A Comparative Study of the Status of National Identity and Ethnic Identity in Two Discourses: Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic

Case Study: The Kurdish Ethnicity in Iran

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The main objective of this research is a comparative study of the status of national identity and ethnic identity in the two discourses of Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic of Iran. It also examines the relationship between the central government and the Kurdish ethnicity during these two periods through a case study.

Method: The present study was conducted using a comparative method and a library-documentary approach, along with descriptive analysis. Historical sources, especially works related to Kurdish nationalists and researchers with a sympathetic approach toward them, were used as the basis for data collection and analysis.

Results: The research findings indicate that the Pahlavi government's adoption of an antagonistic approach, which aimed at achieving national unity and strengthening national cohesion, led the central government to attempt to eliminate ethnic identities. In contrast, the cultural policy of the Islamic Republic adopted an agonistic approach, accepting the concept of ethnic identities as an inalienable reality of Iranian society.

Conclusions: The antagonistic approach of the Pahlavi monarchy not only failed to preserve the cohesion and solidarity of Iranians but also caused tension in the relations between ethnic groups and the central government. This tension was particularly evident in the relations between the Kurds and the Pahlavi government, which led some Kurdish nationalist parties to threaten the territorial integrity of the country. This issue prompted the central government to adopt an agonistic policy, considering the inalienable reality of ethnic and local identities in Iranian society. While emphasizing the necessity of preserving national cohesion, it incorporated respect for ethnic identities into the constitution and the micro and macro policies of the central government.

Introduction

The land of Iran has been the home of various ethnic groups from ancient times to the present. Each of these groups has lived with a single nationality and in a cohesive identity called "Iranian" while preserving their own ethnic identity. Therefore, the national identity of Iranians throughout the ancient history of this land has been composed of different religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups. These groups have cooperated and united with each other to defend the territorial integrity of the country against external threats (Ahmadi, 2012: 3).

Iranian identity was a concept that encompassed all Iranians regardless of any ethnic, racial, or linguistic diversity. No Iranian ethnic group, with any language or religion, felt alienated from the country as a whole. However, the macro-cultural policy during the Pahlavi era, especially during the time of Reza Shah, challenged Iranian ethnic groups regarding the preservation of their culture and ethnic identity, causing them to diverge from the central government. In this context, Kurdish political elites created an artificial "Other" by defining "Self" against the "Iranian Other." (Rezaei et al., 2024 AD/1403 SH: 59)

 In fact, the central government's exclusionary approach to the identity of Iranian ethnic groups provoked a reaction from them. They neglected their Iranian identity by adopting a confrontational or antagonistic approach. This situation intensified after the fall of the first Pahlavi government, ultimately leading to the establishment of the autonomous republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan (Ansari, 2017: 123), and subsequent political, military, and security problems.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979 (Bahman 1357), a great transformation occurred in the relations between the central government and the country's ethnic groups. The recognition of ethnic identities was manifested in the constitution and the country's macro-cultural policies (Torabi, 2009 AD/1377 SH: 153). In fact, it was after the Islamic Revolution that the antagonistic policy of the Pahlavi government was replaced by the agonistic policy of the Islamic Republic.

The existence of ethnic and linguistic diversity in the country necessitates the adoption of logical and wise cultural policies and the avoidance of irresponsible behaviors. Proper and wise policies for managing this issue are only possible by correctly understanding and evaluating past solutions and adopting their positive aspects. Therefore, it is inevitable to refer to the history of the last hundred years of Iran and neutrally evaluate the solutions offered during the Pahlavi and Islamic Republic eras. Only in this way can the issue of ethnic

diversity in the country be properly managed and an environment be created where all Iranian ethnic groups and races, as in the past, live together in complete peace and free from the unpleasant feeling of discrimination or injustice.

The present study aims to answer the question of what place national and ethnic identities held in the two discourses of the Pahlavi monarchy and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, the present research was written with the aim of showing the difference in the cultural policymaking of the governments before and after the Islamic Revolution regarding the issue of ethnic identities. It is clear that achieving this goal depends on a detailed description of each of the mentioned discourses. However, it should be noted that the main goal of the present research is not merely to point out the discursive components of the two governments, but to point out two distinct approaches. These are two approaches that originated from two different worldviews and brought their own consequences to Iranian society. Therefore, the following will first discuss the interaction of the Pahlavi government with Iranian ethnic groups, especially the Kurds. Then, by referring to the provisions of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding Iranian ethnic groups and the macro-cultural policies related to ethnic identities, the transformation of the antagonistic approach before the Islamic Revolution to agonism after it will be examined.

1. Theoretical Foundations

1.1. Agonism and Antagonism

Chantal Mouffe's concept of "Agonistic Pluralism" can provide a suitable theoretical framework for the present research. In her book "On the Political," she considers a key feature of modern democracy to be the recognition and legitimization of political conflicts and the refusal to suppress them through the imposition of an authoritarian order. In modern democratic societies, other societies are not seen as an organic whole. For this reason, the existence of various conflicts is recognized, and institutions are formed that make it possible to express these conflicts in an agonistic manner (Mouffe, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 37). In the agonism Mouffe has in mind, the recognition of the opposing party exists. In contrast, antagonism is governed by hostility and enmity (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 27).

If a country's macro-policy is such that it neglects the pluralistic identity of Iranian ethnic groups, the dynamics of pluralistic agonism are eliminated, and democratic relations between

ethnic groups and the central government are replaced by hostile confrontation and antagonistic relations between the parties. This is what happened in the formation of the two autonomous republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and other ethnic regions. In this state, other types of political identity formation based on nationalist, ethnic, linguistic, racial, or even religious components are formed. Hostilities can take various forms, and the belief that they can be eliminated forever is nothing but an illusion. Therefore, these hostilities must be resolved through a pluralistic democratic system and in an agonistic manner (Mouffe, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 37). Hence, the most rational way to manage ethnic diversity in the country is to accept the cultural plurality of different ethnic groups and respect ethnic identities while using all their capacities to achieve national cohesion and the unity of Iranians.

1.2.   Identity

Identity refers to a set of mental beliefs that create a difference between "Self" and "Other." (Fakouhi and Amousi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 58) This concept, as an emotional or conscious, real or imaginary, existing or fake matter, is related to answering the question of what and who people are, individually and collectively. The two main components in the discussion of identity are "Self-knowledge" and "Other-knowledge," which are measured by various criteria, whether scientific or unscientific, neutral or biased, emotional and superficial or biased and deep (Maqsoudi, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 210). Identity is not a fixed thing and can be defined in different dimensions. Multidimensional identity is known as the multifaceted manifestation of an individual's or society's identity (Azad Armaki, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 153). Therefore, the identity of an individual or society can originate from various sources. For example, having a specific ethnic identity does not mean not having or rejecting the national identity of a particular person or group. Similarly, having a national identity does not mean rejecting or opposing ethnic identity. The denial of different identities not only does not create the conditions for the creation of a consensual and mature type of society, but it has the opposite result and leads to divergent biases (Pourzaki, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 238).

1.3.   Nation, Nationality, and Nationalism

Many thinkers believe that nationality or national identity was formed when people were able to rise above the concept of ethnicity and reach the concept of nation. However,

distinguishing between these two concepts is a very difficult task. In the 18th century, the word "Nation" was simply defined as the state (from the perspective of the governed and not the governors) (Hutchinson and Smith, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 360). Initially, the word "Nation" had a religious meaning for Iranians, and later its conceptual path gave it meaning to the inhabitants of a region. With the emergence of the constitutional movement, the nation, which had a religious meaning and cultural identity for Iranians, also took on a modern meaning in the form of new political texts.

Morteza Motahhari (1919-1979 AD/1298-1358 SH) presented a relatively detailed discussion about this word in his book titled "The Mutual Services of Islam and Iran." He mentions "Nation" as an Arabic word meaning "Path" or "Method" and says:

 "This word is also mentioned in the Holy Quran with the same meaning. He continues: "But the concept that this word has in the Holy Quran is different from the concept that is common among Persian speakers today and from which the word "Nationality" is derived". In the terminology of the Quran, "Nation" means a path and method that has been offered to people by a divine leader. For example, it says: "The path of your father, Abraham." Or it says: "The path of Abraham, who was a monotheist." Therefore, from the perspective of the Quran, a set of intellectual and scientific ideas and a method that people should act according to is called a nation." (Motahhari, n.d.: 53)

 According to Motahari, the word "Nation" is synonymous with "School" in the new sense, and today this word has generally acquired a different concept from its original meaning.

In today's political terminology, the word "Nation" refers to a social unit that has a homogeneous historical past, a similar law and government, and common hopes and goals. Today, instead of the people of Germany, England, and France, the nation of Germany, the nation of England, and the nation of France are mentioned, and probably this word is not applied to all those people, but only to one class of people. For this reason, they are divided into two groups, a group that governs and exercises sovereignty, and a group that is subject to sovereignty. The first group is called "State" and the second group is called "Nation." In past centuries, this word was not used in Persian in this wrong sense. He mentions the Arabic equivalent of what is today called "Nation" by Persian speakers as the concept of "*Qawm*" or "*Sha'b*." However, Motahari also ultimately considers the new meaning of "Nation" and says: "We, who are using the words nation and nationality in this discussion, have the new and modern Persian concept in mind, whether it is wrong or right." (Motahhari, n.d.: 54)

According to many thinkers, nationalism is equivalent to patriotism; while each of these concepts has a different semantic meaning in the course of history. Many researchers who should use concepts with the utmost care consider these two different concepts to be equal and use them on a similar level. Both of these words are usually used in such a vague way that any definition of them can be questioned. This confusion of meanings has also led to a confusion of concepts. When we talk about patriotism, we mean complete devotion to a specific place or a specific way of life that the individual believes is the best way in the world; but there is no desire or wish to impose it on other people. However, nationalism is inseparable from the desire for power. George Orwell (1903-1950) brings this up in his book "Animal Farm" in the form of an ironic and humorous sentence that was written by his fictional animals on the wall, and he writes: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." (Orwell, n.d.: 95) Orwell tries to distinguish the difference between nationalism and patriotism, but he also becomes confused in defining the boundaries and words. Liah Greenfeld (1954) believes: "The reason for the perpetual failure of researchers to define the concept of nationalism is its elusive and complex source." While researchers with a positivist view are futilely trying to define this concept with the help of one or more objective factors (Hutchinson and Smith, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 253-260). Despite the importance of nationalism in contemporary history, there is no consensus on its nature, and like many concepts in the humanities, any attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of it is fruitless. The author, aware of this, and contrary to the positivist approach, is not trying to provide a precise definition of this concept. This is what Walter Bagehot (1826-1877) believed in. Although he considered the nineteenth century to be the century of nation-building, he considered its definition to be easily difficult and said: "If you do not ask, we know what it is, but we cannot immediately explain or define it." (Bagehot, 1887: 21)

1.4.   Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups

The concept of "Ethnicity" is derived from the Greek word "Ethnos," meaning a nation, which is equivalent to a group with a common race. American sociologists have used the word "Ethnicity" to refer to a group with common cultural characteristics and a type of identity that exists as a subgroup in a larger society (Hutchinson and Smith, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 78). This

definition placed the ethnic group next to the minority and in practice used it for any religious, linguistic, and other minorities in the United States.

The definition of an ethnic group by American sociologists violated its original meaning in at least two ways. First, in the traditional understanding of an ethnic group as a unit with a clear racial connection, an ethnic group does not have to be a subordinate part of a larger political society, but may be a dominant element within a state. Like the Chinese, English, or French. Or, like the Arabs, it may encompass several states. Second, the unconditional application of the ethnic group to a variety of these groups blurred the fundamental distinctions between different forms of identity (Hutchinson and Smith, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 79).

Anthropologists, ethnologists, and researchers engaged in global comparative studies use the terms "Ethnicity" and "Ethnic Groups" more in their pure sense, which is related to the sense of kinship. However, as mentioned, there has never been a consensus on the meaning of ethnicity.

Hamid Ahmadi believes that the main reason for the difficulty in defining ethnicity is that this word is a new term among the terms of social sciences, and its meaning has changed with the expansion of the scope of social science studies. The definition of ethnicity or ethnic group at the end of the nineteenth century had criteria that were completely different from its criteria in the second half of the twentieth century (Ahmadi, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 29). These criteria in one period become a cultural criterion, and in another period, they take on a racial or even religious color. The type and number of characteristics considered to define ethnicity or ethnic group depend on what the researcher's goal is in using it. Since researchers define ethnicity and research around it with multiple goals, this concept is defined with a multitude of definitions and multiple characteristics, some of which are mentioned below.

Max Weber (1864-1920) defined ethnic groups and ethnicity as follows: "Human groups that believe in having a common lineage and ancestors." This belief may be due to physical similarities, common customs, or a similar memory and memories (Hutchinson and Smith, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 80). Anthony Smith also considered an ethnic group to be a specific human population with a common myth and lineage, a common historical memory, similar customs, and a connection to a homeland or territory (Smith, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 185).

 Finally, Roland Bertin (1931-2016) also introduced ethnicity as a cohesive and distinct social group from other groups that have stability. Ethnic groups assume their background in legendary pasts and usually have a common name, customs, values, and linguistic

characteristics (Bertin, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 235). The multitude of definitions of ethnicity, which often have deep differences with each other, shows that there is no theoretical consensus on the definition of this concept, just like the concept of nation, and a precise definition of it is not possible. Inevitably, one must, with tolerance, combine the various definitions and define ethnicity as follows: "A group that has a common language, history, customs, myths, and perhaps a common lineage and race."

1.5.   Comparative Method

The analysis of the data in the present research will be done through the comparative method. The comparative method is one of the most important and widely used research methods in the humanities. Although some, like Richard Rose, believe that comparison should only be between countries, others, like Tom Mackie and David Marsh, believe that the comparative method can logically be used for comparisons within a country or over time (Marsh and Stoker, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 282). Today, comparative studies are generally done in two ways: "Quantitative variable-based and qualitative case-based." In a quantitative variable-based study, the researcher seeks to test the theory in question in the form of a deductive strategy and moves toward analyzing the relevant data using a specific theory. But in a qualitative case-based study, a social phenomenon is first observed, then placed in a specific historical context, and finally, the historical process and the sequence of events that led to the occurrence of that phenomenon are sought (Saei, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 207). The present study considers the second type of comparative study.

The main goal of the comparative method is to explain macro-realities. In general, comparison plays an important role in all humanities, especially sociology. The main subjects of study of these sciences are very complex, different, and new structures that have common characteristics and unique aspects and dimensions. In these sciences, to understand any structure, it must be compared with ideal categories, typological types, or with other structures (Nozari, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 238). To understand historical events, the time conditions and the juxtaposition of events that help to understand the formative chains and relationships between events must be considered (Mahoney and Lueschemeyer, 2003: 11).

In general, the comparative method can be used in two ways: "Internal comparison and external comparison." In the internal comparison method, the changes of a certain reality,

such as the institution of marriage, are identified over time and in different cultures or spaces. In the external comparison method, the changes of two or more realities are examined over one or more periods and in one or more societies. These changes will show patterns of difference or similarity between the realities under study (Ghaffari, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 86).

2. Research Background

Valuable research has been done on ethnic identities in Iran and the interaction of the central government with them. Allen Hassaniyan (2021) in a book titled "Kurdish Politics in Iran: Cross border Interactions and Mobilization since 1947" concludes that the establishment and leadership of Kurdish groups in the twentieth century was aimed at freeing them from the neglect of their governments regarding the political and cultural rights of the Kurdish people. The continuous militarization of Iranian regimes in the Kurdistan region since the establishment of the modern Iranian nation-state in 1925 has institutionalized a deep-seated feeling of deprivation among Iranian Kurds and consequently politicized the social identity of the Kurds.

Faramarz Taghiloo (2007 AD/1386 SH) in an article titled "Ethnic Diversity: Multicultural Politics and the Citizenship Model: A Case Study of Contemporary Iran" acknowledges the need to use a new method for the proper management of ethnic and cultural diversity. This is a method that, instead of rejecting ethnic-cultural diversity, is based on respect for citizenship rights and the definition of national identity based on unity in diversity.

Ebrahim Hajiani (2008 AD/1387 SH) in an article titled "The Relationship between National Identity and Ethnic Identity among Iranian Ethnic Groups" examines the relationship between the tendency of Iranian ethnic groups toward national identity and ethnic identity. He concludes that despite the combined and multidimensional identity of Iranians, there is no contradiction between the sources from which the identity of Iranian society originates due to the gradual and continuous process of the formation of their collective identity.

Sayyid Reza Salehi Amiri (2012 AD/1391 SH) in the book "Managing Ethnic Conflicts in Iran" believes that, apart from the years leading up to the Islamic Revolution and the eight-year imposed war, the interaction of ethnic identities and central governments in Iran has faced multiple issues. Thus, the issue of preserving, continuing, and strengthening national

cohesion and solidarity has always been considered one of the most important strategic goals by the central governments of Iran.

Ja'far Haghpanah (2015 AD/1394 SH) in an article titled "Ethnic Policy-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran: How, Process, and Effective Factors on Drafting" considers the most important issue in the field of a country's policy-making to be the management of ethnic diversity. Assuming the continuity of the identity of Iranian ethnic groups, he examines the process of ethnic policy-making between 1979 and 2005. His research concludes that despite the many successes achieved in this field, due to the influence of the internal and external security atmosphere and the lack of a strategic view on policy-making regarding Iranian ethnic groups in the first two decades of the revolution and the existing disharmony in the implementation of the macro-strategies and policies of the system in the next decade, a favorable result has not been reached.

Sadegh Zibakalam and others (2019 AD/1398 SH) in the article "Ethnic Divide and its Impact on the Formation of the Political Discourse of Iranian Kurds during the Pahlavi Era" state that the dominant discursive system of Kurdish politics at that historical juncture was a result of the deepening of the ethnic divide due to the nation-state-building plan of the first Pahlavi government. They believe that the change in the political discourse of the Kurds in their confrontation with the central government of Iran was a result of the change in the type of nationalism that was pursued by the central government.

Among the studies that have discussed the priority of national identity or ethnic identity and how this issue was managed by the central government of Iran, this research is considered an innovation in terms of using a comparative approach and also examining the position of each of the two concepts mentioned in the two periods of Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic.

3.   The Pahlavi Government's Policy on Iranian Ethnic Identities

With the rise of the Pahlavi government, extensive efforts were made to achieve a unified state and national solidarity in the country. In this context, the intellectual community also tried hard to achieve this goal. At that time, several influential magazines expressed the general demands of the intellectual community. One of them was "Iranshahr" magazine. One of the topics raised in this magazine was the harmful consequences of regionalism and the existence of multiple ethnic identities, which needed to be resolved as soon as possible

(Abrahamiyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH (a): 153). Local groups, local dialects, local clothing, customs, and local feelings had to be eliminated in order to create national solidarity. This magazine, by considering the unity of race, religion, and language as one of the most important factors for the progress and independence of any country (Kazemzadeh, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 218) to be permanent and realized, had a special emphasis on preserving the unity of Iranians. As in the article "Religion and Nationality," while expressing regret that whenever an Iranian traveler is asked about his nationality, he will say the name of his birthplace and neighborhood, not the name of his country, it introduces the problem of regionalism as one of the most important problems of the country (Kazemzadeh, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 42).

Another magazine that was published with the aim of creating a modern state and eliminating ethnic identities in Iran was "Farangestan" magazine. The friendly relations between Germany and Iran at that time caused this magazine to also describe racist ideas in Western philosophy, especially the ideas of Gobineau. In the first editorial of this magazine, Iran is described in such a way that only a revolutionary dictatorship can turn it into a modern country (Abrahamiyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH (a): 155).

 The magazine "Ayandeh" also had a high importance at that time. This magazine used articles by writers such as Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh, Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh, Mahmoud Afshar Yazdi, Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Abbas Iqbal, Ali Asghar Hekmat, Ali Akbar Davar, Ali Dashti, Fereydoun Keshavarz, Gholamreza Rashidi Yasmi, and many other nationalist thinkers. In one of his articles titled "The Issue of Nationality and National Unity of Iran," Afshar Yazdi, while referring to the fact that the national unity of Iran is based on racial unity, writes: "It is completely clear that the land of Iran was inhabited by the Iranian race in the era before the Arab invasion and the Mongol invasion, and the Turks, who are of the yellow race, and the Arabs, who are of the Semitic race, were mixed with the Aryan nation, not that they took their place." If the Arabic and Turkish languages are spoken in some parts of Iran, including Azerbaijan and a part of the coasts of the Persian Gulf, by the people there, it is accidental (Afshar Yazdi, 1926 AD/1306 SH: 560).

Some of Afshar Yazdi's solutions for preserving national unity include: promoting and popularizing the Persian language and the history of Iran in all parts of the country, especially in Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, Khuzestan, and Balochistan ; building railways and connecting different parts of the country to each other ; resettling some of the tribes and clans of

Khuzestan and Azerbaijan to inner Iran and taking the Fars tribes and clans from inside the country to ethnic regions ; and prohibiting Iranian citizens from speaking in their local language in courts, schools, government offices, and the army (Afshar Yazdi, 1926 AD/1306 SH: 567 AND 568).

Afshar Yazdi believed that the Lurs, Kurds, Qashqais, and others should not be different from each other, wear their own special clothes, and speak in multiple non-Persian languages. All the people of Iran must try to make the Persian language popular throughout Iran and gradually replace the local languages (Afshar Yazdi, 1924 AD/1304 SH: 4).

The purification of language was derived from the ideas of people like the German Johann Gottlieb Fichte. He considered language to be the complete mirror of a nation's soul and considered its purification to mean protecting the nation from being polluted with foreign elements (Breuilly, 1993: 60). The issue of language purification also had a special place among Iranian thinkers, including Taghi Arani. Due to his strong interest in ancient Iran and the Persian language, he was inclined toward chauvinism and, like many of his contemporaries, advocated for the purification of the Persian language from foreign words. Arani also, in an article titled "Azerbaijan, a Vital Problem of Iran," supported the complete elimination and destruction of the Azeri language, which was his own mother tongue, and claimed that the Mongols had imposed their Turkish dialect on the people of Aryan descent in that region (Abrahamiyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH (a): 195). This issue was also emphasized by Kasravi. In his article "Azari or the Ancient Language of Azerbaijan," he considered the Azeri language to be the product of the domination of Turkish invaders and claimed that they had destroyed the original Aryan language of his birthplace. Therefore, the Turkish language had to give way to the Persian language (Abrahamiyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH (a): 156).

The formation of the ideas of extreme Iranian nationalism caused many measures to be taken to standardize the language and race of ethnic groups in Iran. Abdullah Mostofi, the governor of Azerbaijan, for example, forbade speaking Turkish and said to the people there: "You who are the children of Darius and Cambyses, why do you speak the language of Afrasiab and Genghis?" He considered these actions necessary to create a sense of national unity (Bigdelou, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 175). Thus, teaching and publishing in local languages, including Turkish and Kurdish, were banned.

4. Antagonistic Policies of the Pahlavi Government toward the Kurds

With the approval of the law to standardize clothing in 1928 AD/1307 SH, wearing Kurdish clothing was declared illegal. This caused an uprising in Kurdistan (Sardarabadi, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 165). The main goal of the government in standardizing clothing was to strengthen national identity instead of ethnic identity (Abrahamiyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 157). This act, which was implemented with force and military power in different parts of the country, faced serious opposition among the Kurds. This opposition was especially evident in the uprising of Mullah Khalil and the Manguris in northern Iranian Kurdistan. Mullah Khalil was a well-known cleric of Mahabad who considered changing people's clothes and dressing them in European and foreign clothes to be blasphemy (Samadi, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 91). After the uprising of Mullah Khalil, the clergy of Kurdistan stood against the Pahlavi government. Future developments also added to the growing dissatisfaction, and this issue became so widespread that the Kurdish clerics, immediately after the fall of Reza Shah from power, founded the first Kurdish nationalist party called the "Kurdish Revival Society." (Borzouei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 259)

In addition, extensive changes were made in the country's educational system. The new educational system emphasized the integration of Iranian identity and the elimination of ethnic identities, and had a common educational program and curriculum in the Persian language throughout the country. Teaching in the languages of ethnic minorities, which was previously permitted, was declared illegal. In fact, the general policy of the educational system at that time was the Persianization of ethnic minorities (Abrahamiyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 158). In this regard, more educational budget was allocated to regions that hosted ethnic minorities. In 1925 AD/1304 SH, the acting minister of education demanded an increase in the budget in Border States and provinces such as Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Khuzestan (Bill and report of Mr. Kefil, Minister of Education, 1924 AD/1304 SH: 24). The first Pahlavi government did not only establish new schools to promote the Persian language in Kurdish-speaking areas. It also imposed many restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language in those schools. For this purpose, non-native teachers who had no familiarity with the Kurdish language were used for teaching in schools, and the employment of Kurdish teachers and employees in Kurdistan schools was declared illegal. Also, in several circulars to

schools, the necessity of care and attention to promoting the Persian language was mentioned and speaking it was emphasized (Rasouli et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 85).

Reza Shah, after returning from Turkey in 1934 AD/1313 SH, ordered that from then on, all Iranian ethnic groups should refrain from reading and writing in their mother tongue, and that the Persian language should be spoken in all government offices. In all schools and government offices, the phrase "Speak Persian" was installed (Qasemlou, 2000: 23). This action of the government had a great negative impact on the Kurdish people and led to their further separation from the Iranian national identity. Sayyid Mohammad Amin Shaykh al-Islami Mokri, known as "Heimen," one of the famous Kurdish poets during the Pahlavi era, writes about the prohibition of using the Kurdish language in schools:

"I have seen many bitter and dark days in my life, but I do not remember a day bitterer and darker than the day I went to school. Our teacher, who was a Kurd himself and I later found out that he did not speak Persian well either, spoke to me in Persian, and I did not understand anything. My classmates, whose situation was a little better than mine, made fun of me. I was very embarrassed. For a while, I would cry under the quilt at night for fear of going to school, and in the morning I would go to school by force and dragging my feet. I had become a laughingstock and entertainment for the children." (Shaykh al-Islami, n.d.: 6)

After the fall of Reza Shah in September 1941 AD/1320 SH and the opening of the country's political space, the Kurds emphasized the use of the Kurdish language as the language of writing. This was while Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi also emphasized the compulsory nature of the Persian language in administrative and educational matters and wanted to prevent the promotion of the Kurdish language (Intesar, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 61); but during the short period of the Republic of Kurdistan, the use of Persian books in schools was banned, and extensive efforts were made to print textbooks in the Kurdish language. Even by order of Qazi Muhammad, an attempt was made to find authentic Kurdish equivalents for a number of common Arabic and Persian words in Kurdish (Rasouli et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 90). This action was a reaction to the central government's attempt to completely eliminate ethnic and linguistic identities in the country. This was an issue that could not be accepted by Iranian ethnic groups in any way.

In the field of foreign relations, the negative effects of the policy of cultural standardization were also significant. Throughout history, the Kurds had always viewed Iran's rival countries, especially the Soviet Union, as the "Other" and considered themselves to be among the "Us"

of Iranians; but the antagonistic policies of the Pahlavi government caused the Kurdish "Us" to be placed against the "Them" or the "Iranian other" and, in the course of competition with it, to resort to a foreign country like the Soviet Union (Bouzhmehrani and Pour Islami, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 98). The Soviet Union also made good use of these conditions in its own interest and introduced the Russians as supporters of the Kurdish people and enemies of the Persian exploiters.

The open political space in Kurdistan did not last long, and once again, with the fall of the Republic of Kurdistan, it faced strict control by the central government (Foran, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 415). In this period, the policy that the government adopted toward the Kurdistan region, and especially Mahabad, was a complete military occupation. Thus, the Kurdistan region was completely put under the control of the army, and the officials who were sent there were below average. In the sixteenth session of the National Consultative Assembly, which reopened in 1949 AD/1328 SH, the city of Mahabad had no representative (Mohammadiyani et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH: 137). In the seventeenth session of the National Consultative Assembly, a person who was not at all familiar with the political atmosphere of Mahabad was elected as a representative by the central government (McDowell, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 428). This issue had a significant impact on deepening the divide between the central government and the Kurds and made them one of the supporters of Dr. Mosaddegh during his conflict with the Shah (Mohammadiyani, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 138; McDowell, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 428).

Although the tension between the central government and the Kurdish political elites was reduced to a great extent during Dr. Mosaddegh's era, with the occurrence of the coup of August 19, 1953, and the return of Mohammad Reza Shah to power, the tension between the two sides increased again.

After the coup of August 19, all traces of freedom movements were erased from the political life of Iran. In Kurdistan, the second Pahlavi government declared the Democratic Party illegal, and this party continued its activities secretly. During a conference that was held in a secret location outside Mahabad, the Kurdistan Democratic Party announced its priorities as follows: "Overthrowing the monarchy, establishing a Kurdish government with its own elected government, and freeing all of Kurdistan." (McDowell, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 428) Therefore, the tension between the central government and the Kurdish political elites continued during the second Pahlavi era as well

5. The Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Transformation in the Relationship between the Central Government and Iranian Ethnic Groups

The issue of ethnicity and language was not considered important in the periods before the Pahlavi government and was not a central part of the country's macro-policies 9Rezaei et al., 2024 AD/1403 SH: 46). For this reason, it was not addressed in the Constitutional Law. After the chauvinistic activities of some Iranian nationalists and the adoption of a cultural homogenization policy by the Pahlavi government, attention to ethnicity and language became one of the important cultural issues in the country. The Pahlavi government, by adopting an antagonistic policy, sought to eliminate ethnic and linguistic diversity in the country. However, the passage of time showed that the policy based on ethnic and cultural homogenization not only failed but also caused ethnic crises and violence in various parts of the country, especially in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. This showed that cultural homogenization in a country like Iran, which has long been the home of various ethnic groups, is a futile and impossible task.

After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, extensive efforts were made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to de-escalate tension and transition from an antagonistic policy in relation to Iranian ethnic groups. This issue was emphasized in many articles of the constitution. In fact, the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while accepting the reality of ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity in the country, provided solutions for creating a bond and solidarity between the central government and the various ethnic groups living in the country (Haqpanah, 2014 AD/1394 SH: 72).

Article 15 of the constitution explicitly states:

"The official and common language and script of the people of Iran is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, texts, and textbooks must be in this language and script, but the use of local and ethnic languages in the press and mass media and the teaching of their literature in schools, alongside the Persian language, is permitted." (Fathi and Kouhi Esfahani, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 18)

It is worth noting that addressing the issue of ethnicity and language in a separate chapter and specific articles of the constitution indicates the high importance of these issues to the experts of the constitution. This article has paid attention to two undeniable realities in Iranian society: First, the issue of the common language and script of Iranians, which must be

protected by all people of Iran. This is something that is rooted in the history of this land and has always been respected by all Iranian people;[1] Second, the issue of local languages, which shows the importance of the status of ethnic groups and local languages in the social structure of Iran. The inclusion of this section in Article 15 indicates the realism of the constitutional experts who have recognized the existence of different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups in the country. A brief review of the history of Iran shows that the various ethnic and cultural and linguistic groups in Iranian society, in addition to being familiar with and using the Persian language, also had local and native languages, and there has never been a conflict between the two (Houshangi, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 17). Therefore, the adoption of any policy that has the scent of intolerance toward ethnic and linguistic groups is doomed to failure.

The logic governing Article 15 of the constitution indicates that the only suitable model for good governance in the country is the "Multiculturalism" model and paying attention to all ethnic and linguistic groups in the country. According to multiculturalists, recognizing cultural differences helps preserve national solidarity. While the cultural homogenization model leads to the deprivation of those who are not in harmony with the dominant identity and culture (Nash, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 222). The main reason for the constitutional experts' adherence to the multiculturalism model is to ensure and strengthen the national solidarity of Iranians by paying attention to ethnic and linguistic diversity (Taghilou, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 13).

One of the most important political presuppositions in using the multiculturalism model is the possibility of minorities diverging if ethnic and cultural diversity is not paid attention to in societies that have multiple ethnic identities. Thus, multiculturalism is not just a moral ideal emphasized by various minorities to protect their rights, but a realistic policy that is paid attention to by central governments and with regard to the inalienable reality of identity differences (Ommen, 1997: 25-28).

6. The Agonistic Policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran toward the Kurds

A quick look at the relevant documents shows that in the period after the Islamic Revolution, special attention was paid to the issue of selecting native officials for Kurdistan. The central

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[1]. For further reading on this topic, refer to the book "The Role of Kurds in Preserving Iranian Culture and Civilization" by Mohammad Ali Soltani.

government, immediately after the start of the conflict in Sanandaj, chose Dr. Ebrahim Younesi, a Sunni Kurd, as the first governor of Kurdistan on March 21, 1979. The next governors were Mohammad Rashid Shakiba, Hossein Shah Oveisi, and Mohammad Ali Mehrasa, all of whom were Kurds, and Mr. Mehrasa was a Sunni Kurd. However, due to the exclusionary approach of left-wing nationalist parties, insecurity and chaos spread to, many parts of Kurdistan (Houshmand, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 30). The mentioned individuals and many other Kurdistan officials, even though they were Kurds, were introduced as "Kurdish Enemies" by Kurdish nationalists (Ghaneifard, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 223). This situation, by prioritizing the issue of preserving the country's territorial integrity and preserving Iran's national cohesion in the country's macro-policies, slowed down the process of convergence between the central government and Kurdish nationalist parties. It is necessary to mention that the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran was accepted by the central government because of its more cautious method of struggle compared to other left-wing parties. Even in the midst of the three-month war in Kurdistan and despite the non-return of the Mahabad army garrison and the sabotage that took place by that party, it was still allowed to operate freely (Kouchira, 2008: 197). Imam Khomeini had agreed to the free activity of the Democratic Party with the insistence of liberal nationalists, including Engineer Bazargan, Dariush Forouhar, and a number of their friends (Blouriyan, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 377). Despite this, the method of struggle of radical left-wing groups such as the Peykar group, the Komala party, and the Kar group was such that it challenged the cautious policy of the Democratic Party (Grouhkar, 1979 AD/1358 SH: 45). Therefore, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, under the influence of the atmosphere prevailing in the region and the method of struggle of other groups based in Kurdistan, also turned to extremism and armed struggle.

Any attempt to solve the Kurdistan crisis through cooperation with the Islamic Republic was met with strong opposition from Komala, the Democratic Party, and other left-wing groups. In the meantime, the followers of the Fourth Congress of the Democratic Party, who had separated from it due to the inclination of other members of the party toward extremism and fighting the Islamic Republic while cooperating with the Iraqi Ba'athist regime (Blouriyan, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 397-399; Keykhosrawi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 134), encouraged Mullah Karim Shahrikandi, who was a famous cleric of Kurdistan, to negotiate with the Islamic Republic to solve the Kurdistan problem. Mullah Karim was a person who was accepted by both the Kurds and the central government. He immediately agreed to negotiate with the

Islamic Republic. For this purpose, he prepared a text and went to Tehran to negotiate with the leaders of the Islamic Republic. There, Mullah Karim was told that the government accepts his plan, but it is necessary for the members of Mullah Karim's delegation to go to the Kurdish-inhabited region and get their opinion and then return to Tehran. The goal of the Islamic Republic was to form a new composition of representatives of different strata of the Kurdish people to somehow reach an agreement with them and save itself from the Kurdistan crisis. But when Mullah Karim returned the supporters of the Democratic Party and Komala killed him (Blouriyan, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 429).

Today, this type of behavior toward those who, while belonging to the Kurdish ethnicity and Sunni religion, cooperate with the Islamic Republic government and follow up on solving various problems in Kurdistan through this way, still continues. For example, one of the opponents of the Islamic Republic, in criticizing Dr. Arash Zerehatan Lahouni, who is a young Sunni Kurd and has recently been introduced as the governor of Kurdistan, writes: "Over the decades, we have seen many of these Shi'a Sunni types who are more loyal than the king in Balochistan and Kurdistan." (Doshoki, 1403/06/29)

The establishment of provincial networks that deal with local and regional issues is another clear example of Article 15 of the constitution. Regionalism and coordination with the cultural and social characteristics of the target audience's geographical environment are among the prominent features of these networks. Provincial networks are related to a specific geographical or cultural location and raise their local issues in the local language and for the local audience. These networks help their audience understands the social environment and identifies their issues and problems and interact more with other people in society (Kothari and Azari, 2014 AD/1394 SH: 12). Given the existence of various ethnic groups and widespread identity diversity in the country, provincial networks have a high capacity to secure the rights of minorities and respect their ethnic identity, and in this way, they can play a significant role in solving issues and problems related to the ethnic groups living in the country.

Aside from the positive functions of provincial networks, their raison d'être is what the author has in mind. The activity of these networks shows that ethnic identities have a special place in the discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran pursue national cohesion and solidarity not through an antagonistic policy and the elimination

of identity diversity in the country, but through an agonistic policy that puts respect for different identities on its agenda.

Conclusion

One of the very important issues in countries with ethnic diversity is creating a balance between national identity and ethnic identity in macro-cultural policy. In Iran, in the last century, there have been two completely different approaches to managing this issue. One, by emphasizing the necessity of preserving national cohesion and the unity of Iranians and by adopting an antagonistic approach, sought to completely eliminate ethnic and local identities. This approach not only failed to preserve the cohesion and solidarity of Iranians but also created tension in the relations between ethnic groups and the central government of Iran. This tension was especially evident in the relations between the Kurds and the Pahlavi government and led to the threat to the country's territorial integrity by some Kurdish nationalist parties. The other approach, by taking into account the inalienable reality of ethnic and local identities in Iranian society, adopted an agonistic policy and, while simultaneously emphasizing the necessity of preserving national cohesion and recognizing ethnic identities, incorporated this into the constitution and the micro and macro policies of the central government. Of course, the ethnic movements and crises that occurred in the early years of the revolution in Kurdistan and some other ethnic regions of the country caused the preservation of national unity and cohesion and territorial integrity to be prioritized in the country's policy-making for a short period of time. Fortunately, today this obstacle has been removed, and in parallel, the efforts of the Islamic Republic to respect the ethnic identity of the people of Kurdistan have increased. But this does not mean that the issue has been resolved and the efforts are sufficient. Therefore, in order to completely resolve the issues and problems of Kurdistan, paying attention to the following points is of great importance.

In the political dimension, without the active participation of all ethnic groups in the political structure of a multi-ethnic country like Iran, one cannot witness national cohesion and solidarity in that country. This issue is of high importance, especially in Kurdistan. The continuation of the feeling of lack of active participation in the country's political structure by ethnic groups can lead to a recurrence of insecurity in Kurdish-inhabited areas and cause serious challenges for the society of Kurdistan and the country's political system.

In the economic dimension, today, economic reforms and moving toward economic development in ethnic regions are considered one of the most important criteria for the central government's attention or lack of attention to ethnic identities. The fact that Kurdistan and several other regions are among the deprived regions of the country is in complete contradiction with the raison d'être of the Islamic Revolution and the main goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although the destructive effect of the activities of Kurdish nationalist parties in creating this problem cannot be ignored, now that these parties have been rejected by the society of Kurdistan, it is the best time to move toward economic progress and development in Kurdistan. The rule of "Winning hearts," which is emphasized in the Holy Quran, can be a solution to this problem. Based on this, it should be known that allocating more financial resources to Kurdistan compared to non-deprived areas is considered a religious duty. In the field of social development in Kurdistan, valuable steps have also been taken, but these actions are very insignificant compared to the existing social problems. The occurrence of the security crisis in the years after the Islamic Revolution led to the securitization of the political and social atmosphere of Kurdistan. The reality is that many Iranians still do not have a favorable view of the security of the Kurdistan region; this view, more than being a result of the current reality of Kurdistan society, is rooted in the insecurities and violent conflicts of the early revolution. The development of tourism and cultural exchange between the two sides can play an effective role in creating friendly relations between them. The Kurdistan region, in terms of natural geography, has a pristine and beautiful nature, and this advantage, along with the rich culture and ancient civilization of the Kurdish people, can help the prosperity of tourism in Kurdistan, which is not without effect on its economic prosperity.

Ethical Considerations

Adherence to research ethics principles: The authors have observed ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scientific research, and this has been confirmed by all of them.

Authors' contributions:

Data collection: Reza Rezaei, Ghorbanali Ghorbanzadeh Savar.

Preparation of the research report: Reza Rezaei.

Data analysis: Reza Rezaei.

The authors' contribution to the article extracted from the dissertation is approximately as follows:

First author: Preparation and readying of samples, conducting experiments and data collection, performing calculations, statistical data analysis, analysis and interpretation of information and results, preparation of the article draft.

Second author: Thesis advisor, research design, supervision of the research stages, review and control of the results, revision, editing, and finalization of the article.

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