A Geopolitical Analysis of Ethnicity in Iran, with
an emphasis on challenges and opportunities

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Abstract

Today, ethnicity and pluralism is one of the important international issues because some 179 countries across the globe have been formed out of ethnicity or racial multiplicity. From the ethnic point of view, India has the foremost place and Iran is one among the multi-ethnic country. The problem of ethnicity in Iran goes back to the last 100 years and to some respect it was propounded during the post-constitutionalism era. Iranian society is consisted of multi-ethnic and diverse local cultures-each of which, apart from common Iranian-Islamic identities, possesses a bit of local and regional identities hence, Iranian society is counted as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural one. However, a multi-ethnic society, in a particular condition, causes challenges and crisis to the government or social management. Instances of those challenges can also be observed in the contemporary Iranian history.

Going through assimilative method that leads to absorption of different ethnicity in a culture as well pluralism method that is based on the official recognition of different ethnic groups and granting them some rights, authors have propound a new approach emphasizing on the rights of citizen. In this respect, in the society, everybody living free from ethnic and cultural prejudices enjoy equal rights. Consequently, we may not talk about ethnic security without focusing on the rights of citizen.

By this way, multi-ethnic issue of a country can be presented like an opportunity and can be placed as the beginning of crisis management of this domain. While discussing ethnicity, the current paper emphasizes on opportunistic approach hence, tries to transform existing challenges and threats into progressive opportunities.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Challenges, Opportunities, Strategies, Policy-making, Ethnically.

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Problem Definition

Among most important and attentive topics of each society is the connection between multi- identities with their national and tribal characteristics that connects that culture together. A multicultural society, once lacking cultural cohesiveness, gradually encounters with tribal and regional cultural aggression and polarization. With the aim of institutionalizing its values, tribal culture tries to overcome the regional ones and disturbs cultural balance with its power and dominance on media and other institutions effective in the field of socialization. With the same aggression, native cultures by adopting resistance policies against official culture, disturbs its performance. The aggression becomes source of vacuum in the formation of cohesive identities and socialization of people and utmost leads to weaken social cohesiveness. Exchange and cohesiveness of a society with the official culture and specification of their roles in forming future identity of a person and identical aims play wider role in creating a cohesive society and preventing confusion/disorder. Thus, lack of knowledge about connections between these variables help intensify gaps and aggression with regard to execution of policies and strategies and instead of safeguarding and boosting social cohesiveness, it gives way to social divergence. Iran being on the cross road of historical migrations, has bestowed with different ethnic groups that in proportion to pre-history and under the effect of socio political transition are distributed and settled widely across this land. Historical migrations between Africa, Europe and Asia have led to ethnic blending and emergence of polygene. Geographical location of Iran and onslaught of immigrants with different languages and faith during the last 3000 years led to the settlement of three lingual families of Aryan, Semite (Arabic, Hebrew and Assyrian) and Aral Altaic (Turkish and Mongolian) as well as religions like Zoroastrian, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Here question arises as whether ethnic presence in Iran is a threat or an opportunity? And how can ethnicity be profitable for cohesiveness, security and advancement of the country? As such, the current research tries to respond to these questions and present a suitable way so far as the national cohesiveness is concerned.

Research Hypotheses

1. It seems that the national diversity in Iran provides an opportunity for the country's solidarity and security.
2. Diversity in Iran can help bring durable advancement and development.

Need and Importance to Study Ethnicity

To Alvin Toffler, 3rd millennium is the millennium of ethnicity. Huntington, too, believes that the tensions and deliberations have aimed nations with identity crises. Ethnic and identity crises have direct connections with each other. Statistics show that the rate of conflicts in the world has increased several folds between 1950s and 2000 (i.e. in the last half a century). The issue of ethnic tensions is not merely related to southern, eastern or third world countries rather all international systems even the countries like Canada and France have encountered with this problem hence, the ethnic issue is their grave concern. In the last five decades, about 5 million people have been displaced due to ethnic confrontations and some 30 countries have declared independences based on ethnic variables and earned the membership of the United Nations Organization. In the last half-a-century, there has been 93 ethnic warfare (i.e. 30 related to Asia, 22 to northern Africa, 29 to the African desert,10 in northern and Eastern Europe and two in Latin America). Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burma etc are some of the most recent that took place in 1990s.

With respect to the above discussion, we can say that:

1. In second half of the 20th century, causes of most of the wars have been internal and ethnic rather than between countries or states;
2. Ethnicity is present in all five continents and has nothing to do with a particular region;
3. Iran is one of the multi-ethnic countries and the discussion on cohesion and integration are considered as fundamental problems of the country in the ethnic domain;
4. Iran's ethnicity has often been misused by enemies.

Therefore, there is a need to study ethnic conditions in Iran in order to identify threatening and opportunistic aspects and present ways to national solidarity and security.

Research Methodology

With regard to the proposed topic, the current research has used a descriptive-analytical method. Based primarily on library, the researchers would try to analyze their hypotheses with descriptive-analytical method (content analysis).

Theoretical Basis

In a simple definition of ethnicity it can be said: ethnic group is a social organ formed in a wider area with distinguished people who, in the course of history, have established economic, cultural and kinship ties and have common language, cultural, social, religious and traditional specialties and values. On this basis, once we talk about ethnicity, we really intend a kind of ethnic wisdom that pursues demands for extra-judicial, legal and governmental evasiveness and incline to autonomy, secessionism and separation. Therefore, there exist contextual and substantial differences between ethnicity and ethnically.

The term 'ethnicity' refers to a group that with its basic particularities like language, customs and traditions and heritage, is distinct from other social groups having racial attachment. Victor Kozlov, a well-known anthropologist says: "an ethnic group or ethnic simultaneity is a social organization existing on a distinguished piece of land and covering people who, in the course of history, have established economic, cultural and kinship ties" [Dajem Khoyee, 2001:61].

Ethnicity contains both subjective and objective variables expressed as: an attachment and mental consciousness through identity, connection, common profit, and common desires and an objective cultural participation in common language, contemporary history, religion and territory [Milton Esman].

Alexander defines ethnicity as: initial real specialties leading to the attachment of a group of people with other due to their common race, religion and ethnic origin, apart from their language or cultural characteristics.

According to Greenwood, "ethnicity is a part of culture and group of people that is indicator of desire and particularities of that group. Based on this, the group is segregated from rest of the groups existing in a big political unit."

Greenwood considers some of the 'self-conscious ethnicity' indicators in 'mother tongue' as 'the land of Niakan' as mental-cultural specialties and 'the way of living' [Ramzanzadeh, 1997:95].

Ethnic Structure and Distribution of Ethnic Population in Iran

Having placed at the crossroad of historical migration Iran itself has encountered with diverse ethnic composition that has settled and distributed

widely and have further distributed and intermixed racial and ethnic groups in Africa, Asia and Europe. The geographical location of Iran and onslaught of different migrants with different languages and beliefs in the last 3000 years have led to the settlement of three lingual families of Aryan, Semite (Arabic, Hebrew and Assyrian) and Aral Altaic (Turkish and Mongolian) as well as religions like Zoroastrian, Judaism, Christianity and Islam in Iran.

Fredrick Hussey during his 18-month stay in Iran conducted an anthropometric measurement and distributed Iranian nations into six racial groups: Aryan, Mongolian, Aryan-Mongolian, Semite, Semite-Mongolian, Aryan and Black.

Freddie Monis, a French Iranologist in his book 'Iranian Nations' has distributed the country on the basis of name and geographical locations such as Kurds in western Iran, Bakhtiaris in center, Lores in Lorestan, Arab tribes in Khuzestan, Ghashghayee in Fars, Balooch and Brahuyee in Baloochestan, Turkomans in north and Ghazalbash in Azerbaijan.

In one classification that has paid attention to anthropological, linguistic and social particularities, Iranian nations and tribes have been disturbed as follows:

1) Baloocheh tribes: Lived in an area around Baloochestan, off the Coast of Oman Sea to northern Baloochestan and southern Khurasan.

2) Brahuyee tribes: Lived in northern Baloochestan. They are Dravidian and speak Dravidian language.

3) Azeris:

 a) Ghazalbash lived in Azerbaijan, Maghan Plain, Sabalan Mountains and Orumiyeh (Afshar clan).

 b) Afshar Ghazalbash lived in Zanjan region;

 c) Inanlu and Baghdadi Ghazalnash lived in Qom and Saveh area;

 d) Three tribes of Inanlu, Baharlu and people from Khumsek Farsi clan;

 e) Ghashghayee in Fars province;

 f) Turkomans including Yamut, Takeh, Goklan tribes lived in the whole Gorgan Plain and northern Khurasan;

 g) Ghazzaq consisting three groups lived in vicinity of the cities of Gumbad, Kavush, Gorgan and Bander Turkoman;

 h) Elat Turk is in the rest of Iran like Sirjan, Ghazvin and Karaj.

4) Kurds:

 a) Kurd clans living in the provinces of Kurdistan, Kerman shah and Western Azerbaijan;

b) Kurd clans living in the cities of Bajnurd, Ghoochan, Shirvan in Khurasan province, Kurds living in the area around Mazandaran, southern Gilan and Tehran.

5) Lores and Laks:

a) Lores specially are living in Lorestan area, part of northern plain of Khuzestan and the foothill of Zagros ;

b) Chaharmahal Bakhtiari region and northeastern Khuzestan.

c)   Posht-e-Kuh (Elam);

d) Kehkiloyeh, Bovir Ahmad and similar clans.

6) Arab Clans:

a) Different Arab clans living in Khuzestan area;

b) Arab Fars clans (from Khamseh Fars) living in Khuzestan area;

c) Arab clans living in Khurasan area (Taimuri). Arabs living around Varamin and other points of Iran and Lorestan and they often forgotten their characteristics of being Arab and even lack their Arabic language [Yousefizadeh, 1995:76].
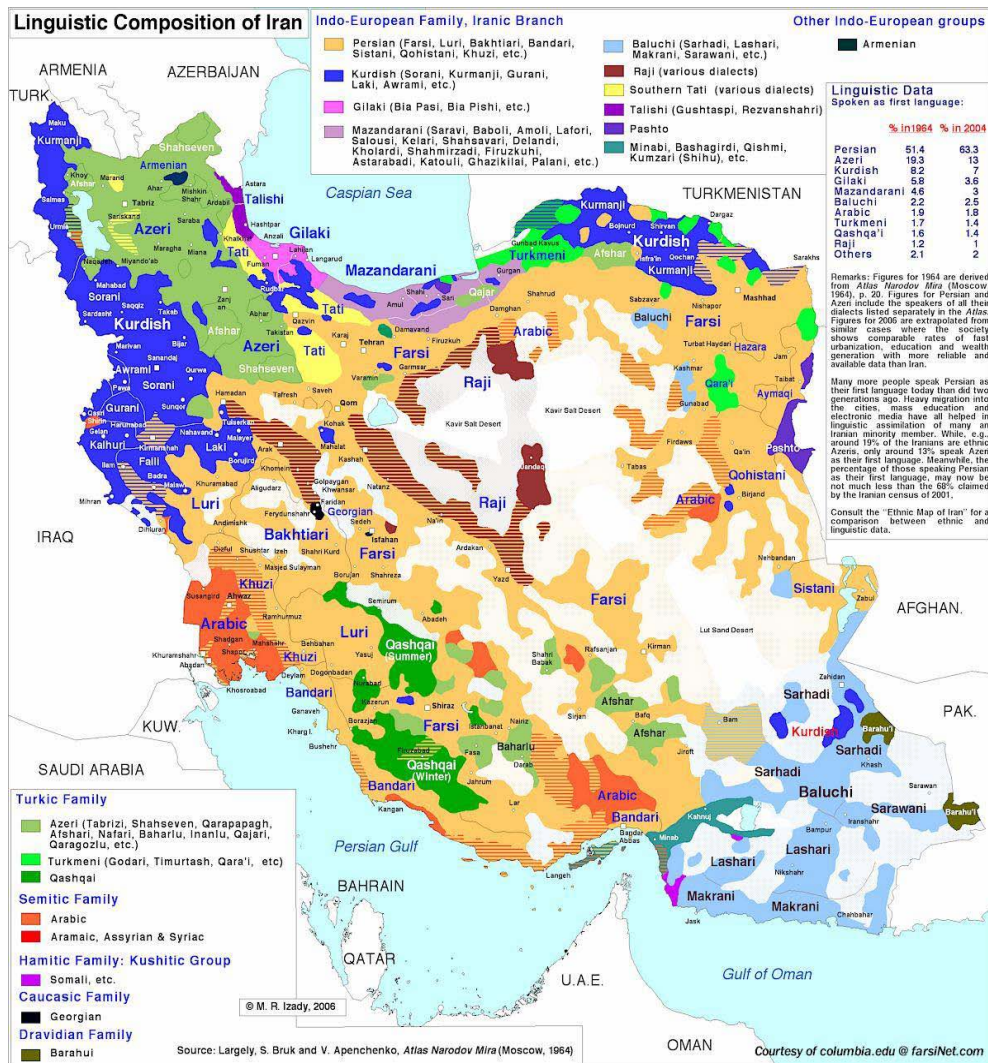
Map1: Ethnicity in Iran (color shows concentration of ethnic groups)

Explanation

Azeris: This group, second only to Fars in the national composition, lives in the northwestern Iran i.e. provinces of Western Azerbaijan, Eastern Azerbaijan, Ardebil and Zanjan. They continue up to the provinces of Hamedan and western Gilan. Apart, a sizeable number of Azeri populations also live in the cities of Tehran, Qom, Arak and Ghazvin.

With linguistic and ethnic feeling, Azeris are distinct from other major linguistic group, Fars. However, in the religious belief and practice, they are at par with other sects and some of their elites have been assigned important religious position in Iran and abroad.

Azerbaijanis consider themselves inseparable part of Iran and they have always played important role in political and social transitions of the country. Political transitions in the last hundred years, from the constitutional revolution to the Islamic Revolution as well Iraq-imposed war testify the devotion and self-sacrifices of Azerbaijanis. As such, disposition, divergence and separation from Iran are not the issue in Azerbaijan.

Due to religious attachment and cultural inclination, Azerbaijan is spin together with Iranian culture. It considers political and economic benefits as inseparable from the national benefit and the preservation of unity and oneness in the country boost national strength and sees its security through national security.

Kurds: This is the third largest group of Iranian nation in the west of the country in the provinces of Kurdistan, south of Western Azerbaijan and adjacent to parts of Kurdish dominated areas consisting northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey and northeastern Syria. A group of Kurds in northern Khurasan and a group also live in Armenia as a minority community.

With respect to religious belief, Kurds are divided into two groups i.e. Sunnite Shafeie and Shiite. Kurds of Kurdistan are predominantly Sunni and Shafeie. Other minority groups are also related to branches of Sunnite. However, Kurds from Kerman shah and Elam are principally Shiite and believers like Ahl-e- Haq and Ali-Allahi.

As a whole, Kurds have common roots with central Iran with respect to racial, lingual, historical and part of their cultural characteristics, however, they are distinct in their belief, nationality and colloquial language.

The demands of Kurdish nationalism though to some respect are considered as the acquisition of self-rule but at regional level, the Kurdish elites are seeking political independence, unity and the establishment of an independent Kurdish government.

Perhaps, the emergence of an independent Kurdish government is at all not undesirable for some foreign powers that try to disintegrate big and consistent Middle Eastern states. For instance, Israel is interested that Kirkuk oil transfer to Haifa ream through northern Iraq and Jordan. Similarly, the United States with a new Middle East map has expressed its desire to make the big Islamic countries split into different ethnic

governments and change the regional political setup based on its won interests.

Arabs: Iranian Arabs are settled in central and southwestern Khuzestan province. People in this region are principally Shiite and are compatible with central Iran. Like Azeri, Khuzestani Arabs also consider themselves attached to the national Iranian identity. Although ethnic challenges like Sheikh Khez'al Movement of 1920 -1925, simultaneously with the end of the World War I and the Arab Nationalism of 1979 with the motive of self-rule or separation were formed under the effect of foreign movements, however, these could not succeeded in front of a centralized force.

Khuzestan region enjoys a particular socio-economic importance due to its proximity with Iraq, direct link with the Persian Gulf and abundance of oil and gas resources. The Iraqi transition in the post-US attack also showed that the religious inclinations of ethnic Arabs in southern Iraqi provinces and their approach toward essential policies of Islamic Republic, role and functions of economy and culture can make the ground available for the regional development of Iran and Iraq.

Baloochs: They are settled in an area consisting southeastern Iran, southwestern Afghanistan and eastern Pakistan. Iranian Baloochestan is a remote region and has geographical proximity with Baloochistan province of Federal Republic of Pakistan and Balooch-dominated area of Afghanistan.

From the religious belief, Iranian Balooch are Sunni hence, they are close to Sunni Balooch and their dominion of Pakistan and subcontinent and distinct from Central Iran. In other words, Iranian and Pakistani Baloochestan are distinct from each other from three variables of belief, language and ethnicity. Geographical location of Baloochestan, distance from the center, desert surrounding with full of active nature and existence of a triangle-shaped desert between Baloochestan and Central Iran have made this region completely marginalized in a way that Baloochestan today is identified as a hot and dry land stricken with poverty, backwardness and drug trafficking.

Turkomans: Iranian Turkomans are settled in northern part of Golestan province and a small region in northwestern Khurasan i.e. cities of Gumbad, Bandar Turkoman, Maraveh, Tapujergelan and Bajnourd. The dominion of ethnic Turkomans starts from this region located at eastern Mazandaran River and expands in the direction of Central Asia and stretches further. The ethnic Central Asian Turkomans, after the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, got a new national identity and government in the form of an

independent Turkmenistan.

Compare to other marginalized ethnic Iranians, Turkomans have limited spatial dominion and like ethnic Kurds and Baloochs are distinct from Central Iran with respect to their language, ethnicity and faith. Contrarily, they have commonality and identicalness with Turkmenistan in these three features.

With the formation of an independent Turkmenistan, there necessitated a common Iran-Turkmenistan profit so that the two countries could pursue peaceful relations based on each other interests. These advantageous ties led to shortening of dissatisfaction among Iranian Turkomans.

If relations remain constant, they would have positive effect on viewpoints of minority Iranian Turkomans toward central administration. Minority Turkomans could have more feeling of attachment to the Iranian nation, with condition that ground for cooperation and coordination of Turkomans in national and regional affairs are provided and their economic, social and geographical conditions are protected [Hafeznia, 2002:101].

Research Findings and Analysis

With regard to ethnicity, first, it is essential to distinguish a complete process governing to this phenomenon. In reality, ethnicity in Iran has much commonality with regard to other ethnic groups and people.

Approaches to ethnic problem in Iran

There are three following approaches to deal with the problems of ethnicity in Iran:

a) Optimist approach: It is believed that ethnicity in Iran is not an issue. Some of the well-known thinkers, fundamentally, negate the existence of ethnic phenomenon in Iran and believe that Iran is a one nation and has a unitary society. To them, tribes/clan present on fringes of provinces cannot be named as ethnic group/groups. As a whole, the negation of an ethnic phenomenon is just to prove the presence of one nation and society.

b)Pessimist approach: It is believed that the ethnicity in Iran is a serious issue that has reached to the level of threat and crisis. From this spectrum, Iran is at the crossroad of an ethnic crisis that is passing the stage of internal disintegration, autonomy, revolt and war. They consider ethnic problem as the most real problems of Iran in the forthcoming decade and say that the ethnic movements in Iran have transformed into

active from passive forms. Similarly, they believe that information, growth and development of knowledge of ethnic groups, their relations with neighboring countries, regional transitions in Iraq and others countries, foreign interference in domestic affairs, support of international institutions and organizations to the rights of ethnic groups in Iran are some of the reasons that guide the country toward ethnic crisis. This view, principally, is focusing on a transition that we witness in Azerbaijan, Baloochestan, Khuzestan and other Iranian ethnic zones.

c) Realist approach: This believes that there is an ethnic problem in Iran but the issue is manageable if it is being encountered with scientific and mental logic as well as realistic management, provided, how sovereignty, political setup and management employ those approaches in their behavior with ethnic groups. For instance, if we accept that ethnic participation is affective in unity and integrity of the country, how expansion of political participation of ethnic groups must be taken into account in the political decision-making.

In 1376, we witnessed the highest rate of participation- more than 90%- in the presidential elections but the ratio has gone down to below 50% in another elections. This shows that how the type of political behavior could help national solidarity while encountering with the ethnic groups.

Ethnic Periods in Iran

Historically, Iran has witnessed three ethnic periods i.e. Qajar, Pehlavi, Islamic Republic. Following are brief account on ethnic conditions during those eras:

a) Ethnic problems during Qajar: Ethnic phenomena in this period, principally, arose after Iranian ethnic groups started internal formation in the frontier regions such as structure of *Iligarishi* with tribal relations based on *khan*, *sheikh* and *rais*. The central government had accepted this structure too. Some of those methods have been defined as federalism, which is wrong because federalism is outcome of modern government and such a modern structure was absent during Qajar. Sheikh Khez'al in Khuzestan and Ghashghaeis in Fars had local governments that took care of administrative affairs and safeguarded security by appointing number of guards. They had local courts and relationship structure based on charisma with sovereignty of a khan, a sheikh or a sardar.

At that time, contentions between ethnic groups were not like the one in

present days i.e. distribution of wealth, power and status rather principally raised from the kind of behavior of the central government with ethnic groups especially while getting salary/stipend and punishment in the case of non-payment of wages.

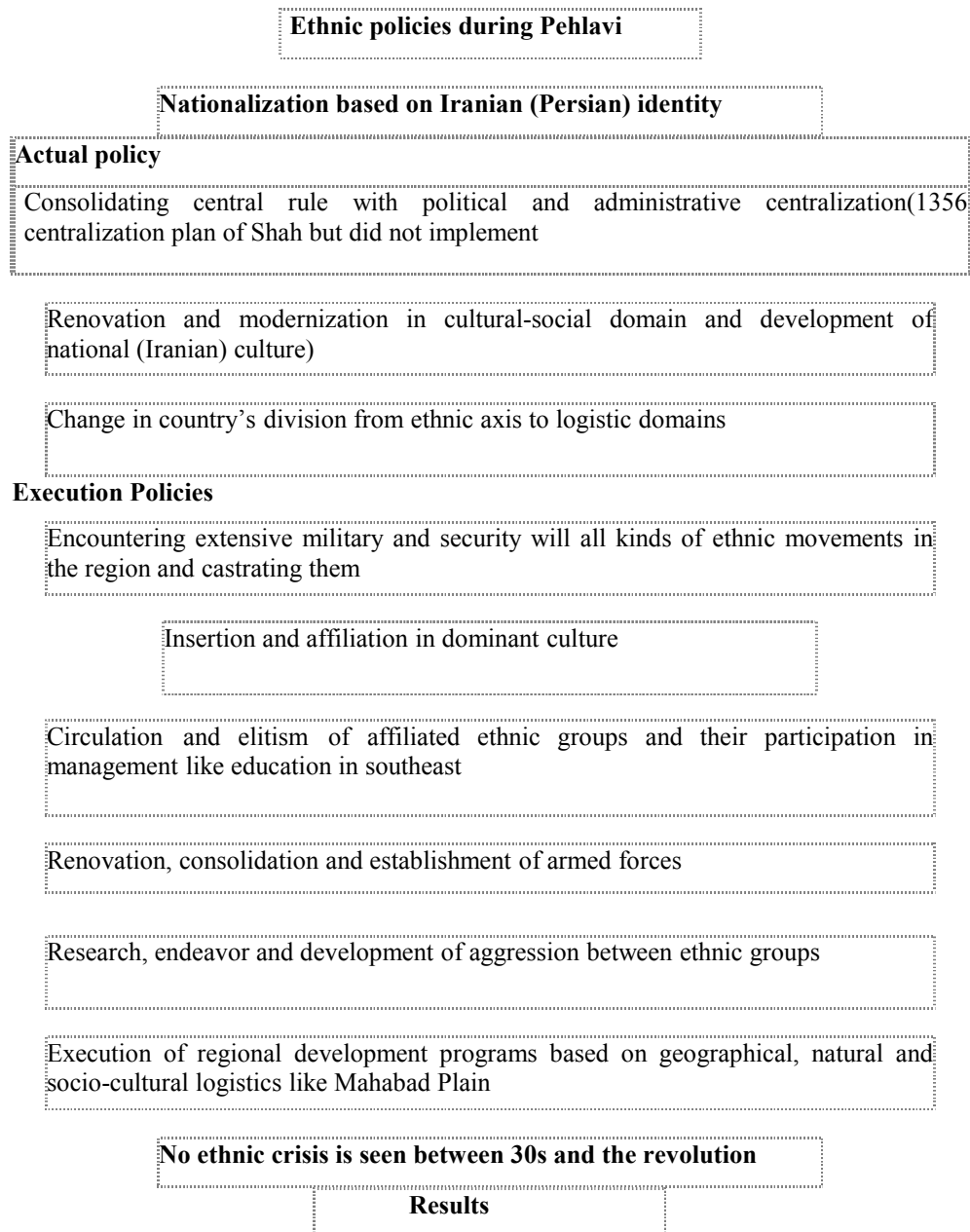It can thus be said that ethnic phenomena during Qajar was not institutionalized at all.

b) Ethnic problem during Pehlavi: During the first Pehlavi era, Reza Shah seriously tried to form a one nation. He wanted to transform all ethnic and social groups to a one national social group through insertion and identicalness.

One of the existing international methods for solving ethnic challenges is identicalness or uniformity, which has different forms. **Authoritative identicalness** (like the one occurred in America where a collection of different ethnic groups got together but, today, their cultures have became identical and one does not find any cultural difference among them. In American society, different cultures were voluntarily one national culture). **Compulsory identicalness** the one followed by Reza Shah. "Nation making" was the output of Reza Shah's period and he followed suppression strategy to achieve this goal. His intellectual team believed that in Iran, language of all should be Persian; they wear same color and should speak identically. To them, ethnic divided society was a dangerous issue.

In the second Pehlavi era, Mohammad Reza Shah also followed a kind of nation-making policy but his system was different. His literature indicated a kind of modernization and insertion. With two principles of modernization and chauvinism (excessive nationalism) tries to define society in the mould of a single entity.

During Mohammad Reza Shah, it was not permitted, at all, any ethnic group show off at the distant point of the country. One of his last efforts was a "logistic land" plan based on transferring parts of population from one point to other that was complete failure as none of the tribes could be vanished with compulsory culture, language, custom and tradition etc. Principally, compulsory method in the ethnic domain is not answerable due to the fact that it is against one culture.

Fig 1: Ethnic policies in Iran during Pehlavi

Ethnic policies during Pehlavi

Nationalization based on Iranian (Persian) identity

Actual policy

Consolidating central rule with political and administrative centralization(1356 centralization plan of Shah but did not implement

Renovation and modernization in cultural-social domain and development of national (Iranian) culture)

Change in country's division from ethnic axis to logistic domains

Execution Policies

Encountering extensive military and security will all kinds of ethnic movements in the region and castrating them

Insertion and affiliation in dominant culture

Circulation and elitism of affiliated ethnic groups and their participation in management like education in southeast

Renovation, consolidation and establishment of armed forces

Research, endeavor and development of aggression between ethnic groups

Execution of regional development programs based on geographical, natural and socio-cultural logistics like Mahabad Plain

No ethnic crisis is seen between 30s and the revolution

Results

c) Ethnic problem during Islamic Republic: The ethnicity problems in the Islamic Republic of Iran can be studied in four stages or periods. First, during revolution that was distraction and division. The second period is named as covertness/concealment demands. Third is the period of constructiveness and the fourth is the period of political development and participation.

First stage: It is the period of distraction when the political system lacked a distinguished pattern or definition of ethnic management. In that stage, national structure and institutions still could not be formed and so was the suitable legality/legitimacy. Whatever governed included was the collection of mental outputs with regard to desirable authority. In that stage, ethnic tensions came into being. Root of these tensions or conflicts intended to often weaken the central or national government of a country. The Kurdistan problem occurred in the same stage because the country lacked proper political planning and strategy as well as a pattern to encounter with the ethnic problems.

Second stage: The stage when people possessed internal solidarity against the outside enemies. This doesn't mean forgetfulness to their demands hence; this period is named as the period of concealment. It is a period when society, with respect to national interest, came to the conclusion that they must be silent while fighting outside enemies.

Third stage: This means the period of constructiveness. The government strategy was to focus on the equitable distribution of wealth in the far-flung points of the country and create a lateral welfare. By the same reason, attention was paid to create substructures, increase per capita incomes, economic development and expansion of social welfare. Although, this period witnessed big successes but it encountered with one fundamental problem i.e. the distribution of wealth was not based on deprivation of structures. In other words, much attention was paid on substructures without any change to deprivation between accounted and unaccounted cities. If the administration could perceive ethnic problems, there could emerge as kind of assessment to distribution of wealth in the prosperous and poor regions. It doesn't mean that administrators themselves did not want to do that rather it was the fast pace of economic development   that made the region with suitable substructure profited more. As a result, ethnic crisis changed into identity crisis.

Fourth stage: The period of reformation when efforts were made to attract ethnic participation, confidence and consent through political

development and ranking for ethnic groups as well as equal attention from the central government. The ethnic groups trusted to these slogans and showed their trust by participating in different elections. As such, the highest rate of participation could be seen in the ethnic regions. In this stage, participation of the province of Sistan and Baloochestan reached to above 90 percent. This confidence could be responded through positive mechanism of distribution of wealth, power and status but ethnic society believed that their demands were not met.

Ethnicity and Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran

According to Article 19 of the constitution, all people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe they belong, enjoy equal rights: and color, race, language and the like, do not bestow any privilege. Thus at the first place, ethnic groups are considered equal to rest of citizen. Especially with regard to freedom of ethnic minority vis-à-vis their beliefs, socio-political freedom; they have same law as that of majority community.

The issue of cultural freedom and preservation of ethnic identities are the most obvious cases that enjoy particular ethnic rights. In this regard, we can point to Articles 15, 19, 20, 24 and 26 of the Iranian Constitution. Article 15 of the constitution, with regard to official language says "Documents and correspondences (principally official and administrative), official texts as well as text-books must be in Persian language and script". With regard to diverse local freedom, the article states: "The use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian". This article provides the ethnic groups possibilities to continue their cultural freedom. Articles 24 and 26 also point to freedom of formation of 'parties and societies' and the freedom of publication and press. That also provides social freedom to ethnic and tribal groups. Iranian constitution on the issue that whether or not parties could have ethnic basis is apparently silent, however, it is evident from the wording that this meaning does not exist and principally its interpretation is the jurisdiction of the in-charge of institutions. The word 'societies' though also is little ambiguous but that could also point to a wide spectrum and hence; that can be termed in the forms of cultural and social organizations, charity and ethnic minority. Similarly, Article 20 points to the enjoyment of "human, political, economic, social and cultural rights" and along with other articles, it too provides a wider spectrum of activities for ethnic groups.

Challenges Arising from Ethnicities in Iran

The ethnic problem can be studied in different domains including political, economic, social, and cultural and the most important of all status domain. In total, ethnic groups encounter enough problems in this field; however, all these problems arise from three following basic sources:

      1. Challenges arising from power distribution;

      2. Challenges arising from wealth distribution;

      3. Challenges arising from social status and place.

Ethnic domain has a lot of problems and challenges. Each of ethnic Iranian groups has its own particular challenges hence; challenges of Azeris are completely different from those of Balooch and Arabs and Turkomans. As a whole, the above three challenges encounter the native Iranian society. In a native society, one jurisdiction of the national government is that whether or not it has same and equal eye towards all Iranian citizens in the three domains of power, wealth and status distribution? In some, ethnic challenges are insignificant but these are emphatic in some of the domains that we focus here briefly:

1) Ethnic disputes: Ethnic diversity and multiplicity in Iran is in a way that can attribute it to a multi-ethnic society. Although these groups have been partners in developing Iranian civilization in the course of history and have protected its integrity. However, despite coexistence and congeniality and sacrifice, these have often encountered with challenges and appropriateness between the government and ethnic groups that were changed into disputes and skirmishes.

In the last one century, the ethnic crisis can be classified into three time intervals:

1. Ethnic crisis during post-Constitutional Revolution: As a whole, seven ethnic and regional crises in this period can be named as: Samitghu uprising in Kurdistan, Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani uprising in Azerbaijan, Jungle movement in Gilan, uprising of Mohammad Taghi Khan Pasyan and the revolt of Khodaverdi Khan in Khurasan, independent movement of Baloochestan under the leadership of Dost Mohammad Khan and the rebellion of Sheikh Khaz'l in Khuzestan.

2. 1940s (1320s according to Persian calendar) is considered as the most turbulent phase of the political history of Iran. Some of the apparent incidents in this period were military occupation of Iran by British, American and Russian forces, dismissal and exile of Reza Shah and

succession of Mohammad Reza Pehlavi, emergence of political parties, formation of different cabinets, and declaration of military rule in Tehran and emergence of various crises in Iranian political arenas. In the meantime, Azerbaijan crisis under the leadership of Seyyed Jaafar Peshehvari and Kurdistan crisis and the establishment of Dimukrat Party in Mahabad under the leadership of Qazi Mohammad Taamul were the most excited ones.

3. With the victory of Islamic Revolution, there occurred a chain of ethnic conflicts. Kurdistan rebellion and ethnic crisis there, conflict of desert Turkoman, unrests in Azerbaijan, Baloochestan disputes and bitterness of Khuzestan in the first decade of the Islamic revolution and the recent ethnic challenges in Khuzestan, Baloochestan and Azerbaijan are some other conflicts encountered by the contemporary Iran.

Above-mentioned crisis is also with the aim to commemorate threat at one side to ethnic diversity that is attentive to national cohesiveness and solidarity. As a matter of fact, those conflicts could seriously damage national unity if there real causes are not identified along with exact planning.

2) Separation or independence: With the emergence of nationalism in 18th and 19th centuries, the thought also extended to ethnic groups. Wilson Rees, an American thinker propounded 14-point principles during World War I and his thought "autonomy" he encouraged all nationalities living in the fringes of defeated empires of Germany, Austria, Ottomans and Russia. Wilson, implicitly and repeatedly desired to establish independent governments for "Arabs, Armenians and Kurds". Most of the tribal chiefs and later educated elites of religious and linguistic minorities in the Middle East were inspired by Wilson as well as Marxist-Leninist principle that emphasized on "self-rule".

As Hanoom emphasizes that self-rule of 1919 had nothing to do with the desires of the above populace, unless these desires hijacked by big powers for their own geopolitical and strategic aims and profits (Ahmadi, 2005:98)

Nationalist movements in Iran, too, had congruence with the strategic aims of big powers hence; created serious challenges for national sovereignty. These challenges occasionally with internal and foreign interests along with factors like economic inequality, humiliation and ignorance of ethnic identities, as well as intensified spoiling factors on peripheral groups created suitable ground for spatial rupture and separating tendencies that each of them must be studied and analyzed separately.

3) Weakness of national solidarity "divergence": Ethnic diversity in Iran caused national government to transform perseverance of the national solidarity as one of the important issues. The knowledge of divergence factors can be affective in studying reasons leading to the national unity or disputes. Some of these forces and factors are as follows:

▪ Imbalance and inhomogeneous national composition: Establishment of minorities in the peripheral region and vicinity has intensified damages to national Iranian government and territory;

▪ Topographical structure of Iran: Inconsistent and inconsequent topographical structures have led to the formation and strength to the cultural fragments;

▪ Lack of proportion of minorities in national participation: Peripheral parts compare to central ones have less share in national performance. On the other hand, the central part due to its divergent inclinations have an outlook mixed with pessimism toward the peripheral section, coordination between the two is not established completely;

▪ Improper system of communication;

▪ Geographical and spatial inequality: Iran possesses spatial framework at national scale as well as regional and local scale. At macro national level, central part compare to peripheral is more developed and has high accessibility to the benefits from national development and profits.

4) Role of dominant ethnic groups in creating social inequality: If the influence of central zones leads to unequal distribution of indicators of social development and welfare across the territorial limits, the feeling of backwardness among peripheral groups would give rise to a kind of divergence.

5) Defense and preservation of territorial integrity: Defense of territory and boundary is a personal obligation of all governments. This matter would be problematic once the national boundary is surrounded by different ethnic communities.

In Iran, ethnic boundaries are not coincided with political boundaries and ethnic tongue has been stretched out across the boundaries. One of the important aspects government must keep in mind is its effort to boost national solidarity and cohesiveness. In that circumstance, peripheral communities like a powerful dam would resist against probable foreign encroachment and threats as well as plots of internal elements.

The imposed war showed that youths from Khorramshehr and Abadan defended the territorial integrity under the auspices of religious teaching and

love to sacred nation. In this defense, they were assisted by fellow countrymen like Turks, Lores and Turkomans.

6) Security threat from ethnic disputes in neighboring countries: Another threat that a country could encounter from diversified ethnic zones is the transformation of alike communities across the political border. War between Azerbaijan and Armenia for Nagorno Karbakh has had much sensitiveness in the Turkish dominated zone. Autonomy of Iraqi Kurdish region also influenced the passion of Kurdish communities in Iran, Turkey and Syria. These ethnic influences from across the border reciprocally affect each other.

7) High expenditure for preservation of national solidarity: To secure and boost polygenic society needs fostering special policies and tough steps that in reality, imposes higher expenditure on the government.

8) Provocations by enemies and big powers: A glance on ethnic challenges in the last hundred years especially during post-constitutional era and post-World War II show that ethnic inclination in Iran was an object of foreign powers and a tool to put pressure on the central government.

In most of the crises, either separation movements or other politico-ethnic challenges, interference in the fate of a country and weakening national sovereignty through inciting ethnic groups have been in the interests of powerful western and eastern countries.

Movement of Demukrat in Azerbaijan and Sheikh Khez'al in Khuzestan after constitutional revolution, armed groups and parties in Kurdistan, rebellion of "Arab Khalq" in Khuzestan after the Islamic revolution and some other ethnic challenges in Azerbaijan, Khuzestan, Turcoman desert and Baloochestan in the last decades highlight the role of foreign elements in forming ethnic conflict and booting ethnic nationalism there.

9) Lack of regard and safeguard to minority rights: Ethnic conflicts intensify in a society that has failed in safeguarding rights of minorities or unable to create non-ethnic civil society based on social movement and employment opportunity [Bersendrov, 1973:65]

10) Weak economic, political and social structures of developing countries: Developing countries are often formed of a society which has deep and wider ethnic, religious, cultural and historical divisions. Apart, these countries lack suitable and qualified economic, political and social structures (for instance acceptable economic development, rate of literacy, middle class, presence of democratic political institutions) so that can successfully bring minorities (religious, ethnic) at par with culture of majority communities. In

most of these countries, there exists intense competition for acquiring economic benefits. In the meantime, one must not forget that we are facing lack of democratic institutions in such circumstances or even in the presence of same, we are unable to perform effectively in acquiring peaceful rights of minorities and ethnic groups (Gatshalej, 1973:87).

Opportunity Arising from Ethnicity in Iran

1. Ethnic or cultural multiplicity

One of the policies of the modern Pehlavi regime was to bring cultural uniformity in order to achieve nationalization process in the country. In this process, Iranian national identity renovated on the basis of pre-Islamic legends and founding western secularism. Islamic faith and teaching became gradually colorless and ethnic cultural fragments shattered in the culturalization machine of Pehlavi regime and renovated in the defined western mould. Similar covering and one dialect were the first step of cultural identicalness that persisted seriously in Iran. Execution pf religious and local festivities faced limitation and ethnic group and their cultural fragments were disdained or made fun of. This process persistently continued during cultural policies of second Pehlavi regime. In spite of wrong perception of the regime, religion and Shiite faith was not only away from national backwardness, dispersion and dissipation rather Safavid history testifies positive application of religion as a unifying element and safeguarding cohesiveness. Iranian national identity is a collection of religious, national and ethnic identities hence; if we do not turn ethnic and cultural multiplicity toward national identity, its rich contents could be faded away. Ethnic and cultural multiplicity or in other words Iranian national culture is a great opportunity for Islamic Republic. With this, Iran is capable to globalize the cultural remains and Iranian Islamic civilization. As such, assuming ways based on cultural multiplicity in macro policy-making could not only earn the country profit rather could be affective in shaping national identity.

2. Ethnic diversity and development

Ethnic simultaneity of Turks, Lores, Kurds, Balooch and Turkomans along with rest of the communities, though realized particular commandment for the management of Iranian society, however, diversity also provided new opportunities for the country. As mentioned, ethnic Iranian dialects were

prolonged beyond the political boundaries. In this way, if the internal sections are affected by extra-territorial transitions, intra-political, cultural and economic transformation could affect ethnic dialects from across the border. New opportunities are provided so that macro management with exact planning, apart from managing dynamic transition inside the political boundary obtains regional developmental role through ethnic effects on ethnic dialects that often control many countries. This matter not only expands the political domain of the government to the regional levels but boost the power of political coordination of a country with neighbors and other regional players. After the Islamic Revolution, the influential system based on faith and ideology could influence the regional countries hence; Iran now enjoys a particular status among the regional states. By figuring out opportunity from its own ethnic diversity and compiling a coordinated dynamic strategy with alike ethnic groups in the adjacent countries, Islamic Republic could evolve its level beyond regional powers.

3. Ethnic diversity, a factor of population distribution

Geographical set up of the country is in a way that there exists much ecological and economic disparity between various regions. Part of social, economic and cultural inequalities is also the outcome of geographical specialties of a region that lacks the same natural talents. In this situation, ethnic diversity and special attachment of ethnic communities to their birthplace, history and native and local culture make the hot and dry, mountainous, freezing and arduous zones tolerable for the residents of these regions. Perhaps from this point of view, ethnic diversity and multiplicity is a blessing one that leads to spatial population distribution across the territory and on the other makes the defense of this region possible.

4. Ethnic diversity, a factor of competition

This is another opportunity accompanying ethnic diversity and in case of planning; it provides much encouragement to the regional development; brings a kind of economic prosperity and happiness among people, prevents from prejudice and inequality and guarantees a balanced development.

5. Extraterritorial ethnicity and economic cooperation

Common inclinations among ethnic communities living across a political boundary provide suitable ground for economic and cultural cooperation.

Principal part of economic cooperation between neighboring countries could be possible through frontier exchanges with the help of peripheral cooperatives. That could also provide economic prosperity for the deprived peripheral zones of the country.

5. Powers of convergence

Different factors and forces could lead to convergence and unity among ethnic and other communities of Iran. Some of these forces and factors are:

- Participation in different layers of attribute of central section;
- Common historical root;
- Common national culture;
- Religion and faith;
- National glory;
- Common political aim;
- National symbols;
- Central authority;
- Foreign threats (Foreign threats that target territorial integrity and national security hence' a single front can help convergence) [Hafeznia, 2002:89].

Security Policymaking Capacity

Today, governments take all measures and available capacities for their security policy so that they could secure the country with less possible expenditure.

1) Natural capacity

This capacity reflects to geopolitical condition of a political unit that consists of two aspects of hardware and software. The first aspect supervising natural conditions like natural resources, water and air, natural condition of boundaries, geographical and spatial conditions etc…and the second aspect includes the things like political culture, tradition, custom, national spirit etc.

2) Exploitation capacity

This capacity is the strength or same variables of natural capacity. The proposed capacity has firm link with knowledge or power of human resource and organizational skill and topics like technology, potency, optimization, preservation, supervision and innovation are placed in this part.

3) Strategic capacity

From this capacity means strength of a system for preparing, appointing and executing macro policies that can distinguish and guide the country's black lines in time intervals. In Iran, discussion from the elite congregation on the national profit, suitable composition of national profit, religious problems and partial aim become the real axis of strategic capacity. As such, security policies are compiled on the basis of these three capacities that can be seen in the following figure.

Security Policymaking
Strategic capacity

↓

Natural capacity

↓

Exploitation capacity
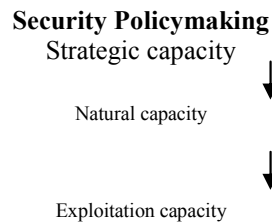
Therefore, the above three capacities are taken into consideration in the security policy making especially with regard to ethnicity. Apart, the effort is made to augment those three capacities for future national interests.

Conclusion and Suggestions

With regard to ethnicities, first, there is need to distinguish general process governing these phenomenon. In reality, there are much commonality in Iranian ethnicity with regard to its attachment to rest of the people and communities. On the other side, contemporary events properly show that hard steps and physical encounters toward nationalization, though, have prevented the ethnic crisis, temporarily, but could not be successful in following identicalness. Likewise, some ethnic groups have had conflicts with the central government once they got an opportunity. Under the effects of internal and external conditions they were in the process to get their share with an autonomy or independence. The influences from the ethnic conflicts in neighboring countries, feeling of social inequality through provocations by enemies and big powers, lack of safeguard to the rights of minorities and the effects arising from developing process of a country, could somehow weaken the internal solidarity. However, despite all, it cannot be imagined that ethnicity is a usual threat to integrity of a country especially Iran where there exists deep commonalities between ethnic groups. In case of proper

management in distributing wealth, power and status, those religious, historical and cultural attachment, national symbols, political aims, needs of a central authority and encounter to all foreign threats would bring special opportunities for security and development of the country. It is because of this fact that competitive ground for economic development, defense of national security are key to peripheral people who have high motivation for advancement despite tough environmental conditions they are living.

It is worth to mention that relations of these common people have to be severed from the elements having political motive through their demands of autonomy or independence. Those elements are principally are related to big powers or other opportunistic states. The pious feeling of general people should not be exploited by a group having its own personal aim and partial enjoyment. For that reason some of the following suggestions are provide:

- Compiling programs in order to profit ethnic groups like other communities in political, administrative, social and security affairs;
- Taking tough measures against elements attached to those who are seeking independence with the aim of individual, group or personal benefits;
- Providing ground to execute articles enshrined in the constitution for the ethnic domain, with the legal sanction and by issuing executive orders;
- Explaining policies and direction transparently and coordinated steps of all institutions, organization, elite and political currents in this regard;
- Emphasizing on commonality and development of national solidarity, abstaining from any type of boundary dangerous to social unity, compiling long-term cultural programs;
- Restraining from all kinds of unachievable expectations in the affairs of economy, politics and etc;
- Providing ground for economic development of ethnic zones through localizing security through peoples' participation.

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