



## **BALTIC JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS**

A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University  
VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3 (2022)  
ISSN 2029-0454



Cite: *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 15:3 (2022): 1114-1137  
DOI: 10.2478/bjlp-2022-002079

### **The American-Chinese Competitiveness Towards The Middle East (Iraq As A Model)**

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#### **Abstract**

The aim of the research is to analyze the competition between the United States and China by reviewing the elements that drew the course of those relations, monitoring cases of compatibility and dissonance between them in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, and setting future indicators for these relations imposed by the nature of the international system, the international environment and the existing economic relations between them, and the research concluded Until the United States is still the dominant position in the international system, and it is clear that China is still far from the possibility of bringing about a change in the nature of this existing order; Given the American military supremacy, its wide spread, its political, diplomatic and cultural influence, and its highly influential role on international organizations, not to mention the presence of a large number of allies still revolving around it and defending the values that it adopts. But this does not mean that China is a power to be reckoned with; China has become a formidable economic power that has outstripped many superpowers, and has an ambitious plan for international domination through economic supremacy. The countries of the Middle East still look at these considerations carefully, and therefore they realize the importance of relations with the United States, and move their foreign policies from the perspective of an assessment of the extent of the damage that can be caused to this relationship. The United States is a strategic partner and continues to provide an indispensable security support umbrella.

#### **Keywords**

American-Chinese competition/Middle East

#### **Introduction**

The American Chinese relations today are among the most complex

international relations in the international system. Both countries are under the influence of the new international environment data after the Cold War phase on the one hand, and seek to show and embody the elements of power they possess on the other hand, as the United States of America seeks to Establishing the unipolar system by aborting all attempts made by some emerging international powers to explain the shape of the new international system, while China is creeping strongly towards the top of the international system, translating a vision adopted by the Communist Party to develop China to become a medium-level advanced country by 2035 AD, and to a great power at the level of the United States in 2050 AD. This Chinese push imposed on Washington the need to review its policies towards Beijing, and it has already begun to shift from the policy of strategic partnership that prevailed after the end of the Cold War at the international level to strategic competition.

Behind the United States' adoption of the option of strategic competition is a principled desire to persuade China not to seek to threaten the nature of the existing international system and the American position at its summit, or to exhaust it and impose restrictions on its transformation into a transformative and revisionist force for the structure of the international system. Strategic balancing in West Asia by directing resources and forces to the Far East, keeping economic advantage and technological edge in the United States' favour, and finally mobilizing alliances to uphold U.S.-sponsored values and standards.

There is no doubt that China's response to these American moves will determine the nature of the conflict at the international level. The difference between China's adoption of a less aggressive policy and the extent to which it is satisfied with the advantages that the United States will provide to it, in a manner that ensures that the two forces remain within the structure of the existing system, and thus reconsideration of the policy of Partnership and balance within the framework of the existing unilateral system, and between China's tendency to expand the scope of geopolitical competition, and work to weaken the United States and move towards the center of the system, based on the background of its undeclared ambition for international leadership, or its interpretation of American behavior as an existential threat to its regime.

### **1- Objective of the research**

The aim of the research is to analyze the competition between the United States and China by reviewing the elements that drew the course of those relations, monitoring cases of compatibility and dissonance between them in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, and setting future indicators for these relations imposed by the nature of the international system, the international environment and the existing economic relations between them.

## **2- The search problem**

The study of US-Chinese competition involves problems of different levels and dimensions, due to the adoption of pragmatism as a basic approach in American thought and the multiplicity of cases of formal transformation. on the one hand, and the region and Iraq on the other. To study the US-Chinese competition in Iraq and its future prospects, several questions must be answered:

- a. What is the American strategy? And what do you aim for? How is it implemented and achieved?
- b. B. What are the American and Chinese interests and goals in Iraq?
- c. What are the most prominent possibilities and future scenes of the US and Chinese strategy in Iraq?

## **3- The importance of research**

The interest in studying the phenomenon of competition in the field of economic relations (American - Chinese) in the post-Cold War period constitutes one of the main tracks in the regional and international relations of both countries on the one hand, and on the other hand, the new horizons taken by those relations with the presence of economically competing international or regional powers It would impose greater attention to the reality of American economic policy towards China, and at the same time explain the patterns of its economic and political behavior with China, and the states of harmony and disagreement with the competitive forces affecting that relationship, and at all strategic, economic and political levels.

## **4- Research Hypothesis**

The research stems from the hypothesis that the greater the American and Chinese competition in Iraq, the greater the tension in Iraq, and vice versa." Which affects it directly or indirectly, negatively or positively, at different levels, including the relationship with China.

### **The first topic: the strategic importance of the Middle East**

The Middle East occupies an important place for the United States and China, and the two countries have great influence in it, and in the context of the current escalation of competition between the two countries, it is expected that their movements in the region will witness some change, which may include adopting new policies and directions, or building alliances, where the competition will cast a shadow over it. A broader participation in the issues of the region and its developments, and the light can be shed on the extent of continuity and change that may occur in the policy and influence of the two countries in the region, as follows:

### **First: The importance and strategic position of the region from the perspective of the two countries**

The Middle East region is considered one of the most important sub-regions in the international system, as it is the heart of the world and the link between East and West, and is characterized by its shipping lanes through which the majority of international trade passes. Energy and oil sources, as it was one of the arenas that witnessed (geopolitical) competition during the Cold War period, and perhaps it is one of the areas that remained a field of attraction between the influential international powers, despite the shift of the international system towards unipolarity, especially the United States and China, where it is considered The region is a microcosm of t<sup>(1)</sup>he conflict/competition between the two powers at the international level.

For its part, the United States considers the Middle East the most important exporter of oil at the international level, and it is considered one of the pillars of its influence on the international scene, due to its geographical location, through which a large share of the international trade movement passes, and by virtue of the civil conflict between East and West, and the existence of Israel The American care for its presence within a region contested by the right to exist and to exist, in addition to its importance in the context of confronting the competing power; Such as China and Russia, and most of its countries are considered traditional allies of the United States, and basic supporters of the existing international system, with the exception of some regimes that are hostile to the United States and oppose its influence, yet the United States does not support the employment of these forces against it in regional control and achieving the desired balance, such as the Iranian regime for example. <sup>(2)</sup>.

As for China, it has important historical relations with the countries of the Middle East by virtue of geographical proximity, and the movement of trade between China and the countries of the region. 60% to move its production wheel, and the Middle East is a geographic pillar and an important market value for giant Chinese economic link projects at the international level, specifically the "Belt and Road" initiative,<sup>(3)</sup> Hence, China is the most important trading partner for the countries of the Middle East, and on the territory of its countries, the first stages of the Chinese ambition for economic hegemony over the international system are going through, which undoubtedly is followed by the ambition of political hegemony, and even the creation and promotion of a Chinese economic model in lieu of the (Western model) in the region. Through development processes in financially troubled countries, through the Asian Development Bank, which has

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<sup>(1)</sup> Chas W. Freeman ,Jr ,.The United States ,the Middle East ,and China ,The Middle East Policy Council ,accessed Apr ,2021: P:50 ,

<sup>(2)</sup> Chas W. Freeman ,Jr ,.The United States ,the Middle East ,and China ,The Middle East Policy Council ,Ibid P: 51.

<sup>(3)</sup> Michael Singh, China and the United States in the Middle East: Between Dependency and Rivalry, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, (Sep) accessed 1 Apr,19, 2021, [file:///C:/Users/m.hamdy/Downloads/ Singh20200909-china-us-chapter-USF.pdf](file:///C:/Users/m.hamdy/Downloads/Singh20200909-china-us-chapter-USF.pdf)

come to compete with the Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which are dominated by the United States. Perhaps the recently announced Sino-Iranian partnership; It is a clear practical application.

There is no doubt that both the American and Chinese powers share in realizing the economic importance that the Middle East enjoys, as its countries are not only among the largest producers of oil and gas in the world, but their subsoils contain, along with various natural minerals, the largest oil and gas reserves on earth, both in the Arabian Peninsula And Iraq or in North African countries, if oil consumption decreases in the future, as some believe, then gas is still one of the most important wealth that is discovered day after day, and energy sources are the main engine of the major economies in the world, but at the level of global trade, they cannot The natural flow, if its movement is impeded in the sensitive ports and corridors located in the Middle East, such as the Arab ports on the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, or the international corridors; As the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab al-Mandab Strait or the Suez Canal. This means that the continuation of Chinese, American and even global economic growth, and the flow of trade, are closely linked to the Middle East region, now and in the future. In addition to the rapid population growth of most countries in the region, the high level of income of some, and the acceleration of economic growth in others; This makes them promising markets for investment and the operation of capital in various fields, and even the sale and export of defense and military products.

### **Second: US military influence versus China's economic influence**

The United States maintains an important strategic military presence in the Middle East, in order to preserve its interests, and the American military bases and deployment are an umbrella for protecting regional security and stability in the Middle East, and the United States of America has strategic economic relations in the Middle East,<sup>(1)</sup> It is a partner of the Gulf countries in the extraction and export of oil in the past. Currently, it is one of the largest trading and investment partners of many Middle Eastern countries, and the region relies on it to provide high-tech services and products. Such as industrial, medical, technological and consumable equipment, machinery, means of transportation, and spare parts. The volume of trade between them amounted to 113 billion dollars in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund.<sup>(2)</sup> While direct US investments in the Middle East amounted to about \$75 billion, during the period from 2000 to 2019,<sup>(3)</sup> In return, many countries in the region invest hundreds of billions of dollars of their sovereign savings in the United States. On the other hand, China maintains a limited security presence to protect its economic projects, investments and citizens, or what some

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(1) Mohammed Soliman ,The coming US-China cold war :The view from the Gulf , Middle East Institute( ,March ,)2021 ,15 accessed1 Arr ,2021 ,19,https://:bit.ly3/dvyV4N: P 237.

(2) IMF ,Direction of Trade statistics( DOTS ,)Exports and Imports by Areas and Countries ,Middle East2020,. Accessed 10, Apr, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3eby9sR>, P: 90.

(3) Statista ,Direct investment position of the United States in the Middle East from 2000 to2019 , Accessed 10, Apr, 2021, P: 67.

call a soft military presence, and a limited military presence to protect the movement of trade at strategic corridors, Thus, China's presence is based mainly on the economy. China has been able to develop its relations with the countries of the region economically, to the extent that it has become the most important economic partner for the countries of the region, since 2016. The countries of the region depend, in their ambitious short, medium and long-term development plans, on the partnership with China. In terms of numbers, it appears that the Chinese economic presence in the region is superior to the American presence, due to its recent growth. This confirms China's steadfast pursuit of its integrated strategy in the region. China provides the countries of the region with industrial and consumer products and various alternatives at competitive prices and of different quality, if the volume of Chinese investments in the Middle East and North Africa reached about 197 billion dollars, during the period from 2005 to 2020, while the volume of trade exchange between China and the countries of the Middle East reached 151 billion dollars. During the year 2020, that is greater than trade with the United States of America, despite the presence of the Corona crisis and its repercussions on trade globally, especially China <sup>(1)</sup>.

### **Third: Doubts about the decline in the importance of the Middle East in light of Biden's orientations**

Following in the footsteps of former US President Barack Obama, the administration of President Joe Biden is moving towards reformulating its strategic approaches in the Middle East, especially its security approaches. The role, in light of the talk about the decline in the importance of the Middle East, as promoted by some American think tanks; Some argue that the redeployment strategy and the transfer of some American forces to the Pacific in order to confront China, will be at the expense of the American presence in the Middle East <sup>(2)</sup>.

However, it is still difficult to imagine that the United States would leave a security vacuum in which rival forces would so easily fill it, and therefore it is more likely that the issue of redeployment would not take the Middle East in any way from the interests of the United States, and the United States would not allow an alternative security equation that China, Russia, or Both together, you are inevitably disadvantaged.

The stranding of the ship "Ever Given" in the Suez Canal, and the disruption of this vital passage, proved the centrality of the Middle East in international politics and its role for any country to maintain its position in this system, as well as the importance of oil in maintaining the United States' position. China has also imposed its technological partnership with the countries of the Middle East through the fifth generation networks, the creation of technological cooperation, which in turn has

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<sup>(1)</sup> American Enterprise Institute ,China Global Investment Tracker, Worldwide Chinese Investments and Construction (2005-2020). Accessed 10, Apr, 2021, P: 34.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ito Mashino ,The Future of the Middle East Caught Between US-China and US-Russia Rivalry ,Global Strategic Studies Institute Monthly Report( ,August ,)2020accessed Apr ,2021 ,19 ttps//:bit.ly3/etrF91

become a source of inconvenience to Washington, due to its competitive economic advantages in favor of China, and the expansion of security and intelligence influence, and this has created American pressure on some countries in the region, in order to put an end to this Chinese technological influence, which appears as a cold “technological war”, not to mention the expanding Chinese influence associated with the “Belt and Road” project, and its provision of Chinese hegemony and presence on the ground, may be enhanced by a military presence over time in a number of countries, and in the main ports that pass through the project, which limits American influence over time, puts the future of trade movement and control over it in the hands of China.

Talk about the decline in the importance of Middle Eastern oil, and the effectiveness of any alternative regional alliances, are still inaccurate estimates as justifications for the American withdrawal from the region, especially with the Chinese willingness to transfer its battle with the Americans outside its vital field, mostly to the Middle East, in addition to the importance of oil to the allies of the States. The United States, and they are an essential pillar in its strategy to confront the rise of China. The United States has also tested several alternative alliances and security initiatives as alternatives to providing an umbrella of security protection under its auspices, but none of these initiatives has yet proven to be effective, so it is too early to talk about a radical or widespread change in US policy toward the Middle East. As the US Secretary of Defense said, the process of moving forces is only a regular tactical maneuver, and is not a retreat from the American role in the region <sup>(1)</sup>.

Fourth: The extent to which China and the competing forces are prepared to enhance presence and balance American pressures

China expresses a desire to settle the conflict with the United States through dialogue and bilateral understandings, and tries to avoid entering into a strategic polarization. Nevertheless, the state of competition will remain. And because the Middle East is a vital area in which the interests of the two sides intersect more intensively than any other region, and because it adopts a calm policy towards the ascent that focuses more on economic initiatives, China will continue to benefit primarily from the umbrella of American protection in the region, where China and the United States agree on a priority Ensuring regional stability and containing conflicts between the countries of the region, as this provides a suitable environment for its projects and stable markets for its investments, as well as ensuring oil supplies for its roaring factories.

However, China or Russia will not hesitate if given an opportunity to change the geopolitical map of the region in their favour. Specifically, China is preparing to expand its cooperation with some influential regional powers, as part of its plans to enhance its economic and strategic position on the international scene as a whole, and reduce American hegemony, Especially after Biden's intentions to build

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<sup>(1)</sup> Natan Sachs and Kevin Huggard, “Israel and the Middle East amid U.S.-China competition”, July, 2020, accessed Apr, 2021, 19 [https://:brook gs2/QyAy8M](https://brook.gs2/QyAy8M), P: 123.

alliances in Southeast Asia to confront the Chinese threat. China's willingness to bring the nuclear file and its relationship with Iran into competition with the United States has emerged, after it recently pledged to seek to protect the nuclear agreement and defend what it described as its legitimate interests in relations with Iran, according to what its Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on March 25, 2021.

China will not stop the growth of its economic relations with the countries of the Middle East, and will work to complete its giant projects that link the economies of its countries with Beijing's growing economy, the most important of which is the "Belt and Road" project, which will transform Beijing sooner or later into a more influential force in regional and global politics, and this Of course, it will be an opponent of the influence of the United States, not only in the region, but of its influence and standing at the international level as a whole, which the United States will try to stop. Therefore, the region will witness, during the next stage, great competition, and the region will be severely affected by this conflict. Given the complex regional reality and its protracted conflicts, which allow for external interference, in addition to the intertwining of the US-Chinese presence and the intensity of its competition, not to mention that it represents an arena of confrontation outside the vital areas of Washington and Beijing, and a backyard for the upcoming international conflict.

### **The second topic: US and Chinese policy towards Iraq**

When the United States began beating the drums of war on Iraq strongly at the beginning of 2003, China began to move through several means, including its continuous expression through its official statements of concern about launching war on Iraq, calling for a peaceful solution to the issue within the framework of the United Nations, as well as urging Iraq to abide by Security Council resolutions, <sup>(1)</sup> and supporting the efforts of France, Germany and Russia to give the international inspectors more time, <sup>(2)</sup>, Despite the insistence of the French side calling on China to take a more serious and strong position in rejecting the American military intervention, this did not happen, and this lack of seriousness was justified by China's consideration of its strategic interests in Southeast Asia and finding an understanding with the United States on Taiwan and North Korea <sup>(3)</sup> .

The Chinese position on the war on Iraq was characterized by two characteristics, the first being the nature of dependence on the positions of Russia and France and taking a similar position to theirs, and the second being the nature of avoiding condemnation of the American invasion of Iraq: <sup>(4)</sup>

1. China's fear of losing its economic interests in Iraq, which it established

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<sup>(1)</sup> Muhammad bin Howiden, Chinese foreign policy from ideology to pragmatism: the position on the Iraq crisis as a model, *Social Affairs Journal*, No. 96, Winter 2007, pp. 119- 118

<sup>(2)</sup> Omar Hashim Thanoun al-Hayali, Chinese foreign policy toward Iraq since 2003 and its future prospects, unpublished master's thesis, (College of Political Sciences, University of Mosul. 2014, p. 73.

<sup>(3)</sup> Thomas J. Christensen , PRC Foreign after the National People s Congress : Iraq ,North Korea , SARS , And Taiwan , *China Leadership Monitor* , no . 7 , May 7 , ( 2003) , pp.1-2.

<sup>(4)</sup> Abdul-Khaleq Shamil Muhammad, The Decision-Making Process in American Foreign Policy: The Iraq Model 2003, unpublished MA thesis (College of Political Science, University of Baghdad, (2015), p 90.



during the era of the former regime.

2. China's fear of the United States' control of energy sources in Iraq, which means threatening China's future oil supplies.
3. The negative effects of this invasion on a Muslim country such as Iraq on the state of security in China itself, especially in the northwestern regions inhabited by the majority of Muslims, which is one of the tense regions in China.

After the US occupation of Iraq became a fait accompli, China called for returning the Iraqi issue to the United Nations, restoring sovereignty to the Iraqis, encouraging the political process, and entering from a position of partnership with the United States in the reconstruction of Iraq and finding a base of common interests between the two parties.

Relying on this policy, China was able to achieve substantial gains, represented by the wisdom of the Beijing government in not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. It used it in the war on Iraq, and this war revealed the weakness of the credibility of the United States and its allies in maintaining world peace, and the decline of its diplomacy and soft power. Some Chinese thinkers have reached the conviction that the post-occupation phase of Iraq has indicated the real crisis of American civilization has already begun. And that the sun of Chinese civilization will rise after that, which in their view means the beginning of the decline of the power of the United States <sup>(1)</sup>.

China believes that its efforts to strengthen its relationship with Iraq must take into consideration the American presence in the region. The Chinese approach to Iraq is characterized by living with the Iraqi situation and understanding its nature. China sought to develop its relationship with Iraq and took serious steps in this field, starting with the reopening of its embassy in Baghdad in July 2004, supporting the new political system, providing material and technical assistance to it, and inviting Iraqi officials to visit China. These visits resulted in the signing of five agreements, including:

1. Facilitating the process of implementing oil contracts concluded between Chinese oil companies and the Iraqi government during the era of the former regime.
2. China cancels its government debt, amounting to 8.5 billion dollars, owed by Iraq by 100%, and reduces the debts of private Chinese companies by 80% over a period of 17 years, starting in 2010.
3. Enhancing diplomatic cooperation between the two foreign ministries.
4. Enhancing cooperation in the economic and technical fields.
5. Providing training programs for Iraqi job cadres.

The series of visits of Iraqi officials to China did not stop, as the visit of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to China in December 2015 came to enhance

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<sup>(1)</sup> Ibtisam Muhammad Al-Amiri, China's foreign policy and the relationship with Iraq, a paper presented to the scientific symposium tagged (the foreign policies of the main Asian countries and relations with Iraq held by the Department of Political and Strategic Studies / House of Wisdom, Baghdad, March 30 (2019), p. 234.

cooperation between the two countries. This visit resulted in creating long-term strategic partnerships with China, and activating the role of the Joint Economic and Trade Committee<sup>(1)</sup>.

Realizing the importance of Iraq and its geostrategic location, China has sought to include it in the initiative to build the economic belt of the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road for the twenty-first century, considering that it is located in the path of this road, which, if implemented, would lead to the achievement of joint development for the two countries, and contribute to the liberalization of trade and the facilitation of investments and exchange. Technical and technological expertise, which drives development and modernization, being the main determinant and guiding principle of China's foreign policy, especially towards Iraq, to search for the following:<sup>(2)</sup>

1. Markets to sell its products: Despite China's reluctance to enter markets whose countries are witnessing turmoil and the competition of regional and international forces, it did not hesitate to enter the Iraqi market, and the volume of Chinese exports to Iraq in 2013 amounted to nearly \$7 billion.
2. Investment: The number of Chinese exports invested in Iraq until 2011 amounted to approximately 108 companies. Chinese investments in Iraq are divided into two parts:

The first: In the field of infrastructure: China has signed many investment contracts with Iraq, including the contract signed by the Chinese Polytech Company to establish an international road for road transport linking Iraq with Syria and Turkey. The major Chinese telecom companies Huawei and ZTE signed more than 600 contracts in The telecommunications sector since 2017, which made the first company to dominate the telecommunications market in Iraq. In the transportation sector, the Chinese company DMU signed a contract with the Iraqi Ministry of Transport to supply it with twelve sets of integrated trains for travelers at an amount of 138 million dollars, and Chinese investment included the electricity sector by signing Two contracts between Shanghai Electric Company and the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity for the implementation of the Zubaidi steam power plant in Wasit Governorate, worth two billion dollars. The Chinese company CMEC also signed a contract to implement the Salah Al-Din Thermal Power Plant, as well as signing dozens of investment contracts in the infrastructure sector<sup>(3)</sup>.

Second: In the field of energy: China's fear of a shortage of energy supplies after it moved towards importing it starting in 1993, or the increase in its prices, or the possibility of the United States adopting an energy embargo policy towards China in the future led to an increase in China's interest in energy security by diversifying sources of import Oil, and encouraging Chinese oil activities and investments abroad, and Iraq is one of the first countries that China has headed

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(1) Ibtisam Muhammad al-Amiri, China's foreign policy and the relationship with Iraq, a previously mentioned source, p. 5

(2) Mayada Abdullah Yassin, The Economic Dimension in China's Foreign Policy, promotion research submitted to (Foreign Service Institute, Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, pp. 89-90.

(3) Ali Hussein Bakir, China's oil diplomacy: Dimensions and repercussions, presented by: Dr. Muhammad Al-Majzoub, Beirut, Dar Al-Manhal Lebanese, 2010, p. 146.

for this purpose, if investment in this sector occupies an important place among China's overall investments in this country. Chinese cooperation with Iraq was not limited to the political and economic aspect, but also exceeded it to the military aspect, as China exported to Iraq a group of small arms worth 100 million dollars to equip the police forces, and Iraq was provided with a set of weapons such as surface-to-air missiles and Chinese unmanned aircraft type. Cai Hong B4 is used for reconnaissance purposes, as well as for training Iraqi forces.<sup>(1)</sup>

### **Obstacles of Chinese policy towards Iraq**

These obstacles can be divided into the following:

#### **First: Internal Obstacles:**

The state of political and security instability that Iraq has been suffering from since 2003 has cast a heavy shadow on the Chinese policy towards Iraq and impeded its orientation in several aspects, most notably:

1. The political aspect: There are several indicators that we can refer to in this scope, which are: The state of political tension and conflict between the Iraqi political forces that confused China's relationship with Iraq, and left an impact on its diplomatic performance towards it, and Iraq's fall into the circle of American influence, which hinders China's plans To expand its relationship with Iraq, and to characterize the Chinese policy of reservation and avoiding risks in its foreign relations, especially countries far from it, such as Iraq.
2. 2. The economic aspect: There are two types of obstacles in this aspect that can impede cooperation between the two countries, including those related to the Chinese side, such as the difficulty of Iraqis obtaining entry visas to China, and the latter's supplying bad goods to Iraq due to the lack of Chinese control, and the lack of private information Sober Chinese companies and commercial activities such as exhibitions. As for the Iraqi side, they are the weak absorptive capacities of the Iraqi economy, the high inflation rates that it suffers from, Iraq's lack of developed financial markets, the low level of infrastructure in Iraq, the lack of transparency, and the state of financial and administrative corruption that It greatly affected the quantity and quality of foreign direct investment in Iraq by China and other countries, and the presence of international competitors to China in Iraq in the fields of energy, trade and investment, especially the United States, which controls the security of the sea lanes through which oil sources pass, as well as its control over global energy institutions, Which constitutes a brake on China's continuity of its orientation towards Iraq in the short and medium term, and the delay in enacting the oil and oil law A gas that, if approved,

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<sup>(1)</sup> Vidya Nadkarni, *Strategic Partnerships in Asia: Balances Without Alliances*, Translated Studies Series, Abu Dhabi, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2020, p. 56.

can solve the outstanding problems between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government about determining the authority of each of them to invest in this sector, and encourage international energy companies, including Chinese, to expand their activities and increase their investments inside Iraq, and solve problems between companies banned from entering the market The Iraqi company, because of its dealings with the Kurdistan Regional Government, including the Chinese company SINOPEC.<sup>(1)</sup>

3. The security aspect: The control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) on large parts of the Iraqi lands on June 10, 2014 aroused the interest of many countries in the world, including China, which expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, and in harmony with its desire to preserve Its interests in Iraq Yen has taken practical and serious steps in this field, such as declaring its support for the Iraqi government in its efforts to combat and preserving cities in the country, and calling for it to take concrete measures to protect Chinese institutions and their workers in Iraq, and calling on the Iraqis to unite their ranks if they want to eliminate ISIS, and China feels The spread of separatist and terrorist movements in the Middle East, including Iraq, and confronting them may draw attention to the separatist-influenced Xinjiang-Uighur region, which is inhabited by a Muslim majority. Religious, ethnic and regionalism in the Middle East can lead to a decline in the volume of Chinese investments and goods in the region<sup>(2)</sup>.

So, since China is facing a potential threat in the northwestern regions of its territory, and its belief that it could be the next target of international terrorism, we find that it has supported the efforts of the United States in its campaign against terrorism and its quest to dry up its sources and sources of financing, as well as its ratification of the United Nations Convention calling for stopping terrorist financing.

China's fear of terrorism stems mainly from the possibility of jihadist political Islam moving to the Xinjiang-Uygur province and from there to other regions of China in the event the United States fails to fight and eliminate it. The jihadist and pushed it to turn around the states' strategy to combat terrorism.

Second: Regional Obstacles:

The complicated situation that the Middle East is experiencing due to the war on Iraq, religious and sectarian conflicts, the increase in the frequency of major powers' interference in the region's affairs and the escalation of competition rates among them hindered China's efforts in two respects: It has strong relations with the countries of the region, especially oil ones, including Iraq, and creating Common ground for cooperation between China and countries in the region in the

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<sup>(1)</sup> Qian Xuewen , China s Energy Cooperation with Middle East Oil – Producing Countries , Journal of Middle Eastern and Economic Studies , vol . 4 , no. 3 , September (2019) , p. 6 .

<sup>(2)</sup> Madian Ali, On the future role of China in international politics: a research into the possibilities and challenges with special reference to the future of its role in the Middle East, Journal of Strategic Studies, Center for Strategic Research and Studies, Damascus University, No. 19, 2019, p. 196.

field of energy,<sup>(1)</sup> The impact of the security crises experienced by the Middle East countries, including Iraq, will not be immediate, but will have repercussions in the medium and long term. China has an interest in maintaining the stability of the Middle East, so we find it pushing towards strengthening relations with its traditional ally, Iran, and between Iraq aspiring to restore its role. With the aim of developing its interests in both countries and gaining political influence in the region<sup>(2)</sup>.

### **Third: International Obstacles:**

Any study of the relationship between Iraq and China that excludes the United States as an important variable in this relationship is not a realistic study. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and because Iraq was the only country in the world that was subjected to wars, occupation, and direct and indirect foreign interference in the last 30 years by the United States and its allies, so China cannot act alone in the region without coordination or at least ensuring that the United States does not oppose Its interests with the latter are greater than its interests with any other country, which constitutes a constraint that prevents it from confronting the United States in any of the conflict arenas in the world, and China entered into competition with a number of major powers over Iraq, especially with Russia, Japan, India, Britain and France, which happened The other on investments in the field of energy, infrastructure and education and strengthened its trade relations with Iraq<sup>(3)</sup>.

The third topic: the future of American and Chinese policy towards Iraq

The US-Chinese relations are characterized by a large degree of change. We find that they tend to an advanced degree of conflict in some respects, and a moderate degree of cooperation in some other respects, as well as a varying degree of competition in other multiple areas. Therefore, these relations have become a unique pattern of bilateral relations with what they possess of contradictory elements at times and cooperation at other times. They are not at the level of explicit competition or hidden hostility, but they remain working for mutual interests and expected threats.

With the rise of its economic power and the rise of its political position, China desires to play an important role at the global level, and the Middle East provides the appropriate opportunity to demonstrate its position and role, especially since it had a position and contributions within the framework of the United Nations in the most important issues of the region, especially the Iraqi issue, and to achieve this vision, China By adopting the Great Ocean Strategy, the Middle East promised an important part of it, despite its lack of geographical borders with it, but its weight and weight in international politics forces China to look at the issue

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<sup>(1)</sup>Rahman Luan, op. cit., p29.

<sup>(2)</sup> Omar Hashem Thanun Al-Hayali , op. cit., pp 97 – 98.

<sup>(3)</sup> Marwan Kablin, China's Oil Diplomacy and the Possibility of Conflict with America, Journal of Strategic Studies, No. 19, 2016, p. 218.

from several angles: the impact of this region on its national security, its provision of a platform for the development of multilateral diplomacy, and the dispelling of emerging fears From the alleged Chinese danger, especially with regard to the issue of energy, so we find China working to consolidate its relations with the countries of the region, as the high rates of China's consumption of energy will push it to increase its dependence on the region's oil in the future, so it will not hesitate to do its best to secure The sea lanes that oil tankers take to reach China, and China is aware of the fact that although the United States is located near these lanes, the vision It assumes dealing with the matter carefully and wisely<sup>(1)</sup>.

Iraq's important location in the Middle East made it occupy an important place in the Chinese strategy, so China will continue its orientation towards Iraq in the medium term if it wants to sustain its economic growth. Oil is increasing year after year, and the effective role of Chinese investments in the Iraqi energy sector has helped to restore energy production in the country<sup>(2)</sup>.

China defines its future orientations towards Iraq in several points, most notably: the continuity of strengthening cooperation in the field of energy, encouraging cooperation in the military field, and providing its various experiences in this field of combating terrorism. In his relationship with China, he is called to follow a number of steps that can lead him to his goal and endeavor, namely:<sup>(3)</sup>

1. Investing his diplomatic and security efforts in order to coordinate with China or set up a set of security arrangements and exchange experiences and information about the activity of terrorist groups, especially since China is concerned about the possibility of these people moving to its territory.
2. Iraq's exploitation of its relationship with China to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which attaches special importance to security issues through the exchange of information between its parties, and the establishment of a center to combat terrorism, as well as issues of economic and political cooperation.
3. Encouraging Chinese companies in the construction, infrastructure, electricity, telecommunications and construction sectors to work in Iraq, while providing guarantees for these companies for the success of their work.
4. The possibility of benefiting from China's experience in addressing the problem of low water levels in its main rivers, the use of modern technologies to rationalize water consumption, and the adoption of modern methods in agriculture, as China has a system for agricultural research and development that is the largest in the world.
5. Encouraging official and unofficial exchanges between the two countries in order to deepen a common understanding on the issues of the two

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<sup>(1)</sup> Nahed Hussein Jaber, *The Most Important Political Issues in US-Chinese Relations*, Issues Magazine. Politics, College of Political Science, Al-Nahrain University, Volume Three, No. 11, 2020: p. 75.

<sup>(2)</sup> Mohamed Abdel Salam, *Chinese Military Capabilities and Regional Balance*, Center for Strategic Studies and Research, No. 183, Cairo, 2019: p. 55.

<sup>(3)</sup> Muhammad Abdul Shafi' Issa, *The Current Positions of Powers in the Global Economic System*, Reading in International Reports, International Politics Journal, No. 173, 2018, p. 49.

countries, and to exchange views on regional issues in a way that enhances mutual trust between the two parties.

6. Investing in Iraq's relationship with China to obtain its support in regional and international forums by adopting stable and stable mechanisms to strengthen the relations of the two countries on the basis of transparency, equality, respect and mutual benefit.
7. Benefiting from China's experience in combating corruption, poverty, achieving social justice and solving the housing crisis.

As for the American reasons supporting the economic, political and military collision with China, there is no doubt that the United States of America has many reasons that qualify it to enter into conflict with any country in the world because of its economic, military and political power that helped it to sit on the throne of the world order. We had to review here the most important of those reasons:<sup>(1)</sup>

1. The factor related to the American cognitive aspect of US President Biden, as President Biden is within the liberal school that emphasizes the duty of the United States to export the values of liberalism and prevent human rights violations, even if this requires the use of military force, which will push the relations between them to clash, especially in the event of China's lack of commitment to the conditional commitment to liberal standards politically or economically.
2. China's opposition to US interference in its internal affairs, especially with regard to the issue of human rights, the issue of Taiwan and issues of trade and investment, and therefore it is likely that China's policy towards the United States is more prone to conflict than it was in the past.
3. Terrorist threats in the Asian region, fueled by the leaders of the extremist Islamic group, Jamaat Ansar al-Tawhid and other active groups in Southeast Asia, which the United States accuses of belonging to Al-Qaeda, continue to declare and constantly declare a state of hostility to the United States and raise the fears of its administration of targeting its vital interests in the region. The United States has explained that these terrorist threats in Southeast Asia will not end, and therefore the United States of America has begun to focus its attention on the Southeast Asian region, especially after the war between Russia and Ukraine.

The new variables that resulted from the war between Russia and Ukraine revealed a Chinese strategy seeking a new polarity or influence in the international system. Therefore, China involved in a strategic approach to influence more in the international system and reveal its power as a major country within this system, but at the same time it realizes that the United States The United States rejects the establishment of international forces competing with it for the leadership of the international system, and that it will never give up its leadership for it for the longest possible period. Thus, the continuation of this situation was claimed to lead

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<sup>(1)</sup> Muhammad Jawad Ali, The American Vision for Gulf Security, Strategic Papers, Center for International Studies, No. 36, 2021, p. 91.

to competition being one of the scenarios witnessed in the future relations between the United States of America and China, at least within the framework of the future. Perspective, meaning the continuation of the situation as it is today.

Within this, it can be said that there are many factors that contribute to the establishment of such a scenario in US-Chinese relations, at a time when there are other factors that are among the obstacles that hinder the continuity of this scenario. In this context, we will review these factors through the following:

**First: the contributing factors for the establishment of the scenario of competition for the leadership of the international system**

**1. Chinese Auxiliary Factors**

Within this scenario, China possessed several economic, political and military factors that it is trying to employ in order to be able to compete with the United States of America, especially in the economic field. These factors are:

- a. China's accession to the World Trade Organization is on an equal footing and in the same cycle with Taiwan, which has long refused to consider it an independent international entity.
- b. The institutional controls imposed by the World Trade Organization on international trade transactions have had a significant impact on the decline of the strategic military dimension, "threat and counter threat" in front of the competitive dimension over the sources of soft power.
- c. The increase in the size of the Chinese GDP, as reports indicate that China will become a great economic power in the world, even though it is producing consumer goods that do not contain high technology, especially in light of the apparent growth in Chinese strategic capabilities, which is working to narrow the gap between China and the developed world.
- d. resort China's to adopting a strategy to achieve the highest export rates, which constituted an important aspect in increasing the intensity of competition between the two sides.
- e. The existence of security and economic blocs and their increasing role in the affairs of the region that push for confidence building and dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region, including the ASEAN Regional Forum.
- f. And the. China's policy of establishing mechanisms for multilateral regional cooperation to support and stabilize the region. On the other hand, the United States has resorted to establishing alliances between it and Pacific countries such as Japan, South Korea and other regional powers.
- g. Continuing US military support for Taiwan and encouraging it to move towards independence with its decision maker.



## **2. American Supporting Factors: There is one supporter from the American side, which is**

The United States of America pushed Japan to amend the Defense Treaty and the Common Territories to increase Japan's military power. It also weaved the threads of a new alliance with India to establish a new "balance of power" in Asia with the aim of containing China.

Through these factors, we can say that there are many reasons for the continuation of the situation between these two countries since the end of the Cold War until the present time, but at the same time it is noted that there are other reasons that can end the state of competition between them and turn it into a state of strategic partnership, but This time, the United States had the largest share of the impeding factors to enter into this scenario.

### **Second: Opportunities, challenges and options for Iraq**

#### **1- Opportunities**

##### **A- Creating a new balance of power and getting rid of the unipolar constraints**

It is in Iraq's interest for a pluralistic international system to prevail, instead of the current state of unilateralism, and perhaps the Middle East countries will find in the rise of China and perhaps other international powers to re-compete the United States an opportunity to push forward the effects of the pluralism of the international system at the regional level, and this would create more space for movement And handling, as it eases American restrictions and gestures, and perhaps sanctions and pressures. There is no doubt that the competition between China and the United States allows the countries of the Middle East to balance their relations, as well as diversify and distribute them among the competing countries. This allows it to show wide options, but without compromising the foundations of its relationship with the United States of America.

Also, Chinese tendencies are based on respect for the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs, and thus competition may lead to easing the pressures exerted by the United States on the Middle East, especially with regard to democracy and human rights.

##### **B: The possibility of countries in the region maintaining diverse relations between the two competing forces**

The United States and China are of particular importance in the foreign policy of Middle Eastern countries, due to the complex nature of the region, the abundance of conflicts, and the need of these countries for reliable trading partners and buyers for their primary export commodities. The United States, in addition to being a trading partner of these countries, is also considered a security and military

partner, and continuing cooperation with them can contribute to the stability of the region and confront the security and military challenges it faces.

At the same time, China has greatly expanded its investments in the region, and it is among the big four Asian countries with which the volume of trade of the countries of the region exceeds the volume of its trade with the United States of America, and from this point of view, the countries of the Middle East should employ the competition between China and the United States in their favour. Optimally, by maintaining strong trade and economic relations with China, and at the same time benefiting from the security benefits of the continued American presence in the region, as well as opening a path for relations with the rest of the world powers, especially in light of the emergence of some

Countries, including Russia, are ready to expand relations with the countries of the region, in order to prevent these two powers from becoming isolated in the countries of the region.

#### **c. Providing an alternative buyer for Middle Eastern oil after its declining importance to the United States**

China is the largest importer of oil from the Middle East, and future estimates indicate that China is in dire need of oil; This makes it a very profitable customer that cannot be lost to the countries of the region.

#### **d. Benefiting from the position of the two powers in achieving regional stability**

The Middle East is full of challenges and crises, and perhaps no country in the Middle East can withstand a new cycle of competition between great powers. Both China and the United States share compatible and complementary interests, with regard to the security dimension in the Middle East, and to mitigate the escalation of conflicts. Which may lead to the formation of structural dynamics for Beijing and Washington, to search for common ground that ensures China achieves its geo-economic interests in the field of trade, energy and investments, as well as enables the United States to maintain its economic and political interests by contributing to the establishment of security in the countries of the region, and the defense of allies in the East middle; This will spare the region the devastating effects of the rivalry between these two powers.

China is among the Security Council countries that have the largest number of world peacekeeping forces, and comes at the forefront of the countries that contribute the most to the international peacekeeping budget, in addition to sending naval fleets to carry out maritime escort missions in accordance with Security Council resolutions, and thus may play an important role in establishing Security in the countries of the region, and this is what calls for its use, in the event that the American interest in the security of the countries of the region declines.

The Chinese desire to move towards the Middle East requires security,

political and economic stability. To achieve this goal, China may find itself compelled to twinning between the trade partnership and the geo-strategic partnership with Iraq. This may represent an opportunity to play an important role in bringing together the different points of view on the most important issues in the region, including the nuclear file due to its proximity to Iran, which is an energy source for China, in addition to the strong economic and trade relations that unite them.

By virtue of China's relationship with the Syrian regime as well as with the Iranian regime, which plays a major role in the Syrian crisis, and China's desire to enter into a real partnership and competition with the United States in the Middle East, the countries of the region can use this relationship to pressure China to play a more central role in ending the Syrian crisis, and dispelling Concerns about Iranian nuclear ambitions and meddling, and the easing of tensions between powers in the Middle East.

#### **e. Having an alternative trading partner to support development plans**

On the economic level, most countries in the region are going through deep economic transformations, including structural changes, such as the shift from dependence on oil to the modernization of the tributaries of national economies. And China, which since 2016 has become the largest trading partner of a large number of countries in the region, could play a major role in the success of these plans, and many Western countries, including the United States, refrain from selling many of the military industries to the countries of the region, such as drones. A pilot and some heavy weapons, but China can provide these industries to Iraq.

## **2- Challenges**

### **a. China's interference in regional conflicts and exacerbation of instability**

The Sino-Iranian cooperation agreement, and China's use of Iran's card in its growing conflict with the United States of America, represents a challenge and a future problem for many countries in the region. Whatever the outcome of future developments and facts in the course of the intertwined relations between China and the United States and Iran in the future, reality supports the foundations of the inauguration of an era in which the United States does not have the keys to the main control over the Middle East, as it prevailed in the past, and with the entry of major and pivotal players Like China, multi polarity is gaining tangible and realistic dimensions, which may develop in the future to a degree that may exacerbate the regional rivalry between these two powers, which may exacerbate the instability in the Middle East.

## **B. Punishment of the two powers by countries that engage in axes against them**

Another challenge will result from this competitive relationship between the Chinese and American giants, as it is likely that one of the two powers will resort to other means and tools to limit the impulse of the other and build dams on its way. Here, it is expected that Washington's tendency to apply political and diplomatic pressure on Iraq, accompanied by economic and commercial threats, to governments that cross or think of crossing the red line in their dealings with China, and this competition between the two giants will contribute to creating divisions in a number of countries, as it may lead to destabilization of security and stability internally and at the regional level.

### **c. American pressures on the countries of the region to limit their economic relations with China and their impact on development plans**

During the past period, the United States has proven that it is in the process of reducing Chinese economic growth in the region, and that it may harm the economic interests of its allies, if they try to enhance Chinese influence. During the visit of former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Tel Aviv in May 2020<sup>(1)</sup>, he warned Israeli officials that their cooperation with China would jeopardize their strategic relations with the United States, and Washington exerted severe pressure on Israel;<sup>(2)</sup> To prevent Chinese companies from winning a bid to build the world's largest desalination plant to be built in Israel, the United States may use the same threat with the rest of its allies in the Middle East.

### **d. The region is exposed to a new cold war with the increasing Chinese military presence**

It is not at all unlikely that this competition over markets, investments, and infrastructure in the region between the two giants will prompt China to go beyond its traditional caution in resorting to military options in its foreign policies, and to think of increasing its military presence in the region. Which may push the United States to enter into a cold war with it, this time its arena is the Middle East region full of tensions and conflicts. Under the title of protecting trade routes in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, China has established a military base in Djibouti, perhaps under similar titles that seek to secure the "Belt and Road" initiative. The Chinese Communist Party in March 2021 AD, which requires allocating huge budgets for the redevelopment and modernization of the Chinese army, and the development of the Chinese naval fleet over the next decade; To be able to protect the country.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Alex Lockie", "Trump calls on China, and the world, to protect their own ships from Iran", Business Insider 24 June 2019, Accessed 15 April 2021, <https://bit.ly/3/x7nyHR>, P: 89.

<sup>(2)</sup> Xinhui Jiang", "From Nonintervention to What? Analyzing the Change in China's Middle East Policy", Middle East Institute 15 July 2021, P: 159.

### **3- The options**

#### **a. Choosing a balanced policy between the two forces to maximize gains**

It would be right for the countries of the region to formulate a balanced policy that brings together the two parties. The United States is the most important strategic ally for many countries in the region today, and perhaps the countries of the region have no alternative to American support in various international frameworks, including security assistance and economic relations. Also, the relations that bring together the countries of the region with China, in light of the interest in maintaining their economic competitiveness in the long term, and in light of China's rise to the position of an economic and technological power, it is necessary for it to formulate a balance policy between its short-term economic interests and the importance of protecting its security in the medium and long term, and to deal Carefully and pragmatically with both forces.

#### **b. Strengthening the strategic independence of the countries of the Middle East**

In light of what analysts describe as a new world in the making, with a Chinese camp and an American one, there is an opportunity for the countries of the region to strengthen their independence and develop their strategic partnership. So that they do not find themselves in a position that compels them to choose between the two camps, or pay part of the new Cold War bill, so the countries of the region may find themselves before the option of reducing dependence on Beijing and Washington, and this course can start by looking for strengthening political, commercial and security relations with non-partners. traditionalists.

#### **c. Regional repositioning and intensification of partnership with the middle powers**

It seems important, in light of the growing competition between the United States and China, that the countries of the region pay attention to bridging the gaps, liquidating regional conflicts, and rebuilding strategic alliances and security initiatives, as the region is a difficult figure for any attempt to employ in the context of the conflict between major powers. The countries of the region must also deepen their relations with the countries and partners of the intermediate and influential powers in the international system, especially the permanent members of the Security Council, as well as the European Union, so that there are alternatives and front lines of defense on the part of these forces for their interests in the region, and to impose an equation It is balanced to prevent exposure to the effects of any cold war that may affect the region.

## **Conclusion**

The United States is still the dominant position in the international system, and it is clear that China is still far from the possibility of bringing about a change in the nature of this existing order. Given the American military supremacy, its widespread, its political, diplomatic and cultural influence, and its highly influential role on international organizations, not to mention the presence of a large number of allies still revolving around it and defending the values that it adopts. But this does not mean that China is a power to be reckoned with; China has become a formidable economic power that has outstripped many superpowers and has an ambitious plan for international domination through economic supremacy. The countries of the Middle East still look at these considerations carefully, and therefore they realize the importance of relations with the United States and move their foreign policies from the perspective of an assessment of the extent of the damage that can be caused to this relationship. The United States is a strategic partner and continues to provide an indispensable security support umbrella. At the strategic and security level, the American role is indispensable to the countries of the region. Indeed, China itself relies on the United States to ensure stability in the region and to ensure the flow of its interests mainly, but on the other hand, China is an indispensable trade and economic partner, so that its position does not compensate for any other power. Even the United States itself, this geo-security equation that is based on a strategic relationship with the United States and its balance is a geo-economic equation with China, which makes the Middle East the most affected region in the world by the outbreak of an open conflict between the two major powers at the top of the system and global leadership, and then Maintaining a balanced relationship and maintaining this geo-security and geo-economic equation is an important guarantee in order for the countries of the region to avoid negative effects from the conflict spreading to the Middle East and to Iraq.

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