

**مركز البيدر للدراسات والتخطيط**

**Al-Baidar Center For Studies And Planning**



# **Iraq and the United States of America Renewed Dialogue and Guarantees for Both Parties**

**Prof. Dr. Ali Fares Hamid**

## About Center

Baidar Center for Studies and Planning is a non-governmental and non-profit organization established in 2015 and registered with the NGO Directorate in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in Baghdad.

The Center seeks to contribute to developing the state and its institutions, by proposing ideas and practical solutions to the main problems and challenges facing the state, including improving public sector management, policies and strategic planning, using reliable data and best practices. The Center engages the relevant authorities in the state with regular meetings to support this objective and utilises the support of international organizations dedicated to assisting Iraq's development. The Center also seeks to support economic reforms, sustainable development and provide technical assistance to the public and private sectors. The Center also seeks to support development of the private sector to provide job opportunities for citizens through training and upskilling, in a way that reduces dependence on government institutions and contributes to supporting and diversifying the country's economy.

The Center aims to utilise the vast amount of potential in Iraq's human resources by organizing programs to prepare and develop promising young people, including leaders capable of proposing, adopting and implementing visions and future plans that advance society and preserve its value system based on the commitment to a high moral standard and rejection of all types of corruption.

# **Iraq and the United States of America**

## **Renewed Dialogue and Guarantees for Both Parties**

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With Iraq's victory over the terrorist organization ISIS in 2017, and thinking about reassessing foreign relations at the bilateral and multi levels, the mindset of the concerned institutions and political forces is occupied, especially with regard to the scope of alliances and the review of agreements concluded, whether with the United States of America or other countries, as the military readiness was not sufficient and the military support and security was not within the appropriate timing to put the strategic accounts in a state of continuous review and concern about any development that might precipitate the collapse of the political system. However, the moment of victory and the variables that arose as a result of the different actors at the internal level had multiple effects on the decision-making process and Iraq's external trends.

The indiscriminate strikes targeting diplomatic missions and the popular movement in October 2019 contributed to a number of variables that arose due to divergent visions and the lack of national achievement, especially after the victory over the terrorist organization ISIS and the illogical reviews of international force accounts, which moved the clash of interests towards Iraq between the major powers in the the international system and the main regional powers in the region, which had negative repercussions on security and internal stability in Iraq<sup>1</sup>.

As a result of the chaos, a military strike was directed by the American planes, targeting a military convoy carrying General Qassem Soleimani and the deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Authority, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, which led to their martyrdom on the road to Baghdad International Airport, which led to great reactions in the political and popular circles ended with the decision of the

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1. Ali Faris Hamid, Misperception and Crisis of Awareness in Evaluating Regional and International Factors, in the book: The Sovereign Iraq Crisis, Al-Alamein Institute for Publishing, Najaf, 2021, p. 311

\* Dean of the College of Political Science/Al-Nahrain University

Iraqi parliament to expel foreign forces from the country.

In addition, the dialogues targeted by Iraq since the decision of the Iraqi parliament until Mr. Al-Kazemi's visit to the United States of America in July 2021 represent the essence of the possibility of dealing with the United States of America with the least level of losses in an attempt to reconcile the options for continuing relations with it and securing the elements of political and popular acceptance, which is supposed to his features stabilize after the Iraqi elections in October 2021 and the formation of the new government.

The basic hypothesis that this study aims to discuss is based on the fact that the regional movement performed by Iraq aims to improve Iraq's external image and support its role as a party that does not violate security and stability between the main parties, rather, he hopes that his initiatives will contribute to strengthening regional understanding and improving external political performance in the direction of cooperation and dialogue among the core parties in its regional neighbourhood.

### **Dialogue with Washington: Opportunities that need employment**

The dialogue that Iraq conducted with the United States of America did not come by chance, although many indicators and data had to deal with it from the logic of necessity since 2017, with a review and evaluation of the frameworks that govern this relationship on the one hand, and an understanding of Iraq's position in the American strategy towards a region that still is rife with contradictions because of the reversals of the random and uncontrolled movement of the forces which belong to it. Regional strategies towards Iraq are still in constant flux due to Iraq's position in every regional power. In addition, the calculations of power are still in a state of competition and a fierce struggle towards increasing power and securing vital interests.

Since the signing of the Strategic Framework Agreement and the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, the direction of the United States of America was not clear, as the paragraphs of the agreement did not move to implementation. It seems that the nature of communication was limited to diplomatic and protocol aspects without working to implement the terms of the agreement and this made the issue of armament and equipment late even in the field of security and military support that accompanied the control of the terrorist organization ISIS over some areas in Iraq. The matter that supposes a re-evaluation of the issue of alliances with

regard to Iraq and an evaluation of the relationship with the outsiders in accordance with the logic of response and evaluating the variables and opportunities generated by the strategic environment related to the limits of Iraq's interest.

The US deal with Iraq is stable according to its security perspective towards the Iranian Republic, as it places Iraq according to the gray zone criteria adopted by the US administration after revisions related to the assessment of power and interests in the region, especially with regard to the revisionist forces or the vision adopted by the allies regarding the threats and risks of the US strategy.

The United States of America believes that the source of Iran's strength in its increasing regional influence is the gray area, which contributes to weakening the ability of pressure to influence. Iraq, for example, has become a party that violates the security of interests for the United States of America because of its presence in the gray zone. The same applies to non-state actors in Yemen and Lebanon. The process of replacing deterrence in the US strategy needs to re-division the areas of strategic action according to strategies based on the target area and the gray area in order to ensure effectiveness in this regard<sup>2</sup>.

According to these data, it is difficult to deal with Iraq according to a double perspective, as it is one of the parties to the gray zone, and therefore any increase in its military or intelligence power may have negative repercussions due to the relationship with the Iranian Republic, and this matter may seem realistic, but it is originally an essential logic in the strategy of the United States of America towards Iraq, especially in the administration of President Donald Trump, who dealt with Iraq with great suspicion and did not find any options that would enable Iraq to manage its affairs independently from its neighbors, led by the Republic of Iran.

The Iranian Republic is working through the gray zone to weaken the ability of American pressure to affect Iran's national security. The process of communicating with non-state actors, such as the case with Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine and the Houthis in Yemen provides the element of pressure on the United States and maneuvering it in regions outside the accounts of calculations of targeted pressures and sanctions. In addition to the fact that the nature of trade exchanges with Iraq greatly contribute in strengthening Iran's regional position. From an economic point of view, Iran occupies the second place, especially in the file of trade exchange. The Iranian Republic come in at 13% in 2018, with a total

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2. Michael Eisenstadt, Kori Schake, and David Deptula, U.S. Strategy Toward Iran: Restoring Deterrence, Enabling Diplomacy, Washington institute, 2020, p.3

of (12) billion Dollars, according to the data of the Iranian Trade Attaché, with a rise that Iranian observers expect to reach to 20 billion dollars; the most influential competitor in Iraqi economic relations with its regional neighbors until 2018, Turkey, which ranks first in terms of trade exchange with Iraq at 22%. However, the Iraqi government's orientations to diversify investors, may negatively affect Iran and Turkey in light of the economic openness that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hopes to achieve after the Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi's visit to Riyadh<sup>3</sup> (3).

The US administrations, since Bush the Jr. and until the arrival of President Donald Trump, have not been keen to address the loopholes in the pressure program directed to the Iranian Republic. The system of pressure, according to the estimation of many experts, did not take into account the achievement of deterrence, and the Iranian Republic was able to exploit the loopholes contained in the pressure in order to continue the confrontation. In this field, many experts focus on the fact that the sanctions and the US policy of pressure on the Iranian Republic need more measures for the purpose of influencing it, whether by deterrence or prevention. Strategically speaking, there was a complex imbalance that deviated the path of pressure and rendered its value useless.

The nature of the dialogue with Washington, which took two rounds of dialogues, did not establish fixed principles that could govern Iraq's behavior towards the United States of America, or even the American behavior towards Iraq.. What the dialogues produce remains dependent on the decision-maker's assessment, which means that the paths of dealing and expectation remain open and subject to the assessment of the maker of the decision for strategic action.

### **Confidence Building Steps: Productive Conversations**

The decision of the Iraqi Council of Representatives to withdraw foreign forces from Iraq after a request made by the government of Mr. Adel Abdul-Mahdi was not an easy matter. The international coalition forces present in Iraq in addition to the Iranian and Russian advisors under the quadripartite coordination have interests related to the balances in the region, and therefore the process of withdrawing these forces needs arrangements and guarantees that is difficult for the Iraqi government to deal with or abide by in light of the protest movement and the targeting of

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3. The International Institute for Iranian Studies, the prospect of the Iranian role in light of the Iraqi legislative elections 2018.

diplomatic missions, which also constituted a source of undermining confidence in the procedures that fall on the shoulders of the Iraqi security forces.

Al-Kadhimi's government tried to redraw the course of guarantees for the regional and international community through a multi-track movement aimed at building confidence. Participating in dialogues with Jordan and Egypt and being authorized to conduct dialogues between Saudi Arabia and the Iranian Republic gave impressions of Iraq's desire to build a regional role based on cooperation, dialogue and participation in supporting the requirements of regional stability. These steps had an important impact on building the elements of relative confidence, which contributed to giving a degree of importance in this field.

The productive dialogues would support the position of Iraq in the American strategy as a country that does not disturb security according to the American perspective of interests in the Middle East, and this matter is one of the most important requirements that establish sustainable and effective dialogues between Iraq and the United States of America, and gives Iraq double opportunities to influence the regional and international environment.

In addition, the continuity of dialogue and Iraq maintaining a privileged position after the October 2021 elections will have important repercussions for Iraq at the international level. International acceptability is greater the greater Iraq's opportunities are to build an effective regional role and more productive dialogues with the United States of America, especially since there is a great desire by the regional neighbors for Iraq to be an active party in the equations of security and stability in the region.

### **The problems of dialogue and the complexities of role discipline**

It is difficult to deal with the dialogue and the Iraqi regional movement away from the internal problems that relate to political interactions and the orientations of political forces, as the weakness of internal consensus has significant effects on the credibility of the action directed abroad, especially in the case of dealing with the United States of America and its regional allies versus those who consider it an adversary.

The weak internal consensus or the political absence regarding the government's performance and its foreign policy leads to the weakness of the credibility of the foreign political performance and the dialogues that the government conducts

with abroad. The agreements and policies that result from them need continuous parliamentary and political cover. The lack of trust and cooperation between Parliament and the government has negative repercussions on performance abroad, as well as it establishes contradictions in the field of external political performance, whether multilateral or bilateral.

The relations of cooperation and friendship that the government conducts through various official channels with various countries, especially Egypt and Jordan, may continue. Despite the lack of talk about it, it can establish an important axis in the region that enjoys acceptability and effective leadership, especially since Egypt and Jordan have positive relations with the United States of America, which enables the establishment of trust. A reciprocal based on tracks The integration of tracks that Iraq seeks to deal with according to a well-thought-out foreign policy and rational diplomacy based on reciprocity.

In addition, the nature of the political orientation towards the outside countries may meet a degree of stability even with the possibility of a new government coming. It is clear that the paths under which work was carried out in the government of Dr. Haider al-Abadi have continued with Mr. Abdul-Mahdi and Al-Kazemi despite the difference in the intellectual system that governs political behavior<sup>4</sup>.

The nature of the criteria governing the future of dialogue with Washington is subject to a number of facts, including the results of the elections and the outcome of the government and the nature of alliances in the House of Representatives, In addition to external data related to the dialogues between the Iranian Republic and the 5+1 group. Such data will have a significant impact on the nature of the American vision towards Iraq and Iraq's position in the American strategy. In addition to the roles that Iraq adopts towards the Iranian Republic and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially after the round of dialogues that was held in Baghdad

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4. The nature of the value system that governs reactions and foreign policy orientations among Iraqi leaders is different and almost reaches the point of contradiction, especially in the understanding of the international system and the movement of the main forces in it, which makes it affect the nature of external political performance. However, the nature of performance despite this contradiction has settled in Regional relations and, to a lesser extent, with the main powers in the international system, which makes the issue of anticipating the trends of external political performance to be more clear in this aspect.

For more see: Ali Faris Hamid, *Misperception and Crisis of Awareness in Evaluating Regional and International Factors*, in the book: *The Sovereign Iraq Crisis*, Al-Alamein Institute for Publishing, Najaf, 2021, p. 307



at the end of September 2021, which Iraq had an important role in promoting dialogues across the level of participants on the one hand, in addition to being the first dialogue session between the two parties to be held after Iranian President Raisi took power in Iran.

The nature of the landscape and the policies that interact within the strategic environment and according to a methodology that deals with expectations

1- The paths of political action abroad may be more committed to dialogue with Washington. The incoming government and its political formation will take into account the nature of the change in the regional and international scene and the movement of power spread at the level of the international system, which makes the next Iraqi government tend to improve the level and quality of commitment in external political performance.

2- The movement of variables and the behavior of Iraq's regional neighbors tend towards supporting Iraq's regional role, and this movement compatible with the nature of interests is almost an opportunity that is difficult to repeat in light of its accompanying American security strategy that tends to calm the movement of competition between regional actors.

3-The features of the external political orientation for Iraq seem to have taken a great deal of stability, especially in building foreign policy tracks, despite the contradictory vision at times. One of Iraq's chances of success is in the dialogues it conducts, whether as a state party to the dialogue or as a participant in it.

The nature of the data and the movement related to it in the regional and international variables doubles the chances of Iraq to have an effective future role in the region, especially in light of its self-qualifications. However, this aspect depends to a large degree on internal consensus and the support of political forces for the government's program, which in turn requires consensus between the main political forces in the House of Representatives with the candidates for the next government, since the criterion of consensus secures credibility and strength for the prime minister in dealing with the movement of interests abroad.