Ethnic Secessionism in Iran: Accusation or Fact

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Abstract

During recent one hundred years, all Iranian governments accused the ethnic groups on the secessionist aims, but the ethnic groups rejected these accusations. Simultaneous to the increase in the ethnic conflicts in the period of hard- liners in the past five years (mostly in non- violent form), accusations were strengthened. Through analysing the data collected by certain in-depth interviews with the Iranian ethnic groups' elites; this article tends to verify the existence of secessionist aspires in the ethnic groups while they pursue their right of self-determination. Collected data emphasize that the ethnic groups have not pursued secessionist aims, and they seek their right on self-determination in the context of Iran. According to the data, almost the entire ethnic movements even two autonomists republic which were established in 1945-1946 in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan had no secessionist aims.

Keywords: Secession, Separatism, Autonomy, Self-determination, Ethnic conflict, Iran

1. Introduction:

During recent one hundred years, all Iranian governments accused the ethnic groups on the secessionist aims, but the ethnic groups rejected these accusations. Simultaneous to the increase in the ethnic conflicts in the period of hard- liners in the past five years (mostly in non-violent form), new accusations were strengthened. It seems ethnic conflicts in all around the world is a "perennial part of the human condition" (Rubin, 2000, p.59). he conflicts occur because of shortage of the resources, whether political or economic. Ethnic groups, as well as other classes and groups in a human society, have their own requests and demands from central government, and if the government fails to provide the ethnic groups' expectations, then expectations would be converted into conflicts. One of the most fundamental demands in any ethnic community is to achieve to the right of self-determination.

Iranian ethnic group have had their own demands and especially after the formation of the modern state resulted by the constitutional revolution (1906) the demand on self-determination has found a prominent position in their social life. The ethnic requests for their right usually have faced by misunderstanding and accusation in the state meanwhile they rejected the accusation and argued they are just pursuing their rights within the context of Iran.

The objective of the research, which enforces the researchers to verify the argument of the existence of the secessionist demands among the ethnic groups in Iran; so, qualitative research method has been utilized. The researchers chose the semi structured interview as the method of data collection.

The researchers also used purposive sampling to select the informants. Indeed, subjects are selected because of their knowledge, rather than by chance. Rubin and Babbie (1997)advise hat participants in an interview must be selected based on relevancy to the topic. For the present study, therefore, according to purposive nonrandom

sampling, the informants were chosen from various levels of ethnic groups' leaders such as; members of political parties, parliament, and universities until the research reaches a point of saturation (Neuman, 1997).

The selection of informants of the ethnic groups was on the basis of the magnitude of conflicts with the central government during the last one hundred years. Accordingly, four ethnic groups' elites were selected as informants and other Iranian ethnic groups were eliminated. Furthermore, the number of informants shows the magnitude of the ethnic conflicts. Kurds have had a long-term history of conflicts in compare to the other ethnic groups. Six of the ethnic elites are Kurds, two people are Azeris, two are Baluchs, and two are Arabs.

The following analysis provides information on general background of the Informants, including position, gender, age, education, and political. Age of all informants who were selected by purposive sampling was between 40 and 60 years old. Objectives of study oblige the researchers to select the middle aged informants due to their experiences. Informants were selected among men regarding the nature of ethnicity and ethnic studies in Iran and also governmental positions, which are captured mostly by men.

According to research objective, educational background of the informants was extremely influential; so, the researchers asked them about that. Six people of ethnic elites have Ph.D.; six others have master degree. From this finding, it can be said that, the education of informants has relationship to their positions as ethnic elites. Most of the informants are educated in the political science, sociology, philosophy, history, management and other's field of the study such as religion, economic, and communication. All of the informants were selected based on their Political background. For example, four of ethnic elites were parliament members in the past rounds. Other informants are academic elites, social activists and journalists. There was a limitation on the selection of the informants. The researchers preferred to select all informants among the elites who are residing in Iran; therefore, the viewpoints of ethnic groups' elite outside of the country were not regarded in this research. Also, there is no precise way to verify exact demands of Iranian ethnic groups due to some problems such as the lack of representative institutions of ethnic groups, civil society and also lack of the opinion polls. To solve the problem, researchers must rely on estimation or other means like content analysis of the ethnic elites' speeches and books.

This article is seeking to identify the goals of ethnic mobilization in Iran. So the main purpose of this study is to verify the existence of the secessionist ideas in the ethnic mobilization. The present research includes some parts: at first the study is going to clarify the key terms' definition, and then a brief ethnography of Iran and the history of the ethnic groups' movements will be deliberated. The findings and discussions will be the latter part.

2. Self-Determination and Secession

It seems ethnic conflicts in all around the world is a "perennial part of the human condition" (Rubin, 2000, p.59). Cornell (2002) asserts that demands for self-determination are the main reason of any ethnic mobilization, especially among the ethnic groups which were settled in a defined geographical area in multiethnic states; so, they often look forward to territorial autonomy or for outright secession. Cornell argues: "the creation of a separate state is a feasible goal and territorial control becomes a chief issue of conflict" (p.245).

Indeed, Self-determination is a doctrine which goes back to eighteenth-century ideas of popular sovereignty and developed with the spurt of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe. The interval between two World Wars and especially after the Second, self- determination played a pivotal role in redraw the World' map, especially Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, which ended the life of some empires and colonial boundaries (Horowitz, 1981).

The notion of self-determination was introduced in Lenin's works too. In these debates, Lenin was discussing self-determination of nations, ethnic groups and various social groups. Considering that Lenin (except the end of his life) was living in a capitalist society, he believed that capitalist society was exploiting various social groups in different forms. His Prescription to eliminate all forms of exploitation was to follow the right of self-determination. Lenin believed all Social classes, and groups can manage their society by this solution.

Determination was discussed and considered from the early 20th century seriously but mostly by the Leftist philosophers such as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Renner, Otto Bauer and others. Lenin was fundamental in these debates but others consider the debate with the fear of fall their own country in separation. This conservative caution was because of their sense of belonging to the interest and unity of their own nations (Page, 1950).

Self-determination was also seen in western intellectual and practical teachings. Wilson's Fourteen Points, which Endorsed to the right of self-determination, is one of the most influential Western documents on the right of self-determination. The evaluations of after Cold War era led to the appearance of the new element in these

debates, and it was the public opinions. However, Conner (1967) believes that Wilson never intended this term to be universalized, and his intention was to apply it in the areas which were under the sovereignty of the defeated power, but the application of the term was burst after the Second World War to other areas and people.

Self-determination is one of the main reasons for any ethnic mobilization. Ethnic mobilization, especially in developing countries has been interpreted as an attempt to separatism or secession.

Horowitz (1981) uses secession for any actions and demands which aim to separate a territory or to achieve to autonomy; so, secessionism and separatism have the same meaning for Horowitz. In addition, Nagel (1980) believes in the similar meaning of these two terms. For Tir (2005) secession and partition are the same. He defines the partition as "an internally motivated division of a country's home land territory" which leads to the creation of at least one new independent state and makes an origin state smaller.

O'Leary (2007) believes that secession and partition do not have the same meaning. O'Leary distinguishes between these terms; while partition means a fresh "tearing" in the territory of a country's home-land and division of it into two or more separate political systems under two independent sovereign states; secession is something like unfastening or unzipping and returning to the "previous territorial order when there was no unity. Such unfastening is the goal of secessionists". (p. 887)

Moreover, Wood (1981) argues that although secession and separation refer to a cut in the relation, which is based on a contract, but these terms are not the same. For Wood separation and separatism are vague terms, which cover all happenings "which feature a desire for the reduction of control by a central authority in a specific area" (p.110) such as federalism, local or autonomist government; but secession refers to a clear and specific "demand for formal withdrawal from a central political authority by a member unit or units based on a claim to independent sovereign status" (p.110).

An important factor of secession is "collectivity". It means secession could not be realized without a public decision making of the people whose elites want to separate them from a nation-state. This factor has been considered in many theoretical and practical works. For example, Hechter (1992) considers the secession through rational choice theory and believes that it is forcibly resulted from collective decisions of a group of people and their elites. By emphasizing on collective decisions, he differentiates secession from another process that leads to the formation of political units and fragmentation of host states.

This research has been done based on the Wood's clarification on secession and also based on the "collective decision" characterized by Hechter.

3. A Brief Ethnography of Iran

From the standpoint of ethnicity, Iran is unique in many ways. Notwithstanding almost oneness of the race of Iranian ethnic groups, there is considerable diversity in their language and religion. For thousands of years, Iran has been domicile for diverse ethnic groups. In an ancient nation, from the far past, Persians, Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchs, Turkmen and other ethno-linguistics have been living alongside together. Also, Iran has been home for many religions like Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrians.

These aspects of diversity make Iran as a multiethnic nation. This diversity is too much widespread in the eyes of many foreign observers, such as Bradley (2006) and Rubin (2005) so, they do not consider Iran just as a nation but not as an empire which includes multi nations.

The main ethno-linguistic minority groups in Iran are the Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchs and Turkmen. Based on the results of the last census (Statistical Center of Iran, 2006), total population of Iran is about 75 million, but there are no official statistics on the population of the ethno-linguistic groups. Researchers and social scientists have to estimate based on some evidences or rely on western recourses due to the lack of official statistics. According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book (2007), the estimation of Iran's ethnic groups population is as following: Persian 61%, (including Gilaki, Mazandarani and Lur), Azeri 24%, Kurd 7%, Arab 3%, Baluch 2%, Turkmen 2%, other (Armenians and Georgians) 1%. However, Iranian government does not recognize these statistics as a fact and discredits them.

From the religious point of view, analysis of the last national census (Statistical Center of Iran, 2006) states that 99% of the populations are Muslims and the rest are Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and others (the census did not explain on the "other"). However, the census did not categorize Sunni and Shi'a Muslims populations. Based on the estimation of Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book (2007), bout 89% of population (Persians, Azeris and Arabs) share the Shi'a Islam faith and the rest of Muslims are Sunni (9%). Baluchs, Turkmen and some of Kurds are Iranian Sunni Muslims. It is worthy to mention, Iran has not experienced any conflicts between the religious groups as other Middle-Eastern countries like Iraq or Lebanon, but the religious diversity has

intensified the conflicts. Indeed if, there would be any religious struggles, especially between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, it was at backstage and hidden by other pleas like language or economic or political issues but leads to intensify the conflicts. In the case of ethnic conflicts, According to Bashirieh (1995) when ethno-linguistic and ethno-religious characteristics aggregate with each other, increasing and deepness of conflict is expected, vice versa when they crisscross, usually the conflict does not tend to intensify.

Despite their different language and culture, the ethnic groups are well-integrated into Iranian society. Unlike many ethnic groups in the West or many multiethnic countries around the world, almost all of Iranian ethnic groups are native to Iran. While many Iranians are identified with a secondary identity (religious, linguistic, or regional background), the Iranian language or culture as their primary identity unifies all of these groups.

4. The Ethnic Movements for Self-Determination

In the recent one hundred years and actually after the Iranian Constitutional Revolution which took place between 1905 and 1911 and led to the establishment of parliament and the central modern government in Iran, differences occasionally have replaced by the political rivalry and conflict, Whether by religious or linguistic purposes. Iran in the recent one hundred years has experienced some ethnic conflicts. Not too much after the constitutional revolution, the revolt of Khiyabani in Azerbaijan commenced at the early of 1920s. During a few months, the movement could seize the greater Azerbaijan (which is called now West and East Azerbaijan – Ardabil – Ghazvin - Zanjan provinces). He renamed the region as Azadistan (liberated). Between two World Wars and During Reza Shah's reign (1925-1941), some ethnic conflicts and revolts took place in some regions such as Doost Mohammad Khan in Baluchistan, Sheikh Khazaal in Khuzestan, Ismail Agha Shakkak (Simku) in Kurdistan.

Simultaneous with the end of the Second World War, the conflicts between ethnic movements and central government were intensified and occurred in the form of two autonomist republics. Twenty-five years later the Khiyabani's revolt, Pishevari, a revolutionary communist paved way for another regionally based movement in Azerbaijan.

Coincident this movement, another tension in Kurdistan was growing. Exactly, 5 days after that the Azerbaijan Democrat Party took control of East Azerbaijan province, one of the Kurdish leaders, Qazi Muhammad, decided to do the same, and on December 15,1945, he announced the establishment of the Kurdish People's Republic in Mahabad (this city is located now in the West Azerbaijan). Both movements were backed by the Soviet Union. According to the historical documents, their age was not long, and both republics were repressed by the Iranian army after the Red Army left Iran (the army of the Soviet Union seized some parts of Iran's territory during the Second World War). After these failed movements, Iranian ethnic groups were subdued by the Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979). Except to some small insurgent groups, there was no ethnic tension.

Islamic revolution (1978-1979) created new chances for all ethnic groups to show their emotions against Pahlavi's dynasty (1925-1979). All of them were suffering not only from neglecting of their rights by Pahlavi but also from horrible repression, which was conducted by the security and police apparatus. Rising of the revolutionary tension led to weaken of the central government. The regeneration of ethnic movements was because of weakening of the central power (Maghsoodi, 2002; Salehi Amiri, 2005). Many of the exiled ethnic leaders returned to the home land and began to restructure the previous movements and hidden activities. These leaders considered the Islamic revolution's mottos and its aims in conformity with their goals; so the process of the revolution was accompanied by cohesion of almost total of ethnic groups in revolutionary values and goals but the period of the shared aims was extremely short.

Only a few days after the victory the revolution on February 10, 1979, ethnic conflicts broke up. The wave of violence encompassed ethnic groups' provinces. Azeris, Kurds, Baluchs, Turkmen, Arabs were challenging for what they called their rights. The new regime, after attempting for settlement, had no solution except than repression of any movements by the army and new revolutionary guards. Turkmen and Azeris conflicts quickly vanished but events in other areas continued especially in the Kurdistan and other provinces, which had Kurdish population (Maghsoodi, 2002). The insurgent groups took control on some part of this region for 2twoyears. Finally, the central forces could suppress them. The upshot of these conflicts was thousands of death and maims (Stample, 1982). Many of the leaders and militia of these groups fled to Iraqi territory and by making dozens of bases in that territory were attacking Iranian armed forces.

Generally, based on the evidence, aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, ethnic minorities and the central governments could not manage their relationship properly. The consequences were accompanied with spoiling the ethnic rights and violating the unity of the nation and its security. Even the Islamic revolution and the revolutionary regime were not able to deal with the diversity of ethnics in Iran. Although its constitution had

guaranteed the minorities' rights, but what the new regime put in action, was not been expected by minorities. Obviously, the variety of ethnic minorities compels the central government to pursue specific policies to manage how distribute the values and how keep the nation's unity. One of the most vital demands for the ethnic groups is the demand for self-determination. It seems still after one hundred years of ethnic groups' mobilization in Iran both sides (the state and the ethnic groups) could not clarify the acceptable way to commit the demands. So any ethnic mobilization and identity seeking efforts has been interpreted by the state and the majority as the attempts for secession. However, the concerns are not limited to the Iranian society; as Sorens (2008) asserts the demands by ethnic groups for self-determination usually create the concerns on tearing the states which they live in, thus many of the governments refuse it or respond to it by suppressive policies, which usually leads to civil wars.

Whether the aim of the mobilization has been secession, or it has been just accusation from the central governments to deal with the concerns created by ethnic mobilization, any ethnic mobilization has been accused on secessionism (Tohidi, 2006). But, even those movements which led to the establishment of two autonomists' republics after the Second World War or those groups which fought the Islamic Republic refused secession from Iran. Despite to the strong refusal of any secessionism by ethnic groups, still the state media and even some private media after any ethnic tension, accuse the ethnic activists and movements on secessionism. So it seems that there is permanent misunderstanding on the real goal of ethnic mobilizations. While the misunderstanding exists, it is supposed that nobody can expect resolving of ethnic problems.

5. Finding and Discussion

Iranian ethnic groups, especially due to changes in Iran's society resulted by the Constitutional Revolution (1906) have pursued their rights of self-determination, however, in different forms. Informant A4 asserts that self-determination is one of the natural rights of human beings. It was understood from most of informants' opinions that demanding the right in Iran varies to each ethnic group as well as different classes of each group. For example, informant A5 asserts that there are some differences within each ethnic group, so it could not be expected same demands from the whole of a group. Moreover, the demands vary among different groups, in this context, informant A10 said:

Demanding the right of self-determination among ethnics has many forms. Among the Kurds, it is more political and cultural, so political parties are the most influential actors in the policy arena. Influence of the Kurdish political parties is so that they have a regular organization in the most cities and even villages in this region in and also in Iran's context they are among the constant parties.

This statement was also observed in another informant's experience. Informant A7 said that pursuing the right of determination by the ethnic groups of Iran has had a variety of ways during different periods. Some times these were inherent demands, and sometimes it has been from outer side and influenced by external pressure. This expression also has been contemplated in experiences of informant A6:

Various Iranian ethnic groups follow up different ways to this demand. Regardless the activists represent the majority of people, or they state their own requests, the right had been pursued in different formal methods from legal and peaceful to illegal and violent and seldom separatist ways.

On the difference of ways for pursuing the right, some other informants believe in sameness of ways by all Iranian ethnics. It was understood from informant A3 experience that it does not seem to be much difference between ethnic practices in this case. He expressed that Kurds and Azeri's might be slightly different; but most of the political movements in these areas have requested national and citizenship rights and opposed to discrimination, which usually imposed by the central government. He continued that it means if the government regards ethnic rights and equality among all people of the nation, the weak streaks of secessionism will be eliminated as it has happened in our history.

It was understood from some informants' opinions that self – determination does not mean as secessionism or even autonomy for certain ethnic groups in Iran. "They just seek equality with the majority and the situation in which their values and beliefs would be respected, and their elites can manage their local affairs" as it informant A1 said. He continued:

I did not see any real secessionism by ethnic groups in Iran. Even two militant movements in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan during 1945-1946 which could govern on these provinces for one year and other movements in these areas were not separatists as it is stated in some literatures such as Kasravi's books.

Informant A9 as an Azeri elite supported the above argument. He said that the Iranians had a long history of coexistence. This level of coexistence is too scarce in other where. Divergence has not been supported by these

people. "Indeed, If there were some small events of divergence, the measures had been reactions for the government' injustice manner", the informant asserted.

This statement was supported by informant A8. As an Arab elite, he believes the society of Arabs does not pursue separatism as an option for self- determination. This is because of the shared faith on Shiite with the majority of Iran. He said:

Arabs of Khuzestan due to common religious faith with the Iranians, among more options have preferred to living in the political context of Iran, especially considering that the eight Arabic countries in the region except southern Iraq are all Sunni Muslims. Arabs in the last hundred years have not pursued any serious efforts for independence due to Shiite factor. As a fact, although separatist groups were active in the early years of the Revolution, but the society did not support them.

Informant A2 as another Arab elite agrees with the argument and states that self – determination among Arabs means participation in the power and the possibility of equal access to the resources. It was an interesting point that stated by these Arab elites because some of the writers and groups argue that Arabs do not share their race with the other parts of Iranian people; therefore, they follow up separatist ideas. Informant A8 states that from Pahlavi's era until now the ethnic movements while they were pursuing separatist ideas were not supported by their society. As another fact to support his argument, the informant mentions that at the early of the Revolution a 30 member delegation of different classes of Arabs went to the Qom city and Tehran to visit the Supreme leader and Prime minister and announced them the Arabs' demands. "Within these demands, autonomy had no position".

An interesting point was understood from informant Allexpression. He states ethnics in Iran have to prove their belonging to Iran at first then they follow up their demands within Iranian social and political movements. He believes that it is because of the structure of the ruling regime at the time of Pahlavi and Islamic Republic, which were trying for centralism and assimilation; so, ethnic groups have never been able to define their self-determination demand. The informant Alludes to some experiences of Kurdish ethnic people who insisted on the right of self-determination in the form of establishing an autonomist republic in Mahabad during 1944-1945 because of weakness in central government. He rejects any separatist attitude among Kurds, and said:

Iranian Kurds never had any secessionist approach; even opposition leaders who were fighting with the Islamic Republic of Iran never doubt in being Iranian and solving the issues of Kurdistan in the context of Iran. A lot of facts can be found, for example, the several statements of the late Secretary-General of Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou during the Iran-Iraq war and attacking Iran by the MEK in 1988. These statements show even the opposition leaders how much believe in Iran and proud to be Iranians.

There is a fascinating point about the demands of self-determination and separatism ideas among the Kurds according to the treaty of Sevres (1920) and given promises to Kurds to establish their own government. Despite those promises and wide aspiration on the independence state, even Kurdish movements have not pursued secessionist ideas. Even if, some small movements have tended to act under the secessionist slogans, they were encountered by other streams in the ethnic areas and the majority of the society. These streams seek their fate within a powerful Iranian government, its civilization, history and culture. These views usually define their right of self- determination as participation and power- sharing with government. There are some examples of these small groups within Arabs, Azeris, Kurds and Baluchs; but they have not had any influence on the society. These behavior of the ethnic society reflect a rational choice by ethnic groups. Informant A12 pointed to the non-separatism nature of Iranian ethnics' movements and their autonomist essence and said:

... Our problem is not independency. We are part of Iran's nation, but we do not want any other people dominate and enforce us ... I don't see the secessionist attitudes among the ethnic groups as it is highlighted in the Center. Despite an extremely small minority which believes in solving problems through ethnic separation, ethnic elites do not see breaking Iran as a solution.

This Baluch elite states that condition certainly would get worse for ethnic groups, if they separate from Iran. In addition, there are fundamentally different problems. He believes that separation is not possible in Iran. For explaining this argument, he asks some questions:

Basically, based on local capacities, is a breakdown of a zone possible or not? If it is possible, sooner or later this happens like Yugoslavia or elsewhere. For example, does the level of ethnic alienation in the Iranian community as deep as Serbs alienation from the rest of Yugoslavia? The fact is not. This community is intertwined, and the discussions are only on the rights and how can the rights of ethnic regions are fulfilled. Whatever these rights are not respected by the government, the magnitude of centrifugal actions will be strengthened. This aspires must not

be interpreted as separatism. It happened at various times in history, including Seljuk, Ghaznavid, Safavid, Qajar, Pahlavi, or early this revolution; but I do not consider it as secessionism and people do not feel so. At the time of the revolution, the chiefs of armed tribes were more concerned about the breakdown of Iran probably as consequences of the revolution in Iran, and they intended to prevent it. Interpretation of the "center" toward the right of self-determination is different of ethnics'. However, I do not deny that some small ethnic movements have separatist ideas but the idea never was supported in Baluchistan, but what supported in the region was; autonomy "Vatvajehy", as it was the slogan of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan "autonomy for Kurdistan." By this term, they wanted to manage their local affairs by themselves.

An Azeri elite supports the idea by saying that Iranian ethnic groups do not look for some rights that had not been for them. They seek for their right, which had been deprived, and they want to re-gain it. The informant expresses that Iran, before the formation of the modern state in Iran, was governed by a provincial administration and was introduced as Bounded (or Guarded) Countries (mamaleke mahroseh). Each of these provinces had defined relationship and the role with the central government, and the leaders of the provinces had their own local authorities. Later in the constitution of the Constitutional Revolution, decentralization was predicted by the state and provincial councils. Unfortunately, despite legislation in the constitution, the issue of decentralization got forgotten because of centralist approach of Pahlavi dynasty and Islamic Republic.

An interesting point was mentioned in some informants' experiences; changes in definitions and aims of self-determination due to political and cultural changes in Iran. According to the experiences of some informants; definition of self-determination has faced with certain changes in recent years because of development in communications and entering of public opinion into international politics. This point of view supported by Iran's Evolutions. Informant A11 speaks on his experiences of changes in the forms of requests on self-determination. He said:

...But after 50 years (of seeking the right of self-determination by militant movements) and during Khatami' presidency, ethnic movements across the country were assumed a new meaning of demands and requests. Demands on the determination have been sought in the space of thoughts and ideas of civil and democratic values by cultural and political activists, by the Representatives in Islamic Council, journalists and students.

The experiences of informant A10 are alike. He believes that in the recent years and evolutions in Iraqi Kurdistan, which led to the establishment of a local government in that region and also development in reformism discourses in Iran and globalization of democratic values, the aims and attitudes of Kurdish militant parties changed so they are talking of suspending the armed struggle and demand for federalism in Iran (instead of secession or even autonomy). Finally there was a fascinating viewpoint in one of ethnic elite's statement. Informant A12 as a Baluch elite asserted:

... I think the phenomenon of separation is provoked and advertised by the central government in Iran. Iranian ethnic groups are not pursuing the separation. I think if Iran goes toward separation, it would occur on the basis of mistakes of government and from the Center would break down, As in Soviet Union. I think that if Iran goes to the decomposition, it will be by the Center, not by the demands of ethnic groups.

This viewpoint also is considered by informant A4. This Azeri elite asserts that there is a same feeling of common identity in our country, and we (ethnic groups) all have it but, unfortunately, it is undermining daily. A force from center says you are not same. For example, while Kurds argue that we are more in Iranian character but the forces from the center say no you are not. Other ethnic groups feel such behavior too. It appears that the force is separating ethnic groups from Iran.

6. Conclusion

Iranian ethnic groups have common demands like other parts of the society, in addition, based on their distinguished cultural situation; they have certain other demands from the government. The demands can be categorized in some parts as political, economic, social and cultural. One of the most fundamental demands of them is self-determination. The collected data explain that Iranian ethnic groups have demanded their right of self-determination within the political system of Iran, and secessionism has no place in all of their viewpoints. In fact, all informants without exception believe that Iranian ethnic groups respect their Iranian origin and their long history of coexistence with each other and pursue the right within the borders of Iran and do not look at other solutions such as separation. The maximum forms of pursuing the demand of the right have been in the forms of autonomy and federalism.

According to the statements of some informants, even the previous ethnic movements in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan which could establish autonomist republics for a while after the Second World War had no

secessionist ideas. According to the collected data, all informants without exception believe that Iranian ethnics considering their Iranian origin and their long history of coexistence with each other. Thus, they pursue their right within the borders of Iran and do not look for other solutions such as secession for achieving the full realization of this right. The maximum forms of pursuing the demand for the right have been in the forms of autonomy and federalism. The right of self-determination has been pursued in different formal methods to legal and peaceful or illegal and violent and seldom separatist ways. It has had different meaning for each group; therefore, various Iranian ethnic groups follow up different ways to this demand. Some times it was inherent demands, and some times it has been influenced by external impacts.

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