

**ATILIM UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MASTER'S PROGRAMME**



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRAQ AND RUSSIA FROM 2013-2018**

**Master's Thesis**

**Barzan Salman**

**Ankara- 2020**





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**Supervisor**

**Assis. Prof. Asli Gulseven**

**Ankara- 2020**

## ACCEPTION AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled “Relationship Between Iraq and Russia From 2013-2018” and prepared by Barzan Salman meets with the committee’s approval unanimously vote as Master’s Thesis in the field of International relations following the successful defence of the thesis conducted in 14/7/2020.

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I hereby declare that

- I prepared this thesis in accordance with Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences Thesis Writing Directive,
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- I cited all sources to which I made reference in my thesis,
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[14/7/2020]

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## ÖZ

Salman, Barzan, Irak ve Rusya 2013 - 2018 yılları arasındaki İlişkileri 2013-2018, M. Thesis, Ankara, 2020.

Rusya ve Irak halkları arasındaki ilişkiler modern Rus ve Irak devletlerinin oluşumundan çok önceye dayanır. Modern çağda ise önce Sovyet-Irak; ardından Rusya-Irak ilişkilerinde; onların üçüncü ülkeler, ulusal kurtuluş hareketleri ve Rusya için özellikle önemli olan Arap milliyetçiliği önemli roller oynamıştır. Bu tez çalışmasında, iki ülke arasında geçtiğimiz on yılda, özellikle 2013-2018 arasında, meydana gelen önemli gelişmeler incelenmiştir. Bu kapsamda 2007 yılında Erbil'de yeni bir konsolosluk kurulması, 2008' de Irak'ın büyük borçlarının iptali, 2014' te imzalanan büyük bir silah anlaşması ve 2017 yılında Bağdat'tan Moskova'ya doğrudan uçuşların başlaması gibi önemli olaylar derinlemesine incelendi. Ayrıca, Putin iktidarı sonrası vuku bulan olaylar derinlemesine analiz edilerek bunların gelecekteki ilişkiler üzerindeki etkileri değerlendirilmiştir. Diğer yandan da, yerel terörizm, NATO ve ABD gibi iki taraf arasındaki jeopolitik ilişkilerin ilerlemesini engelleyen parametreler araştırılmıştır.

Tez çalışmasındaki en önemli inceleme, Bağdat ve Moskova yönetimleri arasında imzalanan en son silah alım anlaşması üzerine yapıldı. Bu anlaşma kapsamında Rusya'nın Irak'a S-400, Buk-M3 gibi hava savunma sistemlerin teslimatı üzerine taraflar mutabık kalmışlardır.

Sonuç olarak, bu tez çalışmasında Ortadoğu'nun iki önemli oyuncusu arasındaki ilişkiler Sovyetler Birliği döneminden başlayarak incelenmiştir. Çalışmada Irak'ın politik yönünde geçtiğimiz on yıldan başlayan ve gelişeceği öngörülen bir değişim saptanmış ve bunun Rusya'nın bölgede kaybettiği gücü kısmende olsa geri kazanmasını sağlayacağı değerlendirilmiştir. Ayrıca, Rusya'nın mevcut ekonomik konumundan dolayı Irak ile olan ilişkilerinde özellikle ABD ve Çin olmak üzere üçüncü ülkeler ile arasını bozmamaya özen gösterdiği değerlendirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Uluslar arası ilişkiler; Irak; Rusya;

## ABSTRACT

Salman Barzan, Relationship Between Iraq and Russia From 2013-2018 , M. Thesis, Ankara, 2020

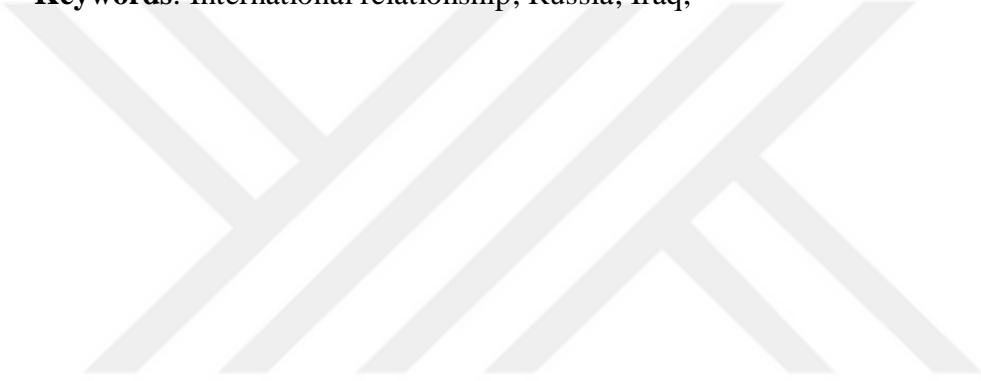
In the current study, the relation between Russians and the people of Iraq long predates the formation of the modern Iraqi and Russian states. In the modern era, Soviet-Iraqi and, later, Russian-Iraqi relations have been generally including their relations with the Third World countries and their national liberation movements, particularly Arab nationalism, which for both historical and geostrategic reasons has been of particular importance for Moscow. In this letter, the most important bookmarks between Iraq and Russia in the last decade, especially between the years 2013, and 2018 have been studied. Any notable event, such as establishing a new consulate in Erbil in 2007, the cancellation of Iraqi major debts in 2008, a major arms deal in 2014, opening of a direct flight from Baghdad to Moscow in 2017 have been singled out and investigated it in fair detail. Moreover, the timeline of the relation between two countries after Putin's rise to power has been analyzed, and the amount and the influence of every event to extract the data required for predicting the future of their relations have been investigated. Also, the parameters hindering the progress of the geopolitical relations between two sides, such as local terrorism, NATO, and the United States have been investigated.

The most important discussion during the investigation was a case study on the latest arms deal between Baghdad and Moscow, due to which Russia is responsible to provide Iraq with S-400 missiles and other Air defense system components, such as Buk-M3, Tor -M2, etc. The importance of this deal is not only because of its huge economic statement but because of the message, this deal has for the United States, its allies, and their strategic plans they wanted to exploit in the middle east. This deal was the biggest sign of the most important orientation change in Iraqi strategies.

In conclusion, this letter has investigated the relationship between two important players in the middle east. The study has reviewed the relationship between two countries from the Soviet Union era to the period of the Saddam Hussein period and the most recent

events from 2013 to 2018. The study indicates that the orientation change in Iraqi political plans which has been occurred at the beginning of this decade is going to evolve in the next decades and it will help Russia to regain the power it had during the Soviet Union era substantially. We believe the nature of the power Russia is seeking this time is fairly different from before as economical appearance of their strategies implies that Russia is careful about not starting any conflict with the United States, its allies, and no other country, especially the superpower of the east, China.

**Keywords:** International relationship; Russia; Iraq;



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## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The current work is a descriptive study which summarize the relations between Russia and Iraq specifically in 2013-2018. We decided to explain the relation between two countries in this specific period because these were the years when the most important developments took place between these two countries and when they came closer in terms of bilateral relations. Prior to that we describe a brief history of this relationship as well as the interaction between Iraq and other countries such as Iran and US. Furthermore, some important events were reviewed in the current study to have a better understanding about the international relations politics of Iraq.

There were some limitations for the gathering the information about the relationship between these countries but we tried to be objective about the events and decision made in the studied period. The main limitation was about the language of the source that we had. Most of the news agencies which we used their news and interviews, did not provide us the interviews in English and we translated them from the resource news.

The main aim of this study was the investigation of Iraqi-Russian relationship to predict the future negotiations and future events which are going to determine the destiny of this important geopolitical region. Furthermore, we have tried to investigate different aspects of a critical deal about the air defense system and explain advantages and disadvantages of S-400 missiles and Patriot PAC-3 for Iraq.

Furthermore, the main argument of this work which was concluded from the study was a remarkable change in political strategies of Iraq at the opening of this epoch (2013-2018) and it is going to evolve in the favour of Russia's novel political plans as Moscow desires to regain the power it had during the Soviet Union epoch.

It is better to divide Iraq-Russia (Soviet Union) relations into four parts to understand it easier. These four parts can be classified with the period before the

collapse of the Soviet Union, between the collapse of the Soviet Union and Iraq war, during the Iraq war, and after the Iraq war.

### *Before the Collapse of Soviets*

The goal of the Soviet Union in the Middle East was to extend its influence in the region and affecting the countries to create anti-western policies. Iraq was the closest country to the Soviet Union (Russia) from 1958 to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq have a long and complex background. The first diplomatic relations were established in 1944 at the end of World War II (Khadduri 1960). Nevertheless, the relations between the countries were not superior after the war, mostly due to British influence on the Arabic countries. Also, Stalin did not care about the relations with Arabic countries because of the British influence (Anlar 2006) The relations were broken off after acceptance of the Bagdad Pact in 1955. Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Turkey signed the agreement. The aim was to prevent Soviet expansion into the Middle East. Soviets criticized the Bagdad regime harshly for joining the treatment. However, in 1958 pro-western monarchy was overthrown by General Abd-al Karim Qasim, who was decent to socialism, and he became the president of Iraq. He withdrew Iraq from the pact and the relations were refreshed.

After the withdrew, the relations were re-established and developed until the 80s. The relations were generally well despite the difference in the views against the Kurdish Communist Party, at that period. Abd-al Karim Qasim modernized the Iraqi army with Soviet weapons(Smolansky 1981) until he was overthrown in 1963. After the 1967 Six-Day War, versatile and friendly relations improved and Soviet influence on Iraq increased. Ba'ath Party took power in 1968 and had ruled Iraq until 2003. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in 1972, which aims to improve cooperation between the two countries(Bennett 1985). Also, the agreement states that contracting parties can not support any policies against the benefits of each other. The period between 1970 and 1973 can be described as the golden age between the two countries in many fields. Soviets were the main supplier for the Iraq army and Soviet oil companies

cooperated with Iraq's state-owned oil corporation following the nationalization of Iraq's oil industry in 1972-73(WER). Also, many other agreements were signed in various fields. In the late 1970s and 80s, the relations deteriorated because of several reasons but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the most important one. Nevertheless, Saddam declared that "Iraq would not change the general policy in its relations with Soviets".

Also, in 1980, Iraq invaded Iran which strained relations because the USSR was against it. However, Moscow adopted a neutral stand in the Iraq-Iran War and stopped military support to Iraq. From the Soviet point of view, two anti-imperialist regimes were killing each other(Ismael and Kreutz 2001). After the war Soviets renewed the arms to supply to Iraq and restored the relations. After October War Russia became the main supplier of the Iraq army. Despite all the conflicts, good relations continued, and fifty agreements were signed between 1972 and 1990. Also, The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was never suspended in that period.

In the case of Moscow, Bagdad was the only regime that was not against the Soviets which make it valuable for Moscow. In the late 70s Egypt has a pro-American regime and after the Islamic Revolution, an anti-communist regime formed in Iran. Half of the Soviet export was purchased by Iraq in the Middle East and the worth of the contracts was \$37,4 billion between the two countries(Lynch and Lancaster 1999). Also, the Soviets built 80 factories during 30 years of cooperation and 8000 Soviet workers in Iraq in 1990 (Spykman 2017).

However, good relations started to deteriorate starting from the late 80s. In 1985 Gorbachev came to power. Then, Moscow's general foreign policy had started to change slightly, which was named "new political thinking". A Russian scholar stated the change as "the basic changes in Russian foreign policy took place before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's team "perestroika" policy led to breakdowns previous political situation. Gorbachev was aiming to establish good relations with the western regimes. Thus, Moscow intended to develop relations with Israel. As a result of the

approaching with Israel, the support to Arab countries including Iraq decreased drastically.

Following the Iraq invasion into Kuwait in 1990, the Soviets supported the international community against Iraq which can be described as the end of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries. Nevertheless, the Moscow regime was against any armed intervention to Iraqi forces. On 17 January 1991, the US Army started an operation against Iraq to expel them from Kuwait. After about one month, Russian diplomat Primakov went to Bagdad to reach a ceasefire agreement. However, the agreement was not accepted by the US and US land attack against Iraq started. Russian initiatives against military intervention in Iraq were failed. A Russian scholar described the unsuccessful ceasefire attempt as "*A last-minute deal reached between Gorbachev and Hussein on Iraqi troop retreat from Kuwait was turned down by the US*". Due to the fail attempt, disappointed Gorbachov accepted US superiority and supported harsh terms against Bagdad at UN Security Council in 1991(Golan 1992). Also, the unsuccessful ceasefire initiatives may be described as a sign of the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the end of 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated, and its successor Russia arose.

Also, in that period, the attitude of the US towards Iraq was inconsistent After overthrown of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958 the relations between the US and Iraq strained, and they never had warm relations mostly, due to several reasons. One of the most important reasons was the horrible relations between Arab countries including Iraq; and Israel. The US, the protector of Israel, had mostly followed policies against Iraq. As a result, Iraqi governors developed close relations with the USSR. Also, after the intervention of Kuwait in 1991 US military attacks against Iraq started end resulted in the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

### Post-Soviet Russia

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia lost its previous power in many areas from military to economic. Under President Yeltsin's directorship (1991-1995), the

Moscow regime has need foreign aids, especially, from the western countries. Also, in that period (1991-2003) Iraq was under harsh sanctions that were applying by the UN. The situation forced the Moscow regime to follow balanced relations between Iraq and the western countries. However, Moscow usually tried to keep good relations with Iraq due to its importance.

Between 1991-1993 the new regime in Moscow supported international policy against Iraq, even they sent two ships to support the blocked against Iraq. However, in 1993 Russia modified her foreign policy. The first meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries was held in 1993(Agarkov 1998). They agreed to continue the contracts signed between the Soviet and Iraq governments. The year of 1994 may be described as a change in Moscow's policy against Iraq. Many diplomatic meetings have played an important role in transition(Omar 1995). In that year Russian attitude towards the sanctions against Iraq started to change. Although the unsuccessful results in general, Russia argued to the reduction of sanctions. On the other hand, Russian developed a fluctuating policy against Iraq due to its balanced foreign policy.

Economic relations between the two countries are also important. There were Russian factories from the Soviet period in Iraq. In 1995 and 1997 two important contracts between Iraqi and Russian oil companies have been signed which let Russian oil companies drill in Iraq. Furthermore, there was Iraq's \$ 7 billion debt from the Soviet period which could not be paid because of the sanctions. In the first six months of 1999, Russian oil companies exported 43% of Iraq's oil that was allowed by the UN.

In 2000 Putin came into power in Russia. He followed a multi-dimensional and pragmatic foreign policy. He has never intended to strain the relations between Russia and the US since he believes it may result in devastating consequences for Russia. He had tried to divide economics from politics. Director of the Centre for the Greater Middle East Conflicts, Alexander Shumilin described the foreign policy as "*Politically Russia is with the West; economically he is trying to get some advantages in developing traditional relations. This is a distinct priority of the Russian policy*"(Berryman 1999).

Putin usually followed the same policy towards Iraq with his predecessor's balanced policy. He worked to a partial and full lifting of the sanctions (Eran 2003) and secured Russian's economic interest in Iraq. The sanctions were damaging Russian economic interests too. Sergei Ivanov, Russian Security Council Secretary described the policy during the visit of Iraq's prime minister to Moscow as "*Russia remained to apply the greatest force for the quickest end and then the constant lifting of international sanctions against Iraq*" (Interview with Yelena Melkumin, Moscow, 20.06.2005.). Russian diplomats had usually worked to lift the sanctions in the UN. However, despite all the statements, Russia had never used its veto power in the UN. Putin only criticized the sanctions and military attacks against Iraq. This situation strained relations and Saddam Hussein threatened Russia to cancel the contracts with Russian oil companies. Despite the threats, Russian signed new contracts worth more than 1,8\$ billion with Iraq in 2001.

However, 9/11,2001 attacks opened a new stage between Iraq and Russia. Improving relations with the US became a priority for Moscow. On the other hand, Bush administration blamed Iraq for financing the attacks. Putin claimed that there is no evidence showing Iraq's support to the attacks. Russia wanted to solve the problem with diplomacy and the Moscow regime firmly opposed to any military operation in Iraq. Russia declared to veto any plans about the use of military force in Iraq. In 2003 Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov stated that "Russia would use its veto in the United Nations Security Council to block measures that would open the way to the use of force(Hunter, Thomas et al. 2004). However, Hasan Köni and Sinan Ogan stated that "*in January 2002, Putin rejected the Iraqi foreign minister to negotiate. Thus, Russia seemed to sacrifice Iraq*"(Shemesh 1992). Then, the inevitable end became clear for Iraq since it was clear that Bush administration was preparing for an invasion to Iraq. Despite the preparations, Saddam Hussein was always believing that Russia could stop the invasion. Bagdad regime tried to effect Moscow in favor of Iraq with some high amount contracts (Spykman 2017), however, Putin never intended to confront the US for Iraq. P. Starobin (Golan 1992), stated that Putin knew he cannot stop Washington from

removing Saddam so he did not want to damage relations to the US. Since Putin knew that the Bush administration determined to invade Iraq, he worked hard to quarantine Russian interests after the Saddam period. In that period, Putin adopted a dual strategy to secure Russian Interest He wanted to keep the good relations with the Saddam Regime, the US, and the opposition in Iraq.

To sum up, Iraq was the only ally of Russian in the Middle East. There was versatile cooperation between the countries. Despite anti-communist Bagdad regimes, the pragmatist policies were followed by both of the regimes. Anti-western policies of Iraq were important for the Moscow regime. Russia was the major arms supplier and oil industry partner of Iraq. However, after 9/11,2001 attacks rooted Russian foreign policy and weakened the relations. The US occupation in Iraq, which Russia opposed, almost ended the relations.

Before the invasion, Bush administration tried to take support in United Nations Security Council. However, Russia, France, and Germany voted any military attack. Still, on the 19th of March 2003, the United States began Operation Iraqi Freedom with airstrikes.

### *During the Iraq War*

Despite the opposition of the UN against the war, the US and the UK started an "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in Iraq on the 19th of July 2003. Military attacks against Iraq were held since the Gulf War Was in 1991 by the US and the UK and the invasion was the last step to take down Saddam Regime. On the 1st of May 2003, US President Bush announced the end of main military operations in Iraq. Coalition Provisional Authority started to work on the 21 April 2003 followed by the end of the UN sanctions on Iraq on May22. Also, Paul Bremer, the head of Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), announced the capture of Saddam Husein(AVTONOMOV 2000). Finally, On the 30th of June 2004, the war ended and the Iraqi interim government took the sovereignty of Iraqi territory on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2004. However, US Forces had stayed in Iraq and the gun war with the terrorist group had continued until 2010. The first election was held in

the end of 2005 and the elected government under Maliki's power took the office in January of 2006.

The Iraqi interim government was established on the 28th of May 2004. However, the government was under US influence and Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi tied to the US *"Iraq's New S.O.B."*. *Newsweek*. July 2004, Dowd, Maureen (26 September 2004). *"Dance of the Marionettes"*. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 27 June 2013. Interim Government worked in a harmony with the US during its governing and on the 5th of May, it was replaced by Iraqi Transitional Government. Iraqi Transitional Government ruled Iraq between 3th of May 2005 and 20th of May 2006 and replaced by the first elected post-war government.

Russia was against the war as aforementioned but after quick US victory, Moscow's policy to the US softened. Putin followed a balanced policy against the US. Putin and Bush met in September 2004. After the meeting, Putin said, "We are partners with the US in the war on terror"(Ahmed 2013). Also, he emphasized that the United Nations should play the role of reconstruction of Iraq. Even, Russia suggested sending troops to Iraq as a part of the UN peacemaker mission. The main goal of Russia was taking a part in Iraq's future and defending its economic interest especially, its privileges in the oil industry. Nevertheless, the US and the Iraqi government did not let Russia take part in Iraq.

After the war, Putin and Iraq's interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi met in Moscow in December of 2004 for the first time. During the meeting, Allawi mentioned rebuilding the relationship. On the other hand, Putin tried to secure the role of Russia in the reconstruction of Iraq and expressed his reservations about the Iraqi elections. However, it was obvious that Iraq was under the US influence and an anti-Russian policy was pursued for that period. He expressed his concerns as;

*"I cannot imagine how elections can be organized when the country is completely occupied by foreign troops, and at the same time I cannot imagine how you alone can stop it from collapsing."*

Also, he declared support for the democratic elections in Iraq.

In terms of economics, Russia had a great interest in Iraq. Russian oil companies were the biggest oil exporters of Iraq and it is assumed the contracts they have could worth 30\$ billion. On the other hand, there were 7\$ billion Soviet-era debts Iraq had to pay. However, after the war, the new Iraq's government stated that Russia should give up that debt because Iraq has no power to repay its Soviet-era debts out(Freedman 2003). Moscow gave up 80% of the debts as a part of Paris Club negotiations with the pressure of America expecting warm relations with Iraq (Weiss 2004). Also, major oil contracts signed in Saddam's era had cancelled by the interim government(paulSalem1). Moscow's purpose was developing good relations with post-Saddam governments to secure it's future economic interests, especially, in the oil sector.

In conclusion, the invasion altered the relations between Russia and Iraq harshly. As a result of the war, the Iraq government entered the influence of the US, and the cooperation was minimized between 2003 and 2006. Russia has been shut out of Iraq's politics and had to give up Iraq's debt and valuable contracts especially in the oil industry. On the other hand, the war did not damage Russian-American relations as bad as expected.

#### *After the Iraq War (2006-2013)*

Russia (early Soviet Union) usually had warm relations with Iraq since Qasim's regime in 1958. Iraq was the only ally in the Middle East for the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Russia was the only supporter of the Saddam regime during his government. There were pragmatic relations. However, after the invasion, Iraq policies were influenced by the US, and Russia lost its only ally in the area.

Although the official end of the war in 2004 the Us army had stayed in the area. The military operations continued until 2010. Although the Iraqi army has become completely ineffective clashes with terrorist groups continued after 2004. Russia always avoided to be included in any gun war and supported the US against terrorism. Between 2000 and 2009 Russia was in the second Chechen War. The Russian army was fighting against Muslim Chechen rebels. Due to the Chechen War, the Moscow Regime scared to

become the target of Islamic terrorism in Iraq when the US forces withdraw from Iraq. The killing of five Russian diplomats for the Chechen War by Al-Qaeda was a sign of an anti-Russian view among the terrorist groups. In 2009 Mark Katz described Russian perspective as

*“You remember al-Qaeda in Iraq? These were busy boys, fighting against the Americans, fighting against the Shiites, fighting against their fellow Sunnis. But what did al-Qaeda in Iraq do in June 2006? They kidnapped five employees of the Russian embassy in Baghdad, killed one out of hand, and then announced that they would release the remaining four only if Russia withdrew all its troops from Chechnya within 48 hours. This did not happen. And al-Qaeda in Iraq, being true to their word, killed the remaining four employees. These people were fighting Americans, Sunnis, Shias in Iraq, yet al-Qaeda in Iraq found time to think about Russia. As America leaves Iraq, they may find more time to think about Russia, and the Russians know that. They are very worried.”*

*(Telhami et al, “Major World Powers and the Middle East,” 12.)*

After two elections held in 2005 and following negotiations, Nouri Al-Maliki came to power in 2006, a member of the Dawa Party, a Shia political group. The US and Iranian supports played a vital role in his administration during the negotiations (wiki10, (David Ignatius, "In Iraq's Choice, A Chance For Unity" Archived 24 December 2016 at the Wayback Machine, The Washington Post, 26 April 2006.). ). His government remains in the office between 2006 and 2014. Maliki was a member of the opposition to Saddam Regime and he had to live abroad during Saddam's government. It can be claimed that Maliki was not warm against Russian policies on Iraq. However, Maliki followed a balanced foreign policy in his term. He aimed to improve his country by cooperating with the active powers in the region such as Turkey, Russia, and, the US.

In Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, who was prime minister since 1999. became president in 2008. They were both supported by the same parties and because of the election rules in Russia Putin and Medvedev switched their positions. However, the main policy of Russia against Iraq was the same as Putin's era. In the same period, Putin became prime minister and in 2012 they changed the roles again and Putin is the president of the Russia federation since then.

On February 11, 2008, two countries signed a contract "Settlement of the Debt of the Republic of Iraq to the Russian Federation on Loans Made Earlier" to write off most of Iraq's \$12.9 billion in debt to Russia, much of it dating to before the first Gulf War when Saddam Hussein administration bought Soviet weapons. Again Moscow was aiming to regain its priority in oil production in Iraq. The future cooperation with Iraq can be proof that Moscow reaches its goals.

In 2009 the first official meeting took place in Moscow between Vladimir Putin and Nouri al-Maliki. In that meeting, both of the prime ministers specified the intention to improve the cooperation in various fields. In the meeting, Maliki described his purpose as;

*"We consider this current visit to be the beginning of cooperation in a variety of areas, and the starting point for the transferral of the mutual efforts of both sides towards the development of our relations in practically all spheres, including, as I have already said, security."*

The meeting can be described as a refresh in the relations since new agreements this meeting.

Also, in 2012 Dmitry Medvedev and Nouri al-Maliki held another meeting in Moscow and they declared the desire to expand relations in many fields. The Iraqi delegation was a sign of the intentions and Maliki described his hope to improve the relations as

*"I would like to say that Iraq is currently implementing an active policy to improve relations with friendly countries and to expand ties in different areas. This is obvious from the line-up of my delegation, which includes representatives of the Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry, the Trade Ministry, the Oil Ministry, and the Electricity Ministry. All these spheres are open for expanded cooperation with the Russian Federation."*

The meeting held in 2009 was followed by many agreements for Russian companies in Iraq in various fields. In December of 2009 Russian private oil company Lukoil awarded the rights to develop the Quarna 2 oil field which contains 12.88 billion barrels of oil. Also, smaller contracts have signed in the oil sector and construction. Russian companies conferred with several infrastructure projects in Iraq.

In 2010 a street vendor in Tunisia set himself in the fire to the seizure his stand by police which sparked protests against the governments for democracy in many Arabic countries. The protests have started in generally 2011 and led to regime changes in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt. Throughout 2011, many demonstrations criticizing the bad living conditions and the government were held. The protests continued until the second half of 2013 intermittently. Also, it transformed into a gun war in some places. Russian view against the Arab spring was suspicious. From the Russian view, the protests were an echo of the "color revolutions" and they were supported by western powers(Al Makahleh 2018). Also, the protests weakened Russian economic interests over the region and Putin expressed his ideas as " Russian companies are losing their places on the local markets that they built". in the countries that have gone through(Malashenko).

The autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq was recognized by Bagdad in 2005. The region is very important since it holds confirmed reserves of some 45 billion barrels of oil (10th largest in the world) and is supposed to have between 2.8 to 5.7 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. Russia established formal relations with its regional government and opened a consulate in Erbil in 2005. However, although Soviet support to Kurds before, until 2010, Russia had small space for it to play a significant role in the autonomous region. The main actors were the US, the UK, Iran, and Turkey in the region. In 2009 Russia increased its initiatives to drill in the Kurdish region. However, actions with Erbil irritate Bagdad Regime. As a result of the initiatives, in 2012 Gazprom signed an agreement for exploration and oil production in the Kurdish region(Mariya 2019).

Due to the withdrew of the US forces from Iraq territory, the Iraq government has bought new military systems to modernize its armed forces. Although, most of Iraq's armory was purchased from the US after the war Bagdad Regime followed a balanced policy to renew its armed forces. They signed contracts to purchase a total of 36 F16 fighter jets from the Us which costs roughly more than \$3 billion in 2011 and 2012 (W.Ibrahim 2011). Despite the American forces in Iraq, they purchased helicopters and tanks from Russia. In 2010 Iraq received Russian helicopters which cost \$156 million. In

2012, Iraq and Russia signed a \$4.2 billion arms deal which made Russia the biggest weapon supply in the Middle East after the US [23], which was criticized by the US. However, the Iraq government scrapped the deal about one month later (Suudad 2012). The reason may be the pressure on the Bagdad regime applied by Washington.

The US invasion in Iraq deteriorated the relations but Russia is still one of the most effective players in Iraq. The period between 2003 and 2008 can be described as a break for warm relations. However, the cooperation between the countries is profitable for both sides. Iraq is indispensable for Moscow because of its resources and strategic location. On the other hand, the power of Russia, historical support, and its proximity to the Middle East make Russia makes it an important collaborator for the Bagdad regime. Also, after 2013, the increase in the Russian effect in the Middle East makes it more and more important for any country in the region which is the subject of the next sections.



## CAPTER I.

### IRAQ IN THE RUSSIAN STRATEGIC PLAN

The arrival of Vladimir Putin to the head of power in Russia in 2000 is an important point in the history of Iraqi-Russian relations. From this date, Russia began to reappear in the Middle East as a dominant factor. President Putin has moved Russia toward being a superpower in the middle east using not militarised advancement but by adopting a strategy based on increasing diplomatic relationships between Russia and the countries of this region and by changing Russia's political manner. He also adopted a pragmatic, interest-based approach with a high degree of flexibility, away from a narrow ideological vision. To regain power, he tried to plan his strategy based on the movements and transformations happened in the region recently ( Jalil and Al-Abidin, 2015, p 1-30).

The recent change in the international balance of power due to the escalation of Russian capabilities and the relative decline in American performance helped Russia to accelerate its plans toward reappearing as a superpower in the region. The international system has already changed toward pluralism, and the return of Russia as an active force has become a reality as a result of the steady growth in its overall capabilities over the past decade and a half.

In this aspect, Russia is working to maintain and enhance its relations with some regional parties, and establish strategic focal points for it in the region after them, which are important requirements for Russian national security, so we find that Russia has moved to the stage of heading towards regional parties that enjoy a geostrategic place and that Russia views as regions in which it is concentrated Actively interests.

Here, Iraq stands out as one of the most important regional parties targeted by the Russian strategy. It is at the heart of Russian strategic attention to establish an alliance with, to gain a foothold in it.

We must point out that Russian policy-making circles have started to develop new strategies for renewing interests in Iraq due to the fact that "Iraq falls right within the area in which Russian national interests are concentrated". This is because of

Russia's great desire to play a greater role in the Middle East. Also, this will help Russia to regain an important international position in addition to the active regional performance <http://www.newsabah.com/wp/newspaper/43528>.

On this basis, we find that Russian policy has consistently maintained good relations with Iraq and is working to strengthen its position within the Iraqi strategic perceptions and support it to keep it away from the risks of disintegration and collapse. Therefore, Russia views Iraq as an ideal target in the Middle East, which should never be left out of the Russian scope.

Due to the United States' political unilateralism in Iraq and its acquisition of interests in this country, the struggle for influence in the region has reached to its highest level after Russia decided to appear as an effective factor in the region.

The Russian policies towards Iraq were demonstrated through their refusal to take part in the increasing of the internal conflict, the confirmation of Russia's position in supporting Iraq in its war against terrorism, and the pursuit of a pivotal alliance of which Iraq is part of it ( Al-Zaman, 2012). Besides, the Russian foreign policy towards Iraq is based on a vision that focuses on the geographical and strategic importance of Iraq, as it represents a place in the forefront of global concerns, and that no global system can form far from influencing within its geostrategic scope. Russia visualizes Iraq as an effective factor in controlling the power balance in the region since it is the path of alliances between international powers (Ahmed, 2014, <http://www.acrseg.org/16360>).

The reason why Iraq is so important for Russia is the escalation of the struggle between Washington and Moscow, as this struggle is due to Russia's desire to establish a new situation in the region with an influential presence, given that its current role is relatively limited and does not indicate a real trend in changing the balance of power on the ground.

Thus Iraq does possess a pivotal role in rearranging the power in the middle east and providing a chance for Russians to achieve their goals. Using this semi-qualified environment, Russia may eventually reach a stage from which it can influence the strategic balance and possessing the ability to impose options in the region in the

direction through which it is possible to go to interim understandings with the United States : <http://www.fcdrs.com/includes/download.php?type=article&aid=286>.

### **1.1 Russian Strategic Shift Towards Iraq**

In addition to the political, defensive, and military gains that Russia seeks to establish in Iraq, it also looks for a strategic and economic partnership that brings direct economic income. Therefore, Russian interests in the region were linked to countries with oil sectors and energy sources, including Iraq. Due to which Russia is willing to construct a through cooperation with Arab countries, which must maintain even with the beginning of the change in Arab regimes (Rawabetcenter, 2014, <http://rawabetcenter.com/archives/8387>).

If we took a brief look at the nature of the Russian strategy towards Iraq and the nature of relations between the two sides, it is worth noting that ideological considerations have a ruling role in this area, which was one of the most important reasons that hindered the development of Russian-Iraqi relations (Fathi, <http://thenewkhalij.org/ar/node/24281>). President Putin and his novel strategies based on which, there was a separation between politics and ideology, politics and economics, etc, provide the condition in which economic priorities are the most dominant factor. Therefore, due to economic considerations, Russia began to develop a strategic vision to move toward the Middle East and Iraq was among the most prominent candidates to apply this approach and shift Russian policy towards the region.

In this context, Russia realizes that the movement towards Iraq will achieve interim and future goals throughout the region, as rapprochement with Iraq will enable interdependence from the region stretching from Central Asia to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Fathi, <http://thenewkhalij.org/ar/node/24281>). Russia is working diligently to limit the unilateral American role in Iraq by entering into Iraq's political and military interactions. Moscow is creating a new side that includes Iran and Syria as well, and this will affect the Middle Eastern strategic architecture (almuraqeb, 2015, <http://www.almuraqeb-aliraqi.org/archives/20731>).

Iraq also benefits from its relationship with the Russian side. In addition to the desire to have a more stable condition after a long war period and after American troops leave the country, Russia can provide strong and reliable support for Iraq in international situations. Other than that, there will be a large void left in the defensive abilities of Iraq, therefore Russia can fill this void. These are some of the main motivations that lead the Iraqi side to expand its relationship with Russia. Therefore, the mutual need pushed both sides toward thorough cooperation, employing the Russian desire to act, and exploiting the accelerated changes in the American policy, two parties were persuaded about the need for expanding their relationship. This movement and acceptance were evident since two parties were aware of the importance of establishing advanced relations in the security and economic areas. These movements in the relationship of the two countries resulted in a heavy arms deal between Iraq and Russia by which Iraq has become the second rank in terms of the volume of Russian arms import in 2014 after India, reaching (11% of Russian military imports) and Russia has become the second-largest arms supplier to Iraq after the United States.

Here, it must be emphasized that the considerations of the national interest were the starting point regarding Russian policy towards Iraq after 2003. On this basis, Russia sought to prevent those interests from being exposed to any threat, by strengthening relations with the new regime in Iraq and stabilizing the existing cooperation, especially in the defensive and military basis ( Ali, 2017, p. 99-117).

Analysts believe that the reason why Moscow decided to expand its relationship with Baghdad is the fact that Russian governors were aware of the fact that Iraq has changed its idea about America, and has the tendency to change its political standing about other major superpowers. Since the Iraqi side wanted to pursue a relatively different path from US policy in international issues, specifically their approach to major powers was changing, the Russian government approached Iraq to revive the alliance with Iraq, which completely vanished after the American hegemony.

Analysts also regard Iraq's return to Russian armament as part of the Russian policy that tends to improve Russia's influence in the region. This policy which includes

Iran and Syria, as well as Iraq, will also give Moscow an additional power in the Syrian crisis because it can align Russian and Iraqi positions regarding the Syrian crisis and it can increase the validity of a political solution.

## **1.2 What Does Russia Pursue in Iraq?**

Russia, like the major superpowers, tries to create a balance between domestic and international determinants, between internal and external considerations and even pushes its foreign policy to match with its internal interests. To understand Russia's relationship with Iraq, it is necessary to analyze the history of this relationship even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. By studying the Soviet Union's role in Iraq one can investigate the extent to which it can be reactivated by current strategies. Iraq, like the rest of the countries of the region, had complex and deep strategic relations with the former Soviet Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the beginning of current decade may be the first time Iraq get the chance to consider rehearsing its relations with Russia, which due to the novel strategies of president Putin regarding the ideological priorities, can be deepened more in comparison with its relation with the former Soviet Union. The result of such a consideration is clear when one studies the recent negotiations and agreements between the two countries.

Building on what we've stated up to this point, the reason why Moscow is so eager about a thorough relationship with Baghdad can be a combination of the following possibilities;

First, Russia can benefit heavily from engaging in a competition with the United States in Iraq. They can change the conditions and confuse the United States' policy by hindering its plans in the region. Russia's more effective performance in this region and specifically in the areas which are more important to the United States' strategic policy naturally will affect the US negatively. Since the Russian leadership is eager about reformulating the global balance of power, it insists on the necessity of a wide relationship with Iraq.

Second, there is a close correlation between Russian economic goals and the Middle East region. Russia, under President Putin, has succeeded in reconciling its economic goals in the region with its strategic policies.

Eventually, Iraq due to its geographical and demographic condition is a crucial place in the middle east and its critical point for international superpowers. This is why the new Russian foreign policy estimates a special value for some of the countries in the region, such as Syria and Iraq, as they retain a place at the forefront in the ladder of global concerns, and that no global system will form away from the influence of such countries in the region. Russia now highly appreciates Iraq's importance and its future role in establishing an equilibrium between international powers (Middle East newspaper, 2004).

It can be said that the Russian vision of Iraq within the framework of the strategic direction and the nature of the relations between the two parties will be determined by several factors, perhaps the most prominent of which is, what Iraq can offer to Russia, i.e. what are Iraq's economic capabilities and how much is the oil sources currently. On the other hand, the geostrategic position in the region, and the extent of the political benefit that Iraq can provide for Russia in the Middle East at the current stage. These all are accompanied by the strategic value that Russia can gain from its strategic performance in Iraq in light of the ongoing conflict in the region (Middle East newspaper, 2004).

The nature of the Russian strategy in Iraq or the future Russian-Iraqi relations heavily depends on the American variable and its political, defensive, and economic trends. It's impossible to neglect the impacts of United States' policy in the region. Especially since some of the features of the future Russian-Iraqi relations are identical to the relations Iraq currently has with the United States, the American variable is the most important factor for this relationship. Another crucial point in the matter of Russian determinants is how Russia works to make Iraq an important strategic ally in the Middle East region and the ability of Russian policy to confront the United States in its spheres

of influence, of which Iraq is one of its most important areas (Middle East newspaper, 2005).

Based on what has been stated up to this point, it can be assumed that the Russian strategy towards Iraq and its goals, determinants, and priorities was based on preserving the Russian national benefits. Also, Russia wants to prevent those benefits from being exposed to any threat, whatever its source, by strengthening relations with Iraq and sustaining the stability of those benefits by holding the cooperation, especially in the military areas.

The nature of the transformations taking place in the global stage on several issues, and their repercussions on many regions, particularly the Middle East region, have enhanced the possibility of the development of Russian interest toward intensifying its relations with Iraq. The most important parameters that caused this enhancement are as follows:

- The developments and events that the region has witnessed since the Arab Spring and the ongoing conflicts in several important countries, as well as the repercussions of terrorism, the alliances of the current stage, and the pattern of regional conflict. The opportunity that Russia realized after a period of stagnation in the American role, to restore its lost role in the region.
- The Russian endeavour to get rid of the restrictions of the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe. There is a Russian need to open new markets for its arms exports on the one hand, and to find alternative sources for its imports from European countries.
- The existence of the Iraqi desire to open and expand its relationships with Russia again, which was due to the political, economic and security crisis that Iraq was struggling with, in recent years. These relations can help Iraq to stabilize its internal condition and give reliable support in its external policies (Ali, 2017, p 99 – 117).

This strategy, adopted by Russia in dealing with Iraq, supports two main goals regarding Russian national security and the economic aspect as well. Concerning national security, it has two aspects that are confronting and combating internal terrorism and threats from outside of Russia. As for the economy, it is related to

deepening, consolidating and supporting the Russian companies led by the state to enhance their involvement in the global economy, especially in the energy sector and then in the other major strategic export sectors, such as the natural resources, defense technologies and weapons manufacturing sectors‘

([http://www.araa.ae/index.php?view=article&id=1767:2014-07-15-09-38-37&Itemid=172&option=com\\_content](http://www.araa.ae/index.php?view=article&id=1767:2014-07-15-09-38-37&Itemid=172&option=com_content)).

### **1.3 A strategic Application of the Russian Approach to Iraq**

Not long ago, Russia has been developing its strategies to deal with the critical stage in the Middle East region and its main countries such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Russia was aware of the ongoing conflicts in the region and its clear effects on the regional balance of power. Therefore, it can be concluded that approaching Iraq is Russia's strategy to confront the crisis in the middle east.

The Russian strategy to preserve and guarantee its important relations with several regional parties, and the formation of new alliances after that, was evident from the actions of its national security (Amir, 2010). Russian security concerns are apparent in Russia's move towards the region. Such concerns are mostly because Russia is aware of the possibility of radical movements toward the top of the power pyramids in some of the Arab countries which can take those pyramids down or initiate a civil war and internal conflicts like what happened in the case of Syria. This possibility is added to the possibility of the spread of sectarianism and its effects within the environment of the Middle East conflict, and the possibility of extending this phenomenon to the Asian environment with a Muslim majority in Central Asia, with similar conditions Somewhat dazzled by the Arab situation, and the rise of the Turkish role.

On the direct Russian concern, there are all the effects of this phenomenon on the Caucasus region, which is described as the soft breach of Russian security. Because of the direct and indirect repercussions of events in the region, especially Syria and Iraq, the Russian political circles began to define new strategies and adopt new means to

maintain their benefits through interim and future tactics that were not common in previous Russian foreign policies, ( Furture Center 2015, <http://mcsr.net/news93>). Also, Iraq is undoubtedly one of the closest allies of Russia in the region.

It should be noted that the crisis in Syria was a test of the effectiveness of the Russian role in the region, and represented a critical turning point that showed Russia's restoration of its position as a major power in the affairs of the region. Especially after the action that it launched to destroy Syrian chemical weapons in exchange for stopping the American military strike on Syria and holding the Geneva 2 conference. To defuse the tension Russia seems to be leading the course of events after other international and regional powers have recognized the Russian vision based on the necessity of a peaceful transfer of power as the only way to settle the Syrian crisis and control its catastrophic repercussions.

A set of investigations indicate that Russian influence will increase in the region during the next stage, so Russia must reformulate its strategy and include regional parties within the path of renewing performance within the framework of the new goals. To this end, Russia must strengthen its presence in the region and improve its performance. These are the critical prerequisites of the expressed premise. Since this influence and the new role need novel tools, pivots, and alliances, Iraq represents a critical focal point in Russian strategy in the region. On this basis, Iraq's accession to the Russian-led quartet regional alliance is a strategic step for Russia to move toward Iraq.

On the other hand, since Iraq is fighting a war against ISIS, Russia has taken this position as a starting point to enter the Iraqi arena after its direct presence in Syria. Moreover, Moscow has strengthened its strategic relationship with Iran through the establishment of an Intelligence Information Center (IIC) in Baghdad that includes the Army Staff from Russia, Iran, Syria, and Iraq and established the joint military bases to fight ISIS.

Nevertheless, Iraq represents the weakest link in the Quartet alliance. Iraq hesitates to rush towards Russia since this can end by losing international support. This is because of the fact that Iraq's main international alliance which was led by the United States does not want Iraq to expand its relations with its main rival in the middle east.

However, the United States and its alliances do not provide reliable support for Iraq. On the other hand, the geographical condition of Iraq, the war which is going on with ISIS and the weight of the Russian movement and its timing, and the lack of American intervention pushes Iraq toward Russia. Yet it's the Iraqi side that should decide about the nature and extent of Russian engagement in the region (Ali, 2017, p 99 – 117).

Russia aims to bypass the issue of exchanging intelligence in the war with terrorism to broader ranges, especially if other powers join in. Besides it aims to erect a wall against US intentions in the region and Iraq has at the time a pivotal role in the Russian strategy. This is because Iraq is the connection between the eastern and western sides of the region and represents the connecting bridge that guarantees communication between the two sides. Russia is aware of the existence of an Iraqi desire to develop a strategic dialogue that will lead to wider relations with Russia that may affect the Syrian crisis and the extent of the Russian performance in it.

This also means changing the balance of power, the shape of regional relations between the main actors, the structure and outcome of the conflict, which is the coalition that aims to deliver messages to the United States' (Isser , 2015, <http://beladicenter.net/index.php?aa=news&id22=10133>).

Russia's success in attracting Iraq to the alliance has many important consequences, as it will pave the way for the exchange of intelligence information between these countries, in the framework of joint operations against ISIS. It will become the first tangible achievement by Moscow as a real move towards forming a regional front or international alliance that enhances the position of Russia and its abilities in the Middle East.

It must be remembered that the Russian position towards the Syrian crisis and the clear and direct impact on the United States of America's policies, and eventually implementing a partnership between Syria and some of the supportive countries indicates nothing but the strength of the role that Russia plays in shaping the policies in the international community. Other than that, Russia also introduced its allies and its interests in the Middle East which was a response to the United States' interests and

allies. Both sides tried to express their presence and their power in achieving their desired goals with minimal losses in Syria.

The United States's intervention in Iraq and Syria to combat terrorism, as well as Russia's interference in the same goal recently, indicates the existence of a serious blood coalition (international) in the fight against terrorism and also the inability of Iraq's military to fight these terrorist groups (Nourhan, 2007).

In conclusion, by studying the Russian move and its development towards Iraq and the region, we tried to point out that there are many geopolitical goals that Russia seeks to achieve in the Middle East and the Arab world. At the forefront of which are the pivotal states of Iraq and Syria alongside Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Islamic republics in central Asia and the South Caucasus together formed the vital scope of Russian interests. These countries together from a strategic military perspective that Russia needs to reduce the size of potential threats on its southern borders, which drives it to establish a new partnership and new alliances in the region based on strategic goals. Russia needs the countries of the region to reduce the roles of US unilateralism and eliminate terrorist groups that threaten the internal stability of Russia (Nourhan, 2007).

#### **1.4 What Does Russia Expect to Achieve in Iraq?**

By analyzing the aforementioned data, it is clear that Russia seeks a broader strategy in the Middle East. It can be said that this Russian move towards Iraq has taken a different course from the previous stages and is a candidate to take wider future ranges. The Russian strategic performance towards Iraq depends on the Iraqi side's response, but at first, it was marred by cautious steps. Russia has adopted a specific strategy to try to establish its presence and weight as a country to be recognized with its orientations and policy at the level of Dooley, President Putin has sought to restore Russia's former power in the region, and reassert its status as a major power in the world.

Russia was able to play the role of a strong partner for many countries, including Iraq, and it was also able to re-establish a military force through which it could confront

US policies that conflict with its policy. Thus, Russia announced that its foreign directions may contradict and differ from US policy following its higher interests, which are reformulated throughout the Middle East.

Russia is setting its perceptions on achieving a set of goals in the future through its strategy towards Iraq, as Iraq is a focal point in the redistribution of Russian power in the region generally. It may help Russia to stabilize Iraq's internal security and confront future challenges. So Russia's main intention is to increase its military cooperation with Iraq to improve its strategic link mostly on military bases such as support and armament and even military bases and training.

The economic factor comes to express the strength of the Russian response to the realization of Iraq's future economic significance and importance to the Russian rise in the international system and Russia's role in the Middle Eastern regional system. The commercial partnership will be one of the most important aspects of the Russian strategic move toward Iraq, as Iraqi oil will draw new paths for relations between the two parties. On this basis, Russia will work to maintain its presence near Iraq. Also, Iraq will serve, in the near future, as an environment for strategic competition with the United States for influence and status, which Russia seeks to reach the stage of dialogue with the United States in the form and nature of alliances and balances in the region in which it will have an important role.

With the above description and foresight for the future of the Russian strategy towards Iraq, it must be pointed out that the American variable will be effective and powerful in defining this strategy for Russia and Iraq as well. Especially since the features of the Iraqi-Russian future relationship are still governed by the directions of American policy, it is expected in the future that the American perception and dealings with Iraq will not witness a major change regarding allowing or providing space for either Russia to make Iraq a strategic ally in the region or abandon it from Before the United States or its role receded in terms of its exit from the US policy circle towards other spaces.

However, it is possible to reduce the impact of these restrictions between Iraq and Russia, especially in light of the security situation that reduces the impact of the

American variable, and the presence of an Iraqi desire relatively independent of American pressure to activate relations between the two countries that this relationship is based on foundations of mutual benefit, which is the most important conditions for this activation.

Based on this, it is clear that the American variable has a clear and significant impact on the Russian strategic directions towards Iraq and that this effect will continue in the future. However, the Russian Federation has economic, military and political ingredients that can reduce the impact of the American variable on the strategic vision of Iraq, and a distinct historical legacy of relations with Iraq, as well as positive signals from the Iraqi side to accept a Russian role, may help. On the other hand, yet there are regional changes that can constitute a pressure factor on US policy in Iraq and the region, which could give way to Russia to obtain a position in the Iraqi arena, so we predict that the future gives a lot of opportunities for the Russian side to enhance its influence both in Iraq and the middle east as a whole (Muthanna, 2009, p 16 – 15 ).

Since Vladimir Putin rose to power in Russia, he began to apply a novel political doctrine of realism in his foreign policy by saying: "The only realistic option for Russia is to be a country Strong and confident of her strength, but side by side to other strong countries. " Therefore, Russia's policy is to be in the international community, not against other powerful states, but side by side. The characteristics of Putin's realistic policy are economy, European security, and the rejection of unipolar (Sakwa 2007)Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice*, Abingdon: Routledge (2004): 267-278.

Russian foreign policy focuses on achieving basic goals, including ensuring the security of the country, creating conditions for economic growth, strengthening international security and peace, and promoting good neighborly relations to prevent tensions and conflicts in the vicinity of the Soviet Union. Achieving internal goals and policies to improve deteriorating internal conditions, control borders, achieve economic growth, and maintain internal unit (Putin 2013).

In the Middle East, Russia has long sought to establish a pivotal role, and since Iraq plays an important role in this region, it can be a good target for Russia in the path to achieve this strategic role and also reach the high seas. A study of Iraq in Russia's

foreign policy can not be carried out in isolation from the United States of America, as it was the United States that deliberately removed Russia from the political game circle in Iraq. Therefore, President Vladimir Putin attempts to restore Russia's former role because of which he entered the conflict with the United States is an important stage, especially in the strategic regions of the world, including Iraq (Ahmed, 2008 ).



## CHAPTER II.

### RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS IRAQ

Since the beginning of the decade, as Russia rose in power again, the international scene has witnessed its rising political presence and influence in the international community. Russia's participation in international crises is one of the most important factors of confusion for the United States' foreign policy. Most of the Analysts believe since Russia's reappearance in the international community, the United States has committed several mistakes. The presence of other players in the international scene is an important factor that determines the policy of superpowers in any region. The interests, benefits, economical relations, etc of present countries are the factors that must be considered in superpowers' foreign policy <https://democraticac.de/?p=34457>.

#### 2.1 Internal determinants

In Russia's foreign policy like other major countries, domestic determinants and geographical position among all other determinants play a critical role. Russian foreign policy is based on its vision of the importance of the geographical factor, which occupies the forefront of the strategic region, which is on the ladder of global concerns. Nevertheless, no world order can form far away from the heart of the world, which is Russia and this constitutes the center of power and a pillar of Russian foreign policy (Muhammad, 2010).

The Middle East region was among Russia's goals to achieve security in its southern borders due to the existence of permanent regional conflict possibility. Also, due to the constant quest to find a community to stand up to unipolarity and put pressure on the United States of America. It allowed Russia to enter the peace process, and strengthened its role in the international community. This is what Russia sought by developing its relations with Iraq because of its geographical location. Iraq is an

important, strategic, and vital region for Russia because Iraq can provide Russia with permanent access to warm-water ports.

Iraq is located in the heart of the Middle East, between Iran and Kuwait. The area of Iraq is 437,367 square kilometers. And it contains natural resources such as natural gas and oil. In addition to phosphate and sulfur. Iraq is strategically located on the Shatt al-Arab waterway and at the head of the Arabian Gulf “Central Asia: Iraq”, the world Fact book, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Washington Mar, 2018..

Therefore, Russia views Iraq as an important partner in the Middle East region (George, 2001). Yet, economic interests were the primary motive of Russian foreign policy toward Iraq. The fact that Iraq has the fifth-largest reserves of crude oil, and it is one of the most important oil producers and exporters of crude oil is the main reason for Moscow's interests towards Iraq. However, since 2014 the Iraqi economy has been affected by ISIS attacks and resulted in a drop in world oil prices, also, in 2015 the price of oil fell entirely. A recent study believes that Iraq possessing these resources made it a priority in Russia's foreign policy because it is through economic interests that Russia can achieve what it wants at all levels “Iraq: Selected Issues Report,” International Monetary Fund, Aug 2015..

Russia's strategic interest in Iraq was to reduce the hostilities to the maximum extent possible, and not to leave any victorious party. From a Russian point of view, the victory of the United States of America led to the growth of American hegemony, its control over oil resources, and its control over its prices, and this threatens Russia's security and interest (Muhammed, 2003, p 158-159 )

After the 2003 war, the Middle East region witnessed a western presence in critical geographical regions for Russia which was near the southern borders of Russia. In strategic terms, this means a threat to Russia. But Russia was able to take advantage of what happened in Iraq, especially in light of the regional rise of Iran, by standing beside it to build a nuclear reactor and providing it with technological capabilities,

which constituted concern and inconvenience to the United States (Muthanna, 2009, p 11 – 12).

Russia has endeavored to combat terrorism, conflict, and the struggles between the rebel movements in Iraq, which would threaten Russia's territorial integrity and internal security if they get the control of Iraq. These endeavors all together tried to enhance the stability of Iraq's internal condition and in the meantime protect Russia's vital interests Ekaterina Stepanova, *The Challenge of Terrorism in Post-Saddam Iraq: A view from Russia* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, No: 325, April, 2004), 4. Nevertheless, terrorist movements in Iraq have increased under the pretext of resisting al-Qaeda, by kidnapping many employees at the Russian embassy in Baghdad in 2006. Not only did they kidnap, but the group also executed one of the kidnapped, and threatened to execute the rest Andrew McGregor, "Russia Threatens Hit-Squads after Murder of its Diplomats in Iraq," *The Jamestown Foundation*, Jul 2006..

In September 2014, an international coalition formed by the United States to confront ISIS, however, Russia had doubts and objections to the coalition. These doubts revolve around the dialectic of the hidden goals behind this alliance. Especially since this alliance is under US command. Although Russia has not joined this alliance, this does not mean not to combat terrorism in Iraq. Russia formed an alliance quartet in 2015 that includes Russia, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. One of the most powerful nations in the alliance was Iraq, being in contact with the United States of America by the international alliance formed in 2014, and Russia refused to join it (Bilal, 2016, p 177).

It is clear that Iraq since 2003 has been and still is facing terrorist operations, and that any support from the Russian Federation is based on preserving its interests in the first place. This is because terrorist groups and organizations besides being a threat to Russia's interests in Iraq, there is also the possibility of moving toward Russian borders if Iraq fails to defeat it.

## 2.2 External Determinants

Iraq's foreign policy is affected by many external factors, which are a product of the international environment in various areas. Baghdad analyses the effects of Russia's presence within its borders considering Russia's prominent role in the international community and also the way this presence is going to affect its relations with other countries. External determinants include the regional environment surrounding Iraq, meaning all interactions between all of the major actors. Moreover, the international environment, which affects Russia's foreign policy toward Iraq.

The disagreements between Iraq and other countries in the region had a negative impact, which is also reflected in the countries active in the international community, such as Syria. Within the regional framework, the relations between Iraq and Syria were close and hostile from time to time, and the reason was the rivalry between two countries for the domination of international affairs. In 2001, the United States asked the Security Council to confront Syria over its illegal oil trade, and Russia refused. And it affected the Iraqi-Russian relations, as Russia found a crack to break the embargo on Iraq through Syria (Ali, 2012, p 13-137).

Syria rejected the US plans in Iraq, and after the start of the US war on Iraq, President Assad strongly opposed the war. This supportive position for Iraq had a positive effect on the domestic level, while on the external level, Syria faced many pressures from America. After the war, the talks between the two sides resulted in a deal over issues of joint security. Eventually, Iyad Allawi asked Syria to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq, and the two parties agreed to form a security committee to control the borders between the two countries (Sattar, 2007, p 21-23).

Syria tended to revive the traditional alliance with Russia, and this was done through the visit of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to Moscow in 2005 and discussion of regional conditions, and emphasis on the Russian role in the region. The two parties agreed on their position towards Iraq and the need to maintain its independence and security and support the political process. In 2008, Assad visited Moscow at the

invitation of former Russian President Medvedev, and the issue of Iraq was discussed and several agreements were signed, the most important of which is the Russian proposal to link the four seas (the Mediterranean, Black, Caspian, and the Gulf) with four countries bordering the seas, which are Syria and Turkey Iraq and Iran (Sattar, 2007, p 2-23).

The Syrian revolution had a major role in Russian foreign policy, as Russia's intervention in Syria was in order to stop the United States interference, which was only to protect its own benefits and gain the position as the dominant role in providing the stability of the region ( Maryam,2015, p 69-68) . The Syrian and Iraqi situations are two models through which Russia highlights its role in the international community, and despite the differences between the roles that Russia and America want to achieve in the region, they both declare the same goals regarding terrorism (Mustafa, 2008).

Russia's policy toward Iraq is affected by international variables, such as the expansion of NATO. During this decade, Nato expanded its missions related to the Middle East region, also it has changed its strategy due to the fact that today it is facing new threats in the security of this region. Among this strategy, the alliance extended its scope of work in the sense that it has become a broad political role in imposing order and security on a global level.

NATO's policy is based on ensuring that the imbalance in global power remains toward the United States and other Atlantic powers. And the formation of a global security system led by Western countries through the alliance, and this is what the United States sought through this alliance because its expansion allows the United States to reshape international relations toward the continuation of its global dominance. The United States also sought, via the alliance, to keep Russia within its political borders, and prevent the possibility of Russia attracting European countries, and also impose economic and political pressure on it, and its nuclear and missile access (Khader, 2007, p 184-185).

Furthermore, NATO's mission in Iraq was to pursue the mentioned goals, however, Russia has rejected the war on Iraq. And with the beginning of 2003, the controversy erupted in the alliance between Germany and France, which refused to make the war in Iraq within NATO's jurisdiction, except with UN approval. However, the United States of America had no intention of using NATO forces in the military operation, but the situation changed as a result of the American pressure on NATO countries by preventing it from developing advance plans related to the war on Iraq (Ban, 2012).

Iraqi relations with NATO began when the Alliance Council decided to approve the request of the representative of Poland being the division commander for the General Multinational Forces in Central and South Africa, that NATO provides that force with services in the areas of intelligence, logistical support, coordination, and support for special transportation for the forces. The United States of America was willing to have a role for the alliance in Iraq, despite the reluctance of many European countries to support NATO's approach (Mustafa, 2008, p 42-43).

Russia tried to avoid deepening its conflict with Washington and stopped opposing US policy in Iraq. The war on Iraq showed the limits of the US-Russian partnership in light of Russia's unwillingness to be an equal partner with America. But at the same time, the fact that Russia will never accept to be America's junior partner.

Russia has turned to the United Nations as its sole sponsor in strengthening its international position. In light of Russia's fear of the growing American role, it tried to limit the role of the United States without direct intervention in the confrontation. And the defection that took place in NATO over the Iraqi issue had exposed the strategic differences between the United States and Europe which was an indication of the possibility for Russia to restore its global role (Ashraf, 2011, p 155-156).

It can be said that NATO is no longer a European-American defense organization confined to the geographical space in which it arose, but rather went out to Asia, including the spheres of influence from Europe heading to Russia such as Iraq

(Ban, 2012). Putin emphasized that "American penetration into Russian spheres of influence threatens Russia's interests and national security."

Russian foreign policy greatly affected Iraq, through its pragmatic policy whose goal was to achieve its interests in the first place, and Russia started from the most important consideration, which is the economy. By establishing economic relations with Iraq, and lifting the sanctions imposed on itself by the help of United Nations, Russia is going to face the impact of changes exerted by the international community, the most important of which is the dominance of the United States and the policy of the United States of America. Moreover, Russia supports Iraq at the political level and also in the military and security area through the great efforts that were made within the Security Council to end it, such that Russia today is the second supplier of arms to Iraq after the United States of America (Ayman, 2007, p 175).

Countries seek to find a strategic position in the Middle East. This region is the subject of permanent international conflict because of its oil wealth and geostrategic spatiality. Thus, to achieve its goals, Russia seeks to penetrate the region due to its international weight and immense military capabilities (Izz al-Din, 2012).

Russia expressed its support for Iraq in order to build an independent and democratic country to combat terrorism and to enhance the territorial integrity and independence of Iraq within the framework of maintaining security and stability in Iraq and the Middle East region, away from regional interventions, and this played a major role in the development of Iraq on the one hand and the development of cooperation with Federal Russia on the other hand. Consequently, the future of Iraqi-Russian relations is subject to internal and external changes, in light of the intensification of competition between international powers because of Iraq's possession of oil wealth and a geostrategic position in the region (Muthanna, 2009, p 1).

In order to study Russian foreign policy towards Iraq, it is necessary to understand the directions of this policy in light of many international and regional changes and the difference in issues between the two countries.

## **2.3 Russian Foreign Policy Intentions From Its Relationship With Iraq**

President Vladimir Putin's rise to power marked a significant shift in Russia's foreign policy priorities. Since 2000, Russia has started to move with its foreign policy towards upgrading the great powers, regaining its role and prestige, and building a strong, modern country (Ban, 2012). To achieve these goals, since his assumption of power, Putin has sought to bring several changes in Russia's foreign policy toward the Middle East, especially Iraq. Russia's foreign policy aims to achieve various objectives in Iraq, including:

### **2.3.1 Restricting NATO's expansion**

Russia's foreign policy emphasizes that "military and political alliances are unable to face global challenges and threats, and with increasing interdependence between peoples and nations, attempts to ensure stability and security within the region are doomed to failure."

Russia has managed to confront NATO to establish a global strategic balance by signing several strategic agreements with international powers such as China, India, and some Middle Eastern countries, led by Iraq. Many Russian experts stressed the need to strengthen Russian-Iraqi relations within Russia's foreign policy. They are aware that the western presence in the region, especially Iraq, is not for the sake of maintaining security. The United States' main aim in Iraq is to take control of oil sources in a region (Ban, 2012, p 60-61). Furthermore, Russia sees the alliance as an American tool and a threat to its domination. Although Russia participates in the Alliance on many issues, such as confronting terrorism and so on, it still views it as a strategic adversary rather than a partner Adam Balcer and NikolayPetrov. *The Future of Russia: Modernization or Decline?*.Carnige Moscow, 2012. 21..

### **2.3.2 War against terrorism**

Russia's foreign policy "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian", The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016. stresses that "the growing threat from international terrorism is one of the most dangerous facts in the world." And that the terrorist threat has reached a great level in light of the "emergence of the Islamic State", therefore it is necessary to "create a broad international coalition to combat terrorism based on a solid legal foundation and cooperation between countries."

Among the Russian support for Iraq in the fight against terrorism, what Russia has done within the Security Council. (Resolution adopted by the Security Council, 2014).

by issuing Resolution No. 2161 of June 17, 2014, less than a week after the ISIS terrorist control over many Iraqi cities and territories. The content of the decision included taking several measures that would freeze financial assets and economic resources belonging to individuals belonging to and supporting terrorist groups in Iraq, and banning their travel (Bilal, 2016, p 17).

Russia has also prepared a UN draft resolution banning the purchase of oil from terrorist organizations and stressing the need to take action to prevent illegal oil trade within the areas under the control of these terrorist groups. Russia's efforts within the Security Council came to reduce the sources of funding for these groups, especially in Iraq, and to prevent their expansion in the regions of Central Asia and areas close to the Russian borders, which constitute a threat to its national security (Bilal, 2016, p 17).

### **2.3.3 Development of economic capabilities**

Since Putin came to power, he has reformulated Russia's strategy based on restoring prestige and the role in the international system in many areas, including the economy Andrew Monaghan, The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 3.. To contain the economic crisis that Russia suffered in the 1990s. Putin's goals in Iraq were to obtain

Russian debt from Iraq estimated to be about 12 billion dollars, then to develop economic ties between the two countries, based on the importance of Iraq in the global economy because of its huge oil reserves.

#### **2.3.4 Establish a multipolar system**

It is one of the priorities of Russia's foreign policy to overcome global challenges and create a stable international order based on international laws "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian,"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016.. Russia emphasizes its pragmatic nature, independence, and rejection of the unipolar system. Putin (Izz al-Din, 2012, p 97). reemphasized this by saying, "New challenges and threats to Russia's national benefits are beginning to appear at the global level ..., and that Russia is seeking to achieve a multi-polar world order that can truly reflect the existing reality in the modern world."

This is by proposing solutions that are compatible with the implementation of the peace settlement, in light of the growing feeling among many countries of their rejection of the power policy imposed by the United States under the slogan of establishing a new world order. Especially about the Iraq crisis in the Middle East by adopting diplomatic behavior towards Iraq, and opposing American decisions to launch a military attack to eliminate the Iraqi regime (Nabia, 1999, p 227).

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS

#### 3.1 Russian Consulate in Erbil, 2007

The Russian delegation chose Erbil as their first stop in Iraq on 21 April 2006 and was pleased to see the economic progress that has been achieved in the Kurdistan Region. Among the political issues that were discussed was the establishment of a federal government of national unity in Baghdad, and the bilateral relations that had existed at a much earlier time.

Following the Russian Government's decision in Moscow to open consulates in Erbil and Basra, this visit finalized the arrangements. In keeping with the federal structure of Iraq, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani welcomed the initiative and offered his full support. Along with the presence of KRG representative offices abroad, Prime Minister Barzani affirmed that with this initiative social, cultural, and economic relations would improve mutual understanding, peace, and prosperity between the Kurdistan Region and the Russian Federation <http://previous.cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?s=010000&l=12&a=10584>.

The Consulate General of the Russian Federation in the city of Erbil was opened on November 28, 2007. The solemn reception on the occasion of this significant event was attended by President of Kurdistan region Masoud Barzani, high-ranking Kurdish officials, politicians, diplomats, representatives of mass media, and graduates of Soviet and Russian universities. Speakers at the reception stressed the timeliness of the decision to open a representation in the region. Russian diplomatic mission became the first Consulate General in Erbil. Now there are more than 30 different foreign representation offices functioning in the Kurdistan region. The Russian ambassador to Iraq at the inauguration ceremony said:

"We are in Erbil today to witness a historic step by inaugurating the Russian consulate. This step came after long negotiations between the Russian government from

one side and the Iraqi and Kurdish governments from the other. Kurdish citizens can now get Russia's entry visa from the consulate in Erbil instead of going to Baghdad."

Also, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani marked the occasion of the opening of the Russian Consulate by welcoming President Putin's Special Envoy, Mr. Igor Yusufov, and saying:

"I want to convey my special thanks to President Putin for taking this courageous decision and the interest he gives the Kurdistan Region. This heralds a new phase in the relationship of the peoples of Russia and the Kurdistan Region.

Our people have not forgotten that Russia was a sanctuary for General Barzani and his comrades. This historic event created strong ties between our two people. There is no doubt that this is the beginning of a new stage in our relations with the Russian Federation.

We are trying to rebuild our region, but we alone cannot carry out this huge task. We need the support and assistance of our friends in the international community. We want to broaden the circle of our relations."

Russia was one of the first countries among the world's most powerful countries that opened a Consulate in Erbil. Regarding Russia's stance towards the Kurdistan Region's independence, the support for the Iraqi Kurdistan region will be in the context of international law with the name 'Iraq'. "Though there have been lots of conflicts among Shia, Sunni, and Kurds in Iraq, they have lived together throughout history. These parties can compromise once more and maintain unity among them," stated Russian ambassador.

The Russian Federation is the second country, after Iran, to open a fully accredited consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region. Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, the UK, and the US also maintain diplomatic representation in the Kurdistan Region.

### 3.2 An Agreement to Cancel 93% of Iraqi Debts Owed to Russia, 2008

Iraq after Saddam Hussein's period was under a huge debt. In some literature, this debt has been approximated to be about \$130 billion. During the US invasion reducing this debt to a sustainable level was of great importance. Since then, debt relief negotiations led to the cancellation of a notable amount of Iraq's external debt. The debt was comprised of 4 main components: Paris Club bilateral debt (\$42.5 billion), non-Paris Club bilateral debt (\$67.4 billion), commercial debt (\$20 billion) and multilateral debt (\$0.5 billion). Debt relief negotiations first led to an 80% reduction of the Paris Club debt. The Paris Club agreement also set the terms for non-Paris Club and commercial debt cancellation levels. A provision of the Paris Club agreement is that Iraq cannot accept a debt cancellation agreement with other creditors on more favorable terms for Iraq than those reached with the Paris Club. Thus, Iraq is expected to receive no more than an 80% cancellation from all of its creditors.

The following table is a detailed table of Iraq's Paris Club debt.

**Table 1.** Total Iraq Paris Club Debt, 2003 (Weiss 2006)

<b>Country</b>	<b>Debt Owed</b>
Japan	\$4.2 billion
Russia	\$12.9 billion
France	\$3 billion
Germany	\$2.3 billion
United States	\$2.2 billion
Italy	\$1.7 billion
United Kingdom	\$1 billion
Austria	\$813.1 million
Canada	\$564.2 million
Australia	\$499.3 million
Spain	\$321.2 million
Brazil	\$192.9 million
Sweden	\$185.8 million
Belgium	\$184.5 million
Finland	\$152.2 million
Switzerland	\$117.5 million
Netherlands	\$96.7 million

South Korea	\$54.7 million
Denmark	\$30.8 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$30.6 Billion</b>

Next is the same Table for Iraq's non-Paris club debt.

**Table 2.** Total Iraq non-Paris Club Debt, 2003 (Weiss 2006)

<b>Creditor Nation</b>	<b>Debt Owed</b>
Saudi Arabia	\$30 billion
Kuwait	\$27 billion
China	\$5.8 billion
Qatar	\$4 billion
United Arab Emirates	\$3.8 billion
Romania	\$2.5 billion
Serbia	\$2 billion
Turkey	\$1.8 billion
Bulgaria	\$1.7 billion
Jordan	\$1.3 billion
Poland	\$564 million
Czech Republic	\$147 million
Morocco	\$32 million
South Africa	\$24 million
Hungary	\$17 million

India	\$1 million
<hr/>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$80.7 Billion</b>
<hr/>	

In February 2008, Iraq managed to sign an agreement with Russia to write off 93% of its debts. At the time, Iraq's debt was about \$13 billion, much of it dating back to the first gulf war when the Iraq government purchased Soviet Union weapons.

Moscow had accepted to write off the debt as far back as 2004 because the Iraq government at the time has assured to honor a large Russian oil claim, also dating to the Saddam Hussein period.

At the time Russia claimed that they had signed a convenient agreement due to which they accepted to write off all but \$900 million of the debt. Also, Moscow agreed to invest \$4 billion in Iraq, namely Iraq's oil industry <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/world/europe/12moscow.html>.

This agreement besides putting an end to longstanding debt problems, it also, hindered the United states policy about limiting Iraq's relationships with Russia and opening Iraq's oil industry to other possible countries.

Iraq was not the only country that achieved such a privilege from the new Russian government. The information about debt cancellation to various countries of the world by Russia caused various reactions in Russian society. On one hand, supporters believe this measure is beneficial because it allows the Russian Federation to declare its focus on economic and political partnerships and renew its list of allies in different regions of the world.

On the other hand, opponents of the idea of debt cancellation argue the unjustified generosity of current Russian authorities, based on the "generosity" of taxpayers of past generations, will not do anything well. Both sides have their

irrefutable reasons for the status of writing off debt to various countries of the world  
<https://mr.wv2facts.net/22233-who-wrote-off-the-debts-of-russia.html>.

To be more precise the list of the debts which were partially canceled is as follows.

**Table 3.** Russia's debt cancellation <https://mr.wv2facts.net/22233-who-wrote-off-the-debts-of-russia.html>

<b>Country</b>	<b>Total Debt</b>
Vietnam	\$11 billion
Iraq	\$12 billion
Algeria	\$4.7 billion
Afghanistan	\$11 billion
Mongolia	\$11.9 billion
Libya	\$4.6 billion
African Countries	\$20 billion
North Korea	\$10.9 billion
Kyrgyzstan	\$0.5 billion
Cuba	\$30 billion
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$116.6 Billion</b>

However, Russian society was against this kind of generosity. They argued that there was never such generosity towards Russia since there was a country named Russia on the map and even before during the Soviet Union era, not even while Russia was on its knees there was no talk about writing off its debts.

### **3.3 A Cooperation Protocol Between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Iraq and the Russian Federation in 2012**

On June 15, 2012 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov held talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, H. Zibari, who was in Moscow on a working visit.

A discussion of topical issues of traditionally friendly Russian-Iraqi relations took place and concrete practical steps for their further advancement were outlined. Particular emphasis was placed on the tasks of strengthening cooperation in the trade, economic, energy and military-technical spheres. The importance was emphasized of giving new dynamics to bilateral relations, primarily through the use of existing reserves, both in private and state lines, including the intensification of the work of the Russian-Iraqi Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation.

The transformational processes in several states of the Middle East and North Africa as a result of the events of the “Arab spring” were examined in detail. S.V. Lavrov and H. Zibari reaffirmed the need to solve pressing problems by the Arab peoples themselves without outside interference. The importance of implementing socio-economic and political transformations in the countries of the region on the basis of observance of generally accepted human rights and freedoms, and the development of a broad dialogue with the participation of all interested parties was emphasized [https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/iq/-/asset\\_publisher/WizNA2SGNvS5/content/id/152406](https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/iq/-/asset_publisher/WizNA2SGNvS5/content/id/152406).

Regarding the situation in Syria, a common opinion has been recorded in favor of an immediate cessation of bloodshed, the launch of an inclusive nationwide dialogue with the goal of normalizing the situation and realizing the aspirations of the Syrian people for a better life, sustainable democratic development. The ministers spoke out in support of the plan for resolving the crisis of UN and LAS Special Envoy K. Annan and exchanged views on ways to form a consolidated approach of the international community in the interests of its speedy implementation. In this context, Sergey Lavrov informed his Iraqi counterpart about the Russian initiative to convene an international

conference on Syria, designed to mobilize various external parties, including Iraq, to facilitate the successful implementation of the plan of K. Annan, to help calm the situation,

H. Zibari, in turn, spoke in detail about the situation in Iraq, the government's efforts to combat terrorist manifestations, which still complicate the implementation of programs to restore the normal life of the population, and ensure the ongoing economic development of the country. He confirmed that the overwhelming majority of Iraqi political and ethno-confessional forces are firmly determined to resolve the existing differences and contradictions in the legal field, on the paths of dialogue and achieving national harmony. On the Russian side, this approach was unequivocally supported [https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/iq/-/asset\\_publisher/WizNA2SGNvS5/content/id/152406](https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/iq/-/asset_publisher/WizNA2SGNvS5/content/id/152406).

S.V. Lavrov and H. Zibari agreed to continue a regular mutually beneficial exchange of views on pressing international and bilateral issues.

### **3.4 An Agreement For Cooperation in The Military Field, 2014**

October 10th, 2012 Nouri al-Maliki who was the Prime Minister of Iraq at the time, during his visit to Russia signed a contract which worth over \$4.2 billion with Russia to equip Iraq's army with Russian weaponry. The Soviet Union and then Russia was the main arms supplier for Iraq in the years 1958-2000. In that period, the total value of the contracts was \$30.5 billion at current prices. Iraq was a valuable client for Russia due to the fact that most of Russia's weaponry clients never paid for the massive supplements they got but Iraq paid for its armaments both with hard currency and oil which readily could be cashed.

By the time of the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq had paid about \$22.4 billion. Nevertheless, with American troops entering Iraq in 2003, Russia took a step back. Since then, the main supplier of arms for Iraq was the USA. In recent years, Russia has been improving its diplomatic and military power in the region once again. Moscow is

repairing its connections with the countries in the middle east and Europe, which were sabotaged after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Vladimir Kozhin stated that Russia would renew armaments shipments to Iraq  
[https://ria.ru/defense\\_safety/20180312/1516142790.html](https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20180312/1516142790.html):

*“Iraq is our traditional partner, and it is boosting its potential by ordering our equipment. Currently, we are equipping an entire armored brigade there. Deliveries of our armored equipment are underway, which will significantly increase the country’s defense potential”*

The deal was one of the greatest weaponry transactions Russia had after its market shrunk due to the Arab Spring movements. However, Russia had some bigger armaments shipments to Algeria and Venezuela. Anyway, the deal took place after several meetings between Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and his counterpart, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. Iraqi military sources reported that the deal involves 48 Pantsir-C1 surface-to-air missiles and up to 40 Mi-28NE attack helicopters. According to Lenta, the first batch of weaponry was planned to arrive in 2014. Also, 36 Russian T-90 tanks had been purchased in the very deal. Later, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari announced that they have discussed acquiring the Russian S-400 Triumph anti-aircraft missile system due to the tensions in the middle east between Iran and Israel and also due to the losses in confronting Islamic State jihadists  
<https://glavportal.com/materials/v-bagdade-izuchayut-vozmozhnost-priobreteniya-rossijskih-zrs-s-400/>.

Iraq has the right to own cutting-edge weapons to defend its territory and air space from air attacks. Terrorism heavily targets our country in places sacred to every Iraqi. There are signs and warnings that extremists might use aircraft for attacks on those shrines, which causes lots of worry and anxiety in the country, as happened after an attack on Samarra’s holy places. Al-Qaeda’s February 2006 bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, one of Shiite Islam’s holiest sites, which unleashed years of Sunni-Shiite sectarian strife. So Iraq intends to possess such a system as the S-400 to defend the land, shrines and air space.

Russia's discussions with Iraq about increasing its armaments purchases up to and including S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems is yet further evidence that Middle Eastern countries are increasingly drawn toward acquiring Russian military capabilities, frequently at the expense of US and European armaments manufacturers. Turkey, Egypt, Iran and, more recently, Saudi Arabia have also expressed interest in acquiring Russia's S-400 system, while Iran has taken delivery of an advanced variant of Russia's S-300 air-defense system. Baghdad's recent decision was undoubtedly influenced by the largely successful actions of Russian armored vehicles in Syria, with Moscow's Syrian campaign providing demonstrations of Russian weaponry firepower. As Russian combat operations continue in Syria, it seems likely that regional interest in the weapons systems sustaining Bashar al-Assad's regime in power can only increase, to the potential detriment of Western arms suppliers <http://www.rudaw.net/english/analysis/02032018>.

### **3.5 A Memorandum of Understanding For Parliamentary Cooperation, 2015**

Speaker of Parliament Salim al-Jabouri signed a memorandum of understanding for joint parliamentary cooperation with his counterpart, the Russian Duma, Sergey Naryshkin, calling for cooperation between Iraq and Russia to create investments that strengthen the economies of the two countries. In a statement issued on the sidelines of his meeting with the head of the Russian State Duma, Al-Jubouri said that "at the end of the joint meeting held in the State Duma building in the capital, Moscow, it was agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding for joint parliamentary cooperation.

The economy of the oil countries is under threat, which necessitates more cooperation to create investments that strengthen the economies of the two countries, reduce this risk and benefit the two friendly peoples. Iraq worked to strengthen its relationship with Moscow. The House of Representatives and the government emanating from it are willing to strengthen this relationship and enforce all previous notes, agreements, and documents between the two countries. As it's mentioned before it is necessary to activate the work of the Russian-Iraqi committee and enhance cultural and educational cooperation by expanding and increasing the opportunities for scholarships

in a way that constitutes a cultural bridge between the two countries. Speaker of Parliament Salim al-Jabouri also confirmed that Russia plays the most important role in the Middle East <http://burathanews.com/arabic/news/286045>.

The head of the Iraqi Parliament, Salim al-Jabouri, and his deputy Aram Sheikh Muhammad and a number of deputies met in Moscow with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during which the two sides discussed several issues of common concern, particularly the political and security situations in Iraq, and ways to strengthen and strengthen bilateral relations between the two friendly peoples, And the conclusion of agreements to serve the common interests between Baghdad and Moscow.

Aram Sheikh Muhammed, the Vice-President of the Council, affirmed Iraq's keenness to develop relations with friendly countries such as Russia, indicating that it has an influence in the region and that it can play a positive and effective role.

The statement indicated that Lavrov confirmed his country's readiness to provide whatever support can be made to the Iraqi people in their battle against ISIS terrorists <https://aenaneews.com/%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B4%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82/>.

The meeting agreed on the need to cooperate and intensify efforts to combat the threat of terrorism, which is threatening the region and the world. Iraq is willing to cooperate with Russia, and it will remain a major front in the facing with terrorism.

### **3.6 A Direct Flight Between Baghdad and Moscow After 17 years, 2017**

17 Sep 2017, the Minister of Transport, Kazem F. Al-Hamami, announced the launch of flights between Baghdad and the Russian capital, Moscow, after 17 years reack. This line will enable Iraqi civil aviation to enter the European airspace and open the horizons for the Iraqi travelers. The line will reduce the burdens on citizens and save travel costs, while the Russian consulate confirmed In Iraq, it issues a large number of tourist visas for those wishing to visit Russia. Moreover, it will simplify the diplomatic relationships besides it will provide easier access in the case of different travelers such as those who travel for study, treatment, tourism, and trade.

Iraq has historical ties with Russia dating back to the forties of the last century when diplomatic relations were established between Iraq and the Soviet Union at that time, and these relations developed during the past years, especially in the fields of investments, study, and medicine. This line will reduce the burdens on the citizen's shoulders and provide for him The trouble of moving between airports as well as reduces travel costs.

It was agreed between the Iraqi civil aviation and the Russian civil aviation to resume the operation of flights between Baghdad and Moscow after a hiatus of nearly 17 years, praising the efforts made during the discussions and discussions that were going into in order to complete the procedures for opening this line.

For its part, the Russian consulate in Iraq welcomed the opening of the Moscow-Baghdad route by Iraqi Airways, expressing its hope that this matter will increase the prospects for economic and commercial cooperation between Iraq and Russia <https://www.almirbad.com/Details/16421>.

## CHAPER IV.

### THE CRITICAL DEAL

Recent events in the middle east region lead Iraq toward one of the greatest deals between Iraq and Russia after the Saddam Husein era. The middle east's condition has been changed vastly after the recent droid attack. On January 3rd, 2020 the United States killed Iran's top commander, General Qassem Soleimani, who was the architect of Tehran's proxy wars in the Middle East in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50979463>.

The targeted killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, could draw forceful Iranian retaliation against American interests in the region and spiral into a far larger conflict between the U.S. and Iran, endangering U.S. troops in Iraq, Syria and beyond.

Moreover, it makes a clear point that Iraq has to improve its air defense system. A string of reports alleged earlier this week that Russia is seeking to export the S-400 to Iraq. To be sure, it's a timely and compelling narrative. The Trump administration's decision to order a lethal airstrike against top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani has cast doubt over the future of continued U.S. military presence in the Middle East, culminating in the recent Iraqi parliament vote for the expulsion of U.S. troops from Iraqi soil <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/obituaries/qassem-soleimani-dead.html>.

The former head of the Security and Defense Committee in the Iraqi parliament, Hakim Al-Zamili, revealed that Baghdad is negotiating to buy the Russian S-400 air defense system, indicating that this system is very important, and it is expected that it will enter Iraq within the next two years.

Al-Zamili said, "The discussions are advanced and are still continuing in full swing by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and the National Security Adviser with the Russian side. There is an Iraqi trend to strengthen cooperation in the field of armament with Russia, and this resulted in the signing of a \$4.2 billion contract for the purchase of

combat aircraft with fixed or mobile wing, in addition to \$1.1 billion contract to equip Iraq with armored vehicles."

This missile system, with a range of four hundred kilometers, is one of the most advanced systems, and it can destroy targets that move at speeds of five kilometers per second, including aircraft, self-propelled, medium-range missiles, and winged missiles <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2019/5/5/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B6-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9>.

Obviously, this deal is not something that the United States could tolerate. This is against US policies in the region and also, against its benefits. Therefore, the United States lifted the sword of sanctions in the face of the Iraqi government as soon as it announced its intention to sign the Russian S-400 air defense missile deal. The deal would spare Iraq from buying fighters and guarantee its airspace in the face of air violations by Israel or the United States itself.

The American press has quoted Pentagon officials as negotiations between Iraq and Russia to sign the S-400 missile deal, and it appears that Russia has welcomed in principle, especially as it wants to provide a number of countries with this system. With this, Washington repeats the threat it made to Turkey, which acquired this system and denied it the acquisition of the F-35 fighter, then pressures it exerted on other countries such as India to refrain from signing an agreement with Moscow, while countries such as the United Arab Emirates have now frozen S-400 acquisition negotiations with Moscow.

The United States recognizes that every S-400 deal signed by Russia with a country results in the non-purchase of neighboring countries by the state benefiting from the S-400 Western fighters, led by the United States because the S400 cripples the movement of sophisticated fighters from F16 to F 35". And if Iraq gets the "S 400", it

would have achieved, on the one hand, to deter the attacking operations carried out by Israel and even the United States against the Iraqi armed factions, and on the other hand, Iraq would not be in urgent need of combat aircraft, especially the interceptors

<https://www.raialyoum.com/index.php/%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1%D9%87-%D8%A5%D8%B3-400/>.

Iraq has formally responded to the objection of the United States of America. A spokesman for the Information Office of the Iraqi Prime Minister, Saad Al-Hadithi, said "the file of arming the Iraqi forces is subject to the requirements and the need to build and strengthen the capabilities of the Iraqi forces, in addition to the compatibility of these weapons with the combat system of these forces. These are the basic criteria that define the nature of the Ministry of Defense's direction as the technical authority, in concluding deals and signing agreements to purchase weapons."

He also declared " there is no clause in the strategic agreement signed with the American side, which obligates or prevents Iraq from importing weapons from a specific country," explaining that the agreement includes confirmation of the support of the United States of America to Iraq in terms of armament, equipment, training, and building the military system, but this does not prevent Iraq. When there is a field - technical - military need, from importing weapons from another country, there is no text in the agreement on this matter. This matter is not subject to political considerations, but to purely military and technical considerations."

Al-Hadithi pointed out that the Iraqi Ministry of Defense is the authority specialized in equipping, arming, issues and other military supplies for the Iraqi forces, stressing that it is the body that determines the nature, type, shape, and source of weapons supplied to Iraq, or that Iraq is making deals to purchase from any country in

the world <https://www.youm7.com/story/2018/2/26/%D8%BA%D8%B6%D8%A8-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%81%D9%82%D8%A9-s400-%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81-%D9%8A%D8%AE%D8%B6%D8%B9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA/3668294>.

Furthermore, members of the Iraqi government said that the parliament decided to go ahead with negotiations for the purchase of Russian "S-400" air defense missiles as a response to Washington's threats to withdraw its support for Baghdad. Karim Allawi, a member of the Iraqi Parliament, declared his country is negotiating with Moscow about "S-400" missiles, as Washington has failed to supply Baghdad several times.

The parliament's decision comes against the background of Washington rejecting an Iraqi request to withdraw American forces from Iraq on Friday, January 10, after increasing tension between Washington and Tehran following the killing of the commander of the "Quds Force", Qassem Soleimani, on January 3, 2020, according to what was reported by Reuters.

According to the United States President, Donald Trump, Washington had established the most expensive airports in the world in Iraq, and the departure of American troops from Iraq is only possible if the Iraqis pay for these facilities. The US State Department had indicated in a previous statement that the presence of its forces in Iraq was "an appropriate matter", calling for expanding the presence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Iraq with its Canadian counterpart.

Former Iraqi Foreign Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, spoke in February of 2018 that Baghdad was studying the issue of buying Russian missile systems, justifying it as a "necessary decision to strengthen Iraq." However, the then Iraqi ambassador to Moscow,

Haider Mansour, denied this, stating that what From an Iraqi delegation in Moscow to buy air defense systems from Russia. ”

However, the talk of Baghdad’s intention to acquire the S-400 system a few days later, after a few American-Iranian bickering, following Soleimani’s killing, and the attack by “Popular Mobilization” and “Hezbollah” brigades in Iraq on the American embassy in the “Green Zone” in Baghdad, Opened the door for possibilities about Iranian pressure on the government of Iraq to respond to Washington's threats to acquire the air system from Moscow, instead of Washington. Which has been justified by Karim Allawi as he said, "We need to obtain these missiles, especially after the Americans disappointed us several times by not helping us to obtain appropriate weapons."

Bringing Russian weapons instead of the American might put Baghdad under US sanctions under laws that require measures against those dealing with the Russian defense sector, especially in light of Washington's opposition to bringing Russian weapons into Iraq that include about eight American military bases, namely Qayyarah, Ring, and Ain al-Assad, Al-Habbaniyah, Balad Air Base, Victory Base, Taji Camp Base, Alton Kabri Base, and three bases in Iraqi Kurdistan <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/354813>.

Iraq witnessed bloody events at the end of the year 2019, including the bombing of military sites belonging to "Hezbollah" in Iraq on December 29, followed by the assassination of the commander of the "Quds Force", Qassem Soleimani, on January 3 of 2020. The "S-400" missile that Moscow has sought in the last decade to introduce the international arms marathon in front of its American rival, has a range of 400 km, and its ability to destroy targets moving at a speed of five kilometers per second, including aircraft and self-propelled missiles. While its maximum speed in destroying targets is estimated at 4,800 km per hour, in addition to its ability to hit 36 targets at the same time by 72 guided missiles at one time.

Russia had installed two batteries for the "S-400" system at the Hmeimim military base of the Russian military command in Syria, and subsequently released

"Sputnik" in November of 2018 a video clip showing the installation of the base with the "Pantsir S2" and "S-400 " systems in 2016.

The Russian government has been working on developing the system under the supervision of the state-owned company, "Diamond Antic" since 2007, while Washington is trying to maintain its leadership in the international arms market by announcing the Pentagon's completion of a deal to purchase 478 "F-35" aircraft, which are considered of the fifth generation, which the Pentagon described as "the backbone of the US Air Force".

On the other hand, the Russian side is so eager to sign this agreement. agreement. Russia itself has proposed to Iraq the S-400 air defense system to protect its airspace, the country's sovereignty, and reliable protection of airspace."



**Figure 4.1** Surface to air S-400 Triumph missiles

A member of the General Council of the Russian Ministry of Defense said: "Iraq is a partner of Russia in the field of technical military cooperation, and the Russian Federation can provide the necessary funds to ensure the country's sovereignty and

reliable protection of its airspace, including providing it with S-400 missiles and other Air defense system components, such as Buk-M3, Tor -M2, etc.

It's been a few months that Iraq is considering the S-400 purchase. Yet the United States pressure on Iraq is the only thing hindering this agreement. If Iraq wanted to get the S-400, it would be the second country in the Middle East to get this air defense equipment in its arsenal <http://www.defense-arabic.com/2020/01/07/%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%B6-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%88/>

Turkey's purchase of the deal gave Baghdad the nerve to consider buying the same missiles from Russia, especially since Iraq is not a NATO ally like Turkey, in addition to that the war tore apart its army, especially since the war on ISIS did not give it time to re-create what was sabotaged, and made it among the weak armies.

However, Iraq through the Security and Defense Committee announced that Baghdad has other alternatives to the S-400 in the event that Moscow refused to sell it <https://xeber24.org/archives/204710>.

Committee member Badr Al-Ziyadi indicated that "there are several governmental committees working on the acquisition of the S400 air defense system in Iraq, similar to neighboring countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia," noting that "Russia's failure to supply Iraq with this system is unacceptable, but there are several options that can be addressed."

Badr Al-Ziyadi stressed that "Iraq has the option to go to China, Korea, France or Iran" and therefore Iraq will not depend on any country, stressing that "the role of the

House of Representatives is focused on increasing government allocations to purchase these advanced systems to protect the Iraqi airspace from any external aggression."

*The Reasons Why Iraq Prefers Russia over the United States?*

The Iraqi government is seeking to strengthen its relations with Moscow at a time of uncertainty regarding the future of military relations between Iraq and the United States since Qassem Soleimani was killed in an American airstrike near Baghdad airport.

Analysts believe that Iraqi moves are the sign of Iraq's tendency to drag the country little by little to an axis far from Washington. The Iraqi Ministry of Defense stated that Iraq and Russia discussed the prospects of deepening military coordination between them, following a meeting in Baghdad between the Chief of Staff of the Army Othman Al-Ghanmi and the Russian ambassador to Iraq Maxim Maksimov, in addition to a newly arrived defense attache.

In the post-Soleimani era, Iraq did not tend to continue its relations with the United States. This could be the best reason why Iraq is considering its new alliance offers which come from countries like Russia and Iran.

Also, Marine General Frank McKenzie, the most prominent American commander in the Middle East, recently admitted that relations with Iraq are going through a "period of turmoil".

Iraqi military expert Ahmed Al-Sharifi says, "The issue of the diversity of weapons sources is acceptable even by the United States, and the proof of that is the Egyptian army. In principle, it is an ally of the United States, but it has a diversity of strange Italian, Russian, French and Chinese weapons reaching the American. So if the decision to diversify the arms sources carries military dimensions and raises the level of capabilities, the matter is acceptable, and even the United States will not object to it."

He continued, "But the problem is that the Iraqi government has recently started dealing with defiance in its international relations, and there is now a clear desire to enter into new balances and alliances, desiring to end relations with the United States."

Al-Sharifi's words generally mean that Iraq is acting as cautious as possible to get far from the United States without making harsh confusions.

In response to the raid that killed Soleimani, the Iraqi parliament issued a non-binding resolution calling for the withdrawal of US forces, and as a result, the state-led coalition against ISIS suspended its joint operations with Iraqi forces for about three weeks before it was recently resumed.

Washington has on more than one occasion condemned the violations against the demonstrators in Iraq, while no reaction was received from the forces that Baghdad is approaching, such as China and Russia

<https://www.alhurra.com/a/%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%83%D9%88-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%91-/532846.html>

It should be noted that in 2014, as Islamic State militants advanced toward the capital, Baghdad, and the Iraqi government was unable to receive the weapons it needed from the United States immediately, Moscow was quick to seize the opportunity to provide "and without any delay" the necessary weapons and equipment, including That warplanes.

The Russian ambassador to Iraq, Maxim Maksimov said, "We have always said that we are ready to provide aid of all kinds to this country with the aim of strengthening its army." He added: "The Russian military industry has already provided the Iraqi government with a massive batch of weapons that have proven effective in the battles

against [IS], including Mi-35M and Mi-28N helicopters and Su-25 jet fighters and missiles, Kornet-E armor and other military products."

Iraq is not only an economic and trade partner of Russia, but its importance also lies in its being a factor affecting regional politics. Russia clearly knows that its capabilities are limited in Iraq. Iran and the United States are the two main players with direct influence in Iraq, while Saudi Arabia is still trying hard to enhance its influence in the country.

As for China, which is the main economic partner of Iraq, it does not directly interfere in all matters related to the internal policy of Iraq. What matters to Russia is that Iran partially and cautiously supports cooperation between Baghdad and Moscow and that the United States does not express its opposition explicitly.

However, the argument that Tehran is inviting Moscow to enter Iraq in the hope of finding a counterweight to Washington is not accurate. In recent years, Iraqi politicians have strengthened their ability to adopt independent foreign policies, and relations with Russia have become of interest to Iraqi officials. In turn, Russia does not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq but rather works to build pragmatic relations with any government seeking the same. This approach helps the Russians to form important political and trade relations.

For its part, Baghdad supports the strengthening of Moscow's position in the country to create a new point of influence that may be able to achieve a balance between Iran and the United States. Consequently, Iraq gets more room to maneuver among all parties concerned.

Some of the areas of cooperation exploited by the Russians and Iraqis have promising potential. Although cooperation mainly includes military sales and energy, Moscow sees itself as a "natural ally" for Iraq in the war on terror. Since Russia, Syria, Iran, and Iraq formed a clearinghouse in 2015, Russia has sought to deepen areas of cooperation by carrying out joint operations against extremist groups.

The war on ISIS will gradually shift from direct military confrontation to broader counter-terrorism initiatives, and Russia will enter this door to expand cooperation frameworks with Iraq.

The institutional cooperation between Moscow and Baghdad now covers all sectors. In addition to the Anti-Terrorism Information Center and the Rescue Group, we find a Russian-Iraqi working group for cooperation in the energy industry, in addition to a Russian-Iraqi committee for trade, economic and scientific cooperation that plays an important coordination role between the governments of the two countries <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/contents/articles/originals/2018/05/russia-mideast-strategy-iraq-elections-syria.html>.

All these together make Russia a better and more reliable ally for Iraq in the region. Also, Russia does not want to lose such an opportunity where it can compete against the United States and even win. Today, Iraqi politicians are sure about limiting their relations with the United States after its airstrike in Iraqi soil. To this end, they must find a third party that could guarantee the counterbalance.

January 3rd airstrike made it clear for the Iraqi leadership that they need to improve their air defense system. The most powerful choices today are American Patriot and Russian S-400. Even though we've discussed why Iraq will choose S-400 over Patriot. There is no harm to compare these two surface to air missiles technically.

The American-made Patriot and Russian S-400 Triumph air defense systems are currently hogging international orders despite their price tags running into billions of dollars. While the Patriot has more or less a captive market within United States allies, the S-400 has had to sell on its capabilities alone having won orders from Turkey and China, countries which compete with Russia in the international arms market.

Further orders for the S-400 are likely to come from India which has internally approved the acquisition with only a formal signature on the contract awaited to set the

procurement process in motion. In addition, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Iraq are said to be in negotiations to buy the system <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2734200.html>.



**Figure 4.2** Patriot surface to air missile system

Another US-made system, the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile defense system that is designed to intercept ballistic missiles at high altitudes is also a competitor for the S-400 regarding some of its features, though not in terms of direct international sales.

### **S-400 vs. Patriot PAC-3**

The S-400 comes across as the most advanced serially produced air defense missile system in the world. Its closest rival is American Patriot with both systems capable of shooting down both aircraft and ballistic missiles. Here is a comparison of technical parameters <https://svpressa.ru/post/article/120265/>:

- S-400 can shoot down targets moving at a speed of 17 km/hour while Patriot/PAC-3 could only shoot down a target moving at 8 km/hour.
- S-400 can engage with 72 targets simultaneously and track 160 targets at the same time while parameters for Patriot are 36 and 125 targets.

- S-400 locates a target at 600 km distance and can destroy at 400 km range (with the latest 40N6E missile that just has been successfully tested). Patriot can locate a plane at 180 km and an enemy's missile at 100 km.
- S-400 is able to down targets flying as low as 10 meters and as high as 30 km while Patriot PAC-3 destroys its lowest target at a height of 50 meters with the highest at 25 km.
- The deployment time for S-400 and Patriot PAC-3 is 5 minutes and 25 minutes respectively.
- Various informed sources have said that to hit an aircraft with a probability not less than 0.99, one will have to launch 1-2 S-400 missiles or 2-3 Patriot missiles. In case of fighting off a ballistic missile attack the ratio will be 1 / 2 or 3 in favor of S-400.

The Patriot system's usage during actual deployment situations has left room for doubt over its performance. For example, after the 1991 Gulf War it was revealed that only a percentage of Iraqi SCUD missiles were actually shot down by Patriot batteries guarding Saudi Arabia and Israel. In the case of the Iraqi missile strike against the American military barracks in Dhahran (Saudi Arabia) in February 1991 the failure of the Patriot intercept left to a tragedy – 27 troops were killed, about 100 wounded. In 2003, also the overall performance was better; there were also cases of failed intercepts of the outdated ballistic missiles launched by Saddam's army in the first days of the invasion. The effectiveness of Patriot systems proved to be low despite almost ideal conditions: low-speed targets, solitary launches, absence of ECM environment, and false targets. After 1991 and 2003 significant upgrades are reported to be made but the Saudi experience of countering the Yemeni missiles (comparable to the ones used by the Iraqis) shows almost the same lack of efficiency <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/06/world/us-details-flaw-in-patriot-missile.html>.

Combat use of the Patriot systems has also highlighted some shortcomings of the system: high sensitivity to sand ingestion and unstable electric supply. There have also been reports of accidental launches.

However, the S-400 is yet to be tested in battle so there is no record of it having been fired during actual combat. The system has been deployed in Syria but didn't engage any targets yet. There have been reports that the S-400 deployment effectively converted the Russian operating zone over Syria into a 'No-fly-zone.'

It is interesting to note that China which has its own anti-aircraft and anti-missile air defence system, choose to buy the S-400.

Increasing US aircraft activity in the South China Sea is believed to have forced China to buy the S-400 from Russia; in the process acknowledging that its own home-grown air defense system was not sufficient to counter sophisticated US aircraft such as the F-35 and F-22. China, which is the first international customer to receive the S-400 is scheduled to test-fire the system in August or September 2018.

An ace up the sleeve of the S-400 is said to be its ability to detect stealth aircraft such as the F-35 and Chinese J-20 which are characterized by a low radar signature. Exact how effective is this stealth objects detection capability is not known. But suffice to say there is genuine concern among western commentators that the S-400 could covert the F-35 which took some US\$396 billion to develop, into a regular 4th generation aircraft effectively negating its tech and price advantage. The same would apply to the Chinese J-20 if the S-400 were to be purchased by India <https://www.army-technology.com/projects/s-400-triumph-air-defence-missile-system/>.

At least 13 countries have expressed interest in buying Russian S-400 systems, despite the fact that a deal with Russia could entail US sanctions.

Among the countries ready to purchase Russian air defense systems, one of the interlocutors of the publication named Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Vietnam, and Iraq. All of them are ready to prefer the S-400 air defense systems of American production. The advantage of the S-400 in the market is the absence of complex bureaucratic procedures for the purchase. If the import of weapons from the United States requires the approval of several American departments at once, then in Russia the process is faster. Many of these countries do not want to wait for permits in the United States. The S-400 has fewer export restrictions, and the Kremlin is ready to

accelerate sales by abandoning any regulatory restrictions. This is like buying an anti-aircraft complex from a supermarket shelf <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/14/11/2018/5bec86c09a7947f9971c9cfb>.

This deal can cost Iraq something about 10-15 billion dollars while buying an equal system from The United States would cost more than \$20 billion. Moreover, the import of weapons from the United States requires the approval of several American departments at once, while such an import from Russia has a much faster process.





## CONCLUSIONS

In the current thesis, the international relationship between Iraq and Russia was studied from 2013 to 2018 in detail. There have been tried to cover this period utterly. To this end, we started the discussion by a brief review of the history of the relationship between two countries since the Soviet Union era. Then we have investigated the most important bookmarks between Iraq and Russia in the recent decade, especially between the years 2013 and 2018. Any notable event, such as establishing a new consulate in Erbil in 2007, the cancellation of Iraqi major debts in 2008, a major arms deal in 2014, opening of the direct flight from Baghdad to Moscow in 2017 have been singled out and studied it in fair detail.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia lost its previous power in many areas from military to economic. Under President Yeltsin's directorship (1991-1995), the Moscow regime has need foreign aids, especially, from the western countries. Also, in that period (1991-2003) Iraq was under harsh sanctions that were applying by the UN. The situation forced the Moscow regime to follow balanced relations between Iraq and the western countries. However, Moscow usually tried to keep good relations with Iraq due to its importance.

In 2000 Putin came into power in Russia. He followed a multi-dimensional and pragmatic foreign policy. He has never intended to strain the relations between Russia and the US since he believes it may result in devastating consequences for Russia. He had tried to divide economics from politics. Putin usually followed the same policy towards Iraq with his predecessor's balanced policy. He worked to a partial and full lifting of the sanctions and secured Russian's economic interest in Iraq. However, 9/11,2001 attacks opened a new stage between Iraq and Russia. Improving relations with the US became a priority for Moscow. On the other hand, Bush administration blamed Iraq for financing the attacks. Putin claimed that there is no evidence showing Iraq's support to the attacks. Russia wanted to solve the problem with diplomacy and the Moscow regime firmly opposed to any military operation in Iraq. The United States

began Operation Iraqi Freedom with airstrikes on the 19th of March 2003, despite the fact that Russia, France, and Germany voted against any military attack.

The invasion altered the relations between Russia and Iraq harshly. As a result of the war, the Iraq government entered the influence of the US, and the cooperation was minimized between 2003 and 2006. Russia has been shut out of Iraq's politics and had to give up Iraq's deep and valuable contracts especially in the oil industry. On the other hand, the war did not damage Russian American relations as bad as expected.

At the beginning of the current decade, Russia had begun developing novel strategies to deal with the critical stage in the Middle East region and its main countries such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Russia was aware of the ongoing conflicts in the region and its clear effects on the regional balance of power. Therefore, it can be concluded that approaching Iraq is Russia's strategy to confront the crisis in the middle east.

Moreover, since Iraq is fighting a war against ISIS, Russia has taken this position as a starting point to enter the Iraqi arena after its direct presence in Syria. Also, Moscow has strengthened its strategic relationship with Iran through the establishment of an Intelligence Information Center (IIC) in Baghdad that includes the Army Staff from Russia, Iran, Syria, and Iraq and established the joint military bases to fight ISIS. This also means changing the balance of power, the shape of regional relations between the main actors, the structure and outcome of the conflict, which is the coalition that aims to deliver messages to the United States.

We've processed the available data deeply and raised to believe that Russia seeks a broader role in the Middle East. It can be said that this Russian move towards Iraq has taken a different course from the previous stages and is a candidate to take wider future ranges. The Russian strategic performance towards Iraq depends on the Iraqi side's response, but at first, it was marred by cautious steps. Russia has adopted a specific strategy to try to establish its presence and weight as a country to be recognized with its orientations and policy at the level of Dooley, President Putin has sought to restore

Russia's former power in the region, and reassert its status as a major power in the world.

Our investigation indicates that the Iraqi political strategies have been changed remarkably at the opening of this epoch and it is going to evolve in the favor of Russia's novel political plans as Moscow desires to regain the power it had during the Soviet Union epoch. We believe that the nature of the power Russia is seeking this time is fairly different with before as economical appearance of their strategies implies that Russia is careful about not starting any conflictions with the United States, its allies, and no other country, especially the superpower of the east, China.



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