# Regional powers and crises in the Arab Middle East

**Seyyed Abbas Hosseini**[1]

**Abstract**

As the most exuberant area of the current world, the Middle East is one of the major centers under the influence of the superpowers due to its strategic and economic importance. The main purpose of this research study is to investigate and analyze changes in Arab countries in this geographic region. By a historical approach, it is hypothesized that during today's transformations, the Middle East crises are generally influenced by some states in the Arab world. Accordingly, using a descriptive- analytical method and using library resources, it is attempted to provide theoretical explanations of the turmoil and variation induced by transformations of the Middle East. Finally, it is

concluded that the profound and widespread changes in the Middle East had remarkable effects on the international relations and governments in the region and created a new context for regional scrutiny, including Iraq and Syria which endangered security of the region by ISIL presence and thus making transformations in the region. Perhaps regional powers are more involved in the crisis management process than global actors.

**Keywords:** Middle East, Islamic movements, State-nation-building, Salafi Islam

[1]P.H.D student of political science of Azad University, Chalous branch.
Email:seid_abbas_hosseini@ yahoo.com

**Introduction**

Due to its strategic and economic importance, the Middle East is turned into one of the main defining elements or ontological foundations of the post-Cold War world. Not only has the importance of the Middle East not decreased after the Cold War, but also it became more important both economically and strategically. In other words, given its main role in the capitalist economy; that is, to provide the raw materials required for the driving the industry and production, Middle East is important for the global system more than any other region in the world (Azinanadi, Darabi,2014: 521). Thus, regionalization of conflicts has occurred, however, no sustainable structures were created to prevent conflicts and manage them. In spite of different definitions, the Middle East, a geographical zone from Morocco to Iran, includes Arab countries, Israel and Iran. Interdependence in the Middle East security domain does not necessarily mean co-operation. Generally, any peaceful settlement in a particular area requires comprehensive regional commitments. The differences between the countries of the Middle East region reflect the lack of regional inclusive institutions; because whenever there is institutional cooperation in a region, then there will be conflicts across the region, and domestic coalitions and co-operation will form against the opposite party (Izadi, Akbari, 1395:46). Since 2011, the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa encountered unrest and protests. These changes were in response to the political and social conditions of these countries, which started from Tunisia, and in short term, extended to other countries such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Ordain, and even the Shiite areas in Saudi Arabia. Among these responses, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (Ekhvanolmoslemin) movement was formed on the basis of Salafi Sunni thought. Given that, the authors of this paper will analyze regional powers and crises in the Arab Middle East. Therefore, to analyze the current transformations in the Middle East, using the evidence and historical experiences, some scenarios were raised in an attempt to explain the thought in relation to the subject of research.

**Research Theoretical Literature**
**Recent Islamic Movements in the Middle East**

As part of each society's identity, religion defines the interests and political action. In the West, religion is considered to be a social and non-political element. However, in the Muslim world, such as the countries in the Middle East, it is considered the society's identity and a distinguishing issue. Today religion is merged in the international policies and has undergone a broad conceptual change(Grayp,2007: 200). The mainstream of the international relations with a materialistic sociological attitude having a contradictory approach towards sociological semantic attitudes, represents a discourse about the interests of power, modernity, secularism. The mainstream ignores religion, which is the origin of identity and culture from an ontological perspective (Ebrahimi, 2010:166).

Popular uprisings having begun with changes in Tunisia in the Middle East region since late 2010, are important from both the theoretical and conceptual perspectives of the crisis and the movement, as well as the regional and international perspective. Since many analysts believe that the popular protests in the Arab world are attributed to inefficiencies and non- accountability of governments, the study of the emergence of a modern state in this region and its features on the one hand, and behavior of authoritarian governments with people on the other hand, can help us understand the nature of the state in the Middle East. The presence of rentier states rich in oil in this part of the world, and also the patterns governing their societies, including Neo-potrimonialism and Soltanism, has driven the popular protests in the area, as well as, the identity dilemma. Indeed, it is obvious that the protest movements over rentier states extended to quasi- rentier ones; states which despite changing their prior social contract-society (welfare and employment in exchange for loyalty and compliance)- did not accept the requirements of this change in the social contract in the political domain (tax in exchange for representation). At best, they made some economical reforms.

Explanation of the new social movements and attention to government structure type in the Middle East is important. Within a hybrid approach, if we consider inherited kingdom regime and the royal regime in the communities of this region, we will realize that

in communities within inherited kingdoms there are more peaceful collective actions and protests due to the power of patriarchal traditions; while in societies with royal regimes that are mainly armed with military coups, the protest movements are of a more destructive nature, and the crackdown is even more intense. In such societies, compared to the former ones, liberal movements develop faster and eventuate earlier, however are usually reversible. Generally, given the current condition around the world and modern means of communication, the movements include the following features: central role of the youths, lack of leadership and the organization of the unit, transition from the existing political actors, decline of radical Islamism and the emergence of moderate Islam, inefficiency of limiting the political context and the irrevocability of pan-Arabism and socialism ideologies (Vaezi, 2012).

With the onset of the wave of transformations in the countries of North Africa and extending it to a number of other Arab countries, the West recognized these developments as the continuation of the third wave of democratization or the fourth wave of democratization. However, given the Islamic perspective, it can be said that in such countries two issues occur simultaneously; demand for more democracy on the one hand, and more attention to religion in the administration of the country being represented in the Moderate Islamist discourse. By a more profound insight into the transformations of the region, it can be easily understood that returning to religious foundations is among the top priorities of people. In an overview, in such countries there are three mainstream: 1) Secular-liberal stream which does not believe in the role of Islam in the political and social life of the country, but recognizes religion a personal issue related to the private life of individuals; 2) The moderate Islamism stream, which is represented in the groups of the Brotherhood and integrates Islamism with modernity and democracy; and 3) The traditionalist stream that has emerged in the Salafi groups and its leaders believe that modernity and democracy are in contradiction with Islam. Indeed, the two latter groups play a greater role in the current political condition of the Arab countries.

Different perspectives are presented about the causes of social movements in Arab countries, in which the effects of internal and external effects are emphasized. Formation and expansion of the middle class governments' attitude towards the issue of Palestine, their relationship with the US and Israel, corruption and inefficiency, the decline of legitimacy, and the absence of civil institutions are some of the causes of these movements in the Middle East.

Non-democratic and non-national regimes, authoritarian regimes, bad governance and oppression are some of the political causes of the movements in the region. Furthermore, financial corruption and economic pressures leading to poor livelihoods and poverty and deprivation, are some of the economic reasons of the movements. The governments that used to provide social services and in return, expected that people follow them, have been transformed since the 1980s, and have not been able to provide previous services. Nevertheless, they continued to use the power of security and military, and demanded that people- whom they considered as "citizens"- follow them loyally. An interesting point in such movements is their similarities such as, how to mobilize public opinion and the form of demonstration, avoidance of violence, participation of protesters with different social and educational backgrounds, the prominent role of youth and women, and the use of new media technology. In particular, the role of various media, including visual, audio and virtual, is indisputable in the onset and continuation of these movements. Advances in ICT and the use of these new tools by the public, accelerated popular movements in the Middle East (Vaezi, 2012). As pointed out, the popularity of the movements of the Arab world made the people's religion (Islam) crucial feature of the movements. Thus, the Islamic identity of recent movements can be emphasized as one of their important features.

**Government - Nation-building in the Middle East**

Government - Nation-building is a process through which the citizens gradually reproduce their common features within the framework of a unit land; through which the relation between the government and the nation is set and defined in different forms, such as political, legal, economical, cultural, and social structures. Based on this process, formation of an inclusive government over a

set of social groups would be possible (Banihashem, 2002:11). Government-nation-building was the fundamental issue of Middle Eastern policy in the present era. In fact, although the process has a long history in the political literature, given the structures of the governments in the Middle East, it was not so important prior to World War I. However, it was only after the international transformations induced by the 2 world wars that resulted in a radical change in the Middle East; that is, the emergence of new governments and the onset of government-nation-building process. In such a condition, most of the countries in the Middle East whose governments did not fully conform to all the cultural and ethnic groups in their land, confronted the crisis of identity, legitimacy, influence and distribution in the process of transition from traditional society and political and economic modernization. To confront emerging challenges, these countries attempted to integrate all the people from cultural, social and political perspectives (nation-building) and to strengthen the institution of a dominant state (state-building), using nationalist ideologies and authoritarianism (Fost, 2007:40).

**Economic challenges in the Middle East**

Due to the high risks of economic policy, ethnic tensions, civil war, the quality of the administrative system, assassination and political violence, the lack of civil liberties and the dominance of law, instances of political and economic risks expanded sharply in the Middle East. It inhibited the process of economic development. One of the instances affecting the process of instability in the Middle East is the issue of political risk which influenced the investment process in the Middle East. In fact, for any company, given the market opportunities in the Middle East, political stability is a matter of great concern. The Middle East is facing increasing threats, such as the violence and unrest of the civil war in Libya, Yemen, Iraq and Syria, also, the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the spread of terrorist groups, millions of refugees and displaced and homeless people, descending oil prices and political tensions. This affected the Middle East economy and investment directly. For instance, according to World Bank statistics, in 2015, direct foreign investment in the Middle East and North Africa was about 54 billion $,while in 2010 it was about 86

billion $ only in the Middle East. It reflects a decline of foreign investment in this region which directly effects economic growth (Arghavaani, Khoshgoftar, 2017).

Today, the factor sharply influencing the economic trend in the region is that the Arab countries are experiencing a significant regional turbulence, such as Islamic Awakening which led to the overthrow of ruling regimes in a number of countries in the region, and in some other countries the turbulence still continues (Campante and chor,2012: 167).

Besides the past difficulties, this issue transformed context of the Middle East. In fact, with political and social changes taking place in many Middle Eastern and North African countries, and continuation of local clashes, the exporters and importers were increasingly concerned about the sustainability of the region's resources.

Internal crises sometimes lead to changes of states and coming on of new states, and sometimes cause instability of and changes in policies. On the other hand, replacement of the regimes might, in the long term, result in chaos. As Robert Capelin referred to it as the future anarchy, it might cause new problems. Obviously, such transformations in the region and a country will affect the programs, policies, and goals of convergence in the region. Therefore, as governments change, those who are at the top of the agenda will be dismissed during the implementation of their plans. Thus, the programs and plans will change, or at least delay. This, in turn, hinders development and progress of the country, on the one hand, and disrupts the convergence growth process, on the other hand.

**Regional Challenges (Political- Security) of the Middle East**

In addition to the issue of terrorism and religious extremism, the main challenges in the Middle East region are elaborated below:

1.     **Conflict between Israel and Palestine**

During the post-Cold War period, many transformations took place on the Israeli-Palestinian internal scene, one of the most important of which was Hamas's victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. The transformation had many consequences which were not favored and accepted by the US and some Western and Arab governments. Some of the consequences include Israel's lack of recognition by Hamas and the emphasis on

resistance, intensification of the emotions and role of Islamist parties in the region, and increasing regional role and influence of Iran given its relations with most of the Palestinian groups such as Hamas. Therefore, pressures on Hamas and its financial sanctions increased, especially by the West, while Fath group was more supported (Vaezi, 2015).

After Hamas victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections, USA and Israel used all their means to marginalize and exert pressure on this movement (Hamas). Particularly, after the changes in June and Hamas's military dominance over the Gaza Strip, they supported Mahmoud Abbas and his elected prime minister, Salam Fayyad. At the end of his presidency, the Bush administration made major efforts to form an independent Palestinian state. However, they failed. Meanwhile, on the Israeli internal scene, Olmert was one of Israel's weakest and most unpopular leaders during six decades of Israeli life. Basically, one of the main internal problems of Israel is the problem of leadership transfer from generation to generation. After the formation of Kadima party by Sharon, and public opinion support for separation from the Palestinians Olmert managed to become the prime minister. Unlike his predecessors, he had no military background. After the war between Israel and Hizbullah of Lebanon in 2006 and publication of the report of the Viñograd inquiry into the failure of Israel to achieve its goals in the war, Olmert's position was very shaky. Unlike Begin and Sharon, who managed to convince public and most political groups to advance their own plans in two sensitive periods (peace with Egypt and exiting the Gaza Strip), Olmert was not a competent and efficient leader. Israel's disgraceful defeat in the 33-day war against the Hizbullah of Lebanon revoked the myth of the invincibility of the Israeli army. Therefore, Olmert was subject to serious charges, so that the Winograd Committee blamed him. Thus, the United States has sought to support the weak Israeli leader by reopening of the peace talks and getting Israel's maximum concessions.

In the last year of the Bush administration, Condoleezza Rice traveled to the region eight times (on average every 40 days). George Bush's Idea for the Annapolis Conference in which he talked about creating a "new political horizon" in the Middle East peace process, was considered only a few weeks after the

transformations in Gaza. The USA and Israel hoped that after the meeting, Mahmoud Abbas's position would be strengthened among the Palestinians. It was based on the argument that strengthening of Mahmoud Abbas can improve his position and the Fatah faction among the Palestinians toward Hamas and other jihadi forces (Vaezi, 2015).

The presence of Syria in the conference is also remarkable. Although Syria sent a delegate to Annapolis to justify negotiations with the Golan, the state of Bashar al-Assad was clearly aware of the negative consequences of not attending the Annapolis conference. Nevertheless, as predicted, some important issues, including determining the status of Jerusalem and borders, remained unclear and only some sub-issues were agreed upon. Annapolis was considered a failed show before it was formed, so that, experts recognized it as a purposeful game by the United States in the final years of Bush administration to compensate for its mistakes in domestic affairs as well as the region (Review of the Middle East transformations, 2007).

In Dec 27$^{th}$ 2008, the final days of Bush administration, the Olmert state, which was in its final days, launched a massive assault on the Gaza Strip. The attack, which was initially limited to aerial bombardment, took on a new dimension with the Israeli ground attack on the Gaza Strip. Because of the defeat in Lebanon in 2006, the Israel government was very cautious about stating its real objectives in the Gaza Strip; such that, the main purpose of the war was to end the Hamas missile attacks in southern Israel, and not Hamas total destruction. The reason was to lower the expectations of Israeli public opinion about achievements of the war during the election days. According to Israeli analysts, the war supported significantly by the Israelis, started aiming at increasing the chances of victory of the ruling parties, especially Kadima and Labor. Given the failure of thirty-three- day war and also withdraw from the Gaza Strip- a war that for many Israelis, began the launch of more missile attacks in the southern cities of the country- these parties lost their public luck. One of the main reasons for the attack on the Gaza Strip was to compensate for the mistakes of Kadima and Labor parties only a few weeks to the sensitive elections in February, 2009. Thus, all the campaign was designed accordingly which was efficient in short term. The heads of Israel state

achieved their goal to some extent, so that the Kadima Party, having 28 seats out of 128 seats in parliament (the Knesset), had the most representatives in the parliament. However, at the end of the Likud party led by Benjamin Netanyahu, won the leadership of a new radical right-wing coalition government with one less seat-27 seats. The Labor party which was traditionally the leading party in the country and led by Ehud Barak- Israeli Defense Minister during the 22-day war- could win only 13 seats. Therefore, at least temporarily, it was not able to maintain strong influence on policies of the country (Vaezi, 1394).

Another objective of the attack was to undermine the military capability of Hamas. In this regard, Israel could not fulfill its objectives, because until the final day of the war, Hamas continued its rocket attacks on Israeli cities. Furthermore, the Israeli army could not occupy Gaza, despite siege of the city. Many military experts believe that Israel largely refused to enter a full-scale urban war, since it would lead to a massive loss in the Israeli army. In fact, the Israeli military strategy was more to exerted widespread pressure on Hamas to retreat and surrender the group than to fully occupy Gaza. However, this strategy was sharply criticized by a part of the Israeli society, and in particular by the Likud party, since ultimately it did not lead to the overthrow of Hamas or even undermining of the military capability of this group.

In its final days, the Bush administration, according to its long-standing policy, supported this strategy. However, Obama and his assistants, preparing for the transfer of power, strongly refused to comment on the strategy. He only expressed that "civilians' deaths in Gaza and Israel is a cause of my deep concern." The reason for his silence was, as he said, "there is only one president in each period" (i.e, currently Bush is the president and he should not be expected to have any comments). However, Obama expressed widespread comment on other issues, including the economic crisis and Mumbai attacks, during the transition period (from 4 November to 20 January) (Los Angeles Times, 2009).

In fact, Obama's silence regarding the 22- day war indicated the USA new state's support of Israel which disappointed those expecting changes in the USA's policies toward Israel. The Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip was schedules so as to eventuate before

Obama's inauguration on January 20th, and thus, not to engage the new Obama administration in a foreign crisis in its early days.

Despite the 22- day war could, partly, restore the reputation of the Israeli government and military inside the country in the short term, the war resulted in serious consequences for the Zionist regime. Slaughter of more than 1300 Palestinians most of whom were civilians, particularly women and children, and the widespread reflection of its news around the world, especially in the region, undermined its reputation. Furthermore, failure to defeat Hamas, even after ground attacks, has undermined the reputation of Israeli army as a powerful and invincible army. Failure to defeat Hamas and Israeli army crimes led to more popularity of Hamas among the Palestinians and Arabs. In fact, the 22- day war strengthened Islamism in the region and belief in the need for an Islamic resistance against Israel and America more than ever.

Scrutinizing these transformations at the international, regional and domestic levels, and after about three decades of peace talks, it can be concluded thatall solutions, negotiations and understandings between the parties to resolve the conflict would fail, unlessPalestinian rights go away, Israel ends its occupational policies, and the United States abandon its policy of supporting Tel Aviv.With the coming of the radical government of Benjamin Netanyahu, and while the Palestinians are divided between Hamas and Fatah,even holding peace talks seems far-fetched.This will be a serious challenge for the Obama administration in the coming years.

2.      **The Issue of Iraq**

In 2003, the Bush administration called for the fight against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and invaded to Iraq for the military occupation. However, even after seven years of the presence of the American Army in Iraq, security, peace and stability were not established in Iraq. On the other hand, empowerment of the Shiite groups having friendly relations with Iran prompted American domestic criticism against the Bush administration. Thus, the United States was no longer pursuing its goals in Iraq, so that after a few years, many members of both Democrat and Republican parties demanded that American troops withdraw from Iraq.The USA failures in Iraq led to investigations (from March to December 2006) into the condition of Iraq and the

possible solutions for the USA in Iraq. The investigations were conducted by a research team (called Iraq Study Group) from both parties, which was led by James Baker and Lee Hamilton. The 9-month investigations of the research team known as Baker-Hamilton Commission, especially emphasized contribution of key Middle Eastern countries including Iran and Syria to address the Iraq crisis. One of the most important reasons for a new American strategy in Iraq, in January 2007, is failure of the previous strategy, which not only was not effective on establishing stability and security, but also, led to the spread of unrest and instability, and signing a security agreement between the United States and Iraq, and the schedule for withdrawing US troops from Iraq (Vaezi, 2015)

The first modern regional reality in the Middle East in recent years was the rise of Iraq dominated by the Aqrah and Shiites, which was a failure, resulting in failure of American strategies. Despite the primary objective of the USA in Iraq to create a model government with the influence and power of secular liberal Shiites such as Iyad Allawi, the victory of Islamist Shiites in the power struggle, and the continuation of insecurity, and the resulting increase in American material and human costs created a new unpredicted condition in Iraq. For several decades, the USA policy in the Persian Gulf was to balance Iran and Iraq. At the start of the US invasion of Iraq, the Americans predicted that the rivalry between Iraq and the Iranian Shiites was more profound thanIraqi Shiite and Sunni Sectarian rivalry. However, the transformation of Iraq since 2003 indicates contrary facts. As a result of increasing sectarian tensions in Iraq, at least in the early years after occupation, gradually the sense of nationalism diminished and sectarian identity was strengthened.

Eliminating Saddam Hussein's regime and failing to establish political and military stability in Iraqcreated a new opportunity for Iran at the regional level (Bahgat,2007,p.5-14). America made a mistake in understanding the sociological facts of Iraq and predicting how social forces work. By two major transformations, i.e, the power of the Shiites close to Iran and the resistance of Sunni Arabs against the political trend, and as a result, the continuation of instability and insecurity, strategies of the White

House have gradually changed. The strategy of forming a model government, changed to strategy of victory, and currently, the strategy of "failure and low- cost exit" is on the agenda of the United States. Now, the issue of Iraq has become the main issue of US foreign policy, so that many of its policies in the Middle East are centered on this issue. Announcing a schedule for the withdrawalof American troops from Iraq the Obama administration follows up the "non-failure and low- cost exit" strategy that was decided in the last year of Bush administration. Nevertheless, to succeed in this strategy, the Obama administration definitely needed Iran's cooperation in this regard. The political structure created in Iraq with the help of the United States based on a consensus-based democracy, and provides proportional contributions to the three main groups (Shiites, Arak, and Sunnis), underwent transformations on the onset of the country's second national election (January 16, 2010). By leaving the Shiite coalition and not agreeing to consensual democracy, Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, seeks to form a national government in the country. Therefore, the new political structure of Iraq cannot be regarded as an American achievement, but is the result of interactions of political and religious forces inside Iraq.

3. **The Muslim Brotherhood movement**

Since its foundation in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has been one of the most important and active political and social forces in Egypt and some other countries of the Middle East. Like any other movements, this movement was the result of the condition in which it occurred. In the Arab world and in Egypt, Yemen, and Syria the Islamic parties are rooted deeply. The Muslim Brotherhood is the biggest, most experienced, and most influential party in such countries which has various tendencies within itself.In the Islamic Awakening, the Muslim Brotherhood was the most organized group among the revolutionaries. The most important claims of Islamist discourse against the problems of Arab societies include rejection of these authoritarian and corrupt systems, supporting the oppressed Palestinians, opposition to any compromise and establishment of relations with Israel, formation of Islamic government inside, and execution of religious orders in these communities.Since its formation, the Muslim Brotherhood movement underwent many fluctuations in its thoughts and

aspirations. The movement reflected the dominant social, political and economic conditions in Egypt (that is, the expansion of the influence of colonialism in Islamic countries, the unfavorable economic conditions and the existing discrimination in society).

These factors were an important platform for attracting people to this movement. In such a condition, The Muslim Brotherhood was formed by Hassan- o- Albana who demanded the return to Quranic ideas and avoid sectarian strife and unity of Islamic society.They demanded a movement to return to the real Islam and to solve the problems of society and to get rid of crises. Hassan al-Banna created a one of a kind organization among the Islamic countries. Since beginning its activities in Syria,the Muslim Brotherhood movement, founded and run in Egypt by the Salafist institutions, showed great effort to seize power in the country; Based on its religious beliefs, the movement could quickly achieve a good position in Syria where 74% of the populations were Sunni. Particularly, it became popular among the rural and urban middle class. Using its influence, the movement could play an active role in different political and social issues, so that from the beginning, it became one of the main actors inside Syria, and thus, competed with other powerful parties such as the Communists and the Ba'ath Party to seize the power.However, when the Ba'ath Party managed to dominate the government due to the collapse of Syria and the widespread interference of French colonialism, the rivalry between the Brotherhood Movement and the ruling party came into an armed and violent phase. Since the Brotherhood movement has benefited greatly from the influence in the Syria and had lots of fans, these conflicts became so bloody and serious (Dehqan, Ketabi, Jaafarnejad, 2016).Events that occurred after the coming of Bashar al-Assad,especially an open political condition in his first year of government, and after the USA invasion to Iraq and Afghanistan, led to resumption of Brotherhood activities in Syria, so that they restored their former power in the country.

Then, with the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the Brotherhood Movement which had deep hatred of the Alawite Assad government, always sought to overthrow this government in Syria, and was always supported and stimulated by the global Brotherhood organization and the Arab countries in the

region,managed to take advantage of the opportunity. Given its historical role and impact in different periods in the political and social issues of Syria, and high influence on different groups, the movement attempted to rebuild itself, and emphasizing religion, attempted to provoke Sunnis, especially Sunni Salafi activists, and together with the Takfiri groups, it questioned the legitimacy of the central government and entered an all- round struggle with Bashar al Asad government. Hence, the Brotherhood movement could play an important role in fomenting the war in Syria (Dehqan, Ketabi, Jaafarnejad, 2016).

4.        **Syria's Challenge with ISIL**

As a new demonstration of radical Islamic fundamentalism, the ISIL groupcommitted countless crimes in Iraq, Syria and other countries on the pretext of reviving Islamic caliphate and as an effective actor in international relations,plays an increasing role in the current international relations.The issue of ISIL is affected by the internal transformations in Iraq and the deterioration of the military and political structures in the country,problems arising from the transfer of power to the new government of Heydar al-Abadi, failure of the Nouri al-Maliki government in the Sunni areas and crisis of influence and authority, lack of strategic attitude and emergence of separatist movements in Kurdistan area, inefficiency of the military in dealing with guerrilla and irregular wars, public panic and deep civil cavity, and above all, ISIL accessing the new financial resources and exercising control over critical areas and centers. ISIL caused the mystery of terrorism become a major shock, and possibly, to become an international disaster (Nazari&Alsiimri, 2015:77). Moreover, domestic weakness of the governments in the region,historical contempt of the Arab world and the wish of the caliphate and Islamic unity as the key to overcome the historical contempt which is due to globalization, and the USA policies in the region are factors contributing to the rise and development of ISIL (Aminian&Zamaani, 2016:1-27).One of the causes of the rise of terrorists like ISIL in the Middle East is the overthrow of authoritarian governments whose substitute governments are not strong enough to deal with terrorist groups. The trend began by the US military intervention in Iraq in 2003which transmits extremists and terrorists from different parts of the world to Iraq and Syria. It was completed with Arabic

transformations in recent years. Now, in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Libya there is no state with enough political and military power to confront ISIL.

One of the basic reasons for the emergence of ISIL in the Middle East is that there is no modern state- nation. Currently, the Middle East is among the areas where there are "bankrupt states" and "weak states".The main feature of this situation is that there is resistance against the structure of "weak governments" of the central government and thesovereignty of the central government is not recognized. In Iraq and Libya, are the phenomena of bankrupt governments.

At the beginning of the invasion to Mosul, ISIL forces were about 700 to 2,000. However, they managed to rule over the city with a population of 2 million people, because the Salafist thinking of the Takfiri groups is tied to the tribal structure of Iraq.

During the last decade, no state was formed based on national unity in Iraq. It seems that one of the main reasons of ISIL emergence is Al-Maliki's weakness in building power-of-arms alliance among the Shiites as well as the Sunnis. ISIL's progress over the past year and expansion of the security crisis occurred in areas where were mainly Sunni areas. At the head of a coalition of Shiite groups, Al- Maleki was the prime minister of Iraq from 2006 to 2013. From the point of view of Al- Maliki's critics, his sectarian and autocratic policies resulted in the emergence of ISIL in Iraq, and thus political and sectarian instability (Azin, Seifzade, 2015).

Therefore, the basic and fundamental level making it easier for their dominance is lack of a central state to have control over the national borders. Next level is the formation of national belonging among the various forces which is so weak in these countries. If there is such power to hinder the formation of such groups, undoubtedly they will not emerge or, cannot develop beyond a local group.

One of the most important concepts of international relations is "actor". From this perspective, the nature of ISIL action in international affairs as a terrorist group, state, or social movement would be in line with achieving a more just world or anti-regime movement in the form of anti- hegemonic and anti- global system

forces that challenge the dominant organizational political hierarchy.

## 5. Policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia

After the Cold War, conflict of security in the Middle East had signs of identity confrontation and linked to geopolitical views of regional countries. Iran and Saudi Arabia are playing a strategic and security role in such a process. Many of the conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia can be observed in the signs of identity. Saudi Arabia used identity mechanisms to spread security conflicts in the Middle East. Saudi Behavioral Model in dealing with Iran in countries such as Iran, Afganistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Iraq is based on geo-political and identity signs. The Salafist thinking should be considered the basis of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi thinking. Together, they formed Takfiri thinking.

Takfiri thinking in Saudi Arabia is the basis of ideological and identity components to expand the security crises and create radical political transformations in the Middle East. Currently, the conflict in Syria is guided by Saudi Arabia, and Syria may be considered as the forefront of the geopolitical and ideological struggle of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda's activity in Syria led to a massive human tragedy and activities of Salafist groups in Syria exacerbated conflict and crisis.

The main focus of the new Arab conflict in dealing with Iran can be observed in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Yemen. Groups that are part of Al-Qaeda, attempt to organize war against Iran; a war which is a symbol of the "low-intensity war" security strategy of Saudi Arabia against Iran, and is based on connection of ideological, identity and strategic components (Mosallinejad, 2015).

Saudi Arabia shaped a different pattern of Islamism against Iran; Islamism with a Salafist approach which the foundation of Saudi strategic thinking to counter the ideological role of Iran. Obviously, in such a condition, The United States and Saudi Arabia co-operate in confronting a common enemy. The Islamic Republic is a symbol of support for the revolutionary groups and political Islam in the Middle East. Having the same ideological attitude toward dealing with the geopolitical and identity area of Iran in the Middle East, the United States and Saudi Arabia launched a strategic alliance against Iran. Supporting groups like ISIL and Al-

Nusra is a symbol of Saudi Arabia's geopolitical and ideological confrontation with Iran. In addition to the mentioned groups, there is a wide range of propagandistic and Takfiri forces that organized their actions in countering Iran's strategic geopolitics in the Middle East (Riedel, 2015: 20).

The mechanisms they used include strategic controversy in Bahrain, serious controversy with Bashar al-Assad state, destabilizing Lebanese political structure through terror, and bombing and suicide bombing (Pollack, 2015:5).

The main focus of Saudi Arabia's new controversy with Iran can be observed in Iraq. Groups that are part of Al- Qaeda, attempted to organize war against Iran; a war which is a symbol of the "low-intensity war" security strategy of Saudi Arabia against Iran, and is based on connection of ideological, identity and strategic components. Such a process resulted in exacerbation the crisis, the spread of violence and the dispersal of terrorism in various geographical areas.

As one of the major actors in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia had a significant impact on regional transformations. The facts about the elements of power and its consequences cannot be ignored. Thus, in this section, the role of Saudi Arabia as an influential country in the transformations of the region, is investigated. Therefore, it seems to be necessary to study how Saudi Arabia appeared and what the role of Wahhabism in the structure of this country is (Alexander, 2011: 29).

**Conclusion**

In the first decade of the 21th century, the greatest controversy and political tensions occurred in the Middle East, and currently, it is in the most sensitive and most important historical period. The region is one of the main areas of US offensive activity after the September 9, 2001 incident. The USA invasion to Iraq in 2003 is one of its major measures in the Middle East which led to an increase in the US military presence in the area. This is the main and most important concern of the country's foreign policy in the international arena. The uprisings in the Arab world, which caused significant changes in the Middle East and North Africa, can be examined from different perspectives. Nevertheless, the first

question regarding these changes would be about the nature of the uprisings. The emphasis is on the fact that being nation- wide is the most important feature of the new movements in the Arab world, and other features and transformations are somewhat due to this focal feature. In the transformed Arab countries, the people, with all their special Middle East features, were an important force in the realm of politics; while, in the past decades, the governments, military forces and some parties and groups as well as foreign actors in these countries made the most important contributions in politics.As a new force relying on itself and without the intermediaries of parties and groups or permission of the government or foreign support, the nation is making contributions in politics. Thus, some other features of the movements can also be included: anti-tyranny, Islamic identity, independence, peaceful, collective leadership and the youth's central role. Regarding the nation- wide uprisings in the region, it may be that the revolutions were in fact a social response by the civilians to the old and basic problem of underdevelopment and crises in these countries. Generally, at domestic level, many Middle Eastern Arab governments are placed at the extreme end (poor) range of social-political coherence.ISIL's empowerment in recent years and seizure of large parts of Syria and Iraq, and extensive political-military actions led to new power relations in the region. To investigate these relations, the main discourses involved were addressed, including the discourse of Salafi political Islam or extremist Islam which is represented by ISIL.

In spite of its natural resources, this geographical region underwent the most underdevelopment and poverty.A region with the largest empires and most powerful governments in the last centuries is under the broadest political instability. The first fact about the Middle East is that apart from all the differences in various economic, political and social areas, its historical identity is heavily influenced by value interconnection. Often, there is no geographical border, since religion, as a splicer of all values, has a transnational nature. The second fact is that since the Crusades, the West sought to institutionalize its sovereignty in this region. The West's attempt to engage in the region by the establishment of the Zionist regime is not just a matter of historical books, but is also well understood by the common people. The third fact about the

Middle East is that many Middle Eastern countries are still experiencing extractive and agricultural economics and did not make remarkable progress in the production-driven economy. This means that they did not involve in the production cycle of the global capitalist system.Therefore, they did not match up with their values. These facts made this region different from other geographical regions in the world in that it is involved in chronic and persistent conflicts and crises. The crisis of regional security in the Middle East is under the influence of the structure of the international system and distribution of power among the effective countries in the region such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Participation of the Arab Union countries, especially Egypt and the United Arab Emirates in regional policies of Turkey and Arabiacaused regional crisis expansion. Regional security management in Iran-Saudi relations is only possible on the basis of regional equilibrium policy making.Iran-Saudi security conflict extended to the regional level. Currently, the conflict in Syria is guided by Saudi Arabia, so that Syria may be considered as the forefront of the geopolitical and ideological struggle of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Finally, not only is the Middle East one of the world's greatest civilization centers, but also the origin of many of the world's cultural and civilization domains. But, painfully, it is under the political dominance of Western and European powers.

**Reference**

- Ebrahimi, N. (2010) Salafi Islam discourse and globalization of Middle East security. Strategic studies quarterly, year 13, Vol (4)

- Azin, A. and Seifzade, A. (2015) A Study of the social and political context of the emergence of ISIL in the Middle East. Foreign policies quarterly, year 29, vol 4.

- Arqavaani, F. and Khoshgoftar, H. (2017) Regional Middle East business blocks: review of the challenges from political economical perspective. Foreign Policy quarterly, year 31, vol 4.

- Izadi, J. and Akbari, H. (2016) Political islam and the West Asian security order. International relations study quarterly, year 9, vol 35.

- Aminian, B. and Zamaani, H. (2016) A theoretical framework for analyzing ISIL behavior. International political research quarterly, Azad University (Shahreza city), vol 26.

- Banihashem, M. (2002) the process of nation making in the Middle East. The Middle East book (1), Cultural institute of international studies and research (Abrar contemporary Tehran)

- A review of the transformations of the Middle East (2007)Report of the meeting of the Deputy Foreign Minister of the center for strategic research.

- Fost, L. (2007) the Middle East international relations. Translated by Soltaninejad, A., Tehran, bureau of political and international studies.

- Nazari, A. and Alsiimri, A. (2014) Review of the ISIL identity: An understanding the intellectual, political and social domains. Political sciences quarterly, vol 68.

- MalekiAzinAbadi, R. and Darabi, S. (2014) the USA and Salafism in the Middle East: from hard power to intelligent insight. Foreign policy quarterly, year 28, vol 3.

- Mosallinejad, A. (2015) Regional equilibrium policy in Iranian-Saudi relations. Policy quarterly,Journal of faculty of Law and Political Science, period 46, vol4.

- Dehqan, Y.; Ketabi, M.; and Jaafarnejad, M. (2016) The role of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the Syrian crisis. 2 quarterlies of Political Sociology Research in the Islam world, period 5, vol 1, successive 10.

- Vaezi, M. (2012) The Obama administration's approach to the Islamic world: A change or continuation of American policies. Foreign relations quarterly, year 4, spring.
- Vaezi, M. (2015) the Title of US political security strategies in the Middle East. Strategic Research Center
- Alexander, Cooley and H. Nexon, Daniel (2011), "Bahrain's Base Politics", in: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67700/Alexander-cooley-and-daniel-h-nexon/bahrains-basepolitics .
- Pollack, Kenneth (2015),The Dangers of the Arab Intervention in Yemen", Washington DC: Brookings
- BahgatGawdat, (2007) "Iran and the United States: the Emerging Security Paradigm in the Middle East", Parameters, Summer, Vol.37, ISS.2. pp.5-14.
- Campante, Filipe.Chor, Davin. (2012), "Why Was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring ,"Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 26, NO. 2, Spring, pp. 167-88.
- Grayp, Bouma, and SeyedKhatab (2007); Democracy and Islam, London: Routledge. Robert, Mork (2002); Ideologies of Globalization Contending Visions of a New World Order, London: Routledge .
- World Bank. (2016), "Middle East & North Africa", 6 Agu 2016    ,http://data.worldbank.org/region/middle-east-and-north-africa.