

# **A Constructivist Analysis of the Formation of ISIS in Iraq and its Challenges and Opportunities for Iran**

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## **Abstract**

A Takfiri is a Muslim who accuses another Muslim or an adherent of another Abrahamic faith of apostasy. The accusation itself is called Takfir, derived from the word kafir (unbeliever). The emergence of ISIS in the Middle East region and the territories in the vicinity of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the support of some of the regional and extra-regional countries of this current, have led to profound changes in the local equations. The purpose of the present article is to examine one of the Middle East's fundamental problems in recent years is the emergence of Takfiri Terrorist groups particularly in Iraq. It is necessary to evaluate the theoretical emergence of the phenomenon of ISIS in this country. In terms of cultural and ethnic diversities, Iraq has always been involved with terrorist movements. A typical example of this phenomenon is the emergence and empowerment of ISIS. The control of ISIS over large Iraq and Syria areas has surprised many scholars in political and security circles. The main question is; 'what platforms and components have been influential in the empowerment of ISIS in Iraq?' Therefore, the main question to be explored in this study is: 'what causes and factors led to the formation of ISIS in Iraq?' Using a theoretical framework and a constructivist methodology and the consideration of the ontological categories that have an excellent capability to explain the emergence of ISIS in Iraq, this paper examined subjective and objective causes of ISIS's formation in Iraq.

**Keyword:** Iraq, ISIS, Takfir, Ex-Communication, Violence, Identity

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### Introduction

Critical issues such as the geopolitical situation, energy, consumer market, historical background, and religious matters have made the Middle East a critical region having a crucial role in the world through the political, economic, cultural, and strategic aspects. This area witnessed numerous wars, alliances, rivalries, and friendships.

On the other hand, the awakening of the Islamic countries of the region affected international relations. (Agha Hosseini; Tadayon Rad, 2014:86). With the third millennium turn, waves of turmoil and instability encompassed the global space, especially West Asia. The first step of instability began with the al-Qaeda's terroristic attack against the Twin Towers of World Trade Center in New York. The second step of regional instability started in January 2011 with the Islamic awakening movement in North Africa and West Asia. In the second step, we observed the collapse of some dictatorships in the region that influenced the regional developments for nearly half a century. The main difference between the first and second waves of turmoil in West Asia is in the origin of this chaos. The first wave of disorder had an external basis, while the second wave stemmed from Muslim nations' desire to restore their lost dignity.

The chaotic third step began with the escalation of Takfiri currents since 2014, igniting sectarian and factional wars in West Asia. I can see the difference between this wave and previous waves of political disorder in the disappearance of international borders and a change in the nation-state's traditional concept. Throughout the history of Islam, there have been individuals, sects, and groups who have excommunicated their opponents and, with the slightest factor, considered them outside Islam's religion and ordered them to be killed. The beginning of this destructive phenomenon began with the Khavarej, and in the last two centuries, the Wahhabis have continued their method. Takfiri currents of Wahhabism and Salafism are among the winds opposed to the Islamic Ummah (Jalili, 2014:128). These currents use the tools of terrorism to achieve their goals. Today's active terrorism is a form of political violence.

Although terrorism has been on the security agenda of countries since the beginning of the third millennium, its recent form of takfiri in the Middle East has emerged from hidden layers in the wake of new uprisings in the Arab world the form of a severe security threat. It has appeared far more violent. The existence of deep ethnic-religious rifts in the Middle East and the deepening of these rifts created by the war for power and the security vacuum have made the Middle East heaven for

extremist groups such as ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). ISIS is one of these fundamentalist groups that, with its advances in Iraq, calls itself the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and has turned the situation in the region into a multi-unknown equation.

It has turned the situation of the religion into a Multi-variable equation.

The emergence of ISIS in the Middle East region and the territories in the vicinity of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and some of the regional and extra-regional countries of this current, have led to profound changes in the local equations. The empowerment of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and its dominance over large parts of these countries have made Iraq and Syria face severe security crises and territorial threats. Still, they have caused risks and dangers for regional and international security. The control of ISIS over large Iraq and Syria areas has surprised many scholars in political and security circles. It raises the central question of ‘what platforms and components have been influential in the empowerment of ISIS in Iraq?’ The research method of the present article is descriptive-analytical and utilizes the theoretical constructivist framework to identify factors and determine the reasons for the formation of ISIS in Iraq and the main challenges and opportunities created by the ISIS for Iran through changing the regional equations.

### **1. Theoretical Foundations: Constructivism**

Constructivism refers to a school that attempts to eliminate absolute materialism from the realm of social studies. Having a systematic and holistic approach to the social, political, and international phenomena, constructivism bases the originality of the ideas and thoughts to build social phenomena. It indicates that the nature of social phenomena differs from material objects and creatures.

Constructivism, in general, refers to a philosophical point of view according to which all the knowledge and human phenomena are "Constructed," these constructions socially interact with mental currents. Philosophical constructivism, assumed that knowledge and the human social phenomena do not necessarily reflect the determined realities. Instead, their condition depends on human mentalities, social experiences, traditions, and social alliances (Salimi, 2010: 34). In contrast to the two spectrums of material and semantic, explanatory and interpretive, positivist and post-positivist, rationalist theories and reflective theories, constructivism believes in establishing a connection and creating a middle approach (Ghahramanpour, 2004: 72).

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From the ontological point of view, constructivism contrasts "Idealism" with "Materialism" and "Subjectivism" with "Objectivism" to offer a combined approach with a focus on meaning and subjectivity, considering their points of difference. It provides an integrated approach with a focus on sense and mentality. In this regard, constructivism does not believe in the world's independence from the human mind being stated in rationalist theories (as neorealism) (Mottaqi and Kazemi, 2007: 210). According to the aspects of mentality and discourse, it rejects the separation of objectivity and subjectivity approaches while rejecting universal laws being free from values. It does not accept international relations theories' analytical ability due to their materialistic methods in analyzing issues and international relations.

Considering the instructions, ideas, beliefs, rules, procedures, norms, and consequently identities, constructivism fills the inherent gaps whitening rational approaches and attends to society's construction in symbolic human interactions. It also rejects the inherent primacies and believes in human development and global interdependence.

From an ontological point of view, constructivism is a cultural phenomenon. It believes that semantic structures and identities affect interests and behaviors. Especially in the conventional approach, the materialistic element still exists, and the central government will maintain its dominance over other actors. Nevertheless, their presence depends on the understanding of ideas and common attitudes in which they are located. In this way, the role of norms, pictures, and images in the definition of power and interests is essential. As a result, constructivism should be analyzed from values, standards, ideas, and the overall culture. In this regard, the starting point to assess terrorists and extremists' trends is the dimensions of cultural identity by which a subjective mental opinion is created. Consequently, groups common interests and identities are achieved (Mottaqi and Kazemi, 2007: 211).

The essential elements of violent identities are internal ethnic-minority's conflicts, religious claims, terrors, and sectarian ideological hegemony. Religious sectarian disputes are the most pervasive and the harshest types of identity conflicts. Religious beliefs create some ideological and intellectual aspects of the identity, representing a pious and fanatical person. The system of religious beliefs acts as the core concept of a religious person, and it makes life predictable by giving him additional reliance. In these circumstances, such a person feels peace and security. In this case, violence occurs when events indicate a risk of identity in the core meanings, or at least the person feels that way

(Eftekhari, 1999: 124-123). In this case, the offensive or defensive responses are formed while aiming at the prevention of destruction. On this basis, the radical currents in different regions consider the growth of outsider identities as a threat to their own identity's semantic core. It makes them act in an extreme and terroristic way.

## **2. The Formation of ISIS in the Middle East**

Many researchers have concentrated their attention on the reasons for the formation of ISIS and their extremist acts. In response to this phenomenon's appearance, there are different approaches stated in scientific and academic environments.

### **2.1. The Existence of Fragile States and the Power Vacuum in the Region**

Some researchers believe that the existence of fragile states that do not adequately fulfill a national government's duties and the presence of a power vacuum in the region-due to the US's reluctance to intervene and play a hegemonic role-allow the radical groups to emerge. These researchers believe that the wave of Arab Spring, which has been formed against the authoritarian government, is one of the factors involved in the emergence of ISIS (Yazdanfam, 2014: 1).

### **2.2. The Lack of an Islamic Caliphate in the Sunni World**

Some researchers also state that the most important political factor in forming radical Takfiri groups is the lack of an Islamic caliphate in the Sunni world. However, the cultural backgrounds refer to Western culture's influence on such groups and the expansion of humanism and secularism thoughts (Farmanian, 2014: 1).

### **2.3. The Misconception of Familiar People Regarding the Religion**

Another critical factor affecting the development of ISIS is the common misconception of ordinary people regarding religion. The roots of ISIS formation in ordinary people's delusion regarding religion (Nesari, 2014: 1).

### **2.4. Contrasting Modernity**

Political researchers search the roots of Daesh formation in the contrasting modernity and believe in Horkheimer's dialectical theory or crisis period<sup>2</sup> (1895-1973). Horkheimer argues that whenever the Muslim world was in crisis, it had tried to move towards Islamic revival (Masoudnia, 2014: 3).

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2. Max Horkheimer was a German philosopher and sociologist who was famous for his work in critical theory as a member of the Frankfurt School of social research.

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Large groups of scholars study the history of ideas of ISIS. They believe that ISIS's beliefs are rooted in the views of Ibn Taymiyya, ascribe their violent acts to his fatwa about the beheading of infidels, etc.

### **3. The Islamic Republic of Iran and The Formation of ISIS in Iraq**

ISIS is a breakaway group of Al-Qaeda. From the perspective of ideological and intellectual tendencies and the behavioral aspects, ISIS is the same as al-Qaeda. However, this terrorist group's behavior during the past decade and especially the past few years have shown that in comparison with al-Qaeda, this group has more radical thoughts and actions that are incredibly violent. Since its separation from al-Qaeda and the emergence of differences between the two, ISIS has been considered the most terrible and most powerful terrorist group in the Middle East (Gerges, 2005: 105). Although ISIS in its current form is the product of the Syrian crisis and the spread of regional conflicts and disputes since 2011, its roots and the empowerment process are ascribed to the post-Saddam era of Iraq, i.e., from 2003 onwards.

The control of ISIS over large areas of Iraq and Syria surprised many in political and security circles. It raises the critical question of 'what platforms and components were effective in empowering ISIS in Iraq?' In this regard, we can refer to a range of factors connected to the main challenges and problems in Iraq and the regional and trans-regional differences and supports. Using a constructivist framework, someone can divide the ISIS crisis, its causes, and subjective-objective grounds into two forms.

#### **3.1. The Subjective Causes of the Development of ISIS in Iraq**

'How can they explain the position of the objective and subjective world in the constructivist ontology?' 'Can they consider it as the cause of the emergence of ISIS in Iraq?' 'What relationships can be established between self-other and the discourse of nonparticipation in constructivism and its extension to terrorist groups like ISIS?' Finally, 'what is the connection between structure and agency?' 'What effects has terrorism had on the structure of the relations?' Consequently, 'how has this structure been affected?' In the following, they will check each of these elements and will discuss them from an ontological point of view.

##### **3.1.1. Rules-Norms and Explanation of the Behavior of ISIS Actors**

In constructivist studies, institutionalized norms have an essential role in determining actors' identities and interests. The criteria guide actors' actions. The standards are the shared mental and value-based expectations about the behaviors of actors. In this regard, actors' activism

is based on the rules and norms arising from historical experiences and cultural backgrounds of subjective factors. In such a situation, assuming the legality and predictability principles, actors' behavior finds its meaning in the context of rules, beliefs, and social norms. Therefore, mentalities, thoughts, myths, and ideas in any society create a cultural context that would strengthen or weaken the presence or absence of violence (Fokouhi, 1999: 79).

A look at Afghanistan and Iraq shows that power has been a part of their culture. In the tribal areas, the security and survival of individuals and tribes in competitions with other tribes over biological resources mainly depend on the size of the population, bravery, and combat power. Tribal people are accustomed to weapons and their use. In such a situation, the violence has cultural and social roots and is based on this kind of interpretation, so villain groups can easily and quickly develop. Instinctive needs rather than being shaped by the collective wisdom from the philosophy of power in the political culture of racial and tribal societies and the values and norms. The outcome of a culture of violence is a violent culture that could be considered a response to the denial of identity, security, and the symbolic meaning of group's life. The power is escalated when the tradition and identity are stimulated with external elements' intervention (Eftekhari, 1999: 128).

### **3.1.2. Identity Crisis – Identification**

The expectations between actors and their perceptions from themselves and others Define friends, enemies, and the behavior against any ones. Part of that identity is intrinsically a related issue being formed in such a situation. The concepts based on which actions are organized are created through these interactions.

That is the exclusive identity included in the self and not the "Other". It is a border between them and us. Also, bound to the material and cannot deny spiritual relations, cultures' spiritual and material interactions in such structure. Meanwhile, the actor's social definition is rooted in social actors' theories about themselves and each other. The realization of identity depends on being who or what a nation is and the power to distinguish between oneself and others. The self's perception shapes the responses to the different subjects (kolae, 2007: 52), creating a sense of belonging and a demarcation of identity; the self is defined to the cognitive status. They are identifying others as the common enemy of all extremists.

The extremism defines itself through relatively homogeneous identities and benefits. This fact has been regarded as the leading cause

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of the empowerment of coherent Takfiri networks and the expansion of their operations. The redefinition of the boundaries between them and others has caused the reproduction of their violent identities. Instead of being filled with the interactions and exchanges, the borders are overcome by hatred, ex-communication, threats, and murdering of competing identities being turned into bloody walls (Jamali, 2011: 157).

The extremist and violent behavior of the terrorist groups in the Middle East grows in this context. Thus, the behavior of terrorist groups is the manifestation of their thoughts, ideas, aspirations, and views within a framework of the conceptual and semantic network in mind. Identity as a mental image is a relation that a person establishes between his/her mental worlds and the social reality, or between cognitive conceptual networks and social relations network.

Based on the theory of constructivism of identity, identities are shaped by exchanges, interactions, and social relations rather than assumptions. Vendt<sup>1</sup>(1958-2016) believes that the interaction process shapes identities, but his critics say that one cannot interact without identity(Vevdt, 2006). Rather than being based on interaction, some identity exists before business (Smith; Bilis, 2009: 554).

On the other hand, in societies where there are more diversities of identity and ethnic, religious, linguistic, and racial issues, identity disputes will rise more than in other organizations. This kind of conflict is often a combination of identity seeking and security seeking.

In this case, the offensive or defensive reactions are shaped to avoid destruction. On this basis, the radical currents in different regions consider the growth of identities as a threat to their identity concept. It makes them act in an extremist and terrorist way.

### **3.1.3. The Culture and Conceptual System of ISIS**

Concepts in social life have a guiding importance (not decisive) because they adjust their behaviors based on things and other actors meanings (Nasri, 2006: 731).

In other words, a kind of construction occurs in the behavior of actors, and this construction is continued, produced, and reproduced. Mental-intellectual structures from the perspective of "Lucien Faber" include a set of beliefs, perceptions, mental blueprints, and ideologies that have been developed in a particular community and build the "Mentality" or "Spirit" of that society, so these structures are considered as a set of

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1. Alexander Wendt (Born 12 June 1958) is an American [Political Scientist](#) Who is One of the Core [Social Constructivist](#) Researchers in the Field of [International Relations](#)

mental tools (Bayrou, 2001: 222). From the perspective of constructivism, intellectual and normative structures are as effective as physical structures in international policies. That is because the mental structures affect countries' identities and consequently affect and define their interests and behaviors (Hadian; Gol Mohammadi, 2004: 273).

From the perspective of constructivism, we should consider the ideas and beliefs in international relations more serious than the traditional theories being based on material interests. Attention to the reality of common knowledge is the exit path of the materialist views. According to Vendt, the conceptual aspect's surface structure is based on materialism's deep design; material conditions are the developing theories' starting point. Ultimately, a social system has only one plan that includes material elements and conceptual elements (Vendt, 2005:276).

From the constructivist perspective social life didn't limit material aspects; however, it is limited to human actions, and social meanings form material frameworks and conditions. So we cannot merely state that the causes of the emergence of terrorism and ISIS are poverty, mental health problems of terrorists, education levels, and Third World nations.

One of the most basic incentives of actors in constructivist studies is the conceptual system. Beliefs and ideas define the interpretation of the environment by the players. It leads to behaviors that are formed on the substrate of mentality and different variations. The certain beliefs of actors motivate them to show their behavior in this world in a particular direction (Jamali, 2011: 150). Therefore, the mindsets of actors that have been gradually taken shape and strengthened are described as a social and political. The actors make judgments about others. Conceptual system and consequently, mental structures form identities, interests, and actors' behaviors:

- 1) Opinions and beliefs determine the political views and tell the actor what is possible and what is impossible;
- 2) Intellectual constructs require a conceptual framework in which mental interactions are established;
- 3) Ideas and beliefs determine the direction of actors' behaviors and guide them (Bellamy, 2007: 48).

Therefore, extremism in the Middle East though is formed in the light of some relationships and interventions with fighting identities; it is a social conceptual construct that is consolidated and strengthened gradually and by the drivers of identities, norms, culture, and history. The intersubjective perception of extremist groups and their ideological interpretation of religion and ethnicity as a value has given them a sense

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of belonging to like-minded people who believe in extremist religious norms; thus, they only see their interests gaining power. And also, they remove obstacles in their way by using violence (Jamali, 2011: 167).

### 3.1.4. The Ideology of ISIS

Understanding and interpreting individuals depend on the way of interacting and understanding the environment and the events. Thus, people create a cognitive scheme and mental framework from the sociopolitical climate in his mind. Rather than objective and external facts, these impressions determine their behavior and identity (Borum, 2007: 14). Radical mentality involves the following items; ideology based on which the extremism is created, principles of perception of religion, the human being's attitudes toward the world, especially the historical evolution of government, public relations, organizations, and the growth of civilization. A part of extremist acts is mainly based on subjective interpretation of the world, rather than objective facts. Therefore, their understanding of the environment through ideas and trends reflects their personal experiences and memories (Jamali, 2011: 161). The rigid ideological allegiances of extremists are the most stable and effective source of behavioral identity. Underlying beliefs in an ideological system are realized intuitively and end all doubts (Beshler, 1991: 7). The unrealistic person has a more profound and sterner faith, and s/he is less exposed to doubts; however, his/her enthusiasm is more robust. For this reason, if a person is subject to acceptance of extremist and radical ideology such as ideological paradigms of Daesh, s/he will act in a terroristic way without fear of his/her destruction.

### 3.2. Objective Causes of the Formation of ISIS in Iraq

In an overview, the objective causes and grounds for the formation of ISIS in Iraq can be divided into internal and external factors.

#### 3.2.1. Roots and National Contexts Empowering the Emergence of ISIS

##### 1) Political, religious and sectarian divisions and challenges in Iraq

The Takfiri group called the Islamic State in Iraq (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is the product of sectarian conflicts rooted in the region's historical foreign intervention. It has paved the way for the continuation of the crisis in the area. Iraq's social structure represents a colorful and diverse mosaic of ethnicities, religions, and cultures appropriate to their political, social, and economic position and cannot dominate other ethnic groups without violence. Kurds, Sunni Arabs, and Shiites in Iraq are the most important local actors of Iraq's policy that have different and even contradictory demands and interests. Peaceful management and integration of their claims are complicated and need a

pluralistic culture. This feature is more evident in Iraq than any other multi-ethnic society because Iraq is a fabricated or forged country being emerged from the defeated Ottoman Empire in World War I and developed with a nation-state conformation. The project of nation-building has not been successful. The artificiality of Iraq has led to the formation of a very heterogeneous texture in terms of ethnic-religious and tribal-tribal composition in this country, which do not feel both fortunate and destined due to the lack of a shared history of peaceful life with each other. Because there is still no such thing as the Iraqi people, In other words, nationality has not been substituted with the tribal and ethnic identities (Ashouri, 2009: 268).

Iraqi society has several significant gaps: 1. Religious gap between the Shiite majority and Sunni minority, 2. ethnic and linguistic gap between the Arab majority and non-Arab minority of the Kurds, Turkmen, and Armenians. 3. The gap between the Muslim majority and non-Muslim minority of Armenians and Assyrians (Shabani, 2007: 165).

Iraq is a country with different ethnicities and religions; this has led to cultural, religious, ethnic, and social tensions. Accordingly, Iraq's political stability has always been continued through dictatorship and political violence; this approach's tools have always been Sunni Arabs. According to what was said, Iraq's social gaps in religion could be divided into "Sunni and Shiite" and "Arab - Kurd".

However, heterogeneous societies are at greater risk of degradation and lack of consensus. The most significant internal challenges of Iraq are the heterogeneity of cultural structure in the three spectra of Sunni Arabs, Shiites, Kurds, and the meddling regional and international powers fueling these conflicts. Challenges and political differences between political groups in Iraq and the lack of political cohesion and consensus are the most critical factors that cause internal tensions and the increase in ethnic, sectarian disputes. The pressures and disagreements create good opportunities for ISIS and the extension of its influence, especially in Iraq's Sunni areas.

2) The lack of proper formation process of government-nation-building  
Government-nation-building is a process that belongs to the modern period in which governments and nations are formed as a new form of political structure. Nation-building is a process in which the areas necessary for developing and deepening common political identity and sense of belonging to the national territory. This process helps a gradual removal of a sense of belonging to local values and creating a democratic government based on the public's will. With the nation-building and

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creation of social cohesion in a country, government building begins, which is a further step to achieve legitimate power and authority (Kazemi, 2005: 9).

In the meantime, cross-regional forces have had a significant and decisive role in shaping the Middle East's borders and governments. It can say that the root of the nation's failure-government building in Iraq dates back to the founding of Iraq and the end of the Ottoman Empire. Since the beginning of the foundation of Iraq, foreign interference has had a significant role in shaping the government's structure – nation-building. However, the people's feelings and unity have shaped identity in the name of national will. If at some point, we witnessed the formation of a strong government stabilizing the situation of the country, we would have realized that its reason was the existence of an authoritarian state and a dictatorship.

Nevertheless, after the dictator's fall, they realized that that government-building in Iraq had not been based on local demands but based on foreign forces' political, social, and security realities. In Iraq, the foreign agent was the main structure forming the identity (onuf, 1994: 6). In fact, in Iraq, as in many Middle Eastern countries, the concept of nation in the modern sense - the common goals and interests which liberate the national government from the ethnic tribal belongings - does not exist (Yamacoguz, 2009: 55).

Therefore, the most critical features of Iraqi society since its establishment until now were enjoying the rootless governments, Identity crisis or lack of inclusive national identity, the domination of the Sunni Arab minority's ruling over the 80% majority in the political and social context. Such features resulted in the widening gap and society integration crisis in Iraqi society. Therefore, in addition to the interference of external factors leading to the rise of the imposed nation and rootless government, the rule of authoritarian regimes, lack of continuity of ethnic, cultural and geopolitical challenges in Iraq (Iraq's ethnic and cultural discontinuity), economic challenges and rentier states and government's dependence on oil revenues and corruption in Iraq, the growing role of the military in political power, the crisis of identity and integration rooted in artificial colonial boundaries after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire were the barriers of correct nation-building in Iraq;

3) Weak governance and the escalation of violence one of the essential indicators concerning government credibility is the quality of governance and government effectiveness in the management and performance of citizens' society's functions. "Good Governance" as opposed to "Bad

Governance" is a term that was introduced from 1980 onwards. Good governance includes improved sovereignty and the ruling based on close collaboration between the government and the people, providing better services to people in different fields, government accountability, Improving or increasing living standards, cooperation, and people's loyalty for having better governance. Efforts by the government for justice, security, stability, tax cuts, expansion of infrastructures of development and employment, and so on, are examples of good governance (Sardarnia, 2009: 135). On the contrary, violence and protests against the government are mostly a result of the corrupted, discriminatory, and weak ruling.

Regarding Iraq, we can say that good governance is not developed in this country for many reasons. After Saddam's fall, Iraqi society lacked a strong central government, and coalition forces had ruled the country directly until 2004. Despite the transfer of power to Iraqis Since 2004, a fragile government was created that lacked public support and could not perform other available functions. The government in Iraq has not been able to achieve good governance functioning in the country. Good governance in the political, security, economic, and social levels demand a comprehensive national government. Such a government is capable of securing and providing services to citizens in different fields. It can create consensus and mutual trust between citizens and government-preconditions that previously existed in Iraq.

For this reason, the new central government of Iraq failed to dispose significantly of the oligarchic ethnic and religious foundations. Such non-systemic administration, without the consent of civil and national foundations, became fragile. Besides, it caused the central government's weakness; its fragility and provided background and appropriate context for the emergence of ISIS.

### **3.2.2. Regional Causes for the Empowerment of ISIS**

Environmental and regional actors can promote each country's political, security, and economic issues by influencing political units' internal processes.

In less-developed countries such as the Middle East, some reasons such as the lack of progress in the political process of nation-government building and the low level of sociopolitical cohesion, the lack of communication channels and the necessary continuity between community groups as well as the low level of economic development, increase the potential influence of foreign players on trends within countries.

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1) The Islamic Republic of Iran and the expansion of disputes and rivalries between regional actors Due to the social structure and history, Iraq is regarded as a weak common national identity and a fragmented society. It has led to regional and international countries' influence on its internal affairs by the country's relationship with domestic groups. In modern times, due to the relative weakness of the central government and its inability to impose full sovereignty in Iraq and the activation of centrifugal forces and opposition groups, the influence and role of regional actors interested in the political process have increased in the security of Iraq. The conflicting interests and goals of these actors in Iraq have challenged the political process and reconciliation in the country's political groups and the country's security.

Iran, Turkey, and Arab states are the main actors influencing their own goals and pursuing their interests in Iraq's regional environment. Iran supports Iraq's territorial integrity, stability, and security, strengthening Shiite groups in the power structure at the center of its strategy. However, most Arab countries of the region are less willing to support the new Iraqi government to change Iraq's situation to their advantage. Arab countries believe that the nation-state building in Iraq is a threat to their interests and their regional position because of its democratic characteristics and Shiites' empowerment. They consider it as a factor to disturb the regional balance of power in favor of Iran. After the collapse of the Baathist regime in Iraq and Iraqi Shia's empowerment as the country's maximum population, Saudi Arabia, who had lost its power game in the US post-war of Iraq, tried to add to the sectarian tensions in Iraq and in the region. Therefore, these countries try to increase the contribution of Sunni Arabs in the structure of power and prevent Shiite groups from influencing and being empowered. In this regard, they did not support the government of Nouri al-Maliki and even facilitated the conditions of instability and insecurity to have their foreign policy. The arrival of a part of the Sunni insurgents from Arab countries and financial arm support of Iraq is an example of destabilizing the country, doubling its challenges (kordesman, 2010: 10).

Therefore, another essential component enhancing the power and role of ISIS in Iraq has been expanding disputes and rivalries between regional players in the past few years and, consequently, the new regional crises, including Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, and others Arab countries worldwide. The problems increased differences and competitions among local players such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Some Arab actors' attempts to take advantage of groups as ISISes were the goals and

policies of some regional countries. In addition to using different groups in Syria to achieve regime change in the country, Saudi Arabia and Qatar try to support ISIS to change Iraq's conditions (Asadi, 2014: 77).

2) The Syrian crisis and revival of the power of ISIS One of the critical factors that cause the domination of different parts of Iraq by ISIS is enhancing this group's strength in light of the Syrian crisis. Syrian crisis increased the power of ISIS from several aspects. The most important of which include benefiting from the Syrian conflict to seize some parts of the country and turn the Eastern part of Syria into a base for the development of its abilities, training, and organization of forces in Syria without serious concern, attracting human resources from various countries in the light of the crisis in Syria; exacerbating sectarian tensions in the region and creation of a platform for extremist groups and behaviors; increased competitions and regional differences, the absorption of financial resources of local actors to facilitate the progression crisis in Syria and Iraq, Iraq and Syria's geographical proximity which is useful in the transmission of weapons and financial resources. In total, the Syrian crisis has had a prominent role in increasing ISIS's powers, and in the absence of the problem, it was unlikely that ISIS could revive and increase its influence in this way (Asadi, 2014: 164).

### 3.2.3. Trans-Regional Causes and Contexts

In general, it seems that the interests of the world powers will require the Persian Gulf region lack peace and stability and security; it has three main reasons:

- 1) The absence of security justifies the need for the presence of world powers in the region;
- 2) Arms sale is one of the most profitable traders with the world powers and a viable wealth source. Competition, challenges, and security problems in the region create the most massive opportunities for arms cartels of the remarkable ability to provide a wealth of resources;
- 3) To establish lasting security for Israel, despite prominent Takfiri characters' emphasis on the fight against the enemies of Islam, there was no serious threat of Salafi Takfiris directed to the Zionists and the Zionist regime in the past. Therefore, a contrasting dichotomy is declared in the positions of the US about ISIS (Houshi Sadat., 2014: 198).

It seems that according to the above considerations, Washington has adopted a double standards policy in the fight against terrorism. In a way that every time Extremist forces act inconsistently with US plans, the country rises to confront. In any area where the terrorists provide the

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country's interests, they will enjoy the US's support. As a result, the US has been reluctant to act in a brutal way against ISIS.

Thus, in the deep and fundamental results, it must be said that America could prevent Takfiris activities in areas where there is a threat to America's interests. Given America's widespread domination, takfiri groups cannot form significant political action, except where their activity does not conflict with America's interests, i.e., where their existence is beneficial for America. Thus, these groups are a part of America's plan and are being moved from the areas that are sensitive to less sensitive areas. To prevent the spread of the Islamic Revolution, the continuation and consolidation of its presence in the region restored the lost dignity in the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Preventing the Russian power as an alternative to the Soviet Union, establishing and maintaining the security of Israel, etc. The US Attempted to start proxy wars in the region using the so-called ISIS forces that are financially backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar and supported militarily and politically by America and Turkey and other allies.

### 3.3. Accelerating Causes of the Emergence of the Terrorist Group of ISIS

Overall, the most important causes of the rise of ISIS are Changes in environmental conditions caused by the withdrawal of America from the country, the lack of the central government's attention to the Sunni regions of Iraq, the failure of the Sunnis in the Iraqi parliamentary elections, problems arising from the process of nation-building and state-building in Iraq, Salafis' defeat in electoral and Assad's return to power of Syria, Sunnis' feel of backwardness compared to Kurdistan, hidden actions of countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar in supporting the Takfiri and Salafi groups in the region to deal with Iran and its supporters.

## Conclusion

The constructivism theory used in this paper is a combination of rational and reflective ideas to explain the whys and hows of ISIS's formation in Iraq. This theory considers the weak central government as the cause of the emergence of ISIS does not neglect the mental-cultural issues. Regarding the approach that in analyzing the behavior of actors, the identity, culture, ideas, shared understanding of the joint action are emphasized, in Islamic extremism of ISIS, the social structure of the actors is taken as the most stable factor in the widening of the gap in the first place. This particular situation puts the actors in the social structure

and shapes their relationships, whether cooperative or conflictual. The fore, the main reason for the emergence and spread of ISIS in Iraq is the identity crisis and the attempts of radical groups to change their government identity through their ideas on the consistency of the development of a new identity.

Gaps in Iraq exist in two ethnic (Kurdish / Arabic) and religious (Shia / Sunni) and provide the Iraqi crisis. Due to the favorable conditions of poverty and cultural ignorance in the tribal areas of East Sunni Iraq, this gap is considered as a good infrastructure for the emergence of a new plan in the form of a Takfiri group called Daesh through the continuation of enjoying young tribal forces and organized military and terrorist violence in Iraq. The research findings indicate that the ISIS for Iran's main challenges through changing the regional equations are outstanding in the discursive, security, and ideological fields. Simultaneously, the opportunities created by the ISIS include the distinction between violent Islam and nonviolent Islam, the introduction of Iran as an anti-terrorist state, and the demonstration of Iran's regional power and its effectiveness in the region.

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