

Passing from Ethnic Discourse to National Discourse in Iran “Multilateral Discourse”

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ABSTRACT

Upon the developments made in internal discipline and individual-global environment of Iran, civil need for making a conceptual framework for extended Iranian identity layers has become more obvious than before. Despite this civil need, neither the previous unity oriented discipline (ethnic- sectarian) on human identity could preserve Iranian pre modernism identity as its previous situation, nor could the attempts for replacing new national identity be internalized. In present research, we have examined the power of discourse identity model in achieving the goals of Constitution for achieving the rights of these groups. Therefore, the hypothesis of present research is that through discourse identity model, integration of Iranian national identity could be preserved in the fluid environment of new discipline. Finally, offered solution in this study is focused on presenting a meaningful identity resulted from adherence to integration. Although adhering to integration is based on the effective foundation of nation-state-government institution, unlike modernistic view, it does not deteriorate other identity layers.

KEYWORDS: ethnic discourse, national discourse, political system, civil rights, integration

INTRODUCTION

Considering the appearance of multiple identity layers resulted through the two top to bottom (liberalization) and bottom to top approaches (democratization) in states' political relationships in today's individual-global environment, the question is: can one, using the discourse identity model, present an appropriate packing (categorization) of multiple layers of human identity in Iranian national identity environment? The few events happening as terrorist acts in some border areas of Iran imply the necessity for finding a solution for this problem. Some scientific studies indicate that national identity in Iran has in sometimes suffered ruptures and that this problem may even deepen in the future. As Durkheim predicted, when passing from mechanical unity to organic unity, the possibility of these events is higher (Durkheim, 1980).

From historical perspective, many Iranian researchers and historians believe that there is a kind of correspondence between theoretical idea of Durkheim and the fundamental political developments in Iran. They claim that historical observations imply that whenever the control of central government weakens in surrounding areas particularly in boarder areas, the exhausted movements existing in the period of that stability provoke the secessionist claims. They refer to two events namely, Reza Shah's exit from Iran and revolution against second king of Pahlavi. It has, however been seen that in many cases such as the Imposed War and the decisive elections, significant patriotic participation has been occurred.

These dual crisis-prone and crisis-remover events are symptoms of political wounds which if not healed, would threaten the country's security. In line with efforts to prevent such threats, the present article tries to consider the ability of the identity discourse model in casting away of the crisis from multi-layer environment of identity in Iran.

The hypothesis of this study is that the political system can, by adopting integration approach with the one existing in the identity discourse, prevent the development of identity crisis in Iran. By transition from crisis-remover Unitarianism and through creating an integration oriented political culture, the government can achieve a multilateral discourse between the nation-state institution.

Considering the citizenship rights as criteria mentioned in the Constitution and having regards to the ideas concerning the transition period in globalization setting, the present article is composed of three chapters; In chapter one, the general fundamentals of citizenship rights and national identity in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran are investigated. Chapter two addresses the conditions of life and the mentality of Iranian ethnicities as well as the need for packing (categorizing) the identity layers in identity discourse. Finally the third chapter, by relying on discourse identity model and comprehensive approach of other diverse identity layers, investigates the role of government in making discourses about identity discourse.

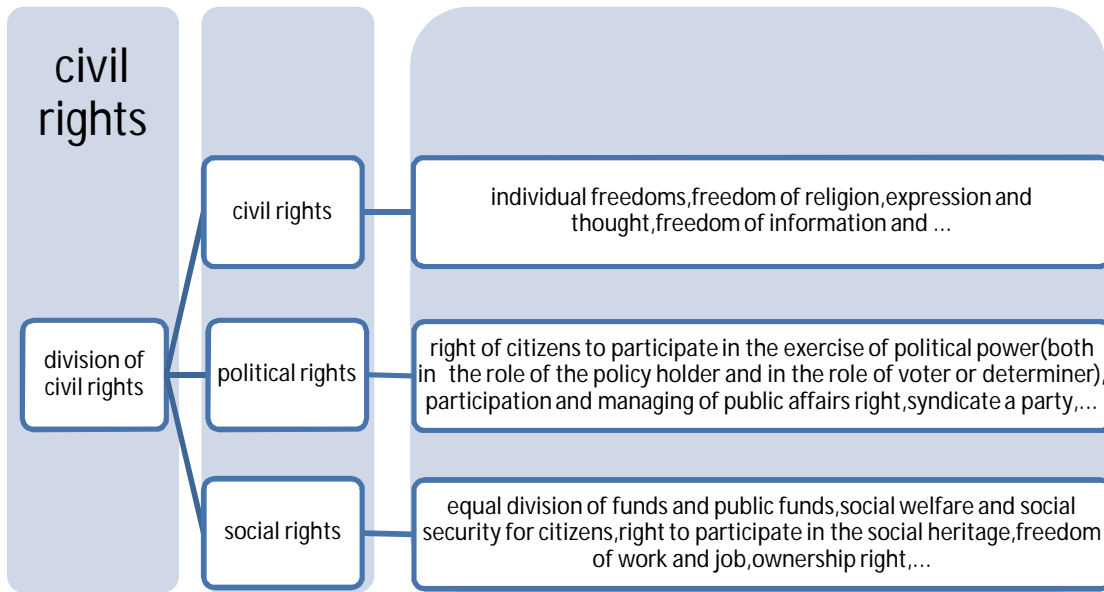
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Chapter one: National identity in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran

By comparing the principles of the Constitution with citizenship rights, one can conclude that, from legal point of view, the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran has the required capacity for meeting citizenship rights of groups. However, the lack of a conceptual software-based framework has caused disagreements on the subject of identity to become the subject of coercive measures rather than peaceful means of solution; so in this part, the citizenship rights, particularly those of ethnical/sectarian groups in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran is addressed.

Citizenship rights in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran

The central government has always some responsibilities toward its citizens, the performance of which it should always follow strictly. The duties relating to citizenship rights are divided to three groups: civil, political and economic and social rights, the important of which are indicated in the following figure.



Reviewing many of principles of the Constitution, one may get to this general idea that the fundamental rights and freedoms are considered for all Iranian citizens and they are equally entitled these rights irrespective of their ethnicity, race, language and even religion. In many principles of the Constitution, the term “anyone”, “all”, “any Iranian” and the like are used (Mehrparvar, 09/12/1999). For example in principle 29 of Constitution, the right to social security is a right belonging to all people and the government is required to provide the services and supports relating to social security for all people of country.

According to principle 34: “it is the indisputable right of every Iranian citizen to seek justice by recourse to competent courts.”

Principle 41 states: “the Iranian nationality is the indisputable right of every Iranian individual and the government cannot withdraw it from any Iranian unless he himself so requests or acquires the nationality of another state.”

Principle 23 states that: “the investigation of individuals’ opinions is forbidden and nobody may be ... or investigated simply for their opinion.”

Principle 14 states: “... the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethnical norms and the principles of Islamic Justice and equity and to respect their human rights.”

Regarding the Respect for the rights of religious group, not only there exists a general vision implying the equality and non-discrimination, but also the preservation of their identity and existence is considered. This belief is manifested in the following forms:

- 1- Freedom of conducting religious ceremonies: principle 13 the of Constitution emphasizes on the freedom in conducting religious ceremonies; in practice, the followers of these three religions have their own different churches, synagogues and altars where they can, individually and in groups, conduct their rites and religious ceremonies; sometimes their rites are also broadcasted from Iran’s national TV.

- 2- Implementation of religious regulations in personal affairs: according to principle 13 of the Constitution concerning the followers of these three formal religions regarding personal affairs namely marriage, divorce, heritage and testament, they act based on their canons and even if a quarrel or claim is brought up in Iran courts, the judge settles the dispute according to their religious canons.
- 3- Forming associations: based on principle 26 of the Constitution, recognized religious minorities can form association and communities according to the regulations.

At the moment, there are various associations and communities of minorities across the country which follow their own activities and preserve their cultural- religious identity.

- 4- To have representatives in Islamic Consultative Parliament: in the Constitution it is predicted that the recognized minorities can have representative in Islamic Consultative Assembly and elect their representatives among their fellow creed and send him to the assembly. According to article 64: “the Zoroastrians and Jews each can elect one representative and Assyrian Christians and Chaldean Christians will jointly have one representative and Christian Armenians of south and north each can elect one representative.

Issues objected by ethnical- sectarian groups

According to principle 115, the president shall be elected from among religious and political personalities possessing following qualifications:

Iranian origin, Iranian nationality, administrative capacity and resourcefulness, a good past record, trustworthiness and piety and convinced belief in the fundamental principles of Islamic Republic of Iran and official religion of the country.

The way the principle 19 of Constitution which says: all people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group to which they belong, enjoy equal rights and color, race, language and the like, do not bestow any privilege. The principle indicates that the term “religion” is not explicitly mentioned with terms: “color, race and language” and this may make this doubt that religion can induce privilege and difference in religion, so it prevents exercising equal rights. While the term “the like” follows this can solve the problem but including the term “religion” can remove this doubt.

principle 12 of Constitution considers Islam and the Twelve Ja’fari school as the official religion of Iran. The followers of other Islamic schools such as Hanafi, shafei, Maleki, Hanbali, Zeidi are not considered as minorities and in that principle it is stated that the followers of these schools shall be respected but it is obvious that they are minorities versus Shia and principle 12 recognizes their existence and identity and protection of their identity and they are allowed to act freely in their rites and religious education according to their school and religion and in personal affairs and claims relating to it, and they can apply their jurisprudential rules and act in courts accordingly.

Regarding non- Muslims, principle 13 of Constitution says: Iranian, Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities who within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies and to act according to their canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.

Part two: living environment of races and religions in Iran

What shall be studied in this environment are the issues relating to Iranian races and religions. Because of a lack of official statistics about living situations of the Sunni’s in Iran, we need to explain Iranian living environment by considering the statistics of Iran Statistics Center and to explain living environment and conditions of Iranian ethnic groups by using the statistics presented in Fact Books Online and various other relevant and valid websites.

Table 1: living environment of ethnic groups and religions in Iran

Religion (dominant majority)	Infra regional inferences in contemporary age	Countries influencing weakening of centrifugal forces	Neighboring countries which enhance centrifugal forces	Neighboring countries relating to Iranian ethnic groups	Type of group	Presence of centrifugal groups	Inter-ethnic group religious and important dialectic differences	Population percent ¹ Habitat (majority)	Characteristics	
									Name of ethnic groups	
Shia						None		Shiraz-Isfahan	5	Fars
Shia	Russia ²		Azerbaijan-Turkey	Azerbaijan-Turkey	Simple (high severity)	None		East and west Azerbaijan	2	Azari
Shia					Simple (low severity)	None		Gilan and Mazandaran	8	Gilaki- Mazandarani
Shia-Sunni	England, Russia, USA ³	Iraq-Turkey		Iraq-Turkey	Composite	Sever religious and dialectic discrepancies	Intra ethnic group religious discrepancies	Kurdistan, Kermanshah	7	Kurdish
Shia	England ⁴		Arabia-Iraq	Pakistan and Afghanistan	Simple (high severity)	None		Khuzestan	3	Arab
Sunni	England ⁵	Pakistan-Afghanistan		Turkmenistan	Composite	None		Sistan and Baluchistan	2	Baluch
Sunni	Russia		Turkmenistan		Composite	None		Golestan	2	Turkmen
Shia					Simple (low severity)	None		Lorestan	2	Lor
									1	others
Religious groups such as Zoroastrian, Christian and Jewish are included in these ethnic groups with a population of 2%										

In order to conduct our investigation based on living conditions and environment of Iranian ethnic groups, we cannot investigate all ethnic groups; therefore, based on the above table, we have divided the ethnic groups of Iran into two categories namely, simple groups and composite groups and then we will refer to composite groups and their living environment. In defining this type of grouping, it must be mentioned that a simple group is a kind of group in which the group is considered a minority from one aspect, for example, from tribal point of view, while in other aspects such as religion, it is considered in majority; This is the case for Azeri people in Iran. On the other hand, in composite or permanent groups, there is more than one aspect that places the group in minority, religion, tribal or language; A case in point is Kurd people, Sunni people, Turkmens, or Baluch people. Considering religion, these groups can be in majority in compared to other Iranian minority religions, but since, according to Constitution of Iran, Shia religion is the official religion of Iran, no problem is solved and it would be ignoring the problem in the first place. So, in the following table we have tried to differentiate these groups.

Table 2: different types of groups in Iran

Population percent	Religion	Name of ethnic groups	Ethnic and religious groups
9%	Sunni	Sunni Kurdish people	Composite
	Sunni	Baluch	
	Sunni	Turkmens	
91%	Shia/ Zoroastrian- Christian and Jewish	Azari, Arab, Lor, Gilaki, Shia Kurdish people	Simple

Here, it is necessary to make some points about this categorization. The first point is that due to the presence of Shia people among Kurds, their influence is reduced. The second point is the lack of any country in neighborhood

¹ Fact book: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

² Supporting democratic Azeri faction

³ USA interference before and after revolution of Islamic Republic of Iran

⁴ For example: supporting Sheikh Khazal

⁵ Interfering in eastern Balouchestan disintegration

which would support Kurd and Baluch ethnic groups, which reduces the negative impact of centrifugal forces. The third point is about Turkish or Azeri people. Although this group is a simple one but due to the presence of two neighboring countries namely Azerbaijan and Turkey and their support for centrifugal groups, their negative impact would be increased.

After classifying these groups to simple and composite groups, we deal with the living situation and environment of composite groups in Iran, so in the next table some important factors are presented.

Table 3: living environment of composite groups in Iran

Centrifugal measures	Unemployment value ⁶	Main habitat in Iran	Population percent in Iran	Intra ethnic group gap/type of gap	Its impact on Iran	Neighboring interfering countries	Composite groups
Uprising of Esmail Agha Shakak in 1920, uprising of Ghazi Mohammad, after revolution riots ⁷	18/7 (second on rank)	Kurdistan	4% ⁸ 47% of Kurdish people of Iran ⁹	Presence of religious and dialectic discrepancies with Shia Kurdish people	Having common interests with Iran	Turkey-Iraq	Sunni Kurdish people
Baluch unity front, terroristic actions of Rigi group	19.2 (first rank)	Zahedan	2%	None	Having common interests with Iran	Pakistan-Afghanistan	Baluch
Turkmen movement led by Osman Akhund, Gonbad conflicts after revolution	12.7 (10 th rank)	Gilan	2%	None		Turkmenistan	Turkmen

According to the statistics presented by Fact Books Online, the percentages concerning the population of people adhering to different religions is as follows: Muslims: 98%, (Shia: 89% and Sunni: 9%) and other religions, namely Christian, Zoroastrian, Jewish, etc.: 2% (fact book, *ibid*). Although Fact Books Online give those statistics about Sunni people in an impartial manner, Kurdistan data base states that the population of Sunni people in Iran is 17,000,000, i.e. approximately 25-24%¹⁰. This contradiction accentuates the concerns of writers about wrong statistics being given by different groups in Iran (as mentioned before). Therefore, if the government announces the correct statistics, these ambiguities will be eliminated and this will prevent further confusion for researchers and state planners alike.

Part three: integrated national identity “multilateral discourse”

Three main hypotheses regarding discourse identity are: 1) emphasizing on the high position of humans’ dignity and respecting humans’ choices, 2) accepting the multiplicity of identity layers and representing the unique and personal identity of any person is with human communities and 3) the authority of individuals with human communities in accepting or presenting his/ her self being (Seifzadeh, Hossein, 2010; p. 116).

In this type of discourse, the method is that “contradictory space” among identity layers does not surrender the mind to “dialectic discourse” resulted from living environment; on the contrary, in this type, the humans help “corresponsive discourse” instead of “dialectic discourse” in a planned manner. By this method, we intend to reach to lingual corresponsive environment from the contradiction between “mental environment” and “living environment” concerning identity. Through emphasizing on correspondence instead of contradiction, such environment is created so that the horizon of vision reaches to the widest dimension of coverage.

⁶ Source- Iran statistics center, population statistics office, working force and census

⁷ Rezaei, Ahmad (2000) “Kurdish Iranians, looking at political, cultural history and identity of Kurdish people”, journal of national studies, second year, No. 5.

⁸ The percent Kurdish Sunni in Iran hasn’t stated in fact book, so by decreasing 4 percent Torkmans and Balouch this figure has been acquired and the 1 percent remained is approximately belonged to Sunni among other ethnic groups

⁹ Rezaei, Ahmad (2000) “Kurdish Iranians, looking at political, cultural history and identity of Kurdish people”, journal of national studies, second year, No. 5.

¹⁰ <http://www.ahlesonnatkhabarnameh.blogfa.com/post-8.aspx>

The conditions in which this theory can be formed are as follows:

- 1- To make the geometrical structure of pyramid adjustable to include both manifestations of human, namely rooted (prone to become a myth) and achievable aspects of human in multi-layer principles and multi-dimensional charters.
- 2- To replace pluralistic integration-based vision or integrative pluralism-based vision instead of traditional and modern unity-oriented vision. The rationale behind this is that both the traditional unity-oriented vision which is developed through being taboo-oriented and modern unity-oriented vision deny the identity and human personality through showing the government as a sacred coercive identity.
- 3- The possibility to apply Straus's packing concept for integrating the multiple layers of identity.
- 4- Separation of identity layer of nation from oppressor institution of government and imposing it on an individual-social spectrum of identity one side of which is the individual and the other side is global community.
- 5- Presenting cosmopolitan patriotic ideology instead of alien relied nationalism

In this civil vision, individualism is accompanied with liberal individualism and or civil pluralism. In this vision, both the rooted and mythical manifestations of identity are considered. Mythical layers emerge in principle and achievement based layers emerge in increasing/ decreasing charters of identity. Living environment is the only factor which emerges in two roles of mythical and achievement. On one hand, the human is restricted to life prison; on the other hand the achievements of each minute of any individual makes the living environment of him/ her.

Despite the presence of both groups: mythical elements and or those thrown on living inironment of individuals and or thrown by individuals to living invironment, the identity to be meaningful, it requires that either the individual or social group accept assigned identity string and or wait for self- made definition of their identity (Seifzadeh, Hossein, 2010, p. 116)

In order to better present this theory in Iran, we refer to conditions in which such theory can be implemented and executed:

- 1- Dominance of a pluralist culture and tolerating the ideas of opposing party. Molavi (one of significant and important poet in iran) refers to this point:

Rigor and prejudice indicates rawness, as long as you are an embryo, you drink blood

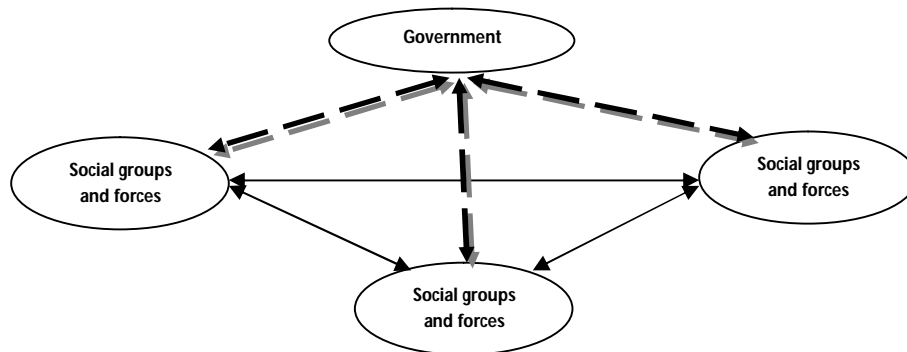
- 2- Presenting a scheme oriented definition of our identity and accepting it, not accepting prepared definition; in this regard Molavy says:

Don't attribute your offense to others, reward your intelligence and ears with this

Accept your offense, since you have done that offense, be in line with justice and penalty

- 3- Accepting national government by elites of different social groups particularly religious and ethnic.
- 4- Equal treatment with all social groups by central government based on social, political and economic justice
- 5- Equal legal, economic power and authority of groups and ethnic groups for progress in all fields particularly in achieving high state positions
- 6- Non alliance of ethnic groups or social groups with foreign governments in case of internal conflicts.
- 7- Non repression of social forces by central government, in case of presence of nonviolent protests

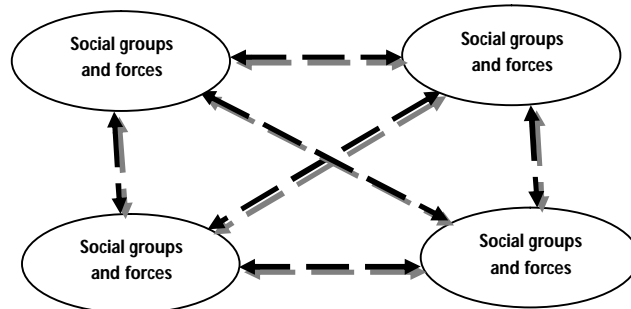
Based on above explanations we can present it in a general form by the following figure



As you can see in above figure, the government not only implements a sound relationship between all social groups based on pluralistic discourse but also the government itself makes relationship with those groups in an equal and fair manner.

In order to make these relations operational, besides issues mentioned above and the environment to which this discourse is dependent to be implemented, we need a democratic behavior both by the government and by social groups and other groups, in a way that the government allows these groups contribute in decision making and electing the authorities and the groups shall accept political cooperation under the dominance of Constitution rather than establishing a conflict based relationship. In order to indicate the present discourse better, we will explain mutual and multilateral dialogues separately.

In this discourse, the ethnic groups and other groups and social forces not only accept others, but also create a kind of situation in which they achieve a scheme oriented definition of identity through transition from prepared definition of identity by holding a pluralistic view and scheme oriented definition of their identity and get free from governmental intervention and contribute in social and political processes in an integrated manner. The following diagram indicates such situation.



The first condition for achieving such situation is presenting a scheme oriented definition of our identity, so that prepared and arranged definition cannot prevent their integration. In order to present such definition of themselves, following conditions should be met:

- 1- Existence of an integration oriented vision on one of these two forms: pluralistic integration or integrative pluralism in social level,
- 2- Commitment to theoretical reflection based view for presenting a manifestation of human view to his/ her identity,
- 3- Going farther from dialectic discourse concerning two opposing tension, namely individual and aggregation forces and achieving a spectrum of corresponsive discourse (Seifzadeh, ibid)

The reason that the government in this theory is regarded as the main factor in enhancing national identity is that despite some viewpoints we believe that the government is the only powerful force which can settle disorders in case of lack of democratic culture through imposing its force. In many cases we see that due to lack of pluralistic culture, friction between social groups and particularly the ethnic groups is expectable and possible. In this situation, the government can prevent occurrence of such phenomena, so in this presented theory, the government is considered as the most important and powerful factor and force in implementing peace and enhancing national identity for society.

On the other hand, this should not lead to government's justification for using force in any case and event in an unfair manner for confronting with social forces, as violent behavior by the government creates this feeling in groups that they cannot achieve their natural rights in this country, so those groups may intend to unite with foreign forces and even foreign governments. In many cases these centrifugal groups conduct violent actions against integrity of a country. some instances of such conditions can be seen in Iraq at the time when Saddam was the governor and Iran at the time when Pahlavi family were the dominant power, because neither violent policies of Reza Shah led to settlement of nomads nor oppressions of Iraq government led to achievement of their required goals and in many cases these measures led to violent confrontation between government and ethnical groups.

Conclusion

By stating identity requirements of Iran including the need to political freedom, social equality, equitable distribution of national wealth and gender issues, we conclude that one of important current needs concerning national identity is the problems relating to ethnical and religious groups. Given the important identity requirement presented in this study, we tried to investigate this identity need from civil rights' point of view because talking about such issue leads us to civil law discussion. Therefore through this article we seek a solution for solving the

problems relating to national identity and its most important subject namely, the rights of ethnic groups and religions from civil rights' point of view.

By reviewing the rights of these groups in Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran from one hand and issues objected by these groups on the other hand and regarding living conditions and environment in which these groups are living, the solution presented in this article is that given the existence of important problems concerning the groups (which are growing in discrete societies) and particularly the necessity to pay attention to composite groups, the government is obliged to prevent worsening this problem in Iran through appropriate tactics.

By following discourse identity model, we conclude that the government as a cone-pump institution serves the people who have common destinies through two measures, namely conservative and liberal. On one hand the government in his conservative role is like a cone or funnel which modifies increasing evolutionary flow resulted from globalization so that no threat is imposed on individuals' identity or all citizens' identity. On the other hand, the liberal role of government serves in distributing the governance of individuals and all citizens on a global level. In such an environment, the government is converted to a national service organization whose services are delivered to all citizens who are from different ethnic groups and races and religions. By benefiting from integrator concepts of discourse based identity, required national facilities for interaction of multiple cultures are provided by national comprehensive culture. Through such interaction, cultural, social, political and economic rights and in general their civil rights are provided based on justice and fairness.

Therefore, given living environment and conditions of these groups and considering ideas presented about national identity, we want to prevent friction between Iranian ethnic groups and government through implementing a multilateral discourse between the government and people on one hand, and between the groups and social forces on the other hand so that they can continue living under a national flag.

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