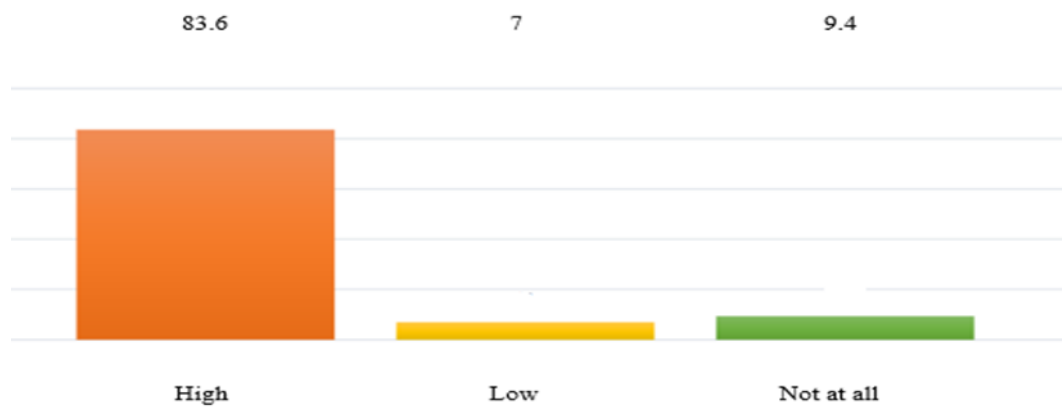


Figure 7 Religious gaps and discrimination according to elites

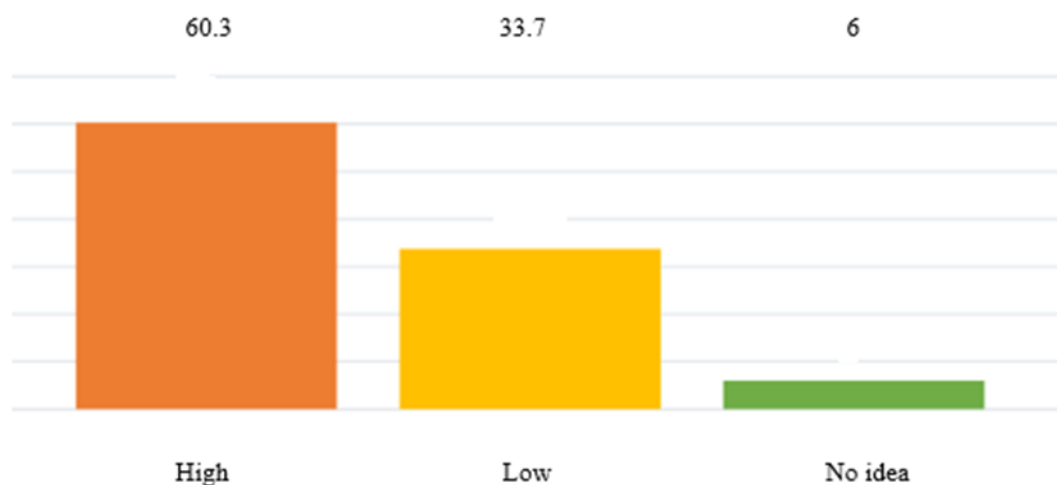


Figure 8 religious gaps and discrimination according to general people

Another issue, which has become problematic, particularly in recent years, is that of women's *hijab*, where women cannot appear in public places without a *hijab* or the minimum adherence to the fundamental norms set by the law. This is true even of foreign tourists, who are also forced to wear scarves and longer clothes providing sufficient coverage as soon as they enter Iran. This ideological view harms the country's tourism industry and also causes economic problems.



**Javad Tariri, lawyer, writer and political activist, Khuzestan**

A Muslim woman may be forced to wear hijab, but why should foreign tourists? This cannot be explained in terms of jurisprudence, which shows that they believe in jurisprudence as long as it is to their advantage. Why are we harming the tourism industry? The field of religion is highly polarized and atomized.

On many occasions, religious groups such as the Yarsanis, living mostly in Kermanshah, and the Baha'is, neither of whom are followers of official religions, have been severely treated, representing discrimination against minorities.

The existence of such ideological purposes can jeopardize security in the country, as observed in the cases of Gonabad dervishes in Tehran, military operations performed every once in a while in Balochistan, the assassination of urban authorities such as Imam Jumu'ahs in Kurdistan, and the invasion of the Parliament in 2017.

Throughout history, symbols have been associated with popular cultures, to the extent that there is no choice in many cases for understanding a culture without understanding its symbols. A skilful ethnographer or anthropologist should be an experienced symbolist. Aware of this, various ethnic groups try to express their identities through their particular ethnic symbols, thereby protesting, in some cases, against high-ranking government authorities. This is manifested, for instance, by local costumes worn in special ceremonies or global and regional occasions, when different ethnic groups try to differentiate themselves from the majority of the society and resist assimilation policies. Other cases of the utilization of symbols include the use of particular colours in writing and

particular neck scarves. Of course, the government also opposes these symbols sometimes. Followers of these groups, however, believe that the colours are not used for specific purposes, and criticize the government's opposition. This symbolism dates back far in history and has been shaped beyond the control of present-day people. Local calendars and particular numbers and months used in them and the literature and colloquial conversations are other cases of symbols representing particular identities.

**Seyyed Abdoslam Mahmudiyani, clergy and religious activist,  
Sardasht, West Azerbaijan**

It is like crossing an important red line to discuss a national-ethnic issue on Fridays, and I myself was interrogated, for example, simply for a mention of the 2717 Kurdish year in Friday prayers. I had to explain why I was using a Kurdish timeline!

Further applications of symbols include holding local and regional ceremonies and giving children certain names or naming them after local celebrities or historical events. In some cases, ethnic groups resist the government's official naming of passages, using a different name of their choice in colloquial language. Moreover, the Sunni minority acts contrary to the official calendar of the country and in line with the Sunni countries in the region upon the announcements of the beginning of *Ramadan*, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. Another symbol, which has turned into a prominent sign of the Kurdish protestant movement in recent years, is a region-wide holiday for all businesses, exhibiting their opposition to government policies and their loyalty to their particular identity.

Some symbols play an integrative role; the green-white-red flag is an official symbol of the country. Although the flag has changed over time, the integrity of the three colours has been retained. The national anthem is another official symbol, which has, of course, changed three times so far. These official symbols are other factors that can bring the various ethnic groups under the umbrella of solidarity.

**Abdolhamid Irannezhad, retired teacher, cultural activist, and researcher from Sistan and Balochistan**

I am related to the Persian as an Iranian, sharing with them language and culture, and we are identified as being under the same flag. I recognize them all as fellow countrymen, and respect their beliefs.



Different ethnic groups can become acquainted and linked through the celebration of rituals and occasions throughout the year, including national ceremonies such as the ancient Nowruz feast and religious ceremonies such as the Islamic prophet's birthday, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha.

The domestic symbols of Iran, through which the government can help unite the Iranian society, can perhaps be divided into three groups. Symbols such as Nowruz, Chaharshanbe Suri, Mehregan, and Yalda are ancient, dating back to ages ago, and are rooted mainly in the myths of ancient Iran and the region. The second group includes Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Ghadir, the Islamic prophet's birthday, Muharram, the anniversaries of Shia Imams' martyrdom, *etc.*, concerning rituals that originate from religious thought. The third group of symbols pertains to the contemporary era, resulting from the reign of the Islamic Republic. This includes ceremonies such as the *Fajr* decade, the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the processions on 13 Aban (3 November) and *Quds* Day, 9 Dey (29 December), and the flag and the anthem of the Islamic Republic. The question that is raised here concerns the extent to which the government has been successful in the application of these factors to achieve national solidarity.

### Cultural borders

Culture is an important factor that differentiates social groups from each other, and sets boundaries between social groups accordingly. It includes historical traditions, based on which each collective identity is made up and connected to its past. Clothing, music, and body treatment are among the features that people try to exhibit through prejudice to realize their identity and thus distinguish themselves from other social identities. On that basis, an attempt will be made in the discussion of tradition as ethnicity to examine the amount of prejudice in

the social groups under study and the role that historical traditions can play in this redefinition.

**Gholamreza Jafari, environmental activist, Naqadeh, West  
Azerbaijan**

Culture can be defined as things that a person lives, works, and gets married by. The culture of each ethnic group is valuable to them. Most of it is acquired from ancestors, and the rest is obtained from historical texts and studies.

According to the obtained results, many Persian speakers have mainly global or national attitudes toward the definition of their identity bases and believe that identity cannot be sought in the modern world based on traditional features.



*Katayoun Riahi, an actress from Tehran*

I pursue forty per cent of the customs as people in the past did, but my personal beliefs affect this in any case.

Mullah Ahmad Bahrami, religious-social activist and former parliament member from Javanrud (Kermanshah Province)

I think that any nation wishes in principle to preserve all its ethnic customs, continue this way of life, and introduce itself to other nations. Why is it that Benazir Bhutto, the Prime Minister of a country with 190 million people comes to Tehran in Pakistani clothes, and there is no problem? Why is it that Ashraf Ghani wears clothes like those of ordinary people in his country? Why is it that Iranian rulers wear the same clothes as they have had, living in their seminary rooms with no responsibility while retaining those clothes? Why shouldn't I retain my ethnic clothes and customs, of which I am proud as my national identity?!

### **3.1.3. The role of the mother tongue**

The world today is a world of extinctions, not only the extinction of animal and biological species, but also various linguistic and cultural species, and languages are disappearing one after another. In the United States, centuries of genocide, forced migration, persecution, and forced integration of local and indigenous peoples have left only a few strong languages out of about 300 indigenous languages. This continues to the extent that some 50 are now considered extinct; that is, they have less than ten living speakers.

Today, more than 70% of the world's scientific content is published in English, and the five major languages of the world have a monopoly on more than 90% of the production of scientific content. Major international languages such as English, French, and Spanish are rich in complexity and structure due to their global position, and no dialectal languages can compete with them in the world of science, communication, and culture. Thus, integration is prioritized over the recognition of differences (Peivandi, 2010).

Many Iranian provinces, in the past, had a wide range of diverse languages and dialects that are often either extinct or on the verge of extinction.



**Rahim Mousavi, retired theater director, Semnan**

You cannot find an under-40 in Semnan who knows Semnan. Most of the languages in this area are extinct.

**Saadoun Mazuchi, civil and political activist, Mahabad, Western Azerbaijan**

We do not have the right to education in our mother tongue, but we demand it as a right as this is reflected in the constitution of the country, but it has not been realized and this is related to the will of different administrations that came to power during the history of the Islamic Republic. None of them had a strong enough will to implement this principle of the constitution, and however, this right was not demanded.

The importance of the mother tongue as the first language through which a person becomes acquainted with the external world is very apparent in the socialization and development of the individual. Linguists have estimated the possibility of the extinction of 40% of languages in the near future.

Accordingly, the United Nations and UNESCO have developed a plan to preserve existing languages and have designated February 21 as World Mother Language Day. Bangladesh was the first country to submit this proposal to UNESCO in 1999, an idea that was then approved by the representatives of the member states. The demand for education in the mother tongue by Iranian ethnic groups reaches its peak every year on this day, as most specifically expressed in social media and cyberspaces.

It can be concluded in general that the examined Persian speakers define their 'we-identity' mainly beyond the local, traditional realm, and ethnocultural characteristics that are true of other ethnic groups are therefore inapplicable to them, so they cannot be defined as a specific ethnic group. Accordingly, they have been referred to in this section mainly as Persian speakers rather than an ethnic group; the concept of Persian speakers has been used for them. We-identity is more restricted for the Kurd, Azari, Baloch, and Arab than for the Persian, and traditional customs and rituals are prioritized by people in these ethnic groups, who have admitted some modern age manifestations. Their efforts to maintain traditional and historical thoughts have brought about a gap between them and other social identities around the country, making them distinct and distinguished.

In today's world, language can turn into a political issue between dominant and dominated groups as a cultural notion. The results of the present study also indicate the politicization of the mother tongue; that is, ethnic groups, associate their deprivation of education in the mother tongue with the government and believe that they should continue demanding it from the political system of the country until it is realized because they will be assimilated to speakers of the official language if such demand and resistance does not take shape.

*Sa'dun Mazuchi, civil rights and political activist from Mahabad (West Azerbaijan Province)*

We do not have the right of education in our mother tongue, but demand it as a right, as reflected in the Constitution of Iran though not realized. This results from the lack of determination in the different governments during the history of the Islamic Republic, none of which was determined to implement this article of the Constitution, and the right has not been demanded either in any case.

For the mother tongue, the history of Iran shows that the centralist approach with an emphasis on the Persian language and restrictions imposed on ethnic minorities has been dominant after the Constitutional Revolution and during the first and second Pahlavi eras. All the laws that existed at that time were aimed at the development of Persian literature and orthography, disregarding the ethnic languages.

This policy was pursued with far greater precision after the Islamic Revolution. Following the registration of companies with Azari names (such as Galin Gaz), for example, and the promotion of their goods on the national radio and television, the members of the parliament held a meeting on 2 October 1996, a while after the advertisements were broadcast, and legislated the prohibition of broadcasting commercials for goods with trade names in the foreign language of Turkish.

Figures bellow show the attitudes of the elite and the general public toward the legitimacy of education in the mother tongue. Accordingly, 85.9% of the elite

and 63.9% of the general public believed that education in the mother tongue was a legitimate right, while 14.1% of the elite and 15.7% of the general public disagreed with the legitimacy of education in the mother tongue.

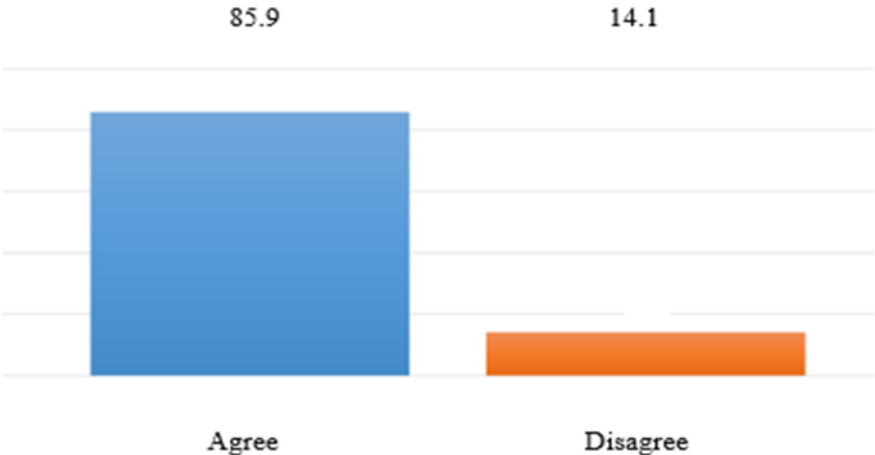


Figure 9 legitimacy of learning in the mother tongue according to elites

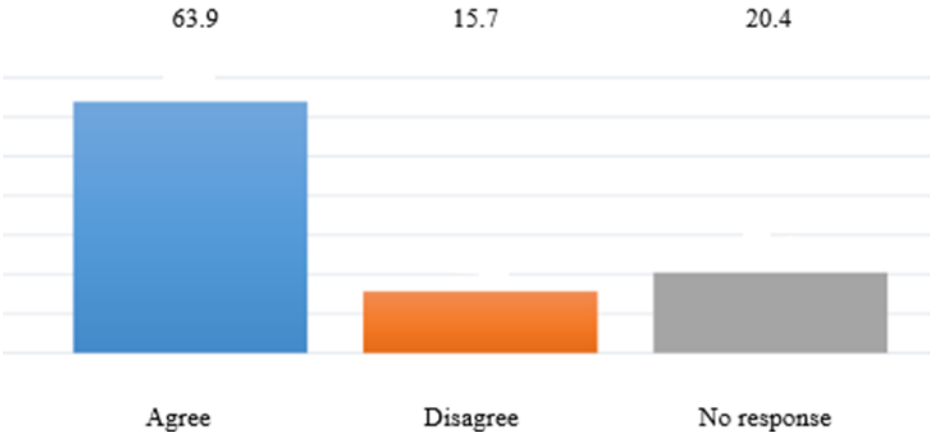


Figure 10 legitimacy of learning in the mother tongue according to general people

The data obtained from the interviews with different participants from the collective identities examined in this study indicate that children’s deprivation of the right to education in their mother tongue, especially in the first years of school, interferes with their learning. Before school, *i.e.* the age of seven, these children have been speaking in their mother tongues in their families and neighbourhoods, and the primary formal, written instruction has been provided to them in Persian upon entrance into school. Since they have not spoken Persian until then, this certainly interferes with their learning process and postpones it.

### **Amir Sajjadi, history teacher from, Saqqez, Kurdistan Province**

If you accept as a principle that Iran is multi-ethnic, it will be a natural consequent principle that everyone should speak their ethnic language. As stated by Mohsen Renani, a professor of political economics in Isfahan, bilinguals who do not have the right to education in their mother tongues have difficulty in learning, and suffer the issue of learning latency, resulting from an educational duality, which reduces the quality of learning. Furthermore, this is a natural, innate human right, and experiences from other countries, such as Switzerland, shows that linguistic diversity does not cause disintegration or separation.



Given the content of the interviewees' statements, which emphasize the significance of teaching in the mother tongue, it can be concluded that there should be provisions for the cultural and linguistic policies of the ethnic groups in government infrastructure, government structure, and supranational bodies. Without a clear language policy, all of these institutions will be flawed and in crisis. Those who want to downgrade the significance of language as a means of simple conversation and communication ignore the results of sociological, psychological, and neurobiological research. Language is not just a few thousand words with a specific method of pronunciation, but in a world where human beings live, languages are both the containers and the sites of production of meaning and identity. It contains the meaning of the lives of the people that speak it and communicate with it and carries their culture and history. Thus, education must be based on the mother tongue for quality education to take place and for intergenerational transmission of cultural experiences to happen.

Children will have better educational outcomes when they are taught in their mother tongue.

**Salahuddin Khadiv, civil activist and journalist, Mahabad,  
West Azerbaijan**

This is a natural right. Linguists know better than anyone that language is not just a means of communication, but a means of thinking. Many forms of cultural production are not possible without a native language to think about it. In psychiatry, counseling should only be given in the mother tongue. The delay in this regard is politically motivated by the regime.

Language is the identity of the individual and the society in which the individual works and lives. Language is a cultural entity and should be explained from a cultural perspective. If linguistic diversity is suppressed under the banner of politics and security, then national security, the cohesion of Iranian society, national unity, and consequently, the territorial integrity of the country will be damaged. The culmination of Scotland's independence movements is closely linked to the irrational behaviour of Margaret Thatcher; just as Franco's chauvinist dictatorship incited Catalan nationalism, as former Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich and Vladimir Putin and his predecessors are responsible for extreme nationalism in Ukraine. All these experiences suggest that language should be considered in the context of civil rights and not as a political issue.

Language should not be considered a myth. Turning language into a matter of myth causes individuals and ethnic and linguistic groups to define their language as a weapon against others. When a language is destroyed, so will the history, culture, and society around it will vanish. With the disappearance of a language, part of the cultural heritage of all humanity is lost. For this reason, the importance of the mother tongue among the Iranian ethnic groups means the importance of a large part of Iranian culture and humanity. Therefore, it is suggested that in the same way that we see the teaching of Arabic (as a religious and Islamic language) and English (as an international language) to children in schools in the education system of the country, attention should be paid to teaching children in their mother tongue and mother tongue deserves to be the subject of professional academic course for all those who are interested.

The idea of a single Islamic nation is of great significance in the political system of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is explicitly stated in the Constitution, and its importance and necessity have been confirmed by many, who have emphasized the religious principles and great Islamic names' behaviour. From the perspective of many scholars and believers, the notion of government-nation is still invalid, and the concept of Islamic government takes precedence over any other. Within the framework of these peoples' worldviews and attitudes, what is happening in the Islamic world is interpreted in terms of governance rather than nation-government. On the other hand, many do not believe in this kind of worldview and criticize the government policies by emphasizing the concept of the nation throughout the Iranian land. These people feel discontent with the government's foreign policy, *i.e.* the financial and living costs for defending Muslims around the world, arguing that it is unreasonable that the government should spend its capital and resources on other countries and prefer the original nation's interest to the Islamic nation's while Iranians themselves are in economic, social, welfare, cultural, and other sorts of trouble.

**Abdorrashid Triz, Mawlawi, history researcher, and socio-political activist from Sistan and Balochistan**

The government seeks to expand its religion, and consumes many of our resources in other countries for its promotion. In Balochistan, you see sheds used as schools. Those who are studying there are Iranians.... The government has spent large amounts in Lebanon, which could have led to progress in Balochistan as in other provinces if spent there. However, the money goes to a foreign Arabic country, such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, for religious reasons, regardless of people's welfare conditions.... As an Iranian, I expect greater concern for those inside the country than for those outside. Investment should be made inside the country, and people should be cared about.

An issue that has always been discussed by ethnic groups, particularly by *pan-*groups, in which group the collective identity of the original natives of a region is associated with, where each of the people argues that they are the main owners of the region according to the history, the names given to different regions, and the oral literature and that others are immigrants, who have entered the region later. Accordingly, each group claims ownership of the land in that region, leading to fundamental disputes between the ethnic groups.

**Meysam Sefid Khosh, Lecturer of Philosophy at Shahid Beheshti University-Tehran**

De-ethnicization took place under the influence of an urban dispute between the Dezfuli and the Lur. Since the late Pahlavi era, the Lu immigrated to Dezful, and lived on the outskirts.

My whole childhood was affected in terms of values by the conflict between these two groups, which had impacts even on the political attitudes adopted in Dezful.

Land ownership and the identity-based sense of belonging of the original natives of each part of the Iranian land has turned into a controversial issue in the past few decades. This is evident in people's feedback on an ethnic post on the Internet or in a discussion between youngsters. As explained above, the issue is more prevalent in provinces with mixed population compositions, such as West Azarbaijan and Khuzestan, where a group of people from one ethnic group may argue that the region belonged to them in principle by finding a word from their language in another or the name of a region, city, or village, and those other residents there today are immigrants, who have occupied the region.

If various ethnic groups and religious minorities reside in the most important strategic regions of a country and those near the borders, with their social and cultural backgrounds located across the borders and without national governance and influence, due to their communication and connection with people there, any external issue or crisis will easily spread into the country, dramatically reducing the government's capability of monitoring the region. The obtained results also demonstrate that ethnic groups have a constant look at the borders and the same ethnic groups across them.

**Karim Bakhsh Kordi Tamandani, socio-political activist, Iranshahr, Sistan and Balochistan Province**

Before the UK entered the subcontinent, there has been a single Balochistan with a government called the Kalat government, which is in modern Pakistan. Once the UK entered, they divided the region, leaving part of Balochistan to India and Pakistan, part of it to Afghanistan, and the other part to Iran. Many of our relatives are now in Pakistan, and we are in contact with them, because we cannot avoid this at all. The sense of ethnic and linguistic closeness and solidarity is there, and the Baloch, whether here, in Pakistan, or in Afghanistan, are hopeful to become united one day.

Threats that arise from borders crossing ethnic groups can be summarized as separatism. The settlement of different ethnic groups near the borders and in

the vicinity of countries with the same languages has provided the potential for the occurrence of ethnic crises near the borders. The Azari are an example of homogeneity across the borders in terms of language, ethnicity, and religion and just religious homogeneity with the centre. Kurdistan Province, southern West Azarbaijan Province, and certain regions in Kermanshah Province and Hawraman are different from the centre in the above factors, shared with those beyond the border. The Balochestan regions of Iran and Pakistan exhibit homogeneity in terms of language, ethnicity, and religion.

Iranian rulers' policy against the identity-seeking movements of different ethnic groups, most of which has of course been violent, has been more coercive, ending in suppression and execution. This has always caused the rebellion to start from another point and the process to continue constantly. Accordingly, it makes sense for the rulers to consider the demands of the identity groups, naturally rising from the heart of the society, once a protestant process ends, because many of these are civil demands, and can be resolved through negotiation.

To summarize, it can be stated that the ethnic groups in Iran, who reside mainly along the borders, share language, ethnicity, and religion with those in the neighbouring countries, which has led the two groups to pursue news about each other closely and to become happy or sad upon each other's joy or sorrow. Kinship has long existed between people from two countries with the same collective identity, and the existence of these similarities and family relationships has led in many cases to the marriage of youngsters on the two sides of the borders and the formation of new kinship and business.

#### **3.1.4. Connection or disconnection: Background of Iranian identity**

Iran's neighbours include ethnic groups such as the Arab, the Azari, and the Afghan, each with their historical and cultural background. However, Iranians have always regarded their history as more honourable, finding themselves superior to the people in the neighbouring countries. The results obtained from this research also confirm this kind of sense of superiority, part of which can be accounted for by the history and the sense of honour that is there concerning figures like Cyrus and Zoroaster and their realms and doctrines. This sense of superiority can be observed also in the ethnic groups under investigation, each arguing that they have been the primary followers of Zoroastrianism and that they have sacrificed their lives in confrontation with the Arab invasion and prevented foreigners from dominating and controlling the territory. This historical sense of honour of the past was reflected in the 2017 and 2018 street protests, with slogans in praise of the Pahlavi government. Accordingly, it can be stated that there is a greater concern for the history of the ancient land than focusing on the future.

Some sort of narcissism concerning a grandiose Iran is common in Iranian society with a historical origin. This socio-cultural anomaly can be seen with a review of historical texts, literary books, speeches and writings of certain politicians and intellectuals, and cyberspace. In volume 42 of the *Mehrnameh*



monthly, Dr Mostafa Malekian<sup>14</sup> describes the manifestations of historical narcissism, where he asserts that narcissism can sometimes be collective and intellectual rather than individual. According to him, Ferdowsi, who has claimed that art can be found only among Iranians, and Nezami, who has stated that the whole world is a body, and Iran is the spirit, have suffered collective narcissism. A narcissist, Malekian says, builds a wall around him, and eliminates the possibility of a debate.

Another manifestation of this collective narcissism is that most human inventions are attributed to Iranians, especially to ancient Iran, and many discoveries are claimed to be originally Iranian. The latest revealed case concerns the tie, as reported by Seyyed Sadegh Kharazi, Iran's former ambassador in France; in the *Shargh* newspaper.<sup>15</sup> According to him, the tie has gone to Europe from the desert part of the world, *i.e.* the Iranian Plateau, where people would tie an ascot to cover the nose upon the monsoon winds to protect the nose. He emphasizes that Iranians have invented the tie, and it has belonged to them. In other cases, Iranian narcissism enters the domain of colour and race, where Iranians consider themselves superior, particularly to their Arab, Afghan, and Turk neighbours.

Besides national and ethnic issues and relations, the entry and expansion of modernism is regarded as an effective factor in the decline of ancient cultural elements.

**Mohammad Ali Daneshgar, theater director from Semnan**

Part of the crisis is a result of modernism. Modernity has brought about changes, leading to identity confusion in Iran.

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<sup>14</sup> Fararu website, news ID: 250360

<sup>15</sup> Issue 2418, 10/10/2015

**Sardar Kiyani, poet and popular activist, Zabol, Sistan and Balochistan Province**

When the Arabs arrived in Eastern Iran and noticed Zagros, they were fond of the gardens and trees with rivers flowing down there. Coming from Saudi Arabia, where nothing but dust and dust storm exists, with no idea at all what a tree is, they saw paradise here.... They passed through Zagros, and noticed the beauty of Iranian women, and thought they were the nymphs mentioned in the Quran, which everyone could pick up and take with him.... The Arabs arrived and did everything. I am so sad, I swear to God...! Does it really make sense that an Iranian woman, with thousands of years of civilization, is picked up and taken by a lizard-eating, barefoot Arab? That the daughter of Yazdegerd III, the world's King, is picked up and taken by an Arab?



Any kind of government in which different ethnic groups live and have demands would adopt its strategy and approach in that regard. This could range from approval of the ethnic demands to harsh confrontations for their elimination. When the strategy is based on coercion and military perspectives, with discourse and interaction ignored, the social elite will naturally not dare rise, criticize, and lead ethnic demands, and will therefore be secluded. Such conditions will result in ethnic groups' ignorance of their rights. Moreover, the military atmosphere, confrontations, lack of official parties, and seclusion of active forces, ethnic and national movements will not achieve their objectives, which would require a democratic atmosphere, and identity demands and their suggestions will be made only occasionally.

The incapability of the identity construction policies of the Pahlavi regime in nation-building following democratic norms and citizenship principles led to the formation of a new issue in Iran known as *resistance movements*. The

resistance and struggle of local rulers in residences of the Kurd, Lur, Arab, and Baloch against Reza Shah and the severe ethnic crisis after his downfall nearly led to the separation of Azarbaijan and Kurdistan from Iran, which can be investigated within this framework. The Islamic Revolution of Iran, which is known mainly for its religious identity, and is inextricably linked with Shia Islam and Iranian-Aryan thoughts as the basis of its formation, will also be subject to this approach. From Ahmad Ashraf's perspective, the historical notion of *Iranian identity* in ethnic, political, and religious movements, formed during the Sassanid era, remained there in the Islamic era with ups and downs, was reborn in the Safavid era, and was manifested in the modern era as *Iranian national identity* (Tajik, 2000: p. 159).

**Jabbar Rahmani, faculty member at the Center for Cultural and Social Studies and anthropologist, Tehran**

In foreign fields, we are culturally broke. Domestically, the set borders leave our cultural levels in crisis.

After the Islamic Revolution, religious, linguistic, and ethnic diversity was recognized as an obvious fact in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and emphasis was put in Articles 13, 19, 20, 26, *etc.* on the observance of the social and political rights of ethnic groups and religious minorities and provision of equal opportunities in economic, social, cultural, and political fields. However, it was not until the late second decade in the post-revolution era that appropriate conditions were met in the dominant political discourse for addressing these articles. The major policy of the government then (in the first post-revolution decade) concerning the ethnic groups involved the use of military means and the widespread presence of the army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the relevant regions, which resulted in the exclusion of social activists and enhancement of national identity by denying ethnic demands and banning part of ethnic press. At that time, when an ideologized atmosphere was dominant in the country, an opposing voice, contrary to the government's views, would not be heard. The government's strategy then against the demand for identity was to use coercive military means.

**Rahmatollah Hemmati, economic activist from Semnan**

Unfortunately, the government suffers political and cultural dogmatism, does not tolerate any criticism, and does not admit reforms.

The second decade in the post-revolution era and the performance of the fifth and sixth administrations focused on reconstruction, which also involved a military nature. Although the major orientation of the government then was defined as an economic approach, the Kurds and Baloch residences were still of not much concern in the development and economic plans.

The first serious steps taken by the government to promote democracy included the rise of the 2 Khordad Front, with slogans such as *democracy* and *Iran for all Iranians*, the agreement on the formation of new political parties and groups, and the socio-political freedom granted to the extent of allowing newspaper publication and founding ethnic NGOs, which led to high levels of participation by the ethnic groups.

During the eight years of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government, as in the previous one, there was a greater concern for the economy than for the society and culture, and little attention was paid to the ethnic regions and the Sunni Muslims.

Finally, Hassan Rouhani has been in power since 2013, with slogans on the realization of minority rights in both the 2013 and 2017 elections. In practice, however, the majority of social groups have acknowledged positive action in only a few areas and believe that most of the slogans have remained slogans as such, with few measures taken to fulfil the promises.

The present study demonstrates that the dominant strategies adopted by the central systems in the past one hundred years in addressing the demands of the collective identities under study have been based on a military perspective, fear, threat, and forceful confrontation. Of course, the severity of the strategy differs from one ethnic group to another. For example, the movements and actions made by the Kurds are monitored more precisely, and more serious reactions are made against them than against other ethnic groups since they have exhibited the most serious political movements among the ethnic identities over the past one hundred years.

**Amir Nabavi, university lecturer and political science researcher from**

The problem is that everyone is counted as an Iranian upon wars and problems, i.e. at the time of expenditure, and all the people must fight in a war, while some of them are considered more Iranian than others and benefit more as resources and advantages are distributed.

Ethnic groups also believe that their feelings and emotions are usually abused, where their presence is considered necessary at the time of the expenditure, while they are discriminated against upon implementation of development plans.

**Mawlana Abdolhamid Ismail Zehi, Sunni Imam Jumu'ah of Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan Province**

We participate in elections, but that is all; we play no role in the rest of the country's decisions.



In general, political movements are organized in Iran as political parties and cultural and civic institutions because of ethnic and national demands. However, these political parties and institutions have been faced with serious issues and usually moved beyond the borders of the dominant political system due to the lack of the required background and conditions therein.

The ruling system attempts in various ways to restrict social forces and activists, and one of these restrictions concerns the field of media. Media are an important tool available to social activists and civic institutions to approach their goals.

In Iran, there is a negative attitude towards participation in the public sector and civic organizations, which is usually associated with security issues. This, some argue, has prevented civil and social activists from activity in the public sector, secluded them, and captured them in political and security dead ends.

**Jalal Jalalzade, religious activist, lecturer at the University of Tehran, and former member of the parliament from Sanandaj**

As the general secretary of a party, who has not been approved of in parliamentary elections, can one really encourage political activity in youngsters?

The statesmen had better seek the reason why civic institutions are silent and passive because social issues are so complex that they suddenly emerge as critical phenomena, which can upset social discipline.

In many cases, certain ethnic and religious identity origins have prevented the elite and active forces in ethnic groups from reaching important, high positions. In the past few years, a range of videos has been published in cyberspace of youngsters from these identity groups with high degrees and various domestic and foreign scholarly articles working as kolbars, factory workers, hawkers, and public servants such as waste collectors, indicating the improper employment of specialized forces from ethnic groups.

In some cases, the improper employment of minority specialized forces has a legal basis, where minorities such as Sunni Muslims cannot reach high political positions such as the presidency according to legal provisions. In other cases, it is not a matter of law, but the subjective views of the high-ranking government authorities, arbitrarily causing such restrictions on activists from certain ethnic and religious groups. For example, Sunni Muslims or collective identities such as the Kurds and the Baloch have not been able to obtain positions as ministers, holders of important security posts, ambassadors, or governors-general after the Revolution (Since 2019, of course, two Sunni ambassadors have been appointed for Far-Eastern countries).

A very important point to be noted about the rights of the ethnic groups is that most of them are not aware of the existence of such explicit laws about them. The findings demonstrate that the ethnic groups' knowledge of their rights mainly concerns the issue of their mother tongue, and most of them do not have much information about their other rights. Part of this lack of knowledge of rights involves those that should be demanded from the government, and part of it involves those that everyone holds concerning others in places where they live.

**Akbar Yadegari, painter, writer, and theater director, Semnan**

Some do not even know that their citizenship rights have been violated. For instance, a car dealer may park their cars on the sidewalk and occupy yours; another example concerns the pedestrian crossing rights, which are not observed at all in Iran. Citizenship rights are developed to ensure your safety on the street or on the bus, in life in general.

According to history, different ethnic groups have always drawn borders between them and other collective identities. These borders have sometimes had limited scopes, very difficult to get through. The main reason for such security fencing is to protect one's culture and customs against other ethnic groups. On

the one hand, this may succeed in helping the ethnic group achieve their objectives; on the other hand, it has diminished their bargaining power in different relationships. Therefore, it can be stated that restriction of inter-ethnic communication can disrupt the development procedures of the communities.

It can be concluded from an investigation of the Azari's political behaviour that they have exhibited dynamic political performance and asserted their loyalty to the Iranian national government and their membership therein in practice through their beneficial political measures. This has also had exceptions, including the foundation of the Azarbaijan People's Government (1945-1946), led by Seyyed Ja'far Pishevari. A few political measures have also been taken in the past decade; during a soccer match held in Tabriz, for example, the flags of Azarbaijan and Turkey were raised by a group of the Azari audience along with relevant slogans. This was carried out by Azari-speaking youngsters with no particular organization or leadership and seemed more like an emotional, momentary measure than a deliberate, contemplative political action. Of course, it was not a deal big enough for the central government to react.

The political behaviour of the Kurds depicts an unpeaceful population struggling to obtain an independent cultural and political identity, with all its spatial divisions constantly seeking to gain autonomy during the past century, whether as a public movement or as individual ones and have never withdrawn. This includes the attempts by Ismail Agha Simko, a leader of the Shikak tribe, between 1920 and 1925 and by Qazi Muhammad between 1945 and 1946 to declare independence in Mahabad and the movements by Kurd parties after the Revolution. The political-military movements of the Kurds can be described as movements mostly involving a kind of leadership and demand for the right to autonomy. For the past three decades, of course, it is not easy to discuss the existence or non-existence of such cases given the strategy adopted by the Islamic Republic Government, and this requires particular scientific investigation.

The people of Khuzestan are predominantly Arab Shia Muslims, and are similar to those of the central part of Iran, as the Azari are. This behavioural characteristic has been reflected in the political performance of this ethnic group in the past century. Thus, the political movements in the region were not welcomed by the natives and faded away rapidly. This is well demonstrated by an investigation of the centralist and separatist forces' political behaviour over the past one hundred years and the controversy between them, leading to the domination of the centralist forces. For example, the case of Khaz'al Ibn Jabir between 1920 and 1925, triggered by the UK simultaneously with the end of World War I and its transition period, failed despite the little resistance by the central government due to the lack of support from the masses of people of the region. It is interesting to note that there was no separatist crisis in Khuzestan during the political transition period following World War II, unlike in Kurdistan and Azarbaijan, but there were movements and activities by the ethnocentric groups during the period of transition from the Shah's regime to the Islamic Republic. The activities of these groups after the Revolution can be divided into two categories: those in progress within the period from the

Revolution to the Iran-Iraq war and those occurring after the war. With the beginning of the war in 1970, the ethnic issues in Khuzestan were affected by the particular conditions in the region and the presence of the military, reducing their intensity and turning them into subtle activities. After that, however, two groups gained ground: the separatist Pan-Arab group and the federalist Pan-Arab group. Favours a multinational country, the latter group does not differentiate the functioning of the revolutionary political system from that of the Pahlavi political system and disagreed on separatism, unlike the former group, finding regional autonomy under the rule of a single country of Iran the way to the realization of their rights. This group has been active in both international and domestic dimensions.

In the past century, there have been some political activities seeking autonomy in Balochistan, as in other marginal regions in Iran with potential for crisis, and some of the Baloch elite have utilized forces opposing the central government in transition periods to achieve their purposes. A movement led by the elite of this region involved Dost Mohammad Khan's uprising during the period from 1906 to 1928. Minor political movements for autonomy and reconstruction of Baloch nationalist thoughts also took shape during the Islamic Revolution, where central power was missing in Iran, which failed due to the lack of support by the masses. In recent years, individuals such as Abdolmalik Rigi and the Jundallah militant organization have also caused central government problems in the region.

All these issues concern one side of the problem, *i.e.* how the central system encounters different ethnic groups. The other side pertains to the structures of the ethnic groups themselves, *i.e.* the extent to which they approve of the coexistence based on cultural pluralism. First of all, it needs to be acknowledged that the politicization of the issue of ethnicity dates back to one hundred years ago, before which Iranian individuals would define themselves in terms of tribal rather than ethnic groups, according to various scientific references and the results obtained from the interviews with the different ethnic groups.

**Ashkan Zare'i, cultural and heritage activist and writer, Khuzestan**

There have been no such debates previously, when all lived together under Iranian identity. Today, everyone tries to stick to their ethnic group and prove it.

Currently, there may be no demand by the ethnic groups in organizational form, but there is still such demand at the heart of the society, manifested in a different form once in a while. It should also be noted that the marginal units are interested in attendance of the Iranian nation and national government, considering themselves as part of the Iranian nation, despite their tendency to



have some relative freedom and local autonomous alternatives, particularly in the cultural field.

### *3.1.5. The inefficiency of Iran's institutionalized social structures*

Every society has its structures for the management of its domestic affairs and achievement of development. Local institutions have been formed to let escape the centralization of the government, for problems to be expressed and solved at the heart of the society, and form local and regional cooperatives and develop the cooperation and collaboration culture for the provision of many of the services needed by people. They also let compensate for the absence or weakness of free political parties that represent people with diverse thoughts and ideas to meet their demands, for the dependence on political structures and overlapping or parallel tasks performed by them, and for the excessive concentration of facilities and population in one or more parts of the country and deprivation of other parts with all its potential social consequences.

#### **A 43-year-old man, employee from Tehran**

The point is that discrimination has nothing to do with ethnic groups. Here in Tehran, you will be discriminated against if not regarded as an insider, no matter what ethnic group or city you are from. It has nothing to do with ethnic groups whether you are an insider or an outsider.

Non-governmental organizations, which can increase people's participation, are also turning into part of the new paradigm of development, *i.e.* the New World Order, in today's world (Gosh, 2009). The participation of non-governmental organizations in local development as voluntary, non-profit organizations indicates the emergence of decentralization and delegation of authority at the level of local decision-making and management, which leads to exclusion of bureaucracy at the national level. Mohammad Khatami's most significant reformist political development project was perhaps the nationwide establishment of local councils in 1998.

The results of the present study indicate the extent of governmental power in the administration of the country. Although entitled to *local* and elected by the people, the minority local institutions also act entirely in line with government institutions and their interests after the election process. This inefficiency is attributed to the overall structure of the country, of which ethnic groups are considered a part.

Naser Amoli Moghaddam, journalist and reformist activist, Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan Province

The very economy has a twofold management. One facet holds 65 to 70 percent of the power, with which most of the violations are associated, and which is not responsive. The other facet, holding 30 to 35 percent of the violations, is elected by the people, not fully controllable either. It is most unfortunate when the 35 percent collaborates with the 65 percent, as in the case of municipal corruption.

It can be stated that local, governmental, and quasi-governmental institutions in Iran have so far failed to be properly institutionalized to function as expected. At the provincial and urban levels, the Iranian administrative system simply obeys commands from higher levels. The senior managers are appointed and employed via the centre, with no role assumed for the people. This top-down perspective on the country's management process and the appointment of non-native managers for administrative positions in ethnic regions accounts for the severer inefficiency of the institutions in these regions, because most of the managers are unaware of the sociocultural issues concerning their administration zones, and their management terms end, and they are replaced by others as soon as they to become acquainted with these issues.

Like government departments and organizations (the executive branch), institutions such as the city council and municipality do not function positively, according to people. They have even hindered development and brought about severer economic and administrative corruption in some cases. Thus, the level of public trust in them has dramatically lowered, and they have strayed away from their actual roles and duties.

**Zhila Hesami, literary activist, Naqadeh, West Azerbaijan Province**

In the past few years, there has been so much distrust that I would not participate even if my sister were nominated.

Cooperatives are among the most democratic organizations everywhere, where the members are the main owners. The major capital of the cooperative sector results from the accumulation of people's micro-capitals used to develop employment and production. The lack of material and spiritual support for cooperatives and their members, the lack of insight and belief in their effectiveness and efficiency, the poor collective work and participation culture in the society, the value-added tax, and many other barriers against cooperatives

do not bode well for their future. By far the worst event in that regard involved the decision to merge the Ministry of Cooperatives, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Welfare and Security in recent years into the single Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare.

With the assumption of democracy as political participation and competition of some groups and organized interests for possession of political power and administration of the country according to the policies and attitudes of all those groups, political parties and elections constitute the core of free, democratic life.

There are two major points about the activity of parties in this period. Firstly, not only does the existence of so many parties in a country not indicate political advancement and development, but it demonstrates an imbalance in its political structure and culture concerning party activities. The existence of nearly two hundred certified political parties and associations in a country suggests that the society has not yet reached the level of political development and socialization required for party activity in cultural terms. The second, more important point is that many of these parties are no more than names, far removed from the notion of the party in its literal sense because none of them has been capable of exhibiting the real functions of a party, including political participation, socialization, communication, force training, *etc.* Most of them simply contain the concept of party, emerging in masses upon elections and fading away at the end of the process. Sadegh Zibakalam, a political science expert, argues that no party has ever taken shape in the literal sense of the Islamic Revolution. Instead, political groups have been active as parties temporarily during elections, while no precise, defined relation has been established afterwards between their representatives and the parties themselves (Zibakalam *et al.*, 2014: p. 7).

**Shahin Sepanta, veterinarian, writer, and civil activist from Isfahan**

I find our domestic policy in regard to individual and political freedom and parties a total failure. Almost forty years after the Revolution, parties should have been freer now, and political groups should have been active. I myself am a member of a political group, which is faced with a problem every time. Although we have stated every time that we are simply a critical opposed group with no intention of overthrow and no destructive activity, they have never given us the opportunity to take a measure, and have always restricted us.

Such conditions result in the inefficiency of political parties, excessively involving politics in many of the life routines, such as culture, language and literature, sports, society, and environment, followed by the ruler's confronting reactions. Another consequence of these conditions can be observed in the process of candidacy for the presidency or parliament membership elections,

where the easy terms and conditions set in the election law cause a large number of individuals to register, including not only well-known political figures but also ordinary people with no political background and sometimes totally unacquainted with politics.

The government is administered based on the Constitution and a set of other laws, such as the Civil Code, the Criminal Law, and the Islamic Penal Code, each enforced by the relevant authority. On that basis, it may be thought that all the legislation is carried out by the legislature, as in many of the world's countries, but the Supreme Leader holds plenty of power in that regard as the highest political authority. As explicitly stated in the Constitution, it is up to the Leader to determine the general policies of the system.

The conflicts between the branches and the lack of an understanding of the positions of Iranian institutions indicate an internal inconsistency in the political structure of the country. The existence of institutions parallel to the government, which is in charge of the executive branch, is a manifestation of inconsistency. The issue is so serious that President Rouhani, announced the existence of a shadow state in a speech, stating that they had handed over part of the economy to an armed government with media.<sup>16</sup> This concerns the influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the economic sector and political administration beyond the body of the government. The results of the present study are also indicative of the existence of this inconsistency in the political structure of the country.

**Ali Sahebi, psychologist from Mashhad (Razavi Khorasan Province)**

Iran's foreign policy has two sides, which are at different levels. There is a Foreign Minister and a representative of the Leader in foreign policy, in international affairs, Velayati, who goes to Lebanon to negotiate with Hezbollah, while no one asks him about his position.

Although used in the negative political sense of conspiracy theory to describe an influential group in disguise that has formed a subtle government, the term *shadow government* is recognized today as a positive phenomenon common in the political systems of some of the world's democracies and as a place for the opposition. Politically, a shadow government is a non-operational cabinet pending to gain control of the government in response to an event.

In Iran, the term was first used after the presidential election in 2017, won again by the moderation movement, by Saeed Jalili, a fundamentalist and a defeated candidate in the 2013 election, published as part of a manifesto. His office has

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<sup>16</sup> Khabaronline, news ID: 679394

already turned into a place for shadow government meetings, where the performance of a minister is investigated once in a while mainly by those who are likely shadow-government ministers.

According to Saeed Jalili, shadow government means that every individual or group should enhance anything that is done well, even by a rival, while closely monitoring the issues concerning the country. At the national and local levels, he argues, it is one's duty to help anyone who does something good, just as they should point out any observed mistake and have it corrected legally and morally while observing piety.<sup>17</sup>

Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani, head of Tehran City Council and a senior member of the Executives of Construction Party, made a precise statement free from political compliments about the shadow government's function. According to him, the government may decide to improve its relations with a certain country and resolve the issues, where a group in disguise decides to do something to cause a fight between the domestic and the target government to avoid an improvement. It is the very shadow government, asserts Hashemi, which decides to do something to disrupt the relations between Iran and that country'.<sup>18</sup>

The results of the present study indicate a disagreement in the country in the process of decision-making on interaction with the world.

**Mojtaba Gahestuni, correspondent and cultural heritage activist from**

In general, we have failed in politics, being incapable of interacting with the world. In a country where governance is in the hands of one party, and the government is in the hands of another, shadow governments take shape. We already have not only more than one government but in fact several shadow governments that make decisions, and the conflict can be felt.

In general, it can be stated that there is inconsistency and divergence from the norms in the political structure of the country, part of which is accounted for by the structure of the government, where inconsistency can be observed between the different departments and ministries. Another cause concerns the macro-structure of the government, where certain institutions function quite differently from the government in many cases.

In underdeveloped countries, the consecutive or sharp rise in inequality in different regions and cities has inevitably led to the search for better living conditions and immigration opportunities. The rapid growth of the country's

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<sup>17</sup> Dana Information Network, news ID: 1389632

<sup>18</sup> Iran newspaper, Issue 6874, 12/9/2018

urban population during the past four decades has not been guided by a comprehensive national planning system based on sectorial and regional coordination. Given the close relationship between the population distribution pattern and political, economic, and social performance, the population will naturally move towards some cities around which activities and capitals are concentrated. Such a population distribution pattern has brought about population and function gaps at the middle and low levels of urban centres, causing the country to be confronted with problems in the urban hierarchical system (Rezaei and Taqvaei, 2009: p. 1).

**Mohammad Ehsani, filmmaker and documentary filmmaker, Tabriz**

As you step out of Tehran and four or five other cities, you are faced with a cultural, economic, and social catastrophe, until you arrive in Sistan, where poverty is as severe as there is hunger. Near the borders, public poverty can be observed. In Tehran, there is poverty, but it is not public.

In Iran, the population is concentrated in a few cities, mainly in Tehran, which indicates regional imbalance. Tehran alone is home to more than ten per cent of the country's total population, a phenomenon known as macro cephalization.

Although high population density in an urban settlement does not indicate a disorder in itself, it leads to significant inequality and improper distribution of facilities around the country. According to the results of the 2016 public census, where the ten most-populated cities were specified, the first five provinces of the country, in which about forty per cent of the population live, are not among the main residences of the Azari, the Kurd, the Baloch, or the Arab. Due to the concentration of human resources and economic capitals in these regions, capitals have been depleted in other regions, gradually widening the gap between cities. The major economic resources have been concentrated in the five regions at the expense of poverty and inequality in others.

The existence of inefficiency has sometimes made the people of the ethnic groups under investigation exaggerate, 'project' in technical terms, when discussing them or the prevalent economic, social, cultural, and other inequality.

**Ghanem Savari, teacher, Hamidiyeh, Khuzestan Province**

It is intentional...; what else could dry up Karun, Karkheh, Dez, and etc. all at once?!

The Iranian society regards most events from an excessive political perspective. The crises have been treated by the respondents in an absolute manner. As can be observed in the quotations, they argue that the government has not met any of their rights, all dedicated to the central regions.

**Mohammad Hosseini, religious and cultural activist, Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

Employment, production, and wealth are distributed totally unfairly and highly oppressively in Iran. Economy is in the hands of one who is ignorant. This is deliberate and conscious. You can observe the economy in this region, where the Shia and the non-Kurd have been granted administration everywhere, with lower positions filled with the Kurd.

Such an attitude toward and treatment of some compassionate government officials, who are of course few, discourages them instead of encouraging them to try harder; when they see that they are treated like that despite their efforts to realize social justice, they become discouraged from continuing their activities, by which no one will be harmed as much as the ethnic groups themselves.

The conducted interviews demonstrate that the Kurds have a more positive attitude toward their lives than the Baloch, and believe that they are in more appropriate conditions than them. On the other hand, they believe that they are in less favourable conditions than their neighbours, *i.e.* the Azari, thinking that the Azari, particularly in economic terms.

The Baloch regard their lives as filled with deprivation and underdevelopment. As detailed in the previous section, they believe that this is due in part to defects in the group itself, including the small number of the elite and university alumni, and there is of course religious discrimination. This ethnic group feels that they have more in common with the Sunni Kurd than with other ethnic groups. They are most concerned among the other collective identities with the other ethnic group from the same province, *i.e.* the Sistani, who, they believe, enjoy greater privileges in the province despite their small population as they follow the same religion as the central government, and are in charge of most important provincial affairs. In their view, this is why they are suppressed most by this local group apart from the central government, and the existence of this group can be considered as an external reason for their underdevelopment. In contrast, the Sistani believe that they share their history with the Baloch, and their underdevelopment can be accounted for more by improper internal conditions than by external factors.

**Mawlana Abdolhamid Ismail Zehi, Sunni Imam of Friday Prayer of Zahedan, Sistan Balochistan**

There are a lot of problems in Balochistan, and poverty is severer there than in any other part of the country. Most of this poverty is in turn a result of discrimination. Throughout the world, discrimination manifests itself in two ways: economic and cultural poverty. We suffer from both types.

The Arabs find their lives more favourable than those of ethnic groups such as the Baloch, and they also believe that the Baloch are in the worst conditions around the country in terms of development. This ethnic group themselves have been regarded by the Bakhtiari as fanatical.

The Azari believe that they are in better economic conditions than the other ethnic groups and that this is mainly a result of their harder work and greater effort than the other ethnic groups'. They have negative attitudes mostly toward the Persians, who have command of the country's administration, and seek to integrate the ethnic groups' cultures.



**Rasul Nami, carpet designer, Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

I think the Persian have somewhat violated the Azeri's rights, and the issue has unfortunately spread to families.

The Persians believe that the problems in the country are not particular to a specific ethnic group, and different regions in the country are vulnerable in this respect. This group's attitude towards the Sunni minority suggests that they have the potential for toleration and flexibility in behaviour.



**Naser Amoli Moghaddam, reformist journalist, Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan**

In Khaf Seminary, I entered into arguments with Mawlana Motahhari on Shiah and Sunni, where he would easily argue with me in front of the Sunni students. They seem to be open-minded, tolerant people.

The results obtained above on view of one's life and of another party's and comparison thereof bring about a sense of discrimination, according to which each ethnic group believes that there is discrimination against them, and the country's facilities are in the hands of another group. This sense of discrimination can result from various factors, which are partly rooted in the law, where different ethnic and religious groups believe that there is discrimination against them in the official laws of the country. Another source of this sense of discrimination is religious issues, which leads to the belief that there is discrimination against unofficial religious groups in the country. Moreover, this sense can be rooted in political affairs and the government authorities' subjective behaviour, as the administration has been in the hands of a single linguistic, regional, and religious orientation throughout the forty years following the Islamic Revolution, with the other orientations almost deprived of the authority, and more facilities have thus been dedicated to those specific regions to the others' disadvantage.

Figures below show the amounts of the sense of political discrimination among the elite and the general public from the ethnic groups under investigation.

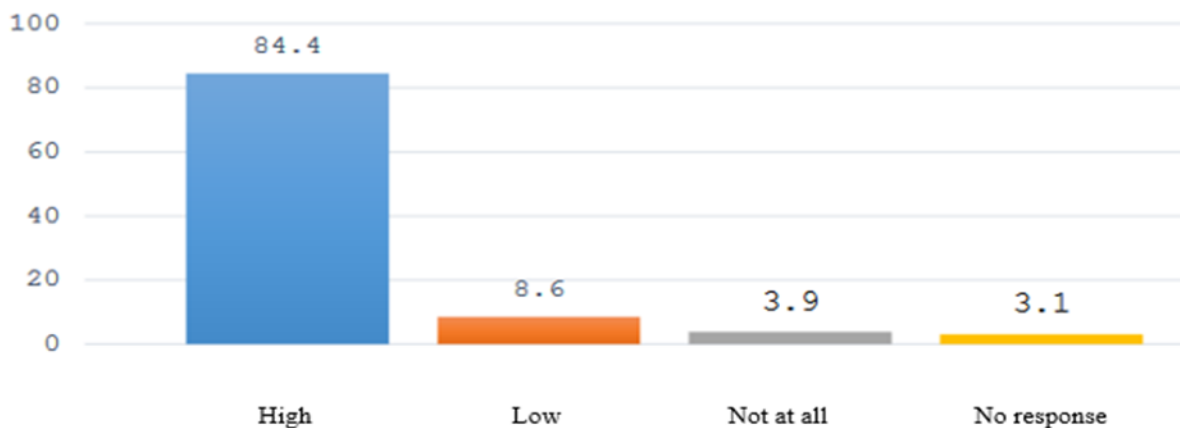


Figure 11 Sense of ethnic political discrimination according to elites

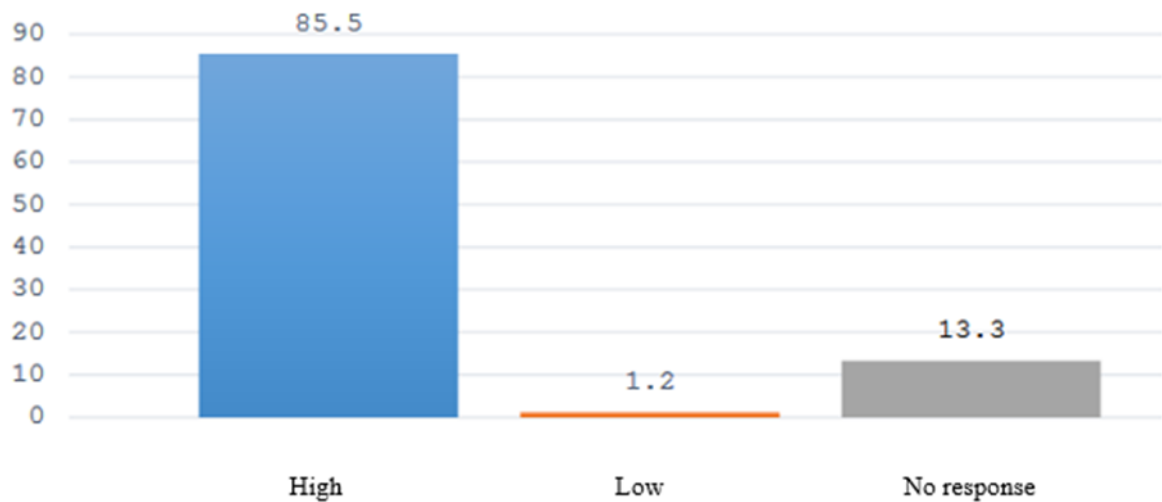


Figure 12 Sense of ethnic political discrimination according to general people

According to the results of this study, different ethnic and religious groups tend to preserve more reasonable traditional-historical customs, but do not hesitate to exclude or neglect the unreasonable aspects of their cultures. In other words, the interviewees have pointed out by making distinctions between good and bad customs and mentions of instances thereof that they maintain and enhance customs that are more rational and capable of adapting to the conditions of the day, *i.e* those with human and moral aspects in the modern world. However, customs that are not morally or logically justifiable, and consist mainly of superstitious, illogical behaviour should be excluded.

**Hasan Fesharaki, writer and translator, Isfahan**

Neither Nowruz nor Ashura should be imposed on anyone. People are free to have customs. However, there are good customs and harmful customs. Examples of harmful customs include Qama Zani (a bloodletting ritual) and circumcision. Rational, human, moral customs appropriate to the modern world are a requirement.

Values that have been seriously criticized in the modern age include improper religious values, beliefs, and customs. Individuals believe that religion is a personal choice, and it is not immutable simply because it is transmitted through society; in fact, anyone can make the right decision by thinking and reasoning about it. Of course, people's criticism and revision of values are associated with society's perception and interpretation thereof. In other words, some of what we are faced with today originates from history not so far away.

Underdevelopment is a set of conditions in which people are attached to modernity and at the same time unfamiliar with and perhaps even strongly opposed to it, because things have hardly occurred at the right place and time in the underdeveloped world.

**Mahmoud Eftekhari, retired Tehran Cultural Heritage official and Iranian art expert, Semnan**

In the land where we live, nothing can be said with certainty..., as if we have not learned any lesson from history, and keep moving in a circle.

The results of the present study also confirm the key role of internal factors in the development of the ethnic groups under investigation. For instance, the interviewees have pointed out the importance of the return by university graduates from Tabriz after completing their studies in the development of the city. On the other hand, the role of internal factors and the small number of university graduates from provinces such as Sistan and Balochestan have been mentioned as a reason for the underdevelopment of the region.

**Peyman Nasehpur, university lecturer, Ardabil**

Tabriz is superior to Ardabil since the graduates return to their city after graduation. The Tabrizi progress along the route to development of their city.



Accordingly, the underdevelopment of different ethnic regions, and the entire Iranian society in general, is accounted for in terms of four perspectives: breach of law and underdevelopment, underdevelopment and Iranian behaviour, Asian production method and Iran's underdevelopment, and rationality and underdevelopment, all of which emphasize the inherent nature of the issue.

### 3.1.6. Relationship between the government and ethnic groups

The results presented in this section, to be discussed below, suggest that there is an inappropriate relationship between the government and ethnic groups. A clear example involves a demand made by ethnic groups, particularly by the Sunni community, the largest religious minority in the country, concerning the lack of religious centres in province capitals, especially in Tehran. The media is another important issue that plays a role in cultural monopoly. In Iran, the audio-visual media are controlled by the government, and the issue of interests is naturally raised when there are such commands, with the group holding commands utilizing it following their interests. Another factor that has contributed to ethnic groups' dissatisfaction with the government is their unfavourable economic conditions. These groups believe that most of the country's economic resources are concentrated in Persian residences. Another source of dissatisfaction among the ethnic groups with government policies is how the mother tongue is treated, where enforcement of the relevant laws is believed to have been pending so far.

#### **Nazar Mohammad Didgah, former parliament member and Mowlawi, Iranshahr, Sistan and Balochistan**

We do not have mosques in Tehran and Isfahan. The Sunni say their prayers at home. Imam Khomeini had given land at Tehran Grand Musalla ('prayer hall') in Abbas Abad to us in a letter he had written to Mawlana Abdol'aziz. I even opened an account to collect public donations to have a mosque built there. When I was a parliament member, a Kurd told me not to collect public donations at all because he would pay for the costs of construction. However, no building permit was given. The very gentleman who is in charge now stopped us, along with others, while we were friends at the parliament.



The Sunni Online website, publishing news from the Iranian Sunni community, has repeatedly reported in recent years on the ban on Sunni Eid al-Fitr and Eid

al-Adha prayers. Another recent event that dissatisfied and enraged the Sunni and the Imam Jumu'ah of Zahedan was the destruction of their prayer hall in Poonak, Tehran by municipal forces, supported by the police and security forces in 2015.<sup>19</sup>



Picture 14 Line of the Sunni saying prayers in a prayer hall in Tehran and the involved difficulty due to the small space

Respect for cultural diversity involving an acceptance of the differences in the society can lead to peaceful coexistence and the enhancement of national integrity and security. The presence of restrictions in that regard may account in part for the formation of radical groups in the neighbouring countries.

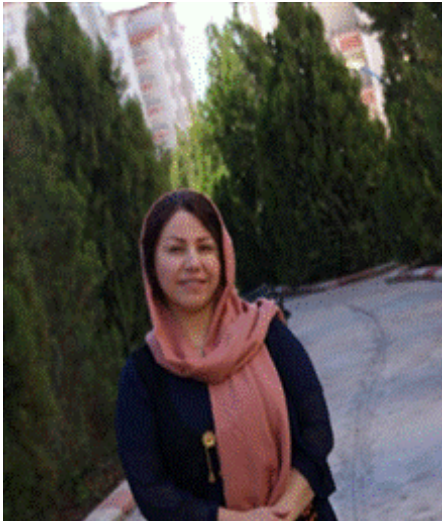
The results of the study also indicate restrictions imposed on different ethnic groups for possession of free media. Apart from the ethnic and religious groups' deprivation of their free audio and video media, filtering dominates their press and websites.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://sunnionline.us/farsi/2015/07/3914>

**Mawlana Abdolhamid Ismail Zehi, Sunni Imam of Friday Prayer, Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan**

The ethnic groups have in fact no voice to express themselves and no media of their own. If someone interviews them out there now, will the authorities be dissatisfied? Who should we talk to then? Our words will not be broadcast on the radio or the television, and we do not have our media. Where should we state our problems? We have a website known as Sunni Online, which is subject to filtering, and so is my own.



**Shno Hosseini, civil and women's rights activist, Javanrood, Kermanshah**

I am less than satisfied with the performance of the radio and the television at the national and provincial levels. In my opinion, they are not popular media, and their contents are not responsive to ethnic groups, in that the programs are not aimed at serving these groups.

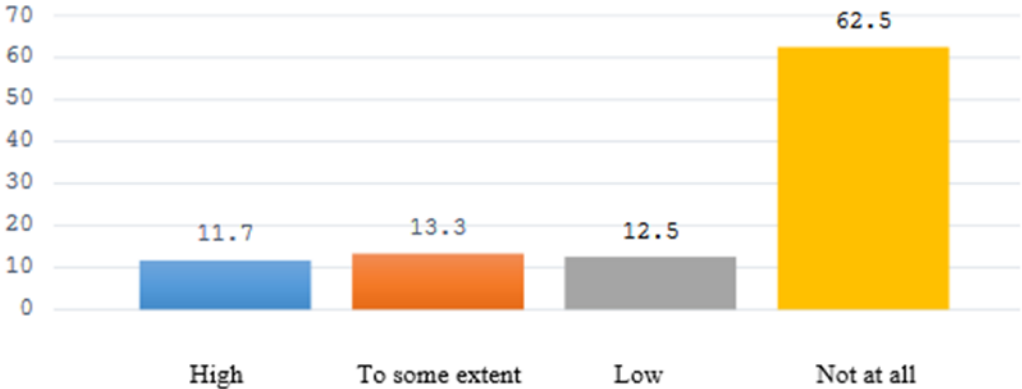
An analysis of the contents of these statements indicates different ethnic groups' overt and covert dissatisfaction with the media active in the country. According to interviewees from different ethnic groups, including the Azari, Kurd, Baloch, Arab, and Bakhtiari Lur, the domestic audio and visual media are directed toward the assimilation of Iranian ethnic groups, without as much concern for the ethnic groups as they deserve. Unlike the discussed ethnic groups, the Persians are rather satisfied with the performance of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting.

The provincial audio and visual media do not perform any better than the national radio and television. There is again dissatisfaction among the ethnic

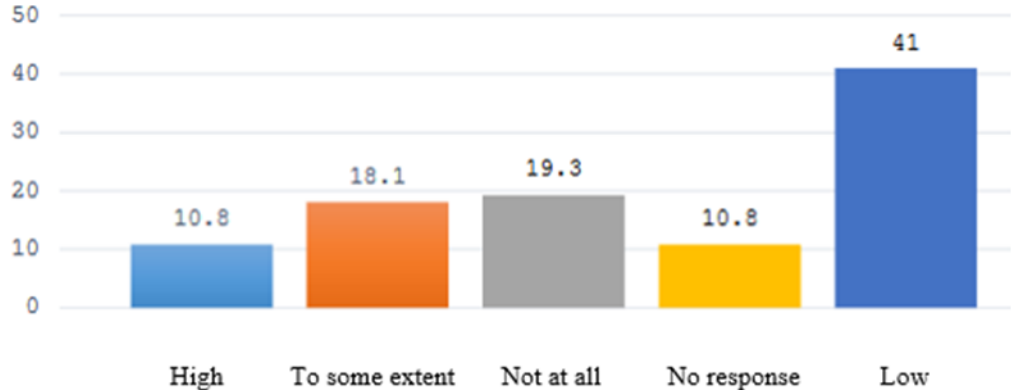
groups with the performance of these media. It is reported that most of their programs are also directed in form and format toward the centre. Producing programs of lower quality than the national radio and television, these media convey the cultural superiority of the Persian and the religion of the government, intentionally or unintentionally.

It is important for national media to function based on justice and to be free from discrimination concerning ethnic and social groups. If they function selectively, severer averse and destructive positions will likely be adopted around the society.

Charts 9 and 10 show the levels of satisfaction with the provincial and national radio and television programs.



*Chart 9. Specific satisfaction with radio and television*



*Chart 10. General satisfaction with radio and television*

In conditions of censorship and control of the media, the audience functions as activists, seeking an alternative by searching the media with similar orientations. This was confirmed by the results of the interviews made with the different ethnic groups.

**Ghasem Ale Kasir, ethnic researcher and activist, Khuzestan**

We use cyber and media cultural products from the Arab world, which have influenced various aspects of our lives, from the naming process to style, to clothing, to music, and to catchphrases.

In Iran, ethnic groups have an unbalanced share of the economy of the country as a whole. A major part of the heavy industry, involving steel, car, petrochemical, and similar companies, is located mainly in the centre, in Persian-speaking provinces. The largest shares of the industrial sector belong to the provinces of Isfahan (41.4%), Alborz (44%), Tehran (7.3%), Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari (39.6%), Qom (4.43%), Markazi (40.3%), and Yazd (47.8%).<sup>20</sup> As in the industrial sector, crops gaining high income such as pistachio and saffron are grown in the agricultural sector in Central Iran, which has led to a large share of GDP in the Persian residences.

**Abdossalam Bozorgzade, radio and television producer, Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan**

In our province, there are two governments: the Islamic Republic and the Republic of Sistan. I have made a pledge not to mention the Republic of Sistan again, but I will. There is a group of at most two percent among the people in the province who have created a republic of immodest totalitarians that has gained command of everything in the province, including political, economic, and administrative power, thanks to their religious identity and the particular conditions following the Revolution. We, the Baloch, hate them. I call them the Republic of Sistan, because they have united to suppress the remaining ninety-eight percent, tear them apart, and get rid of the poor Baloch as a counter-revolutionary, discouraging and ignoring those with fortunes at offices, which are in their hands.

According to official statistics and indicators, the ethnic groups are in unbalanced economic conditions within provinces such as Sistan and Balochistan and West Azarbaijan, which are multi-ethnic. For example, the Sistani and the Azari have larger shares of the economy and industry than the

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<sup>20</sup> Khabaronline, news ID: 375259



Baloch and the Kurd, respectively, and political and economic opportunities are at the disposal of the ethnic groups closer to the centre in orientation.

The economy of the Kurds is based on agriculture and pastoralism. In the northern parts of the Kurds' residences (southern West Azarbaijan), horticulture is common as well as agriculture, while in the southern parts (Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Ilam), rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism are more common due to the presence of pastures and lack of fertile lands. The Kurds' residences in Iran are not highly developed in industrial terms due to their geographic location near the borders and security issues. This region is not in proper economic conditions and suffers a high unemployment rate among the active population due to the lack of economic infrastructures, factories, and investments in the industrial sector. Therefore, a large number of the Kurds have to engage in fake occupations as smugglers, kolbars, and the like to earn a living.

Figures bellow show the employment opportunities of the ethnic groups, which exhibits an aspect of economic inequality. Accordingly, 89.8% of the elite and 81.9% of the general public believed that job opportunities were not evenly distributed among the ethnic groups. Only 10.2% of the elite and 8.4% of the general public believed otherwise.

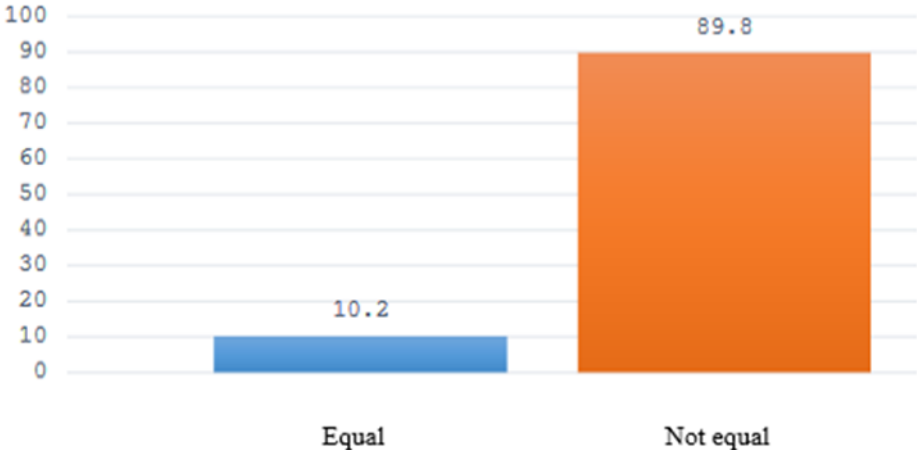


Figure 13 equal employment opportunities for ethnic groups according to elites

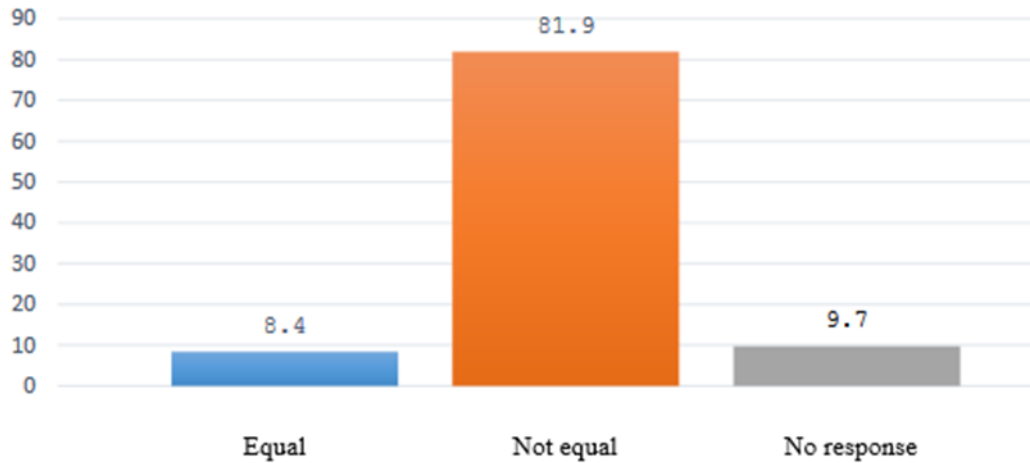


Figure 14 equal employment opportunities for ethnic groups according to general people

The data in Figure below show the unemployment rate in the thirty-one provinces of the country in descending order. Accordingly, the left-side half of the chart contains the multi-ethnic provinces, including the Kurd, Azari, Arab, Baloch, and other populations, and the right-hand half, with lower unemployment rates, contains provinces mostly located around the centre of Iran's map, from which the high-ranking officials have been selected over the forty years following the Islamic Revolution. The main causes of unemployment in Iran include the centralist policy, economic and political crisis in Iran, improper economic policies, financial and administrative corruption, ignorance of entrepreneurial values, and association of security issues to ethnic groups.

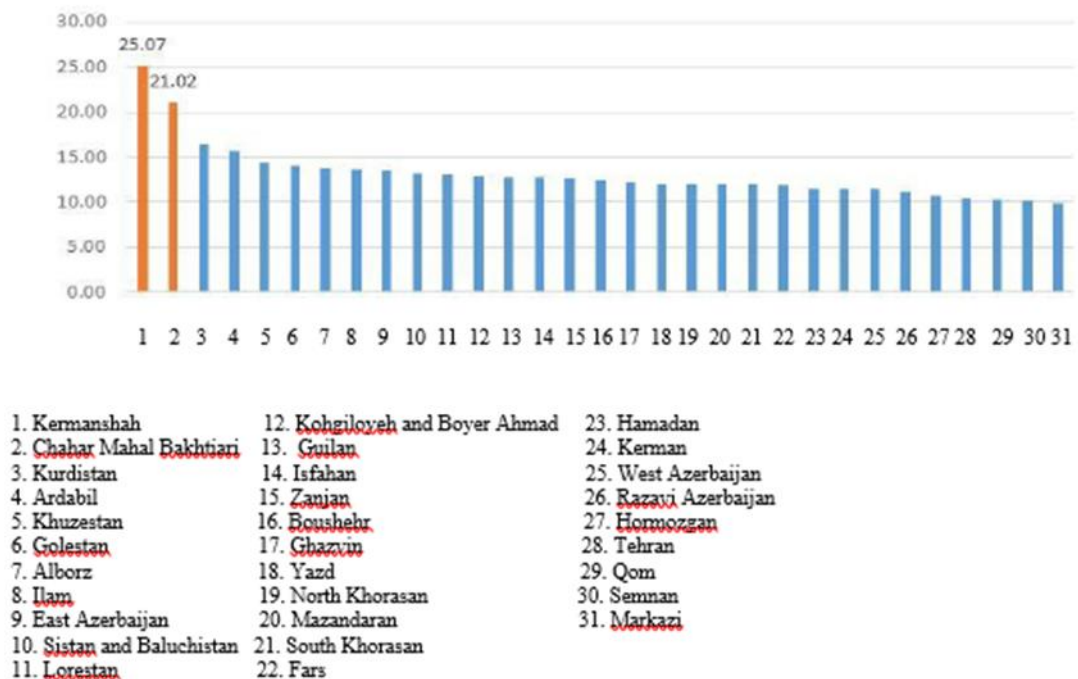


Figure 15 Unemployment rate (Statistics Centre of Iran)

The Azari are in relatively good economic conditions, and there are better job opportunities and facilities in their region than for the other ethnic groups. This region has common borders with Azarbaijan and Turkey and particular cultural and economic exchanges with these two countries, where similar languages are spoken. Their economy is based mainly on pastoralism and agriculture. The region has a considerable share of the production of dairy products and those containing protein. However, that is not all about the economy for most of the people there, given the plenty of job opportunities provided by large factories and industries such as tractor manufacturing, the petrochemical industry, machinery manufacturing, and the steel industry. Of course, the conditions are not so good in some marginal parts, especially in villages far from the centre, as demonstrated more clearly upon the earthquake in Varzeqan, near Tabriz.

The communications established and the maritime boundaries delineated at the Arab residences in Khuzestan and Hormozgan provinces have thrived international commerce. The important ports in these regions include Bandar Abbas and Bandar Imam Khomeini, having a major share of the country's maritime transit. Moreover, the oil-richness of the Arab residences and the presence of large industries have attracted a workforce from everywhere around the country. The resulting conditions have somewhat disrupted the ethno-demographics of the region as well, as various ethnic groups have settled there to obtain job opportunities. Unfortunately, however, the Arabs are overall at low economic levels.<sup>21</sup>

**Basem Hemadi, researcher in Arab rituals and ethnic music and university lecturer from Ahvaz (Khuzestan Province)**

I live in a province with water, oil, and gas. Unemployment should not make sense here, and there should be little poverty, but horrible deprivation and poverty is observed in villages and suburbs. This may be the case also in other provinces, but we wonder why we should suffer it despite our wealth of oil.

In Balochestan, the economic conditions are miserable, and no factories or investments have been observed in recent years. The border is semi-closed, and there is not much economic or cultural interaction with the other side. For the same reason, border markets have not taken shape, and most people are engaged in occupations such as goods and diesel fuel smugglers, and there is widespread poverty in the province. Sistan Balochestan used to be Iran's granary, but agriculture is faced with many problems today, with many

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<sup>21</sup> [www.citypedia.ir](http://www.citypedia.ir)

agricultural lands being infertile, due to the particular climatic conditions, water shortage, and severe drought.

**Mohammad Bahari, university lecturer in literature, Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan Province**

Our economy is naught or less than naught, and that is the case for all the Sistani. Economy is based on animal husbandry, agriculture, and industry, but there is no such a thing as industry in this province. Zabol was supposed to turn into an agricultural center, Balochistan into an industrial center, and Zahedan into an academic center. Zabol has nothing now. I won't utter a word if a factory is said to have been made in Zabol throughout the past forty years. Our people used to earn livings through diesel fuel and gasoline. They can no more do that either as long as a wall has been stretched along the border. We have been left at the wall now, unable to escape either way.

Figures bellow show the sense of economic inequality among the ethnic groups. According to the figures obtained from these charts, 90.6% of the elite and 88% of the general public believed that ethnic groups in Iran suffered from economic inequality, and only a very small percentage of both groups believed that there was a small economic gap and little discrimination in that regard.

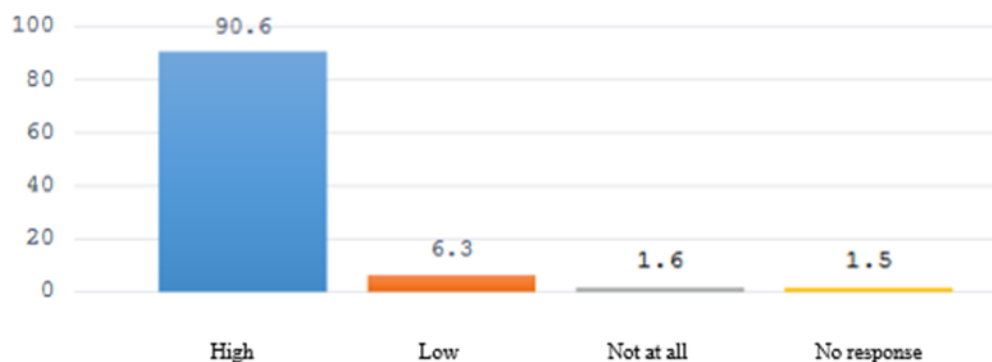


Figure 16 Sense of economic gap and discrimination according to elites

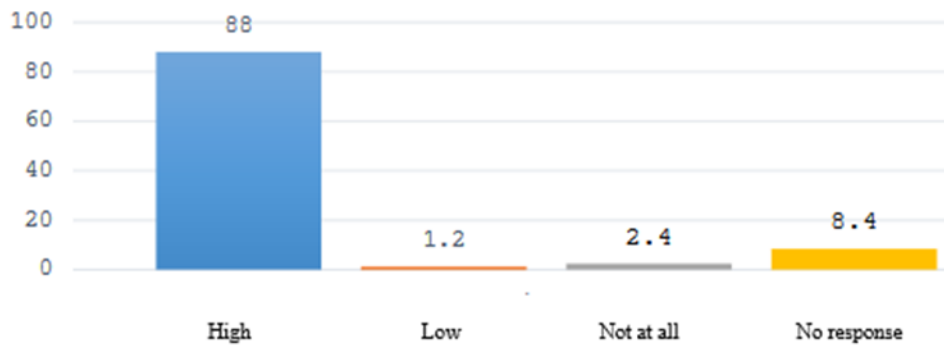


Figure 17 Sense of economic gap and discrimination according to general people

*Chart 15.*

The overall results obtained in this section indicated that each of the regions under investigation had rich, unique resources depending on their situations. These include abundant water, a suitable climate for the cultivation of various agricultural products and livestock and poultry farming activities, rich, diverse metal and non-metal mineral supplies, especially gold and decorative stones, natural fields and landscapes and cultural, historical, and tourist attractions, the capacity for construction of small hydropower plants given the surface water resources and appropriate topography, young, efficient, committed manpower interested in modern technologies, and appropriate conditions for the establishment of free-trade zones. Besides the unavailability of policies for water control, storage, and transportation, the above factors have provided the potential for development and prosperity in various areas of agriculture, industry, and services. Development has its particular process, and its requirements should be met for it, including the provision of security and facilities for investors and their encouragement to invest. Thus, the government plays a key role in the initiation and continuation of development, particularly in the activation of productive investments and those that should be made in infrastructure facilities. As long as the current procedure continues, without the government being activated and major projects being implemented, not only will the backwardness of different regions not be compensated for within the upcoming one hundred years, but the gap between the deprived and developed regions in the country will also widen.

There is plenty of historical and contemporary evidence in Iran of political militarism, an important topic in political sociology addressing the intervention of the military as a social group organized in politics. Political militarism in Iran has its roots in the first and second periods of the Pahlavi era and has continued after the Revolution. The major characteristic of the first Pahlavi king, Reza Shah, was his profound sense of militarism. Throughout his twenty years as minister, prime minister, and king, he insisted on the empowerment of the army and the spread of militaristic thought. Mohammad Reza Shah also relied on the military to maintain his reign by overthrowing Mossadegh's national

government on August 19, 1953. In the post-revolutionary period, many military men held important political positions in the country, such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Ali Larijani, and Mohsen Rezaee.

**Mehri Pakzad, faculty member at the Islamic Azad University of Mahabad, West Azerbaijan**

I have a doctoral student who confesses that he does not know anything, and I have to give him additional grades as long as he comes from a certain organization.

The evidence of economic rent for the military suggests that some kind of militarism has infiltrated the internal structure of the country, and is severer and broader among the communities under investigation. Usually, with excuses made by the government such as social control, order, and security, economic rent has both enhanced the military perspective in the society and spread various aspects of administrative and economic corruption in different parts of the society. Some of the evidence in this study attributes the prevalent underdevelopment to economic rent and even regards the inefficiency of governments as resulting from this deep-rooted phenomenon in the politics of different periods. Part of the data obtained from the partisans refers to the cultural monopoly granted to the Persians in Iran. The issue of cultural assimilation in Iran has a long history and has long sought to eliminate the multiplicity of cultural identities. It has been intensified in the modern age by the new media and administration tools, oriented toward the centre to enhance the cultural elements of the Persian's collective identity and to attenuate the other collective identities. This is of course done also by residents of other provinces, such as the Azari in West Azarbaijan, and some participants in this study have used the term 'colonialism in colonialism' to refer to it. After all, this movement is a process of attempting to assimilate the cultural diversity present in Iran, reaching its peaks in the final years of the Qajar and Pahlavi eras, particularly during Reza Shah's reign. Still in progress today, the policy was officially promoted then in magazines including *Iranshahr*, *Farhangestan*, and *Ayande*.

**As'ad Ardalan, researcher in history and international lawyer, Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province**

Reza Shah's policies in 1926 and 1938 caused a 'Speak Persian' sign to be installed at schools in Kurdistan.

In an article about religion and nationality, *Iranshahr* stated that the issue of ethnicity was so serious that when an Iranian travelling abroad was asked about his nationality, he would mention his place of birth rather than the name of his country. It was then asserted there that the local sects, dialects, costumes, customs, and sensitivities were to be eliminated.

In 1929, the parliament declared the old costumes of the Iranian ethnic groups as illegal, and forced all men except registered clergies to wear Western clothes including 'Pahlavi hats.' Eight years later, these hats were replaced by European chapeaus. Reza Shah prescribed the latter hats not only to exclude ethnic identities but also to interfere with the ritual of saying prayers in Islam, requiring the forehead to be rested on the ground. In addition, he changed the names of many cities.

As the Islamic Revolution took place in 1979, the article in the Constitution that granted the ethnic groups the right to read and write in their mother tongues at all levels of education never became operational in practice as desired by the target groups, with the emergence of the authorities' subjective behaviours.

**Hamid Hamadi, university lecturer, Khuzestan**

Our children speak Arabic at home, but they speak Persian to them upon their entry into school, and this is oppression. Assumed to hold 100% talent, they will be using 50%, which will be a cause of academic backwardness. We can see our children shine and succeed even though it is not their mother tongue; that is, I think we would be more sophisticated than in the current conditions if they studied in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, it comes to mind at first glance upon an investigation of the political structure and laws of the country that the government has a precise, unbreakable legal structure that no one can violate. However, the various political and social events may raise suspicion in a citizen's heart that the political structure is far apart from what it should be. The wide range of corruption and breaches on high-ranking officials' part and the negligence on the legal institution's part reinforce the suspicion. Moreover, the illegal measures taken to impose legal restrictions on individuals and certain movements with no legal process gone through indicate the inconsistency of the political structure with the actions taken within the system.

**Marziye Mohebbi, lawyer, Mashhad**

Almost the entire political structure is based on the Governance of the Jurist's rule, and the economy is based on oil. The old reactionary politics, not willing to communicate, has totally hindered achievement of the development purposes, and the conditions have deteriorated every day according to the indicators.

This institutional dependence results in conditions where there are sometimes decisions and measures within the system that not only do no one takes responsibility for, but are sometimes even attributed to external factors. For example, the assassinations that were committed in different periods, such as the serial murders and the invasion of the boys' dormitory of the University of Tehran in 1999 and 2009 (known as the university campus invasion) were attributed to forces inside, *etc.*, and some highlighted the role of *the West* to acquit the government and authorities. Such opacity and complexity in political action in Iran are already quite different from what was demanded by the people shortly after the Revolution.

In general, it can be said that part of the inconsistency and deviation of the discipline from the routine in the political structure of the country results from the structure of the government, with such lack of coordination observed between different departments and ministries. Another part concerns the macro-structure of government, where particular institutions function totally differently from the government in many cases.

**3.1.7. Exclusion of cultures**

The existence of ethnic and cultural diversity in the realm of a government has been regarded by them in various historical periods as a threatening or opportunistic component. Based on the above view, certain policies have been adopted for strategic management of diversity in favour of the government. Therefore, it is only from the perspective of governments and their interests and security that the issue of ethnic and cultural diversity has gained significance.

**Asghar Izadi Jeyran, sociologist and lecturer at the University of Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

The Azeri spoken in radio and television programs is ridiculous, and the Azeri are represented in the series with contempt.



In Iran, some kind of confrontation, exclusion, or ridicule of the cultural manifestations of the different ethnic groups is observed in practice either generally or occasionally. One type of exclusion can be seen in radio and television programs, which have sometimes caused protests by the relevant ethnic groups, including the Azari, Lur, Kurd, Baloch, *etc.* Another type occurs in the representation of ethnic and religious rituals, which are not allowed to be carried out in groups. The people from these ethnic groups believe that there is a planned attempt to devalue the ethnocultural manifestations in the eyes of the youth and to value in their minds a specific cultural type instead to make everyone similar and easier to manage.

**Abdorrashid Triz, Mowlawi, history researcher and socio-political activist, and Balochistan**

On the radio and television of the province, with a 70-80% Baloch population, Balochi is the language with the fewest programs, no investment is made in the folklore and public culture of Balochistan, and the activists are given no opportunity.

Charts 16 and 17 show the amount of restriction on ethnic and religious rituals from the perspectives of the elite and the general public.

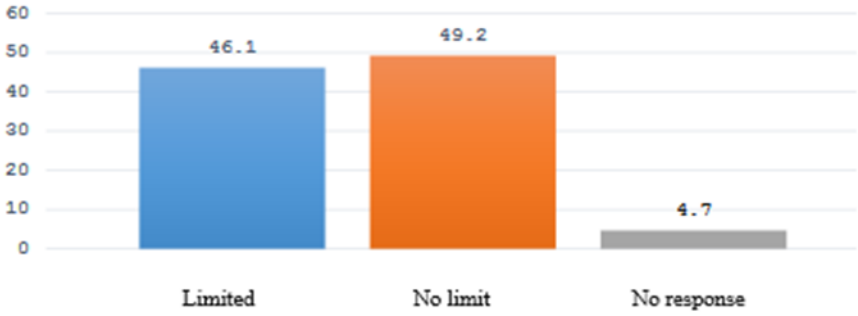


Figure 18 Restrictions on ceremonies according to elites

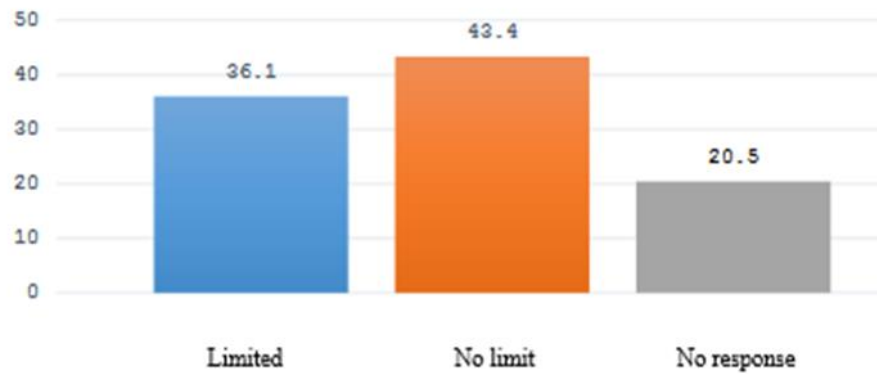


Figure 19 restrictions on ceremonies according to general people

Many scholars and experts in the field of social sciences believe that the current conditions in the country are anomic, discussing attenuations of social order and consensus (Abazari, 2014). A reformist activist, Abbas Abdi (2006) addressed the issue of social collapse seriously for the first time in the 2000s. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad<sup>22</sup> and his associates are also among those who have recently raised the issue of social collapse in Iranian society. According to them, there has already been a collapse in various economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, and other fields. Activists in various fields find the current conditions improper, which could pose a risk to the future of the country. The results of the present study also confirm the existence of these crises.

**Mehdi Feizi, faculty member in economics at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan**

There are a series of crises and issues, in fact hyper-issues, in the country that are ready to explode like time bombs, concerning topics from banks to pension funds, to water crisis, to unemployment, to divorce. Each of these is horrible in itself, and becomes more horrible along with the others; once one explodes, so can the others, and that is horrible.

It is thought that the inefficiency is caused by the government, which is always regarded as the accused party. It can be stated in general that the central government has hardly taken practical measures since the Pahlavi era to earn the public trust of the ethnic groups and that the government's strategies concerning the ethnic groups have involved unfulfilled economic promises or coercion. Committees have been dispatched on certain occasions to regions such as Kurdistan, and there have been negotiations in the years following the Revolution with the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and other parties

<sup>22</sup> Resalat newspaper, Issue. 9187, 8/4/2018

and with the big Sunni names as the Central Sunni Council. However, such attempts have failed due to the dominant centre-based, power-oriented, non-pluralist spirit, and the negotiators from the ethnic and religious groups have been imprisoned or exiled in most cases. Throughout this period, the central governments have insisted on their ideologies despite all the promises that they have made, and do not seem to wish to do anything in practice for the achievement of unity, through which they could win the trust of different ethnic groups.

Figures bellow show the views of the elite and the general public on the political conditions in the country.

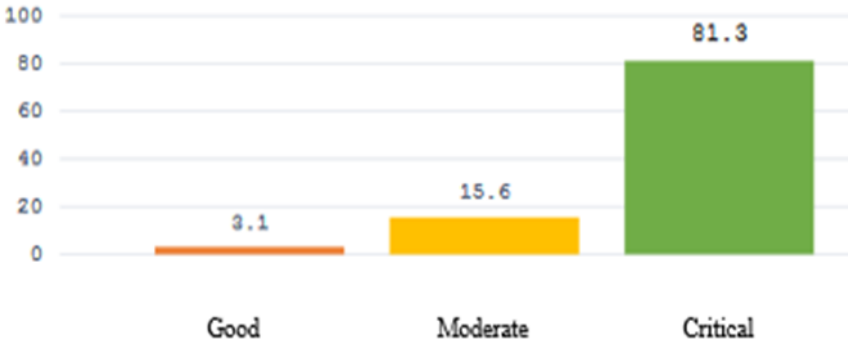


Figure 20 The political status of the country according to elites

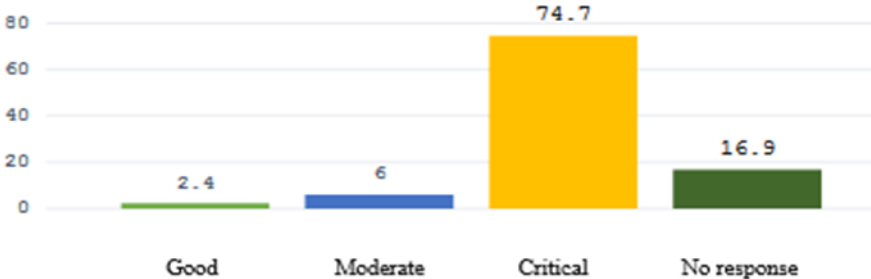


Figure 21 The political status of the country according to the general people

Another aspect of social collapse is the disruption of national-territorial unity. In the land of Iran, a variety of populations have always lived side by side, and there have been plenty of competitions and struggles between these different manifestations of Iranian collective identities. During each period, a certain group has gained power, which has never denoted the exclusion of the other groups, as the main issue in these competitions and struggles has not involved being or not being Iranian. No single historical case can be found in which orientation or government has sought upon their achievement of power to completely exclude the other groups and question their Iranian entity. However, there has been ethnic discrimination throughout the discussed historical period

in economic, political, cultural, social, and other aspects, which has been considered as a threat to national-territorial- unity.

**Ahmad, carpet merchant, Urmia, West Azerbaijan**

With all this discrimination, Iran will fall apart. In the short run, people's disgust will increase, which will lead to collapse and dissolution in the long run.

In general, it can be stated that ethnic issues are considered the most complicated, at the same time the most influential socio-political issues in today's world, based on evidence from various sources. Some of the evidence indicates that the enhancement of ethnic identity and movement will be one of the most prominent manifestations of Iran's socio-political dynamism in the short term. The involved factors include enhancement of the gap between national and ethnic identity, rise in social dignity, economic, political, and cultural demands, increasing development of ethnic organizations, institutions, associations, and centres, and the emergence of extremist identity-seeking feelings among some of the elites, intellectuals and political parties, increase in political alienation, separation of ethnic groups and the political system, and the emergence of identity demands in opportunities for political expansion such as national and local election (Karimi Maleh, 2009: p. 23).

Another important case that was discussed in the interviews made with various ethnic groups about cultural monopoly, concerned how the cities, passages, streets and allies, as well as places of residence of the groups, were named. They pointed out that the government institutions were trying to change the local names and replace them with Persian ones.

Sardar Fotuhi, public and private research project consultant, Saqqez, Kurdistan Province

The square is known as Halow ('falcon'), but is now referred to as Jomhuriye Eslami ('Islamic Republic'). Language and culture resist here, and the square is still called Halow. Language escapes from power.

The results obtained in that regard from the interviews indicate resistance by the ethnic groups, who still use the native and local names in colloquial language regardless of the official naming. There is an important point involved here: that language policies will work only if they are in line with the public opinion in

society. It is nearly impossible to impose language or modification on people against their will.

Ethnocide is a consequence of failure to approve of cultures and orientation toward cultural monopoly, as a result of which the identity and ethnicity of the social group fade away over time, and is replaced by a set of superficial cultural features. The term was coined by the anthropologist *Robert Jaulin* in the 1970s to refer to a set of methods aimed at destroying the culture of a people and replacing it with other cultures (Burton, 2017: p. 189). The term *ethnocide* should not be confused with *genocide*. The former means the destruction of ethnic culture and identity, while the latter means the murder of individuals in the society and the termination of the generation of an ethnic group through a holocaust, an epidemic, or an unlimited prevalence of alcohol or drugs, of which there are numerous examples (Ruholamini, 1989: p. 115). In the process of ethnocide, the culture that replaces the other is usually that of the conquerors or colonizers or a more powerful national culture. Thus, once the process of ethnocide is completed, the ethnic group finally disappears as one distinct from the others, as it is inevitably integrated into a larger group.

### *3.1.8. Overcoming the crisis*

In the previous section, cases were discussed that indicated the existence of socio-political crises in the country. In this section, solutions will be presented according to the obtained results to overcome these crises. The most important issue here is to help preserve collective identities with reference to multiculturalism. The findings demonstrated that many of the demands made by ethnic and religious groups fell within this legal framework, and a number of the people in these groups considered the implementation of the existing legal provisions as their ultimate demand. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take full advantage of these democratic capacities to overcome the crises mentioned in the previous sections.

The issue of citizenship rights and belief in and respect for it are other factors that can help to overcome socio-political crises.

Another important issue in this regard is the observance of moderation and avoidance of any form of extremism with respect to ethnic groups. From the point of view of the participants in this study, this will lead the country to national reconciliation and perpetual peace rather than collapse. Each of the above will be discussed in more detail below.

The issue of national unity can be investigated from two perspectives. Firstly, national unity is based on extreme nationalist views, where a society combines its nationality with sacredness and worship, and considers other nations and nationalities not as equivalent to theirs but as inferior and worthless. From this perspective, national unity requires an urge for pride and supremacy, based not on original, common values but ethnic and national prejudice, resulting in the view that it is legitimate to dominate over other nations and regard them as tools.

The proponents of this view believe that national identity can be enhanced provided that ethnic identity is attenuated, and reinforcement of collective identity will lead to the debilitation of national identity and consensus. From another point of view, national unity denotes self-confidence, reliance on the nation's capitals and capabilities, and reduction of the distances and gaps arising from the religious, ethnic, territorial, and linguistic differences within the nation to enhance solidarity, empathy, and collaboration among the groups and individuals for the growth and excellence of the nation. On that basis, ethnic and national belonging never assumes an intrinsic or absolute value, not resulting in prejudice, and belonging to a nation or land never arouses a negative or superiority-seeking attitude toward others. Most collective Iranian identities prefer the latter view. This view suggests that there is no conflict between local and regional identity and macro, *i.e.* national, identity despite the greater concern for the latter in the modern world.

**Mohsen Goodarzi, sociologist, researcher, and university lecturer from Tehran**

Large political identities do not function like the original factions, representing the interests of the large departments and groups in the society to some extent, and micro ethnic, regional, familial, and friendship identities have grown instead.



The teachings of such developments concern the view that the Iranian society needs a fundamental paradigm change in its intellectual infrastructures to progress from collectivism to positive individualism based on undeniable citizenship rights. Iran's social and economic institutions should gain enough knowledge to be capable of distinguishing between collectivism-based policies and those based on positive individualism. They should be able to reject the government's supportive policies that ensure the satisfaction of their short-term interests and voluntarily refuse to receive them. They need to know those supportive policies will result in their dependence on the government, which will prevent them from mobility and dynamicity. On the other hand, national policies arising from socially organized disputes guarantee observance of citizenship rights, and will lead to national development and prosperity.

The first step for the achievement of the desired conditions of perpetual peace through operational dispute is to revise Iranians' beliefs at both governmental and national levels. For that purpose, it seems essential to make revisions in the following areas.

1. It is very important to avoid ethnic ridicule at all levels of society, from everyday social dialogues to radio and television programs, to the statesmen's and celebrities' words.
2. It is essential to avoid ethnic self-exaltation to enable dialogue and establish perpetual peace. The self-exaltation in the Iranian ethnic groups, which exists more or less in them all (more in the Kurds and Azari, for instance, and less in others) is a serious barrier to the achievement of perpetual peace and national reconciliation.
3. It is important to respect all the religions with followers residing within the Iranian territory and to believe in equal social rights for the followers of all those religions.
4. It is of great significance to avoid discriminatory behaviour toward other ethnic groups. The unpleasant sense is not restricted to a specific collective identity and has been experienced by most ethnic groups. The ethnic groups complain about the Persian's improper behaviour toward them at the centre. On the other hand, those living in Tehran discuss their experience of behavioural discrimination among the ethnic groups in trade and other aspects of life.
5. the government needs to change their methods to realize economic, social, and cultural equality for all Iranians.

Another group believe that many of the demands made by ethnic and minority groups have been considered in the Constitution, and there are problems only in their implementation. Accordingly, the enforcement of these laws is suspended mostly due to the subjective, personal treatment by the relevant officials.

**Salaheddin Khadiv, civil activist and journalist, Mahabad, West Azerbaijan**

If citizens were given as great a deal of rights as in the Constitution, a revolution would take place in Iran.

For citizens' rights, collective and religious identities believe that they have been deprived of these rights, *i.e.* they have not been given the rights they should. Important issues referred to by the collective identities as a violation of their citizens' rights included the failure to use ethnic and religious capacities in important, strategic positions, such as the presidency, ministry, and

governorship, and lack of religious places, such as mosques in Tehran despite a large number of the Sunni in the city, cultural exclusion of artists, women, and social and environmental activists, *etc.*

Figure 22 shows satisfaction with the application of citizens’ rights from the perspective of the elite. 92.2% of the elite are dissatisfied with the way civil rights are applied, and only 7.8% of them are satisfied with the human rights conditions in the country. Figure 23 shows the sense of discrimination concerning the ethnic-citizenship right, on which basis 73.4% of the elite believed that ethnic groups did not enjoy equal citizens’ rights. Since most of the interviewees in the general public group lacked a precise understanding of citizens’ rights, as indicated throughout the explanations of the concept by the large gaps between their conceptions and the real sense, the quantitative findings concerning the general public were excluded in this section.

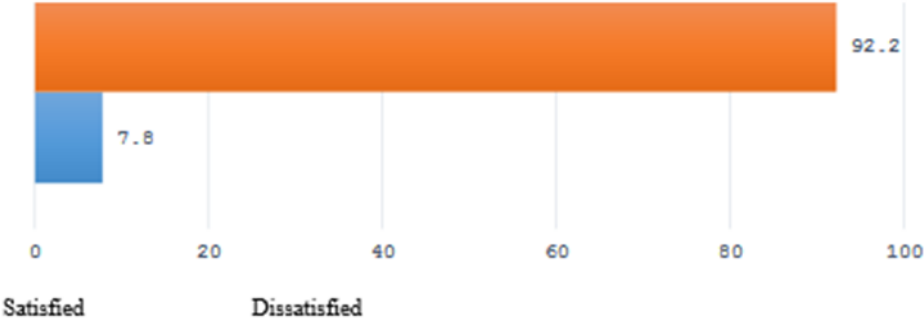


Figure 22 satisfaction with citizenship rights according to elites

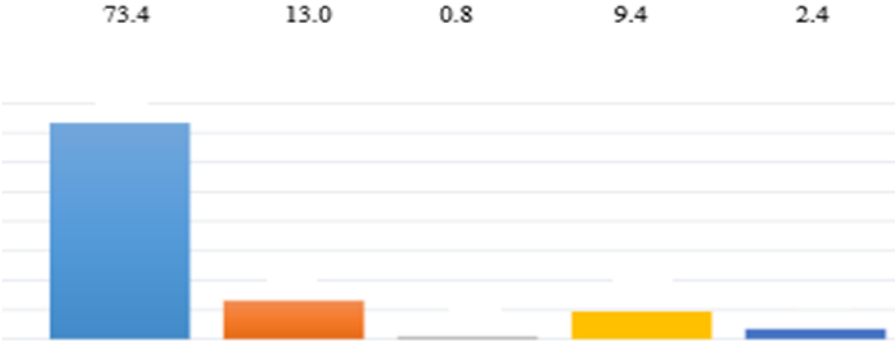


Figure 23 satisfaction with citizenship rights according to general people

Today, the concept of citizenship is considered a social status in the view of civil society, and a citizen is defined as a member of the political society who has rights and obligations about the membership. Concern for citizens’ rights in any society will provide the dominant political system with consistency, legitimacy, and continuity. There are civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and judicial aspects to these rights, and the quantity and quality of their utilization in any society is considered an indicator of development and a component of proper governance.



It has already been found that cultural requirements need to be met for the regularization of the modern order, where the incorporation of values functions far better than methods of social control. In other words, a first step to having citizens' rights respected by people is to try to integrate them into society by increasing knowledge and ensuring the enforcement of laws. It was found through the interviews that there was a vague image of citizens' rights even in the minds of the elite. There has been dissatisfaction and a sense of discrimination among the ethnic groups, since specific cases have not been specified for exemplification, and there is even inconsistency in the instructions concerning the contents of the Constitution on civil, social, political, and economic rights.

**Riyaz Ali Farhani, social activist from Khuzestan**

The target society still does not know exactly what their rights as citizens are!

According to the interviewees in this study, a large number of people still do not know what is meant by the term *citizens' rights*, and it seems that the most important point before all these discussions are made by the government, a human rights charter is prepared, *etc.* is to raise people's knowledge of the term, so that they can refer to and demand it in the next step.

Topics such as citizens' rights first and foremost require instruction and cultural information, for which social activists and civic institutions are partly responsible. Instruction of citizenship behaviour is highly effective in the performance of civic organizations, and the teachings will help enhance social ethics and expand social consensus locally, nationally, and globally. The government and state institutions are responsible for another part of the instruction and information. The government and legislative institutions, national and local organizations, civic entities, *etc.* play an important role in training citizens through the instruction of citizens' rights and group life skills and introduction of the principles of urban management. For instruction and cultural information in the area of knowledge of citizens' rights, it will help increase the quality of group life and enhance social capital in life to learn about civil behaviour instruction parameters.

Some of the participants in this study confirmed that the alignment of ethnic interests with national interests has led to a revision of certain religious and ethnic beliefs in an attempt to establishment of a social consensus between the ethnic identities and the national identity in Iran, On that basis, the different governments have taken shape on close spectra from the right and the left, and groups far away from the route have been marginalized, or have joined the opposition. Thus, the eleventh and twelfth governments, headed by Hassan Rouhani, succeeded in the invitation of the factions existing in the political system framework to moderation, which was their slogan, at least during the

period of elections. This would give a pleasant taste to the spectrums forced away from the government during the elections period due to the possibility of participation of different spectrums and ethnic and other groups but finally failed to achieve much success. That is evidenced by the poor participation in the elections for the twelfth parliament, indicating the right party's return to power and implying the reformist's disappearance from Iranian politics. If this process continues, there will be progressively tighter potential loops in politicism within the political system of the Islamic Republic, which will increase the population of critics and the opposition.

After all, access to perpetual peace is a necessary condition for the coexistence of ethnic groups. The concept of perpetual peace can be found in the thoughts of the philosopher Immanuel Kant. His ideas in that regard are based on the definite prerequisites and conditions of peace and understanding between nations and states, a combination of realistic ideas such as that of the 'federation of free states' and ideas that do not seem to be easily realized but can serve as motives for mankind's progress in the future.

An important part of what concerns perpetual peace is explained within a cultural framework based on cultural criteria. A cultural approach should include and approve of the similarities and differences in all traditions so that it makes it possible to believe in them and even feel proud and happy to have them (K, 2002: p. 36-44).

Undoubtedly, the most important topic on the issue of peace is interaction and dialogue. Social and ethnic movements are issues that most countries in the world are involved in. An evident manifestation of these movements and the demands of the participating groups is the street protestant movements, which may be led in some cases to deviation and chaos by those abusing the excitements of the youth. What matters here is how these protestant movements are treated. In some cases, the reactions are manifested as violence, threat, and imprisonment. Of course, interaction and dialogue can always provide more appropriate solutions. According to the obtained results, the political structure of the government has failed to go through the route of interaction and dialogue as expected. Apart from the government's approach, there is violence in Iranians' behaviour at the micro level and the heart of society.

**Javad Tariri, lawyer, writer, and political activist from Khuzestan**

Your inability to interact well with Gonabadi dervishes demonstrates that you would even fail to interact with the founders of Iranian Shiites, who were dervishes, the noblest people.... When there is no opportunity for me to talk with my spouse, to love, to caress my child, or to study, what will be the output? Violence against my spouse, child, colleague, *etc.* will come about, want it or not.

A fundamental problem in political and international theory, with which it has long been concerned, is how you can help establish peace-based ethics and perpetual peace in domestic and worldwide governance. Any criterion required for peace that applies across societies and cultures should be created based on free consent, in fact, based on consensus resulting from dialogue and collaboration. It is as important as the final result how you can formulate a set of ethical principles applicable to all societies and cultures. A cultural approach should be comprehensive and approve of similarities and differences in all traditions so that it makes it possible to believe in them and even feel proud and happy to have them. In the interviews conducted among experts from different collective identities, they mainly pointed out the lack of peace in the current conditions of Iranian society, and most of them found the government and the governance responsible for such conditions.

**Nazar Mohammad Didgah, former parliament member and Mawlawi from Sistan and Balochistan**

If they do not take a serious action, Iran may fall apart as in the early years. It is in the hand of God. If the conditions persist, that will result.

It is a result of this study that the system has paved the way for enmity and irrationality rather than for peace and friendship with its wrong policies. In other words, the policies adopted in the past few years, involving opposition to collective and religious identities, have resulted more in their repulsion than in their fascination and formation of national unity. Undoubtedly, the most important component of the new theories is a return to the dispute, but in the public field. Despite all the cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences within the cultural geography of Iran, what matters in the achievement of perpetual peace in Iran is to provide an appropriate platform for dialogue and interaction between the ethnic groups to share and utilize the wealth and power resources equally and ensure individual, social, political, cultural, and religious freedom.

### *3.1.6. Strengthening solidarity through symbols*

According to Ernest Renan nation is essentially a spiritual soul, and only two things constitute this spirit: the first one is in the past and the second one is in the present. One is to have a rich and shared heritage of memories, and the other is the real satisfaction of living together and wanting to continue the value of the heritage that they all share. According to him, every nation is a glorious solidarity that is formed by the feeling of sacrifices that one person has made and the other is ready to do. The nation considers a past desirable and revives itself, especially in the present, through tangible actions. Renan believes that the existence of a nation is an everyday referendum, like the existence of an individual whose life is a permanent confirmation of life (Renan, 1882: 26-29).

Different views and theories have been presented about how solidarity develops between members of society, helping to make it a nation. Despite the relevant schools of thought and theories, it appears that the set of factors influencing national solidarity introduced in various perspectives can be used as criteria for evaluating national solidarity and, by insisting on them, examining the various aspects of national solidarity. According to this view, such elements as the common language, common race, common ethnicity, common culture, common customs, common history and past, common values, attachment to common land, common rational perceptions and memories, common honours, common interests, common ideals and aspirations are among the factors that can be used to analyse national solidarity in society (Ghasemi, 2007: 321). The nation-states, as national units, use all their power and resources to address the risks that threaten their national solidarity and try to strengthen national unity and solidarity in various ways and by using appropriate tools. One of these methods used by the national state as an alternative to local identities and their symbols that were introduced in the previous section is to use the national and official symbols of the country.

Each of us, consciously or unconsciously, uses symbols in our daily activities, in our speech and behaviour and they repeat in our dreams. Symbols make our desires tangible, and, in the course of a story, they excite us, shape our character and behaviour, and even cause us to succeed or fail. This is how the constituted symbols and rituals among communities find functional significance. On the one hand, they represent their basic requirements and necessities, and on the other, they demonstrate how concerned and conscious the individuals who require them are. Both considerations are necessary for a function to be created. This need and awareness, play a complementary role to each other. In many cases, due to the severity of the needs, some subconscious forces affect the conscience of the community members on the formation of a function. Therefore, by studying the structures, institutions, roles, symbols, and customs of the society, one can understand, on the one hand, its social needs and, on the other hand, the extent of people's awareness of those needs.

George Ritzer in his *Sociological Theories* points out several functions of the symbol, which include:

- One, Symbols enable human beings to deal with the material and social world by naming, classifying, and remembering the things they encounter in the world. In this way, human beings can organise a world that would otherwise be a chaotic space.
- Two, Symbols enable humans to understand the environment.
- Three, Symbols improve the ability of people to think.
- Four, Symbols empower people to solve various problems. Most animals have to act by trial and error, but humans can think symbolically about different types of actions before choosing an action.

- Five,           The use of symbols allows actors to transcend time, place, and even themselves. By using symbols, activists can imagine how they have lived in the past or will live in the future.
- Six,            Symbols enable us to imagine a metaphysical reality such as heaven or hell.
- Seven,         And the most important point is that symbols do not allow humans to be trapped in their immediate environments. This will make humans active rather than passive agents (Ritzer, 2010: 285).

Iranian society has unique and distinctive characteristics. From a sociological point of view, Iran is a pluralistic society. The existence of different ethnicities, languages, and religions is a typical feature of Iranian society. Geographically and geopolitically, Iran is in a situation where it is under pressure from forces that have entered the society from different sides, diverging and centrifugal forces with the aim of separation from Iran and joining other political units, or the establishment of new political units (Ahmady: 2018, 143).

The Islamic Revolution, with the diverse structural changes that it caused, also affected the culture of Iranian society. The Islamic Revolution of Iran had religious slogans and goals that, following a period of Pahlavi dynasty rule and their Westernist and archaic ideology, negated both of these ideologies. The Islamism inherent in the essence of the Revolution of 1979, along with the anti-Islamic efforts of the government during the half-century before the revolution, caused the revolutionary government to make great efforts to rebuild the Iranian identity. The new identity was a religious identity based on Islam, which overshadowed the Iranian identity. This is partially the result of extremism in the Pahlavi period to deny the Islamic elements, which caused a reaction in the form of extremism in the denial of the Iranian, secular and ancient elements in the post-revolutionary era. During this period, apart from the marginalisation of the archaic elements of identity, according to some, we have witnessed transformations in religious elements and many religious rituals are performed in a different way from the previous periods. These transformations in the manner of performing the ceremonies or eliminating and ignoring some of them are among the causes that may national unity and solidarity.

**Bagher Sadrinia, faculty member and university lecturer,  
Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

The old costumes must be restored to their former state. Like Charshanbe Soori [the fire feast at the last Wednesday of the year], which has been transformed, or like Ashura, where extremist behaviours have damaged the originality of religion. But the original customs are part of national identity and national unity.

The tricolour flag with green, white, and red colours, is an official symbol of Iran. These three colours, although they have changed over time, still retain their overall significance. The national anthem is another official symbol that is respected in different countries and any disrespect to these symbols is considered disrespect to the entire nation. Therefore, these official symbols are another factor that can unite and cover different ethnic groups and facilitate their solidarity.

**Hossein Mohammadzadeh, University Lecturer, Sanandaj,  
Kurdistan**

Every country has its own language, flag and symbol, and very naturally, the citizen of a country interacts with it under the laws of that country.

**Abdul Hamid Irannejad, retired teacher, cultural activist and researcher, Sistan and Balochestan**

My relationship with them [the Fars people] is as an Iranian, we share one language and one culture, and we are living under one flag, and I know all of them as compatriots and I respect their beliefs.



Picture 15 Interview with Abdul Hamid Irannejad

Another element that is commonly used as a symbol in countries is the personalities and heroes, both mythical and real, who serve as role models and whose memory is held in high esteem by the people of that country. These people travel through history and are not confined to specific historical periods. One of these figures is the Prophet of Islam. The Imams, particularly Imam Ali and Imam Hussein, are among the most significant Shiite religious figures. Although they are not Iranians, their followers respect them as a symbol of truthfulness and grandiosity. Next to these personalities, there are national figures who have some mythical features, such as the heroes of the Shahnameh, and others who are real, examples of which can be found in different periods of Iranian history.

**Gholamreza Jafari, Environmental Activist, Naqadeh, West Azerbaijan**

National holidays and religious rituals are ingrained in the culture of these people. They tried for four decades to make some of these elements lighter or bolder, but they were unable. They attempted to cancel the Nowruz ceremony but were unable to do so.

National holidays (including the ancient holiday of Nowruz), religious holidays (including the birth of the Prophet and Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha), the Fajr Decade (anniversary of the Revolution), and other national and religious ceremonies respectable in Iranian territorial geography can provide a basis for connection and dialogue between ethnic groups.

**Mansour Rahmani, Kurdish Literature Activist, Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

Some of the festivals, such as Nowruz and Chaharshanbe Soori, are shared by the Iranian cultural geography, which includes Balochis, Kurds, Persians, and Azeris. These are unquestionably the heritages of all these ethnicities, as are other occasions such as Eid al-Fitr, which have entered the field of cultural Iran in a historical occasion and are doubtlessly a common heritage of all Iranian ethnicities.

Symbols and rituals, as previously stated, can help to strengthen national identity. This is due to the emotional nature of many conventional (habit-based) human behaviours, and the power of these symbols and mirrors to affect two aspects of behaviour. They support the development of a tradition that has endured throughout history and will endure in the generations to come, but they also provoke feelings of patriotism and arouse strong emotions throughout each



rite and interaction with these symbols. Thus, symbols and rituals are necessary as foundational components of national solidarity.

The local symbols of Iranian society – Through which the government can contribute to the unity and solidarity of Iranian society – can be categorised into three groups. Some of these symbols such as Nowruz, Chaharshanbe Soori, Mehregan, Yalda, and others are ancient and their history goes back to the distant past and are mainly rooted in the myths of ancient Iran. The second part of these symbols, such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Ghadir, the birth of the Prophet, the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, and other Shiite Imams, are religious occasions and related to rituals that are part of religious thought. The third group of symbols is related to recent times and originated from the rule of the Islamic Revolution. Ceremonies such as the Fajr decade (anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution), Quds Day, the flag and anthem of the Islamic Republic, etc., are in this group. The question now is to what extent the government has been able to use these symbols and rituals as a supporting factor for national solidarity.

Iran is a country with inhabitants of different ethnic and religious affiliations. Accordingly, the proposed symbols have different interpretations by different ethnic and religious groups. The Sunni community of Iran—including parts of Khuzestan Province (Arabs living in this province) and Kurdistan Province and parts of West Azarbaijan and Kermanshah provinces as well as Balochestan—cannot be aligned with some religious symbols that are associated with Shiite thought, and symbols and calendar events such as Ghadir Khum or Nimeh Shaaban conflict with their religious and ideological beliefs. On the other hand, among those who have religious beliefs, ancient ceremonies such as Nowruz or Syrian Wednesday and other national ceremonies have no place. The adherents of this sect cite a hadith from the Prophet in support of their position, in which it is advised to substitute Nowruz and Mehregan for the two Eids of Fitr and Eid al-Adha. These beliefs hold that the origins of ceremonies like Nowruz, Chaharshanbe Soori, and Sizdeh Behdar are associated with Zoroastrianism and therefore invalid. These opinions are more common among Baloch residents, Arabic-speaking Khuzestanians, and Kurdish Islamists, as can be inferred from the interviews that were conducted. To put it another way, this outlook is only held by a small number of people in Sunni Kurdish communities where ethnicity outweighs religion. Due to this preference for ethnic identity over religious identity as well as the political history of this region, the degree of alignment with national and revolutionary symbols among the people of the Kurdish regions is weaker than that of the people of other ethnic groups.

### *3.2. Interethnic cultural boundaries*

Culture is one of the key characteristics that separate ethnic groups from one another and, as a result, it defines ethnic groupings. Historical traditions are one of the grounds on which each ethnic community congregates and establishes a connection to its history. Clothing, music, body paint, and other types of costumes are just a few examples of how people attempt to materially express

their identity by exhibiting their prejudices and thus distinguishing themselves apart from other ethnic groups.

**Gholamreza Jafari, Environmental Activist, Naqadeh, West Azerbaijan**

If we want to define culture, it is the things that human beings live with. Humans live with them, work with them; they create relationships according to a culture. The culture of any ethnic group is valuable to its members. Most of these cultures are acquired from our fathers and ancestors, and we have acquired some of them through the historical texts through education.

In light of this, an effort will be made to investigate the degree of prejudice held by the ethnic groups under study as well as the potential significance of historical traditions in this reconsideration. Another factor that distinguishes various ethnic groups is the question of their mother tongue and the level of discrimination against it. Another element that might set people apart from one another is the idea of the ummah. According to Quranic teachings, the term 'Ummah' is used to refer to the entire Islamic community, regardless of language, race, or other characteristics. In other words, the degree to which this idea is preferred by members of the investigated society over concepts of ethnicity and nationality based on language is investigated. In many areas of Iran, including the west and north-west with a mixture of Turko-Kurd population, the south-west with a mixture of Arab-Fars-Lor population, and the east with a population of Balochi and Sistani, ethnic groups coexisting beside one another have produced a complex and interconnected cultural context. Each of these groups views itself as the primary native of the territory, while the other views itself as an immigrant, and as a result, each group asserts property ownership due to the issue of cultural originality. This topic is examined from the viewpoint of the relevant ethnic groups under the heading of land acquisition. The final issue relates to the current political borders that exist in each of the four corners of the nation, according to which there is a gap between the ethnic groups that have historically coexisted. The final section looks at the present interactions between various ethnic groups and the significance of political boundaries.

### 3.2. UMMAH VS. NATION

In the current world, stability has lost all of its significance and has become a utopian ideal for people. On the one hand, many religious philosophers view religion and religious teachings as mature, timeless, and universal ideas that can be applied to all locations and times. The Quran uses the term ‘ummah,’ which refers to the entire Islamic society, in several verses, including verse 92 of Surah Anbiya where all the Muslims are called a united Ummah. This term is used to refer to Islamic society regardless of its geographical and territorial boundaries. The concept of a nation, on the other hand, is a new and modern idea that describes the unique geographical and territorial boundaries of a country.

Islam encourages people to attain the desired system structure—the Ummah—in numerous ways. This has nothing to do with national, racial, or ethnic boundaries and seeks to bring all people to this unity, wherever they may inhabit the world. Islam invites Muslims to get together and views them as members of a family. Islamic macro-management enables people from various nations to communicate with one another, progress, and achieve perfection. Ummah is a purely ideological concept and it means a society that is not based on any blood or soil ties and has gathered them together for a single purpose. This is a society whose people, under great and sublime leadership, feel the responsibility for the progress and perfection of the individual and the community with their blood, belief and life (Shariati, 2014: 256). Some people have also used the term ‘Ummah’ to refer to a community of Muslims and believers who submit to and obey God, with a government that is ruled by Islamic teachings (Ahmady, 2009, p. 51). The Islamic state chooses its citizens from all human beings and refers to its adherents as the ‘united Ummah’ regardless of country boundaries and ethnic, linguistic, and cultural distinctions.

The idea of ‘Fraternity’ (Okhovat) is also essential in the ummah-building process; Quran considers Muslims as each other’s brothers in verse 10 of Surah al-Hijrat. Additionally, Al Imran’s verse 103 calls for Muslim unity and forbids separation and secession. Various movements have emerged throughout the modern history of the Islamic world in this direction. The movement was started by Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, a revolutionary scientist and politician who has always advocated for the unity of Islamic nations and who has attempted to bring Muslim countries together by publishing ‘Urwat al-Wuthqa’ newspapers in India and ‘Zia al-Khafqin’ in London. Sayyid Jamal al-Din sought to unite all Muslims under one banner and demonstrate the true might of Islam to the rest of the world. Soon after, Iqbal Lahori of Pakistan strove to awaken Islamic countries by disseminating his ideas and beliefs to bring Muslims to their rightful place. Another prominent Muslim who moved to Lebanon to aid other Muslims is Imam Musa al-Sadr. The final Friday of Ramadan was designated Quds Day by Ayatollah Khomeini in favour of the Iranian Muslim community of Palestinian origin, and he urged Muslims everywhere to participate in a march for the liberation of Palestine.

In contrast to the concept of Ummah, there is the idea of a nation that is associated with territory and geographical location, as well as with a culture,

language, history, race, and common ethnicity. The Treaty of Westphalia, which was signed in 1648, was the first international agreement to formally recognise countries' equality in international relations as well as their political and religious independence. After that, the Pope lost some of his authority and Christianity in Europe lost some of its significance. On the other side, the Christian Ummah, whose core was the faith of Jesus, came apart, and the basis of the establishment of governments was based on nationality and ethnicity. As a result, Europe was split into various regions based on ethnicity. The phrase 'national government' therefore entered the lexicon of political ideas. The outcome of this strategy was that the 'national government' replaced the 'government of religion,' and from that point on, nations, not individuals who adhere to a religion or have a religious foundation, choose their fate. God also had no place in the political system. All nations were founded based on nationality, ethnicity, race, or linguistic characteristics, with religion and otherworldly ideals becoming less significant in the formation of governments. Realised examples of this include the decline of the Christian empire in the Middle Ages and the Ottoman Empire in a portion of the Islamic countries. These events led to the emergence of small nations on the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, where the idea of the Ummah essentially gave way to nationalism and created a new form of nationalism.

A nation is a sizable group of people bound together by a shared culture and consciousness. The sense of belonging to one another and the sense of unity among the members of that unit emerge from this connection. The occupation of a single geographic region and a sense of dependency on a particular piece of land is among the common features of all nations. The nation in its modern sense is something brand-new, with a history that begins with the rise of new nationalism and is associated with the intellectual, political, and social advancements of Europe over the past 200 years, specifically those that followed the French Revolution. National consciousness, which is defined as national identity, the need for a national government, and the need to establish a strong centrepiece (i.e., the state), is therefore a comparatively modern development (Qaderi, 2010: 375).

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is derived from religious foundations and standards. Article 4 of the Constitution, which is the most important principle and a guide for all other Articles, states that any legislation that contradicts the unity of the Islamic Ummah and causes indifference toward the situation of Muslims will not be compatible with the spirit governing the Constitution. For this reason, in several principles, the unity of the Islamic Ummah and the protection of Muslims in every corner of the world have been taken into consideration and expressed as a fundamental duty. Two illustrations of these legal principles are given below.

Article 152:

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the preservation of the independence of the country in

all respects and its territorial integrity, the defence of the rights of all Muslims, nonalignment with respect to the hegemonic superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States.

Article 154:

The Islamic Republic of Iran has as its ideal human felicity throughout human society and considers the attainment of independence, freedom, and the rule of justice and truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the freedom fighters against the oppressors in every corner of the globe.

The aforementioned Articles logically follow that from the perspective of the Constitution, since all Muslims are members of one single Ummah, upholding the rights of all Muslims and aiding the legitimate struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors in every region of the world is one of the fundamental standards of the state, one of the guiding principles of politics, and a guiding principle for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As a result, it is possible to comprehend the significance of the concept of ‘the single Ummah’ in the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is expressly stated in the Constitution. Many people emphasise this concept’s necessity and importance by highlighting the spiritual underpinnings of Islam and its traditional practices. However, many academics and religious adherents believe that Islamic administration is superior to all others and that the nation-state notion has no place even in modern society. According to their worldview and subjectivity, rather than the modern idea of a nation-state, what occurs in the Islamic world is perceived and comprehended in terms of the traditional and Islamic government. On the other hand, many people do not accept this type of worldview and criticise the government policies of the country by emphasising the concept of the nation in the territorial area of Iran. These people are dissatisfied with the government’s foreign policies based on economic and human costs to defend the Muslims of the world and they believe that when the people of the country are having problems in various economic, social, welfare, cultural, and other fields, why the government should spend its capital and resources on other countries and prefer the interests of the nation to the interests of the Ummah.

**Javad Oveisi, Teacher and History Researcher, Zabol, Sistan and Balochestan**

We are hungry ourselves, but we help other countries. One must have a lyric to help another. The light that is necessary at home should not be sent to the Mosque. [Persian proverb]

**Abdul Rashid Tariz, a religious scholar, history researcher and socio-political activist, Sistan and Balochistan**

The government uses many of the resources we have available in other nations to promote Shia, its own religion. You can find Iranian-run colleges and schools in Balochistan. Our administration has invested money in Lebanon that, if it had been invested in Balochistan, would have developed this region like other provinces. However, due to religious concerns, Arab nations spend a lot of money for the welfare of their citizens. They exclusively spend money on religious activities in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen; they do not spend money on their own nation. As an Iranian, I often expect people to focus more on the inside than the outward. Investments ought to be internal, and indigenous people ought to be prioritised.

The above perspective is based on the belief that in a situation where the world economy is advancing its new forms of colonialism in the framework of capitalism, the economy has recruited all other countries and cultures, and somehow the economies of powerful countries are not able to deal with it. The Iranian government has been the focus of attacks, sanctions, and international exclusions because the Iranian economy appears to be incompatible with such a viewpoint. The internal situation of the country is therefore unfavourable,

especially in terms of the economy, and instead of regulating the government's welfare programmes within the boundaries of Iran, it deals with extraterritorial ambitions that may not be able to manage and direct it. This has increased the risk of a national economic crisis and caused irreparable harm to the citizenry. This is a predicament that is mostly the result of the ideologies that guide the implementation of public programmes and investments in the other nations of the region. In addition to religious and spiritual beliefs, some proponents of this philosophy cite the idea of 'security' as justification for their support. This group of people state that due to the regional conditions and various conflicts that are going on in different countries around, political officials are forced to act like other global and regional powers to protect the internal borders of the country. This requires a strong intellectual and theoretical basis for persuasion and, in addition, requires considerable economic, financial, and executive power.

**Mohammad Gol Kahraze, Faculty Member of Zahedan University, Sistan and Balochestan**

I ask why Iran is helping Syria and Iraq when we are dying of hunger? [They say] we have to go beyond Iran's borders for our own security. Were it not for Iran's support to Iraq and Syria, we would be fighting in Khuzestan now or in neighbouring provinces!

This view contends that if the government acts against this situation, there is a possibility of insecurity in the country's internal borders, as stated in one of the speeches of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution about the martyrs who defended the shrine in February 2016 where he stated: 'If the defenders of the shrine had not fought, we would have fought in Kermanshah and Hamedan today.'<sup>23</sup> The opponents of this policy by highlighting the idea of the nation as represented by the country's territorial boundaries argue that we should not invest in this area until the threat has reached the nation's borders. It can be said that the followers of the studied ethnic groups, most of them belonging to the two religious groups of Sunni and Shiite, to redefine their identity had little consideration for the idea of Ummah as a religious form different from ethnic and linguistic bases. When compared to traditional, linguistics, and ethnic criteria, it can also be said that the role of religion in defining cultural boundaries is of secondary importance to them.

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<sup>23</sup> Mashreq News, News ID: 531613

### 3.2.4. Land Possession

The implication from the foregoing was that many ethnic groups attempt to define their ethnic identity through various elements, and by defining their identity borders with others, they are within their ethnic circle and borders. The question of land and its ownership is brought up once each nation's identity has been established. In several Iranian provinces, there are diverse and mixed-ethnic environments where various ethnic groups dwell. One of these provinces is West Azarbaijan, which is home to both the Kurd and Azari ethnic groups. Various ethnic groups, including the Lor, Bakhtiari, and Arabs, are present in Khuzestan. Balochis and Sistans are the two ethnic groups that coexist in the province of Sistan and Balochestan.

A topic that has always been discussed by the people of these provinces, especially the 'pan-', is which ethnic group is the original native of these areas. Each of these groups contends that their people were the original inhabitants of these regions, while the other group were immigrants who later invaded that territory, citing historical backdrops, records, and oral literature from various regions. They assert ownership of the land in certain locations as a response. Major disagreements between the members of these ethnic groupings have also resulted from this.

**Meysam Sefidkhosh, lecturer in philosophy, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran**

De-ethnicisation took place under the influence of an urban conflict between the Dezfulis and the Lors. The Lors immigrated to Dezful and settled there beginning towards the end of the Pahlavi era. The antagonism between the two groups shaped my childhood. This problem also had an impact on Dezful's political atmosphere.





Picture 16 Interview with Meisam Sefidkhosh

This issue is further raised in regions where the people of these ethnic groups live in the same city. Cities like Urmia, where a mix of Turkish and Kurdish ethnic groups live, are an example of this. The uncle of one of the spectators at the 2015 volleyball match between the team from this city was later revealed to be one of the team's Kurdish-speaking players. He entered the stadium wearing Kurdish clothing, and as soon as the Azari-speaking fans noticed him, they began shouting curse words at him. The organisers of the match, which also happened to be of the same language and ethnicity as the supporters, remained silent, and the person who was dressed in Kurdish, was forced to leave the stadium. Studies reveal that each Kurdish/Turkish-speaking population are quite sensitive about employment, especially the hiring of instructors from other ethnic groups in their area since they feel that their presence not only hurts their local economy but also makes it harder for them to find work. Indigenous groups believe that these practices weaken their culture and sense of self. Similar to the previous instance, the nomination of a Kurdish-speaking individual at a Tabriz administrative office sparked widespread public outrage, prompting the authorities to remove the individual from the position.

**Aziz Nemati, poet and linguist, Urmia, West Azerbaijan**

Why should a non-Azeri youth come to teach us? With all these young talents that we have.

**Saman Rahnama, economic activist and member of the city council, Mahabad, West Azerbaijan**

I was a manager somewhere. The client who came to the governor said that there was a shortage of real men that you made a Kurdish man the CEO!

In another case, during the 2017 referendum on the Kurdistan Region, maps of the ideas of Greater Kurdistan were circulated in cyberspace, including the Kurdish regions of Iran, and claims of land ownership were made differently. Nader Ghazipour, a representative of the people of Urmia, reacted strongly to the plan, saying: ‘we will pull out the eyes of anyone who desires to capture the territory of Azarbaijani’ Mr Ghazipour’s statement and the defining Kurdish cities in the south of West Azarbaijan Province (such as Mahabad, Bukan, Sardasht, Piranshahr, Oshnavieh, Takab, Shahindej, and other cities) as the territory of the Azaris provoked a strong reaction from the Kurds. One of these reactions was the text of Mr Jalal Jalalizadeh, a former representative of the Kurdish people of Sanandaj in the Parliament: ‘First of all, Kurds are not a minority in West Azarbaijan Province, and Azaris themselves are not Turks. You want to violate the rights of the main ethnic residents with your racist stances.’ Despite using a different body of evidence, Mr Jalalizadeh’s remarks portray Azaris as immigrants and, differently, claim the ownership of this land.

In March 2018, also in Khuzestan Province, violent skirmishes broke out between residents of Andimeshk and security personnel as the border sign between the two cities of Dezful and Andimeshk was moved, adding a few metres to Dezful and removing some from Andimeshk.

The debate over who owns the land and whose ethnic groups make up the majority in each region of Iran have grown intense in recent years. This can be seen by listening to a conversation between several young people or by reading comments on an ethnic social media post.

As stated in the preceding paragraphs, this issue is especially prevalent in mixed-population regions like West Azarbaijan and Khuzestan. In those cities, a group of people from each ethnic group searches for a word in the name of a different village, city, or region written in their language to support their claim that the region was originally theirs, and if other people now reside there, it proves that they are immigrants who have taken control of the region.

### *3.2.5. Ethnicity and borders*

A border is a construct that designates the lines dividing the areas of two nations, and borders are solid lines that are established to specify a political unit in practice. These lines establish the borders of the area and the boundaries of

the government, as well as the authority of that government. As a result, one of the primary and crucial debates of political geography is formed around borders (Mirheidari, 2001: 161).

Political geography takes into account many key concerns, including the idea of boundary and its variations (Heidari & Jalilian, 2011: 88). One of the broadest definitions of a border is that it is a line drawn to divide 'us' from 'them' in space (Mojtahedzadeh, 2009: 44) and establishes the political realm of various nations (Veisi, 2011, p. 224). This is because borders are the most crucial element in identifying and differentiating a political unit from other units.

Human contacts should not be hindered by borders since, although separating the areas under various sovereignties, borders frequently foster positive political, economic, and cultural ties between neighbouring governments. Like in everyday family life, the shared border between neighbours promotes cooperation and friendship rather than acting as a barrier to movement and socialisation. The border between neighbouring states is another important geographical element that significantly contributes to the improvement of the relationships (Motamednejad, 1995: 87).

**Mohammad Taghi Sheikhi, Lecturer in Demography, Al-Zahra University, Tehran**

We live in a pluralistic world; thus ethnicity should not be a barrier for us. For a more robust economy and progress, we must all collaborate without discrimination.

Two interrelated central and peripheral components came together to form the geographic spatial structure of Iran. In contrast to the symmetrical and convergent component at the centre, the periphery is divergent and includes a wide range of ethnic and cultural groups. The Sunni religious minorities who live in the periphery, including the Azari, Kurdish, Arab, Baloch, and Turkmen ethnic groups, are dispersed throughout the nation and practise the two main branches of Hanafi and Shafei Islam.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a country with fifteen countries that has a common land and water border and from all thirty-one provinces of the country, 18 provinces in border regions and 13 provinces in central regions and about 50 per cent of the area and 49 per cent of the population belong to border regions. Locals living along the existing border strip. Studies reveal that the bordering regions share ecological similarities, social traits, and ethnic ties with the bordering populations. As a result, they have historically been able to meet their requirements through trade with the people of the neighbouring countries.

In the north-western borders, the border has passed through the Azari-speaking people and separated a minority of these people from the majority, in the north-eastern and south-eastern borders, respectively, the majority of the Turkmen and Baloch people with all their brilliant historical records and contributions for the creation of a civilisation of Iran were left on the other side of the border, including the historical Safarian cemetery that is now located outside Iran. We see the same situation with the ancient Iranian people, the Kurds, who are the remainder of the Medes (Sheikh Attar, 2003: 28). More significantly, the boundary in the southwest has been crossed in a way that leaves the cities of Madain and Ctesiphon, which served as Iran's capital during the Sassanid era, on the other side of the political divide and leaves very little of the Persian language spoken there. This is true even though various ethnic and religious minorities that reside in each country's most crucial and strategic border regions encounter social and cultural challenges that are external to its boundaries and its sphere of influence. The reason for this is that any exterior difficulties and crises can readily spread within the borders due to the linkages and contacts that these ethnic groups have with outside borders, increasing the likelihood of political instability. The results of this study demonstrate that ethnic groups are continually in contact with people across borders who are of the same ethnicity as them. The findings of this study show that ethnic groups maintain communication with people who share their ethnicity and who live outside of their borders.

**Karim Bakhsh Kurdi Tamandani, political-social activist, Iranshahr, Sistan and Balochistan**

Balochistan was a united territory before the British entered the subcontinent and had a government called Kalat government which is now in Pakistan. Then when England comes, it divided this territory between Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan. Now many of our people are in Pakistan and we have a relationship with them, because it cannot be broken at all. There is this sense of kinship and ethnic and linguistic solidarity, and the Baloch people, both here and in Pakistan and Afghanistan, wish to be connected one day.

**Sadegh Sotvan, sociologist and researcher, Sistan and Balochistan**

I was a teacher at the border for two years. When the border people went to the doctor, they thought that if you wanted to be healed, you should go to a Pakistani doctor, they even went across the border. They had no sense of convergence with the center, but this is changing and the change is palpable.

The threats caused by border crossing in Iranian ethnic territories can be divided into three categories:

- a. Centrifugal movements: studies show that if the ethnic majority is in the other country and they have more suitable conditions in terms of political, economic, cultural, and social, they attract people from the neighbouring country.
- b. If the situation 'a' is accompanied by the religious conflict between the ethnic groups and the dominant body of the nation, the centrifugal movements will become even more intense (Karimipour, 2009).
- c. The little political and economic power they may have, or even the stronger the sense of being isolated and oppressed they may have, centrifugal movements become more violent and may even result in an armed clash with the more class gaps there are between the minority and the rest of the population (Lik, 2002).
- d. Centrifugal movements that can even result in a violent clash grow stronger when class gaps between the minority group and the rest of the population increase, their share of political and economic power decrease, or even the perception that they have been oppressed increases (Lik, 2002).

The primary force behind demands for ethnic identity, ethnic nationalism fundamentally defines the nation in terms of ethnicity, with a strong sense of devotion to an ethnic group whose forebears, beliefs, and shared culture and language are its main components (Ahmadipour et al., 2010: 43).

The preference to look to foreign support, particularly from neighbouring countries and groups with whom they have religious, racial, or cultural ties, is strengthened when governments are unable to adequately respond to needs and demands or are unable to act appropriately to suppress or curb the demands. The combination of internal and external threats brought on by aggrieved local-regional groups and foreign actors is a challenge for national security management. Underdevelopment and its effects lead to insecurities. In other words, the suffering and poverty in these places might produce an atmosphere

that is conducive to the creation of anxieties and the instigation of opponents to seize the chances available in these regions (Eftekhari, 2009).

**A young Kormaji Kurdish boy, studying sociology student at Ferdowsi University**

Ethnicity is important to me, but humanity is more important. Now my roommate is an Iraqi Arab, my friend from Ardabil and we have friendly relations.

The establishment of several ethnic groups with their languages in border regions and neighbouring nations prepares the basis for the development of ethnic crises in border regions. Azaris can connect with people on the other side of the border in terms of language, ethnicity, and religion, but they can only do so in terms of religion with people from the centre. The three factors of religion, ethnicity, and language set the province of Kurdistan apart from the central points, and it also has these three things in common with the people on the other side of the border. The three components of religion, language, and ethnicity are shared by the Balochis in Pakistan and Iran. According to Ahmadipour (1997: 45), 'There are decentralised forces in Iran (particularly on the periphery of the borders) that might be posed as crisis centres in times of emergency.' Therefore, throughout the past century, several ethnic groups have experienced centrifugal impulses, some of which are listed below.

What is striking among Iranian ethnic groupings is the relative sense of differentiation in addition to cultural affinity with co-ethnics beyond the geographical range of Iran, in contrast to the high level of cultural affinity among co-ethnics residing in bordering countries. Even though Iranian border ethnic groups recognise their cultural overlap with ethnic groups across the border, they prioritise their unique ethnic identity in Iranian culture, sometimes even claiming supremacy in specific situations (like in the case of the interviewee).

**A housewife, 58 years old, Tabriz**

Along with the Turkish Turks, I frequently interacted with the Kurds. Personally, I adore every living thing. However, Turks living outside of Iran have a much weaker culture. Do not rely on the image of these movies because women are severely abused in Turkey, despite the fact that there is more freedom there. Azerbaijan is similar to how we formerly were. They are just like our ancestors; for instance, the bride washes the feet of her father-in-law.

**Table 3.1: Localist political tendencies among border ethnicities and the policies of the central government of Iran regarding the divergent actions of ethnic groups during the Pahlavi period**

<b>Political behaviour of border ethnic groups</b>	<b>Government policy in dealing with them</b>
Samko's revolt against the Turkish regions of Azarbaijan in 1922 and the Republic of Kurdistan in 1945 led by Ghazi Mohammad	The government's military conflict against Samko and his defeat, the annexation of the Kurdish tribes of Lake Urmia to the Iranian army, the surrender of the party leader to the commander of the army and the fall of the republic
Turkmen military operation against the central government in 1922	Suppression of operations by the central government in 1923, the plundering of the Turkmen nomads by Reza Shah, the gradual occupation of the region's lands and its transformation into governmental properties
Doost Mohammad Khan Sardar Baloch's Movement demanded political power in ethnic areas simultaneously with good relations with the central government	Army operation against Doost Mohammad Khan in 1928, his surrender and defeat, and finally, his execution in 1930.
Establishment of the Democratic Party of Azarbaijan under the leadership of Pishvari and the government of the Republic of Mahabad (Kurdistan) to gain autonomy in 1945	Government military operations against them in 1946, and control them.
Creating a new guerrilla movement in the 1960s from Barzani's Democratic Party	The suppression of the new Kurdish guerrilla movement by the gendarmerie
Formation of the Balochestan Liberation Front in 1964 and the continuation of their activities until the 1970s	The Iranian government's agreement with Iraq, on the one hand, and the expression of some leaders' loyalty to the central government, therefore, a devastating blow to the body of the Front.
Balochestan Democratic Party was formed in Baghdad in the 1960s and the call for the formation of a national democratic government in Balochestan	Signing the Algeria 1975 contract between Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Saddam Hussein, the end of Iraqi government support for the Balochis
Tudeh Party propaganda, labour strikes and Arab incitement by Egypt and Iraq to detach Khuzestan from Iran	Suppression by military forces and controlling the divergent agents and forces



**Table 3.2.: Localist political tendencies among border ethnic groups and the policies of the central government of Iran regarding tribes in the post-revolutionary period**

Source: Pakmehr, 2002; Ahmady, 2000; Hafeznia, 2002, quoted from Pishgahi Fard et al., 2009

<b>Political behaviour of border ethnic groups</b>	<b>Government policies and actions in dealing with them</b>
Siege of the Revolutionary Guards in August 1980 by local armed groups	The movement of the army towards the city of Paveh for defence by the order of the Ayatollah Khomeini
The formation of the Baloch Muslim Union led by Mowlavi Abdul Aziz with no radical stance towards the central government	Unity of calm policy and prevention of tension in Balochestan
Formation of the armed group of the Balochestan Liberation Front led by Rahim Zardkoohi	Clashes with the Revolutionary Guards and the defeat of this armed group
Movement of Turkmen Peasant Councils in 1980 and request for land reform and the acquisition of some autonomy	Turning this movement into armed violence led by leftist groups and the intervention of the central government.
Crisis in Abadan and Khorramshahr	Crisis control and prosecution of agents by government forces
Propaganda for Arab Nationalism, anti-government struggles, relations with foreigners, terrorist acts	Control and prosecution of agents by government forces, border control, economic, cultural and political measures, countering foreign interference

As shown in the tables above, the policy of the Iranian rulers against the ‘identity movements of different ethnic groups that have been generally violent, was more severe and usually ended with repression and execution. The results of this study demonstrate that this has led to the insurgency always beginning in one place and spreading to others. This process has harmed political security, political legitimacy, social involvement, etc., and has occasionally resulted in crises. The study’s findings clearly show that the participants advise the authorities to pay attention to the identity groups’ requests that have spontaneously emerged from society’s core during a protest because many of these demands are civic and amenable to discussion. In other words, they grow their capacity for political inclusion and their appreciation of cultural diversity, which considerably increases the chance of taking advantage of all the human and societal potential.

In this connection, the cultural features of ethnicities and their literary and artistic fields, such as folk literature, poetry and literature, are among the topics that connect border ethnic groups that are effective in social cohesion and

political satisfaction. Since the history of these peoples is tied to territorial geography, and since a territorial border between these ethnic groups was only established during the modern era, following the treaties of the Qajar kings and the treaties after the World Wars, the majority of them share a context in these cultural grounds, and culture has come to be seen as an important joining element. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account this sociocultural continuity to maintain political legitimacy.

**Ashkan Zarei, cultural and heritage activist and writer,  
Khuzestan**

At the age of eighteen, I went on stage with Baku fiddle player Abel Elif. Our languages was so similar that we went on stage without much rehearsing. I am 90% connected to Baku Azeri. During the Azerbaijan Music Festival, we postpone every work to see what our friends in the other Azerbaijan doing.

**Amin Shirzadi, poet and songwriter, Kermanshah**

My friend at Kubani, Osman Ravan, is now in Los Angeles. He used my poems about the Kermanshah earthquake and held a concert and donated the proceeds to the earthquake victims of Kermanshah.

Borders can also serve as a communication bridge to provide the context for interactions and connections between the two sides of the border. Cross-border trade exchanges are one of the main indicators in the establishment of relations between neighbouring countries and also the livelihood of bordering people, and in this way, people living in the border areas of neighbouring countries can live together and share opportunities and resources. It can help the friendship and understanding between the two sides to endure and solidify by stabilising border communities, offering job opportunities, and fostering economic success, security, and the creation of a type of relative advantage in border regions. It should be mentioned that despite the resources that are currently available in the border regions, one of these regions' core attributes is their distance from the centre.

The spread of troubles in the economy like smuggling and false jobs is a result of the failure to govern the economy under these border conditions. As a result, from an economic perspective, while smuggling hurts the domestic industry and the national economy, it also benefits the residents of border regions. This is particularly true when there are no large and small industries where young people from ethnic groups can work and the central government does not provide enough financial resources to the country's periphery. Since the level of poverty in these regions is higher than in the nation's centre, they generally benefit financially from the existence of these border exchanges, whether they take the form of formal bazaars or unofficial Kolbari jobs. Naturally, based on the findings, harsh limits have been put in place against this kind of cross-border commerce exchange in the interim, particularly in the last one or two years.

**Mohammad Ehsani, documentary filmmaker, Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

In the border areas, we see general poverty. There is poverty also in Tehran, but it is not general as poverty in the peripheral regions of the country.

**Qutbuddin Sadeghi, screenwriter and theatre director, Kurdistan**

Because there are no big factories in Kurdistan, the main income of the people is through the same local bazaars that the Kolbari has created . . . which the government does not tolerate either. I do not understand why they put so much pressure. There are no industries, no agriculture, so what should the people do?

This situation has happened while the border location can be an opportunity to create jobs and even benefit from the economic advantages of the neighbouring societies, and in other words, 'The economy of the border regions can greatly contribute to the progress of economic development, improvement of people's living standards, poverty reduction, appropriate distribution of income, creating more friendly relations, and finally promoting stable security in border areas' (Chandoevwite, 2004: 145). The contemporary economy can be characterised as being cross-border and, in many cases, global. If a nation fails to take advantage

of this opportunity, economic opportunities will undoubtedly become unconquerable challenges to that nation, and it can be said that solving economic problems using traditional techniques will instead have irreparable consequences. In addition to wasting economic resources, this will also destroy intergenerational capabilities and create the potential for an economic crisis in modern production, particularly in emerging industries like tourism, which will ultimately cause producers and other economic actors in the citizenry to go bankrupt.

**A young Kormaji Kurdish boy, studying sociology student at Ferdowsi University, Mashhad**

Everybody is below the poverty line. Now my father is very old and cannot work, he has no insurance and no salary. You see, the Kurds on our side in Khorasan are much lower economically than the Kurds of Kurdistan and are often overlooked. Maybe one of the reasons is that they are nomads and nomads are vulnerable.

One may maintain that the Iranian ethnic groups, which are primarily found in the country's border and marginal regions, share a language, a religion, and ethnicity with those living across the border in the bordering nations. They now closely follow the news of their compatriots as a result of this situation and feel their joys and sufferings alongside them. Young individuals on both sides of the border have been able to marry and create new kinship relationships thanks to

**Kazem Waghef, political and religious activist, Khuzestan**

As a result, in the current situation of the country, and despite various crises, it is necessary to refer to these legal democratic principles as one of the solutions in the field of ethnic demands and to achieve reconciliation and lasting peace between different ethnic groups and religions, and by adhering to law, while confronting the personal views of arrogant people, some form of moderation to be achieved in protest activities and ethnic and religious movements.

the existence of these shared values and some familial ties that have developed between people of the same ethnicity in the two countries.

### *3.3. Connection or rupture, the background of Iranian identity*

Many of the research's findings show that Iran's neighbours include countries like the Arab world, Turkey, Afghanistan, and others, each of which has its historical background and cultural past. However, Iranians constantly reflect on their past, which they believe to be more glorious, and they concede their superiority over other people in the neighbouring countries by using inappropriate literature to denigrate the Arabs, Turks, Afghans, and others. The findings obtained from this research also confirm the existence of this kind of sense of superiority. Part of this sense of superiority goes back to the historical past and the sense of honour that exists towards personalities such as Cyrus and Zoroaster and their territory and religion. Besides national and ethnic issues and challenges, the arrival and expansion of modernism are also considered a factor in the decline of old cultural elements.

**Mohammad Ali Daneshgar, Theater Director, Semnan**

Part of the crisis is the result of modernism. Modernity has brought changes and in Iran, we have experienced identity confusion.

As a result, there is inter-ethnic conflict among the ethnic groups that have been studied. For instance, each of these ethnic groups believes that they were the primary and authentic followers of the Zoroastrian religion and that it was this group and their people who had sacrificed themselves against the Arab attackers and had prevented foreigners from dominating the soil of Iran. This is in contrast to the intellectual consistency in the historical-cultural continuity in the field of religion. Even this admirable aspect of Iranian culture and religion has in some ways evolved into a source of tension and collision among social identities. This shows that the notion of doing away with sovereignty still exists and has done so in the past. It could do so in a fashion that is both noble and consistent with the socio-political norm, making religious changes intelligible in the context of social developments. Based on this, it can be said that we Iranians look more at the historical past instead of looking at the future. A civilisation that wishes to advance must set aside this kind of skewed perspective and make more plans for the future by removing the drawbacks of the past and highlighting them. The capacities, resources, human capital, and potentials of society find a developmental path under such circumstances.

### 3.3.1. The superiority of Iran

Narcissism in Iranian society has historical roots and has occasionally manifested itself in morally reprehensible forms, arrogance, and self-aggrandizement. It is possible to observe this social and cultural anomaly in Iranian society by looking at historical texts, literary works, the speeches and writings of some politicians and intellectuals, as well as cyberspace. The historical expressions of narcissism are described by Dr Mostafa Malekian as follows: ‘Narcissism is not necessarily individual; it can also occasionally be collective and intellectual. Nezami Ganjavi and Ferdowsi both had a collective narcissism, with Nezami saying ‘The whole world is the body and Iran is the soul’ and Ferdowsi saying ‘art is enough for Iranians. The narcissists construct a wall around themselves, precluding communication.’<sup>24</sup>

In another type of arrogance, most Iranians believe that the Iranian nation is the smartest in the world, while according to Mohsen Renani’s research, the Iranian nation is ranked among the nations below the average intelligence. This is while a part of society considers smartness to be the same as intelligence. The findings of this study also indicate the existence of similar historical prejudices among ethnic and religious groups.

**Mahmoud Ghaderi Mokri, Cartoonist, Mahabad, West Azerbaijan**

Naturally, there are prejudices, we are prejudiced about Islam and Sunni and being Iranian and a member of the Kurdish group.

The scope of this issue is so wide that sometimes government politicians get caught in the whirlpool and, while commenting on political, economic, and social issues, provide prescriptions for the whole world. For instance, during a period of high oil prices, the Iranian Shah of the 1970s spoke abrasively of his celestial power and his capacity to teach Western countries democracy in an interview with foreign journalists. Also between 2005 and 2012, with the ninth and tenth governments generating \$700 billion in foreign cash and soaring oil prices, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the then-president, stated to the world his intention for change and management of the world (Etemad Newspaper, No. 1648). Elsewhere, Ahmadinejad had stated, ‘More than a hundred politicians in the world have spoken to me about this expectation, that is, world governance, and they say that Iran has the power to govern the world’ (Asr Iran Website, News ID: 274288). Earlier, the head of the reformist government, Mohammad Khatami, in the year when he was declared the ‘Dialogue among Civilisations’ at his suggestion, said in his speech: ‘Humanity owes its debt to the civilisation of

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<sup>24</sup> Fararu News website, News ID: 250360

Islamic Iran.’ The source of this statement is the same prejudice and arrogance in question, while no other country has such a claim.

Another manifestation of our collective narcissism is that we associate all human inventions with Iranians, especially ancient Iran, and essentially, in our opinion, everything has Iranian roots. There is no phenomenon in the world that we have not discovered either its origin or its root! The latest item discovered is the tie, the joyful news of which was announced by Seyed Sadegh Kharazi, Iran’s former ambassador to France, in the Shargh daily: ‘The tie has gone to Europe from the desert and desert part of the world, that is, the plateau of Iran. People used to tie a handkerchief as a tie to block their noses during monsoons. The people of Iran were the inventors of the tie, the tie belonged to the Iranians.’ In other cases, our self-esteem of us Iranians enters the field of colour and race, and by comparing our race with other peoples, especially the neighbouring Arabs, Turks, Afghans, and other nations, we consider ourselves superior and greater than them.

**Sardar Kayani, Sistani poet and popular activist, Zabul, Sistan and Balochistan**

When the Arabs came to the east of Iran and saw the Zagros region, they said, ‘Wonderful gardens and trees under which there is a flowing river.’ Arabs who came from Arabia and did not understand what a tree is at all and has seen nothing but dust and storms, they saw this place as paradise... They passed Zagros and saw that Iranians have amazingly beautiful women, they said that these are the nymphs as described in the Quran. They took Iranian women,... they took everything... This is so annoying. An Iranian woman, who has thousands of civilisations, should be taken by the hand of an Arab lizard-eater, is it really true? The daughter of Yazdgerd III, the king of the world, will be captured by an Arab and taken away?!



Picture 17 Interview with Sardar Kiani

Racism is a fluid and constantly changing phenomenon that divides people into superior and inferior groups and accords them with social status. Contemporary racism is based on discrimination against one or more characteristics of ‘racial identity’ (skin colour, body shape, etc.) or ‘ethnic identity’ (language, culture, history, etc.) showing its nature in the group, individual, cultural, institutional, and governmental behaviours. Therefore, racism in its modern definition is not limited to the difference in skin colour, but also it includes contempt for language, accent, culture, religion, customs and traditions, etc. For the same reason, racism and racist actions play an important role in exhibiting social inequalities, making all the research centres and universities allocate sufficient funds and facilities to study and analyse different racist behaviours and practices.

Here are some of the various forms of racism that are so prevalent in Iranian society:

#### **1. Biological racism**

This type of racism divides people into superior and inferior groups based on, so to speak, ‘genetic structures’ and ‘biological nature.’ This form of racism reached its peak in Hitler’s Germany, which considered the German race and the white race of the north to be the superior race that should not be mixed with other races.

**Zahra Khazaal, entrepreneur and tourism activist, Abadan, Khuzestan**

Iraqi money is impure and forbidden. Every child understands what this means.



## 2. Systemic racism

This version of racism is practised by government agencies and institutions of the ruling group, such as the military, the educational system, the media, and the formal and informal literature. A clear example of this is the language policies that have banned the language of Iranian ethnic groups in schools, governmental institutions, the press, and as a recognised language of the country.

## 3. Cultural racism

Cultural racism is the practice of embedded cultural beliefs and behaviours in a country, such as the saying, 'Art is just among the Iranians.' Of course, there is no problem if one recognises art in one's people, but when one limits this recognition to Iranians, one is effectively claiming that non-Iranians lack artistic talent or is aware that this is cultural racism because it 'others' the population and divides it into superior and inferior groups or civilised/uncivilised, artist/artless, etc. Other instances include the frequent racist jokes made in Iran and among Iranians living abroad about Turks, Arabs, Lors, and other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, this problem has spread to athletic venues, as evidenced by football matches involving teams from Tehran and Tabriz or other Persian-speaking parts of Iran.

## 4. Linguistic racism

This type of racism involves forcing one's language on others as well as outlawing and demeaning other languages. This results in the majority language of the people being forbidden in administrative, governmental, and official organisations and institutions.

**Rasoul Nami, carpet designer, Tabriz**

In radio and television series, low-minded and backward characters usually have a Turkish accent or, for example, are stupid Gilak people. This is an insult and ridicule .

The other aspect of linguistic racism is the exaltation of one dialect over the others. The normalisation of the 'dominant dialect' is one of the mechanisms through which the ruling group exercises its psychological as well as economic and cultural dominance. Hegemonic discourse promotes one dialect in such a way that if you do not speak with a dominant dialect in society, you will be considered illiterate, your level of knowledge will be questioned, and your human personality will be degraded.

**Mehdi Hamidi Shafiq, political activist from East Azerbaijan**

Turks are stupid stereotypes on the radio. We are in a racist society. We are racist in the works of such great literary figures as Hedayat and Al-Ahmad, and the Arabs have been insulted frequently in these works.

### **5. Everyday racism**

Everyday racism involves racist acts and attitudes that victimise others on a daily and regular basis. Prominent examples include humiliating, poisonous, ridiculous, and arrogant outlooks and gazes over minority groups, as well as the prevalent ethnic jokes in the everyday life of Iranian society.

**Hassan Behdad, Director of Cultural Heritage, Hamidiyeh, Khuzestan**

When an Arab gives an opinion, he is severely confronted and asked if he is Arabic or Iranian. This is a very bad question. I am an Iranian Arab. He wants to say you do not belong here and you have come here. He wants to say that you have no rights. This has its effects in the long run.

The perpetrators of this type of racism frequently claim ignorance about the inhumanity of their behaviour and regard it as ‘trivial,’ ‘normal,’ or ‘usual,’ while the victims of this type of racism are constantly confronted with the debilitating effects of this sinister phenomenon and feel it with all of their being. In this context, relationships and established behaviours play a crucial role. The normalisation of racist behaviour has frequently made it difficult for people to comprehend the scale of the suffering and violence it has wrought.

### **6. Internalised racism**

This type of racism is practised by the victims of racism themselves, through internalising and institutionalising racism in society. Because racism prevails in the wider society, the victims of this system internalise its features, literature, and discourse instead of resisting it. For example, the Azarbaijani Turks call themselves Aryans and, in this way, want to not only convince their families and relatives that they belong to the ruling race, but also deal severely with

opponents of Aryan racism and, along with racist currents, suppress linguistic, cultural, and historical values, disregarding the basic dignity of all human beings.

Attempts to hide ethnic affiliations and attribute oneself to the centre and especially to the city of Tehran, to imitate a Tehrani accent and to use its common words and expressions are among the external manifestations of this type of racism.

## **7. Democratic racism**

Democratic racism is a type of racism that, while adopting democratic stances and so-called progressive discourses, refutes the existence of a racist society. For instance, certain members of leftist, feminist, or liberal groups in Iranian society may mistake anti-racist discourses for ethnicism and tribalism when they take into account things like the globalisation of society, progressive literature, and progressive movie titles. Anti-racist activists are backward and think of themselves as being quite progressive, while the perpetrators and practitioners of democratic racism deny the existence of racism in Iranian society.

Narcissism and selfishness, which unfortunately plague a significant portion of our society, are shown in the collective state when other nations are insulted and denigrated. Racist remarks against immigrants, such as those who are Arab, Azari, or Afghan and who share linguistic, religious, and historical attributes, seem to be too common. While in more advanced countries, they are frequently dealt with by the appropriate laws and legislation.

Racist attacks take many forms: in the case of Arab speakers, on the pretext of events such as the Jeddah airport incident or the Mena incident, or the Iranian government's political dispute with an Arab government (which had nothing to do with nations) or the loss of an Iranian sports team to an Arab sports team; in the case of Turkish speakers, we see common anti-Turkism in the first and second Pahlavi eras, or in general by telling various jokes about the Arabs, Turks, Lors and other ethnic groups.

What is regrettable is the expression of these derogatory statements by some politicians and social elites, such as calling Obama 'Kaka Siah' [Nigger] Javad Larijani at the meeting of the members of the Islamic Society of Engineers or referring to Arabs as 'lizard eaters' by Gholamhossein Ebrahimi Dinani, a philosophy professor at Tehran University, in an interview with Khabar Online, and Also repeating the same insulting remark directed at Afghans and Arabs by actors and artists, who for many during the elections consider themselves to be the leaders of the nation's enlightened thinking, or the assertion that we have always been, are, and will be the best and that other civilisations owe their past and present survival to Iranian genius, and that Iranians have been in the centre of the world, and that no civilisation has been superior to us! All of these remarks are some examples of these racist discourses. This is disastrous rhetoric, with real-world examples in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and other nations, which has historically only led to hatred, hostility, conflict, and displacement for the nations.

The historical origin of strong nationalist tendencies and the activity of Iranian racist parties goes back to the time when the first Pahlavi government highlighted the discourse of the 'Aryan race' and 'Iranian nationality' to advance the modern nation-state project. The desire to return to old Iran, belief in the superiority of Iranian-Aryans over others, and blaming 'Muslims, Turks, and Arabs' for the 'backwardness of Iran' are some of the most important ideas that they followed. This is while the term Aryan race or its equivalent cannot be found in any of the historical texts.

The term Aryan race was coined in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century for racist purposes and colonial exploitation and was widely publicised. Before that, this term had a linguistic concept and lacked any racial/ethnic connotations, and it was during the Nazi era that such a concept was introduced. Both anti-Arabism and anti-Turkism are pervasive in the rhetoric of Aryanism. One hundred years ago, many Iranians had not even heard of Cyrus the Achaemenid, but now many consider Cyrus to be the most important figure in Iran. These topics are more like jokes. When it is stated that the natural right of millions of Turks and Kurds in Iran is to receive an education in their mother tongue and those who respond that doing so will weaken Persian and cause the nation to fall apart, we are left with no choice but to view such responses as a form of othering that feeds racism and fascism.

All of these events are taking place in official media outlets like IRIB, where blacks and Indians are introduced as common victims of racism and nations like the United States are accused of committing it, but this issue in Iranian culture is simply disregarded and ignored. Also, such an attitude is not criticised in the educational system, and the pervasiveness of racism and the negative effects it has on society—such as hostility and insecurity—are simply disregarded.

### *3.3.2. Historical optimism*

There is little doubt that our past as Iranians and the civilisation that developed from it are among the oldest civilisations in human history, and since the development of that civilisation, we Iranians have influenced the course of global events. In some circumstances, this is something we are proud of, but by no means have we arrived where we should have been with such a past.

Iranian temperaments have long been a subject of discussion among philosophers who are studying the causes of the backwardness of Iranian society, notably in the last hundred years. Some of these temperaments, such as imitation, extreme patience, high levels of kindness, religious mindset, creative power to adapt to the harshest situations, the desire for progress, and the like are the secret causes of Iranian survival throughout history. The Iranians have been able to maintain their civilisation in this harsh situation and remain alive and stable. On the other hand, despite all the enthusiasm and efforts for progress and development, Iranian society is still caught in the downward spiral of underdevelopment due to temperaments like lying, duplicity, pretence, hypocrisy, language games, pride, narcissism, retrogression, delusion, and

others that are a result of feeling insecure and living under political, economic, and social tyrannies throughout history.

The nature of selfishness, narcissism, and backwards-looking, combined with illusions and exaggerations in historical events, is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental, ongoing, and severe pains of Iranian society, closing the doors to our security, health, sovereignty, and happiness.

In this case, the retrospective is different from the real historical memory. Retrospection is more of a return to myth than to reality, and it's more of an optimistic turn away from reality because some people, even to an extreme, become fascinated by the ancient 'golden age' and exaggeratedly depict it, making it seem so glorious that it never would have entered the minds of Zarathustra, Darius, or Shah Abbas Safavid and his secretaries. In this regard, it has been claimed that Iran's historical past was brilliant and full of honourable and peaceful ideals and that the belligerent policies of the present do not represent the actual culture of Iran. The research shows that Iran's history is rich in harmony, equality, and brotherhood, but the present day is rife with conflict, animosity, hypocrisy, deceit, and lying.

**Karimbakhsh Kurdi Tamandani, socio-political activist,  
Iranshahr, Sistan and Balochestan**

According to the Charter of Cyrus, everyone with an Iranian national identity, regardless of religion, creed, or race, must be treated equally. The message 'death to a country' on our missiles draws global attention to us, isolates us, and portrays us as an aggressive nation, but we do not have a history of such hostility. A culture and civilisation that educated the world about freedom existed in our history. The Human Rights Charter was initially drafted by our nation.

This perspective on history evolved as a defence mechanism against the feelings of humiliation we experienced during the Qajar era and in response to the astounding rate of progress made by Western societies in comparison to the misery, poverty, illiteracy, disease, and devastation that were so pervasive in our nation. For our intellectuals, some of whom have had this experience restored with narcissistic compensation, it is significantly more traumatic; a phenomenon that could have existed before other defunct dynasties and

empires. Instead of accepting reality and challenging realistically and wisely all these problems and failures, to stand up and to progress, with the same prevailing myths, we are reproducing a historical myth and it seems that in the same direction as the 'supremacy' of the Iranians, not only are we superior in terms of the expansion and extension of the empire of both art and war, but we are also global leaders in religion and ethics, on the one hand, and in all sciences and technologies on the other.

While the discovery of nuclear energy and radioactivity is a result of extensive practice, collective research, and discoveries of scientists like Max Planck, Niels Bohr, Marie Curie, and others, we still keep repeating that it was our great poet Hafez Esfahani who first spoke of atoms when he wrote, 'When every particle of dust is split, you see a sun in the middle,' and that these Western physicists have applied the same idea as expressed in that line of poetry. If we talk about the 'origin of species' and the science of evolution, which is the result of fifty years of research by Charles Darwin, we immediately answer that our great mystic, the Rumi, discovered it more than four hundred years before when he said, 'I was dead as a corpse and alive as a name' and Darwin has not done much. Talk about the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Iran is one of the signatories, but it has a European origin, with a long and bloody history of two world wars, but we start talking about the Charter of Cyrus the Great, saying: 'Pal, we are the real creators of human rights!' It's strange to think that everything Descartes, Kant, Spinoza, and others discovered and argued, anything they had written and said had already been said by our sages and mystics; as a matter of fact, they have wasted their time redoing it. The discussion here is not about exaggerating the contributions of Westerners and undervaluing those of insiders, but rather about how we view both our own and other people's pasts. False pride has affected us all for generations, varying in severity, but most notably it has affected our monarchs and political figures. King Sultan Hussein's ambassador to France refused to travel in the same carriage with the representative of the King of France, because he thought that he was the representative of the Sultan with a sacred throne and crown, and he considered it his disgrace to ride in a carriage with the representative of a newly crowned king. Two hundred years ago, Fath Ali Shah Qajar, while adhering to the infamous treaties of Golestan and Turkmenchay, shouted 'Woe to the Russians' and 'Woe to the day when our wrath catches them!' The second Pahlavi frequently provided the West instructions and even expressed contempt for it, claiming that democracy was just the product of 'blue-eyed' vulgarity. In more recent years, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has also claimed to be involved in global management to solve global problems.

It is a common misconception among various ethnic groups that they were the only ones able to repel foreign invaders when they first arrived. According to the Kurds, their ethnic group was the only one that defied the Arabs and voluntarily converted to Islam. The northerners claim that the difficult terrain of Tabarestan Province prevented the Arabs from ever reaching their territory and that this is why they were able to vanquish the Arabs there. Everyone in the country's east believes that without them, little of Iranian culture would still be

around today. Examples of this line of thinking are attempting to claim national awards as one's own and citing ethnic bravery to support such claims.

**Sardar Kiani, Sistani poet and public activist, Zabul, Sistan and Balochestan**

If there was no Sistan, you would not be able to speak your mother tongue today. Why? Because the Arabs came and took over the whole world. If Yaghub Leith had not left Sistan and taken them out of Iran, you and I would not have spoken Persian today.

The Cyrus Charter of Human Rights, science, technology, the artists and poets of the day, as well as individual liberty, justice, and equality are all described in this two- or three-thousand-year-old historical optimism. It is claimed that in contrast to the other nations in the area, ancient Iranian society shows no signs of human exploitation or slavery.

**Mukhtar Haghghat, manager of the Shadow Poetry and Literature Association, Zahedan, Sistan and Balochestan**

The original Iranians were Zoroastrians who did not come under Arab rule and did not accept Arab culture. Zarathustra promoted monotheism 3,700 years ago. Unfortunately, some people think that they are fire-worshippers. The fire temples were for worship. Fire is a symbol of light and purity. Two hundred years after Zarathustra, Abraham, the prophet came from the nation of Israel. This means that there was no prophet before him and we are the first people on the planet to accept monotheism, and this makes us proud as Iranians.

**Mehdi Keyvan, retired historian and lecturer at the University of Isfahan**

The reason for the misery of our society is that today the Persian language has lost its history and glory, that is, the language of used in the History of Bayhaqi, the language used but such literary figures as Ferdowsi and Saadi.

But an intriguing fact is that there are no records or written accounts of this glorious history, that we claim to have. Even though writing and documenting were relatively new to us, we lacked the same enthusiasm as Ionian and Athenian peoples had for writing; otherwise, only foreign historians like Herodotus, Xenophon, and others would have recorded our history. They appear to have written the history of these events while we were more preoccupied with war, war preparations, and empire expansion. Of course, we have always heard that all our libraries were burned by the Arabs and before them by Alexander. But if there had been people who were fascinated by science, even one book or one clay tablet might have survived among the thousands of tablets that have been found on the subject of science and technology. People who are fascinated by science carry books and writing with them wherever they go, and they hold books in the highest regard. For them, life would be meaningless without books and writing. We are aware of many Persians who travelled to India without bringing any books on science or history! Furthermore, even if it was an oral culture—which it undoubtedly was—their information would still need to be transmitted verbally and in person. Unfortunately, we are also not aware of this method of oral science communication.

### *3.4. Absence of leadership for the movements*

The success of any movement is determined by its leadership. To establish and negotiate identity demands, leadership must take action. Leadership is often concerned with the effectiveness of the influence and the overall direction of the movement.

Before the middle of the 20th century, as was argued in earlier parts, linguistic and theological differences were not the primary cause of ethnic tendencies. However, these disparities eventually became factors that gave rise to local political movements and the elites' explanations for them. The centralist policies of the Reza Shah targeted influential ethnic tribes throughout Iran, however, these efforts merely gave rise to local political tendencies in non-Shiite and non-Persian-speaking regions. The establishment of the contemporary centralist



administration angered the ethnic and tribal leaders, who attempted to develop and address an ethnic theory. This led to the emergence of educated and middle-class tribal elites (Ahmady, 2018). The educated urban elites of the new urban settings required ethnic chiefs to supply essential resources, especially military resources, and to work for political initiatives.

Accordingly, the ethnic demands of Kurds evolved over the past hundred years and until about a quarter of a century ago, mainly by two political elites: the first group consisted of former tribal chiefs who were exiled or imprisoned by Reza Shah's centralist government. With Reza Shah stepping down and handing over power to his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the group took full advantage of the weakness of the central government and reorganised itself. The second group included the newly educated elite, who emerged from Reza Shah's rule and were partly the result of the government's centralist policies. When some middle-class Kurds formed the first Kurdish political group in 1942, 'The Komala Life of Kurdistan in Iran,' both tribal leaders and elders joined and actively supported it. The same is true of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, which emerged in 1945 and replaced the previous party (ibid., 241). Many of the Democratic Party and Komala leaders in the post-revolutionary era came from the great tribes of the area, but most of them did not win office purely based on their social class and most of them had professional degrees. The group led some of the Kurdish demands until about a decade after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and to achieve this, they were at war with the central government for about a decade and also held formal talks with representatives of the governing body. Since the government viewed their demands as counter-revolutionary, they were voiced in harsh terms throughout all of those years, which resulted in skirmishes and conflicts between the two groups.

**Ismail Mahmoudi, cultural and environmental activist,  
Marivan, Kurdistan**

Due to the weakness of the political discourse, our political demands are mostly expressed and presented in harsh political languages, sometimes this leads to some conflicts.

After the complete withdrawal of these two parties from the territorial borders of the country in the late 1980s, the Kurdish-speaking people did not have a representative or leader to express their demands. By the beginning of the 1990s, Kurdish areas were gradually depleted of these forces, and these groups settled mainly on the country's borders and in the neighbouring country of Iraq and continued their activities from there. In the same decade, with the death of

the original leaders of each of the two parties, along with other factors such as the adoption of modern approaches, their departure from the country's territorial borders, the weakening of political tendencies among the youth, they lost their strength and were unable to lead the Kurds and advocate for their needs. As a result, aside from the representatives sent to the Islamic Consultative Assembly during the last three decades or so, the Kurdish people have been without a representative to promote their ethnic interests. Of course, in the case of these individuals, the vast majority of the public, and even those who participated in the election process, do not accept them as the genuine representatives of their demands because they think they were chosen through rigorous government screening procedures and that, rather than representing the voice of the general public, they are among the officials of the nation.

The Democratic Party of Azarbaijan, founded in 1945 and led by Jafar Pishevari, was the most significant movement toward the demands of the Azari people that had a political overtone. The movement lasted a year before failing due to the restoration of the central government and the Soviet Union's withdrawal of support for the group's leaders, as was the case with the KDP at the same time. The significant political role played by traditional and tribal elites in Azarbaijan's political life in the post-Reza Shah era is a significant feature that distinguishes Azarbaijan from Kurdistan. Aside from external influences, educated middle-class urban elites in the Caucasus and Aran have been the main proponents of efforts to politicise the language issue in Azarbaijan. There were tribal causes in Azarbaijan during this time, but it had a limited political impact (ibid., 278). Following that, the Azarbaijani people have always had representatives in the central structure of power, whether during the Pahlavi or the post-revolutionary era.

The reason for this may be that the people of Azarbaijan have been religiously aligned with the central political apparatus. This position is more applicable to the post-revolutionary period. Also, the demands of the Azarbaijani people after the failure of the government did not have much political colour. This has led to the fact that now if an Azari person is asked to name several non-governmental leaders to express their interests and demands, he or she will most likely not be able to name any one person.

Regarding the interests of the Baloch people from the point of view of their leaders, it can be said that the role of elites in promoting ethnic consciousness in this region has two main differences with Kurdistan: The leadership of the political movement in Balochestan of Iran remained in the hands of the traditional elites of the Baloch community (tribal leaders). In the years following the revolution, this power was taken away from tribal chiefs and was primarily held by religious leaders like Mowlana Abdul Aziz Molazadeh, a member of the Assembly of Constitutional Experts, Mowlana Nazar Mohammad Didgah, a representative of Iranshahr in the first term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and Mowlana Abdul Hamid Ismail Zehi, the Imam of the Maki Mosque in Zahedan. Mowlana Abdul Hamid is currently quite popular in Balochestan society and even among Baloch armed groups in the past two years, when five soldiers were taken hostage by the armed group Jaish-ul-Adl, they

were freed through his negotiations while Iranian security and intelligence forces were unable to liberate any hostages. He requested the captives to release the border guards in honour of the people, which was agreed upon by the group, and four soldiers were freed. He also delivered a volume of the Qur'an to the group to bargain with them.

The last issue discussed in this section is the position of the representatives of the city council and the Islamic Consultative Assembly in the management of the interests and demands of different ethnic groups. In this regard, these representatives themselves, by forming different ethnic and religious fractions, claim to represent the demands of their fellow people, but the results obtained from interviews conducted with various ethnic groups show the opposite. The participants claimed that because of numerous government controls, they do not accept these individuals as their representatives and believe that they are more in line with the central agendas.

**Javad Tariri, Lawyer, Writer and Political Activist from Khuzestan**

None of these city officials can find a real vote. Sovereignty does not believe in a concept called democracy and legitimises election fraud. These people are hired by the government through violating the most basic civil rights. Politically, all Iranian ethnic groups have been severely deprived of their rights and ethnic groups have not been given the opportunity to act. In these forty years, your total turnover of power has been through 2,000 people. During the time of the Shah, there was 1000 rentier families and now 2500 families based on 2500 years of Persian history.

Political parties, as well as cultural and civil institutions, have generally been formed in Iran in response to ethnic and national demands; however, these political parties and institutions have faced significant challenges because of the absence of a framework and the current political atmosphere. They are usually pushed to the margins of the political system. These political movements have clashed with official political systems and sometimes fought civil wars because of their emphasis on identity and their focus on the principle of the right to self-determination.

Every political movement has a set of interests and demands that are unique to its political objectives, and the existence of strong, charismatic leadership is one

of the requirements for a movement to develop and succeed. Kurdish-speaking individuals in various political, literary, cultural, and scientific domains were asked to name some elders and their leaders. The majority of the names given by interviewees were those of people who are no longer alive. Many from the Azari and Arab ethnic groups who were interviewed mostly spoke of people who do not operate inside the territorial boundaries and whose compatriots are in other regions of the Middle East. When referring to their elders, the Baloch-speaking ethnic group most frequently mentioned their former and current religious leaders and religious elders.

In Balochistan, if a person inside the country or foreign media wants to get information about their living conditions and various social, ethnic, cultural, and even environmental demands, they will go to people like Mowlana Abdul Hamid. In Kurdish areas, many scholars, especially foreign media, continue to turn to the Democratic Party and the Komala for asking questions. Since the Azari ethnic group does not have an organized expatriate group, it is usually necessary to turn to their local elites for information about the people of the region. The same is true of the Arabic-speaking ethnic group. However, in recent years, military groups have emerged that claim to advocate for the rights of the Arab-speaking people inside the country, and are sometimes negotiated.

No systematic research has been conducted on the extent to which the internal population of each of these ethnic groups adheres to the party policies of their ethnic group. In recent years, strikes have been carried out by various associations in various Kurdish areas in the form of market closures, but it is not possible to establish a statistical correlation between recent market closures carried out by a variety of associations in different Kurdish regions and the positions of the parties involved.

### **3.4.3. Isolation of active social and civil forces**

The Iranian civil movement has made a significant contribution to social awakening through its serious and effective participation in social activity. The most significant issue highlighted by the social awakening is the demand for respect for human dignity, individual and collective liberties, intellectual and occupational security, and the independence of civil institutions.

Active forces are those who take steps for the good of society. The activities of these forces can be carried out individually, in groups, or in an organized fashion. The organized state of these activities is what is called, so to speak, civil society or civic institution. In contrast to the institution of government, the term 'civil society' in the social sciences typically refers to a sphere of social relations free from the influence of political power and includes a variety of private and democratic institutions, organizations, associations, and activist groups. If we consider the main feature of the state to be the construction of authoritarian power or authority and citizenship, then civil society lacks such a structure (Bashirieh, 2006: 329).

Civil institutions are new social movements that emerged in the latter years of the second millennium and the beginning of the third. These movements are sometimes referred to as revolutionary movements and are in the libertarian

tradition. To accomplish equal civil, social, public, citizenship, judicial, and other rights, various institutions were established. Civil institutions are the vivid, dynamic, and pluralistic echoes of human society. By engaging in social activities, they build social capital and advance the realization of governance. They will accelerate the country. To improve the conditions of vulnerable groups or the general conditions existing in society, these institutions and the activism of civil society activists serve as the watchdog of society.

Civil society is not created in a vacuum or by accident; rather, it is based on a variety of interests within the framework of society, the general state of society, the state of the economy, and the political and cultural landscape, as well as the magnitude of social problems, are all important factors that influence the civil sphere. The knowledge required by citizens to channel the knowledge acquired in social strata is also one of the cornerstones of the development of civil society. Additionally, the past, present, and historical memory of civil society exert a significant influence on the conscience and consciousness of its activists today. Social divisions, disputes, and contradictions often serve as the foundation for this structure.

It is impossible to find a society with either no social gaps or a few ones. Some differences, like those between genders or age groups, are structural, and people have no part in causing them. Some of these gaps, however, are the result of a country's historical development, and historical incidents and mishaps significantly influenced their genesis. There are many different types of historical gaps, including religious and sectarian divisions, religion and state separations, as well as ethnic, racial, and linguistic ones (Ibid., 100). To close these gaps, social activists propose strengthening civil society.

The existing tensions and distances between Iranian ethnic groups can be lowered via intimacy and proximity. Ethnic tensions and activities motivated by ethnocentrism can be diminished by interethnic understanding and interaction.

**Sadegh Sotvan, sociologist and researcher, Sistan and Balochistan**

One of the issues, along with structural issues and problems, is that our proximity with other races is very low, and this lack of proximity makes us more nervous, more ethnocentric.

A society that sees limited political space, lack of free access to the media, arranged election results, repression of protests, disregard for parties, and the impossibility of heterogeneous activities, as well as poor activity of civic

institutions, instead of aiming for social dynamism, its forces eventually experience brain drain and stagnation.

In the history of Iran, social forces have long been active, albeit in a traditional way, in such forms as voluntary organizations, clergies, trade unions, grassroots organizations, traditional cooperatives, cultural organizations, monasteries, and charities. However, the main history of the activities of social forces in a codified and organized form was after the election of Khatami in June 1997. When the 1990s arrived, a certain vitality had developed in the social structure of the nation, and it manifested itself in several progressive social movements, including the women's movement through the One Million Signatures and the political movements of the latter years of the decade.

The scope of the movement process of these forces in Iran can be broken down into several categories: One category of these forces became active in the areas of social development and the accomplishment of such objectives as citizen empowerment, enabling local communities, education and participation in cooperations, training of social actors, cultivating the power of reason, evolving the mass of the population into citizens, teaching individual independence, and welfare, and we also have another category of these forces that became active in the fields of welfare and well-being. These actions also fall under the social category, which includes things like altering life patterns, attitudes, and preconceptions to transform them into right and beautiful mindsets. Another distinct category of activists focuses on the environment and addresses problems including waste, landscaping, animal living conditions, air pollution, water pollution in rivers and lakes, and more. Some people are also politically concerned and seek to improve the political environment as well as women's rights, freedom of expression, and other liberties. To improve the performance of its officials, these forces are also responsible for regulating government activities and the performance of institutions under their control. Other than in these instances, coping with social problems and occasionally intervening to lessen or eradicate them are also included in the collective activities that are carried out through observing social deviations and abnormalities.

The Iranian government generally has a negative attitude toward civic engagement and organisation, and these initiatives are frequently seen from a security standpoint. Some civil and social activists have been banned from working in the public sphere, as a result, alienating them and putting them in a precarious position in terms of politics and security.

**Jalal Jalalizadeh, religious activist, lecturer at the University of Tehran, former member of parliament, Sanandaj**

When the general secretary of the largest party is not approved to become a candidate in parliamentary elections, can this really revive the hope of political activism in the hearts of young people?

Activists and social forces are being restricted in numerous ways by the government. The media industry is one of these restrictions. The media is a crucial instrument for reaching out to civic organizations and social activists to further their objectives.

**Payam Dorfeshan, a basic lawyer and a civil activist from Tehran**

It is a fact that we are losing a lot of our important knowledge under the influence of the current media. You examine the myths of the modern world and the traits that have led to their mythic status. This substitution of abhorrent values for ones founded on profound human conceptions is a loss. How much does a teenager today use proverbs or poems in his or her language?

In Iran, state and national audio and video media are considered, and in this regard, the private sector is not allowed to operate. In the field of the press, civil society organizations need to obtain permission from the government to carry out their activities, and after that, their activities are regularly monitored. The next area of government confrontation with the activities of civic institutions is their disabling in terms of cooperation with knowledgeable personalities and civic activists. To counter the symbolic positions that enable them to act to influence public opinion in the moral, cultural, or political realms, elites and political leaders, together with the powerful and prominent members of civil society, are regrettably being particularly controlled by the government security agencies.

**Amir Sajjadi, History teacher, Saqqez, Kurdistan**

I was the editor of Rajan biweekly for nine months. I left it because of the pressure. I participated in the 2013 council elections; In the first stage, I was rejected on charges of belonging to an illegal group!

The reality is that politicians should not be content with the silence and inaction of civic institutions since social concerns are so complicated that they can sporadically surface as critical phenomena and fundamentally change the social order. In this situation, instead of looking inward and correcting their mistakes, in a closed cycle, the authorities look for external factors to blame the others. The situation in the last decade can be considered proof of the claim that almost every day we see the gathering and protest movements of a group of people in different parts of the country. So, to avoid creating a pretext for 'foreigners' to exploit social activists and engage in involvement in domestic matters, state officials should focus on removing the security outlook from these groups.

Government officials can leverage the wide-ranging capacities and potentials of social forces to enhance the social situation. We have all seen some of their capacities for crisis resolution over the past ten years in such events as the earthquakes in the Azari areas of Varzeqan or Sarpol-e Zahab in Kermanshah, the collapse of the Plasco building in Tehran, or the burning of trees and forests in the western regions of the country. They brought with them a considerable amount of skills, abilities, and resources. These capacities and potentials suggest that these forces possess extensive indigenous and specialised knowledge, which can be utilised by recognising them in normal times of stability.

Iranian society is a society of ethnic and religious divisions, great tensions, and deadlocks that eat away at the soul of society in isolation and weaken it from within. The elites and active forces of these groups have frequently been blocked from obtaining critical and essential positions due to the prevalence of ethnic and religious identity assumptions. In recent years, many video clips about young people from these identity groups have been shared on social media; despite having advanced degrees and numerous scientific and research publications, they work as kolbars, factory workers, street vendors, street sweepers, and other low-level jobs, which highlights the inappropriate use of these expert forces, particularly those from the periphery ethnicities.



### **Working at Cafeteria and stationery, Oshnavieh, West Azarbaijan**

In Kurdistan, people are forced to do kolbari as they have no other job. The is the case that a doctorate does such a job! Kolbari is the same as porting, this is so awful! Everyone who hears this gets nervous; what does it mean? Someone who has educated at a university, is forced to start kolbari!

In many cases, this has a legal basis, and according to the law, minorities such as Sunnis cannot hold political office, such as the presidency. In some cases, the problem is not with the law but a result of the preference of high-ranking government officials who arbitrarily impose such restrictions on activists of ethnic and religious groups. For example, in post-revolutionary history in the field of management, followers of Sunnis or ethnic groups such as Kurds and Balochis have never held positions such as ministry, embassy, or governorship. In some cases, these restrictions have been imposed not by the central government but by shadow groups. For instance, the Baloch ethnic group in Sistan and Balochestan province claims that many important regional positions have been given to members of the minority Shiite Sistani group and that the majority Sunni population has been denied access to these official positions. Similarly, in West Azarbaijan Province, which has a religious and ethnic context and where the two groups of Shiites and Sunnis, as well as Azaris and Kurdish speakers, are relatively equal in number, Sunni followers and Kurds believe that the opposite group has deprived them to access high job positions. In Khuzestan, Bakhtiari and Arabs have similar complaints.

Besides the lack of access to employment prospects, another effect of these limitations is the isolation of civil society activists working in many domains of culture, the arts, politics, the environment, and other areas. In addition to the ethnic groups mentioned in the preceding paragraph, ethnic groups like Turks and Persians also have strong convictions about security outlooks toward minorities and are critical of some centralised government initiatives.

### ***3.5. Absence of free political parties***

A political party can be defined as an organisation whose goal is to gain legitimate control over the government through the electoral process. The main goal of all parties is to dominate other parties to gain power and keep it. According to Jill Christ, the political party is ‘an organized group of citizens who share common political views and seek to dominate the government by acting as a political entity. The main goal of a party is to spread its ideas and policies at the political level’ (Alam, 2004: 344).

If we accept that democracy is defined as the political participation and competition of groups and interests organised to seize political power and govern the country based on the policies and positions of each group, then political parties and elections are at the heart of free and democratic social life.

The Iranian party has only been around for a century or so in its current form. Additionally, its past can be traced back to the post-constitutional era (Zibakalam et al: 2014, 14). The following four time periods can be used to categorize Iranian party activity throughout the past century:

#### **1. The constitutional era (1906-1925)**

Parties became a part of the constitutional movement when it officially began and the parliament was established. Aside from the first parliament, several intellectual parties with Western-inspired ideologies and various Islamic parties emerged at this time, and in other assemblies, the intellectual war of words between the parties developed.

#### **2. During the reign of Reza Shah (1925-1941)**

During this period, the activity of the parties decreased significantly and the ruling dictatorship of this period did not allow the parties to operate, and if it was allowed to operate, the basis of this activity was not to contradict Reza Shah's policies.

#### **3. During the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979)**

At the beginning of this period, due to society's annoyance with the authoritarian atmosphere of Reza Shah's government, an open political space was formed and the parties prospered. This period did not last long and in 1948, following the unsuccessful assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah, a wave of arrests and repression of parties began. Between 1951 and 1953, during Mossadegh's presidency, the Shah's authority diminished and the parties resumed their activities. In the years 1953 to 1960 and following the coup d'état of 19 August 1953, the activity of the parties decreased again and most of the parties operated secretly and semi-secretly. In 1960, following the election of Kennedy as President of the United States and his reform plan, a politically open space was formed for the activities of the parties. These conditions did not last long and with the suppression of the uprising of June 5, 1963, the dictatorship of Mohammad Reza was reinforced again. Shah planned to assemble the majority of the political parties active at the time in the form of a single party. During this period, the activities of the parties again became underground and hidden.

#### **4. The Islamic Revolution era**

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the popularity of political parties increasingly flourished. Concerning the freedom of activity of parties, Article 26 of the Constitution explicitly states that "The formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations, as well as religious societies, whether Islamic or about a recognised religious minority, is permitted provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic republic. No one may be prevented from

participating in the aforementioned groups, or be compelled to participate in them.’ Consequently, during the four decades of the Islamic Revolution, various parties were licensed, and according to the Interior Ministry, 223 political parties and organizations were licensed. The parties and organizations that were formally allowed to operate during this period can be divided into four groups: reformist parties, fundamentalist parties, moderate parties known, and student organizations, each of them with different subdivisions and subcategories.

There are two main points about the activity of parties in this period: first, the existence of this high number of parties in a country not only does not indicate political progress and development but also indicates a kind of imbalance in the political structure and political culture of that country about party activities. When there are nearly two hundred licensed political parties and communities in a country, it may indicate that the community has not yet culturally reached the required level of political growth and sociability required for party activity. When one learns that a country has over 200 political parties, one may not only not consider this a sign of political pluralism but also a sign of tribalism, political immaturity, and self-centeredness, even if one is unaware of the political culture of that community.

The second and more important point is that many of these parties are just a name and are miles away from the party in the true sense of the word. Real characteristics of parties include such elements as political participation, political socialization, political communication, training of political forces, and others. Most of them are just using the name of the party as a high number of fake parties emerge like mushrooms during the elections, and when the election process is over, no trace of them remains on the ground. Sadegh Zibakalam, an expert in the field of political science, believes in this regard: ‘In the Islamic revolution, parties were never formed in the true sense of the word, but political groups called parties temporarily operated during the elections, and after that, they did not establish any precise and defined relationship between party representatives and the party itself.’ (Zibakalam et al: 2014: 7).

President Rouhani, in a press conference on February 6, 2017, states that ‘Unfortunately, our parties are mostly active during elections, like seasonal shops that open their doors and go to rest at the end of the season. Our parties must be active throughout the year, and this is my hope and wish, and I want all our parties and civic organizations to be active.’ (Arman Press, News ID: 65452).

If we enter the heart of society and ask a citizen to improvise the names of several parties out of those two hundred official parties, he or she may hardly be able to name one or two parties. If we are a little lucky and the person is interested in political issues, it will take familiar letters such as the Coalition Party, the National Trust, and Kargozaran, which again will be just a couple of names. This is an issue that shows the strangeness of the position of party politics and activities despite its numerical multiplicity.

**Shahin Sepanta, Veterinarian, writer and civil activist, Isfahan**

I consider our domestic policy around individual and political freedoms and parties to be a completely wrong and bankrupt. After forty years from the revolution, parties should now be freer and political groups should be active. I am a member of a political group, but we face many problems for any form of activity. Although we have said that we have no intention of overthrowing the regime, we have no destabilizing or undermining activity and we are only a critical opposition, but they do not give us the opportunity for any activity and they limit us.

There are different views on the reasons for weak and poor party activities in Iran. The way governments interact with political parties and organizations, both directly and indirectly, has a significant impact on the quantity and nature of their activities and, as a result, their efficacy. This is one of the main causes of the failure of parties in Iran. In other words, one of the reasons for the lack of growth of parties and party activities is due to the security definitions and outlooks of the state and the resulting governmental restrictions, according to which parties with different or divergent intellectual orientations are not allowed to operate and political elites should be afraid of participation in party activities. Since the same security view is more prevalent among ethnic groups, there is no formal party with a free tribune and media that could operate at the ethnic level to represent ethnic demands and interests.

The lack of political open space and the rule of monopolistic thinking in the political structure of the country is of great importance in this regard. However, the most significant factor in forming a party in a society is the prevalence of a pluralistic mindset and acknowledgement of opposing views. Another important factor is the political culture of the elites and members of society. The spirit of acceptance, political tolerance, flexibility, group work, liberalism, and the reliance on reason and consciousness instead of prejudice and subjectivism are among the other important requirements to form a modern political culture. Ethnic and tribal divisions are also obstacles to the realization of political parties. Political parties need to promote regional, ethnic, and tribal confrontations into political and intellectual disputes. The negative mindset of the people and the elites about the idea of the party, especially the abuse of the party by the party leaders and the simple use of it as a tool to gain power, can be considered as other obstacles that lead to the absence of parties. Party costs in contrast to their benefits in underdeveloped countries should also be added to

the above list. There is a perception that party activities are not required because of the idea that according to some, party politics is an imported practice and also the fact that most party functions are performed through such civic organizations as the press, universities, seminaries, mosques, and other religious institutions. Such a situation weakens the political institution and keeps it underdeveloped, leaving the elites and political experts as well as the society in a state of lethargy and discouragement.

**Jalal Jalalizadeh, religious activist, lecturer at the University of Tehran and former member of parliament, Sanandaj**

The political situation is suitable when in society, we see strong parties and activities of the party and student unions and trade unions. Today we do not see these communities and unions in our society. That is, almost our society is heading towards a political discouragement. I believe that unless there are strong parties, freedom of expression and opinion, and freedom of the press, and the like, we will not experience political development and prosperity.

In such circumstances, that is, the absence of the party in society, the media, especially the press, have usually found a political function, in a way, they are filling the party vacuum and compensating for it in various ways, and this leads to paying heavy prices through such governmental countermeasures as arresting, suspending or banning the main activists.

The result of such a situation and the absence or inefficiency of political parties will be that many of the ordinary affairs of daily life in society, including culture, language, literature, science, medicine, sports, the environment, and others will be politicized and will be further accompanied by confrontational reactions from the rulers. Another result of such a situation can be seen in the candidacy process of the Presidential and Islamic Consultative Assembly elections, where everyone is allowed to enter. The release of the films of these people during the registration period has long been ridiculed and scorned by many domestic and foreign critics and has affected political intellectuals and sympathizers.

The existence of a party in a society contributes to the stability and security of the political system. The systematic method presented by structural-functional theories is one of the most successful explanations concerning how the parties function. Researchers like Gabriel Almond, James Coleman, and G. Bingham Powell support this perspective, which made its way into the political sciences in the 1960s. According to this point of view, the party engages in individual

social and political activity and, because of functioning as a black box, has inputs, outputs, and feedback. The data or inputs contain a set of information and demands transmitted to the party, and the results and outputs include all decisions, regulations, slogans, stances, demands, orientations, tactics, strategies, and others which is taken out of the black box of the party and presented to the society, the government, and other political, social, economic, and cultural institutions. Feedback is the reflection of those findings that are re-entered into the black box as data and come out as new findings that in this role, the data is interpreted. In this way, the party functions as a platform that gathers questions from the community level and, after analysis and classification, presents solutions to decision-making bodies like the government, parliament, and other political players (Akhavan Kazemi, 1999: 103-104).

Abdul Rahman Alam (2004), lists several features for parties according to Monroe's view, including:

1. Electoral contests aiming at winning: Parties exist to compete in elections and to increase the party's chances of winning more votes, their first function is to select deserving candidates.
2. Formulation of public policies: The party takes part in the election campaign based on several announcements and programs to ensure that voters are adequately informed about both the party's policies and programs as well as the major issues.
3. Dealing with the government: The opposition is the minority party, whereas the government is made up of the majority party. The majority cannot stray from a particular course simply because a minority exists. Because human beings are imperfect and politics and government are complex, many decisions made by the government may not be in the best interests of society. Therefore, political non-governmental organizations must critique and voice their opinions. This expedites the process of political participation for groups and parties while also reducing decision-making errors.
4. Political education of the general population: The election campaign is generally seen as an educational campaign during election season. The public, in general, is uncaring and uninterested in the actions of the government. To improve the social context of politics, the parties must play their essential role.

In addition to ending social apathy, the existence of the parties in society also facilitates the process of political socialization. Thus, many political customs and acceptable behaviour are passed down from generation to generation, enabling them to make significant contributions to the political community. Indicators of political apathy or inactivity include a lack of interest in politics, a feeling of political non-commitment, and a poor understanding of the issues. Fundamentally, this is a societal issue. If political parties and organisations carry out their duties effectively, they may provide voters with a sense of political system belonging while influencing voter behaviour during elections, a problem that might have an impact on the level of social development.

5. Mediation between the government and the people: The party is that unique nexus between the individual and the government; it is the connecting line that connects the two sides, and it is the hook that binds the individual to the government.

In systematic analysis, the parties manage the public demands while conveying the demands and requirements of society by setting the party program and agenda and presenting and implementing it within the legislative and executive organizations. On the other hand, political parties and groups, as well as the government and the political system as a whole, institutionalise values and ideological beliefs, as well as national concerns, and political socialisation tendencies within the society.

6. Gathers like-minded individuals: A party may perform its duties effectively and without difficulty as long as it can retain its members, has the ideal mix of desires and compatible perspectives, and is disciplined and well-organized.

Apart from the points made in Monroe's view, the following can also be considered important features of the parties in the modern era:

A) Preserving political stability: Samuel Huntington, influenced by de Tocqueville, observes that a highly institutionalised political system is effective overall. According to him, the stability of society depends on absorbing this rising degree of political engagement on a vast scale since the new social forces that have formed throughout the modernization process necessitate widespread political participation. Parties can serve as the primary institutional vehicles for coordinating this political involvement in a constructive and legitimized way (Badie, 2000: 94-100).

B) Peaceful competition instead of violent struggle: In countries where political competition is pursued either individually or in ethnic and tribal competitions, even election can be a basis for deepening political divisions and fundamental variances in the country. While doing so, the party lessens tensions as a result of the demand for votes by eliminating widespread social and racial issues and diminishing economic, racial, and social differences. All social groupings will give way to peaceful competition when they can engage in politics and administration through political parties and institutions, and when public opinion supports them and gives them political power. The possibility of terrorist and violent movements will arise, and the stage will be set for violent and covert operations if the path to peaceful protest is blocked. Experiences have also shown that instability eventually reappears in the system when doors are entirely closed off to particular social strata, forces, or an ideological spectrum.

Following the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and the opening of the political space as a result of the revolutionary process, many diverse parties that had not had much chance to express themselves as a result of the political repression in the previous regime, were enabled to express their opinions and beliefs and introduce them to the society. However, this state of affairs did not last long, and eventually, the elders of numerous parties, along with their opinions and ideas, were banned from participating in political contests and

expelled from the social scene. With the start of the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, a particular type of mandatory cohesion was established in society, and the ideological conflict between the parties was put to rest as a result of the military setting and the presence of young people in the front lines. Most electoral results were significantly affected by this atmosphere. With the end of the war and in the last thirty years, various political parties have taken over the leadership of the country's executive tasks. At first, the 'construction' administration of Rafsanjani took power for eight years with technocratic slogans for the reconstruction of the war-torn country. After that, the reformist administration of Khatami took power with the slogans of creating an open political space and the concepts of freedom of expression and freedom of thought, which was in charge for eight years until 2005. After that the anti-Western rhetoric of Mahmoud Ahamdinejad with the slogan of justice and equality and helping the oppressed captured the administrative position until the 2013 elections when Hassan Rouhani's government has come to power, whose slogan was to follow the middle path, moderation in politics, and repairing the damaged economics. Through this introduction and also putting together a set of theories of different ethnic groups that were interviewed, we can discuss the theories about the existence of political parties in Iran and the functions that party-based politics can find. Two distinctive groups become visible here: The first group believe that the changes brought about by these four different political parties could not have affected the living conditions of the people and ethnicities.

**Sardar Fotuhi, consultant for government and private research projects, Saqqez, Kurdistan**

The fundamentalist and reformist parties have shown that they have not done anything useful in Kurdistan and they have not done anything for Kurdistan.



**Seyed Ahmad Azizi, political activist and parliamentary candidate, Sarpol-e Zahab**

Forty years after [the revolution], with the coming to power of different administrations, we see that nothing has really happened and the gaps have deepened, causing huge differences between developed and underdeveloped areas, and there is no balance in our country. When we see this situation, we infer that there is a policy in it that Sistan and Balochistan will not develop and Kurdistan will be deprived. This is the understating of the people.

The views of the second group, however, focus on how satisfied the various ethnic groups were, on the whole, with the reformist government that Mohammad Khatami presided over from 1997 to 2005 and they believe that in this period, the ethnic group has come out of its previous isolation and gained power.

**Qassem Siasar, Director of Zahedan National Library, Zahedan, Sistan and Balochestan**

The Sistanis felt better up until 1976 because the government gave them more attention and more Sistani Shiites occupied positions in the administration. The election of May 1997, started a process that progressively grew less ideological, and the Sistanis no longer felt the same situation. As someone who works in this territory, I think the changes since the 2nd of Khordad [i.e. the election of Khatami] are beneficial. Involvement of the Baloch people in provincial political and administrative matters is necessary.

### Zaher Sarai, literary activist and poet, Ilam

If we adopt the reformist discourse in Iran that considers Iran is for all Iranians, naturally Iran and political development will be formed and everybody will look to the potentials inside, the country will find a bright future and will face less internal and external problems .



Picture 18 Interview with Zaher Sarai

After reviewing the arguments in this section, it can be said that political parties are a necessary component of society and that they serve a variety of purposes that are advantageous to both the public and the government. Unfortunately, this is not properly addressed or taken into consideration in Iran, as can be observed by evaluating each of the eight roles covered in the preceding pages. In most situations, there have only been nominal parties involved. These political platforms of such shallow parties have a more centrist leaning, and they have consistently disregarded topics of ethnicity and their need to defend all the people, which has led to demonstrations from various ethnic groups and, regrettably, always been greeted with violence.

#### *3.5.4. Disparities in the political structure*

Iranian government in terms of the political structure is the Islamic Republic. The republican system is based on three faculties of legislature, executive, and judiciary. In addition to these three independent powers, the leadership, as the highest governmental authority, has the role of overseeing the three faculties of

the government. The leader is a religious and political figure and is elected by the Assembly of Experts.

The constitution and a number of associated laws, including those pertaining to civil law, criminal law, Islamic law, and other laws, are used to run the government. Each of these laws is carried out by the appropriate bodies. According to this perspective, all of these laws are passed by the legislature, as they are in many other nations, but in reality, the leader of the Islamic Revolution, who is the ultimate political authority, has a significant degree of power. According to the explicit text of the constitution, it is the task of the leader to determine the general policies of the system.

Following the introduction of the 1979 Constitution, the formation of general policies of the system showed to be a requirement. Therefore, several members of the Review Council supported its inclusion in the 1989 revision of the Constitution. The general policies of the system, which establish the governmental frameworks and directions in all spheres of governance, are based on the goals and tenets of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, this lack of theoretical support has led to many ambiguities being raised regarding its various aspects. The nature of these policies concerning the fundamental rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the major and key issues from which the elimination of ambiguity causes various effects and results. Determining the nature of these policies will disambiguate issues such as the position of these policies in Iran's constitutional rights and the quality of monitoring their implementation. Therefore, their positive effects will be manifested in or through governmental faculties and institutions, and this establishment may even turn it into a model that can be presented as the fundamental rights for driving a reasonable and purposeful political system (Esmaili et al., 2007).

Contradictions among the forces and unawareness of the situation and position of Iranian institutions reveal a certain internal incompatibility of the political system. The existence of parallel institutions with the state is a reflection of this non-compliance. This is to the extent that President Rouhani, in a speech, announced the existence of a powerful shadow state. 'We handed over part of the economy to a state that has both the gun and the media,' President Rouhani said in a speech (Khabar Online News Agency, ID: 679394). This refers to the IRGC's influence in the economic sector and political management outside the government. In this regard, the Iranian Vice President, in another meeting, announced his powerlessness to change even the head of his office. The presence of security forces in diplomatic meetings and international relations, regardless of political and international custom and the neglect of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is another aspect of this non-compliance, to the extent that some time ago, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was forced to resign. The findings obtained in this study also indicate the existence of this inconsistency in the political structure.

**Ali Sahebi, psychologist, Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi**

There are two distinct processes in Iranian foreign policy that are not congruent. You see a foreign minister and a representative of the foreign policy of the leader. In international affairs, when Mr. Velayati goes to Lebanon and negotiates with Hezbollah, no one objects that where is the real Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Rahmatollah Hemmati, economic activist, Semnan**

In the country, there is no common understanding in politics. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has its own policy, and cultural institutions have a conflicting view, and the overall political situation is in a state of ambiguity.

The former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, thinks that the judicial system of Iran has thirty 'structural' and 'behavioural' issues that are inherent in the structure and that it lacks disciplinary measures. In this regard, he called for the formation of a 'High Judicial Council' in the presence of the head of the judiciary, the head of the supreme court, the attorney general and at least six high-ranking judges to elect judges across the country and delegate the recruitment and transfer of judges to that council. According to him, 'concentration of power and violation of the constitutional structure', 'incompatibility between responsibilities with powers' and 'unity of plaintiff, prosecutor, judge and executor' are among the 'structural' problems of the judiciary system of Iran. Ahmadinejad also stated in another part of his protest statement that the authority of the head of the judiciary to transfer judges 'naturally violated the professional immunity of judges and consequently seriously damaged their independence.' (radiofarda.com).

**Abdul Qader Savari, researcher, Khuzestan**

Intellectuals want a democratic society, like France and the Netherlands, etc. , but I do not think that Iranian society will soon have a truly independent National Assembly and an independent judiciary. It's very unlikely . . . . It requires a lot of work and effort.

The fact that this opinion was expressed by a former president and a current member of the Expediency Council who was appointed by the Supreme Leader, as well as the results of the current study, demonstrate the lack of independence in the judiciary and the pervasiveness of various forms of corruption in this system.

When people examine the political and legal systems of the country, they first have the idea that the government has a strong legal framework that cannot be violated. However, several social and political events have generated mistrust in the minds of the people that the political system is far from what it appears to be and what it ought to be. These concerns are further strengthened by the fact that high-ranking officials have engaged in several forms of corruption and evasion, as well as by the judicial system's contempt for them. Additionally, unlawful activities and the imposition of legal prohibitions against certain people and currents without the use of a court procedure demonstrate how the political structure and institutional actions are incompatible.

In such a situation, and despite the separation of powers in the country that requires the formation of any kind of democratic government, the existence of a leader as the supreme decision-making authority whose power is claimed to be derived from divine orders, somehow, overshadows the independence of important and strategic faculties. In such a case, the idea comes to mind that all the basic policies are in the hands of the leader himself.

**Marzieh Mohebbi, Lawyer from Mashhad**

Almost the entire political structure is based on Velayat-e-Faqih [Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist], economy is based on oil. Also an old, reactive policy reigns that is not willing to communicate, development goals has not been achieved at all, and according to the indicators, everything is getting worse every day.

The result of this lack of institutional independence is that sometimes some decisions and actions are made within the system that not only no one is responsible for, but sometimes they are even attributed to external factors. For instance, the assassinations that occurred in various eras, such as the serial murders of intellectuals that occurred in the late 1990s, or the attacks on the University of Tehran students' dormitory in 1999 and 2009 were sometimes attributed to being carried out by forces within the Ministry of Intelligence, the IRGC, the Basij, the plain clothes, and other unknown forces, while for others, to exonerate the government and officials, they are contended to be the work of foreign agents. These forms of opacity and complexity of political action in Iran are far removed from what was dreamed of and demanded by the people at the beginning of the revolution.

In general, it may be claimed that the political system of the country shows signs of non-compliance and deviation from the normal way. The organizational structure of the government, which leads to this form of non-compliance and contradiction between its numerous agencies and ministries, is partially responsible for this non-compliance. Another feature of this that is related to the structural properties of the government is the fact that some institutions regularly operate very separately from the state.

### *3.5.5. Macrocephalization of the urban structure*

In underdeveloped nations, the gradual or abrupt increase in regional and urban inequality has inevitably prompted people to migrate to larger cities in quest of better living conditions. Meanwhile, the fast urbanization that has unfolded in all nations has not been balanced and has mostly concentrated in major cities and capitals. Iran has not been an exception to this during the past fifty years, which means that the country's fast urbanization over the last 40 years has not been handled within the framework of a comprehensive national plan that incorporates sectoral and regional coordinations. Given the intense relationship between political, economic, and social functions and the distribution of the

population, it seems to sense that when wealth and activity are concentrated around some cities, the people will ultimately shift in that direction. The country is experiencing issues with the urban system as a result of this population distribution strategy, which has produced a demographic and functional gap between the middle and lower levels of metropolitan areas (Rezaei and Taqvai, 2009: 1).

In terms of scientific and theoretical urban planning, designing a city where the transfer of new technologies, the distribution of commodities and services, and the adoption of various lifestyles occur throughout society is the ideal method to arrange space and establish hierarchy. In other words, urban hierarchy is a categorization and sequencing of urban centres based on quantitative and qualitative variables, prioritised according to relevance. These facilities are arranged according to rank and population. Pierre Georges believes: 'The urban hierarchy based on the number of inhabitants of the city alone cannot show a completely clear picture of the city. Therefore, this hierarchy should be determined according to the nature of the performance and functions of cities (Farid, 1992: 143)

In the system of hierarchies of cities of a country, often the largest city and its capital are in the highest rank in terms of having special features, which is called the 'first city' (Behforuz, 1992: 3). The first city is a city that affects other cities in terms of population or function. In other words, the first city is a city that has at least twice the population of the second city of a country (Shokui, 1994: 485). The first city is a mark of urban imbalance. For example, the hierarchical system of most cities in South America and Africa suffers from such an imbalance (Dickinson et al., 1996: 226, quoted by Inanlu, 2007: 39).

The urban system is not limited to the physical set of urban settlements, but also includes flows and connections between settlements. These flows include population, capital, means of production, ideas, and information, each of which affects the fortitude of the urban structure. In response to a variety of social, economic, and cultural changes as well as a diversity of local circumstances, a specific type of spatial system for human settlements has emerged during the past few decades. The imbalance between rural and urban centres in various social, economic, and cultural fields, has disrupted the spatial order of settlements on the one hand, and the rapid growth of some first-class cities, migration from villages and small towns to such cities caused deprivation and isolation of villages and small towns (Momeni, 2009: 35).

In Iran, the concentration of population in several cities of the country, particularly Tehran, indicates regional imbalance and a strong concentration of population in these few points. Tehran alone accounts for more than ten per cent of the country's total population; a phenomenon that is often called macrocephalization.

**Ali Bakhtiarpour, faculty member and lecturer in geopolitics,  
Ahvaz University, Khuzestan**

More than one-fifth of Iranians live in Tehran and the other four-fifths all around Iran. Iran's first city with its suburban areas has a population of about 14 million people. My city, which is Mashhad is the second city and has a population of 4 million, that is, 4 million versus 14 million, and the third city has something like 2 million people. This is a big, serious disease called macro-cephalization. In our urban structure, the head of Iran is big while its organs are very weak . . . . This is a manifestation of the centralised power, economically and politically centralised.



Picture 19 Interview with Ali Bakhtiarpour

The term macro cephalization is derived from biology and refers to a complication when a baby is born with a head much larger than the body. A disproportion of the size of the head with the body is not a complication in itself, but it does indicate a brain complication such as a gland, bleeding, or brain injury. The urban structure also seems to suffer from a similar disorder. The



head of this urban system, which is Tehran, is much larger than usual in terms of population, capital, services, and facilities.

According to the urban hierarchy model, cities should have populations based on where they are in this hierarchy, with the second city’s population being equal to half that of the first city, the third city’s population is equal to one-third that of the first city, and so on until the nth city’s population to be equal to one-nth that of the first city (Taghvaei, 2000: 104).

Until the beginning of urbanism and urbanization in the contemporary period, Iran had an almost homogeneous urban system. This means that the country’s urban network was natural and has continued to live under the influence of endogenous development and traditional urban-rural relations. After that, as a result of the transformation of endogenous growth and development into exogenous development, the evolution of urbanism, urbanization and urban planning in the contemporary period from the middle of Qajar rule onwards begins (Habibi, 1996: 6).

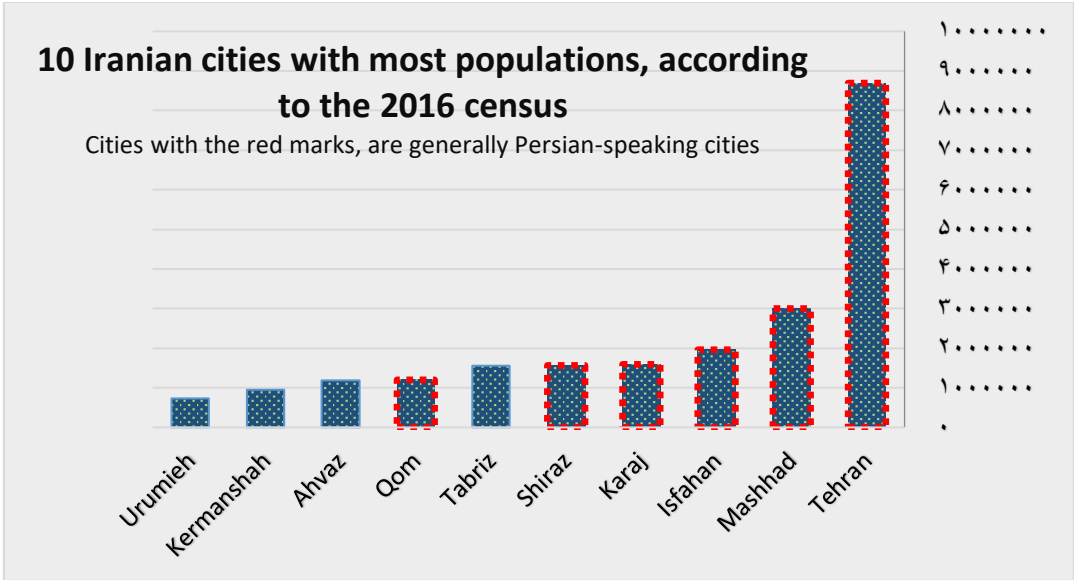


Figure 24 Ten Iranian cities with the most populations, according to the 2016 census

Although a high population density in a city does not always signify disorder, it has a substantial impact on inequality and uneven allocation of resources across the nation. According to the table above, the top five provinces of the nation do not contain any of the provinces where the major ethnic populations of Turks, Kurds, Balochis, or Arabs reside. These provinces are home to around 40% of the population. The concentration of human and economic capital in these areas has led to the depletion of other areas of the capital, increasingly widening the gap between these cities. The major economic resources have been concentrated in these five areas at the expense of fostering poverty and inequality in other areas.

**Mohammad Ehsani, documentary filmmaker, Tabriz, East Azarbaijan**

You move from Tehran to four or five cities farther to the south and you face a cultural, economic, social catastrophe until you reach Sistan where poverty reaches the point of hunger. In the border areas, we see general poverty. There is poverty in Tehran, but it is not so general.

**Shahram Geravandi, sociologist and journalist, Khuzestan**

From Rafsanjani's administration, even in Khatami's administration, we have a serious challenge that is called the Ministry of Energy. The Ministry of Energy has always been selected from among the central provinces, from the people of Isfahan and Yazd.

On the other side, it has been challenging for young people from minority ethnic groups who have lived in these cities to return to their native homeland and city because of the visual attractions, resources, services, and social welfare in these cities. This condition is particularly common among academics and new graduates from universities. As a result, the elites and human capital that are the primary forces driving growth will be concentrated in big cities, which will inevitably obstruct the progress of development and the equal distribution of wealth and capital. Most researchers in urban studies consider the starting point of urban problems in Iran from the beginning of capitalist relations when the dynamic relationships between rural production and the dependence of urban centres on rural areas ultimately led to the dependence of rural areas on urban centres and ultimately, the society found a heavy consumerist orientation. Then, when rural immigrants flooded the cities and constructed cities that could not be accommodated appropriately, the once steady and balanced relationships between the city and the village became one-sided and imbalanced, and the lower urban classes grew ever larger. Thus, Iranian society saw the escalation of both cultural and economic destitution, the effects of which have spread a cloud over the society and led to some insurmountable social issues. The most

significant and harmful outcome of this process, which is affecting more and more people every day, is rising socioeconomic inequality.

In addition to depriving some regions of the country of various forms of capital, the macrocephalization of cities will lead to societal problems in large cities. After a short time, the effects of centralization on urban issues including marginalisation, air pollution, traffic, and population density manifest themselves at the national level, which will naturally be accompanied with injustice in many regions and disruption of the active relations between the cities.

**Amir Sajjadi, Teacher of History, Saqqez, Kurdistan**

The allocation of resources throughout the nation is definitely not equitable and fair, based on the situation I observe in Kurdistan. Iran as a whole works for Tehran, and Tehran as a whole works for the north of Tehran. This often repeated sentence accurately describes the situation in Iran.

Suburban areas develop in big cities when the impoverished are concentrated in one section of the metropolis. Aside from that, regional development becomes uneven due to the accumulation of facilities in many big cities, forcing peasants and residents of small towns to move to cities to access facilities and better living environments. The movement of villagers, residents of small towns, and the impoverished in the city are seen to be the primary causes for the expansion of suburbs and communities around large cities. The following strategies can be used to stop the development of suburban regions in urban areas and their revitalization:

- 1 Balanced regional development through equal distribution of facilities and services;
- 2 Decentralization of administrative, economic, social, and cultural activities of central and large cities;
- 3 improvement and empowerment of the various aspects of the quality of life of marginalized people.

The following actions are recommended to address the problem of macrocephalization, the breach in the urban network, and the equitable distribution of facilities throughout the nation (Khadem Al-Hosseini, 2011):

- Stabilizing minor and secondary cities, which are the development poles of the urban hierarchy;

- Preventing excessive expansion of major cities in the province's centres;
- Providing specialised services and facilities in small and medium cities;
- Geographical distribution of investments in underprivileged cities;
- Focus on depressed areas more.

### 3.5.6. The projection of crises

The existence of the type of inefficiencies discussed in the previous sections has sometimes caused people of the ethnic groups to talk about these inefficiencies as well as economic, social, and cultural inequalities and exaggerate them and in a way, project all the problems on them.

The current situation in the country is fraught with several crises. The nation is concerned about many worrying environmental issues, including the drying up of large rivers like the Zayandehrood, the disaster at the Gotvand dam, the drying up of the Hamoon and Urmia lakes, as well as the Karun, Karkheh, and Dez rivers; the appearance of sinkholes; the extinction of rare animal species; air pollution from fine dust; and economic, industrial, and agricultural issues. The common belief is that these crises are the results of the mismanagement of the government. Other factors at the lowest strata of the social system that hinder crisis resolution and have made crises worse include the lack of public awareness of crises, the lack of understanding of natural resources like water, and the inadequate knowledge on how to use them. Generally speaking, crises will always be exacerbated by a lack of public awareness, a lack of national resolve to handle the issue, a lack of comprehensive, long-term planning, and the inability of scientific institutions to recognise the primary problems and provide solutions.

Human interference and irrational manipulation of natural resources are to blame for the environmental problem, which has grown to be a significant issue in the present day. Because of the threat that humans pose to this living and mortal earth today, scientists have focused their attention on this problem to preserve it.

**Ahmad Bahri, Managing Director of Mahabad Monthly and Cultural Activist, Mahabad, West Azarbaijan**

The natural landscape of Zagros is dying; agriculture and water are leaving the scene.

Due to Iran's location in one of the arid and semi-arid regions and limited water resources, except in the northern part of the country and parts of the west, other regions are facing water restrictions, a situation that is more evident in the central, southern, south-eastern and south-western regions of the country. The existence of two desert areas in central Iran has also added to the restrictions on

the water supply to large areas of the country. Due to the extensive construction of water dams during the past few decades, it is no longer viable to construct new ones in the country. Also, the possibility of transferring water from the water-rich areas of the country to dry and low-water areas is not feasible. These are among the issues that have made Iran a country with a high level of water shortage and stress.

Environmental crises in general and water crises in particular have the potential to turn into human, social, and political crises. Relating the protests of January 2018 Most cities in the country to the water shortage crisis are examples of this type of analysis. The water problem leads to protests, and over time the protest spreads and takes on a political overtone, gradually creating destructive and radical slogans with violence, leading to clashes and injuries to both sides of the people and the state resources. Undoubtedly, the role of the human factor in the emergence of these crises cannot be overlooked, but, as explained earlier, one of the most important reasons for this is the environmental and geographical conditions of Iran, marked with water stress. Besides, the imbalance of the human population with natural resources should not be ignored. The results show, however, that members of ethnic groups tend to project in this situation and place more emphasis on the role of government and stakeholders than on any other natural causes.

**Shahram Zamani, sociologist and journalist, Tabriz, East Azarbaijan**

You block and dry our sea, and you build a road in the middle of it. As a result of this form of manipulation in nature, there has emerged a variety of skin diseases in the area that doctors cannot treat.

**Ghanem Savari, teacher, Hamidiyeh, Khuzestan**

It is intentional . . . Could it be that Karun, Karkheh, Dez, and all the other rivers and dams to dry at once?!

Since Iran has a heavily politicised culture, the majority of events there are viewed from a political perspective. Of course, the formation of such a sort of

perspective is influenced by the government's intrusion into even the most fundamental aspects of citizens' daily lives. Although there is obvious exaggeration in this situation, the single-factor assessments and explanations of various situations offered by the elites and the general public do not appear to be particularly credible.

Apart from environmental crises, in recent years we have witnessed various other types of crises, such as various labour and social protests, rising tensions in foreign relations and the return of economic sanctions, economic crisis and rising inflation, desperate efforts by some political groups to reform power relations and many other problems. The results of the current investigation in this area also show several analyses that are far from fair and do not seem to be very realistic.

**Mohammad Bahari, University Lecturer on Literature, Zahedan, Sistan and Balochestan**

Our people have nothing at all; There is no freedom to try and earn a living. There is nothing left for my people. Their sea is dry. Their agricultural products are extinguished. They no longer have livestock, they have no industry.

**A 38-year-old man, Bushehr**

It does not matter now, because we do not see anyone caring about us and our rights. So, as the saying goes, take your hat so that the wind does not take it. Therefore, it is very difficult for people to discuss the common good now.

The government is not responding at all to these situations, according to research participants. According to the responders, who are quoted, the

government has not granted them any rights and has instead provided all required powers to the central areas.

**Mohammad Hosseini, religious and cultural activist,  
Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

The distribution of jobs, production, and wealth in Iran is not fair at all; this is very cruel. Someone is running the economy who is ignorant. They do it intentionally and with a purpose. Look at the economy of this region, which on all sides has managed by the Shiites and the non-Kurds who have put the Kurds in the lower ranks.

**Female student, Saqqez, Kurdistan**

I think no right has been given, therefore the question of assessment of what is given is irrelevant.

Making such judgements is, in fact, quite unfair. Despite their attempts to promote social justice, such an attitude towards the government and its employees inhibits them from improving their attempts when they see them treated in such a way, rather than motivating them to work harder. The consequences of such a scenario will eventually affect the ethnic groups.

### **3.5.7. Polarity in worldview**

This section will concentrate on how each ethnic group perceives their world and the worlds of others, as well as how they describe, characterise, and analyse it so that a comparison between the two viewpoints may be established. In other words, an attempt will be made to explain the views of each ethnic group with its economic, social, cultural, and religious conditions, as well as those of other ethnic groups, to provide a comparison between them in the next step.

Looking at the economic situation of the ethnic groups discussed in the study, it seems that the worst conditions in this field are the Baloch ethnic group, while the Azari speakers have a better situation than other ethnic groups. Kurdish, Bakhtiari, Sistani, and Arab ethnic groups are between these two.

There is no superiority or inferiority between different ethnic groups when it comes to culture, which includes the customs of the people of various regions, including their costumes, music, ceremonies, and other habits. Each of these rituals and cultural values serves a purpose in societies that have managed to maintain their identity throughout the historical transformation.

One of the ways that ethnicities perceive one another is via a broad perspective that is unconcerned with distinctions and differences.

**Hassan Hemmati, faculty member of Yazd University, Semnan**

I interacted with everyone like they were Iranians, and I did not perceive any distinctions. My encounters have been with Iranians. I didn't think about ethnicity.

Socially, each ethnic group has its own positive and negative characteristics and aspects, and apart from the positive aspects such as social capital, quality of life, and other components, they also struggle with issues like addiction, violence, divorce, and other similar issues.

Interviews indicate that the Kurdish ethnic group finds itself in more favourable conditions than the Baloch ethnic group and believes that they are living in better circumstances. On the other hand, they say that their circumstances are worse than those of their neighbours, the Azaris and that the Azari ethnic group, specifically economically, has better conditions.

**Raouf Azari, civil activist, Sardasht, West Azarbaijan**

We have almost more favorable conditions in Kurdistan than in those of the people living in Balochistan.



**Mohammad Raouf Jahani, civil activist, Marivan, Kurdistan**

The Turks now control most of Iran's industry and wealth.

The Baloch ethnic minority views their world as undeveloped and disadvantaged. They acknowledge that the group and the absence of elites and academics are contributing factors to the issue, as was previously discussed. This ethnic group believes that, compared to other ethnic groups, they are closer to the Sunni Kurds. Compared to other ethnic groups, they have a more favourable attitude toward the Sistani, whom they believe, despite having a small population, enjoy greater privileges in the province because of their closer religious ties with the central government and are in charge of the majority of significant provincial affairs. In their view, this has led to the fact that, apart from the central government, most of the atrocities have been committed against them by this local group, and they have imagined the existence of this group as an external factor of their underdevelopment. The Sistani ethnic group, on the other hand, argues that they and the Balochis have a shared history and that their underdevelopment is due more to the absence of their intragroup circumstances than to outside forces.

**Zafar Ahmad Didgah, seminary teacher and social activist,  
Sistan and Balochestan**

We feel close to the Kurds. We feel cultural proximity with them.

**Mohammad Golkahraze, Faculty Member of Zahedan  
University, Sistan and Balochestan**

The Baloch elite in the province (all their doctors and professors) may not exceed 50 or 60... Compare this with the Kurdish elites.

**Sadegh Sotvan, sociologist and researcher, Sistan and Balochestan**

The concept of the Sistan government, which has created a hegemonic condition in the province, has caused many problems for us.

**Reza Keikhah Aria, Cultural Heritage Officer, Sistan and Balochestan**

We do not consider ourselves very different from the Baloch people; we feel like cousins.

The Arab ethnic group in the world considers its conditions more suitable than such ethnic groups as the Balochis, and they also believe that the Balochis have the worst conditions in the country. This ethnic group itself is considered fanatical by the Bakhtiari people.

**Hamid Hamadi, university lecturer, Khuzestan**

I was horrified when I saw the deprivation of Sistan and Balochistan. In the past two years, some 200 to 300 villages in Balochistan have been buried under the sand. As compared with them, I feel very happy.

**Masoud Zalizadeh, researcher and writer, Ahvaz, Khuzestan**

I occasionally feel unfavourable toward Arabs because of their particular traits, including intolerance and a disposition that makes them ready for confrontation and war.

The other ethnic group in consideration is the Azaris or Turks, who think that because of their greater labour and efforts, their economic condition is better than that of other ethnic groups. This group has a particularly negative view of Persian speakers and believes that if their rights have been violated, it was mainly due to Persian speakers, as they control the country's administration and are attempting to assimilate the cultures of other ethnic groups.

**Peyman Nasehpour, university lecturer and musician,  
Ardabil**

The Turks are hardworking and have a better economic situation than the others. The lowest unemployment rate is in Tabriz. As an instance, when I visited Kermanshah, one of the managers complained about how lazy everyone was there.

**Asghar Izadi Jeeran, sociologist and lecturer, Tabriz  
University, East Azarbaijan**

In my doctoral dissertation, I compared the three Persian provinces with the three Turkish provinces and saw a considerable distance between them. As if this is a systematic discrimination against ethnicities.

**Rasoul Nami, carpet designer, Tabriz, East Azarbaijan**

I think the Persians have taken some the rights of the Turks; Sadly, the family has institutionalized this.

Persian speakers also believe that the issues and problems of the country are not limited to a specific ethnic group and that different regions of the country are suffering similar problems. The attitude of this group towards the Sunni religious minority is that the group is flexible in its behaviour and has a high capacity for tolerance.

**Nasser Amoli Moghadam, journalist and reformist activist,  
Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi**

In the Khaf seminary, I had fundamental disputes arguing with Mawlana Motahari about Shia and Sunni, and he was easy in talking to me in front of his Sunni students. These seem to be bright, tolerant, and good people.

According to the findings in the lines above, there are two ways of looking at their world and the worlds of others and comparing them, which creates a sense of discrimination. Each ethnic group believes that they are the targets of discrimination and that other groups are using the available resources unfairly. Several factors may combine to create this feeling of prejudice. Many ethnic and religious groups feel that they are the targets of discrimination in the nation's official legislation and this is partially supported by the legal system. Also, there is the perception that there is prejudice against unofficial religious groups in the nation.

The official political stances of the government, which during the forty years of the Islamic Revolution was controlled by a linguistic, regional, and religious group while other groups were denied this leadership, is another factor for the formation of this discrimination. As a result, these particular regions began to find more facilities sometimes applied in opposition to other regions.

Manuel Castells in his three-volume work, *The Rise of the Information Age (Volume I: The Rise of the Network Society; Volume II: The Power of Identity, and Volume III: End of Millennium)*, with a new approach and citing evidence from around the world, has studied and presents the typology and transformations of collective identities. Castell's proposes three forms of identity building in the age of the networked society:

- Legitimizing identity: introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination vis-a-vis social actors, a theme that is at the heart of the theory of authority and domination, but also fits with various theories of nationalism.
- Resistance identity: generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival based on principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society and the emergence of identity politics. For example, ethnic nationalism often arises from feelings of alienation and anger against unjust political, economic, or social discrimination.
- Project identity: when social actors based on whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position.

To obtain political office and top administrations at the national and local levels, it is critical to be linked with the country's official religion, Shiism. Other Islamic sects and minorities do not qualify and do not have access to these privileges. The level of prejudice will escalate when they are not in top management positions and are placed in a position of inferiority and worthlessness, a sense of discrimination that is anchored in the spirit of the constitution.

Figures below show the extent of political discrimination among the elite and the masses of the ethnic groups studied. 84.4% of the elite and 85.5% of the people believed that Iranian ethnic groups were subject to discrimination and political inequality.

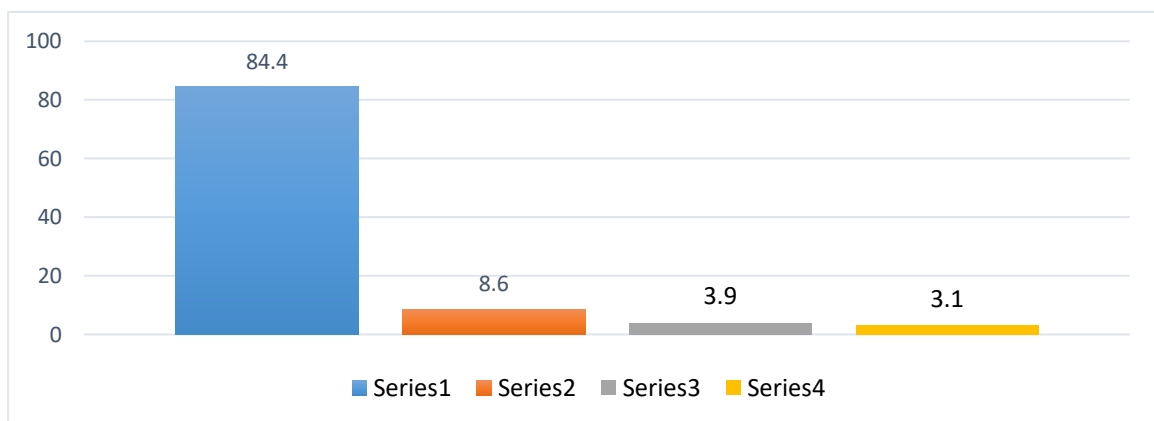


Figure 25 sense of political discrimination of ethnic groups among the elites

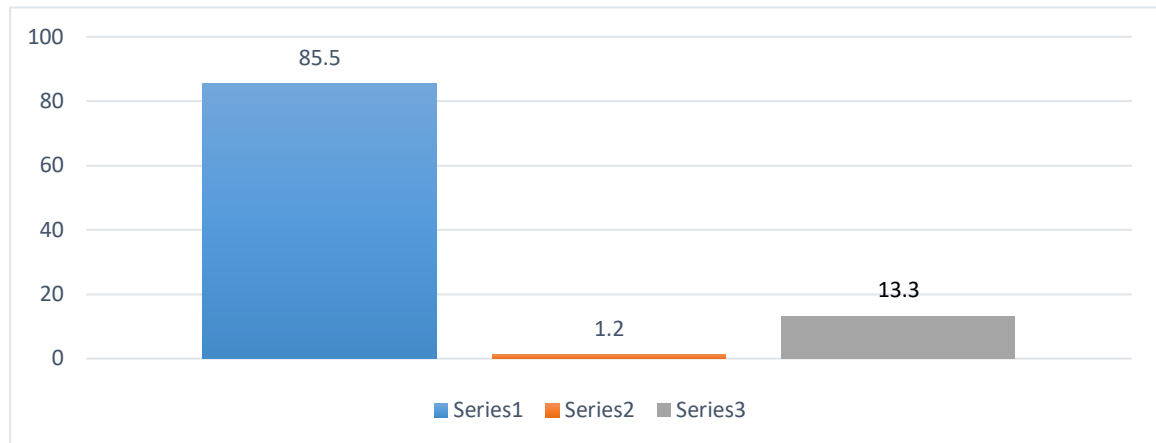


Figure 26 sense of political discrimination of ethnic groups among the common people

### 3.5.8. Dual system of values

Dualism is a philosophical theory in which two concepts, reality, or opposing words (such as good and bad, ugliness and beauty, and others) face each other. Dualism means that every religion and creed believes in two principles and origins, God and the devil, soul and matter, and others. According to this way of thinking, social issues and phenomena are intertwined around a pair of binary concepts: inside-outside, main-subordinate, root-surface, objective-subjective, base structure-superstructure, general-partial, secular-religious, monarchism-republicanism, black-white, friend-enemy, etc. The relations among these end with an unresolved conflict or the victory of one side; in the best case, one side complements the other.

A dualist holds that the facts are incomprehensible unless we presume that there are ultimately two distinct and unchangeable principles. For instance, dualists in anthropology explain human realities through two categories of fundamental causes: intellect and carnal desires, soul and body, or free will and determinism. Similarly, dualists in cognition theory explain cognition through two distinct categories of reality: subject, and object. Finally, dualists in religious cosmology depict this world in a way that the two forces of good and evil are constantly in conflict with one another. Christian Wolff initially applied the term for the philosophers who considered the body and the soul as two distinct essences: 'Dualists are those who accept the existence of material and immaterial essences; that is, they acknowledged the real existence of bodies outside the ideas of the soul and defend the immateriality of the souls.' This mindset adopts a dualistic or polarised perspective on societal issues and events.

The culture of society is transmitted through values and traditions. However, occasionally certain values become useless and are unable to describe the current societal conditions. People in these circumstances will re-evaluate and rethink their values. The cultural and social values of the communities make this clear. While most individuals recognise the worth of values and their

significance, they also find some of them to be objectionable and accept their obsolescence. They hold that just because traditions have been successful in the past does not necessarily indicate that they should still serve as the foundation of modern social life. In this sense, each time traditional transformation is expected, it must be performed sooner than later.

One of these contradictory conceptions is the question of tradition vs modernity, and the ideals that guide each of these paradigms. Iranian society now differs significantly from that of a century ago; since Reza Shah's rule and the modernization and modernist programmes he initiated and many of the ideals of the modern world have infiltrated the Iranian culture. Most of the people have left their traditional or local rural environments and are living in metropolitan areas like Tehran, Tabriz, Mashhad, Isfahan, and other big cities. In the meantime, they have adapted to the way of life of Westerners owing to contemporary technology and tools like communication media and their incredible power. On the other hand, the majority of people living in these modern-day cities were reared in totally traditional settings, with customs and religious beliefs that have been around for many tens or hundreds of years. In such a situation, it is vital how these people face the dilemma binary traditional-modern dilemma. Naturally, contemporary people, seeing the new styles of life in the modern era, find many of the behaviours of their traditional society inappropriate, and on the other hand, the cold, utilitarian, and individualistic conditions of life in modern megacities provoke their nostalgic feelings together with the memory they have of the old times.

The shape and substance of everyday life in Iranian society are influenced by religion as a traditional and historical phenomenon. Additionally, the ethnic/tribal connections of the people have made them dependent on a variety of regional customs, values, and ideals. As a result, given the modern world we live in and the processes of globalisation, the deliberation over the dual system of values will be even more crucial because it is crucial to understand the roles that traditional and religious values play.

Based on the findings of this research, different ethnic and religious groups have kept what was reasonable from the old and historical customs and did not hesitate to leave or forget the unreasonable aspects of their culture. In other words, the interviewees have highlighted the need to preserve and strengthen customs that are based on reason and logic and have humane and moral aspects in the modern world, while traditions that lack these justifications or are superstitious and irrational should be abandoned. They have done this by differentiating between good and bad social norms and providing examples of each.

**Mohammad Ramezani, English teacher, translator and story writer, Bukan, West Azerbaijan**

In terms of traditions, I have kept what I thought was reasonable (honesty, hospitality, etc. ), while I do not consider the other part reasonable (like unnecessary shame or obedience) and I do not accept the superstitions that exist in some cases. I am sure that the nature of time and human evolution will set aside all these obsolete traditions.

**Hassan Fesharaki, writer and translator from Isfahan**

Neither Nowruz nor Ashura should be imposed on anyone. People are free to have customs. We also have good and bad etiquettes. For example, whipping or circumcision of girls is harmful. Appropriate rational, human, and moral etiquette is needed in the modern world .

Among the values that have been severely criticised in modern times are wrong values attributed or attached to religion and tradition. People feel that religion is a personal choice that is passed down through society without being challenged. However, one may still choose the proper path by carefully considering all available options.

In other words, some of what we face today is not so far away from the historical construction. Critical ritual recitation such as the beheading that takes place during Ashura ceremonies in some areas is a kind of rethinking of religious values. The attribution of this part of religion to the not-so-distant period indicates that values are not fundamentally inherent and have changed over time. Some other religious, customary, and traditional matters that need to be reconsidered; Issues such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, and blood marriage of girls between two ethnic groups, and others such as those that existed in the tradition of the past need to be reconsidered and removed from popular culture. The findings of this study also show that the interviewees are interested in rethinking traditional and old views.



However, the criticism and revision of values by the people are related to the general perception and attitude of society. In other words, what we are facing today is a not-so-distant historical construct. Critical re-reading of some primitive forms of rituals in some regions is a type of this rethinking that takes place concerning religious values. The assignment of this aspect of religion to a not-so-distant time reveals that these principles are not inherent in religion and have undergone modifications and adaptations through time. Several other religious, customary, and traditional matters that need rethinking, such as female circumcision, child marriage, the marriage of girls as a form of blood price between two ethnic groups, and other such cases that existed in the tradition of the past need to be reconsidered and eliminated from the culture of the people. The findings obtained from this research also show the interviewees' interest in rethinking traditional and older ways of life.

**Ali Tahmasebi, retiree, researcher and writer, Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi**

I believe that we must constantly re-examine and re-assess ourselves. It is true that we cannot forget the past, but we cannot stay in the past; we are not a repetition of ourselves, we are a continuation of ourselves; this continuation, however, is a kind of rereading... My fathers has made some mistakes and now that I am rereading the past, I must criticise it.

**A 21-year-old boy, Semnan**

You see, I am not prejudiced, because I had no choice in my own people or religion; Because my parents were like this, I grew up and learned the same way. So if we understand this, we are no longer prejudiced.

In this regard, many citizens are aware of the acquired aspect of their ethnic and religious identities and therefore have lower group sentiments towards them.

### 3.6.6. *Political militarism*

It is debatable why governments or nations are turning to violent military rather than flexible political structures; in other words, as long as there is the possibility of dialogue, why should humans turn to war and conflict? Is the way to dialogue blocked? Are democratic political systems failing in non-Western societies? Do those in power are incapable of promoting democracy? These are among the questions that have given rise to numerous theories in the humanities.

Militarism or militarisation is an ideology that believes that military power is the foundation and source for all forms of security. Militarism, in its mildest form, believes that 'reconciliation through military capability' becomes possible, and that military readiness is the best or the only way to achieve peace.

Militaristic governments become completely alienated from their people because of their over-reliance on military power and the allocation of the largest share of national revenue to the strengthening of security institutions; they also lose national support in the face of external threats.

Historically, militarism goes back to the Prussian military tradition and the military orientation of the German government. Bismarck, a conservative German historical figure, believed that history develops through blood and a sword. The spread of militarism in Europe was one of the grounds for the emergence of fascism, which adapted fascist movements from military customs and praised military traditions.

Militarism is used in two senses:

A) The influence of military culture in society: Militarism here means the influence of the army or the way of life and military culture in political and social life. Usually, in the military way of life and culture, order and hierarchy and the relationship between domination and obedience and violent approaches are praised.

B) Military engagement in politics: With the development of modern technology and the establishment of new military complexes and armaments culture, modern technology in weapons has led to the formation of disciplined, modern armies, which have indirectly intervened in politics.

One of the important debates in political sociology is the intervention of the military as an organized social group in politics. Military intervention in politics is a global phenomenon that exists in most countries with varying degrees and forms. At the lowest and most widespread levels, the military, as an influential group, seeks to influence policymakers to achieve their military and organizational goals, and at the highest level, the military plays a key role in political decision-making with direct control of power (Sullivan, 1991: 63).

According to Huntington, the factors involved in military involvement in politics include:

1. Weakness of civil society;
2. Critical economic situation;

3. Poor organizational and corporate culture;
4. Lack or weakness of efficient political institutions;
5. The severity of social and class conflicts;
6. The professionalisation of the military.

In general, it can be concluded from an examination of historical instances of the phenomena known as militaristic inclinations that their characteristics vary from case to case, suggesting that the term 'militarism' should not be reduced to a single phenomenon but rather should be used to describe some related phenomena used in foreign policy. Phenomena such as competition in arms purchases and the growth of industrial-military complexes more than the growth of the national economy, increasing military personnel and military spending, prioritising military-security cooperation over economic cooperation, joining regional and international military alliances, tending to resolve disputes through military rather than resolving them peacefully, ideological propaganda, and the institutionalisation of the Hobbesian culture in the social environment of a region, are considered as hallmarks of militaristic tendencies in foreign policy.

In Iran, the main characteristic of the Reza Shah was his deep militaristic approach to political administration. During the twenty years of his ministry, presidency, and monarchy, he insisted on strengthening the army and spreading militaristic approaches. The Shah believed that the modern absolute state could be achieved only with the establishment of a centralised and powerful state and that the realization of this goal depended only on the militarisation of the state and society. On the other hand, the achievement of national unity and cohesion depended on the establishment of a strong national army that could eliminate local leaders. On the eve of gaining power, Reza Shah took advantage of a demagogic policy and, after settling on the throne, brought militaristic action and approaches to the fore in all its dimensions. His militaristic actions and behaviour may have been accepted for a limited time to seize power and eliminate rival centres, but his attempts to increase and expand the militaristic theoretical and behavioural foundations were a total mistake that decreased the level of solidarity and compassion of the people towards him. The Shah was increasing his sphere of power every day and was depriving the people of any form of participation and the right to express themselves. In such a situation, the people had no will of their own and therefore did not feel any responsibility toward the government (Fars News Website, News ID: 8512070023).

When the Allies threatened and conquered the country in September 1941, not only did the army crumble quickly, but the people also remained in their homes without displaying any defensive reactions and appeared to be content with what was occurring. The Shah also resigned softly from his kingdom. All authoritarian and military governments have suffered from this and will continue in the future.

The second Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah, on August 19, 1943, relied on the military to overthrow Mossadegh's national government to protect himself,

although he could not trust them all. The Shah, whose father had sent him to study at a military institution in Europe, always wore a military uniform upon his return to Iran, and those who travelled with him or joined him upon his arrival there advanced through successive levels and attained the highest governmental and military posts.

In the post-revolutionary period, many soldiers and Revolutionary Guards, such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Ali Larijani, Mohsen Rezaei and others held important political positions in the country. Many IRGC and Basij forces were elected governors and governors, and many others entered the legislature. In the current legislature, individuals such as Elias Hazrati, Haji Deligani, Mirzaei Nikoo, Ahmad Salek, Salman Khodadadi, Mohammad Hossein Farhangi, Nader Ghazipour, Akbar Saeedi, Hassan Kamrani, Aziz Akbarian, Dariush Esmaili, Gholam Mohammad Zarei, Ramezan Ali Sobhanifar, Mohammad Dehghani, Mojtaba Zolanuri, Javad Karimi Qodusi, Sohrab Gilani, Gholamreza Sharafi, and Adl Hashemipour are among those who have previously served in the Revolutionary Guards. The above issue shows the presence of the military in the political sphere which was described above as the presence and involvement of the military in politics.

**Abdul Qader Savari, researcher, Khuzestan**

In terms of political structure, we are experiencing a dictatorial militaristic structure.

One of the military organisations at this time is the Basij factions. Because they meddle in several domestic affairs and the general public is compelled to obey, they also have military authority and the legal right to use weapons in different regions of the country in addition to engaging in some self-ascribed cultural activities.

**Mehri Pakzad, Lecturer and Faculty Member of Azad University, Mahabad, West Azarbaijan**

I have a PhD student who admits that he does not understand anything I teach, because he comes from a [military] organisation and I have to give him a grade.



Picture 200 Interview with Mehri Pakzad

Many government policies intentionally or not are pursued to gain more power. In this regard, Sardar Pasha Mohammadi, director of the Basij of the Nomadic Organization of Iran, in an interview in April 2018 announced the arming of the nomads of northwestern and eastern Iran, stating that ‘...they contribute to the overall security of the country.... In the east and northwest of the country, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has implemented lasting popular security based on the nomadic community and the indigenous people of the country. In other words, our security bases have been established with a focus on the heads of tribes, clans, ethnic groups, and indigenous peoples of the region, both Shiites and Sunnis, and today we can claim to have lasting public security on the eastern and northwestern borders of the country.’ He further explained that the nomadic community of the country is a population of about one million and two hundred thousand people of Azarbaijani, Lor, Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, Baloch, and Persian ethnic groups who live in 104 ethnic groups and 550 tribes and 525000 of these people are members of Basij Organization that are organized in the form of four battalions of Beit-ul-Moghaddas, Ashura, Al-Zahra, and Al-Kowthar (Basij Organization Website, News ID: 28447).

The outcome of this situation will be that the police and security forces will climb up the city wall. Wherever you turn your head, you see the police and security forces; in the streets, the universities, the offices, and everywhere are full of law enforcement and security officers. Closed Circuit TV cameras with their sharp eyes monitor all the movements of people and interfere in various political, sports, religious, cultural, social, and economic affairs and control ethnic and religious costumes and rituals.

**Saber Rostami, social activist, Oshnavieh, West Azarbaijan**

I remember going to school on Wednesday; There was intense surveillance, and two guards interrogated me like a criminal. I asked what do you want me; I will tell you. This was their attitude. There was nothing to check. I told them if I had anything, I would have chosen another way!

**Ali Sahebi, psychologist, Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi**

Its power is so concentrated that a large part of the country's economy is in the hands of forces that have no rivals, and according to the president [Rouhani], this section has both the weapon and the media.

Despite the emphasis by Iranian authorities on the need to adhere to democracy (albeit religious democracy) and the legitimacy of freedoms in society, many actions by some officials still indicate an interest in militarising or, in other words, garrisoning Iranian society. In many cases, this militarism has entered the political arena, and many people who have lived militarised and fought on the battlefield, enter the political arena as candidates and want to participate in institutions such as the executive branch.

Although Iranian authorities place a strong emphasis on the necessity of upholding democracy (albeit religious democracy) and the legitimacy of social liberties, many of their acts nonetheless reveal a desire to militarise or, to put it another way, garrison Iranian society. This militarism has frequently permeated politics, and many individuals who have served in the military and engaged in combat, are running for office and wish to serve in the state and administrative and legislative sections. These are the forces that comment on all other cases

and during various political and civil movements, they intervene to offer solutions that are far from the want of society. All this indicates the existence of a form of militarism in the internal structure of the country, and ethnic groups consider the existence of these secret and powerful military forces, such as the Basij, as a means to assert control and dominance over them.

### *3.7. Political and social crises*

Iran's foreign policy has always been criticised from various expert perspectives. These individuals contend that the current political system has failed to interact and negotiate with various groups on a global and regional level as it ought to and that the Iranian nation lacks allies it can rely on during crucial campaigns and events like the negotiations over sanctions and the hostility of some major international powers. According to this perspective, even when governments have worked to foster this relationship and friendship, they have failed because of radical ideologies from within the nation. As a result, it is claimed that there is no one voice leading the nation's foreign policy and that organisations known as the 'shadow government' have more power and influence than those of elected representatives.

**Zahra Khazaal, entrepreneur and tourism activist, Abadan, Khuzestan**

We were able to do very efficiently in our village. One day I went to the village adultery and told myself that we should do something; We were very efficient in producing handicrafts and packing dates, and we were not disappointed. Now we have been able to turn this village into a tourist area and travellers travel here and we take care of them. So, we can help change to happen if we want to.

In recent years, the women's movement has also become a major social issue in which women protest against gender inequality and believe that purposeful efforts are being made inside the country to exclude women from social fields and form the heart of society. Largely unsuccessful efforts, instead of unifying the country's ethnic and gender structure, have led to widespread dissatisfaction as well as the intensification of the demands of the people of these groups, especially in recent years. In such circumstances, there have been people from ethnic groups who have allegedly attempted to manipulate the current crisis and resort to extremist measures by addressing the inequalities that exist in various economic, social, political, and cultural spheres in the country. Other fields also exhibit the same destructive kind of individuality and the emergence of an

atmosphere that is atomistically competitive. One of the most significant of these areas is the ethnic and religious atmosphere, which is immersed in the belief of adherents of ethnic minorities including Turks, Kurds, Balochis, Arabs, and other ethnic groups that numerous attempts have been made in recent decades to obliterate their identity foundation. In all of the above cases, there are fundamental flaws that the country's political leaders may lead to social collapse if they do not work to address them. The existence of a set of these conditions and the juxtaposition of the above, the way of interacting with the world, the existence of shadow states, individual and social interests, the elimination of cultures, the spread of dissatisfaction and intensification of demands, extremism and possible collapse can lead to political and social crises. We will further explain these in the following sections. We will further explain these in the following sections.

### **7.3.1. Model of Interaction with the World**

The interactions between Iran and other nations in modern history should be seen from a regional, civilisational, and global perspective. Religion, economics, and the requirements of international politics have all been factors in the development and maintenance of these relationships. The tenets of Iran's foreign policy may be seen as being founded on the following principles, which seem to be theoretical underpinnings of the Iranian Constitution (Sari-ul-Ghalam, 2009: 28)

1. Emphasis on the implementation of political independence at the level of planning and policy-making;
2. The preference for nations and movements over states in international relations;
3. Independence of foreign political relations from foreign economic relations;
4. Opposition to Israel and defending the movement of the Palestinian people;
5. Giving priority to political justice in maintaining relations between states;
6. Maintaining a strategic distance from the interests of major political powers;
7. Contesting discriminatory veto law in the United Nations;
8. The nature of political power in Iran is ideological, and consequently, the Iranian foreign policy is ideological.

No country today can survive without mutual relations with other countries. The development of countries is not possible without others and it is very difficult to go through different crises without mutual assistance. Economic and political relations with other countries will create significant opportunities for the country and in addition to the economic sphere, it will improve the indicators in many other sectors.



After the Islamic Revolution, Iranian foreign policy was largely based on the ideological values of the Shiite rulers and gradually transformed in nature. The Islamic Republic's administration decided to adopt a hostile policy against Israel and the United States following the 1979 revolution, and Tehran's rhetoric became more strident in the early post-revolutionary years and during the Iraq-Iran war. Iran worked toward adopting a distinctive security strategy and attempted to identify itself independently of the strategies and ideologies of the Eastern and Western blocs.

Although Iran's relations with the United States and Israel have been considered the most challenging aspect of Iranian foreign relations, its relations with Islamic countries, the Middle East, and its neighbours have also had fluctuations. The temporary break with Saudi Arabia after the Hajj incident in 1987, disputes with the UAE over ownership of the three islands of Tonb-e Bozorg and Tonb-e-Kuchak and Abu Musa, tension with Bahrain following Bahrain's accusation that Iran supports its Shiites oppositions, the termination of relations with Egypt after Iran supported Khaled Islambuli, the strain of relations with Kuwait due to the Iraq-Iran war, and the strain of relations with Jordan, are among the examples of Iranian relations with Islamic and regional countries in these years.

In the meantime, and based on changes in the approach of different administrations, researchers have found specific discourses and strategies in each period. In the reformist government, according to its central political tenets that were influenced by the idea of 'political development', the idea of 'dialogue among civilisations' was at work. Reform-oriented activities in the foreign sphere moved towards idealism, nonviolence as well as opposing any form of war. At the same time, the de-escalating and interactive policies of the reform government were met with much opposition. Diplomatic relations and constructive interaction with the world during this period paid considered a high position for the West and preferred development with a Western approach. Mohammad Khatami, the head of the reformist government, had stated in this regard: 'Today, we can boldly say that in the life of a nation that is determined to excel and develop, there will be no constructive transformation, unless it passes through the text of Western civilisation, and the basic condition for transformation is understanding with the West and touching the spirit of that civilisation, that is, modernity. Those who are not familiar with this spirit will never be able to bring about positive transformation in their lives' (Resalat Newspaper, No. 6610).

This process became the prelude to the 2005 elections, where a right-wing government with justice-oriented claims arose that was led by the hardliner, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who wanted to return to the policies of the early days of the revolution when there was a fight with 'global arrogance'. Accordingly, with sympathetic and populist slogans targeting the lower classes, instead of looking for successful models of development, the government turned toward African countries, South America, and most importantly Palestine. The result of

this form of thinking was the attack on the British Embassy in 2011 in Tehran.<sup>25</sup> Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, criticising the de-escalation policy of Mohammad Khatami's reformist and dialogic government, believed that in the shadow of the 'de-escalation policy', Iran was called the axis of evil, and this policy after the victory of the Islamic Revolution imposed unprecedented humiliation on the Iranian people. As a result of this de-escalation policy, Iran's nuclear facilities were closed, and in addition to tightening economic and financial sanctions, several resolutions were issued to protest human rights abuses in Iran. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called the departure of the West from Iran a national celebration day.

Constructive interaction with the world is the framework and trajectory that the administration of Hasan Rouhani chose in the middle of 2013 after the election. The Rouhani administration, which took a moderate approach, saw constructive interaction with the world as a cause for progress and development. In a dialogue with the West and the United States, Hassan Rouhani, along with Mohammad Javad Zarif and his moderate group, following the concept of 'heroic softness' prescribed by the Supreme Leader, started new negotiations with the West that resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. As a result of this agreement, which is accompanied by the endorsement of its commitments, Iran will be released from sanctions by the United Nations Security Council, the European Union, and the United States against Iran (secondary sanctions). The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was the starting point of Iran's interaction with the world after a decade.

Hassan Rouhani, in his inauguration ceremony in the second round of elections, spoke about the need to interact with the world:

Today, the nations of the world, despite their geographical distances, cultural diversities, and political differences, are in a highly intertwined world, neighbouring each other, where sustainable and equitable national development cannot be achieved without a clear and reliable program of constructive and effective interaction with the other countries of the world; this is even emphasised in Document on Vision Plan. Overcoming the toughest sanctions, with a combination of diplomatic power and deterrent power to defence, has been the first step in this direction. The system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, although it honourably pays for the independence of the country, never accepts the imposition of isolation by the enemies and does not submit to the wishes of the ill-wishers for Iran's active participation in the world system and will not stay away from

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<sup>25</sup> The British Embassy in Tehran was attacked on Tuesday, November 29, 2011, by some Basij members. These people entered the embassy building, pulled down the British flag and threw some documents and other materials out of the embassy building. In a similar action and in the attack on the residence garden of the British Embassy in Gholhak area, six British employees were taken hostage, who were released after a few hours with the interference of the diplomatic police.

developments and human achievements. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has been and is a sign of the goodwill of the Islamic Republic of Iran for constructive and effective interaction at the international level (Quoted and translated from: <http://president.ir/en/99893>).

Finally, it can be said that the political, economic, and international circumstances in Iran demand that the way in which governments interact with the rest of the world should be prioritised. This is because the economic situation of the lower classes is deplorable and because economic and job-providing enterprises lack the minimum dynamics to create a minimum promising effort for the country's economy and society. Evidence such as the very high rate of the dollar as a global reference currency and the inefficiency of domestic production activities indicate the deviation of the domestic economy from the global economy, and this also strengthens threats such as the 'Venezuelanization' of the country. Having said that, the emergence of such global crises as the Corona epidemic reinforces this necessity, where the lower classes of society suffer the most. Additionally, during the elections for the 11th term of the Islamic Council, these classes, who serve as the major constituency for political and electoral participation to uphold the legitimacy of the political system, demonstrated that desperation has also dangerously permeated their socioeconomic base. It can be said that in practice and contrary to all the intellectual diversity of different administrations in foreign policy, the entire system during its forty years of life has not been able to find cooperative partners and friends at the global and regional levels. This is to such an extent that the fundamentalist cleric, Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi, in the summer of 2018, right when they were in the power of a government that claims to interact with the world, said: 'We don't have as many friends in the world as the number of fingers on one hand' (ISNA news agency, news ID: 97061407168). The findings obtained in this research also indicate a deficiency in this field and some sort of dissatisfaction among the people for the lack of proper interaction with the outside world.

**Seyyed Abdulsalam Mahmoudian, cleric and religious activist, Sardasht, West Azerbaijan**

Wanted or unwanted, we are involved with many countries in the world, and there is no such understanding and compromise that should be between humanity. We are being threatened from many sides, and a country that is isolated, is harmed in every way.



Picture 21 Interview with Master Seyyed Abdulsalam Mahmoudian

The findings of this research support this emphasis, which is maintained by the majority of sources that cite foreign investment recruitment as the most crucial approach for economic development, particularly in terms of alleviating unemployment and the recession. But there must be wide and thorough relations with the outside world, as well as with foreign nations and businesses, to attract international investment.

In this regard, other research participants have stated that from an economic point of view, the export of better-produced goods and the import of quality goods are in the interest of all countries of the world. Also, as economic relations expand, political ties become stronger. The isolation of a country in international politics and economics limits its relations.

Moreover, the country has to interact with the world to import advanced technologies to develop economically and compensate for its backwardness. This is while technologies are not available in developing countries today. Even some industrialised European countries do not produce advanced technologies. For instance, while some nations may advance in the arms industry, they have used modern technology minimally in other manufacturing and economic sectors. As a result, they are not grouped among the world's largest main economic powers and must engage in international trade. It is a fact that Iran is not a producer of technology and does not have the required resources. Therefore, to develop economically and compensate for its backwardness, it has to interact with the world to import advanced technologies.

**Mohammad Taghi Sheikhi, Lecturer in Demography, Al-Zahra University, Tehran**

We need to be softer with the outside world and seek help. A place like China had closed its doors until recently, but they came to their senses and opened their doors and have relations with one hundred and twenty countries of the world, and their economic values are increasing every day .

An approach toward creating an international consensus against Iran and isolating it is the Iranophobia project and validating the Iranian threat. Before the nuclear deal, Iran's confrontational and adventurous policies, together with the lack of interaction and negotiation with the outside world, as well as the construction of a wall of distrust around the country, supported the development of the Iranophobia project. Psychologically, part of human fear of something is brought on by ignorance and lack of awareness of the totality of it as a whole. This situation of ignorance has been created for Iran internationally. Naturally, when a country closes the doors of interaction and blocks the way of recognising other countries, the slightest negative propaganda by others and their media will find a high depth of influence and credibility. Therefore, any interaction with the world and exchange of views on resolving regional and global challenges will make the world believe and accept Iran as a responsible partner in international and regional relations and the project of regional stability and security. Unfortunately, Iran has failed to do well in this regard.

**Karimbakhsh Kurdi Tamandani, socio-political activist, Iranshahr, Sistan and Balochestan**

Every country and government must prioritise its national interests over anything, and we think that our national interest is not taken into account, and we are more in the world looking for special religious interests and certain ideas, and if we considered that national interest, we would resolve all these tensions with the world. We see countries that one day fought each other, the United States bombed Japan and did the most damage, but now they are friends. We have been sending death messages to the whole world for forty years. We write the slogan of death to a country on our missiles and this turns all eyes on us, isolates us in the world, and portrays us as a belligerent country.

**Habibaullah Mostovfi, retiree, Kermanshah**

In foreign policy, interaction and dialogue leads to the best solutions.

After the nuclear deal, the undeniable and important role of Iran in regional stability and resolving existing crises and challenges has been highlighted and demanded by many foreign delegations that have visited Tehran. It is important for many countries to welcome the influential and stabilizing role of Iran in the region, as the United States and its regional allies seek to impose sanctions on Iran under the pretext of destabilizing actions in the region. This shows that the extensive interaction with the world and the region together with the seriousness and goodwill of Iran through negotiation to resolve regional crises and challenges, especially the globalized challenge of terrorism, will frustrate and thwart the efforts of its enemies; this will also help to further advance the regional policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the country's political officials, currently, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are among the most powerful neighbours of Iran and are considered to be the biggest enemies of the country over the last few years, the leaders of these two countries have frequently been criticised by the politicians of the country. The origins of this antagonism and hatred can be traced back to events in the countries of the region such as Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain, where each of these countries sees the other as a source of insecurity and considers itself a true supporter of the people of those countries.

**Amir Sajjadi, Teacher of History, Saqqez, Kurdistan**

Iran has not only not recruited friends in the region, but its security margin has been lost. There is a regional consensus that Iran is a threat to the Middle East.

No country in the world can maintain a high level of prestige and position in the international arena while being non-interactive and avoiding broad and deep

relationships with the global community. Increasing a country's international prestige and promoting its strategic standing supports the achievement and protection of its national interests. This important task is carried out by inviting that country to attend important international forums, the willingness of different countries to attend meetings hosted by that country, the readiness to establish and develop relations with that country, attracting foreign capital, and the willingness of the peoples of the world and elites to learn about the economic, social, and cultural potentials of the country. Thus, most of the economic, social and cultural potential of that country becomes known to the world and helps to promote national interests. Therefore, another requirement for extensive interaction with the world is the reconstruction and promotion of its international status of the country. In this context, the Iranian authorities have failed to establish the image and reputation that the Iranian people deserve.

**Hadi Naghdi, Consultant and Psychologist, Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

Unfortunately, because our grand policy was not focused on resolving all of these issues through serious consideration of the national interests, and there was the idea that we should be with one specific group and avoid the others, we have been under pressure from a group that we do not embrace. Like the United States, which imposes sanctions on us, votes against Iran in many institutions, and exerts pressure on both the Iranian government and the Iranian people in various ways. On the other hand, other nations, such as Russia and China, benefit from our terrible relations to the United States and while we have to seek their protection, they mistreat us.

Finally, it should be stated that the emphasis on interaction with the world and logically dealing with the problems ahead can be deduced from the statements by the participants of this research; these conditions and requirements are mentioned that are categorised by Noor Alivand (2017: 17-18) as follows:

**1. Internal cohesion and a unified voice in foreign policy:** In most countries, the head of government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in charge of formulating and implementing foreign policy. However, depending on the political structure of the countries, some other institutions, including the

legislatures, as well as the intelligence and security organizations, also have positions in the tactical field of foreign policy, but their actions and positions are again within the framework of general strategy and policy that the government has determined. Therefore, when there is transparency about foreign policy, a transparent and unified voice is transferred to the outside world, and consequently, other countries interact better with them. Although the supreme leader and the President formulate major foreign policy strategies, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of their implementation and execution, there are several parallel institutions and organisations in Iran that do not necessarily have a role and responsibility in the field of foreign policy, with many inconsistent positions on the country's foreign policy issues, which not only impede the implementation of strategies and policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also confront foreign countries with an incoherent and contradictory situation in establishing relations with Iran and hinder any form of constructive interaction.

**2. Employing competent and informed diplomats:** Foreign policy, and particularly the policy of interaction, will be problematic unless there are skilled, knowledgeable, energetic, and competent diplomats who effectively implement these policies. This is true regardless of how accurately the strategies and policies formulated by the responsible and superior authorities are based on the needs and current conditions of the country. Employing diplomats for missions in specific countries and regions based on their level of capability and knowledge of the political system, economic potentials and culture of those countries, the employment of economic diplomats alongside political diplomats, training of diplomatic staff in specific areas of foreign policy, their mastery over international diplomatic languages and the language of the mission area, as well as their mastery of the international political literature, and also considering the use of female diplomats, particularly when they are part of foreign guests, are among the requirements that need to be considered.

**3. Holding international meetings and observing its diplomatic standards:** The inauguration ceremony of the twelfth term president and the presence of one hundred and five countries as well as nine international organisations, indicated that the Islamic Republic of Iran is capable of hosting important international gatherings at the level of high-ranking international authorities. The occasion was a strong start for the diplomacy of Hasan Rouhani, the head of the Twelfth Government, and on the sidelines, multiple bilateral conversations took place between the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, with high-ranking foreign officials who were there. Unfortunately, the focus of the local media on the periphery of the ceremony, including publicising the selfie shot of the members of parliament with Ms Mogherini, and its widespread media coverage have overshadowed diplomatic signals and the international significance of the event. Other requirements for the success of the strategy of broad engagement with the world include staging multiple such events, taking into account diplomatic traditions and customs, and paying attention to professional media diplomacy to deliver signals appropriately to the world.



**4. Consolidation of economic diplomacy:** Today, economic diplomacy and economic connections between countries are important because high economic links between two countries enhance political interactions between them, and countries with high levels of economic exchanges have less turbulent political relations. This is a fundamental requirement for the Islamic Republic of Iran, which seeks extensive connection with the rest of the world.

### **3.7.2. Existence of shadow states**

The previous section demonstrated that the Islamic Republic of Iran's administration has had limited success in engaging with the outside world. One explanation for this is internal discord, which reveals that we have never been able to speak with a unified voice in foreign policy, and therefore other nations are likewise confused about which institution is the final decision-maker. Although the phrase 'shadow state' is commonly used in a negative political sense and conspiracy theory to represent an influential and retrograde organisation that has built a hidden state, it is now acknowledged as a positive phenomenon in the political system of various democracies and as a platform for dissent. A shadow government is a government entity that waits to assume control of the government in the event of a crisis. In recent decades, in various nations' parliamentary systems across the world, the party that emerges in second place following national elections is generally depicted as the main opposition party and refers to itself as the shadow government.

For the first time in history, a shadow government was established in the British Parliament in 1951 under the leadership of Hugh Gatescule, the then-leader of the opposition, to counter the policies of Winston Churchill, the then-prime minister. In Britain today, the shadow cabinet is considered a component of the parliamentary system and consists of a group of high-ranking members of the opposition party. This is a process led by the leader of the main opposition party, where an alternative cabinet is formed for the ruling government. In this cabinet, members and ministers equivalent to the ministers of the main government are elected as shadow ministers. Shadow cabinet members are often, though not always, appointed to the same position in the main cabinet when their party takes power. However, in the shadow cabinet, the main responsibility of the members is to criticise the policies and actions of the government and their equivalent minister, as well as to propose alternative programs (ISNA News Agency, news ID: 96031005923). It has been highlighted that, except for Britain, the government currently serves as the principal opposition to the governing party, which has contributed to its positive perception.

After the 2017 presidential election, which was followed by the revival of the moderation movement, the phrase 'government in the shadow' was used in Iran for the first time in the form of remarks made by fundamentalist politician and unsuccessful 2013 candidate Saeed Jalili. Today, his office serves as a location for shadow government meetings, and every so often, mostly by those who are likely to become shadow government ministers, the performance of a working minister is criticised.

According to Saeed Jalili, ‘the shadow government means that every individual and group, while closely monitoring the issues of the country if it sees that a good and right thing is being done and even when the rival party is doing the right thing, it must encourage that right action. At the national and local levels, if someone is doing a good job, it is our task to help them; as it is our duty if someone does something wrong, to point out that mistake and to correct the wrongdoing in a legal, moral, and pious manner’ (Rah-e Dana Information Network, News ID: 1389632).

Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Tehran City Council and a senior member of the Kargozaran -e- Sazandegi Party, describes the government’s performance in the shadow in a more precise and devoid of political apology: ‘Sometimes the government decides to improve its relations with a country to solve some problems, but this shadow group decides to do something so that there will be a fight between the government and the destination government and the relations between Iran and that country to become volatile. This is the same shadow government that decides to do something to disrupt relations between Iran and other countries (Iran Newspaper, September 12, 2018; No. 6874).

The results of this study show that there is a kind of cacophony in the country when it comes to deciding how to deal with the outside world; it has been noticed in some instances that when a foreign official enters the country, other people from other institutions go to welcome the foreign guest instead of the minister of foreign affairs, which in some cases has resulted in protests by the minister of foreign affairs and even his resignation. In other instances, powerful individuals are making various attempts to disrupt the acts of the state during discussions on foreign policy with Western nations.

**Mojtaba Ghahesooni, journalist and cultural heritage activist, Khuzestan**

In general, we have failed in foreign relations and we have not been able to interact with the world. In a country where the state is in the hands of one party and the government is in the hands of another party, shadow states are created. Now we not only do not have one state, but we have several shadow states that make decisions and we can feel this contradiction.

During the execution of the privatization order and the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, many state companies were transferred to government-affiliated institutions such as the IRGC when besides public and private, the third form of

property emerged that became famous as ‘publivate’. These institutions have money, power, and media, and have considerable power in Iranian domestic and foreign policies, which have been repeatedly challenged by the reformist parties and the political elite. This group believes that according to the constitution and organizational charters, it is the guardian of the Islamic Republic in all areas. Examples of recent actions by the shadow government against the legitimate government include the attack on the Saudi embassy and consulate in Tehran and Mashhad in January 2016, just as Hassan Rouhani’s administration was attempting to mend tense relations between Tehran and Riyadh, and carrying out a missile test with a slogan on the destruction of Israel immediately following the nuclear agreement.

**Nasser Amoli Moghadam, journalist and reformist activist,  
Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi**

Last year, a French team came to Iran to negotiate with the Ministry of Industry, and at the same time several missiles were tested and everything was blown away.

Aside from the macro and national structures, the existence of a shadow government with the abovementioned structure may also be observed at the micro and intermediate levels. People from many linguistic and religious groups reside in provinces like West Azarbaijan, Khuzestan, Sistan, and Balochestan in Iran because of their varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. One of these organisations, which is primarily religiously affiliated with the government, often has administrative authority in these provinces. According to minority residents of the province, many of the privileges and budgetary allocations made by the government to these provinces to be fairly distributed among the different cities are, in reality, embraced by some cities that are closer to the central government in terms of language and religion. They are also treated with disapproval when holding local and cultural ceremonies while there is no legal prohibition on performing them. However, regardless of the elected structures of power like the presidency and the executive body of the state, as well as the members of parliament in each city, there are always groups and individuals who have the capacity and influence to modify policies, appointments, budget allocations, etc. As a result, the great majority of people now view elections as no longer having any real significance.

**Abdul Salam Bozorgzadeh, Radio and Television Programmer,  
Zahedan, Sistan and Balochestan**

We have two governments in our province: the government of the Islamic Republic, and the government of the Sistani Republic. I will not say that I have committed to this Sistani Republic, I am just showing them. In a stratum that has a maximum of 2% in the province, a republic of this large number of totalitarians who, because of this religion, with special conditions after the revolution, political power, economic, administrative and everything in this province in their hands. We Balochis hate them. Why do I say Sistani Republic, because all of them have gathered together to strike at the other 98%, to create discord, to dismiss the unfortunate Balochi as a counter-revolution, and to discourage their capitalists in the offices in their own hands and not to acknowledge them.

Government representatives in these provinces, who practise the nation's official religion, deny security to racial and religious minorities and further their underdevelopment. Despite the laws and the current emphasis on equality and justice, this group continues to legally disallow the development and realisation of the rights of the dissimilar group, particularly in terms of religion.

### **3.7.3. Individual and collective interests**

Individualism is at the core of the free market system and one of the most significant foundations of liberalism in the capitalist world. There are several interpretations of individualism, including English, American, German, and French individualism, progressive individualism, monopolistic individualism, property and atomistic individualism, and methodological and epistemological individualism. The concept of the individual is the common meaning throughout these readings. Contemporary scientist Lukes (1973) has identified at least eleven possible meanings for the term, ranging from respect for human value, independence, and freedom of action to the sanctity of personal affairs.

On the other side, the term 'collectivism' describes a kind of behavioural interaction amongst many people, groups, or ethnicities that are based on group

interaction and behaviour. Individualism is the opposite of collectivism. While individualism is oriented toward the individual and his or her particular objectives, collectivism is more concerned with society and the collective. The same group orientations that support collectivism attempt to derive identity from the collective and to act following preset collective standards, and group self-images impact how each member perceives themselves individually.

The school of liberalism emphasizes the primacy of the individual and personal interests, and in the course of its evolution and formation, various guilds have used different meanings of individualism as their central concept. The originality of the individual is one of the most important foundations of liberal thought. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu, 'Liberal individualism emphasizes the absolute value of individual existence' (Bourdieu, 1999: 93). For the first time, according to Locke's idea, a person is seen to have a private sphere, or their area of personality, into which no outside force—religious, political, or otherwise—can intrude. This worldview is described as a sort of opposition to both the practical intrusions of governmental authority into the private life of its citizens as well as the supremacy of the church.

Therefore, one can argue that liberal individualism originated as a result of secularism and the process of the personalization of religion. In this view, religious matters exit the scope of shared interest to be read as personal interests, and salvation is seen as a personal matter rather than a societal one.

Marxist and socialist theories, on the other hand, disregard individualism and assume that society as a whole is authentic. According to Marx, all forms of property in the public and communal realm are legitimate and belong to the entire society, and the denial of private property is seen as fundamental for providing justice. The social instrument offers a framework for continual self- and community criticism since it allows one to express and articulate all facets of one's existence, both public and private.

The Iranian political system demonstrated the superiority of collectivism over individuality both in the months leading up to the Revolution's triumph in 1979 and afterwards during the imposed war. With the conclusion of the war and the ascent of Hashemi Rafsanjani's neoliberal administration, which was founded on the maximising of 'individual gain' and the idea of 'individual originality,' Hashemi Rafsanjani concentrated more on rebuilding the country's economy after the eight-year war (Taro, 1994: 29). In the context of this view, the 'whole' or 'society' has no originality and should not be considered as anything but the sum of the individual persons. In this context, society (nation) is, first of all, the manifestation of the meaningful will of each individual who wants to live in such a structure (Farvand, 1983: 123). In the context of such an approach, it makes sense that the collective interest or anything that relates to the collective identity is nothing more than an assumption or supposition, whereas personal interest and individualistic motives are the only things that are intrinsically real and should be taken into consideration.

**Yaghoub Mousavi, sociologist and faculty member of Al-Zahra University, Tehran**

We are entrapped in a form of false and immature individualism. Individualism in Iran is a great scourge. Individualism means giving originality to individual interests that must be suppressed.

**Massoud Binandeh, lecturer at Sanandaj University**

A form of negative individualism has expanded in which everyone strives for oneself and takes into account individual interests, and this negatively affects the degree of participation in social affairs, the degree of daily participation in public affairs, in NGOs, and the amount of participation in public interest.

With the change of government and the election of a new president named Seyed Mohammad Khatami, in the context of the 'Economic Reorganization Plan', it was explicitly stated that the new approach to economic issues is no longer purely economic, but a socioeconomic approach. The Economic Reorganization Plan makes it very clear that whenever there is a conflict between approaches to increasing production and achieving economic growth and the equitable distribution of income and wealth, the government will abandon 'development' in the interests of social justice and its economic aspect.

According to theorists such as Yousef Abazari, Hossein Raghfar, and Farshad Momeni, the main characteristic of Ahmadinejad and Rouhani's administrations is a return to the same neoliberal principles of the Hashemi era, in which individuality and individual interests were prioritised over any form of collectivism. During this time, many began to believe that even the nation's political and economic leaders took personal interests into account when making decisions and neglected the needs of the nation and the general public. At the same time, cases of economic corruption were reported in the community, which supported such a belief.

**Raouf Azari, civil activist, Sardasht, West Azarbaijan**

If we look at the macro-structures of the country, when the CEO of the most important bank in the country simply embezzles a huge sum of money and prefers his personal interest to the public interest, when our politicians, when our MPs deviate from the public interest for the sake of some personal interests, when a city representative does not pay attention to many of the basic principles that could be in the interest of its people only for his personal benefit, it becomes certain that individual interests far outweigh our national, ethnic and religious interests.

The situation in which Iranian society is today is individualistic and is based on the rejection of the community-based model. The prevalence of individualistic views and the pursuit of maximum interests in the individual sphere has imposed heavy costs on Iranian society. Even this situation has manifested itself in the system of the political and economic power of Iran and has created widespread administrative and political corruption. Because of this, the situation described by Hobbes when he presents the state of nature as one in which man is a wolf to man becomes true in contemporary Iran where the supremacy of individual interests over collective interests is institutionalized in the family, economy, and power. For this reason, perhaps a form of irresponsibility and indifference on the part of the individual and society is observed from all its political and social dimensions. Exploiting, lazy, profiteering and indifferent citizens are the results of the expansion of such a system, in which formal controls increase in both volume and depth. Corruption, embezzlement, rent-seeking, and the like are prominent examples of the primacy of individual interests over collective interests, as well as the existence and prevalence of individual interests over collective interests among the public (Bazon,1992). In public health, many of the problems that exist in Iranian society are due to the selfishness of individuals to make more profit, and as a result, they have jeopardized the collective interest and are willing to sell the collective interest to the individual interest.

In such societies when there is a conflict between the best option for individual interests and the best option for collective interest, citizens often prioritise the satisfaction of the individual, and they are identified with such characteristics as selfish individualism, insecure, fragmented, inefficient, etc and if asked 'why in

a situation of conflict between individual interests and collective interests, citizens prefer the priority of individual over collective interests, the occurrence and prevalence of various disorders at different levels of the society can be identified as possible influential factors.

**Cyrus Shafaghi, geographer and lecturer in urban planning,  
University of Isfahan**

In our country, personal interests are overshadowing everything, and the material abuses that are taking place in our country, and the media have repeatedly reported, show that personal interests are far superior to national ones.

**Mohsen Goodarzi, Social Researcher, Tehran**

At the social field, we observe the emergence and growth of the utilitarian individual who measures every social issue by the meter of his desires and interests.





Picture 22 Interview with Mohsen Goodarzi

The current state of affairs in Iran and its unique characteristics point to the development of vicious cycles in the interactions between individuals and society as well as between power and society. Government institutions' disregard for the rights of their citizens has resulted in individual violations of the rights of society. It has become more common for people to reject society's rights to safeguard their own. This transition has resulted in a vicious circle of negative individuality. The deterioration of morality and the growth of social aberrations are the external manifestations of this predicament. Similarly, the absence of a competent, participatory, and questioning citizenship institution has led to a concentration of power in government. The concentration of power based on income, independent of the economic activity of individuals in society and based on ideology has led to the greater dependence of social and economic institutions and individuals on the state. The government does not make any attempt to link individualism with collectivism, and the results of the current study reveal that the government itself is taking steps towards the same form of individualism.

**Jabbar Rahmani, Member of Academic Staff, Research Institute for Social and Cultural Studies, Tehran**

We do not have a system in Iran that can link national and individual interests.

Our national interests are in conflict with our personal interests, and this is dangerous. And that may be one of the secrets of our backwardness that we have always thought of as individuals, not as a collective. We have not been taught, and in our culture and in our games and in our language, there has always been individual rather than collective thinking, and this is a dangerous phenomenon.

In the conducted research, the key statement that was heard from most of the respondents indicate that individual interests have taken precedence over collective interests in Iran. When creating macro-governmental policies, people are obliged to obey the common interests; yet, the stage of execution is determined by the interests of a handful of individuals. This has led to a kind of social apathy among the people, which has itself fuelled the prevalence of different forms of corruption as well as the weakening of social capital. People are social beings who need the attention, cooperation, collaboration, and participation of their fellow humans to meet their biological, psychological, and social needs. Social protection can take many different forms, from a simple expression of solidarity to manual aid, donations and financial support, and even to self-sacrifice. Social indifference is now regarded as inappropriate due to the social character of humans and the requirement for cooperation and collaboration in the form of the creation of a division of social work to address fundamental human needs. When a society is individualistic, people's behaviour is dictated by 'I' rather than 'us.' In contrast, emotion and a dedication to shared objectives form the cornerstone of any social order. However, phenomena like selfishness and social indifference show dullness and pessimism. The main reasons for social apathy and marginalisation are pessimism about macro-national policy and various forms of ethnic discrimination.

There is a wide spectrum of attention and assistance that can be provided. Social indifference is now viewed as unacceptable due to the social character of humans and the requirement for cooperation and collaboration in the form of the creation of a division of social work to address fundamental human needs. In individualistic societies, the 'I' rather than 'we' guides the behaviour of individuals. This is because the basis of any social order is emotion and commitment to collective goals. But phenomena such as individualism and

social indifference reveal a certain degree of boredom and pessimism. Pessimism about macro-national policies and different ethnic discrimination are the main causes of social indifference and individualism in Iran. Therefore, individual and collective interests cannot find alignment points.

Figure 3.19. and 3.20 show the attitude towards the alignment of individual and collective interests. Accordingly, 88.2% of the elite and 71.1% of the common people believe that there is no harmony between individual and collective interests.

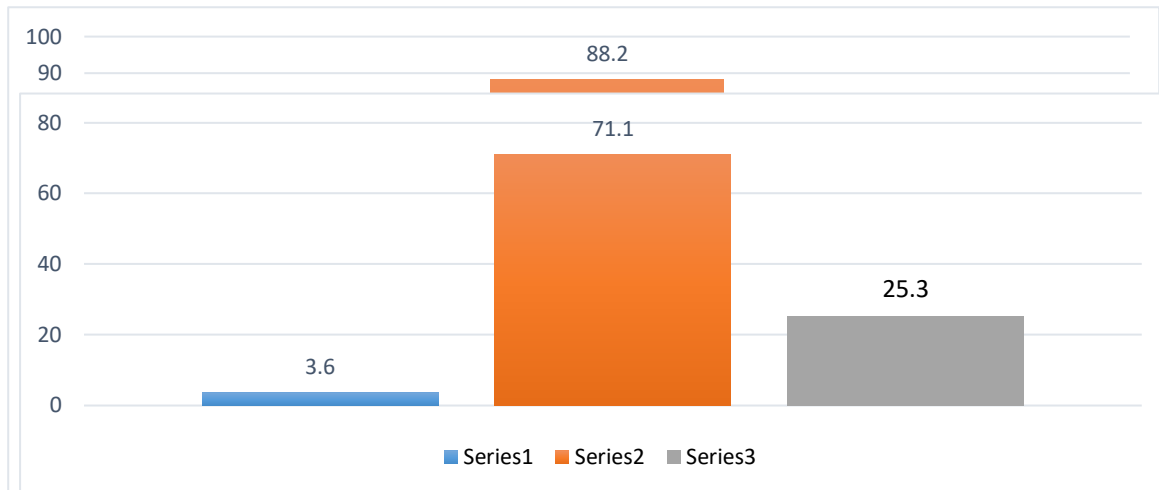


Figure 27 Alignment of public and private interests, according to the elites

The preference for collective interests over individual interests is certainly one of the basic tools for development and progress, and in designing the Islamic-Iranian model, one of the main concerns is how we can create an appropriate culture for this and with what mechanisms, which is based on the findings indicating its absence and the preference of individual interests over collective interests, a task that could lead to a lot of problems and difficulties in the future.

#### 3.7.4. Gender complications

Gender, in contrast to sex, has many different meanings and associations. While sex refers to physiological differences between men and women, neither of which is optional, gender refers to societal perceptions and psychological, social, and cultural distinctions between men and women. These distinctions have a significant impact on the tasks and roles they produce for both sexes. Gender is one of the initial factors that shape a person's identity. Gender, represented as femininity or masculinity, plays a vital role in shaping an individual's identity through relationships between the self and society from the earliest stages of development. Simone de Beauvoir in her famous book *The Second Sex*, in response to the question of what a woman is states that women are nothing but the product of social and economic forces (de Beauvoir, 2018). In Iranian

society, the family is one of the most important social forces in this field. Families train girls from the beginning to achieve their role as women and prepare boys to take on male roles as heads of households. In such a way, job segregation is instilled in children from the very beginning of life by the family, and they are educated in terms of being a woman or a man for future social role-playing. The education system and the school are other important institutions in shaping gender patterns. In the textbooks, some popular hero figures such as 'Devoted Peasant' and 'Petros' are masculine, while 'Kokab Khanum' is introduced as a devoted and kind mother and a girl named 'Kobra' who is forgetful and does not know where she left her books, a clearly defined symbol of a feminine figure.

**Maulana Abdul Hamid Ismail Zehi, Sunni Imam of Zahedan,  
Sistan and Balochestan**

Women are not equal in all of Iran and they complain. This is naturally the case here as well.

**A young girl, Semnan**

In state TV shows, you never see a woman reading a book, exercising, or doing art.

Apart from these, statements such as 'the girl belong to others', 'the boy is the breadwinner of the house', 'the family name continues only with the boy', and others are considered incentives to create gender biases and complications. It is obvious that in such circumstances, the identity of each person will be defined according to the reflection of these ideas in the real self.

Sexual identity, which forms a significant part of every human identity, contains the image that each person has of themselves men or women; the person learns that man or woman must be created to think, behave, and feel in a specific way commensurate with his or her sexual nature (Jürberg, 1974: 1). The results of the current study also show that because of this negative social attitude of women, they experience daily challenges and abuses. The work environment that exists for a female workforce in society is in no way comparable to the male workforce. In addition to this disparity, women face more severe salary and benefit disparities in the workplace. This inequality persists after a woman

marries. In marriage, the woman loses all of her rights, unless she demands them from her spouse at the time of marriage, which also happens infrequently. These rights include the right to divorce, the right to child custody, the right to pursue further education, and the right to travel abroad.

**Jila Hesami, Literary Activist, Naqadeh, West Azarbaijan**

There are some jobs I can do, but society doesn't like it. When we consider women, the distribution of employment and wealth and dignity all through the country is not fair all. When a woman marries, when she doesn't have the right to divorce. what is equality?! When a woman works in a store, her salary is half that of the man who works there. A man's salary in the same job has always been higher than women's.

**A young Kurmanji Kurd boy, sociology student at Ferdowsi University**

Women don't have the same opportunity as they should have. Aside from education, they are not considered as equal anywhere. Women in our society don't want 70 percent of themselves, our university professor said about the hitting of the Ershad patrol in the classroom, saying that in my opinion, women should not read more than a bachelor's degree and should not work full-time. Now our class is 45 with only three boys. Of the girls, 37, eight said we accept the master's

At the level of Iranian society and when discussing gender gaps or gender complications, the following four factors are fundamental: The first is education, which includes primary, secondary, university, and internship levels; Second, economic participation, which includes the opportunities and capacities of men and women in society, the amount of labour force participation, the type of job, and income; Third, political power, which includes the number, position, and qualification of men and women in political positions; Fourth, health, which includes diseases, access to treatment, longevity, and quality of health for men and women.

At the level of education, Iranian society has the lowest gender gap between men and women, and the difference between the literacy rate and the level of

education of men and women in Iran is very small. Based on the 2011 general population and housing census, the literacy rates of men and women were 88% and 81%, respectively, which are even smaller in urban areas. However, part of the high percentage of men in this field goes back to the age group of forty years and above, when there used to be a significant educational gap between men and women in terms of gender. Women have made major contributions to the higher education industry, and their representation as a percentage of all students at universities and other higher education institutions has climbed from 38.5% in 1997 to 52.4% in 2007. And today, more than 60% of college graduates are women. However, factors like gender quotas, banning or restricting women from participating in certain academic areas, and other pertinent issues are the main causes of inequality in this field.

The gender gap in the economy is getting wider, and women make up a very small percentage of the workforce. One of the important reasons for this situation is the country's economic laws that consider employment and income generation a male right and free domestic services a female duty. The traditional husband is also free to ban women from working. One of the most important differences between men and women in the labour market is the wage difference between them. The gender-based payment gap and discrimination have been a concern for economists and policymakers in recent years and have been cited as a factor in market inefficiency. This means that the existence of discrimination prevents the limited resources of human capital from being allocated optimally. According to the 2011 population and housing census, males and women made up 65.5% and 12.3%, respectively, of the population in the country aged ten years or older. Given the scale of the divergence and the government's current efforts, it appears doubtful that the amount of disagreement will decrease shortly based on the data provided.

Men and women are increasingly separated in politics. The degree of female representation and presence in the legislature, as well as in positions of authority such as governor, mayor, and minister, is a sign of the gender gap that exists in politics. Although women actively participate in society as a whole, the rules and the dominant ideology have served as barriers to women's advancement in this area.

Finally, in the field of health, it can be said that the gender gap between men and women is narrowing again. However, in areas such as sexual and reproductive rights, women's rights are not very suitable and they are deprived of the right to choose the time of reproduction, the number and type of delivery, as well as abortion. Also, sports opportunities for women are very different from men, and it seems that cultural and traditional forms are also very important in this regard.

A summary of what was stated in this regard can be found in the quote from one of the interviewees below.

**Mohammad Ramezani, English teacher, translator and storyteller, Bukan West Azerbaijan**

Women suffer from painful sexist phenomenon or gender inequality. Low salaries for women with better work and more than men, they are more oppressed in society. When the woman is her father's house, she is oppressed by the parents, then in the husband's house, and then by her male children. In fact, women are oppressed both in their families and on the larger scale of the society.

The country's laws have addressed the question of women's rights on several occasions. Article 21 of the Constitution is dedicated to women's rights in five paragraphs. Paragraph one has created a favourable environment for the development of female personality and has considered women equal to men in all matters. It also states in Article 27 that everyone has the right to choose the job he or she wants. Principles governing the 20-year development vision document of the country, especially the Sixth Development Plan, which is related to the four years 2018 - 2022 is also emphasising gender equality and justice. According to the provisions of the Sixth Development Plan, to achieve the goals outlined in the tenth, twentieth, and twenty-first principles of the Constitution, the goals of the Vision Document and the general policies of the Sixth Plan are to strengthen the family institution and the status of women in it. For society to benefit from women's human capital in the process of sustainable and balanced development, all executive bodies are made responsible for organizing and strengthening the organizational position of women and family affairs, applying a gender-based justice approach in their policies, programs and plans, and evaluating the effects of decisions. In that context, they should act according to the communication criteria of the National Organization for Women and the Family. By comparing these gender gaps and complications with the laws of the country, as in all other cases, we find a gap between what is in the law and what is practised at the social level. The existence of this gap between law and practice and the establishment of the idea of gender discrimination has social consequences. The first effect can be that women are excluded from taking part in different political, societal, and economic positions. In other words, the persistence and consolidation of gender biases have led to great harm such as 'gender discrimination' which is itself a mediating variable in the occurrence of other tribulations. Violence against women is another effect of the intensification of gender bias in society. It is unrealistic to expect a man who has grown up with a coercive attitude and believes he is superior to the other sex to treat women differently when the dominant rules in society make a woman weak and a male powerful. The verbal, physical, and sexual violence against women in modern society, as well as the divorces that arise from it, are

prime examples of the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes that have evolved. This form of violence and patriarchal relations are more intense in traditional societies.

**Abdul Rashid Tariz, History researcher And sociopolitical activist, Sistan and Balochistan**

In general, we Iranians grow up in a patriarchal society with a patriarchal subjectivity, and the patriarchy which emerges, is multiplied in a place like Sistan and Balochistan.

In contrast to the natural flow of life in the twenty-first century, gender views and biases are being observed in various parts of the world, and facilities, services, and rights are decided according to the patriarchal view, where the dominant gender—which is determined by men—is considered to be more rightful. This has grown extremely terrible in the Orient, where women are treated differently in all spheres of life. The laws of the various countries play a major role in determining this condition among other considerations. The right to divorce (Article 1133 of the Civil Code), the right to child custody (Article 1169 of the Civil Code), the right to employment (Article 1117 of the Civil Code), the right to education (Article 1105), the right to leave the country (Article 18 of the Passport Law), and the right to leave the country (Article 18 of the Passport Law) are all male rights in the relationship between spouses in Iran. These laws allow men to deny their spouses these rights. The findings from the interviews with various ethnic groups support the significance of this topic from the point of view of the interviewees.

**Javad Tariri, Lawyer, Writer, and Political Activist, Khuzestan**

I saw many murders that were due to the woman not wanting her husband, because she was not allowed to divorce. Cases such as child custody, the right to divorce, the right to travel show that in our law, opportunities are not equally considered for women.

In some instances, inequality in the relationship between men and women is not caused by the law but rather by social customs, such as religious, traditional, and



cultural beliefs. Women's rights are severely limited in communities with radical religious values, including restrictions on what they can wear, participate in, and learn. In traditional families, girls and women are frequently denied the opportunity to receive an education and are married at a young age, even though they are not permitted to work outside the home or in the community. There is a pay and benefit discrepancy when women are given job opportunities, which is related to employment opportunities. The interviewees also expressed dissatisfaction with the development of inequality at the macro and management levels, in addition to the micro level, in this regard.

The perception of gender inequality is one of the problems that women encounter in society and that has an impact on their social conditions. Members of society might differ greatly from one another in a wide range of ways, starting with innate traits and ending with socioeconomic features. One of the socio-cultural aspects of gender that contributes to the unequal distribution of opportunities, positions, rewards, and situations between men and women in society is gender. In general, the perception of gender inequality refers to the unequal access that men and women have to available resources and opportunities. The causes of this worldview demonstrate how women are viewed as inferior beings in society.

Despite the improvement in the social status of women in recent decades and the increase in their presence, especially in the scientific and academic fields, society is still far from achieving the desired position for women.

**Yaghoub Mousavi, sociologist and faculty member of Al-Zahra University**

The issue we face on a national level is doubled at the ethnic level. The world of women also has a lot of issues. Naturally, changes resulted from both global advances and the revolution; according to sociologists, a revolution is an explosion of consciousness and anticipation. These expectations were developed inside ethnic groups and coincided with new media and global trends. Although there are more minority women poets, writers, professors, and other professionals as a result of the way in which women were transformed, these changes were undoubtedly unintended. As a result, women's financial conditions can occasionally be disastrous in terms of population and historical capital. We learned through new communication technologies that there are several exploitations among the ethnicities, particularly for women and girls.

Figures 3.21. and 3.22 show the opportunities for women as compared to men. Accordingly, 93% of the elite and 57.8% of the common people believe that women's opportunities are unequal compared to men's.

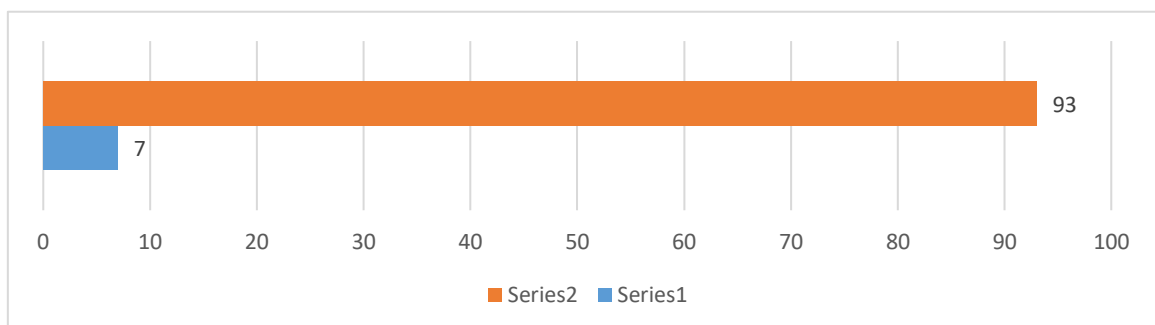


Figure 29 Equal opportunities for women, according to the elites

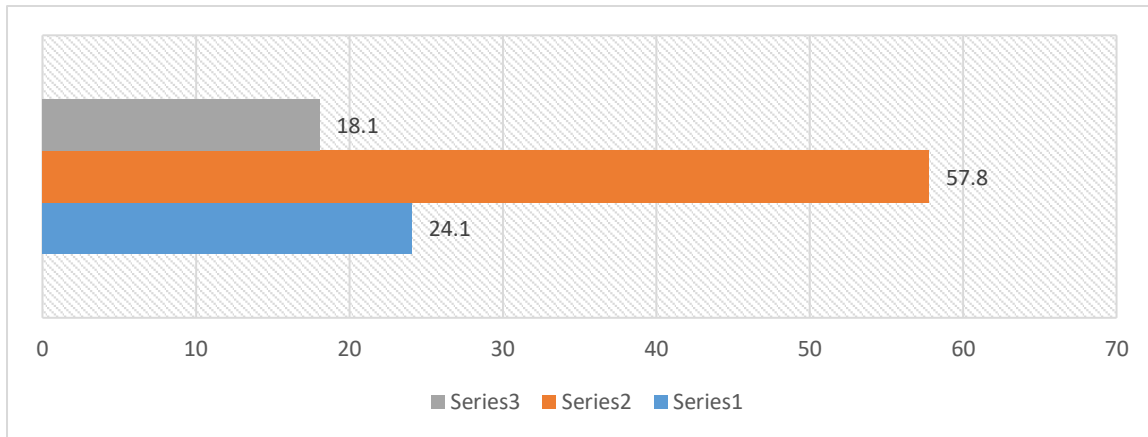


Figure 30 Equal opportunities for women, according to the common people

In general, it can be said that eliminating gender barriers necessitates focusing on several different factors, including women's empowerment in a variety of aspects, the abolishment of discriminatory legislation, raising public awareness, the development of non-profit organisations, and effective women's movements. In this regard, it is vital to reform this culture and tradition in legislative bodies and those in positions of authority, as well as in educational institutions like the family, which play a significant role. Women must advance confidently in this direction in tandem with the general movements that seek to end this inequality.

### 3.7.5. Spread of dissatisfaction and intensification of demands

The security and stability of each country depend on its people, those who have the right to vote and protest. If popular demands are ignored and their voices are not heard, it will lead to the emergence of protests and unrest. Dissatisfaction in Iran, like any other society, has existed openly and covertly over the past decades and has grown increasingly intense in the last decade. Following the 2009 presidential election, a protest movement spread over the majority of the nation, inflaming the mood on the streets and universities for about a year. As these grievances subsided by January 2017, an atmosphere almost calmly dominated the country. In the autumn and winter of 2017, there was again widespread unrest in different parts of the country. An important point of the unrest was that many places where there had been no protest movement during the 40 years of the Islamic Revolution also joined the protests. In areas such as Khuzestan, Lorestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and their tribal communities, which have often been known to align with the regime and have played a key role in the country's security, large protest movements took place.

**Amir Nabavi, University Lecturer and Political Science  
Researcher, Tehran**

Regarding the protests in January, we had disturbances in areas where, according to the security atlas, have never witnessed political events and incidents at any time in history.

Another important point about these protests was that apart from the ethnic, religious, and student groups that started the previous protest movements, there were also groups such as workers, bazaars, truck drivers, teachers, retirees, kolbars, bank depositors, and others who joined the protesters. To some extent, the voices of protest of these groups and guilds are still heard from time to time, which indicates the spread of dissatisfaction and its expansion among various ethnic and religious guilds and groups.

**Nasser Baghishi, cultural activist, Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

In the current situation, no group of organization is satisfied. Even in the body of government and so-called insiders, there are large dissatisfied groups. These dissatisfactions are also seen among the affluent ethnic groups.

Factory closures and worker unemployment, unprecedented inflation and declining purchasing power of people—particularly that of workers and teachers—, rising dollar rates and declining imports and market downturns, housing slump, overpriced commodities, car prices, water crisis, political repression, neglect of the rights of the women, centralism, closing borders, shooting kolbars, poor schools in Sistan and Balochestan, environmental crisis, public frustration, corruption and fraud, social indifference, Internet and cyber addiction and rising digital crimes, the rise of celibacy and divorce, the rise of prostitution, and others are among the problems and crises that have led to public discontent.

**Cyrus Shafaghi, geographer and lecturer in urban planning,  
University of Isfahan**

About economic corruption, one of the major drawbacks of our laws is that those who commit financial abuses are not properly punished.

One of the biggest flaws in our laws on economic corruption is that individuals who engage in financial abuses are not subject to punishment. When these examples are coupled with the political demands of these ethnic groups, which vary in strength and intensity depending on the majority of them being social or economic, the already acute unhappiness doubles, becoming a full-fledged crisis. Most people are pessimistic and believe that these crises are not temporary and that there is no chance for them to be resolved by the government because of the poor management and ineffective social programmes in Iran, which have caused a generalized low level of confidence between the government and the people.

**Tafgeh Hassanpour, civil activist, Baneh, Kurdistan**

I'm not optimistic about emergence of a social order, progress and trust, and social co-ordination in the country, so much so that the feeling of insecurity of myself and others living around me is so deeply rooted in the sense that the situation that makes this predicament in my mind is so deeply rooted.



Picture 23 Interview with Tafgeh Hassanpour

However, various reasons have been introduced for the formation of these protests, all of which can be summarized under the title of ‘the existence of a gap between the expectations of the people and what they have’ at all economic, political, cultural, social, religious, environmental, and other levels. If the level of functioning of the government lags behind the level of the requirements of the citizens, dissatisfaction will arise which can appear as instability or divergence (Mohammadi Lord, 2014: 63).

This distance made the elites and professors of universities and seminaries react. Mohammad Reza Zaeri, a Shia cleric, describes this:

They don’t understand, plainly they don’t understand! They have not understood for years and now it is worse! They did not understand the situation of Gonabadi dervishes, not the water disturbance of Isfahan farmers, not the chaos of Kazerun, not the teachers’ union protests, the pain of bank deposit holders, nor the helplessness of truck drivers, the failure and suffering of oppressed farmers, neither they do understand the slogans of the people at the funeral of Malek Motiee, the actor, nor the anger of the families of school students whose innocent children were abused... They do not understand even today! The confusion of the market and people’s lives, the helplessness of the patients, which is melting away bit by bit with this dollar price! The depression of a young man who no longer has any hope of marriage, the despair of a middle-aged man who does not even dream of owning an apartment in retirement! It is not their fault! They don’t understand! Officially they do not understand! They don’t hear, they don’t see! deaf and dumb. They do not understand.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> A reference to Sura Al-Baqarah, verse 171: ‘The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries cattle or sheep - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.’

So far, despite warnings and unique remedies from college academics, social activists, political leaders, and clergy, not only have no adjustments been made to better the situation, but the unfavourable condition has deepened and spread. Officials continue to discuss the advancements in science, business, and technology while ignoring issues and handling them aggressively. On the other hand, political institutions must remember that social movements are not always negative events but typically act as venues for expressing social demands and issues, and, when regarded from a functional point of view, the adaptability and sustainability of the political system, they increase possibilities for social interaction and redistribution of opportunities (Shafiee, 2003: 657).

Figures 3.23 and 3.24 show hope for short-term reform, with 93% of the elite and 89.2% of the general public believing that Iran’s crises will not be resolved in the short term.

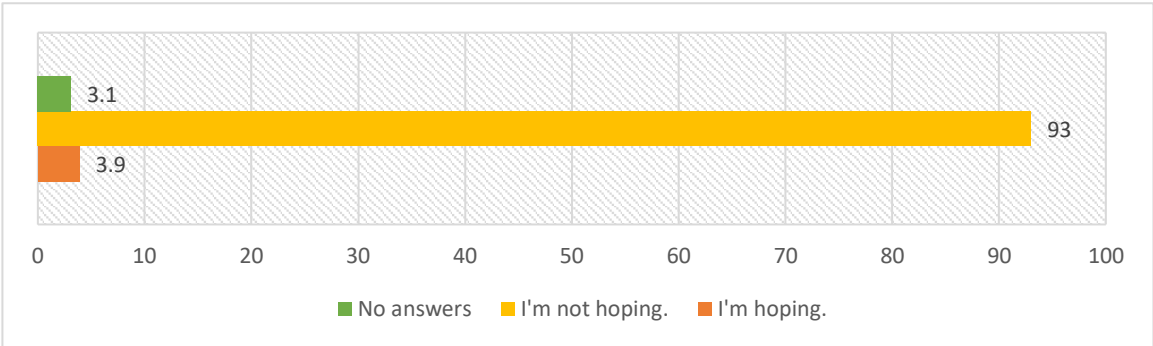


Figure 31 hope for short-term reform, according to the elites

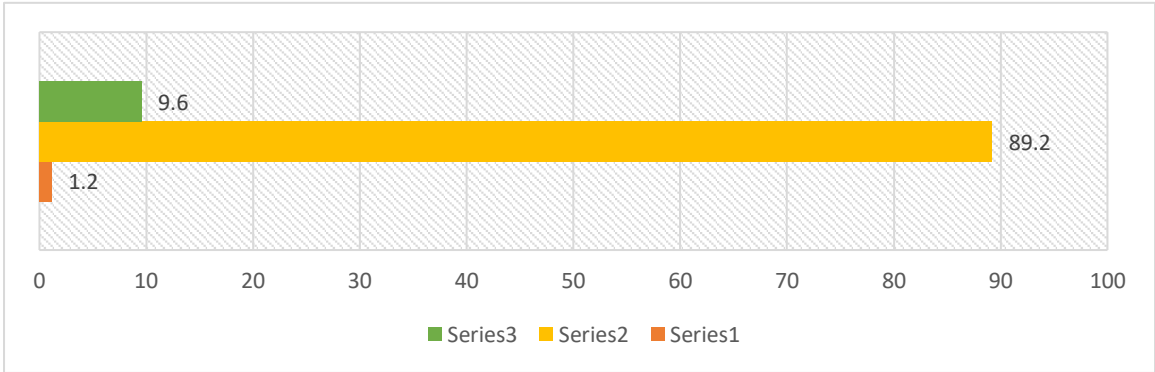


Figure 32 hope for short-term reform, according to common people

Figures 3.25 and 3.26 show hope for long-term reform, with 53.9% of the elite and 73.5% of the general public believing that Iran’s crises will not be reformed and resolved in the long term.

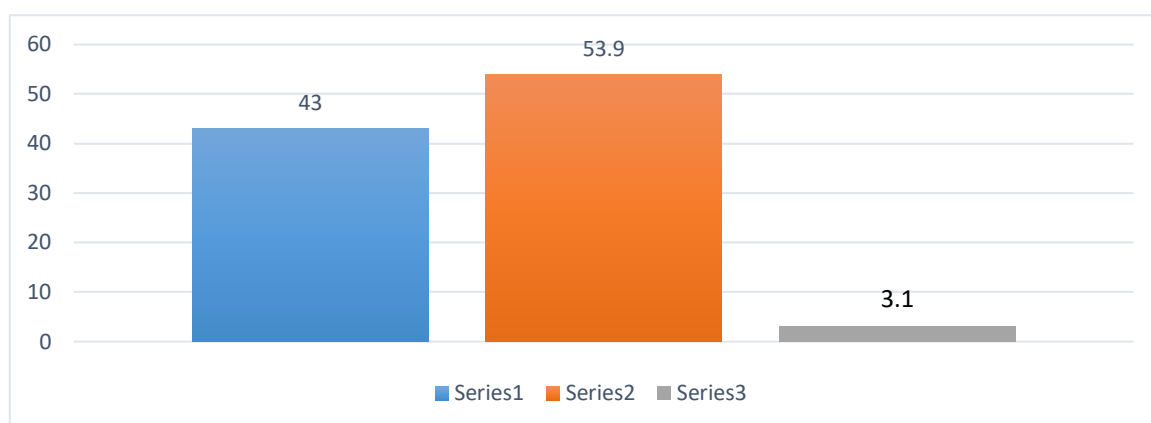


Figure 33 hope for long-term reform, according to the elites

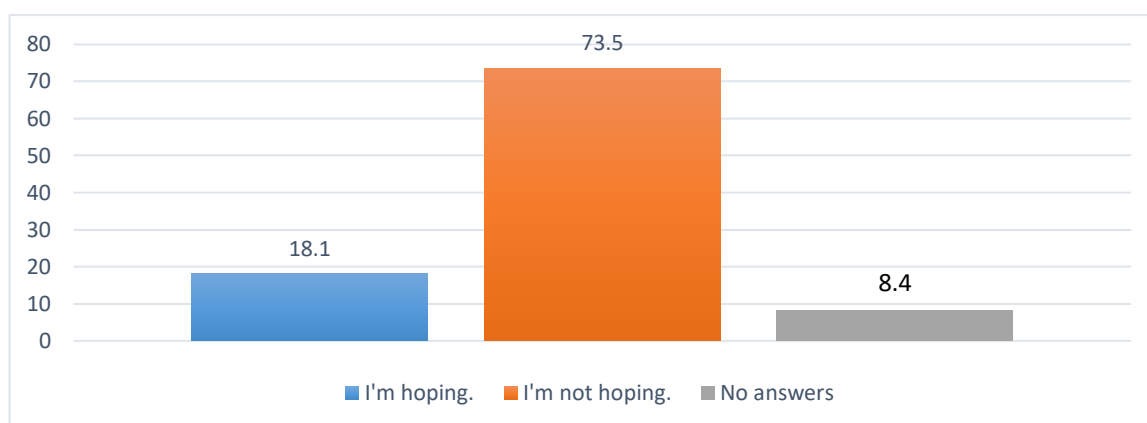


Figure 34 hope for long-term reform, according to common people

As can be seen, both the elites and the common people believed that neither in the short nor the long term did they have much hope of resolving the various crises and problems in Iran. Extensive frustration has accelerated the process of migration, social problems, and crime and delinquency. Social and environmental crises such as water supply crisis, unemployment, air pollution crisis, constitutional rights and citizenship, biodiversity degradation, forest and animal species issues, corruption and scientific fraud, consequences of climate change, drug abuse, health challenges, centralism, health problems caused by new lifestyles, urban marginalisation, marriage issues, ageing populations, ethnic challenges, the spread of sexual risk, and other issues, including domestic and foreign policy crises such as international sanctions, have led to growing frustration and the spread of the idea that no problem would be solved.



### *3.8. Crossing the Crisis*

In the previous section, we talked about cases that indicate the existence of political and social crises. In this section, based on the results obtained from this research, the desired solutions to overcome these crises will be presented. The most important issue in this line is to help preserve ethnic identity of ethnicities in the form of cultural pluralism. The various ethnic groups living in the territorial geography of Iran have always been proud of being Iranian and have acted in line with national interests. A basic and structural assessment of beliefs and changes to prevalent dogmatic conceptions are also significant in this context. Many requirements of ethnic and religious groups are in line with the constitution of the country, which provides democratic and fundamental rights. According to the findings of this study, many members of these groups call for nothing but the full and plain implementation of the current legal provisions. To resolve the challenges stated in the preceding part, it is worthwhile to fully utilise these democratic capabilities. The practice of moderation and the avoidance of any kind of extremism regarding ethnic groups is a significant concern in this context. Following these cases will eventually lead to enduring peace and national reconciliation, as opposed to placing the nation on the route to collapse, as was the scenario in the preceding section. Each of these scenarios will be covered in more detail in the sections that follow.

#### **3.8.1. Preservation of ethnic identity**

An ethnic group is a group of people who have a common origin, race, history, land, culture, religion, literature, music, language, circle of marriage, customs, feasts and rituals, habits, eating and dressing habits, and a common destiny. They are recognised with a different identity from other ethnic and social groups (Hosseinzadeh, 2001: 246). The most important characteristics of a nation are having real common ancestors, a common name, common land and language, common territorial spaces, and common values.

Many people, particularly the elite, do not consider ethnic identity as important.

**Rahim Mousavi, theatre director, Semnan**

Addressing these problems is not possible with existing definitions. For example, we do not wear the clothes of our fathers, we do not have their jobs, and all this causes us to distance ourselves from that culture. My clothes and jobs and the way we get married and, most importantly, the deterioration of our language show that we are not like our fathers.

In one sense, social identity refers to a person's uniqueness and individuality, or the fundamental differences that set people apart from everyone else in terms of 'self' identity. In another sense, social identity refers to a person's capacity to connect with or join others through groups or categories based on salient similarities, such as ethnic features and other attributes. According to these explanations, it can be stated that the sources and tools of social identity are the interest in a common culture, a common land, a common language and a common history. This common history and language can be outside the conventional boundaries of the contemporary world.

George Herbert Mead looks at how one develops a complete sense of self to establish identity. Mead contends that each person creates their own identity or 'self' by arranging other people's attitudes into socially or group-organized attitudes. In other words, how someone perceives themselves and how they feel about themselves is a reflection of how others see them (Nazarpour et al., 2008). People attempt to identify themselves in conformity with the rules and traditions of the society to which they feel belonging.

Henry Tajfel, suggests that individuals experience collective identity based on their membership in a group. This means that the person recognises those who belong to the same group as insiders, and therefore positive, and those who do not belong to the group as outsiders. This theory has been used mainly to understand the psychological basis of group differentiation. The purpose of Tajfel is to identify the minimum requirements that must be met for group members to be recognised by those who are outside the group. In light of this, social identity is defined as a person's sense of himself about his knowledge and awareness of his membership in a group, as well as the value and affective component associated with that membership (Tajfel, 1978: 63). The sum of these elements leads to the formation of a categorization of a group membership. Categorization increases practices that are desirable within the group but are expensive outside the group.

From the functionalist point of view, identity is what distinguishes individuals and groups from each other. This means that people introduce themselves by some fixed characteristics and consider these as their distinguishing features. Adherents of this school believe that individuals compare and contrast their group with a foreign one to prove their group superiority (Schwington and Baker, 1989: 9, quoted from Iman and Kizqan, 2003: 81).

According to the proponents of the symbolic interaction school, social identity is our perception of who we are and who others are, as well as how people understand themselves and others. Thus, social identity is the result of agreements and disagreements. The followers of this school place a specific emphasis on the connection between personal identity and social identity and hold that everyone is born with an experiential identity that can change and take on a new identity as a result of socialisation and interpersonal interaction. According to them, identity is not fixed, but can expand and constantly change over time and in space (Duran, 2007: 55). In other words, this theory holds that individuals now have the power to seek their own sources of identity, and that

source is not to be found in the conventional and prescribed form. The results of this study demonstrate that such a circumstance is more common among Persian speakers who broaden and define their 'identity' at the national or international level. In other words, to redefine their identity ground, the activists of this group are less interested in traditional roots originating from their ancestors.

**Shahram Groundi, sociologist and journalist, Khuzestan**

As a modern human being who has gone through a series of stages, I do not believe in ethnicity and I consider myself a cosmopolitan person. I consider myself an Iranian who is a citizen of the world.

According to Serena Nanda and Richard L. Warms, ethnic groupings are made up of individuals who set themselves apart from other social groups or larger societies. An ethnic group creates ethnic boundaries between itself and other social groups, and these lines serve to reinforce intragroup ties and separate them from other groups. A common language, racial heritage, religion, traditions, set of shared values, or common territory must serve as the foundation for these borders. Thus, ethnic identity is a subjective and individual experience that makes a person belong to a particular ethnic group (Warms, 1998: 205). One also feels that the culture in which one is born is the centre of culture in the world. In this regard, Max Weber has considered ethnic groups as human groups with subjective beliefs about common ancestors (Ardakani, 2008: 43).

Tajfel views ethnic identity as a component of the idea of the individual, arising from his or her knowledge of belonging to an ethnic group with associated values and emotions. According to Holmes, ethnic identity is the feeling of belonging to a group of people that has its cultural heritage, values, and origins (Fini, 2007: 271).

Ethnic identity is a special set of objective, subjective, cultural, social, ideological, and sensual factors that are manifested in one human group and distinguish it from other groups (Altai, 2003: 139). Examples of these elements include similar values and a sense of community-based on ancestry, colour, language, history, and family, regardless of socially acceptable boundaries. These elements strengthen emotional bonds among participants and promote higher homogeneity than the community as a whole. This interest in individuals from the same ethnic group living outside of Iran's boundaries can be seen in research from each of the four ethnic groups that speak the same language

outside of Iran: Kurds, Azaris, Balochis, and Arabs. In other words, the Turkish ethnic group defines its ethnic identity in terms of Turkey and Azarbaijan; Kurds look to Syria, Turkey, and Iraq for guidance; Baloch people identify with their neighbours in Afghanistan and Pakistan; Khuzestan's Arabic-speaking population sees the entire global Arab population, particularly those living in Persian Gulf region, as part of their circle of identification. The members of these groups feel that only political boundaries separate them from their compatriots' pains and sufferings. They also believe that their compatriots share similar values, ancestry, and cultural heritage. Here are some instances of these interviews.

**Nasser Baghishi, cultural activist, Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

We are not related to anyone in Syria or Turkish Kurdistan, unlike other Kurds. But without doubt, my cultural and historical ties to a Kurd in Qamishli (Syrian Kurdistan) are much stronger than those I have with a Turk in Ardabil or a Persian in Qazvin since we share a single language, common history, shared grief, and even a common utopia. Due to this common sense, I've learned Kurmanji Kurdish reading and writing and have even started to teach it.

**Nazila Jalilzadeh, researcher of philosophy, mysticism and religions, East Azarbaijan**

We have a lot of cultural affinity in social behaviours with Turks outside Iran, which is very tangible.

**Sardar Sarani, Pharmaceutical Technician, Zabol, Sistan and Balochistan**

Yes, I follow and read the publications of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the poems of very good poets and the professors of Quetta University in Balochi.

**Qasem Al-Kathir, researcher and ethnic activist, Khuzestan**

In the entire Arab world, we feel incredibly close. Iranian intellectuals are culturally ignorant of the Arab world and lack knowledge about it. As its name suggests, the Arab world is a world. In addition to Christians and all varieties of Sunni and Shiite Arabs, we also have Jewish Arabs. We have a lot in common in certain ways, yet we also differ greatly. For instance, Iraqi Arabs alongside Ahwazi Arabs have a significantly different concept of 'other' than Arabs from the Persian Gulf or Arabs from Africa. But the media has helped to highlight the similarities. We listen to the same music here and watch the same satellite TV shows that they do in Palestine.



Picture 24 Interview with Sardar Sarani

Apart from ethnic groups, Sunni adherents also have this type of attitude toward external rather than internal and central links and locations, and they also have more favourable attitudes toward their links across the borders because of their religious affiliation with border neighbours, which could be a trouble for the political system of the country. In such a setting, the authorities should attempt to look at these relationships between ethnic and religious groups culturally rather than politically or in terms of security, and attempt to solve them by downplaying the expressions of identity and assimilating them with the centre. The findings in the following section also show that ethnic and religious groupings have historically supported the interests of the nation.

Figures 3.31 and 3.32 depict how co-ethnic groups in neighbouring nations use satellites and the media. The statistics show that 64.1% of elites prefer to utilise foreign satellite networks with the same language, compared to 62.7% of the general population.

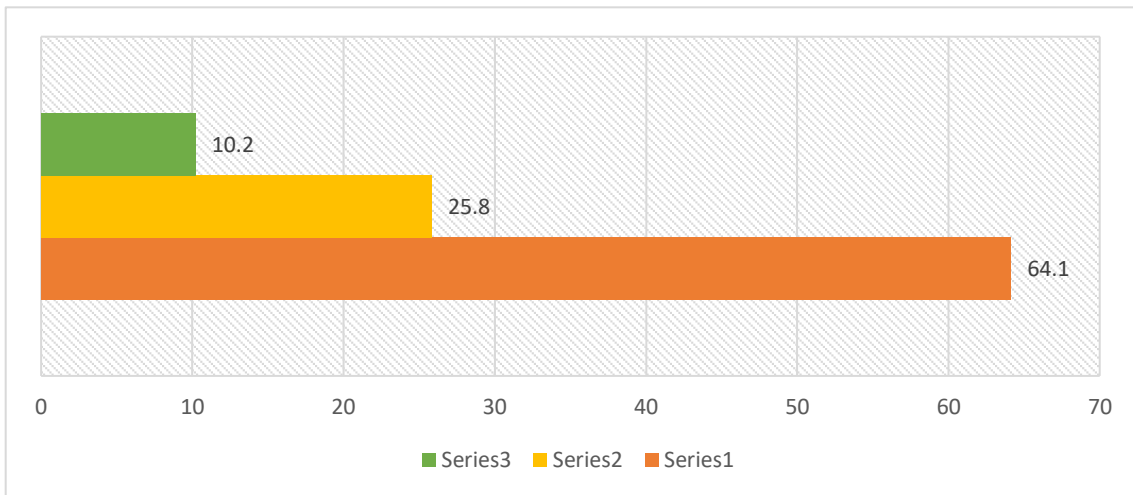


Figure 35 Use of external satellite networks of the same language - elites

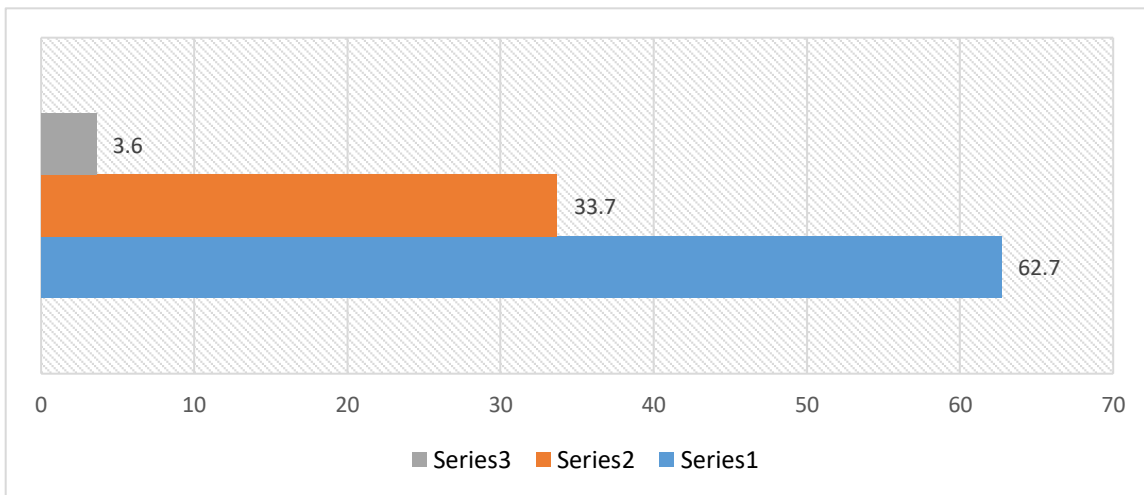


Figure 36 Use of external satellite networks of the same language – common people

Media productions play a significant role in the formation of conceptions and meanings. It can be argued that the content of messages transmitted via various mass media is constantly undertaking considerable change and transformation in human cultures. Domestic TV shows and satellite network programmes produced outside of Iran have always had an impact on the Iranian mind and lives and, in general, influence a significant proportion of their individual and societal behaviour.

Broadcasting policies, particularly those about ethnic groups, have sought to homogenise and eradicate broader cultural diversity. The more centrist programming on provincial radio and television does not conform with the local style of life. The entertainment, scientific, and other programmes on national and provincial radio stations, on the other hand, are so out of place that people

are more likely to turn to satellite channels and trust them more than national and provincial radio stations. Through satellite channels, one can freely access an aspect of ethnic culture or an alternative viewpoint that is not covered on national radio and television. When it comes to movies, TV shows, and news sources that are aired by satellite, satellite channels are generally preferred.

### *3.8.2. Alignment of ethnic and national interests*

The human world consists of various tribes and nations that are scattered throughout it according to environmental and geographical conditions. Surveys show that there are only 14 countries in the world with no significant minorities, and only 4% of the world's people live in countries that have one ethnic group (Omidi, 2015: 226).

Multi-ethnic societies are societies in which there are several large ethnic groups. In Britain, Irish, Asian, West Indian, Italian, and Greek immigrants are among the groups that have formed distinct ethnic communities within the larger society. The United States is more ethnically diverse than the UK and has immigrant communities from all over the world. These groups participate in the political and economic order, but ways they are very different from each other (Giddens, 2006: 278).

Iran is a country made up of ethnic groups, races, and various linguistic (Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Lor, Baloch, Turkmen, etc.) and religious (Shia, Sunni, Christian, Kilim, Assyrian, Armenian, etc.) groups. Since each of these groups added layers of cultural identity that enriched and expanded Iranian culture, they all assisted Iranian culture to endure and persist throughout history. The presence of Azaris, Bakhtiaris, and Gilanis in the constitutional revolution is a clear example of this collective effort for a common goal that shaped the political and cultural identity of the constitutionalism movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Islamic revolution and eight years of defence against the invasion of Saddam Hussein is a precious political and cultural heritage created by all Iranian ethnic groups, and all of them, including Azari, Kurdish, Baloch, Arab, Christian, Jews, and Armenian, played an essential and crucial role.

**Saeed Bavi, Civil Activist and Employee, Khuzestan**

These same people also participated in the war with Iraq, there are original Iranians and they live in this country. Now, they may be different from us in terms of ideology. They are part of the general national integrity.



The concept of 'national unity' can be looked at from different angles and perspectives: on the one hand, national unity is founded on extreme nationalistic attitudes, in which a society sanctifies and worships its nationality while deeming other nations and nationalities inferior to its own. According to this viewpoint, national unity necessitates boasting and supremacy, which is justified by ethnic and national prejudice rather than by original and common ideals. As a result, other countries can be used as a tool to dominate others and to further one's dominance.

According to proponents of this viewpoint, if ethnic identity is enhanced, it would erode national identity and cohesion and the strengthening of national identity depends on the destruction or weakening of ethnic identity. From another angle, national unity entails having self-confidence, relying on the resources and abilities of the country, and closing gaps and divides brought about by linguistic, territorial, and religious divisions within it to increase the nation's strata and individuals' cooperation, empathy, and solidarity as it moves toward development and excellence. According to this perspective, belonging to a nation or land does not incite prejudice and does not have any intrinsic value. It also does not cause one to have a superior or derogatory opinion of others. Most Iranian ethnic groups consider the second perspective as more effective. It is claimed in this perspective that, contrary to popular belief, the importance of regional and local identities in the modern world does not conflict with macro and national identities.

**Mohsen Goodarzi, sociologist, researcher and university lecturer, Tehran**

Big political identities do not function like the main political parties that partially represented the interests of large groups and sectors of society; instead, and small and smaller ethnic, regional, kinship, and friendship identities have emerged.

**Ashkan Zarei, cultural and heritage activist and writer,  
Khuzestan**

Willingly or not, my upbringing was in such a way that we don't have feel having any ethnic affiliation and if we look at it on a larger scale, we adhere to the Iranian identity. I believe that sub-cultures should be preserved. Better to say, Iran is like an old tree whose branches are the ethnic groups, and its root is Iran, and that those branches are connected to the same root. For me, Iran is important and its sub-cultures and dialects should be preserved

The proponents of this view contend that the strengthening of ethnic identity does not necessarily result in the weakening of national identity and cohesion. Alternatively, they contend that the strengthening of national identity is independent of the weakening of ethnic identity, although individuals with high ethnic identities may experience a weakening of both their national and ethnic identities at the same time (Finney, 2001: 501).

Today, it is impossible to disregard the role that ethnic concerns play in the convergence and divergence of nations. Because it has an impact on all facets of society—political, economic, cultural, and social—this topic is very important. As a result, in the current context, maintaining national cohesion and the broad, integrated, and united Iranian identity under planning, establishing a strong management and critical-corrective revision of domestic and foreign policy, and establishing equal conditions for the nation's citizens are significant and inspiring concerns. The notion about the significance of national solidarity is confirmed by the Iranian leader's designation of particular solar years, such as 1384 as 'National Solidarity and Public Participation' and 1386 as 'National Unity and Islamic Unity.' The problem that the results of the current research revealed is that despite all of their complaints about their circumstances and conviction that they are the victims of inequality and discrimination, the various ethnic groups under study never think of themselves as differentiated from the country known as Iran.

**Abbas Gadidi Khedari, a history lecturer at the University of Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

I disagree with your use of the term 'Persian ethnic group.' We have a composite entity called Iran, made up of several ethnic groupings. One of these aspects of the nation may occasionally be the focus of extremist movements, despite the fact that it is a historical artefact. A Turk is an Iranian, just like a Kurd, an Arab, and other ethnic groups. I've spoken to Kurds, Gilks, Lors, and Bakhtiaris. I felt like a country person having a lot in common with other racial or ethnic groupings.

**Mehdi Keivan, historian and retired university lecturer, Isfahan**

If you hear any criticism now, it's likely coming from Kurdish, Turkmen, or Baloch people who all identify as Iranians and have economic and cultural grievances that have evolved into political grievances. They talk about separatism, for instance, even though they do not practise it. The majority Iranian people, in either the Azari or Kurdish, view themselves as original Iranians. These voices are a result of their occasionally experiencing insults.

In Iran, different ethnic groups have always moved following national interests, according to many country-level studies, and when there are demonstrations, they are usually motivated by feelings of relative deprivation or other types of neglect and mistreatment.

Turkish, Kurdish and Arab public university students were the subjects of a study by Ali Rabbani and his colleagues in 2008, and they concluded that there

is a positive, synergistic, and reasonable relationship between the two variables of national identity and ethnic identity. The association between the national identification variable and feeling of relative deprivation is generally strong and negative, whereas this relationship with the ethnic identity variable was positive and weak. In other words, the more relative deprivation an ethnic group experiences, the less sense of national identity and belonging they have, and the more ethnic convergence and national divergence there is. Ali Yousefi offers insights from a 1998 study he performed on five ethnic groups: Baloch, Turk, Kurd, Fars, and Lor in an article titled 'Inter-ethnic relations and its effect on ethnic identity in Iran.' He discovers that the sense of belonging and loyalty of the ethnic groups to the national community increases as interethnic cooperation, which is accomplished by combining three types of intellectual, emotional, and livelihood relations of the ethnic groups, increases. On the other hand, with an increase in ethnic conflicts and hostilities, the sense of belonging and loyalty of the ethnic groups to the national community declines. His research demonstrates the high levels of commitment among the five ethnic groups to the components of national identity, including religion and ritual, people, cultural pride, and land. In comparison to the Fars, Kurds, and Azari ethnic groups, the Baloch and Lurs ethnic groups show a greater demonstration of interest in and allegiance to the components of national identity. Additionally, Hajiani (1998) investigated the correlation and proportion between the tendencies of Iranian ethnic groups toward ethnic identity and those toward national identity (Kurds, Balochs, Azaris, Arabs, Turks, and Lurs). The results of his study show that the ethnic and national identity among the Iranian people have both power and prominence and there is no conflicting and polar relationship between them. It should be noted that while the political elements of ethnic and national identification have a conflicting relationship with one another, the cultural and social dimensions of these two types of identity have a positive and strong interaction with one another.

Samad Beheshti and Mohammad Haqmoradi (2016) used secondary analysis to conduct a study titled 'Sense of Belonging to Iran among Iranian Ethnic Groups' and concluded that all ethnic groups have a strong sense of belonging to Iran in general and that some ethnic groups have a stronger sense of belonging than others. The level of this attachment is diminished, as it is for Sunni Arabs and Kurds, by their perception of injustice, their poor political participation, and their unequal share of growth as compared to other ethnic groups. In a paper titled 'Ethnic identities, social cohesion, and national security,' Razavi Al-Hashem et al. (2008) concluded that the policy of elimination, integration, and assimilation of ethnicities is unfeasible.

They claim that traditional nationalists, who are intolerant of ethnic minorities and historically connected with regimes that compel and oppress national minorities, see the integration of citizens into a single nation as their objective. A stable society built on cultural pluralism in a multi-national state based on democracy is what new nationalism is predicated on—a combination of convergence and social cohesion. Experience has demonstrated that whenever leaders have attempted to make concessions to ethnic group interests, they have

come closer to resolving ethnic conflict. The integration of several ethnic groups into the dominant one has never been successful.

### **3.8.3. Re-evaluation of beliefs**

Most political circles today, regardless of political tendencies, agree on the following problems: political inefficiency, loss of national social capital, widening of social gaps, poor management of the nation's economy, the proliferation of cultural abnormalities, and moral decline. The political gridlock and general confusion that characterises most of these discussions are evident in the overwhelming passivity of social forces, including elites inside and outside of government as well as the common people.

The extreme complacency of the government in general toward upholding moral principles like justice, fairness, honesty, and tolerance has led to a rise in societal hypocrisy and dishonesty. The absence of legitimacy of the law in society and the widespread mistrust of civil and governmental institutions are more obvious than to be explained. Iranian citizens deal with issues like this every day of their lives, such as the buying and selling of their rights as citizens in the majority of the country's municipalities under the guise of change of use, purchase of additional density, or other architectural regulations, urban planning, and construction regulations, as well as all types of government interventions in the professional career. Such actions contradict concepts such as private property rights, freedom of exchange, and the principles of competition in the market. Another example of non-compliance and disrespecting the fundamental rights of citizens in this context is restricting the rights of voters and elected officials by establishing various qualitative criteria that deprive a significant segment of the population of their citizenship rights based solely on a response to a question from a non-judicial authority and without the judgement of competent courts. The prevailing general perception at the societal level is that every regulation has a price depending on the situation and place. Regardless of how true this belief is, the simple expression of such an idea is a sign of citizens' general disbelief in the possibility of securing their rights through legal channels and a failure to apply the rule of law. Many prominent individuals and national entities are worried about the deterioration of social capital in Iran. Numerous indicators support this sociological observation. The foundations of public morality and citizenship norms have been rocked by the potential of fast and unhealthy means of attaining wealth, power, and social prestige without labour or merit.

Technocracy is one of the effective methods whose validity and efficiency have been tested in many societies, and in today's Iranian society, it is a way to get out of existing unhealthy practices and routines.

**Siros Shafaqi, geographer and urban planning lecturer,  
University of Isfahan**

If the government uses all different strata and their knowledge, the society will be successful. But if it relies on a specific group, this would not happen. The state should employ the right expertise.

The current state of affairs encourages people to critique any opportunities—legal and illegal, real and unreal—at the earliest opportunity and within the shortest period. This approach will, in the medium term, de-stigmatize public unethical behaviour, including lying, greed, fraud, usurpation, failure to respect others' rights, bribery, corruption, buying votes, greed for other people's property, snatching public property, and other unethical behaviour. The signs of this crisis can be easily seen in traffic blind spots, financial and tax frauds, the spread of lawlessness, family crisis, the growth of all kinds of social problems and millions of judicial cases in Iranian society.<sup>27</sup> The findings obtained from this research also show the existence of this volume of problems and dissatisfaction among the studied ethnic groups.

**Mohammad Haqmoradi, journalist, sociologist and social  
critic, Sanandaj, Kurdistan**

Unfortunately, I don't feel optimistic given the existing situation; without altering the social, legal, political, and economic systems, I don't think this process will be comfortable to continue. This implies that our future will undoubtedly not be good. Internal issues lead to economic pressures; if we do not make significant adjustments, we will be in a chronic state of crisis; and if we carelessly overlook these issues, popular protests will arise.

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<sup>27</sup> Khabar Online, news ID: 275243

Many scholars attribute this state of affairs to the absence of a strategic theory for national governance, lack of politics and instability in decision-making, stratification and instrumental use of religion, official and systematic forms of lawlessness, frequent financial indiscipline and the inability to exercise control over supervisory institutions such as the Islamic Council or the judiciary, the weakness of the press and mass media in the exercise of public supervision, extremism with the appearance of adhering to fundamental values such as justice, altruism, service, the dissolution of planning institutions, the destruction of the bureaucratic system and the concentration of decision-making at the head of the government and the lack of accountability in the context of a transitioning and developing society as Iran. All these developments show the obstinacy and strong desire to maintain the concentration of power in the hands of the government and to expand the dependence of social and economic actors on the government. In addition to the basic concerns stated in the previous sections, there is also some degree of dissatisfaction among various ethnic and religious groups, who criticise the rigidity and inflexibility of the authorities. These oppositions on their part in various cultural, social, and economic spheres typically happen due to factors like the pervasive regional disparities in this field of culture, disregard for minority groups, and limitations on their willingness to practise their religion following their religious calendar and history, and other similar cases. The existence of this high volume of issues and problems requires fundamental reconsiderations and reforms by government officials.

**Ali Bakhtiarpour, faculty member and geopolitics lecturer,  
Ahvaz University, Khuzestan**

I believe that we are undergoing a transformation... This transformation should be done in a proper and slow process... I don't know how long this will take, but I am sure that we have to, we are even indebted to change.

**Mojtaba Shahnoushi, sociologist and faculty member of Khorasgan University from Isfahan**

My best wish is that even a millimeter we can put the situation in the direction of internal reform and the authorities will show some sense and feel that they are making a mistake. They should allow their reasonable organs to operate. Without destroying the balance of the society, a transformation is possible to take place toward the development of the country.

The idea of this type of development is based on the fact that Iranian society needs a fundamental paradigm shift in its intellectual foundations to move from collectivism to positive individualism based on undeniable citizenship rights. Iran's social and economic institutions should become informed enough to distinguish between policies based on collectivism and positive individualism. They should be able to reject government support policies that guarantee their short-term interests and voluntarily refuse to receive them. They should know that the result of support policies is the dependence of social and economic institutions on the government and deprives them of the power of mobility and dynamism. Rather, national policies that arise from the heart of organized social dialogues guarantee the protection of citizenship rights, and also, promote and support national development and prosperity. A century of experience is enough to learn that support policies based on government expediency are sterile and ineffective. Also, Iran needs a paradigm shift from government to governance. The government oversees the decisions of executive authorities, while governance oversees the processes of participation of citizens and social institutions stemming from citizenship rights in decision-making, selection and regulation of the executive system, implementation of decisions and supervision of the implementation of national policies. The idea of government is associated with historical blockage, stagnation, and standing still, while the transition to governance carries dynamism, forward-looking, and progress. Governance is an organized system of social dialogue, and the resulting power is the product of the dominance of the more efficient discourse in a given time and place. Citizens, in the framework of good governance, find an identity and can play a role. This principle gives significance to concepts like liberty, justice, equality, inclusivity, participation, consensus, and accountability.

Today, many civilisations are gradually embracing diversity. This indicates that it has multiple communities that are fighting for survival. A sizeable portion of



the population is a member of a culture that rejects our moral tenets and values. Dealing with the perception of being ‘marginalised’ by cultural minorities is the topic at stake.

The first step in achieving the desired condition of lasting peace through practical dialogue is to examine Iranians’ beliefs, both at the level of the government and the level of the nation, and to do this, it seems necessary to examine the following topics:

1. It is important to avoid ethnic derision at all social levels, from everyday social conversations to radio and TV programs and literature of statesmen and authorities.
2. Dialogue and long-lasting peace require avoiding ethnic arrogance. In truth, creating enduring peace and national reconciliation is seriously hampered by the arrogance of Iranian ethnic groups, which is present in all ethnic groups with strengths and weaknesses (more in ethnic groups like Kurds and Turks and less in others).
3. Respect for religions and belief in the equality of social rights is important for the followers of all religions who live in the geographical territory of Iran.

**Peyman Nasehpour, university lecturer and musician, Ardabil**

About the official religion, reform must continue and there is nothing wrong with a Christian who insists on being Iranian to become the president, the Sunnis have their place. The dynamism in Iran today is a sign of a very beautiful cultural revolution.

**Woman, 40-year-old, architect, Tehran**

Just as our religion is respected and is our refuge, we should not humiliate and mock other religions. We should not reject anyone’s religion to say that we are superior to them. We are not superior, no one is superior.w

4. It is crucial to avoid acting in a discriminatory manner toward other ethnic groups. This unpleasant experience is common among most people and is not specific to any one ethnic group. Ethnic groups discuss how Persians in the centre of cities treat a minority group with disdain. Tehranis instead discuss their encounters with discrimination in trade, behaviour, etc. when residing among ethnic groups.

5. Changing governance procedures to achieve economic and social equality is important for all Iranians.

Among the elite groups that have been studied in this research, positive representations of revising values and creating alignment between them can be observed.

**Yaghub Mousavi, sociologist and faculty member of Al-Zahra University, Tehran**

I have left myself free to employ cultural elements. Although I had religious tendencies and was a sympathizer of the Islamic Revolution and a political activist, I did not experience any form of cultural blockage and dogmatism. For us social scientists, it is difficult to determine a specific indicator regarding identity. My cultural sources revolve around Iran-Islam-West axes. At one time, it was global, national, or religious, and I have tried to create a balance in the conflict between them. I have had a lot of interactions with other ethnic groups due to studying in Tehran, Isfahan, and England, and I have had very good relations with Turks, Kurds, Southerners, Arabs, and Northerners, and I have no special prejudice in this regard.

#### *3.8.4. Employing democratic capacities*

A free, good, and dynamic society are one in which its members maintain ethical and civil relationships with one another and in which opportunities exist to

benefit from the historical, ethical, and cultural resources of the region as well as from the wisdom of other civilisations. It is made feasible by both the experience of societies now and the historical endeavour of human civilisation to create a good society to achieve a better, freer, and more equitable society.

In other words, the maintenance, development, vitality, and excellence of democracy at the general level and civil and democratic institutions at the objective and specific level are largely linked to the capacity, creativity, morality, and culture of the citizens of the society, which emerges through cherishing, highlighting, and debating cultural democratic values.

One opinion that is often heard about Iran is that it is considered to be an autocratic, dictatorial, and totalitarian system, with no free political parties and organizations, no trade unions or weak ones, no free media allowed to operate, no mention of civil society, no rights for ethnic groups as well as no place for linguistic, religious, and ethnic minorities, where, generally speaking, only one ideological voice is heard.

However, another group of people contends that the constitution specifically adequately addresses many of the requests of ethnic and minority groups; the only issue is how it is fully implemented. There are additional laws that are formally defined, including those about freedom of thought, the right to protest and gather, mother tongue, religion, and forming cultural, social, environmental, and political groups. These individuals claim that the main reason for the delay in putting these laws into effect is that the relevant officials have personal preferences.

**Arab man, teacher, Khuzestan**

In my opinion, the law of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a very complete and codified law, and it respects the rights of all ethnic groups and establishes justice to a sufficient extent. However, with the different administrations, certain fluctuations happen.

**Salahuddin Khadiv, civil activist and journalist, Mahabad West Azerbaijan**

If all the rights listed in the constitution are followed, Iran will see a revolution.



Picture 25 Interview with Dr Salahuddin Khadiv

This group cites several constitutional principles, including the fifty-ninth principle, which states that whenever a social issue is in dispute, it may be put to a public vote to determine its validity in the society, as support for their claims about the existence of democratic capabilities in the governmental structure of the country. However, this principle has only been used within the confines of the law, and in the forty years after the Islamic Revolution, no instance of this principle being put into practice has occurred.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, many people believe that the constitution, which is the national covenant, has fairly and clearly defined the rights and obligations of minorities. This definition is based on the scientific and legal underpinnings of Islamic law, which serves as the foundation for the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The issue of the rights of minorities in the constitution and the democratic capacity that exists in it can be examined in two parts: firstly, the rights that are generally considered for all Iranian people, including minorities, without any difference and in which, the equality of minorities in exercising their political

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<sup>28</sup> Throughout his administration, Hassan Rouhani criticised suspending of this concept in a number of speeches. This, of course, has prompted a response from extremist groups, particularly hard-line fundamentalists.

rights and freedoms and non-discrimination has been mentioned. According to various constitutional principles, it is possible to get to the conclusion that all Iranian nationals and citizens are entitled to certain fundamental freedoms and rights, and that these rights apply to all of them equally, irrespective of their ethnicity, race, language, or religion. In many of the principles of the constitution, the title 'everyone', 'every person', 'every Iranian', etc., is the subject of judgment. Article 3's clauses 8, 9, and 14 of the Iranian Constitution guarantee equal treatment of men and women, the establishment of fair judicial security for all, and the general participation of the people in determining their political, economic, social, and cultural destinies. It also prohibits unfair discrimination and provides opportunities for everyone in all material and spiritual spheres. Article 19 of the Constitution clearly states, 'All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and colour, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.' Also, Article 22 stipulates: 'The dignity, life, property, rights, residence, and occupation of the individual are inviolate, except in cases sanctioned by law.' According to Article 28, 'Everyone has the right to choose any occupation he wishes, if it is not contrary to Islam and the public interests, and does not infringe the rights of others. The government has the duty, with due consideration of the need of society for different kinds of work, to provide every citizen with the opportunity to work, and to create equal conditions for obtaining it.' Article 29 considers the enjoyment of social security as a universal right and obligates the government to provide services and support related to social security for every person in the country. Article 30 states, 'The government must provide all citizens with free education up to secondary school, and must expand free higher education to the extent required by the country for attaining self-sufficiency.' According to Article 31, it is the right of every Iranian individual and family to have housing that fits their needs. According to Article 34, seeking justice is the right of every Iranian Muslim and anyone can refer to competent courts for seeking justice. In Article 41, it is also stated: 'Iranian citizenship is the indisputable right of every Iranian, and the government cannot withdraw citizenship from any Iranian unless he requests it or acquires the citizenship of another country.' According to Article 32, 'No one may be arrested except by the order and following the procedure laid down by law' and in Article 33, the same interpretation is used regarding deportation and forced residence. In Article 23 it is also stated, 'The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief'.

The rights regarding the identity and recognition of racial and religious minorities make up the second part. It should be mentioned in this regard that minorities and adherents of non-Islamic religions are split into two official and unofficial categories under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Article 12 of the Constitution considers the official religion to be Islam and Jafari's twelfth-century religion. Even though they have not been seen as a minority, adherents of other Islamic schools like Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali, and Zeidi have been said to be completely acknowledged in the same article. However, it is clear that, in any case, they are also a religious minority

compared to the majority of the Shia religion. Following their jurisprudence, Article 12 recognised their existence, protected their identity, and allowed them to act freely in their religious ceremonies and religious education. They should also be able to apply their jurisprudence to their circumstances and claims, and the same rules should be applied in the courts.

As for non-Muslims, Article 13 of the Constitution says: 'Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognised religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.'

Regarding this group of religious minorities, it can be said that the Constitution takes into account not only the fundamental notions of equality and non-discrimination but also the preservation of their existence, identity, and freedom to hold religious rituals in their particular circumstances and accordance with their religious principles. This group also has the right to organise associations and elect a representative to the parliament.

Except for these three recognised religious minorities, the Constitution does not recognise the other religious and belief orientations as religions, hence it has not made any provisions to protect their identity. The general laws and regulations of the Iranian government apply to those who adhere to these kinds of tendencies and ideas, who are regarded as nationals and citizens of Iran. Although it has not even guaranteed its right to hold collectively and publicly recognised religious rites, the government is under no duty to acknowledge and uphold its religious rules and regulations.

Because of this, it is feasible to recognise the existence of democratic capabilities in the country's legal and political system based on the totality of these laws and other laws about ethnic and religious minorities. The questions that need to be answered in the interim are how to implement these rules and how linguistic and religious minorities might demand them.

According to the conducted interviews, Article 15 of the Constitution, which addresses the idea of the mother tongue and the right to education and education in that language, is another Article that shows the existence of democratic capacity in the laws of the country. However, according to the researched language groups, the implementation of this principle has been delayed until now.

**Alireza Khani, cultural and literary activist from Ivan (Ilam)**

Article 15 of the Constitution allows this and states that ethnic groups can study in their own language and with their clothes, but this is only written and after forty years we are still not allowed to study in Kurdish language.

Consideration of the aforementioned legal principles provides an overview of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which recognises some fundamental rights for all people, including equality before the law, security of life and property, employment and housing, freedom of opinion, choice of job, social security, litigation, education, being subjected to a fair trial, citizenship, participation in the management of the affairs, and similar rights. With this picture of the constitution, it can be concluded that the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken a very progressive view of minorities, although some reflections and considerations can be seen in some laws and regulations related to minorities that are discriminatory. It appears that the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken action today to strengthen the legal framework and demonstrate adherence to international obligations; it is hoped that by identifying fresh legal and jurisprudential solutions, all citizens of the Islamic Republic will be treated equally by the law and supported.

**Amir Shahed, an expert on the history of post-Islamic Iran, Isfahan**

Among the other things [that] should be considered in the discussion of Iranian ethnic groups is the need to avoid advertising and producing content that causes a feeling of division and hostility.

We no longer have walls and borders. My thoughts are not Iranian either. I was raised in a society that has no borders. By highlighting the ethnic groups and their relationships, we highlight something that does not exist externally. The main gap in the world system is the gap between the World Bank and the people of the world. The order is that this gap should not be seen and when this gap is overlooked, they are fueling ethnic wars.

Based on these democratic capabilities, experts like Sadegh Zibakalam—one of the most vocal opponents of existing policies and a lifelong advocate of racial and religious minorities—claims that he does not want to overthrow the current political system but rather seeks to reform its defects. In an interview, he stated that he would be willing to protect the system even with a weapon.



## Chapter Four: Conclusion and Suggestions

Identity has always been a topic of discussion in human life throughout history, and it has been approached from a variety of perspectives. Although anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers have all made varied attempts to elucidate its facets and aspects, the concept of identity is still being debated and questioned today. It is now more important than ever to know who we are, what we are, what elements make up our identity, and what things define who we are. This is because, unlike in the past when individuals had little control and were compelled to accept what their fathers and predecessors had taught them, people currently have a propensity to actively and consciously strive to define and redefine their identity grounds rather than taking them for granted. Based on this, it can be said that in the past, identity had a forced and prescriptive aspect, and people did not have much of a choice or challenge regarding it, because there was no possibility of rejection or selection. But contemporary humans are questioning and concerned and are searching for meaning regarding aspects of their identity. Identity is a combination of fundamental social, psychological, cultural, philosophical, biological, and historical characteristics that, at a given time and place, enable a group to, eloquently, and consciously distinguish themselves from other groups. Identity is a factor that can clearly and acceptably define a group in a certain space and time and consciously distinguish them from other groups and individuals.

<b>Sciences</b>	<b>The main focus of the discussion</b>	<b>Identity type</b>	<b>The main focus of the discussion</b>
Logic	Personal identity	Individual	The nature and essence and cause
Philosophy	Existential identity	Individual and Collective	Questions 'existence' and identity are the centre of the circle of ideas.
Mysticism	His identity	Individual and Collective	Introduces God as the authentic identity and considers it as belonging to God.
Political Science	National identity	Collective	State, nation and government, and the relationship with national identity
Psychology	Personal identity	Individual	Self, I, subconscious mind, the scope of individuality
Sociology	Collective identity	Collective	Being one with oneself and others, identity in all kinds of groups and communities, having

			common values and collective conscience
Anthropology	Personal identity	Collective	Identity in various groups, including ethnic groups, tribes, other cultures, etc.

Table 7 Identity from the point of view of different sciences (Rashidi, 2014)

Identity is a core concept in social sciences that has been recognised as a suitable tool for comprehending and analysing social and cultural conditions since it appears to be able to identify deeper and more fundamental perspectives and layers of social situations. Identity is a category that, from a conceptual standpoint, is thought to be the foundation, essence, and index of many cultural and social phenomena as well as their cause. In other words, identity influences the style and quality of how actors and human agents behave.

The history of Iran demonstrates that several ethnic groups have always resided there. Iran's structure and shape are a result of the coexistence of these various ethnic groups. The stability of Iran's geographic and territorial setting has emerged from this coexistence. The existence of tales, stories, and myths, as well as similar historical memories, symbols, values, practises, and other elements, serve as examples of how individuals from various backgrounds have interacted and integrated throughout history. But apart from this situation, another discourse tries to assimilate and integrate ethnic and religious groups with different degrees of intensity and weakness. The argument behind this discourse is to preserve the country's coherence and national security and political integrity, and therefore, it has always provided the ground for censorship and the elimination of the cultural and political identity of ethnic groups. The underappreciated, but important, point in this perspective is that politicising and perceiving ethnic cultures in this way has seriously jeopardised national security, left ethnic groups feeling deprived, and prevented them from accessing sources of power and wealth in the nation. The inequity between different ethnic groups and the government has grown wider as a result of the unequal distribution of wealth, status, and power among them and the intensification of their sense of deprivation has sparked the emergence of movements and organisations that seek political identity. Examples of ethnic demands from identity groups include the absence of ethnic groups and their distinct cultural norms in print, audio, and video media, especially the national media, widespread religious discrimination, inequality in receiving high-ranking government and executive positions, the absence of political-ethnic parties, the lack of welfare, health, medical, and cultural facilities, and the absence of mother tongue instruction at the school level. The suppression of these identity groups by the central government has reinforced ethnic and radical sentiments that pose a serious threat to national security and cohesion to the point that many ethnic groups in Iran find themselves beyond one ethnic group in Iran and in some cases refer to their people as the nation and as a national minority.

In multi-ethnic countries, the relationship between ethnic identities and national identities is a significant challenge because how these two forms of socio-political identity are observed by one another has broad ramifications and is a key determinant of peace and national cohesion, stable security, and the effectiveness of the government. A nation will move toward national cohesion and the employment of all its capabilities if the ethnic identities inside it can define themselves under a broad and overarching identity. On the other hand, national security, social cohesion, the economy, and the legitimacy of the government are at risk if its ethnic identities conflict with the national identity or with those of other ethnic groups.

In a society where justice does not prevail in various dimensions of the social system or where people have a sense of the absence of justice, the national identity in all its components will undergo crisis and instability and the threat of disintegration. The same thing will happen to a society whose members do not view themselves as 'citizens' or 'members' of that community. Citizenship also implies responsibility, commitment, affection, and belief. On the other hand, members or citizens compare themselves to one another and when they use the amenities, resources, and privileges established in the structure of the society, they believe they are entitled to them and demand justice in different dimensions. A major part of the administration of justice is the responsibility of the government or the political system of society. If people do not however believe in justice, their sense of citizenship, their sense of commitment, their sense of responsibility, and their sense of emotion—all of which are the crystallizations of their national identity—will all be harmed, and the force that binds them to the community will be undermined. Based on this, an effort was made in the current study to examine and analyse the demands of various ethnic groups to achieve social justice from a perspective of peace, as governments work to curtail violence and provide the groundwork for long-lasting peace in their nations. On the one hand, peace is the absence of war, conflict, and violence; on the other, it is the presence of security, tranquilly, and peaceful living within a society, a nation, or on a global scale.

Multiplicity and diversity of identity have been a reality in most societies in the past and present. In the contemporary period, despite the modernization processes and the establishment of modern institutions, this diversity of identity not only did not diminish but also became a subject of controversy and conflicts around identity distinctions and differences. Also, from the second half of the 20th century, the processes of globalization, such as the increasing growth and expansion of the media as well as the removal of the monopoly of control and management of the media, caused the growth of identity awareness and provided the possibility of their representation. Along with original identity sources like race, religion, and nationality, new identities based on gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, pseudo-religious groups, and other factors emerged and demanded to be recognised as well as a share of social rights and privileges.

Iran's population is so diverse that the country is referred to as having a multi-ethnic and multilingual society. Persians, Turks, Kurds, Lors, Balochis, Turkmens, and other ethnic groups who speak various languages coexist

alongside one another and inside a single geographical political framework, demonstrating the ethnic and cultural diversity of Iranian society. Nearly all of these ethnic groups reside in border regions and share religious and cultural affiliations with ethnic communities in surrounding countries. For instance, the Balochis live in the southeast of the country bordering Pakistan, the Turkmen live in the northeast of the country bordering Turkmenistan, the Azaris live in the north and northwest of the country bordering the Republic of Azarbaijan and Turkey, the Arabs live in the west and southwest, and the Kurds live in the west and northwest of the country bordering Iraq and have settled in Turkey. All of these ethnic groups have political borders that cross their geographic territory. In terms of its social structure, Iran should be considered a heterogeneous country because it is home to people of various ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious identities, some of whom also live in neighbouring countries. According to social research, some centrifugal elements may occasionally appear to be centres of crises, particularly along the borders. On the other hand, ethnic groups in neighbouring countries such as Arabs and Kurds in Iraq, Azaris in the Republic of Azarbaijan, and Balochis in Pakistan can be considered centres of tension and crisis. Similar to other multiethnic and multilingual nations, Iran has also practised the politics of ethnic integration or ethnic exclusion, which has resulted in the emergence of ethnic tensions and the fronting of particular ethnic groups in Iran's geography over specific historical times.

Although there is less denial of the fact of identity diversity and pluralism in Iran, disputes and identity activities centred on the three axes of ethnicity, language, and religion have persisted during the past century. This is because of prejudice and inequities in the political, economic, and cultural structure of the country. In this regard, the current study attempted to offer a comprehensive picture of ethnic identities in the context of Iranian territory, considering the elite's perspective. Following a discussion of the effects, a plan for the steps that lead to tension reduction, the establishment of peace and harmony, and social development was provided.

According to interpretivism and qualitative methodology, the grounded theory approach was used to perform this study. Interviews with elites were conducted in the first stage using an anthropological method, and then regular Iranian citizens of various ethnic backgrounds—specifically Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Balochis, and Persians—were interviewed in the second stage. Based on the qualitative nature of the research, the purposive sampling method was applied. After completing 100 interviews, the theoretical saturation of the data was attained. To increase assurance, additional interviews with 215 participants were undertaken to ensure that the research was thorough and persuasive. The supervision and recommendations of qualitative approach experts were also employed. The in-depth and semi-structured interview technique was used to gather the information and data for the current study. Theoretical coding (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) was used to collect data from interviews and analyse the data in three phases. Informal conversational interviewing was utilised to gather the participants' key concepts and categories

in the first stage of data collection. In the second stage, the categories and concepts discovered during the interview procedure were examined for theoretical sampling and theoretical sensitivity using the grounded theory approach. After this point, when the concepts and categories that would make up the interview questions had been formed, it was necessary to standardise the interview questions using the semi-structured interview approach. This procedure proceeded until theoretical saturation was reached. In the preceding, concepts, major categories, and subcategories were obtained by applying open coding at the same time as data collecting. The subcategories were tied to one another and the major categories through the use of axial coding, and the types of categories were established in terms of causation, process, and consequence. In practice, the analysis procedures were applied cumulatively to produce the primary categories and, ultimately, the key phenomena.

The realization of any research will be practically sterile and useless until it leads to the formulation of practical strategies and plans to solve the problem and improve the situation. In other words, knowing and evaluating the current situation only deals with problematizing and posing the problem from different angles and aspects. The current research project has studied and recognised the internal and external conditions and issues of Iran regarding ethnic groups through modern scientific methods, it has provided suitable preparations for planning and presenting appropriate strategies, and it should be noted that the presentation of the plan and strategy depends on adopting appropriate scientific methods.

Qualitative studies as the present one, provide opportunities for the general strategies for solving the problem to be revealed. The extracted theoretical model makes it clear that the social and political rupture that has led to demands for justice from various ethnic groups and social strata is the most pressing challenge affecting the Iranian people. If this rupture is not handled from all of its apparent and covert angles and dimensions, it could lead to unfavourable outcomes and become practically hard to manage and control. This situation arises from the changes in the livelihood and economy of the country and the ideology governing the society and these issues can be considered the main factors in the formation of the phenomenon-based society.

In general, the situation has led to different strategic actions, and each of these actions will have different consequences. The two consequences of stability and deterioration of social capital indicate different scenarios that outline the country's future challenges. The final data analysis model, which was retrieved using grounded theory, is displayed in the image below. The circumstances and recommended strategies will be evaluated in the pages that follow.

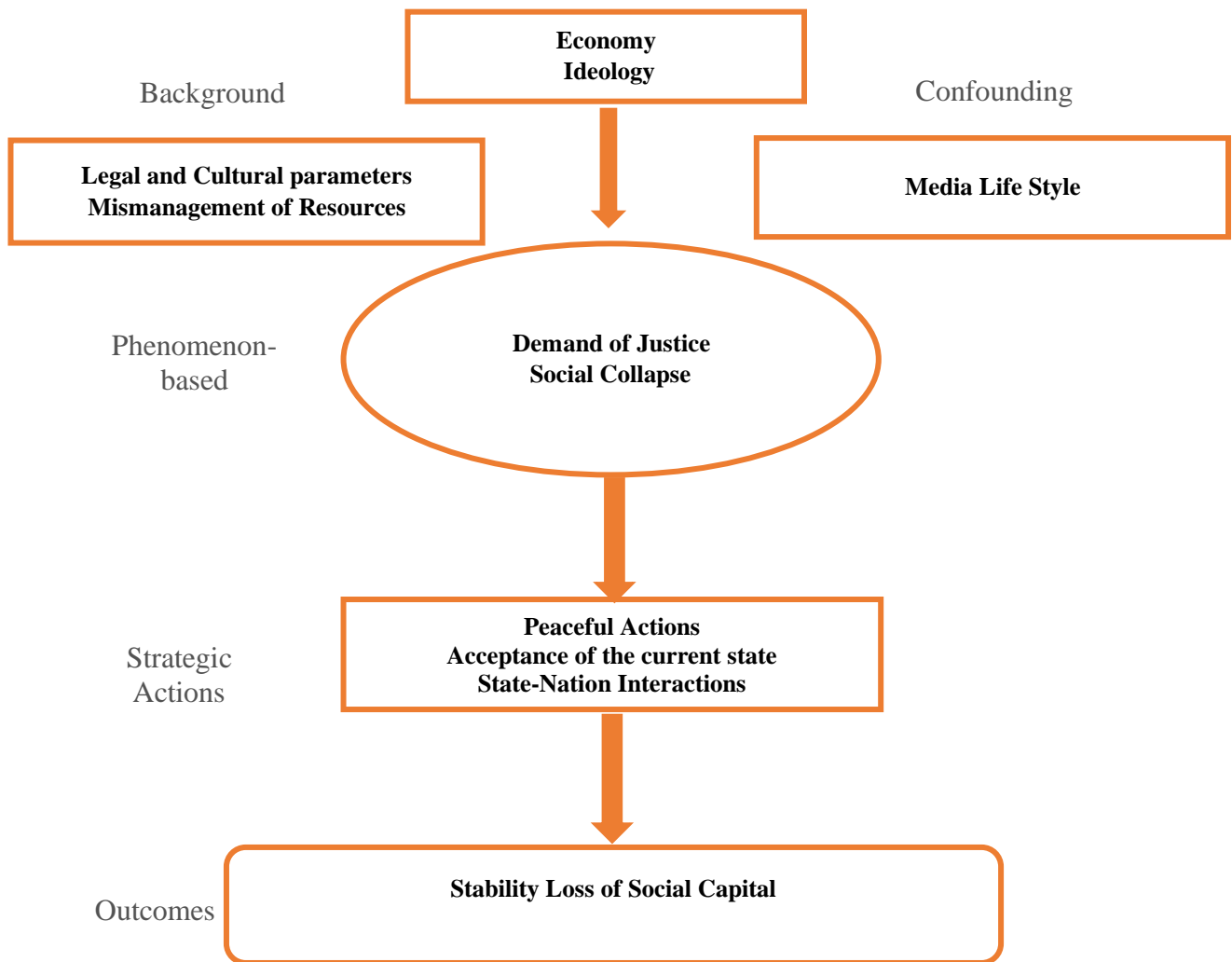


Figure 37 Conceptual model of investigating ethnic identity in Iran with an emphasis on peace (2018-2019)

The above model is a theoretical model resulting from data collection and analysis. The unequal economy was one of the characteristics mentioned by the ethnicities in Iran, because the majority of heavy industries, including steel and automobile companies, are located in Persian-speaking provinces such as Isfahan, Alborz, Semnan, and Markazi, and the largest amount of economic income is allocated to these provinces.

As a result, we are seeing the development of a perspective centred on these extracted demands, and based on that perspective, numerous ethnic groups are vying for their legal entitlements. These demands are undoubtedly made in the form of a request to the government and reflect a kind of peripheral awareness of how the central government has discriminated against ethnic communities.

Perhaps it can be claimed that the Azari ethnic group, particularly in the province of East Azarbaijan, is in the second level of importance in terms of generating economic wealth after the Persian speakers. This region also features

lucrative and employing factories in the industrial sector, including those that manufacture tractors, machines, petrochemicals, and other commodities. At the middle and small scale, there are a lot of factories and industrial towns operating. Azari speakers are not more satisfied with the government than other ethnic groups despite these circumstances. The feeling of inequality of Azaris can be summed up in two things: First, this group compares the economic conditions of their people with Persian speakers and they believe that the share of Azari-inhabited provinces is very small compared to the central provinces such as Isfahan, Semnan, Markazi, Qom, Alborz, and Tehran. They are unhappy about this discrepancy since it contradicts their beliefs and the relative state of the economy. The second factor that has contributed to this ethnic group's dissatisfaction with the government is their conviction that the majority of the industries that are currently operating in their regions date back to the previous administration, and that no new significant industrial companies have been created in the forty years since the revolution.

#### **A young Baloch woman, Zahedan**

There is no opportunity for work. No factory or anything. There have been a number of factories that were closed. Now, tell me, where men should go to work? Many people don't like it, but they have to do what they don't like. But they have to take care of their wife and children.

In the Kurdish regions of Iran, from the southern cities of West Azarbaijan Province to the provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Ilam, there are no factories, workshops or industrial towns to generate adequate income and to provide employment opportunities for talented and skilled groups of young people in these areas. Based on this, the unemployment rate for members of this ethnic group is exceptionally high, and the majority of the population who are actively seeking jobs migrate to Iran's provinces, particularly Tehran, or to brick-making factories in East Azarbaijan. These are the jobs that due to the difficulty of the work, the native people are not willing to engage in. Another part of its young population, who mostly have university educations, take refuge in the border cities and there, they work as kolbar with minimal daily wages and without any job prospects or insurance. Due to the lack of industrial plants, most of the products of the agricultural sector of this region are transferred out of these regions to other provinces without any processing. Such a situation has caused inequality and dissatisfaction among the people of these regions, who consider the role of the government important in its emergence. However, the Kurdish speakers of West Azarbaijan province live in an even worse condition; they are a minority within a minority and feel that they are third-level citizens.

As mentioned, Arab speakers of Iran are scattered in the southern Khuzestan, Bushehr, and Hormozgan provinces. These are the oil-rich regions, and since they have important ports, there are substantial movements of trade and business there. These ports not only draw in local labourers but also employees from other areas. However, the fact that there are more favourable economic and environmental conditions in that region could not have improved the quality of life of these people. Despite these circumstances, the members of this ethnic group do not enjoy the same level of prosperity as they would have to, and they also experience and voice economic disparity and displeasure.

The Baloch ethnic group, which, aside from the ethnic concerns, is also different from the rest of society in terms of religion, is associated with the lowest economic conditions and the most discontent among the analysed ethnic groups. As in the Kurdish territories, there has been no industrial development or, to put it another way, practically no growth in this area. On the other hand, the agricultural industry is on the verge of collapse as a result of the environmental conditions and the river drought that have affected Baloch-inhabited areas in recent decades. Due to internal issues and widespread illiteracy, the residents of these regions have not been prepared to play a significant role in the administrative departments of their province. As a result, the majority of administrative positions in these regions are held by Sistani, who practise the same religion as the ruling authority. In addition to all of these factors, the isolation of this region and its marginalisation play a significant role in its underdevelopment, which makes it difficult for its residents to engage and conduct business with its neighbouring provinces. Due to these circumstances, many residents in this region, particularly its youth, have turned to dangerous activities like smuggling drugs, goods, and gasoline, which has posed serious challenges and damage to the people.

**Maulana Abdul Hamid Ismail Zahi, Imam of Ahl-e-Sunnah  
Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan**

[Balochistan] has a lot of problems and poverty is more than any other region in the country. Most of this poverty is the result of discrimination. In the world where there is discrimination, it shows itself in two ways: economic poverty and cultural poverty; and we are suffering from both types.

We will briefly review the topics of importance to ethnic groups in the current study to understand the factors that contribute to the emergence of such disparities in the economic condition of ethnic groups and the development of a sense of inequality. The Sunni ethnic groups in Balochistan and Kurdistan were



deeply concerned about the ideology and sovereignty of the Shia religion as the nation's official religion as well as the alignment of this religious stratum with the views of government leaders. In this context, members of these ethnic groups referred to the history and the existence of religious divides, arguing that one of these two groups has always ended at the expense of the other, and a phenomenon is happening again. The development of economic centralism in the Persian-speaking provinces, which was brought about by political centralism in those areas and the election of more government officials in the years following the revolution, was another significant element. In this context, members of these ethnic groups referred to Iran's previous history and the existence of religious divides, arguing that one of these two movements has always ended at the expense of the other and that this practice is still occurring today. The development of economic centralism in the Persian-speaking provinces, which was brought about by political centralism in those areas and the election of more government officials in the years following the revolution, was another significant element. Ruling ethnic groups have imposed legal and cultural constraints, which are listed under underlying conditions, to make resource squandering in its various dimensions even worse.

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are two types of minorities: religious and sectarian. The issue of a religious minority is stated in Article 13 of the Constitution, which stipulates that Iranian Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians are recognised as religious minorities and are free to practice their religious ceremonies and in personal situations (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and wills). They are also free to teach and act according to their religious teachings and tradition. Although Persian is the official and most widely used language in Iran, distinct Iranian ethnic groups are also free to utilise their native tongues in publications and the media, as well as in the teaching of related literature in schools. While Article 15 of the Constitution announced the latter and recognised the right of various Iranian ethnic groups to use local dialects and languages, what has happened reveals the policy of ethnic and religious integration or exclusion. At the time of the victory of the Islamic revolution, the number of followers of Christian, Zoroastrian, and Jewish religious groups in the country was relatively large, and the people of these groups, contrary to the freedom that existed for their people in the Constitution, as a result of the new policies started to immigrate and leave the country. Today, relatively few people of these religious groups remain in the country. Also, the implementation of Article 15 of the Constitution as well as mother tongue instruction in schools is still on hold. Despite numerous requests and follow-ups, the Sunni community has been denied access to a mosque and a religious centre in a major metropolis like Tehran. The ethnic and religious culture of minorities is never advertised and promoted in the media, and what is advertised is not the ethnic identity but mostly the dominant culture and lifestyle. Regional and ethnic parties do not exist, non-governmental organizations are not allowed to operate, and security conditions are dominant in ethnic areas. The media policies and the promotion and advertisement of the

lifestyle close to the centre have been explained and described in this research under the title of intervening conditions.

Discrimination is one of the most significant criticisms Iranians have made of the dominant ethnic group. There is a general call for justice among Iranian ethnic groups due to the perception of political, social, economic, and cultural discrimination. Social disconnection or social and political discontinuity has resulted from inattention to this popular demand. Social disintegration threatens the life of Iranian society. Increasing poverty, widespread unemployment, job uncertainty and instability, reducing the capacity to produce wealth and provide welfare for the majority of society, increasing social problems, spatial segregation, erosion of social capital, and many other problems are getting worse in more or less accelerated processes. Large parts of people are pushed to the margins of the economic and social system who live on the outskirts of the city and in poor areas and do not have proper and fair access to educational or health services. Social values are polarized and there is no consensus on the priorities and the main issues.

**Salesman, 50-year-old, Mashhad**

Our economic situation is crumbling. The authorities should not cause us so much pain and discomfort. If our officials do not pack their bags and leave, I am sure that the future of Iran will be good.

**Paymaneh Roshanzadeh, gynecologist and writer, Semnan**

The society of capitalists and thieves are not part of the human society and their interests are for themselves, so that they can rob the masses of people. There is a war between the interests of these with those of the general people.

Official policies are at such a distant distance from the lives of a large group of people that has created two opposing galaxies. The satisfaction with low life and the feeling of alienation from society and its management policies are spreading in society. A large part of the people believes that they are kept away from the

resources they need to live a good, quality, and dignified life. These numerous signs indicate the increase of social divisions, and the conflict between the people, the government, and the elites. Instability, alienation, and conflict are just a few examples of how the disintegration of social bonds can manifest itself. In such a situation, the social and political discontinuity and the demand for justice are central phenomena in this research.

**Man, 43-years-old employee, Tehran**

The problem is that discrimination has nothing to do with ethnicity. We are from Tehran; If you are not considered an insider, you will be discriminated against from any ethnicity and city. Being and insider or outsider have nothing to do with ethnic background.

The provision of social justice and sustainable development requires the interaction of the state and the nation. The correct management of the country, regardless of the freedom of Iranian citizens, regardless of ethnicity and religion, is the only way out of the crisis. This strategy, however, which was developed taking into account free elections, freedom of speech, and ultimately the participation of ethnic elites at the senior management levels or perhaps a kind of political and democratic federalism, can improve this process. In the situation of social and political disruption and crisis that has formed due to mismanagement, civil and non-violent movements are taking shape, especially through social networks. Movements such as non-violent rallies and protests, which are also approved by the constitution, can be seen in every corner of Iran, although they are often faced with repression. Some people have chosen to remain passive and accept the current state of affairs as a result of the use of violence by the government to dismantle collective social movements as well as a lack of optimism for a brighter future within the society. This prompted the research to identify peaceful action, government-nation interaction, and passive acceptance as strategic actions.

From an economical perspective, we can observe a governmental form of economy that has granted special privileges to a select group of individuals, and it can be acknowledged that non-Persian (ethnic) and non-governmental Shia (religious) individuals as well as those who are labelled as outsiders are not able to access these resources and privileges. The majority of research participants discussed such discrimination and inequality, supporting their claims with such data on management ratios, cultural benefits ratios, unemployment rates, and provincial development levels.

It is obvious that such an economic, administrative and political system fosters the grounds of corruption, and today it is clear that the hoarding of marketers, the embezzlement of billions by government white-collar workers, and religious pretensions are clear signs of deviation and deterioration of social and political capital. In a country with an efficient government and high levels of social capital, the government and society complement each other and rush to help each other in facing the upcoming challenges. With sufficient social capital, communities become more conscious of their responsibilities and there is a higher sense of community cohesion, which results in fewer crimes and less

**Man, 36-year-old, from Taleghan, Karaj**

If poverty comes through any door, faith will leave through the same door. In a Muslim country, everyone is thinking about their own economic interests with nobody thinking about me as an employee.

government control over citizens (alignment of the interests of the government and the nation). The internalized norms formed through the socialization of individuals, on the one hand, reduces government expenses and on the other hand, strengthen the relationship between the people and the government. However, the current setting seems to be moving against this.

Therefore, the instability and deterioration of social capital are among the most important consequences of a society that is not institutionalized and regulated, a society where there is a feeling of discrimination among citizens who are labelled as ethnic and religious minorities and have a limited role in Iranian society.

#### **4.1. EXAMINING OPERATIONAL SCENARIOS AND POLICIES**

The research conducted and the results obtained have drawn two main scenarios for Iran: social stability, and the decline of social capital. If the current situation continues where social capital has deteriorated on various levels, eventually, a social, economic, political, and cultural collapse will occur. But according to the second scenario, which is desired, social stability will be achieved. This second scenario will depend on fundamental reforms, including creating fundamental reforms in the infrastructures and superstructures of the society or creating fundamental reforms in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields, and also making wise on behalf of the governing institutions with consideration of different ethnic groups.

**Baqir Sadriniya, university faculty member, Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

When the central power is strong, religious and ethnic issues should be resolved so that separatist tendencies do not form and disappear... If the central power is weakened, various voices will be raised, and the original voice will be lost. If a blind rebellion takes place, nothing but destruction will result.

As was previously stated, maintaining the status quo will contribute to the ongoing acceptance of it and exacerbate social, racial, and religious gaps. The expansion of these gaps causes the disintegration of the social system and hostility and conflict between social groups. However, the young generation and society's elites will be forced to depart because they are unhappy about not being able to improve their living conditions, which would lead to a dramatic shortage of human capital in society. Some forces are imposed on society and when it comes to the season of utilizing the knowledge and skills of talented people, all the scientific funds are already consumed. Ultimately, the absence of these highly skilled individuals will cause a lot of damage and harm to society.

The second scenario, which is the ideal one, finds Iran in a solid and stable condition in the areas of culture, society, economy, and politics. According to the research's findings, the outcome and the destiny of Iran—that is, whether the first scenario comes to pass or the society shifts toward the second—will be determined within the next three years.

**Maulana Abdul Hamid Ismail Zehi, Imam of Ahl-e-Sunnah Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan**

I hope for the future of Iran. After all, a journey is being completed. I believe that internal and external pressures force us to change our procedures. I believe that the current situation cannot continue. Changes that will satisfy the nation are inevitable. A series of policies should be changed and a series of problems needs to resolved.

In general, the future perspective of the country can be drawn as follows:

*Iran will be a country with ethnic and religious diversity that will be the source of national unity and solidarity. The political system will exclude the hierarchical social system and the ranking of citizens in internal policies by accepting the equality of ethnic identity alongside national identity. Political and cultural decisions will be made according to the development of inter-ethnic relations centred on national reconciliation. The development of the national will is intended to reduce inequality and discrimination.*

**Esfandiar Haji, history researcher and writer, Urmia, West Azerbaijan**

Change must start from all directions and it will not be fixed by changing the president or the populist methods of a person. There should be a public demand behind there. There is pressure and people are in distress. We have to change this... Activists should think for the future of the society.

To realise the aforementioned vision, operational tactics and strategies have been devised and put forth in a variety of social, cultural, political, social, and legal sectors. In the following, these strategies have been reviewed and updated. It should be mentioned that these initiatives primarily originate from interviews with members of the community and local elites, after which they are incorporated into strategies and activities.

## **4.2. PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS**

Dissatisfaction and feeling of discrimination among ethnic groups, along with social and political disintegration and instability in society, are just a few problems of contemporary Iran. The economic and political crisis caused by international sanctions has severely affected the domestic situation, which requires a further review of foreign policy. On the other hand, environmental crises and mismanagement of natural resources have caused public dissatisfaction. The members of every ethnic group examined in this study voiced a complex environmental problem that has led to the devastation of their cities and residential regions. The drying up of Hamun in Sistan and Balochestan, the deteriorating condition of the Karun River in Khuzestan, the drying up of Lake Urmia in Azarbaijan, and the air pollution in Tehran are some examples of these environmental crises. In all the mentioned cases, the main cause of the wretched environmental situation is considered to be wrong policies and silenced observations. Many environmental and social activists consider Iran to be a country of crises; water supply crisis, unemployment, hopelessness

about the future, corruption and scientific fraud, drug abuse, urban marginalisation, marriage and divorce problems, problems of teachers and workers, guilds and marketers, pension fund crisis, ethnic challenges, women's rights disputes, expansion of sexual risks, immigration, aristocracy, organized administrative and financial corruption, as well as war and conflict with regional countries, are some of the most important crises that Iran is facing in the current situation.

**Mohsen Goodarzi, sociologist, researcher and university lecturer, Tehran**

I do not agree with cultural practices and politics that try to promote a certain lifestyle through bureaucratic means.

These crises have been made worse by poor management, the underutilization of elites in specialised positions, and the prioritisation of relationships over rules at various levels. Meanwhile, ethnic groups experience the greatest levels of dissatisfaction because they feel more marginalised and excluded the further they are from the centre and corruption is better seen from a distance. Although government media regulations prohibit discussing racial issues, technological advancements have transcended the limitations of national radio and television and created a networked society, allowing for the expression and protest of issues on both a virtual and local level. As a result, public protests have grown exponentially in recent years. As a result of these demonstrations, some regime politicians have repeatedly advocated and presented a plan for national reconciliation to maintain the current situation. What is evident is that, like the majority of Iranian society, including workers, teachers, students, and women, ethnic and religious minorities have expectations that cannot be satisfied under the current legal and administrative structure. In the abnormal and unplanned conditions of Iran, which are associated with the crisis of mismanagement, it is impossible to envision national cohesion and ethnic solidarity, and finally, a peaceful and harmonious coexistence. The suggestions that follow, drawn from this research, are made in this regard.

#### *4.2.1. Realization of economic justice*

The old or traditional definition of justice is a definition that both non-religious and religious minds have paid attention to. Even the imams and prophets have addressed it in some cases, and that is the general definition of 'giving all the rightful their rights'. Before expressing this definition by the Prophet of Islam, Aristotle, Plato, and even Cicero have discussed it and it is also mentioned in the text of the holy books of the Bible and the Torah. Justice, according to Imam Ali, is the state in which everything is in its proper place; that is, if we put everything

in its appropriate position, justice would emerge. This definition is thorough, but a more precise definition of justice can be given in light of examples of justice and other connections that exist in the social lives of the people. We mention this definition in light of that general definition, which is: the distribution of opportunities and facilities within society to citizens based on merit and need in a manner in which everyone feels satisfied.

### **A young Arab boy, Hamidiyeh, Khuzestan**

Our economic situation is not good at all. Everything is very expensive, for example, the price of sugar. There is no justice in Iran. But this is not to say that only Arabs have been oppressed, in Iran all people have been oppressed.

With lower or higher intensity, every human being knows about oppression and discrimination. Justice is the opposite of oppression and discrimination. Economists have two completely different views on justice; some believe that justice has an external origin and must be injected into the economic system from the outside. Marxists and socialists are ardent speakers of this idea. Another group, however, contends that justice should not be enforced from outside the economic system since, if it is used properly, the economic system would establish justice on its own. Some people additionally bring up the topic of justice and market fairness. There is also a more balanced view according to which, justice is neither exogenous nor endogenous because in some cases it cannot be considered exogenous or endogenous, but the essence of the economy is to move towards maximum profit. Therefore, it conflicts with the nature of justice. However, this does not mean that one should follow a radical Marxist approach, but it emphasises the supervision of the government but it emphasizes the supervision of a fair government to establish justice.

When there is little to no tension or conflict between the many subsystems of the economic system and the system as a whole, justice is more successfully realised. Justice will not exist if social, political, and cultural systems are unable to develop some sort of rational interaction. Therefore, in some cases, governments can also become an obstacle to the realization of economic justice. This is especially true in Iran, where the basic aspects of the economy are under the control of the government.

It was mentioned in the previous chapter and in the lines above that, the majority of the industrial sector's production units are situated in the central provinces, depriving the peripheral provinces and the centres of the ethnic groups, leading to dissatisfaction and a sense of inequality among various ethnic groups, including Turks, Kurds, Arabs, and Balochis. The absence of manufacturing facilities and industrial towns in the Kurdistan and Balochestan



regions was discussed, and it was concluded that this situation had compelled the residents of these areas to engage in smuggling and other dangerous and illegal activities that negatively affect the economy and production system of the country. In contrast, the development of manufacturing facilities in these regions will, in addition to enhancing the production industry, create jobs, make use of the knowledge and skills of the locals in these regions, excite the youth, and advance science and technology. It will be possible to give educated Kurds and Baloch, and their lives and financial stability will be secured by formal employment inside the country.

**Mohammad Taghi Sheikhi, Demography Lecturer of Al-Zahra University, Tehran**

The state is concentrated in Tehran, and since 80 years ago, all investment has been made here, and other cities have been left without the benefit of industry and machinery.

Of course, the simple position of industrial equipment in these areas cannot create a sense of equality, because there is such a feeling of dissatisfaction among the people of Azari and Arab areas, and the level of dissatisfaction in these areas is also significant. The law of relativity, which states that people constantly compare their circumstances to those of their superior groups and become dissatisfied if their circumstances fall short of those of their superiors, is unquestionably the cause of this. Regarding the Turk and Arab ethnic groups, although their economic conditions are not comparable to the Kurdish and Baloch ethnic groups, since they compare themselves with Persian speakers and consider their economic conditions to be lower than theirs, a feeling of inequality is also created in them. However, this does not mean that there is no dissatisfaction among the people of the Persian regions, and there is absolute prosperity among them. The findings obtained from the interviews conducted with the people of those areas also show the existence of dissatisfaction among this group. Moreover, it is a fact that provinces such as Isfahan, Markazi, Semnan, Kerman, and Alborz have better economic conditions than the rest of Iran. The findings of the study and the attention of the residents of these two ethnic regions focused mostly on the Turkish and Arab ethnic groups, who believed that the economic growth that occurred after the Islamic Revolution was the result of the economic policies of the previous administration. They state that during the Islamic Revolution, their economic prosperity in the industry sector has not developed as it should be. As a result, government officials must help improve the economic conditions of the ethnic areas and also try to distribute them fairly and equally.

In a general summary, it can be said that chronic mismanagement has led to the creation of privileged, underprivileged, and even non-privileged areas in Iran. Sharing based on the level of production process involvement, equality of rights, a relative balance of wealth and income, and establishing property in its stable position are all components that have contributed to close substantial economic inequalities in various parts of Iran, particularly the margins and borders. The eradication of prostitution, poverty, and organ trafficking will only happen then. Economic justice will be established when the jobs are distributed based on justice and meritocracy, when the people of West Azarbaijan and Kurdistan, which are rich in agricultural, mineral, gold and other natural resources, have a share of it when they do not recognize Sistan and Balochestan with drug trafficking as a job. This is the outcome of sound economic management, which places equal rights, a relative balance between wealth and income, the placement of properties in their rightful positions, and the avoidance of ideologically biased consideration of the many ethnic groups. It is possible to move closer to the idea of economic and distributional justice by building industrial and agricultural factories, developing agriculture and animal husbandry, and utilising the skilled, young, and educated human capitals of the majority of the studied ethnic areas in the fields of agriculture, stone and gold mines, handicrafts, livestock products, and other production fields.

#### *4.2.2. Realization of social and cultural justice*

Philosophy of justice talks about two principles: the first principle defends equal freedom and equal opportunities, and the second principle observes in what situation it can be said that inequalities are justified and fair. In the Constitution, accepted and legal religions include Sunni religions and Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian religions, but these religions are not free to propagate their doctrines and also, the followers of these religions do not have a share in the administrative circles of the country. The findings obtained about the Sunni religious group, which is the largest religious minority in the country, show that there are many dissatisfactions among them. The lack of a mosque and a place of worship in Tehran, where, in their estimation, about one million members of the Sunni community reside, is one of the most significant problems mentioned by the ethnic groups involved in this research. As a result, they have to rent out residential areas for their religious rituals and prayer halls. In addition to the financial burden this issue places on them, the limited environmental space also causes them to have physical limitations and lengthy lines that prevent them from being able to worship. Besides, they have had further restrictions so that in the last few years, they have experienced the destruction of their prayer rooms. Another thing that was strange for the Sunni followers is the restriction and closure of their religious schools. From the distant past, in the regions of Kurdistan and Balochestan, the education of religious scholars has been carried out by their clerics in small rooms and chambers that were installed next to or inside the mosque. The High Council on Cultural Revolution has, however, emphasised since 2007 that the management of Sunni religious schools should be under the supervision of the 'Council for Planning of Sunni Schools' and the further supervision of the 'Council of Representatives of the Supreme Leader in

Sunni Affairs,' which has resulted in many Sunni religious schools rejecting this decision and being subsequently shut down. People from these ethnic groups also mentioned restricting and observing the words and deeds of religious leaders.

**Mohsen Goodarzi, sociologist, researcher and university lecturer, Tehran**

I mostly consider myself Iranian and in the cultural framework of Iran and belonging to the cultural tradition of Iran, like poetry, but my feeling towards Iranian peoples is a mixture of respect, as well as anger and dissatisfaction because of the injustice and discrimination that is directed towards them.

Today, research in various scientific fields has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of top-down and one-directional policies. Accordingly, it is suggested that the government should stop managing local matters and hand the responsibility up to the community. The Sunni religious community has always successfully controlled its religious centres in the past. In this regard, it is recommended that this group be relieved of the current security and control restrictions so that the local authorities and population can freely administer their religious affairs. Terrorist operations carried out in the early 2010s in the provinces of Sistan and Balochestan and Kurdistan are the result of this discriminatory view. In addition to fulfilling this group's forty-year wish, the establishment of a special Sunni religious centre and places of worship in Tehran alongside those of other monotheistic religions will be a step toward the realisation of the concepts of justice and equality; these initiatives will not pose a challenge to any of the monotheistic religions.

Another important finding of the research was on the topic of the mother tongue and teaching it. According to the law, different Iranian ethnic groups can be educated in their ethnic language and there should be no restrictions on this, which has not been implemented yet and remains at the level of a legal text. When no provisions are made for the implementation of these laws and when ethnic language is viewed as a security concern, it is as though there are no laws at all. Of course, in this context, two Kurdish and Turkish language and literature programmes have recently been established in the universities of Kurdistan and East Azarbaijan, but it is important to emphasise that these are not supported in the workplace or by employers. Since the goal of many entrance exam candidates is to choose a field that can guarantee their future career, the mere existence of such a university field without any provision in the labour market has caused it to be not very popular to the point that its seats remain empty.

The appropriate policies need to be devised under the direction of ethnic linguists and linguistic elites to overcome this feeling of prejudice and achieve social justice in the field of language. When all available resources are used to advance a specific language and religion while other ethnic and linguistic minorities are constrained from a security standpoint and suitable conditions are not provided for their growth and expansion, policies of integrating or removing ethnic identity are invoked, which leads to a form of indefensible inequality. Lawlessness and poor administration, which can be seen as the start of ignoring meritocracy, are two of the main reasons why social justice is not achieved.

Every ethnic group has certain signs, practices, and lifestyles that it utilises to maintain its identity and highlight how it differs from other ethnic groups. Some examples of these local symbols among Iranian peoples include local dress and the significance of its colours, certain ethnic musical genres, regional festivals and conventions, holding some group festivities, and local dances. The results of this study demonstrate that this sector has the lowest level of inequality among the ethnic groups that were analysed, and the government has been capable of acting reasonably successfully in these areas to meet the needs of various ethnic groups. The right to use local clothes, local music, local joy and mourning ceremonies and similar cultural practices are reserved for different ethnic groups, and in the conducted interviews, except for the limitation of the use of certain colours among the Kurdish and Arab ethnic groups in their clothing, no other case was found that would indicate injustice for them.

**Man, 38-year-old, Alborz province**

I will give just one example: Not long ago, Mr. Rouhani had a travel to Alborz province. Just for half a day, the cost of his trip was several billions from the governorate and... he came with his team a distance of 0 km. A few billions were spent just for an hour of speech that no one listens to. What can be expected with this situation?

The ethnic groups had given customary laws and social norms more consideration, which angered them because, in their opinion, unfair judgments are made about ethnic groups, particularly in Persian-speaking regions. However, there was no evidence to suggest that they were subject to limitations due to state pressures or governmental prohibitions. Another significant measure recently granted to foster a sense of cultural and social equality among Iranian ethnic groups is the usage of local clothing, which is now permitted in a large number of offices. When it comes to fostering satisfaction among ethnic

groups, the presence of the same cultural freedoms in this sector can serve as a model for other industries.

Iran is a country with ethnic and religious diversity, and there are restrictions for ethnic groups in some ceremonies and rituals. For example, in holding religious ceremonies such as Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Fitr, in which Sunnis and Shiites generally disagree, Sunnis celebrate Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha with Arab countries, and the Clergy Council warns Sunni clerics not to make public announcements. Or they are restricted from organizing ceremonies like Nowruz in Kurdistan. In some cases, on the part of the government, there are sensitivities in holding cultural events such as 'World Mother Language Day' (February 21) and 'World Baloch Culture Day' (March 2). World Baloch Culture Day is celebrated officially and very brightly in the Pakistani province of Balochistan and also in Afghanistan, but in Iran, due to the lack of public knowledge of the nature of such a ceremony and excessive emphasis on religious aspects and days of mourning, happy ceremonies and celebrations are either not allowed to be implemented or it is implemented just within the framework of some revolutionary practices and ceremonies.

The right to hold cultural, ethnic, and religious ceremonies and rituals have been considered in many human rights documents. Among them, we can refer to the 'Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities' which states in the second paragraph of Article 2 that persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate in cultural, religious, social, economic, and governmental life. The second paragraph of Article 2 of the aforementioned declaration also obliges governments to adopt measures for people belonging to minorities, so that people can expand their culture, language, traditions, and customs, except for certain actions that violate national laws and conflict with international norms. Also, according to Article 27 of the Constitution, gatherings are free, as long as they are not against Islamic and armed standards. Therefore, preventing the holding of religious and ethnic rituals is a violation of citizenship rights.

One of the other major issues is gender discrimination, which, in addition to legislative limitations, has its roots in social norms, laws, and conventions both at the government level and across society. Iranian society has historically been a patriarchal society, where males have held control from the same level of family and connections between husband and wife and women have been subservient to their instructions and commands. At the social level, the labour market and employment have been open to them because of the traditional and religious conviction that it is the man's job to support the family's expenses, and as a result, their responsibility and capacity to work is greater than that of the women. Contrary to the high acceptance rate of women into universities over the past fifteen years, there are no suitable job opportunities for them after they finish their educations, either at the level of government offices or in private companies. As a result, they must return to the traditional family environment and, based on customary rules, act like their mothers to accept the responsibilities of being a wife and a mother.

**Akbar Yadegari, painter, writer and theatre director, Semnan**

Discrimination can also be seen in the division of sexual labor. Some jobs are a taboo for women without a clear reason, including the presidency.

A society that aspires to advance in its growth must, of course, exert all of its available resources. Not employing our human resources effectively implies ignoring and excluding the majority of the population. Unfortunately, as women and girls in society have demonstrated, they are not only not less talented than men but also occupy the majority of university seats and compete equally with them in national exams. In light of this, it is appropriate to eliminate gender bias and the idea that women are the second sex on both the political and social levels. In this context, the government should work to ensure that women have equal opportunity and privilege in the workforce by doing away with the employment restrictions that have previously applied to job tests, as well as to various ministerial, governorship, and other senior executive posts to ensure a fair share for women. Managers should choose their forces based entirely on the talents of individuals and without any consideration for gender, and also the myth of the inefficiency of women should be abandoned. This can be done by harnessing the power of the media and taking advantage of social elites and civil activists.

The concept of second-level and second-degree citizenship is often repeated by people of ethnic groups. This can be considered a serious warning to cultural policymakers. Although the use of this concept is not officially discussed in political gatherings, the existence of its theoretical framework among academic and scientific elites has provided the basis for its measurement and evaluation in Iran. The political system in power does not particularly enjoy its presentation as a public problem, but ignoring it and denying its significance does not imply its absence. The formation of this concept in the minds of the general public and especially ethnic groups indicates its existential conditions. The backdrop for inter-ethnic conflict and animosity is influenced by several factors, including the unequal distribution of resources, services, and facilities, the rejection of inferior ethnic groups by superior groups in multi-ethnic provinces, and similar problems.

**Alireza Khani, cultural and literary activist, Ivan, Ilam**

When there is an unfair distribution of power and wealth, this warns that our demands will be denied. When we, as Kurds, are not allowed to have a Kurdish minister and president, or big factories to take our youth out of unemployment, these are undeniable results of this discrimination.

Therefore, it is advised to minimize the economic and cultural gaps to erase this concept from the psychological space of Iranian society and ethnic groups. In this regard, the following solutions are emphasized:

1. Comprehensive development of deprived areas by prioritising ethnic groups and religious minorities;
2. Development of participatory planning by taking advantage of the diverse and cultural capacities of ethnic groups;
3. Reduction of centralism and redistribution of economic and social opportunities;
4. Application of bottom-up planning approaches in a way as the distribution of resources starts from the border areas and then leads to the centre;
5. Restructuring the nation's managerial structure and administrative structure by giving local managers more authority.

#### *4.2.3. Realization of political justice*

Political justice is related to the domain of power and politics and the participation of people. It is about how the rulers find legitimacy and whether they have legitimacy with the people or not can be related to political justice. From the perspective of the people, if the political ruler has acquired the authority to lead, the government is just; nevertheless, if he has gained control through coercion and violence, the government is tyrannical, and it is not acceptable to obey him. The topic of political parties is among the most crucial ones that should be taken into account in the field of political justice. In the previous chapter, we discussed how, despite the approximately 200 political parties in Iran that have been granted licences and permits, only a small fraction of them are active in society. If we were to ask a few educated Iranians at random to name a few of these licenced parties, they would likely be unable to do so simply because they do not know.

From the point of view of some studied elites, what is conducive to success in the domestic and international arena is to approach with similar ideas, not with similar ethnicity.

**Bagher Sadriniya, faculty member and university lecturer,  
Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

Intellectual factors, rather than ethnic factors cause communication with other countries. Thinking is a means of communication with ourselves and with other countries. This is a very important point.

The findings of the present research confirm such a condition, and according to the studied ethnic groups, parties in Iran mainly spring up like mushrooms during elections and for a maximum of two weeks and disappear after the election process is over. These same parties also primarily work following a form of macro-structural thinking, and in ethnically diverse places, we lack a party that reflects the needs of our people on an ethnic level. The existence of security and surveillance methods controlled by various military and security institutions, many of which are mostly independent of the state, as well as a large number of filtering networks in Iran, may be the most significant factor in the decline and withdrawal of parties in that nation. The most essential function a party can perform is to leverage democratic ideals and the dialogue process to communicate the desires of its supporters or the wider public. When this process is absent from society, democratic values and social dialogue are replaced by conflict and violence, and the emergence of such a situation might finally call into question the legitimacy of the system.

In terms of implementation, a just government is one that, by removing restrictions, provides the possibility of equal and free participation for people in political fields and distributes power and political positions according to the talent and competence of people. In this context, all four non-Persian-speaking ethnic groups were dissatisfied. Members of Kurdish, Baloch, and Arab ethnic groups interviewed here, stated that within four decades after the Islamic Revolution, there was no case of their fellow speakers being elected to first-level political positions such as heads of the executive, legislative, or judicial branches, government ministers, governors, or ambassadors of the country in important regions of the world. In the Arab and Baloch areas, the governor is chosen mainly from non-natives. Apart from ethnicity, the societies of Balochistan and Kurdistan mention that the reason for this inequality is related to their different religious orientations. Such a situation shows how severe the ideological dominance of the country is when it has reached the point where one ideological faction is in charge of the political affairs of the country. The level of



dissatisfaction of the Azari-speaking ethnic group, which shares the same religion with the ruling party, is not less than the three ethnic groups expressed in these fields. This demonstrates that there are other contributing factors to this predicament and that its persistence is not exclusively ideological. Turkish-speaking citizens say that, compared to their proportion of the total population, they have not received much political attention during the past four decades and have been assigned very few significant governmental positions.

**Maulana Abdul Hamid Ismail Zehi, Imam of Ahl-e-Sunnah,  
Zahedan, Sistan and Balochistan**

Baloch make up 75% or at least 70% of the population here, yet they have very little control over affairs and very little participation. They do not work in administration, and the proportion of Baloch people employed by the government of the province is very low.

In other words, the political elites in Iran are divided into insiders and outsiders. Insiders exist in public administration from the governorate to high levels of management, while outsiders do not exist at all. Such a situation is very different from the theme of political justice that was presented at the beginning of this section, and if a resolution is not discovered, if it is not taken into account by setting aside the insider and outsider perspectives, and if it is not given attention to management meritocracy at various political levels, the realisation of political justice and the legitimacy of the government will be seriously jeopardised. As a result, it is essential to view the outsiders who are marginalised as insiders.

In addition, by establishing a federal political structure, it is possible to allow all the different ethnic groups and languages to determine their political destinies. at the least political expense to the system. And eventually, produce political justice. The realization of such an objective will be with the lowest political cost for the system and would enable political justice.

#### *4.2.4. Realization of social welfare*

Social welfare includes both material and spiritual aspects of life. The material aspect emphasizes the provision of basic needs, food, clothing, job, housing, and health, and the spiritual dimension can also include literacy and education, legal protection, as well as the enjoyment of human, political, social, and economic rights. Social welfare is an organized set of laws, regulations, programs, and policies that are presented in the form of welfare and social institutions to respond to material and spiritual needs and provide human happiness to create a foundation for growth and excellence. Iran in the global welfare index of 2017

was ranked 117 among 142 countries. This position demonstrates that Iran is in a very tough situation in terms of social welfare, but what is more worrisome is that the indicators of social welfare seriously decline the further we move away from the centre toward the minorities and borders in aspects like access to infrastructure services, roads and dams, health and hygiene services, cinemas and parks and green space, leisure time, personal and public security, judicial security, and many other indicators.

The lack of hospitals in Kurdistan and Balochestan is so awful that patients must travel at least three to four hours to reach provincial centres. Rural health centres in Kurdistan are unable to provide even the most basic medical care and procedures, forcing patients to return home or travel to neighbouring regions. In addition, when visiting Tehran's hospitals, one may see a large number of patients from various cities who have taken refuge in the city owing to the deprivation of their regions, and their families spend the night in the hospital yard or the adjacent parks and streets.

#### **A young Arab man, working in a grocery store, Mashhad**

I don't want anything more from society because if I do, I will be even more disappointed. I am from Abadan, but owing to unemployment in my hometown, I had to relocate to earn a living.

Access to the natural gas pipelines is still not possible in the borders and especially in its villages, and in this context, in recent years, major disasters occurred in schools in Kurdistan and Balochestan due to the use of old oil heaters, which killed several children and teachers, and the effects of burns on the bodies of many them remained. Many of these rural schools continue to offer classes in tents or the open air, on plains and in deserts. There are no tent schools above primary school, and rural adolescent boys and girls are obliged to attend urban schools every day, regardless of the weather. In this situation, and due to a lack of adequate transportation, forced dropout is prevalent, particularly among girls. Schools in cities are typically held in two-time shifts, with a significant number of students in each classroom.

Cinema, parks and free time have no meaning in the borders of Iran. Baneh and Marivani children leaping on explosives in Iran's western borders and being killed or having their hands and feet amputated while playing is heartbreaking news, yet it is widely reported. Minority and border development and industrial and road infrastructures are highly upsetting, and the roadways of those places have become a killing ground for their youth. In this regard, it is recommended

that the indicators of social welfare be investigated with careful regulation and without ethnic-religious discrimination, particularly in the fields of health and education, and taking into consideration at least the regional scope and road infrastructure separately, to avoid irreparable damage, defects, and failures; this must be corrected, and suitable steps must be taken in this direction.

#### *5.2.5. The role of mass media and media justice in ethnic solidarity*

Following the birth of the printing industry and its effects on social developments over the last few centuries, one of the most influential social institutions, alongside the family and the formal education system, is the means of mass communication, the media, which are increasing in number, quality, and technology, as well as their audiences and users. These modern channels of communication are important for informing, monitoring, protecting, training, and creating social cohesion. National broadcasting in Iran, embodied in state-run television and media, has failed to appropriately represent ethnic identity. Indeed, there is a widespread belief that national radio and television networks cannot be given the national title. The established provincial media acts more as a caricature image of ethnic groups' life and culture failing to reflect and respond to their cultural demands. Almost all the programs, documentaries, series, and movies on the television channels show the lifestyle and culture of Persian speakers living in Tehran, whereas TV programmes depicting the lifestyle, culture, and customs of ethnic communities are very limited and inaccurate. From a religious standpoint, practically all programmes that directly or indirectly deal with religious problems are in line with the country's official religion, Shiism, and Sunni adherents are not represented at all.

Apart from the national media, the people of each province also have their audio and visual media, which are usually named after the ethnic group of that province, a historical and geographical place, or a person who is a symbol of that region. As stated in the previous chapters, Azari speakers live mainly in the provinces of East Azarbaijan, Zanjan, and Ardabil, with an almost equal population ratio in the province of West Azarbaijan. According to the findings, members of this identity group do not use provincial networks frequently and do not regard them as an authentic representation of their culture and customs. Concerning the Kurdish-speaking ethnic groups located in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Ilam, as well as half of West Azarbaijan, it can be stated that until around 3-4 years ago, the people of this region were dissatisfied with their provincial TV networks. However, significant shifts have taken place in the two networks of Kurdistan and Mahabad (southwest Azarbaijan), and the data reflect the relative contentment of the inhabitants of these regions, particularly at the public level. During these years, the issue of the culture and art of the people of this region, especially in the field of folklore literature, music art, clothing, and local culture, has received more attention to the point where, for the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in these two regions, musical instruments are shown and big Iranian and local music groups are invited to perform the program.

**Arab boy, University student, Abadan, Khuzestan**

In fact, there is no media that matches our culture. For example, our music is very important to us and it cannot be seen in the media; or in the various ceremonies we have [are not represented]. Provincial media should follow the culture of each region.

This is a favourable turning point that may attract potential over-the-border media audiences to local news outlets. Of course, these platforms are not without flaws, and there are still points of disagreement and dissatisfaction with them. One of the negative aspects of these networks is the predominance of Shiite religious ideas in these media channels, although these regions are almost entirely composed of Sunnis. Until a few years ago, none of these networks used the local horizon associated with Sunni while announcing the call to prayer, and now there are only three times calls to prayer although Sunni has five calls to prayer during the day. Furthermore, no name of Sunni religious elders is mentioned in these networks, yet when there are associations with Shia Imams, these networks operate following Shia traditions.

The province of Sistan and Balochestan is a combination of two Sistani minority groups with the Shia religion in the north of the province and the Baloch Sunni majority in the centre and south of the province. The findings obtained from the Baloch ethnic group, about the provincial television network of this region, show that there is widespread dissatisfaction. According to the people of this region, the management of this network is under the control of the Sistani religious minority who are aligned with the government, and even the name of this TV network, Hamoon, is derived from the geographical region of this ethnic group, which is mostly trying to show its culture, customs, and religion. This is while Baloch speakers do not find themselves represented in this media as much as they should. According to them, only a few hours of programs are broadcast in the Balochi language during the day, mostly in the dead hours. The findings obtained about the Arab ethnicity, which is placed among the Fars and Bakhtiari ethnic groups, also indicate the existence of a similar view. All of these cases have created a sense of discrimination among the mentioned ethnic and religious groups, and they do not find their identity and culture represented in these TV networks. Consequently, they go to satellite channels and internet networks fundamentally aligned with their ethnic and religious culture on the other side of the borders. For each of these ethnic and religious groups, there are several channels in neighbouring countries such as Iraq, Azarbaijan, Turkey,

Pakistan, and Arab countries, as well as various networks of opposition groups in Europe.

### **A young businessman in the market, Tabriz**

It is evident that the media does not behave properly in relation to ethnic groups. You can see how the media deal with different dialects. They are mostly used for laughter and comedy. They are openly insulting ethnic groups.

It is clear that the mainstream media promotes and shows religiously and politically acceptable collective identities, and ethnic minorities are not represented in national radio and television. This is in contrast to the media's responsibility to produce media content that promotes ethnic integration, cohesion, and solidarity. To this end, products can be broadcasted that emphasize the common historical and cultural background of Iranians and also ethnic media elites can be invited to radio and television programmes. Furthermore, assimilation politics and the politicisation of cultural subjects should be avoided. Furthermore, there should be a point of view based on the equality of all voices that respects all ethnic groups as well as their traditions and cultural customs. If this occurs, there will be a greater understanding among ethnic groups, and the gap between different ethnicities will be bridged because the media are seen as vital aspects in the development of ethnic coexistence. But public media, especially television, has never met the needs of the general public, leading people to other media and virtual spaces. On the other hand, filtering and confrontation with free media by some powerful parties, indicate a form of monopolizing information and preventing its free circulation. In this regard, it is suggested that, rather than confronting the virtual media and obstructing the flow of information, this could be dealt with in moderation, and not only the online media space should be freed, but also the possibility of the private sector and independent parties entering the field of television media and issuing a licence should be provided. Private networks should be developed so that private media can produce and broadcast programs alongside the national media. This will create healthy competition and return public trust in the national media.

#### *4.2.6. The role of the proximity between religions*

In the section on social and cultural justice, cases of Sunni minority dissatisfaction with the government were discussed and it was stated that even Islamic religions, do not receive a fair and equal budget and educational facilities. There is no mosque for Sunnis in Tehran. In Mashhad, Sunni mosques

are even destroyed. Religious missionaries are arrested, religious schools are closed, religious books are banned, religious minorities face restrictions for simple printing and publishing, the travels of their religious elders are controlled, and various levels and forms of prohibitions are imposed on them. These forms of behaviour would eventually cause religious conflicts. Religious restrictions, in turn, lead to extremism and violence, examples of which have been observed in recent years, particularly among Sunnis in Balochistan and Kurdistan. In this regard, the idea of proximation is presented, which will lead to unity and cohesion among ethnic and religious minorities, and the result will be peaceful dialogue and coexistence, the practical example of which are abundant throughout history, most notable in the early days of Islam.

The solution proposed by the majority of the studied elites is to practise ‘majority religious democracy’.

**Baqir Sadriniya, faculty member and university lecturer,  
Tabriz, East Azerbaijan**

The official religion should not be presented in such a way that some people feel to be a minority, and the adherents of other religions should not feel insulted or oppressed.

The majority of subjects in both Sunni and Shia religions revolve around shared religious beliefs and practices. The problems are limited to governance that dates back approximately 1400 years, when Shiites believe, based on some religious sources and their interpretation, that the government should reach Ali, while Sunnis believe, based on other sources and traditions, that what happened at that time did not deviate from the ideas of the Prophet of Islam. This difference of thinking has existed since then and whenever one of these two groups has taken over the government, they have tried to implement their ideas and marginalize the other. In the present situation, when the government is in the hands of Shiites, Sunni followers in this study complain about discrimination and dissatisfaction. According to the respondents of both groups of Shia and Sunni followers, one of the main findings reached in the current research is that it is a practical solution to remove religious ideas from the foundation of governance and establish the conditions for a secular government. One of the significant consequences of this is the elimination of any privileges or prejudices based on religious beliefs and the deployment of human skills based simply on individuals’ knowledge and expertise.

#### *4.2.7. Using legal democratic capacities and implementing its pending principles*

The reference to numerous core legal concepts was explored extensively in the findings of this research, and it was noted that many of the requests raised by

ethnic groups can be satisfied by referring to these principles. The issue of religious, religious, and human freedoms enshrined in Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the Constitution, the issue of mother tongue education enshrined in Article 15 and other relevant Articles, the issue of equality of different ethnicities and races enshrined in Article 19, and many other cases demonstrate the existence of a form of democratic potential and capacity in the country's laws for the realisation of ethnic and religious minorities' rights.

**Mohsen Soodmand, psychologist and consultant, Ardabil, West Azerbaijan**

Mother tongue education can be conducted by public. It should be left to the people themselves. This is a right and it is mentioned in the Constitution. If this is recognised by the government or the ministry of education, then the classes will be organized.

Organizing the cultural affairs of ethnic groups by the public is an effective and key policy in solving the problem. According to the findings of this research, what has caused the dissatisfaction of these ethnic groups, which in certain cases is so intense that leads to a type of social crisis and breakdown, is the suspension of these laws to the level of legal texts and not being implemented during the four decades of the reign of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Throughout this time, many administrations with varying intellectual and political bents have come and gone, but none have dared to debate or execute these pending concepts. As stated, many of the demands of different ethnicities and religions are congruent with these principles, and many of the atrocities committed were the result of the personal approaches and behaviours of inefficient managers. As a result, in the current situation of the country, and despite various crises, it is necessary to refer to these legal democratic principles as one of the solutions in the field of ethnic demands and to achieve reconciliation and lasting peace among different ethnic groups and religions, and by adhering to the law, while confronting the personal views of arrogant people, some form of moderation to be achieved in protest activities and ethnic and religious movements.

## About the Author:

**Kameel Ahmady** is a Coordinator Conducting Social Anthropology Research received the IKWR 2017 Truth Honour Award from London Law University and placed first in the literary category at the 2017 Global P.E.A.C.E. Foundation ceremony hosted by George Washington University. Dual British-Iranian national, Kameel Ahmady studied economic environment and publishing at the University of Communications in London, earned an M.A. in Social Anthropology from the University of Kent, and pursued additional courses on research methods and Middle East Studies at the London School of Economics and Birkbeck, University of London. Kameel has worked mainly on international and social development focusing on gender and minority issues. Published in English, Farsi, Turkish and Kurdish, his previous pioneering research has garnered international attention. In 2011, Etkin in Istanbul brought out *Another look at east and south-east Turkey*, and his ground-breaking research, *In the Name of Tradition. Female Genital Mutilation in Iran*, appeared in 2015 with UnCUT/VOICES Press. Nova Science Publisher added *An Echo of Silence* – the study of Early Child Marriage (ECM) in Iran -- to its program in 2017, a work that Shirazeh publishing made available in Farsi. In 2020, *A House on Water*, investigating temporary marriage in Iran, was brought out by Shirazeh in Tehran and Mehri in London, as well as, in 2019, *Childhood Plunder* (scavenging—i.e. waste picking—in Tehran), printed by IRSPRC. In the last few years he has focused on LGBT and ethnicity in such works as *Forbidden Tale*, a comprehensive study of LGB individuals in Iran, printed in English and Farsi by Mehri publishing in 2020 along with *The House with an Open Door*, a comprehensive look at temporary marriage in Iran, and, in 2021, *From Border to Border, an analysis of Iranian identity and ethnicity*, based on research with five major Turkish (Azari), Kurdish, Baloch, Arab and Fars (Persian speaking) ethnic groups also published by Mehri in Farsi and English. His new book on child labour ‘Traces of Exploitation in Childhood’ (A Comprehensive Research on Forms, Causes and Consequences of Child Labour in Iran) in June 2021 and published by Avaye Buf publishing. His latest research on Incestuous Adultery and Male Circumcision or Male Genital Mutilation/Cutting (MGM/C) published recently by the same publisher as well as scholar press.



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Iran is a country with a very high level of ethnic and religious diversity as well as identity plurality. Ethnic discrimination coupled with a lack of shared standards has weakened national solidarity and cohesion, which has given rise to ethnocentrism.

In most civilizations, both ancient and modern, multiplicity and variety of identities are a reigning reality. The current age has seen an expansion in identity diversity and pluralism along with other social and cultural changes. In addition to traditional identities based on race, religion, and nationality, new identities are emerging based on gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, pseudo-religious organisations, and other measures and are also seeking recognition.

This book presents a thorough history of the identity demands of different ethnic groups in Iranian as well as a thorough analysis on theoretical frameworks and current trends.



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