

The Regional Challenges that Stand in the Way of Iraqi Foreign Policy to use Soft Power

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Summary

The Iraqi security environment suffers from a wide margin challenges, it is formed by a complex set of elements and components that have a great impact on the security scene, One of the most important factors are politics, geography, economy, external interference and other influential factors, which reflects on the overall situation of societal stability and directly affects the state of general stability politically, economically and socially inside Iraq, furthermore it will encourages enemies and opponents to enter through it to the Iraqi arena and influence the shaping of its security scene. The concept of national security or the concept of national security of any State is no longer limited to the local dimension and the internal arena, especially in the West Asian region, where the concept of domestic security overlaps with the concept of regional security and the concept of international security, because it is located on the main path of the strategies and interests of the major world powers that are engaged in a struggle for hegemony and influence and compete on their straits, corridors and seas.

Key words: Soft Power, Foreign Policy, Iraq, Regional Challenges, Turkish Challenge, Iranian Challenge, Saudi Challenge.

Introduction

The Iraqi political system suffers from many challenges resulting from the collapse of a totalitarian state based on authoritarianism, To be replaced by a state of unclear composition and dominated by instability, and most of the political forces in it lack to a clear vision of the concept of the state, this has led to the supremacy of sub-loyalties and their struggle to reach power for the purpose of domination and not towards building an effective and strong state; the political process was founded on quotas, which contributed to deepening the idea of division and based the decision-making process towards the religious, ethnic, sectarian and ethnic components, this led to the domination of divisions and their control by the behavior of political parties, the parliament, even the government and all state institutions, this was reflected on the state building, which led to the emergence of many obstacles and challenges, whether political, legislative, social or economic.

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Research Problem

The problem raises a key question: What are the Regional Challenges that Stand in the Way of Iraqi foreign policy to use Soft Power?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis stems from the fact that soft power has become one of the most important means used by countries in the implementation of their foreign policy and the achievement of their goals, and that Iraq is one of the countries that own these sources, however, regime change after 2005, the adoption of the constitution and holding elections produced a new government lacking to the qualifications to run the state, as well as destruction many sources of economic, cultural and even military power, that led to the weakening of the state's ability to impose its agenda in the international environment and destroying the state's ability to make the best use of soft power sources to protect reconciliation.

Turkish Challenge

After 2005, Turkey was able to activate its role in the Arab region, especially Iraq, as a result of changing the course of its strategic turn from European to Asian, becoming Europe's gateway to the Arab region, and moved towards building a new geopolitical base to revive the Ottoman heritage and introduced Iraq and Syria in it and some Asian countries, especially after changing the focus of its interest in joining the European Union towards activating its role in the Middle Eastern circle (Saif.T, 2021).

Iraq contributed to increasing Turkish influence and making it a distinctive regional player, this is what Turkish politicians realized after they adopted two strategies (Whistling disagreements or problems and strategic depth); by Whistling disagreements, it presented itself as a savior partner for the Arabs, especially Iraq to make it more acceptable, and took advantage of the opportunity of the strategic vacuum in the Middle East to show itself as a protector and leader under slogans that achieve its ambitions, As for the strategic depth, the aim was to make Turkey's neighboring countries within their strategic depth, Iraq is the most important of these depths, so it is necessary to position itself at the top of the regional leadership according to the principle of Turkish peace (Park.p, 2014).

The increase in Turkish influence has been contributed by its two advantages: first, being eastern, and second, being the only NATO force that adjoins Iraq, That is, it is (Eastern-Western) and this is what it is unique from the rest of the regional powers, There are also three main issues that push Turkey to deal with Iraq, which are considered to be among the most sensitive matters in its national security, First, the Kurdish issue and the (PKK), second, water issue, and third, the Turkmen issue, these issues have often been presented as dilemmas for Turkish national security, That's why Turkey has become one of the most influential regional powers on Iraqi politics, Being associated with the number one international actor is the United States of America (Suleiman.A, 2014).

The issue of Kirkuk and Turkmen regionalism in Iraq is one of the outstanding issues facing the course of Turkish-Iraqi relations beyond 2005, It is about the city of Kirkuk which has been and still disputed because of its natural resources and its important location; the city is witnessing an identity dispute between three nationalities inhabited by (Arab-Kurdish-Turkmen), at the same time the Turkmen problem is linked to the Kirkuk issue as it is

considered from the point of view of the Iraqi Kurds as part of Kurdistan, claiming that there are hundreds of historical documents that Prove the city's belonging to them (Veen.V, 2022).

Turkey is trying to stir up sectarian and ethnic strife in Iraq by accusing Iraqi governments of sectarian governments, In addition to demanding the rights of the Turkmen and interfering in Iraqi affairs, Turkey is striving to exploit the Turkmen issue by making them an internal power with external Dependency, which can use them for the purpose of achieving its goals by keeping Kirkuk and its oil out of the reach of the Kurds, given the serious risks that the Kurds control of Kirkuk oil entail that could encourage the Kurds to achieve secession (Ozcan.M, 2010).

Not only that, but also went to deal with the Kurdistan region directly often away from the federal government, Turkish investment companies invade the Kurdistan region, and they also depend on the region to obtain oil at reduced prices, and It ignored the Iraqi government's statements that dealing with the region constitutes a violation of national sovereignty, At the same time, however, it rejects the Kurds' complete separation from the central government, and This was demonstrated in the 2017 referendum where Turkey and Iran expressed their willingness to use hard force to prevent that Kurdish aspiration from happening for any reason, Indeed, Iraq was able to enter Kirkuk and end the project of the dream of a Kurdish state with the support of regional powers that agreed with it in this direction, Turkey is still preparing the corridor for the entry of ISIS into Iraq, and the export of oil smuggled from Iraq by these terrorist groups through its territory at low prices, and did not take the necessary measures to close its borders to this terrorist organization (Sardar.M, 2015).

Turkey also seeks to neutralize Kurdish aspirations for greater autonomy as a large minority by military means, by eliminating the bases of hardline Kurdish groups, especially the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), considering Qandil, Sinjar and Qamishli in Syria are basic military targets, so Turkey began to adopt escalatory positions from 2018 to 2022, following a series of military operations targeting the PKK, where it affected the areas of (Bassyan-Matena-Avashin) in northern Iraq, and The Iraqi government expressed its strong rejection of Turkish military violations in northern Iraq, stressing that it is a violation of national sovereignty (Rashid.S, 2019).

Although the Turkish presence in northern Iraq is a clear violation of national sovereignty, it is another violation of international law, Turkey asserts that the launching of continuous attacks is a legal right based on the agreement signed with Iraq in 1994 where Turkish forces are allowed to disembark in Iraqi territory at a depth of 25 km to pursue the PKK, but it has exceeded it to reach 100 km and is legally considered expired and has not been renewed after 2003 and has not deposited a copy of it with the PKK. The United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of its Charter, as the recent Turkish bombing of northern Iraq proved Turkey's violation of all international agreements, but Iraq can use the economic factor as a pressure card on Turkey, especially since Iraq is an open market for the import of Turkish goods, so it can impose a customs tariff to correct the imbalance in the rate of trade exchange, especially on wholesale goods to reduce their import, and find alternatives to Turkish imports by heading towards the countries that produce the same goods produced by Turkey, including East Asian countries, And to find new border crossings for the export of Iraqi oil, the Turkish port of Ceyhan is the second port after the ports of Basra (Iraq in the Turkish Strategic Perception, 2022).

As for the water crisis between the two countries, it is as close as possible to the dilemma that Turkey refuses to discuss about it, Based on the idea of the right to control the

waters of Nuri Tigris and Euphrates as Iraq controls oil wells, rejecting the position of international law on international rivers, Therefore, the Iraqi government has put pressure on Turkey to negotiate on the water issue based on international law, Turkey could be granted detailed concessions at oil prices, as is the case with Jordan, And the use of trade exchange as a pressure card on the Turkish side, especially since Iraq is the fourth market for the discharge of Turkish goods and goods to adjust water balances with the Turkish side. (Lossow.T, 2018)

Iranian Challenge

After Iran realized the state of political vacuum that Iraq has been suffering from since 2003 and the confusion in its foreign policy orientations, it moved towards employing its strategy in Iraq, as it was able to extend its demographic arms in the Iraqi arena, so the Iranian decision-maker went to employ the Iraqi change established by the United States of America to his advantage and turn it into an Iranian gain, as the Iranian orientation towards Iraq is based on the idea of reviving the Persian Empire by turning the Persian Gulf into the Persian Gulf States; that is, Historical legacy is what determines Iran's aspirations in the Middle East, especially Iraq (Azizi.H, 2021).

What constitutes a threat towards Iraq's regional aspirations is to take it as a shield for expansion, influence and building protective geopolitical hoops for Iran, but Iran strives to keep Iraq weak and preoccupied with its internal problems and has no role in regional interactions to ensure his presence in its sphere of influence, secure its western borders, and keep it away from the field of competition for its role as a regional power and in order to ensure the achievement of its goals, as a result Iran has resorted a strategy of spreading chaos and instability in Iraq, these goals intersect with the interests of Iraq and its quest to build a civil state, This prompted it to move brilliantly and use the method of maneuver and influence in the Iraqi arena, where Iran took Iraq as a gateway to complete its influence towards achieving regional hegemony; Iraq is the gateway to hegemony for all forces in the international system and this is what Iranian politicians realized, and as soon as the Americans made the change, the Iranians employed it to their advantage (Nader.A, 2015).

Iran's strategic desires in Iraq are (political-economic-security), so Iranian leaders have resorted to the components of Iraqi society and taken them as a strategic depth that allows them the ability to move politically inside Iraq to reach its Arab surroundings, where Iraq forms a base for extending Iranian influence; it is the land bridge that connects it to the Arab Gulf region and the Mediterranean coasts in Syria and Lebanon, Iran focused its efforts on political situations and influence the orientations of Iraqi politics at home and abroad to correspond with its interests, it is in Iran's interest to form an Iraqi government with which it has close relations so it began In interfering in the elections, the existence of such a government for Iran is important to rearranging its relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries which is what Iraq witnessed by embracing the Saudi-Iranian negotiations on its territory in 2022, Iran's obsession is forming an Iraqi government that does not agree with its orientations, it may lead the United States of America to form an Iraqi government loyal to it and hostile to Iran at the same time, And be a base for a US military attack on it in the future, so Iran went to prevent the formation of this government, by supporting a number of political forces with the capabilities that allow them to reach the top of the political pyramid in Iraq (Bargezar.K, 2011).

In addition, the multilateralism that makes up Iraq represents another challenge towards Iraq's external renaissance; we often see that the regional neighboring countries take it as an excuse to intervene in order to preserve their interests, for Iran, it has an obsession with the possibility of non-Persian social components to demand cultural rights or religious freedoms

that contradict its Islamic regime, what increases Iran's fears and concern the movements and demands of non-Persian components and their presence along its borders with neighboring countries, this is clear by opposing Iran and seeking to contain the Kurdish movement and its separatist tendency, which prompted it to intervene continuously in Iraq and form a joint committee (Iranian-Turkish) to prevent the establishment of the Kurdish state in northern Iraq, Iran believes that the establishment of the federal system and the establishment of the Kurdistan region, which enjoys a status closer to independence, is a threat to its security and territorial integrity, so Iran supports the territorial integrity of Iraq and rejects its division and cooperates with Turkey in this area (Patrick.R, 2015).

Iraq represents an open market for a consumer who is not a producer of various goods and commodities, it depends on the import of goods from 3 countries: (Turkey - Iran - China), meaning that Turkey and China represent an economic challenge to Iran in the Iraqi markets, as Turkey occupies the first place in trade with Iraq and it accounts for 25% of the Iraqi market, followed by Iran with 13% and China with 12%, as well as energy resources, areas of investment and tourism, all of this provides an opportunity for Iran to address its economic problems, especially the international sanctions imposed on it because of its nuclear program, this supports its orientation for the purpose of obtaining the first technological and economic position in the region and prepares one of the alternatives to face the decline of Iranian oil reserves (McGovern.E, 2010).

Therefore, the Iraqi decision-maker should be aware of the extent of the influence that Iran enjoys within Iraqi institutions, especially in the economy, security and media sector, in addition to being a country geographically adjacent to it, that is, it is necessary for Iraq to resort to dialogue and diplomacy and prevent the use of a ground for conflict with regional parties.

Saudi Challenge

Due to the divergence in political, economic and social orientations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Iraq is part of the region's security structure, especially for both the GCC countries and Iran, as it is affected by them affects them, moreover Iraq's slide into civil war or division poses a challenge to Saudi Arabia security, at the same time, the attempt to restore Iraq's previous defensive build-up represents a new threat to its security; that is, Saudi Arabia strives to maintain the state of change in Iraq itself in order to avoid the expected repercussions of change, whether it is by applying systematic democracy by the United States of America or by influencing Iranian orientations (Mohammed.A, 2014).

What hinders relations between the two parties is that Saudi Arabia has different ideological orientations from Iraq, Whereas, after the democratic experience, Iraq has become able to express its identity in manifestations and forms that do not agree with the Saudi views, Indeed, most of its components, which were described as being close to the Saudi side, do not agree with it, and the revival of the role of the scientific estate and religious authority in Najaf Al-Ashraf is also a factor of concern for Saudi Arabia because of the presence of a different minority from it in orientation inhabiting the Eastern Province (Al-Ahsa) It is the area of the enormous oil reserves, and the possibility of this reference turning into a new influential pole in the region of that minority (Bedroom.J, 2019).

Border security is one of the most serious outstanding issues between the two parties because of its link to national policy and the permanent mistrust between the two countries, although the Saudi government worked on November 18, 2020 to open the Arar port for trade exchange, the volume of trade exchange based on what was announced by the Saudi Statistics Authority in April 2021 reached to one billion dollars, however, the Iraqi government's efforts

are moving towards extending a trade route between Najaf and Saudi Arabia that allows pilgrims to enter and increase trade exchange between the two countries, It will be of economic importance in enhancing the return of land transport, reviving trade and contributing to the development of areas along the way, in addition to the tourism sector, but the Saudi government is still reluctant to make its decision for fear of an ideological exchange away from its orientations (Mustafa.M, 2022).

increase Iraq's oil production will also give it an impact at the global and Arab-regional levels; from the global point of view, it will lead to its transformation into a party that contributes to determining global oil prices, which pushes the countries of the world to strengthen economic and investment cooperation with it, while from the Arab-regional point of view is represented by the expansion of the Iraqi-Arab economic cooperative, because the increase in oil production will open the way for significant Iraqi economic activity, both at the internal level (reconstruction projects) and at the level of relations with other countries of the Arab world. This is indicated by a report to the US agency (Bloomberg), in April 2019, that Iraq has become a competitor to Saudi Arabia in influencing the global oil market, and has a role in the decisions made within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) about production and prices, which means the emergence of Iraq as a major economic power competing with Saudi Arabia, that leads to the strengthening of its democratic system (Kareem.u, 2018).

Conclusion

We find that the Iraqi foreign policy after 2005 is confronted by regional and international challenges, including terrorism and competition between the Middle Eastern countries regionally, and between the American retreat and the repercussions of the Ukrainian-Russian crisis also the pressure of international organizations internationally, however the most dangerous and influential are internal obstacles, so we do not condemn the external aspirations in Iraq as much as we denounce the weakness of the Iraqi government in realizing its interests, Therefore, the confusion, political blockage, and lack of clarity of vision and goals fall on successive Iraqi governments. No political forces emerged after the regime change realized Iraq's supreme interests, as well as Iraq has not seen economic, social or even cultural improvement, On the contrary, the state is still witnessing an unparalleled decline.

The best way to restore Iraq's regional and international prestige and status is to adapt to the new international situations without trying to use the policy of axes or intersect with the interests of international parties, as going otherwise will lead to return Iraq to a crisis that different from what it witnessed previously, and the Iraqi political decision-maker must be aware the state weakness with the tendency to proceed with the regional balances between (Turkey - Iran - Saudi Arabia) and international balances (United States of America - Russia) and its intervention in the eastern region, These rivalries between regional and international powers often push countries towards the abyss or what is expressed by (countries of regional interest) and become an arena for conflict and this is what Iraq is witnessing, therefore, The study reached a set of conclusions:-

- 1- The process of internal or external policymaking after 2005 is no longer monopoly in Iraq but it has become vulnerable to overlapping wills and conflicts of interest forces, so what Iraq suffers from today is poor planning and the failure to study many resolutions before implementing them, The means of implementing foreign policy remain weak and have not reached the stage of investing in them.

- 2- The challenges that have confronted Iraqi foreign policy and even the internal policy are the attribution of the work of institutions to the principle of quotas, this has produced a weak state run by people who lack experience and qualifications for foreign work, As well as many of them are connected to neighboring countries, With personal interests prevailing over higher interests, This generated challenges that overlapped between what is official and what is chaotic, which prompted neighboring countries to intervene to create an Iraqi political path that corresponds to their wishes.
- 3- The study proved that foreign challenges have affected in the direction of foreign policy between what is regional and what is international, therefore Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have all posed regional challenges that have consistently sought to weaken Iraq and its regional regression, rather, like Iraq's development, it is a challenge that hinders its effectiveness and strength, The political deadlock that Iraq has witnessed since 2005 until now represented an opportunity for these forces to compete to exploit the political vacuum and fill it in accordance with their wishes.

Recommendations

- 1- The study recommends that the Iraqi government should adopt an independent and balanced foreign policy strategy; Based on the awareness of the components, the assimilation of capabilities and the use of the available possibilities to achieve the desired goals.
- 2- The democratic political process is the Concentrated country's foundation for stabilization, It is necessary to work on developing them in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of the phase witnessed by Iraq.
- 3- Unifying the Iraqi political discourse to face internal and external challenges, Determining which one prevails in influencing the interests of the state while maintaining national security and the supreme interest of the state away from narrow and external Loyalties.
- 4- Develop short- and medium-term strategic plans with ongoing review to keep pace with international changes, and the advanced strategies in the field of culture, education and economics that it dedicates... , and others.
- 5- Reshaping Iraqi diplomacy by adopting standards of professionalism and fully recognizing and addressing the obstacles to Iraqi foreign policy, such as the challenges of globalization and terrorism, and rebuild an effective diplomacy aware of the nature of its work.
- 6- The government's should be used soft power through the establishment of cultural and sports activities that contribute to attracting tourists from different countries, to learn about the civilization of Iraq and its effects and to get rid of the repercussions of the wars it fought previously and burdened it, also taking advantage of the Pope's visit to revitalize tourist attractions and pay attention to the development of infrastructure and attract pilgrims to Christ as well as activate the service side by establishing hotels and others.

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