The challenges of creating democracy in Iraq and its influence over the security interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

Establishing relations with Iraq over the past half century has constantly been one of the most significant foreign policy issues for Iran. New developments in Iraq and the formation of a new power, politics sources in Iraq, as a result of the US and its allies’ military invasion of Iraq and the collapse of the usurper regime in Iraq, have overshadowed the security and national interests of the Islamic Republic. Establishing and developing a political structure taking into account democracy and designing a model of federalism considering ethnic and religious divisions in this country can pose real challenges to Iran’s security interests. Hence, the present article sets out to examine the aspects of this issue.

Keywords: security interests, democracy, federalism, centralism, decentralization

1 | INTRODUCTION

Iraq has always been under the dominance of authoritarian regimes from the beginning of its establishment until the collapse of Saddam. The usurper regime seized power in a military coup in 1968, with strong totalitarian regimes elements. On the other hand, the civil and foreign wars and the political instability in this country, along with the internal political authoritarianism, have never permitted the spread of civil political culture in Iraq. In Iraqi society, which had the experienced of colonial rule, monarchy, Arab nationalism, and the fascist revolution, political trust, social tolerance, mass support for political freedom, and gender equality were predominantly low. The political system in Saddam’s era was influenced by the ideology of Pan-Arabism.

With the US invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of the Iraq’s regime, the process of nation-building in Iraq was redefined and various groups participated in the administration of society. In this respect, the issue of state-nation-building in Iraq was initially designed as a political project by neoconservatives with the aim of building a model for other governments in the region. (Pollock, David 2008, p: 37) . The overthrow of the usurper regime in Iraq in 2003 by the United States ended to a new process of democratic state-building in the country and an endeavor to establish an efficient and strong government as a model for other regional countries. Hence, the Iraqi way of governing and the division of our power between the various ethnic and religious groups in Iraq has become the most essential political concern in Iraq. Kurds and Arabs, on the one hand, and Sonnies and
Shiites, from the other side, are the restricting factors in the success of a democratic government. Foreign countries’ intervention, especially the role of the United States, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, makes problems for the process of democratization. Each of these countries has an effective role to play in stirring up internal divisions among the Iraqi people. They are hindering the Iraqi people from fulfilling their democratic aspirations in the political, economic, security and cultural domains.

Iraq has a lot in common with the Islamic Republic of Iran among its neighbors, and its geopolitics and territorial integrity are doomed to any fate is of utmost significance for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Because it can severely threaten the political geography and the international legal and security outlook of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although the new Iraq is not, as in the past, a military threat to the Islamic Republic, it still has the potential to lead to tensions and insecurity in Iran’s national security interests. Because security issues have changed drastically in the new situation. The challenges posed by the rivalry between various ethnic and political groups inside Iraq and the destructive effects of instability and civil war, extremism, ethnic and religious divisions, and eventually the probability of the country’s disintegration, are among the most serious challenges. Iraq’s internal affairs enter Iran’s national security sphere. The US military invasion to Iraq and the overthrow of the usurper regime have led the country’s developments to build a controversial situation for the security and national interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In terms of military and security issues, however, the fall of the usurper regime in Iraq led to the removal of Iran’s most important strategic threat. Establishing a political structure based on democracy and federalism in Iraq can pose challenges to Iran’s security interests because Iran also has a very important position in securing security and developing peace and stability in the region due to its special geopolitical and spiritual position. Though, development gaps, cultural-ethnic-linguistic-religious faults, and geographically and communicatively unparalleled isolation in Iran provide a stable environment for the development of unrest and crisis. So, considering the above introduction, the question of this research is:

What challenges does the establishment of democracy in Iraq pose to the security interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran?

In the present context, although Iraq’s traditional military threats have been eliminated, the complex political and cultural nature of the country and the instability and insecurity of recent years have changed the political structure of the country in the form of American democracy and the presence of foreigners. Another has posed new threats to Iran’s foreign policy. Thus, the hypothesis of this research is that the new political developments in Iraq, while creating opportunities for Iran, have questioned the overall national security and security interests of Iran.

2 | THEORETICAL STUDIES

In today’s rapidly changing world, the concept of "national security" is being used more and more every day, not only in politics, but also in economics, culture and society, and is gradually becoming a powerful word and concept. The breadth of this concept has led to the point that security became the focus of studies that cover key concepts, including international relations, power, interests, and crisis. The appearance of the concept of "national security" came after the formation of the Westphalian Congress (1648), during which the scattered feudal governments and empires gave way to "nation-states." With the rise of the nation-state, the issue of national security gradually gained a special place. However, this concept was not seriously studied in scientific and academic circles after World War II and no operational definition was provided. The development of national security academically is largely influenced by fundamental changes in post-World War II America.
2.1 | Copenhagen School

Each theory and approach is rooted in a series of assumptions and propositions according to which different institutions, processes, and phenomena are examined, analyzed, and evaluated. The first book of the Copenhagen School "Security: A New Framework for Analysis," published by Bari Bouzan and Weaver, is a comprehensive framework for analyzing security studies. This book rejects the traditional view of security, which places great emphasis on militarism and the military. Instead, examining the characteristics of security as a whole is on the agenda in five areas: "military, political, economic, social, and environmental." The authors of the book believe that security is a special type of policy that is used in a wide range of issues (Bunker, R. J. & Sullivan, J. P, 2015, 54). Building security is an essential concept introduced by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. In his article, "Security and Non-Security" inspired by linguistic theory, Weaver calls security a theological movement. That is, the movement of the language and the type of expression expressed by the speaker defines security. Successful verbal movement is a combination of language and society that is also considered by the interpretive school; The school that Bouzan and his colleagues were influenced by. Otherwise stated, security is a process that puts some issues within the security framework; While it has not been in this area before. Securing security in all military and civilian areas is possible (Friis, K. (2000), pp. 1-17), securing it as over-politicizing issues, and laying the groundwork for the Intellectual Foundation as a sufficiently prominent existential threat. It is significant to have political implications. In the security discourse, a major issue emerges and is presented as the highest priority, and by applying the term security, the government claims that it needs and has the right to use transnational tools to deal with it. (Harsij, Hossein and Fattaahi, Ahmad, 2014, pp. 124-129) Bozan et al. in this context purpose a range of three degrees including; They depict non-political issues, political issues and security issues. In this context, there are two conditions for a security issue to be: Security discourse is a mechanism for breaking existing laws and procedures. Security discourses include: security-making actors and efficient actors. Security-making actors are individuals or groups who secure issues by stating that something is existentially threatened. Effective actors only have an impact on security decisions. On the other hand, the security-making actor is the only security reference for making a subject, and the meaning of speech action also makes sense here. Usually, security-making actors include: leaders, governments, parties, and the like. Bouzan highlights the essentiality of security analysis at the level of regional analysis, and argues that countries should have a special place in their foreign policy to "regional dimensions of security" and security in the multidimensional dimensions of Forumli and the environment and economic prosperity. It was not previously considered in the security definitions (Tabatabai, Mohammad Javad; Fathi, Seyed Mohammad, 2014, 21) to follow it. In other words, the main difference between him, the security studies of the post-Cold War period from the Cold War period, the scope of security and the scope of issues such as immigration, transnational criminal (terrorist) organizations, etc. This article seeks to address the emergence of new threats by taking advantage of the Copenhagen School’s new approach to security studies and its thinkers’ efforts to break out of military one-dimensional security and comprehensive security. Therefore, considering the specialized approach of this school in security analysis, it can be a suitable model in analyzing Iran’s security issues. Following the fall of Saddam in 2003 and the turmoil in Iraq, Iraq’s influence on Iran’s security interests has increased. The country’s major security threats, the rise of ISIS takfiri currents in Iraq, the new nation-state government, democratization, federalism, the change in regional balance, the presence of regional and international powers, have created new security issues for Iran.

2.2 | The relations of Iran-Iraq before 9/11

Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the Iraqi government in western Iran, the policies adopted by the Iraqi government have always been a source of threat to Iran’s national security, and the country has rarely had friendly relations with Iran. Territorial and border disputes with religious issues such as discrimination against
Shiites in Iraq and ethnic and racial issues such as the Arab-Ajam conflict, the presence of Kurds on both the Iranian-Iraqi border, and the temperament of Baghdad’s rulers are among the main causes of tension or conflict during the last half century. Although the signing of the 1975 Al-Jazeera agreement apparently ended border disputes and relatively better relations, this relative calm in relations between the two countries ended with the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Because Iraq, in accordance with the Algerian declaration and by accepting the Taluk line as the border line between the two countries, had practically accepted the sovereignty of Iran over the Arvand River and was looking for a suitable opportunity to inflict its final blow on Iran. Thus, the victory of the Islamic Revolution, which changed the structure of power in the Middle East and the world’s bipolar security system, in addition to removing Iran from the ranks of US supporters and the Western bloc, also encouraged Iraqi leaders to launch a military attack on Iran. Saddam, who had set his sights on leading the Arab world and filling the power vacuum in the region, took the opportunity to make the most of the lost concessions in the 1975 Algerian agreement (Houshang Mahdavi, 2001, 57). The usurper regime, led by Saddam Hussein, launched a series of propaganda attacks on Iran after bombing Iran’s oil facilities and participating in a series of destructive actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran under the pretext of rebuilding the three islands. Finally, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 6. 26. In 1980, in a memorandum, he revoked the 1975 Algerian agreement, and Saddam, claiming absolute Iraqi sovereignty over the Arabian Peninsula, tore it up in front of television cameras.

Overall, the usurper regime has ruled Iraq since usurper regime came to power in 1968. The regime was formed on the basis of usurper ideas, and its structures were established under Iraq’s interim constitution on September 22, 1968, in such a way that party members were able to seize power unanimously by resorting to it. (Ibid., 359)

3 | THE STRUCTURE OF IRAQ AFTER 9/11

The US invasion of Iraq led to a change in the political structure and formation of the Iraqi government council. Coordination was made with high-ranking US officials. The members of the council included 13 Shiias, 5 Sunni Arabs, 5 Kurds, 1 Turkmen and 1 Christian, who numbered a total of 25 people and were completely selected based on the ethnic and religious structures in Iraq (Farahani www.did.ir). The US invasion of Iraq to establish democracy began while these groups, instead of having a civic identity, were formed within the framework and values of ethnicity, marriage, religion and blood. Thus, the concept of national identity and citizenship - as one of the characteristics of the state - modern nations - has not been developed in this country (Dehyar 1386, 37). Therefore, in the new Iraq, ethnic-religious and identity gaps with competition. The political groups of different groups have come together to gain power, and due to the lack of national identity and social integrity, as well as the different goals and interests of these groups in the post-Saddam Iraqi political process, the country is witnessing major ethnic and religious tensions. It is like an Arab-Kurdish and Shea-Sunni conflict. Tensions and disagreements over federalism and Kirkuk are among the most important manifestations of the Kurdish-Arab conflict, and the violence of Shiite-Sunni sects is one of the religious tensions in Iraq. (Asadi, 2012, 242)

4 | STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND SECURITY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The emergence of new political developments in Iraq has changed the construction of power and politics in this country, as well as the way it views regional and international issues. The existence of new aspects prerequisites a new definition of Iraq’s role and position in Iran’s foreign policy inevitably. For the past four decades, no country has posed as much of a military threat or security challenge to Iran as Iraq in both domestic and international dimensions. This section addresses the security challenges posed by
structural change in Iraq.

5 | INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

5.1 | Strengthening American hegemony

The US government (Bush) views the Iraq crisis and its attack as a crucial opportunity to rebuild its regional and global order. This goal and other covert and overt US demands at the regional and global levels in the current changing, fluid and ambiguous environment have posed challenges to many governments, especially Iran. According to many analysts in the field of international relations, one of the consequences of the US invasion to Iraq is the strengthening unilateralism and the heightening the new world order in line with American hegemony (Fattahzadeh, Jame Jam Newspaper, 2003) The deterrent power of powers such as Russia and China and Europe will weaken the influence of regional actors such as Iran, India and Saudi Arabia. The fact is that the US invasion of Iraq has weakened the position and authority of the United Nations, the Security Council and other international bodies affiliated with the United Nations.

The distribution of power in the international arena faces unilateralism and the establishment of American order. By resorting to softening methods, the United States is trying to make the military environment, which has a comparative advantage, the center of its interactions with the world.

5.2 | The formation of the triangle of the United States, Iraq and Saudi Arabia against Iran

Before the occurrence of Iraq invading Kuwait, the traditional security system in the Persian Gulf region was based on a balance of power between the three powers, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and its subsequent defeat in the war against the International Coalition Forces led the United States to gain a direct presence in the region. Thus, from Saddam’s ouster from Kuwait in 1991 to his fall in Iraq in 2003, the US-based balance of power system - the Gulf Cooperation Council, especially Saudi Arabia on the one hand, and Iran and Iraq on the other, it was based on the policy of bilateral containment. The new security system in the Persian Gulf happens to have been shaped after the US-led invasion of Iraq, based on a balance of power between the United States, Saudi Arabia and Iraq on the one hand, and Iran on the other. This triangle could pose a threat to Iran’s security interests, which different signs of that threat are already clear.

5.3 | Israel's support for centrifugal groups

The fall of Iraq has brought achievements to Israel. That is due to the fact Iraq has been on the anti-Israel front for the past half century, although the Iraqi government has pursued specific goals of hostility to Israel at several different times, the most conspicuous of which has been to conclude the Arab world and competing with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Jews who formed the Israeli government see the fall of Saddam as a kind of approach to the idea of “from the Nile to the Euphrates,” and in today’s interpretation of the new Middle East book by Shimon Peres, Israel’s former prime minister, a new environment is emerging in the region. It is possible that Israel is at the center of its economy due to advanced technology (Haj Yousefi, 2003, 52).

The principle of Kurdish self-government in northern Iraq, which has been the result of long-term struggles, failures and expectations, is a very encouraging and gratifying event for them. The 15-year-old’s stability over its past experiences, in its two-factor, double-digit, formalized form within the Iraqi federal government, as well as its support for the international system, has increased confidence and hope in Iraqi Kurds and the Middle East. Their breath has caused them with the strengthening of centrifugal forces by Israel in Iraq and given the country’s future political structure (federal system), there is a possibility that Iraq will disintegrate in the future. This situation could affect minorities living in Iran, Turkey and Syria and their demands for independence, although the country’s historical and national history and background are very different from Iraq’s. In this regard, the Iranian government prefers to keep the borders in the current state, until there is instability on the western border and any possibility of independence is prevented. (US National
5.4 | Challenges of democracy and regional actors

The region’s environment opposes the establishment of a democratic system in Iraq. Turkey is concerned about the Kurds and other Kurdish cultural groups, as it threatens to establish democracy and its rights to its country. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, and other Gulf states, all have democratic systems in Iraq. It is not in their best interest to do so. Such a system may affect the internal situation of those countries, and as a result, everyone is trying to keep Iraq in its cage and in its violence, conflict Iraq’s political and social structure has an identity diversity. Contradictory political identities are a major factor in challenging democratic government-building processes. Regional actors have played an important role in creating political instability in Iraq. In such circumstances, the ground has been laid for the emergence of "proxy wars" against the Iraqi political structure. The proliferation of Iraq’s proxy wars is the result of a political, identity and ideological imbalance between regional actors that could pose a threat to the Islamic Republic’s security interests. (Bakhash, Sh, 2004,36) and internal strife. It is not, but a regional and international affair.

5.5 | Internal dimensions

5.5.1 | Increasing the national power of Iraq and creating security challenges

There is a danger that increasing Iraq’s national power will cause Iraq to deviate from its path and take an irresponsible path. With the rise of national power in Iraq, it may, as in the past, act as a balancing element of Iran’s regional role; This was spent on Iran’s legal, political and security energy to address the threat posed by a conventional military rival in the region called Iraq. A cohesive and united Iraq, if it defines its role as an actor in the Arab world as before, and distances itself from the Islamic Republic of Iran for ethnic or political reasons, would not be desirable for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

5.5.2 | Violence and sectarianism in Iraq

Iran’s direct military intervention in Iraq and the battles with ISIS and the Takfiri Salafi groups and the direct military intervention of the Shiite resistance, including the Iranian military and affiliated forces under the command of the Islamic Republic of Iran such as Hezbollah, etc., can be of different types. Put future situations ahead of Iraq’s geopolitical developments and territorial integrity. On the one hand, this intervention could lead to the recapture of Iraq and the increase of the popular mobilization power in this country, on the other hand, by provoking reactions from domestic, regional and international sources, with the propaganda of the Sunni media. The Arabs of the region and the United States will have a negative impact on the preservation of the unity and integrity of Iraq (Eisenstadt, Michael and et al, 2011,74). Iraq, for reasons such as its border with Syria, as well as its religious, cultural, and ethnic differences, has a very high capacity to influence the spread of sectarian violence in Syria. Therefore, the escalation of the Syrian crisis could have significant implications for Iraq’s domestic politics. The power structure in Iraq is such that Shiites are the main force in Iraq’s political system. In light of this fact, Baghdad’s proximity to Tehran after the fall of Saddam has made this political arrangement much more unpleasant for governments such as Saudi Arabia. If Bashar al-Assad’s regime fails to control the Syrian crisis, Takfiri terrorists such as ISIS or political opponents of the Syrian government take over most of Syria.

In other words, if the Syrian crisis spreads, it could affect the future of Iraq’s territorial and geopolitical integrity, and consequently of Iran.

5.6 | Federalism

One of the political differences in Iraq is related to the political and economic issues of this country, and each of the tribes and religions exchange certain views and interests in the political and economic spheres of the central government. Iran’s foreign policy and national security can be considered important in this regard. According to the new Iraqi constitution, the role of the president of this country
is ceremonial and the executive affairs are in the hands of the prime minister. It is in the hands of the Shiites, it will be elected, although the new constitution has been approved by most of the people of that country. However, there are differences between various Iraqi groups, especially Sunni Arabs, Shiites and Kurds, who each pursue their own demands for the constitution and the issue of federalism, trying to find an acceptable model for the Bina system. Establish international and regional as well as desirable for the Kurds. If they succeed in this project, not only will the Kurds of the Middle East have an interest in themselves based on a strong element of commonality and belonging, but they will also have a role model for the Kurds that will be attractive and motivating to them, as political thought gradually Federalism is spreading from the model of northern Iraq among the Kurds of other countries. (Singh, K. R1981,97).

5.7 | Obtaining power by Sheas

The overthrow of Saddam and the rise of Iraqi Shiites will lead to the rebirth of Najaf as the first holy city of moderate Shiites in Qom, which has been one of the main Shiite centers since 1969. This will pose a real threat to Iran, adding to the concerns of Iran’s rulers. The possibility of relocating the great Shiite religious center to its original location in Iraq could reduce Iran’s influence in the long run and help create seminaries independent of the government and the new and more non-political Shiites. In fact, Iraq is the most important actor that can bring Shiism back to the Arab world if it wants to. If Iraq can attain a democratic system, the majority of Shea in the country will want Najaf and Karbala to flourish again to invite Arab Shea scholars from all over the world, and the seminaries in Najaf and Karbala will once again be a place for discussion and examination by students. And it will become a source of Shiite imitation. After the collapse of the usurper regime and Saddam Hussein’s regime, the open space will definitely be used to attract students from Qom to Najaf and Karbala. This will conclude to the recruitment and migration of students, and perhaps the relocation of some authorities’ offices (Kubba, L, 2004,68).

6 | CONCLUSION

A concise glance at Iraq’s interim constitution before the country’s political changes reveals that Iraq’s governing structure has a centralized and authoritarian structure that has centralized most of its power in certain institutions, such as the Revolutionary Command Council. In addition to the legal framework, the power structure was much more closed in practice, and only a few members of the upper echelons of the usurper party held power. These people were more Sunni than the Arabs, and other groups, such as Shiites and Kurds, had virtually no role in the power structure. Although in a democratic Iraq, Shiites will play a decisive role in the structure of government. The presence of Shiites in the Iraqi power and politics scene and its position and role in Iran’s foreign policy must continue to the extent that it does not lead to the abandonment and isolation of other identities from the Iraqi power scene. With the new developments, new features have entered the Iraqi political scene that need to redefine the role of different identities in the Iraqi scene. Generally, the establishment of democracy, federalism, and the presence of foreign interventionist and hostile forces around Iran’s borders, especially Iraq, while posing a security threat, is a major obstacle to expanding Iran’s role and influence in the region. In this regard, the scene of the new Iraq has become the main axis of US pressure and threats against the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past years. As the US administration has accentuated on different occasions, a new and different Iraq will be a lever of pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran to change its political behavior at the regional level, which has not been very effective, yet.

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