Ethnicity and Sustainable Development

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Abstract:
Iran is a rich country with a high natural-cultural diversity which could be used in a suitable way for growth, development and preserving national security. Ethnic diversity is considered as one of these diversities. The objective in this research is to analyze the relationship between ethnicity and sustainable development. The research method is content analysis and the data collection was carried out through searching domestic and international databases and studying the papers related to the subject of this study, through researcher-made note-taking papers. Research findings suggest that despite the generally negative image perceived of ethnicities and the fact that sometimes they are considered as a fundamental threat to national integrity and maintaining national security, ethnicity could be viewed differently and be used as a prominent tool for development.

Keywords: ethnicity, sustainable development.

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Introduction

There are various definitions of ethnicity available today and each of which emphasize on certain elements of this social phenomenon. It seems that the clearest definition in this regard is related to Victor Kozlov (famous ethnologist), who believes that “an ethnicity is an organized organization which is located in a specific land area and includes a population who have established economic, cultural and familial bonds with each other through history and have their own language, cultural properties, social values and common traditions. In the past, blood and racial properties were considered among ethnic bonds, while they are neglected today due to the mixture of nations.” (Abutalebi, 1999) The major ethnic indices include: ethnic self-awareness, mother tongue and ancestral domain. In regards with some ethnicities, psychological properties (mental states), lifestyle or certain types of social-territorial (government) organizations, evident demands and desires of the individuals of an ethnicity for establishing a governmental organization are among these indices. (Khishavandi, 1980)

The ideal of any national government is to have an integrated nation and among its members there should not be any drastic linguistic, ethnic and racist diversity and all have to be loyal to a general national identity. However, among the independent countries in the world, not many countries could be found that lack any linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity. Iran is a country which has accommodated a combination of ethnicities in itself, due to the various historical developments and demographic movements. (Ahmadipur et al., 2010)

Ethnicity is among the relatively vague concepts in social sciences, in which the hasty decisions, firm boundaries and unthoughtful exclusions must be avoided. Ethnicities could not be conceptualized as isolated, without connection with the world outside their boundaries, homogenous, or as stateless societies and in continuous conflict with the governments. (Khalili, 2005)

Iranian plateau is a geographical-regional and cultural area which has caused racial and ethnic diversity. Among these, the diversity among the ethnicities in Iranian society is so that the use of the term “multiethnic state” in addition to its demographics shows an irrefutable reality and mixture. The presence of various ethnicities such as Persians, Turks, Kurds, Balochs, Turkmens and ‘Arabs, together in one geopolitical framework indicates the ethno-cultural mosaic of Iranian identity and civilization. (Ahmadipur et al., 2010)

The existence of ethnic and cultural diversity refers to the presence of combined identities and various identity boundaries and as long as the ethnic diversity has not led to a conflict or gap, it should not be considered as a threat to national security and territorial integrity. However, presence of ethnic differences could potentially be the origin of temporary tensions or formation of divergent tensions with long-lasting consequence for national security. Hence, precise study of factors which could lead to conflicts among the ethnicities residing in Iran is considered as the objectives of Iranian society today. (Ahmadipur et al., 2010)
One of the simplest and at the same time most expressive definitions of development is development as a multidimensional trend (political, social, cultural and economic) which entails decrease in poverty, unemployment and inequality, and increase in industrialization, better communication, formation of social system based on justice and increase in people’s participation in daily political affairs during its progressive movement. (Maqsudi, 1998)

Until several decades ago, most studies conducted on development process considered the emphasis and reliance on ethnic identity related to the backward societies and they believed that societies with backward economic and social structure face more problems in this regard. (Maqsudei, 1998)

In their analyses and comparisons of traditional and industrial societies, a wide range of sociologists, and development and modernization theoreticians persisted that the ethnic differences and conflicts will be diminished during modernization. (Seyed Emami, 1997)

Functional roles will become more important than the roles formed by loyalties and traditional interests and public and private interests will overtake the traditional principles. On the other hand, negotiation and dialogue will be the foundation of political life and tolerance in the form of diversity for mutual respect for all subcultures which have formed unity will grow. (Arme, 1997)

In the meanwhile, reaching democracy, industrial growth, gaining economic welfare and increase in the education level could help with diminishing ethnic sensitivities. (Burman and Roy, 1988)

Until the time of “modernization” paradigm dominance on social sciences, the majority of theories about ethnic identity were organized through benefiting from traditional concepts so that the social development process was from traditional to modern, from simple to complex and from particularism to universalism. In this framework, ethnic issues are related to particularism or pre-modernism and modernizing process is overruling them. Hence, if such issues occur again, they are viewed as issues resisting development or results of partial modernization, and as a result, they are of low significance among theoreticians. (Stavenhagen, 1997)

Traditional theories about development and ethnic identity rely on the fact that basically, economic and industrial backwardness a, lack of national capitalism growth and lack of national and integrated market lead to survival of local and regional markets with limited give and takes among insider ethnicities. (Maqsudi, 1998)

In transition approach, traditional societies with properties such as: closed economy, central and traditional authority, feudal system and dominance of pastoralism, low social mobility and communication-information limitations, face the minimum stress. On the other hand, the industrial societies also, after passing these stages and by the establishment of civil society, statutory authority, industrial development and social and economic welfare, are facing lower crises, and have higher capabilities for resolving them, in case of confronting such situations. Hence, societies in transition stages, with developing and mixed economy, deal with various values and prospects and also higher stresses and crises. It should be mentioned that these
governments face many challenges in controlling crisis and many factors are involved in it. (Maqsudi, 1997)

**Methodology**

The research method in this study is content analysis and the data collection method was searching through domestic and international databases and studying the papers related to the study by researcher-made note-taking papers. The collected data was coded and categorized.

**Research Findings**

Research findings suggested that modernization in economy has extended the dominant economic structure to all around through accumulation of capital and creating commercial-industrial development, personal and social-national and regional division of labor, mass production, creation of a national market and establishing monetary relations among people. (Maqsudi, 1998)

In the political arena, by establishing a strong central government, the developed countries have practically provided the grounds for establishing security, ending domestic turbulences and suppressing centrifugal forces. (Maqsudi, 1998)

In the social and cultural arena also, the expansion of communications and urbanization, increase in per capita income and education levels, creating stronger social, political and cultural bonds between various region of the country have practically diminished the heterogeneity of the ethnic subcultures with the governing values and ultimately decrease in ethnic conflicts. (Maqsudi, 1998)

If old theories would consider modernization of societies as a transformer and integrator agent of ethnic groups, with a 180-degree rotation, the modern theories consider modernization process a cause for awareness of ethnic groups; a factor with which they have reach a strength against the national and global identity. (Maqsudi, 1998)

In fact, due to the need for novel behavioral patterns, the modernization process simultaneously pressures the national integration and the ethnic issues, which could cause political confrontations, according to some opinions. According to Belanger, in the economic and social aspects, the ethnic movements resurrection should be attributed to the ethnic competitions, especially job competitions, in many multicultural societies, since 1960s. This increase in competition is in turn the result of modernization process, especially urbanization, developing the second and third degree economic sectors, political arena development and increase in the number of organizations. (Amir Ahmadi, 1995)

Increase in ethnic awareness during the modernization period leads to more ethnic conflicts in the future. Developed industrial societies have been able to increase the ethnic awareness through other ways. For instance, increasing the number of political leaders of the ethnic
minorities due to their residential and business segmentation led to protecting the rights of these minorities. That’s because in some instances, the ethnic leaders took constructive and useful measures in protecting the rights of the ethnic groups, so that in the next stage, they were seeking better positions in the political power pyramid. (Ibid)

Sikurat believes that modernization, especially the industrial development based on national economic growth and development rate, leads to imbalance, and continuation and deepening of poverty in backwards areas. Other aspects of modernization, such as spread of information and communication, reading, social mobility, at the confluence of deepened deprivation have led to ethnic awareness, which might lead to tensions. Based on Sikurat views, considering the inherent contradictions between imbalanced development and increase in ethnic awareness, modernization leads to an increase in ethnic conflicts. (Ramezanzade, 1998)

The specifications of social arena of a society in transition include the high literacy level, average (and fluctuated) skills and per capita income and taking various measures in birth control. The industrialization process in these countries led a wide range of people to migrate to the large cities and especially the outskirts. The growing trend of migration, observing and sensing economic, class and social gaps along with the lack of adequate efficiency in the information and management system, provide a situation which leads any impartial observer to doubt the future and survival of the political systems in these societies. (Maqsudi, 1997)

Today, scientists and experts predict the emergence of two seemingly contradictory phenomena worldwide, which, according to Robertson, are publicizing the private issue and individualizing the public issue. Along with deepening the globalization process, on the one hand the cultural expansion and integration, economic markets and legal and political method are observed and on the other hand, the emergence of various types of ethnic conflicts and emphasizing the most fundamental ethnic identities and ethnic loyalties in many parts of the world are observed. (Seyed Emami, 1998)

Along with the threats they have for the domestic security, presence of ethnicities in a country entails advantages which are briefly mentioned in the following:

Consolidating Integrity and National Unity: In the past year at least, there has not been any social support for ethnic separatist tendencies. This is the largest potential and opportunity for the system to use and actualize its potentials, to intensify the national, islamic-Iranian sentiments. People have the potential to be Iranian and stay Iranian. This is the authorities who can use this great opportunity for growth of islamic Iran, through preparing suitable context and requirements. (Saleh Abadi and Jan Parvar, 2015)

Social Capital: The Iranian society and the politicians, due to the presence of competitive powers, require paying more attention to the national integrity and unity in the region and benefit from the presence of ethnicities for preserving the national unity, in the best possible way. Creating participatory contexts in various fields are among the suitable opportunities which
could be effective in motivating the sense of commitment among people, creating motivation and increasing hope for the future, through creating positive mentality in ethnic-national regions. (Saleh Abadi and Jan Parvar, 2015)

Strengthening the Foundations of Power in the Country: Strengthening the foundations of power in the country is defined as benefiting from ethnicities for strengthen the foundations of power in the country and attracting the public participation and political mobilization of people against the competitors. (Saleh Abadi and Jan Parvar, 2015)

Protecting and Controlling the Borders: Various ethnicities and religious minorities reside in the most critical strategic and border areas which are beyond the borders in which the national government could have impact. (Ahmadi and Alvand, 2012) To decrease the vulnerability along the borders, the minorities residing in these areas could be used. (Jan Parvar and Lesani, 2013) It should be marked that the most important border guards are the people who live in these border regions and they are considered as the first circle of preserving and protecting the borders. (Molai, 2008)

Transnational Opportunities: In addition to the aforementioned domestic advantages proposed for Iranian ethnicities, there are transnational advantages as well which could be benefited for expanding the sphere of influence in various economic, political and cultural fields and some of which are mentioned below:

Political Opportunities: Norms, interactions and cultures build governments’ identities and interests. This process creates the interaction between the governments. (Shafi’I, 2011) In the global arena, the growing trend of the countries’ interdependence and their growing need for exploiting common resources, active participation in the global arena, and the power of affecting each other have led to an increase in conflict of the national interests and security interdependence among countries and the context is settled for dominance of countries foreign policies principles. (Jan Parvar and Lesani, 2013).

Economic Opportunities: Among the methods of participation in the world trade is to expand the regional trades between the countries. Expanding these trades entails great advantages for any country. Among the most important advantages could be referred to formation of trust and decrease of border conflicts in neighboring countries. (Razini and Bastani, 2002) Paying attention to the economic affairs of people has always been in favor of political goals, since economic welfare encourages people to stay in borders of a country and helps the government in protecting the borders. (Sa’idi et al., 2009) Nowadays, lack of controlling the borders and the goods smuggling have forced governments to use modern methods of in cleaning the bordering regions. Such cooperation in the form of common border markets is among the most known methods for the economic developments of border areas(Fakhr Faemi, 2004) which entails the access of security goals such as economic security, forming the political security of land borders, forming social security and sustainable development, which are all among the goals of such markets. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, 1992)
Socio-Cultural Opportunities: What creates an identity among the individuals in an ethnicity and distinguishes them from other ethnicities is their common cultural manner, which includes the set of beliefs, behaviors and rituals. These individual manners create the individual identity and the sum of individuals’ identity creates the group identity and from that, the sense of belonging in individuals towards an ethnicity or a group is created. (Nur Bakhsh, 2008)

Considering the fertility of post-industrial society for crisis, in his book entitled Social Changes, Rocher (1991) claims that:

“This hypothesis is also acceptable that in accordance with the complexity and development of society, due to the presence of social contractions, the possibility unity in social system decreases. Also, it could be claimed that, the more aware the individuals in a society are, and the higher their literacy level is, they are more sensitive to the structural contradictions and the pressures they create and this fact explains the fact that the post-industrial society is always struggling with social unrests and conflicts.”

The political, economic, geographical and cultural changes in the functions and structures of the societies and countries, and moving from a one-dimensional military approach to a multi-dimensional approach, role-playing of the nomad tribes in border security and establishing stability in borders have been considered, since security has developed to various aspects of economic, social and territorial securities from military security. Based on this, Sojasi Qidari et al. (2013) presented a paper to explain the function of today’s nomad tribes in security and sustainable development in border regions, and to explain the studied problem and the research objective, they used library method based on analytical method. Results suggested that the nomad tribes with a multi-dimensional approach have a great role in economic security of border regions through providing the foodstuffs and running border markets. In the social aspect, they have a great role in social security of the border regions through preserving the local and national culture. In the territorial aspect, they have a significant role in territorial security in country’s borders through dominating the strategic regions and spatial activities in regional contexts.

Ethnicity and religion in the framework of politics could lead to integrity or collapse of a country. In a country like Iran, which has accommodated ethnicities and religious minorities and subcultures, the significance of studying the relationship between these ethnicities is felt. The significance of this issue is felt more in border regions which have a high strategic importance. Birjand County, with a high ethnic diversity and many religious minorities which live together with a relatively lower level of conflicts, could be a proper model for the developing regions with a high level of tensions. Studying in this field not only helps with the further development of the region, but also could help with developing the regions and reach ethno-religious integrity with high tensions through imitating the models. By conducting the stages of this paper through library method, Nakha’i (2013) came to this conclusion that the reason for underdevelopment of Birjand could be studied in three subfields of undesirable weather conditions, being remote from
the capital of Iran and neighboring Afghanistan and smuggling goods and presence of Mashhad, as a metropolitan.

Considering the great flood of immigrants from various parts of Iran with different ethnicities and cultures and their replacement in cities, it is tried to use the potentials of various ethnicities in the cities and also, the challenges which cities are confronting due to the cultural collision, ethnic diversity and different demands are transformed into opportunities so that the urban managers and planners provide proper urban facilities for the citizens through accurate plans and provide the requirements for comfort, security, and healthy environment for them. The research method in Shakeri (2013) was descriptive-analytic and using library, the opportunities and challenges of ethnic diversity in cities were studied.

Since national security has a close relationship with sustainable development which leads to economic growth and beyond that, this research tries to shape the center–periphery (or core–periphery) political systems so that along with developing the center, the outskirts are developed and the decrease of ethnic divisions with the center is observed. Hence, considering the abovementioned solutions, Qolizade and Maleki Puya (2015) by considering the direct relationship between the borders security and sustainable development in these regions, studied the domestic and international factors impacting sustainable development and borders security, with an emphasis on the Kurdish provinces in west and northwest Iran.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

As it was observed, this research tried to depict the relationship between ethnicity and sustainable development. Since today’s world is experiencing the cultural diversity and multiculturalism more than ever, the main issue today is not to accept or not accept the situation, but how to use the opportunities in the best possible way. In order to use the current situation and change it in our favor, the global system which has provided opportunities for all of humans should be accepted. Using this situation depends on understanding the situation and the mechanisms in the global system and planning it in a smart way. It seems that presence of various ethnicities is a desirable opportunity for Iran. Hence, by considering the aforementioned, I could be claimed that the tendency of people towards culture, language and religion is natural and it has its roots in human identity and soul. Tendency towards preserving the ancestors’ heritages and being loyal to the ethnic and group intentions and goals and sticking ethnic affiliation is completely natural in cases which threaten the ethnic interests.

However, a nation which is consisted of several ethnicities could change this diversity into agreement and understanding and use it in order to satisfy national interests.
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