The Turkish-Iraqi Security Agreement

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In August 2024, Iraq and Turkey signed a landmark security cooperation agreement, focusing on military collaboration and counter-terrorism efforts. This agreement, the first of its kind in this field between the two nations, signifies a deepening of bilateral relations aimed at addressing shared security concerns, particularly the fight against terrorism.

Turkish and Iraqi relations have been interrelated in numerous aspects. Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of both nations as independent states, the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Iraq mostly hinged on security considerations.

In 2023, the PKK carried out numerous attacks on Turkey from positions within northern Iraq, contributing to ongoing tensions between the two countries. Turkey has expressed concerns over the PKK's presence in areas such as Qandil, Sinjar, Makhmour Camp, and Sulaymaniyah, and has launched military operations to address these threats. While Turkey views these operations as necessary for its security, Baghdad has been cautious, expressing concerns over violations of its sovereignty. The Iraq-Turkey dialogue reflects ongoing efforts to manage these security challenges while respecting Iraqi territorial integrity.

In March 2024, Iraq labelled the PKK as a banned organization in Iraq. Following that, the recent Memorandum of Understanding on security and cooperation signed by Turkey and Iraq highlighted the ongoing strategic development of their partnership through these essential concerns, as well as border security in August. The agreement is anticipated to elevate cooperation and cooperative activities between the two countries. This agreement not only strengthens relations in security but also areas such as trade, energy, water issues, transportation, and education.

This security pact underlines Turkey's longstanding commitment to combating terrorism and ensuring border security, while also emphasizing Iraq's necessity for economic development and strengthening bilateral relations. Nonetheless, this raises a subsequent inquiry: what will be Iran's stance towards Iraq thereafter?

The Iraq-Turkey security cooperation agreement poses significant implications for regional stability. First, the joint agreement threatens Iran's long-standing influence in Iraq, particularly through its close ties with Shiite militias and political factions. With Iraq aligning more closely with Turkey for military training and counterterrorism, Iran risks losing some of its leverage in the region. Second, the intensified crackdown on the PKK could push Kurdish militants closer to Iran's borders, potentially destabilizing its security landscape.

The establishment of joint security and training centres enhances Iraq's military capacity and reduces its dependence on other Western powers, such as the United States. However, increased Turkish influence also raises concerns about Iraq's sovereignty and the potential expansion of Turkish military operations within Iraqi borders.

In conclusion, the Iraq-Turkey security cooperation agreement represents a significant step in their bilateral relationship, enhancing military collaboration and addressing shared security concerns. Nevertheless, this agreement has also the potential to shift regional power dynamics, particularly by posing a challenge to Iran's influence in Iraq and in the region.