

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS POST-SADDAM IRAQ: AN ANALYSIS

Thowhidul ISLAM*

Abstract. Iran and Iraq are the two neighbouring countries but with unfriendly relationships. They were engaged in several wars, including an eight-year-long war that ended in 1988, and this enmity continued throughout the following decades. Both countries followed hostile policy to each other and developed intimate relationships with each other's dissident groups. Iran provided political support and financial assistance to the Shi'ite and Kurdish resistance organizations, which had been fighting against Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athists. Iraq's resistance groups were also eager to receive Iranian aid. Ironically, the vacuum created in Iraq with the fall of Saddam in 2003 filled with the Shi'ites and Kurds and thus Iran's Iraqi allies assumed the power of Iraq. As a result of the regime change, Iran's policy towards Iraq has shifted into a new turn aimed at eliminating the traditional hostilities, and thus Iran-Iraq relations improved considerably. The two countries signed several cooperation agreements, including military cooperation agreements on new transportation and energy links and possibly future oil pipeline connections. While Saddam's Iraq was considered a security threat to Iran, now it has gradually been developed as a potential ally. Iran seeks to ensure that Iraq can never again become a threat to Iran. Iran wants to shape post-Saddam Iraq's political structure in Iran's favour to establish a pro-Iranian government at least no emergence of an 'anti-Tehran' government in Baghdad. Iran sees Iraq as providing lucrative investment opportunities and a growing market for Iranian products. Iran wants to suppress Iranian dissident groups located over the border inside Iraq. Iran also tries to exert its influence on Iraqi internal affairs to prevent the US from changing Iran's political system and threatening Iran's national security. Historical experience, national-regional interests, and geopolitical factors motivated Iran to follow this new policy strategy toward Iraq. Thus, the fall of Saddam became a turning point in Iran-Iraq relations, which ultimately changed Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq. This work exclusively aims at analysing the Iranian policy strategy towards post-Saddam Iraq.

Key Words: Iraq-Iran relation, Saddam Hussein, Shi'ite, Kurdish, politico-regional interests, Iran's policy strategy.

* Dr. Md. Thowhidul Islam. Associate Professor of Bangladesh Studies. International Islamic University Chittagong. Kumira, Bangladesh. E-mail: tauhidcox@gmail.com; tauhidcox@iiuc.ac.bd

Introduction

Due to its geo-political and geo-strategic characteristics, the Middle East has been one of the world's most significant regions of involvement. The Persian Gulf—which is regarded as the "heart" of the Middle East—has been a focal point of world politics for more than thirty years. Iran and Iraq, two of the Gulf's riparian countries, have different foreign policies, which is one of the key reasons for which the Persian Gulf has gained prominence in world affairs. With its revolutionary philosophy, strategic location as the political hub of Shi'ism, and abundant natural gas and oil deposits, Iran stands out as a representation of Persian culture and its political history. However, Iraq gains significance due to its unique role in the Arab World, its diverse ethnic and sectarian makeup, its pan-Arab philosophy, its status as the most powerful Arab country in the Gulf, and abundant petroleum resources. Iraq's 1920s secession from the Ottoman Empire marked the beginning of these two countries' struggle for regional predominance. After the UK left the region in the 1970s, the conflict grew more intense and in the 1980s, it became close-quarters fighting. But, the eight-year war ended without a winner. However, in the post-Cold War era, a number of regional and global events had a significant impact on the power dynamics between Iran and Iraq. The Russian threat to Iran essentially vanished in 1989 with the Soviet Union's departure from Afghanistan and subsequent collapse in 1991. Alternatively, during the First Gulf War, Iraq, the "eternal" opponent of Iran, was forced out of Kuwait in 1991, suffering severe damage to its military, political, and economic power. Consequently, Iran achieved supremacy over Iraq in the region. Since then, the US and its allies imposed UN Sanctions, no-fly-zones and provided support to Iraqi dissident groups to curtail the power of Saddam's Ba'athist regime. The US gave regime change in Iraq a high priority following the events of September 11, 2001. In a State-of-the-Union Speech on January 20, 2004, George W. Bush proclaimed, "And above all, we will finish the historic work of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq so those nations can light the way for others and help transform a troubled part of the world" (WOOLLEY and PETERS, 2004). The US-led actions in 2003 resulted in the fall of the Ba'ath regime, the destruction of Iraq's military, the disruption of its political authority, and the transformation of its political system into a loose federation. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003 made profound changes in the context of Iran-Iraq relations. Shi'ites and Kurds, who had close links to the Iranian leadership, were certain to inherit Iraq through the introduction of democracy, and the reinforcement of sectarian identities through new governmental institutions. With the fall of Saddam, Iran had a chance to pursue strategic

expansionism in the Middle East and began to forge cooperative ties with Iraq while also gaining more political influence in the country. Thus, the US policy in Iraq established the platform for the best Iran-Iraq relations in decades and accordingly, the Iranian policy towards Post-Saddam Iraq got a new dimension. This is pure qualitative research based on secondary sources of information. A descriptive method will be used to analyse the data collected through secondary sources, including books, journals, periodicals, and globally renowned news media. Content analysis method would be used to examine the collected data. The main objective of this study is to explore the Iranian perspectives in regard to its policy strategy toward post-Saddam Iraq.

Historical Background of the Iran-Iraq Relationship

Iran and Iraq have been competing states and empires since antiquity. Throughout history, the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Abbasid dynasties were based in Mesopotamia, which is now Iraq. The Achaemenid, Safavid, and early modern Qajar dynasties ruled over the Persian Empire. Shi'ite Islam, which originated in Iraq, was recognized as the state religion of Iran in the sixteenth century, during the Safavid dynasty. Religious pilgrims from Iran travel to the holy Shi'ite towns of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, which are also ancient Shi'ite centres of study. Consequently, Iran considered, even when Iraq was under the sway of the Ottoman Empire, southern Iraq to be within its historical area of influence and to be a part of the Persian cultural basin.

Iran has existed as a distinct political entity for millennia, based on the remnants of the Persian Empire. In contrast, Iraq is a remnant of colonialism and consists mostly of the three provinces that were part of the Ottoman Empire's eastern region: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. When Iraq's mandate authority was founded in the 1920s, Iran viewed its newly formed neighbour with distrust and refused to recognize the legitimacy of Iraq. Iraq had a strong desire to acquire control over the Shatt al-Arab Waterway and the Arab-populated area of Khuzestan, which was part of Iran. Iraq backed the "Arabia" state, which was established in Khuzestan. Iran responded to this by not recognizing Iraq until 1929 and supporting the Kurdish insurgencies led by Mahmud Barzanji, which lasted from 1919 to 1923 (KESKIN, 2008). Once the mandate government in Iraq came to an end in 1932, Iran launched an effort to identify the country's boundary with Iraq in the centre of the Shatt al-Arab. As per the agreement struck on July 4, 1937, between the two countries, Iraq's sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab River was affirmed. However, the mid-line (thalweg) was acknowledged as the boundary in the Abadan area along the eight-kilometre stretch of the river (ATAMAN, 2010 pp. 167–168). Iraq's first ambassador to Iran, Tawfiq al-Suwaidi,

listed three main issues that characterized relations between the two countries in the 1930s and persisted into the following decades: the state of ethnic Arabs in Khuzestan, the unguarded portion of the Iran-Iraq border in the Kurdish north, and, most significantly, the Shatt al-Arab waterway (ISMAEL, 1982 p. 14). Following the border's precise definition and mutual agreement in 1937, Iran and Iraq established a number of agreements and treaties that essentially made them friends. Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan signed the Saadabad Pact in 1937, a symbolic non-aggression agreement. The Treaty of Good Neighbourly Relations was signed by Iran and Iraq in 1949. Although these accords greatly improved relations, the membership of Iran and Iraq in the Baghdad Pact in 1955 marked the pinnacle of this relationship. The goal of the deal was to stop the Soviet Union from expanding throughout the Middle East. Nevertheless, the worst period of relations between Iran and Iraq began in 1958 when a new Iraqi government decided to support the Soviet Union during the Cold War. During this period, unresolved issues included disputed boundaries, access to the Shatt al-Arab canal, and heightened ethnic tensions, putting the two countries on the verge of war. The story of Iran-Iraq relations throughout the first three decades is one of the antagonistic neighbours coming to terms with their differences in order to face common challenges. At one point or another, Iran and Iraq's collaboration or animosity increased as a result of British colonization, the Cold War, and the War on Terror. The West and Iran were shocked when, in 1959, Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad Pact.

Meanwhile, Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was once again making waves in Iraq. The Iranian Shah began to back KDP, seeing this as a chance to weaken his regional enemy. Kurdish uprisings in 1963, 1965, and 1968 were not put down. Therefore, the Iraqi government was forced to grant the Kurds substantial political, economic, and cultural rights in 1970 (KESKIN, 2008). Given the challenges Iraq faced at this time, Iran unilaterally terminated the 1937 pact in 1969 and asserted its own sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab (ARI, 2007 p. 401). The US's new regional strategy was another significant factor that prompted Iran to take this action. The Nixon Doctrine, often referred to as the "Twin-Pillar Policy," assigned Saudi Arabia the political and economic responsibility for the security of the Gulf Area, while Iran was responsible for its military defence. Iraq's regional interests were harmed by Iran as it attempted to control the Gulf Area with the help of the US military and political support (ATAMAN, 2010, pp. 166-167). However, after seizing power in 1968, the Ba'ath regime attempted to align Iraq's foreign policy even more with Soviet doctrine. In 1972, Iraq signed a "Friendship Treaty" with the Soviet Union to secure military and political support. Iraq launched a fresh offensive against KDP soldiers in 1974 after re-arming its military with Soviet assistance. Acknowledging the KDP's lack of prospects against the Iraqi army, the Iranian Shah resolved the issue by

establishing a pact with Iraq (Rousu, 2010: 59). On March 6, 1975, the parties signed the Algeria Treaty, which said that Iraq would give up its sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab and that Iran would not assist Kurdish organizations in Iraq (ISMAEL, 1982 p. 61). In addition, on July 13, 1975, the two countries signed the "Treaty of Border and Friendship" in an effort to maintain cordial neighbourhood relations and avoid border transit (ATAMAN, 2010, p. 169).

However, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, led by Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, completely altered the nature of ties between Iran and Iraq. Following the revolution, Iran's new government saw the US and the West as threats to their rule and severed ties with the US, a longtime ally. Furthermore, given their divergent ideologies, the Iranian leadership had no scope to ally itself with the Soviet Union when it broke away from the West Block. Iran consequently found itself at a disadvantage position versus its adversary Iraq as a result of becoming isolated in the international arena. The Saddam administration in Iraq was ready to benefit from the situation in Iran. Additionally, the elements of Iran's new leadership spread the concept of spreading the Islamic revolution to surrounding nations, which made the secular Baathist regime in Iraq feel threatened (RAMAZANI, 1988, pp. 24-27). Conversely, Iraq sought to attain total control over the Kurds, limit Iran's economic and political influence by severing the Khuzestani Arab population from Iran, and establish Iraqi sovereignty by achieving national unity (ARI, 2007 p. 404). Saddam Hussein launched an attack against Iran on September 1, 1980, seeing a weak Iran in the midst of domestic disarray. Iraq's early-war domination of the conflict was short-lived, notwithstanding the occupation of some Iranian territory in the south. The invasion that was carried out in 1981 gave Iran its territory back, and in 1982, Iranian forces began to advance on Basra (ARI, 2007, p. 406). An eight-year war that resulted from the invasion was protracted, violent, and ultimately fruitless, leaving well over a million people dead or injured (ARMAOGLU, 1991b, pp. 29-31). The battle ended on July 3, 1988, when Iran complied with UN resolution 598 (ARI, 2007, p. 409). Although the war was ended in 1988, Iran and Iraq never had a real peace.

First Gulf War of 1990 and the Iranian Policy

The balance in the region changed with Iraq's attack on Kuwait on August 2, 1990, claiming it as part of Iraq. Iran unequivocally denounced the invasion of Kuwait and supported the UN resolutions demanding that Iraq remove its forces from Kuwait without delay. The crisis' most significant result for Iran was that Saddam had to unconditionally accept the terms of the 1975 Algeria Treaty—the reason the eight-year conflict began—in order to secure Iran's border and install troops from the Iranian fore to the Kuwaiti front (CETINSAYA, 2002, pp.

302-304). Throughout the conflict, Iran maintained its position of neutrality. While Iran did not object to the US-led Coalition Forces' engagement, it was worried about the US forces' protracted presence in the region. The US-led ground assault began on February 24, 1991. Iraqi soldiers were driven out of Kuwait and soundly defeated within 100 hours. Iraq significantly weakened as a result of the intervention, and the Iraqi army entirely vacated the Iranian territory it had not left following the Iran-Iraq War. Following these events, Iran's position in the region strengthened, and it was able to negotiate a deal with Iraq that allowed them to return to the Shatt al-Arab on their own terms. Yet Iran did not take the lead in the Gulf following the defeat of its main regional rival, as the war unlocked access for the world's only superpower, the US. More than before, US policy became the main factor influencing relations between Iran and Iraq. Throughout the decade that followed the First Gulf War, Iran and Iraq cooperated on a few subjects to face their shared challenges in response to US policy in the region. Iran and Iraq were just adversarial neighbours who occasionally banded together to confront a common threat posed by an external force.

Second Gulf War of 2003 and the Iranian Policy

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US, Iran and Iraq saw an increase in US jingoism as the US viewed them as two of its top foreign policy priorities. Iran and Iraq were designated as major adversaries in the War on Terror by George W. Bush, branding them as an "axis of evil" in his State of the Union speech on January 29, 2002 (WOOLLEY AND PETERS, 2004). Under the "axis of evil" doctrine, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were declared to be the adversaries of world peace. Accordingly, the US possesses the lawful authority to mandate or coerce them to alter their conduct. In light of this, the US legalized its meddling in the Middle East following 9/11 under the pretext of combating terrorism. In the following months, Iran-Iraq relations improved in the face of the US impotence. Early in 2002, both Iran and Iraq swapped hundreds of soldiers' remains from the Iran-Iraq War, and Iran freed 700 Iraqi prisoners of war (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2002).

Iran devised a two-pronged approach to oppose US policies in the months before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The first was to oppose publicly the US military intervention in Iraq.

To carry out this mission, Iran made use of its diplomatic connections with Iraq and other countries in the region. Kemal Kharrazi, the foreign minister of Iran, visited Istanbul on January 23, 2003, to have meetings with counterparts from Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003A). In the end, Iran's diplomatic approach was unsuccessful.

Iranian President Khatami said on March 21, 2003, a day after the invasion, "We have opposed this move from the outset, and today we again clearly condemn this military attack" (PAYVAND'S IRAN NEWS, 2003). Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, the Supreme Leader remarked, "The US claims that its objective is the elimination of Saddam and the Ba'athist regime. This is, of course, a lie. Its real aim is to appropriate OPEC and to swallow up the region's oil resources, to offer a closer support to the Zionist regime and to plot more closely against Islamic Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia..." (BODANSKY, 2003).

Second, Iran made a number of noteworthy early preparations to secure a significant role for itself in post-Saddam Iraq. Tehran hosted a meeting with a number of Iraqi opposition leaders in January 2003 who were working with the US, including well-known invasion proponent Ahmed Chalabi, to devise plans for a post-Saddam Iraq. Following a meeting with Iranian officials, over a dozen exiled leaders of the Iraqi opposition devised plans to enter northern Iraq. Iran promised to help the exiled Iraqis by granting them entry via its border into the Kurdish Autonomous Region (SCIOLINO, 2003). Another summit for the leaders of the Iraqi Shi'ite opposition was held in Tehran on March 6, 2003. The goal of the summit was to strengthen Shi'ite unity in post-Ba'athist Iraq (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003b). Iraqis' frequent meetings in Tehran serve as evidence of Iran's partial involvement in the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime. Although Iran supported Saddam Hussein's demise, it did not want the US to gain an advantage at his price. Similar to the First Gulf War, Iran adopted a stance that backed the US's end aim but not its methods. Iran was uneasy about the idea that US soldiers stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq would trap them in a massive vice. Despite Iran's concerns, the invasion gave Iran's closest supporters in Iraq the chance to take control of Baghdad. Iran thus faced threats and opportunities together as a result of the Second Gulf War in 2003.

Iran-Iraq Relations after the Fall of Saddam Hussein

The historical hostilities between Iran and Iraq have drastically shifted with the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and with the ascendancy of Shi'ite majority in Iraq's political and economic spheres. Both the countries seem at their most amicable relations in the history. The two countries' relations have greatly improved due to the quick growth of business links and the flow of commodities, products, and people across the border, where violent conflicts were waged in the 1980s. Iraqi Politicians now often visit Tehran, and Iranian officials visit Baghdad. In addition to improved elite relations, cross-cultural and cross-religious interaction also enhanced. Every year, thousands of Iranians visit the Shi'ite holy sites of Najaf and Karbala in southern Iraq; Iraqis also travel to Mashhad, Qom,

and other sacred locations within Iran. For example, in the summer of 2006, Iranian consulates in Baghdad, Basra, and Najaf granted about 3,000 visas every day to pilgrims from Iraq (BARZEGAR, 2008).

Iran and Iraq had begun a new chapter of better relations after the coalition forces returned power to the Iraqi leaders. High-ranking officials from both sides conducted an unprecedented number of visits, stopped supporting each other's opposition groups, and adopted a warmer attitude to highlight the new relationship. Iran has vigorously worked to increase its political influence and economic assistance through both diplomatic and military measures, taking advantage of Iraq's unstable political environment and vulnerable security. On August 4, 2003, Iran was the first Iraq's neighbour country to send a team to meet with the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) (NASR, 2006, p. 2). The IGC sent a delegation led by Jalal Talabani on November 18, 2003, to meet with Iranian authorities. The meeting's main focus was on Iraq's derelict oil industry. According to Iranian authorities, they are prepared to receive up to 350,000 barrels of crude oil from Iraq each day, refine it, and sell it on the country's behalf (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003c). IGC delegate Muwaffaq al-Rubay'i gave an explanation of his extensive agenda for the meeting:

We want to establish tourist relations, exchange visits, and have cultural, economic and security relations to consolidate the situation at the border. We also want industrial relations to coordinate our foreign policies... [We want the] relationship between [the] new Iraq and Iran to be a model for Iraq's new relations with its neighbors and the other countries of the world (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003c).

Iran pledged to donate \$300 million to support Iraqi reconstruction efforts (FELTER AND FISHMAN, 2008 p. 39), and the two countries swapped ambassadors. The Interim Government was replaced in May 2005 by the Iraqi Transitional Government through election. Shi'ite parties performed remarkably well in the January 2005 parliamentary elections, nearly securing a majority in the newly elected legislature. Kemal Kharrazi, the foreign minister of Iran, travelled to Baghdad on May 17, 2005, to congratulate Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, the newly elected prime minister of Iraq. Additionally, Kharrazi was the first Middle Eastern minister to visit Baghdad after the 2003 invasion. Within two months of Kharrazi's visit, Iraqi officials made high-profile visits to Tehran. Ibrahim Ja'afari, the prime minister of Iraq, paid a visit to Tehran on July 16, 2005. A number of noteworthy agreements came from his discussions with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president-elect, President Khatami, and Supreme Leader Khamenei. Iran offered to finance the newly elected Iraqi government up to \$1 billion and encouraged the building of a network of pipes between Abadan and Basra (KATZMAN, 2007 p. 5). Two countries also decided to reopen consulates in Iraq's primarily Shi'ite towns, including Karbala and Basra. In addition to the concrete outcomes of the discussions, Prime

Minister al-Ja'afari made a number of first-time remarks while in Iran, which enhanced their significance. He claimed responsibility on behalf of Iraq for initiating the Iran-Iraq War, something Saddam Hussein strongly denied (KATZMAN, 2007, p. 5). Jalal Talabani, the president of Iraq, made his first visit to Iran in November 2005. Following his November 21, 2005, meeting with Talabani, Ahmadinejad declared his support for the new Iraqi government: "A popular, independent and developed Iraq will be the best friend of the Iranian nation. We totally support the political process that the Iraqi nation is undergoing that will... guarantee its territorial integrity, independence and progress" (BBC NEWS, 2005). With almost 53% of the seats in the parliamentary elections held in December 2005, the pro-Iranian Shi'ite coalition United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) emerged victorious and established the permanent government of Iraq. During the first fifteen months of their terms in the permanent government of Iraq, both President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki made at least five trips to Iran. During these visits, several agreements were signed on issues like border migration, intelligence sharing, the pipeline project that would transport crude oil between Abadan and Basra, clearing mines, and jointly searching for soldiers who were lost in the Iran-Iraq War (KATZMAN, 2010a p. 10). Iraqi officials expressed their confidence that they could resolve disputes with other neighbours by using their relationship with Iran (BBC NEWS, 2007).

In March 2008, Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, made his state visit to Iraq as the first Iranian leader since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. An agreement on military cooperation was signed between Iraq and Iran, along with six other accords covering customs procedures, insurance, industry, environmental protection, education, and transportation (KATZMAN, 2010a p. 10). Concurrently, Iran declared the granting of \$1 billion in credits for Iranian exports to Iraq (which complemented the \$1 billion credit granted in 2005). Iraqi officials have supported Iran's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program while they are against Iran obtaining nuclear weapons (REUTERS, 2006). The US and Iraq agreed to withdraw coalition soldiers from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009, and from all remaining Iraqi land by December 31, 2011, when they signed the Status of Soldiers Agreement (SOFA). Iraq gave the Iranians the guarantees they were looking for. Al-Maliki previously assured the Iranians he intended to make the US military leave and that he would "not allow Iraq to become a platform for harming the security of Iran and neighbours" (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2008). Camp Ashraf, which was taken over by members of the Iranian dissident organization Mujahedin Khalq Organisation (MKO), was given until April 11, 2011, by the Iraqi government, to leave the country (REUTERS, 2011). Agreements to extradite convicts were signed on April 24, 2011, by Hassan al-Shammari, the justice minister of Iraq, and Morteza Bakhtiari, the justice minister of Iran. The accord permits MKO members to be extradited to Iran to stand

trial (PRESS TV, 2011). The 1975 Algiers Accord's provisions for defining land and sea borders are now accepted by both countries.

Economically, Iraq and Iran have established wide-ranging ties since 2003. Trade between the two countries has amplified tenfold since 2003, reaching \$8 billion in 2010 (Reuters, 2010a; Karim, 2010)). Iran has also led a number of Iraqi rehabilitation initiatives. A number of legislation aimed at strengthening inter-regional business contacts were developed, and the border trade between the two countries has expanded. Iran was awarded a \$1.5 billion contract to support the reconstruction of the city of Basra on February 20, 2009. An Iranian construction company consented to construct three hotels and over 5,000 homes (FARS NEWS, 2008; EVANS, 2009). While the \$150 million power plant in Shi'ite Sadr City was constructed by the Iranian company Saner, an agreement worth \$230 million was reached with the Iranian corporation ISP to develop schools in Iraq (REUTERS, 2010). The Basra Investment Commission in southern Iraq authorized the establishment of a free trade zone with Iran on April 14, 2010. A private company is expected to invest about \$16 million in the zone over the course of the next 25 years (IRAQ BUSINESS NEWS, 2010). The Legislative Council member for Iraqi Kurdistan, Ali Khorshid, declared on April 19, 2010, that trade between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan reached \$4 billion in 2010 (FARS NEWS, 2010a). On June 14, 2010, Iran's Oghab Afshan Industrial and Manufacturing Company (OAIMC) pledged to produce 300 buses for export to Iraq (FARS NEWS, 2010b). A contract was reached between Iran and Iraq on January 25, 2010, whereby Iran committed to exporting about 19,000 barrels of diesel oil to Iraq daily. Speculators estimated the deal's potential value to be between \$500 and \$600 million (REUTERS, 2010b). A \$10 billion natural gas agreement was struck in 2011 by Iraq, Iran, and Syria, wherein the three parties committed to building a pipeline that would start in southern Iran and conclude in Syria. Iranian authorities said that the pipeline will eventually pass through Lebanon and into the Mediterranean. At first, 20 million cubic meters would be sent to Iraq daily, and 20 to 25 million to Syria (AFP, 2011). Iran and Iraq reached a deal on May 23, 2011, allowing Iran to provide natural gas to power plants in Iraq. Accordingly, Iraq would be able to buy 25 million cubic meters of gas per day to run its facilities in the Baghdad suburbs to the northeast (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2011). Thus, Iran has extensively strengthened its ties with Post-Saddam Iraq through diverse means approaches.

Iranian Policy Strategy towards Post-Saddam Iraq

The fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 has presented a historic opportunity for Iran to increase its influence in Iraq and to improve relations. The important aspect

of Iran's policy during this time of transition was to transform Iraq from a historical threat to a future cooperative partner (WANG, 2007, p. 70). Iran, as a major player in the Middle East, certainly wants to establish its own security environment and expand its sphere of influence there. After being confined for so many years by the Arab countries led by Iraq, Iran is now in a good position to reclaim its leading role in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. To attain this aim, Iran has redesigned its policy strategy towards post-Saddam Iraq to build an extensive friendly relationship with Iraq and to influence the political structure in Iraq to Iran's favour by promising the political triumph of pro-Iranian politicians in Iraq. Since the number of Shi'ites in Iraq almost guaranteed Shi'ite domination of an elected government, Iran suited its interests to encourage the admission of Iraqi Shi'ite factions into the electoral process. Iran had a key role in the formation of the UIA, a Shi'ite Islamist alliance that includes the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), the Da'wa party, and the group led by the cleric Moqtada Al Sadr. This coalition won 128 out of 275 seats in the full-term parliament election held on December 15, 2005. Iran has also significantly reduced supporting the Shi'ite militia activity in Iraq. As of early 2009, according to the US Defense Department, "Tehran has selectively reduced the number of militants it supports" (KATZMAN, 2010b, p. 2). This US judgment has persisted throughout the course of the following years. According to Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, there has been a noticeable decrease in the entry of explosive devices from Iran to Iraq (KATZMAN, 2010b, p. 4). Iran has managed to avoid fresh conflicts with its Arab neighbours and prevent the emergence of new security challenges in the region by playing a moderate and well-balanced role in post-Ba'athist Iraq. Iran, therefore, has adopted both pragmatic and ideological appliances in regulating its policy towards Iraq. On the one hand, Iran has made an effort to counter the perceived US threat in times of insecurity by supporting friendly Shi'ite groups. On the other hand, Iran has attempted to counteract the detrimental effects of Iraq's ideological, ethnic, and sectarian divides on Iran's national security by highlighting the country's unity. Thus, Iran has been keenly aware of its multi-dimensional interests in Iraq and has pursued a broad strategy to secure them. A number of geopolitical, economic, strategic, regional and international considerations persuaded Iran to develop this policy strategy towards post-Saddam Iraq.

Impact of Historical Events on Iran's Foreign Policy

Historically, Iran has been facing invasions and security threats from neighbouring countries due to its geo-strategic location in the Middle East. From the Allied occupation during World War II all the way up to the invasion of Iraq in 1980. Iran's pragmatic security policies towards its neighbours have been greatly

impacted by threats arising from its borders. A long-term pattern of Iranian pragmatic security strategy towards Iraq has been uncovered by three pivotal periods: the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and subsequent Iraq-Iraq War in 1980–1988, and the First Gulf War in 1991. Iran viewed the Soviet Union as a greater threat under Muhammad Reza Shah, who countered it by allying with the US and signing the Baghdad Pact. While Iraq fell into the Soviet sphere of influence, Iran became one of the US allies against Soviet expansion in the Middle East. During this time, the historical animosities between Iran and Iraq combined with these external alliances widened the rift between the two countries. With the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Iran severed ties with the US evaluating it as a threat to their regime. On the other hand, ideological disagreements prevented Iran from moving closer to the Soviet Union. Iran chose a "neither East nor West" foreign policy strategy in response to challenges from both superpowers. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the creation of sovereign border states in Central Asia, Iran's northern border was no longer threatened by a superpower. But US-Iranian ties had deteriorated much worse, and Iran felt even more vulnerable in this new unipolar world (TAROCK, 1999 p. 62). Iran observed that even though Iraq attacked it initially during the 1980–1988 War, Iraq received support from other countries whereas Iran did not. Iraq instigated another regional crisis when it invaded Kuwait in 1990. An imminent threat to Iran was removed with Iraq's defeat and subsequent containment by a coalition led by the US. However, the US military presence in the region posed a bigger threat to Iran. All these historical experiences, combined with Iran's sensitivity to foreign interference and consistent regional threats, significantly impacted the designing of the country's foreign policy strategy today (TAROCK, 1999, p. 4).

Secure Neighbourhood and Regional Stability

Iran has paid a heavy price over the last few decades for living in a volatile neighbourhood. The core of Iran's unstable and insecure backyard is the ongoing sectarian conflict and instability across its western border (Iraq), unstable states in the east (Afghanistan and Pakistan), transforming states in the north (Central Asia and the Caucasus), and authoritarian regimes that rely on security in the south and the Persian Gulf. An unstable atmosphere might intensify local rivalries, military conflicts, crises, and eventually the deployment of foreign troops. Iran is devoting a significant amount of its political and economic stamina to fending off these many challenges from the region. The necessity to constantly retain a powerful military to protect Iran's national borders is ingrained in this dimension of Iran's national security demands (ALAM, 2003). Without reaping the benefits that come with maintaining regional stability, Iran is paying a heavy price.

Though the removal of Saddam from Iraq reduced the conventional military threat, new security threats centred on the development of insecurity and uncertainty, ethnic geopolitical enmities, religious and civil war, and the chance of territorial disintegration have developed. Building strong ties and collaboration at the state level is necessary to address these issues (BARZEGAR, 2008). Tensions have arisen both domestically and regionally as a result of the existence of three independent identities, such as Kurdish, Sunni, and Shi'ite, and the problem of how to balance them. However, Iran also realized that backing a centralized government in Baghdad would stop ethnic and sectarian strife from spreading outside of Iraq, particularly after that country's sectarian violence in 2006. Spreading insecurity in Iraq would mean insecurity for Iran (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2007; THE JERUSALEM POST, 2006). A stable and secure Iraq means stable and secure borders for Iran. With this perspective, Iran's policy towards Iraq shifted from a hard strategy of mostly providing covert military backing to different Shi'ite militias to a soft strategy of influence, with the main goal being to influence Iraq's political and economic affairs. Thus, establishing a secure, stable, and balanced Iraq and preserving its territorial integrity has become one of Iran's foreign policy priorities to relieve itself from regional instability and secure Iran's interests in the region.

Preventing Future Security Threat

Iran has seen several invasions and threats across its borders in the north, west, and east throughout its history. Iran has experienced threats from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Iraq under Saddam Hussein. The national Iranian psyche has been profoundly impacted by generations of foreign threats. Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein's regime was no longer a threat, Iran saw how his alleged threat of chemical and biological weapons failed to stop the US from launching a pre-emptive strike (BOWEN AND KIDD, 2004: 265). Iran's paranoia has also grown as a result of the Bush administration's "axis of evil" rhetoric and intention to change the Iranian regime (BOWEN AND KIDD, 2004, p. 26). The security of Iran is seriously threatened by the US military's presence in the region. Therefore, Iran's engagement in Iraq is aimed at preventing future security challenges. By supporting those political organizations in Iraq that are more amiable towards Iran, Tehran has tried to persuade Baghdad to play the role of a strategic partner in the region. Iran establishes good relations with Iraq to reduce potential threat perceptions (NAGHIBZADEH, 2002). The establishment of positive ties with Iraq could also assist Iran's efforts in harmonizing its role and power with the rest of the Arab world.

To Establish a Shi'ite-Led Iran-Friendly Government in Iraq

After Saddam, one of Iran's most crucial geopolitical objectives in Iraq is to support the rise of pro-Iranian political groups with Shi'ite leaderships to come into power. Iran prefers a central Iraqi government that will be powerful enough to hold the country together, but not so strong as to pose a threat to Iran and be relied upon to maintain friendly relations and ready to lessen US influence in the region (POUND, 2004). In this respect, Iran desires to have a Shi'ite-dominated government in Iraq, because they believe that Shi'ites don't fight the Shi'ites. Iran realized that Shi'ites dominated Iraq will be a reliable neighbour for Iran to secure its political, strategic and economic interests (SINKAYA, 2007, p. 56). Iran strongly desires of preventing an anti-Tehran government from coming to power in Iraq. Iran came to the conclusion that, as Iraqi Shi'ites make up 60% of the population, the best way to guarantee their dominance in a post-Saddam Iraq was to encourage general elections. Iran supported the national elections held in 2005 and worked hard to form UIA with the major Shi'ite groups. The UIA won the victory in the election and formed the government. After the polls, Iran applauded its outcome (COLE, 2005). The main strategic objectives have been, first, to assist in the establishment of an Iranian-friendly government in Baghdad, and second, to prevent Iraq from reclaiming the military might of the Ba'athist period or to stop Iraq from becoming a base for potential US military operations. Iran hopes to erase the long-standing label of Iraq as its counterweight in the Persian Gulf by converting it into a friendly state and establishing a "balance of interests" in the new relationship.

To Deter US Hegemony in the Region

One of the fundamental objectives of Iranian strategy toward Iraq is to challenge perceived encirclement by the US and to deter US hegemony in the region. Following 9/11, the Bush administration's regional strategy has centred on pursuing a "regime change" agenda, forging hostile regional coalitions against Iran, and isolating Iran in its geopolitical domain (WOOLLEY AND PETERS, 2004). As a result of the political and security events in post-Saddam Iraq, Iran is faced with security concerns due to the US military presence near its borders, along with the potential for additional US military bases and US aims and strategies in the region. Despite Iran's deep relief at the fall of the Taliban and Saddam governments, there remained a feeling that a new and perhaps more dangerous security threat had taken their place (KHALILZAD, 2008). This has enforced Iran to confront the US in the region. Iran views, even the US, if not with the intention of overthrowing the regime, uses the threat to put pressure on Iran to stop its alleged nuclear weapons program and its

backing for Hizbullah and other anti-Israel organizations. Iran, therefore, fears that if the US genuinely succeeds in its endeavour in Iraq, Washington would take note of the advantages of regime change and try to implement it elsewhere in the East. Instead, Iran wants a powerful, nationalist, legitimate, Iran-friendly government in Baghdad so that the US will leave the region as soon as possible (Murphy, 2005). One significant Iranian tool to counter US hegemony could be the political dominance of Shi'ites in Iraq. It is in Iran's best interest to make sure that Washington's success in Iraq depends on collaboration with the Shi'ites, therefore lessening the US's capacity to exert pressure on Iran in other issues. Thus, establishment of friendly and cooperative relations with Iraq is also aimed at deterring the US hegemony in the region.

Spreading Influence across the Permeable Borders

Iran and Iraq have shared a long porous border, which has been a major source of contention between the two countries. Since Shi'ite beliefs originated in Iraq, Iranian pilgrims have historically been there to visit the holy shrines. Some have even married and established families after staying to attend one of the religious institutions. Since 2003, the number of Iranian pilgrims entering Iraq has been gradually rising. Many Iranians have relatives in Iraq and vice versa. Scientific and cultural exchanges have also increased. Trade and investment have flourished in certain sectors due to Iranian entrepreneurs seeking to capitalize on new prospects. Iranians have a long history of participating in charitable contributions, mainly supporting the preservation and development of sacred places. The border area of southern Iraq has seen a notable increase in Iranian influence, where Iran is sponsoring infrastructure projects, including schools and clinics. "Iranian influence is everywhere. Iranian money is being pumped in; pictures of Khomeini are common, even in government buildings. In many places, Persian seems to be the lingua franca rather than Arabic" (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 15).

Cross-border smuggling, an endemic occurrence in any age, has gotten worse in the absence of robust border controls enforced by the Iraqi government. Thus, there is a good chance that fighters and weapons may transit. Furthermore, Iran is said to have infiltrated the ranks of pilgrims with intelligence operatives (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 13). King Abdullah of Jordan alleged that in order to foster a pro-Iranian public mood, Iran has been giving unemployed Iraqis benefits and salaries (WRIGHT AND BAKER, 2004). Thus, the establishment of control over the porous border region has become one of the priorities of Iran in Iraq to secure its geopolitical interest and increase its regional influence.

To Preserve Leverage in Kurdistan and Maintain Stability in Iran's Kurdish Community

Iran and Iraq have a mutual interest in keeping the country from disintegrating due to war, insurgency, or secession. Iran's Kurdish community is composed of trans-border ethnic and tribal groups that have strong cultural and family bonds with the Kurds in Iraq. The main Kurdish parties in Iraq have had a conflicted relationship with both the Tehran and Baghdad regimes; they trust neither but occasionally feel compelled to turn against the other. The Kurdish community in northern Iraq was Iran's strategic partner against the Baghdad government throughout the 20th century. During the Barzani uprising in 1974–1975, Iraq's Kurds depended on Iranian assistance; nevertheless, the uprising was put down after the Shah withdrew his support following the agreement with Saddam Hussein. Kurdish groups allied with Iran in the 1980s Iran-Iraq war to press for a better arrangement with the Iraqi government. However, they were punished severely after the war ended (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 1995). Following the chemical assault on Halabja in March 1988 and the subsequent repression of the Kurdish uprising in April 1991, Iran provided support to Kurdish groups in Iraq (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 19).

Iran's strategy changed with the fall of the Saddam regime, which was the common opponent of Iran and the Kurds in Iraq. Iran wanted an Iraq during the Saddam era with a weak central authority, but following Saddam's overthrow, Iran now wants an Iraq with a strong central government and preserved territorial integrity. Siding with the Coalition Forces against Saddam, the Iraqi Kurds became the new ally of the US in the region (BAHCHELI AND FRAGISKATOS, 2008, p. 76). Thus, the traditional collaboration between Iran and the Iraqi Kurds lost its validity. However, Iran's main concern now is the Iraqi Kurds' growing demands for independence, which have an impact on the Iranian Kurds (ARIKAN, 2006 p. 176). The disintegration of Iraq may fortify transnational coalitions against the Iranian regime in its entirety. The Iranian Kurds are very much influenced by what is happening in the Kurdistan of Iraq and Turkey. A Kurdish state may, thus, unite Iranian Kurds or give them the confidence to look for a significantly better deal within Iran. Iran, therefore, worried about the possible influence of an independent Kurdish state on its own Kurdish populace. Iran has been supporting the Kurdish leadership's drive for suitable political demonstrations in Baghdad, hoping to discourage Iraqi Kurds from pursuing independence (International Crisis Group, 2005: 10). To put it another way, Iran is trying to bring Kurdish-leaning Iraqi players into the fold of the central state rather than confronting them. To safeguard its strategic interests, Iran also expanded economic relations with the Kurds. Cross-border trade has flourished; scores of contracts are signed with Iranian private companies. Iran has become the most significant

trade partner of the Regional Kurdish Administration (BAHCHELI AND FRAGISKATOS, 2008, p. 78). Iran's principal expectation is that the Kurds in Iraq would neither demand independence nor incite their Iranian counterparts to demand more autonomy (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 19).

Iran's Religious-Political Interest in Iraq

Although Persian-speaking Iran and Arabic-speaking Iraq are very different from one another in terms of language and culture, they are connected by the shared religion of Shi'ite Muslims. In Iran, Shi'ite Muslims make up 89% of the entire population, while in Iraq, they make up around 60–65% of the population (CIA, 2003). Interaction between the Shi'ite communities of Iran and Iraq has always been significant. The holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq have been the centre of Shi'ite learning and theological education for centuries. Many of Iran's clerics have studied there, and the sacred sites are frequently visited by hundreds of thousands of Iranian pilgrims (BYMAN ET AL., 2001, p. 57).

In terms of religious-political ideology, a significant portion of Iraqi Shi'ites support Khomeini's vilayat-i faqih, which currently governs Iran. For instance, Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr, the head of one of the two major Iraqi Shi'ite "camps" Jamaat Al-Sadr Al-Thani (the Sadr II movement), holds similar opinions. Sadr "...calls on Shi'ite spiritual leaders to play an active role in shaping Iraq's political future" (BBC NEWS, 2003). The Dawa Party's president, Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr, encouraged the Shi'ite resistance in Iraq by endorsing Khomeini and his revolution (ARMAOGLU, 1991a, pp. 775-777). Even Shi'ite organizations who opposed vilayat-i faqih have positive relations with Iran. Iran has made an effort to cultivate harmonious ties with every Shi'ite group in Iraq. Iran's role was demonstrated on March 30, 2008, when it successfully mediated a conflict between the al Maliki administration and Shi'ite militants in Sadr City. Another excellent example is Iran's position and actions during the Basra crisis in March 2008 (HIRO, 2008). Iran has an interest in preserving its Shi'ite leadership role both worldwide and in Iraq. Many Shi'ite clergy members in Iraq have been greatly influenced by Iran's religious-political leadership role. Iran has attempted to influence Iraqi politics in order to install a Shi'ite-dominated government, while the Iraqi Shi'ites have also come to view Iran as a natural ally. Therefore, in order to strengthen their positions in the struggle for political dominance in Iraq, either the extreme right sect led by Ahmad Chalabi, the extreme left sect led by Moqtada al-Sadr, or the moderate sect led by Al-Sistani and Al-Hakim, attempt to cultivate an intimate connection with Iran and wish to depend on Iranian support (WANG, 2007, p. 71). Iran's role has been crucial in empowering the Shi'ite groups in Iraq's power distribution. As a result, the Shi'ites in Iraq have emerged as the main political force in the country since the overthrow of Saddam.

Concurrently, the Iranian government is focusing on depending on the Shi'ites in Iraq to prevent the US from threatening Iran (WANG, 2007, p. 72). Iran has also increased its soft power in the domains of information, religion, and the economy. Additionally, the Shi'ite groups have a long-term strategy of strengthening their strategic ties with Iran in order to balance their position of power within Iraq and to improve the relations of their government at the regional and international levels. Meanwhile, the leaders of the ISCI and Dawa party have deep emotional, intellectual, and organizational ties to Iran's executive political-security elites due to their extended stay in Iran during their exile. Only ISCI refrained from fighting on the side of the Ba'athist regime during the Iran-Iraq War (VISSER, 2008). Therefore, Iranians have faith and trust in these factions. Iran's objective is to unite all of Iraq's Shi'ite groups and to advance balanced relations with them so that they can translate their demographic weight into political influence, thereby consolidating Shi'ite primacy in Iraq.

Iran's Economic Interest in Iraq

Iran has significant economic interests in Iraq. Hasan Qashqavi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament, claims Improving "Iran's economic relation with Iraq is something which can bring about growth and prosperity to the economies of both countries" (GUTZWILLER, 2004, p. 61). "Iran sees Iraq as a critical trading pipeline with the rest of the Middle East, from which it has been locked out for decades" according to Hasan Qashqavi (GUTZWILLER, 2004, p. 63). Iran is looking for a means to make up for the money it lost when its profitable oil smuggling business with Saddam Hussein's regime was shut down. Iran urgently needs to diversify its own economy and lower its inflation rate, as the country's export of petroleum products accounts for 80% of its foreign exchange revenues. Iran's average inflation rate from 1998 to 2002 was 15.6% (GUTZWILLER, 2004, p. 65). Increased trade with Iraq will support Iran in accomplishing the task. Iran launched an ambitious program to increase trade, media, tourism, and cross-border migration. It also made significant investments in power plants, hotels, schools, and the rehabilitation of southern Iraqi cities, including Basra, Karbala, and Najaf. During Ahmadinejad's 2008 visit, a \$1 billion credit for Iranian exports was announced, leading to an increase in overall export revenue to \$8 billion in 2010. Iran benefited largely from the balance of commercial and technological exchange brought forth by this new economic partnership. Through a massive economic and political infrastructure, Iran now seemed to be able to accomplish what it was unable to do during the war: establish itself beyond the Iraqi border, particularly into the country's religious centres.

Additionally, Iraq has become a popular travel destination for religious visitors from Iran. Iran spends tens of millions of dollars a year building and upgrading tourist attractions for its pilgrims. Hiro observed that “Iranian Shi’ite is pouring into Iraq, which has six holy Shi’ite sites, across the unguarded border. They are thus bolstering the Iraqi economy to the tune of about \$2 billion a year” (HIRO, 2004). Iranian merchants consider certain parts of Iraq, especially predominantly Shi’ite areas, to be ideal markets for Iranian exports. According to some estimates, the range of economic activity brings in around \$5 billion a year (KATZMAN, 2010a, p. 11). However, Iran’s enormous economic potential puts it in a prime position to meet the needs of the regional markets, opening doors for new and emerging Iranian companies and young industries. Iran has substantial interests in the regional economy, including the transit of energy sources, the geopolitics of pipelines and other energy transference sources, and meeting the demands of regional markets in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the Persian Gulf.

Conclusion

The historical hostility between Iran and Iraq was significantly altered in 2003 with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime in Iraq. Iran has since established cordial ties and adopted a cooperative strategy towards Iraq. As a result, political, economic, and cultural ties between Iran and Iraq have greatly improved. Iran’s policy toward Iraq immediately before and after the Second Gulf War of 2003 could be summarized with four strategies. First, Iran publicly opposed the US military intervention in Iraq, though Iran branded Saddam’s rule as a brutal regime (VAEIDI, 2003). Second, after the US invasion had begun, Iran said that it would remain impartial and not become engaged in the Iraqi crisis. At the same time, Iran said that it would prefer to actively participate in resolving the Iraqi crisis. Iran’s foreign minister declared the country to be “neutral but not indifferent” (BARZEGAR, 2005, p. 52). Third, Iran began preparing for post-Ba’athist Iraq in order to establish close ties with the newly elected Iraqi government following the war. Iran views post-Ba’athist Iraq as a potential ally to safeguard regional interests, especially to counter US hegemony, rather than as a threat. Fourth, Iran has made a significant effort to foster good ties with Iraq by putting a strong emphasis on social security, territorial integrity and stability in Iraq. Iran has been a major supporter of the electoral process in Iraq, hoping to include various ethnic and sectarian groups, particularly the Kurds and the Shi’ites, in the political power structure of the country. Iranian support for Iraqi Kurds is intended to prevent any possible instability among the Kurds of Iran. Iran has been fostering unity among the Shi’ite groups in Iraq and preserving cordial ties with all of them. With the goal of establishing security and territorial integrity in Iraq, Iran devised a cooperative strategy toward the Iraqi

government. Iran also bolstered the economic and commercial relations with Iraq. For Iran's economy, Iraq has grown to be a major destination for investment. Most of Iran's policy toward Iraq can also be viewed as pre-emptive to address the new political-security challenges in the region mainly created by the US military presence as well as geopolitical changes and shifting of security-political structure in Iraq. As a consequence, Iran and Iraq established their most amicable relationship in history.

Friendly relations with Iraq could relieve Iran's military and diplomatic burden in favour of economic development. As economic ties improve, interdependence will increase, and the potential for conflict between them will subsequently decrease. Iran has also found a way to strengthen its position in the Middle East. Iran should handle its comprehensive ties with Iraq through active interaction with the goal of maintaining the power balance in Iraq. A friendly Iraq should also look for cooperation with Iran. Furthermore, Iraq should work to resolve the challenges left by the war and work with Iran to resolve regional conflicts amicably. Iran's concern about the US strategy in the region should particularly be noted by Iraq. Iran needs to recognize that the establishment of a regional security framework would be unattainable without Iraq's active involvement. Iran, as a major player in the Gulf, should accept the regional position of Iraq and readjust its Iraq strategy in light of the changing circumstances following the War. Alternatively, without the cooperation of Iran, it is unlikely for Iraq to achieve any real security and stability in Iraq. Iran should assist Iraq in establishing a stable government in order to safeguard the national interests of both countries. The instability in Iraq could lead to the instability in Iran. Together, the two countries also have the opportunities to advance their oil project and improve collaboration in the OPEC. Both countries should also take the initiative to address outstanding issues, such as settling the Shatt al-Arab delineation, strengthening mutual land border control, ceasing to support groups that use violence against one another, fostering cross-border trade and cultural exchanges, and, in the end, formally terminating the state of war between them.

References

- AFP, 2011. Iraq, Iran sign natural gas agreement, 25 July. [online] Available at: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gvzWs8kqDo-papqC3Tc2O2zyYttiw?docId=CNG.bdfd412c79e6299f9001bd03821c3cad.331> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Agha, H.J. and Khalidi, A.S., 1995. *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and cooperation*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Alam, A., 2003. *The Diaries of Alam*. Tehran: Maziyar Publication.
- Ari, T., 2007. *Irak, Iran, ABD ve Petrol*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Alfa Basım Yayın Dagitım.

- Arikan, P., 2006. ABD'nin Irak'i Isgali ve İran'in Tutumu. In: M. Sahin and M. Tastekin, eds. *Körfez Savası II*. Ankara: Platin Yayınları.
- Armaoglu, F., 1991a. *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi (1914-1980)*, Vol. I, 7th ed. Ankara: Türkiye Bankasi Kültür Yayınları.
- Armaoglu, F., 1991b. *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi (1980-1990)*. Ankara: Türkiye Bankasi Kültür Yayınları.
- Associated Press, 2011. Iraq seeks Iranian gas for power generation, 23 May. [online] Available at: <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Iraq-seeks-Iranian-gas-for-apf-1708854785.html?x=0> [Accessed 16 June 2022].
- Ataman, M., 2010. Iran-Irak Üstünlük Mücadelesi: Çok Boyutlu Sorunlar. In: K. Inat, B. Duran and M. Ataman, eds. *Dünya Çatışmaları: Çatışma Bölgeleri ve Konuları*. 3rd ed. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, pp. 165–181.
- Bahcheli, T. and Fragistakos, P., 2008. Iraqi Kurdistan: Fending off uneasy neighbours. *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 2(1).
- Barzegar, K., 2008. Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq. *Middle East Policy*, 15(4). [online] Available at: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A191646581/AONE?u=anon~a8740e89&sid=googleScholar&xid=b8b533a3> [Accessed 15 August 2023].
- BBC News, 2003. Profile: Moqtada Sadr, 26 September. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3131330.stm [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- BBC News, 2005. Talabani trusts in Iran support, 21 November. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4457568.stm [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- BBC News, 2007. Iraq PM Maliki in Iran for talks, 8 August. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6936236.stm [Accessed 16 June 2022].
- Barzegar, K., 2005. Understanding the roots of Iranian foreign policy in the new Iraq. *Middle East Policy*, 12(1).
- Bodansky, Y., 2003. *Defense and Foreign Affairs Daily*. 24 February.
- Bowen, W.Q. and Kidd, J., 2004. The Iranian nuclear challenge. *International Affairs*, 80(2).
- Byman, D., et al., 2001. *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*. Santa Monica: RAND.
- Cetinsaya, G., 2002. Rafsanjani'den Hatemi'ye İran Dis Politikasına Bakışlar. In: M. Türkes and I. Uzel, eds. *Türkiye'nin Komsuları*. Ankara: Imge Kitapevi.
- CIA, 2003. *The World Fact Book 2003*. [online] Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Cole, J., 2005. Informed Comment, 16 February. [online] Available at: <http://www.juancole.com> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Hiro, D., 2008. Wining Iraq without losing to Iran. *Daily Times*, 25 April. [online] Available at: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/print.asp?page=2008\04\25\story_25-4-2008_pg3_6 [Accessed 13 June 2022].

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS POST-SADDAM IRAQ: AN ANALYSIS

- Hiro, D., 2004. Analysis: Iran's influence in Iraq. *BBC News*, 15 April. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3629765.stm [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Ehteshami, A. and Hinnebusch, R.A., 1997. *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*. New York: Routledge.
- Evans, M., 2009. Iranian builders win contracts in city that Shias helped to wreck. *The Times*, 20 February. [online] Available at: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article5769328.ece [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Fars News, 2008. Iran-Iraq trade set to increase, 12 August.
- Fars News, 2010a. Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan to boost trade exchanges, 14 April. [online] Available at: <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8901301380> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Fars News, 2010b. Iran to export 300 buses to Iraq, 14 June. [online] Available at: <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8903241542> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Felter, J. and Fishman, B., 2008. Iranian strategy in Iraq: Politics and other means. *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 13 October.
- Gutzwiller, R., 2004. Realpolitik and Iran's post-Saddam strategy for Iraq. *M.A. Thesis*, Naval Postgraduate School, California. [online] Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA424750.pdf> [Accessed 23 June 2022].
- Human Rights Watch, 1995. *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*. New Haven.
- International Crisis Group, 2005. Iran in Iraq: How much influence? *Middle East Report* No. 38, 21 March. [online] Available at: <https://www.ref-world.org/pdfid/425faa654.pdf> [Accessed 13 June 2023].
- Iraq Business News, 2010. Basra approves free trade-zone with Iran, 14 April. [online] Available at: <http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/?p=2472> [Accessed 13 June 2022]
- Ismael, T.Y., 1982. *Iraq & Iran: Roots of Conflict*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Karim, A., 2010. New Iran envoy says sanctions won't affect Iraq trade. AFP, 10 August. [online] Available at: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jM5IHbye-6CCQvdBDACQRwCMSpZA> [Accessed 11 May 2022].
- Katzman, K., 2007. Iran's influence in Iraq. *CRS Report for Congress*, 2 February.
- Katzman, K., 2010a. Iran-Iraq relations. *CRS Report for Congress*, 13 August. [online] Available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22323.pdf> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Katzman, K., 2010b. Iran-Iraq relations. *CRS Report for Congress*, 15 April. [online] Available at: https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20100415_RS22323_3b95cba8f4503b03cbc802924e7f39716aed8ff2.pdf [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Keskin, A., 2008. Iranian Kuzey Irak Politikasi: Iran ve Irakli Kurtler. [online] Available at: <http://www.turksam.org/tr/a1383.html> [Accessed 13 June 2022].

- Khalilzad, Z., 2008. Iran should be thankful to U.S., 2 February. [online] Available at: <http://www.panarmenian.net/news/eng/?nid=24729> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Murphy, D., 2005. Kurds emerge as power brokers. *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 February.
- Naghizadeh, A., 2002. Rectification of Iran's foreign policy shortcomings during Khatami's presidency. *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly*, 3(3), pp. 85–100.
- Nasr, V., 2006. When the Shiites rise. *Foreign Affairs*, July–August. [online] Available at: <http://www.mafhoum.com/press9/282S26.htm> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Payvand's Iran News, 2003. Khatami slams US 'aggression' in his Norouz message to Iranians, 21 March. [online] Available at: <http://www.payvand.com/news/03/mar/1115.html> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
- Press TV, 2011. Iran, Iraq agree to extradite criminals, 24 April. [online] Available at: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/176546.html> [Accessed 21 July 2023].
- Pound, E.T., 2004. The Iran connection. *US News and World Report*, 22 November.
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2002. Iran Report: January 28, 2002. [online] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342767.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2003a. Iran Report: January 27, 2003. [online] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342718.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2003b. Iran Report: March 10, 2003. [online] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342723.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2003c. Iraq Report: November 20, 2003. [online] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1343148.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2008. Iraq: Al-Maliki seeks to reassure Iran, 8 June. [online] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144580.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Ramazani, R.K., 1988. *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East*. Baltimore.
- Reuters, 2006. Iran has right to peaceful nuclear work, 26 March. [online] Available at: <http://news.oneindia.in/2006/05/26/iran-has-right-to-peaceful-nuclear-work-iraq-1148641765.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Reuters, 2010a. Iran exports to Iraq to pass \$8 billion in 2010: Official, 25 April. [online] Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE63O11U20100425> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Reuters, 2010b. Iran to sell diesel to Iraq despite U.S. sanctions, 25 January. [online] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/Iran To Sell Diesel To Iraq Despite US Sanctions/1938770.html> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Reuters, 2011. Iraq sets deadline to dismantle Iran exile camp, 11 April. [online] Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/04/11/uk-iraq-iran-ashraf-idUK-TRE73A6YA20110411> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Rousu, D., 2010. Beyond the Shatt Al-Arab: How the fall of Saddam Hussein changed Iran-Iraq relations. *Unpublished Master's Thesis*, University of Arizona Near Eastern Studies Graduate College.

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS POST-SADDAM IRAQ: AN ANALYSIS

- Sciolino, E., 2003. Iraqi dissidents meeting Iran to plan Iraq entry. *New York Times*, 26 January. [online] Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/26/international/middleeast/26IRAN.html> [Accessed 23 June 2022].
- Sinkaya, B., 2007. Sii Ekseni Tartismalari ve Iran. *Avrasya Dosyası*, 13(3).
- Tarock, A., 1999. *Iran's Foreign Policy Since 1990: Pragmatism Supercedes Islamic Ideology*. Commack: Nova Science.
- The Associated Press, 2007. Iran's spiritual leader OKs talks on Iraq, 17 May. [online] Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna18704477> [Accessed 23 June 2023].
- The Jerusalem Post, 2006. Ahmadinejad: Iraq's security is Iran's security, 12 September. [online] Available at: <https://www.jpost.com/iranian-threat/news/ahmadinejad-iraqs-security-is-irans-security> [Accessed 23 June 2023].
- Vaeidi, J., 2003. Exemplary war. *The Diplomatic Hamshahri (Farsi daily)*, No. 2, December.
- Visser, R., 2008. Maliki, Hakim, and Iran's role in the Basra fighting, 9 April. [online] Available at: <http://www.historiae.org> [Accessed 23 June 2022].
- Wang, B., 2007. The Iraq war and the new Iran-Iraq relations. *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 1(1).
- Woolley, J.T. and Peters, G., 2004. Address before a joint session of the Congress on the state of the Union. *The American Presidency Project*. [online] Available at: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/211969> [Accessed 23 June 2023].
- Wright, R. and Baker, P., 2004. Iraq, Jordan see threat to election from Iran. *The Washington Post*, 8 December. [online] Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/12/08/iraq-jordan-see-threat-to-election-from-iran/7e0cc1bc-aeb3-447a-bc9e-cfa5499699bc/> [Accessed 23 June 2023].