Iran, the Middle East, and International Security

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Abstract

This article investigates the importance of Iran's current position in the Middle East and in the international security system. With post-9/11 political-security and geopolitical developments in the Middle East and the crisis in Iraq, Middle East issues have become more interconnected and heated international debate, connecting the region's security system to the international security system. In addition, recent developments in the Middle East have changed the balance of the region's power structure in favor of Iran, consequently increasing Iran's regional role and its bargaining power in the region's affairs. The author examines that this situation is the result of Iran's inherent geopolitical features, as well as cultural and ideological elements of its national power, the outcome of regional political-security developments, and, subsequently, the emergence of a new definition of the nature of threats against international security. As such, Iran has become an important connection between Middle East security and international security. The author concludes that Iran should take the utmost advantage of the current situation and strengthen its strategic position in the region.

Keywords: Middle East Security, Global Security, Iran's Geopolitics, Shiite Factor, 9/11, Al Qaeda Terrorism, Regional Crises.

İran, Ortadoğu ve Uluslararası Güvenlik

Öz

Bu makale İran'ın uluslararası güvenlik sisteminde ve Ortadoğu'daki mevcut durumunun önemini incelemektedir. 9/11 sonrasında Ortadoğu'daki politik-güvenlik ve jeopolitik gelişmeler ile Irak'taki krizle birlikte, Ortadoğu meseleleri, bölgenin güvenlik sistemini uluslararası güvenlik sistemine bağlayarak giderek birbiriyle daha da ilişkili hale getirmiş, hararetli bir uluslararası tartışmaya dönüştürmüştür. Buna ilaveten, Ortadoğu'daki son gelişmeler, bölgenin güç dengesini İran lehine değiştirerek, İran'ın bölgesel rolünü ve bölgedeki olaylardaki pazarlık gücünü artırmasıyla sonuçlanmıştır. Yazar, bu durumun İran'ın doğal jeopolitik özelliklerinin, ayrıca ulusal gücünün kültürel ve ideolojik unsurlarının, bölgesel politik-güvenlik gelişmelerin sonucunun ve bunu takiben uluslararası güvenliğe karşı oluşan tehditlerin doğasının yeniden tanımlanmasının ortaya çıkmasının bir sonucu olduğunu belirtiyor. Bu şekilde İran, Ortadoğu güvenliği ve uluslararası güvenlik arasında önemli bir bağlantı noktası olmuştur. Yazar son olarak, İran'ın şu anki durumdan maksimum fayda sağlaması ve bölgede stratejik konumunu geliştirmesi gerektiğini belirtmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ortadoğu Güvenliği, Küresel Güvenlik, İran Jeopolitiği, Şii Etkeni, 9/11, El Kaide Terörü, Bölgesel Krizler.*

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Introduction

In the years since the September 11 attacks and the onset of crisis in Iraq, Iran's consolidation of its political-security role in the Middle East, and its impact upon regional and international security systems has been the focus of attention in international and Middle East security studies. The prevailing view in the West and the Arab world is that new political-security and geopolitical developments have changed the balance in regional power and political structure in favor of Iran. Accordingly, this situation has had negative effects on the United States' strategic interests, its regional allies in the Arab world, and on Israel's position. During recent decades, preserving a 'balance of power' policy between the regional actors has been the basis of American foreign policies in the region, especially in the Persian Gulf. The recent developments have unbalanced power equations in favor of Iran.

How does the security of the Middle East connect to the international security system and what is Iran's position in this process? What are the causes of Iran's increasing regional role? Answering these questions, I first argue that post-9/11 political-security developments and the crisis in Iraq have turned Middle East issues into the focal point of the international security system. At present, the two major international security matters, the war against Al Qaeda terrorism, and blocking its access to WMD, as well as defusing regional crises in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, are related to Middle East issues. I then discuss that with the recent global and regional developments, two key elements of Iran's national power, geopolitical features and ideology (the Shiite Factor), have gained more significance in settling these problems. From a geopolitical perspective, the increased importance of Al Qaeda terrorism on the one hand, and the continuation of the crises in Afghanistan and Iraq on the other, have put Iran at the center of recent geopolitical developments and the political dynamics of the Middle East. With respect to the Shiite ideological factor, I detail the political and security developments in Iraq's power structure and politics, the subsequent coming to power of the first Shiite government in the Arab world, along with the political developments in Lebanon in post-summer 2006 and spring of 2008, which have increased the role of Shiite factor, consequently extending the role of Iran from a national level to regional and international levels. Thus, Iran is crucially involved in issues which are simultaneously regarded as the top priorities of international security.

Middle East and International Security since 9/11

Iran's increasing role and importance in the Middle East since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the crisis in Iraq is primarily rooted in the growing significance of Middle Eastern issues for the international security system. Secondarily,

Iran's natural geopolitical features and the cultural, religious and historical structure of its power and politics have made this country one of the most influential forces in the Middle East.

The important issues of the post-9/11 Middle East can be identified as the emergence of new influential variables, political-security and geopolitical developments, and the shifting roles of the players:

Al Qaeda Terrorism
Although Al Qaeda had conducted terrorist attacks before 9/11 and slightly influenced regional developments, its attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon constitute a turning point in the global effect of Al Qaeda terrorist operations.

With the concept of terror entering the realm of public security and daily life in the West, the extent of the impact of Al Qaeda's terrorism made it more than a specialized field in the realm of states' security, and brought it into the public sphere, and the relations between nations and states.[1] After the Al Qaeda operations in London and Madrid, pressure from the public led to changes in the behavior of the government in Britain, and a change of government in Spain. In the United States, George W. Bush's failure to control the crisis in Iraq and win the fight against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan has seriously called into question the legitimacy and popularity of the Republicans in the United States' power structure.[2]

Meanwhile, Al Qaeda's attempts to overthrow traditional Arab regimes such as the regimes in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, the United States' closest regional allies, along with questioning Israel's legitimacy, have consolidated the role of Al Qaeda in regional dynamics. From this perspective, the initial reception of foreign troops' presence in the region by the traditional Arab regimes has undermined their legitimacy in the eyes of the Arab world.[3] At the same time, for these traditional regimes the United States' inability to control regional crises in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon has led to a new conception of the United States' position, role and power in the Middle East and in the interna-

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1   Kayhan Barzegar, "New Terrorism and Human Security in the Middle East: Diverging Perceptions," in: *Human Security and International Insecurity,* (eds.) Georg Frerks and Berma Klein, Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2007, pp. 131-134.

2   According to a poll conducted by CNN in September 2008, the popularity of President Bush reached to its lowest level making it to 28 precent, which was the worst for an American president. See "Poll: More Disapprove of Bush than any other President," CNN Politics, at: www.cnn.com/2008/politics

3   Stephen Zunes, "US Policy toward Political Islam", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 12 September 2001, at: www.alternet.org/storyIl1479.

tional security system. In general, Al Qaeda's role and efforts as an influential force in Middle Eastern political-security issues have increased to the extent that the war against terrorism has become the chief concern of the international security system. In this context, and within the domain of international security, the debate about the causes of Al Qaeda's emergence, the degree and efficiency of its activities, and the means to abolish it encompasses a broad range of political-security and cultural-religious issues of Middle East.

Concerning the rise of Al Qaeda, one can point to the following elements:
1. The emergence of social, political and identity crises within the Arab world as an outcome of the globalization process;
2. The United States' disproportionate support for Israel in the Arab-Israeli peace process;
3. The United States' support for authoritarian and dependent regimes in the Arab world, paving the way for the massive presence of the U.S. military and political systems in the region;
4. The existence of wars, tensions, and regional crises in Middle East.

On the extent of Al Qaeda's influence on regional and global security, one can refer to the following efforts:
1. Fomenting religious wars and divisions in the Muslim world, i.e., between the Shiites and the Sunnis;
2. Creating a gap between the Muslim world and the Christian world;
3. Accelerating extremism and promoting a violent image of Islam;
4. Making attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Finally, regarding the means to fight against Al Qaeda and its relation to regional security, one can refer to following factors:
1. Direct military intervention, regime change policies, and preemptive wars;
2. Implementing political solutions through democracy promotion in the region;
3. Integrating the region's socio-cultural and economic factors in the global system by promoting the market economy, promoting education, eradicating poverty, etc.[4]

Of these elements, the first two, the danger of Al Qaeda gaining access to WMD, and Al Qaeda's role in creating division between the Shiite and the

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4   Bush's failures in promoting democracy, the market economy, educational development, and the eradication of poverty, all objectives of the plan, were soon put aside due to manifest differences between the United States' policies and the socio-political and cultural realities of the Arab world. For an analysis of Bush's plan see: Hamid Ahmadi, "The Greater Middle East Initiative: Internal Contradictions and External Problems," *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No.4, Vol. 8, No.1, Spring and Summer 2006, pp. 59-72.

Sunnis, are of more consequence with regard to international security. Regarding the first issue, the terrorist attacks of September 11th redefined the strategic priorities of the United States regarding the battle against terrorism, the terrorists' access to WMD, and in the context of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).[5] Al-Qaeda terrorism was an issue even during the 1990s, but the degree, quality, and effects of its operations after 9/11 attacks has turned Al Qaeda terrorism into a worldwide strategic threat Meanwhile, the possibility of Al Qaeda's gaining access to WMD, and subsequently using them against the United States, causing substantial damage, turned the issue of Al Qaeda into an 'existential threat'.[6] And the war against Al Qaeda terrorism altered the United States' priorities regarding the NPT regime. During the Cold War, multilateral commitments and achieving consensus were the bases of the NPT regime. But, with the events of September 11th, the U.S. propensity to tackle Al Qaeda's imminent threats by using force has led the U.S. to adopt a sort of hegemonic position within the NPT.[7]

Regarding the creation of a regional religious war between the Shiite and the Sunnis, Al-Qaeda's role in fomenting such division in Iraq is indisputable. Sectarian strife is the main cause of the continued instability and tension in Iraq, which in turn has a direct relationship with regional and consequently, international security. The perpetuation of tensions in Iraq serves Al Qaeda's interests in several ways. The failure of Iraq's Shiite government to control the religious division between the Shiites and the Sunnis, the discrepancy between Shiite and Sunni political factions in Iraq's power structure, and the inability of United States and other foreign troops to control the crises all effectively the prolong tensions in Iraq, and consequently the region. The issue is of such significance that some experts agree that future conflicts in the region derive from the current rivalry between Shiite and the Sunni forces.[8]

Regional Crisis and New Geopolitical Changes

The international community's war against Al Qaeda terrorism after 9/11 has led to new regional crises in Afghanistan and Iraq. These crises have brought about new geopolitical developments in the region, subsequently putting Middle East issues at the heart of international security concerns. The crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon have increased the importance of Middle Eastern issues and its connection to international security in two ways: first,

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5   William Walker, "Weapon of Mass Destruction and International Order," *Adelphi Paper,* No. 370, London: Oxford University Press for IISS, p. 45.7. Shahram Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006, p. 2.8. Ibid., p. 3.

6   Shahram Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006, p. 2.

7   Ibid., p. 3.

8   Vali Nasr, "Behind the Rise of the Shiites," Time.com, 19 September 2006, at: www.befercenter.org

by changing the role of regional and international actors; and second, by changing the nature of security threats.

Regarding the changing role of actors at the regional level, the regional crisis has brought about new geopolitical changes in two ways: first, the interconnectedness of political developments in the regional countries; second, a shift in the traditional role, influence and interests of regional and trans-regional actors.

On the interconnected effects of the Middle East issues, with the issue of Sunni radicalism and Al Qaeda terrorism entering into the Middle East issues, the Arab, and Islamic world, the Afghanistan crisis has connected Afghanistan's issues with the Middle East affairs. In the past, the issues related to northern Afghanistan were connected to Central Asia, and the issues of southern Afghanistan to South Asia and the Indian Subcontinent.[9]. Similarly, with the new arrangements concerning the roles of regional and trans-regional actors, and due to the factors listed here, the political-security issues of Pakistan are more connected to the Middle East and the affairs of the Arab world. Exaggerating the danger of the rising of the extremist elements or Al Qaeda operatives' in the Pakistani society and subsequently their probable access to nuclear weapons has been a new justified excuse for the ruling military-security elites in Pakistan to get the American attention and financial aids since 2001.

In this context, the 2003 Iraq crisis undoubtedly constitutes a turning point for the interconnectedness of Middle Eastern affairs, as well as a shift in the role of actors. From the start of the crisis, the change in Iraq's traditional power structure and politics (the decline of the Sunni minority's power) and its replacement by a new order (the rise to power of the Shiite majority) has effected all of the political-security developments in the region. Most important of all, the increasing importance of the Shiite and Kurdish factor in the new Iraq has increased Iran's influence in the country. Consequently, for fear of Iraq losing its Arab identity Saudi Arabia has begun to concern itself with the Shiite and Kurdish issues. With the ratification of the new Iraqi constitution, the consolidation of federalism and the possibility of Iraq's fragmentation, Turkey, which was traditionally concerned about the Kurdish activities in northern Iraq, has become more interested in the Shiites and the Sunnis affairs in southern and central Iraq. Fear of Iraq's disintegration and the Sun-

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9   Lakhdar Brahirni, "Issues of War and Peace in the Middle East: A Few Remarks," The Dubai Initiative Conference, Harvard University, Winter 2007 I 2008, at: http://belfercenter.ksg.harvurd.edu/publication/L 7724

nis' isolation forced Jordan and Egypt to play an active role both in Iraq and in the framework of regional political-security system. Meanwhile, new developments in Iraq's power structure and politics and the Shiites' rise to power have somehow connected Iraq's affairs to political developments in Lebanon and, through Hezbollah, to Syria and Palestine. Consequently, Israel has become gravely concerned with the formation of a new coalition of Shiite factions and friendly states, especially in the southern Shiite-dominated region of Iraq at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.[10] The geopolitical connection of the Persian Gulf dynamics to Mediterranean issues via the Shiite factor, a conception which Arab Sunni elites and some Western experts call the "Shiite Crescent,"[11] has become a grave concern for Israel and conservative leaders of the Arab world.[12] Finally, the issues of Iraq and Afghanistan are more connected with each other by way of Al Qaeda's networks, and their operational and logistical connections in the two countries.

Regarding the shifting roles of the actors at the international level, new geopolitical developments mean that trans-regional actors such as the European Union, Russia and China try to play a more active role in the region due to their national and global interests e.g., energy security, WMD, the NPT, and Al Qaeda terrorism. Meanwhile, their growing interest and presence in the Middle East is due to their stress on a multipolar international system in which all global actors can play comparable roles in issues related to global security, a way to avoid the U.S. unilateralism of Bush's era. EU countries, due to the crisis in Afghanistan, the war against Al Qaeda and the effects of these on the EU, have become more involved with the security affairs of the region. In addition, the growing economic interests of the EU in the Persian Gulf compelled it to play a more active role in Iraq and in the Arab Middle East, as well as in its relations with Iran in general. Finally, the EU's diplomatic engagement in Iran's nuclear crisis gave it an active role in the Middle East political-strategic affairs.

At the same time, new political-security developments have offered Russia and China the opportunity to perform a more significant role in the Middle East regional affairs. New geopolitical developments and some strategic issues such as Iran's nuclear program, energy security, and the crises in Lebanon and Palestine have somehow paved the way for Russia's return to Mid-

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10   Yossi Alpher, "Stopping Iran Must be the Objective in Iraq," *The Strategic Interest,* February 6, 2008.

11   See Kayhan, Barzegar, ''The Shia Factor,'' Heartland: Eurasian Review of Geopolitics, Issue I, 2008, pp. 76-83.

12   Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "*Iraq, Jordan, See Threat to Election from Iran, Leaders Warn against Forming Religious State,*" The Washington Post, December 8, 2004.

dle East affairs.[13] One could argue that this situation can be attributed to the United States' unilateralism in handling regional crises and Iran's nuclear crisis, which provided an opportunity for Russia to play a major role in regional issues. New developments have also increased China's influence in the Middle East. Increasing its presence in Middle East's economic affairs during recent decades, China is consolidating its strategic role in the regional dynamics that have emerged since the 9/11 attacks. Most importantly, Iran's nuclear program and the United Nations Security Council's sanctions, has given China more influence on a controversial Middle Eastern issue.[14] One could even argue that the U.S.'s increasing threats against Iran by means of Security Council sanctions have moved Iran towards Russia and China. Many strategists regard this as a historic mistake of the Bush administration, which furnished Russia and China with a foothold in Middle East in Iran.[15]

Another outcome of post-9/11 regional crises was a change of direction in the nature and location of Middle East threats and political-security affairs. While Middle East affairs mainly and traditionally revolved around the Arab Middle East, focusing on western part of the region and mainly the Arab-Israeli conflict, a situation in which Iran and Turkey were deemed to be marginal, new political–security developments since 9/11 have refocussed Middle Eastern issues on the east and on the Persian Gulf. Regarding the changing nature of the regional issues, the traditional issues of oil politics, energy security, and supporting Israel's interests are no longer at the only focus of international security. Rather, today, with important issues such as the Al Qaeda threats, the new security threats are more centered on identity and social crises, religious extremism, ethnic geopolitics, ideology and religion, along with the role of the masses in economics and politics.[16] Today these issues are more related to human security and more general domains of concerns. In other words, after the September 11th attacks, Middle East issues have become more general, interconnected, and internationalized to the extent that the Middle East is the most important element of international security.

Iran's Rise to Power in the Middle East
For two reasons, Iran's role and bargaining power have increased in the post-

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13   "Russia and the Middle East," *International Herald Tribune*, February 17, 2006.

14   Kayhan Barzegar, "Iran Eyes the China Card," *The Washington Post,* February 6, 2008.

15   For example see the views of Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, well known American strategists. Henry A. Kissinger, ''The Next Steps with Iran," *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2006. See also: Kathy Gockel, "Energy, Economic Interests Complicate Iran Dealings," The Stanley Foundation, November 2007.

16   Kayhan Barzegar, "Positioning New Terrorism in Middle East and International Affairs Studies," *Middle East Studies Quarterly*, Volume 13&14, Issues 1&4, Spring and Winter 2006, pp. 65-66.

9/11 Middle East. First, in terms of the nature of issues and geography, with the new geopolitical developments that emanated from the 2003 Iraq crisis, Iran has become the main hub of political-security affairs in the region. Second, with the rise to power of the Shiite factor in Iraq and the region, Iran became capable of powerfully affecting the region's political dynamics. In other words, Iran' role is becoming more significant in the areas and issues which have turned into key concerns of the international community.

Iran's Geopolitics

Iran's geopolitical situation played a crucial role in the war against Al Qaeda terrorism. Iran's role has been crucial in two ways: by removing the Taliban, and by blocking the infiltration routes of Al Qaeda forces since 2001. Providing intelligence and security information for American forces, as well as by supporting the Northern Alliance forces, Iran played a critical role in overthrowing the Taliban.[17] After the actual war, Iran cooperated with the international community by holding the Bonn Conference, by assisting the formation of the new Afghani government and by helping the nation during its transition phase with parliamentary and presidential elections. At the next stage, Iran aided the international community by blocking the infiltration and transit routes of Al Qaeda forces through its territory. In this sense, the factor of geopolitics has contributed to further cooperation between Iran and the international community, leading to the need for Iran's active involvement in the Afghanistan crisis.

With the outbreak of the crisis in Iraq and the consequent political-security developments in the region, Iran's geopolitical significance as the hub of the regional security dynamics has become more evident. The length of borders with Iraq, connecting the two strategic areas of the Iraqi Kurdistan in the north, and the Shiite Basra region in the Persian Gulf in the south, gave Iran a unique strategic position in the Iraqi crisis. Iran's active neutrality during the Iraq crisis, its support for Iraq's transformation process, as well as its support for the Iraqi Shiite government's attempts to bring stability in the country, all added to Iran's regional role.[18] Most importantly, with the formation of the new Iraq, Iran and Iraq, with their long history of hostility and war, and the expenditure of a significant portion of their financial, military and logistical resources to oppose each other, turned into friendly states and regional partners. This development is a remarkable geopolitical change in the Persian Gulf and the power politics of the Sunni Arab world which increases Iran's role in the region.

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17   Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Tackling the Iran - U.S. Crisis: The Need for a Paradigm Shift," *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2007, Vol. 60, No.2, p. 75.

18   Kayhan Barzegar, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the New Iraq*, Tehran: Center for Strategic Research, Summer 2006.

The Shiite Factor

Beyond Iran's geopolitical position, the rise to power of Shiite factions in Iraq's structure of power and politics, and the Iraqi Shiite government's subsequent demands to establish close relations with Iran have increased Iran's role not only in Iraq's political dynamics, but in the entire region and in the Arab world, particularly in Lebanon. According to Iraq's traditional political order, Iraq was governed by a Sunni minority, based on tribal loyalty and indirect rule. The primary function of this order was to contain the neighboring non-Arab states of the region, i.e., Iran and Turkey.[19] By controlling the Kurds in north, and the Shiite in the south, the Sunni regime of Iraq balanced Turkey and Iran's regional role. Removing the Ba'ath regime subverted this traditional order, and replaced it with a new one which is based on increasing the role of Shiites and Kurds, direct democracy, and the rule of the majority. This development especially strengthened the role of Iran, since it has close cultural-political relations with both the Shiites and the Kurds. Regarding Iran's relations with the Shiites, this relation currently goes beyond ideological and religious factors, since it is also based on social-cultural connectedness, an important matter which brings the Iranian and Iraqi nations closer to each other, dispelling the traditional idea of "two strategic enemies."

Meanwhile, Iran's increasing regional role implies that the Iraqi Shiite factions will seek Iran's political, financial, and logistical support to maintain their position in Iraq's domestic politics, their relations with Sunni Arab states and the United States, especially in the post-troop withdrawal era. From the Shiite factions' perspective, there is always the possibility of U.S. policy moving to support the Sunni factions, which will, in the long term, lead to the intervention of traditional Arab Sunni states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt in Iraq's politics. As experience shows, these Arab states would not tolerate the increased role of Shiite factions in Iraq's new power structure. After years of being marginalized, now that the Iraqi Shiites have formed the first Shiite government in the Arab world, they need the support of Iran, the only friendly state in the region.[20] Al Maliki's Shiite government is surely not welcomed by Riyadh as much as it is in Tehran. In addition, using the close relations between Iran and Iraq as a strategic card gives the Maliki government bargaining power to regulate its regional and international relations, especially with Turkey and the United States.

In Lebanon, the rise to power of the Shiite factor in three stages has increased Iran's regional role. The first stage started with the Hezbollah victory

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19   Stephen Zunes, "Saddam's Arrest Raises Troubling Questions," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, December 15, 2003.

20   Dilip Hiro, "Winning Iraq without Losing to Iran," April 25, 2008, at: www.dailytimes.com.pk

over Israel in the summer 2006 war, which strategically consolidated Iran's role in Lebanese and Palestinian affairs. Some observers did not see the 2006 war as a war limited to Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea, but as a regional war between Iran and the United States through their proxies, Hezbollah and Israel. From this perspective, the war paved the way for Iran's direct presence on Mediterranean shores, and on the Israeli borders. The second stage started with Hezbollah's victory in the new round of domestic political rivalry in Spring 2008, when the Lebanese Shiite group managed to drive back the pro-Western government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.[21] Some analysts think that the subsequent agreement between different Lebanese factions in the Doha Conference was another strategic victory for Hezbollah and Iran in the Mediterranean region. Some radical Western commentators even went so far as to call this development the beginning of a new "Cold War" between Iran and the United States in the entire Middle East region, and Iran, by maintaining an active role in Afghanistan, Iran, and now in Lebanon, has managed to establish 'strategic deterrence' against United States in the region.[22] Finally, in the third stage, Iran's regional role was increased by its opposition to the Israeli military attack of Gaza during the 22-day war. While all the conservative Arab regimes stayed silent, Iran was one of the main regional nations that condemned the Israeli regime's military operation and actively asked for a tough reaction from the international community.

Conclusion

Newly introduced factors such as Al Qaeda terrorism, the regional crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon, along with of the rise to power of the Shiite factor in the region's power structure and politics, have connected the Middle East security system to the international security system. Political-security developments since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as well as the Iraqi crisis have generalized, interconnected and internationalized Middle Eastern issues. In these circumstances, Iran's geopolitical characteristics, which provide it with simultaneous access to the existing political-security issues of Middle East's region, has put Iran in a position where it connects the Middle East's security system to global security system. Since 9/11, the two main concerns of international security, the war against Al Qaeda terrorism and resolving the regional crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and recently Gaza have given Iran a new role and increased influence in the region. The competitive and changing nature of the Middle East's political-security developments is such that the main regional actors can only enhance their regional and strategic

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21 See Efraim Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," *Middle East Quarterly,* 14, No.3, Summer 2007.

22 Thomas L. Friedman, "The New Cold War," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com

role through the advent of new geopolitical changes, as well as by shifting the role of actors in the security system. The current circumstances in the Middle East have provided Iran with an unprecedented opportunity to benefit from its advantageous geopolitical and cultural positions, thereby empowering its regional and consequently, international position.

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كـايـهـان بارزيـكـار
خـلاصـة

يتناول هذا المقال أهمية الوضع الحالي لأيران ضمن منظومة الأمن العالمي، ووضعها في الشرق الأوسط. فقد نتج عن التطورات التي حصلت في نطاق الأمن السياسي وفي موضوع الجيوبوليتيك بعد التاسع من ايلول/ سبتمر، مضافا اليها الأزمة العراقية وقضايا الشرق الأوسط، ربط نظام الأمن في المنطقة بنظام الأمن العالمي. وبدأت العلاقة بين هذين العاملين تزداد ارتباطا بمرور الأيام، وتحول ذلك الى نقاش دولي حاد حول الموضوع. واضافة الى ذلك، فان التطورات الأخيرة التي حصلت في الشرق الأوسط، أدت الى تحويل ميزان القوى في المنطقة لصالح ايران، مما أدى الى زيادة قوة الدور الأقليمي لهذه الدولة وزيادة امكانياتها للتفاوض حول الأحداث التي تقع في المنطقة. ويرى كاتب المقال ان هذا الوضع ناتج عن الخواص الجيوبوليتيكية الطبيعية لأيران، اضافة الى العناصرالثقافية والايديولوجية لأمكانياتها الوطنية، والتطورات السياسية والأمنية الأقليمية، وما يتبع ذلك من ظهور تعريف جديد لطبيعة التهديدات الموجهة للأمن والسلام العالمي. وبهذه الصورة فقد اضحت ايران نقطة ارتباط مهمة بين أمن الشرق الأوسط وبين السلام العالمي. وفي النهاية فان الكاتب يرى ضرورة ان تجني ايران حدا اقصى من المكاسب مستفيدة من الوضع الراهن، ومن تطور موقعها الاستراتيجي في المنطقة.

الكلمات الدالة : أمن الشرق الأوسط، السلام العالمي. جيوبوليتيكا ايران، التأثير الشيعي، التاسع من ايلول، ارهاب القاعدة، الأزمات الأقليمية.