Chapter V

DISTANCES AND CONFLICTS

5.1 Economic Distances
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DISTANCES AND CONFLICTS

Geography is a discipline in distance and it helps in understanding, the degree and magnitude of regional overtones affecting the process of integration in a nation state. A case of Iran could be understood, if one tried to explain it with the help of these geographical distances and the creation of centrifugal forces. Neither these distances nor the divisive forces do have uniform spatial framework. They vary in terms of spatio-temporal framework.

The geographical distance denotes a variety of distances but one can have economic, social and political distances and each one of them has their viewed in a total complex situation and not individually, as they are inter-dependent in nature and character.

Much has been said in the preceding chapter about the great many physical diversities in the form of mountains, plateau desert and as well as the economic disparities in the form of rural-urban occupation and core-periphery distribution.

All these prepare sound stable ground for the variety of differences which would really help in understanding the case of Iran.

The two bold mountain chains and the interior desertic region of Iran have been responsible for enhancing the length and breadth perspective and the people living in the Caspian lowland are quite foreign to the people of Baluchestan or the Khuzestan. The Zagros region itself is an assembly of micro-units and each micro region is different than the other and each has much physical distance. These physical distances in turn are further accentuated due to the harsh varying climatic regions, which really shape the perception of the people living in different areas.

5.1 Economic distances:

The regional structure and its economic characteristics are such that these evidents show the wide ranging spatial differences, both in the context of the micro as well as micro regions of Iran. The all prevailing influence of oil in the present economic set up of Iran creates differing perceptions in the case of Iran. Inspite of governmental effort is disposing the revenue of oil for developing other part of the country equally the crue of the situation is that there are wide regional imbalances.
These are built up on the pre-existing imbalanced regional structure due to agricultural disparities which continue to perpetuate inspite of the petro-dollar capable of improving it at the grass root level. The age-old differences between the nomads and the settlers still exist to a substantial level. The distances in agricultural development are very clearly marked. The south-west Iran is rich in intensive agricultural activities. The Zagros and Alburz mountains followed with valley and terrace farming. The Caspian littorals have intensive cultivation of cash crops. As usually, the rest of Iran which has little water have oasis farming or remain barren. But within these meso regions the economic distances are also seen at the micro-levels. The views of the farmer in the Seistan area are different than the views of the cultivators in Kurdistan hills or the Masandaran coastal areas.

The location of five industrial core areas (northern lowlands, Tehran, Tabriz Axis, Esfahan Axis, south-west oil belt and Khuzestan have distance of wide range. The highest concentration of manufacturing industries is found in Tehran and Tabriz areas. Moderate concentration of industries is seen in the northern lowland. The level of industrial development may be found on the basis of the nature of production. The concentration of industries not only create
economic distances among these areas but it is heightened between the core and the periphery. In other words the distance of industries is not only from one extreme to another extreme of the country but with in the concentrated areas of industries (see chapter IV).

Every region dominated by the tertiary sector surrounded by a sea of primary activities. Though primary sectors are the basic sectors to provide food to workers but it brings an economic distance in terms of per capita income. The data shows that the per capita income of the primary sector workers are much less than those of secondary and tertiary workers. This economic distance creates disparity not only in their per capita income but in their consumption pattern, education, skills, manners and national awareness. Even within the secondary and tertiary sector one will find a marked distance. Transport and communication is age old wheel to move further the economy of the country on the way of integration. There is hardly a communication net work joining the capital city with provinces like Semnan, Yazd, Kerman, seistan and Baluchestan, nor with the district headquarters of Iran. This all results in region to region and sub-region to sub-region economic distances, capable of modifying the perception of the people. This system also resembles with the pattern similar to the one created by colonial powers who evolved an urban based network. All big
cities like Tehran, Tabriz, Esfahan, Bandar-Abbas, Sari, Rasht, Khorramashahr, Ahwaz are connected. This pattern of transport followed a pure economy of movements of goods only (urban centres joining to ports only). However, it may be assumed that the network does not provide a means of intermingling of domestic goods for domestic consumption or even an exchange of ideas among people because it is not widely connected with the rural areas including district headquarters and villages. On the other hand it follows a two step flow system from the metropolis to the ports and vice-versa (see fig. 4.7).

If one looks into the growth of urban centres and growth of urban population in whole of Iran according to the 1976 census (see fig. 4.3 and table 4.3) then you will find the emergence of tiny micro like parallel circles all around the metropolis denoting urban population at the centre and rural on the periphery. This clear cut rise in urban population helps in analysing the growing distances on the part of the working sector, and dependence on the emerging industries which is coming up at the lower pace. Due to this distances there are wide fluctuations in the country's primary sectoral growth. Due to this the country imports different raw materials and finished products.

These economic distances have neither produced a socialist model nor a mixed economic model but it partially
follows a capitalist model heavily dependent on the import policy. This results in the advent of multinationals who establish industries with sophisticated computerised systems which is labour saving denying employment to the skill and unskilled Iranians. If highly sophisticated computerised industry could not have come then the percentage of workers in employment sector could have increased. Due to these multinationals the capital which shift from to their own country creates an imbalance in the sectoral growth of industries. These multinationals are so market oriented that they seldom looked into the development of other industries whose buyers were generally low priced wage workers. Due to this western oriented economic policy, Iran not only created a core and peripheral regions within the short geographical distance but also in the far flung areas of the country. This policy also creates a wide gulf among the ethnic groups, linguistic groups and unsettled nomads resulting in social disparities.

5.3 Social Distance:

The social distances and conflicts played an important role in nation building as well as in understanding the core and periphery of Iran. The social distances and conflicts are related broadly to factors like racial, religious and ethnic. The emergence of social distances are some how or other the reflection of the physical and the economic
structure of Iran. Iran has predominantly one religion, that is Islam (98%) (see fig. 6.2 table 6.1) with a common language that is Persian (99% people) speaks. Inspite of a common language and common religion Iran has distances in ethnic composition and racial composition. The nomad versus the settler and the modern gifted elite versus non-elites increases the social distances both horizontally and vertically.

Though the dominant and official religion of Iran is Shiism but there are religious minorities like, Kalimi, Zoroastrian, Christian, Assyry, Christian Arm any and Sunnis. (see fig. 6.2 and table 6.1). The Shia and Sunni combined together represent around 98.8% of the total population and rest of 1.2% of population are religious minorities. The religious minorities except Sunnis are generally seen in the port cities and metropolis i.e. Bandar-Abbas, Bandar Bushehr, Shiraz, Ahwaz, Esfahan, Khoassan, Tehran, Tabriz, Rasht, Sari. These small religious groups though have distances from the religious majority in their day today activities and religious activity but being a urban based they have learnt to accept each other thus minimising the religious distances. The religious minority (except Sunni) of Iran are well settled with a high income and engaged in secondary and tertiary activities. One analyses the distribution and distances of these religious groups in
space then gets an unbridge distances but on the national integration system these groups are merging or trying to merge with the national stock. If it is clearly seen throughout history that these religious minority groups have never been a major threat to Qajar monarchy, Pahlvi monarchy and the present Khomeini reign. But on the other hand the major minority group (Sunnis) posed a great distance to the majority group (Shiia). The spatial distribution of these Sunnis are quite scattered in Iran and a ring is formed around the periphery of Iran. This concentration of a religious minority posed a great threat to the central authority of Iran. Whenever the centre became weak, the Sunni dominated areas declared themselves independent. The recent one is the declaration of the Kurd people who are basically Sunni. Especially after the second world war they have posed as a great threat to the social cohesion of Iran. The gulf of geographical distances from extreme east to extreme west with the centre occupied by majority (Shiias) help in the Sunnis of loosing confidence on the central authority (see Chapter IV).

The ethnic composition of Iran spatially helps in identifying the distances and the core-periphery relationship. The ethnic it is a result of the mixture of language area and culture. The main ethnic groups are Kord, Lur, Bakhtiyari, Gashquai, Baluchis and Turkoman. Though there are some minor
groups, like Afsara, Khameh, Hamaadi, Arab, Sakan, and Hazara (see fig. 6.1). These tribes considered their chieftain (Khans) above any thing. Their customs to live free and move freely within their own territory, and preserve their old tradition and customs has helped in creating a great distance from the rest of the ethnic groups of Iran and frequently results in this affects the national unity. Throughout the history one gets innumerable examples of disunity, e.g. whenever the king became weak, instead of helping him these groups have declared independence (see Chapter II). Each ethnic group has a number of chieftains and each one has a group of people attached with that chieftains only.

The spatial analysis of distances of Iran clearly shows a pattern which indicates the danger to the country's integrity. The emergence of dynamic core areas and existence of unstable ethnic region in the periphery is not a healthy trend for the nation like Iran. The growth of urban centres are far from the ethnic groups restrict them from changing their occupational structure, and deflects them from merging in the main stream. The Kura, Turkoman, Baluch and Arabs are always a threat to the core of Iran.

Racially Iran is almost one. It is dominated by Indo-Iranian stock. The area occupied by this stock is around 3/4 of Iran's total area. Inspite of the Indo-Iranian stock Iran has semantic stock (Arab) on the
Khorasan and south west of Iran. Historically all these regions were volatile just because of their distances from the centre. Therefore, whenever the king became weak, these races used to attack and declared themselves rulers. The raids of Uzbegs were quite severe (see Chapter II). But after the Second World War this region became quiet not creating much disturbance to the central power. These racial groups still maintain individuality and distances. They still follow their racial character. The lack of transport and communication, developmental programmes, education and other integration processes have made this region as a peripheral one with a separate identity and an unbridgeable distance.

The social distances between the settlers and the nomads have been a challenge to the maintenance of the core-periphery interaction in Iran. The settlers are basically a distinct racial groups with a different ethnic and religious composition. They are basically the Shias with Indo-Aryan racial characters. The settled population has greater advantage because they are seen in the agriculturally developed areas and industrial-urban centres with high per capita income and all infrastructural facilities making their region as the core region of Iran (see fig. 4.8).

But on the other hand nomads who are seen on the mountain slopes of Zagros, Alburz and partly on the central
and south east of Iran are having a very primitive kind of agricultural practice. The south-eastern nomads generally do little bit of oasis farming and the mountainous nomads do terrace farming (see Chapter IV). These primary activities, a low density of communication and absence of industry have made these nomads backward and confined them to their valleys. They never come out of their specified areas.

This unbridged distances between the settled and the unsettled population remains a great threat to the country, not only because of their location but also due to the faulty planning of the Iranian monarch (see Chapter IV). The nomads were never assured of their mixing into the mainstream of settled Iranian population and to have a steady life. On the other hand the white revolution, which was formulated by King Reza Shah Pahlavi has created some kind of fear among the people. The low level of concentration of industries, lack of transport and communication and least amount of developmental work has created a great distance among the settler and the nomad. Unfortunately again these areas are concentrated on the fringe of Iran.

If we examine the rural-urban population of Iran (see Chapter IV, fig. 4.3 and table 4.5). then a clear cut picture emerges. Iran has a predominantly 59% rural population. This ratio of rural population is seen in almost all the peripheral states of Iran. But on the other
hand, a higher ratio of urban to rural population is seen in Esfahan, Shiraz, Ahwaz, Khorasan, Tabriz, Tehran, Rasht, Sat, Bandar-Abbas and Pahlvi (see Chapter IV). This demographic characteristic creates a gap which should be narrowed down considerably with the growing economy.

The elite versus non-elite is an important parameter of measuring the social distances in Iran. The emergence of the elite is not a new factor in the population but it is an age-old phenomena product of the Industrial Revolution of Europe. The people who fall into this category are well educated, settled, occupying high posts in the bureaucracy and influence the administration of the country. They are very volatile on their opinion and represents a microscopic proportion the total population (0.01%). These people are seen only in power oriented metropolis. In Iran they are seen in a good number in Tehran and Tabriz. The elite versus non-elites ratio is 1:99. This elite versus non-elite is an urban phenomenon but unfortunately elites and non-elites are at a distance and compete with each other desperately. Because in Iran the “Bazar” plays an important role in the development of Iran’s economy as well as the politics. The business class and aristocrats also remain close to the administrative units which always creates problems to the urban elites but due to their high education and shrewdness they still influence the administration of Iran.
The emergence of the distances within Iran between the core and periphery is distinctive due to an uneven and faulty planning and lack of communication connecting different areas. In turn, the emergence of vast peripheral unstable regions are substantially significant in promoting divisive forces within the polity of Iran.

5.3 The Political Distances:

The spatio-political distances of Iran is of special nature which is clearly visible through time. The coming of monarch Pahlavi foiled the achievement of the people's (1906) constitution revolution and re-establishment of monarchical form of government suppressing the executive, judiciary, legislature, civil service, the electorate, public opinion, party system and killing the interest groups. The king became all powerful and the Majlis (Parliament) became a rubber stamp. All decisions regarding replacements of bureaucrats nobles were taken by the king. Ministers, were mere puppets. The king became the head of army. This absolute power may be seen in a historical perspective. It cannot be understood without analysing the distances among the political parties, groups, clergy, settled/nomads etc. Though from time to time the king had

2. Z. Marvin, The Political Elite of Iran, 1971, pp. 1-150.
played on the tactics of divide and rule and suppressed the
mass movements and at the time of need he bribed the party,
introduced popular 12 point programmes and formed the Savak
secret service. The coming of Savak to look after the
movement of different political parties and their leaders, not only crippled the formation of democratic institution
but curtailed the movement of different political parties.
Many parties went under ground like Tudeh party of Iran,
Iranian National Forum, Fedaii Guerrillas, Mujahedin-i-Khalq,
and few parties like Novon Party, Mordoom party, Miliaen
party and Rastakhis party at different points of time.

Going through the divide and rule policy of the
government on one hand and the role of political parties on
the other hand gives a distinct distance among the parties
which strengthened the monarchical form of government for
about 60 years. Otherwise no country of the world has
witnessed the revival of monarchical form of government
after such type of revolution. Formation of the democratic
system after the French Revolution is an example followed
by the U.K. and other places. But in Iran unfortunately

3. B. Amin, *The Modernisation of Iran 1921-41*, Standford,
   pp. 11-120.

4. Z. Marvin, n. 2, pp. 43-150.
after the great constitutional revolution of 1906, the monarchy was re-established. The political and ideological differences of different political parties and individual leaders helped the king to capitalise upon and rule the country.\(^5\)

It is very evident from the political party manifestos of different parties about their understanding of the political situation of Iran and their party ideology. The left-oriented political parties of Iran are, the Tudeh party, the Fedaii and small Maoist group. These parties clearly believe in a class struggle and dialectical materialism. They discard all liberal institutions and favour the formation of state on Marxist-Leninist principles. On the other hand the Mujahedeen and National front parties though believe in Marxism in proxy but they deannounce materialism which shows that they wanted Iran as a state of Islamic socialist country which seems to be vague notion in the real sense. Between these two groups there is another groups of clergy who are most powerful and non-compromising fundamentalist who believe in an Islamic state and at present are ruling the country. These three political ideological distances among these groups have disunited the people of Iran except in 1959 revolution when they removed the Shah.

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with united strength. But again these parties are divided after the Shah's departure and helped the fundamentalists to rule the country. This has helped in the maintenance of Ayatollah Khomeini's rule inspite of spate of cruelties, mindes and torture.

The political distances within the parties are very much prominent. The Tudeh party which is an old one (established 1941) has typical political distances within the party itself. The political ideological awareness among the cadre of this party was so volatile that many a time the members of that party were found to be spying for "savak". This party was also divided on the issue of the C.P.S.I.U.'s functioning and debates on petty issues. The political maturity of the Tudeh party has never reached to that extend where they could formalise wide based ideology. Even today the distances among leaders and cadres are seen on the question of lending support to Khomeini. These political distances are not only seen in the Tudeh party but also in other left parties. Each one has two groups, minority and majority. Some feel that by armed struggle they can bring revolution. Some of them feel that the beginning of a struggle in the urban centres might bring

awareness among villagers and automatically revolution will come. The main lacuna of Communist Parties of Iran is that they lack contact in the south, south-east and central Iran. These parties are confined to Sari, Gilan, Rasht, Tabriz, Orumiyeh and Sanandeż only.

The class orientation of leaders also plays an important role in the movement. The class of leadership in the Communist Party of Iran are in the hands of the upper class. They lack the revolutionary zeal and are unable to understand the pulse of the proletarian which is revolutionary in its nature. Due to this distance of leaders and cadres, many a time the step taken by the leader is isolated the masses. This brings the movement to a standstill thus breaking away of the people from the party–supporting the leader like Mossadeq.

On the other hand the liberals like Mossadeq and some others put forth different kinds of liberal approaches like nationalisation of oil, industry and forestry etc., but lack of mass appeal and absence of party network makes it unsuccessful. The distances among themselves and the people

7. Ibid.
8. Z. Marvin, n. 2.
10. Z. Marvin, n. 2.
were too wide. At the same time the Shah has utilised these distances by removing and expelling Mussadeq from Iran. These groups never had any particular ideology or well defined principles.

The most appealing group without a party was clergy groups whose leader now is Ayatollah Khomeini. The proximity of this group with the people is important. It consists of all religious leaders. They have readymade institutions and principles i.e. Masjid and Islamic principles. They have a hold among the nomads also which is the most volatile group and no party has any hold on them. These people were scattered all over Iran. This group has a political distance from the urban elite and the westernised liberals. But they constitute an insignificant number in comparison to the total population. The political distances of this party was minimised with the people and this group has appealed to the people due to its non-compromising attitude and religious faith. Khomeini may be said to be the most uncompromising man of Iran.\textsuperscript{11} This picture of Khomeini has helped in building an image of anti-Shah and anti-America which has brought him into power. In real sense Khomeini minimised the political distance not only within his groups but also among the people of entire Iran.

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\item \textsuperscript{11} M. Muhasezi, \textit{Islamic Revolution Future Path of the Nation}, Tehran, 1982, pp. 1-176.
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The political distances among the people of Iran was so much (except during the Shah's removal) which had helped the King to rule Iran for sixty years after the revolution of 1906. The people of Iran were badly divided by the Shah. The coming of petro-dollar and liberal policies of the Shah; like opening of bars, clubs, prostitution houses, cinema, pornographic magazines etc. created a new class in Iran. This class kept themselves away from the general mass and helped the king in ruling the country. The merchant class became much more powerful due to export-important business. The emergence of this class creates a great political distance from the villages. The rapid growth of urbanised class confused the rural people creating a gulf in political contacts. But at the end of 1979 the people got united and as a result of this the Shah was thrown out together with the monarchical form of government. But just after the coming of Khomenei again the distances are becoming wide which may lead the country to a difficult position in deciding the future course of action.

5.4 Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces:

The centrifugal and centripetal forces have been significant, if viewed historically. The distance between core and periphery of Iranian territory give rise to the

existence of centrifugal forces. During Safavid and Qajar period the central authority was located in Tabriz and Esfahan which meant that a great distance had to be covered to rule the periphery of Iran. Due to the presence of mountain barriers (Zagros and Alburz) on the north west and great desert on the south and east the absence of transport network made these centrifugal forces more strong (see Chapter IV). Historically, the centrifugal forces among the ethnic groups were so strong that whenever the centre became weak they declared independent and ruled that area (see Chapter II).

The present day analysis of physio-socio-economic political chain clearly shows the existence of centrifugal forces. These centrifugal forces are generally seen on the peripheral regions of Iran with small pockets in central Iran. The emergence of centrifugal forces in Iran is due to rugged mountain, desert topography, low rainfall, absence of irrigation system, absence of industry, low income, less agricultural land, absence of developmental programme, heterogeneous ethnic groups and least developed communication system. The core-periphery interaction has become very sensitive and thus posing severe stresses and pull-on the unity in Iran.
It is evident from the history that, the centrifugal forces in Iran do not only expels the region but also helps in national integration system (see Chapter II). The centrifugal force emerge from the periphery of Iran towards the core of Iran because of the latter's power to attract. These forces sometimes push people from the less developed areas to developed areas. The very reason of growth of urban population by 5% per year is an indication of the role of centrifugal forces which expel people from economically-socially, politically backward areas of Yazd, Kerman, Seistan and Baluchistan, western Azerbayejan, Kordestan, Ilam to different centrally located places of Iran like Tehran, Tabriz, Esfahan, Ahwaz, Shiraz and Khorassan. But the rate of of integration of people in Iran is quite low due to the low density of transport and communication network, otherwise the centrifugal force of the periphery is so strong that it could have replaced a large bulk of people to the core areas.

The centrifugal forces are not only experienced on the peripheral areas of Iran but are seen in the core areas too. Though these core areas are well equipped in all the sphere than the peripheral areas but are dissatisfied with the traffic congestion, cozy space, noise pollution, legal restriction etc. like Tehran, Tabriz and Esfahan.
The centripetal forces in Iran play a great role in keeping its territory stable. The centripetal force emerges as a gravitational force keeping the most difficult region of Iran intact. The nation Iran is very much attractive to Iranians. The presence of Zagros on the west and Alburz on the north and presence of Caspian sea and Persian Gulf gives a kind of confidence to the people geographically. They get attracted to the scenic beauty which is not found in the whole of West Asia. At the same time the emergence of a national language (Persian spoken by more than 95% of the population and a national religion (Shiism) which is practised by 75% of the total population helps in strengthening the centripetal forces.

The arrival of petro-dollar and opening of few industries in different places created hopes among people of getting employment and an improvement in the country's economic position. This was, however, not the case though centripetal forces became strong. The centripetal forces of Iran are quite strong in the Tehran, Tabriz, Caspian lowland, Isfahan and south west of Iran, because the socio-economic and even geographical condition is very helpful to the people of that region. The maximum concentration of productive forces, decision makers, planners and administrators are seen in those regions.

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