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Research Paper

Diplomacy of Transformation and Military Escalation

Shifting Alliances in a Crisis-Stricken Middle East

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Summary

Amid the rapid geopolitical transformations witnessed by the Middle East, a series of remarkable diplomatic meetings have emerged as indicators of shifting power balances and the reshaping of traditional alliance maps. Regional conflicts are no longer managed solely through the language of war and ideological alignments, but have entered a phase of “diplomacy of transformation.” Security and economic interests intersect along unfamiliar paths, from Baghdad and Damascus to Doha, and from Riyadh to Tehran. Active parties are moving with apparent pragmatism, attempting to contain chronic crises and shape a new reality more conducive to coexistence. However, the question remains: do these movements represent a genuine leap toward stability, or merely a temporary truce in a scene that remains turbulent?

First: Diplomatic Meetings Reflecting Middle East Transformations

In a scene reflecting deep geopolitical transformations, the Arab region has recently witnessed a series of unconventional diplomatic meetings that touch the wounds of chronic crises and attempt to chart new paths toward stability. The story began in the Qatari capital, Doha, where Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia’ Al-Sudani met with the new head of the Syrian Authority, Ahmad Rashid, in a step considered part of the process of reviving Syria’s role in the Arab orbit after years of isolation. Doha, which had strongly supported the Syrian opposition during the civil war, was not merely a neutral host. Still, a partner in reviewing regional policies, perhaps to compensate for the decline in its influence after the failure of the “Arab Spring” project, or to achieve a balance with Turkey, which still occupies parts of northern Syria.

Meanwhile, Iraq, which appears as a bridge between the Arab and Iranian

worlds, is trying to play the role of mediator. On one hand, it seeks to enhance cooperation with Damascus on thorny issues such as combating the remnants of ISIS or the return of displaced persons. On the other hand, it pushes toward joint economic projects, such as electrical interconnection, attempting to exploit its geostrategic position to achieve gains that might restore its luster as a regional commercial center. However, this role is not without challenges: Iraq itself suffers from internal divisions and the effects of external interventions. But the question here is: is Iran now as it was in the past? To answer this question, one must examine the following paradox, which provides a clear answer to the question raised.

The lens of events has shifted to Tehran, where the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, met with Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman in a rare meeting that marks the pinnacle of the Saudi-Iranian reconciliation path initiated by Chinese mediation in 2023. The meeting was not merely a diplomatic protocol, but a sign of profound shifts in regional alliances. Saudi Arabia, which led an Arab coalition against Iranian influence for a decade, is now showing unprecedented flexibility, perhaps to find a way out of the Yemen quagmire, or to contain security threats that hinder its Vision 2030 economic ambitions. As for Iran now, suffering from stifling Western sanctions, it seeks to turn reconciliation into a lever to alleviate its isolation, and perhaps to create a breakthrough in the nuclear file through an undeclared alliance with Riyadh against American pressures.

Second: Behind the Scenes: Struggles of Influence and the Puzzle of Stability

Behind these meetings lies a complex puzzle of conflicting interests: Arab states that have resumed welcoming the Syrian regime (such as the UAE and Jordan) hope to curb the flow of Syrian drugs and stop illegal migration, but they struggle with the reality that Damascus still occupies parts of their lands (Lebanon and

Jordan), and relies almost entirely on the support of Iran and Russia. On the other hand, Qatar, through hosting the Iraqi-Syrian dialogue, seeks to establish itself as a regional mediator, competing with the UAE, which preceded it in opening doors to Damascus.

As for the Iranian-Iraqi axis, it faces Arab suspicions and historical challenges, while its supporters see it as a safeguard against the return of extremist organizations such as ISIS, and it strengthens security and intelligence coordination among its parties. The fragility of this alliance is evident in the presence of internal political differences and disparities in national interests, as well as economic pressures resulting from American sanctions imposed on Iran, which threaten any party involved. These combined factors put the future of the alliance at stake and make it vulnerable to erosion over time, unless a common ground is found that guarantees its continuity and regional legitimacy.

Third: The Most Likely Scenario: The Diplomacy of Fragility

Despite these steps appearing as a “diplomatic awakening,” they are as fragile as a spider’s web. The Syrian regime, which has lost control over a large part of its territory, possesses nothing but promises of reconstruction. Meanwhile, Western sanctions make Arab investors reluctant to take risks. On the Saudi-Iranian side, embarrassing questions arise: will Iran abandon its allies in Yemen or Lebanon in exchange for improved relations with Riyadh? And will Washington allow these movements to threaten its traditional alliances in Iraq, for example?

It is worth noting that the Middle East is entering a new phase of “realistic diplomacy,” where old enmities dissolve under the weight of shared economic interests and common security threats. However, the region, from which we have learned not to trust the sun’s brightness after a storm, still keeps its cards close to

its chest. Will these meetings mark the beginning of an era of coexistence, or just a warrior's rest before a new round of conflict? The answer may be carried by the winds coming from the "Zionist entity," which still holds the strings of the great game in the Middle East.

Fourth: The "Zionist Entity" as an Escalatory Factor in the Regional Equation

Amid the deep diplomatic transformations witnessed by the Middle East region in the recent period, which sought to build the foundations of sustainable peace that restores stability to the area and puts an end to decades of conflict, the "Zionist entity" has emerged as a leading actor trying to overturn the regional political equation fundamentally. The winds coming from the "Zionist entity" do not seem to desire the calm after the storm; on the contrary, they seek to escalate the situation and increase tension, which has led to a deviation in the course of the diplomatic transformations that were supposed to lead to comprehensive calm.

In the wake of this pivotal transformative moment, the region has witnessed mutual escalation between Iran and the "Zionist entity," represented by mutual airstrikes and repeated military attacks, making the battle remain burning without interruption and any apparent signs of a solution or settlement. This escalation occurs amid growing regional competition, with each party seeking to exert its influence and political agenda, amid complex calculations of intertwined international and regional interests.

While countries in the region and the world try to exploit the diplomatic moment to achieve peace, the "Zionist entity," through its positions and continuous escalation, remains a significant obstacle to these efforts, placing the region before serious security and political challenges. The matter becomes more complicated due to external interventions and conflicting interests, which fuel the cycle of

violence and hinder the building of trust among the disputing parties. Therefore, the continuation of this state of escalation threatens not only the stability of the Middle East but also extends its impact to international security as a whole, as the region becomes a hotspot of tension that may lead to broader and more dangerous conflicts if serious steps are not taken toward de-escalation and constructive dialogue. Under these circumstances, the search for effective and comprehensive diplomatic solutions and integrated strategies becomes an urgent necessity to end the cycle of violence and establish the foundations of just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Fifth: Escalation in the Middle East: Regional and International Repercussions and the Possibility of Diplomatic Containment

The Middle East is recognized as one of the most vulnerable regions to unrest and conflict in the contemporary international system. The continuation of the state of escalation in the region represents a threat whose danger is not limited to regional stability but extends to the entire structure of international security.

The region has become a hotspot of escalating tension, where geopolitical calculations are intertwined, raising the likelihood of sliding into large-scale conflicts if genuine, comprehensive, and serious diplomatic approaches are not developed to break this vicious cycle of violence.

It is worth noting that the current interactions require an in-depth analysis of three central axes that constitute the keys to understanding the tense political and security scene in the region:

1. Emerging Alliances and the Reshaping of Regional Balance:

The emergence of Saudi-Iranian rapprochement in recent times is one of the most significant transformations in regional dynamics, as this step represents

a diplomatic turning point that is expected to reduce the intensity of sectarian and political polarization that has dominated the region over the past few decades. However, the “Zionist entity’s” escalation raises fundamental questions about the ability of these nascent alliances to withstand escalating security challenges, especially in light of the fragility of the regional security structure and the absence of an effective collective system for conflict resolution.

2. Conflicting International Agendas and the Struggle for Influence:

The international stance on escalation in the Middle East reveals a clear division among the major powers. While the United States has demonstrated absolute support for the “Zionist entity,” both China and Russia have called for restraint and adherence to international law, reflecting the intensification of geopolitical competition for influence in this strategic region. This division not only reflects differences in political positions but also reveals the fragility of the contemporary international system and its ineffectiveness in controlling regional crises.

3. The Future of Regional Stability in a Volatile Security Environment:

Security developments force many Arab states to reconsider their strategic choices and regional alliances. With the rising danger of involvement or complicity, especially toward the forces of the “Axis of Resistance,” some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq, find themselves before a delicate equation: either to engage actively in de-escalation efforts, or to be exposed to political pressures that may weaken their position in the new regional order. Therefore, the need to activate preventive diplomacy and strengthen collective coordination mechanisms, away from strict alignments, is growing.

Ultimately, there is no alternative but to say that the Middle East, in the context of this escalation, stands at a historic crossroads: on one hand, the dynamics of violence continue to impose their dominance on the scene, and on the other, signs of strategic transformation loom, upon which the foundations of a more balanced and stable regional system could be built. In this context, what is referred to as the “diplomacy of transformation” may represent an essential pillar for drawing a new map of alliances that can contain tensions. However, this requires a serious political will, balanced international support, and fundamental reform of the regional system, which remains hostage to historical divisions. However, the central question that remains for policymakers is: will this escalation mark the beginning of a more turbulent phase, or a decisive moment that opens the door for countries in the region to reach a comprehensive settlement, bringing the area out of its chronic cycles of conflict?

Sixth: Iraq Between the Pressures of Escalation and the Challenges of Neutrality

Iraq faces a strategic challenge with the escalation of Iranian-“Zionist entity tension, as it finds itself, due to its geopolitical position, at the heart of a regional conflict in which it may not be a direct party, but is greatly affected by it. This position presents a challenge to the policy of neutrality, especially in light of the presence of non-official armed forces, which the state struggles to control entirely. Despite Baghdad’s declared refusal to use its territory as a battleground for settling scores, the fragility of its sovereignty remains a significant obstacle to establishing a unified national position.

The absence of complete control over security and political decision-making creates disparities in positions and exposes the country to the risk of unintended involvement in conflict. On the economic front, any disturbance in the Strait of

Hormuz or the Gulf poses a direct threat to Iraq, given its heavy reliance on oil exports through these passages, which puts the fragile Iraqi economy at risk of new risks that exacerbate its internal crises. Despite the challenges, Iraq has the opportunity to transform into an effective regional mediator, provided there is a political will, a sovereign decision, and effective security control. Iraq's balanced relations with most of the conflict parties enable it to play a role in de-escalation, provided that there is internal and external support for this role. Ultimately, Iraq faces two choices: to continue serving as a battleground for others' conflicts, or to redefine its position as a regional actor that contributes to building new balances, thereby preserving its sovereignty and interests.

Conclusion

In light of the unprecedented diplomatic transformations presented in this paper and the increasing manifestations of military escalation in the Middle East, it is clear that the region is undergoing a phase of strategic reshaping that reformulates power balances and the paths of regional alliances.

The diplomacy of transformation, as demonstrated in the paper, represents a serious attempt by some regional actors to overcome traditional divisions, benefiting from international variables. At the same time, these movements have been met with deep escalatory challenges, most notably the state of Iranian-“Zionist entity tension and Zionist interventions in the regional security structure.

Iraq is a living example of this dual dilemma: on one hand, it seeks a balanced diplomatic positioning, and on the other, it suffers from internal fragility and strategic vulnerability that make it more susceptible to the effects of conflict. Thus, the data indicate that the region stands at a decisive crossroads: either to move toward crystallizing a regional system based on the principle of coexistence and

collective coordination, or to revert to the traditional cycles of conflict that have proven ineffective in producing security and stability. From here, the need arises to build a realistic regional diplomacy that begins with shared interests, is guided by mature political will, and is free from strict alignments, with a vision that transcends immediate considerations toward a comprehensive strategic vision that restores the Middle East's lost balance.

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