



Article Type: Research paper

A comparative study of Saudi and Qatar policy towards ISIS in Syria

*Hossein Rafie¹, Hossein Moinabadi Bigdeli², Morteza Sheikh Darreh Ney³

1. Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Iran
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law and Theology, Shahid Bahonar University, Kerman, Iran
3. Master's student, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Iran

Article Info.



Received: 16/02/2022

Accepted: 01/08/2022

Available Online: 11/09/2022

Abstract

ISIS is the short name of the terrorist group of extremist Islamists in Iraq and the Levant. During the growth of ISIS, Syria has been a suitable platform for the growth and declaration of caliphate of this group due to its internal developments. With the start of the internal crisis in Syria, the role of some regional actors for the growth of ISIS and the deepening of this crisis is justified. The regional actors involved in the developments in Syria, including the Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, used different policies against ISIS in Syria. These countries used different policies and tools to support ISIS. Contrary to Saudi Arabia's claim of rejecting terrorism and its types, we always see the use of this issue in the policies of this country in the region and its developments. Along with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, as a small country, is very interested in expanding its influence

Hossein Rafie, PhD

Address: Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Iran

E-mail: h.rafie@umz.ac.ir

How to Site:

Rafie, Hossein, Moinabadi Bigdeli, Hossein, Sheikh Darreh Ney, Morteza (2022). A comparative study of Saudi and Qatar policy towards ISIS in Syria. *Fundamental and applied studies of the Islamic world*, (4), (2), 61-82

on regional developments by using the tools of terrorism and Islamic extremism.

One of the most important issues in the past few decades is the issue of the threat of terrorism, which is increasing in importance in political literature and international relations every day. Meanwhile, the Middle East region is very important. This region, due to the birthplace of Islam and its countries being Islamic, and most importantly, the extreme and deviant views of some Islamic groups on the Islamic religion, has caused us to witness extreme thoughts and ideologies and the emergence of various Islamic terrorist groups. After the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001 by the Al-Qaeda terrorist group, the Middle East region has faced many security challenges, the effects of which have long remained in the minds of the governments and especially the people of this region. Among the other terrorist groups formed in this region is the ISIS group, which research and investigation in the process of fundamental formation and existential philosophy of this terrorist movement is the ideology of Salafi jihadism. Most of the activity of this group has been concentrated in Syria and parts of Iraq.

Syria is an important country that is always of special importance in the world of politics. So that it is considered as the Achilles heel of the Middle East region. With the beginning of political unrest in Syria due to the protests of March 2011, which was caused by the political developments in the Arab countries, ISIS declared its existence as the most powerful terrorist group in the history of the Middle East. Kurdistan and by declaring and claiming the establishment of an Islamic government in Syria and cities from Iraq and by implementing measures, or better to say some crimes against humanity, it has placed its name at the top of the media and international news. During the rapid growth of ISIS and the deepening of the crisis in Syria, in addition to internal destabilizing factors, some external sources of support have made ISIS strong in this country. Also, the developments in Syria have provided a suitable platform for the exploitation of regional actors, including the Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have used different policies and strategies in the form of support packages for the ISIS group in Syria, with Wahhabi Salafism becoming an official and political religion. Saudi Arabia (Alrebh, 2017: 28-279). This country has been at the forefront of supporting Salafi-Wahhabi groups, and all Sunni jihadist groups, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra Front, are ideological children of Wahhabism that Saudi Arabia has injected into various countries. Along with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, unlike many Small countries have a great desire to

expand their influence on developments abroad and always openly support moderate Islamic groups and sometimes with Islamic extremist thoughts. This country has had relations with groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Taliban.

With the spread of unrest in Syria and the beginning of the political crisis, at first the role of internal factors seemed prominent, but a deeper look at this crisis shows that in addition to internal forces, external factors and sources of influence have intensified and deepened the Syrian crisis. So that after gaining power and declaring the self-proclaimed caliphate of the terrorist group Daesh in Syria, this country became the arena of conquest and exploitation of the policies of foreign actors. The main factor in the expansion of internal developments in Syria and turning it into a regional and international crisis is the strong presence of foreign actors and their alignment in this crisis. Each of the foreign actors involved in the crisis are looking for their own policies and interests. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are among the most important actors involved in the developments in Syria. Considering their political structure and identity, these two countries are looking for special political goals and interests in Syria, and at the beginning of the crisis, they confronted the government of this country and put the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government on the agenda of their foreign policy. At the beginning of the Syrian crisis and its developments, these countries provided extensive support to ISIS in various diplomatic, media, financial and logistical fields. The entry of these two actors in the Syrian crisis caused the prolongation of the civil war and played a destructive role and spread the war. The fact that Saudi Arabia and Qatar are on the same front shows that Riyadh and Doha agree against Bashar al-Assad. But this shared opinion does not mean complete unity and sharing of these two countries and they have had differences in goals with each other.

The findings of the article show that the two countries of Qatar and Saudi Arabia differed on how to support ISIS and the difference in goals. So that Qatar's goal is to form an Ikhwani government in the Arab Middle East region, but Saudi Arabia's attitude in supporting the ISIS terrorist group is to confront Bashar al-Assad's government close to Iran and prevent Iran's regional hegemony and confrontation with Shiite intellectual foundations in the Middle East. Based on this, it can be said that the policy and performance of these two countries in the developments in Syria, despite many similarities, have slight differences and in some cases they are formal. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have played an undeniable role in strengthening

and expanding ISIS in Syria. The main policy of these two countries in supporting ISIS has been to bring down and end the existing political system in Syria, weaken rival countries (Iran) in the Arab world and expand their influence in the region.

Key words: Terrorism, ISIS, Saudi Arabia, Qatar ,Syria.