Factors Affecting Divergence and Convergence of Ethnic Groups in Sustainable Security
(Case Study: Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan Province, Iran)

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop a practical knowledge for the assessment of factors affecting divergence and convergence of sustainable security among Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan according to employments. For this purpose, path analysis was used, according to which relative deprivation had the greatest effect on the divergence and political alliance had the greatest effect on the convergence. The results of testing the hypotheses confirmed all research hypotheses, except elite competition. According to the results, in evaluation of divergence and convergence factors, there was no significant difference between Lor and Arab staff, and among convergence factors, religion was the most important factor and citizenship rights were the least important factor, and among divergence factors, cultural difference was the most important factor and language difference was the least important factor. Given the development of practical knowledge for developing divergence and convergence factors, sustainable security was evaluated among Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan according to employments, and Ahvaz was selected as the local territory. The statistical population included 300 people (experts and managers). A researcher-made questionnaire was used to measure research variables. A total of 169 questionnaires were distributed. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were confirmed. Data were analyzed in two levels of descriptive and inferential statistics by SPSS.20 and LISREL.

Keywords: Sustainable Security, Convergence, Divergence, Ethnic Groups.
Introduction

Ethnic affiliations and tendency toward certain primary interests, such as race, language, religion and birthplace can be considered as political phenomena in interaction or confrontation with national security when they turn into elements affecting political developments in society. Making ethnic interests and national affiliations coexist and defining a logical connection between ethnic identity and national identity will pave the way for stability and the balance of development in terms of security. Whenever comprehensive system of national identity does not possess interaction and sharing personal, ethnic and national identity in a reasonable form, and every time ethnic interests have not defined and accepted along with national tendencies and affiliations, the outcome of their actions not only will not lead to the development and stability of national security, unity, and convergence, but also will result in tension, conflict, opposition of these forces and divergence.

There are few empirical studies that have focused on the relationship between convergence and divergence in ethnic groups. But, it should be considered that such studies can increase literature and research richness in the field of political science. In this study, experts’ remarks in an informal interview revealed that the lack of coherence among ethnic groups leads the actor to experience a conflicting socialization process and face problems in terms of social cohesion. Conflict exists between formal culture and regional cultures when there is no full integration between cultures and ethnic groups in communities consisting of several cultures and ethnic groups, and the lack of attention to this issue in the maximum state can lead to the formation of many political violence and chaos in society, and the violence either in organized or unorganized aspect will have many negative effects on society.

Factors such as religious and historical links and spiritual heritage can lead to convergence in society. In this case, Iran has unique features. Iran, on the one hand, has a few thousand years of history and civilization, which lead to strengthening of the ties between people despite cultural and ethnic differences, etc. On the other hand, Islam, especially Shia, is a common ideological language among Iranian people, which increases convergence. The majority of ethnic groups live in border cities. They are Twelver and Jafari Shia Muslims who have strong religious conviction. These main elements should be considered important in social convergence to the extent that they can be regarded as the main pillars of the Islamic regime in Iran; and a government who considers the principle of convergence will face fewer obstacles and more supports of people in the implementation of its policies.

Therefore, the present study seeks to answer this question: “Do national identity, religion, citizenship rights, social justice, political alliance, and social interaction affect ethnic convergence among Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan? And it was assumed that convergence factors in Lors and Arabs have significant effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan.

Conceptualization: Operational Concepts

Convergence means a sense of belonging and correlation of nation’s components with all constituent elements including the territory, political system, and nation. In this regard, governments act based on two approaches, i.e. spiritual factors and material factors.
Based on a spiritual approach, Guttman refers to the importance of symbols such as history, legends, literature and social habits in the construction and destruction of governments (Muir, 2000: 29); in material approach, Hart Sean focuses on spatial inequalities in terms of standard of living, literacy level, education, economic attitudes, attitudes of institutions, and attitudes about racial and class differences, especially political philosophy (Glessner, 2004: 56).

Divergence is the feeling of potential and actual separation of ethnic groups with all or a part of the constituent elements of a country, so that instead of a sense of belonging to the nation, territory and government, it is a feeling of convergence with elements such as language, ethnic territory, countries and neighboring regions (Abdi, 2010: 43).

**Convergence:**

**Conceptual:** Convergence is the approaching of people to a particular point, which is usually known as their common goal (Hafeznia, 2006, p. 373)

**Operational:** Convergence is a score obtained by subjects for responding ethnic convergence questionnaire and its indicators, such as national identity, religion, national unity (national identity), citizenship rights, social justice, political alliance, and social interaction.

**Divergence:**

**Conceptual:** Divergent forces are forces that divide political units in a society and act in the opposite direction of converging forces (Janparvar, 2010, p. 38).

**Operational:** Divergence is a score obtained by subjects for responding ethnic divergence questionnaire and its indicators, such as, elite competition, language, culture, relative deprivation, geopolitical modern tribalism.

**Sustainable Security**

**Conceptual:** It is sustainable security, national security, in addition to human security (Smith, 2008), and security in human societies is affected by factors in five major sectors as follows: military, political, economic, social and environmental (Buzan, 1999, p. 34).

**Operational:** Sustainable security is a score obtained by subjects for responding sustainable security questionnaire and its items including personal, national, social, economic, cultural, and psychological security.

**Research Literature**

Thinking about the security dates back to the start of human life and his sociobiology. At the same time, the debate about security entered academic circles since the end of World War II. There is still no consensus among researchers after more than six decades of debate on this concept (Shaygan, 2012).
Recent studies emphasize on this fundamental point that the concept of security should not be limited solely to military issues and threats. Security has a more general sense that not only can be applied in military affairs, but also can be used in economic, social, political and environmental fields (Sheehan, 2009, p. 64).

Buzan in his book titled “People, States and Fear”, which is now considered a classic reference in academic circles, states that security in human societies is affected by factors in five major sectors: military, political, economic, social and environmental (Buzan, 1999, p. 34).

The peak of this approach and diversifying the security aspects can be found in UNDP 1994 Human Development Report, in which human security is defined as a situation in which people are freed from constraints and psychological pressures that inhibit the growth of human beings. Human security involves protection against chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression and protection from sudden and damaging disruption to one’s daily life. In this program, providing human security requires a seven-dimensional approach in which economic, food, health, environmental, personal, social and political security are considered (ibid, pp. 141-142).

According to George Kennan, sustainable security is national security in addition to human security and he believes that to establish sustainable security not only it should be focused on national governments security and preserving the territorial integrity, independence and inward security, but also human security including the security of individuals and society members should also be noted. It can be said that in addition to the value of preserving the territorial integrity and survival of the ruling political system (military aspect), other values such as the creation of necessary conditions for economic prosperity and social justice (economic aspect), democracy and the shift of power and the rights and freedoms of citizens (political aspect) in form of national values will lead to the development of national security aspects (Almashat, 1985).

According to Imam Khomeini (mercy upon him), sources for providing internal security include unity, faith and spirituality. In view of Imam Khomeini unity has a key role in unifying, cohesion and social and political agreement. Methods of providing security according to Imam Khomeini are as follows:

1. Public support for providing security (public support from official institutions will provide security).

2. The direct involvement of people in providing security; according to Imam Khomeini general mobilization can guarantee security.

3. Providing security through military, police and security forces;

4. Providing security through non-security formal institutions (such as the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Assembly of Experts, etc. (Shaygan, 2011).

According to Navidnia, realization of security requires attention to both negative and positive security and he believes that emphasizing on one aspect and neglecting the other would weaken permanent security. He believes that continued security in a stable and continuous context needs
comprehensive attention to the hazards of life that will be possible to some extent with adding negative and positive security discourses (Navidnia, 2009).

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, security is sustainable when it covers all people from different groups, races, tastes, ethnicity, languages and religions. He also believes that even the opposition should live in security as long as they have not joined the enemy (Shaygan, 2012).

RezapourQushchi and Naderi (2014) conducted a study titled “Globalization and Ethnic Pluralism in Iran, Challenges and Opportunities”. In their study, they tried to explain different and conflicting attitudes toward globalization with focus on globalization and ethnic pluralism in Iran.

Maleki (2013) conducted a study titled “Analysis of the historical process of governments’ attitude to national identity in strengthening unity and solidarity of Iranian ethnic groups”. The findings showed that in a diverse society like Iran an identity is effective that its national trait involves all ethnic, religious and cultural identities of the country and national identity will only emerge in the light of government efforts to create equal conditions and establish respectful relations and recognize cultural and identity layers and socio-political rights of different ethnic groups.

Noah et al. (2007) conducted a study titled “Arabs; Divergence or Convergence”. In their study they measured the effect of relative deprivation on three dimensions of ethnic identity (cultural, social and political) among Arabs of Khuzestan and the results showed a significant relationship between relative deprivation on each of the three dimensions of ethnic identity and it was shown that national identity is associated with ethnic identity. And this relationship was confirmed in a reverse direction indicating the divergence of Arabs.

Karimipour (2004) conducted a study titled “Arabs in Khuzestan: Divergence and Convergence”. This descriptive – analytical study evaluated the size of divergence and convergence in Arabs of Khuzestan compared to the majority of political core and also national aspirations based on well-known cultural – social criteria. The fact that Arabs of Khuzestan are Shia Muslims not only has a central role in the convergence of this province to national core, but also has a reducing effect on divergence factors.

**Factors affecting convergence and divergence, and development of the research conceptual model**

Based on the literature and theoretical and empirical foundations presented briefly above, factors affecting convergence and divergence of Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan were identified and a conceptual model was developed.
Research Methodology

Given that this study aimed to develop a practical knowledge for the assessment of factors affecting divergence and convergence in sustainable security in Khuzestan, it was an applied research, and because it sought to identify factors influencing convergence and divergence in Lors and Arabs, hypotheses were established by library method and data were extracted. In this study, a closed questionnaire was used to measure the variables. The total Cronbach’s alpha of the questionnaire was 0.79, that this coefficient indicates high reliability of the tool. In this study, to investigate the factors influencing convergence and divergence and their effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan, experts and managers (n=300) formed the statistical population of this study. Linear regression was used to test hypotheses. The results were evaluated by one-way ANOVA, variables were assessed among workers based on ethnicity, and, finally, ranking factors was examined by Friedman test. LISREL and SPSS were used to perform analyses.

From the total of respondents, 79% were male, and 21% were women; 45% were Lors, and about 42% were Arabs and about 13% belonged to other ethnic groups; about 29% were manager and about 70% were experts; about 30% were under 30 years old, about 38% were between 30 and 40 years old and about 32% were over 40 years old.

Results and Data

The results of convergence in Lors and Arabs show significant relationship with national identity, religion, citizenship rights, social justice, political alliance, and social interaction. As the results show, all coefficients are significant because their significance test value was larger than 1.96 and smaller than -1.96. These factors (national identity, religion, citizenship rights, social justice, political alliance, social interaction) affect convergence in Lors and Arabs and it can be explained.
by these factors. Fit index RMSER = 0.045, the degree of freedom = 15 and the chi-square = 19.77 with a significant level of 0.180 are favorable results. As a result, this model has a good fit.

Given positive values of lower and upper limits for sustainable security and a lower significance level of less than 0.05 and given the means which are more than 3, it can be said that according to staff, the sustainable security situation in Khuzestan was in good condition; the correlation coefficient (0.735) for national identity of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables and the coefficient of determination (0.540) shows that 54% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.735) through national identity. Thus, there is a significant relationship between national identity of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (0.735) shows that with one unit increase in national identity there will be 73% increase in sustainable security in Khuzestan. In other words, national identity of Lors and Arabs has direct and positive effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the first hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

The correlation coefficient (0.569) for religion of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables, and the coefficient of determination (0.324) shows that 32% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.569) through religion. Thus, there is a significant relationship between religion of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (0.569) shows that with one unit increase in religion there will be about 57% increase in sustainable security in Khuzestan. In other words, religion of Lors and Arabs has direct and positive effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

The correlation coefficient (0.408) for citizenship rights of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables and the coefficient of determination (0.167) shows that about 17% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.408) through citizenship rights. Thus, there is a significant relationship between citizenship rights of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (0.408) shows that with one unit increase in citizenship rights there will be about 41% increase in sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the third hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

The correlation coefficient (0.373) for social justice of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables and the coefficient of determination (0.139) shows that about 14% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.373) through social justice. Thus, there is a significant relationship between social justice of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (0.373) shows that with one unit increase in social justice there will be about 37% increase in sustainable security in Khuzestan. In other words, social justice of Lors and Arabs has direct and positive
effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

The correlation coefficient (0.867) for convergence of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables and the coefficient of determination (0.752) shows that 75% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.867) through convergence. Thus, there is a significant relationship between convergence of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (0.867) shows that with one unit increase in convergence of Lors and Arabs there will be about 87% increase in sustainable security in Khuzestan. In other words, convergence of Lors and Arabs has direct and positive effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

The correlation coefficient (0.360) for culture of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables and the coefficient of determination (0.130) shows that about 13% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.360) through culture. Thus, there is a significant relationship between culture of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (-0.360) shows that with one unit increase in cultural differences there will be 36% reduction in sustainable security in Khuzestan. In other words, cultural differences among Lors and Arabs have reverse and negative effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

The correlation coefficient (0.559) for divergence of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security shows a high correlation between these two variables and the coefficient of determination (0.312) shows that 31% of sustainable security can be explained by this correlation (0.559) through divergence. Thus, there is a significant relationship between divergence of Lors and Arabs and sustainable security in Khuzestan. The significance level of F-statistics is less than 0.05, suggesting that changes indicated by the model are not by chance and beta coefficient (-0.559) shows that with one unit increase in divergence of Lors and Arabs there will be 31% reduction in sustainable security in Khuzestan. In other words, divergence of Lors and Arabs has reverse and negative effects on sustainable security in Khuzestan. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis is confirmed with 95% confidence.

According to the mean factors affecting divergence of Lors and Arabs, cultural differences are in the first rank, and elite competition, tribalism, relative deprivation, and language differences are in other ranks, respectively. Therefore, cultural differences and elite competition are the most important factors and language differences are the least important factors, and relative deprivation and tribalism lie within the continuum (most important – least important) and are of relative importance.

According to the mean factors affecting convergence of Lors and Arabs, religion is in the first rank, and national identity, political alliance, social interaction, social justice, and citizenship rights are in other ranks, respectively. Therefore, religion, national identity and political alliance
are the most important factors, and citizenship rights are the least important factor, and social justice and social interaction lie within the continuum (most important → least important) and are of relative importance.

Conclusion

The results showed the effect of national identity, religion, citizenship rights, social justice, political alliance, social interaction on ethnic convergence between Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan, that political alliance had the greatest effect on explaining ethnic convergence. Regarding ethnic groups and national identity, ethnicity should be replaced by opportunity-oriented process in Khuzestan to prevent neighboring countries from intervening, and not to give them any excuse, and equal opportunities should be created for economic, political and cultural development along with central parts of the province. Involvement of ethnic groups in all affairs, people’s equal rights, using local elites in planning and managing affairs should also be considered. These considerations not only remove ethnic and religious divergence, but also decrease costs and provide public development. Protecting citizenship rights, respecting Lors and Arabs, and observing law for all of them will strengthen the power of the central government.

In general, according to the results, the mean score of convergence was 3.8947 for Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan and the standard deviation was 0.49789, which are in good condition indicating that the majority of people in this province belonging to Lors and Arabs, first consider themselves Iranian and then Lors or Arabs, and regardless of their ethnicity, they are willing to do anything to defend Iran. In general, according to the results, the mean score of convergence was 2.3844 for Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan and the standard deviation was 0.37131, which are in good condition indicating that less ethnic elites in this province (Lors and Arabs) challenge each other over the distribution of resources and political power and the use of particular languages in particular places regardless of beliefs and policies will not lead to a lack of identity between individuals and they less stress on the elements of ethnic identity, such as language and accent. In general, according to the results, the mean score of convergence was 3.9356 for Lors and Arabs in Khuzestan and the standard deviation was 0.45271, which are in good condition indicating that citizens in Khuzestan despite ethnic conflict enjoy job security and moral security. This province despite numerous ethnic groups can deter external and internal threats, the organized crime rate, such as structured networks, is minimal in this province, there is security within its national borders against overt and covert threats, and it is active in cooperating with the government and participation in political affairs.

National identity has a significant effect on sustainable security in Khuzestan. The findings confirm this hypothesis with impact factor of 0.73 and significance level of 0.000. Accordingly, it can be concluded that whenever comprehensive system of national identity (Islamic and Iranian identity) enjoys sharing of personal, ethnic or national identity in a rational way, and whenever ethnic interests are defined and accepted along with national affiliations, the resultant actions of every one, not only will lead to the development and stability of security in Khuzestan, but also will reduce or sometimes remove tension, conflict, and confrontation of forces. Thus, Lor and Arab identity have never had confrontation with Iranian identity in Iran. Lors and Arabs have linked themselves with common history and Iranian identity. The results partially confirm previous research conducted in this area.
Religion has a significant effect on sustainable security in Khuzestan. The findings confirm this hypothesis with impact factor of 0.569 and significance level of 0.000. Accordingly, it can be concluded that religion affects inter-ethnic sensitivity. According to the cohesive role of religion as a social landscape, many common denominators of Islamic religions should be used as a pivot for increasing sympathy, empathy and harmony and any view or theory that seeks to ignore the Islamic identity should be avoided to achieve sustainable security in Iranian society.

Citizenship rights have a significant effect on sustainable security in Khuzestan. The findings confirm this hypothesis with impact factor of 0.40 and significance level of 0.000. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the recognition of people regardless of their ethnicity (Lor and Arab identity) and an emphasis on their human identity allow these ethnic groups to benefit from powers and privileges in society, and thus for this civil rights, they can take duties and ethical responsibilities in recognizing the rights of others, and can enjoy the right to participate, intervene, comment, select housing and job, receive training, etc. Sense of values and character in ethnic groups – regardless they are Lors or Arabs – will lead to security in Khuzestan.
References


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