Ethnic Loyalty in Iranian Society and its Effect on Democratization: A Study of Turkish, Kurdish, and Farsi Speakers

Behrang Seddiqi

Assistant Professor and Faculty Member at Roudehen Islamic Azad University

Khalil Mirzaei

Assistant Professor and Faculty Member at Roudehen Islamic Azad University

Manzar Aalinezhad

M.A in Research in Social Sciences at Roudehen Islamic Azad University

Abstract

It is a common phenomenon to see ethnic and cultural plurality and heterogeneity in the political units of a society in today's world. By living peacefully next to each other, the different ethnic groups and tribes in a society are able to establish major powerful institutions such as the national government and help shape a whole unit called national government or national identity. Given the multi-ethnic nature of the Iranian society and also in light of global changes, ethnography has become increasingly important in today's world. The present study has focused on the theoretical and practical dimensions of ethnography and more specifically on the role of ethnic loyalty and prejudice as a transitional stage to reach democracy in Iran. The study has made use of statistics and data in analyzing three ethnic groups: Fars, Turks, and Kurds. The theoretical section, in addition to presenting a broad view on the issue at hand, uses a specifically practical framework based on theories of ethnic identity and democracy. The research population of the study includes Farsi speakers of Shiraz, Turkish (Azari) speakers of Tabriz, and Kurdish speakers of Sanandaj who have reached the voting age (18 years old). This included 201 Fars, 199 Turks, and 198 Kurds. The sample was chosen by using the clustering method proportionate to the research size. Having collected the needed information and extracted the data the following were used based on the theoretical framework and case studies of the study: Pearson correlation coefficient, F-test of independent groups, ANOVA analysis, and path analysis. The results of the study indicate a difference among the ethnic groups in their positive attitude toward democracy. Moreover, the results show the influence of media on ethnic identity and people's tendency for democracy. Along with these variables, many other factors like social basis and national identity have influenced people's tendency toward democracy – all in all 31% of the changes with regard to attitudes toward democracy is determined by these factors.

Keywords: Democratization, Democracy, Ethnicity, Ethnic identity, Ethnic loyalty, Democratic tendency

1. Introduction

Countries with ethnic, religious, linguistic, racial, and political heterogeneity and potential conflicts try to find ways to strengthen their national solidarity. Needless to say, national solidarity is built upon the pillars of shared history, culture, language, and religion. However, that which makes national solidarity possible in the final analysis is belonging to a land as a shared political unit and the will to live in that political unit.

There are many reasons for the crisis in national solidarity in different countries. Such a crisis in countries with an ideological political system shows the lack of consensus among the socio-political forces with regard to the ideology of the political system.

It is a common phenomenon to see ethnic and cultural plurality and heterogeneity in the political units of a society in today's world. By living peacefully next to each other, the different ethnic groups and tribes in a society are able to establish major powerful institutions such as the national government and help shape a whole unit called national government or national identity.

If ethnic, religious, linguistic, and racial differences are assumed to threaten national solidarity, to counteract it in a humanistic way one needs to reside in a house of democracy because it is only in a democratic political system where human and civil rights are given to everyone without ethnic, religious, linguistic, or racial prejudices.

Assuming that ethnicity is one of the instruments in the democratic activities of intellectuals, groups, political parties, and the people, ethnic identity becomes an influential factor in people's participation and electoral behavior in ethnically populated regions. Nevertheless, for some there always remains a gap between electoral participation in ethnical regions and participation in other regions.

Generally, ethnic unrest and hegemony are understood within their own special language and logic. Such a language or logic is determined by the theories related to this issue.

The present study has focused on the theoretical and practical dimensions of ethnography and more specifically on the role of ethnic loyalty and prejudice as a transitional stage to reach democracy in Iran. The study has made use of statistics and data in analyzing three ethnic groups: Fars, Turks, and Kurds.

The study has used library research, survey method, and SPSS software in order to first underline the importance of ethnic identity in Iran and second to study the variables that influence the transition to democracy in this country.

2. Discussion

This study investigates the meaning and nature of democratization or a transition to democracy; the forces behind democratization, and the obstacles on the path to its realization. Different theories of social and political sciences are used in carrying out this task.

It is evident that in the last century, Iranians have tried to realize new political values such as freedom, political participation, civil equality, and delimitation of rulers' prerogatives through the constitution. However, the effort by the Iranians to achieve a political system based on democratic structures has not completely succeeded so far. In other words, *democratic* has not yet become an adjective for Iran's political system. This means that the process of democratization is still ongoing (Saei, 2007: 13).

People of Iran have paid an immense cost to achieve a democratic political system in the last century. However, the paths put forward by the political intellectuals have not only undermined the institutionalization of a democratic regime but have also led to reproducing new forms of totalitarianism. Establishing a democratic regime needs appropriate social conditions (Saei, 2007: 37).

Despite the fact that democracy, the rule of the law, and human rights are among the most important achievements of humans in the domain of social life, tradition has stood against these values and has prevented these concepts from entering the social life of people in Iran.

The mistake that the intellectuals of Iran have made in interpreting the condition of society is that they have followed the models in other societies and have emphasized the transition to democracy without taking into account the process of ethnic-tribal forms of governing in Iran.

In fact, ethnic identity, its foregrounding or backgrounding, is one of the most important issues in Iran because firstly Iran is made of many ethnicities and secondly a civil society has never been institutionalized in this country. Ethnic identity may have disadvantageous consequences as well (Taghavinasab, 2009: 11).

Fostering and institutionalizing democracy in every country depends to a large extent on managing ethnic conflicts and gaps. Managing ethnic conflicts is effective both in determining the degree of democratization and in strengthening democracy in a country.

One of the issues which one needs to consider in the process of democratization of a country is the management of ethnic conflicts. The systematic and interwoven relationships between power and ethnicity has led to the hegemonization of ethnic discourse in opposition to the national discourse.

Iran is a country with a lot of cultural and ethnic differences. This country has never been a mon-ethnic or mono-cultural one and has always welcomed different ethnicities. To be an Iranian means a hybrid of all of these ethnicities who live as citizens in Iran such as Fars, Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Balouch, and Turkemen.

Each ethnic group has its own different needs and demands to protect and strengthen its unique identity. On the other hand, each group demands to participate and have a role in the society as a normal citizen does.

If ethnic identity formation is turned into extreme ethnocentrisms and dominance over other ethnic groups it leads to ethnic conflicts and prevents national solidarity and unity in a society. On other hand, if national identity formation is turned into extreme nationalism and anti-ethnic policies in homogenizing and delegitimizing the ethnic groups it also leads to ethnic conflicts and antagonism within a country.

There are certainly many ethnic groups in Iran whose national identity is undermined. Such a hegemony in identity formation has been manifest in different historical conditions. One needs to make a distinction between two points. First, Iran is a country with different ethnicities, and second, multiple ethnicities have prevented the formation of a dominant national identity. Therefore, in a country whose collective identity is weak it is necessary to determine an approach which

can manage the ethnic conflicts, gaps, and participation in the process of democratization. A scientific study of these issues can help one decide on the best model for an effective transition to democracy and can also contribute to establishing a form of democracy which is compatible with the socio-cultural structures of Iran.

This study investigates the role and degree of ethnic loyalty in Iran and how it effects the process of democratization. Accordingly, the main questions of the study are as follows:

- Is democratic tendency different among the ethnicities?
- Can the media strengthen ethnic identity?
- Is democratic tendency dependent on social basis?

3. Aims of the Study

The main aim of the study is to investigate the difference in democratic tendency among the ethnicities. Other aims include:

- Studying the effect of satisfaction with the ethnic political system on ethnic identity
- Studying the role of ethnic loyalty in political and electoral participation

4. Democratization

Democratization means the process of political change directed toward democratizing a totalitarian regime. This process has three stages:

1. Breakdown of the authoritarian regime
2. Democratic transition
3. Democratic consolidation

The first stage entails the breakdown in the structures of a totalitarian regime. The second stage refers to change and transition from totalitarian structures and processes to new structures and processes. The third stage happens when these structures and processes are institutionalized, that is when the important groups of the society accept the political institutions and follow the rules of the democratic game. People are expected to learn that democracy is a way out of oppression, violence, and bloodshed. In sum, the establishment of a democratic system occurs in the third stage of democratization (Saei, 2007: 12).

According to the theory of democracy, a democratic political system is one in which the rulers are elected by the people through a free and just election campaign and are deemed responsible to the people. Dismissal or replacement of the government is possible through election and voting, without violence or bloodshed. Civil and political freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the permission for the political opponents to freely work) of the individuals and different groups are officially recognized (Huntington, 1994; Soroush, 199; Potter et al., 1997; Nhanen, 2003; Popper, 1999, 2004). Therefore, a democratic government is one which is epistemologically speaking based on rule of the nation (not rule of the people). From an anthropological perspective it is based on human rights (recognizing political and civil freedoms). These criteria differentiate a democratic system from non-democratic one (Saei, 2007: 7).

5. Ethnicity and Ethnic Allegiances

The concepts of "ethnicity" and "ethnic" have become increasingly important in political and social sciences, and history. If ethnic identity is directed toward expressing ethnic relations and categorizations one needs not worry. However, if it is turned into an extremist policy and ethnic chauvinism, national identity is faced with challenges and crises.

The history of the "ethnic" goes back to ancient Greece. Ethnic in that context was used to refer to immigrant tribes who were not still settled in the cities. These people were not entitled to any political rights and excluded from the domain of politics. At the same time, there was a conflict between Greek theists and atheists among the citizens of the city. This was in fact the origin of a condescending attitude toward ethnic groups. Such a phenomenon manifested itself later in the view shared by the church about other people: the world outside the church domain was considered to be under the reigns of Satan and heresy. In the twentieth century, and as a result of developments in social sciences, ethnicity became one of the basic issues to which every thinker tried to ascribe a definition. For example, Marx and Weber note that ethnic groups have a belief in a shared origin/ancestors.

Multi-ethnic societies are "those in which there are many major ethnic group formation. These group formations participate in a political and economic system while being distinct from one another in other respects." In other words, though differing in terms of culture, language, and social life, they share a similar political and economic system.

Ethnocentrism refers to an attitude whereby the behavioral and mental criteria of a special ethnicity is privileged over other ethnicities. Skepticism, suspicion, and negative view about other ethnicities, themselves one of the main causes of ethnic conflicts, are some of the unfortunate consequences of ethnocentrism. Seeing oneself as superior and the other as subaltern is certainly imposing the beliefs, traditions, and generally the culture of one specific ethnic group on other groups. Naturally, this view serves the interests of those in a superior position. The ascription of special rights and prerogatives to one group at the cost of depriving other groups creates a discriminatory and antagonistic atmosphere in the society and promotes national antagonism instead of national solidarity and unity. The feeling of deprivation by some groups has some consequences including, "marginalization of those who feel deprived. This phenomenon causes the emergence and solidification of sub-national identities such as ethnicity, race, and region because an awareness of material economic, political, and social deprivation manifests itself in a particular ideology." Therefore, resorting to ethnocentrisms is in fact a natural reaction to a feeling of deprivation and discrimination. Ethnic groups who find themselves excluded from social rights due to the interests of the ethnocentric tendencies of the dominate group will certainly turn to ethnocentrism themselves to exercise their rights. In other words, "whenever ethnic discrimination is practiced through economic deprivation and exclusive access to resources the process of coordinated social relations is disturbed, and the interpersonal ethnic relations within the framework of national government becomes hostile and antagonistic." As a result, the intensification of ethnocentrism leads to instability at national borders and threatens the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country.

6. Theoretical Frameworks

One can schematically divide the theories of democratization or transition to democracy into two main groups: first, macro-structure and long-term theories which emphasize long-term changes such as economic development, rise of the middle class, emergence of a powerful civil society, advent of democratic political culture, urbanization, and the spread of education and communication. In fact, these theories consider democracy as dependent upon macro cultural, economic, and social variables. The second type of theories are those which short-term factors such as especially political protest, role of ideology, political parties and specific circumstances that contingently arise in a period of the political history. Central to these theories is the rational measurement of political actors rather than structures (Bashirieh, 2011).

In structural theories, democratization is a byproduct of the changes in the social structures. According to these theories, change in the social structures leads to change in political structures, that is, democratization.

This study aligns itself with those theories which emphasize structural elements and long-term changes such as economic development, rise of middle class, emergence of powerful civil society, and advent of democratic political culture which cumulatively can change attitudes and worldviews. This should not mean that political actors and specific contingent changes in the political history are not important in the process of democratization in Iran. Rather, since this study delimits itself to investigating the conditions and effects of ethnic loyalty on democratization it does not address transitional factors and the role of intellectuals in the process as such.

6.1 Rational choice:

In Hechter's view, "members of any ethnic group participate in a collective action only when self-interest is gained through it" (Ahmadi, 2004: 158). He notes that, "the basic premise of rational choice theory is that aggregate social behavior results from the behavior of individual actors, each of whom is making their individual decisions. The theory therefore focuses on the determinants of the individual choices. Individuals always make prudent and logical decisions that provide them with the greatest benefit or satisfaction and that are in their highest self-interest" (cited in Ahmadi, 1995: 185).

"Most of the proponents of the theory of rational choice believe that collective ethnic movements occur when an enough number of the group members agree to participate in the movement. Rationalists and opportunists concede to do this only when their interests and benefits prevail over the possible losses. The important point about the theory of rational choice which distinguishes it from traditionalist approaches is the emphasis on the role of human agency in relation to structural constraints (whether cultural, social, or economic)" (Ahmadi, 2004: 158).

The above approach contends that the political homogenization and integration of ethnic groups within a nation prepares the ground in which competition for resources, especially for government positions and employments, becomes a motivation for inter-ethnic conflict and antagonism. "When there is a clear resource for competition in relation to a particular ethnic identity, the basis of collective action is oriented toward ethnic identity and its protection. Such an inter-ethnic competition encourages ethnic mobilization, leads to the formation of ethnic organizations, and promotes ethnic identity formations" (Ahmadi, 1995: 180, 181). "In such a view, it is assumed that actors generally look for products which

are measured in terms of wealth, power, and status. Collective ethnic or national gatherings enhance achieving the goals by influencing the government or in some cases by opposing the government" (Morshedizadeh, 2000: 203).

"Ethnic identity formation, therefore, as a basis for collective action, is realized and protected when there are clear rights by relying upon which one can compete with others. Such competition among ethnic groups is force behind mobilization which can lead to the establishment of ethnic organizations and fostering of ethnic identity formations" (Ahmadi, 2004: 155).

Political and social competitions among the different ethnic groups causes ethnic mobilization and may function as a force for the ignition of ethnic conflicts and intensification of nationalist identity formation tendencies. When the government is controlled by a dominant ethnic group, a contingent phenomenon, other ethnic groups and minorities become in fact politicized. In a study on the role of ethnic tendencies and loyalties in political participation of Arab ethnicities in Khouzestan, Mohammad Hayudi investigates the percentage of participation of these ethnicities in the 9 post-Islamic revolution governments (since 1979; from President Rajaei to President Ahmadinejad). Accordingly, it was found out that no ethnic Balouch or Turkeman member had participated in those 9 governments while Turk ethnic members had the highest degree of participation in terms of ministers and other positions (Hayudi, 2005). Political deprivation of these ethnicities can be the reason for the decrease in electoral participation, membership in political pastries, or other political activities all of which are indexes of democracy. However, other ethnic groups like Turks and Fars tend to participate in such activities to gain more rights or maintain the existing governmental positions; in sum, democratic tendencies is different among the ethnicities.

6.2   Robert Dahl's theory:

In Dahl's theory the following are the appropriate conditions for democratization:
1.   Dispersion or neutrality of instruments of violence or coercion
2.   A society based on distribution of resources of wealth, income, education, and status among the groups and individuals
3.   Cultural homogeneity
4.   The existence of political culture supportive of democratic institutions
5.   Foreign intervention

The intervention of foreign powers can both hinder the process of democracy and contribute to its realization (Vanhanen, 1997).

6.3   The theory of foreign intervention:

"Most studies on ethnicity and nationalism have ignored or underestimated the significance of interventionism. They tend more often than not to identify the internal forces behind ethnic mobilization and the rise of ethnic nationalism whereas the foreign factors are not taken into account or their effect hardly explained. International interventionism and politics has had an accelerating effect in some Third World countries like the Middle East which shows the role of foreign governments in this regard (Ahmadi, 1995: 193). Accordingly, "the dominance of hegemonic policies in contemporary world has become the pretext for foreign political and military intervention to arbitrate the conflicts. As the historical experience of Middle Eastern countries bear witness, some of these interventions have had a principal effect on the emergence of sectarian movements and the promotion of ethnic nationalism" (Ahmadi, 2004: 165). In general, the theory of intervention – especially the intervention of world powers – in the national affairs of another country and the consequent ethnic conflicts is directed toward political appropriation and self-interests and benefits.

Shapur Ravasani believes that the theory of ethnicity and the creation of ethnic grouping – consequences of which are ethnic and racial wars – is a strategy employed by European capitalist countries. He notes that the causes behind the separation of Eastern nations are imperialistic and capitalistic, that is, they are blind to cultural, ethnic, and geographic values (Maghsoudi, 1999: 59). According to this view, the phenomenon of ethnicity is not problematic as such in societies and cultures like Iran. Rather, manipulative programs and strategies by powerful political movements are assumed to be ascribing a scientific aura to the concept of ethnicity and by spreading it in scientific and political communities appropriate the concepts for their own political aims and interests (Varjavand, 2011: 255).

6.4   The effect of modernization on increasing ethnic identity:

"This approach bears witness to the increasing trend in ethnic crisis and cultural identity politics; assumes that

developments and increase in the level of economic exchange and contracts paves the way for expanding and raising ethnic and cultural awareness and enhances ethnic mobilization. Researchers such as Walker Connor, Hamid Mowlana, Robert Park, and Herbert Blumer emphasize the fact that the one-sided effort of a government for cultural assimilation, influence, hegemony, cultural simulation, and imposition of unequal cultural relations causes more ethnic crises rather than fulfilling homogeneity and convergence. In this view, communication is taken to promote crises instead of encouraging national and world unity" (Maghsoudi, 2000: 175). "In the United States, Glazer and Moynihan proposed the idea that against all expectations ethnic loyalties and allegiances have not only subsided but rather intensified. Along with the demise of colonization in Africa and Asia many scholars came to the conclusion that ethnic allegiances still remain significant and even more so in light of new theories (Fenton, 1999: 101).

6.5 The effect of modernization on decreasing ethnic identity:

"Connor believes that the increase in ethnic awareness in the era of modernization is expected to trigger more ethnic conflicts and antagonism in the future" (Maghsoudi, 1998: 118). Among other reasons for the politicization of ethnic identity is foreign forces and interventions. The theory of foreign interventionism refers to the intervention of foreign countries especially world powers in the national affairs of a country which can add fuel to the flames of ethnic conflicts with the aim of gaining more political interests and benefits.

In the era of communications and information boom, the media and worldwide satellites are among the most influential instruments used by foreign powers for intervening in countries which are in a transition stage to realize democracy. This is clearly evident in broadcasting the news of less developed countries (in terms of information technologies) by the so-called center countries (developed and equipped with advanced media technology).

Based on the above discussion and also given the ideas of theorists like Walker Conner with regard to the role of modernization in increasing ethnic identity and ethnic awareness which are assumed to bring about ethnic conflicts as a consequence it may be assumed that there is a relationship between trusting a political foreign media and ethnic loyalty.

"This approach promises to decrease ethnic conflicts. Thinkers like Ferdinand Tonnics, Karl W. Deutsche, Clifford Geertz, and Mark McCormack have emphasized the positive effects of modernization in decreasing ethnic conflicts" (Maghsoudi, 2000: 174). In such a process, "traditions, collective commitments, and other identity formation elements such as nationality and ethnicity lose their previous importance the permeability of the boundaries between different communities increases" (Golmohammadi, 2004: 33).

"For Deutsche, communication leads to political convergence within and among societies. He believes that the needs and bilateral negotiations of different societies in contemporary world will eventually culminate in convergence and worldwide unity" (Maghsoudi, 2000: 176). "Similarly, McCormack refers to the functional nature of media in contemporary industrialized societies and argues that mass media is able to create a shared sense of unified identity in social minorities through reconciling many of their beliefs and values. This can become an important force in the process of nation building and eliminating ethnic crises (ibid: 177).

"Eric Hobsbawm thinks more confidently about the demise of ethnicity and nationalism. For him, ethnic revival is temporary and reactionary phenomenon related to fundamentalism. Hobsbawm believes that adherence to the notions of ethnicity and nationalism are influenced by the emergence of fundamentalism and like fundamentalism itself is a temporary and transitional phenomenon with no place in contemporary world" (Morshedizad, 2000: 209).

As a historian, Will Durant points to the history and decline of ethnicities which were important in building civilization and predicts the death of ethnicities (Durant, 2000: 298). Martin Albrow contends that with the development of globalization ethnic identity as well as national identity will weaken. "The developments in globalization will replace nationalism with globalism and will undermine unified national values by creating allegiances to a global system and its values" (Shiroudi, 2004).

The media can also create political convergence in a society.

The mass media is able to create a combination of shared identity by foregrounding many of the values and beliefs of the people. This can in itself be an important factor in decreasing ethnic conflicts, enhancing the process of nation building, and encouraging democratic activities. The theory of the effect of modernization on decreasing ethnic identity assumes that communication will finally result in convergence. Given the fact that the main official form of communication in Iran is its national (TV) media one can postulate that there is a relationship between satisfaction with the national media and democratic tendency. According to this theory, the national media is able to promote democratic tendencies among ethnicities and the nation in general.

6.6   The theory of internal colonialism:

"This approach which is explained for the most part by Michael Hechter emphasizes that ethnic solidarity in a national political system may be strengthened as a result of critical regional inequality between a distinctive cultural center and its surrounding. The main concern of the elites in the center is to maintain "dependency means" of the surrounding population. Therefore, the members of the surrounding groups try to use cultural signs as leverage to end or delegitimize the dominant formations as unjustified" (Ahmadi, 1995: 182, 183). "In such a situation, culturally creative elements do not remain in their traditional guise, rather, they are transformed to discriminatory political elements" (Ahmadi, 2004: 156).

Hechter has looked at nationalism from the perspective of economic changes. He uses the concept of "internal colonialism" to explain nationalism. Hechter's theory can be summarized as the following:

1.   The more the economic inequality between people the less likely it is to achieve stronger solidarity among them.
2.   The more the internal communication between people the stronger the solidarity of the suburban people becomes.
3.   The more the cultural differences are the more likely it is to construct a stronger form of solidarity between the culturally different people in the surrounding area and the center (Ranjbar, 2005: 157).

In most of the scenarios involving discrimination and dire regional inequality between a distinct cultural center and the surrounding groups, the distinct group desires to gain internal independence and in some cases especially where it is concentrated on geographical area their separatist policies are used as a way to end those inequalities.

These groups tend to leave the internal administrative affairs to the people so that they are independent in managing their city or province. For example, if the administrative positions like governors and mayors are given to members of the relative (favoritism) this would in effect decrease people's willingness for gaining internal independence and would decrease political and electoral participation. Thus, one can think of the assumption that there is a relationship between the tendency to gain internal ethnic independence and the tendency to realize democracy.

6.7   Huntington's theory:

The conceptual basis of Huntington's theory is as follows:

Economic development along with industrialization and transformation of the values (religious transformation, meritocracy, rise and consolidation of democratic values and activities), expansion of foreign trade, creation of new sources of power for social groups, raising literacy, and transformation in social structure (rise and spread of middle class) lead to democratization.

According to Huntington's theory, the third wave of democratization was neither led by industrial workers nor by the farmers and landowners but rather by the middle class.

Huntington's theory does not consider economic development as a decisive factor in itself. If economic development is joined with industrialization, democratization will be achieved. However, the wealth that comes from natural resources such as oil has an adverse effect on democratization. Thus, oil revenues hinder the process of democratization by increasing bureaucratic power and diminishing taxing policies (Huntington, 1994: 75, 341, 342).

For Huntington, economic development and industrialization result in democratization by transforming values. The transformation in values, according to this view, is dependent upon religious transformation, raising literacy, and transformation of social structures.

Social basis is the value ascribed by a group to a social role (Vusughi & Nickholgh, 1992: 222). Sometimes dignity refers to the distribution of rights, obligations, and authority within the same system (Gold and Kolb, 2005: 182).

A wide range of factors including education, income, and type of employment constitute the social basis of individuals and effect their social roles. People's view about daily issues, social activities, and their political and democratic tendencies depend on their social basis and roles. A different social basis causes different views and values which according to Huntington leads to democratization. Thus one can think of the assumption that democratic tendency is different among people with different social basis, that is, those with a higher social basis have stronger democratic tendencies and vice versa.

By proposing the above hypothesis we mean to point out that political and electoral participation of people and their democratic tendency may *not* depend on ethnic identity and loyalty. Rather, it may be the result of transformations in views and difference in social basis.

7. Research Hypotheses

- Democratic tendencies is different among ethnicities.
- There is a relationship between foreign political media and ethnic loyalty.
- There is a relationship between satisfaction with national media and democratic tendency.
- There is a relationship between internal ethnic independence and democratic tendency.
- There is a relationship between democratic tendency and the social basis of people.
- There is a relationship between democracy and national loyalty.

8. Research Methodology

Since this study intends to measure the effect of views, beliefs, and behaviors of people on a certain variable it has uses a descriptive-survey method. In doing so, first the required information and related theories were compiled by using library and bibliography research. Then a theoretical framework was deducted from the existing theories out which the hypotheses of the study were designed. Finally, a questionnaire was constructed to collect further required data.

8.1 Research population:

The research population of the study included all Turkish speakers of Tabriz, Kurdish speakers of Sanandaj, and Farsi speakers of Shiraz who had reached the voting age.

The reason for the above selection was due to the fact that the Turks and Kurds constitute the majority of ethnic groups in Iran. Also, to compare the attitude of these ethnicities with regard to the variables, Farsi speakers who represent the main official language and population of Iran, were included.

8.2 The sample size and its features:

This study has used available tables which determine the size of the sample based on certain set of criteria.

These tables determine the required sample size based on certain combinations of levels of accuracy, reliability, and variability. The selection of tables was determined by the normal distribution of features and the relation of sample size to the implementation manual (Mirzaei, 2009: 186).

The method used for sampling was clustering proportionate to the size of the study. In carrying out the sampling in different cases, the cities being as large as they are, were divided into north to south and center. Then from each city one region was randomly chosen.

9. Analysis of Research Hypotheses

9.1 First hypothesis:

Democratic tendency is different among the ethnicities.

Table (1): Variance analysis to study the difference in democratic tendency among the ethnic groups

Different variable	Variable	Significance level	Reliability level		Mean difference
			min	max	
Kurd	Fars	0/003	-2/91	-0/48	-1/70
	Turk	0/002	-3/19	-0/58	-1/88

The results of statistical test proves the above hypothesis.

As the above table indicates, among the analyzed groups there are at least two groups which have a significant statistical difference with regard to the main issue.

The significance level of the democratic tendency among the ethnic groups shows that there is not a significant difference between Turk and Fars ethnic groups, while the Kurd ethnic group is different from other groups.

The above finding may be explained by using the theory of rational choice and competition for resources. When there is a clear form of competition related to ethnic identity, the basis of collective action will be ethnic identity. Such a

group will participate in a collective action only when some self-interest is gained through it.

According to these theories, political and social competition among different ethnic groups leads to ethnic mobilization. This is a cause for participation of ethnic groups in political and democratic activities. Taking into view the history of participation of ethnic groups in post-Islamic revolution governments (from President Rajaei to President Ahmadinejad) it can be concluded that such activities and campaigns with democratic aims has given a golden opportunity to Turks to gain access to power resources. In light of the history of participation of ethnic groups in the 9 post-Islamic revolution governments it becomes clear that democratic tendency has changed. In other words, each of the ethnic groups which had better hopes for gaining access to power resources made more concerted efforts to participate in political and democratic activities. In sum, the assumption that democratic tendency is different is proven by the findings.

9.2 Second hypothesis:

There is a relationship between a foreign political media and ethnic loyalty.

Table (2): Correlation of ethnic loyalty and use of foreign political media

N	R	Sig	Regression equation
598	0/18	0/00	Ethnic loyalty = 13/3-0/06 Trust in a political media

The significance level indicates that there is a relationship between the category of ethnic loyalty and trust in foreign political media. The above correlation coefficient shows that as the ethnic loyalty of people increases their trust in a foreign political media increases too.

The above finding can be explained by Robert Dahl's theory, theory of foreign intervention, and the theory of modernization's effect on increasing ethnic identity.

According to Connor's theory, globalization increases ethnic identity, and moreover raising ethnic awareness in the modern era through mass media will intensify ethnic conflicts in the future. The findings of this study proves the idea that there is a relationship between trust in a foreign political media and ethnic loyalty. There is a positive relationship between ethnic loyalty and trust in a foreign political media, and the sample correlation coefficient is 0/18. This means that the more trust people place in a foreign political media the stronger their ethnic loyalty is. This can be put down to the explanation that the media increases individualistic identity formation by representing individual models of identity, and foregrounding the issue that governments' policies are directed toward cultural assimilation.

9.3 Third hypothesis:

There is a relationship between satisfaction with the national media and democratic tendency.

Table (3): Correlation between satisfaction with the national media and democratic tendency

N	R	Sig	Regression equation
598	-0/11	0/00	National media =39/1-0/08Democratic tendency

To test the hypothesis about the relationship between the two pseudo-interval variables of national media and democratic tendency the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. As the table shows: the sample correlation coefficient is -0/116 and the significance is 0/005. This means that there is a weak relationship between these two variables. In other words, the more the satisfaction of people with the national media the less their democratic tendency.

Despite McCormack's theory that most values and beliefs create a shared combination of a unified identity and work as a factor in the process of nation building, participation in national activities, and elimination of national crises, the findings of this study shows that the national media has not been able to promote democratic tendencies in people. There is an indirect relationship between the two variables and the correlation coefficient is 0/11. This means that as the satisfaction with the national media increases people's democratic tendency decreases. This can explained by noting that the national media has not been successful in attracting the trust of its audience, especially in a post-election period.

9.4 Fourth hypothesis:

There is a relationship between internal ethnic independence and democratic tendency.

Table (4): Correlation between internal independence and democratic tendency

N	R	Sig	Regression equation
598	0/08	0/00	Internal independence =39/1-0/08 Democratic tendency

The above table shows that there is an almost weak indirect relationship between internal ethnic independence and democratic tendency. The sample correlation coefficient is -/08 and the significance level is 0/003. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, when people have a stronger tendency toward internal independence their tendency toward democracy increases too.

The above finding can be related to Hechter's theory of internal colonialism. Hechter, as noted earlier, believes that in a national political system ethnic solidarity might be fostered by the intensification of regional inequality between a distinct cultural center and its surrounding. In most cases of discrimination and inequality the resultant circumstance encourages the group to gain internal independence and discourages political national activities and participation. We can assume that when an ethnic group tends to gain internal independence it does not show any willingness to participate in elections or other forms of political activities which are at the service of national interests.

9.5 Fifth hypothesis:

There is a relationship between democratic tendency and social basis.

Table (5): Correlation between social basis and democratic tendency

N	R	Sig	Regression equation
598	0/25	0/00	Social basis =33/3+0/32Democratic tendency

The above table shows that there is a direct relationship between the two variables: the sample correlation coefficient is 0/25 and the significance level is 0/000. In other words, the higher the social basis of people the stronger their democratic tendency. The results of regression equation confirms this idea.

In Huntington's theory, the prerequisites for democracy were transformation in values, strengthening of democratic behaviors, raising literacy, and transformations of social structures. The findings of this study with regard to the role of social basis on democratic tendency confirms Huntington's theory. The variable of social basis which entered the study as a confounding variable could show the highest effect on the dependent variable (0/31) in comparison to other independent variables.

9.6 Sixth hypothesis:

There is a relationship between democratic tendency and national loyalty.

Table (6): Correlation between national loyalty and democratic tendency

N	R	Sig	Regression equation
598	0/14	0/00	National loyalty=35/14+0/10Democratic tendency

The above table shows that there is a direct relationship between the two variables of the study: the sample correlation coefficient is 0/14, and the significance level is 0.00. In other words, as the national loyalty of people increases their democratic tendency increases too. The results of regression equation are as follows:

The coefficient of determination is $R^2=0/20$. This indicates that 20% of the changes on the variable of democratic tendency is predicted by the regression line. Given the level of significance (0/00) we can say that the regression equation is generalizable to the research population.
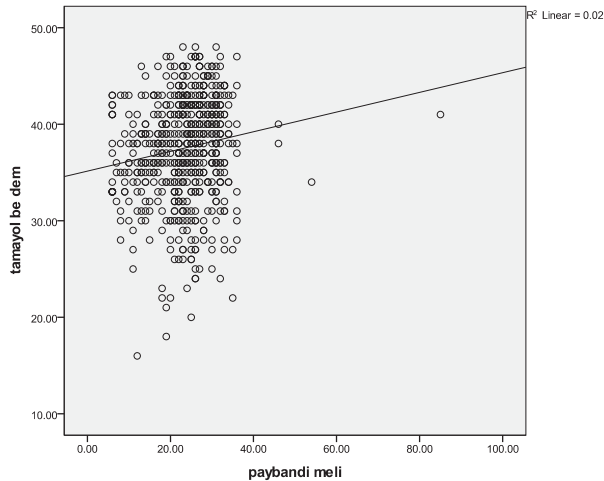
National loyalty=35/14+0/10Democratic tendency

Figure (1): Distribution of correlation between national loyalty and democratic tendency

10. Conclusions

The present study has investigated the condition of ethnic loyalty and its effect on democratization in Iran. The study tried to analyze the role of factors influencing ethnic loyalty and people's democratic tendency.

By studying the relationships between the variables of ethnic loyalty, democratic tendency, satisfaction with the national media, trust in a foreign political media, internal independence, and social basis the following results were achieved:

Most of the respondents included in the study were: 374 male (62/5%); 223 female (37/3%); 248 with B.A education (41/5%).

Based on the findings of the study, the mean of democratic tendency is 37/5. As for ethnic loyalty, it is 26/1; national loyalty 18/1; trust in foreign political media 15/1; satisfaction with the national media 19/5.

- The ethnic groups in this study possess a higher mean of ethnic loyalty (26/1) in comparison to national loyalty (18/1). This is in line with the theory of archaism. As a theorist of archaism, Connor believes that the real national identity of a person is his/her kinship identity. When a non-kinship identity is pit an unresolvable opposition against national identity the primary identity (kinship) prevails. Moreover, according to Geertz's theory which assumes that blood and kin relations are universal concepts that always threaten the new governments it can be argued that conflicts are the result of wrong policies of cultural assimilation practices by the system and its dependent institutions. Ignoring cultural pluralism, and national monopoly have the potential to undermine nationalism in ethnic groups.
- The ethnic group of Turks had the highest mean of political and electoral participation in comparison to other groups. Moreover, this ethnic group acquired the highest degree of democratic tendency (38/2). The variable of democratic tendency which is measured by participation in all elections, participation in elections without considerations of religious or ethnic allegiances, etc. for other groups was: 38 units for Fars, and 36/3 for Kurds. This finding can be explained in relation to the history of participation of these ethnic groups in governments. Moreover, it is understandable to see that when a group is satisfied with the political system their tendency toward democratic activities increases.
- The ethnic group of Turks have the highest satisfaction with the national media in comparison to other groups. This is in line with the theory of the effect of modernization on decreasing ethnic identity. Such a thing can be explained with regard to the national media's representation of Turks in its channels and programs. Moreover, the existence of the internal Sahar channel whose programs are all in Turkish has contributed to this issue. All in all, the Turks have been satisfied by the programs of the national media of Islamic Republic of Iran.
- The ethnic group of Kurds had the lowest level of satisfaction with the national media (mean: 17/3).

With regard to the lower level of satisfaction with the national media by the Fars in comparison to the Turks it can

be noted that since the official language of Iran is Farsi (Persian) and the major population speak Farsi the national media has not succeeded in meeting the needs of this large number of audience. In other words, the national media has failed in creating news and other forms of programs which could have satisfied this group of people.

- The highest trust in foreign political media belongs to the ethnic group of Kurds (mean: 16/4) in comparison to other groups. This finding can be explained in light of the theory of foreign intervention and the theory of the effect of modernization on intensifying ethnic identity. The reasons behind these are: lack of attention of national media to this ethnic group, and the low degree of satisfaction with the political system by this group. When a group is hardly satisfied with a political system their tendency to trust a foreign political media which opposes that political system increases.
- The ethnic groups of Kurds (mean: 22/2) and Turks (mean: 17/2) had the higher tendency for internal independence. This can be explained in relation to privileging the ethnic identity of these groups over their national identity. Such a thing is in direct contrast to the programs of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The latter institution has proposed that "unlike the common view, ethnicity is not an effective variable in the social structure of Iran: we are not faced with a serious condition of ethnicity." This study, as we have seen, contradicts the proposal.
- Though there is not any theory about the relationship between ethnic identity and national identity, the findings of this study shows that the ethnic identity of people is in conflict with their national identity. Ethnic identity weakens national identity. It is disconcerting to find out that the coefficient of determination is -0/39.

11. Suggestions and Solutions

In interpreting ethnic orientations one needs to understand the phenomenon as socio-political reality, a reality that should not be misrepresented. The point is to understand the reasons behind this issue.

Ethnic conflicts and orientations may have originated from deep chasms at the heart of a society. In encountering this we suppose that nothing can be as effective as democracy and preparing an atmosphere of tolerance and power balance among the ethnic groups. Democracy surpasses conflicts, including ethnic conflicts.

Moving beyond ethnocentrism without giving voice and tolerating them is impossible. National identity which is able to reconcile ethnic identity conflicts flourishes when the trace of ethnic presence is not eradicated in national mindset. The failure in creating a trend which could turn a country into a unified and convergent whole is a failure at reaching democracy at the first place.

The ethnic groups in this study had a higher mean of ethnic loyalty (26/1) in comparison to national loyalty (18/1). The correlation coefficient between these two variables is -0/39 and there is an indirect relationship between them. Therefore, the following suggestions are proposed:

- The Iranian government needs to respect ethnic loyalty and allegiance. It should not assume that the ethnic groups must work in accordance to the central government.
- National identity must be redefined on the basis of nation building and citizen rights.
- The resources need to be mobilized in order to give a positive view about national identity especially a view shared by the ethnic groups. This is possible by the role that the media plays.
- Including national identity formation in the process of socialization
- Implementing a policy of cultural pluralism and avoiding the policy of cultural assimilation
- Relying on the fact that ethnicity is inherent and beyond the will and control of the individual and his choice while nation is social, rational, and based on conscious choice we need to remind the ethnic groups that forming a national identity does not mean finding another identity, rather, adding one identity to a previous one. The policy makers need to be aware this identity is formed in relation to the condition and structure of the society, not in a vacuum.
- Democracy and participation have many manifestations. However, elections are the most prominent manifestation which can also be a sign of the legitimation of a country and its political conditions. Political systems based on democracy and rule of the people and the participation of citizens in political processes as pivotal tool must create an appropriate and equal condition for the inclusion and participation of all ethnic groups.
- Creating chances for promoting the motivation for participation in democratic activities and trusting elections.
- Though the findings of this study show that the ethnic loyalty of people is in line with their trust in a foreign political media – the correlation coefficient of these variables is 0/18 – we need to accept that for the most part the social issues of Iran originate in internal affairs rather than foreign influences. As the findings of the study

indicate there is an indirect relationship between satisfaction with the political system and ethnic loyalty (R= -0/13). It is true that imperialism and foreign powers have influenced the internal affairs of Iran but we need to note also that of a country is not afflicted with internal affairs it can tackle all these influences. As for the ethnic conflicts in Iran the easiest way is to blame foreign influences for the intensification of conflicts and evade one's own responsibilities. However, this does not erase the realities of the problem itself (from *Pathology of Ethnicity in Iran*).

- National media is the main instrument of mass communication in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The media has always been the hub and center of raising awareness. However, the findings of this study contradicts this idea; that is, there is an indirect relationship between these two variables (R=-0/11). In a country in which the main instrument of mass media is in opposition to democracy it seems almost futile to recommend anything to the policy makers of the media given the yawning gap between the media and the social realities. Nevertheless, since the media plays a pivotal role in creating paradigms and mindsets the following suggestions are proposed:

- The satisfaction of all ethnic groups must be considered in designing the programs.

- The national media needs to investigate the factors influencing the satisfaction of the audience through conducting research programs. It should presuppose that there is a close relationship between national and ethnic identity. This is expected to lead to convergence and social reconciliation in the public area among different groups and classes and finally to democracy.

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