

The Role of the Gulf in Iraq after 2017

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ABSTRACT *The commentary analyzes the role of the Gulf in Iraq after 2017 in light of the complex process of Gulf-Iraqi relations from 2003 to 2017. Furthermore, it examines the repercussions of the Gulf crisis, and analyzes the dimensions of the development of the relationship. The study presents a future vision for the relationship in light of a set of determinants related to the Iraqi political reality, Gulf foreign trends, and the impact of the variables affecting the Gulf's role in Iraq.*

Keywords: Gulf States, Iraq, Gulf Crisis, Gulf-Iraqi Relations

Insight Turkey 2022
Vol. 24 / No. 4 / pp. 23-35

Received Date: 6/10/2022 • Accepted Date: 20/10/2022 • DOI: 10.25253/99.2022244.2

Introduction

Some of the challenges on various levels surrounding the Gulf role in Iran relate to the Gulf position on the Iraqi political reality after 2003, by refusing to deal with several governments, accusing them of being too close to Iran, especially in the two governments of former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (2006-2014), where discord prevailed. As a response, the Iraqi governments have accused some Gulf countries of supporting armed groups in Iraq. Other challenges related to the political and security instability in Iraq manifested in great obstacles to Iraqi openness towards the Gulf regional environment.

However, the pivot point in the context of Iraqi-Gulf relations was in 2014 with the arrival of former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to power in Iraq. Then the Gulf-Iraqi relations witnessed an improvement in the diplomatic atmosphere, especially with the appointment of the first non-resident ambassador for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The political role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affects, to a large extent, the behavior of other Gulf countries.

We can say that the Gulf's role in Iraq after 2017 witnessed a great development compared to the previous stages, with the coming to power of Iraqi governments that do not adopt policies hostile to the Gulf countries. This contributed to the increasing Gulf-Iraq interactions and led to the exchange of diplomatic visits be-

tween Iraq and the Gulf states at the highest levels. However, this does not preclude the existence of a number of dilemmas and obstacles facing the Gulf role in Iraq, foremost of which is the lack of Gulf consensus in managing political relations with Iraq, or other regional issues in the region, as was evident in the Gulf crisis. The other obstacles related to the Iraqi internal environment appeared in political and security unrest, internal or external, especially regional developments in the Middle East, as well as the role of the variables affecting the Gulf role in Iraq, including the roles of Iran, Türkiye, and the major powers, such as the U.S. and the Russian Federation.

This study attempts to identify the nature of the Gulf's role in Iraq after 2017, according to the following axes: (i) the turbulent course in Iraqi-Gulf relations, (ii) the repercussions of the Gulf crisis on the Gulf's role in Iraq, (iii) the development of the Gulf's role in Iraq, (iv) the future of the Gulf's role in Iraq.

A Turbulent Course in Gulf-Iraqi Relations

The Iraqi-Gulf relations have passed through various stages, including a partial opening after 2003 in the presence of the American occupation and the establishment of the political system in Iraq. Later on, differences prevailed over the relations, especially after 2006, when former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who is close to Iran, came to power. Iraq's

violence and security instability at that stage increased the differences between Iraq and the Gulf. As a result, the Iraqi government accused some of the Gulf states of supporting the violence by facilitating the entry of armed groups into Iraq.

Despite the great support provided by the Gulf states to the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, they failed to adopt an effective and clear vision of establishing a Gulf influence on Iraq. Unlike the Gulf's position, the Iranian position was clear. That was evident in the statement of former Iranian Vice President Muhammad Ali Abtahi, who said: "If there is no Iranian support, the American forces would not have been able to occupy Afghanistan or Iraq."¹ This explains the reality of the pragmatic Iranian policy whose interests agreed with the U.S. despite the conflict between them. In the post-U.S. occupation stage, Iran was the most prominent factor in curbing the Gulf's role in Iraq, especially with the Gulf states accusing the Iraqi regime of relying on sectarian foundations in managing political affairs, whether internal or external. In addition, Iran was accused of employing the Iraqi government to achieve its strategic interests in the Middle East. The escalation of sectarian and religious discourse in the region has contributed increasingly to the complexity of the Gulf-Iraqi relation.

Some Gulf countries re-opened their embassies in Baghdad in 2008, one being Kuwait, which had ceased diplomatic relations since the Iraqi oc-

The Iraqi government accused some of the Gulf states of supporting the violence by facilitating the entry of armed groups into Iraq

cupation of Kuwait in 1990, and the other the UAE.² Relations, however, remained limited to economic and social affairs, and political relations did not develop as required. Gulf governments tried to intervene forcefully in the Iraqi political scene by supporting the Iraqi list, led by former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, who was close to the Saudi leadership. His list managed to win the Iraqi parliamentary elections in 2010, but an Iranian American deal meant that al-Maliki remained as Prime Minister of Iraq for a second term, which to a large degree, led to the escalation of the Iraqi-Gulf disputes.³

In the context of studying and analyzing the Gulf-Iraqi relations, it can be argued that the post-2011 period witnessed the escalation of the Iraqi-Gulf disputes due to a set of variables, including but not limited to: (i) The withdrawal of the American occupation forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 contributed to the increase of Iranian influence in Iraq and led to the decrease of the Gulf's influence. (ii) The start of protest movements and the escalation of sectarian and religious dimensions in the crises in the Arab region, most notably Syria, where the sectarian conflict reached

The lack of unity in the Gulf political decision-making towards Iraq and other regional or international issues continuously contributed to the weakening the Gulf's role

the highest level. Iran used its economic potential and the geopolitical position of Iraq to support the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, in exchange for the intervention of the Gulf states to support the Syrian opposition.⁴ (iii) The Gulf intervention through the Peninsula Shield Force to suppress the protest movement in Bahrain, which put Iraq in confrontation with the Gulf countries due to the Iraqi-Iranian political association. (iv) The success of Iran in extending its regional influence from Iraq to Syria and Lebanon, its intervention in Yemen to support the Ansar Allah al-Houthi group, and its attempt to support the protest movement in Bahrain led to the escalation of the Iraqi Gulf disputes as the domination of Iraqi political forces linked to the Iranian project of power in Iraq, and their hostile statements made against Gulf.⁵

In this regard, the features of the Iraqi Gulf political differences became clear during the Arab summit in Baghdad in 2012. While the former Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, was the only leader present, the other Gulf states' representation

was limited to the level of ministers and ambassadors, and the presence of Sheikh Sabah may be the indication of his effort to enhance the Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations in the post-2003 era.⁶

The occupation of Iraqi territory by ISIS in June of 2014 and the holding of the parliamentary elections that took Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to power was the start of an important breakthrough in Gulf-Iraqi relations. Al-Abadi associated with the Iranian project less than his predecessor al-Maliki. He sought to balance Iraq's foreign policy with the Gulf states parallel to Iranian relations.⁷ One of the indicators of the transformation in Iraqi-Gulf relations was that the Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz sent a congratulatory message to the new Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and invited him to visit the Kingdom. In response, al-Abadi visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and met with senior officials after eight years of the Saudi leadership refusing to receive his predecessor, Nuri al-Maliki. The Saudi Foreign Ministry later announced the resumption of Iraqi-Saudi diplomatic relations after a 25-year hiatus, and Tamar al-Sabhan was appointed as the first non-resident Saudi ambassador to Baghdad.⁸

The Repercussions of the Gulf Crisis in Iraq

The lack of unity in the Gulf political decision-making towards Iraq and other regional or international issues continuously contributed to the weakening the Gulf's role. Despite

the discord decreasing in the post-2014 period, and a relatively positive development occurring through official visits between Iraq and the Gulf States, the Gulf crisis significantly impacted the Gulf's role in Iraq. The Gulf crisis led to the division of the Gulf countries into three axes. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain lead the first axis. Qatar formed the second axis, besieged by neighboring countries, while Kuwait and Oman formed a third axis neutral to the two sides of the crisis. One of the accusations leveled by the blockading countries against Qatar was cooperating with Iran against the interests of the Gulf states, therefore, Iraq came into the firing line of the crisis due to the Iranian role in the country. The Saudi leadership tried to co-opt the Iraqis into a position against Qatar, especially after the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Still, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, on his visit to the Kingdom in 2017, reaffirmed the Iraqi neutral position on the crisis and called for an end to it. At this stage, Saudi Arabia tried to support its role in Iraq by receiving the Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr (who takes an opposite position to the Iranian policy in Iraq).⁹

Among the repercussions of the Gulf crisis on the Gulf's role in Iraq is the disintegration of the regional project called for by Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the Emirates, Egypt, and Jordan in 2017. It was an attempt to form a political alliance of Sunni political forces to confront Iranian support for Shiite political forces. A

series of meetings took place in this regard. On the founding steps, the parties to the project agreed, but the outbreak of the Gulf crisis led to the failure of this project after the refusal of the Sunni political forces supported by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to attend the coordination meetings of the project in Türkiye.¹⁰

In the context of studying and analyzing the repercussions of the Gulf crisis, the Gulf's attitude becomes clear from the referendum of the Kurdistan region that took place in 2017, when Saudi Arabia and the UAE indirectly supported the Kurdish secession project. That was a real threat to Turkish national security on the one hand and Iranian national security on the other, however, Saudi Arabia and the UAE continuously accused Qatar of being in cooperation with Türkiye and Iran against Gulf interests. The project's failure, however, due to internal and external reasons, along with Iranian and Turkish support for the central government in Baghdad, contributed to doubling the strategic losses of the Saudi and Emirati roles in Iraq.¹¹

Among the effects of the Gulf crisis on the Gulf's role in Iraq is the partial improvement of Iraqi-Qatari relations because of the Iraqi and Iranian policies. On December 18, 2015, an Iraqi armed group close to Iran kidnapped 26 Qatari citizens, some of them from imperial families, who had come to the Samawah desert area in Iraq for hunting. All Iraqi government attempts and Qatari pressures to release them failed. However, the

Regarding the development of the Gulf role in Iraq during the reign of al-Kazemi, it is important to say that al-Kazemi enjoys great American and Western support

outbreak of the Gulf crisis, the siege of Qatar, and the Qatari rapprochement with Iran and Türkiye contributed to the release of these people in April 2017, 17 months after their abduction. This incident shows a great Iraqi rapprochement with Qatar to stand close to Iran and Türkiye due to the blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.¹²

In the context of these events, we can conclude that the outbreak of the Gulf crisis led to a negative impact on the Gulf's role in Iraq through conflicting policies of the Gulf states, conducted by Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the one hand and Qatar on the other. However, in considerations related to Qatar's close ties with Türkiye and Iran, this eventually led to an Iraqi rapprochement with this axis.

The Evolution of the Gulf Role in Iraq

The Iraqi-Gulf relations, no doubt, have moved from a state of disagreement during the reign of al-Maliki to openness and cooperation during

the era of the Haider al-Abadi government, which was less associated with Iranian politics and sought only to open up to the Gulf and Arab countries. We can say that one of the most prominent outcomes of the role of al-Abadi was in developing Iraqi-Saudi relations. It was agreed during his visit to Saudi Arabia on August 14, 2017, to establish the Saudi-Iraqi Coordination Council to develop relations in the political, security, economic, social, cultural, educational, and sports fields.¹³

When former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi came to power after the 2018 Iraqi elections, he continued Iraqi openness and pursuit of developing Iraqi-Gulf relations, especially with Saudi Arabia. Despite the formation of Abdul-Mahdi's government is based on an alliance agreement between Sairoon (led by Muqtada al-Sadr) and al-Fateh (the group of traditional Shiite forces close to Iran), they continued to work on developing relations with the Gulf states. Accordingly, Abdul-Mahdi visited Saudi Arabia in April 2019 at the head of a high-level government delegation that included 11 ministers and several governors, advisers, and businessmen, and worked on activating the Saudi-Iraqi Coordination Council along with signing 13 agreements to develop relations between the two countries.

In the context of the Iraqi neutral position on the Gulf crisis, Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi visited the State of Qatar on May 29, 2019 and praised the skill of the Qatari



leadership in managing the crisis. He stressed the Iraqi position calling for an end to the Gulf crisis. Abdul-Mahdi's visit to Qatar was his third visit to a Gulf country after Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.¹⁴ As evidence of the Iranian role in pushing the government of Adel Abdul-Mahdi to try to mediate in Iranian-Saudi relations, Abdul-Mahdi visited Saudi Arabia again for hours on September 15, 2019, during which he met with Saudi King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.¹⁵ The purpose of the visit was to convey an Iranian message to the Saudi side after the targeting of Aramco's oil facilities in Saudi Arabia by parties close to Iran. After the end of his visit, Abdul-Mahdi disclosed that he conveyed a message from the Saudi side to Iran related to Iranian-Saudi relations and the situation in the Middle East region.

When focusing on the development of the Gulf role in Iraq, it is important to note that the Gulf countries, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, played a major role in supporting the Parliament Speaker Muhammad al-Halbousi, who was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives for the fourth parliamentary session (2018-2022) after the parliamentary elections held in 2018. He is the first speaker of the Iraqi parliament from the representatives of the non-Islamic trend of the Sunni component. He received great support from the Gulf countries, especially from the Emirati leadership, and later became the leader of the Sunni political scene by virtue of his gaining the highest political position for a Sunni within the Iraqi political system, in addition to the tripartite consensual context that was designed for the regime in Iraq after 2003. On this basis, it is not

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein (R) and Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Nayef al-Hajraf (L) hold a joint press conference after their meeting in Baghdad, Iraq on February 1, 2021.

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an exaggeration to say that the Gulf role has become active in the Iraqi political scene because Emirati-Saudi support to the Speaker of Parliament al-Halbousi.

The effectiveness of the Gulf role in Iraq increased with the arrival of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi in May 2020 after the overthrow of the government of Adel al-Mahdi following the outbreak of the Tishreen protest movement in Iraq. Al-Kazemi is a Shiite liberal who held the position of head of the intelligence services in Iraq. He enjoys a wide range of external relations and great support from the Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Despite the obstacles and difficulties that his government faced in domestic politics, whether in the political, security or economic fields, he succeeded in the foreign policy file. He made a series of visits to other regional countries that play an active role in the Middle East and major powers in the international political system. Al-Kazemi expressed his relentless quest to develop Iraqi-Gulf relations in light of the Saudi and Emirati leadership's support for him. The government's endeavor to develop Iraqi-Gulf relations was strengthened by official visits to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait. He visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the first time in March 2021.¹⁶ Many agreements were signed to develop relations between the two countries. Al-Kazemi affirmed his keenness to a crystallized effective Gulf role by supporting the political track and the participation of the Gulf states in

the reconstruction of Iraq, especially in the post-victory stage over ISIS. The signing of the Iraqi-Gulf Electricity Interconnection Agreement via Saudi Arabia during al-Kazemi's participation in the Jeddah Security and Development Summit in July 2022 was a clear sign of the effective development of the Gulf's role in Iraq. Iraq has suffered a crisis in the supply of electric power, especially in the summer when Iran cut off gas exports to Iraq more than once (gas is used to generate electric power supply) as the latter could not pay due to international sanctions imposed on Iran. This agreement was a major challenge to the Iranian influence in Iraq, especially since the visit and its results faced hostile campaigns from Shiite forces close to Iran.¹⁷

Regarding the development of the Gulf role in Iraq during the reign of al-Kazemi, it is important to say that al-Kazemi enjoys great American and Western support, which is evident in the context of international dealings with Iraq at this stage, which has clearly differed from the previous stages. Al-Kazemi also enjoys Gulf support in confronting Iranian influence in Iraq. In this regard, the Gulf countries strongly supported al-Kazemi's foreign policy in holding the tripartite summit that brought together Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt in Baghdad. Al-Kazemi, at the summit, put forward the idea of the 'New Sham' or 'New East' project. Al-Kazemi's proposal of an economic project between Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, is similar to the idea of the European Union, where Egypt contributes to

human resources, Iraq contributes to oil exports, and Jordan has its geopolitical position to export Iraqi oil through the port of Aqaba. Tripartite meetings between these countries preceded this project before al-Kazemi came to the presidency. The first meeting was in March 2019, when the three parties formed a joint council, the second meeting was held between them on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meetings in New York in 2019, and the third meeting was held in August 2020 in Amman during the era of the al-Kazemi government. The joint council is specialized in the fields of energy, trade, and investment. The summit resulted in the signing of 15 agreements between Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan, including the export of 12 million barrels of oil to Egypt in 2021 at preferential prices.¹⁸

The development of the Gulf role in Iraq during the reign of al-Kazemi was again manifested in the Conference for Cooperation and Partnership held in Baghdad on August 28, 2021, in which Iraq's neighboring countries participated, namely Türkiye, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar. Representatives from Britain, France, and other countries, with delegations from the United States, the United Nations, and the European Union, also participated in this conference. The effectiveness of the Gulf role in Iraq became clear in the presence of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad, the UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, and Sheikh

The effectiveness of the Gulf's role increased, especially after the normalization process between Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Qatar on the one hand and between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates with Türkiye on the other

Sabah Khaled al-Sabah representing Kuwait.¹⁹

The Iraqi parliamentary elections on October 10, 2021 have also impacted the Gulf role in Iraq. This is evident in two tracks. The first is the Gulf support for the Sunni political leaders, divided between the UAE and Saudi support for Parliament Speaker Muhammad al-Halbousi, and Qatari-Turkish support for Sheikh Khamis al-Khanjar. Al-Halbousi entered the electoral race led by the National Progress Alliance, while al-Khanjar led the Azm Alliance.

The second track is represented in the indirect Gulf support for the Sadrist movement that announced the project of the political majority government against the consensual context in force in Iraq. Sadr's project represents a qualitative opposition to the loyalist forces close to Iran. The election resulted in the victory of al-Halbousi on the Sunni side and al-Sadr on the Shiite side. The effectiveness of the Gulf's role increased, espe-

The future reading of the Gulf's role in Iraq requires recognition of the Iraqi political reality, analyzing the regional Gulf trends, and considering the variables affecting the Gulf's role in Iraq

cially after the normalization process between Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Qatar on the one hand and between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates with Türkiye on the other. One of the most prominent repercussions of the end of the Gulf crisis was the Emirati consensus with Türkiye to unify the Sunni political position by putting pressure on al-Halbousi and al-Khanjar to enter a unified political alliance in the post-Iraqi parliamentary elections. Indeed, the Gulf pressures supported by the Turkish position succeeded in declaring the Sovereignty Alliance (which brought together both al-Halbousi and al-Khanjar). The announcement of the alliance was after a meeting of the leaders of the Sovereignty Alliance with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the head of the Turkish intelligence service Hakan Fidan. The information confirmed that the Turkish success in declaring the Sovereignty Alliance was preceded by high-level coordination with the Emirati and Qatari side. The important role of UAE National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed was clear in declaring this alliance and resolving the crises through

visits and meetings between the parties to the crisis.²⁰

The Gulf's success in declaring the Sovereignty Alliance was a clear development of the Gulf's role in Iraq in the light of the political transformations that happened in Iraq concurrently with the changes in the regional environment in the Middle East. The features of the increasing Gulf role in the Iraqi political scene became evident in the repeated visits of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, and the multiple visits of the Speaker of Parliament to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait, as well as the visits of the President of the Republic, Barham Salih to the Gulf states.

The Gulf influence in the Iraqi political system has increased with the continuous Gulf support, which is linked to the Western support, for the political majority project announced by the leader of the Sadrist movement, Muqtada al-Sadr. This is the alliance between al-Sadr movement and the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Masoud Barzani. While the first includes the largest Shiite political bloc with the Sovereignty Alliance, which also includes representatives of the Sunni component, the latter is the largest Kurdish political bloc in the country. This tripartite alliance aims primarily to isolate the forces linked to Iran in Iraq, including Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish forces.

As a result of these developments, it can be said that the Gulf's role in Iraq after 2017 witnessed great de-

velopment compared to the previous stages. The features of the Gulf presence in the Iraqi political reality became clear through the following: (i) Increasing visits between officials in Iraq and the Gulf countries and signing of many agreements and memoranda of cooperation, (ii) Gulf participation in regional conferences hosted by Baghdad, (iii) Support provided by the Gulf's states to the poles of the Iraqi political scene, whether through the success in declaring the Alliance of Sovereignty between al-Halbousi and al-Khanjar or through supporting the efforts of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi.

The Future of the Gulf's Role in Iraq

There is no doubt that the future reading of the Gulf's role in Iraq requires recognition of the Iraqi political reality, analyzing the regional Gulf trends, and considering the variables affecting the Gulf's role in Iraq. In this regard, the future scenarios for the Gulf's role in Iraq can be clear by focusing on opportunities and challenges that can be faced.

First Scenario: Increased Gulf Role in Iraq

The possibility of the increase of the Gulf role in Iraq can be studied in light of a set of opportunities present in the Iraqi political reality. The decline in the role of the Shiite loyalist forces linked to Iran will contribute to the continued development of the Gulf's role in Iraq. As known, some Shiite forces, especially those which

represent the armed groups, are doctrinally linked to the Iranian project. Some of these parties are based on the tradition of Khamenei's reference and therefore take positions hostile to the Gulf role in Iraq, especially if the Gulf role is combined with the policies of Western powers as happened in the al-Kazemi era, which witnessed Gulf American and European support for his policies in Iraq and his orientations towards the external environment.

In addition, one of the indicators of the development of the Gulf's role in Iraq is the new tendency of the Gulf countries to play active roles in the regional environment, especially in Iraq. This started when they realized that the isolation policies practiced by some Gulf countries with Iraq after 2003 had led to the growth of other regional influence at the expense of the Gulf influence, as was evident in the Iranian and Turkish role in Iraq. The Gulf role in Iraq is based on the impact of several variables. In this regard, it became clear that the impact of the Gulf-Iranian relations was the main determinant. On its part, Iran tried, with the arrival of U.S. President Joe Biden in 2021, to resume negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program after the withdrawal of the U.S. administration under former President Donald Trump. The Gulf supported the American withdrawal from the nuclear agreement with Iran, especially the role of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which originally opposed the signing of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the major powers in the international sys-

The current analysis of the Gulf's role in Iraq after 2017 shows that this role witnessed a shift in the Gulf's position in Iraq as a result of a set of considerations

tem in 2015.²¹ On this basis, it can be said that reducing tension in Gulf relations with Iran as a result of the changes in the Middle East contributes to the increase of the Gulf role in Iraq and qualifies the Gulf powers to play active roles in the Iraqi political scene and Iraq's foreign orientations, whether in the regional or international arena.

Second Scenario: Decline of the Gulf's Role in Iraq

In the context of studying the possibility of a decline in the Gulf role in Iraq, it must be noted that any change in the reality of the Iraqi political scene, in the sense of the development of the role of the forces loyal to Iran, will be a challenge to the Gulf's role in Iraq and may cause the decline of this role at various levels. In addition, any changes in the Gulf regional policies, whether related to the different policies within each of the active countries (Saudi Arabia, Emirates, Qatar) or the occurrence of differences again and the mismatch of the Gulf states' goals in the regional environment, will naturally lead to a decline in the Gulf role in Iraq. Moreover, this will be aggravated if these

countries realize the futility of political openness to Iraq because of the dominance of Iranian influence, for example, and also the impact of the role of the variables affecting the Gulf role in Iraq that may appear. In particular, the Iranian nuclear capacity and Iranian expansion in the Middle East, which constitutes a real threat to Gulf national security,²² and the resurgence of Gulf-Turkish disputes will undoubtedly lead to a decline in the Gulf's role in Iraq.

Considering these issues, we can conclude that the future of the Gulf role in Iraq is determined in the light of a set of determinants related to the nature of the Iraqi political reality and to the nature of Gulf foreign trends, as well as the role of variables affecting the Gulf role in Iraq.

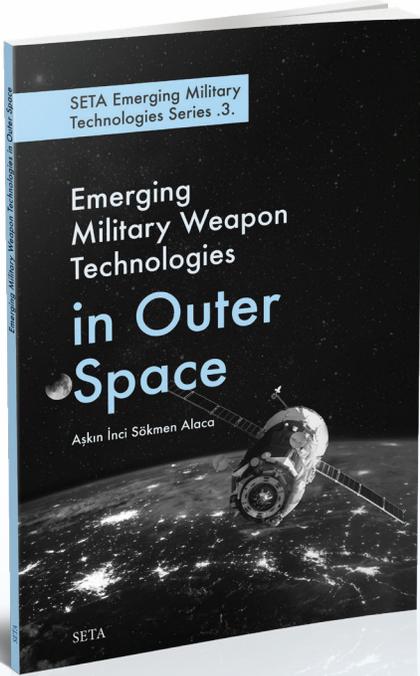
Conclusion

The current analysis of the Gulf's role in Iraq after 2017 shows that this role witnessed a shift in the Gulf's position in Iraq as a result of a set of considerations. Foremost of these is the arrival of the Haider al-Abadi government in Iraq, which sought to open up to the regional environment, especially the Gulf ones, in an attempt to balance Iraq's foreign orientations, which had been more closely related to Iranian policy during the era of Nuri al-Maliki. In addition, the impact of the shift in Gulf politics towards active involvement in Iraqi political affairs after years of isolation is evident. The shift in the Saudi position in Iraq contributed to pushing the Gulf states

towards activating their role in Iraq, given the nature of the leadership role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the regional environment. Although the Gulf crisis affected the effectiveness of the Gulf's role in Iraq, its detente and the return of relations between its parties contributed to actively supporting its role in Iraq. The effectiveness of the Gulf role in Iraq during the era of Mustafa al-Kazemi's government is greater than at any time before. In its quest for openness to the regional and international environment, Iraq has achieved many successes at the level of foreign policy, most notably the development of Iraqi-Gulf relations. ■

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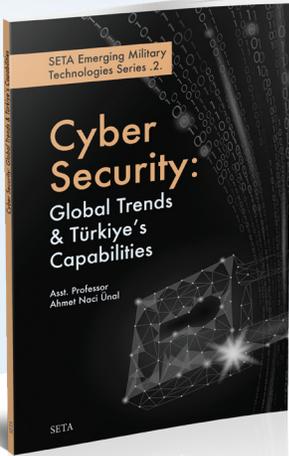
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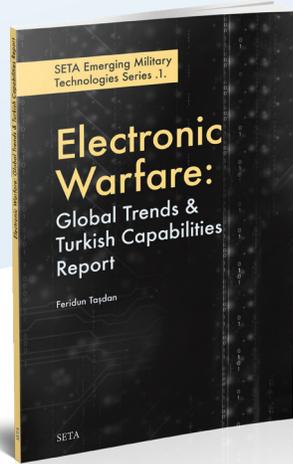


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