Identities' Orientation in Iraq (post- Saddam); Confrontation or Interaction

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Abstract

In post-Saddam Iraq, the identity contest and lack of an inclusive government in organising these competitions paved the way for identity conflict. This crisis caused increasing social divergence and acted as an obstacle for national and collective identity formation as preconditions in national government and political order establishment. In post-Saddam Iraq, the events such as ISIS rise, the Kurdish independence issue, the fragmentation between the political and religious groups, etc., show the identity policies' confrontation. In identity confrontation, Iraq's solution is resorting to identity interaction and to an inclusive and strong government establishment where can have all ethnic and religious groups (Kurds, Arabs, Shias, and Sunnis) trust and cooperation. Explaining the different trends of various identities in Iraq and examining the identity crises which have prevented an efficient government and a cohesive nation emergence, this descriptive-analytic research seeks to answer this question: 'In Iraq, are the different identities' orientations in confrontation or interaction?' The results indicated that a two-way and inverse relationship between them, i.e., the incomplete identity interaction process, has created numerous crises leading to a confrontation between ethnic and religious groups. This flawed process has led to the spreading and intensifying national and regional conflict. The present study used library resources and information, applying constructive theory.

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Introduction

The ethnicities, identities and policies discussions in domestic and foreign policy domains, as well as the multiethnic, racial and religious communities' political and behavioural management, is a sensitive issue closely related to countries' national interests and political life. Since the 1990s, the socio-political conflicts and divisions have taken mainly an ethnic-religious-language identity-based form. From the socio-political division's perspective, the Arab Middle East is a region that is not entirely homogeneous. A mixture of social, political, ideological, border, identity, and religious divisions has led to internal and external tensions and wars in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Racial and ethnic pluralism in Iraq society has created the historical and current context of an identity crisis, and social, economic, administrative, political, intellectual, geographical and climatic factors have directed, shaped and activated it. In this country, the possibility of threat and influence from the external environment has been created due to the lack of a common and equal identity concept.

A historical overview of the political and social developments in the Middle East reveals the two fundamental factors, which are the intense ethnicity and religiosity among these societies, the main reason for which dates back to the period when the Ottoman Empire collapsed. With interventions of several colonial powers, new frontiers were drawn based on the interests of the colonial powers regardless of social structures. Iraq was also formed on this basis and started its new and tense life. After Iraq's independence, the Kurdish, Sunni and Shia independent identities' presence in the northern, central and southern regions and how to establish and maintain a balance between them has always caused tensions at local and regional levels. Given this issue, the concern about Iraq's division into different identity groups and its negative effects on Iran's national security has always been the Iraqi analysis issue in Iran's foreign policy. The new situation in post-Saddam Iraq has led to new threats against Iran, such as the spread of extremism, terrorism and ethnic-religious tensions and the possibility of their spreading to the entire region, including Iran. The scene of the new Iraq can be considered the scene of postmodern wars, i.e., domestic wars in the country are highly identity-oriented. The situation that arose with removing the shadow of a full-fledged dictatorship (Saddam), and this escalation of ethnic conflict in Iraq, is one of the manifestations of the United States in the swamp of this country, which will not leave it even after the official withdrawal of its troops. Thus, the current situation in post-Saddam Iraq is a clear manifestation of a post-modern conflict, the main features of which are the war between internal groups and the overall confrontation and conflict on ethnic and identity issues.

1. Iraq Ethnic-religious Context

Iraq emerged at the request of European colonial powers, especially Britain after World War I to reunite the three former provinces of the Ottoman Empire; Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. From the beginning, this country was fragmented by ethnic and religious contexts and lacked cohesive elements such as language, race, religion, land and common historical heritage; according to social and political sciences theorists, the elements are necessary to establish any modern national unit. Over the past century, such heterogeneity persisted despite the uniform policies implementation (Anderson and Stanfield, 2004 AD: 20). In past decades, the dominant role of Sunnis in Iraq, combined with the ideology of the Ba'ath party, has brought many security concerns and costs to Iraqi people. The fall of Saddam's Ba'athist regime in 2003 opened a new chapter in Iraq's history and, after years, paved the way for a democratic and stable state establishment. But as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, it has faced many challenges in maintaining unity and peace goals.

In terms of population, Shias are the most critical group in Iraq, Sunni Arabs are the second and the Kurds, with about 15% of the people, are the third largest force. At the same time, the Turkmen and Assyrian minorities, mostly Christians, make up about 2 per cent of Iraq. As an independent state, this country, after the rise of the Ba'ath Party in 1968 and Saddam Hussein in 1977, has faced a civil war with the Kurds and a foreign war with Iran and Kuwait, and internationally with the unification of governments in 1991 and 2003 with the United States (Yazdani and Sheikh Hosseini, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 298-299). Intra-group divisions in Iraq have led to many divisions between ethnic and religious parties and groups, observed among Kurds, Sunnis and Shias. Ethnic-religious conflicts in Iraq take two primary forms: First, the Kurdish-Arab ethnic conflict, which has shown itself in the differences and challenges between the Kurds and the Sunni and Shia Arab groups, and especially in the form of disputes between the central government and the Kurdistan Region. Disagreements between the central government and the KRG on issues such as expanding the Kurdish Federal District borders, the Kurdish Pishmarg and their interference with Iraq army forces, oil and the future of Kirkuk are well under consideration. Second, the Shia-Sunni religious conflict includes significant differences between Shia and Sunni groups, like how power is divided in the new political system, the structure and elements of the military and security forces, and the former Ba'athist regime's political, military, and security structures presence. In addition, the Sunni extremist groups' terrorist acts, such as al-Qaeda, against Iraqi Shias are also under investigation in the context of the Shia-

Sunni religious conflict (Asadi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 252-253). With the fall of the Ba'athist regime in 2003, different political parties and groups entered Iraq's political and social arena, each claiming to represent a particular ethnicity or sect and politically orienting themselves from Islamism and secularism to nationalism. Instead of having a civic identity, these groups are formed within the framework and values of ethnicity, marriage, religion, and blood. Therefore, the national identity concept and citizenship, as one of the state modern-nation characteristics, has not been developed in this country (Sefidi et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 97).

Figure (1): Ethnic-Population Density in Iraq.


Source: https://vista.ir
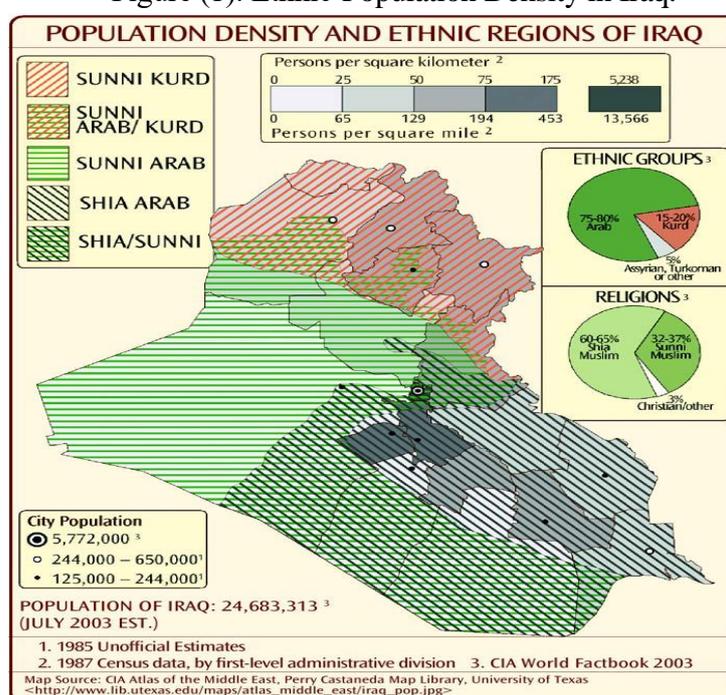
According to studies and many 'analysts and experts' testimony, it can be said that Iraq is a multi-ethnic and religious country, due to which many important issues and events are strongly associated with identity and confrontation or interaction of identity. In post-Saddam, three critical issues in Iraq were strengthened:

1) Religious tendencies (Shia, Sunni, Christian, Shabak, Yazidi, Jewish)

2) Ethnic tendencies (Kurdish, Arabic)

3) National tendencies (among Saddam-era nationalists)

These gaps never allowed national integration based on common interests to Iraq's dissenting society. The Shias were isolated on a religious basis, and the Kurds were subjected to ethnic cleansing and socio-political isolation on an ethnic basis. In parallel with these issues, they started their

armed movement and continued it until 2003, after which they preserved themselves. In fact, after 2003, the Kurds gained more power and became heavily involved in attracting foreign capital, building and exporting oil; while in the south controlled by Baghdad, daily religious violence in the bombings form and armed attacks inflicted heavy financial and human losses on Baghdad, where despite its trained forces and military equipment could never create security and sustainable development (Nikfar, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 186-187). Since identity-ethnic activities have internal and external consequences, such dynamics can affect national, regional, and international security. Ethnic group competition for economic resources and political opportunities, feelings of inequality, and feelings of relative poverty and deprivation increase group awareness and solidarity and provide the reason for their collective dynamism. In most cases, identity-ethnic tensions result from complex interactions of economic, social and political factors (Gonesh and I Ata, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 217-218). It should be noted that a country is considered capable of managing ethnic-religious diversity and identity that can maintain and strengthen national unity by respecting ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious inequalities.

Figure (2): Ethno-religious Groups in Iraq.

Source: http://rahyabnews.com
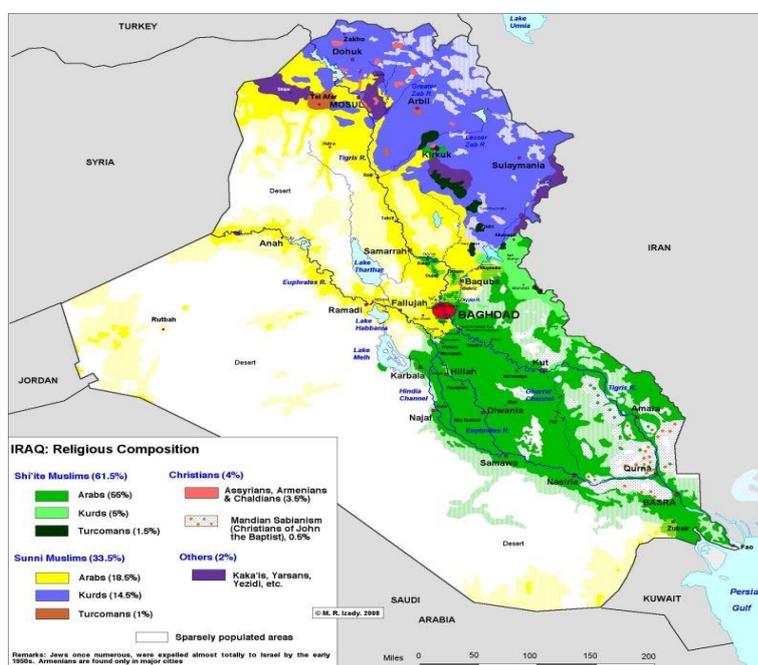
2. Methodology

Explaining the different trends of various identities in Iraq and examining the identity confrontation which has prevented an efficient government

and a cohesive nation emergence, used an analytical-descriptive approach and relied on constructivism theory, this study while examining the identity issue in new Iraq (post-Saddam), addresses this question: 'In Iraq are the different identities' orientations in confrontation or interaction?' It is also hypothesised that the incomplete identity interaction process has created numerous crises leading to confrontation continuation between ethnic and religious groups. This defective process has ultimately led to national and regional conflict spreading and intensifying. In this study, "the orientation of identities in Iraq" is considered an independent variable and "the confrontation or interaction of identities" is regarded as a dependent variable. This article focuses on the issue of ethnic-religious identity and identity policies in Iraq and examines identity interaction and confrontation.

3. Theoretical Framework (Constructive Theory)

In recent decades, the relationship between "identity" and politics has attracted political science and international relations, thinkers. As the main actors, religious solid and identity groups have increasingly become important in domestic and international politics. These groups can question the government's legitimacy, do things across borders, and attract international attention with international support. Although such actions may not overthrow governments, they can bring significant changes in domestic politics and the international relations style (Stack, 2010 AD). Identity is the perceptions and expectations about oneself that are specific to the role. Identities simultaneously perpetuate rational choices, and the international political norm patterns shape them. Identity is not a unified phenomenon that can be defined in general terms, but there are different types of it. Wendt divides identities into four following types; a. personal, b. typical, c. based on role, and d. collective. An actor's development as a distinct physical entity depends on creating and maintaining boundaries between the "self" and the "other". Within this range, even personal identities require differences. Personal identity is other identities arena or place (Wendt, 2006 AD: 31). From this perspective, it explains the government institution, which has a materialistic and immutable foundation. The typical identity can be multiple, just like the regime type or government form; the role identity is only about another (Karami, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 170), and collective identity is a common and interdependent characteristic that is interacted by individuals and many others who care about their action's direction and opportunities and limitations of their performance scope. The government is the modern form of collective political identity and the organised structure of nationalism (Karami, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 18-19).

In international relations, constructivism is better known to researchers as

Alexander Wendt and the social theory of international politics. Constructivism is an approach that combines other methods. It seeks to address other theories' shortcomings and, by presenting its propositions, explains the environment and international politics more realistically, emphasising more cultural, value-based and interpretive components. In this regard, identity and interests are not predetermined and are derived from the power distribution structure. Still, they are derived from the internal sources of actors' identities (Aghaei and Rasouli, ٢٠٠٩ AD/1388 SH: 5). Many countries in the world have

heterogeneous populations and a mix of racial, linguistic, religious or political groups. The relationship between ethnic groups and minorities with the ruling groups occurs in various forms, from full compatibility to separatism. The concentration of a minority group in one area or their dispersion throughout the country, locating on the edge of the border or close to the political core of the country and also if the minority is part of the majority group in the neighbouring country or part of the scattered minority groups in several neighbouring countries, how they behave and communicate between minorities and ruling groups (Mir Heydar, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 131).

٤. Finding

There are many identity definitions, and most of these definitions begin with understanding oneself against others. Identities are not only an individual or psychological matter but also a social matter that is deeply in interaction and relationship with others, and actors attribute to identity through interaction and participation in an institutional framework. Collective identities are linked to people of the country's relations with other societies and land inhabitants. A national identity is a group of people who aspire to or have a historical land, collective myths, historical memory, duties or legal rights to all members with signs to distinguish themselves from others (Yeylaghi, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 26-27).

4.1. The Perspective of Identity Confrontation in Iraq

4.1.1. Saddam Era

Second Republican Period (1968-2003): Contradiction and identity crisis intensified. Shias and Kurds who had not practically participated in Iraq's rule since Iraq's formation, Ba'athists, particularly during Saddam Hussein's rule, were put aside. Shia and Kurdish groups were not involved in the state-building process, and nearly 80 per cent of the population were trapped in insecurity and terrorist condition. The result was a sharp escalation of contradiction, identity crisis, and national sentiment collapse. The second period can also be a peaceful coexistence period that has been

going on since the fall of Saddam and the Shia government formation (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 135). Bulordi, in the translation of the book "Ibrahim Jafari Government Experience" (first Prime Minister of Iraq Republic), explains Iraq's particular regional situation and possessing huge oil industries, considers the attacks of September 11th as a pretext the United States attacking pretending the existence of mass destruction weapons, while pursues its other goals to expand controlling in Persian Gulf (Bulordi, 2016 AD/1395 SH).

4.1.2. Post-Saddam Era

Developments in 2003 and Beyond: Activating Identity Confrontation. With Saddam's fall in 2003 and the social forces' freedom, there was a unique historical opportunity for Iraq's oppressed tribes and religions. On the other hand, some Sunnis, especially Ba'athist regime remnants, came up against new conditions. Factors such as forces of freedom from past oppression and discrimination, the overwhelming demand for power by ethnic and religious groups, Sunnis failed attempt to stay in power, and the occupiers' failure to organise Iraq all made particular critical situations which the first and immediate effect was activating past accumulated crises. Recent decades' statistics on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq illustrate the escalation depth and identity crisis. To address the new Iraq problem, Americans have considered the state-nation-building model from the outside. Still, this model has been very costly and violent, and in the short run, it has had little impact as a stabiliser in the regional environment. Also, with external support exiting and withdrawing, nascent government structures and institutions have been on collapse verge as a result of internal strife caused by disagreement and denationalisation (Bashir, 2009 AD/1388 SH).

Table (1): The Perspective of Identity Confrontation in Iraq

Era	Period	Identity Crisis Functions
pre-Saddam	Ottoman	Establishing Identity Structural contradictions
	British Mandatory	Contradiction Consolidation
	Kingdom	Continuing British Approach
	First Republican	Deepening Contradiction and Strengthening Ethnic-Religious Identity Crisis
Saddam	Second Republican	Contradiction and identity crises intensified.
post-Saddam	Developments in 2003 and beyond	Activating Identity Confrontation and Countering

		Violence

Source: Golchin & Amiri Moghadam, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 243-249

4.2. Ethnic-Religious Confrontation
4.2.1. Identity Confrontation Conceptualization
Many countries are heterogeneous in populations and have a mix of racial, linguistic, religious or political groups. The relationship between ethnic groups and minorities with the ruling groups occurs in various forms, from full compatibility to separatism stage. The emergence of ethnic differences and conflicts and their increase can lead to internal crises between two countries crises and even regional or international. Undoubtedly, the politicisation of ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic identities paves the way for the spread of ethnic differences and conflicts. Countries with mosaic societies have a minimum threshold for understanding and trust-building, and the slightest spark can lead to crisis and possibly civil war. Sectarian violence and racial and religious cleansing in post-Saddam Iraq have endangered peace and security in the Middle East. Most of Iraq's neighbours are ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic mosaic communities, and their border security has deteriorated since the 2003 Iraq war (Vaezi, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 141-142). Ethnic identity politicisation accompanies nationalist, linguistic, and religious identities' politicisation. Many ethnic divisions and sectarian separatist violence that weaken the central government and shake the territorial sovereignty of crisis-stricken countries are ethnic identities' politicisation subsets. Ethnic-racial civil wars, terrorism, and ethnic conflicts are among the worst identity conflict types (Mishali, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 583-595). Identity confrontation politics has two basic characteristics: The first characteristic is the non-domination of one identity over other ethnic identities, and thus a kind of power balance between identities. That is, none of them can destroy, deny or manage another. The second characteristic is that competing identities maintain their dynamism against each other. They are not passive in confrontation with each other, and each tries to eliminate the opponent; otherwise, he faces the risk of being fired by the other. Such a situation creates a confrontation problem (Ahmadian, 2014 AD/1393 SH). In terms of political and security influence, identity confrontations can be divided into the following:

4.2.1.1. Structural identity confrontations: The existence of some conflicts due to gender, age and social division is a definite and natural thing. They are structural and can be seen in all societies. Accordingly, structural contrasts are formed because of some immutable and stable characteristics in human societies and always exist as gender and age gaps.

4.2.1.2. Historical identity confrontations: Historical conflicts such as religious and ethnic divisions result from a country's historical destiny and have no structural necessity. Historical developments play a significant role in these gaps' formation; therefore, there are many variations in how they are formed in different societies. (Bashirieh, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 99).

4.2.1.3. Ethnic-linguistic identity confrontations: More than 90% of the world's countries have a heterogeneous and multi-ethnic texture in terms of population (Mason, 1998 AD: 128). Due to ethnic and racial diversity, language gaps have also emerged in these countries. The existence of ethnic diversity stems from a variety of factors. Some countries once ruled by empires, such as Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia, included many tribes and clans. Massive migration and the annexation or abstraction of lands due to wars and crises from one country to another, in turn, have caused heterogeneity in most countries' populations (Ahmadi, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 73).

4.2.1.4. Religious identity confrontations: Religions are among the factors based on which social divisions appear and become active. Major religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc., with their internal branches, have many followers in many countries, which in some countries are the majority and in some minority. In the case of religion, it must be said that the interpretability of religions inevitably leads to their division (Bashirieh, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 130).

4.3. Ethnic-religious Interaction
4.3.1. Identity Interaction Conceptualization
There are several concepts, each of which has a unique role in interaction relations between people on the one hand or intensifying ethnic feelings on the other. Therefore, in turn, they are practically discussed in solving a crisis.

4.3.1.1. Democracy: Democracy is a system of government in which all adults, based on regulations, have the right to participate equally in public policy and law-making. Democracy, at the same time, means participation and crisis. A society can be called a democracy that has the freedom to judge its conflicting demands, such as the demands of the economic market and individual and human group expectations, monetary expectations and the need for identity.

4.3.1.2. Multi-ethnic democracy: An independent and sovereign political system with two characteristics of democratic decision-making institutions and the presence of two or more ethnic groups can be defined as a group of people who consider themselves a distinct cultural community; They often share language, religion, kinship, or physical characteristics

(such as skin colour) and often have negative and hostile feelings toward members of other ethnic groups.

4.3.1.3. Shared Democracy: Shared democracy is a form of government based on a representative election in which, unlike pro-majority systems, participation in power is institutionalised. Sharing practices have typically taken root in countries where explicit religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences have created profound differences—the policy results from negotiations between sector leaders in an "elite agreement" process.

4.3.1.4. Pluralism: Political pluralism, another concept which has many similarities with democracy, is a theory that sees political power widely distributed among various groups of society and is defined with features such as the multiplicity and diversity of actors, group competition, broad political participation, multiple power sources, and elite rotation. In sectarian pluralism, group diversity, ethnic and tribal affiliations, religion, blood and race have led to social conflict and divergence, and value issues are considered the main cause of dispersion.

4.3.1.5. Autonomy: Autonomy has often been thought to be closely linked to democracy. It is sometimes said that only in a democracy an individual or ethnic group can be truly autonomous. According to some researchers, extremism in autonomy is the cause of ethnic violence. Autonomy usually refers to the limited independence of a political entity or other entity in affair management.

4.3.1.6. Federalism: Federalism is a political system in which all independent political units give part of their sovereignty to a central unit to create a vital state. In the federal system, two opposing tendencies come together: the interest in autonomy and the drive to form a single society that includes all member communities. In other words, federalism can be considered as satisfying the independence sense of small nations in the form of the need for quantitative and qualitative development. In Iraq, law-makers counter one group's dominance over others and, according to Iraq's societal conditions, put federalism in the constitution as a way to realise pluralism because, based on this, it provided a prominent role to control the political, social and economic affairs of the groups (Haji-Yousefi, et al., 2007 AD/1386 SH: 121).

5. Discussion
5.1. Identity Confrontation and Interaction History in Iraq
With the collapse and territorial disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the building of Iraq is based on three geographical areas: Mosul; the location of Iraqi Kurds, Baghdad; Sunni and Basra; the geographical space of Iraqi

Shias. With Iraq's bio-political-national process beginning, the country was under British guardianship for a decade. Still, with the independence acquisition, political groups came to power. With the monarchy fall, the republican government was replaced and by a coup against Qasim, the Ba'ath party came to power (Kaviani Rad, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 76-79). In this context, the country is a collection of tribes and clans competing for power, security and wealth. At the same time, they do not recognise the central government as a just and legitimate authority. This feature makes it impossible to apply society and nation-state concept to Iraq (Sari al-Qalam, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 72). Hence, Iraqi groups seek to increase their power and influence in the new political structure and the pursuit of Iraqi interests and significant priorities, such as stabilisation and cooperation between groups, are among their next priorities. This utilitarian view, based solely on ethnic-religious foundations, exacerbates ethnic-sectarian violence and the identity crisis.

The Kurds are the most critical internal issue in Iraq. Despite remaining confined to nations such as Turks, Arabs and Iranians, they continue to insist on their ethnic, linguistic, and territorial identities. This insistence on territorial identity and their intention to build a territory independent of other ethnic groups has made them a threat to local governments. For specific reasons, the Kurds living in Iraq are more geopolitically essential and sensitive. These include the oil-rich region of Iraqi Kurdistan, and the relative action freedom of Iraqi Kurds compared to Kurds living in other countries in recent decades. Kurdistan has been focused on complete independence for a long time and is now providing areas. In this regard, the main focus of the Kurdistan Region is on oil and increasing its production. (Nikfar, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 191-193).

Figure (3). The power triangle in modern Iraq's political structure
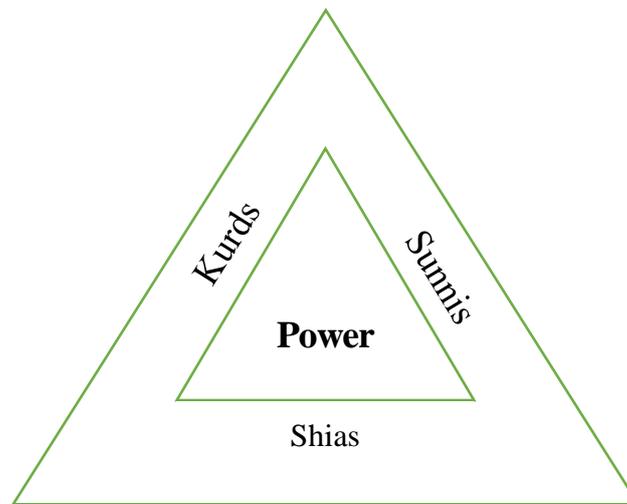
Source: Authors

5.1.1. Identities in New Iraq and Its Consequences

5.1.1.1. Shias' Identity: Although Iraq is Shia centre and encompassed by holy shrines, despite the Shia population weight, they were politically always in the minority. With Ale-Boyeh's exception in the fourth century, Shias have always been dominated by Sunni political powers in Baghdad. Shias were neglected despite their demographic weight throughout Ottoman, Hashemite, British, Nationalist, Communist, and Ba'athist regimes; however, today, Shias are the largest group which makes up the majority of Iraq's entire population. Saddam's overthrow provided the basis for the Shias' presence and their exit from isolation. Since then, Shias have become increasingly active in the political and social arena (Talashan, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 116).

5.1.1.2. Kurds' Identity: Kurds have always pursued a "Kurdish" independent ethnic and nationalist identity and only find it to respond to their desires and represent their characteristics. However, Iraq's identity, which emerged after 2003, has provided them with broad material and spiritual privileges. Kurds prefer their Kurdish nationalist identity, so during the drafting of Iraq's Constitution, they did not allow to emphasise Iraq's Arab identity. Kurds say Kurdish people must determine their destiny; it means they must be able to declare independence at any time. In the post-Saddam era, Kurds have acted with consistency, coherence, and efficiency in Iraq's politics, and it can be said they have gained the most in Iraq's political process today (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 191-195).

5.1.1.3. Sunnis' Identity: Sunni Arabs, despite being a minority, have dominated Iraq's political and social life from the distant past with Ottoman

government support. On many occasions, Arabs have expressed a desire to use Arab and Islamic identities to excel in Shia and Kurdish groups. Iraq Sunnis have put their desire more towards religion, and in fact, religion has sought to be the main engine of their cause and argue for their new order founding or emergence. Accordingly, despite a new system establishment year in Iraq, there are still concerns that Arab Sunnis will not accept the new Iraq identity framework after the change and that Iraq's society and the government will fail to create the new Iraq (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 195-196). In a post-Saddam era, Iraq Sunni groups have refused to participate thoughtfully in the political process and, by insufficient support from the government, have created challenges in building a strong, cooperative and peaceful state for all groups. Sunnis' dissatisfaction with its role in the new power structure and considerations and policies of Arab countries, including Saudis, have played a decisive role in the unprotected and uncooperative behaviour of Iraq's Sunni groups (Asadi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 89).

5.2. Factors of Identity Conflict in Iraq

In societies that suffer from social disintegration, each group prefers its collective identity based on group values and interests to national values and interests. Efforts by governments to unify, harmonise, and restrain them have seldom succeeded and have often led to coercive, empirical, or separatist movements among the many threats to national security, the most serious is the fragmentation or eventual disintegration of existing national identities due to division or secession. Such threats provoke internal disorder and instability, destroy internal cohesion, and ultimately paralyse the government apparatus. With the Ba'athist regime collapse in 2003, various political parties and groups entered the Iraqi political and social arena, claiming to represent a particular ethnicity or sect and politically embracing different tendencies, from Islamism and secularism to nationalism. Instead of having a civic identity, these groups are formed within the framework and values of ethnicity and tribe, marriage, religion and blood. Therefore, the concept of national identity and citizenship as one of the characteristics of the modern nation-state has not developed in this country (Daheshyar, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 37). Thus, in the new Iraq, ethnic-religious and identity divisions are associated with the political struggles of different groups for power, and due to the lack of national identity and social cohesion, as well as the other goals and interests of these groups in the political process in post-Saddam Iraq, it is witnessing significant ethnic and religious tensions and conflicts, such as Arab-Kurdish and Shia-Sunni. Ethnic-religious conflicts in Iraq take two primary forms:

5.2.1. Kurdish-Arab Ethnic Conflict: In the context of which there are

differences and challenges between the Kurds, Sunni and Shia Arab groups. Struggles between the central government and the Iraqi Kurdistan region are a clear example. These differences include issues such as the Kurdish Federal District borders' expansion, the Kurdish Pishmerg, and the interference of their duties and areas of operation with the Iraqi army, oil, and Kirkuk future.

5.2.2. Shia-Sunni Religious Conflict: This includes significant differences between Shia and Sunni groups on issues such as how power is divided in the new political system, the structure and elements of military and security forces, de-Ba'athist, and how to interact with regional and international actors. In addition, the terrorist acts of Sunni extremist groups against Iraqi Shias are also part of the Shia-Sunni religious conflict (Asadi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 241-253). Racial and ethnic pluralism in Iraqi society has created the historical and current context for identity confrontation, and social, economic, administrative, political, intellectual, geographical and climatic factors have directed and shaped this crisis. First: social factors, second: economic factors, third: administrative-political factors, and fourth: geopolitical factors.

5.3. Identity Confrontation Social Factors

Identity is a collection of fundamental social, cultural, psychological, philosophical, biological and historical characteristics that convey and transfer a group's nature and essence, meaning the unity or sameness of its members with each other. They are in one within a specific time and place where they clearly, acceptably and consciously distinguished from different groups and individuals (Al-Taie, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 139). The concept of organising the social sector is the "identity". Therefore, social security oversees large identity groups (Bouzan et al., 2009 AD/1388 SH: 184). The crisis social factors can be listed as follows:

5.3.1. Ethnic Pluralism and Diversity: In general, the following five main groups can be mentioned in Iraq: Shias, who make up about 65 per cent of the population. Twenty per cent of Kurds live in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Dohuk and Kirkuk provinces. Sunnis comprise 32per centt of Iraq's population, mainly in the northern suburbs and around Baghdad. Turkmens are now politically active by the Turkmen National Party. The Assyrians, with a population of 3 per cent, constitute a large part of the non-Muslims in Iraq. Different periods have often had conflicts with the existing governments in Iraq (Sharifi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 23).

5.3.2. Religious Diversity: 97 per cent of Iraqis follow Islam (65 per cent are Shias and 32 per cent are Sunnis), and 3 per cent are Christians and other religions.

5.3.3. Language Multiplicity and Diversity: Iraq's common language is Arabic. Kurdish is also spoken in Kurdish areas. In addition, Turkmen,

Assyrian and Armenian languages are used in some parts, as well as Persian and Turkish languages among the minorities living in Iraq (Sharifi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 39).

5.3.4. Population Multiplicity and Diversity: Iraq is a country with different ethnicities, and its inhabitants are Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Goranis, Laks, Assyrians, Mandaeans and Sabeans, etc. The Kurds live in the northern and northeastern parts of Iraq, known as Iraqi Kurdistan, and are culturally and linguistically different from the Arabs. The population of this country in 2008 was equal to 2.28 million people. This year, the population density is 5.64 people per square kilometer (Sharifi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 53).

5.4. Identity Confrontation Economic Factors

5.4.1. Agricultural Economy: Fertile lands are located along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and mainly in the southern regions. These rivers' source is in Turkey, and due to their passage from Sunni areas and the possibility of building a dam upstream of these two rivers, it can be said that Iraq's water resource management is in Sunnis' hands.

5.4.2. Energy Economy: Most of Iraq's oil is extracted and exported in Basra and southern Iraq; therefore, it can be said that the management of energy resources is in Shias' hands. The second Iraqi oil field, located in Kirkuk, is not considered reliable because Kirkuk is a mixed province, and there is violent competition for the province's oil resources control (Zarean, et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 116).

5.5. Identity Confrontation Administrative-political Factors

5.5.1. Current Political System Inconsistency with the Structural Realities: Iraq has seen three different styles or ways of governing in its short life. From 1921 to 1958, a monarchy based on a constitutional system ruled the land. From the coup of Abdul Karim Qasim to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, authoritarian republics with a large military presence, and after two years of transition, since 2005, the system has been transformed into a federal republic (Badiee et al., 2014 AD/1393 SH: 639). Lack of experience and institutions and weakness of democratic culture among different people and elites, along with a history of growing ethnic and religious conflicts and party pluralism lack of expertise are among the harmful features in today's Iraq; this means that the necessary preconditions to ensure the democratic system success in Iraq do not exist and the current political system is inconsistent with the structural and chronic realities (Moghadamfar, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 149).

5.5.2. Consensus Democracy: The Iraqi constitution and electoral laws are regulated so that none of the three main groups (Shias, Kurds and Sunnis) can achieve an effective majority to form a government. Democracy in Iraq is called consensual democracy because of a group characteristic of

not reaching an absolute majority and the need for the main parties' agreement to achieve an effective majority. Naturally, this agreement will result in a coalition government that must tolerate the political opposition in parliament and within the government (Farazmand, 2013 AD/1392 SH). On the other hand, while in practice, power in Iraq is a quota, the constitution or other official laws or agreements do not mention the power distribution and each Iraqi group share. Thus, the political-legal structure's secular nature is another challenge to state-building in Iraq. In political systems based on a consensual democracy model, the political structure and government are highly fragile. If the pro-government coalition in parliament collapses, the government will fall (Zarean et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 123-124). In the three divisions of power, the Kurds form one side alongside the Shia and Sunni Arabs. According to a consensus democracy, each of the three key positions of president, prime minister and speaker of parliament is reserved for representatives of one of these three groups, and each must have two deputies from the other two groups.

5.6. Identity Confrontation Geopolitical Factors

5.6.1. Ethnic-religious Geopolitical Features: post-Saddam Iraq has elements and developments that changes in the power structure and its identity have caused changes in identity geopolitics. In addition to sharing borders with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, Shias have access to open waters through a limited coastline. Therefore, in addition to land transit routes, Shias also have air and sea routes, while the Sunni provinces and the Kurdistan climate are landlocked and suffer from geopolitical repression. The geography in which Iraq Shias live is connected to the geography of the most essential and largest Shia community, the Iranian Shias. The geography of Iraqi Kurds is adjacent to the Kurds' geography living in Iran, Turkey and Syria. Three Sunni provinces are adjacent to the Sunni areas of Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; hence, the developments along the ethnic and religious lines of Iraq's social groups outside the country directly or indirectly affect the Iraqi Shias, Sunnis and Kurds and their relations with each other. The imbalance in Iraq's social groups' economic, political and geopolitical capacities and the Shias' relative superiority have put them in constant rivalry and impatience. They have deepened the social and identity gaps (Zarean et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 117).

5.6.2. Nomadic and Tribal Structure Characteristics: The nomadic nature of Iraqi society, in addition to the economic lifestyle, has also affected the structure of social relations. Even though in recent years, due to city development and the expansion of education in rural areas, tribalism has not flourished in the past, the tribal context and nomadic design in the

cultural and social arenas have continued. The lack of endogenous social changes in Iraq has led to the continuation of tribal structure. As a result, civil society has not been established, and the patriarchal system governing the tribes has been extended to the state and government levels.

5.7. Identity Uprisings in Iraq

5.7.1. Ethnic Identitarianism: The Middle East, due to its long history and numerous gaps around ethnic ties, is always prone to all kinds of ethnic uprisings formation. Today the most critical and active ethnic insurgency in the Middle East is the Kurdish movement. An ethnicity divided into five countries in the Middle East and the Caucasus, which in at least three countries, Iraq, Turkey and Syria (Entessar, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 63). The Kurds' ethnic inclination in Iraq in the 1990s provided the basis for a kind of "quasi-government" and after the Saddam fall, by relying on the official Iraqi federalism rejection, openly expressed its desire for separatism. This tendency has become one of the main factors in weakening the state-building structure in post-Saddam. In Iraq, ethnic and tribal divisions are practically intertwined with active Salafist movements. As a result of such a link, the social depth and strength of the Salafi forces increased significantly, making the governments to counter them very difficult (Gerges, 2016 AD: 144-160).

5.7.2. Religious Identitarianism: What complicates the ethnic and tribal identities rise in the Middle East is its entanglement with religious divisions. In his analysis of identity uprisings, Castells considers the forces formed on a religious identity basis to be the primary "resistance identity" in the Middle East. Resistance identities are the shaping element of a set of social forces that, because of frustration and dissatisfaction, do not accept authoritarian states, the nation-state order and its ideological order, i.e., secular nationalism (Castells, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 29-37). At the core of the thoughts and actions of these groups is a kind of frustration with the plight of Islamic societies and the need to overcome it by fighting its perpetrators and culprits. Accordingly, in defining the examples of the enemy, these forces define themselves, on the one hand, in opposition to the West and Western civilisation and, on the other hand, in opposition to state-nation order as modern and European products. From another perspective, the rise of religious identities in the Middle East should be seen in the rise of Shia groups. Arab Shias have lived difficult for centuries under the Sunni majority and their government's shadow. These pressures not only did not decrease during the national governments' establishment but also increased in intensity (Kazemi, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 146-172). The rise of Shia identity is a process that began in the early 1970s in various parts of the Middle East and intensified during the Islamic Revolution. The effects of this significant change were seen in the formation

of Shia movements in the 1980s in Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, leading to the Shia forces' emergence as influential forces. The Shias suddenly experienced a period of prosperity that resulted in their transition from an institutionalised inferior position and "forgetfulness" to the domestic and regional politics influential forces (Fuller and Franck, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 145). This is the excellent and effective process known as the "Shia revival" and sees the conflict between the resulting force and the Sunni majority as the driving force behind developments in the Middle East (Nasr, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 28). In a country like Iraq, the position of the Shias has been strengthened while the realisation of the Shia role-finding following their demographic status has led them to express their commitment to maintaining the nation-state framework. The Shias' active groups have maintained their military and security independence to prevent the situation from changing to their detriment. The revival of Shias in the Middle East, although a move towards democratisation and the elimination of discrimination against the nation-state structure and its efficiency, should naturally be welcomed, but was encountered with the sharp and radical reaction of Arab states as well as the identity tendency issues, especially Salafi fundamentalists.

Table (2): Dispersion of Ethno-religious Groups in Iraq

Ethnic Groups / Indicator	Shias	Sunnis Arabs	Kurds	Turkmen
Geographical area	much	less	much	less
Population and its density	much	less	less	much less
Geographical proximity	much	much	very much	much less
Non-underground resources	very much	much less	much	much less
Struggle for independence History	much less	much less	very much	much less
Civilisation background	very much	much	much	less
Alignment with international discourse	very much	much	much	less

Experienced leadership staff	very much	much less	very much	less
Group organisation	very much	much less	very much	less
Geopolitical position	very much	much less	much	less
Conclusion	high independence potential	high isolation potential and lack of independence	very high independence potential	low independence potential

Source: Golchin; Amiri Moghadam. (2019 AD/1398 SH)

6. Conclusion

With the Ba'athist regime collapse by the US invasion of Iraq, the country underwent a series of developments and trends that not only transformed the construction of power and politics but also led to changes in power, politics and security visions. Iraq's mosaic social context and different ethnic-religious groups' existence form the foundation of political life, security interactions, and political behaviours. Important and influential actors at the level of the Iraqi central government are the three main groups of Shias, Kurds and Sunni Arabs. The fall of Saddam and the Ba'athist regime collapsed, followed by the formation of a new political structure in Iraq based on democratic principles and the participation of all ethnic-religious groups, which eliminated the most critical security threat to Iran in recent decades as the most fundamental security opportunity. Establishing relations with pro-Iranian political and religious groups and currents, or in other words, the Shia element in the governance and political power structure in new Iraq, and strengthening strategic ties in the economic, cultural and political-security fields are among the main axes to achieve the national security for Iran. This can be done by maintaining a balance in relations with other Iraqi political and ethnic-religious identities, which results from regulating relations with the new Iraqi government.

The single identity of one Iraqi can be defined by looking carefully at the geography and history of this country after accepting the general right of all while respecting the rights of the minority and the majority's decisions. In other words, first of all, different groups appreciate their presence in Iraq's geography and have their cultural share in its civilisation history. They are using their connection with the surrounding environment and

neighbours to find their identity element and not allow historical and subjective ideas to close their eyes to the view of civilization-religious heritage. The word and the concept of "identity" cannot be used for Iraq and many other countries. What can be meaningful is the "identity building" concept. That is, trying to find meaning and definition for Iraqi identity, which must first be defined as "common values" to achieve a common identity in ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. 'What is defined by today's standards as Iraqi identity must be built based on Iraqi values, i.e., trying to shape those meanings that can embrace identity?' The wisest way for all groups to participate is based on the population proportion and the struggle for Iraqi national identity. Due to the inter-identity rivalry, a promising future for Iraq cannot be imagined. Recent events in Iraq, including ISIL's seizure of large parts of the country, the Kurds' push for independence, heavy divisions between various political and religious groups, the lack of international and regional consensus on the fate of Iraq, and ways of interaction, has brought identity to a standstill and increased the identity confrontation factors. Tensions and insecurity are expected to spread in Iraq, with Sunnis, Shias and Kurds increasingly at loggerheads over their position and future in Iraq. The events show that trust between the various identities has greatly diminished, and the central government has taken on a "bankrupt state" appearance. Thus, the ground has been prepared for terrorist groups. The Arab countries and the international system are not only not thinking of helping to establish a stable and inclusive government in Iraq, but their behaviour is reducing trust and increasing pessimism and divergence between groups and identities. In the event of escalating ethnic tensions and the inability of the central government to contain the crisis and the possible disintegration of Iraq, terrorist and militant groups will escalate the conflict between Shias and Sunnis and other ethnic groups and religions in Iraq.

There is clear evidence that regional and trans-regional actors tend to use the power of ethnic identities as a tool in their bargaining. Saudi and Turkish support for the Kurds in Iraq's internal conflicts, Western support for the Kurds' role in Iraq and Syria, Turkey's efforts to exploit the Turkmen to play a role in Iraq, and other things that show foreign actors to use a clear tendency to exploit these capacities in regional competitions and to put pressure on competitors. At the other end of this spectrum, however, is the regional and trans-regional actors' desire to exploit the religious identity-based forces to achieve their regional goals. In recent years, there has been clear evidence that regional and trans-regional actors are trying to use identity as a tool against their enemies

while curbing identity upheavals and preventing them from becoming a threat to themselves. As a result, these actors have sought to redefine their geopolitical disputes with regional rivals over religious divisions and sectarian identities. King Abdullah Jordan's speech in 2004 about the formation of an Iranian-centered "Shia Crescent" danger sought to formulate the Shi'a dialect under sectarian rhetoric and to make it dependent on the issue of inclination. To revive its empire, Iran provided the ground for its de-legitimization. At the other end of the spectrum has been the sense of threat exploitation created to mobilise the identity-based forces against Iran, its regional allies, and Shia groups. In this process, the role of Saudi Arabia and its international allies are prominent, as Muhammad bin Salman 2016 spoke of the threat of a "full Shia moon" against the Arab world. Interaction with all ethnic-religious groups in Iraq society, including Shias, Kurds and Sunnis, is significant for Iran. In the meantime, creating a balance in the type and size of relationships with groups is vital so that it does not cause dissatisfaction among other groups. However, the priority of Iran's view is based on more interaction with the Shias to strengthen the Shia-centered government. The strong presence of the Shia element in the construction and context of Iraq's power and politics has expanded the relations between the two countries. Iran has a strong base among the Iraqi Shias, the majority of this country. Ethnic roots with the Kurds, who have become increasingly powerful and gained international prestige, could pave the way for better relations. This is a privilege that the Arabs and the Turks do not enjoy. Supporting the Kurds, in addition to the Shias, can give Iran two powerful religious and ethnic arms that will keep Iran open to pursuing its policies in the event of any disintegration or autonomy in these areas. Good relations with the Kurds can also increase the government's popularity with the local Kurds.

Therefore, unity among ethnic and political groups is essential for gaining more power and influence, which cannot be achieved unless the political party's coalition is within each of the three main Kurdish, Shia and Sunni sections. Iran has brought order and stability to the region through the new Iraq, stabilised its influence, and established a balance based on security. It can stand up to other countries' unity, preserve and protect and not allow behaviour to develop in the neighbourhood that targets its national and regional interests and strong values. In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy apparatus, while taking a balanced approach to Iraq's political events, should pursue strategic goals with regional and trans-regional actors in Iraq's political chessboard, staging constructive and

efficient interaction are being made to increase Iran's interests and ensure its national security.

7. Acknowledgment

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