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Iranian-Iraqi Border Matter and Domination of Iraqi capabilities

Iranian-Iraqi relations are the best example of the Persian expansionist and anti-Arab policy throughout different historical eras. Iraq was one of the Persians' goals in the modern era, just as it was in the Middle Ages and in ancient times. One of the Persian politicians expresses his feelings in this regard, saying: "What a pity that this beautiful country fell into the hands of that people, i.e., Iraqi people. If it were ours, and God will give it to us, what a paradise it shall become!!"

From this point, Iraq has always been subjected to several Persian invasions in modern history and since the Safavid era. With the annexation of Iraq to the Ottoman Empire, the chronic problem in the history of Iraq appears, which is the demarcation of the Iranian-Iraqi borders. During tranquility periods between Persia and the Ottoman Empire, the latter tried to demarcate the borders with Iran through many common treaties with regard to Iraq. However, these treaties did not, in fact, lead to the demarcation of the borders accurately, but rather made matters more complicated and Iraq inherited a heavy legacy in this regard.

Abdel-Aziz Nawar believes that through both treaties of 1639 and 1746, Iranian mentality did not want to accurately define the Iraqi-Iranian borders, whether in the south or even in the north in the Kurdish areas, as the affiliation of the Kurdish winter clans, i.e., who graze in winter in Iran, and the summer clans in Iraqi Kurdistan, i.e., those who graze in summer in Iraq, was not determined. Those treaties also split Kurdish people into two halves. One of them is in Iran, and the other is in Iraq, which will increase the instability on the borders between Iran and Iraq so far.

Iraqi legal expert, Sardar Abdullah, confirms a historical fact regarding the border conflict between Iran and Iraq, which is that the Iranian side has always been the stronger party who imposes its conditions and coerces Iraq in this regard. This may appear clearly in the 1937 treaty during the reign of Shah Reza Pahlavi, where the southern border in Shatt al-Arab was modified in favor of Iran in the area opposite the Iranian city of Abadan; as Iran was seeking to expand its influence in this strategic region, so as to tighten its control at the head of the Arabian Gulf, in its permanent attempt to control the navigation traffic in the Gulf. This is also closely linked to its permanent attempts in the south to control the Strait of Hormuz with a view to control navigation in the middle of the Gulf.

However, Iran does not always recognize the demarcation of borders with Iraq and demands the expansion of these borders in order to comply with its permanent tendencies to swallow and control Iraq. During the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran returned to demanding the expansion of its borders with Iraq, especially in Shatt al-Arab region. In order to put pressure on Iraq in this regard, Iran played the Kurdish card in the face of the ruling Baath regime in Iraq in the seventies and supported the armed Kurdish opposition against Baghdad. Here, Iraqi regime found itself in a difficult situation, especially with the growing Kurdish military operations supported by Iran. This led to signing a treaty in Algiers between Iran and Iraq in 1975, in which Baath regime, unfortunately, waived many rights in Shatt al-Arab favor of Iran, in exchange for Iran abandoning support for the Iraqi Kurds.

With the arrival of Khomeini to power in Tehran in 1979, the border problem between Iran and Iraq returned to the fore again, which led to the outbreak of a fierce and long-term war between both states that lasted from 1980 to 1988. The war did not resolve the border issue, but made it more complicated as the forces of both states did not return to the borders that were between them before the war, and the matter worsened with the discovery of many oil fields in the disputed areas overlapping between them, which added a new economic dimension in addition to the old strategic dimension of the border issue. In fact, this matter was a continuation of the policy of imposing the order by force that Iran has followed in the matter of demarcating its borders with Iraq over the years and history; it was weird that the Iranian forces occupied this oil field only one month before the meeting of the joint Iranian-Iraqi committee to redraw the borders between both states.

In fact, this was nothing but a show of force on the part of Iran to impose its conditions on Iraq at that meeting. Iraq could only summon the Iranian ambassador in Iraq and demand the exit of the Iranian forces from this site and solve the problem through a joint committee between both states.

Iran was actually trying, whether by expanding the scope of its diplomatic and consular activities in Iraq or even the influence of Iranian-backed Iraqi parties and militias, to influence the course of Iraqi affairs and to assert Iranian hegemony over Iraqi capabilities.