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Explaining the Role of food security in the water relations between Iran and Iraq

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Abstract

The situation of the two countries Iraq and Iran is such that both are located in the Asian region and due to population growth, climate change and other natural and unnatural factors, on the one hand, they are facing a water crisis, and on the other hand, they are facing a self-sufficiency policy that this situation can to have an effect on the relations between the two countries which have been affected by geopolitical, political, cultural, economic and religious factors. Despite the importance of the relationship between water and food security and the need to identify the impact of its dimensions on the relationship between them, the institutions in charge of the two countries have many problems in formulating appropriate policies, which could be due to the lack of appropriate executive guidelines or lack of awareness of the impor-

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tance of the issue. Therefore, the production of common structured knowledge in relation to food security and water resources that can create sufficient awareness, knowledge or ability in the target context is felt as urgent and necessary. This research aims to answer the question of what is the relationship between food security and available water resources in the Tigris and Euphrates watershed shared between Iran and Iraq?

In this article, the literature of the subject was first explained and the main challenges were identified through data collection. In data collection, experts' opinions and semi-open structured interviews were also used and efforts were made to fully identify the variables. In total, 56 variables were extracted through interviews and library studies. Fuzzy Delphi method was used to identify the most important issues affecting water resources between Iran and Iraq in common watersheds. The variables extracted based on the Delphi method have been investigated and analyzed using the structural analysis method in the MICMAC software environment. For this purpose, a 18x18 matrix was used to determine the status of each of them in the system.

Based on the findings, the strongest relationship between the influence and effectiveness of the variable "Importance of water resources for food security" is with the variable "Weakness of policy for water resources management", in which the influence of the variable "Importance of water resources for food security" is greater than its effectiveness. After that, the strongest relationship is the effect of this variable on "Iraq's internal unrest". This relationship shows that unrest and protests in Iraq are greatly affected by people's concern about their food security. Iraqi brokers believe that access to water resources is necessary to create employment. This comes from the fact that Iraq is a basic agricultural country and water is one of the main foundations of agriculture. This issue, together with the low level of water resources productivity, has caused the excessive withdrawal of water resources in the Tigris and Euphrates catchment basins, and little harvest from the existing water resources. Iraq's water needs for water resources that enter the country from upstream countries have made Iraqi politicians change the level of their cooperation with neighboring countries according to the level of addressing their concerns. The findings of the research also show that the level of "Iran's participation in Iraqi development

projects” is closely related to solving their concerns in the field of food security. Therefore, it is considered that the quest for “food security” in Iraq is mutually influenced by the components of security and development.

The economic characteristics of Iran and Iraq indicate that agriculture is the basis of both countries. Therefore, the need for sustainable water resources is one of the main components and concerns of both countries. Both Iran and Iraq are located in the arid and semi-arid region of Southwest Asia, and the average rainfall in this region is lower than the global average. This has made water governance one of the areas emphasized by Iran and Iraq. Iran depends on the water resources of the western regions of the country to preserve the ecosystem of the central regions of the country and to develop agriculture, and Iraq also depends on the water resources that enter this country from the upstream countries of the Tigris and Euphrates basins for the supply of food and the protection and development of agriculture. Although Turkey’s share as an upstream country in supplying Iraq’s water resources is much higher than Iran’s, Iraq’s high dependence on water resources has affected the country’s hydropolitical relations with Iran. Structural analysis method has been used to explain the importance of food security on the relations between the two countries. It is of great importance to understand the degree and intensity of influence and influence in the structural interrelationships between variables to explain the position. - It shows that the mutual relations show that food security is related to the areas related to development and security in both countries and this shows the high importance of this topic in the relations between the two countries.

Key words: food security, water relations, Iran, Iraq.