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# GLOBALIZATION, CRISIS OF MEANING AND EMERGENCE OF THE FUNDAMENTALIST IDENTITY; THE CASE STUDY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA (ISIS)

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*The present study is an attempt within the framework of Castells's theory and with application of an analytical-historical approach, to answer an important question about the impact of globalization on the emergence of the fundamentalist identity of the ISIS group. In order to answer this question, we test the hypothesis that globalization, with the aggravation of the crisis of meaning, has led to the emergence and enhancement of resistant and fundamentalist identities of the ISIS group. We assume that along with internal factors and external factors (such as the role of great powers) some other factors, including globalization, played a significant role. The research results show that globalization by challenging the ideological and monologue identities has aggravated the need for identity and meaning. Accordingly, a resistant and fundamentalist identity like that of ISIS and Taliban is one of the responses to this need. By choosing meaning and rendering it exclusive, fundamentalists devote their energy to applying chosen meanings and features. The reconstruction of meaning by the fundamentalist groups like ISIS occurs through relying on collective concepts such as religion, family, and community. This community makes identities whose aim is to establish the integrity and support of people against the seemingly hostile outside world. Accordingly, it seems that the spread of the fundamentalist identity in the modern world can be considered as an immediate outcome of globalization.*

**Keywords:** globalization, crisis of meaning, fundamentalist identity, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

## 1. Introduction

Globalization has brought about fundamental changes in today's world and made the thinkers even speak of the emergence of a new world. Modern communication technologies have transformed the patterns of organizing, social stratifications and values and norms. With the increasing emergence of facilities such as computers, communication satellites and the Internet the fundamental changes occurred which brought a widespread access to information and continuous presence of the media, on the one hand, and deconstruction and the collapse of general standards – on the other. Globalization, through the enhancement of individualism has caused the crisis of collective identities. This crisis by challenging the stability and security of the old world has led to the rise of resistant identities that strive to resist the hegemonic process of globalization. Today the fundamentalist movements such as ISIS, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda are considered as the most important resisting identities which through the creation of meaning, formation

of collective identity and effective use of information technology, promise to their members the creation of an ideal world and help them cope with the crises of identity and meaning. Thus, in the paper we focus on the impact globalization has produced on the emergence of the fundamentalist identity of the ISIS group. The hypothesis that we try to test in this paper is that globalization by aggravating the crisis of meaning has led to the enhancement of fundamentalist identities like the ISIS group. Thus, the main goal of the paper is to show, by application of Castells's theory, that globalization has forced the individual to seek security and overcoming of the crisis of identity and meaning in membership in groups with resistant and fundamentalist identities such as ISIS.

This description does not mean that globalization is the only cause of the emergence of extremist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; still many factors can be considered in this regard. For example, some political officials such as Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif (2017), point to the US attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq and their impacts; others such as Donald Trump in America see Obama and Hillary Clinton to be primarily responsible for the rise of ISIS (Merry 2014; LoBianco and Landers 2016). The latter believes that the withdrawal of the US forces from Iraq and the lack of an appropriate strategy towards Syria events in 2011 was the cause of creating ISIS. In this context Julian Paul Assange, the Editor-in-Chief of the organization WikiLeaks, has explained how the events that unfolded in 1979 had launched a series of events that have led to the rise of ISIS (Austin 2016). He released more than hundred documents that showed that the CIA has contributed to the emergence of ISIS, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda. In addition, the same analyses can be found in many published articles on ISIS (Tucker 2014; Caris and Peynolds 2014). These articles say that ISIS has grown out of what used to be Al-Qaeda in Iraq, a Sunni insurgent group that fought against the US and Iraqi government forces after the downfall of Saddam Hussein. Its leader at the time was Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian who moved to Iraq after the US invasion and pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2004. From the perspective of these analyses if the United States had not attacked Iraq and Afghanistan such groups would not come to create (Page 2015: 6). However, it is not the purpose of this study to explain these factors and their contributions to the development of ISIS. We are trying to define fundamental factors that have contributed to the creation of the radical thoughts between citizens of different countries and finally helped them to find each other in Syria and Iraq.

## 2. Literature Review

The concept of globalization has no defined and unified history in political and international literature. Therefore, some consider it to have a history of 400 years and some others trace this phenomenon to the contemporary period (Pearce and Robinson 2011: 35). Nevertheless, many scientific studies have been so far conducted on this phenomenon. Below we survey some of them that are related to the subject of the present study.

Bobby Sayyid, the professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester, England, and the director of 'Center of Studies on Globalization', in the book *Fundamental Fear* describes Islamism and the Islamic resurgence or revival in the world as 'the return of the repressed'. The author traces the roots of the fear of the West to this issue and believes that the Islamic revival in the world has caused severe anxiety and concern among many people in the West, since the growth of Islamic fundamentalism has questioned and challenged the pattern of political, economic and cultural development of the

West. The author maintains that fundamentalism fuels such anxiety. Therefore, the revival of Islam poses some questions regarding the boundaries and what is considered as 'the heritage of the age of Europe'. In other words, its emergence and rise reveals the shortcomings of the West (Sayyid 2003: 67).

Nevzat Soguk also, in a book entitled *Globalization and Islamism, Post-Fundamentalism*, says that today the Islam of Wahhabism has drawn the public attention in the world to the decrees and orders that are induced and executed through fear and horror. In contrast, the Islam of Turkey and Indonesia which has accompanied modified religiosity with modern democracy and global secular requirements draws little attention to itself. This book highlights the tension that is the result of the rise of the Wahhabi movement, on the one hand, and the promise of democratic religiosity in places such as Turkey and Indonesia, on the other hand. According to the author, the contrasts and differences are noteworthy. The Wahhabi ideology undermines the rich Islamic-Arab history in favor of a dogmatic and backward identity and rejects all the achievements of the Western civilization. This current of thought is run in the political society by firm prohibitions and creation of deprivations. Nevertheless, in Turkey and Indonesia, the Western liberal ideal is not perceived and accepted in general as an 'other' and 'foreign' way, yet in the stature of political ideals it has been generally filtered and limited through apparent Islamic sensitivities.

Gilles Kepel's book entitled *Prophet and Pharaoh* (modern Islamic movements in Egypt) has been written about the Islamic movements of Egypt. The book is highly important since the author has taken as a starting point for his investigation the emergence of radical movements in Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimūn (the Muslim Brotherhood) of Egypt. In eight chapters of his book Kepel has analyzed and explored the thoughts of Seyyed Qutb and his influence over the modern Islamic movement in Egypt and then analyzed the thoughts, principles and historical path of radical groups in Egypt. Furthermore, the author has also considered the impact of the traditional movement of preachers of Egypt and also the movement of Islamic students in the universities of Egypt (Kepel 1984).

Torkel Brekke, in a book entitled *Fundamentalism: Mission and Protest in the Age of Globalization*, engages in the study of the roots of fundamentalism, depiction of its features and the history of key fundamentalist movements all around the world, by considering examples from Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. In this book, he argues that fundamentalism emerges due to the fact that it wants to put aside the non-modern religious leaders and challenge the authority of secular governments and some religious institutions. They impose religious values and actions on all spheres, specifically law, politics, education and science. According to the author, fundamentalism is a completely modern and global phenomenon since it requires the globalization of ideas and methods related to religious leadership and also global changes regarding the relationship of religion with modern communities and governments (Brekke 2012).

Mohsen Qanbari also, in the paper 'Globalization and Deconstruction in the Middle East', maintains that globalization is a process that has dominated the political, economic, cultural and social areas of modern life and has challenged the independence of nation-states in the world. This phenomenon, due to the fluidity of its nature and its 'becoming' nature, has always shown modern manifestations in the Global Village and has revealed creative interpretations and analyses. In this regard, showing the deconstructive or divergent appearances of globalization in sub-systems such as 'the Middle East' in the three spheres of politics, economy, and culture and introduction of the ways to

deal with it which have always been challenging among Muslim scholars are attempts that have been made in the context of the present paper in order to prove the main hypothesis (Qanbari 2007: 83–100).

Seyed Ahmad Movaseqi, in a paper entitled ‘The Effect of the Social Crisis and Globalization on the Emergence of Fundamentalism in Egypt’, has analyzed the effect of social crisis and globalization on the development of fundamentalist movements in Egypt. In this study, he attempts to address the question of: ‘What effects have the social crisis as the main variable and globalization as the aggravating factor had on the emergence of fundamentalism in Egypt?’ His hypothesis is that the combination of social crises and globalization are the main cause of rising fundamentalism in the Muslim communities and in particular in Egypt (Movaseqi and Zahedi 2011).

Basing on the literature survey, we can maintain that our study differs from the other works in the following aspects: 1) the present paper studies the relationship between globalization and crisis of meaning and its effect on the formation of fundamentalist identities; 2) the study applies Castells's theory; and 3) we claim that globalization, by challenging the dominant and monologue identities, has aggravated the need for identity and meaning. Accordingly, the resistant and *Salafi-Takfiri* identity such as ISIS and Taliban is one of the responses to this need, since these groups form identities whose function is to establish the unity and support the individuals against the seemingly hostile outside world.

### **3. The Theoretical Framework of the Research: Manuel Castells's Theory**

One of the issues of prime importance in Castells's theoretical framework is identity and collective actions with it. In his view, the identity is a process whereby a social activist knows himself and creates his meaning and world of meaning mostly based on a characteristic or a set of cultural characteristics and without referring to other social structures (Zahedi 2010: 16). In the contemporary world, we witness an increasing gap between the network (globalization) and an individual (identity). In fact, a contradictory trend is established between globalization (by IT) and the actions resulting from identity. Thus, identity is a phenomenon that is formed by the activists and within a collective action. Castells distinguishes three forms and sources for the construction of identity.

#### **3.1.1. The legitimizing identity**

This kind of identity is formed through the dominant institutions in the society so that it can expand and rationalize their domination over social activists. According to Castells, the legitimizing identity forms the civil society. Castells believes that: ‘A set of organizations and institutions and also a set of organized and structured social activists reproduce this set of identity which rationalizes the sources of structural domination, of course sometimes in a highly conflicting way’ (Castells 2001b: 25). This situation does not characterize only the authoritarian regimes but also can be found in democratic regimes. The civil society possesses a set of ‘tools’ such as churches, unions, parties, cooperatives, and urban institutions, *etc.* which on the one hand, perpetuate the dynamics of the government but on the other hand, are deeply-rooted among people. According to Gramsci, it is this very dual nature of the civil society which has turned it into a distinguished area of political transformation, since it also provides the possibility and ability for the overthrow and change of the government without appealing to violence and directly as the overcoming of progressive forces in the civil society due to the integration

and continuity between the institutions of the civil society and the government's power tools are organized, based on a single identity. Basing on this view, Castells tries to summarize the views of distinguished sociologists in the following way: 'Where Gramsci and De Tocqueville see democracy and civilization, Foucault and Senet, and before them Horkheimer and Marcuse see the domination of the internalized legitimacy of an undifferentiated and equalizing imposed identity' (Castells 2001b: 25).

### **3.1.2. Resistance identity**

This identity is formed by activists who are in conditions or situations which are considered as unfavorable in terms of the logic of domination. Castells, when introducing the identity of resistance, believes that such identities are at the first glance formed for resistance but by propagating their plans throughout history and among the institutions in the society they may transform into a dominant institution and then, basing on the rationalization of their domination, change into a legitimating identity. In this regard, he says: 'Development of the identities during this sequence shows that from the perspective of social theory no identity can be considered as an essence and no identity per se, outside its historical context, has a progressive or reactionary value' (Castells 2006: 25). According to Castells, the identity of resistance leads to the establishment of communes and communities since such identity creates some forms of collective resistance against tyranny. In this case, the identity is based on history, geography or biology and such basis easily determines the borders of resistance. Accordingly, Castells mentions some trends and movements such as religious and nationalistic fundamentalists based on ethnicity. He claims that the mentioned groups 'are from something which I call the eliminating by the eliminated; that is to say, construction of a defensive identity in the form of dominant ideologies and institutions through overthrowing their value judgment and at once enhancement of the limits and borders and lines of differentiation' (Castells 2001b: 25). Castells says regarding the problem of the eliminated-eliminating: 'The problem of the two-way communication of these eliminated-eliminating identities is raised. The answer to this question which must be given only historically and empirically, determines whether the communities will continue their survival or will turn into a constellation of fragmented tribes which are sometimes called by the euphemism of communities' (Alsayyad and Castells 2002: 11).

### **3.1.3. Programmed identity**

When social activists, by means of any accessible cultural materials, form a new identity which redefines their position in the society and are therefore striving to change the overall form of the social construction, this kind of identity is realized.

Castells argues basing on Gramsci's theories that the legitimizing identity establishes the civil society; that is, a set of organizations and institutions and also a set of organized and structured social activists re-produce this set of identity which rationalizes the sources of structural domination, of course sometimes in a highly conflicting way. The second type of identity construction, which is identity of resistance, leads to the formation of a community. This identity creates forms of collective defense (reaction) against tyranny and oppression that would be otherwise intolerable. Eventually, under the influence of Touraine's views, Castells believes that the third process of identity construction, which is a programmed identity, leads to the creation of a subject. Although subjects are made by individuals, they are not the same as individuals. Subjects are collective social activists who help individuals reach a comprehensive meaning in

their experiences. Here, identity construction is a program for a different life that intends to transform the society. Also, Castells by the case study of conflicting and dissident movements argues that of utmost importance is that all movements, despite fundamental differences with one another, bring about a phenomenon which he refers to as 'identities of resistance'. These identities, against the eradicating flood of the world's network, try to resist the changes that are taking place in the world. According to Castells, these internal and external pressures will undermine the national governments and will bring a kind of government crisis. This change, as was mentioned, brings about a seemingly paradoxical situation when, on the one hand, the nationalist tendencies are strengthened and on the other hand, national governments are undermined (Castells 2001b: 39).

#### **4. Globalization, Decline of Ideological Identities and Crisis of Meaning**

The twentieth century is often presented as the age of universal ideologies and identity constructions each trying to provide some meaning and form for individuals' socio-political behavior and life by developing new frameworks. The meaningful relations between ideology and identity indicated a close relationship between them; a meaning that is summarized within the framework of the concept of ideological identity. This identity equalizes and also denounces individualism, tries to come up with a collective and exclusive meaning for the disciples by appealing to ideological justifications. Thus, within the framework of this kind of identity, the phenomenon of the crisis of meaning less frequently emerges. The challenge of ideological identities is considered as one of the most fundamental changes of this epoch. Before Globalization has started, many scholars in the field of International Relations considered the Cold War as the most fundamental phenomenon of the twentieth century since during this period the power and meaning were defined by super-powers and took on a universal identity which was required by the ideological atmosphere; yet, the end of the Cold War and consequently the emergence of deconstructive and anti-modernist movements in the twentieth century is regarded as the decline of meaning in all of its forms and myths (Huntington 2001: 175).

With the rise of global information networks and increasing expansion of facilities such as computers, communication satellites and the Internet, a new world emerged and all dimensions of human life have been affected by this technological revolution. This phenomenon brought some widespread and enduring changes in the formation of identity and its related meanings (Bauman 1998a: 36). Globalization, by providing a worldwide communication between people and expansion of communications between different socio-political groups and institutions has overthrown the limitations of national borders and therefore transformed the pattern of living in nation-states (Sayyid 2003: 67). The media contributed to the growth of personal culture and reduced the influence of political totalities on the formation of new identity resources. Due to the growing public use of these facilities the worldview of more divergent individuals and different groups and identities becomes increasingly different and implies various perceptions of the world. In today's world, not only is the rhythm of social changes quicker than in any pre-modern society, the spheres of action and the depth of impacts on the behavioral functions and methods of the former communities are also unprecedented (Giddens 1991: 361). In this regard, globalization, like modernism, is the outcome of disruption of traditional order and of the relations between place, space, and time. Globalization in

this sense refers to a process when an individual and society are linked to each other at a global scale (Nash 2010: 412).

The main context of the modern society comprises information and system of electronic communications, and the communication network in such communities forms a virtual public sphere (Loader 1998: 35–65). Thus, in this extremely decentralized environment one can hardly expect a high capacity of identity construction within the framework of the major and universal ideological approach. Globalization in this aspect has made traditional identity constructions difficult and has opened a space beyond modernity. It has damaged the unity of the subject and has expanded doubt and uncertainty into all areas; it has expanded the realm of social life relations and has revealed the individuals' social world to be larger than in the past. It has forced the owners of transparent identities to face dull and mixed identities. In this situation, the government does not have serious role in the identity construction. The persons choose and make their identities. Therefore, we witness a collapse of privacies, universal meta-discourses and local sub-discourses and the absolutists and the crisis of originalities and images possible (Zelin 2014: 6) and by making meaning problematic, it has led to a more critical situation and deterioration of common identities. These conditions have paved the way for the release and escape of local sub-discourses and also provided the emergence of fundamentalist groups such as ISIS, which will be further discussed.

### 5. The Problem of Meaning and the Emergence of Fundamentalist Identities

As it was argued, within the framework of Castells' theory globalization has brought about many problems for ideological and monologue identities that can hardly define a common system of meaning and identity for their members. Nevertheless, today the very process of globalization has led to the emergence of resistant and fundamentalist identities such as ISIS which stand against the waves of globalization and radical individualism. This duality results from the identity implications of this phenomenon (Bell 2002: 15). Before entering globalization, the identity and meaning in countries like Syria and Iraq were mostly determined and formed by common political ideologies; yet with the aggravation of globalization, this mechanism declined and abandoned the followers in the face of heavy waves of the crises of identity and meaning. In this respect, the fundamentalist groups like ISIS become the resistant identities that help their members against these crises by making collective identities and unique meanings. They create their society basing on traditional values, religion, Jihad, Takfir of those they assume to be *mushriks* (infidel), nation and family (Loveday 2015: 21); movements that stubbornly ask for autonomy within the range of their resistance in order to gain enough power to prepare attacks on the institutions which they assume as tyrannical. For instance, in addition to resistance and numerous attacks by ISIS on the governments of Iraq and Syria, we hear many news how ISIS crucifies even children breaking their fast for fours in the sun in order to apparently show the severity of lawfulness of Wahhabism in Sharia verdicts for its own troops or mete out punishments such as stoning to persons with slightest violations of the laws of their considered government (Malas 2014: 14).

Therefore, the fundamentalist group of ISIS has been formed basing on highly distinctive principles and since the logic of community is the key to their survival, they do not embrace individual identities. Accordingly, on the one hand, the movements mostly consist of people without identity and, on the other hand, the people that resist against

these crises, are mostly attracted to collective identities (Castells 2006: 426–427). Thus, today with the start of the third millennium, the fundamentalism of ISIS has become somehow amazing, powerful, and effective and manifests itself as one of the most important identity-making sources, in such a way that *Telegraph* Newspaper of London claims that over 27,000 foreign fighters have travelled to Iraq and Syria since fighting broke out in 2011. The foreign fighters joining these groups are from at least 86 countries. The aforementioned paper has announced the number of foreigners of some countries as follows: there are 2,100 nationals from Turkey, 2,400 from Russia, 6,500 from Tunisia, 2,500 from Saudi Arabia, 2,250 from Jordan, 1,700 from France, 1,350 from Morocco, 900 from Lebanon, 800 from Egypt and 760 from Germany in the ISIS terrorist group (Kirk 2016).

In general, the consequences of globalization that has deeply affected the emergence of fundamentalist indentures of ISIS can be investigated under some classifications.

### 5.1. Globalization and realization of plural identities

According to many analysts, the expansion of globalization in the modern world has brought to life the plural and fluid identities; yet, in some cases, the plurality of identity and multiplicity of meaning will become intolerable. In this respect, the fundamentalists such as ISIS make use of the proper conditions that have arisen by choosing meaning and making it exclusive, as well as spending their energy on applying selected meanings and features and thus, giving strength to their identity (Marty and Appleby 1991: 46). Nevertheless, this fundamentalist movement is a reaction to the diversity of identity and multiplicity of meanings as well; for example, the aforementioned movement severely opposes the *Jabhat al-Nusra* group (al-Nusra Front) in Syria. Furthermore, the evident example of this type of viewing otherness can be clearly observed in Arabia, Egypt or Pakistan. The diverse fundamentalist groups that have expanded in these countries each emphasize their own exclusive meaning. For instance, groups such as *Jamiat Ulema-e Islam* (Fazl-Ur-Rehman group), *Jamiat Ulema-e Islam* (Sami-ul-Haq group), *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (Army of Jhangvi)<sup>1</sup>, *Jaish-e-Mohammed*, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, etc., despite having common features such as Sunnism, opposition with the Shiites and supporting the *Rashidun* Caliphs and senior companions (*Sahabis*), each emphasize their own peculiar identity. Thus, the members of the fundamentalist group of ISIS, on the one hand, stress the distinct identity and meaning of their group and on the other hand, face a range of fundamentalist groups with different identities and meanings. For instance, *Jabhat al-Nusra* and Al-Tawhid Brigade are severely fighting ISIS in the current situation while, on the other hand, ISIS also fights the Al-Qaeda group in Syria and has held hostage and executed one of the leaders of this group by the name of ‘Abid al-Jardavi’ known as ‘Abu Jabal’. Therefore, the plural identity, multiple meanings and lack of acceptance of different interpretations is a common feature of sub-discourses and fundamentalist groups in the era of globalization (Bauman 1998b). For instance, the spokesman for ISIS tells his soldiers on fighting the Shiites: ‘remember that you are fighting a depraved nation that who appeal to [Imam] Ali, [Hazrat] Abbas and [Hazrat] Fatimah and ask them to intercede and help them; these are persons that rely on humans and worship idols, so God will never help them’ Or ‘troops of ISIS, you are soldiers fighting in the path of God, while the Shiites are the soldiers of Satan fighting in the path of transgression! So fight against the soldiers of Satan, the guile of

Satan is weak and will soon fail'. Today these views on the Islamic identity together with subjective interpretations of religion have brought about the most severe harms to the genuine Islamic principles. This issue is so severe that Adnan Mohammed al-Aroor one of the influential Salafi clerics in Syria has reacted to the actions of ISIS and has said in an interview: 'It has become obvious to us that ISIS forces violate all agreements and attempt to kill the Mujahidin (Muslim fighters) in the path of Haq (Truth). They are tyrants who try to purify the Islamic nation of the existence of the ulama (scholars) by Takfir of the scholars' (Khabar 2013a).

### **5.2. Globalization, secularism, and anti-traditionalism and opposition of fundamentalist movements against it**

Some analysts argue that globalization also implies the spreading of the Western secular pattern and consider the emergence and expansion of the fundamentalism as a reaction to this phenomenon (Turner 2004: 376).

In this regard, the fundamentalism of ISIS is as clear as the reaction of the groups to globalization. They think that secularization, urbanization and anti-traditionalism, which has been referred to by some scholars as 'globalization' is not a good and favorable phenomenon (Derrida 1998: 13). In this regard, religious fundamentalist discourses with functions such as accessibility are the most important identity-building source in the networking society. By referring to the past and emphasizing an exclusive meaning of religion, they try to restore its domination in judicial, economic, and governmental affairs. Afghanistan and fundamentalist groups such as Taliban and ISIS in Syria and Iraq are evident examples of this impact. In these countries the extremist fundamentalists with a religious claim have demanded the formation of the Islamic government based on their own specific religious interpretations. They get their strength for fighting from the assumptions of a threat or destruction of religion and tradition of the Prophet of Islam in the new era. From this perspective, the main characteristic of the insight of Taliban and ISIS group is the spirit of devotion to and canonization of theological and Islamic-judicial achievements of their predecessors. They regard the early and medieval Islamic eras as the golden age and immune from any error and have a dogmatic belief with regard to the religious interpretations of this era. Modern *ijtihad* (religious jurisprudence) and deduction has no place in this school of thought and people are generally obliged to follow the words and sayings of predecessor scholars. These merely imitative understanding of religion leads to their and their supporters' cynicism of and hostility to the Western life and secularization of religion. In this regard also opposition with the corruptions of the Western culture and civilization in general is one of the basic slogans of all fundamentalist groups; but what distinguishes extremist fundamentalism of Taliban and ISIS from other Islamic groups is their rejection of the Western civilization. Doubtlessly, the opposition of Taliban and Al-Qaeda and ISIS with TV, imaging equipment, Western dressing, cinema and the like is a clear sign of their spirit of militancy against the manifestations of the Western civilization for establishment of new laws (Arango 2014: 5). For instance, after domination in Raqqa, ISIS imposed the rules whose violation deserves severe punishments. The list of these rules includes the following ones: 1. Wearing jeans is forbidden for women. 2. Smoking cigarettes and hookah is forbidden and if not observed, the two indexes and middle fingers of the offender will be cut off and if repeated, the sentence of the offender will increase to execution. 3. All barbershops are closed and if someone cuts their hair short they will be

executed. 4. Display of women's clothing in the shop windows is forbidden and men cannot work in the shops selling women's clothing. 5. Men are not allowed to enter the sewing shop for women's clothing. 6. Advertisement and signage for women's beauty salons are forbidden. 7. Using the word ISIS is considered an offense and the offender will be sentenced to 70 lashes. 8. Women's visits to obstetrics and gynecology doctors for treatment are forbidden and the offender will be punished. 9. Combing the hair and placing any additional thing on the head is forbidden to men and the offender will be sentenced to 70 lashes. 10. The men with slim waists are not allowed to wear jeans. Women's sitting on the chair is *haram* (unlawful) (Khabar 2013b). Also, ISIS or members of the terrorist group 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' have started distributing notices in the schools of Saraqeb city in Idlib Province in which this terrorist group has required female students to observe Islamic clothing or covering such as gloves, *niqab* (veil or mask) and black veil. The people of *Raqqa* also, in order not to face these punishments, do not leave their houses except in cases of emergency (Fars News Agency 2016).

### **5.3. Globalization; communication and information flow, confusion of the relations and the need for meaning**

Globalization, by transforming the relations of production, power and experience, has challenged the traditional relations between religion, identity and gender and has brought about insecurity, abandonment, loneliness of the individual and consequently demands such as the need for meaning and identity. In analyzing this situation, it should be added that the society has provided a modern formal network of relations whose basis is the increasing use of information and communications means; that is to say, in the same way that this process has caused the emergence of fundamentalism, it has also caused this current of thought to make use of its facilities and show its power and identity. For instance, today the computer is the symbol of network society in comparison with the previous industrial processes. The economy of this group is based on networking. The points that are considered unimportant for the network society are ignored as it happened in many African countries (Mahcupyan 2014: 81). The power of this society is based on an efficient use of information and communication facilities and capabilities. From this perspective, the Mayan Indians in Chiapas Province of Mexico, by understanding the important role of network society and utilizing it, have gained an undeniable power in the networking atmosphere. This local group fights with the help of press notices, official comments, symbolic acts and reconciliatory events. The remarks of their spokesman are spread on Internet websites and move their audience. They represent a post-Cold War peasant revolt and with the help of the benefits of globalization, they have obtained a powerful identity in order not to be undermined but become universal enough in order not to restrict themselves. The transformation of the relations of experience is another fundamental change of the network society. Feminists and homosexuals are an evident illustration of this transformation. By personalizing religion, politicizing their identity or gender and overturning the forbidden areas, they developed new patterns of the relations of experience. The speed and intensity of changes have produced a gap in the society and the emergence and spread of fundamentalists, including ISIS, appears in fact a logical response to it. In this regard, the activists that avoid individualization of identity and multiplicity of meanings resulting from globalization consider the fundamentalist identities of ISIS as a safe haven for attacking the hostile

world outside. They are passive in nature and are a response to the adverse conditions of the time. From this aspect, within the framework of Castells's theory, the emergence of fundamentalism is considered as 'a resistant identity' against the social sanctions resulting from globalization (Hall 2004: 327). The fundamentalists of Aum cult in Japan are an evident example of this influence. Although the members of this group were mostly graduates from the Japan top universities and the distinguished scholars of the country, by membership in this group and attainment of a fundamentalist identity, they overcame the crises of identity and multiplicity of meaning. In order to better understand this attraction, one should point to the alienation of the Japanese youth after the failure of powerful social movements of Japan in the 1960s. Many of these youths dreamed of living in a different world in which science and technology would help their body to go beyond natural and social limits and restrictions. This is where Aum's methodology for salvation and creation of collective identity based on spirituality and self-realization through meditation and practice becomes revealed. The members of this cult, with an apocalyptic interpretation, speak of an imminent war which is an inevitable result of the competition between Japanese and American companies for the establishment of a new world order. The preparation for such a war, in addition to reconstruction of the collective identity according to the teachings of Aum fundamentalists also requires skill in the application of technology of advanced weapons, especially chemical and biological weapons and guided missiles. On the other hand, the ISIS group members also use up-to-date technology to advertise and propagate their thoughts or reveal their identity. For instance, they use highly advanced weapons to fight against the Iraqi and Syrian governments. They also share different films, notices and tapes of their thoughts and also commit crimes in cyberspace (Lister 2014: 18).

Therefore, contrary to the expectation of some people, this group takes action in different fields including media in a carefully planned and purposeful way. For instance, the Twitter, due to an easy and quick access it has, is widely used by ISIS. This fundamentalist group has numerous Twitter pages with specified and defined functions; one of their pages was the page of ISIS leader who had more than 50 thousand followers, which was later closed by Twitter. They also have pages for each of the languages that are used in European countries and they have created separate pages for all regions or, in their own words, the provinces they have conquered, such as Al-Anbar, Mosul and Syrian provinces, which advertise ISIS products with ISIS logo in Indonesia. Furthermore, ISIS has a software by the name of 'Sahar' which makes working in the Twitter environment easier for them and by means of this software they have an easy access to the accounts of their users and their audience and such measures make more difficult the tracking of their cyber activities for anti-terrorist forces (Spencer 2014: 1).

#### **5.4. Globalization, collapse of meaning and its reconstruction by sub-identities**

Globalization, in addition to challenging ideological identities dominant in Arabic Middle Eastern countries and exclusive meanings, has led to the emergence of fundamentalist identities such as ISIS that have based their resistance on the reconstruction of meaning and overcoming of identity crises. Meanwhile, the assumption that religion is met with some suspicions and a devout believer is obliged to face or modify these suspicions, has existed in all religions since long time ago; yet, the return to the main sources of religion in the recent centuries which led to the movement of 'religious reformation' in Christian communities, was revived in the nineteenth century in Islamic communities

and soon tuned into dogmatic approaches and strict interpretations which were mostly based on personal interpretations. Wahhabism was one of such movements which later mothered many other deviations including ISIS. It seems that the root of these unrealistic interpretations of religion can be traced to inconsideration of the specialized aspect of religion and cynicism towards the modern world. For instance, in its late encounter with the Western civilization, Afghanistan felt subject to the destruction of identity and welcomed Talibanism (Harding 2014: 13). In North Africa and the Middle East, the existing puppet governments and governments paying no attention to the fate of their own people led to the emergence of Takfiri groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra, Al-Tawhid Brigade, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, *etc.*, which was in fact a negative reaction to the rulers. Among these factors, strategy of the West in shaping harsh movements to develop Islamophobia and find an enemy in light of which it can persuade people to comply, should not be forgotten. This strategy has been explained by a French author Jean-Christophe Rufin in the book *'The Empire and the New Barbarians'*. In this book which was published immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is written: 'The West will not be able to survive without having a terrifying enemy. The Soviet Union is gone and now it must invent a new enemy. Among the third-world countries Islamic countries have the highest potential for ascension to this position' (Rufin 1992: 45). In this regard, we also have a lot of documents and evidence which show who brought about Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS.

However, this is one side of the story. Without doubt, against the waves of globalization and crisis of meaning resulting from this process, Islamic fundamentalists have always appealed to reconstruction of the cultural identity for social resistance and political uprising, which is in fact a post-modern phenomenon. As the processes of the new domination to which people react are realized through the flow of information, reconstruction of meaning inevitably takes place through reverse flows of information. Religion, nation, family and society bring about rules which represent the eternal values and are never overwhelmed in the vortex of the flows of information (Castells 2006: 88). The evident proof of this reconstruction can be clearly observed in fundamentalist groups such as ISIS. By presenting the modern and decadent understanding of religion, based on the reconstructed identities of tradition, they brought about new patterns of meaning since they imagine they can make their behavior and thoughts structured within the framework of these religious interpretations and concepts. Special concepts such as jihad al-nikah (sexual jihad), codification of new rules which were formerly mentioned, martyrdom and Islamic government, *etc.* are the symbols of a new culture which were constructed through traditional materials (Mohammed 2013: 12).

##### **5.5. Globalization, media revolution and identification of sub-discourses**

Today, with the enhancement of communication and information technologies, we witness the emergence of a new form known as globalization of information. This dimension of globalization, by providing proper information facilities and infrastructures, has brought about significant changes whereby collective identities, by drawing on it, seek identification of their chosen identity and meanings by others (Machaidze 2015: 12). The powerful impact of fundamentalist groups is largely due to the presence of the media and effective use of information technologies. In fact, their organizational infrastructure is developed by means of the same technology. Without the Internet and a substitute medium, the fundamentalist movements could hardly develop the influential networks

and would be only a group of dispersed and powerless reactions. Drawing the attention of the media takes place through taking theatrical actions that have a strong attraction, even if requiring (human) sacrifices. Therefore, in all fundamentalist movements, the use of weapons plays a vital role not as a goal, but rather as a sign of freedom and also a tool that can draw the attention of the media. It seems that the new fundamentalist protest movements publish their messages and claims in the form of symbolic policies (power of image), which is characteristic of the information society. Their media skills are fundamental and turn the basic tools for fighting and they at once use operations and weapons for creation of an event which can be reported. The attention of the media attracts people's attention to the media's claims (Castells 2006: 428). This impact is the major common feature of all fundamentalist groups in the network society. In this regard, numerous examples can be mentioned; yet its newest examples can be sought in the operations of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Before the destruction of the Twin Towers in the USA, the Al-Qaeda fundamentalists were unknown to the world but it was only with the collapse of these towers the claims of this group attracted public attention. The fight of the ISIS group against the Iraqi and Syrian governments and its resistance to any kind of thought and belief which it assumes to be deviating is another example here. The publication of the images related to the conquest of parts of Fallujah and Ramadi and appointment of Wali (governor) in the city of Fallujah, conquest of the building of a satellite network in Iraq, attacks on the pilgrims of Karbala and martyrdom and injury of ten pilgrims, distribution of poisonous food by ISIS terrorists among pilgrims in Karbala and poisoning of 70 people, destruction of about 1,400 houses in Iraq and killing of 1,996 people as a result of this destruction in the latter half of 2013 by ISIS, confirm the aforementioned assumption (Knights 2014).

On the whole, one can say that the way the Islamic communities treat globalization and Western modernity has led to political radicalism, since modernity and the process of globalization in these communities unfold in a chaotic and uncoordinated way and not only disrupt the balance within the society but also threaten the collective identity and bring new inequalities. Accordingly, since radicalism has been formed, it no longer determines its goals through rationality and rather brings about a frustrated and pent-up anger which may, before destroying the causes, threaten and target the insiders; like the killing of the Shiites by the fundamentalist groups of ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Globalization, by the crisis of meaning it brings about, makes the individual in the Islamic communities appeal to ideology and forms his/her resistant identity; a deviating thought which severely brainwashes the individual and turns him/her into an alienated element who is ruled neither by reason nor by himself/herself and is ruled rather by ideology. For example, a person who is under the influence of Wahhabism and the ideology of the ISIS group has no free will anymore. Humans are basically 'imaginaire' creatures and their mental images determine their behavior and narrow ideologies and teachings are the main image-making factors which draw the attention of uneducated and ignorant people. As the countries of Iraq and Syria have a long way ahead until democracy and the governments that are ruling in these countries are too weak to be able to eradicate fundamentalism and the ISIS group easily, it is predicted that the fire of rage of Islamic extremists will remain aflame (Shadid 2010: 9). However, these movements will bring about no changes and will only cause great damage to the image and reputation of Islam and the Muslims. It seems that these groups transform each time and new extremist groups form instead of them. The Islamic governments should not make use of or boost

these groups in their struggle against the West or their rival Islamic governments, since they will later cause serious problems for them as well.

## 6. Conclusion

The main goal of this paper has been to analyze the effects of globalization on the rise and spread of fundamentalist identities of ISIS in the modern world. Thus, firstly based on the theoretical framework of research the consensus of many scholars considering the emergence of the modern world was elaborated. Based on the view of Castells it was also stated that identities resisting against the process of globalization will be formed. Following the analysis of the modern world, deterioration of the ideological identity and the problematic and critical status of meaning was emphasized and eventually under the title of the problem of meaning and emergence of the fundamentalist identity the effects of globalization on the emergence of the fundamentalist identity was analyzed and it was concluded that: globalization, with the deterioration of ideological identities and exclusive meanings on the one hand and plurality of identity, multiplicity of meaning and collapse of forbidden areas on the other hand, leads to the anxiety and loneliness of the individual and leads him/her towards the search for new sources of identity based on the reconstruction of old identities. Fundamentalist movements, by creating collective identities and exclusive meanings, try to overcome the crises of identity and meaning. In these movements, a new identity is formed but not by the return to tradition and rather by giving meaning to traditional materials in order to realize an ideal and brotherly world in which the deprived masses and discontent intellectuals reach a new meaning. Therefore, by appealing to fundamentalist identities, people seek help from their historical memory and against the waves of globalization and the resulting crisis of meaning, they think of their ideal and favorable world. Thus, membership in fundamentalist groups and movements, even though temporarily, is considered a seemingly efficient alternative for a rejecting world order.

## NOTE

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<sup>1</sup> Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Army of Jhangvi) as well as Sipah-e-Sahaba are among the religious extremist groups that were formed in Pakistan. This group was founded in 1996 and has had some communications with the Pakistani security agencies. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is famous for being anti-Shiite and has many times launched bloody attacks on the Shiites in Pakistan. At the time of Zia-ul-Haq when this group, by a series of operations, caused some problems for the Pakistani government, their communications with ISI stopped and eventually the government imprisoned all of them and this led to some problems between the two countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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