

## Iran, New Iraq and the Persian Gulf Political-Security Architecture

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the necessity of establishing a new political-security arrangement in the Persian Gulf region in the light of new political developments in the region after the 2003 Iraq crisis. The author argues that following the recent political-security changes in the region and with the shift of Iraq's role from its previous threatening position, together with the prospect of building a friendly coalition between Iran and Iraq, the formation of new political-security architecture is inevitable in the Persian Gulf region. The new arrangement has to be based on the new political-security, cultural and economic realities. The author also argues that the nature of security threat in the region has changed. Under the new circumstances, instead of hard inter-states rivalries, the security challenges are more centered in human security and nations' political demands and expectations. Dealing with these new situations requires establishing mutual cooperation in the region. While offering certain characteristics of the new political-security arrangement in the Persian Gulf, the author concludes that without mutual multilateral cooperation between all the involved regional actors, no security arrangement would work out successfully. Under the new circumstances, the increased presence of foreign actors, especially the United States, will further complicate the regional issues.

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## Introduction

The new political developments in post-invasion Iraq and the empowerment of the Shiite factions in the country have affected the perspective of power and politics in the Middle East and especially in the Persian Gulf region. The most immediate result of the new developments has been capacious increases in Iran's regional role not only regarding Iraq and the Arab Sunni world, especially the Persian Gulf Arab states, but also in ties with the other main trans-regional actors especially the United States. Iran's increased regional role is perceived in some Arab Sunni quarters as an attempt to build a so-called Shiite crescent, and in the West as Iran rise to power which contradicts the traditional balance of power that for years has been the official policy of the United States. Concurrent with increase in Iran's regional power, Iraq's evolution from its previous position as a threatening player, together with the changing nature of security threats in the new circumstances, all require the formation of a new political-security system in the region based on the characteristics of new political developments. With the rise to power of Shiite majority in new Iraq, a new friendly coalition is emerging in the Persian Gulf region that can impact the entire regional political-security arrangement.

The author argues that Iran's support of the Shiite elements in new Iraq is not merely based on enhancing the ideological grounds, but in strategizing the role of Shiites in Iraq's power equations and regional politics. By shifting Iraq to a strategic friend, Iran can influence the political-security architecture in the Persian Gulf and make a new political block, a policy that can weaken the traditional security system of the region that is essentially centered in the interest of outside powers and not Iran. The logic behind this argument is that future political games in the Middle East region are bound to consolidate the shares and roles of regional states in the region's economic and political zones of interests. Naturally, the Islamic Republic of Iran as the most important player of the Persian Gulf region seeks to strengthen its role in such a transitional circumstance. In this respect, new Iraq has a special place in Iran's regional policies,

bringing about grounds of creating political-security opportunities in the Persian Gulf region.

### **1. Iran and New Iraq: The Shiite Element**

The circumstantial important role of the Shiite element in Iran's foreign policy had not been previously appreciated for two reasons. The first reason was the lack of faith of the Shah's regime toward the potentials of Shiite ideology in shaping Iran's regional actions that led to a lack of appropriate use of this instrument in Iranian foreign policy. Although some foreign analysts tend to agree that Iran's former regime did in fact use the Shiite element in Lebanon (via Imam Moussa Sadr's movement) and Iraq (indirect support for Hezb-e-Dawee) and some other places in the region in the 1970s. (Fuller&Franke, 2005: 171-172) However, the optimum utilization of such a role of Shiite to develop Iran's foreign policy capacities is occurring for the first time upon the new developments in Iraq. At present, the significant point is that for the first time Iran's interactions with Iraqi Shiite community are simultaneously placed on normal cultural and political ties of the two nations and governments.

In other words, the trivial significance of Shiite element in Iranian foreign policy in the past had been considered in the context of organizing groups opposed to the extremist Arab nationalist regimes (such as former political regime in Lebanon or Saddam Ba'athist regime in Iraq who backed anti-Iranian sentiments). But current interactions between Iranian and Iraqi Shiites are based on the candid religious and ideological interactions between the two sides rather than governmental policies rendered to mutual containment. (Barzegar, 2005: 200-201)

The oppressive policies of the Ba'athist regime and the ruling Sunni minority in Baghdad in turning the blind eye to the share and the role of the Shiite majority in Iraq's power structure and politics was still another obstacle facing the application of the Shiite element in Iran's foreign policy. The Ba'athist regime's perception of Iraqi Shiite element as Iran's adamant nexus, and accusing them of having divisive and sectarian orientation, all exacerbated its discriminatory

policies into serious oppression against Shiites during the last three decades. Along such lines, the Iraqi regime ignored Shiites' demands, clamped down on their political activities, extremely minimized their role in political power structure and key official positions and exerted savage repressive policies against them. (Fuller&Franke, 2005: 23)

The new condition and developed political power structure of Iraq, bringing on the Shiite majority over the Iraq's government, have provided Iran's foreign policy with new grounds of opportunity at national, regional as well as international levels. At national level and bilateral relations, there exist much potential for strategic relations based on cultural, economic and political-security elements. These aptitudes could translate to cultural and social ties on different grounds such as media communication, religious tourism, university exchanges and scientific seminars, expansion of seminary communication, and common research projects. This is an important matter in the redefinition of cultural interactions and a new positive view of the two nations toward each other, leaving behind the previous strands of mistrust and suspicions.

The advent of new political developments in Iraq counts as a turning point in the strengthening of the Shiite position in the region and the world. Therefore, at the regional level, more than anything else, the empowerment of the Shiite element in new Iraq will play an important role in balancing Iran's relations with the regional Shiite nations and the Arab countries. Prior to it, the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran had initiated the role of Shiite factor onto a new stage. In fact, the Islamic Revolution encouraged the Shiites of the region to identify themselves and embolden their presence in the region. In the new conditions, the Shiites as one expert of the Middle East called them as the "Forgotten Muslims"<sup>41</sup>-dramatically enter the Middle East developments as one of the most important effective factors.

A glance at certain figures and number demonstrates the potentials of Shiite power and their future position and role in the Persian Gulf, Middle East region and the world. Currently, the world Shiite population is estimated between 160-200 million. (Maleki, 2006: 256-257) They are majority in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Azerbaijan, and in

Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar, Emirates, Yemen, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan are viable minorities.<sup>2</sup> The estimate for the Arab Shiite population is around 14 million who are inhabited in the Persian Gulf littoral states. (Fuller&Franke, 2005: 23) Around 50 percent of the world's oil reserves are located in regions with the Shiite inhabitants. Countries with Shiite majorities have access to 30 percent of the world oil reserves that include: Iran, Iraq and Azerbaijan. If the eastern part of Saudi Arabia be added to the latter figures, this volume reaches 50 percent. Taking into account of such features, Iran's role as the centre of Shiite developments in the world will become more significant in the coming years.

At international level also the augmentation of Shiite element role in new Iraq and its effects on Iraq's international relations can provide Iran with auspicious grounds in its international relations and resolving some of the country's strategic issues with the United States in the region. Undoubtedly, Iran's importance in international system with regard to affecting regional security and stability has been multiplied and for great powers in post-9/11 world. Such a fact was demonstrated-more than any other place- in Iraq where due to its cultural, political, economic and security links, Iran maintains huge influence congenial to the stability and security. Such an importance of Iran's role in new Iraq coincides with the US vital interest of preservation of stability in Iraq; therefore the US needs Iran in order to maintain security in Iraq. (Barzegar, 2006a: 165) This matter has presented Iran with a valuable opportunity to optimize its foreign policy and redefine its role and status in the region and especially in the Persian Gulf.

## **2. Iran and Iraqi Shiites: A New Coalition**

Strengthening the potentials for Iran's foreign Policy via the role and element of Shiite in new Iraq realizes when the role of the Shiite element is defined in the context of establishing strategic relations between Iran and Iraq. Accordingly, the enhancement of Iraq's sovereignty and the consequent empowerment of capacity-making opportunities at inter-governmental level on political, security,

cultural and economic fields will benefit the interests of both countries. Through cooperation with the friendly government in Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran can reach many of its strategic aims including a new definition of partnership in the Persian Gulf security arrangement and applying equilibrium in its relations with the great powers and the Arab world.

Logic for strategic linkage through the element of Shiite goes back to the reality that future power games in the Middle East region will not be merely centered on ideological grounds but they are bound to consolidate the domain of states' regional influence and roles. Iran's role and influence in the region would therefore depend on the level of strategic connectivity and management of relations with its allied and amicable political groups like the SCIRI (now ISCI), Al Dawee and others in order to consolidate their position and functions in Iraq's power structure. One should argue that the long term functioning and activity of these groups will only depend on their presence in the framework of government and popular legitimacy and support. For the same reason, the effectuality of Islamic Republic of Iran via the latter political groups must ultimately transcend the sole security and contentional issues and being directed toward strategic and leadership functions.

From another perspective, the characteristics of power and political structure in the Middle East region is in a way that there have always existed a degree of rivalry either constructive or unconstructive, among the main regional and trans-regional players. In the past, the presence of interventionist foreign players was assumed to be the main balancing factor of power and politics in the region. The recent formations and new political conditions such as the Iraq crisis, and resistance of the Lebanese Hezbollah in the summer 2006 war with the well-equipped Israeli army revealed many political and cultural realities in the region. Therefore, the role of great powers in this region is facing serious challenges on a daily basis. The foremost reason for this is the resistance of nations and aversion of public opinion to the presence of foreign forces and their increasing interference in the affairs of regional communities. Just as Iraq's crisis demonstrated, promoting democratization process and conducting

the war against terrorism by the means such as direct military operations, will neither find a common and understandable language among the Middle East masses, nor will it find any receptive audiences. (Barzegar, 2006b [internet]) Such situations are further indications of the important role of regional players such as Iran who enjoy independent sources of cultural, social and political power which are somehow balancing elements at the regional level.

Effectuality also depends on the level of influence beyond the national borders. For this reason, sharing of roles needs to a degree of mutual cooperation among main players, based on a win-win strategy and advancing cooperation in order to establish stability and security upon which the potentials for creating opportunities for all can be realized. Achieving concrete interests of all involved actors as the outcome of establishing efficient economic, political and security systems are the ultimate result of building such cooperation.

In the process of new regional political developments, new Iraq counts as the most important factor for Iran's strategic linkage to the main domain of role and influence in the region as well as taking roles commensurate with Iran's pivotal sources of power in the region, particularly in the Persian Gulf. That said, Iran's effectual role-making via Iraq would take place by considering both inputs and outputs. This policy means that while the Islamic Republic of Iran is applying its national means and power elements including geopolitics, close relations with the main actors of Iraq's politics, cultural, economic and other potentials in offsetting the new conditions of the region, it must also pay attention to the fact that the scope for role creation outside of national borders requires managing strategies and accepting the relative role of the other relevant players in the current situation.

The new political developments and the downfall of Saddam's Ba'athist regime, indisputably increased Iran's relative power and as the main actor of the Persian Gulf Region, which has subsequently led to presumed concerns in the Arab Sunni world, particularly among some Persian Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia. Those preoccupations have been expressed at times as emergence of a Shiite crescent in the region. Likewise, other involved foreign powers, and above all the US, are seriously concerned about Iran's increasing regional role and

influence. Therefore, a kind of rivalry is ongoing among regional and trans-regional players for consolidating their interests particularly in Iraq. Iran's efforts to enhance its rightful regional role are yet to be seized through contemplation of regional conditions and considering other players' interests. In this context, Iran's course of action should initially be implemented at state levels. In post-invasion Iraq, the first step in Iran's action should be based on strengthening and stabilizing the Iraqi new government. Then in the second stage, political, security, cultural and economic opportunities, should be established through building strategic relations at government levels. In the new conditions, this policy should be focused on identifying common interests rather than differences and the past mutual threat perceptions.

### **The Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities**

Concerns over the formation of a Shiite crescent, based on allegation about Iran's increasing role and regional influence was first mentioned by King Abdullah of Jordan. In a sense, it actually demonstrated the concerns of some circles in Arab World over the ascent of Shiite majority to power in an Arab country (Iraq) for the first time. Some Arab Sunni leaders namely Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's president who mentioned once that, "The Shiites of the region are more loyal to Iran than their own countries."<sup>3</sup> Or Saud Al Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister expressed worries about the increase of Iran's influence –and the Shiites on the whole in the region – mentioning that, "We all fought Iran to prevent its invasion of Iraq, but now all of us (Arabs) have delivered Iraq to Iran without reason".<sup>4</sup>

The alleged concern of some Arab countries over the formation of Shiite crescent is primarily based on the presumption that an emboldened role of Shiite element in the region's power structure might change the balance of power to the detriment of the some Sunni Arab regimes through creation of a coalition between Iran and Iraq. Secondly, this coalition takes place within countries namely Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, whose governments oppose the existing traditional order. Such an ideological alliance would imbalance power



in benefit of Iran. And thirdly, they assume that the formation and empowerment of such a coalition with a different perspective on the role of actors and presence of the great powers, counts as a threat for conservative regimes of the region. This is specifically considered in terms of affecting the Shiite minorities in the Persian Gulf region. There is no doubt that the establishment of an ideological and democratic Shiite government in Iraq can challenge the legitimacy of authoritarian Sunni regimes. As an example, the ratification of Iraq's progressive constitution, and its full complementation can lead to a major perceived threat by the Persian Gulf Arab regimes.

Iran's bold presence in new Iraq is the result of the new political developments derived from normal logic of dynamic developments in Iraq's power and political structure following the downfall of the Ba'athist regime and the activation of the huge potential of different Shiite political factions which were excluded from any noticeable role in Iraq's politics.

Normally, the effective and significant presence of Shiites in political structure, the overwhelming victory of Shiite faction in the parliamentary elections as well as taking charge of executive positions, all were efforts in terminating the forty-year period of Ba'athist monopolistic rule and abandonment of the habits and prejudices that over the last eighty years took roots in Iraq's power and political structure. In other words, the demand of Iraqi Shiites for expanding relations and the beginning of a new kind of political, cultural and economic interaction with their natural allies in the region especially Iran is quite normal and logical. It is derived from their desire to balance their role and position in new Iraq.

The pivotal point in the new conditions is how Iran can simultaneously balance its policy at the national level and considering Iraq's politics on the one hand, and at regional and international levels and in dealing with the Arab Sunni world and the United States. Working with Iraqi Shiite groups and parties from a domestic point of view is of major interests for Iran to increase its influence among Iraqi Shiites as well as the formation of a friendly coalition at the level of the two states. In contrast, such an increase in Iran's presence will

potentially entail some constraints in Iran's regional and international relations given the fact that Iran has been following a policy of advancing good relations with the Arab world..<sup>5</sup>

New Iraq is the place that Iran's ideological and pragmatic aspects of foreign policy have converged for the first time since the Islamic Revolution. In contrast to the first decade of the Islamic Republic while Iran's foreign policy was mainly defined according to ideological precepts, this time the factor of ideology is placed in service of Iran's national interests and as a mean of achieving the objectives of national security and interest. The main reason for following such a pragmatic act is that the nature and substance of current challenges and opportunities force Iran to be pragmatic in its actions. Because of pressing dangers that are emanating from security threats in its immediate security environment such as spreading instability, civil and religious war, ethnic conflicts, etc, and the involvement of all layers of Iranian society, the Islamic Republic of Iran is urged to assume a degree of realism in the process of its foreign policy decision making in the region. In this context, ideology serves only as one element of national power and as an optimizing mechanism in regulating of Iran's foreign policy. In other words, the enhancement of Shiite element in Iran's relations with Iraq is not exclusively based on ideological grounds, but it is also an asset for building bilateral strategic aims and ties.

### **The New Regional Security Arrangement**

New developments have necessitated the formation of a new regional security system in the Persian Gulf based on political, cultural and security realities of the region. This *sine qua non* is based on three factors of:

1. Increase in Iran's importance and its augmented regional role;
2. Emergence of a new Iraq with a different nature;
3. Changes in the nature of security challenges.

With the new political developments in post-invasion Iraq and whole region, Iran's regional role has growingly increased. Iran's contribution to the regional security arrangement should therefore be

defined based on its new role. The logic for Iran's increasing role is derived from inherent sources of natural power particularly from cultural, social and geopolitical aspects of which any underestimation would be damaging to the any regional security system. During the last two decades, the presence of foreign powers (specially the US) around Iran's borders and threatening this country, has disrupted the endogenous balance of power at regional level and has led to mistrust between regional states. Past tensions in relations of Iran, Iraq and the Persian Gulf littoral states are evident examples in this regard. Brazen interference of foreign powers in the regional order of the Persian Gulf has consistently caused chaotic complications at regional level. Rendering boundless support to the former Shah regime of Iran as the gendarme of the region not only provoked the arms race, but also intensified the mistrust between Iran and the Persian Gulf littoral states. Support for Saddam Hussein during the 1980s imposed war against Iran, led to his further invasion of Kuwait. In fact, the extensive military US presence in the region and establishment of permanent military bases in the regional countries have widened the gap between states and people in those countries and also has delegitimized those regimes because of their political and security dependence on the US.

Meanwhile, the type and characteristics of political and security threats in the region have been transforming during the last decade. It implies that bulk of previous threats was as result of arms race, schism and split among regional states. Military coalitions and general threats emanating from rivalries and enmities of governments and occurrence of wars were mainly based on "imaginary threats" all serving to the "third party interests". For instance the sense of Iranian security threat perceived by Persian Gulf littoral states is an imaginary delusion of Iran's efforts to increase its interfering presence in the southern coasts of the Persian Gulf. The decade long of the US presence in the 1990s aggravated this misconception; Some Middle East experts tend to perceive that consolidation of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq following the 1991 war by the US was a pretension of Iraqi lived threat in the region. Thereby US while strengthening the foundations of its military presence, further added to the dependency of regional

regimes dependent on the US and carried on the arm sales and export of military equipments to the regional countries.

The new political developments in Iraq are a turning point with regards to formation of new aspects of threats with different security and political essence. Hence, the type of threats is changing from hard military power to soft human security issues due to the changes in the Iraqi political structure and the country's abandonment of (Ba'athist) traditional militarism and extremism. The new changes have affected the entire region's political-security issues. The new changing political environment are mainly based on issues such as, the revival of Shiites and Kurdish factions in Iraq's power division, together with a growth in political change and masses expectations in the fate;

- Increase in demands for greater self-determination among different cultural and political identities and weakness in authority and legitimacy of governments;

- Increase of people role in power and political structure; and other form of threats like:

- Expansion of terrorism, environmental pollution, drug trafficking, trade security and export of energy;

In other words, the nature of the new sources of threat is such that require "mutual and collective cooperation" among all concerned regional and trans-regional players in the region. For example, fighting the Al Qaeda related groups requires cooperation by all involved countries to block their communication routes and violent activities. Achieving this aim necessitates mutual cooperation by all concerned actors.

The traditional security system in the region has been designed chiefly upon the traditional threats and particularly based on the situations of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Policies such as "balance of power", "dual containment", and descriptions such as presenting Iran's "imaginary threat" to the region for imposing "imported security system" based only on the demands and interests of trans-regional players or in other words, "third party interests" have been the main components of such a security system. With the new developments, such an arrangement that multiplies the causes for tension and mistrust among the regional states and is based on mutual misperception

about the roles, positions and aims of the others regional countries is not in conformity with regional realities, and just as demonstrated during the crises in the last few years namely the first and second Persian Gulf wars, it lacks the required efficacy. For the same reason, the current conditions and realities of the region inevitably demand new regional security arrangement.

### **Beyond Mutual Threat Perception**

Instead of focusing on differences, any new security arrangement, must primarily be based on new definition of the threats' nature, precise understanding of the aims of all involved players, identifying and working on the common security concerns and interests.

Realization of such a system will apparently require the evolution in the type of visions and perceptions of new threats; it also requires moving toward bringing new definitions for the regional security challenges. Irrespective of the change in cognition and conduct of players regarding one another's role and participation, the new security arrangement in the region requires contemplating the followings:

#### **1) Engagement of All Actors**

Applying the concept of “exclusion” toward certain players such as Iran and Iraq in the past, together with defining a “threatening” role for them have been a major source of tension and rivalry in the region. Pursuing this policy at present is neither feasible according to the region’s new political realities in the region nor acceptable by the main actors namely Iran and Iraq. In this context, and in addition to the need for redefining the new situation in terms of enhancement of Iran's regional role and new Iraq’s position, the logic of the security needs of the region is to localize the political-security arrangements. Thereupon, the main regional countries must form the main foundations of regional security whose role being used in a constructive and effective manner and to the benefit of a collective security system in order to confront new threats.<sup>6</sup> Approaching to a

kind of "parity", "convergence of common wills" and attainment of a balance based on the role of all involved players and commensurate with their sources of power is of vital importance. The significance here is because the traditional definition of mutual threat was a deriving force of the conflictual perceptions of the main actors towards the roles and aims of each others.

## **2) Redefining the Role of Trans-Regional Actors**

In the past, a major portion of political and security energy were spent on confronting the threats that were introduced by trans-regional actors or "third parties". These perceptions of threats were not based on region's realities. Just as the Iraq crisis demonstrated, regional nations are not prepared like the past, to accept the dominant role and influence of foreign powers namely the US in their affairs. Some analyses tend to agree that the intense presence of the US military forces in region throughout the 1990s demonstrated how much security and political costs such a presence can entail. Such costs may be defined both in terms of increasing rifts and mistrust between regional states followed by an arms race, or in form of the threats emanating from expansion of terrorist operations which has challenged the legitimacy of some Arab Sunni regimes before their peoples. For example, Al Qaeda justifies its terrorist actions in Saudi Arabia and Jordan under the pretext of combating the US puppet regimes that have provided political and security and economic grounds for strengthened foreign presence in Islamic countries. (Zunes, 2001[internet] & Barzegar, 2005: 116)

## **3) Identifying Common Indigenous Security Threats**

The notion that the existing security threats are originated in the actions of some actors such as Iran is mainly rooted to serve the self-interested policies of foreign actors. Under the traditional security system, the main focus was on the conflictual interests and existing discrepancies among the main regional actors namely Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. But as substantiated, in the current situations the nature

of threats has changed. Therefore, the need for mutual cooperation to confront the new threats, whose main security and political costs are endured by the whole region, is inevitable. A new redefinition of the main regional players' perception of new security threats is worthwhile to this end. For example, for the Islamic Republic of Iran the threats from the region are generally emanated from the Israeli threat and the US military presence next to Iran's national borders. Therefore, it beholds the threats in a more broad and strategic framework rather than coming from inter-regional context and by the Persian Gulf states. In contrast, other Persian Gulf littoral states view the security threats differently which are mainly coming from Iran's growing presence in the region. Given the new circumstances, these kind of different understandings of foreign threats should be reconsidered since convergent viewpoints for confronting common threats are of the possesses utmost importance.

#### **4) Building Regional Interdependence**

No sustainable and harmonious regional system can endure without building political-security, and economic interdependence among the region's main players. The logic for this argument is that insecurity and instability in the region would be costly for all regional or trans-regional players. Hence, all players will attempt to prevent tension that can have security, political, economic or cultural roots. Moving toward constructive cooperation or even constructive rivalry must replace the existing mistrust and conflict in the relations between main actors. In this context, establishing strategic relations in the region's economics, creating a kind of common market to deal with trade of goods, services and technology, connecting oil and gas pipelines, utilizing facilities in shape of common ports, connecting the banking systems, trade and promotion of tourism, establishing joint shipping lines and air cargo companies, removing tariffs and customs duties and etc can provide grounds for economic and trade interdependence in all dimensions. Such policies will in turn make countries accountable and responsible to work help and uphold stability in the context of a collective security system.

## Conclusion

The advent of political developments in Iraq has changed the nature of power and politics in the region and particularly in the Persian Gulf region. With the new political developments, the formation of a new regional political-security system consisted of all involved actors is inevitable. Since the nature of security threats have changed and cultural, social and political matters are gradually replacing the traditional security threats, the need for regional cooperation at the level of regional states and foreign interested actors is necessary. No regional security arrangement will succeed without collective and mutual cooperation of the main actors of the Persian Gulf region including Iran and Iraq.

New developments have also altered the direction of future power games in the region. Accordingly, states rivalries not only take place based on ideologies, but securing new domain of roles. Thus any player naturally will try to gain more prospects of political, security, economic and cultural opportunity for its own interest. World politics legitimizes states' efforts to consolidate their roles in their domain of security and influence. Iran's efforts are not an exception. In this context, building a friendly coalition between Iran and Iraq is according to the new realities of the Persian Gulf politics. The natural characteristics of the structure of power and politics, as well as geopolitics, cultural religious solidarity and backgrounds and political and economic capacities of Iran and Iraq lead them to work together in the Persian Gulf issues. The main step for introduction of new regional security arrangement is the abandonment of confrontational security mindset in the relations of the Persian Gulf states. The intense presence and the interfering role of the foreign powers in the politics of the region should be ended. Engagement of all involved regional actors should be placed. By advancing interdependence all states will accept common responsibility for the sake of their own interest. The new political-security system of the region must be based on priority of the commonalities, rather than discrepancies and as the past mutual threat perceptions.



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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Pointing to Graham Fuller in book *Arab Shiites. Forgotten Muslims*
- <sup>2</sup> For more information on facts and figures on Shiite regional community look up: Nasr, Vali (2006) "When The Shiite Rise" *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2006
- <sup>3</sup> Hosni Mubarak's speeches on these grounds cause a wave of anger and concern among regional Shi'it communities and Iran. Look up: news site-analysis Baztab, 21 Farvardin 1385.
- <sup>4</sup> For a foreign view on Saud Al faisal objectives look up: Gnehrm, Edward "Iraq: A View from the Neighborhood" February 23, 2006, available at: [http://www.gwa.edu/elliott/news/transcripts/s\\_hapiro5.html](http://www.gwa.edu/elliott/news/transcripts/s_hapiro5.html) From the early 1990s decade Iran's official foreign policy in relation to the Arab world,

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in particular the Persian Gulf region has been based on the two axes of confidence building and tension reduction. For more information look up: Barzegar, Kayhan (2000) "Détente in Khatami's Foreign Policy and it's Impact on improvement of Iran-Saudi Relations," *Discourse; An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol 2, No 2 (fall 2000) pp0.163-164

<sup>5</sup> From the early 1990s decade Iran's official foreign policy in relation to the Arab world, in particular the Persian Gulf region has been based on the two axes of confidence building and tension reduction. For more information look up: Barzegar, Kayhan (2000) "Détente in Khatami's Foreign Policy and it's Impact on improvement of Iran-Saudi Relations," *Discourse; An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol 2, No 2 (fall 2000) pp0.163-164

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Asghar Khaji, Iran's former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Diplomatic Hamshahri, Tehran, Summer 1385, pp.10-12