

A theory of ethnic collective movements and its application to Iran

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Introduction

Twentieth century world history has witnessed frequent ethnic collective movements in many developed and underdeveloped countries. Examples include nations with democratic and dictatorial governments such as Canada, Britain, Spain, India, Iran, Sudan, Nigeria, South Africa and Indonesia. The present paper outlines a conceptual framework to explain the determinants, timing and forms of ethnic collective movements and then attempts to apply it to the Iranian experience.

An extensive literature exists on the causes and processes of political violence in general and ethnic collective movements in particular. These studies include both quantitative analyses (e.g., Parvin, 1973; Richardson, 1960; Deutsch, 1961; Rummel, 1966; Midlarsky, 1982; Nagel, 1974; and Sigelman and Simpson, 1977) and qualitative explanations (e.g., Eckstein, 1964; Brinton, 1969; Rosenau, 1964; Robertson, 1983; and Ursprung, 1984). Early investigations focused on the psychological and socio-cultural causes of political instability and unrest such as identity crises, social mobilization and communication revolutions (Feierabend & Feierabend 1966; Deutsch, 1961; Gurr, 1968; Weiner, 1966; and Williamson, 1985). Similar themes have re-emerged in more recent literature (e.g., Smith, 1986; Connor, 1977; and Armstrong, 1982). Smith (1986), in particular, has argued that ethnic collective movements are rooted in the quest of ethnic communities (or 'ethnie') for their collective identity (including their communal past, myths and historical memories), solidarity and autonomy, all of which have given rise to ethnic nationalism.

A significant number of current explanations are, however, largely focused on economic factors but authors differ on what particular element is the most important. Marxists have emphasized the non-correspondence between relations and forces of production and/or between economic and political structures as the main causes of revolutions (Marx, 1859). Economists such as Parvin (1973), Hirschman (1964), Sigelman and Simpson (1977), and Weede (1981) have singled

out the 'average income' or 'societal well-being' as the prime cause of political unrest. Others, including Coser (1957), Midlarsky (1982), and Davis (1948) have emphasized the inequality-violence relationship. This position is also supported by structuralists who focus on ethnic stratification, class position, occupational structures, and ethnic awareness of their plight (Bonacich, 1972; Hechter, 1978; Blalock, 1967; and Hanna, 1979). In sharp contrast, Nagel (1974), Olson (1968), Brinton (1965), Razi (1986), and Hardin (1982) have argued against the inequality factor as a major cause of any kind of collective political action. In fact, such well known authors as Durkheim (1965), Huntington (1968), and Johnson (1982) have maintained that it is not inequality but *declining* inequality among classes that has been a major contributing factor to revolutions. These authors are also supported by those in the tradition of rational choice theory (e.g., Hechter et al., 1985) arguing that ethnic collective movements can only take place if a sufficient number of individuals agree to participate *and* that rational individuals will only do this if their expected benefits exceed their expected costs. A few explanations have emphasized the role of unemployment and inflation in generating political violence and the collapse of elected governments (e.g., Robertson, 1983; and Ursprung, 1984).

The problem with most of this literature is that it largely neglects to distinguish between the subjective and objective determinants of ethnic collective movements, or if it does make such a distinction, it fails to observe or specify their differential impacts. In a recent article, Rothchild (1986) has made an important contribution toward resolving this problem. He first distinguishes between the 'subjective' and 'objective' factors. The former include cultural, political, ideological, and psychological variables, while the latter are, basically, social and economic elements. Then he makes a second distinction between 'negotiable' and 'non-negotiable' demands raised by the ethnic communities during their movements: 'Whereas negotiable demands accept the legitimacy of competing interests and acknowledge the need for mutual gains formulas within the existing state system, their non-negotiable counterparts perceive their interests in zero-sum terms and, at times, may come to question the validity of the state itself' (Rothchild, 1986: 69). Generally speaking, the subjective factors give rise to basically non-negotiable demands, while the objective factors generate demands that are negotiable.

Rothchild's classifications have important implications for a theory of ethnic collective movements. Obviously, both groups of factors do contribute to the latent possibility of ethnic collective movements through increased ethnic discontent and the formation of ethnic political organizations. But the impact of the subjective factors go well beyond this and are amongst the more powerful sources that precipitate the *actual occurrence* of ethnic collective movements because they directly

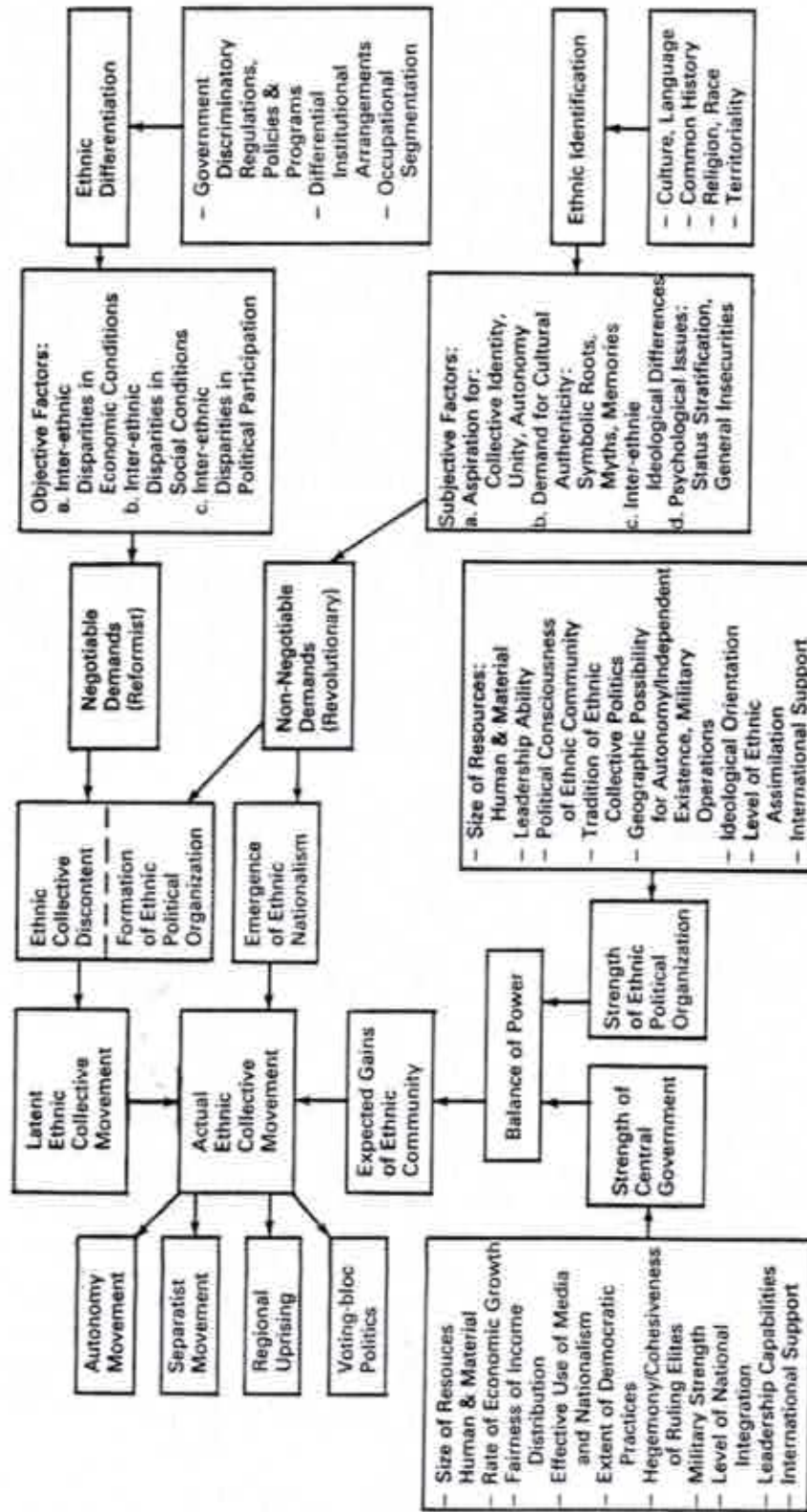


Figure 1: A conceptual framework for ethnic collective movements: factors influencing their latent and actual occurrence

contribute to ethnic nationalism and to such non-negotiable demands as the right to autonomy or independence.

The existing literature also fails to acknowledge that the actualization of ethnic collective movement depends on the *expected gains* of the ethnic community from confronting the central government. This is determined by the *balance of power* between the central government and the ethnic political organization. In addition, the literature has paid only scant attention to explaining the *timing* and *possible forms* of ethnic collective movements.

This paper builds upon, but also diverges from, the existing literature on ethnic collective movements. Specifically, I argue that the probability of ethnic mobilizations is largely influenced by: 1) *factors that contribute to the latent development of such movements* including both subjective and objective factors; and 2) *the expected gains of the ethnic community* from engaging in a confrontation with the central government, which is determined by the balance of power between the two forces. Ethnic movements tend to follow periods of major socio-economic and political crisis in a nation and, may take one of the following four forms: autonomy movements, separatist movements, regional uprisings, and ethnic voting-bloc politics. In the next two sections this theoretical framework is developed and applied to the Iranian experience since the turn of this century.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 summarizes this conceptual framework for ethnic collective movements.

a. Latent Ethnic Collective Movements

Factors contributing to the latent stage of collective movements include both objective elements, such as inter-ethnic disparities in social and economic conditions and political participation, and subjective variables, such as the aspiration of the ethnic community for the revival of its collective identity and cultural symbols, and inter-ethnic ideological and status differences. These factors intensify negotiable and non-negotiable demands which in turn increase ethnic collective discontent and promote the conditions leading to the formation of ethnic political organizations.

The objective factors are caused by the ethnic differentiation practices of the central government. These include discriminatory regulations, policies and programs, differential institutional arrangement (e.g. concerning property and civil rights), and segmentation of the labor market. The subjective factors, are primarily rooted in the identification of an ethnic group defined as a 'community conscious of sharing similar characteristics such as a distinct language, a religion, a

culture, or a historical experience of its own and is conscious of its differences with other communities by virtue of these same characteristics' (Harik, 1972:303).

b. Revival of Ethnic Nationalism

Ethnic nationalism emanates from an aspiration for the regeneration of collective identity, unity and autonomy, and from demands for popular participation and cultural authenticity including a return to symbolic roots, past myths and historical memories (Smith, 1986). Ethnic nationalism may also be precipitated by the ideological and political differences between the core and the peripheral ethnic communities, by status stratification among various ethnic and the general feeling of exploitation and oppression that this can create. Over-centralization, a persisting sense of solidarity within a community, and feelings of rootedness in a territory and attachment to its life style are additional factors contributing to the regeneration of an ethnic ethos. Finally, the level of ethnic assimilation in the larger national culture also influences ethnic nationalism. Generally speaking, the lower the level of assimilation the more intense the resulting ethnic nationalism.

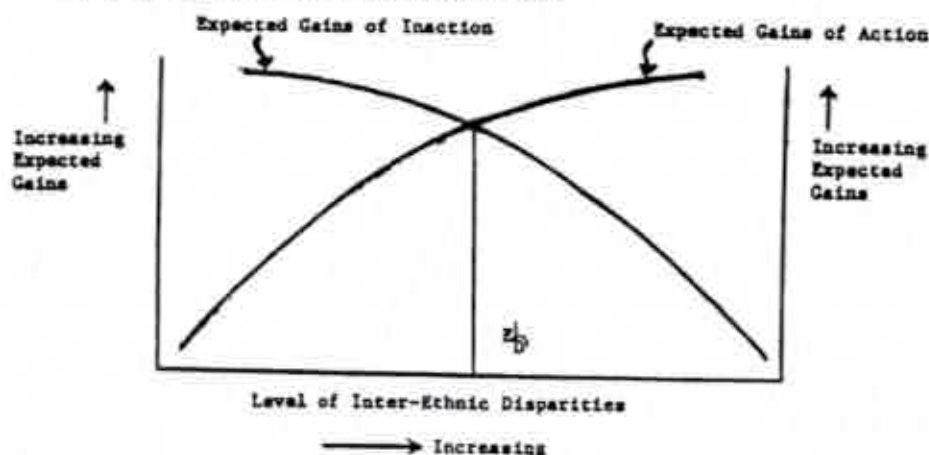
In the presence of all or some of these factors, ethnic population groups can be expected to develop nationalistic behaviour, the intensity being indicated by the willingness of a large number of individuals to 'risk life and/or career' and to 'make material sacrifices . . . at a level that would adversely affect life-style,' should the community become endangered by threats of some kind (Cottam, 1984: 35). However, nationalism so generated may remain in the realm of ideology, the political outlook of the ethnic intelligentsia in particular (Arjomand, 1984), if ethnicity is not adequately politicized and if the response from the ethnic population remains less than total.

c. Expected Gains of Ethnic Community

The expected gains of an ethnic community are another factor which helps transform latent ethnic collectivities into actual movements. The size of such expected gains is largely determined by the balance of power between the central government and the ethnic political organization. The more this balance is favorable to the ethnic community the larger is the expected gains and consequently the higher the likelihood that the latent ethnic collective movement will become manifest. Indeed, individual perceptions of the probabilities of success or failure which form the basis of rational choice calculations are also determined by the balance of power.

Aside from the factors influencing the strength of both parties, inter-ethnic disparities in interaction with the nature of the state also influence ethnic politics. In particular, as demonstrated by Figure 2,

Figure 2: Under a Democratic Government

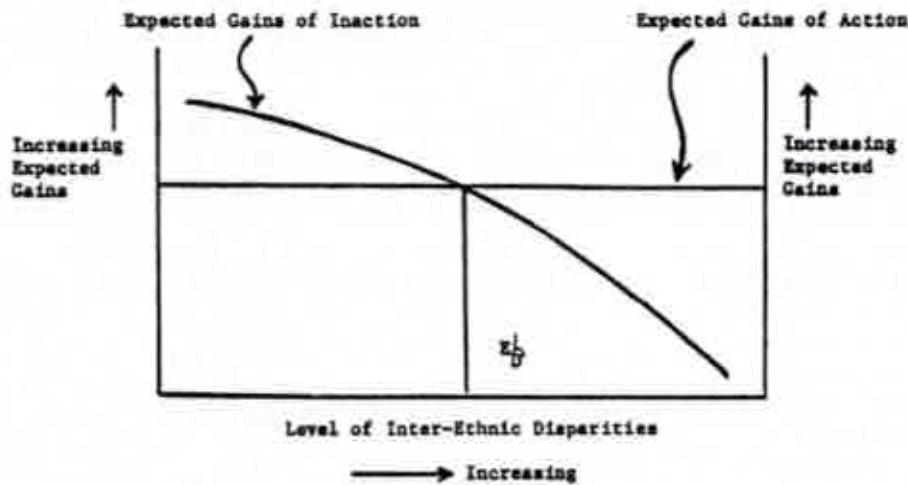


under a democratic central government, expected gains of action and inaction vary with the level of disparity. The expected gains of action are high at higher levels of disparities and decrease as disparities decrease. The reverse is the case for the relation between the expected gains of inaction and the level of disparities. Thus, it is theoretically possible to identify an equilibrium level of disparity (E_D) at which the expected gains of action and inaction are equal for an ethnic community. Assuming a rational leadership, the ethnic political organization may engage in a collective movement against the central government only if disparities increase beyond E_D . Under a democratic central government, therefore, the expected gains of action to the ethnic community are largely influenced by the level of disparities. This is not, however, the case under a dictatorial central government as in most Third World countries (see Figure 3). Here the expected gains of action remain the same regardless of the level of disparities although the expected gains of inaction increase as disparities decrease.

Therefore, despite what many structuralists assume disparities alone cannot lead to the mobilization of potential ethnic movements under the conditions of dictatorship so often found in Third World countries. The ethnic political organization in these societies will move to the confrontation stage only if it is convinced of its strength vis-à-vis the central government and expects to gain from the conflict. However, I am not claiming that the power relationship is unimportant under conditions of democracy, but only emphasizing the fundamental role of this element in dictatorships.

The strength of the ethnic political organization is determined by a number of variables many of which are qualitative in character and are hard, if not impossible, to quantify. Major among such factors are human, both material and managerial, resources at the disposal of the

Figure 3: Under a Dictatorial Government



political organization. These resources may be generated internally or come from external sources in various forms of assistance including intelligence, military, financial and political support.

Political consciousness of the ethnic populations, solidarity among them and a tradition of collective politics are equally important factors in determining the strength of the ethnic-political organization. Specifically, ethnic communities with a high political consciousness and solidarity and with a longer tradition of collective activity are in a better position to create stronger and more effective political organizations. The ideological commitment of the political organization is also of major significance. Organizations on either end of the political spectrum, from ultra-right to ultra-left, are normally unable to generate such support among ethnic peoples and are generally weak. In contrast, political organizations with a more cross-class politics, democratic platform, and a commitment to ethnic nationalism are highly attractive for the ethnic population and tend to grow strong if they follow a non-compromising revolutionary path.

The geographical situation of the ethnic population is an equally important factor in determining the strength of the ethnic political organization. Historically, territories with a minimum size, and those located in mountainous or forest areas, or provinces bordering other states with similar ethnic populations, have engaged in ethnic collective movements more frequently and effectively than ethnic provinces in central locations and with flat bare plains. Additionally, the centrifugal force of discontent among ethnic communities increases in proportion to their distance from the central government.

Finally, the extent of assimilation of ethnic populations in national life has a profound impact on the strength of the ethnic political organiza-

tion. In general, the less the ethnic population is assimilated, the stronger is its political organization. Ethnic assimilation may take one or more of the following four forms (Yinger, 1981): (1) acculturation, a process through which the ethnic population loses its cultural distinctiveness as it accepts the dominant culture of the larger unit. In the name of unity an ethnic community may be forced to forego its demands for its own historical heritage, language, and/or religion; (2) amalgamation, a process through which the ethnic population loses its biological distinctiveness by intermarriage; (3) identification, a basically psychological process whereby ethnic groups 'may come to think of themselves as belonging to the same society . . . a new society blended from their societies of origin' (Yinger, 1981: 252); and (4) integration, which occurs where ethnic stratification is eliminated and various ethnic groups are accorded similar civil, political, and economic rights and privileges. Inter-ethnic disparities would thus be at a minimum under full integration.

Factors influencing the strength of the central government are also varied and not all of them are quantifiable. Aside from military and police forces and their accompanying repressive apparatuses, economic resources at the disposal of the government are fundamental among such factors. Their potential for strengthening the government, however, is only realized if they are effectively mobilized and deployed.

State power may further increase through a policy of national integration which requires the elimination of discriminatory regulations, policies, and programs across ethnic groups, social classes, and territorial/sectoral units. The effective control of the media and other ideological state apparatuses may be used for indoctrination of the public, 'engineering of consent' (Miliband, 1969: 183), and concealing socio-economic, political, and ideological differences among groups, classes, and political parties.

Finally, support from the international community, and neighboring states in particular, is critical in determining the strength of state power. This may take different forms; an active form, as when the state receives direct military, financial, and political assistance; or a passive form, when a neighboring state is persuaded to withdraw its backing for an ethnic collective movement. It should be noted that aid from countries considered oppressive or imperialist may indeed be counterproductive (Razi, 1986: 249).

d. Timing and Forms of Ethnic Collective Political Action

As a general rule, many of the resources at the disposal of the state are not effectively deployed in times of major political crisis. It is not, therefore, surprising that ethnic collective movements should occur during or immediately following wars (civil or international), revolutions, foreign invasions, or heightened political conflicts, particularly

among the ruling classes. During such periods, the relative strength of the ethnic political organization can be expected to increase to its peak, while that of the central government will reach its lowest point. Consequently, the expected gains of the ethnic population from confronting the central government will be at its maximum.

The various forms an ethnic collective movement may assume depend on, among others, the relative sharpness of ethnic or class distinctions in the area, the relative strength of the ethnic political organization, the historical background to the demands raised by the ethnic populations, the geographical and material possibility of meeting such demands, the level of ethnic deprivation, and the expectation of whether such deprivation can or cannot be cured under a unitary government.

Four general forms are possible: autonomy movements, separatist movements, regional uprisings, and voting-bloc politics. The first two occur where ethnic identity is sharper than class distinction, while the last two may also occur in the absence of ethnicity and where social stratification is highly pronounced. An autonomy movement in its pure form signals a conflict between the elite of the region (which may be the provincial authority itself) and the central government over the extent of participation in political decision making. It demands decentralization but hardly has any redistributive demands. A separatist movement has a similar cause but its objectives go beyond provincial home rule. It aims to create an independent state and is generally in favor of substantial redistribution. Where the ethnic political organization is relatively strong and is committed to a more extreme ideological position, separatist demands are most likely to be raised if they are underpinned by a sense of historical legitimacy and seem likely to be successful. Otherwise, ethnic collective movements are more likely to demand autonomy for the ethnic population within the framework of an integrated and united nation-state.

These forms are distinguished from regional uprisings and ethnic voting-bloc politics by being less deeply rooted in socio-economic grievances. Under political democracy, voting-bloc politics are more likely to emerge, while under dictatorships, regional uprisings are more common. Voting-bloc politics seek to modify ethnic disparities by changing political representation through an electoral process. Regional uprisings aim to overthrow the central government and transform the whole socio-economic system.

The Iranian Experience

The twentieth century history of Iran is characterized by four major political episodes and their corresponding ethnic collective movements (Table 1). These have included autonomy movements, separatist movements, and regional uprisings. The conspicuous absence of ethnic voting-bloc politics is a reflection of the dictatorial nature of the Iranian

Table 1
Periods of major political crisis in contemporary Iranian history and the corresponding major ethnic collective movements

<i>Periods*</i>	<i>The Major Events</i>	<i>Major Ethnic Collective Movements**</i>
1906-25	Constitutional Revolution, World War I	Simitqo's separatist/tribalist movement in Kurdistan; Khiabani's autonomy movement in Azarbaijan; Kucheck Khan/Communists' uprising in Gilan; Colonel Pasian/Khuda Verdi Khan's regional uprising in Khurasan; Doust Mohamad Khan's separatist/tribalist movement in Baluchestan; Shaikh Khaz'al's separatist/tribalist movement in Khuzestan.
1941-53	World War II, Democratic/Nationalist Movement	Kumala/Kurdish Democratic Party's Movement and subsequent establishment of the Kurdish Republic (led by Qazi Muhammad); Azarbaijani's Democratic Party's Movement and subsequent establishment of the Republic of Azarbaijan (led by Pishchvari).
1963	Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Uprising	Boirahmadi's regional political unrest.
1978-present	Iranian Revolution, War with Iraq	The Kurdistan Movement; sporadic political unrest in Baluchestan; short-lived Arab Nationalist Movement in Khuzestan; political unrest led by Peasant Councils in Turkaman Sahra.

* These periods are characterized by weak central governments (except for the 1963 political crisis).

** The Tangestan's nationalist movement in 1913 is not listed because it had as its target British imperialism, not the central government. See Roukzadeh-Adamiyat (n.d.).

Source: The information is compiled from various sources. See references at the end of this paper.

state. In this part of the paper, I apply the conceptual framework I have developed to explain these ethnic collective movements.

a. Ethnicity and Ethnic Nationalism

Iran is a multi-ethnic country (Table 2). The majority of the population, over 60 per cent, are Persians (the core ethnics) as compared with over 22 per cent Turks, about 6 per cent Kurds, over 6 per cent Lurs, about 2.5 per cent Baluchi's and around 2 per cent Arabs. Shi'ite Islam (the core religion), subscribed to by over 85 per cent of Iranians, is the official religion of the state and Farsi (the core language), spoken by less than 50 per cent of the country's population, is its official language. Certain constitutional rights are thus withheld from peripheral ethnics (e.g., Suni and non-Farsi-speaking ethnics). They are not, for example, allowed to study in their own language.



Iran: Geographical distribution of ethnic groups.
Note: Azarbaijanis, Shahsevans, Turkamans, and Qashqa'is are Turks; Bakhtiari's are Lurs.

Table 2
Demographic, Ethnic, Geographic and Historical Characteristics of a Selected Number of Iranian Provinces

Selected Provinces	Population (per cent of total, 1976)*	Density (Km ² 1976)	Urban Population (per cent total)		Religion ^b	Language ^b	Ethnicity	Location ^c in Iran	Collective Political Movements
			1976	1976					
Mazand ^d	20.7	79	80	Shi'ite	Farsi	Persians	Center	No	
Khuzestan	6.5	34	58	Shi'ite	Farsi/Arabic	Persians/Arabs	Center	Yes (SM)	
Gilan	4.7	108	29	Shi'ite	Gilaki	Persians	Border/South	Yes (RU)	
Khuzestan	9.6	10	38	Shi'ite	Farsi	Persians	Border/North (F/M) ^e	Yes (RU)	
Kermān	3.2	6	32	Shi'ite	Farsi	Persians	Border/East	No	
Ilam	0.7	14	20	Shi'ite	Luri	Lurs	Center	No	
E. Azarbaijan	9.5	48	37	Shi'ite	Turkish	Turks	Center	Yes	
W. Azarbaijan	4.2	32	31	Shi'ite/Sunni	Turkish/Kurdish	Turks/Kurds	Border/West (F/M)	Yes (A/SM)	
Zanjan	1.6	27	25	Shi'ite	Turkish	Turks	Border/Southwest	No	
Kurdistan	2.2	31	24	Sunni	Kurdish	Kurds	Center	Yes A/SM	
Bakhtaran	3.1	42	43	Sunni/Shi'ite	Kurdish	Kurds	Border/Southwest (F/M)	Yes A/SM	
Sistan ^f							Border/Southwest (F/M)	No	
Baluchistan	2.1	4	25	Sunni	Baluchi/Farsi	Baluchis/Persians	Border/Southeast (F)	Yes (A/SM)	
Iran	100.0	21	47	Shi'ite	Farsi	Persians			

Notes: For comparative purposes, selected provinces include all ethnic provinces, provinces with at least one ethnic collective movement and the most developed and undeveloped provinces. Luri are considered Persian and most ethnic Turks are Azari.

* 1976 is the last year for which reliable statistics are available (from National Census of Population and Housing 1976). The results of the 1986 census are not yet available.

^b Refers to the majority. W. Azarbaijan and Bakhtaran have large populations of both Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims. Arabs in Khuzestan are Sunni and they constitute one-fifth of the province's population. In the beginning of 1970 the linguistic groupings in Iran was as follows (all in percent): Persian: 50.2; Turkish: 20.6; Gilaki: 6.1; Luri-Bakhtari: 5.7; Kurdish: 5.6; Mazandaran: 4.9; Baluchi: 2.3; Arabic: 2.0; Turkamani: 1.7; Armenian: 0.6 and Assyrian: 0.4.

^c See the map on p. 373.

^d RU = Regional uprising; A/SM = Autonomy/Separatist Movements.

^e Includes Tehran

^f F = Heavily forested; M = Mountainous

Attempts have also been made by various governments, starting with the reign of Reza Shah (1921–1941), to assimilate ethnic groups into the core Persian culture. Examples of the methods used include the glorification of ancient Iran, the symbol of the monarchy as a centripetal force, an emphasis on the need for Islamic unity and intermarriage. Both repression and ideological manipulations have been used for this purpose.

However, despite these measures, many of the ethnic communities, except for the Azarbaijanis, are not assimilated into the core culture. Kurds, particularly, have maintained their differences with Persians and other ethnic communities by virtue of their distinct language, religion, culture, and historical experience, and have thus kept their self-identity and ethnic solidarity. This is reflected in a popular Kurdish song:

O Enemy, the Kurdish-speaking people still exist.
Let no one say the Kurds are no more.
The Kurds live on, Our flag shall never fall.

There is other evidence to suggest that ethnic nationalism persists in constant competition with Persian nationalism. Various ethnic groups have expressed a desire to regenerate their collective identity and autonomy: there is a persisting sense of attachment to particular regions (e.g., Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, Baluchestan), and an unreserved willingness of many to sacrifice their lives for their homelands. Ethnicity is highly politicized in Iran as shown by the many ethnic political organizations and mass movements (Moemeni, 1979; Sharifzadeh, 1977; and Hosseinbor, 1984).

b. Ethnic Differentiation

Iranian ethnic communities suffer from differential institutional arrangements particularly with respect to language, religion and civil rights. Some of these arrangements have been part of the constitution since 1906. For example, only the Farsi language and Shi'ite religion were recognized as official by the 1906 Constitution. The Islamic Constitution is no different. The ban on the use of other languages, even in informal education is total. The publication and distribution of newspapers, journals and books in ethnic languages were strictly prohibited by the Shah's government. Even the name of stores and businesses in ethnic areas could not be written in the ethnic language (*Keyhan Newspaper*, 23rd Urdibehest, 1355 (1976)). Civil rights have been denied to all Iranians, but the ethnic nationalities have been particularly disadvantaged. Bans on freedom of press, speech and unionization have been total in the ethnic provinces. Even the movement of people in certain ethnic areas was strictly controlled by the Shah's police. Writing in 1977, Ghasemlou (1980:127) reported that 'each Kurdish peasant

travelling from one village to another must inform the mayors of both villages, who, in turn, are obliged to inform the security police.' The centralization of decision-making in Tehran also meant little participation by the ethnic nationalities in their own affairs and destiny.

Government policies and programs have discriminated against the ethnic provinces. As shown in Table 3, the ethnic provinces, in per capita terms, were assigned comparatively much lower development funds in the Fourth Plan (1968-72) than the Persian provinces. In most cases, the differences are substantial. Similarly, the government's regional policy discriminated against the ethnic provinces where only a few industrial growth poles were located (Amirahmadi, 1986; Nattagh, 1984). Other discriminatory practices concerned the distribution of loans and investment by the Industrial and Mining Development Bank of Iran (IMDBI) (see Table 4), and once again, a disproportionate share went to the Farsi-speaking provinces (see Atash, 1985; Nattagh, 1984; Industrial and Mining Development Bank of Iran, 1976; and Imam-Jomeh, 1985). Additionally, the government pursued a policy of labor market segmentation at the provincial level through which specific

Table 3
Inter-ethnic inequality in the distribution of development funds in the fourth plan (1968-1972)

<i>Regions</i>	<i>Development Funds (billion Rials)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>per capita (Rials)</i>
Gilan, Gorgan, Mazandaran ^a	23.0	7.9	6,230
E. and W. Azarbaijans	34.2	11.8	7,735
Markazi	82.1	28.3	13,710
Khuzestan, Boirahmadi ^b	46.3	15.9	20,366
Hamadan, Luristan ^c	3.4	1.2	1,321
Isfahan, Yazd ^d	51.3	17.7	17,761
Fars ^e	19.8	6.8	10,056
Sistan, Baluchestan, Kerman	3.2	1.1	2,049
Khurasan	11.8	4.8	3,896
Kurdestan, Bakhtaran	7.1	2.4	2,530
Saheli ^f	7.6	2.6	10,335

Notes: For ethnic character of the provinces see table 2, and the notes below. U.S.\$ = 70 Rials (approximately).

^a Gorganis and Mazandarans are Persian

^b Boirahmadis are Lur

^c Hamadanis are Persian and Lurestanis are Lur

^d Yazdis and Isfahanis are Persian

^e Farsis are Persian

^f Sahelis are Persian and Arab

Source: Fifth Development Plan, 1978-1977
Plan and Budget Organization, Tehran, 1972, p. 127

Table 4
Geographical distribution of industrial mining and development bank of Iran (IMDBI) loans and investments, 1961-1978, in millions of Rials (net of withdrawal and cancellations)

Selected Provinces ^a	No.	Loans		Investments		Total Loans and Investments	
		Amount	Per cent	Amount	Per cent	Amount	Per cent
Markazi (includes Tehran)	572	71,624	43.9	16,049	54.3	87,673	45.4
Khuzestan	61	30,620	18.7	6,251	21.7	36,871	19.1
Gilan	65	13,473	8.2	2,514	8.5	15,987	8.3
Khurasan	24	2,924	1.8	315	1.1	3,239	1.7
Kerman	17	3,627	2.2	458	1.5	4,085	2.1
E. Azarbaijan	23	4,531	2.8	949	3.2	5,480	2.8
W. Azarbaijan	4	235	0.1	44	0.2	279	0.1
Kurdestan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bakhtaran	8	702	0.4	138	0.5	840	0.4
Sistan/Baluchestan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes: ^a For ethnic character of the provinces, see tables 2 & 3.
 Source: Adapted with modifications from Imam-Jomeh, 1985, p. 328.

activities were to be promoted in certain areas based on their comparative advantage. In practice, however, ethnic provinces ended up by receiving only a few modern establishments and the labor market in such provinces remained largely of the low wage-paying type (see Table 5).

c. Inter-Ethnic Disparities

The facts of ethnicity and ethnic differentiation have led to extreme inter-ethnic disparities in Iran as documented in various publications (see e.g., Amirahmadi and Atash, 1987; Aghajanian, 1983; and *Mas'aleh-ye Melli Dar Iran*, 1356). As shown in Table 2, the Persian provinces are more urbanized than the other ethnic provinces. At the two extreme ends, Markazi was 80 per cent urbanized in 1976 while Ilam, Kurdistan and Baluchestan had urbanization levels ranging from 20 to 25 per cent. This is important because those living in urban areas have, on average, greater access to education and health care services, are exposed to more diverse employment opportunities, receive higher incomes and consume more than rural residents (see, e.g., Jabari, 1981; Hashemi, 1984; and various issues of *Survey Results of Household Income and Expenditures in Urban/Rural Areas of Iran*).

Major socio-economic and political disparities exist among various ethnic nationalities, particularly between Persians and the remainder, and such differences have been widening since the 1920s. In the absence of democracy, dictatorial governments have been dominated by the Persians. Only Turkish elites have been incorporated into national politics, while the rest, including the Kurdish elites, have largely been excluded. Inter-ethnic disparities in political participation have been exacerbated by the growing centralization of almost all major decisions since the 1920s.

Table 6 shows inter-ethnic economic disparities in a number of important variables for selected years. On average, Farsi-speaking provinces have a much higher per capita GDP and monthly household expenditures than the other provinces, reflecting a higher level of welfare for the Persians. Value added per worker in large industries is also higher for the Persian provinces indicating the existence of a more modern, dynamic economic structure in these provinces, Markazi in particular. Turkish-speaking provinces seem to have also fared well while Kurdistan and Baluchestan remain the most deprived in this respect. The employment patterns also reflect the relatively backward character of the non-Farsi-speaking provinces. On average, the Persian provinces have the lowest level of primary employment, while this same mode of employment accounts for the major source of income earning in such ethnic provinces as Ilam, Kurdistan, West Azarbaijan and Baluchestan (see Table 5).

Table 5
Inter-ethnic disparities in occupational structure, 1956, 1966, and 1976

Selected Provinces ^a	Percentage of Employment					
	1956		1966		1976	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Markazi	27.8	32.1	17.9	37.7	11.7	35.8
Khuzestan	57.1	19.8	37.6	25.3	31.9	27.9
Gilan	75.1	7.1	61.8	15.8	44.6	21.5
Khurasan	59.7	21.0	54.0	25.3	41.8	35.4
Kerman	53.2	28.0	49.0	32.3	44.9	34.2
Ilam	89.7	2.8	79.1	8.0	68.6	17.6
E. Azarbaijan	59.5	20.0	50.3	28.3	38.0	38.5
W. Azarbaijan	66.5	10.4	60.1	16.0	54.0	22.6
Zanjan	71.7	13.8	67.0	17.0	49.6	34.8
Kurdestan	71.5	7.3	69.0	11.9	43.2	36.4
Bakhtaran	66.6	11.1	55.1	15.6	38.8	28.8
Sistan/Baluchestan	74.7	8.1	66.3	14.6	35.1	33.1
Iran	56.7	19.7	46.6	26.7	35.1	33.1

Notes: ^a For ethnic character of the provinces, see tables 2 & 3.
Source: Statistical yearbooks and various other publications by the Plan and Budget Organization (now a Ministry).

Table 6
Inter-ethnic disparities: selected economic indicators, selected years

Selected Provinces	per capita GDP ^a (rials) ^b		(% change) 1971-74	Average monthly household expenditures (rials)		Value added ^c per worker in large industries (1000 rials) 1976
	1971	1974		1971-72	1971-72	
Markazi (including Tehran)	50,264	94,449	89	10,204	933	
Khuzestan ^d	22,500	43,607	94	7,139 ^e	991	
Gilan	22,169	37,105	67	8,329	280	
Khurasan	16,717	28,633	71	5,236	532	
Kerman	14,440	22,644	57	3,845	587	
Ilam	10,732	17,122	60	g	j	
E. Azarbaijan	16,003	30,243	89	8,711	686	
W. Azarbaijan	21,290	35,511	67	7,492	560	
Zarjan	19,667	34,789	78	h	830	
Kurdistan	24,988	33,123	33	7,090	156	
Bakhtarand	22,500	38,839	73	6,431 ^f	521	
Sistan/Baluchestan	11,996	21,995	83	5,012	130	
Iran	35,465	46,950	32	—	740	

Sources and Notes:

- ^a Ministry of Finance and Economics.
^b 70 rials = \$1 (approximate); 1974 figures reflect sharp rises in oil revenues in that year.
^c Value added by oil for the years 1971 and 1974 were: 26,818 million rials and 125,678 million rials respectively.
^d Value added by oil for the years 1971 and 1974 were: 14,633 million rials and 71,200 million rials respectively.
^e From M. H. Pesaran, 1974 (with minor modifications).
^f Includes Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad (Lurs) and Chaharmahal Bakhtiari (Lurs) provinces.
^g Included in Bakhtiari.
^h Included in Markazi.
ⁱ Includes Lorestan (Lurs).
^j Included in Khuzestan.
^k Calculated using data from Iranian statistical yearbook and other publications by the Plan and Budget Organization (now a Ministry).

For ethnic character of the provinces see previous Tables.

Social inequalities among various ethnic groups are also high as indicated in Table 7. The inequalities are particularly wide among core and peripheral ethnic and among those at these two extreme ends. Indeed, Markazi, which includes Tehran, stands alone and is distinguished by relatively high values for all three indicators shown in the table. It must be noted that the extent of inter-ethnic disparities differs with respect to different variables: generally speaking, disparities are more pronounced for economic variables than social ones (compare Tables 6 and 7).

d. Latent Ethnic Collective Movement

Ethnic nationalism, ethnic differentiation and inter-ethnic disparities have thus been strongly present in Iran, and it is my conviction that their mere existence has created a latent ethnic collective movement. In particular, these factors have been at the root of intensified ethnic discontent and have led to the formation of ethnic political organizations. Beyond this, however, their contribution to *manifest* collective political action has been limited. While a majority of the provinces with a history of collective political movements have been among the *least* developed, not all such provinces have been engaged in regionally-based political action. Examples include Ilam, Zanjan and Lorestan. On the other hand, a few Persian provinces with a moderately developed level of socio-economic structure have also been involved in regional collective political uprisings (e.g., Gilan and Khurasan). These observations indicate that inter-ethnic disparities cannot by themselves account for ethnic mobilization although they seem to be at the root of an absolute majority of such movements. While in Iran these factors have prepared the important pre-conditions for collective political action, such as generalized discontent, group solidarity and political organization, the actualization of the potential had always depended on the expected gains to the ethnic community associated with the contemplated political movement. Where such expected gains were perceived to be significant, the action has been carried out. This point is demonstrated in the next section.

e. The Expected Gains of Ethnic Collective Movements

The expected gains of an ethnic collective movement is determined by the balance of power between the central government and the ethnic population. The stronger the central government, the less is the likely advantage for the ethnic population to confront it and, therefore, the less probable that an ethnic collective movement will develop.

Iranian ethnic political organizations have had access to large (see Table 2) and quite dedicated human support but have lacked managerial and material resources. This has been particularly true in the case of the

Table 7
Inter-ethnic disparities: selected social indicators selected years (1956, 1966, and 1976)

Selected Provinces ^a	(1) Percentage of Literate Population (10 years and over)		(2) Percentage of Population Having Units with Electricity		(3) Population per Physician		
	1956	1966	1976	1966	1976	1966	1976
Markazi	30.6	56.0	65.9	80.6	96.8	1,961	1,060
Khuzestan	16.0	39.2	50.3	82.3	96.2	5,000	2,558
Gilan	14.1	30.4	50.7	67.4	88.2	7,692	4,167
Khurasan	11.0	26.6	40.0	65.5	86.6	7,143	3,676
Kerman	10.9	25.5	41.8	65.5	78.7	11,111	4,785
Ilam	4.2	14.7	27.3	56.3	81.6	—	7,692
E. Azarbaijan	10.2	23.4	36.3	54.3	81.4	9,091	4,566
W. Azarbaijan	10.2	22.7	38.3	48.5	80.2	11,111	5,076
Zanjan	6.5	15.7	30.4	49.4	82.1	—	8,065
Kurdestan	6.4	16.2	29.7	60.5	81.2	10,000	6,173
Bakhtaran	11.4	28.7	42.3	62.2	82.6	7,692	4,673
Sistan/Baluchestan	5.6	17.1	29.4	48.2	62.5	11,111	5,236
Iran	14.9	33.5	47.5	—	—	5,263	2,513

Notes: ^a For ethnic character of the provinces, see the tables 2 & 3.
 Source: (1) and (3) are compiled by the author from various publications of Plan and Budget Organization (now a Ministry).
 (2) Kamkar, 1985, pp. 148, 153.

smaller national minorities such as Baluchis and Arabs. At times, ethnic movements have attempted to solve this problem by requesting assistance from foreign countries on hostile terms with the Iranian government. For example, Turks and Kurds have mostly relied upon Soviet assistance, while Arabs and Baluchis have sought support from Britain (see Table 8 for detail). Such aid has included intelligence, military, financial and political assistance but has largely been non-committal and temporary. The failure of almost all ethnic collective movements in Iran has had much more to do with a lack of leadership and effective management of resources. If managerial difficulties have largely crippled ethnic political organizations, high levels of political consciousness, solidarity and a long tradition of collective politics among the ethnic populations have, nevertheless, significantly contributed to their strength. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Kurds, and also the Turks, have historically created stronger and more effective political organizations than any of the other ethnic groups in Iran.

As indicated in Table 8, the ideologies of the regionally-based political uprisings in Iran have included right-wing, nationalist, national-democratic and left-wing orientations. Of these, the left to national-democratic politics seem to have occurred more frequently and, on the whole, have been sustained for a longer time. This is an indication that political organizations with a cross-class political appeal, democratic platform and a commitment to ethnic nationalism have been highly attractive for the Iranian ethnic peoples and comparatively stronger when compared to organizations at the far left or right of the political spectrum.

Almost all major regionally-based political uprisings in Iran have occurred in border provinces with large tracks of forests and/or mountainous terrain (see Table 2). A majority of such provinces border nations with similar ethnic populations. Examples include Kurdistan, bordering Kurdestans in Turkey and Iraq; Baluchestan, bordering Baluchestans in Pakistan and Afghanistan; and Azarbaijan, bordering Azarbaijan in the USSR. These observations indicate that the geographical situation of ethnic groups is an important factor contributing to the occurrence of ethnic collective movements and increases the capacity of the political organization for action.

Finally, the extent of the assimilation of ethnic populations in the mainstream of Iranian society remains relatively low. The Kurds, for example, are the least assimilated, demonstrate the highest degree of solidarity, and have the strongest ethnic political organizations in Iran. Azarbaijanis, on the other hand, have largely been assimilated and the impact of this can be observed in their relative inaction after the 1979 revolution.

The factors influencing the strength of the Iranian government have also varied. The central government has had access to a relatively

Table 8
Forms, demands, and/or causes of major ethnic collective movements in Iran since the beginning of the twentieth century

Major Ethnic Collective Movements* and Their Ideological Orientation	Forms, Demands, and/or Major Causes**
A. Kurdistan:	
1. Ismail Agha Simitqo's Movement (1920-25): Right-wing	Separatist; tribal centrifugal revolt; elite vs. elite movement; initially succeeded but soon defeated; no mass support.
2. Kumala/Kurdish Democratic Party's Movement (1942-46): Left to National-Democratic	Initially autonomy, subsequently separatist; revival of Kurdish language and culture; local officials chosen from local people; well-being of Kurds; supported by masses, but independent republic defeated within a year. Soviet support wavering throughout.
3. The Kurdistan Movement (1979-present): Left to National-Democratic	Autonomy; revival of Kurdish language and culture; local officials elected from local people; more resources for Kurdistan to redress past injustices.
B. Azarbaijan	
1. Khiabani's Movement (1920): National Democratic	Autonomy; democratic measures for all Iran; anti-imperialist; supported by Soviet Union; defeated within a year.
2. Azarbaijan's Democratic Party's Movement (1945-46): Left to National Democratic	Autonomy; democratic measures for all Iran; against oppressive practices of Jandarmes and landlords; revival of Azari's language and culture; elimination of national oppression; supported by Soviet Union; defeated within a year.

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| <p>C. Khuzestan</p> <p>1. Shaikh Khaz'al's Movement (1920-25): Right-wing</p> <p>2. Arab Nationalist Movement (1979): Right to National Democratic</p> | <p>Separatist; tribal centrifugal revolt; an elite vs. elite movement; supported by British; initially successful but soon defeated; no mass support.</p> <p>Autonomy/separatist; totally unsuccessful; no mass support; short-lived; supported by Iraqi government.</p> |
| <p>D. Baluchestan</p> <p>1. Doust Mohamad Khan's Movement, (1906-28): Right to National Democratic</p> <p>2. Sporadic Political Unrest (1979-present): Left to National Democratic</p> | <p>Separatist; a tribal centrifugal revolt; an elite vs. elite movement; successful in establishing an independent state but later defeated; supported by British.</p> <p>Autonomy/separatist; totally unsuccessful; unable to gain mass support.</p> |
| <p>E. Others</p> <p>1. Gilan: Kuchek Khan/Communists' Movement (1920): Left to National Democratic</p> <p>2. Khurasan: Colonel Pasiani/Khuda Verdi Khan's Movement (1920): National Democratic</p> | <p>Regional uprising; democratic measures for all Iran; anti-imperialist; supported by Soviet Union; established Communist state but defeated within a year.</p> <p>Regional uprising; democratic measures for all Iran; defeated within a year.</p> |

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| <p>3. Boirahmadi's Tribal Movement (1962): Right-wing</p> | <p>Regional uprising; tribal centrifugal movement; against land reform; elite vs. elite contest; no demand for regional government; defeated within a year.</p> |
| <p>4. Turkoman Sahara: Peasant Council's Movement (1979-80): Left-wing</p> | <p>Regional uprising; no demand for regional government; demanded land reform; grew strong but defeated.</p> |

Source and Notes

* Regional uprisings during the Constitutional Revolution (1906-13) are considered as part of the national politics. These include Sattar Khan's revolution in Azarbaijan, Sardar As'ad's movement in Bakhtiari, Sepahdar A'azam's movement in Gilan, and Tangestani's movement in Bushehr area (see Amirahmadi 1982).

** Note that British support largely went to 'right to national democratic' movements with primarily separatist demands. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, supported movements tending toward 'left to national democratic' with largely autonomist demands.

This information has been compiled from various publications. See references at the end of the paper.

large, fast growing and young population. Much of the huge economic resources of the country, including oil, natural gas and other important minerals such as copper and coal; the large industrial establishments and financial institutions, and most of the means of communication have been publicly owned and at the disposal of the central government. The Iranian government has been able to sustain a high rate of economic growth and improve its military and police force for several decades. By the 1970s the Shah's army developed into the largest and most powerful force in the Middle East after the Israeli army.

What can be concluded concerning the relative strength of the central government and the ethnic political organizations in Iran? As I shall argue in the following section, the central government has always been stronger in peace times but has had difficulty in maintaining its control in major crisis periods when ethnic demands and nationalism reach their peaks. Thus the gap between the strength of the two parties has depended on the degree of political stability and the general socio-economic situation in the country. Confrontations have almost invariably occurred in times of major political crisis when the government had been greatly weakened and as a consequence the expected gains from action have been significantly higher for the ethnic political organizations.

f. Timing and Forms of Ethnic Collective Movement

The major ethnic collective movements in Iran have occurred during periods of political and socio-economic crisis. These include the Constitutional Revolution and World War I (1906–1925), World War II and the democratic/nationalist movements of the Tudeh Party and Musadeq (1941–1953), the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic uprising (1963), and the Iranian revolution and war with Iraq (1978–1980s). Except for the 1963 political crisis, these periods have been characterized by weak central governments.

Two general kinds of political movements can be discerned from Table 8: peripheral and core ethnic movements. The former were more frequent in the periods up to the 1940s, occurred in separatist or autonomist form, and primarily took place in less developed ethnic provinces where class differentiation remained very low while ethnic cohesion was at its highest. The earlier movements of this type were characterized by frequent separatist demands and antagonism between the ethnic elites and the national elites (e.g., Simitqo's movement in Kurdistan, 1920–25; Khaz'al's movement in Khuzestan, 1920–25; Doust Mohamad Khan's movement in Baluchestan, 1906–1928). More recently, however, demands for autonomy and decentralization have received more currency among the ethnic peoples and the emphasis is now being placed on class politics and on the revival of ethnic languages and cultures (e.g., the present struggles in Kurdistan and Baluchestan).

The period immediately following World War II seems to have been transitional in that the ethnic movements were torn between demands for independence and autonomy and the distinction between class/elite politics was blurred (e.g., Democratic Movements in Kurdistan and Azarbaijan, 1942–46). Core ethnic movements, on the other hand, have occurred mostly in the more developed provinces where class differentiation has been more distinct while ethnicity either did not exist or if it did, had lost its political potential (e.g., Kuchek Khan's Movement in Gilan, 1920; and Pasian's Movement in Khurasan, 1920). These movements have taken the form of regional uprisings, being largely class conflicts, and contained no demands for autonomy or independence.

All regional political movements in Iran have been ultimately defeated by the central government. Initially, however, some have had a degree of success and such cases were more frequent in the earlier periods. As indicated in Table 7, almost all regional movements dating between 1906 and the mid-1940s have managed to establish autonomous or even independent regional governments for periods ranging from one (most frequent) to twenty years (only Baluchestan). The more recent movements have been largely unsuccessful. This pattern reflects the following: 1) the central government's increased economic resources and enhanced military and police forces; 2) the gradual development of capitalism and the state, which have created a nation-wide economy and thereby reduced the legitimacy of regional demands. However, peripheral ethnic collective movements have been significant and this indicates the powerful legacy of ethnonationalism in Iran.

Conclusions

This paper has proposed a conceptual framework to explain the determinants, timing, and forms of ethnic collective movements and has applied it to the Iranian experience. It is my conviction that such a framework, perhaps with some modifications, can also be applied to other multi-ethnic, Third World countries with political, social and economic structures somewhat similar to those of Iran. Theoretical improvements should, in particular, include further specification of terms such as 'expected gains', 'subjective factors', 'non-negotiable demands', and the 'strength' of the parties. A real problem concerning all these and similar terms used in the theory is that they hardly lend themselves to precise measurement. A different issue relates to the preoccupation of the proposed theory with such units as groups, communities, parties and governments. Further developments might also incorporate the role of individuals, and rational choice theories can be particularly helpful in this regard.

A number of practical implications follow from the theory. It suggests that ethnic collective movements demanding complete independence

are in decline and will continue to decline in the future if only because many peripheral ethnic communities are rapidly being assimilated in larger core ethnic cultures. Movements demanding autonomy, political participation, and decentralized administration will, on the other hand, continue to grow. These trends are perhaps the best indication that many ethnic political organizations would be well advised to change their demands from total independence towards claims for federal systems of local government.

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