

The Fragility of the Iraq's Government and the Re-emergence of ISIS

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Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism

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Terrorist groups have become one of the most important security and political issues in the world in recent decades, and the name of ISIS is at the forefront of these groups and the relevant news that has made Iraq its first invasion hotspot. Many politicians and theorists attribute this primarily to domestic factors and the political, economic, social and even cultural conditions in Iraq, while others have blamed foreign factors and foreign intervention or assistance for ISIS growth in Iraq.

What is needed is an intermediate view of these factors, both internal and external, influencing the emergence of this radical Islamic group in Iraq and paving the way for ISIS to operate. In general, in many parts of Iraq, due to the lack of a strong central government, the lack of participation of Sunni groups in the political structure, the creepy growth of Wahhabi beliefs and the presence of foreign countries in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, there have been areas for the formation and growth of sectarian armed organizations, which the most important one is ISIS.

ISIS is a trans-regional phenomenon and a promoter of an understanding of the "radical jihadist Salafi" religious attitude, and as far as it can reflect its global slogans, it will succeed in attracting troops and fighters. Therefore, in case of re-emergence, the possibility of attracting power in the world, whether in the Middle East or from Europe and Sunni Muslims there, will not be unexpected (Soleimani, 2014: 1). All in all, in this article, we will focus on one of the most important political and security factors, namely the fragility of the Iraqi government, which leads to the absence of a strong government and the creation of a platform for foreigners to participate in the Iraqi society that can help Islamic fundamental beliefs to grow.

Following the formation of a new political system in Iraq after 2003, the country has witnessed the emergence and spread of waves of Salafism that have emerged in al-Qaeda since 2004 and later on ISIS in 2014. Al-Qaeda was not a new phenomenon due to its rise and spread in Afghanistan and then other countries in the region, but its transformation into ISIS, raised the issue in the minds of researchers as to why ISIS emerged and expanded in Iraq? An issue that arose from the fragility of the government in Iraq after 2003, and by fomenting this situation, itself became the main consequence and created a security crisis in Iraq and the region. (Haji Yousefi and Hosseinzadeh, 1397: 33)

According to Rothberg, fragile states are tense, highly conflict-ridden, dangerous, and unfortunate conflict scenes of warring factions. (Rothberg, 2002, 86) The fragile state is also referred to as the inefficient and corrupt government, which often relies on single-product resources and economies and faces enormous political and economic instability. The government's helplessness or bankruptcy means that the government has failed in many important ways, and instead of supporting the citizens, there is chaos and often civil war.

The law is either not enacted or enforced and therefore the order is not established. There is no central political authority or it is very inefficient. In many cases, the economic system is helpless and unable to provide even the most basic elements of welfare for the people. The state of helplessness arises for governments that have been fragile and weak in the past. Compared to the fragility of government, helplessness is only more severe, and the problems of fragile government are exacerbated. Therefore, to recognize the helplessness of the state, we must recognize the fragile and weak state from which the helplessness emerges.

Fragile governments are inefficient in several ways: The first major problem facing governments is the economy. There is no coherent national economy that can sustain the basic level of welfare for the people. The second problem of fragile governments is the political problem, and it goes back to government institutions and their legitimacy to the people. While in efficient governments, activities such as ensuring the security of citizens (domestic and foreign), establishing order and justice (effective rule of law), and maintaining personal freedoms are self-evident. (Haji Yousefi and Hosseinzadeh, 1397: 42).

The process of state-building and nation-building through the institutionalization and acceptance of the legitimacy of these institutions by the people and the implementation of laws supported by the political system is itself the most important way to prevent the emergence of a fragile. In Iraq, after the 2003 US-led invasion, existing political institutions were destroyed. Alternative institutions such as parliament, the judiciary, and federalism in the constitution were in fundamental conflict with the political culture of the Iraqi people. Thus, the ethnic-religious distribution of government positions, such as the prime minister, president, and head of the judiciary, was itself a factor in creating social tensions in Iraq.

In this regard, the legitimacy of these institutions was based on the ethnicity of the individual at the top, and its function was related to the social capital of the tribe and the religion of that person. This reduced the legitimacy of these institutions and, in turn, led to the government's inability to carry out basic distribution, extraction, and symbolic functions. Therefore, as has been observed, inadequate institutionalization, along with crises of legitimacy, inefficiency, and foreign interference, have come together so that in this turbulent environment, extremist groups can mobilize their forces and overthrow the weakened Iraqi government. From these developments, we conclude that, according to Huntington's theory, incomplete institutionalization and the illegitimacy of the ruling institutions led to the emergence of a fragile state that could not perform many of its fundamental functions. In such a situation, other factors and variables that were mentioned led to the emergence of extremist Salafi groups in Iraq (Haj Yousefi and Hosseinzadeh, 2018: 45).

Regarding the concept and model of fragile government, using some of the characteristics that the Peace Foundation has used for fragile governments, the Iraqi government has examined that from the perspective of this foundation, the fragility of government can be determined based on the following characteristics: Incompatible population, refugees and displaced populations, group dissatisfaction, tensions and violence between groups, brain drain, unbalanced economic development, lack of economic prosperity and poverty, government illegitimacy, poor public services, lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law, competition between local and national leaders and external intervention. In 2016, for example, Iraq was the 11th country in the ranking of fragility among 32 countries and now that ISIS has largely lost control of Iraq, but Iraq is still ranked 17th which could pave the way for the re-emergence of ISIS.

According to the Peace Foundation, the Iraqi government has been one of the most fragile governments in the world since 2003. (FFP, 2016) Therefore, the state of the fragility of the government in this country are based on the four characteristics of the fragility of the Peace Foundation, namely the crisis of legitimacy, economic incapacity, military weakness and poor social situation due to ethnic and religious violence.

However, the government has not yet been able to form a strong nation, which has been one of the reasons for the growth of the extremist group such as ISIS. (Takhshid and Matin, 2011: 206). Therefore, another result of the weak and fragile government in Iraq has been the lack of a strong government and the presence and intervention of foreign forces in Iraq. Such interventions, such as the US invasion on Iraq, had negative effects on the country which eventually led to the fall of Baghdad, the escape and destruction of Saddam's regime, and the outbreak of ethnic warfare in the country (Yazdanfam, 2009, 152-153).

The CIA concluded in 2006 that the US intervention in Iraq had strengthened terrorism and Islamic extremism in the country (Michel's, 2006). The interference of foreigners and the absence of a powerful government and following that, the rise of ISIS have led those who oppose this transnational government to join a reaction to this transnational government in Iraq. This issue, therefore helps ISIS to recruit more mercenaries and fighters to destabilize Iraq (Mabon and ardovini, 2015: 3).

Therefore, despite the good progress made in the political and security system in recent years, the Iraqi government has not yet fully transitioned from its fragility stage, and if it fails to do so by reaching a strong consensus in Iraq's society, that will not only increase the chances of foreigners staying and interfering, but it may also lead to the resumption of ISIS activities.

In this regard, the recent incidents in Iraq in recent months, such as the assassination of Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes and Qassem Soleimani, and subsequent retaliatory actions by Iran, have not only once again turned Iraqi territory into a scene of foreign conflict, but also the two countries may even seek to extra damage their interests by pursuing their own agenda in Iraq, which will further complicate the internal situation in Iraq and could pave the way for the re-emergence of ISIS. Needless to say, the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, which is heavily pursued by Iran, could both provide an opportunity to revive the ISIS caliphate and provide Tehran with the conditions to pursue Iran's infiltration policies in Iraq. That is why it seems that the new prime-minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi is trying to prevent Iraq from becoming a foreign battlefield by pursuing a balanced policy between Iran and the US.

ITCT does not necessarily endorse any or all views expressed by the author in the article.

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