Istituto Affari Internazionali

Solving Iraq's Foreign Policy Dilemma: State Control or Regional Integration?

27 November 2026
12.30-13.30 CET

Webinar-Expert Discussion

Working language: English

The war on Iran has confronted Iraq with a familiar dilemma: how to balance its relationships with the United States, its longstanding ally, and with Iran, while preserving its ties with the Gulf states. Iraq's foreign policy has struggled with this dilemma throughout the post-2003 period. Today it is even more acute, as armed factions operating outside the purview of the state, notably Kata'ib Hezbollah and Harakat al-Nujaba, actively contributed to Iran's counteroffensive by launching attacks from Iraqi territory on Gulf neighbours. Does the solution to Iraq's foreign policy dilemma lie in a bolder stance by Baghdad against the armed factions? Or does it also rest on a regional order that integrates Iraq, Iran and the Gulf through economic and infrastructural interdependence?

The expert consultation aims to chart an operational way forward for Iraq–Gulf ties, for both Gulf policymakers and Iraqi decision-makers, by identifying concrete projects that can build relations resilient to the shocks of regional war.

AGENDA

Welcome Remarks

MARIA LUISA FANTAPPIÈ

Head of Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme at Istituto Affari Internazionali

In conversation with:

BADER MOUSA AL-SAIF

Assistant Professor at Kuwait University, Associate Fellow at Chatham House

LAHIB HIGEL

Deputy Director, Middle East and North Africa Programme, International Crisis Group

ALI AL-MAWLAWI

El-Erian Fellow at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center and director of Horizon Advisory Group