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Components of Terrorism Expansion in the Middle East (Cultural Component Emphasizing Daesh (ISIS) Behavior)

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ABSTRACT

The Middle East is one of the oldest centers of civilization, witnessing the emergence of four major religions: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It also serves as the nexus connecting three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Its geographical location has not only facilitated the movement of goods but has also allowed for the exchange of diverse beliefs. It was expected that with the withdrawal of foreign powers from the Middle East and the presence of vast fossil resources and other potentials in the region, the Middle East would occupy a prominent position in global affairs. Regrettably, the Middle East has not only failed to follow a rational development path but has also transformed into a region characterized by escalating ethnic, tribal, and sectarian tensions, becoming the epicenter of unrest, political crises, and the incubation of terrorism.

Numerous factors contribute to these challenges, some of which are influenced by colonial legacies, governance systems, deprivation, ethnicity, tribalism, religion, tradition, culture, and the lack of essential economic and socio-political infrastructures. All these factors have significantly hindered the development process in the Middle East, consequently playing a substantial role in the proliferation and spread of terrorism.

Today, terrorism has become one of the most important and influential global issues, with the Middle East serving as the primary breeding ground for terrorism and extremism, surpassing other regions in terms of terrorist activities and radicalization. The emergence of groups such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Daesh (ISIS), Ansar al-Sharia, and many other terrorist and extremist groups in this region attests to this claim. The reasons for the rise of terrorism in the Middle East can be explored in various dimensions, including political, social, economic, and cultural aspects, each of which requires in-depth research.

This paper aims to demonstrate how cultural factors, including beliefs, convictions, traditions, values, and deeply rooted behavioral patterns, have contributed to the proliferation of various groups and movements, especially ISIS, in the region, leading them towards terrorist and extremist behaviors.

Keywords: Terrorism, Middle East, Culture, ISIS

INTRODUCTION

The abhorrent phenomenon of terrorism has been a well-organized crime that has inflicted significant financial and human casualties throughout history. In the era of globalization, terrorist acts and the issue of terrorism are no longer confined to national or regional borders; they affect societies worldwide. Today, terrorism and organized criminal groups are considered one of the most pressing global societal challenges and a threat to the rights of nations and international stability.

The Middle East stands as one of the oldest centers of civilization and governance in the world. This unique position of the Middle East attracted the attention of colonial powers, leading Western colonial states to compete for dominance over the region [1]. The mosaic-like fabric of the Middle East, coupled with its underdevelopment in economic, social, political, and civilizational aspects, has given rise to deprivation and challenges that have turned the Middle East into one of the most crisis-ridden and conflict-prone regions globally.

The problems existing in the Middle East, particularly the issue of terrorism and the resulting crises, not only adversely affect the countries within the region but also have repercussions on other parts of the world [2]. Unfortunately, the Middle East continues to be embroiled in a political competition, regional disputes, and persistent challenges, making it one of the primary breeding grounds for terrorist groups and violent activities, especially after the September 11th attacks. Since that date, terrorism in the Middle East has become one of the most significant regional and even global issues, causing widespread fear of terrorism among all nations [3].

As Iran is located in the Middle East and shares borders with countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (which are known as centers of terrorism), understanding the components of terrorism expansion in the Middle East, especially the cultural factors influencing ISIS behaviors, can greatly contribute to enhancing security in the vast territory of Iran.

When examining the history of violent activities and terrorism in the Middle East, it becomes evident that childhood teachings, cultural, political, and socio-economic conditions in the region have created a conducive environment for violent behaviors. In general, the use of violence in the region can be divided into three periods: first, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Islamic groups, influenced by the works of Seyyed Qotb, leaned towards Islamic radicalism and violence against Arab regimes; second, in the late 1980s, when Egyptian radical Islamic groups engaged in violent acts such as physical assassinations of Egyptian government officials and street-level violent clashes with security forces; and third, in the period after the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which witnessed extensive violence by both the Taliban and non-Afghan Islamic extremist forces supporting them, such as Al-Qaeda, against American military and non-military personnel, reaching its peak after the September 11th attacks [4].

In the Middle East, political system transformations, often referred to as the Arab Spring or Islamic Awakening, have been accompanied by the proliferation of terrorist activities, exacerbating the political and cultural tensions among communities and impacting international relations. These tensions, more than anything else, manifest in the growing political-cultural divide between Western and Islamic societies. This divide is mirrored within Western societies in the form of homegrown terrorism, which is, in turn, a stark example of the deepening identity conflicts between Islamic and Western cultures within Western countries.

In the Middle Eastern societies, terrorism activities find fertile ground in exacerbating ethnic, racial, and religious divisions. This situation can be attributed to the existence of conducive conditions for cultural and political conflicts and the presence and intervention of external intervening powers. The guidance of Al-Qaeda's terrorist activities in Iraq against Shi'ites, both within Iraq and on a regional scale, is a prime example of how this phenomenon has generated new forms of ethnic and religious sectarianism not only within Iraq but also across the region [5].



In the past two decades, terrorism has experienced a rapid and mushroom-like growth, and today the world is witnessing the dominance of terrorist movements rooted in a new wave of Salafism. This trend began in 2006 with the emergence of groups like Jebhat al-Nusra and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and has since expanded to other countries. Currently, one of the significant factors contributing to turmoil in the Middle East is the Salafi Takfiri movement (ISIS). This form of Salafism not only weakens Islam itself but also harms the interests of Muslims. It presents a harsh and irrational interpretation of Islam.

The escalating emergence of Salafi Takfiri movements throughout the Middle East in recent years has made everyone aware of the widespread danger they pose [6]. Therefore, understanding this movement, particularly comprehending the cultural components of its expansion, is crucial. Through precise understanding of this threat, we can devise effective strategies to counter it. It is essential to recognize the intellectual and cultural roots of these groups in the fight against them.

In this article, we will first introduce the components of terrorism expansion in the Middle East. Then, we will delve into the cultural factors that influence the behaviors of ISIS. By doing so, we aim to shed light on the factors driving the growth of this extremist movement and to offer insights into how to combat it effectively.

2-1. the Concept of Terrorism

The word "terrorism" has its roots in the Latin word "Ters," and in Arabic, it is equivalent to the word "Erab," which means creating fear, terror, and horror. Terrorism is not a new subject; it has always existed as a social phenomenon throughout history. However, its style and context have evolved over time. Terrorism can be categorized into various forms, such as criminal terrorism, ideological terrorism, national terrorism, political terrorism, cyber terrorism, state terrorism, and international terrorism. Although terrorism has recently experienced significant quantitative and qualitative growth as a social phenomenon, there is still no universally accepted and definitive definition of terrorism that all legal scholars and intellectuals agree upon. As a result, an individual involved in terrorism may be considered a freedom fighter or a revolutionary in some perspectives, while in the views of others, the same individual may be seen as a troublemaker and a separatist [7]. Nevertheless, several definitions of terrorism have been proposed, and here are some of them: Some people describe terrorism as the use of fear-inducing tactics among the public to exert pressure on a government. Another definition states: "Any form of resorting to terrorism or violent criminal acts carried out by an organized group against individuals or their property, or an unlawful threat to use these methods with the aim of intimidating governments or peoples, severely undermining public safety and security" [8]. The laws of the United States define terrorism as: "The calculated use of unlawful force or violence against individuals or property to coerce a government, the civilian population under its jurisdiction, or any other part thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" [9]. The U.S. Department of Defense defines terrorism as: "The calculated use of unlawful violence or the threat of unlawful violence to instill fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological" [10].

The Arab Convention, dated April 22, 1998, defines terrorism as follows: "Any act or violent threat, regardless of its objectives and motives, carried out to advance a personal or group's



criminal agenda, aiming to create fear among the people, induce fear by causing harm to them, endanger their lives, freedom, or security, or to harm the environment, public and private facilities, or occupy them. Such acts are considered terrorism" [8]. In the statement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, it is stated that "The struggle of nations, including armed struggle against foreign occupiers, colonialists, and foreign dominations, in accordance with international principles and laws, in no way falls under the category of terrorist crimes" [9]. In the Islamic religion, the use of violent means and tools is permitted against oppressive or invading forces that insult and denigrate Muslims, threaten their security, livelihoods, and even their lives [8]. In international treaties, the violent resistance against invaders and occupiers of foreign lands is considered a legal and legitimate act, and it is not classified as a terrorist crime [6]. Countries that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1984 defined terrorism as acts of violence carried out by colonial forces, racists, or military forces against nations struggling for freedom and independence [6]. On August 12, 2005, the United Nations General Assembly expressed the difference between terrorists and freedom fighters by stating that liberation struggles have legitimate objectives, and their actions are not carried out through terrorist methods. These organizations are recognized as regional and international entities [11]. In summary, it can be understood from the discussions and definitions mentioned that the concept of terrorism lacks a specific and universally accepted definition that satisfies everyone to this day.

3-1. Definition of Culture and Cultural Factors

Literature, education, knowledge, a collection of customs and traditions, sciences, beliefs, and the arts of a society are referred to as culture. Culture, in a comprehensive sense, is defined as a collection of social behavioral patterns, arts, beliefs, customs, and other human products and intellectual characteristics of a society or nation. In the 19th century, the term "culture" was often blended with Western civilization, and, in a way, Western civilization was equated with culture, while other civilizations and cultures were perceived as peripheral, barbaric, or primitive[12]. This interpretation, mostly pursued by Western countries, portrayed Western civilization and culture as superior, even though Western culture itself was a mixture of Greek and Eastern cultures. In the 20th century, the definition of culture was accompanied by complexities and variations, but from the collective definitions provided for culture, we can point out common features, as follows: Culture primarily includes three human actions; what an individual thinks, what they do, and what they produce. Therefore, culture is a common entity that is transmitted to different generations through the process of education, and, at the same time, it is symbolic, adaptive, and cohesive [12]. The components of culture have an organic relationship with each other, and any change in one can alter the entire set, so culture is a continuous and dynamic phenomenon that never stops, with its core values forming the essence. Culture is a phenomenon that arises based on natural desires and social forces. The geography of the region, the history and events of a nation, the language and literature prevalent among the people, religion, economics, and the way of life of the people all have an impact on the formation of culture. In a compatible combination, they bring forth a rich set of values and beliefs that influence human behavior and facilitate interpersonal communication. Culture is a



combination of the assumptions and shared values of society and industry in which an organization operates [12].

Common Assumptions encompass the following aspects:

1. **Individuals' Thoughts and Beliefs about Each Other:** This includes considering their personal interests in relation to the common interests.
2. **Interactions among Members:** This involves interactions such as competition or cooperation between individuals within the culture.
3. **Organizational Relations with the Environment:** This relates to the organization's interactions with its surroundings, including aspects like dominance, participation, and more [13].

Cultural Factors in the Spread of Terrorism (Case Study: ISIS)

Terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with various components, originating from diverse contexts. Therefore, the cultural backgrounds contributing to the emergence of terrorism are numerous and diverse, with each observer categorizing them according to their perspective [14]. In this research, we aim to briefly address several key and influential cultural factors in the emergence of terrorism.

Family: The family forms the core of any society. If this core deviates towards abnormalities, ignorance, and backwardness, it's highly likely that it will become a bankrupt family. Sometimes, in such bankrupt families, the thoughts of some of its members naturally deviate towards hatred and enmity, leading to violence and terrorist activities in order to fulfill their needs and desires. For instance, Daesh (ISIS) grew under circumstances where Iraq and Syria were unable to meet the needs of their populations and were under the influence of Western powers and the United States. This led to the rapid spread of Daesh's culture of violence among families [15].

Education: Education encompasses the process of identifying educational needs, setting goals and educational programs, implementation, and evaluation. Education can be seen as a process through which individuals gain awareness, skills, perceptions, and appropriate tendencies to fulfill a specific role and achieve a particular goal. Education systems play a significant role in reducing or expanding terrorism [16]. Teaching and educating courses that can promote tolerance and understanding of different beliefs can reduce tensions stemming from differences and foster friendship and love within human societies. Conversely, if educational materials promote superiority and hatred toward others, it not only fails to spread friendship but also removes ethics from society. Improper and unethical teachings can sometimes push an individual toward terrorist acts, and this individual may see themselves as an exception willing to sacrifice their life for their goals (something many are not willing to do). They may ignore the moral costs of their terrorist actions [17]. For example, during the emergence of ISIS in 2014 in northern Iraq and eastern Syria, the overall literacy rate in these regions was less than 80%. According to Iraqi officials, ISIS attempted to reduce literacy and increase its violent teachings



by eradicating schools and literacy centers in these areas. As a result, the illiteracy rate among young people in that period increased by 9% [18].

Geography: Whenever we deal with a location that has boundaries and frontiers as a cultural region with common characteristics, we are inevitably engaged in geographical studies to understand its culture. The formation and development of any culture take place within a specific geographic area. Cultural differences and diversities are primarily attributed to the geographical, spatial aspects of the region. The climate, land, its natural resource quality, opportunities, and constraints resulting from the natural environment, and indeed the culture of that place are influenced. For example, the type of clothing and attire can be considered as a manifestation of the lifestyle and cultural identity of any nation or ethnicity, influenced by the climate. In hot and dry Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, white, loose-fitting clothing with minimal contact with the body is prevalent. In contrast, in cold regions like Siberia, clothing tends to be skin-tight, woolen, and layered [19]. On the other hand, culture manifests itself in various and diverse ways in different cultural places, creating a mosaic of culture, shedding light on geography's role in culture. In the introduction to Ibn Khaldun's book, it is stated that two categories of factors (physical environmental factors and historical and cultural experiences) affect human life. He believes that nomads are braver than city dwellers and that in areas with various tribes with unique beliefs and sensitivities, it is rare for a strong government to form [20]. The Middle Eastern countries are located in semi-arid and mountainous climates, regardless of the effects of the climate on the behavior and characteristics of the region's people.

This type of geography, aside from climatic conditions, provides a conducive environment for terrorist activities. The presence of mountainous terrain, difficult-to-cross routes, and challenging access to specific locations allow terrorists to establish their bases without the fear of easy attacks. For example, the existence of ISIS bases in Iraq and Syria (facilitating their mobility) and the failure to destroy them by major powers over the past two decades can be seen in this regard. However, it does not mean that the activities of such terrorist groups are limited to a specific geographical area such as the Middle East. Instead, a brief look at the activities of ISIS reveals the extent of their activities, taking into account their territorial expansion up to today. Nowadays, their activities have extended to most parts of the world. This territorial expansion and the development of activities are aimed at challenging global powers in the form of a war against infidels [14].

Religion: Religion is a collection of heartfelt beliefs and corresponding practical behaviors related to these beliefs. In the realm of beliefs, it encompasses faith in the oneness of God, His attributes of beauty and majesty, belief in prophethood, and belief in the afterlife. In the realm of behaviors, it includes all actions that are in accordance with these beliefs and are performed to worship and serve the Almighty in compliance with divine commands and directives. According to the Islamic perspective, which asserts that the only true worldview and consequently the only correct religious and value system is Islam, we Muslims consider religion as the meaningful purpose of human life, manifested through actions and behaviors conducted within the framework of the unique values and belief system of a society. Unless we consider the constituent elements of culture to be fewer than those of religion, for instance, if we only regard the components of culture as the value system and behaviors present in a religious society, in this case, culture will be a subset and adjunct to religion [21].



It should not be overlooked that sometimes values in a country with a religious society are defined more broadly than merely religious values. In this case, we will have two types of values: the first type includes fixed and unchangeable values derived from religious beliefs, and the second type comprises values resulting from customs, traditions, and social agreements, which are subject to change. However, it is evident that a change in the second category does not affect the fixed and unchangeable values since they originate from fundamentally different sources [14].

Religion has been considered one of the major factors contributing to the emergence of terrorism throughout history. Humans have witnessed numerous acts of violence perpetrated by religious interpreters in the Middle East region. In the Middle East region, the roots of religious terror, meaning holy war and jihad, can be traced back to the activities of the Ismaili sect during the Seljuk period and to the Hashashian group led by Hasan Sabbah (during his time about fifty important murders took place). He had reminded his followers that to receive rewards from God they had to be killed in battle against the enemies of God [20].

Religious bias and religious superiority can transcend national boundaries and turn into enmity against other religions. Fanatic followers or extremists of various religions can become radicalized through interpretations that promote religious supremacism. These extremists consider their religion superior to others, leading to the exclusion and demonization of followers of other religions. At times, these religious biases can incite fear and hatred towards the opposing group. In some cases, authoritarian governments may exploit the religious and sectarian tensions within their populations for their survival or political objectives. This exploitation can even occur within a single community that shares a common religion but has different sects, as seen in various religions, especially within Islam, such as the divisions between Shia and Sunni. Such actions can serve to condemn a specific religion or sect [18].

Many religious scholars argue that religion rarely forms the root of terrorism since the primary purpose of religions is to create a better world for humanity, address their problems, and social issues. Religion can even act as a unifying identity factor among different regions. Therefore, religion and faith often act as unifying elements rather than divisive ones. Thus, it is not fair to attribute violence and terrorism to religion and faith themselves, but rather to distorted interpretations and the misuse of religion and faith, which propagate non-normative violence [18].

Nevertheless, until the 1980s, religious terrorism was less prominent, but since then, many acts of violence and terrorism have taken on a distinctly religious character. During this period, terrorism, which was more prevalent in the Third World, became influenced by religion, and radical religious groups like the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS saw significant growth. In these groups, religion is seen as a unique system that provides meaning to all aspects of human life and any foreign religious or non-religious beliefs are considered highly dangerous and must be met with violence. Many of these extremist organizations believe that their religion and their actions are divine commands, viewing their violence as sacred and a religious duty. They also argue that their actions are not criminal but rather sacrificial, as they martyr themselves in the pursuit of a higher goal, serving God [14].

Regarding the roots and background of religious and sectarian terrorism, extensive studies have been conducted, and today, many Middle Eastern terrorists interpret religion in their specific way and employ religious directives in carrying out their terrorist acts. Members of various



religious terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, view violence as a sacred act and a divine duty. They claim that their actions are rooted in divine commandments. Furthermore, they assert that their acts of violence are not criminal but rather sacrificial because, in the service of a higher purpose, namely their religion and God, they willingly martyr themselves, often through suicide bombings. This misinterpretation of religion has led some scholars, like Jim Walker, to argue that belief in the Quran and the concept of Jihad may serve as motivating factors for Muslims to engage in terrorist attacks [12].

Economics: In management and psychology texts, basic human needs are often listed as prerequisites for other needs to be met. According to the hierarchy of needs proposed by scholars like Maslow, the path of growth and the transition from basic to higher-level human needs starts with material needs. Study of both ancient and modern scholars indicates that leaders of human movements and revolutions have typically come from affluent or middle-class backgrounds and were individuals who were not preoccupied with their daily material needs. Poverty and unmet material needs can stifle individuals and disconnect them from thought, intellect, and reason. Even if a society has churches, synagogues, mosques, and moral educators, it will not achieve the desired outcomes if its members lack the time and mental capacity for reflection and thought. The course of history has shown that political and economic stability is the source of cultural, artistic, and scientific growth in human societies. Intellectual potential is latent in a healthy body, and a mind that is always consumed by daily concerns will lack the capacity for deep thought and, consequently, will be less enriched by individual and societal culture. Human minds and spirits require rest, leisure, travel, and contemplation. Individuals even need time for themselves, away from their families and loved ones, to engage in proper intellectual reflection. A impoverished society will lack a healthy culture, an effective education system, and efficient governance. Such a society will constantly be preoccupied with concerns about the future, and in such an environment, expectations of productivity will remain unfulfilled. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of statesmen in a country is to provide economic stability and prosperity to their people, thereby reducing class disparities, inflation, and unemployment. These statesmen will undoubtedly be remembered in the history of their country because, through economic stability and an improved quality of life for the people, wisdom, thought, ethics, and humanity also thrive in society, and divine religions are not apart from human dignity [9].

Economic factors are also another important factor in the emergence of terrorism. While not all terrorists are necessarily impoverished individuals, violence tends to occur more frequently among those who are in difficult economic and social situations. Poverty and destitution have always played a significant role in the formation of violence and terrorism. Unemployment, inflation, housing problems, a decline in living standards, or the mismatch between wages and prices can drive some individuals towards violence and terrorism, as a means to voice their grievances about the harsh economic and social conditions around them [20]. The pace of globalization encompasses various issues, including the economy, but it has created challenges for economies in developing countries. The stark disparity between the two camps of the rich and the poor has created a deep and alarming divide between wealthy and impoverished nations, turning it into a crisis that intensifies with each passing day and explodes in some regions. This crisis can lead some individuals towards seeking revenge, violence, vandalism, and unrest, creating an atmosphere of fear and terror among other citizens. In other words, economic



disparities create conditions of instability and rapid movements, often leading to violent actions, primarily among disadvantaged and impoverished youth. Consequently, the frustration of some individuals in society who have failed to advance in their societies, unable to achieve an acceptable status, is also a significant factor that may incline a person towards terrorist acts. In other words, unemployment and lack of integration into society can lead to an individual's frustration, pushing them towards terrorism. The acts of violence in Paris (November 2015) demonstrated that most of the perpetrators were individuals who couldn't integrate into the secular society of France and Belgium, which consequently led them to radicalize and become involved with ISIS. Additionally, the economic situation in countries where ISIS emerged and grew (Syria and Iraq) illustrates that economic factors play a substantial role in the growth of terrorist groups [13].

Nationalism: Nationalism is a group of people who share common characteristics, origin, and relative attributes. They also have common cultural, linguistic, behavioral, and religious traits that may be traced back to previous generations or have arisen based on other factors; therefore, a national group can form a cultural community. In societies with slavery and feudalism, ethnicity is another form of association among individuals who share blood ties and have common land, language, and culture, but this association is not yet stable enough and even on a national scale, economic unity is not complete [14]. Generally, throughout human history, we have encountered two types of ethnicity. The first type is known as tribal or clan-based ethnicity, which is usually based on family and familial interests. With the beginning of human migration, the second type, nation-based ethnicity, emerged. In reality, this type marked the evolution of societies (nations) and brought about ethnic groups with common characteristics living alongside each other. Military invasions, migration, trade, and religions have contributed to the development of these ancient ethnicities. Meanwhile, ethnic and racial differences still exist among ethnic groups living in the same country, and these distinctions continue to persist alongside national births and offspring. Members of an ethnic group (not to be confused with nationality) always claim to have had a rich and valuable cultural heritage throughout history. However, some historians and demographers believe that many of these cultural issues are recent developments and had no place in the cultural history of ethnic groups [2]. From a political perspective, the distinguishing feature of an ethnic group and a country is the lack of sovereignty and cohesion in an ethnic group. While ethnicity and race are related concepts, the concept of ethnicity deals more with social groups and is characterized by common tribal interests, common nationality, common genes, religion, language or culture, while race has to do with the concept of biological "homo sapiens" classification and is determined based on genotypic and phenotypic characteristics. As mentioned above, the specific geography of a place has a significant impact on the culture of that region and leads to ethnocentrism, racism, and ethnocentrism is one of the other factors that can contribute to the emergence of terrorism. The racial and cultural superiority that groups like ISIS believe in is a clear example. When feelings of ethnic or racial superiority are reinforced through phenomena like nationalism, religion, or culture, differences between different ethnic groups are exaggerated, and violence is used to assert the superiority of one race or ethnicity over others. If individuals from a specific race feel oppressed by other races or ethnicities, they may resort to violence as a means of confronting perceived oppressors, ultimately leading them towards terrorism [17].



Technology: All cultures are constantly evolving, and these changes are now faster and deeper than ever before. Modern communication technology has led to significant and complex transformations in human relationships and interactions, creating new patterns of communication and reshaping the concept of identity. The vast amount of information and new knowledge can easily be made available to individuals and organizations worldwide through information and communication networks, making information networks accessible to everyone [21]. A review of the history of communication tools in third-world countries shows that technology transfer has always been carried out by advanced countries, often based on meeting the needs and conventional methods of more advanced countries. Moreover, technology transfer has always been accompanied by political dominance. Therefore, the level of a country's use of communication tools depends entirely on its dominance. Besides these objectives, technology undoubtedly influences the culture of societies, and this is one of the characteristics of culture. Technology enters society whether we like it or not, and when it does, it affects perspectives and behaviors. If these tools are misused, used improperly, or with ill intentions, they can become destructive and disastrous forces. We must assume that the adults who are the current generation and our young people, who are the future generation, will be influenced by these developments. As a result, all segments of society, especially the media, cannot and should not remain indifferent to these developments. The role of education and preparing the young generation to understand and use technology tools correctly and to use positive aspects for national development is of paramount importance. Education and upbringing are not only the cradle of knowledge and technology, but they also cultivate and disseminate the culture of a society within it [22].

It must be said that the culture offered by schools and universities is, in fact, a manifestation of the collective life of a nation or the culture of a nation. Considering the uncontrollable nature of the characteristics of modern technology, it is essential to strengthen the ideological foundations, beliefs, and faith of individuals, in other words, internalize values. In this regard, the internet, as one of the prominent aspects of modern communication technologies that has seen significant growth in recent years, has had a very important impact on the social and cultural structure of today's societies. Nowadays, researchers focus on using the internet for four main reasons:

1. Expanding communication with other researchers at the national and international levels through email.
2. Expanding national and international collaborations through the publication of joint works.
3. Accessing information resources.
4. Accessing resources such as supercomputers, telescopes, and more.

According to Castells, the field of culture has undergone significant transformations with the emergence of new technologies because the speed of cultural flow through modern communications is increasing. In Castells' view, the position of the internet as a fundamental infrastructure of the information society is crucial because it greatly contributes to the overall strengthening of the information society. He believes that the internet promotes decentralization, an abundance of diverse content, virtuality, a reduction in the importance of time and place, and more [21].



Technological advancements and communications have indeed played significant roles in the proliferation of terrorism and violence by terrorists. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion because they have control over the flow of information to the public. Mass killings and violence resulting from terrorist acts, along with the rapid dissemination of news related to them through social media and group media, can affect individuals who may be filled with frustration and life failures. It can make killing and criminal acts appear ordinary to them.

Today, terrorists are well aware of this phenomenon and use it to their advantage for attention and publicity. They utilize media and social networks that enable them to promote their terrorist ideals. Reports from the United Nations indicate that terrorist groups make use of the internet in the following ways:

- 1. Propaganda:** This includes recruitment, radicalization, and incitement to commit terrorist acts.
- 2. Financial support, training, and operational design:** This involves both overt and covert communications for information exchange.
- 3. Execution of operations and cyber-attacks.**

Among terrorist groups, ISIS has made more extensive use of the internet to achieve its goals, and it can be considered one of the most media-savvy terrorist groups in history. In addition to its on-the-ground terrorist operations, ISIS conducts extensive activities in the virtual space and on the internet. They use online platforms both to promote their terrorist ideologies and to recruit new members and expand their organizations. Furthermore, ISIS leverages the online space for psychological warfare and justifying its actions, leading to around 20.4% of Facebook user comments about ISIS in the United States being positive. The number of pro-ISIS user accounts on Twitter exceeded fifty thousand at the end of 2014. ISIS's extensive use of social media, which has led to its global reach, has drawn attention to a new identity in traditional societies in the region. These are societies with social and cultural structures that face challenges when dealing with the influx of Western values and norms. ISIS has presented a new identity by returning to the early days of Islam and its principles. This reflects the importation of fringe cultures, which is one of the features of globalization. It has allowed ISIS to find followers even in Western societies, contributing to its international appeal [8].



2. Materials and Methods

In the composition of this article, a descriptive research method has been employed because it aims to describe a phenomenon at a particular point in time. This method does not propose any hypotheses or study relationships between variables but solely focuses on examining the current situation and presenting a solution. The theoretical foundations of this research are based on the security perspectives of the Copenhagen School. It is evident that the researcher will also utilize certain theoretical and empirical evidence that plays a specific role in this study. The theorists of the Copenhagen School believe that security is not limited to military and defense issues and can

extend to other domains. The data collection method primarily relies on document analysis, primarily utilizing library resources.

3. Results

By examining the research findings regarding the components of terrorist expansion in the Middle East and conducting field studies in this research, Figures 1-3 illustrate the cultural components influencing the spread of terrorism and the mutual impact of these components. As observed, among the mentioned components in this research, each of them influences the others. To answer the question of why the religious component has such a significant impact, it should be noted that the source of many individual behaviors, both in private and social-political life, is the emotional aspect that individuals derive from their religion. Émile Durkheim argues that religious beliefs express the general nature of society. Many human behaviors are irrational, and this irrational trait is related to a person's spiritual and religious life. Since a person's mental life, like the realm of rationality, is not entirely adaptable, it can be concluded that many of human social behaviors are irrational. [23].

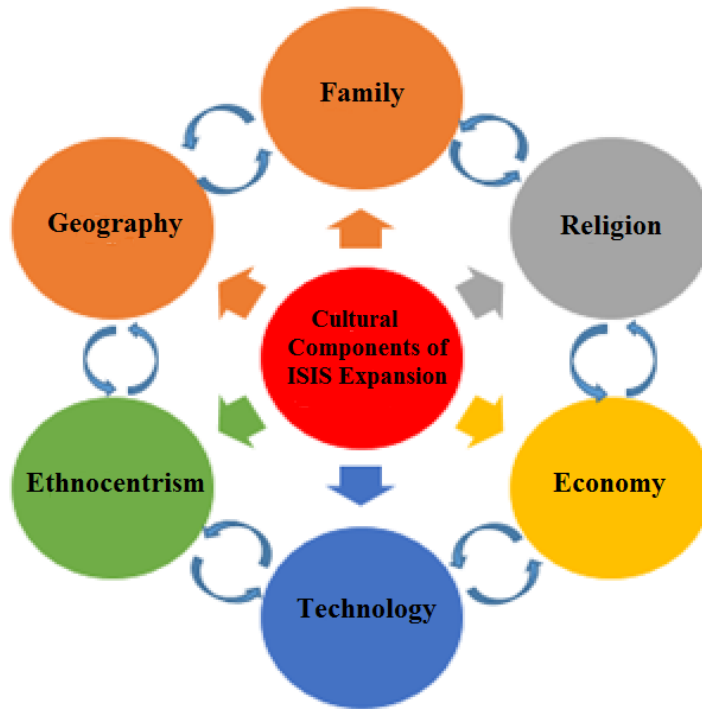


Figure 3-1 - Diagram of cultural components of ISIS expansion

Many followers of various religions believe that religion has been able to create a sense of unity among people. However, some argue that this sense of unity among followers of a particular religion can lead to hostility towards others. For instance, according to Freud, Christianity was originally founded as a school of universal love, but it became very strict and intolerant towards

other religions [18]. From the perspective of many religious believers, human beliefs are rooted in religion, and religion serves as guidance for salvation, relief from pain and suffering, and achieving peace. In other words, religion acts as a comforting and soothing factor in human life and can guide individuals towards happiness. Different religions offer various methods and tools for achieving salvation and tranquility, and these guidelines deeply affect individuals' ways of life. Among religious followers, some of the positive religious values should never be attacked under any circumstances because these values are lofty ideals that God has bestowed upon them to improve their lives. From a psychological perspective, individuals who are deeply religious and devout can exhibit behaviors in many social aspects that are different from those in other societies, such as customs, ceremonies, and other religious directives that have been cultivated and deeply rooted in their minds through experience. It is also essential to mention that different patterns of religious political and social life vary in different democratic, semi-democratic, and non-democratic societies. The non-democratic nature of the Middle East region has had a significant impact on the political and social life of the region's nations throughout history. Among religious adherents, religious acts and behaviors are considered responses to the non-democratic nature and injustices in the region, with the Western powers playing a much larger role in creating these injustices than the region's rulers [24].

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The social, economic, cultural, and political characteristics of Middle Eastern societies have contributed to the emergence of violent and terrorist behaviors among the people in this region more than in other areas of the world. Additionally, the presence of major powers and the formation of new cultures in interaction with them, utilizing modern communication tools, have led to an increased prevalence of terrorist activities and the tendencies of various movements in the region towards this phenomenon. Poverty, underdevelopment, and the presence of authoritarian governments that hinder peaceful political participation of parties and movements have driven the people in this region to seek ways of participating in power and implementing their perception of global principles through non-peaceful activities. Cultural teachings acquired from childhood, religious biases, and historical ethnic and religious differences, deeply rooted in the history of Middle Eastern countries, have created an environment conducive to extremist and violent behaviors in this region [25]. By examining various components mentioned, it can be inferred that each of these components represents only one aspect of the causes of terrorism, and all the examined components have existed for years as part of the historical, political, social, and cultural identity of the Middle Eastern people. In the process of terrorism proliferation, the influence of each component on the others is significant. One component may have less impact on other components, while another component may have a greater influence on others. However, the religious component (both past and present) has had the greatest impact on the spread of terrorism. Religious extremists, with their particular interpretations and readings of religion, firmly believe that God supports them. They see themselves as superior and resolute in their conviction, using modern resources and tools, with the hope of reaching paradise according to their unique interpretation of religion, to engage in terrorist acts [20]. By distorting traditional teachings of Islam in this way, these religious terrorists view violence as a sacred act and a divine duty rooted in divine commandments. It is



the responsibility of religious leaders and scholars to rise up against these distortions with logical reasoning and proper interpretations of religion, countering religious misinterpretations and incorrect interpretations, and making the correct and sound interpretations available to others, thus rendering the efforts of terrorist groups in distorting religious teachings ineffective and preventing them from recruiting individuals in this manner. A noteworthy point is that until the late twentieth century, terrorism had never reached such intensity and severity to cause crises and tensions in the world. The use of the internet by groups like ISIS for recruitment and to create an atmosphere of fear and psychological warfare is clearly observable. Therefore, Middle Eastern terrorism from the late twentieth century onwards can be termed as postmodern terrorism, a phenomenon that, using new and modern tools (such as the internet and media propaganda), has magnified existing conflicts with the West and exhibited violence, intimidation, and fear in various political, economic, social, and cultural forms [8]. It is undeniable that we cannot eliminate the causes and factors contributing to the spread of terrorism entirely. However, we can identify and work to reduce the underlying conditions and factors to some extent. Rooting out violence and terrorism in the region requires a level of development and the establishment of democratic governments with the participation and involvement of all groups and currents in power. It also requires suitable cultural education based on civil engagement in society.

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