Iran's Foreign Policy Toward Iraq Crisis After 2014

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Abstract

To achieve national objectives and interests, different countries adopt specific orientations and strategies according to their domestic needs and geopolitical conditions, and based on the structure of the international system. In this regard, Iran's national power components, including strong national government, geopolitical position, and ideological elements, provides this country with a leading role in regional issues. Iran's strategic and geopolitical position, attained through its connection to some issues in the Middle East, provides it a context for serving the role of a regional player. This focus of Iran's foreign policy on regionalism safeguards the country's national interests in the long run. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran not only acts as a major player in the Middle East, but also upholds decisions to strengthen its position and to promote its national interests. At present, Iraq crisis is one of the central issues of Iran's foreign policy decisions in the region. In this study, we intended to discover the performance of Iran's foreign policy in Iraq crisis based on the components of its national interests. The investigated hypothesis is developed based on a realistic logic from the perspective of Iran's national interests including political-strategic and economic-commercial interests, as well as development model of Iran-Iraq cooperation.

Keywords: National interests; Iran's foreign policy; Crisis of Iraq; Middle East; National power

1. Introduction

Developments in Islamic awakening in the Middle East and North Africa as one of the most challenging areas in the world, it is especially important for many regional and international powers. Also, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the important and influential powers in the region, has responded to these developments and trying to control them. This focus of Iran's foreign policy on regionalism safeguards the country's national interests in the long run. The region's political and security events entered a new stage with the onset of the Syrian crisis and then the ISIL invasion of Iraq. So that it provoked regional and international reactions. Thus, due to Iran's neighbors with Iraq, the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the leader of the resistance axis, faced challenges and threats. Threats and challenges that may at any time endanger the interests and security of Iran in the international and regional system. Therefore, Iran is not indifferent to its peripheral environment and seeks to within the framework of international law and its foreign policy, reacting to the developments in Iraq.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, due to geopolitical and geo-strategic interests with Iraq, at various levels had wide relationships with Iraq. However, this relationship was somewhat cautious before the US invasion of Iraq and the fall of Saddam in 2003. But after Saddam's fall, Iraqi-Iranian relations turned from security-building to opportunity-building. This issue increased dramatically with ISIL's invasion of Iraq in 2014. On the other hand, given the geographic location of Iraq, regional and international powers, especially the United States and its allies and Iran, and the axis of resistance to enhance their powers led to competition. In fact, this event indicates that the Islamic Republic of Iran is not passive against the activities of the United States and its allies in the region and with support from his allies in the region, for their own security and regional countries has taken political and military support from Iraq.

Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran not only acts as a major player in the Middle East, but also upholds decisions to strengthen its position and to promote its national interests. At present, Iraq crisis is one of the central issues of Iran's foreign policy decisions in the region. In this study, we intended to discover the performance of Iran's foreign policy in Iraq crisis based on the components of its national interests. The investigated hypothesis is developed based on a realistic logic from the perspective of Iran's national interests including political-strategic and economic-commercial interests, as well as development model of Iran-Iraq cooperation.

2. Theoretical Foundations
2.1. Realism and Foreign Policy

Realist theories, sometimes referred to as the school of thought of power politics, since the beginning of the formation of international relations, they have been the dominant theory of global politics (Gohari Moghaddam, Colonel Pour, 2016). Realism is based on theoretical foundations and serious assumptions and meanwhile respond to many criticisms, it has also survived as one of the prominent theories of international relations. Accordingly, realism, given the theoretical richness, have been used as a conceptual and theoretical framework for the explanation and analysis of phenomena and developments of international relations and foreign policy (Mattiqi and Soltani, 2013). Because of realism, have different branches, cannot be identified in a single theory. But the most important assumptions can be categorized as follows:

1. Anarchy: from the point of view of realists, contrary to domestic policy where actors are classified hierarchically; the international system was not central authority and has an anarchic structure.

2. The fear (pattern of behavior): in the anarchical structure, Fears have different levels at different times and places; it will never diminish enough to lose its importance.

3. Pivotal survival (pattern of behavior): countries are trying to ensure their survival and in this case become to the actors of self-help that is always act in their favor and pivotal survival to become their behavioral pattern.

4. Axial strength (pattern of behavior): Anarchy forces the government to maximize its relative power; because security and survival were not certain and trying one side for security, often leads to conflict with others.

5. Axis of government: from the realists' point of view, governments are the main actors of international relations and others act within the framework of the relations between them. Accordingly, other actors, including state actors, have no direct influence on the system and their

importance is arising from governments, and by the extent of the effect that can be have on the governance Policies and Behavior.

6. Stability, Conflict and Controversy in the System: the conflict is mutual action that two sides will try to strengthen their position by lowering the other position, prevent other actors from achieving their goals and take out its rivals from the scene. About the roots of the conflict, there is no single theory; But realists the causes of it, known within the framework of the concept of power and competition resulting from it (Abbasi, 2015).

7. The balance of power: realists believe that governments cannot for their survive rely on the guarantees of other governments; because in international politics, the structure of the system does not allow trust. In the absence of global governance, coexistence is achieved through the balance of power. Therefore, one of the concepts that is being made in the framework of realism is the concept of chaos or lack of central authority (Ranjbar Mohammadi, 2016).

Therefore, from the perspective of the realists, Issues such as value and nonmaterial interests, ethics, norms, cultural differences, ideologies, and the nature of the political system, have no place in foreign policy of countries. As mentioned, this theory emphasizes assumptions such as axis of government, survival, balance of power, autonomy, and anarchism of the international system. In realism, the main goal of governments is to defend and protect the country and survival option for them is at the top. Because without the element of survival in the behavior of states, no government, to add national power in the realm of international politics, will not take action; thus, the rise of national threats provides a platform for increasing power to protect political survival (Torabi and Mohammadian, 2015).

According to this Realists, in addition to emphasizing national power and interests, believe that eliminating the instinct of power, is just an ideal and struggle for power, takes place in an environment lacking central authority. Since in a hostile environment, is considered a prerequisite for achieving all national goals, so pursuing and gaining power, are the rational and inevitable goal for foreign policy. From the perspective of realism, governments are not accountable to any supreme authority and so they should seek their own interests. In a sharper sense, national interests is defined to base on power; because if governments do not have enough power, they will face serious problems for their own interests (Ranjbar Mohammadi, 2016). Thus, the anarchic nature of the international system requires that governments for preventing invasion of other states, they seek to increase their hardware and security capabilities and in order to survive, is imagined to the worst situation for themselves. Therefore, since all governments seek to maximize their power in the international arena, select the balance of power as the most appropriate option for managing regional crises. In fact, the balance of power as a model of the global system, is say to this fact that fear of increasing power in an anarchic environment, guiding the governments in the system, leads to toward the balance against each other. When signs of the efforts of one of the great powers to control the international system are observed, the other powers are united through a balance factor, protect their security and position in the international system. So can be say the balance of power is the main factor behind stability in the international system of anarchy (Mohammadkhani, 2009).

The theory of realism, due to the emphasis on objective issues, to analyze the foreign policy approach of governments and their reactions to changes in their peripheral environment and also, their national interests are being exploited in the field of international interactions. In this regard, the patterns of behavior of Iran and Iraq, after the ISIL terrorist group invaded Iraq in 2014, is follow the logic of realism; because the establishment of stability and security in Iraq, helps to safeguard Iran's interests and national security. Therefore, Iran has seeked to use its power for shaping the regional and global order to be well-used. In this way, Iran's foreign policy towards the Iraq crisis (after 2014), can be analyzed in the form of the theory of realism that is based on the concept of national interests in foreign policy.

2. *Crisis of Iraq; Causes and Roots*

After the fall of Saddam, Ba'athist survivors were divided into two categories: First, people who are for individual interests and without ideological motive, joined the party. This group, which has motivated to cooperate with the new political system, was not included of the de-Baathist plan and enter the trends of the new political system. Second, Ba'athists are fanatical and loyal to the ideals of the Ba'ath Party that is included to de-Ba'athist law were cleared from the government, the army, security apparatus and the other pillars of government. Some of these people emigrated or escaped from Iraq and by carrying out terrorist operations and kidnapping, Iraqi destabilization projects and subsequently, was followed the ineffectiveness of the ruling system (Aminiyan and Zamani, 2015). On the other hand, during the years of the Second War of Iraq and the United States in 2003, Saddam's regime provided opportunity for the presence of Arab fighters who went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Army and they were known as "Afghan Arabs" in Iraq; to use their capacities to confront the United States (Zarean and Islami, 2013). Therefore, in anarchic space after the fall of Saddam, expanded the Salafist-Ba'ath axis. Ba'athist generals of the former Iraqi regime who were ousted from power after the US invasion in 2003 and were lost their position and privileges, committing to terrorist and extremist acts. Salafi-Takfiri groups are also the result of many troubles and humiliation for the thirteen years of international economic sanctions that since 1990, was imposed on the Iraqi people, seeking for an opportunity to take action; exploited from the vacuum of power after the US invasion of Iraq. In result, the Ba'ath-Salafi bond was strengthened during the thirteen years of the international sanctions regime (Aminiyan and Zamani, 2015). This led in June 2014, ISIL terrorist group, by invading Iraq, the six provinces of Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Anbar, occupied part of Diyala province and part of Kirkuk and the suburbs of Baghdad. The event becames large and complex crisis in Iraq and the regional and international levels.

That way, it seems the roots of the current crisis in Iraq (2014) should be searched in the context of domestic and regional political-security or ethnic-religious disputes. Accordingly, the factors that led to the formation of the Iraq crisis and the emergence of ISIL in 2014 include:

1. Security Challenges: Iraq was an occupied country that did not have an army to maintain security and more importantly, the transition process of power in the country went slowly and with the involvement of regional and international actors, there was no consensus on the formation of the state and the lack of security in a war-torn country provided justification for the presence of foreign troops in the country.

2. Non-formation of a powerful government: after 2003, elites who came to rule in Iraq; did not go the natural course of growth and evolution; but they owe it to the rapid change of conditions and the occupation of this country by the United States and their rise to power was functions of individual and collective orientation toward the United States. Nation-building is the main task of governments that want to achieve development and create a single country. But strong and effective government in Iraq –which has ethnic-tribal, political-social and religious diversity- is not formed and the Iraqi government is always vulnerable and fragile because of its ethnic diversity.

3. Expansion of tribalism: the most important obstacle was the formation of a strong government in Iraq and this factor has prevented the creation of a single identity in this geographic area. While in other countries, the nation is formed around a unifying entity that collective identity of all members of society. In Iraq, religious and tribal interests are still the most important factor in human societies.

4. The presence of occupiers: the United States has repeatedly changed its strategy in Iraq; before the attack, the United States launched its strategy placed on the basis of Iraq's disarmament of weapons of mass murder, the fight against terrorism, the overthrow of the dictator and the release of the Iraqi people and at some point, the strategy is to maximize a puppet dictator and at some other time, was adopted the strategy of creating divisions and a civil war for survival in Iraq.

5. Nomads return to Iraqi political scene: the United States by removing Iraqi government and army did not pay attention to social, cultural and historical characteristics of this country, failed to replace the government and the military. Hence, the Iraqi tribes, which hold over 70% of the country's territory, in a new political situation expanded their influence and the tribes by organizing military and paramilitary groups took responsibility security areas under their control (Samiy Esfahani and Sharif Yalameh, 2016).

In sum, can be the root causes of the emergence of ISIL and the crisis in Iraq evaluated and analyzed in some cases such as changing the environmental conditions caused by the withdrawal of the United States from this country, the central government's negligence towards the various regions of the country (ethnically and religiously), problems and issues arising from the rule of law process and measures and protections covert of some countries in the region and outside the region.

3. Iran's Foreign Policy Toward Iraq Crisis After 2014

In terms of global positions, Iran's Foreign Policy Principles, is restored such as the negation of domination, the emphasis on independence, the peaceful resolution of differences and also Emphasis on the principle of avoiding intervention, the principle of peaceful coexistence, Respect for international borders and the unity of the Islamic world. These principles, in addition to being fully consistent with the religious teachings of Islam, are completely compatible it is also consistent with rational foundations and principles. In this regard, expresses the eleventh principle, the eleventh principle and the tenth chapter of the constitution, objectives, principles, as a guide to the practical Iran's foreign policy[1]. In this regard, in accordance to the constitution of Iran, the most important foreign policy goal of this country, is preserving the survival and ensuring the national security of the country. Iran follows secures security by avoiding interference in the internal affairs of other countries and mutual respect. In Article 154 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has been emphasized to refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of other nations and supporting the legitimate struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its wise policies, was the first country after the fall of Saddam, has recognized the transitional government of this country and played an active role in order to advance the political process of this country in particular the drafting of the constitution and the establishment of civilian institutions and the consolidation of security in Iraq. Also among neighboring countries, provided the most of the aid and financial support and security of the Iraqi people and undertaken reconstruction of some cities and regions. At the international level also, Tehran always has been trying to rid Iraq of the crisis. For this reason, at the Iraqi peace summits, participated actively and also as host gathered all Iraqi neighbors and took steps to establish its security. Finally, Iran, in order to show its goodwill to Iraq, the request of "Abdulaziz Hakim", leader of the Shiite group of the Supreme Council Agreed to talk with US officials. These negotiations are in three stages and took place to examine ways to secure Iraq and combat terrorism (Mariji, 2008).

On the other hand, with the rise of ISIL and its massive invasion of Iraq emerged a milestone in Iran's strategic politics. Indeed, with ISIL's massive invasion of Iraq in 2014 and their arrival at the gates of Baghdad, Iran was the first country to stand alongside the Iraqi government and people and

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[1]- See: Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1368) Pages. 21-28

condemning this invasion. Accordingly, at the beginning of ISIL's invasion of Iraq, Iran's political and security strategy was based on support of Iraq's territorial unity through political stability and military aid and support. In this regard, Ayatollah Khamenei; Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with Haidar al-Abbadi, Iraqi prime minister considers Iraq's security very important to Iran and stated that the complex situation in the region is such that the security of the countries of the region is not discriminatory, While the Islamic Republic of Iran considers Iraq's security as the brotherly and neighboring country, as well as its security (Moradi, Without date).

In the realist world of the international system, due to the rise of ISIL and its impact on regional and trans-regional geography, all countries are struggling to achieve their national interests. A wide range of regional and trans-regional actors that fed from different groups and has various nationalities are active in the region [Sanai and Kavianpur, 2016]. In this situation, the Islamic Republic of Iran also in order to maximize its interests, must compete with other regional and international powers. In this context, the actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran are: Firstly, to send aid to the Iraqi people before sending any country, the second stage: the recognition of countries in line with the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as Russia, in the fight against ISIL and thirdly, to increase bargaining power in negotiations in order to achieve its goals and interests, according to the explicit constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, in the field of advertising aid action to dispatch Quds Force (QF) from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard directly went to Iraq and Syria. Also, the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed this issue in its announced policies (Sanai and Kavianpur, 2016). In this regard, can be stated training operations and awareness of the various strategies and tactics of urban and guerrilla warfare in the battlefield, demonstrate the capability of the armed forces of Iran, the operation of modern training, which did not have the capability to experiment from the battlefields such as the imposed war[2], increased military maneuvers aimed at increasing deterrence (Ismailzadeh Emamgholy, Ahmadi Fesharaki, 2016); examples of Iran's behavior patterns were to compete with other powers in Iraq (including the United States).

After the ISIL terrorist group in 2014 gained more control of the Mosul area, such as military barracks and airport, the Iraqi Army was defending and blocking the ISIL Forces into military barracks and Iraqi cities and this provided enough time to teach and organize mass popular defenses in the form of "Hashd al-Sha'abi" or popular mobilization groups. In this way, the Iraqi Army with the support of the military advisers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, while assessing the status of the cities on the path to ISIL's attacks, To design and implement military operations with objectives such as the division of IS-controlled areas into separate sectors, Discontinuing the ways of supporting and relieving IS Forces in these segregated sections, The siege and capture of these ISIL-dominated areas; Army and popular mobilization of Iraq by launching some regular and accurate operations, take action to the liberation of some of the cities and villages occupied by ISIL and Ba'athist forces which can be referred to the "Amraley" and "Mosul" liberation operations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran needs to define its own specific political and security strategies in view of the formation of a new international, regional and domestic space in Iraq. Because on one hand, today's support groups of the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as the Shiites and Kurds, have the political power of the country and on the other hand, Iraq is involved with some internal disputes and the activities of terrorist and takfiri groups (Golshani and Sohrabi, 2013). Therefore, in the Iraqi political-security environment after the rise of ISIL, is requires to Formulating of unique political and security strategies that will enable Iran to maximize Iran's interests in the anarchic space of the international system.

In addition, security crises provide to enormous changes in the balance of power and alliances and coalitions regional. On this basis, the use of the policy of alliance and coalition by Iran in the Middle East region is reacting to security threats. This policy has two aspects: First, the establishment of an

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[2]- Imposed war: Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988)

alliance and coalition with regional governments or political groups in the region, in order to undermine common security threats, second, eliminate these threats from the channel of active presence in the political-security issues of the region[3]. In this regard, it showed the credibility of the bilateral and multilateral alliances between Iran and its regional allies in the form of the resistance axis and also highlighted the effective role and cooperation between Iran and Russia as strategic partners in the international community. Indeed, the recent Iraqi crisis (2014-2017) was actually divided into the sphere of influence and competition of regional and international powers. For example, the cooperation and military consultation by Iran to the Iraqi army and popular forces in the fight against ISIL caused the United States-led anti-ISIL coalition also began its air strike against the terrorist group. Of course, they divide terrorists into good and bad and fight against those who, they say, are bad terrorists and also they mean the bad terrorists who endanger the interests of the United States. The coalition is fighting ISIS in Iraq, which supports the same group and other terrorist groups in Syria. While Iran from the very beginning its serious resolve clearly shows to combat Takfiri terrorism, especially in the liberation of Mosul (2017). Thus, in the regional dimensions of the recent Iraqi crisis, the foreign policy strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are as follows:

1. A strong presence in order to prevent the advance of ISIL

2. An effort to protect the holy places of Iraq in confronting ISIL

3. More relationship with Iraqi Kurdistan in order to prevent the advance of the ISIL in this Region

4. Organizing paramilitary forces and Shia popular forces in Iraq against ISIL

5. Military consultations with the Iraqi army to confront ISIL

6. Strengthening the military presence directly inside Iraqi territory near the borders of Iran

7. Tactical change of support for Maliki's government to persuade him to ward off power in order to establish a strong central government that is approved by all the political and national groups in Iraq (Mattiqi and Soltani, 2012).

Finally, it must be said that in the Iraqi crisis, Iran 'approach is based on Preserving National Sovereignty and consistency and respect for the rights of all groups in Iraq. Also, Iran's policy towards Iraq, is transnational policy and this approach is a way to ensure sustainable security in this country. Therefore, since the beginning of the crisis in Iraq, Iran's political and military officials, security in Iraq was assumed as the national security of the Islamic Republic. So that the resistance of the Islamic Republic in the early days of the crisis in Iraq, was preserved Baghdad and the Kurdistan region and also recently (2017), Iran played an important role in the Mosul liberation operation.

Conclusion

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[3] See: Motaqi Ibrahim and Soltani Ismail (2012), Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq and its impact on the regional status of Iran, Journal of Political and International Knowledge, 2(5)

The Iraq crisis and the emergence of ISIL as the most powerful terrorist group, due to Iran's neighbors with Iraq, influenced Iran's policy on national and international dimensions. In anarchic space of the international system, Iran, as well as other government actors, seeks to increased power and national security. Therefore, Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq is in line with the constitution and the norms and logic of realism. Indeed, Iran has played an active role in the region since the emergence of ISIL and the Syrian and Iraqi crisis and since the whole world wants peace and the destruction of terrorism, this helps Iran to gain more influence at the regional and international levels. The rise of ISIL in Iraq and Syria has caused to take shape Iran's foreign policy, based on the preservation of the territorial integrity of the two countries, increasing regional power, preventing the destruction of Syria and Iraq's sacred sites and the survival of the Iraqi government. On the other hand, Iran intends to support the Iraqi government, Prevent from the formation of a government that opposes the current policies of the two countries and Iran's national security. Therefore, Iraq's security is broadly in line with Iran's security. This will make this country a special place in Iran's foreign policy. Accordingly, the conquest of Mosul and the defeat of ISIL, has the biggest impact for Iran which can be noted to providing by Iran's foreign policy strategies, proving regional power of Iran, Western scandal, increased economic and political opportunity and security for Iran.

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