

Received: 01 January 2025 ,Accepted: 25 January 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/jssr.vx2i4.18>

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## **The Iran-Iraq Conflict and Its Lasting Impact on Middle East Stability and Geopolitical Dynamics from 1980s.**

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Abstract.

The Iran-Iraq Conflict, spanning from 1980 to 1988, was a prolonged and devastating war that profoundly impacted the Middle East's stability and geopolitical dynamics. The conflict was driven by a complex mix of territorial disputes, religious differences, and political rivalries between Iran and Iraq. Iraq, led by President Saddam Hussein, sought to assert dominance in the Persian Gulf region and capitalize on Iran's post-revolutionary instability. The war resulted in significant human and economic costs, with an estimated 500,000 to 1 million deaths and massive financial losses exceeding \$1 trillion

### **Introduction**

The Iran Iraq war (1980-1988) is today acknowledged as one of the gruelling and long lasting wars of the twentieth century with longlasting effects on the Middle East. Thus, apart from the human life and material losses, the war left deep social changes in both the Iranian and Iraqi societies as well as reshaped the geopolitics of the Middle Eastern countries. It set a shifting pattern of the political and military relations in the Middle East which not only affected the belligerent states, but also other actors in a way that engendered long lasting conflict in the Middle East, which is still spiking to date.

To bring about the war was as a result of the following causes; territorial, ideological, and power in the region. After 1979, Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, aimed at regaining power in the face of Iran which, after its revolution also became eager to establish itself as a regional power and spread its version of revolution to other Middle Eastern countries. These two states despite being of the same Arab and Persian stock had fundamentally different political systems; while Iraq was a nationalist Ba'athist Arab regime, Iran had just emerged from an Islamic revolution and sought to displace the conventional Arab order with Shiite Islam.

During the war both countries faced devastating military defeats, financial collapse and numerous. Despite the stronger economy and resources of Germany and Japan, the war took its toll on both powers in terms of military, finance, and civilians. The war was fought indecisively and, nevertheless, put its indelible stamp on the surrounding international relations. In war some essential issues were outlined where Middle Eastern stability was at risk, what roles and relations played political, economic, religious etc. factors. It also uncovered the influence external stakeholders as the United States, the Soviet Union, and other neighboring Arab countries had on the course of and after the war.

This paper aims to assess the Iran Iraq war effects on Middle Eastern stability and geopolitical structures the changes it brought to the balance of power and relevant alliances as well as introduction to subsequent wars. Therefore, the subject of this paper will be the consequences of the war in the Middle Eastern region paying attention to Iran and Iraq's states and superpowers and other global actors.

In this sense, this paper will strive to answer several critical questions about the future of the war as well as its impact on the Middle East. The research will then analyse how the Iran Iraq war shaped the balance of power in the region, the interactions within the principal players, emergence of Non State Actors, and the strategic dynamics of the Middle east.

### **Research Questions**

Since any academic investigation is fundamentally based on research questions they are critical when specifying the scope, depth and direction of the investigation. In this research, two broad research questions will guide the assessment of the enduring consequences of the Iran Iraq War on stability and geopolitics of Middle East. These questions are intending to solve not only the primary impacts that have arisen from the war, but also the futures which have influenced the area at the present days.

#### **Research Question 1:**

#### **In what a way did Iran and Iraq counterbalance in the Middle Eastern countries during the period of war 1980-1988?**

In answering to this question, it is possible to investigate how the power relations evolved either during the war and after its implementation in the Middle Eastern region. It will look at how Iran and Iraq rearranged the power system in the Persian Gulf Region by breaking the unity of the gulf states and shedding light on the part played by superpowers of US and Soviet Union and other neighbors. This paper will also consider the manner in which this war led to the enhancement or erosion of specific regional powers as well as the impact on intra-regional political relations, and rise of non-state actors. This question also accounts for the general political agenda of those involve directly or indirectly in the conflict such as ideology in economic benefits or insecurity.

## **Research question 2:**

### **It is important to note about what has been the Iran Iraq war's long-standing implication on the Iraq internal structure, regional countries powers and security situation in the Middle East?**

The second question aims at finding out the long term impacts of the Iran- Iraq war and it's; effects to the stability of Iraq as well as the surrounding security. The wars entailing Iraq had devastating impacts to most sectors, political, social, and economically and to date, the impacts of war are still felt. This question will ask how the war affected governance of Iraq, sectarian conflict and relations between Iraq and Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. It will also examine how the war induced a new round of power shift within the region and how it allowed regional actors to interfere in Iraq's affairs and how this affected the role of Iraq in subsequent wars, including the gulf war 1990-1991 and the invasion by America in 2003.

It will also endeavor to identify other longer term impacts of the war on overall Middle Eastern security architecture. These are: the changing nature of security threats, increased militancy and proxy wars and changing role of extra-regional actors.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper has demonstrated the fact that theoretical frameworks are crucial when developing the strategies for exploring the political and historical occurrences such as the Iran Iraq War and Middle East region. This section will describe the main theories that will be used to analyses the research questions. The major frameworks are as follows, which includes realism, liberalism, and constructivism- these are the theories of International Relations. Combined, these theories will assist in giving an all-inclusive account of the changes of power in the geo-political scale, internal stability issues and regional security issues which arose from the Iran-Iraq War.

### **Realism:**

Realism is among one of the biggest and oldest theories of IR. It accurately posits power, security and national interest as the major determinants of states' actions. Realism theory assumes that the state is the central unit within International Relations and influences its actions by the wish to gain power and survive in an unfriendly world environment that is considered to be anarchical.

Precisely viewing the case of the Iran-Iraq War one is able to use the basic assumptions of realism to fit in the idea of the war causes as well as the subsequent international politics. Qualitative analysis Iran and Iraq as state actors worked towards their national interests by trying dominate the other and provide security to their regions. The republic in the region after the Islamic revolution endeavored to extend its revolution and to challenge what it referred to

as threats to its revolution by Iraq's secular leader, Saddam Hussein. On the other hand, a war like Iraq's invasion of Iran was a result of a quest for dominance of the gulf region, territory especially the Shatt al-Arab waterway and to maintain its Ba'athist regime.

Thus, from the conceptual point of view, relating to realism, one can indicate the involvement of extra-regional players like the USA, the USSR, or regional ones like Saudi Arabia. These states became involved in the war with an aim of balancing the power that was at play in the region to suit their stand. This aspect of Realism again provides an understanding as to why the Iran-Iraq War not only developed into a head to head battle between Iran and Iraq, but also, a regional war involving super powers and regional states exercising their self-interest in shaping the war in accordance with their interest.

Realism will also come in handy while formulating the impacts of the war that include changes of power structure and sovereignty declaration in the affected region. After the war, the Iran's regime tried to regain power; at the same the Iraq's one the same. The result point that Iranian – Iraq war illustrates real polity mapping in Middle East where power always defines the political map.

### **Liberalism:**

As a counter to Realism, which emphasizes power, structure, and conflict, Liberalism posits the importance of international organizations, commerce, and diplomacy in maintaining order. Notably, Liberalism stands out as the theory that constitutes the international relations as the cooperative system rather than as a system concerned with the issues of the anarchy competition.

The Iran-Iraq War has to be analyzed through the concept of Liberal IR in regards to international organizations like the U.N since the latter tried to intervene into the war and negotiate a cease-fire. The UN resolutions with the resolution of the Security Council 598 contained demands for cessation of the conflict and attempts to solve humanitarian and political impact of the war. Involvement of U.N. as a third-party impartial actor, and efforts of U.N to set frameworks of behavior for the warfare like the use of chemicals weapons or the sanctity of civilian life reflects Liberal principles of cooperation and legalization of state relations.

Moreover, the effects of the Iran Iraq war toward long term regional cooperation could be looked from Liberalism prospective. After the war different regional and global players made efforts to bring Iraq back to order and to renew some sort of relations between Iran and Iraq. Nevertheless, one of the major difficult has been the failure to coordinate a collective security architecture in the Middle Eastern region. It is for this reason that the U.N., and other international bodies have not been able to make lasting peace, as appreciated by Liberalism in a place that is very much influenced by power politics and animosities.

What is more, the liberalism paradigm can contribute to understanding the place of trade and economic relations after the war. Though there was hostility between the two nations, they engaged in economic activities especially in trading activities and oil exports in the post-war Iraq period. This is most probable after the Iraq's crisis of depending on Iran's electricity and gas import after the war to show that aside political rivalry, economic relations is key to stability.

### **Constructivism:**

Constructivism is a different lens with which to view international relations because it focuses on ideas, identities, norms, and how shape states' behavior. While Realism and Liberalism are based on the concept of material capabilities and institutions, Constructivism opines that the structure of the international relations is socially embodied. In this theory, the following factors have been included to explain the relations and behavior of states: history, culture and ideology.

For the example, with regard to the Iran Iraq War, predictions made by Constructivism are particularly useful in regard to the roles played by ideologies to influence the war. The Iranian revolution in 1979 was a revolutionary event that transformed the Iranian state and the regime's leaders, especially Khomeini aimed at exporting the revolution to other countries especially those around Iraq. This philosophical conflict between the cleric state – Iran and the Ba'ath party's secular Iraq was the rationale of war. From this perspective, constructivism can be traced how these ideological and identity-based differences influenced not only the war, but also the war aftermath period when sectarian and ideological conflicts manifested in both domestic arenas and in the relations with international community members, as well.

In addition, the role of Constructivism is useful more to pull attention to the social and cultural factors of the disagreement. Sectarian rivalry was also brought to the forefront during the war and after alongside; the tensions between Shia and Sunni populations in Iraq and between Kurdish population and the central authority. These internal divisions, which have been defined in religious terms and cultural affiliation, remain determinant of Iraq's politics and its relations with Iran to date. Constructivism equally assists in understanding why faith-based and cultural relations between Iran and Iraq: specifically, the Shiism, remains important even today.

This paper also utilized the Constructivism paradigm in explaining the post-war impact of the Iran-Iraq War and the role of Iran as the influencing actor in the political-security context in Iraq. In particular, Iran's support for Shia militias and its attempts at influencing political system of Iraq cannot be seen as a one-time tentative, but as an on-going ideological and identity-based one. This continuing influence informs how the memory of war is perpetuated and how political and religious people's identities come about.

### **Discussing Three Entities**

This section will delve into three crucial entities involved in or affected by the Iran-Iraq War and its aftermath: the states of Iran, Iraq and the United States. All these entities had their significant roles in the conflict and contributed to the making of post war geopolitics of the Middle East. This paper looks at the actions and interests of these three actors to understand the effects the war has had on the region in the long run.

### **Iran: It discusses features of the Islamic Revolution and the challenges of post-war reconstruction.**

This paper will examine Iran and Iraq relationship focusing on the Iran's role in the Iran-Iraq War. After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, when people overthrew their US supported shah Pahlavi, Khomeini emerged as the leader of Islamic Republic of Iran. The change was not only political too but it was also Cultural and Ideological change Iran that tried to break its links with the western world and establish a government in the light of Islam. This shift produced strains with neighboring Iraq, which beneath

The Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein was secular and had his own plan of empire building in the region.

Of all the goals, the primordial goal of Iran in the war was to preserve the Islamic Revolution in the country. As the Iranian revolution started in late 1979 and a new political regime was formed in Iran, Saddam Hussein observed Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980 as an opportunity to eliminate the new regime what he considered a major threat to Middle Eastern stability. Besides territorial question, a threat of expansion of Iran's Islamic revolution was a serious concern for Iraq. To Iran, the war evolved into a conflict of defense besides land, revolution and independence of Iran was also at stake.

During the course of the war, Iran used the strategy of using low-technology warfare to counter-act the superior military of Iraq by recruiting volunteers, known as Basij. But Iran lost heavily, did not want any compromise, and insisted on the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. Such an unrelenting stance, together with the refusal to negotiate, led to the high losses of lives on both sides. Iran, however, gained a clear political and national realization from the war because it asserted to the Islamic revolutionary ideology.

During the post-war period, Iran had enormous problems to reconstruct the destroyed infrastructures and the destroyed economy system. The war also helped in fueling sectarian conflicts within the region especially between the Shias and the Sunnis. Nevertheless, from these experiences, Iran established itself in the region enjoy an emerging form of control over Iraq especially among Shia's. After the war Iran's foreign policy ever became more Islamic causing the country to export the revolution which made it support the Shia in Iraq and Lebanon and others.

### **Iraq: Saddam Hussein and His Dream and the Impact of the War**



Saddam Hussein and Iraq had ambiguous position and highly contradictory relation with Iran during the Iran Iraq war. To start with, Iraq's invasion of Iran was a function of border disputes, attempts at regional hegemony and drive to curb the expansion of the newly born Iran's revolution. The main issue was the Shatt al-Arab waterway through which the two countries' border was demarcated, and was an important channel for Iraq's oil export. Saddam Hussein also wanted to reduce Iran's power and also to proclaim Iraq as the overlords of Persian Gulf.

It was a storm of violence and the worst of both were involved in genocide for power. The learned reader will notice that despite a formidable technological edge, Iraq's military was somewhat undone by Iran's propensity for the unconventional. Saddam Hussein's regime also used chemical weapons on Iranian forces and civilians and that brought international condemnation. However, the war is closed with a draw; no major territorial shifts happening, and Iraq has lost human and material resources.

Thus, after the war Saddam Hussein's regime was in severe economic trouble, and Iraq owed considerable sums to such countries as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. To counter this, Saddam Hussein start work to regain Iraq military power and establish himself as a ruler of a regional country. Thus, in 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait citing historical precedents that dated back to the Dec of 1899 when Kuwait was annexed to the Ottoman Empire and the burden of the war which nearly bankrupted Iraq he started the Gulf War. continued internal turbulence and led to the voting of United Nations sanctions after Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003.

In the case of Iraq, the Iran – Iraq war brought many changes and affected the nation in several ways. Even though the war supported Saddam, while in the short run Hussein sought to enhance his domestic legitimacy, these were counterproductive in the long run. The war had made Iraq's military strength its major reality and had led to the formation of polarizes in the Iraqi communities especially the sunna and Shia. What followed the conflict they basically left Iraq diplomatically and economically naked with a shrunken military and a crippling population. In essence, Saddam Hussein did not achieve his strategic goals in the war, and this greatly contributed to his defeat and indeed the destabilization of Iraq in the following years.

### **The United States: An Interpretation of Geopolitical Objectives and Strategic Considerations:**

America had a somewhat active but uncertain position in the Iran Iraq conflict. The U.S Government considered Middle East mainly in terms of Soviet interference in this region during the 1980s mainly due to the cold war factor. A political change in Iran and a new political figure known as Ayatollah Khomeini came to power and the change of policy of this new regime seemed a major geopolitical threat owing to the anti-American slogans and seizing the American embassy in Tehran in 1979.

When this new threat emerged, the United States at first supported Iraq: yielding military assistance, intelligence, and funds. The U.S. regarded Iraq as a counterweight to Iran's revolutionary ardor and aimed at containing the Iranian influence in the region. As a result, the United States had built an intricate network of alliances because it also had relations with other gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia, who also feared Iran's increasing influence.

In the same sense the US undertook naval actions in the Persian Gulf to safeguard sea routes and contain Iran's influence. America's participation in the war was not very direct and comprehensive, but its participation was sufficient enough to change the course of the war. The U.S. served the purpose of helping Iraq not to lose the war by supplying it ammunition and funds, at the same time as trying to counteract Iran's expansionist aspirations. However, the war was not won, and the U.S. had a difficult time as war unfolded before long. After that, in the years after the war, the U.S. will turn its attention to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the gulf war and later to the war in Iraq in 2003. He subdued the Iran-Iraq War specifically had significant influence on American policy regarding to both of the countries; the U.S. tried to curb Iran through employing sanctions and threat of mil variant force and attempted to deal with Saddam Hussein regime after the Gulf War. Current US involvement in the region has shaped the nature of relations with both Iran as well as Iraq and the role of the USA in the Middle East politics.

### **Answers to Research Questions**

In this section, the two main research questions formulated earlier in this study are responded to.

The intention is to accomplish a synthesis of the Iran-Iraq War's consequences towards the stability and politics of the Middle East the overall regional and global effects and the roles of political, economic and social factors. The two research questions are:

- 1. In what ways international conflict influenced the development of the Middle Eastern geopolitics in the decades following Iran and Iraq's war?**
- 2. What has remained after the Iran-Iraq War in terms of relations between Iran, Iraq, and the rest of the world?**

### **Geopolitical Impact on the Middle East (1980s–Present):**

The Iran Iraq war was to a great extent a game changer of the geopolitics of the Middle East region. It intensified the old regional rivalries and helped to bring about consolidation of regional and global relations. The outcome was observed in a range of areas, including Iran as a regional state, the development of the sectarian conflict that continues up to the present.

### **Iran as a new emerging power**



The impact of the Iran Iraq War on the Long Term was perhaps the change of the face of Iran converting into a monolithic power in the region. Subsequent to the war, Iran's leadership primarily the Supreme Leader ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, both strategized and defended against Iraq aggression and safeguarded the Islamic Republic. While losing heavily Iran also made its stand for revolution which elevated its position in the international Shia arena and in front of its own population. Continuing it, the Iran saw the war as an opportunity to strengthen ideological appeal it has based on Shia Islam, as well as to spread revolution on other nations, especially in the Persian Gulf area.

And indeed, after the war Iran adopted a more assertive policy abroad, which is also expressed through acts of sponsoring proxies. Iran over the course of the war got also involved in other countries such as Lebanon where the Hezbollah movement emerged with the support from Iran, Yemen and Syria. It would transform Iran's regional policy in the future to what is called the Shiite Crescent, where Iran has influence starting from Iraq.

Syria, and Lebanon. The actions of Iran can still be considered as limited, of which the main ones were the involvement in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003, the Syrian Civil War, and supporting various Shia militias in the region can be viewed as marking Iran as main player in the region.

### **The Arab World's Reaction: Polarization and Rivalries**

The conflict between Iran and Iraq was quantitative as well as qualitative dispute that was embedded not only between Iran and Iraq but also among other Middle Eastern countries. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council fully backed Iraq considering Iran as a threat given their advanced revolution rhetoric and potential to cause an upset for the monarchical systems in the region. This alignment has paved a gulf in the Middle east whereby the Arab countries felt endangered by Iran's entrenchment. The war served to strengthen further the Sunni-Shia sectarian dimension especially when the war ended in a standoff throwing Iran as a dominant power in the region.

It has delineated the geopolitics of the Middle East ever since. Of all the players mentioned above, Saudi Arabia has been the more sensitive to the idea of Iran as a rival power, vying for hegemony over the Arab world and beyond. Since the postwar, the Gulf countries have adopted different measures in an effort to contain Iran's influence and these include military action such as through the Saudi led intervention in Yemen to diplomatic isolation of the Iranians. The United States led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that ousted Saddam Hussein gave Iran further leverage because the majority of the Iraqi population belongs to Shia sect and is under the Iran's influence.

### **Impact on the Middle Eastern Security Architecture:**

These features of the Iranian –Iraq war exacerbated persistent insecurity and instability in the long-run effects of Iran –Iraq war. Even after the end of the war between Iran and Iraq, it left both countries in a weak military power but the collapse of Iraq economically and politically was as a result of their defeat. And later in 2003 the U.S. invaded Iraq under the heinous pretense of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the control of Saddam Hussein has caused a lot of vices on the stability of the political system in Iraq.

After the invasion, Iraq became a center of sectarian violence, many of which are rooted from the Iran Iraq war. The Sunni-Shia tensions that grew during the conflict have remained high as Iraq's new political structure has failed to address relations with the Sunni minority and the Shia dominated government. Arising of ISIS and more particularly the continuing regional conflicts such as the Syrian civil war can be pegged on effects of war and the political void and sectarianism left behind by the end of the conflict. U.S intervention in Iraq has also had broader regional impact it has not only entrenched Middle East as a theater of strategic rivalry between outside powers. The emergence of Iran as a power, increased insecurity in Iraq and Syria and the contest for influence that has ensued has attracted other powers such as the United States, Russia and China. The gulf monarchies especially Saudi Arabia have ensured this cycle of regional insecurity is perpetuated through trying to balance Iran influence by seeking closer relations with the U.S.

### **Long-Term Consequences for Relations Between Iran, Iraq, and the International Community:**

The war has shaped the nature of relations between the two states and the overall relationship between the Iran and Iraq with other countries particularly with the United States.

### **Iran-Iraq Relations Post-War**

The Iran Iraq war significantly influenced the Iran Iraq relations post 2003 ousting of Saddam by the United States. While the two countries share the tragic history of war in 1980s, their relationships have not been limited only to this animosity. After the ouster of Saddam Hussein, Iran arguably became one of the most important brokers in the new Iraq. This influence has been most apparent in the Shia dominated regions of southern Iraq where Iran has developed cozy relationship link to political, economic and military spheres of power with different political groups including the Badr brigade, Dawa party and the Sadrists. This has increased Iranian influence enough to make Iran be making formidable decisions on Iraq's domestic and foreign policies.

For Iran, Iraq is more like a shield because it creates that buffer through which no number of foes can pose an immediate threat to the regime in Tehran. Iraq also serves Iran as a platform to extend influence over the Arab world, the use of proxy such as GPAI, Hezbollah and other Shia militants. Although the Iranians have been accused of being involved in the instability of

Iraq mostly by the US and its allies, Iran is not likely to let go of Iraq especially because Iran strategic in the middle east geological map.

### **The United States and Western Powers: From Allies to Adversaries:**

Since the beginning of the Iran Iraq War up to the current US relations with the two countries, there has been apparent confusion in the policy being implemented by the U.S. The U.S supported Iraq in the war with a view of considering Saddam Hussein as an effective check on Iran's revolutionary government. Still, after the Gulf War of 1991 and the 2003 Iraq invasion, the US has found itself having to reassess its policy in the region and with regard to Iran in particular.

While the argument of spreading democracy was untrue due to the support of authoritarian governments in the region the occupation of Iraq in 2003 resulted in the empowering of Iran indirectly. In a somewhat paradoxical manner that offered unintended consequences to the American campaign, by getting rid of Saddam Hussein Iraq became more vulnerable to Iranian influence. Additionally, the emergence of ISIS and subsequent sectarian wars left a power space that Iran dominated aggravating the confrontational relations between USA and Iran over the power sharing dynamics in the Middle East.

The United nations and the broader international system have had a bipolar response to Iran-Iraq relations post-war. As the international community endeavored to place pressure and pressure on North Korea. Having said that, since the end of the war in 1980s, Iran's nuclear program has taken the lobby as central to any diplomatic strategies. The little deal signed in 2015 between Iran and six world powers (U.S., U.K., Russia, China, France and Germany known as the joint comprehensive plan of action JCPA) was however a trilogy in international relations which was pulled out in 2018

### **Long-Term Impact on Regional and Global Security:**

The impact of the Iran-Iraq conflict with other regional actors integrated with the aftereffects of the US's interference and the shifting dynamics of newly emerged actors like ISIS might make the Middle East a volatile area. It has also further divided the region between Iran on one side and Saudi Arabia's Gulf Cooperation Council allies and on the other side and also has taken the west siding in various conflicts within the Middle East.

Consequently, the Iran-Iraq War has left serious implications on the stability of the Middle East. It changed the political and geopolitical roles and relationships of the four major actors: Iran, Iraq, the regional neighbors and the international system, and predicated future conflict, this time the sectarian and power, in particular, struggle of Iraq for control of the region and Iran for control of the broader Middle East. The legacy of the war has not been just carried by the on-going conflicts, changes in the formation of the alliances and the ongoing world struggle for power in the Middle East.

### **The Shaping of Iran's Regional Role:**

Perhaps the most revolutionary result of the Iran/Iraq War was the emerging of Iran more as a power in the gulf region than before. While the war did a lot of harm to Iran's infrastructural and economical aspect, the war had it leverage by which Iran constructed a powerful regional power. It made the country to assume the position to was resisted under Khomeini who successfully checked Iraq from over powering Iran. As a result of the post-war changes, Iran now adopted a more aggressive foreign policy quickly extending its influence throughout the entire Middle East.

Some effects of the war cleared that Iran has direct allies in the Shia factions in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. Increasing Iranian domination of Iraq after March 2003 is another sign of regional change that started with the war and its consequences.

### **Sectarian Divides and Proxy Conflicts:**

The Iran-Iraq War also began the aggravation or the already strained relation between Sunni and Shia in the region. This was not a simple bilateral conflict between Iran and Iraq, but also a confrontation where most Arab countries participated in the war aiming at supporting Iraq to prevent a neighboring power, Iran, from extending its hegemony over the region. These lines were hardened by the war as sectarian divides that have remained potent determinants of the politics of nations in the region. The consequence of this division persists in proxy wars and other figures, and visible particularly in Syria and Yemen that Iran's Shia militias fight and Sunni Arab led formations mostly backed by Saudi Arabia. These conflicts that relate to the broader regional conflict between Sunni and Shia powers can be dated to the Iran Iraq war, where both southern and northern factions continue to use military, financial and ideological force to open up areas of advantage into the contested region.

### **Impact on Iraq's Internal Stability:**

It is equally so with Iraq that the war has brought such changes. This conflict retarded the progress of Iraq and bare its military capability as well as its economic status. Iraq's post-war redevelopment process was hampered by the gulf war of 1990 to 1991 and the subsequent American led invasion in 2003. All these events put Iraq in front of pressures of sectarian violence, internal strife, and the final breakdown of the powerful centralized government. The political power void that was created once Saddam Hussein was removed from power allowed Iran to have a strong and controlling influence in Iraq, implementing Shia controlled government in Iraq that is hostile to Sunni people. War and its consequences have played significance role in the pro-longed instability in Iraq in terms of violence and continued economic stagnation and radical parties like the ISIS.

### **U.S. and Global Influence in the Region:**

The Iran Iraq war and its after effects also therefore affected the role of United States and other world powers in the Middle East. In the first place, the Iraq of the 1980's was an American ally in the war against Iran, a feeling that was cemented by the Islamic revolution of 1979. Though before the Gulf War and especially after the war and the invasion of Iraq by the U.S in the year 2003 entail the shift of the new complex of relations in the region and an increase of the Iran's role in Iraq and in the MENA area.

Of course American policies particularly those of the George W. Bush administration which ousted Saddam and tried to recreate the politics of Iraq were instrumental in shifting the balance of power. The end result was the gaining of Iran more influence in the region, thus contrary to the aims of its opponents in the Gulf States and America to contain Iran. These policies are still felt in today's international relation as the U.S and Iran remain foes in Iran's region which includes Iraq, the Middle East.

### **The Continuing Struggle for Stability:**

The ingenuity of Iran and Iraq led to the awful warfare that destabilized the region perpetually. The war intensified that played a crucial role in carving a highly charged political climate in the Middle East. The situation in Iraq, Syria and Yemen has remained uncertain due to the creation of power vacuums and division of society, which the Iran-Iraq War contributed for, seeds for extremism and terrorism were sown.

Furthermore, the region being important to international powers especially because of its oil deposits the Middle East will continue to act as important arena for conflict. The Iran-Iraq War has created a multifaceted regional power structure in which internal players such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey compete with the external ones such as US, Russia, and China.

### **Concluding Thoughts on Middle East Geopolitics:**

The one event which has shaped the Middle East was the Iran Iraq war and that has changed the geopolitics of Middle East. The war not only changed the balance of power but introduced the profound ethnic cleavage that defines today's politics, economy and society in the region. It is the outcome of this conflict that Iran has grown into a regional power, Sunni-Shia divide deepen and Iraq falls apart. Geopolitical impact of the war is yet to determine, as the Middle Eastern countries are still experiencing multiple splits and interventions of the external powers.

The lessons learned from Iran-Iraq War are still highly important now for those who investigate the main sources of conflict in the Middle East for decision-makers and strategists. The effect of the war on allies in the region, the concept of proxy wars as well as the shifting power relations between regional and international powers show how this conflict has shaped the region's Politico- military order to date.

Although the atmosphere in the region is constantly changing, regarding present-day issues there is still necessary to refer to the information given by the Iran-Iraq War. In various ways, the I-IW can be seen as the crucible from which many of Iran's current regional strategies and responses have emerged, from its regional ambitions to sectarian tensions it seeks to negotiate, not to mention the impact of foreign interventions it continues to face. by the U.S. more complicating the Iran west relations.

### **Conclusion**

The Iran-Iraq War which began in September 1980 and came to an end in August 1988 left a very strong and enduring impact on the geopolitics of the Middle East as well as defining the political, economic as well as social relationship of Middle East countries for decades to come. By external intervention, internal power struggle, and sectarianism, the war re-scribed relations between Iran, Iraq, the extended Arab sphere, and the United States and Russia. The effects of the above war have not left the Middle East without a breakdown of the region and its international relations as a whole.

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