

Poble Dmytro Kostyantynovich
Sinovets Polina Andriyivna
Tsyberman Anastasiia Volodymyrivna

A retrospective of Iranian-Iraqi diplomacy against the backdrop of the geopolitical situation in the region

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Poble Dmytro Kostyantynovich
Assistant Professor at the Department
of International Relations
Odesa I. I. Mechnokov National University
Frantsuzkyi Blvd, 24/26, Odesa, Ukraine
ORCID: 0000-0001-5898-3343

Sinovets Polina Andriyivna
PhD in Political Sciences,
Assistant Professor at the Department
of International Relations
Odesa I. I. Mechnokov National University
Frantsuzkyi Blvd, 24/26, Odesa, Ukraine
ORCID: 0000-0002-5521-7982

Tsyberman Anastasiia Volodymyrivna
Bachelor of International Relations
Odesa I. I. Mechnokov National University
Frantsuzkyi Blvd, 24/26, Odesa, Ukraine

The primary purpose of the study is to analyze the evolution of Iranian-Iraqi relations in recent decades, taking into account key changes in their structure, the reasons for these transformations, and the impact of these relations on the overall geopolitical situation in the region, as well as the role of the diplomatic services of both countries. The scientific relevance of this topic stems from the fact that the Ukrainian academic and analytical literature covered this issue rather fragmentarily – a full-fledged, systematic analysis of the bilateral relations between these states in the context of changes in the geopolitical environment is lacking. This creates a need to generalize and critically rethink existing approaches, taking into account new sources – such as official diplomatic statements, analytical reviews of leading think tanks, expert publications, and interviews with political figures of countries, regional press, etc. The practical relevance of the work lies in studying the formation of relations between the two states, which can serve as valuable experience for Ukraine, in particular in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The main basic research method was used, such as event analysis, supported fragmentarily by historical, functional, geopolitical, and empirical methods. As a result, the study of the development of Iranian-Iraqi relations against the backdrop of current regional instability has demonstrated the multi-level nature of the interaction. Iraq, balancing between Iran and the United States, is forced to seek compromises to preserve its sovereignty and ensure internal stability. The expansion of Iranian influence is causing concern among Arab states and Israel, which increases the risks of regional polarization. At the same time, international actors retain an interest in the stability of Iraq, which opens up opportunities for diplomatic initiatives.

Key words: geopolitical situation, the role of diplomatic service, sovereignty, internal stability, the expansion of Iranian influence, international actors, multilateral dialogue.

Introduction. The topic of the selected study is “A Retrospective of Iranian-Iraqi Diplomacy against the Backdrop of the Geopolitical Situation in the Region”, which was chosen in connection with the dynamic transformations in bilateral relations between Iran and Iraq, which have a direct impact on the balance of power in the Middle East and the formation of regional security. Analysis of the role of the diplomatic service of both countries in the development of bilateral relations allows us to trace the main trends of cooperation and confrontation between the two states, as well as assess their role in the overall structure of international relations.

The analysis of Iranian-Iraqi interaction, in particular in the aspects of economic cooperation, military coordination, and the formation of regional alliances, can serve as a guideline for determining effective approaches to international interaction in conditions of geopolitical turbulence. Important in this context is Iran's approach to diplomacy, which, as Hassan Rouhani emphasized, is based not on the rejection of national interests but on constructive interaction with partners on the basis of equality and mutual respect for the purpose of jointly solving challenges and achieving strategic goals. This approach determined Tehran's foreign policy line in the region and its role in stabilizing the situation in Iraq and the Middle East in general. That is why the study of Iran as a stabilizing factor in the region is important for

the formation of analytical approaches in Ukrainian political science, contributing to the understanding of crisis management mechanisms and the construction of effective foreign policy strategies.

Aims and objectives. The study aims to analyze the role of diplomatic service throughout the evolution of Iranian-Iraqi relations in recent decades, taking into account key changes in their structure, the reasons for the transformations, and the impact of these relations on the general geopolitical situation in the region.

To conduct the aforementioned study, the following objectives were identified, namely:

- 1) to analyze the historical prerequisites of the conflicts between Iran and Iraq, in particular the Iran–Iraq War of 1980–1988;
- 2) to examine foreign policy changes in bilateral relations after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003;
- 3) to determine the role of the United States in the transformation of Iraqi statehood and its consequences for regional security;
- 4) to assess the political and economic rapprochement of Iran and Iraq after 2011 against the background of the fight against ISIS;
- 5) to examine the prospects for the development of relations between Iran and Iraq, taking into account current regional instability.

Materials and methods. The study is based on the texts of official documents, statements, communiqués of the Foreign Ministries of Iran and Iraq, UN Security Council resolutions, analytical materials of international think tanks, publications by national and international scientists, analytical reviews of the mass media, etc. The event analysis and fragmentary comparative method were applied to examine the sweeping foreign policy swings of two major players in regional politics in the Middle East during the last decades of the past century and the current decades of the current century, and broad feedback was received from scientists, politicians, and experts. In the preparation of this study, significant attention was devoted to analyzing the works of both foreign and domestic scholars who have examined the evolution of Iran–Iraq relations within the broader context of regional and global security. Among the most influential contributions are the following authors: Brzezinski Z., *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997), and Orhan D. D., *Iranian Foreign Policy Towards Iraq: An Analysis of Three Wars Between Ideology and Realism* (2019), both of which offer valuable insights into the strategic dimensions of the rivalry. Similarly, Parasiliti A. T. (1993) in *Iran and Iraq: Changing Relations and Future Prospects*, and Woods K. M. et al. (2009) in *Saddam's War: An Iraqi Military Perspective on the Iran-Iraq War*, all of them provide important historical perspectives on the conflicts between the two states.

Further analysis of post-war dynamics can be found in Wang B., *The Iraq War and the New Iran-Iraq Relations* (2007) and Takei R., *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs* (2009). More recent works, such as Rashid Y. (2021) on Iran's economic influence in Iraq, Menmy D. (2025) on Iraqi officials seeking stronger U.S. ties, and Azizi H. (2024) on the evolving structure of Iran's foreign policy, reflect ongoing transformations in the bilateral relationship.

Attention should also be paid to key documents of international diplomacy, including the UN Security Council Resolutions 598 (1987) and 661 (1990), which defined the legal and political framework for the post-conflict settlement. Ukrainian scholarship has also contributed to this field: Zavada Ya. and Tsebenko O. (2022) discuss Iran–Iraq relations in the context of regional security, while Dubinsky V. (2023) analyzes the main directions of Iran's foreign policy in light of contemporary geopolitical challenges. Likewise, Kiyanytsya V. (2022) explores the transformation of bilateral relations during the Saddam and post-Saddam periods, and Smorzhevskaya A. (2016) considers Iraq's place in Iran's foreign policy. Finally, Sinovets P. and Gergieva V. (2019) provide a broader European perspective in their work on the EU and the Iranian nuclear program.

Results and Discussions. The concept of “geopolitics” occupies a special place in the modern science of international relations, as it allows combining spatial, political, economic, and cultural factors in a single analytical framework. Its relevance has increased significantly in the post-bipolar world, when competition between states is no longer limited to military force or economic power. Geopolitics encompasses the complex interaction between the spatial characteristics of the territory and the ability of the state to project power—both within its own borders and beyond. In the modern sense, geopolitics not only fixes where the state is located but also analyzes how this position is used or, conversely, limits its influence. For example, countries that control sea straits often have significant leverage in global trade or security. The history of international affairs indicates that territorial control often has been the main core of a political conflict. “Empires were also built through the careful seizure and retention of vital geographic assets, such as Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, or Singapore, which served as key choke points or linchpins in a system of imperial control” [6, p. 37].

Geopolitics is especially important for the study of unstable regions, such as the Middle East. This space is home to key geographical features (the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, oil and gas fields, and transport corridors), as well as cultural and religious centers (Islamic shrines, and centers of Shiite spirituality). It is here that the interests of global players—the United States, Russia, China—are intertwined with regional powers: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel. In this region, any movement of military equipment, the opening or closing of a port, or the signing of an energy agreement—everything has geopolitical significance and affects the balance of power. At the same time, geopolitics in the 21st century is no longer just about space in the physical sense, as it was in classical theories. Modern geopolitics encompasses symbolic and cultural space, that is, the space of ideas in which states construct their vision of themselves and others. Political elites shape geopolitical narratives, particularly in speeches, state documents, and strategies through which they define “their” and “foreign” territories. In this sense, geopolitics also becomes a tool of ideology—it does not simply reflect the real state of affairs but creates images that influence decision-making. Therefore, the study of geopolitics also includes the analysis of rhetoric, language, historical analogies, and symbols used by states to substantiate their claims. It must incorporate a multidisciplinary approach, including political science, geography, history, and economics, to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of geography in world politics and the evolving nature of the geopolitical pattern in the contemporary world. [14, p. 2].

In promoting its interests in the implementation of foreign policy, each country emphasizes the intensification of the activities of its diplomatic service. If we compare the diplomatic services of the two Middle Eastern countries, the objects of the aforementioned study, it is possible to find some similarities in the declared functions of the foreign policy institutions of Iraq and Iran.

The Iraqi diplomatic service has the responsibility for representing the interests of Iraq abroad, maintaining comprehensive international relations, and protecting the rights and freedoms of Iraqi citizens outside the country; the diplomatic service of Iraq also participates actively in the activities of international organizations such as the UN, the League of Arab States, and other regional and international events and forums [7].

The Iranian diplomatic service, known as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has the responsibility to form and implement the country's foreign policy. The Iranian MFA is engaged in the development of comprehensive bilateral and multilateral relations, protecting the interests of Iranian citizens who are abroad, and ensuring the security of the state in the international arena. But among similar functions such as opening embassies and consulates, taking part in international negotiations, protecting the rights and freedoms of Iranian citizens abroad, gathering information about the international situation, and promoting Iranian interests all over the world, Iran is actively trying to form strategic alliances with countries that share its views on international issues, such as Russia and China. Iran has a significant influence on different politics in the Middle East, supporting groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and it gains the ability to influence conflicts in the region and strengthen its position in confrontation with such competitors as Saudi Arabia and Israel. The Iranian diplomatic service also deals with issues of sanctions that affect the country's economy—negotiations on the lifting or easing of sanctions are an important part of foreign policy [5]. Thus, the Iranian diplomatic service has a multifaceted approach to influencing international politics, taking into account both diplomatic and military means.

Returning to the recent retrospective of the fluctuations in the efforts of the diplomatic services of Iraq and Iran, it should be noted that in the early 1980s, the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East underwent significant transformations, largely due to the consequences of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The establishment of a theocratic regime in the center of the Muslim world not only radically changed the domestic political balance in Iran, but also had a direct impact on the balance of power in the region. Two key states that claimed regional dominance—Iran and Iraq—entered into a confrontation

motivated by both geopolitical and ideological factors. This struggle intertwined the interests of not only local actors, but also global state actors, including the USA, the USSR, and the countries of Western Europe, which sought to protect their strategic positions in the Persian Gulf [9, p. 394].

The Islamic Revolution in Iran posed a serious challenge to the ruling regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Given that a significant part of the Iraqi population—approximately 60%—was Shiite, Baghdad perceived the expansion of revolutionary Shiite ideology as a threat to the stability of its power. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, adopted on November 15, 1979, Iranian foreign policy was based on the concept of “exporting the revolution”, which, on the one hand, served as a tool for the spread of Shiite ideology, and on the other hand, was part of Tehran's geopolitical strategy aimed at establishing its regional leadership. In this context, Iran intensified its participation in international organizations and support for non-state actors that fought against the influence of the United States and its allies in the region [1, p. 61].

Initially, Iraq officially welcomed the Islamic Revolution in Iran, hoping for a possible rapprochement with the new government. However, when Tehran openly began to call on the Shiite population of Iraq for revolutionary change, the Ba'ath Party saw this as a direct threat. Given the internal unrest, the weakening of the Iranian armed forces after the revolution, and the desire to gain control of the strategically important region of Khuzestan, Saddam Hussein decided to launch a military attack on Iran [10].

At the initial stage of the war, the Iraqi forces had a significant advantage due to the factor of surprise and numerical superiority, especially in the southern region of Iran, where five Iraqi divisions opposed only one Iranian. After the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian armed forces suffered serious losses due to repression and purges among the officer corps, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had not yet acquired sufficient combat capability. In addition, due to the rupture of diplomatic relations with the United States, Iran experienced an acute shortage of spare parts for armored vehicles and aircraft, which significantly limited its military capabilities. However, already in the second half of 1981, the strategic initiative began to pass to Iran. As a result of large-scale counteroffensive operations conducted in March-May 1982, Iraqi troops suffered serious losses and were forced to retreat from most of the occupied territories [18, p. 10–11].

Starting in 1984, the so-called “Tanker War” began to escalate, becoming one of the key components of the conflict. In the Persian Gulf, both sides attacked oil tankers of third countries to undermine the economic potential of the opposing side by destroying

its export capabilities. In the period from 1987 to 1988, Iraq conducted active offensive operations, while Iran continued to adhere to the tactic of mass attacks by volunteers, which proved ineffective. As for the international community, it more actively called for an end to hostilities. The UN Security Council adopted in July 1987 Resolution 598, which provided for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of troops everywhere to internationally recognized borders, and the resolution of territorial disputes through diplomatic means. The protracted war began to exhaust both states, which contributed to the growth of internal discontent, particularly in Iran, where society increasingly felt the consequences of economic isolation [15]. The 1980–1988 conflict itself had long-term consequences for the region. In Iraq, repression against the Shiite population intensified, leading to the emigration of thousands of political activists and religious figures to Iran. At the same time, the war fixed the mutual hostility between Tehran and Baghdad and radically changed the geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East, leading to a deep polarization in the Arab world. Thus, the conflict forced the states in the region to decide on their position: Syria and Libya openly supported Tehran, while Egypt, Jordan, and most of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) sided with Baghdad. By 1988, a new map of geopolitical alliances and confrontations had formed, which had a long-term impact on regional security.

After the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the political leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran revised its foreign policy priorities. During the presidency of Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani (1989–1997), a new concept of foreign policy was proposed, characterized by moderation and pragmatism. Instead of radical slogans about “exporting the Islamic revolution,” the ideas of spiritual and cultural propaganda of Islam and economic cooperation came to the fore. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei emphasized that Iran should concentrate on internal development, economic revival, and the restoration of the national dignity of the Muslim Ummah [2, p. 80]. On the other hand, the Iraqi regime, after the war, was faced with the need to carry out political and economic reforms. While planning economic liberalization and partial privatization, Baghdad faced a number of serious challenges, including servicing its external debt and significant military spending. Iraq's vulnerable economic situation allowed Kuwait to use the oil factor as a lever to pressure Baghdad to resolve long-standing territorial disputes. In response, Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait on August 2, 1990, which was the impetus for a new international crisis. Iran's position during the Gulf War was unique: Tehran simultaneously condemned both Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the US military intervention in the region. President Rafsanjani adopted

a measured diplomatic stance, declaring support for UN resolutions on Iraq while criticizing the growing US military presence in the Persian Gulf. This strategy allowed Iran to strengthen its diplomatic position, avoiding any confrontation with the main players in the conflict, while expanding its influence in the region [17, p. 71].

The UN Security Council strongly condemned the aggression, adopting on the 6th of August 1990 Resolution 661, which imposed severe sanctions against Iraq. [16]. Against the backdrop of these events, Saudi Arabia appealed to the United States for military assistance, which led to a large-scale buildup of American troops in the region. Meanwhile, in August 1990, while the world's attention was focused on the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq and Iran restored diplomatic relations. Baghdad was forced to agree to Iranian terms for a peace settlement: a complete withdrawal of troops from Iranian territory, the sharing of control over the strategic Shatt al-Arab waterway, and the exchange of prisoners of war [9, p. 397].

The reaction of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Saddam Hussein's armed aggression was shaped by several conflicting factors that determined its strategic decisions and diplomatic maneuvers. First, it is important to consider the historical context: only a few years had passed since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, which had left a deep mark on the collective memory of Iranian society. Second, a complex ideological dilemma arose. The anti-Iraq coalition was led by the United States, a state that the Iranian political establishment had traditionally perceived as its main geopolitical and ideological adversary. Third, the US military presence in the region raised serious concerns in Tehran, as it not only threatened Iran's security but could also change the balance of power in the Persian Gulf. The attempt to combine the ideological principles of the Islamic regime with pragmatic foreign policy objectives forced Iran to actually remove itself from active participation in the Persian Gulf War, officially declaring neutrality [3, p. 48].

On August 21, 1990, two years after the official cessation of hostilities by the UN resolution, Iraq completely liberated all captured Iranian territories, demonstrating its readiness to establish diplomatic relations. In response, Iran agreed to restore diplomatic ties severed during the war. With the coming to power of President Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005), Iran's foreign policy course acquired new priorities. Khatami proposed the concept of a “dialogue of civilizations”, which envisaged three levels of interaction [2, pp. 80–81]:

- dialogue within the Islamic world;
- dialogue between Islamic and Western (Christian) civilizations;
- interfaith and intercultural dialogue with other civilizations.

This concept was intended to reduce tension between Iran and Western states, as well as to contribute to the stabilization of regional relations. However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent tough US policy towards the states it included in the “axis of evil” significantly complicated the implementation of this strategy.

In the period 2003–2011, Iranian-Iraqi relations underwent radical transformations due to external intervention, a change in political power in Iraq, and new geopolitical challenges. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime as a result of a military operation by the United States and its allies opened up new opportunities for Iran to strengthen its influence in Iraq. At this stage in Iraq's history, the process of transition from the Saddam era to the formation of a new political order became of key importance. In an unstable state, not having recovered from previous wars and faced with armed anti-government protests, Iraq could no longer claim the role of a regional center of power. Instead, its new international status led to changes in the principles of interaction with Iran. Events in post-war Iraq had a double effect for the Islamic Republic. On the one hand, the American intervention strengthened the influence of the United States in the region, and Iran found itself virtually surrounded by US military contingents, which created a constant threat of a possible military conflict. These fears were well-founded, given the rhetoric of the Bush administration regarding Iran. On the other hand, the overthrow of the Hussein regime radically changed the balance of power in the region. The political vacuum, the weakening of central power, the de facto autonomy of certain regions, and the growth of separatist tendencies created a situation that the United States could not fully foresee. At the same time, Iran took advantage of these conditions to strengthen its influence in Iraq.

Until a certain point, at the end of 2009, tensions arose in bilateral relations between Iraq and Iran due to the issue of oil production on the common border, but this did not prevent the active development of relations between the states. During 2008–2009, high-level diplomatic visits were actively held, which allowed creating a legal basis for cooperation in various areas: from national security to energy and transport. This cooperation became an important element of political stability in Iraq and a guarantee of Iran's interests in the region [1]. The key instrument of Iran's influence in the Iraqi space was interaction with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which coordinated the activities of Shiite armed groups and directed their actions by Tehran's regional interests. This was especially evident during the 2010 parliamentary elections, when Iran directly interfered in Iraq's domestic political processes, seeking to unite Shiite pro-Iranian parties [4].

Nevertheless, in parallel with the political processes, Iraq and Iran actively developed economic cooperation. Since 2003, trade between the two countries has shown exponential growth. According to official data, in 2010 the volume of bilateral trade increased tenfold compared to 2003 and reached \$8 billion. A separate point of intersection of the interests of the two countries was the nuclear issue. It should be noted that the Iranian nuclear program has long been a cause for significant concern in the international community, in particular, the UN, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and among influential players on the international stage: the United States and the European Union. European Union “contrary to the US policymakers, who at once connected the Iranian nuclear program with aggressive intentions of the state, the Europeans tried to use the maximum of their diplomatic influence and with minimum damage for all sides” [12]. Iraqi officials have repeatedly expressed support for Iran's right to develop a peaceful nuclear program, but at the same time stressed the inadmissibility of developing nuclear weapons. Baghdad called on Tehran to comply with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to ensure cooperation with the IAEA to avoid escalating conflicts in the region. Therefore, Baghdad's official diplomacy looked more attractive than Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The economic partnership was further developed in 2011, when Iraq, Iran, and Syria signed an agreement worth \$10 billion for the supply of natural gas. According to this project, a pipeline was to be built from Iranian fields through Iraq to Syria and then to the Mediterranean Sea via Lebanon. Thus, Iran sought to consolidate its energy presence in the region and increase its influence on the energy security of neighboring countries. Further, Iran at the end of the second decade of the 21st century increased the number of its companies to 110 active in various fields of export and import, production, construction, energy, etc. Iran's largest share of the Iraqi market at the time related to exports of non-oil goods, electricity, and gas. According to statistics released by official Iranian sites, Iraq in 2019, with about US\$9 billion, was the second-largest destination for Iranian non-oil exports after China, and Iran's share of the Iraqi market last year was close to 19 percent [11, p. 4].

In June 2021, the Islamic Republic held presidential elections, which were won by Ebrahim Raisi, a representative of the conservative political camp, known for his critical stance towards the United States and Western countries. During his inaugural speech, the newly elected president announced his intention to change the foreign policy course of the previous administration and strengthen Tehran's negotiating position in relations with Western countries. The first months of Ebrahim Raisi's presidency demonstrated the new administration's desire to deepen

strategic partnerships with Russia and China. On September 17, 2021, during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Dushanbe, it was announced that Tehran would be granted full membership in the organization, which signaled a shift in Iran's foreign policy emphasis to the eastern vector. In regional policy, Tehran's key priority remained the protection of its national interests in Iraq. With the advent of the new administration, Iran's efforts to counter anti-Iranian terrorist groups intensified, in particular in the territory of Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, on September 9, 2021, the IRGC carried out an air strike on four facilities used by anti-Iranian groups, as a result of which their headquarters were destroyed. At the same time, Iran's geopolitical position in the region has weakened somewhat. The loss of control over two of the four key Arab capitals has posed a serious challenge to Tehran. Israel's military campaign in Lebanon has inflicted significant losses on Hezbollah, which has played a key role in advancing Iranian influence in Beirut. In Syria, Turkish-backed Sunni groups pushed back the forces of the Bashar al-Assad regime, a long-time ally of Iran, in late 2023, weakening Tehran's position in the region.

Throughout 2024, pro-Iranian armed groups in Iraq regularly carried out attacks on US and Israeli military facilities. In particular, in March 2024, three American soldiers were killed as a result of a drone strike. However, the subsequent dynamics of events indicated changes in the strategy of the pro-Iranian forces: since the beginning of December, they have ceased active hostilities, which could be evidence of their caution and fears of provoking a decisive reaction from Washington.

Along with this, Iraqi political elites have demonstrated a desire for a balance between Tehran's influence and the need to maintain constructive relations with the United States. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and his Coordination Structure, which has close ties to Iran, made several key concessions to the United States in January 2024. In particular, the Iraqi government canceled Donald Trump's arrest warrant issued for the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, agreed to the release of American researcher Elizabeth Tsurkov, who was being held captive by the pro-Iranian Kataib Hezbollah group, and passed a budget amendment that helped strengthen the positions of Kurdish political forces traditionally oriented towards cooperation with Washington [13]. These events demonstrated a new balance of power in the region, in which Iranian allies in Iraq are experiencing increased external pressure and are forced to seek new tactical approaches to maintain their positions.

Iran's influence over Iraqi politics remains significant and systemic, making it difficult to weaken it. Unlike the United States, Tehran has significant control over key decision-making processes in Baghdad, particularly when it comes to appointing a prime min-

ister, transiting IRGC units through Iraqi territory, or conducting drone attacks on American military advisers. This situation gives Iran leverage, allowing it to manipulate Iraqi domestic politics to its advantage. Iran–Iraq relations are an example of an asymmetric partnership in which a stronger state (Iran) uses flexible, soft, and indirect tools to achieve its strategic goals in a weaker, politically and security–fragmented Iraq. At the same time, Iraq, despite its dependence, is not a fully controlled object—it can play its own geopolitical game, maneuvering between influences and sometimes limiting Iran's actions, as was evident during the protests of 2019–2020 and after the assassination of General Soleimani.

Overall, the geopolitical dimension of Iran–Iraq relations demonstrates a complex, multi-level dynamic: from strategic partnership to internal conflict of interests, from historical affinity to modern mutual distrust. This dynamic is determined not only by the specifics of bilateral relations, but also by broader processes of the regional struggle for influence, in which Iraq remains a key element in the balance of power in the Middle East.

As a separate stage of important geopolitical changes that have affected the foreign policy of modern Iran, it is necessary to note the Russian full-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, and generally led to a change in the geopolitical situation not only in Eurasia but also throughout the world. It demonstrated the weakness of the modern world order. However, as for Iranian–Ukrainian relations, despite a number of successful joint projects, they were accompanied by various scandals and constant diplomatic accusations of dishonesty. Today, when the world community has been provided with convincing evidence of Iran supplying Russia, as an aggressor country, with weapons, in particular Shahed–129 and Shahed–191 drones and ballistic missiles, these relations are on the verge of rupture [2].

Conclusions. The results of the study have examined the main milestones in the development and formation of Iranian–Iraqi relations, which allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the current state of bilateral relations and their impact on the geopolitical situation in the region, as well as the influence of international players on the evolution of events between the two countries.

Firstly, an analysis of the historical background of the conflicts between Iran and Iraq showed that the Iran–Iraq War of 1980–1988 was the culmination of deep historical, religious, and territorial contradictions between the two states. This armed conflict had long-term consequences; in particular, it led to increased divisions in the Middle East. The war not only exacerbated geopolitical rivalry but also led to religious confrontation. Moreover, the conflict forced regional states to decide on their position: Syria

and Libya openly supported Iran, while Egypt, Jordan and most of the GCC countries sided with Iraq.

Second, a study of foreign policy changes since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 has revealed a transformation in the balance of power in the region. The elimination of the Sunni leadership opened the way for increased Shiite influence in Iraq, which created the conditions for rapprochement with Iran. Iran actively used this opportunity to expand its influence on political, economic, and security processes in Iraq, while at the same time increasing regional polarization and intensifying rivalry with Middle Eastern states.

Third, an assessment of the role of the United States in the transformation of Iraqi statehood has shown that the American military presence had a dual effect. On the one hand, it contributed to the creation of new state institutions and the fight against terrorism, in particular ISIS. On the other hand, the destabilization caused by the invasion weakened centralized power, creating a vacuum that Iran used to strengthen its positions. At the same time, the reduction of the US military presence threatens to weaken Iraqi institutions and increase Iraq's dependence on Iran.

Fourth, an analysis of the political and economic rapprochement between Iran and Iraq after 2011 has shown that bilateral cooperation has acquired new dimensions in the fields of energy, trade, and security. The war against ISIS has been a catalyst for increased Iranian support, which has led to close integration into Iraq's security architecture. However, such interaction is accompanied by challenges to Iraqi sovereignty and exacerbates internal political fragmentation, increasing the influence of Shiite groups with close ties to Iran.

Given the above, it can be argued that the future of Iranian-Iraqi relations will depend on a number of factors: the level of internal stability of Iraq, the results of geopolitical competition in the region, transformations in Iran itself, as well as changes in the global system of international relations. At the same time, these relations will remain one of the key dimensions of Middle Eastern politics, and will continue to require attention from both scholars and practitioners of diplomacy.

For Ukraine, studying this case is useful in view of the need to adapt to the new multipolar system of international relations, understand the instruments of regional balancing and develop flexible foreign policy strategies in the context of global turbulence.

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Ретроспектива ірано-ірацької дипломатії на тлі геополітичної ситуації в регіоні

Побле Дмитро Костянтинович

старший викладач кафедри міжнародних відносин Одеського національного університету імені І. І. Мечникова
Французький бульвар, 24/26, Одеса, Україна
ORCID: 0000-0001-5898-3343

Сіновець Поліна Андріївна

кандидат політичних наук, доцент кафедри міжнародних відносин Одеського національного університету імені І. І. Мечникова
Французький бульвар, 24/26, Одеса, Україна
ORCID: 0000-0002-5521-7982

Циберман Анастасія Володимирівна

бакалавр міжнародних відносин Одеського національного університету імені І. І. Мечникова
Французький бульвар, 24/26, Одеса, Україна

Основною метою дослідження є аналіз еволюції ірано-іракських відносин за останні десятиліття з урахуванням ключових змін у їхній структурі, причин трансформацій, впливу цих відносин на загальну геополітичну ситуацію в регіоні та роль дипломатичної служби обох країн. Наукова актуальність цієї теми зумовлена тим, що в українській академічній та аналітичній літературі це питання висвітлювалося досить фрагментарно – повноцінний, системний аналіз двосторонніх відносин між цими державами в контексті змін геополітичного середовища відсутній. Це створює потребу в узагальненні та критичному переосмисленні існуючих підходів з урахуванням нових джерел – таких як офіційні дипломатичні заяви, аналітичні огляди провідних аналітичних центрів, експертні публікації та інтерв'ю з політичними діячами країн, регіональна преса тощо. Практична актуальність роботи полягає у вивченні формування відносин між двома державами, що може слугувати цінним досвідом для України, зокрема в контексті російсько-української війни. Основним базовим методом дослідження було використання подієвого аналізу, фрагментарно підкріпленого історичним, функціональним, геополітичним та емпіричним методами. В результаті дослідження розвитку ірано-іракських відносин на тлі сучасної регіональної нестабільності продемонструвало багаторівневий характер взаємодії. Ірак, балансуючи між Іраном та Сполученими Штатами, змушений шукати компроміси для збереження свого суверенітету та забезпечення внутрішньої стабільності. Розширення іранського впливу викликає занепокоєння серед арабських держав та Ізраїлю, що підвищує ризики регіональної поляризації. Водночас міжнародні актори зберігають зацікавленість у стабільності Іраку, що відкриває можливості для розвитку та дипломатичних ініціатив.

Ключові слова: геополітична ситуація, роль дипломатичної служби, суверенітет, внутрішня стабільність, розширення іранського впливу, міжнародні актори, багатосторонній діалог.

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