

## Will America Launch a War on Iraq?

President Trump will not fight a war in the next few months before the presidential elections, especially when the results of such a war and its consequent retaliation are unpredictable.

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*The US administration views Iraq as an arena for confrontation with Iran, with the aim of subjugating the country to its hegemony and dominance. The US imposes harsh sanctions on Iran and is trying to close the Iraqi market to prevent Tehran from smuggling its oil through Mesopotamia, and to obstruct the sale of gas even if it means cutting the supply of electricity to southern Iraq. All US means are valid for the current administration to crush Iran with economic sanctions and close off its access to neighbouring countries. The US is also said to be preparing a military campaign against Kataeb Hezbollah in Iraq, apparently convinced that this group is the Iraqi branch of Hezbollah Lebanon. Even if both groups have the same objective—to oppose US hegemony—they differ in leadership and in their approach and relationship to Iran. However, it should be borne in mind that the consequences on US national territory of the devastating effect of COVID-19 have created an unprecedented economic decline and this burden also falls on the US army deployed abroad. Also, history shows that the US does not engage in any war if victory is not guaranteed.*

There are many reasons why the US is not even close to starting a war in Iraq. There is no doubt that America has the military power to wage any war it wants against any small or medium-sized country. However, Washington may start a war at will but will not be able to stop it so easily. It also has no idea about the damage a war on Iraq could cause. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria are the best evidence, if we evoke contemporary history, of the US inability to decide when a war should stop! Hence, launching a war on Iraq in 2020 would not be such a cakewalk as the 2003 war. Notwithstanding its occupation of Iraq with tens of thousands of men, the US failed to subjugate Iraq, mainly due to the emergence of the Sunni and Shia resistance which drove America out of Iraq in 2011.

And when US forces returned in 2014 – at the request of the Iraqi government – to contribute to fighting ISIS, the US presence was regulated and limited to fighting the Takfiri organisation and to offering paid-for military training. It was to refrain from conducting any military activity in the country without the permission of the Iraqi Prime Minister. The US has not only violated this agreement, it has attacked the Iraqi army, federal police, and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) on the Iraq-Syria border, killing and wounding 56 elements. Furthermore, it allowed Israel to attack Iraqi security forces' warehouses, this according to what the American ambassador in Iraq revealed to the Prime Minister during a private visit to his office in Baghdad. Also, the US crowned its illegal interference in Iraqi affairs with the assassination of two leaders, the Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani on

a mission requested by Iraqi Premier, and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis the commander of the PMF. These acts pushed the Iraqi parliament to formally request the immediate US departure from Iraq.

Iran was the first to respond to the need to defend Baghdad and Erbil when these were under imminent danger from the ISIS advance in 2014. Tehran carried on supplying the Iraqis with weapons at the request of Baghdad. A decision-maker in Iraq said “a senior British diplomat told a senior Iraqi official in Baghdad that the US believes that the PMF has very accurate Iranian missiles that can reach any country in the region and this is what worries America and the countries of the region.”



Following parliament’s request and the increase of hostility towards the US presence in Iraq, where foreign troops are considered occupation forces, the US initiated a redeployment plan. It has pulled out of 6 military bases and centres but equipped the military bases of Ayn al-Assad, Balad, and Harir with Patriot missiles, disregarding Baghdad’s disapproval. This is why Iraqi leaders are skeptical about the seriousness of the US’s real intention of withdrawal.

The US’s presence in Iraq aims to control Iran and to control access to the oil. Therefore – sources believe – the US exit will not be straightforward. The US has failed, after 17 years of occupation and military assistance against ISIS, to win the hearts and minds of the population.

The US wrongly assumed that Ismail Qaani, the commander of the IRGC-Quds brigade, would not replace his assassinated predecessor Qassem Soleimani. It also failed to understand that Iran is a country, whereas the IRGC is an institution. The axis of the resistance had never depended on a specific person, whatever his status. Qassem Soleimani was indeed a decision maker, but he was affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard Corps – Al-Quds Brigade, which is headed by its supreme leader Sayed Ali Khamenei. Following the assassination of Soleimani, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah, took over in the temporary void to follow up on the affairs of the Palestinians in Gaza, the development in Syria, the Iraqis and Yemenis. We can see the presence of the Lebanese Hezbollah in all these axes and countries.

In Iraq, statements have emerged from different new organisations showing competence in media warfare, possession of drones and reading of aerial footage, and a similarity to the methods and professionalism of the Lebanese Hezbollah. One of the latest communiqués of the new anonymous group “Islamic Resistance in Iraq – Cave Owners (companions)”

thanked Sunni Iraqi for their help in attacking the US convoy travelling between Erbil and Salahuddine province and invited the Iraqi Sunnis to join the resistance against the US forces. The group offered to arm, train and deliver weapons to “our Sunni Brothers. ”



Another reason why the US is far from declaring any war on Iraqi groups is the outbreak of the Corona virus and the decision taken by the Pentagon to stop all military movement between the bases, and military deployment in the whole country. Any war is a risky adventure that could have heavy consequences for the US army especially that, in the number of cases and the number of deaths caused by the Covid virus, the US holds first rank. President Donald Trump is in no position to allow his army to be hit by the virus.

We also have already seen how President Trump refused to attack Iran on several occasions. Iran has said that it will defend Iraq, as Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Secretary-General of National Security-has confirmed. Therefore, the US does not want to see Iran involved on the battlefield in Iraq. Iran has shot down the most sophisticated drones and bombed the American base of Ayn al-Assad in the first attack against US forces since Pearl Harbour during the days of World War II. Trump preferred not to respond.

Last but not least, President Trump will not fight a war in the next few months before the presidential elections, especially when the results of such a war and its consequent retaliation are unpredictable. As a result, the US administration's leaking of information to the Western media that the Pentagon issued an order to prepare for a war in Iraq can be identified as part of the *psychological* war.

The US has violated its agreements with Iraq in many occasions, deploying Patriot missiles to protect US bases inside Iraq and redeploying its forces by pulling out from more vulnerable bases spread in various parts of Iraq. However, the Patriots already demonstrated their inability to repel missiles fired from Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine. Consequently, it is a defensive measure that will not protect the US from the decision of various Iraqi organisations to bomb US bases when confrontation becomes inescapable, if the US insists on staying in Iraq and disregarding the Iraqis' will. Thus, America doesn't itself hold the decision to go to war in Mesopotamia: most probably the many Iraqi groups will be the ones starting it. The US departure may protect US interests strategically but, if the US insists on staying, the power of the central government in Baghdad will be weakened. Lebanon is the best example of this phenomenon. And Iraqi resistance organisations will become quasi-state actors, much stronger than they are now.

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