

Iranian foreign policy towards Iraq

First: The importance of Iraq for Iran

The great importance of Iraq for Iran and its policies is characterized by three aspects:

1. the geostrategic importance (the presence of Iraq in a geographically strategic location in relation to Iran and its strategic projects)

Iraq is located in the southwestern tip of the continent of Asia, in the region comprising the Arabian Peninsula, which is the midpoint of the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. The site is considered one of the fixed elements in geography, but its importance is the one that changes, so it either loses or acquires new importance according to the developments taking place. So, Iraq, by virtue of its distinguished geography, has become a subject of great interest to many countries, which led to its exposure to multiple problems and conflicts for long periods and with the support of international powers, especially with its neighbors, including Iran, with which it fought a fierce war that lasted eight years, which led the two countries to material and human losses for both parties.

2. the economic importance (the economic dimension of oil, agriculture and trade in Iraq in relation to Iran)

The strategic economic importance of Iraq is no less important than its geostrategic importance. Perhaps the most prominent of this is the huge oil reserves that Iraq possesses. Iraq has economic resources, the most important of which are: Oil: Iraq possesses the second oil reserves in the world after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its discovered areas, and according to recent estimates, the volume of Iraqi reserves of crude oil reaches (112.5) billion barrels, which is equivalent to (11%) of the total Global reserves In addition to oil, Iraq has large reserves of natural gas, whose latest statistics indicate that the amount of reserves reached in 2003 approximately (109.5) billion cubic meters. Iraq also has agricultural potential, which is reflected in the availability of vast areas of agricultural land. The total exploitable land is more than (48) million dunums, of which only (12.3) million dunums were exploited, and this made it possess enormous agricultural potential. Iraq is an important market for selling Iranian products, especially industrial products and foodstuffs.

3. the political and security importance (the unity of Iraq and its participation in the security arrangements that guarantee Iran)

Iraq includes in its social composition multiple minorities, including the Kurdish minority, as is the case with Iran. Therefore, Iran realizes the need to seek to preserve the cohesion and unity of Iraq, and this cannot be considered an Iranian goal as much as it is the fear that the Kurdish opposition in Iran will become active, and on this basis, it opposes any project that seeks to divide Iraq. This is in addition to the fact that Iran seeks to be involved in any future regional security arrangements. In light of its realization that it views Iraq as an important element in determining the balance of power in the region, and therefore seeks to communicate with it as a way to play an important regional role in the region in general and Iraq in particular.

4. The religious and sectarian importance (the sectarian priority of the Shiite holy places in Iraq)

Considering that Iraq is a Muslim country, and it represents for Iran a special and important Shiite weight to the fullest extent and the farthest possible extent, just as the presence of holy places in Iraq, especially in the provinces of (Najaf and Karbala) established historical and religious relations between it and Iran, and Iran has sought from behind these relations to direct a mission Iranian outside the borders of Iran, which is consistent and clear. All that has been done for the sake of establishing an Islamic empire, with Iran as its starting point, because the Iranian intellectual perception has not been liberated from the historical and civilizational legacy in its vision of Iraq, and on this basis the Iranian perception has mostly stemmed from an intellectual belief based on ambition aimed at restoring its imperial influence.

Second: the constants of Iranian policy towards Iraq

1. Territorial unity of Iraq (politically, geographically and in terms of security):

One of the most prominent constants in Iranian foreign policy towards Iraq is to prevent the division of Iraq and to keep the current Iraqi state as a unified state dominated by a Shiite Arab population. This basis has not changed since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 until now.

2. Economic instability in Iraq (the dominance of Iranian goods on the Iraqi market):

It is represented in striving to dominate the Iraqi markets, and dumping them with Iranian goods and commodities that have cheap prices, compared to goods and commodities imported from other countries, and focusing on the consumer aspects, not production, with the aim of monopolizing the production outlets of Iran without Iraq. In addition, there are expectations of an increase in the level of trade exchange between the two countries from \$12 billion in 2014 to \$22 billion in 2015. And to the extent that Iran is able to disrupt the economic, industrial, and agricultural structures, it will supply the Iraqi markets with what meets the demand therein, and Iran will try to have a role in reconstruction and investment projects in the provinces that the Iraqi government will re-control, and remove the elements of "ISIS" from, and Iran will work to benefit from it. From the banking sector in Iraq to meet its need for foreign currency it needs, in light of the international sanctions imposed on it.

Third: The theories on which the Iranian political system is based in regulating its internal and external relations

1. The theory of the guardianship of the jurist: The Islamic political theory of the current Iranian political system relies on the legitimacy of assigning power to the Supreme Leader of the Republic as a deputy to the guardian of the jurist, who is the hidden twelfth Imam (and is called by them the expected Mahdi), and according to this theory, the Iranian state is being prepared until This Imam reappears and leads the state as well as the regional neighboring countries and the countries of the whole world with justice and goodness. Accordingly, the

current Iranian rulers build their external and internal orientations on the basis of the thoughts and orientations of this Hidden Imam.

2. The theory of exporting the revolution: The Islamic revolution in Iran, from the point of view of those who carried it out, is considered one of the most successful and best revolutions that moved the Iranian people, according to their opinion, from misery, poverty and disease to prosperity and a good life, as a prelude to the rise of the Hidden Imam according to the theory of the Guardianship of the Faqih. Therefore, it is their duty to transfer this experience Unique to other countries, especially countries with a Shiite minority, such as Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and many other countries. The main goal of exporting the Iranian Islamic Revolution is to prepare for the return of the Hidden Imam according to their belief, and to build huge armies in order to liberate other countries and spread peace and prosperity in the world.

Fourth: The objectives (goal) of Iranian foreign policy in Iraq

1. **Protecting Iran's national security:** Iran is considered to have many problems with the regional and international surroundings. Therefore, removing the constant danger from its strategic depth, which extends from the Persian Gulf to Iraq, is considered very important to protect Iran's internal national security. Therefore, the highest priority for the political regime in Iran, especially in its dealings with Iraq, is to protect its national security in order to prevent Iraq from being exploited by major countries such as the United States or countries such as Israel or Saudi Arabia from striking Iranian national security.

2. **Sectarian hegemony through rapprochement and religious control:** Although the Iranian constitution has declared in its fourth article the dominance of the Twelver Shiite sect over the pattern of governance in Iran, the Shiite religious center is not located in Iran, but is located in Iraq within the cities of Najaf and Karbala, and previously it was The founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, lived in Karbala in Iraq for seventeen years, and accordingly, the main goal of Iran in Iraq is to dominate the holy places and lead them towards the world.

3. **Hostility to the United States and targeting its interests in the region:** There is no doubt that America wants to use Iraq as a base to strike Iranian interests, and on the contrary, Iran also wants to harm American interests through race and hegemony over them, and therefore the Shiite parties, movements and groups, especially those armed by Iran, are always They represent Iran in striking American targets in the Arab region.

4. **Finding a way to supply its allies in the region through Iraq with money and weapons:** In application of the theory of exporting the revolution, successive Iranian governments had a problem of how to deliver financial, military and economic supplies to many countries and political parties leading to their project in the region, and accordingly, after controlling it,

Iraq became one of the ways Fast and safe transportation of military equipment and economic power to Syria, Lebanon and other countries in the region.

5. The threat and the corresponding threat to Israel and its interests in the Middle East:

Israel is one of the most prominent enemies of Iran in the region, due to what Iran is doing to eliminate it and expel it from the land of historical Palestine, as the Iranians say. Therefore, Iraq is a fertile ground for striking Israel and its interests or transferring military aid. to Israel's enemies in the region.

Fifth: The future of Iranian foreign policy in Iraq (future scenarios)

1. **The scenario of direct intervention and control of the Iraqi state:** Experts believe that Iran, especially the US withdrawal in 2010, is facing a golden opportunity to fully take over the Iraqi state and create a political system parallel or similar to its political system in Iraq. Despite the strength of this scenario and the amount of strategic interest in it, the repercussions behind this step may be frightening due to the national, sectarian and religious diversity in Iraq, in addition to the division within the (Shiite Street).
2. **The scenario of indirect interference and influence-making only:** The indirect intervention through certain agents of Iran in Iraq in order to create a great influence and extend political and economic influence on the Iraqi arena is considered one of the best scenarios for Iran, given the low costs and losses and the many interests that may happen. Iran must stop direct interference in Iraqi internal affairs.
3. **The scenario of complete withdrawal from the Iraqi political process:** Although this scenario has been excluded by experts, the complete withdrawal of Iran from the political process and economic hegemony in Iraq is an option, especially if it is measured by the damage incurred by Iran as a result of direct intervention and the sanctions imposed. On its political entity and dilapidated economy by the United States and its Western allies.

Iraqi-Kuwaiti Relations: From the Perspective of the Two Biggest Problems Between Them

1. **The problem of Kuwaiti dependence on Iraq:** The Ottoman Empire ruled the Middle East for four hundred years, during which it divided the lands into states and cities (sanjaks). After the arrival of British forces to the region in 1918 and the declaration of Iraq as a region belonging to the British crown, the British dealt with Kuwaitis as an emirate independent of Iraq. Throughout those years, until Iraq during the time of Saddam Hussein occupied the State of Kuwait in 1990, Iraq was calling for the annexation of Kuwait again whenever it had the opportunity, whether during the monarchy or during the republican era.

2. **The problem of international borders, the Iraqi sea outlet:** Kuwait's dependence on Iraq is not the only problem between the two countries. Rather, the border separating them is a problem in itself because it contains oil and gas wells. Iraq demands Kuwait for tens of kilometers of borders, including the strategic Babayan Island, not only that, but also that Kuwait, with its construction of the Al-Kabeer port, would have blocked the only sea outlet to Iraq within the ports of (Al-Faw and Umm Qasr). Accordingly, the port problem still exists between the two countries, especially in light of the knowledge that Iraq, as a landlocked country, has only a few kilometers on the Arabian Gulf as its only outlet.

The pillars of the Saudi regime and its impact on the Iraqi-Saudi relations

1. **The unity and strength of the Saudi royal family (Abdulaziz Al-Saud family):** The Saudi royal family and its unity is considered one of the most important factors of strength in the Kingdom and the Arab Gulf region. It is a strict theocratic kingdom similar to the political system in Iran, where the monarchy is restricted and the rule is all in the hands of one person. Similar to the kings of Europe in the Middle Ages, and the Abdulaziz family was the primary competitor to the Sharif family who were ruling the Hijaz before the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Hashemite family after their expulsion from the Hijaz became the kings of the kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan, this is what made the relationship between Iraq and Saudi Arabia during the period of monarchy not good. However, the relationship developed during the Republican era, and during the period of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia became an enemy of Iraq, as it allowed the American forces and allied countries to use their lands to invade Iraq and expel it from Kuwait.

2. **The influence of the Wahhabi sect on government policies in Saudi Arabia towards Iraq:** The Al Saud family, in the first period before the establishment of the kingdom, had nothing but to exploit the Islamic religion in order to urge people to support them, and this is what they obtained after (Sheikh Muhammad Abd al-Wahab), the founder of the Wahhabi sect, joined the family. Al Saud and help them to eliminate their enemies and build the current state called the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Until now, the Wahhabi doctrine is clear in the internal and external political conditioning of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the most prominent evidence of this is Saudi Arabia's hostility to Iran, which has a Shiite sect, as well as Iraq in the period after 2003, due to the dominance of the Shiite majority over the rule of Iraq.