

Foreign Policies of Regional Neighborhood Relations of Iraq

Fourth stage - Second course

Dr. kamaran Majeed Hussien

Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq

First: Turkish policies towards Iraq (the historical framework)

Relations between Turkey and Iraq extend over hundreds of years since the Ottoman Empire entered the region in the sixteenth century, and relations have changed and transformed greatly according to the changes between the two parties. And if we exclude the Ottoman period, and focus on relations in the modern era, we can say that before the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey and for decades, the Turkish view of relations with Iraq focused on security concerns related to the fear of external interference and its exploitation of some internal contradictions and files to influence the situation. The unity of the country, which is what some historians call the (establishment complex) of the Turkish Republic, which is still with it today.

For decades, relations with Iraq were built on determinants and foundations related to security issues, foremost of which is border control and reducing the danger of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which since 1984 waged a separatist war against the Turkish state on the one hand, and disputes over water shares from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as a matter of national security for both parties on the one hand. other.

The prominent feature of Turkey's Pre-Justice and Development policies towards Iraq was ignoring it and managing relations according to the orientation towards the West in terms of interest, politics and economy. However, the relationship with Iraq permeated during those years - most of which occurred during the Cold War period - three important stations that differed from this context and in which Turkey approached the Iraqi scene and clashed directly with it, the first of which was the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1953 with the membership of Turkey, Iraq, Britain, Iran and Pakistan with an idea from The United States of America to repel communist expansion in the Middle East, which did not succeed or last for long. The second is the Iraqi-Iranian war 1980-1988, in which Ankara pursued a policy of dual containment of both sides, in coordination with the United States.

As for the third, it is the second Gulf War 1990-1991, which Turkey invested in to reaffirm its importance to the Western system even after the end of the Cold War. Ankara allowed the international coalition forces to use its lands, and Turkish forces participated in the military operations, in addition to the logistical support provided by Turkey and its support for the "providing comfort" operation related to protecting the Kurds in northern Iraq, despite its negative repercussions on it due to the weak control of the central government on the outskirts of the country and the resulting PKK attacks on Turkey and the establishment of the Iraqi Kurdistan region against its will.

The water file is considered one of the most important causes of tension in the relations between Turkey and Iraq historically, and although the intensity of the dispute over it has subsided recently, it remains an existing tension factor that interacts with or activates other events, as it relates to the national security of the region and the three participating countries separately: Turkey, Iraq and Syria. In 1980, the three countries established a joint tripartite technical committee for the purpose of developing a consensual solution that satisfies the three of them with regard to water shares, based on the relevant articles of international law. However, the practical reality seems far from a consensual solution and the parties' satisfaction, as the water issue is still a matter of conflict and disagreement between Iraq. Syria on the one hand and Turkey on the other.

The Southeastern Anatolia GAP project, which includes several projects and dams on the Tigris and Euphrates, had negative effects on both Iraq and Syria, the most important of which is the decline in their proportion of the Tigris and Euphrates waters and the impact of the quality of this water due to its high salinity and the excessive use of chemicals in it, as well as the matter related to the national security of Iraq and Syria.

The Justice and Development Party's assumption of power in Turkey in 2002 can be considered a turning point in Turkish-Iraqi relations, although the party did not make a radical revolution against the entirety of its country's previous foreign policy towards the region as a whole and Iraq in particular. The Turkish policy towards Iraq was based on two basic principles: confronting the threat of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and launching its operations from northern Iraq, where its camps are in the Qandil Mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan, and its emphasis on the importance of demographic and political balances in Iraq and its protection, especially with regard to the Kurdish component.

But the biggest challenge to Turkish-Iraqi relations during the era of Justice and Development was not long overdue, and the US war on Iraq in March 2003 was. The ruling party submitted to the Turkish Parliament a draft resolution to allow the US forces to use its lands in military operations, but Parliament rejected the draft resolution, an incident that the Turkish leadership continued to consider a mistake that removed it from the possibility of participating in shaping the future of Iraq and left it outside the circle of influence since then.

Despite this, the Turkish government made great efforts before and after the war to support the security, stability and territorial integrity of the Iraqi neighbor, as it proposed the establishment of a group of "Iraqi Neighboring Countries" that was formed in January 2003, and it also woven balanced and friendly relations with the various Iraqi parties, but the changes in the Iraqi scene Especially the exclusionary policies of the successive Iraqi governments made it closer to the year of Iraq than others, so it communicated with them and developed bilateral relations with their symbols and currents and participated in attempts to involve them in the political process and integrate them into it.

Over the past years, Turkey has been keen in its relations with its Iraqi neighbor to emphasize the importance of its territorial integrity and reject partition scenarios so that it too will not be affected by them, and to adhere to Iraq's security and stability as a strategic interest for both parties, and an incentive to develop economic and trade relations between them. However, relations did not always go smoothly, but were punctuated by some crises, such as the attacks of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) against Turkish lands, to which Ankara always responds with military operations in the border areas with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Second: The importance of Iraq for Turkey

There are several factors that contribute to the formulation of the importance of one country in relation to another, foremost of which is the civilizational-cultural rapprochement, economic interests, the volume of trade exchange, the extent of compatibility in the vision of foreign policy and files of common interest. With all its potential to be affected and influenced on both sides of the border on the various economic, political, military, security, social and strategic levels.

Iraq is of exceptional importance to Turkey and its foreign policy, which is evident through the following:

1. **The strategic importance of Iraq's geopolitical location for Turkey.** The former Turkish prime minister of Turkey (Ahmet Davutoğlu) sees in his most famous book (Strategic Depth - Turkey's Location and Role in the International Arena) the need for Turkey to pay exceptional attention to it and prioritize it if it wants to raise its regional and international status in the eastern regions The Middle East, especially Iraq, where the two countries share a common land border that extends over 384 km, which feeds the double vulnerability - the influence on both sides

of the border and in both directions, especially at the level of trade relations, social-cultural ties, and political and strategic influences. Iraq was also an important part of the lands of the Ottoman Empire, and it received special attention throughout that period, as it was the geographical depth of Anatolia and the land of a civil civilization that preceded the Ottoman Empire.

2. **Ethnic importance and demographic diversity**. There is a great similarity in ethnicity (Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen) and sectarianism (Sunnis and Shia) in the two countries, in addition to the cultural-civilization-social interaction between the two peoples on both sides of the border. Turkey is also historically considered the sponsor and protector of the Iraqi Turkmen politically, culturally and socially, and it has very special relations with them that were shaped by the realities of history, race and culture. Kirkuk receives special Turkish attention to preserve its diverse ethnic fabric, as well as its exceptional importance in the very sensitive energy file for Ankara.

3. **The Iraqi importance in relation to containing the Kurdish issue**, the Kurdish file is considered one of the most important files of strategic common interest between Turkey and Iraq and in the region, as the Kurds are distributed in them in addition to Iran and Syria, and it is a thorny and volatile file that historically led to cooperation between the two countries at times and to a clash between them at other times. In the context of the Kurdish file (PKK), which has camps in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq, occupies a special place, and is considered one of the most important factors shaping Turkish-Iraqi relations, positively and negatively.

4. **Economic importance - energy**, where the two countries have strong economic relations, as Iraq recently occupied the third place in the list of Ankara's trading partners, a position that it lost later for several reasons, foremost of which were the attacks of the Kurdistan Workers' Party and the emergence of the state organization - ISIS in Mosul and tension Political relations between Turkey and the Baghdad central government. Iraq is also considered one of the most important options for Turkish energy security as an alternative to the natural gas of Russia and Iran, in addition to oil, which is a basic pillar in trade relations between the two countries in general and between Turkey and the northern region of Iraq in particular.

The volume of trade exchange between Turkey and Iraq increased from 2003 to 2021 tremendously, with successive jumps from just \$900 million to about \$17 billion, and this jump compensated for most of the declines that Turkey may have witnessed in its trade relations with other Arab countries as a result of the revolutions and wars, or political tension, or the state of instability prevailing in the region.

2021	2018	2015	2012	2009	2005	2003	
17,720	15,890	13,450	10,800	5,100	2,750	830	الصادرات
222	201	177	149	121	67	42	الواردات
18,000	16,900	13,600	11,000	5,200	3,000	900	المجموع

Trade exchange between Turkey and Iraq (2003-2021) - one million dollars

Third: Constants of Turkish policy towards Iraq

Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq is based on two main pillars: geopolitical security and economic security. Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 until today, Turkey has always emphasized these constants in any issue related to Iraq. Which

1. **The unity of Iraq (geopolitical security)**: The Turkish government considers preserving the unity of Iraq a constant of the country's national security. This is given that its division could open the door wide for other divisions in the region that may not exclude Turkey itself. Especially if this division is drawn along the Kurdish line in the region (in addition to the fate of Kirkuk and the Turkmen element).
2. **Stability in Iraq (economic security)**: For Ankara, the stability of Iraq is a strategic gain on the political and economic levels, and in terms of investment and energy security. This is due

to the elements that the two parties possess that help achieve economic integration between the two countries. Iraq needs massive infrastructure work worth tens of billions of dollars, and Turkey has a huge contracting sector, and ranks second in the world after China in terms of the construction sector, not to mention a vital private sector that can contribute effectively to helping Iraq for the benefit of Turkey as well.

Fourth: Controversial issues between Turkey and Iraq

Since the founding of modern Turkey in 1923, until now, Iraqi-Turkish relations have been characterized by their changing nature. In general, it can be said that the relations between the two countries were governed by five pivotal issues:

1. **The border issue between Turkey and Iraq (Mosul Wilayat):** The border is considered one of the biggest contentious issues between Turkey and Iraq, as Turkey sees the entire Mosul Wilayat as its right, after it was severed from its body and annexed to Iraq after 1920, and the Turks see that the Mosul Wilayat is their right. And they will take it back a hundred years after the signing of the Sykes-Picot Treaty.

2. **The issue of the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Gap project):** The water file has historically topped the list of files of common interest and was one of the reasons for the tension in bilateral relations between the two countries, as well as between Turkey and Syria, as both Baghdad and Damascus see the Turkish dam projects on the Tigris and Euphrates as threatening measures. their national security.

According to a study by the Brookings Institution for American Studies, “the climate change crisis, especially the “lack of water and drought” will lead to the loss of more than twelve million Iraqi citizens to their jobs, and will spread unemployment and migration from the countryside to the city in a large way, and the loss of agricultural land will be one of the most important negative effects that will lead to It refers to the current situation as a result of the completion of the Gap project to build dams on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Turkey.” The report also states that “Turkey now sees water as an effective political tool that can be used in the upcoming competition between Turkey and Iran to control the countries of the region,” as she described it. The Turkish government's illegal control of Iraqi water sources and depriving the country of them through unprecedented dam projects, the network said will lead to making Iraq a "waterless country" by the year 2040. The "Gap" project consists of 23 dams, the aim of which is to "invest water resources." It built fourteen dams at the headwaters of the Euphrates River, and nine dams at the headwaters of the Tigris River, in an attempt to cut off water from Iraq almost completely.



3. **The Kurdish issue (represented by the Kurdistan Workers' Party - PKK)**. The file of highest priority for Ankara is the threat of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to its lands, as the latter has been waging a separatist war since 1984 that has cost Turkey 40,000 dead and more than \$500 billion in human losses, in addition to the current period of escalation through which the party has tried since July 2015 to start an urban war and declare Self-administrations in the Kurdish-majority areas in the southeast of the country. And because the party has training camps in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq from which militants and weapons smuggling operations are launched into Turkey, Turkish relations with both the Baghdad central government and the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government are largely determined, and before any other determinant, by their respective positions regarding these camps and Turkey's right in intervening against it, and therefore we find in the history of Turkish-Iraqi relations moments of crisis and moments of cooperation in this file, depending on the position of Baghdad.

4. **Economic relations - securing the flow of energy**. As in its relations with most countries, the economic file remains one of the most important determinants of Turkish policy towards Iraq, which emerges as one of the most important trading partners for Ankara in terms of intra-land trade, natural gas, Turkish investments in Iraq, and the work of Turkish construction and construction companies on its territory, with a volume of trade exchange approaching 15 billion in 2015 (it had reached about 9 billion in 2013). Iraq, and especially the region (Kurdistan Region of Iraq), also represents one of the guarantees of Turkish energy security, considering it among the alternatives that can reduce the level of Turkish dependence on Russian gas, which currently amounts to 55% of Ankara's needs. Consequently, there is a Turkish concern for more than good relations with Iraq, or at least not for their deterioration, despite the contentious files between the two parties.

5. **Relationship with Iran (hegemony in the Middle East)**. Since the Turkish parliament voted to refuse to participate in the war against Iraq and not to allow the US forces to use Turkish lands, Turkey has lost areas of influence and influence in Iraq to Iran, then the areas of competition and indirect confrontation with it were renewed and increased by the impact of the Syrian crisis and the Turkish position on the "Decisive Storm" operation in Yemen. And the Turkish reservations about the exclusionary and sectarian policies of Al-Maliki and then Al-Abadi - according to the Turkish position - against the Sunni component in Iraq. In this sense, the level of Iraqi-Iranian relations between differentiation, cooperation and dependence, and the internal policies that derive from that pertaining to the ethnic and sectarian diversity in the country, are a major determinant of the level and course of inter-relationships between Ankara and Baghdad. It is possible to add to this determinant and on its margins the impact of the Syrian crisis, especially the scenarios of a solution and calm, on Turkish-Iraqi relations, albeit to a lesser extent.

Fifth: The objectives (target) of Turkish foreign policy in Iraq

Turkey has a set of immediate and future geostrategic motives, goals, and ambitions in Iraq, which can be classified as follows:

1. **Protecting Turkish national security**: Turkey has always placed two factors at the top of its regional priorities. The first is related to the size of the regional risks surrounding it, and the second is related to achieving economic gains and maintaining national security. Therefore, the main reason for the Turkish intervention in Iraq is related to the size of the regional risks surrounding it, and the second is related to achieving economic gains. Therefore, the main reason for the Turkish intervention in Iraq is to contain great dangers threatening its national security, especially after the emergence of the power of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on the one hand and the emergence of ISIS on the other, especially after ISIS took control of 40% of Iraqi territory after

the fall of Mosul in June 2014. This made Turkey cross fighters from Iraqi Kurdistan through Turkish territory to fight alongside the Kurds in the Syrian city of “Kobani” near the Turkish border.

2. **Protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq (standing against the division of Iraq)**. The Turkish position still rejects the partition scenarios in the region, especially with regard to Syria and Iraq, given that its outputs will not stop at the borders of these two countries, but will go beyond them to some neighboring countries, especially Turkey, which is still suffering from the exacerbation and repercussions of the Kurdish problem. Thus, the commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq is a fundamental pillar of Turkish foreign policy, especially since the weakness of the central government and the division of its lands will not only tempt the Kurds of Turkey with similar future scenarios, but also increase the threat of ISIS. With Turkey's commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq, it stresses the need to maintain balance and stability between the ethnic and sectarian components of the Iraqi people, with special attention to Kirkuk, where Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds live side by side, and considers it, along with Baghdad, a safety valve to prevent developments from reaching a zero-sum conflict on ethnic and sectarian grounds. .

3. **Containing the Kurdish issue:** As the Turkish policy towards Iraq is still summed up in the Turkish fear of the Kurdish project in Iraq and the ability to establish a similar project in Syria, which will lead to serious repercussions inside Turkey. As this file plays a major role in the fluctuations of Turkish attitudes towards the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Turkey's campaign against the PKK militants in northern Iraq is linked to the internal political movement aimed at resolving the problem of the "Kurdish question" to grant the Kurds autonomy in the south, which will be strengthened thanks to the inclusion of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk in the Iraqi Kurdish region. That is why this intervention works to weaken the economic and political influence of the Iraqi Kurdish forces, as well as works to disperse the Kurdish demographic concentration, because the Iraqi Kurdistan region has become a base for the concentration of Turkish movements present in Turkey, Syria and Iran, and it has become a safe haven for Kurdish separatist movements that use the region for training as a starting point for implementation. attacks.

4. **Standing up to the new Russian role in the region:** It is believed that the Turkish move in Iraq came in response to the strengthening of the Russian military presence in Syria and its adherence to the regime's choice to lead Syria after the crisis (ISIS), in addition to strengthening the activity of the Russian-Iranian alliance in the region. As Turkey realized that it was among the political targets of Russia's military intervention in Syria; As it became afraid that this intervention would perpetuate the long-term Russian presence in its south. This isolates it from the Arab world, prevents its communication with the Arab Gulf states, ends its role in the region, and may support the existence of an independent Kurdish entity next to it. This prompted it to infiltrate and control the region (inside the Kurdistan Region of Iraq), which is outside the control of the Iraqi government. Some believe that this intervention, at this time, is nothing but an urgent and rapid response to the deployment of Russian forces in Syria and their blocking of the road to any possible regional intervention to establish buffer zones inside Syria near the Turkish border to stifle the Syrian regime and support the political opposition to overthrow it. Thus, Turkey achieves two goals. The first is to overthrow the Syrian regime, and the second is to remove Russia from the circle of strategic balances in the Middle East. In doing so, Ankara is using its own military forces to show its unwillingness to back down in the framework of its regional rivalry with Moscow.

5. **The role of the proxy for the United States of America:** For the United States of America, Turkey is an important and vital member of the international coalition that it formed in September 2015 to eliminate ISIS in Iraq and Syria, given its geographical proximity, and its cultural and geographical relations with that region. Turkey is a member of NATO, and therefore Turkey is able to play the role that will be assigned to it, as it will be an asset, an actor and an influence in

it. Therefore, it can be said that the United States uses Turkey as a tool to confront Turkish and Iranian influence on the one hand, and Turkey also uses its position and role as a tool to strip the position of the first strategic ally - with the exception of Israel - of the United States in the region, which is consistent with President Erdogan's plans to increase Turkey's international and regional influence.

Sixth: The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy in Iraq (Future Scenarios)

Because of the different demographic nature and political structures of Iraq, and the continued presence of the central government and state authority in it, even if it is weaker than other stable countries in the region. Turkish options can be limited to three future scenarios:

1. **The option of neutrality: (exiting the state of siding with a certain party):** and means the continuation of the development of Iraqi-Turkish relations in the political and economic fields than they are currently without direct Turkish interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, and avoiding any step that would disturb the pace of bilateral relations in the foreseeable future.

2. **The retreat option: (the situation remains as it is):** in which Turkey seeks to withdraw within its regional borders, completely ignoring the developments of events in Iraq, avoiding entering into any competition with Iran or other countries in the Middle East, and temporarily turning a blind eye to what is happening on the ground in the Iraqi arena, pending results. suffix.

3. **The option of progress (more political and military intervention):** This construct reflects a discrepancy between the vision of Turkey and Iraq towards many common contentious issues, whose roots go beyond the military movements of the PKK, as many internal Iraqi issues have become red lines for Turkish policy, and these lines may There are justifications for a direct Turkish intervention with the aim of contributing to rearranging the situation in the Iraqi arena, especially if Turkey feels that the outcome of the events is heading towards a direct impact on Turkey's territorial integrity, in addition to that it enjoys the support of the United States of America and other active parties in the international community, and this scene is which Turkey has tried to achieve at the present time.