

## **The Impact of Identity Crisis in Iraq (post-Saddam) on the Islamic Republic of Iran Foreign Policy Orientation**

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### **Abstract**

Iraq is a prominent identity crisis example. Ethnic and religious multiplicity have caused political and social conflicting divisions. Shiites, Kurds, and Sunnis are the main group players. Kurdish and Arab are ethnic, Shiite and Sunni are religious groups. Islamic Revolution made fundamental changes in Iran's foreign policy orientation. In Iraq simultaneously, Saddam took power. Different ethnicities and identities had no expressing opportunity. US invasion and Ba'athist overthrow brought Iraq into a new and unstable phase, and various groups and ethnicities expressed their conflicting political and social identity goals and demands. Regional countries particularly Iran have expanded their influence in Iraq by changing the foreign policy orientation, to prevent others from increasing their effect. This study is to analyze and investigate identity crisis impact in Iraq on Iran's foreign policy orientation emphasizing post-Saddam era (2003-2020) applying Constructivism Theory. The descriptive-analytical method and library resources used in collecting data and information.

**Keywords:** Crisis; Identity; Identity Crisis; Constructivism; Foreign Policy Orientation.

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### **1. Introduction**

The ethnicities, identities and policies discussions in domestic and foreign policy domains, as well as the political and behavioral management of multiethnic, racial and religious communities, is a sensitive issue that has a close and important relationship with national interests and political life of countries. In one society, the contradiction, conflict, and divisions among different groups, identities, and ethnicities can lead to crisis. Social divisions refer to indicators and criteria that may cause the social groups' separation from one another and even to their confrontation. Along with politics, the ethnicity, religion, and social class can also initiate conflict and political, social and identity crises. In undemocratic and heterogeneous countries, identity problem is very difficult to solve. In short, it can be said many countries in Middle East and in Arab world are concerned about their identity and its crisis.

Lucian W. Pye, divides political crisis into five categories: identity, legitimacy, participation, influence and the distribution crises (Seifzadeh, 1989:173). The identity crisis occurs when a society realizes what has exclusively and indisputably admitted, since its self-cumulative is no longer acceptable under the new historical circumstances. To get a new level of performance based on changes in territory, intensity, structural or eventual changes, it is necessary that the political system redefine the participants in system, i.e., who they are, and how they are different with all other political or social systems. Regarding identity crisis, we can say there are four main types of identity crisis: the first type relates to feelings about territory and relationships of geographic circumstance to nationalist feelings. The second form occurs when social structure, and in particular social class divisions expansion in a way that prevents the national unity. The third case deals with confliction between transnational identities and commitment to a common national identity. The fourth form of identity crisis is caused by psychological consequences, rapid social change, and dual feelings toward foreigners (Pye,2001:170-171).

Over the past few decades, the identity and politics relationship has been debated by theorists in political science and international relations. As actors, ethnic groups have become increasingly important in internal and international politics. Such groups can question the governments' legitimacy, take action beyond official borders, and gain the foreign powers

and international supports. Although such actions may not lead to the governments overthrow, they can bring dramatic changes in domestic politics and change the international relations style (Stack,1981:87). Since public identity activities have internal and external consequences, such scrutiny can affect not only national security, but also regional and international security. Competition between ethnic and religious groups to gain access to economic resources and political opportunities, feelings of inequality, and feelings of relative poverty and deprivation increase group awareness and solidarity and provide basis for their collective scrutiny. In most cases, ethnic identity tensions are as a result of complex economic, social, and political factors interactions (Gonesh and I Ata,2004:217-218). Racial and ethnic pluralism in Iraq has not only created the historical and current context for the identity crisis, but also social, economic, administrative, political, intellectual, geographical and climatic factors have directed and shaped this crisis and has been put it into action. Iraq is as a nascent state in Middle East, formed in this region in twentieth century due to interests and strategies of European powers, especially Britain (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:20). It has a very heterogeneous ethnic and religious population and in terms of political, social and cultural structure is divided into three distinct areas. In Iraq, Sunni Arabs live in the central, Kurds in north and Shiite in south. Alongside these three main groups, there are also small cultural and social identities, such as Turkmen, Assyrians, and Yazidis, who have distinct cultures and beliefs. The lack of national identity in Iraq, along with ethnic-religious rift, has led to emergence of an identity crisis between ethnic and sectarian groups where the historical and political factors as well as functional causes has reinforced it. Ignorance of people's rights during different historical periods and lack of a clear plan to reduce gaps and conflicts have caused social and political disruption. That is to say, besides the Sunni-Shiite religious identity gap, and Arab-Kurdish ethnic identity crisis, there is a third economic-welfare-class crisis, too (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:19). Gaps and splits that arise from differences in identity, belief, ideology, and authority, since they see their interests preserving and sometimes their existence as the other party's elimination, are likely to lead to violence and crisis. From the very beginning of Iraq creation in 1920s, Arab Sunnis which constitute a low percentage of population and have long domination in Iraq continued to rule the country

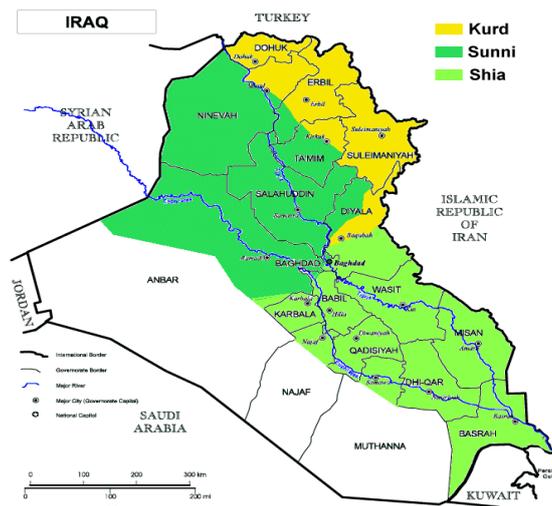
until 2003, even however, with the Ba'athists' efforts to spread extremist nationalism to attract Shiite Arabs, they failed to infiltrate other claimed areas beyond the predominantly Sunni centers in Iraq. For this reason, Ba'athist central government has always had the least legitimacy and acceptance in the southern Shia populated and northern Kurdish regions, while Kurdish ethnic identity and Shiite religious identity are bolder than Iraq's identity among the inhabitants. Since Saddam's Ba'athist regime fall in 2003, Shiites and Kurds have had the first opportunity to seize the power outpost in accordance with their demographic realities. Power elites trying to redefine a broader and more modern national identity in this country. Thus, we continue to see ethnic and religious identity interests' superiority on national identity and interests. A brief look at transformations in Iraq shows internal instability and identity crisis has had a direct impact on other countries foreign policy behavior and orientation. An in-depth understanding of political and social situation in Iraq can provide an opportunity to recognize its security dimensions and effects which its stability or destabilization has on neighboring countries, especially Islamic Republic of Iran.

#### **1-1. Iraq Recognition; Ethnographic Features**

The political, social, economic, psychological, patriotic, ethnic, religious, geographical, and historical reality of Iraq is too complex to conceive of as a single, homogeneous national and ethnic consensus, and "National Identity" as a general fact and with general coverage. Iraq is made up of 18 provinces that are federally governed under the new constitution. Each province has a private parliament that is elected by the people, and ultimately a chairman is elected as governor with relatively full authority. Cities, villages, and even districts in every province also have a council and a chief to send the views and needs of everywhere in country to senior Iraq officials. New Iraq parliament law permits the provinces coalition and new regions formation, where now Kurdistan Region having three Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Duhok provinces in the north, is governed by declaration of autonomous government under a federal headquarters in Erbil. This geographical coalition is possible for other provinces as well, but provincial consolidation has not yet taken place in the other 15 provinces in Iraq. Basra, Nasiriyah and Al-Muthanna provinces deciding to declare a separate region in south by referendum but it did not reach majority and is now governed by central

government in Baghdad under previous procedure. Iraq has a National Assembly with 329 members from all over the country, as well as the President and Prime Minister as most responsible person in country with 22 ministers. The official language in Iraq is now Arabic and Kurdish, which in some provinces also Persian and Turkish spoken. The religion of 97% is Islam, 67% are Shiites, 30% Sunnis and 3% Christians, etc. Shiites generally reside in central and southern and Sunnis live in north and west. Baghdad, as capital of Iraq, contains various groups, parties, and religions, which are currently at odds over political power and religious differences. Iraq has 3650 kilometers common border with its neighboring countries, including Iran as the largest border with 1458 kilometers to east, Turkey with 352 kilometers to north, Syria with 605 kilometers to west, Jordan with 181 kilometers to southwest, Saudi Arabia with an area of 814 kilometers to south, Kuwait 240 kilometers to southeast and Persian Gulf 58 kilometers to southeast (Nejatnia,2019:12).

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

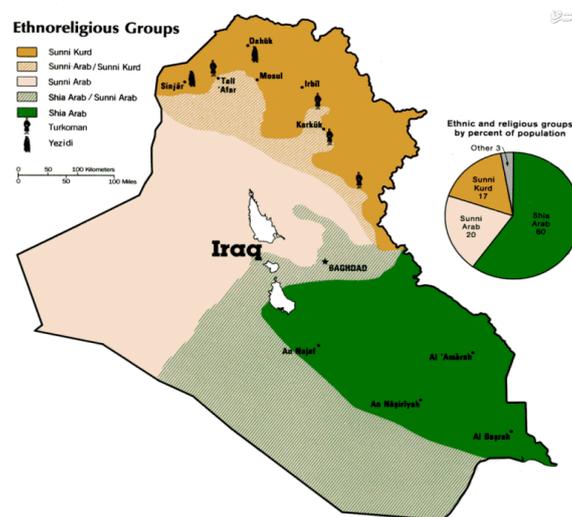


(Source:<https://vista.ir>)

With the fall of Ba'athist regime in 2003, different political parties and groups entered Iraq 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, national identity concept and citizenship, as one of the state modern-nation characteristics has not been developed in this country (Rostami and Sefidi,2016:97). Thus in new Iraq, ethnic-religious and identity divisions have been accompanied by political rivalries between different groups to gain power, and due to lack of national identity and social integrity, as well as different goals and interests of these groups, the post-Saddam political process in Iraq is showing major ethnic and religious tensions, such as the Arab-Kurdish and Shiite-Sunni conflicts. Tensions and disagreements over federalism and Kirkuk, are among the most important manifestations in Kurdish-Arab conflict where Shiite-Sunni sectarian violence is one of religious tensions in Iraq (Asadi,2012:242).

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



(Source: <http://rahyabnews.com>)

## 1-2. Review of Literature

Due to obvious importance of identity element in this research, as a key element in constructivist theory, many researchers in foreign policy have conducted studies and analyzed it in a special way and one particular perspective. The following are some relevant examples:

In "Identity and Nation in Iraq" book, Sherko, Kermanj, (2013), examines the concept of identity and its crisis in Iraq in 9 sections. It discusses the

process of social and political development in Iraq and considers two categories in subject study. The first point refers to a popular belief in Iraq that Iraq was a united and stable nation until the Ba'athist party gained power in 1968, but this has not been proven by historical facts. The second issue deals with Iraq's inability to become a united state between 1921 and the subsequent overthrow of Ba'athist regime in 2003, which has been direct result of ongoing conflicts among different ethnic and religious groups. This book consists of nine chapters. The author divides the modern history of Iraq into seven periods, where in last chapter, deals with the “paradoxes of nation-building in Iraq” and not only argues about systemic deficiencies, contradictions and gaps of nation-building, but also discusses about a unit nation formation and nationalization.

Kazemi, Hojat, (2017), in his article “Identity Uprisings, Fragile States and Geopolitical Crises in the Middle-East”, mentions that activation of social and identity divisions and crises in Middle East and their politicization has led to form a set of sub-national and trans-national identity-based forces which do not have essential motivation to integrate into nation-state order. Using discussions of Manuel Castells, this paper considers sub-national (ethnic), identity-based, and trans-national (religious) forces in Middle East as a "resistance identity". The identity-based forces, through the rooted conflict with established nation-state, pave way for transforming fragile states into failed states. So, regional and supra-regional powers go to exploit identity-based forces capacity for strengthening their position in geopolitical conflicts where the identity components role intensity and complexity have increased. The research question is: “What are the geopolitical crisis factors in Middle East?”; and the hypothesis is: “The intersection and entanglement of sub-national and trans-national identity-based forces rise, the structural weakness of nation-state and regional and supra-regional powers geopolitical competitions are the main factors in forming and spreading Middle East geopolitical crisis.”

Razavinejad, and Shafiee, (2016), in their article “Studying Islamic Republic of Iran Foreign Policy Approach and Orientation in Arab World Crisis”, announce that Iran has had long and close relations and communications with Arab world. By Islamic Revolution in Iran, these relations changed and the conservative Arab countries became concerned about Islamic Revolution spreading to their countries. Iraq’s imposed war

on Iran and Arab states supporting of Saddam were aimed at stopping Islamic Revolution waves. However, during this period, Syria, Libya and Algeria refused to support Iraq. With end of war and Iraq's invasion to Kuwait, the previous Arab world allies were shattered. Subsequent developments, such as 9/11, US invasion to Iraq and Shiite-dominated regime rise in Iraq, and also Iran's peaceful nuclear program, the Arabs world's foreign policy orientation on Iran and on the contrary Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy orientation on the Arabs were changed. Due to lack of integration in Arab world, the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken different orientations toward Arab crises. Iran has a decisive and definite position on Iran-Arab issues (the first Gulf War, regional security in the Persian Gulf, Middle East New Plan and the three-islands), in crises among Arab world the relative neutrality orientation (the second Gulf War), in the Arab world internal crises, which on one hand were Shiites, advocates Shiites (Arab Spring, the Shiite minorities crisis and Lebanon crisis) and in crises of Arab and non-Arab (the Palestinian and Israel regime) has established solidarity and cooperation with the Arabs.

Taj Khosravi, and Khosbani Yazdani, (2020), in a study entitled as "Iraq future and its related scenarios (2010-2020)", emphasizing on political and security situation in Iraq and its internal, regional, trans-regional actors' influence in the process of Iraq developments, they also design and predict possible future scenarios in Iraq in three modes based on goals, facilities and strategies of these actors: 1- Iraq dismembering and disintegration, 2- civil war scenario in Iraq and 3- the fair and democratic power division in Iraq. Based on futures studies, author has presented a model of current trends in the context of game theory, and using scenario writing method, has examined Iraq scenarios in the next decade. In order to explain each of the possible scenarios, this article states that before ISIS arrival in Iraq (from Iraq and Syria west borders) as an imposed representative of Sunni minority, Iraq division was conceivable in two ways: the first form is divided into two Arab regions (both Shiite and Sunni) and the Kurdish region. And secondly, division of Iraq into three regions: Kurdish, Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs. This division into three parts was based on ethnic and religious backgrounds in the US Senate Assembly. According to the plan, designed by Democrat Joseph Biden and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, the Kurds in north and Shiites in south and the Sunnis in west with separate

security, law enforcement and administrative powers, and Baghdad as the political and local capital for division of oil revenues, defense affairs and foreign policy determination will continue to operate as neutral regions. They even chose names for these areas and called them as Kurdistan, Shiiastan and Sunnistan (First Scenario). Due to ethnic and religious diversity, clashes between Iraq internal forces could lead to disintegration. For a civil war creation, there are two belief backgrounds in Iraq: ethnic bigotry and religious bigotry, which can lead to religious or ethnic warfare. Regarding religious warfare, it can be said that the main group that tried to wage a full-fledged religious war from 2003 to 2013 was al-Qaeda in Iraq, after which ISIS became very prominent in 2014 (Scenario 2) as identity groups. Identity groups play a key role in regional security in Middle East. In general, it can be emphasized that confronting identity-oriented groups which have an ideological approach is achieved through a variety of behavioral and pattern formulations. In such circumstances, the condition has been prepared for applying more complex and diverse models in geopolitical field in Middle East. This can be seen as a continuation of the approach taken by the United States during the Cold War (Mossalanejad, 2014:77). The fair and democratic division of power in Iraq is likely to have a range of scenarios with itself, i.e., it can take many forms. For example, Kurds between 2003 and 2013 called for a referendum in some cities, such as Kirkuk and Tikrit, to join the Kurdistan Region. Democratic power division means a division that is firstly proportional to each group population and secondly be based on democratic mechanism. The authors conclude that by combining different perspectives and possibilities of these actors, scenarios of Iraq disintegration, civil war and a fair and democratic power division in Iraq can be seen in Iraq future perspectives. It is clear that each groups and forces is trying to achieve its maximum goals, but in achieving each actor's goals, there are other actors' aims and facilities.

## **2. Methodology**

Using an analytical-descriptive approach and relying on constructivism theory, this study while examining the identity crisis in new Iraq (post-Saddam), addresses this question "How identity crisis in Iraq has affected the approach, direction and orientation of Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy in internal, regional and international dimensions?" It posits this hypothesis that "Identity crisis in Iraq has paved the way for Iran to face

internal, regional and international challenges and increased its security aspects". In present study, "identity crisis in Iraq" is considered as independent variable and "Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy orientation" as dependent variable.

### **3. Theoretical Framework (Constructive Theory)**

For experts and thinkers in the field of international relations, the constructivist approach is better known as Alexander Wend and the concept of "identity". This theory was developed by other researchers due to the inability of traditional theories to predict international events and global developments and is now one of the most accepted theories in international relations. In analyzing the governments' foreign policy, most scholars have attempted to use major and dominant intellectual approaches and paradigms in international relations such as realism, idealism, and behaviorism. The main reason for these analyzes can be found in fact that identity issue of most countries political system has never been seriously considered but paying attention to international system current situation and the complex ethnic and religious identity structure in Middle East, studying Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy orientation with respect to Iraq country, within mentioned approaches and paradigms framework cannot be easily understood. For this reason, from a variety of theories, the constructive approach which is more descriptive and analytical, selected as theoretical framework.

One of the most important reasons for constructive approach importance in international relations is its relevance to question of states' identity. In defining identity, constructivists have defined it as a self-definition or self-defining against others. In their view, identity allows nations to make their world meaningful, to categorize other entities, and to define others as their friend or enemy. Governments with these perceptions seek to change or maintain the status quo, unite with one country or take action against others (Wilmer,2002:59). According to constructivists, other important issues related to identity are fluidity and changeability of identities. Identity can be fluid under material conditions, and constructivists' main mission is to explain this change and policy because in their view, identity is a social matter, meaning that in constructing selves, the other can also be made, so identity is fluid. In their view, actors' perceptions of themselves, their interests and goals are changeable, and as a result of new identity

formations, there will be new interests for government as well, so these different and changing identities serve actors' interests and behaviors. In this respect, identity and interests are not pre-eminent and are not derived from power distribution structure, but are sourced from internal origins of actors' identity (Aghaee and Rasooli,2009:5). According to constructivist foreign policy model, common inter-subjective norms in both internal and international levels of Iran national identity forms the specific national role. These roles in turn, determine the specific national interests that guide and shape the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. Thus, by applying this model one can examine how non-material intellectual and ideological structures such as ideology and worldview, influence Islamic Republic's foreign policy and also the role and place of non-material interests and resources in Iranian foreign policy can be determined and explained. Furthermore, definition and prioritization of Iran's national interests based on its national identity and role could be analyzed (Dehghani Firouzabadi,2010:43).

In modern Iraq, ethnic and religious groups non-integration within a single nation and non-formation of national identities and competition for power have led to identity crisis which made the shared and common interests among Iraq groups and other countries. In recent years this crisis with terrorism increasing spread and other foreign countries interference has influenced Iran's foreign policy in various aspects. It seems that constructive theory, which emphasizes on immaterial dimensions and internal identities of countries, in explaining Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy provides a better context about Iraq. Taking into account such characteristics and features in Iraq specially identity crisis, and by examining its emergence causes and redefinition its impact on Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy the importance of this research can be understood. Recognizing identity crisis in Iraq with emphasis on constructive theory with regard to gaps in less use of this scientific theory in international relations is one of main causes of this research. Considering identity crisis in Iraq and its variable role and impact on Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy orientation in order to produce an appropriate and practical study source for crisis management and scientific analysis of identity crisis in Iraq for its impact on policy approach of a country that has more ethnic, religious, social and political structure similarities with Iran can be theoretically and scientifically beneficial for policy makers and

statesmen in dealing with identity crisis and practically in transforming it to opportunity to serve national interest. The innovative and creative approach of this study is applying constructive theory in one country foreign policy orientation regarding identity crisis.

#### **4. Finding**

According to many studies and many analysts, Iraq is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where, many important issues and events are highly intermixed with “Identity” and “Identity Crisis”. In this country identity crisis has been closely linked to denying other ethnic groups identity. This article examines the subject in two sections, and in different eras, pre-Saddam, Saddam, and post-Saddam: the first section, studies the identity crisis in Iraq, its roots, contexts and causes along with the current status analysis, and the second section examines and explores the impact of identity crisis in Iraq on Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy orientation.

##### **4-1. Section One - The Perspective of Identity Crisis in Iraq**

Ba'ath Party took power through coup in 1968, and Saddam Hussein ruthlessly defeated his party rivals and overthrew the regime (Bremer,2007: 58). Saddam and his entourage lacked social influence and were deprived of religious originality and, within Ba'ath Party, pursued a radical Arab ideology based on Sunni Arab thought. This practice led to changes and doubling weakening of other “ethnicities” and “religions”, in a way that Arab Sunnis prevailed over the political system for six periods as, Bani Omayeh, Bani Abbas, Ottomans, British Mandatory, Kingdom and Republican, which continued until Transitional Council of Iraq Government formation (Majlis) in May 2003, (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:18). On this basis, six important historical periods in Iraq history concerning contradictions establishing, its consolidation, deepening and escalation, and finally activation of divisions and conflicts in the form of identity crisis at three stages: (a) Pre-Saddam era, b) Saddam era, and c) Post-Saddam era will be discussed.

##### **A) Pre-Saddam era**

###### **Ottoman period: Establishing Identity Structural Contradictions**

In studying historical background of contradictions and identity crisis in Iraq despite tumultuous history of past few centuries, it seems that Ottoman period, with establishment of sovereignty and stability structures, went to be starting point for identity structural contradictions. Since Bani Abbas

dynasty founding, Sunnis have ruled Iraq unlike Shiites and Kurds. For about five centuries Ottoman sovereignty caused Turks political governing and along with them Sunni Arabs over Iraq (Mar,2001:28).

**British Mandatory: Contradiction Consolidation**

In 1920 Iraq created from Ottoman Empire by British, including three constituent states Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. They did not have a common political, social and economic life background within a single political entity. They had different cultures and tendencies and were governed separately and independently, and lacked national identity and cohesion. Britain pursued Iraq complete domination by marginalizing and persecuting Shiites. In 12 years of mandatory, Britain tried to take advantage of Turkish, Arab and Kurdish hostility. Shiites, who made up the majority were not safe (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:243-244).

**Kingdom: Continuing British Approach**

Although Iraq independence from British mandatory led to 25 years' kingdom sovereignty from 1932 to 1958, in fact it was mandatory period continuation and Britain had completed control over rules. King Faisal attempted to reduce ethnic-religious discrimination severity in Iraq, but Britain directly prevented it through subordinate prime ministers and governments. In King Faisal words, during this period Britain dictates to Iraq government a policy that paying taxes and killing were for Shiites, and positions and offices for Sunnis. The British, had no belief in Shiites and tried to keep them out of sovereignty (Aliyan,2005:369).

**First Republican Period (1958-1968): Deepening Contradiction and Strengthening Ethnic-Religious Identity Crisis**

In 1958, first republic was formed under Abdul Karim Qassim leadership, whose father was Sunni and his mother was Shiite. He has sought to halt increasing deprivation process, and ethnic and religious disputation in Iraq. Abdul Karim Qassim also sought to promote multi-ethnic inclusive nationalism in Iraq, and to contribute other ethnic and religious groups' administration. After Qassim, Abdul Salam Aref with a sharper and more violent approach, resorted to tribalism and hostility to Shia. During Republican era, Iraq government strongly prevented Shiites possible strengthening role in Iraq, which created a class division and public discontent, Shiites were always dissatisfied with repressive view of state (Barzegar,2011).

**B) Saddam era**

**Second Republican Period, (1968-2003): Contradiction and identity crisis intensified** Shiites and Kurds who had not practically participated in Iraq rule since Iraq formation, in Ba'athist particularly in Saddam Hussein rule were put aside. Shiite and Kurdish groups were not involved in state-building process, and nearly 80 percentages of population were trapped in an insecurity and terrorism condition. The result was a sharp contradiction escalation, identity crisis, and national sentiment collapse.

**C) Post-Saddam era****Developments in 2003 and Beyond: Activating Identity Crisis and Countering Violence**

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

**Table (1): The Perspective of Identity Crisis in Iraq**

<b>Era</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Identity Crisis Functions</b>
<b>Pre-Saddam</b>	Ottoman British Mandatory Kingdom	Establishing Identity Structural contradictions Contradiction Consolidation Continuing British Approach
	First Republican	Deepening Contradiction and Strengthening Ethnic-Religious Identity Crisis
<b>Saddam</b>	Second Republican	Contradiction and identity crisis intensified
<b>Post-Saddam</b>	Developments in 2003 and Beyond	Activating Identity Crisis and Countering Violence

(Source: Golchin and Amiri Moghadam, 2019: 243-249)

Study of Iraq historical-political process reveals that it was not formed on a common idea basis of its citizens. Accordingly, there have been structural conflicts that have resulted in divisions and identity crises. This gap and crisis deepening has undermined social cohesion and has faced Iraq community to internal crisis and insecurity. Since Ottoman Empire fall, both during Ottoman and independence years, country has always been plagued by internal crises stemming from public consensus lack on national identity and the central government legitimacy, and establishing a national government process was a major concern for governments in Baghdad. From outset, Iraq had a fragmented ethnic and religious context and lacked coherent elements such as language, race, religion, land, and a common historical heritage, elements that were viewed by theorists in social and political science field which are necessary to adopt any modern national unit (Anderson and Stanfield,2004:20).

#### **4-1-1. Identity Crisis in New Iraq and its Consequences**

In Iraq ethnic and racial division, there is greater agreement on following subdivision: 75 to 80 percent Arab (largest ethnic group), 15 to 20 percent Kurdish (second largest ethnic group) and the rest, about 5 percent which include Turkmen, Assyrians, Jews, Yazidis and Sabians. Arabs are of Sami race, Kurds are Aryan race, and Turkmen are of Central Asian Turkish race. Shiites emphasized Islamic Republic of Iraq as their preferred alternative to new political system. Sunnis also supported Iraq Arab Republic. Kurds and other non-Arab minorities also proposed Iraq Democratic Republic, which was eventually recognized by Iraq Parliament as government identity and structure source (Pirani,2019:35). Therefore, Iraq is a combination of religious Shiite majority and Sunni minority and Arab-Kurdish demography division. After 2003, Kurds are in politics and they present their religion and ethnicity clearly, so the political divisions and cultural trends observed over Iraq. Hence, to study Iraq politics culture and mainstream, the research inevitably takes into accounts the two criteria (religion and Ethnic) with special attention in its assessments (Darvishi Setalani, and Vatankhah,2018:12-13).

##### **1) Shiites' Identity**

Although Iraq is Shiite center and encompassed by holy shrines, in spite of Shiite population weight they were politically always in minority. With Ale-Boyeh exception in fourth century, Shiites have always been dominated by

Sunni political powers in Baghdad. Shiites were neglected despite their demographic weight throughout Ottoman, Hashemite, British, Nationalist, Communist, and Ba'athist regimes, however, today Shiites are largest group which makes up majority of Iraq entire population. Saddam overthrow provided basis for Shiites presence and their exit from isolation and since then Shiites have become increasingly active in political and social arena (Talashan,2010:116).

Shiites are responsible for their Iraq identity, believing it guarantees unity and integration, responds to interdependence, loyalty and religious freedom, they believe Iraq community multiplies is one suitable merit and positive characteristics. Shiites do not have much affinity for their Arab identity, the main reason being that Arab identity is now out of its natural form and has become a definite religious trait, meaning that anyone outside (Sunni) religious framework, also out of Arab identity (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:191). Therefore, despite many ups and downs in Iraq political process, Shiite groups' main tendency is to maintain Iraq integrity to strive for greater power within Iraq internal equations and practical political conditions as well as to strive for stability and security (Vaezy, 2008: 51-17). Because of population majority and cultural elements, Shiites are looking for Arab identity and cultural fundamentals different from Arab world which has more specific Iraq characteristics (Bagheri,2013:149). The political developments in Iraq have made Iraq Shiites in the center of influential identity and political behavior among other Arab Shiites, and the region Shiites, who have always viewed their loyalty to central government with skepticism, are in a precarious political, economic and social situation. They seek to consolidate their power and improve Shiites political and economic situation, and start a new political life by redefining the position of Shiites as an effective religion in the region (Javdani Moqaddam,2012: 39-40).

## **2) Kurds' Identity**

Kurds have always been in pursuit of a "Kurdish" independent ethnic and nationalist identity, and only find it as a response to their desires and representing their own characteristics. However, Iraq identity which emerged after 2003 has provided them with broad material and spiritual privileges. Kurds prefer their Kurdish nationalist identity, so during drafting Iraq Constitution they did not allow to emphasize Iraq Arab identity. Kurds say Kurdish people must themselves determine their own destiny, it means

they must be able to declare independence any time. In post-Saddam era, Kurds have acted with consistency, coherence, and efficiency in Iraq politics, and it can be said they have gained the most in Iraq political process today (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:191-195). Also, Iraq Kurdistan has always been one of divergence areas due to linguistic, religious, historical and cultural heterogeneity of Iraq majority (Zibaklam and Abdullah Pour,2011:63). Among Kurdistan neighboring countries, Islamic Republic of Iran has had the least problem with Kurdish issues, since Kurds are essentially Ariyan and prideful in their ethnic affiliation with Persians (Ahmadi,2000:85).

### **3) Sunnis' Identity**

Sunni Arabs, despite being a minority have dominated Iraq political and social life from distant past with Ottoman government support. On many occasions, Arabs have expressed a desire to use both Arab and Islamic identities to excel Shiite and Kurdish groups. Iraq Sunnis have put their desire more towards religion, and in fact religion has sought to be main engine of their cause and argue for their new order founding or emergence. Accordingly, despite a new system establishment year in Iraq, there is still concern that Arab Sunnis will not accept new Iraq identity framework after the change, and Iraq society and government fails to create the new Iraq (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:195-196). In post-Saddam era, Iraq Sunni groups have refused to participate seriously in political process and by insufficient support to government, have created challenges in building a strong, cooperative and peaceful state for all groups. Sunnis dissatisfaction with its role in new power structure, and also considerations and policies of Arab countries including Saudis, have played a decisive role in unprotected and uncooperative behavior of Iraq Sunni groups (Asadi,2008:89). Sunni Arabs, because of their minority status define their Arab identity in line with Sunni Arab world and see themselves as part of Arab world in order to enjoy full support for a greater share of power. They consider Arab countries as their natural and permanent supporter and even a large part of their behaviors and roles are based on Arab governments' views and policies (Bagheri,2013:149).

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

<b>Ethnic Groups</b>	<b>Shiites</b>	<b>Sunnis Arabs</b>	<b>Kurds</b>	<b>Turkmen</b>
<b>Indicator</b>				
<b>Geographical area</b>	much	less	much	less
<b>Population and its density</b>	much	less	less	much less
<b>Geographical proximity</b>	much	much	very much	much less
<b>Non-underground resources</b>	very much	much less	much	much less
<b>Struggle for independence History</b>	much less	much less	very much	much less
<b>Civilization background</b>	very much	much	much	less
<b>Alignment with international discourse</b>	very much	much	much	less
<b>Experienced leadership staff</b>	very much	much less	very much	less
<b>Group organization</b>	very much	much less	very much	less
<b>Geopolitical position</b>	very much	much less	much	less
<b>Conclusion</b>	high independence potential	high isolation potential and lack of independence	very high independence potential	low independence potential

(Source: Nasri, (2005))

**4-1-2. The Security Dimensions of Iran and Iraq Relations**

Looking at the background of Iraq and Iran relations after Islamic Revolution, it can be further divided into two periods. The first is the contradiction period and enmity starts from the victory of Islamic Revolution to the fall of Saddam. During this period, everything is affected by the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The image of an enemy from Iran was very prominent among its neighbors particularly for Iraq, which resulted in a common sense creation among neighbors. The region countries, especially Iraq and Saudi Arabia feared that Islamic Revolution would spread inside their countries, finding a solution to stifle Iranian revolution. In this situation, Saddam's government, on behalf of all opposition governments, based on past border and territorial disputes, launched an eight-year war against Iran.

The second period can also be a peaceful coexistence period that has been going on since the fall of Saddam and Shiite government formation

(Dehghani Firouzabadi,2010:135). During this period, Iran welcomed Ba'athist government collapse, insisted on foreign troop's rapid withdrawal from Iraq and friendly relations development. During this period, Shiites topped Iraq political system in January 2005 elections. Trial of Saddam by judiciary and issuance of a statement by Iraq government on the recognition of Algerian 1975 treaty were other factors that changed the attitude of Iranian diplomatic system towards the new Iraq government (Sadeghi, et al. 2017:138).

Iraq's expansion toward Iran is directly affected by Iran's national power. As Iran's national capability has diminished (or perceived by Iraq leaders as such), its expansion has grown, and vice versa, at times when Iran has been powerful, Iraq's aggression has diminished. As a result, Iran is the best balancing force to restrain Iraq's eastward expansion. The political and ideological nature of Iraq has also played a significant role in intensifying and restricting Iraq expansion. Consequently, a democratic political system establishment in Iraq, even if it is not revolutionary in nature, will pose less security threats to its neighbors, especially Iran in the future, because theoretically in democratic peace theory framework, one of ways to moderate aggression in Iraq foreign policy is a democratic order. On the other hand, political system deployment that has substantial and ideological differences with Islamic Republic of Iran increases threats. Therefore, in the state of formation the American oriented regime in Iraq it is likely to recreate its territorial and border disputes with Iran, as well as future Iraq-Kuwait disputes over border issues (Akbari,2015:312 -311).

#### **4-1-3. Iran and Iraq Ethnic Groups**

Iran has Kurdish and Arab ethnic minorities whose backbone is in Iraq, so Iran has always tried to maintain its political influence and domination level over these minorities in Iraq to consolidate its territorial integrity and prevent these ethnic groups divergence. On the other hand, the majority of Iraq's Shiite population as Iran's ideological allies and Shiite religious and pilgrimage shrines in this country are aspects for Iran's active presence and role in Iraq (Abdi and Shirzad,2016:75-76). Iraq Shiite groups view towards Iran to gain support is partly influenced by the extent of these groups' relations with Iran, as well as the intensity and breadth of links between the two sides. Iraq Supreme Islamic Assembly is more inclined towards Iran, and its ties with Iranian officials are stronger. Although the relationship

between Iraq Shiite groups and their view to Iran is influenced by group and religious-cultural relations, the main issue for these groups at the present time is to institutionalize their place in structure of new Iraq power. Thus, as the behavioral patterns and approaches of majority Shiite groups in Iraq show, their approach to Iran is largely based on power policy and for gaining external support in success against other Iraq groups. It seems that if Shiite groups' power is institutionalized and their power stability is established in Iraq, their approaches to foreign policy will be defined in new national formats. Regarding the type of approach and relations of Iraq Kurdish groups with Iran, the issue is more complex. On the one hand, Kurdish current leaders have benefited from Islamic Republic of Iran support during Ba'athist, and in a broader sense, due to greater ethnic-racial closeness to Iran in the region, have a more friendly approach and a more convergent view than the Turks and Arabs. Being most organized and economically strong, the Kurds have added their weight to post-Saddam Iraq shaping (Bengio,2012:297-298). Kurds are aware of Iran's national security concerns about Kurdish developments, and are skeptical about Iran's policies. The political changes that had taken place in Iraq Kurdistan after 1991 and Kurdish quasi-state existence since 1992 coalesced to cause a sense of political and national cohesiveness among urban and literate Kurds in which a widely accepted identity as 'Kurdistanis' displacing former self-designation of 'Iraq Kurds' or 'Iraqis' (Aziz,2010:5). One of the separatist activities of Iraq Kurdistan region was, holding a referendum in October 2017 to establish an independent Kurdistan state. According to statistics, the majority voted in favor. However, this separatist referendum is ultimately failed due to the entry of Iraq and regional actors and trans-regional actors silence (Islami and Shamsabadi,2018:65). The approach of Sunni groups to Iran has been influenced by their internal rivalry with Shiite groups and Iran's relations with Iraq Shiites. Nevertheless, there are serious differences over the views and actions of conservative Sunni groups and anti-Iranian Sunni groups. Some Sunni groups with totalitarian tendencies do not tolerate Shiite majority participation in country's political process based on their demographic weight, and condemn Iran's support for it. The Sunnis want to create a strong central government to protect them and distribute revenues more fairly (Moadab,2010:11).

#### **4-2. Section Two - Iraq and Islamic Republic of Iran Foreign Policy Orientations**

Governments choose their specific orientations and strategies under the international system structure and function influence, to meet their national goals and interests depending on their internal needs, geographical and geopolitical situation. Since international politics emerges in a dynamic environment, and transformative factors emerge from all sides, one should not expect that foreign policy structure and governments orientations will remain unchanged. What certain is, these changes are sometimes slow, gradual, and at times rapid and underlying. The governments' most important orientations and strategies are neutrality, isolation, alliance and non-compliance (Qawam,2002:146). In other words, each country foreign policy consists of two parts, relatively stable and relatively changeable. The sustained part reflects overall foreign policy framework within which foreign policy exercises and strategies are structured and it is largely based on theoretical doctrines, value systems, and society dominant identity, while the second part is influenced by human experience and observes policies that are compiled and regulated due to circumstances (Sabouri and Salehian, 2013:177). In this field regarding Islamic Republic of Iran establishment in 1979 and consequently Saddam Hussein's power in Iraq, its foreign policy orientation has been briefly examined in both a) Saddam and b) post-Saddam periods:

##### **A) Saddam era**

Islamic Revolution victory in 1979 transformed political system in Iran and led to dramatic and profound changes in Middle East and its coalition system, exactly at the same time Saddam Hussein assumed power in Iraq. These two countries looking to each other was completely a security look and in fact, since Ottoman government collapse and Iraq government formation in west of Iran, policies adopted by Iraq officials have always been a threat to Iran's national security. Under these circumstances, Ba'athist government imposed a full-scale war on Iran for eight years in 1980 with a prior decision and plan to overthrow nascent Islamic Republic. War ended with issuance of Security Council Resolution No. 598 by temporary ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in summer 1988 (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:140).

From end of Iran-Iraq war to Saddam fall, Iraq's containment policy has gone through three stages. First phase from the truce to Iraq invasion to Kuwait, was a kind of "neither war nor peace" state. Secondly it was a two pronged policy that spanned from invasion to Kuwait until end of Gulf War. Since beginning of Kuwaiti crisis Iran has divided its policy on Iraq invasion from the policy it had taken on the unresolved issues of Iran-Iraq war. Iran condemned Iraq invasion to Kuwait and called for "Iraq troop's immediate withdrawal to internationally recognized borders and peaceful dispute resolution." The third phase, covering the end of 1991 Gulf War until 2003, was in some ways similar to first phase status, "no war, and no peace." (Ramazani,2017:85-87).

**B) Post-Saddam era**

After Saddam fall, Islamic Republic of Iran was pleased with the fact that it was dissatisfied with occupiers' presence especially US in Iraq and did not regard it as its national interest. Iran has several important principles regarding post-Saddam Iraq:

1. Opposition to any separatism in Iraq
2. Opposition in creation or promotion of ethnic, religious and racial conflicts in Iraq
3. Helping create security and stability in Iraq
4. Opposition to continued occupation in Iraq
5. Opposition to any foreign intervention and emphasizing on Iraq's destiny
- 6- Promoting Shia position in Iraq condition (Akbari,2017:64).

Among Iraq neighbors Iran has consistently supported the security establishment, stability, territorial integrity and national unity in post-Saddam Iraq, while most of other Iraq's neighbors have not been satisfied (Niakui,2016:130). Iran which had pursued positive neutrality policy in Iraq crisis (Persian Second War), sought to maintain normal relations with its new government and pave the way for improved relations in future. In post-Saddam, Iran has always insisted on Iraq's territorial integrity and has backed its official government. In overall Iraq has had opportunities and threats for Iran. New Iraq government even if it shifts to a secular and pro-western, due to its new civil and democratic structures will be less regular threat than Saddam's threat.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5-1. Identity Crisis Solution**

This study has attempted to examine the historical contexts focusing on post-Saddam era while answering the main research question about identity crisis in Iraq and its effects on Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy orientation, it is going to address the roots of contradictions and social and political crises in Iraq to provide a model for a national unity plan. Three main ethnic and religious groups formed Iraq society, following Saddam's Ba'athist regime collapse, they used extreme tools to achieve their demands i.e., to compete with ethnic and sectarian communities in contradiction main nature in Iraq, it means it is origin of power and resources acquisition where other foreign actors strongly influence on this competition. In other words, it can be stated Shiites and Kurds real deprivation in past years as well as Sunnis false deprivation sense after 2003 have triggered ethnic and religious conflicts in Iraq (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:249).

Ethno-religious conflicts have been most serious challenge facing state-rebuilding in Iraq since 2003. Indeed, Iraq maintains a long history of violence (Rastgoo et al,2018:248). It has failed to overcome the national identity crisis and political legitimacy, which has led to emergence of a third crisis as the security crisis. For this reason this country still has to deal with national identity crisis and security implications of undeveloped nation-state. Although a new political structure based on federalism, democracy and elections has been in place since 2003, there is a long way to go before a favorable political order and a proper identity framework in which the interests of all ethnic groups can be met. On the other hand, the most important challenge for central government in Iraq before entering stabilization process is how to establish and maintain security. This is so important that the continued legitimacy and presence of government and sovereignty on the scene, depends directly on functioning and ability of government to maintain its internal security; since no economic, cultural or social activity is not possible without security. This principle is greatly important in Iraq because of its complex ethnic and demographic nature and also due to lack of tolerance and reconciliation between different groups.

Overcoming to security problems in Iraq requires a streamlined dialogue and understanding, an initiative based on an understanding of nature, structure, mechanism and real capabilities and limitations. In such

circumstances, there should be a focus on reform process, rule of law, power strengthening and powers to de-escalation and structuralizing. Achieving strategic alignment among Iraq major tribes, focusing on central government cohesion and authority and fostering Shiite, Sunni and Kurds integration and participation in governance commensurate with electoral requirements are backgrounds that provide necessary context and capacity which will provide understanding. Speed and robustness this process depends largely on having a one unite definition in national interest and a practical commitment to maintaining Iraq's integrity. On the other hand it seems although Iraq's federalism constitution was originally designed to preserve and consolidate its integrity, but it is a factor in diverging and weakening national cohesion at present. Federal formation on ethnic and religious identities basis can undermine and threaten its national unity and identity principle. Therefore, other models must be taken into consideration by people in response to ethnic and religious diversity and can address the deprivations imposed on people which dates back centuries. The provincial federalism model is well-suited to achieve this goal and is well implemented and in contrast the three-federalism model (Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish) can be worst model because it weakens spirit of national solidarity and will reinforce ethnic and religion identities in such a way that "Iraq" national identity will be severely damaged and even forgotten. To extent that Iraq can deviate from three federalism model formation, it has similarly departed from disintegration danger and is close to reinforcing its "Iraq" national identity (Golchin and Amiri Moghadam,2019:252).

## **5-2. Iraq Scenarios and their Impact on Islamic Republic of Iran Foreign Policy Orientations**

With security situation in post-war Iraq, impact of Iraq developments on Iran security issues has increased. The ethnic and religious identities formation in future Iraq could give rise to a new concept and identity in Middle East and towards neighbors. Iraq is undergoing a period of political and security developments, and despite passing years of Ba'athist government collapse, efforts to improve security situation and organizing political structure, speaking out about institutionalization and stabilization of this country is too early (Akbari,2015:312). In this context, Iraq may face four possible structures and scenarios in future due to identity crisis and interference of major powers:

**A) Weak Country;** this is the case when Kurds, Shiites and Sunni Arabs cannot agree to form a national state and Iraq is without a state and ethnic groups cannot resolve disputes due to their conflicts. Most important contradictions and major divisions that may arise in future Iraq are: The Kurdish-Arab dispute, especially regarding Mosul, Kirkuk and other conflict areas between two sides; Sunni-Shia continuing and diverse contradiction. Both groups are seeking to end violence, but for many reasons problem still needs to be resolved. Sunni and Shia mixed regions have not fully stabilized yet, and competition for power and government centers and resources is still intense. Disagreements among Shiites, including Sadris and al-Da'wa, Majlis A'la and al-Da'wa, etc. have always been slow to make progress on above issues and there is a conflict possibility. This is both an opportunity and a threat for Iran. The unrest may weaken Shiites, and this weakness will spread to Iran borders. On the other hand, Iran can manage and mitigate these conflicts, especially disputes between Shiites that are not compatible with national interests. Saudi Arabia views these developments as beginning of Iraq's disintegration. Turkey is also aware of consequences in turning Iraq into a federal and dispersed state to serve its interests.

**B) Stable and Secure Country;** this scenario is long-term for evolution current trends in Iraq. As the security situation improves and national reconciliation is finalized, Iraq's international standing will change. Strengthening stability will open the door to foreign investment and construction in other sectors of economy and will draw Arab investors into Iraq. With gradual improvement in security situation, Arab countries especially Saudi Arabia are being persuaded to lead Baghdad to a more active role in regional security and political affairs. This scenario is in the interests of Islamic Republic if the Shia rule.

**C) Powerful Country;** Iraq will become one of most powerful Arab countries if it is stable and united with its democratic structure and significant oil reserves. If central government can solve Kurds problems and alleviate Shiite and Sunni Arab conflicts, then a powerful and nationalist Iraq will sound the alarm in other countries in region and they will inevitably do so to change their policies. This scenario is dangerous for Arab countries, since Iraq is likely to become a partner for Iran.

**D) Failed Country;** this is dangerous to regional security and to Iraq sovereignty, meaning failure to achieve national consensus on issues such as

oil revenue sharing, Kirkuk issue, and inclusion of Iraq militias in national armed forces and also it means failure to bolster political participation at national level and defeating current Shia and Kurdish coalition. This scenario is detriment to Iraq national security and unity and is not in Iran's interests (Akbari,2015:316-312). Each of these scenarios with various consequences differentiates Iraq's role and position in Middle East, and could affect its neighbors particularly Iran.

### **6. Conclusion**

During post-independence period in Iraq, existence of various Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite identities in the northern, middle and southern regions of country and how to maintain balance between them has always affected Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy in internal, regional and international levels. Iran's concern over Iraq's disintegration into different ethnic groups and ethnicities and its negative impact on Iran national security has always been a central focus in analyzing Iraq's affairs. For this reason, Iran's foreign policy has pursued a fierce struggle to maintain and balance various ethnic and religious identities. Iraq is a country that is facing two serious ethnic and religious divisions and it is very difficult to fill the Kurdish and Arab, and Shiite and Sunni divisions. Events in Iraq have always had a sensitive and strategic link with Iran's national and vital interests. In this country, belonging sense to ethnicity is still stronger than belonging sense to nation and geographical unit that forms nation-state. Although the quasi-modern government was created in Iraq and has a modern Constitution, but the Constitution imitated by West cannot find its place in society. This means that in West, infrastructure growth has been somewhat balanced with over-structure growth, but in Iraq this is not the case. Countries in region and world powers are strongly opposed to prosperity and democracy in Iraq and seek to block Iraq's progress for two reasons: first, to prevent and stop the democracy process in Iraq that may affect Arab countries in region. Second, Iran-Iraq coalition and its impact on Persian Gulf that could threaten the interests of West and its vassalage rulers. What Islamic Republic of Iran is looking for in Iraq is a stable, secure and powerful country, which must always take into account the possibilities and always monitor political and social events in Iraq and take appropriate orientation and action in accordance with Iran foreign policy principles. If national unity and integration are maintained, Iraq will be a calm and safe

neighbor for Iran and region. Iraq can be Iran's strategic ally in ideological and political realm. But if it goes out of national unity and integration, will face internal crises resulting in poverty and insecurity. In this case, ethnic and religious groups will ignore their role and pave the way for other countries to intervene. In worst case, breakup of Iraq would be within federal government and could be a battleground for third powers to expand their influence in Middle East strategic region. The way out of the current identity crisis in Iraq is to establish a strong, stable and inclusive government that will attract the trust and attention of all ethnic and religious groups.

This article attempts to analyze the situation in Iraq in terms of ethnic and religious identity, and describes briefly crisis that followed it in various historical periods, from beginning of independence until 2003 to Saddam fall, and explains in detail from 2003 to early 2020. Using an analytical-descriptive approach and relying on constructivism theory, this study while examining identity crisis in new Iraq (post-Saddam), addresses question of "How identity crisis in Iraq has affected the approach, direction and orientation of Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy in internal, regional and international dimensions?" Studying and analyzing this article, it can be concluded that current ethnic and religious identity crisis in Iraq paves way for Iran to face internal, regional and international challenges which promote security affairs. Iraq neighborhood and proximity to Iran, being in Middle East as most pressing region, being center of international developments and hardships in last two decades, and most importantly much similarities and commonalities with Iran in terms of texture and construction of ethnic, religious, social, petroleum resources and ... as well as being affected and influenced by conflicts and interests of both Iran and Iraq from each other are main reasons that makes need to carefully study of this research. In post 2003 renewal process, Iraq has not been able to overcome the national identity crisis and political legitimacy, and these two crises have led to a third crisis called security. Therefore, Iraq must also deal with persistent national identity crisis and the security consequences of nation-state underdevelopment. Although a new political structure based on federalism, democracy, and elections has been formed since 2003, there is still a long way to achieve desired political order and proper identity framework in which all ethnic-religious group interests are served (Golchin

and Amiri Moghadam,2019:250). Iraq's story since April 2003 is mainly about deconstruction of the already shaky pillars of 'nation'. Therefore, the most important element of nation building is to revive or produce a national narrative which is stronger than ever, and which can be accepted by nation's components. Nation building is a process of institutional, socio-political and ideological dimensions, and no viable state can be found without a credible, but also sociable and appealing narrative. Reconstruction of national identity is main challenge towards re-inventing a viable Iraq nation (Harrith,2010: 9).

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