

# Religious Movements and Their Social Capital: The Dialectic of Fragmentation and Reproduction

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The concept of social capital is one of the essential sources of power that religious parties and movements rely on in the process of reproducing their existence. Given that Iraqi society is a Muslim Arab society, the existence of religious movements and parties is an imperative dictated by the social reality of the Iraqi community as a Muslim society. These religious movements and parties depend on their social capital to reproduce their existence, and this depends on the policies and behaviors these movements adopt in dealing with societal issues.

### **First: Fragmentation of Social Capital**

Social capital fragments due to the decline of its components, which are social relationships, trust, solidarity, and cooperation. When the strength of these components weakens, it contributes to the fragmentation of social capital, which can be explained as follows:

#### **1.Social Networks and Relations**

Social networks and relationships form the core of the social capital concept, and they are vital for both the individual and the community. They help the individual move from self-isolation to social interaction through engagement with others. Social capital is measured by the density of relationships and networks owned by an individual or a party. However, when certain movements and parties limit their exchanges, interests, and relationships to their members, or when they expand their relationships only seasonally, particularly during elections, this leads to the contraction of these relationships within the social frameworks dictated by the interests of these religious movements and their parties. As a result, they fail to build sustainable social relationships with the wider community, which contributes to a decline in their social capital.

#### **2.Community Trust**

Community trust is a vital social process in supporting the mechanisms of social cohesion and integration. Its accumulation and development depend on the reciprocal experiences between individuals, especially when these experiences are sincere and pure, with parties adhering to their commitments and promises. With the continuous repetition of such experiences, the level of community trust increases due to the benefits it brings to all members of society.

Trust is, therefore, one of the most important symbolic assets held by religious movements and parties because it strengthens their social position. This is achieved through the effectiveness of their religious capital and their ability to utilize it to address crises. However, when these movements and parties fail to meet their commitments, promises, and the contracts they made with their followers, and when some of their members prioritize personal interests over the public good, or when some of these movements and parties abandon their critical enlightenment role in addressing issues that concern society, this weakens their social standing. As a result, the influence of their religious capital diminishes, leading to a decrease in trust,

its erosion, and eventual collapse. This generates tension, contributing to the fragmentation of social capital and the disintegration of the social fabric.

## 2.Solidarity

Solidarity is one of the important dimensions of the accumulation of social capital. Social networks that provide support and assistance when needed are crucial to social capital. Social capital is not defined by the number of relationships an individual has but by how effectively these relationships are mobilized when help is needed.

Since Iraqi society is composed of multiple components, and due to the political change from single-party rule to a multi-party system and shared governance in political affairs, all the components of Iraqi society were able to demand their rights. This is one of the positive aspects of representative participatory governance. However, when participation or solidarity in political governance turns into factional, pragmatic, and partisan solidarity at the expense of each component, it inevitably leads to the fragmentation of social capital within these parties. This facilitates the rise of narrow party identities based on partisan utilitarian exchanges.

## Second: Sources of Reproducing Social Capital for Religious Movements and Their Parties

### 1.Religion

The perspective of scholars who have studied social capital varies regarding the importance of religion as a source of social capital. Some view it as a positive contributor to the accumulation of social capital, as it provides an essential social framework for achieving social cohesion. Others, however, consider it a negative factor in the formation of social capital due to its potential impact on public trust, given the intolerance and extremism exhibited by some religious authorities in its application. All religions, regardless of their names, emphasize the importance of tolerance, promoting a culture of peaceful coexistence, and strengthening the principle of accepting others. Additionally, religion plays a key role in stressing solidarity and social welfare among community members. When religious movements and parties effectively perform their enlightening role, critically addressing any deviation, abuse, or corruption, it will significantly enhance their social capital.

### Integrity

When religious movements and parties fulfill their roles, in line with their religious identities, with integrity and transparency in the institutions they manage or supervise, and when they attract individuals who are characterized by honesty and credibility in managing affairs, this contributes to strengthening public trust. Furthermore, when their cadres work diligently to combat corruption, eliminate nepotism and favoritism, activate the professional and neutral role of oversight bodies in managing files within public sector

institutions, and protect public funds, this collectively enhances and supports the trust of the community in these religious movements and parties in governance. This, in turn, will increase their social capital.

### 3. Efficiency and Achievement

Efficiency represents the optimal and judicious use of human and material resources to achieve the best results. It refers to employing the least inputs in managing institutional performance, both at the human and material levels, to achieve the best outputs on a broader scale and provide better services to the community. When religious parties and movements in charge of political governance develop plans aimed at improving the service, economic, political, cultural, and other areas affecting citizens' lives, and when they achieve better results in projects and create better economic opportunities with the aim of preserving the dignity of the Iraqi individual, this will reinforce the values of community solidarity and cooperation with these parties, thus further enhancing their social capital.

### Conclusions

1. Some deviant and extremist religious movements, such as terrorist groups, have contributed, to some extent, to the fragmentation of Iraq's general social capital. They have created sectarian and doctrinal divisions that reject the culture of peaceful coexistence and acceptance of others.
2. The limited practices and orientations of some religious parties and movements in their social relations, confined to their supporters and adherents, will contribute to a decline in their popularity and social acceptance, which in turn has led to a reduction in their social capital.
3. The high levels of corruption in state institutions, particularly those headed and managed by individuals associated with religious parties and movements, have contributed to the decline in the popularity of these parties and movements.
4. Religion is one of the fundamental and significant sources in the production of social capital.
5. Values of integrity, success in managing affairs, and effective achievement are key resources that significantly contribute to the increase and accumulation of social capital.