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## **BISS PAPERS**

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### **THE GULF WAR: THE ISSUES REVISITED**

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## THE GULF WAR : THE ISSUES REVISITED

### Introduction

The fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq has been continuing for the last seven years, already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and cost the participants billions of dollars in lost resources and revenues. The war has also serious implications for security and stability of the region. The logic of the war seems to be obscured and even the parties are not certain about the tangible gains that can be achieved. The war is also unique in the sense that it is the only Third World conflict where the superpowers, despite their vital geopolitical and strategic stakes in the region have little leverage on the parties to influence the course of the war.

In spite of numerous efforts and initiatives taken by different quarters including the UN, the OIC, the NAM, the GCC and many individual countries to mediate the conflict the war continues all the same. At the same time, it also appears that the fate of the war may not be decided at the war front, as no party has so far been able to come out decisively victorious. It has turned into a stalemated war of attrition with huge human and material losses. Both sides are entrenched in the war and apparently have higher stakes in continuing the war, instead of coming to a negotiated settlement.

Iran-Iraq war apparently has its own dynamics in the sense that despite its persistence in one of the most volatile regions of the world, it has not escalated to the extent of involving neither the regional



countries nor any external major/super powers. But the very persistence of the war for long seven years raises question about the apparent insulated nature of the war. Moreover certain recent developments, specially, the controversial US arms supply to Iran, growing US involvement in the Gulf, recent Iraqi missile attack on US vessel and US decision to deploy forces in the Gulf and to reflag Kuwaiti ships etc., are bound to influence the nature and course of the war. It remains to be seen to what extent the war would remain insulated from external involvement. Secondly, the joint move by the five permanent members of the Security Council adds a new dimension to the peace moves made so far. Whether the warring parties will respond to a Security Council move to halt the war is also a matter of conjecture. However, the course of events has come to a critical juncture.

Against this backdrop the present paper will revisit the major issues and aspects of the Gulf War including, the causes of the war in its historical perspectives, the impact of the war for both Iran and Iraq, regional implications, superpower involvements, peace initiatives by different quarters, its failures, the present impasse and options for solution.

### **I. Iran-Iraq War in Historical Perspectives**

The present rivalry between Iran and Iraq has to be understood in its historical context. The relations between the two Persian Gulf countries were always tense and conflictive throughout the history. Arabs invaded the territory of Persia in 636 AD and various Arab dynasties ruled Iran until the 11th century. Although the Arabs were successful to islamise, they could not arabise the Persians. During the Umayyad and Abbassid Caliphates, the Persians were treated as second class citizens and were oppressed by various Arab rulers.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime various theological sects emerged in Iran among which

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1. For details about conflicts between Arabism and Persian nationalism, see, Hamid Enayat, "Iran and the Arabs" in Sylvia G. Haim (ed) *Arab Nationalism and a Wider World*, (New York) 1971, pp. 14-16



the Shiites were the largest and strongest. In early 16th century the Safavid dynasty came to power in Iran which declared Shiism as the official religion and an integral part of Irani nationalism. Thus having been consolidated on Shiite faith and ideology Persia started opposition to Sunni dominated Ottoman Empire for geopolitical control over a vast territory in the Gulf including the present territory of Iraq. Iraq was important to Persia for a number of reasons; a) Iraq occupied an important geostrategic position, was the route to Gulf, and a bridge between East and West, had rich glorious historical past and was the birth place of many ancient civilizations; b) Most of the Holy Shiite shrines were in Iraq mainly in Najaf and Karbala and Iran wanted to acquire an unrestricted access to those areas, c) Persia wanted Iraqi territory to maintain the security of the important Basra-Baghdad-Khanqin trade route.<sup>2</sup> During the 16th and the 17th centuries a number of wars broke out between Persian and Ottomans and in 1639 a treaty was concluded by which Iraq was formally incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. Although various treaties were signed between Iran and Ottomans on Iraq, wars continued and at different times Persia occupied various parts of Iraq and destroyed many Sunni tombs and shrines.<sup>3</sup> However, the Ottomans protected Iraq from persianization.

After the first World War as the Ottoman Empire collapsed, Iran exerted its influence in the region and claimed parts of Iraqi territory and refused to recognise the new State. Although the relations improved in 1929 when Iran officially recognised Iraq, the boundary issue on Shatt-al-Arab and ethnic problems remained as sources of tensions between the two countries. Iran was always suspicious about its Arab citizens in Khuzistan while Iraq was suspicious about its Kurd citizens. In the post World War-II period Iraq taking the advantage of Iran's weaker position tried to exploit the situation and many quarters in Baghdad were even in favour of

2. Stephen H. Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*, p. 13

3. Stephen H. Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, pp. 18-19



announcing an Arab state in Khuzistan in order to redress the grievances of fellow Arabs and to avenge the past.<sup>4</sup>

The relations between Iran and Iraq somewhat improved in 1950s as the two countries found a number of commonalities of their interests. For example, both of them signed the Baghdad Pact, endorsed the Eisenhower doctrine and strongly opposed Nasser's nationalist anti-West posture. However, the revolution in Iraq in 1958 and the overthrow of monarchist regime altered the situation and Iraqi foreign policy underwent a qualitative change. In 1959 Iran signed a defence agreement with the US and got security guarantee from the US, and at the same time the relations with the Soviet Union also improved. Since 1969 a number of technical, agricultural and cultural agreements were signed with the Soviet Union and a Permanent Committee for Economic Cooperation was also formed.<sup>5</sup> Iran's close relationship with the US and rapprochement with the Soviet Union worried the new regime in Baghdad. The relations further deteriorated when Iran constructed the Khusroabad port on the Shatt-al-Arab, Iraq rejected the move, called it illegal and claimed that the new port fall within its territorial water.

Some regional political developments had also their repercussions on the Iran-Iraq relations. As Kuwait became independent in 1961 Iraq claimed sovereignty over Kuwaiti territory, while Iran denounced the claims as illegal and recognised the new State. Iraq's closeness to Egypt also irritated Iran as she was supporting the royalists in Yemen against the republicans backed by Egypt.

Iranian recognition of Israel in 1960 angered the Arabs particularly Egypt, and Iraq tried to make it an Arab-Persian issue through mobilising wide Arab support against Iran.<sup>6</sup> There was faint indi-

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4. J.C. Hurewitz (ed) *Middle East and North Africa*, vol. I, p. 13

5. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica Macropedia*, vol. 9, p. 861

6. Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran ; A Developing State in a Zone of Great Power Conflict* (Berckely Universit, University of California Press) 1974, p. 182



cation of beginning of a new phase of Iran-Iraq relationship in 1967 when Iraqi President visited Iran and the two sides agreed to form a mixed Commission at the earliest possible time to solve the bilateral disputes based on its reports. But the Baathist revolution in Iraq in 1968 interrupted the process.

The British withdrawal from Aden in late 1960s created a power vacuum in the Arabian Peninsula. With a view to filling up the vacuum Iran modernised its Navy with the help of the US and emerged as a regional power. Such a new posture had its impacts on Iran-Iraq relations. And in 1969 Iran denounced the treaty of 1937, the legal framework on Shatt-al-Arab and forcibly asserted the right of its ships to navigate the Shatt-al-Arab under the Iranian flag.<sup>7</sup> To redress the power imbalance Iraq signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1972. From then onward frequent border incursions by either side took place. And in February 1974 the UN Security Council appointed a special representative to investigate the causes of tensions and to report to the Council. The UN mission was successful in a). effecting a ceasefire agreement between the parties, b) withdrawing of military forces from borders, c). avoiding any military action which might aggravate the situation, and d). resuming negotiations between the Parties.<sup>8</sup> A series of meetings were held in Istanbul between the parties which, however, ended in failure and military clashes continued along the joint boundaries in 1974 and early 1975.

A treaty was signed between the Shah of Iran and the then Vice President of Iraq Saddam Hussain in March 1975 under the mediation of Algeria. According to the treaty, the parties agreed to demarcate land boundaries in accordance with the Constantinople Protocol of 1913, to delimit the river boundaries according to the median line in the mid-channel to establish security and mutual

7. *Arab Report and Record*, 16-30 April 1969, p. 160

8. *UN Security Council Official Records*, Documents 5/11291, May 20, 1974



confidence along their common borders. In return Shah pledged to end his interference in Iraq's domestic affairs. After the Algiers treaty a series of negotiations took place between Iran and Iraq and in June 1975 the parties signed "Treaty on International Boundaries and Good Neighbourliness between Iraq and Iran" which stipulated the terms and conditions for improving bilateral relations between the two Persian Gulf states. (For details about Algiers treaty and other treaties, see Annexure - 1).

Historically, three issues seem to be the main roots of tensions in Iran-Iraq relations: a) Dispute over Shatt-al-Arab, b) The Kurdish issue, and c) Dominance over the region.

a. *Shatt-al-Arab*: As the dispute over Shatt-al-Arab appeared to be the prime cause of the Iran-Iraq war the issue requires elaboration for the purpose of the present paper. The Shatt-al-Arab is a navigable waterway that unites the historic Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from their confluence at al-Qurnah to the head of the Persian Gulf. Its total length is about 204 km and average breadth is 548 meters but at some points the width reaches more than one km. It forms the Iraqi-Iranian frontier for about 102 km.<sup>9</sup> Shatt-al-Arab is a strategic economic artery for both Iran and Iraq. It is Iraq's lifeline to the sea, enabling medium-draft vessels to bring cargoes upriver to Basra and providing an exit route for those petroleum exports that do not go by pipeline. For Iran, the waterway is equally important. It provides direct access by water to the oil ports of Khorramshahr and Abadan for machinery and equipment, and a surface route for transshipment of oil. The present dispute over control of Shatt-al-Arab is steeped in history. Before the Ottomans came the entire area was under Persian control and in the 17th century the Shatt-al-Arab became an inland water way of the Turkish Empire with the Arab-speaking tribes on both banks claimed by Turkey. In 1847 a boundary treaty was signed between Turkish and Persian Empires which

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9. For details about the Shatt-al-Arab see, Khalid al-Izzi ; *The Shatt-al-Arab River Dispute in Terms of Law*, (Baghdad) 1972, pp. 67-68.



provisionally fixed the border on the eastbank of the waterway, giving Persian vessels freedom of navigation along its entire length. But problems arose with the Arab tribes living in both the sides of the Shatt-al-Arab. Although under the treaty of 1847 those tribes were recognised as subjects of Persia, most of them were Arabs and refused to live under Persian rule. A series of treaties were signed between Ottoman Empire and Persia in early this century, and with the Anglo Russian mediation a treaty was signed in 1913 which left "the river and all the islands therein" to Turkey, with the exception of two strips of about four miles each opposite the ports of Khorramshahr and Abadan.<sup>10</sup>

After the World War -I Iraq emerged as an independent State and claimed on the Shatt-al-Arab as successor to the Ottoman Empire but Iran refused to honor those treaties not only for national pride but also for growing economic importance of the ports of Abadan and Khorramshahr and the shipping importance to them. She also demanded that *thalweg* principle, i.e. division at the midstream should apply to the full length of the waterway, while Iraq demanded the full control over Shatt-al-Arab. Iraq brought the issue to the League of Nations and International Permanent Court of Justice but the League and Court failed to solve the issue and the parties started direct negotiations.

In 1937 an agreement was signed which provided that the frontiers between Iran and Iraq would run along the Shatt-al-Arab on its left bank except for a four mile anchorage area in front of Abadan where the frontier would be the mid-channel of the Shatt-al-Arab. The parties also agreed to set up a Commission to mark the frontier lines.<sup>11</sup> However, the validity of the treaty of 1937 remained doubtful because no convention on the installation and maintenance of navigation signals was agreed on. The treaty

10. *The Washington Post*, 14 October 1980

11. Jasim M. Abdul Ghani, "Iraq and Iran; The Years of Crisis," (London) 1984, pp. 116-120



failed to solve the boundary problems of Shatt-al-Arab and when political relations between Iran and Iraq deteriorated the issue again came at the fore front. Thus in 1968 with the revolution in Iraq the relations between the two countries deteriorated and in 1969 Iran, an emerging power in the Gulf, declared the treaty of 1937 null and void, while Iraq expelled thousands of Iranians in protest.

Persistent and open Iranian support to the Kurdish insurgency in northern Iraq almost led to a war in 1974. Eventually Iraq acknowledged the Iranian demand on Shatt-al-Arab. In fact the Kurdish issue so weakened the Iraqi position that in mid-1970s she had no option but to accept the Iranian condition on the Shatt-al-Arab issue and to sign the Algiers Treaty which demarcated the boundary in the mid-channel of Shatt-al-Arab which was a long-sought objective of Iran.

However, the Algiers treaty could not solve the Shatt-al-Arab issue. It was a political necessity for Iraq at that time to accept it but Saddam Hossain, then Vice President, and a signatory to the treaty, apparently took it as a personal humiliation and was waiting for an opportune moment to avenge the same.

With the revolution in Iran and overthrow of the Shah the Iranian leadership was experiencing internal turmoils and international isolation. The situation further changed in the late seventies. Iraq reclaimed her control over entire Shatt-al-Arab and in September 1980 declared the Algiers treaty null and void. The Shatt-al-Arab issue was always at the centre of dispute between Iran and Iraq and whenever one party was in stronger position dictated the terms and conditions on the other. The sovereignty over Shatt-al-Arab has become a symbol of national pride and prestige for both Iran and Iraq and they consider it to be a reflection of national power at least psychologically. So it appears that even if the war is over the Shatt-al-Arab will continue to remain as a source of tension between Iran and Iraq.



b. *The Kurdish Minority Issue:* The Kurds had been a distinct people both ethnically and linguistically but have historically been exploited by Persia as a leverage to weaken the central government in Iraq. As the relations deteriorated in late 1960s Iraq accused Iran of supplying arms to Kurds, providing training facilities and permitting Iranian territory for transit of arms to Kurds.<sup>12</sup> While Iraq revived the issue of Arabistan, and in 1969 announced the formation of the Popular Front for Liberation of Arabistan and claimed Khuzistan as Iraqi territory that "annexed by Iran during the foreign mandate which the Iraqi people did not accept,"<sup>13</sup> Persia always used the soft underbelly of the Kurdish issue when the central government of Iraq was not in good terms with Iran. The Persians had always an affinity with the Kurds as the Shah of Iran used to say, "Persians and Kurds are pure Aryian race" and "the Kurds are not Arabs."<sup>14</sup> In point of the differences between Persians and Arabs he said, "The Jews are Semites and the Arabs are Semites too, we are Aryans as you Germans are Aryans."<sup>15</sup>

The Kurds became more dependent on Iraq after the signing of Iraqi-Soviet Treaty in 1972. At the same time the Iranian aid to Kurds substantially increased. In retaliation Iraq wanted to widen the arena of conflict with Iran and backed the Baluchi dissidents along the Irani-Pakistani border. Even Iraq opened an office for the Baluchistan Liberation Front in Baghdad to increase further pressure on Iran.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, the Irani support to Kurds increased significantly and Tehran became directly involved in the issue and supplied sophisticated surface-to-air Hawk missiles and heavy weapons to the rebels. And Iraq on the other hand asked the Soviet Union for more

12. *ibid*, p. 137

13. *Arab Report and Record*, 1-15, June 1973, p. 236

14. *Texts of Interviews Granted by H.I.M. the Shahanshah* (Tehran, Ministry of Information and Tourism) 1974, p. 15

15. *ibid*, p. 73

16. Jasim M. Abdul Ghani, *op cit*, p. 141



arms to fight the Kurdish rebellions. Moscow however was trying to mend fences with Tehran and Iraq apparently failed to draw attention of the Kremlin leaders. The situation became more complicated when the US and Israel came forward to help the Kurds against Iraq. Washington considered Iraq as a Soviet client State and Shah as a valuable ally. The US tried to prevent the Baathist regime of Iraq from achieving the leadership role in the Gulf and to neutralise her from the Arab-Israeli dispute by keeping her busy with internal problems, particularly, with the Kurdish issue. The US aid to Kurds had apparently paid sufficient political dividends as Iraq was seriously involved with the Kurdish issue and could not send more than one division troops for the support of the Arabs in the October 1973 war, as also mentioned by Henry Kissinger in his memoirs.<sup>17</sup> The Kurdish card was also used by the US to create sufficient pressure on Iraq to neutralise her militant position on the major developments in the Middle East, particularly, on the series of disengagement agreements that were signed after the 1973 war. Israel had also the similar objectives ; to weaken the Baathist regime in Iraq, to neutralise her from the Middle East politics and helped the Kurdish guerillas with money, arms and instructors from 1965 to 1975.<sup>18</sup>

With the support of US and Israel and direct involvement of Iran, the Kurdish issue gradually became a serious challenge to the Baathist regime of Iraq in 1974.<sup>19</sup> The war with the Kurds became a heavy burden for Iraq. According to a report Iraq mobilised 80,000 men supported by 800 tanks and eight squadrons of MiG-21s against the Kurdish rebellion with a considerable financial drain on the government (about \$ 4 billion).<sup>20</sup> Thus in 1975 Iraq had no other option than to neutralise Iran on Kurdish issue which really threatened the territorial

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17. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, (Boston 1979) p. 1265

18. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 6 October 1980

19. *The Washington Post*, 17 December 1974

20. Jon Kimche, "Selling out the Kurds", *New Republic*, 19 April 1975, p. 20



integrity of the state, by signing a treaty with Iran. In March 1975 the Algiers treaty was signed according to which the Shah pledged to end the interference in Iraq's domestic affairs and to cease aid to the Kurdish rebellions, while Iraq recognised Iranian claim on Shatt-al-Arab.

C. *Power Rivalry in the Gulf* : Rivalry for dominance over the Gulf region was another issue of contention between Iran and Iraq. In order to attain the status of guardian in the Gulf Iran built up huge military arsenals with the help of US in the early 1970s. According to an assessment of IISS of London, in early 1970s Iran's military was the strongest in the region and its ground forces were twice as large as those of Iraq and Saudi Arabia combined and its Navy was much superior to the combined Naval forces of Iraq and Saudi Arabia.<sup>21</sup> In 1976 Iran's defence expenditure totalled about \$ 9 bn, i.e., about 15 percent of GNP and occupied 7th largest in the world after USA, USSR, West Germany, France, China and Britain.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Iranian claims over Bahrain and three other Islands in the Gulf in early 1970s and agreement with Oman in 1974 for joint naval control of the Strait of Hormuz made the Arabs in the Gulf, particularly the Iraqis more suspicious. Iraq broke off relations with Iran and expelled many Iranian residents from Iraq. In fact, in early 1970s Shah's Iran became the main security linchpin of the US in the region which obviously made the Baathist regime of Iraq suspicious and uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Iraq tried to strengthen its position by modernising its armed forces with the help of the Soviet Union and also by mending fences with fellow Arab nations. But Iraq had a number of disputes with the neighbouring countries over the questions of frontier delineations, the neutral zone, tribal migrations and smuggling, and the Gulf countries were suspicious about Baathist Iraq. And often the Gulf Arab states accused Iraq of fueling their domestic situations by provid-

21. R.M. Burrell, "Iran in Search of Greater Responsibilities," *New Middle East*, October 1972, p. 28

22. *Military Balance*, (IISS, London), 1977, p. 33



ing arms to underground extremist groups with a view to destabilizing the regimes and exporting socialist Baathist ideology to the region. Relations with Saudi Arabia improved when Iraq signed an agreement with the Kingdom which divided the neutral zone equally between the two countries.<sup>23</sup> Iraq failed to form an anti-Persian coalition on the basis of Arab nationalism to counter growing Iranian influence. And by signing the Algiers treaty in 1975 Iraq had to recognise Iranian dominance over the region. The Arab countries welcomed the Algiers treaty. However, Iraq failing to gain control over the Shatt-al-Arab intended to seek deep port facility in the Gulf and claimed two Kuwaiti islands, Warbu and Bubiyan to improve her deep water port at Um Qasr. As stated by President Saddam Hussain the Iraqi objective was not to expand her territory at the cost of Kuwait but to assert the leadership role of Iraq in the Gulf. He also made it clear that any final demarcation of Kuwaiti-Iraqi border must take into account Iraq's security and defence needs.<sup>24</sup> So it appears that even after signing the Algiers treaty with Iran, Iraq continued her quest for gaining the leadership role in the Gulf. In late 1970s Iran considered as the leader in the Persian Gulf, while Iraq considered herself as the guardian of Arabism in the area.

## II. Causes of the War

As it has been observed, the historical Arab-Persian dispute, Shatt-al-Arab issue, Kurdistan problem and rivalry over the domination in the area worked as catalytic forces for the Iran-Iraq war of 1980. Nonetheless, some major political developments in the area worked as the immediate cause of the war.

The revolution in Iran, overthrow of the Shah and proclamation of Iran as an Islamic Republic radically changed the regional power balance in the Gulf and Iraq became apprehensive of new Iran because

23. Majid Khadduri; *Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1968* (Washington D.C 1978) p. 150

24. For details about Iraq's relations with the Gulf countries see, Khadduri, *ibid.* pp. 153-159.



the Islamic regime challenged the status-quo by questioning the legitimacy of traditional rulers as well as that of Baath regime in Iraq. The ideological conflict was further compounded with Ayatollah Khomeini's personal antipathy with the Iraqi leader Saddam Hossain who expelled him from Iraq at the request of the Shah after 14 years of living there.<sup>25</sup>

To an extent, the Islamic revolution weakened the position of Iran apparently demobilised its armed forces, oil production was cut drastically and the economy suffered serious setback. The number of armed forces decreased from 413,000 in 1978 to 242,000 in 1980 and many US trained experienced generals were either executed or arrested because of their controversial role in the revolution. At the same time procurement of new arms and equipments was suspended, US military experts were expelled and negotiations started with the US to sell back some of the sophisticated arms. Even the construction of some of the important military installations were either halted or converted for civilian use. The defence expenditure was reduced to \$ 4.2 billion in 1980 as compared to \$ 9.94 billion in 1978.<sup>26</sup> The oil exports decreased from 4.5 million barrels p/d in 1978 to 1.1 million barrels p/d in 1980 and the revenues from \$20.9 billion in 1978 to \$8.9 billion in 1981.<sup>27</sup>

The country was apparently suffering from political unrest and internal turmoils because of the infighting among various pro-revolutionary and anti-revolutionary forces. Relations with the US and other European countries were strained and the situation further aggravated in November 1979 with the taking of American diplomats in Tehran as hostage. The Islamic Iran was in near isolation from

25. Jasim M. Abdul Ghani, *op. cit.*, p. 178

26. For details see, the author's article on "Iran-Iraq War: A Military, Economic and Socio-Political Assessment" *BIJSS Journal*, vol. 5, No. 3, 1984, pp. 295-297

27. *ibid.*, p. 303



the international community and severely affected by world-wide arms embargo and economic sanction imposed on her.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, Iraq was able to significantly strengthen her position in the Gulf both politico-militarily and economically by late 1970s. As the Arab world was strongly critical about Egypt-Israeli separate peace treaty, Iraq led the anti-Sadat campaign. The Baghdad Summit of Arab countries in 1978 and a rapprochement with Syria helped Iraq to consolidate her position in the Arab world. Iraq further cemented her position by signing a security agreement with Saudi Arabia in early 1979<sup>29</sup>. As the Arab countries were concerned about the Islamic revolution in Iran and were afraid of a potential Iranian appeal to their Shiite population Iraq tried to project her as the defender of Arabism in the Gulf. And the Iraqi intention was clearly manifested when President Saddam Hussain declared in April 1980 that "Iraq always had a unique position within the Arab nation" and the "Iraqi army will remain strong to defend the honour of all Arabs fighting foreign forces."<sup>30</sup>

The economy of Iraq was also flourishing. The GDP increased from \$16.3 billion in 1978 to \$39.98 billion in 1980 and oil revenues from \$9.6 billion to \$26.0 billion for the same period.<sup>31</sup> Iraq's imports between 1978-81 also increased from \$4.12 billion to \$20.5 billion or by about 400 percent.<sup>32</sup> The discovery of proven reserve of oil exceeding 100 billion of barrels, three times the amount previously estimated, strengthened Baghdad's position and Iraq became the second largest oil

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28. For details about economic sanctions on Iran, see, *The New York Times*, 23 April 1980

29. *The New York Times*, 28 December 1981

30. Added I. Dawisha : "Iraq: The West's Opportunity", *Foreign Policy* Number 41, Winter 1980-81, p. 140

31. The author's article *op. cit.* pp, 295-303.

32. Abbas Alnasrawi, "Economic Consequences of the Iran-Iraq War" *Third World Quarterly*, vol, 8, No. 3, July 1986, p. 872



producer by 1979 after Saudi Arabia. The military expenditure also increased from \$1.66 billion in 1978 to \$2.98 billion in 1980 and total armed forces increased from 212,000 to 242,000 for the same period.

In the backdrop of politico-economic situation both Iran and Iraq started ideological wars against each other. Iranian leadership described the Baathist ideology as "fascist and racist" based on "atheism", while Iraq described Khomeini regime as "fanatical based on medieval thoughts in contradiction with the humanistic essence of Islam". Even Saddam Hossain tried to prove the Iranian revolution not as an Islamic one by arguing that any true Islamic revolution must be a friend of Arab nations and Iranian revolution is not an Islamic one as it is hostile to the Arab revolution.<sup>33</sup>

In October 1979 Iraq put forward three conditions for improving relations with Iraq : (a) The abrogation of the 1975 "reconciliation treaty" and the restoration to Iraq of its former rights ; (b) The evacuation of Abu Musa and the Tumbs Islands in the Strait of Hormuz occupied by Iran in 1971, and (c) granting of autonomy to the Baluchis, Kurds and Arabs in Iran.<sup>34</sup> Iran rejected the Iraqi demands and accused Iraq of supporting pro-Shah elements and provoking Arabs in Iran to overthrow the regime of Khomeini, while Iraq accused Iran of supporting the Kurdish rebellions and radical Shiite groups to overthrow the Baathist regime. Iraq also claimed that Iran designated a prominent Shiite leader exiled in Iraq as the head of the "Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq" to put pressure on Baghdad and to overthrow the Baathist regime. The situation was critical in April 1980 when an attempt was made to assassinate Iraq's Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz on the Mustansirriyyah University campus and Iraq accused Iran for the incident. Iraq reportedly expelled 7000

33. Jasim M. Abdul Ghani, *op. cit.* p. 183

34. *Kessing's Contemporary Archives 1981*, p. 185 31005

35. Jasim M. Abdul, Ghani, *op. cit.* p. 185



Iranians and Iraqis of Iranian descent. The relations between two countries further escalated when Iraq executed Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir-al-Sadr, a prominent Iraqi Shiite scholar and theologian. Iraq also accused that some leaders of clandestine al-Dawa party and Iraqi communist party met Khomeini and drew up plans for destabilising the regime in Baghdad.

Amidst accusation and counter-accusation of violating the 1975 Algiers Treaty as well as each other's territorial waters and airspace the war broke out in September 1980, although there is a lot of claims and counter-claims as to who started the war first. However, in any case President Saddam Hussain denounced the Algiers Treaty on September 17, 1980 and strated bombardments on Irani cities, towns and economic installations.<sup>36</sup>

### III. Iraq and the War

Iraq was engaged in the war well equipped and confident with strong army, sound economy, political stability and increased international acceptability. From the very beginning Iraq tried to project the war as a clash between Arab nationalism and Persian nationalism by conjuring up the memory of the Arab conquest of Persia in the battle of Qadisiyya in AD 638 and began to refer the war as "Second Qadisiyya" or "Saddam's Qadisiyya".<sup>37</sup> In Saddam Hossain's word "It was a decisive battle for the Arabism in the Gulf and for deterring the expansionist Persian ambitions".<sup>38</sup> Iraq apparently had the following objectives when the war broke out in September 1980.

36. For details about the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war see, A.E. Dessouki (ed) *The Iran-Iraq War: Issues of Conflict and Prospects for Settlement*, (Princeton University 1981), pp. 79-87.
37. Ralph King, "The Iran-Iraq War; The Political Implications", *Adelphi Papers*, No. 219, Spring 1987, p. 6.
38. Saddam Hossain's Speech on 28 September 1980, *Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraqi-Iranian Conflict*, p. 219.



- a. To destroy the 'myth of Persian hegemony', to end the Iranian military supremacy for ever and to shift the balance of power in the Gulf in Iraq's favour;
- b. To contain the Islamic revolution within Iran and to overthrow the Khomeini regime;
- c. To abrogate Algiers Treaty and establish control over the entire Shatt-al-Arab; and
- d. To dictate terms and conditions of any negotiations of the war by occupying strategic areas of Iran.

Keeping in mind those broad objectives Iraqi leadership was also motivated by the following forces and factors :

- a. Growing internal political unrests and tensions between central government and minority groups in Iran;
- b. Demobilization and fragmentation of Iranian army and indication by many ex-Iranian generals exiled in Iraq of their support to Iraq in the war;
- c. As the US-Iranian relation was at the critical stage because of the hostage crisis Iraq expected that in any war with Iran Washington would side with Iraq;
- d. Iraq calculated that in case of Iraqi attacks the Arabs in Khuzistan would support her because of their ethnic and linguistic affinity;
- e. Iraq also thought that an attack on Iran would be an attack on the leadership and the pro-Shah groups and opponents of the revolution would support Iraq and compel the regime to step down;
- f. Iraq mended its relations with some Gulf countries and expected to get total support from the Arab world; and
- g. Iraq also expected full support from the Soviet Union as she had Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with Moscow.



But it appears that Iraq failed to fulfil her objectives and most of her calculations were mainly based on wrong assumptions. About the Iranian forces the Iraqi leadership had misleading information and failed to assess the revolutionary zeal, political resilience and strength of Persian nationalism. The regular forces and newly formed Revolutionary Guards of Iran fought with great courage and discipline. Iraq also overestimated its forces and the Air Force failed to fulfil the pre-designed mission in crippling the Iranian aircrafts on the ground. Iraq apparently had no clear military objective, rather the regime in Baghdad was convinced that invasion of a part of Iran would bring down the Khomeini regime. The military performance of Iraqi army was also left much to be desired because the army was highly politicised, most of the soldiers were Shia and were not completely reliable by the command. Some Western analysts viewed that, "Iraqi officers have in the past been promoted on the grounds of political loyalties and not on their military skills".<sup>39</sup>

Iraq also misjudged the influence of Arabism in Khuzistan and expected that the Arabs in Khuzistan would welcome the Iraqi attack and would revolt against the Khomeini regime. But it appeared that over the historical period the Arab consciousness of the Arab community in Khuzistan had been diluted considerably by intermarriage and other socio-cultural interlinkage with ethnic Persians. It is true that the Arabs in Iran were neglected and many of them were disappointed with the revolutionary regime in Tehran but that sentiment fell far short of a declaration of secession. Moreover, by the time the Iraqi forces arrived in Khuzistan many people were evacuated to other parts of Iran for their safety. Iraq was not successful in using the Arab card in Khuzistan against the revolutionary regime in Iran as it was visualised by the Iraqi leadership.

Iraq also overestimated the Arab support in the war. Iraq used all means available at her disposal to convince the Arab world that she was fighting for Arab interests, very often evoked the image of histo-

39. *Newsweek*, 24 May 1982



rical conflicts and tried to expose the war as an Arab-Persian one. The reported Iranian connections with Israel were propagated to discredit Islamic Iran and were often used to portray the Iranian threats to the Arab world in connection with Israel. The Gulf countries, afraid of the very nature of Iranian revolution, cautiously sided with Iraq and in 1981 provided with \$ 24 billion loans to Baghdad.<sup>40</sup> But at the same time it appeared that they were not ready to put all their eggs in one basket. Iraq did not receive the supports she expected from fellow Arab nations and Saddam Hussain expressed his dissatisfaction. The Soviets also disappointed Iraq and halted arms supply to Baghdad although Moscow was obliged to help Iraq according to the Friendship Treaty.

Although in the first phase of the war i.e., from September 1980 to May 1981, Iraq had an edge over Iran and seized large area of Iran including the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, she failed to fulfil her military objectives i.e., to end the war within the shortest possible time and to dictate terms and conditions of negotiations. However, gradually Iraq was losing grounds and Iran steadily not only recaptured the territory but also staged major onslaughts on Iraqi territories. And in mid 1982 Iraq announced the withdrawal of its troops to the international boundary and asked for a ceasefire.<sup>41</sup>

The war has also seriously affected the economy of Iraq. Iraq wanted to broaden her resource base but the diversification plan was seriously undermined by the war. Although Iraq decided not to curtail spending both to maintain public morale and to complete the infrastructure for holding the Non-aligned Summit in Baghdad in 1983, the continuous high cost of the war compelled the government to declare a policy of economic austerity. Iraq could not end the war as she designed and soon it turned into a great economic liability for her. As Table-I. shows the Iraqi GNP fell to \$30 billion in 1981 from

40. *The Washington Post*, 18 March 1982

41. L. Carl Brown, "International Politics and the Middle East", (London) 1984, p. 4



\$40 billion in 1980, while the oil revenue decreased from \$26 billion to \$10 billion for the same period. The volume of exports and imports also decreased and since 1981 the country was suffering from deficit balance of payments. On the other hand, the number of armed forces increased from 342,250 in 1980 to 520,000 in 1984.

**Table-I: GNP, Oil Revenue and Trade of Iraq 1977-84 ( \$ billion )**

Year	GNP	Oil Revenue	3 as % of 2	Exports	Imports	Balance
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1977	18.7	9.6	52.2	10.4	4.5	6.0
1978	22.7	10.2	44.9	12.0	4.2	7.8
1979	35.8	21.8	59.5	20.3	9.9	10.4
1980	40.2	26.1	64.9	28.5	13.8	14.7
1981	30.4	10.4	34.2	11.6	20.5	-8.9
1982	31.1	9.7	31.1	10.6	21.6	-11.0
1983	33.2	8.4	26.1	8.9	11.7	-2.8
1984	34.3	10.4	30.3	9.7	9.8	-0.1

Source; Abbas Alnasrawi; "Economic Consequences of Iraq-Iran War", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.3 July 1986, Tables-I and 2, pp. 874 and 878.

The defence expenditure increased from \$2.98 bn in 1980 to an estimated \$ 13.8 bn in 1984 and the ratio of military imports to total imports increased from 13.8 percent in 1980 to 43.6 percent in 1983. The Iraqi output of oil declined from 3.4 million b/d in August 1980 i.e., prior to the war to a mere 1.4 million b/d in October.<sup>42</sup> The Iraqi economy suffered a further setback in April 1982 when Syria closed the Iraqi pipeline through its territory and Iraq lost oil export by 400,000 barrels per day valued at \$5 billion per year.<sup>43</sup>

42. Thomas R. Stauffer; "Economic Warfare in the Gulf" *American-Arab Affairs* (14), Fall 1985., pp. 98-116

43. *Middle East Economic Survey* (MEES) 19 April 1982, p. 2.



**Table 2 : Armed Forces and Defence Expenditure of Iraq 1977-1984**

Year	Number of Armed forces	Defence Expenditure (\$ billion)	Total Imports (\$ billion)	Military Imports (\$ billion)	5 as % of 4
1	2	3	4	5	6
1978	212,000	1.66	4.2	1.6	38.1
1979	252,250	2.67	9.9	2.3	23.2
1980	342,250	2.98	13.8	1.9	13.8
1981	517,250	4.74	20.5	3.7	18.0
1982	642,500	8.0	21.6	4.3	19.9
1983	517,000	10.3	11.7	5.1	43.6
1984	520,000	13.8	—	—	—

Sources : *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, 1985, pp 108-9 and *Military Balance* (IISS London) 1978 to 1985.

According to an estimate for 1980-84 Iraq lost oil revenue of \$53.5 billion. The annual cost of the war to Iraq in 1983 was estimated to be \$15.7 billion which did not include the value of fixed assets destroyed or loss of oil revenues.<sup>44</sup> According to an estimate the total cost of the war for both Iran and Iraq upto the end of 1985 was more than \$ 400 billion, while the oil revenue for both the countries from 1919 to 1985 was only about \$ 360 billion i. e., already in 1985 the cost of the war exceeded the oil revenues of both the parties ever received. The average annual cost of the war during 1981-85 absorbed about 94 percent of Iraq's GNP for the same period.<sup>45</sup> Iraq had to seek loans of more than \$ 50 billion from the oil rich Arab countries to pay the war bills. The consumer imports have also fallen and restrictions have been imposed on the proportion of wages remittable by foreign workers. Along with the economic losses, the sufferings of human lives and properties are also enormous. There is no authentic data about the loss of human lives but according to an estimate the toll of only war

44. Abbas Alnasrawi, *op. cit.* p. 883

45. *ibid*, p. 886



dead for the first five years was about 1 million people and about 300, 000 were wounded.

As long as the war continues it will seriously affect the already crippled Iraqi economy. But at the same time Iraq seems to have no option and cannot get out of the present situation. It is true that President Saddam Hossain is using the war for consolidating his power and position but with the prolongation of war the question may arise, for what the Iraqis are shedding their bloods and thus Saddam Hossain may face problems. Even if the war ends and Iraq has to negotiate on the basis of the Algiers treaty (indication is already there), the question will arise what the Iraqis have gained in the war. Iraq may also face problems from its donors. Assistance to Baghdad is likely to continue as long as it keeps on gaining in the war, at least, sustaining the same. If however, Iraq is weakened to the extent that the position of Saddam Hossain is threatened, it may become questionable whether and to what extent external help would be forthcoming.

#### IV Iran and the War

Although the Islamic Iran strongly criticised the Baathist ideology, described the Iraqi leadership as "unbelievers and enemies of Islam" and called the Iraqi people "to rise up and overthrow them",<sup>46</sup> it was not prepared for a full scale war with Iraq. The country was suffering from internal political turmoils, the hostage issue brought the nation into a near isolation from the international community and was under severe economic pressure because of economic sanctions imposed on her. While at the war front within few months Iraq occupied vast Iranian territory including Khorramshahr, Abadan and strategic important economic regions of Khuzistan. The main reasons for Iranian failures in the war at the initial stage were lack of spare parts and trained and skilled manpower, internal political infighting and absence of a unified position in the war. Every group in the Iranian society was trying to consolidate its position by using the war. The war was, in fact, a tool in the struggle between the opposing groups in Iran.

46. *The New York Times*, 23 April 1980



The Islamic fundamentalists headed by Islamic Revolutionary Party were rather hardliners and were against any compromise or negotiation with the US. The centrists who included mainly nationalists, liberal democrats, westernised middle class and progressive section of clergy, headed by Bani Sadr were in favour of liberal democratic values with moderate attitudes toward the West. The leftists including the Tudeh Party, two wings of the Fedayeen-e-Khalq and the Mujahedin-e-Khalq were rather weak and divided. Fedayeen and Mujahedin-e-Khalq were in direct clash with the government and the Revolutionary Guards, while Tudeh Party continued its total support to the regime.

However, the war galvanised the Iranian public opinion in support of Khomeini regime. The disorganised and demobilised armed forces could organise themselves within remarkably shortest period and launched counterattacks on the Iraqi forces. The war helped to consolidate the Islamic revolution and national cohesion in Iran. The war also served as a symbol of resilience of Iranian revolution and its continued vigour and facilitated the neutralization of potential rivals of the Islamic regime. As the war continued the Islamic regime in Iran was consolidated and relations with other countries particularly with the Third world countries were expanded. Iran accorded highest priority to Muslim States, followed by other Third world countries in establishing relations. The new Iranian leadership was also successful in motivating the mass in the war on the basis of Islamic ideology and Ayatollah Khomeini did not accept the UN Charter for solving the war, rather demanded Islamic solution quoting from the Holy Quran which says if one tribes invades the other then all others are obliged to defend the latter in war, until they obey Allah.<sup>47</sup>

However, the country could not so easily get out of the political and economic trauma of the revolution and then of the war. Although the American hostages were released in early 1981, US continued arms

47. R. K. Ramazani, "Khumayni's Islam in Iran's Foreign Policy," *Islam in Foreign Policy* edited by Adeed Dawisha (Cambridge University Press), 1983, p. 25



embargo on Iran and even the consignments that were paid for and signed before the hostage crisis were not delivered. Iran had to pay high price both politically and economically for the hostage crisis as President Bani Sadr recognised "if we had not prolonged the hostage drama, everything would have developed differently. Now we have to pay dearly"<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, a series of political killings took place in Iran. In June 1981 a powerful bomb exploded at the headquarters of Islamic Revolutionary Party office which killed 72 leaders including the prime architect of the Party Ayatollah Beheshti. Two months later in August 1981 President Ali Rajai and Prime Minister Javad Bahonar were killed in another bomb explosion in Tehran. In September the Chief Prosecutor and Police Chief were killed in bomb explosion and a number of revolutionary leaders were killed throughout the country. In September anti-Khomeini demonstrations and heavy gunfires broke out in Tehran. In October, Defence Minister, acting Chief of the Armed Forces and acting Commander of the IRG were also killed in a plane crash near Tehran. Nonetheless, the political institutions in the country did not stop functioning. On October 2, 1981 a general election was held in Iran and Hojatoleslam Ali Khameni was elected President and became the first man from the Islamic Revolutionary Party to hold the Presidency of the Islamic Republic, while an independent member of the Majlis Hujjat-ul-Islam Syed Hussain Mussavi was elected as Prime Minister. Thus in the span of only three years 1979-82 Iran had three Presidents, four Prime Ministers and seven Foreign Ministers. All these seriously affected the planning and conducting of the war with Iraq.

Things, however, turned for the better with the election of Khameni as President and Mussavi as Prime Minister when political stability was observed, and Iran could concentrate on the war seriously. Continuous victory of Iranian forces at the front also helped consolidating of the government in Tehran. At the same time various political measures were taken for internal security and stability. The Tudeh

48. *The Bangladesh Observer*, 11 February 1981



Party, one of the oldest and well organised parties which came with all out support to Islamic revolution was dissolved and more than hundred of its members were put on trial and ten leading members were executed. The Mujahedin-e-Khalq who had the largest guerilla organization was castigated as hypocrites, declared enemy of Islam and was ruthlessly suppressed.<sup>49</sup>

By mid-1982 Iranian forces were able to drive the Iraqis from Iranian territory and from July Iran started offensive. Iranians were of the view that if Khomeini would call the entire Iraqi people, majority of whom are Shiite, would rise against the Baathist regime of Saddam Hossain which appeared to be an overestimation. Ayatollah Khomeini was in Iraq for long time and was respected as a religious leader but he lived in near isolation in Najaf and failed to study and evaluate the impact of Baathist rule in every spheres of life and the secular nationalistic fervour and institutions that were built up in Iraqi society since 1968. The Iranians also expected that since majority of Iraqi army are Shiites they would support Iran in case of Iranian offensive. But it appeared that Iran overemphasised the religious aspects which proved to be failed, rather nationalistic feelings and emotions played and are playing the key role in the war.

It is difficult to get the actual situation of the front but it is true that the Iranians are currently enjoying the upper hand in the Gulf war and have occupied a vast Iraqi territory, although they have so far not been able to carry out their "final assault" which according to them, may decide the fate of the Gulf war. It appears that Iran, with its huge human and material resources prefers a war of economic attrition where the main objectives may be to decrease Iraq's oil export, to close Basra and Fao ports in the Gulf, to stagnate the war economically and to make the Gulf countries reluctant to provide aid to Iraq by creating a stalemated situation.

49. For details about political oppositions in Iran, see, Asaf Hussain, "Islamic Iran; Revolution and Counter Revolution" (London) 1985, pp. 197-185.



Although to a lesser extent, the war has also caused economic damage to Iran. The defence expenditure has increased sharply, while exports declined and imports increased.

**Table-3 : GNP, Oil Revenues and Trade of Iran 1977-1984 (\$ billion)**

Year	GNP	oil Revenue	3 as % of 2	Exports	Imports	Balance
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1977	79.4	21.2	26.7	21.7	14.6	7.1
1978	76.1	19.3	25.4	22.4	19.5	2.9
1979	70.8	20.5	29.0	19.2	8.4	10.4
1980	74.5	13.5	17.9	15.3	12.8	2.5
1981	77.5	9.3	12.0	10.7	12.9	-2.2
1982	85.4	15.9	16.6	17.2	11.2	6.0
1983	99.8	18.7	18.7	19.5	18.2	1.3
1984	115.0	16.7	14.5	15.1	15.3	-0.2

Source : Abbas Alnasrawi, "Economic Consequences of the Iraq-Iran War" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3, July 1986 Tables, 1 and 2 pp. 874 and 878

Irani economy seriously suffered by Iraqi attacks on oil installations. As Table-3 shows oil revenue reduced from \$20.5 billion in 1979 to only \$9.3 billion in 1981, while the exports decreased from \$19.2 billion to \$10.7 billion for the same period and the country was suffering from deficit balance. Iran's oil output reduced from 1.3 million barrels p/d in August 1980 to 450,000 barrels p/d in October and only the damage of Abadan refinery cost about \$ 14 billion which used to produce 60% of all Iran's refined products and about half were exported.<sup>50</sup> However, Iran was less affected with the damage of oil installations as her share of oil revenue to GNP was much less (only 13.5 percent in 1980) than Iraq's (about 65 percent in 1980). Moreover, the Iranian economy proved to be more resilient and within the shortest period she was able to increase oil output and recapture

50. *Financial Times*, 23 October 1980.



some of its old market. The GNP increased steadily and oil revenue also increased significantly during 1982 and 1983. Iran's military expenditure also increased steadily from \$ 9.9 billion in 1979 to an estimated \$ 20 billion in 1984.<sup>51</sup> According to an estimate the cost of war for Iran up to 1985 was about \$ 120 billion i.e., about \$ 20 billion per year.<sup>52</sup> The Iraqi expulsion of Iranians and dislocation of about 2 million people because of war intensified internal refugee problems and involved heavy costs for their rehabilitation. The repeated Iraqi attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf in 1984 and later on Iraqi bombing raids on Kharg Island, Iran's main oil terminal, caused a short but sharp reduction in Iranian oil exports.

In the Gulf war Iran seems to be currently in a stronger position and has the potential to continue the war for a longer period. However the Iranian intransigence and rejection of all peace efforts have created wide dissatisfaction in the world community and there also seem to be divisions within the government about the correct strategy of the war and doubts have been raised both in and outside the government about the wisdom of the continuation of the war. And the factional rivalries within the leadership in Tehran was clearly demonstrated during the controversial US arms supply to Iran in 1986.

Meanwhile, it has created wide doubts and suspicions whether Iran can end the war at the battlefield and inspite of relatively healthy economy and low foreign debt, the Iranian leadership does not also seem to be ready to continue the war indefinitely and is apprehensive about the possible consequences of the undue prolongation of the war.

## V. The Gulf War and the Regional Response

The Arab world, particularly the Gulf countries were apprehensive of the Islamic revolution because of Iranian propaganda to overthrow

51. For details about Iran's defence expenditure see, *Military Balance* (IISS, London), 1978-1986.

52. *Quarterly Economic Review-Iran* (2) 1984, p. 12



"the reactionary and oppressive and anti-Islamic regimes of the Gulf"<sup>53</sup> and Khomeini's potential hold over the Shiite population in the area. As Table-4 shows, except Iraq and Bahrain the Shiites are minority in other Gulf countries but whether they constitute majority or minority everywhere they are politically and economically disadvantaged. And

**Table - 4: Shiite Population in the Gulf Countries (in thousands)**

Country	Total population	Citizen population	Shiite population	Percentage of Shia citizens
Qatar	255	70	11	16
Oman	950	700	28	4
UAE	1,100	250	45	18
Kuwait	1,370	570	135	24
Bahrain	360	240	168	70
Saudi Arabia	8,500	5,500	440	8
Iraq	14,400	13,500	8100	60
Iran	42,000	40,000	36,800	92

Source; Anthony Hyman, "Security Constraints in the Gulf States" *Conflict Studies*, (The Institute for the Study of Conflict, London) No. 188, p. 13.

the leaders were concerned that a radical message from Tehran might have ready audience among their Shiite population. The seizure of Grand Mosque in Makkah by radical fundamentalists in November 1979, Shiite protests in Saudi Arabia's Eastern province and resentments by Shiite populations in some other Gulf countries made the situation more complicated.<sup>54</sup> Iranian attack on Kuwait's oil facilities and a coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981 reportedly inspired by Iran, made the Gulf regimes more suspicious about Khomeini's Iran. Although Iran warned the Gulf countries not to support Iraq, the Iran-Iraq war polarised the Arab world. According to their reactions

53. *The New York Times*, 25 November 1979

54. J. Bill "Resurgent Islam in the Persian Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1 1983, pp. 108-27



to the Gulf war the Arab countries may be divided into three categories a) countries totally supporting Iraq, namely, Jordan, b) countries pretending to be neutral but supporting Iraq, particularly the Gulf countries and Egypt, and c) supporters of Iran, namely Syria and Libya.

Jordan is the only Arab country that bought the Iraqi idea, recognised the Gulf war as Arab-Persian one and called other Arab States to help Iraq to protect Arabism against Iran. Jordan expressed her total support to Iraq, provided expertise for planning and organising the war and permitted Iraq to use the port of Aqaba and airbase Magraq for transporting military supplies. In support of Iraq, Jordan severed diplomatic relations with Iran and Syria and the Jordanian gesture was highly paid for. Jordan was heavily dependent on foreign aid and in 1980 received \$ 24 million from Iraq as budgetary aid and project financing.<sup>55</sup> Iraq also heavily invested in various Jordanian development projects. Another reason of Jordan's being closer to Baghdad was the Palestinian issue. King Hossain was trying to influence the PLO and seeking to solve the issue in his favour for which support from a radical Arab leader like Saddam Hossain was essential. King Hossain did not support Iraq because of his liking of Baathist ideology or personal sympathy to Saddam Hossain, rather he was trying to use it as a bargaining stake in intra-Arab politics to strengthen his own position.

The conservative Gulf countries although were very much concerned about the consequences of the war, were very cautious and refrained from taking any measures which could put their vulnerable societies at risk. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia being the spiritual leader of the Islamic world could not be partial in a war putting Muslims against Muslims. For the first few days the Saudis took some time to react and only on 25 September 1980 King Khalid affirmed the Saudi support to Iraq in its pan-Arab battle.<sup>56</sup> The concerns of

55. *Kessing's Contemporary Archives* 1981, p. 31009

56. Ami Ayalon, "The Iraqi-Iranian War," in Colin Legum (ed) *Crisis and Conflicts in the Middle East*, (New York, London) 1981, p. 45



other small Gulf States were expressed by a Kuwaiti official in 1984 when he said, "the situation in Lebanon concerns us, but the Iran-Iraq war terrifies us".<sup>57</sup> But at the same time they do not seem to be ready to welcome a victorious Iraq which may pose threat to the stability of the Gulf and be detrimental to Saudi interests in the region. Even it was reported that the Gulf countries were anxious at the quick Iraqi victory at the initial stage of the war. The Arab Press Service (Beirut) reported in early 1981 that "at the start of the Gulf war when a quick Iraqi victory resulted there was a great deal of nervousness in Riyadh at the prospects of Iraq emerging as a powerful battle experienced State with wider Gulf ambitions".<sup>58</sup>

As we have seen earlier, on the eve of the war, Iraq improved relations with the Gulf countries by signing security agreement with Saudi Arabia and mending fences with Kuwait, UAE and North Yemen. With the outbreak of the war the Gulf countries provided Iraq with financial aid and so far they have pumped to Iraq more than \$50 billion in loans. They also allow Iraq to use their ports for trans-shipment of necessary supplies, sell their oil in Iraq's name and have agreed to construct new pipelines to the Red Sea to increase Iraq's oil exports.<sup>59</sup> But the Gulf countries inspite of all provocations do not seem to be ready to be directly involved in the war and to antagonise Iran, rather they are in favour of developing their own security system within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council with the help of the US. The Saudis, in fact, had a long objective to develop its own designed security system in the Gulf and the small states were reluctant and apprehensive of a possible Saudi domination over them. But the Iran-Iraq war brought a qualitative change in the security

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57. *Newsweek*, 20 February 1984

58. Quoted in Christopher S. Raj, "The Iraq-Iran War and Arab Response" *IDSJ Journal*, (New Delhi) Vol. xvi, No. 3, January-March 1984, p. 235

59. Richard Cottam, "Iran—Motives Behind its Foreign Policy", *Survival* (IISS London), November/December 1986, p. 501



perceptions of the Gulf and helped to bring the small Skeikhdoms into a Saudi dominated security umbrella.

As the war broke out, the oil production of both Iran and Iraq heavily reduced and about 4 million barrels of oil p/d were taken out of the market which provided opportunities to Saudi Arabia and other oil rich Gulf countries to increase their production. In 1978 Saudi Arabia produced 40 percent of the Middle Eastern oil and received 40 percent of the oil revenues, while for the first full year of the War the respective shares were 60 percent for output and 66 percent for revenues.<sup>60</sup>

However, the Gulf states are very much concerned about continuous Iraqi and Irani attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf and repeated Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz and they are already seeking Western particularly American protection for safety transportation of oil. They are also facing problems in continuing financial support to Iraq as their economies are also suffering from sluggishness due to the unprecedented fall of oil price in the world market. But at the same time their options also seem to be limited. In spite of their support to Iraq, the Gulf countries did not close their channels with Iran and a number of visits at various levels between Iranian officials and officials from different Gulf countries took place in recent years. A number of peace initiatives were also taken by the Gulf States either individually or collectively to end the war, but so far those failed to bring any breakthrough. The nature of Iranian demands to end the war is such that the Gulf countries do not and can not support it or put pressure on Iraq to accept those which may have serious repercussions and ultimately may threaten their own security and stability. So it appears that the Gulf countries can not insulate themselves from the conflict, at least for the moment, even if they want to do so.

Iran-Iraq war brought Egypt closer to the Arab fold particularly to Saudi Arabia and Jordan from her near isolation in the Arab world

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60. Abbas Alnasrawi, *op. cit.* p. 889



because of signing separate peace treaty with Israel. On 23 September 1980 President Sadat appealed to the people of Iran and Iraq to settle their problem peacefully and "not to shed precious Arab and Islamic blood".<sup>61</sup> He also suggested for a joint Egyptian-Saudi naval force to police the Gulf. And it was reported in 1982 that 60 Egyptian pilots were flying on Iraq's Soviet made aircrafts and about 400 Egyptian volunteers were fighting against Iran along with their Iraqi counterparts.<sup>62</sup> However, Egypt's relation with the Arab world particularly with Iraq did not improve until the death of Sadat. As Iraq was increasingly desperate in the war front, Baghdad was eager to seek more Egyptian aid and advice. And although formal diplomatic relations were not established Iraq was getting arms, ammunitions spare parts and military advisors from Egypt. In 1982 it was reported that the Egyptian supply of arms and spare parts amounted to \$ 1 billion which increased to about \$ 2 billion in 1985.<sup>63</sup> Although Egypt is providing limited support to Iraq, it does not seem that she will agree to be involved in the war directly.

Libya and Syria, two Arab countries, support Iran against their fellow Arab country Iraq in the war. Libya became the first Arab country that supported Iran and called on other Arab nations, "It is our Islamic duty to align ourselves with the Muslims of Iran instead of fighting them on America's behalf."<sup>64</sup> Libya supports Iran mainly because of strong anti-American posture of Iranian leadership, Libya's rivalry with the Baathist regime of Iraq and Colonel Gaddafi's liking to some of the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini and revolutionary aspects of Islamic Iran. Syria supports Iran not for her liking toward Iran or affinity to the Islamic revolution but mainly because of her rivalry with fellow Baathist regime in Baghdad and President Assad's personal antipathy to Saddam Hossain. In fact, there is

61. *Kessing's Contemporary Archives* 1981, p. 310010

62. *Time*, 24 May 1982, p. 18

63. *The Guardian*, 1 November 1985

64. *The Statesman*, 12 October 1980



no commonality of interests, either ideological or political, between Iran and Syria, but there are some common perspectives between the two countries both on Iraq and on some regional issues. The Syrian connection with Iran is also giving a good dividend for the regime in Damascus. Iran is supplying oil to Syria and also providing considerable financial aid and loans. On the other hand, Syria is providing military assistance to Iran but the most important material contribution that Syria made to Iran's war effort was the closure of the Iraqi pipeline in 1982 which had serious economic repercussions on Iraq. However, the unusual Damascus-Tehran ties were not always smooth and in 1986 certain issues particularly Syria's tardiness in paying the Iranian oil bill and roles of pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon, began to complicate the Syrian-Iranian alliance. Meanwhile, Syria tried to use the Iranian card in her bargaining with the superpowers and other fellow Arab countries, and at times pretended to develop relations with the USA, Jordan, Iraq and other Arab countries to create pressure on Tehran knowing the fact that Iran put high priority on her relations with Syria, the only major ally in the Arab world. A round of high level meetings between Syrian and Iranian officials in 1986 helped to mend the fences and the Iranian decision to sell 2.5 million tons of oil to Syria reconfirmed that the Syrian position remained unchanged and Iran values her relationship with Syria.

Among the regional countries Turkey is deriving considerable benefits from the Gulf war, particularly from Iraq because of its only pipeline through Turkey. As the Strait of Hormuz has become vulnerable, Turkey's Mediterranean ports have become attractive trade routes including oil exports for both Iran and Iraq. New pipelines for safer export of oil from both Iran and Iraq are also being constructed through Turkey which will increase Turkey's leverage on both the warring parties. Turkey has also leverage on both Iran and Iraq particularly on Iraq on the Kurdish issue.

As the war continued Turkey became Iraq's main supplier, while trade with Iran was also flourishing. In 1985 Iran was Turkey's



second largest customer and its second most important source of imports.<sup>65</sup> Turkey sells its industrial products and engineering know-how as well as wheat, meat, dairy products and poultry to Iraq and Iran.<sup>66</sup> But in case of any significant change in the course of the Gulf war or in the positions of superpowers, as a member of NATO, Turkey may face problems in maintaining her neutrality.

Among the regional countries Israel is also significantly benefitting both politically and militarily from the Iran-Iraq war. The war divided Arabs, diverted their attention from the Palestinian issue to the Gulf war, neutralised Iraq, one of the strongest advocates of the Palestinian cause, exhausted strength and energies of two of Israel's potential adversaries and created opportunity for putting pressure on Jordan for signing separate peace treaty and continuing aggressions on Palestinians in Lebanon and in occupied areas. Israel also dared to strike the Iraqi nuclear station near Baghdad in 1981, invaded Lebanon in 1982 and forced the Palestinian guerillas to evacuate from Beirut. Israel was also benefitted by supplying arms and spare parts to Iran and in 1983 Israel reportedly sent arms to Iran worth about \$ 100 million.<sup>67</sup> Israel is using every opportunity out of the Gulf war to strengthen its security and trying to merge the West Bank and Gaza into the mainland of Israel and thus to liquidate the possibility of a Palestinian State forever.

## VI. The US and the Gulf war

The Islamic revolution in Iran and the fall of the Shah was a serious blow to US prestige and influence and at the same time a challenge to its ability to defend vital national interests and those of friends and allies in the region. However, the selection of rather moderate and secular persons like Bani Sadr as President and Mehdi Bazargan as Prime Minister by the Revolutionary regime of Iran and

65. Ralph King, *op. cit.* p. 44

66. For details see; Anthony Hyman, *op. cit.* p. 18

67. Ralph King, *op. cit.* p. 44



its critical stand toward Moscow created some hopes in Washington. The US was ambivalent about the nature and trend of future leadership in Iran. The fall of Bazargan and the take over of the entire staff of the US Embassy in Tehran as hostage on November 4, 1979 by militant students seriously worried Carter Administration about the US fate in the Gulf. While the Soviets were strengthening their position in the Gulf and adjacent areas at the cost of US interests and Moscow's military intervention in Afghanistan at the end of 1979 made the situation more complicated. However, the US seemed to be determined to protect its interests in the region and President Carter in his State-of-the Union message to Congress on 23 January 1980 stated, "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America. And such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military."<sup>68</sup>

When the Iran-Iraq war broke out the US was busy with the hostage crisis and Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, was in a dilemma and failed to formulate any clear-cut policy toward the war. The US attitude toward the war influenced by ; a) the unresolved hostage crisis, b) the impact of the war on oil flow, c) security of US allies in the region, and d) possible Soviet influence in Iran. Inspite of irritants and bitterness in bilateral relations because of 52 Americans as hostage in Tehran, US could not afford to lose Iran, a former ally, and to join Iraq, a Soviet ally with a strong anti-American regime, with a view to releasing hostages. US had no diplomatic relations with either of the warring parties, while Moscow was trying to please the both. In that critical situation Washington decided to increase naval power in the Indian Ocean, to create the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) and to work toward creating a structure of base facilities in or near the region that would be available for use by the US forces.<sup>69</sup> But the problem was that the US allies in the region were

68. *New York Time*, 24 January 1980

69. "US Policy Toward Persian Gulf", address by Under Secretary of State, David D. Newsom, 11 April 1980, *Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Current Policy No, 160*



not confident about US ability to protect them, and were unwilling to provide the US with base facilities or to cooperate with the RDF. They were also critical of US backed Camp David accords. The US was really in a critical position with the outbreak of the war and for the first time since her emergence as a superpower she was unable to play any direct political role in a Middle East crisis.<sup>70</sup>

The US declared its neutrality in the war and supplied four AWACS to Saudi Arabia which could be used to provide US and allied ships with long range surveillance.<sup>71</sup> But while maintaining its neutrality, US could not undermine the strategic importance of Iran as Kissinger described it, "as the eastern anchor of our Middle East policy" and "a pillar of stability" in the turbulent and vital region.<sup>72</sup> And when the Carter Administration took the position that territorial disputes should not be solved by committing "aggression and also threatened that US would not tolerate any "dismemberment of Iran" it apparently went in favour of Iran. In fact, Washington was worried at the initial quick victory of Iraq as Warren M. Christopher, Deputy Secretary of State stated, "We certainly would be strongly opposed to any dismemberment of Iran" and also added that Washington "could not condone" the seizure of Iran's oil rich province of Khuzistan by Iraq.<sup>73</sup> US considered cohesion and stability in Iran essential for peace and stability in the region and was afraid that in case of a Iraqi victory the Soviets might intervene in Iran exploiting the chaotic situation there and by using their forepost in Afghanistan. Many American scholars also advocated for supporting Tehran emphasising the strategic importance of Iran. As professor Amos Perlmutter pointed out, "We can not let Iraq dismember Iran territorially or the Soviet Union encroach upon Iran politically. If we do not have to love Khomeini, we ought to realise

70. *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 October 1980

71. *The Washington Post*, 16 October 1980

72. Henry Kissinger, *"White House Years"*, (Boston 1979) p. 1258

73. *The New York Times* 29 September 1980



that our vital interests are at stake in the continued viability of Iran. US interests involve preventing the disintegration of Iran, preserving its viability as a State and thereby protecting the number one US interests in the Middle East, which is the protection of oilfields and the transport and flow of oil. Iran is vital to this interest and its demise as a functioning state would severely threaten this interest"<sup>74</sup> However, the administration was divided on the issue; National Security Advisor Brezezinski was more in favour of supporting Iraq and stated that "we see no fundamental incompatibility of understanding between the United States and Iraq. We believe Iraq desires to be independent, and that Iraq wishes a secure Arabian Gulf, and we do not feel that American-Iraqi relations have to be frozen in antagonism".<sup>75</sup> Secretary of State Muskie for his part was soft toward Tehran and was in favour of releasing the hostages even in exchange of some spare parts to Iran.

After long negotiations the hostages were released in early 1981 and US released \$8 billions worth of Iranian assets in USA, but the relations between the two countries did not improve. The Iranians were concentrating on the past US role in Iran and demanding American apology, while the US was banking on the future of Iran. Despite declared neutrality and arms embargo on Iran, US appeared to have permitted third countries to resale American arms and spare parts to Iran. And Iran was able to purchase arms from Israel, UK, South Africa, Switzerland and other pro-American countries. (See, Annexure-2).

But the US policy toward Iran was not consistent and as Iran started offensive in the Gulf war, US appeared to be tilted toward Iraq. In March 1984 it was reported by the *New York Times* that US

74. Quoted in Christopher S. Raj, "US-Iran Relations : Post Hostage Phase", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. IV, No. 11, February 1981, (IDSA New Delhi), p. 539

75. *The Statesman*, 28 October 1980



exchanged military intelligence information on Iran with Iraq.<sup>76</sup> It was also reported that Washington softened its position on Europe's supply arms to Iraq and endorsed the French supply of Exocet missiles to Iraq. Washington also sought help from the Islamic countries to put sufficient pressure on Iran to end the war. US officially dropped Iraq from the list of countries supporting terrorism and granted between \$1 billion to \$2 billion of commodity credits to buy food.<sup>77</sup> In November 1984 US and Iraq also agreed to resume their diplomatic relations after 17 years of interruption. US encouraged its Arab allies to increase financial aid to Iraq and permitted US banks and construction firms to provide loans and credits to Iraq to build up pipelines through Jordan. US protected naval ships and tankers in the Gulf from Iranian attacks, while did not protect ships docking at Kharg Islands against Iraqi attacks. US also put indirect pressure on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to be involved in the war against Iran. Nonetheless, US maintained neutrality and tried to avoid to play any controversial role in the war.

However, US arms supply to Iran in 1986 created wide controversy about the US role in the Gulf war, dissatisfied her allies in the region and once again proved that despite strong anti-American policy pursued by Tehran, strategically Iran was very important to US and Washington was not ready to mend fences with Iraq at the cost of Iran. In fact the US security perception in the Gulf is predominantly guided by the Soviet factor as President Reagan remarked, "America's longstanding goals in the region have been to help preserve Iran's independence from Soviet domination".<sup>78</sup> In fact by supplying arms to Iran, US had an objective to create division among leadership in Tehran and to influence the Iranian policy toward the US, but it appeared that the bid was preempted and Iran managed to get arms

76. *The New York Times*, 24 March 1984

77. Robert C. Johansen and Michael G Renner, "Limiting Conflict in the Gulf", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, October 1985, p 812

78. *Newsweek*, 24 November 1986



from the US and at the same time seriously embarrassed the Reagan Administration.<sup>79</sup>

The US faces a number of predicaments in formulating appropriate policy toward the Gulf war. Firstly, Washington has no diplomatic relations with either Iran or Iraq and has no strong leverage to put sufficient pressure on the parties. US is also not in a position to ascertain the potentials of the belligerents. Moreover, it is suspicious about the role of Iran and Iraq in the region when the war is over. Even after the war is over, US has to face a number of difficulties to develop working relationship with the parties as during the long period of war she was not able to build up confidence, rather both Iran and Iraq are suspicious, doubtful and ambivalent about the US role in the Gulf. US may have to face two dilemmas :

(a) Although at present the Arabs are more concerned about the Iran-Iraq war and are seeking US help for their security, the Palestinian cause remains at the core of Arab politics and when the war is over the Arab countries including Saudi Arabia will be more critical of US policy in the Middle East in general and toward Israel in particular and may try to diversify their policies by improving relations with Moscow.

(b) US will have to work for a common position among the Gulf countries about the Soviet threats to their security. But it will be difficult to convince the Arab countries because Moscow, by and large, has so far become successful in creating confidence in her allies and has gradually developed relations with the conservative Gulf States.

However, Washington may adopt a policy of involving her allies in Western Europe and Japan to be more involved in the Gulf. So far the US has been taking the maximum risks for minimum economic benefits in the Gulf. In 1980 US imported about \$ 2 million barrels of oil p/d from Gulf countries which was dropped by 50 % in 1982

79. For details about US arms supply to Iran and its consequences, see, *Newsweek*, December 1 and 8, 1986, pp. 14-20 and 18-20



and constituted only 7 percent of America's oil consumption<sup>80</sup> while about 60 percent of Europe's and about 90 percent of Japan's oil supplies come from the Gulf region. Moreover in trade and commerce including arms supply Japan and European countries are more involved in the Gulf than the US.

## VII The Soviet Union and the Gulf War

Historically, Russia along with other European powers tried to exert influence in Persia on a number of occasions but she had no strong foothold in the region. Some major events in 1950s and 1960s particularly the revolutions in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iran brought the Soviets closer to the Arab world. Finally, with the presence of about 120,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan they are only a day's drive from Iran's Gulf ports or the Khuzistan oil fields which has remarkably strengthened their military position in the Gulf. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was motivated by a number of factors : a) Loss of Egypt, the most important ally in the Arab world, b) Islamic revolution in Iran and its possible repercussions on Soviet Muslims in Central Asia; c) To be closer in the direction of the Persian Gulf; d) To increase influence in the Indian Ocean; e) Political unrest in Pakistan particularly in Baluchistan, finally f) If required to use Afghanistan as forepost for marching toward Iran.

The Soviets knew it very well that the Islamic Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini could not be a friend of communist Moscow. Nonetheless, at the end of 1978 when it was evident that Shah's days were numbered Soviet Union issued a statement threatening that if US would intervene in Iran the Soviets would not sit idle. In March 1979 Soviet Union welcomed the revolution in Iran and hoped that relations of good neighbourliness would develop fruitfully.<sup>81</sup> However, the new regime in Iran appeared to be determinant to keep distance from Moscow,

80. *The Dawn*, 10 March 1982

81. O.M. Smolansky, "Soviet Policy in Iran and Afghanistan", *Current History*, October 1983, p. 321



strongly condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, criticised her dealings with Muslims in Central Asia and reduced gas supply and cancelled the construction of a second pipeline for supplying gas to Soviet Union. Iran also abrogated two clauses of the treaty of 1921 under which the USSR reserves the right to intervene in Iran's internal affairs if a third country threatens to attack from Iranian territory.<sup>82</sup> The Iranian revolution was a net gain for the Soviets for a number of reasons : a) strong anti-American posture of the revolution, b) dismantling of US satellite and intelligent network in Iranian territory which were used against Soviet Union , c) weakening position of Iran due to chaotic situation and domestic political turmoils, d) increased possibility of bringing the Tudeh Party to power e) new opportunity for consolidating relations with Syria, Libya and Yemen and increased stakes in the Middle East, f) Gulf countries' new suspicions about US capability to protect her allies who became reluctant to be too closer to Washington.

However, like the USA Moscow was also in a dilemma when the war broke out. On the one hand she had Friendship Treaty with Iraq under which she was obliged to help her. On the other hand, Iran was strategically and politically more important to Kremlin from a number of considerations : a) Iran's abundant human and natural resources and important strategic location, b) geographical contiguity to USSR, c) strong anti-West and anti-American posture of the regime, d) possible support or at least a neutral Tehran on Afghanistan issue. The Soviets supplied intelligence information to Khomeini regime through the Tudeh Party and it was also reported that Kremlin offered arms to Tehran although Iran had initial reservations. Later she received arms supplied through some East European countries and North Korea.<sup>83</sup>

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82. *Military Balance* (IISS; London) 1985-86, p. 69

83. Shahram Chubin, "Gains for Soviet Policy in the Middle East," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Spring 1982, p. 140



Moscow, however, declared its neutrality and called for an immediate ceasefire as L. I. Brezhnev said in Moscow, "We are for Iran and Iraq settling the disputable issue between themselves at the table of negotiation."<sup>84</sup> A special Iraqi Envoy visited Moscow on September 22, 1980 to explain the Iraqi position and asked for more arms, but the Soviet response was cool and apparently she was dissatisfied on Iraq for a number of reasons; a) As accused by Moscow Iraq did not consult Soviet Union in her war efforts. b) Iraq criticised Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and demanded unconditional Soviet withdrawal. c) Iraq also criticised the Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa and in Yemen. It was reported that in 1980 Iraq vigorously tried to prevent the government of North Yemen from moving closer to the USSR and promised to provide with \$300 million of aid to North Yemeni armed forces.<sup>85</sup> d) Iraq's continuous improvement of relations with the West was also not liked by Moscow. In 1972, 95 percent of Iraq's military hardwares came from the Soviet Union, while in 1979 it fell to only 63 percent.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, Iraq procured arms from many Western countries particularly from France, (For details about Iraq's arms procurement see, Annexure 2). e) The Baathist repression on Iraqi communists also annoyed Moscow.

The Soviets were not only indifferent to Iraq's demand but also signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Syria, Iraq's opponent, in 1980 and was trying to strengthen the Syrian-Libyan axis, the Arab supporters of Iran in the war against Iraq. In fact, Moscow's main intention was to weaken the position of Baath party which could best serve the Soviet interests in Iraq.

On the other hand, the relations between Moscow and Tehran improved. As it was reported by the *Time* magazine that a group of highly professional Soviet intelligent agents helped Iran to create

84. *The New York Times*, 1 October 1980

85. Adeed I. Dawisha, *op. cit.* p, 138

86. *ibid*, p, 136



an efficient intelligent and security force and to strengthen the Islamic Guards.<sup>87</sup> Iran-Soviet trade also increased and in 1981 it reached \$ 1.2 billion, three-fold higher compared to 1978.<sup>88</sup> In 1982 the two countries also signed a Protocol for increased economic and technical cooperation. The Soviet sea and land transit routes were also used to pass Iranian goods.<sup>89</sup> It was only when Iran started offensive in the war and Iraq threatened to abrogate the Friendship Treaty with Soviet Union that Moscow resumed supplying arms to Iraq in August 1982 and provided with sophisticated arms including MiG-22 and MiG-27 Fighter planes and T-55 and T-62 tanks (see, Annexure-2). Moscow was afraid that the collapse of a client State would have serious repercussions, while an Iranian victory would not only upset the regional balance but might have serious implications for the Soviet Union itself,

As the Soviets tilted toward Iraq relations with Iran suffered a setback and in 1934 the Soviet backed Tudeh party was ruthlessly oppressed, many of its leaders were either executed or arrested and 18 high ranking Soviet diplomats were expelled from Tehran. However, despite continued opposition to Soviet policy Iran could not ignore Soviet influence in the Gulf war and since 1984 was trying to convince Moscow not to supply arms to Iraq. Although in 1986 Soviet Union and Iran signed agreements to resume gas export to Soviet Union and to improve economic relations, Tehran apparently failed to change the Soviet policy toward Iraq. In fact Moscow is in an advantageous position in the Gulf war compared to the United States. And she is trying to get maximum benefits—political, economic and strategic—by keeping the belligerents engaged in the war, supplying arms to both the parties and improving economic relations with them. As long as the war will continue Iraq will have to depend on Moscow for arms (as she failed to improve relations with the US), while the regime in Tehran will probably continue its anti-American

87. *Time*, 23 November 1981, p. 11



stand and seek Soviet help which will, in both ways, serve the Soviet interests best in the region.

### VIII. Peace Efforts

As the war started in September 1980 between Iran and Iraq, two influential members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference ( OIC ) and Non-aligned Movement, active mediation efforts were taken from different quarters to end the hostilities. As early as September 17, 1980 PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat visited the capitals of both the warring countries to end the conflict. On behalf of the Organization of Islamic Conference President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan as the Chairman of the Organization, and Secretary General Habib Chatti visited Tehran on September 27, 1980 and later on Baghdad to mediate the dispute. But Iran vowed to fight until all Iraqi troops left its territory, while Iraq demanded control over the entire Shatt-al-Arab. Peace initiatives were also taken up by Cuba and PLO and those also ended in failure. At the end of October 1980 the Non-aligned Movement formed a four member mediation Committee comprising the Foreign Ministers of Cuba, India and Zambia and Head of the Political Department of PLO to end the Gulf war. Meanwhile Olof Palme, former Prime Minister of Sweden was appointed UN Special Representative to mediate the conflict between Iran and Iraq and upto January 1982 he visited both Baghdad and Tehran for five times and finally declared his mission as failure because of lack of political will between the parties to end the war.<sup>90</sup>

The most active and comprehensive peace efforts were undertaken by the OIC. The Organization formed an eight member Committee

88. N. Mitra; "Iran and the Soviet Union," *IDSJ Journal* (New Delhi) Vol. xiv, No. 4, April 1982, p. 804

89. *The Dawn*, 24 February 1982

90. Ralph King, *op. cit.*, p. 74



to mediate the Iran and Iraq war<sup>91</sup> The OIC peace Mission visited both Baghdad and Tehran and proposed for a truce and phased withdrawal of Iraqi troops to international boundary, freedom of navigation at Shatt-al-Arab, non-interference of the parties in other's affairs and to set up an OIC committee to decide the future of the waterway of Shatt-al-Arab.<sup>92</sup> The mission ended in failure, but soon the OIC started fresh initiatives and Iran set three conditions for a ceasefire a) simultaneous ceasefire and withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iranian territory, b) an investigation of responsibility for the aggression, and c) settlement on the basis of the 1975 Algiers agreement.<sup>93</sup>

In March 1981 an agreement on principle was reached between Baghdad and Tehran during the visit of a one-member OIC Mission but it remained unimplemented mainly because of political infighting in Iran, particularly the fall of President Bani Sadr. In fact in Tehran nobody dared to take risk to start negotiation with Iraq as the *Christian Science Monitor* commented, "There is no one who can take a chance on weakening his position by appearing to be weak toward Iraq."<sup>94</sup> The OIC mission is still continuing its efforts to end the war but apparently it failed to find out any workable formula acceptable to both Iran and Iraq because of the intransigent attitudes of the parties particularly of Iran. The OIC peace mission could not function effectively for a number of reasons; a) The Iranian leadership suspected that since the Organization was Arab dominated, its peace mission was influenced by them and tilted toward Iraq, although there was no Arab member in the Committee. And Iran was quite suspicious about the neutrality of the mission, b) Political infighting in Iran and frequent changes in leadership during 1981 also created

91. The members of the OIC peace mission were Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Guinea, Gambia, Senegal, Malaysia and the PLO. Ahmed Sekou Toure, President of Guinea was the Head of the mission.

92. *The Bangladesh Observer*, 7 March 1981

93. *The Dawn* (Pakistan), 31 March 1981

94. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 March 1981



problems for the peace mission, finally, c) The Peace mission was formed with those OIC members who had hardly any leverage either on Iran or Iraq or could influence on the regimes in those countries. The UN also played an active role in defusing the tensions in the Gulf and upto December 1986 the UN Security Council adopted seven resolutions regarding the Iran-Iraq war. The UN Secretary General also visited the warring countries several times, but the UN efforts also ended in failure.<sup>95</sup> The US also outlined a detailed plan which called for; a) withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Iranian territory, b) setting up a format to settle territorial and other points of contention between the two nations, c) Joint Iran-Iraq control over Shatt-al-Arab under the Chairmanship of third nation acceptable to both the parties.<sup>96</sup> However, it was observed that Washington did not take any follow-up efforts to execute the plan and it was not possible for the US because of her controversial position in the Gulf and non-existence of diplomatic relations with either of the warring parties. In general the superpowers tried to keep them away from the conflict by declaring their neutrality and no serious efforts were taken up by them to end the hostilities, rather they were banking on the OIC, NAM and other peace missions.

Initiatives were also taken by individual countries and personalities to end the war but those also failed to bring any tangible results and the war is continuing without any possibility of recession in near future. The question may be raised why the mediation efforts taken by different quarters have failed. Firstly ; there is a serious lack of political will of the parties to end the war. At the initial stage Iraq was intransigent and was strongly committed to her demands which could not be accepted by Tehran, while later on Iran became intransigent and refused to accept mediation efforts for peace. Secondly, the

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95. For details about Security Council Resolutions, see, Ralph King, *op. cit.* pp. 70-72

96. *The New York Times*, 23 October 1980



Superpowers have very limited leverage on the parties and do/can not put pressure to end the war, rather both Soviet Union and the US are trying to get maximum benefits out of the war by trading arms with both the belligerents. Thirdly; although initiatives were undertaken by the OIC, the NAM, the UN and other agencies and countries to end the war, most of the efforts were taken in isolation or on individual basis and there was no coordination and comprehensive integrated approach among the peace initiators.

### IX. The Present Impasse and Prospects for the Future

The Iran-Iraq war has been continuing for the last seven years and has come to an impasse. As we have seen the peace initiatives have so far failed to bring the parties to the negotiating table and at the same time as the conventional wisdom suggests the fate of the war can hardly be decided in the battle field. One of the main reasons for prolongation of the war is that almost all the parties including the regimes of both Iran and Iraq seem to be benefitting out of the war and are rather in favour of maintaining the present status quo.

Although the superpowers declared their neutrality in the war, they are deeply involved in a serious competition with each other in the Gulf. But considering the very volatile nature of the regimes and vulnerability of the region they do not want to take risks and are reluctant to invest heavily or to take side clearly because any fault or mistake made by one superpower will be fully utilised by the other. In fact, the superpowers find their interests best served by continuing the war. As Henry Kissinger aptly explained, "The ultimate American interest in the war (is) that both should lose".<sup>97</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy also echoed the same view when he stated, "it is our basic position that a victory by either side is neither militarily achievable nor strategically desirable because of its destabilizing effect on the region."<sup>98</sup> A Staff Report of

97. Quoted in Robert C. Johansen and Michael G. Renner, *op. cit.* p. 805

98. *ibid.*



the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations also suggested in 1984 that, "Iran-Iraq war does not pose a threat of superpower confrontation" and also added that stability in the Gulf could be maintained as long as there was "no victor, no vanquished."<sup>99</sup> Another US interest in keeping both Iran and Iraq busy in the war is to divert the Arab attention from Arab Israeli conflict.

On the other hand, the Soviets are afraid of the implications of a possible Iranian victory on Afghanistan and on the Muslims in their Central Asian Republics and also on their relations with Iraq. At the same time the Soviets will not feel comfortable with a possible Iraqi victory because of their past experience of relations with the Baathist regime of Baghdad and also of the anti-Iraqi stance of the Soviet allies in the Middle East. Moreover, Moscow with all probability will not support the emergence of a strong power at its doorstep. As Iran and Iraq historically contend the leadership role in the Gulf, interested parties consider that by keeping them preoccupied in the war they can be made docile and manageable.

The Gulf countries wish for an end of the war but at the same time are apprehensive about the durability of peace in the region. And it seems that the continuation of the war in a protracted way is more acceptable to the regional countries rather than its further escalation. There is no doubt that the Persian Gulf countries are concerned about the impact of Islamic revolution in Iran and consider Tehran as a threat to their security and stability, but at the same time they are quite cautious about their past relations with Iraq and are suspected about the consequences of the victory of Baathist Iraq in the Gulf.

Moreover, as Iran and Iraq are engaged in fighting their oil production have seriously been reduced and other OPEC countries, particularly the oil rich Gulf countries have been able to increase their production which in a way is helping their economies in the situa-

99. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 29 August 1984

100. Abbas Alnasrawi, *op. cit.*, p. 889



tion of sharp fall of oil price. But when the war is over and if the OPEC are to accommodate Iran and Iraq some 10 percent of current OPEC output will have to be reallocated to them to resume their pre-war level of production which may create further problems for already divided OPEC camp.

There is no denying the fact that the war has already had serious negative impact on the pace of and prospects of economic developments in Iran and Iraq. A post-war reconstruction will be more difficult task where they may face serious challenges and the price may be much higher than the continuation of the war. It is true that both the regimes are using the war as stabilizing factor in their domestic politics and no one wants to take risks as history shows defeated regimes can hardly retain power. Nonetheless, the severity of war and its undue length may become a distabilizing factor for the the regimes of Iran and Iraq. And it is more applicable for Iran which is repeatedly denouncing the calls of international community and peace initiatives to end the war. In fact, the Iranian intransigent attitude and rejection of all peace proposals are not liked by many countries and already some are in favour of adopting punitive measures against Iran to compel her to sit at the negotiating table. The Iranian position at the 8th Non-aligned Summit at Harare, Zimbabwe in 1986 also created wide dissatisfaction among the member States.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, Iraq's moderate attitude and readiness to accept peace mediations and to end war "at any time" has strengthened her international position and prestige. Since 1983 Iraq has been calling to the Iranian people to end the war. In August 1986 President Saddam Hossain proposed a five point peace plan : a) general, complete and unconditional withdrawal of forces to recognised international boundaries, b) complete exchange of prisoners, c) signing of a peace and non-aggression agreement, d) non-interference in internal affairs, and, e) act as positive elements in achieving peace and security in the region.

101. Hari Sharan Chhabra; *World Focus, Monthly Discussion Journal*, No. 79, July 1986, p. 23



But those proposals were also rejected and Iran seems to be adamant to its demands. Let us see what are the Iranian demands and can those be fulfilled to break the impasse? The Iranian demands have over-time been modified and at present their main demands are : a) Saddam Hossain must be removed, b) Iraq to be named as "aggressor", and, c) payment of war reparation.

a) The demand of removing Saddam Hossain from power is a difficult precondition and seems to be insurmountable at least for the present moment. It appears to be a direct interference in internal affairs of Iraq and whatever dislikings the Iraqi peoples may have of Saddam Hossain they will obviously not like the Iranian dictation to their affairs. Moreover, hardly any country including the superpowers will subscribe to this demand because it will have serious regional as well as international implications. However, given time, considering the situation of the war, the nature of Arab politics and pattern of sudden change of leadership in the region this condition may also not be insurmountable in future.

b) The demand of naming Iraq as "aggressor" is rather more difficult to fulfil as it implies many legal consequences. In 1984 Iran agreed to work within the UN to resolve the conflict provided the UN was willing "to recognise Iran's grievances", the UN, the OIC or the NAN can come forward either individually or collectively to address Iran's "grievances" and can work out some acceptable words or diplomatic niceties which can please both the parties. And Iraq already proposed an international arbitration to find out who started the war and should pay compensation. So this demand can perhaps be negotiated.

c) The payment of war compensation to Iran seems to be not so difficult and can be managed in some way or other. Iranian demands for war reparation ranged from \$ 150 billion to \$ 350 billion. The Gulf countries without mentioning the amount proposed on a number of occasions to create a Gulf Reconstruction Fund to encourage Iran for negotiation.



The resolution of the Gulf war may be approached at two levels : a) local levels i. e., direct negotiations between Iran and Iraq; and b) at international level. As the war has become a personal vendetta between Saddam Hossain and Ayatollah Khomeini, direct negotiation for resolution of the conflict may appear to be unlikely or even impossible at this stage.

The international community can play an effective role to limit, if not to end, the war by controlling or totally cutting their arms supplies to both the warring parties which ultimately could create a congenial atmosphere for peace mediation. Many political analysts are convinced that if arms supplies are cut off, the war would grind to a halt within two weeks. Iran and Iraq have registered arms agreements with 16 countries (Annexure-2). More than 40 countries are supplying arms to Iran and Iraq with about \$ 10 billion worth yearly. At least 29 countries are supplying arms to Iraq and only France's arms sales to Baghdad since September 1980 totalled about \$ 6 billion.<sup>102</sup> The US arms supply to the region also increased. Between 1950 and 1981 one-third of all US military sales agreements went to only two countries-Saudi Arabia and Iran. Almost half of the arms sales to the Third World goes to the Middle East. In 1972 Middle East imported arms of about \$ 2 billion and in 1982 the amount increased to \$ 15 billion.<sup>103</sup> And although data on Iran's arms purchase are not available, it is reported that at least 21 countries are supplying arms to Iran and 10 countries are supplying arms to both Iran and Iraq.<sup>104</sup>

The superpowers can also contribute in limiting the war by supporting international and regional peace initiatives, by maintaining their neutrality in true sense and by refraining from expanding existing

102. *South*, May 1987, p. 14

103. *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1973-84*, United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, (Washington D. C) April 1984, p. 55

104. *South*, May 1987, p. 14



military influence in the region. A global US-Soviet negotiation and East-West compromise may also help to limit the Gulf War.

As it appears, it is not possible to end the war altogether at the moment, but a step by step method under the auspices of international bodies/agencies may be applied to limit the war. Under the sponsorship of the UN a moratorium on bombardment in cities and civilian areas were held for nine months in 1984 which can be revived. In the like manner, arrangements for the total exchange of POWs, prohibition of using the chemical weapons and moratorium on attacks on ports, shipping and economic installations can be made under the sponsorship of third parties/agencies which ultimately may create a congenial atmosphere for negotiation to end the war.

### Conclusions

When the Gulf war broke out in September 1980 historical animosities based on old Arab-Persian ethnic and cultural rivalries, Shia-Sunni split and politico-ideological disputes appeared to be the main causes of the war. Historically, Iraq was suspicious of its Shiite population, while Iran of its Arab population in Khuzistan and the situation further aggravated with the Islamic Revolution in Iran which had a direct bearing on the war in terms of threats and concerns it created in the region and the opportunities it presented to Baathist regime of Iraq. Iran publicly called the Shiites in Iraq to rise up and overthrow the government, while Iraq tried to use the Arabs in Khuzistan against the regime in Tehran. But soon it appeared that the Sunni-Shiite rift or Arab-Persian division played very minor role in the war itself. Over the years, particularly in the wake of the war a social and religious transformation has taken place and the Iranian leadership is convinced that other Shiite communities in the Gulf are not ready to rise for Islamic revolution. Rather they are comfortable with their national identities, while Iraq is also convinced that the Arabs in Iran are not ready to join their fellow Arabs. Meanwhile, the fear that Iraq and other Gulf countries had about the spread of



Shiism and influence of Islamic revolution in the region has significantly reduced and the Gulf leaders seem to be convinced that the Iranian revolution does not pose as much serious threat as was originally perceived.

It is true that the war has strengthened Iraq's national cohesion but at the same time the Baathist regime of Baghdad has not been able to escape from its historical sense of insecurity and instability mainly derived from its geographic location and demographic make up. And the situation has further aggravated with the huge economic loss, human sufferings and heavy debt burden. And an undue prolongation of the war will no doubt make Iraq more and more dependent on the oil rich Gulf countries and on the Soviet Union. The war has also performed useful functions for the regime in Tehran, served as a symbol of revolution's resilience and facilitated to strengthen the power and position of revolutionary forces and to neutralise the potential political rivalries. Many analysts consider that the war has developed a life of its own and without it a social discontent may arise which may bring down the edifice of power in Tehran. But at the same time the war has caused severe economic damage and human sufferings and its indefinite continuation may pose threats to the regime as there are already dissident voices in Iran questioning the wisdom and logic of the war.

The Iran-Iraq war has also its regional implications. It has polarised the already divided Arab world, destroyed the Iraqi led Arab coalition against Egypt, helped to improve Arab-Egypt relations, moulded Iraqi militancy and turned the Baathist regime moderate. As Iran and Iraq, two States contending for the leadership role in the region, are engaged in a fratricidal war and are seriously exhausted militarily and financially, Saudi Arabia has emerged as an undisputed regional power. With the continuation of the war the military balance in the Middle East has been disrupted and Israel, taking the advantage of Arab occupation in the war, continuing her aggressions in Lebanon. The war has brought a qualitative change in the security perceptions of the Gulf countries and worked as a catalytic force for creating the



Gulf Cooperation Council among the six Arab Gulf countries. The Iranian ideological revolutionary zeal to export revolution to other Gulf countries seem to have been checked and the leadership in Tehran felt the limitations of their revolution. The Iran-Iraq war again unveiled the disunity and sharp divisions in the Arab world and proved that Arab politics is mainly guided by national interests, personal antipathy and individual factors rather by broad Arab interests, and pan-Arabism is still a far cry.

The Iran-Iraq war also proved that any Third World conflict, even if it occurs at the most volatile and sensitive region where the interests of external powers are directly related can be contained and made it a limited and protracted one. Although at the outbreak of the war there were wide fears and doubts about its escalation, it has so far neither spread to other parts of the Gulf nor directly involved any external powers inspite of all provocations. It was possible mainly because no party has suffered a decisive defeat and Iran showed considerable restraint during the "tanker war" in 1984 and Iraqi attacks on Kharg Islands. In fact the Iraqi objective was to provoke Iran into an escalatory action which could have caused an international crisis and thereby drawing external powers into the conflict. But inspite of repeated threats Iran did not close the Strait of Hormuz or attack other Gulf states.

The superpowers inspite of their vital interests in the region did not involve themselves directly or change the course of the war because of the absence of any agreed East-West code of conduct in respect to the Gulf and wide fear that any superpower intervention would seriously undermine the stability of the region which both superpowers are likely to defend. The Iran-Iraq war proved that the superpowers have also their limitations and cannot always influence or conduct world events according to their designs.

The Soviets, inspite of their Friendship Treaty with Iraq, appeared to be interested to strengthen their financial ties with Tehran and at the same time continuing arms supply to Baghdad. And Moscow will in



all probability continue this policy in future whatever opportunistic it seems to be to other parties.

Although the US declared its neutrality in the Gulf war with the Iranian offensive in July 1982, she appeared to have tilted toward Iraq and helped the Baathist regime in Baghdad either directly or indirectly. But at the same time US was trying to mend fences with Tehran and secret talks were being held between the two countries as it was revealed in 1986 during the controversial US arms supply to Iran. The Reagan Administration tried to justify the rationale of arms supply to Iran as a measure to bolster the position of "moderates" in Iran who favoured relations with the US, but the whole operation seemed to have been based on very simplistic interpretation of Iranian politics. The US arms supply to Iran seriously undermined the US policy in the Middle East, embarrassed its friends and allies in the region and possibility of opening of new avenues for arms supply to Iran was increased. However, the US arms supply to Iran proved that Tehran is still strategically and politically important to US and both superpowers are in competition to invest for a control over post-Khomeini Iran. The recent massive American deployment in the Gulf and her decision of protecting the Kuwaiti ships by bringing those under US flag have no doubt increased the risks of America's being directly involved in the conflict particularly with Iran.

It is true that the peace efforts so far initiated by different quarters have failed to end the Gulf war. But it does not mean that the efforts should be stopped, rather new initiatives with fresh proposals should be taken in a coordinated and integrated way and the parties having more influence and leverage on both the warring countries should come forward to solve the conflict in the Gulf. However, an overall and permanent solution of conflict will depend on the parties, their attitude to each other, perceptions of the war, leadership role and above all, on the basic dynamics of on-going socio-political changes in their societies.



**Annexure 1 : Algiers Declaration, 6th March 1975, Joint Communiqué between IRAQ and IRAN**

During the meeting in Algiers of the Summit Conference of the Member Countries of OPEC and on the initiative of President BOUMEDIENNE, His Majesty the SHAHINSHAH of Iran and H.E. SADDAM HUSSEIN, Vice President of the Revolutionary Command Council of Iraq, held two meetings and had lengthy discussions on the subject of relations between the two countries.

These meetings, which took place in the presence of President BOUMEDIENNE, were marked by great frankness and a sincere wish on both sides to reach a final and permanent solution to all the problems existing between the two countries.

In application of the principles of territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders and non-interference in internal affairs, the two contractual parties have decided:

1. To effect a definitive demarcation of their land frontiers on the basis of the Protocol of Constantinople, 1913, and the procès-verbaux of the Delimitation of Frontiers Commission of 1914.
2. To delimit their fluvial frontiers according to the Thalweg Line.
3. Accordingly the two parties will restore security and mutual trust along their common boundaries, and hence will commit themselves to exercising a strict and effective control over their common boundaries with a view to putting a definitive end to all acts of infiltration of a subversive character no matter where they originate from.
4. The two parties also agreed to consider the arrangements referred to above as integral elements of the comprehensive solution. Hence any impairment of any of their components shall naturally be contrary to the spirit of the Algiers agreement.



The two parties will remain in permanent touch with President BOUMEDIENNE who will offer, in case of need, the fraternal assistance of Algeria to implement the decisions which have been taken.

The parties have decided to reestablish traditional ties of good neighbourliness and friendship, particularly by the elimination of all negative factors in their relations, the continuous exchange of views on questions of mutual interest and the development of mutual cooperation.

The two parties solemnly declare that the area should be kept free from any outside interference.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Iran and Iraq met in the presence of the Algerian Foreign Minister on 15 March 1975 in Teheran to fix the details of work for the Joint Iraqi-Iranian Commission created to implement the decisions reached above by mutual agreement.

In accordance with the wishes of both parties, Algeria will be invited to all meetings of the Joint Iraqi-Iranian Commission.

The Joint Commission will draw up its timetable and work-plan so as to meet, in case of need, alternatively in Baghdad and Tehran.

His Majesty the SHAHINSHAH has accepted with pleasure the invitation which has been conveyed to him, on behalf of H. E. President AHMED HASSAN EL-BAKR, to make an official visit to Iraq; the date of this visit will be fixed by mutual agreement.

Furthermore, H. E. SADDAM HUSSEIN has agreed to make an official visit to Iran on a date to be agreed between the two parties.

His Majesty the SHAHINSHAH and H. E. Vice President SADDAM HUSSEIN wish to thank particularly and warmly



President HOUARI BOUMEDIENNE who, acting from fraternal and disinterested motives, has facilitated the establishment of direct contacts between the leaders of the two countries and, as a result, has contributed to the establishment of a new era in relations between Iran and Iraq in the higher interest of the future of the region concerned.

Algiers, 6 March 1975

**TREATY ON INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES, GOOD  
NEIGHBOURLINESS BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAN  
SIGNED ON JUNE 13, 1975**

His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran,

His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq,

Considering the sincere desire of the two parties as expressed in the Algiers Agreement of 6 March 1975, to achieve a final and lasting solution to all the problems pending between the two countries ;

Considering that the two parties have carried out the definitive redemarcation of their land frontier on the basis of the Constantinople protocol of 1913 and the minutes of the meetings of the Frontier Delimitation Commission of 1914 and have delimited their river frontier along the thalweg ;

Considering their desire to restore security and mutual trust throughout the length of their common frontier ;

Considering the ties of geographical proximity, history, religion, culture and civilization which bind the peoples of Iran and Iraq;

Desirous of strengthening their bonds of friendship and good neighbourliness, expanding their economic and cultural relations and promoting exchanges and human relations between their peoples on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity, the inviolability of frontiers and non-interference in internal affairs ;



Resolved to work towards the introduction of a new era in friendly relations between Iran and Iraq based on full respect for the national independence and sovereign equality of States ;

Convinced that they are helping thereby to implement the principles and achieve the purposes and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations ;

Have decided to conclude this Treaty and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran;

His Excellency Abbas Ali Khalatbary, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran ;

His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq ;

His Excellency Saadoun Hamadi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq ;

Who, having exchanged their full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

#### Article 1

The High Contracting Parties confirm that the State land frontier between Iraq and Iran shall be that which has been redemarcated on the basis of and in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol concerning the redemarcation of the land frontier, and the annexes thereto, attached to this Treaty.

#### Article 2

The High Contracting Parties confirm that the State frontier in the Shatt al Arab shall be that which has been delimited on the basis of and in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol concerning the delimitation of the river frontier, and the annexes thereto, to this Treaty.

#### Article 3

The Contracting Parties undertake to exercise strict and effective permanent control, over the frontier in order to put an end to any



infiltration of a subversive nature from any source, on the basis of and in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol concerning frontier security, and the annex thereto, attached to this Treaty.

#### Article 4

The High Contracting Parties confirm that the provisions of the three protocols, and the annexes thereto, referred to in articles 1, 2 and 3 above and attached to this Treaty as an integral part thereof shall be final and permanent. They shall not be infringed under any circumstances shall constitute the indivisible elements of an over-all settlement. Accordingly, a breach of any of the components of this over-all settlement shall clearly be incompatible with the spirit of the Algiers Agreement.

#### Article 5

In keeping with the inviolability of the frontiers of the two States and strict respect of their territorial integrity, the High Contracting parties confirm that the course of their land and river frontiers shall be inviolable, permanent and final.

#### Article 6

1. In the event of a dispute regarding the interpretation or implementation of this Treaty, the three Protocols or the annexes thereto, any solution to such a dispute shall strictly respect the course of the Iraqi-Iranian frontier referred to in articles 1 and 2 above, and shall take into account the need to maintain security on the Iraqi-Iranian frontier in accordance with article 3 above.

2. Such disputes shall be resolved in the first instance by the High Contracting Parties, by means of direct bilateral negotiations to be held within two months after the date on which one of the Parties so requested.

3. If no agreement is reached, the High Contracting Parties shall have recourse, within a three-month period, to the good offices of a friendly third State.



4. Should one of the two Parties refuse to have recourse to good offices or should the good offices procedure fail, the dispute shall be settled by arbitration within a period of not more than one month after the date of such refusal or failure.

5. Should the High Contracting parties disagree as to the arbitration procedure, one of the High Contracting Parties may have recourse, within 15 days after such disagreement was recorded, to a court of arbitration.

With a view to establishing such a court of arbitration each of the High Contracting Parties shall, in respect of each dispute to be resolved appoint one of its nationals as arbitrators and the two arbitrators shall choose an umpire. Should the High Contracting Parties fail to appoint their arbitrators within one month after the date on which one of the Parties received a request for arbitration from the other Party, or should the arbitration fail to reach agreement on the choice of the umpire before that time limit expires, the High Contracting Party which requested arbitration shall be entitled to request the President of the International Court of Justice to appoint the arbitrators or the umpire, in accordance with the procedures of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

6. The decision of the court of arbitration shall be binding on and enforceable by the High Contracting Parties.

7. The High Contracting Parties shall each defray half the costs of arbitration.

#### Article 8

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto shall be registered in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

#### Article 9

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto shall be ratified by each of the High Contracting Parties in accordance with its domestic law.



This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of the instruments of ratification in Teheran.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Plenipotentiaries of the High Contracting Parties have signed this Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto.

DONE at Baghdad, on 13 June 1975.

(Signed)

Abbas Ali Khalatbary

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran.

(Signed)

Saadoun Hamadi

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto were signed in the presence of His Excellency Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika, Member of the Council of the Revolution and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

(Signed)

### **Protocol Concerning the Delimitations of the River Frontier Between Iran and Iraq**

Pursuant to the decisions taken in the Algiers Communiqué of 6 March 1975.

The two Contracting Parties have agreed as follows :

#### **Article 1**

The two Contracting Parties hereby declare and recognize that the State river frontier between Iran and Iraq in the Shatt Al Arab has been delimited along the thalweg by the Mixed Iraqi-Iranian-Algerian Committee on the basis of the following :

1. The Teheran Protocol of 17 March 1975;

2. The record of the Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, signed at Baghdad on 20 April 1975, approving, inter alia, the record of the Committee to Delimit the River Frontier, signed on 16 April 1975 on board the Iraqi ship El Thawra in the Shatt Al Arab;



3. Common hydrographic charts, which have been verified on the spot and corrected and on which the geographical co-ordinates of the 1975 frontier crossing points have been indicated; these charts have been signed by the hydrographic experts of the Mixed Technical Commission and countersigned by the heads of the Iranian, Iraqi and Algerian delegations to the Committee. The said charts, listed hereinafter, are annexed to this protocol and integral part thereof :

Chart No. 1 : Entrance to the Shatt Al Arab, No. 3842, published by the British Admiralty ;

Chart No. 2 : Inner Bar to Kabda Point, No. 3843, published by the British Admiralty ;

Chart No. 3 : Kabda Point to Abadan, No. 3844, published by the British Admiralty ;

Chart No. 4 : Adaban to Jazirat Ummar Tuwaylah, No. 3845, published by the British Admiralty.

## Article 2

1. The frontier line in the Shatt Al Arab shall follow the thalweg, i.e., the median line of the main navigable channel at the lowest navigable level, starting from the point at which the land frontier between Iran and Iraq enters the Shatt Al Arab and continuing to the sea.

2. The frontier line, as defined in paragraph 1 above, shall vary with changes brought about by natural causes in the main navigable channel. The frontier line shall not be affected by other changes unless the two Contracting Parties conclude a special agreement to that effect.

3. The occurrence of any of the changes referred to in paragraph 2 above shall be attested jointly by the competent technical authorities of the two Contracting Parties.

4. Any change in the bed of the Shatt Al Arab brought about by natural causes which would involve a change in the national character of the two States' respective territory or of landed property, constructions, or technical or other installation shall not change the course of



the frontier line, which shall continue to follow the thalweg in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 above.

5. Unless an agreement is reached between the two Contracting Parties concerning the transfer of the frontier line to the new bed, the water shall be redirected at the joint expense of both Parties to the bed existing in 1975-as marked on the four common charts listed in article 1, paragraph 3, above shall one of the Parties so request within two years after the date on which occurrence of the change was attested by either of the two Parties. Until such time, both Parties shall retain their previous rights of navigation and of use over the water of the new bed.

### **Article 3**

1. The river frontier between Iran and Iraq in the Shatt Al Arab, as defined in article 2 above, is represented by the relevant line drawn on the common charts referred to in article 1, paragraph 3, above.

2. The two Contracting Parties have agreed to consider that the river frontier shall and at the straight line connecting the two banks of the Shatt Al Arab, at its mouth, at the astronomical lowest low-water mark. This straight line has been indicated on the common hydrographic charts referred to in article 1, paragraph 3, above.

### **Article 4**

The frontier line as defined in articles 1, 2 and 3 of this Protocol shall also divide vertically the air space and the subsoil.

### **Article 5**

With a view to eliminating any source of controversy, the two Contracting Parties shall establish a Mixed Iraqi-Iranian Commission to settle, within two months, any questions concerning the status of landed property, constructions, or technical or other installations, the national character of which may be affected by the delimitation of the Iranian-Iraqi river frontier, either through repurchase or compensation or any other suitable arrangement.



**Article 6**

Since the task of surveying the Shatt Al Arab has been completed and the common hydrographic chart referred to in article 1, paragraph 3 above has been drawn up, the two Contracting Parties have agreed that a new survey of the Shatt Al Arab shall be carried out jointly, once every 10 years, with effect from the date of signature of this Protocol. However, each of the two Parties shall have the right to request new surveys, to be carried out jointly, before the expiry of the 10-year period.

The two Contracting Parties shall each defray half the cost of such surveys.

**Article 7**

1. Merchant vessels, State vessels and warships of the two Contracting Parties shall enjoy freedom of navigation in the Shatt Al Arab and in any part of the navigable channels in the territorial sea which lead to the mouth of the Shatt Al Arab, irrespective of the line delimiting the territorial sea of each of the two countries.

2. Vessels of third countries used for purposes of trade shall enjoy freedom of navigation, on an equal and non-discriminatory basis, in the Shatt Al Arab any part of the navigable channels in the territorial sea which lead to the mouth of the Shatt Al Arab, irrespective of the line delimiting the territorial sea of each of the two countries.

3. Either of the two Contracting Parties may authorize foreign warships visiting its ports to enter the Shatt Al Arab, provided such vessels do not belong to a country in a state of belligerency, armed conflict or war with either of the two Contracting Parties and provided the other Party is so notified no less than 72 hours in advance.

4. The two Contracting Parties shall in every case refrain from authorizing the entry to the Shatt Al Arab of merchant vessels belonging to a country in a state of belligerency, armed conflict or war with either of the two Parties.



### Article 8

1. Rules governing navigation in the Shatt Al Arab shall be drawn up by a mixed Iranian-Iraqi Commission, in accordance with principle of equal rights of navigation for both States.

2. The two Contracting Parties shall establish a Commission to draw up rules governing the prevention and control of pollution in the Shatt Al Arab.

3. The two Contracting Parties undertake to conclude subsequent agreements on the questions referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article.

### Article 9

The two Contracting Parties recognize that the Shatt Al Arab is primarily an international waterway, and undertake to refrain from any operation that might hinder navigation in the Shatt Al Arab or in any part of those navigable channels in the territorial sea of either of the two countries that lead to the mouth of the Shatt Al Arab.

DONE at Baghdad, on 13 June 1975.

(Signed)

Abbas Ali Khalatbary  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of  
Iran

(Signed)

Saadoun Hamadi  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of  
Iraq

Signed in the presence of His Excellency Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika, Member of the Council Revolution and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

(Signed)

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Source : Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Iraqi-Iranian Conflict; Documentary Dossier*, January 1981.



Annexure-2 Registered Trade of Major Conventional Weapons with Industrialised and Third World Countries 1983-84

Recipient	Supplier	No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order	Year of delivery	No. delivered	Comments
Iran	Argentina	(100)	TAM	MT	(1983)	(1983)	(25)	Undisclosed number reportedly delivered
	China	(100)	F-6	Fighter	(1982)	(1982) (1983)	(50) (50)	Unconfirmed; reportedly delivered
	Korea, North	(150)	T-62	MBT	(1981)	(1982) (1983)	(75) (75)	North Korea reportedly supplied Iran with \$2 bn worth of arms in 1982, incl. MBTs, artillery and small arms
	South Africa	..	G-5 155mm	TH/TG	(1982)	(1983)	(12)	Unspecified number reportedly delivered
	Switzerland	(6)	PC-7	Trainer	(1983)	(1983)	(6)	Reportedly delivered Sept 1983
	China	(100)	F-6	Fighter	(1981)	(1982) (1983) (1984)	(20) (20) (20)	Part of deal incl T-59 and artillery reportedly worth \$1.3 bn
		..	T-59	MBT	(1981)	(1982) (1983) (1984)	(100) (100) (100)	Part of larger deal; Iran reportedly has given China access to Soviet weapons captured from Iraq
		(300)	Type 59/1 130mm	TG	(1981)	(1982) (1983) (1984)	(100) (100) (100)	
	Switzerland	(80)	PC-7	Trainer	(1983)	(1983) (1984)	(6) (35)	Delivery suspended after 41 aircraft; enquiry commission instituted



## Annexure 2 (contd.)

Recipient	Supplier	No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order	Year of delivery	No. delivered	Comments
	UK	2	Hengam Class	LS	1977	1984	2	Unarmed support ship; displacement: 2500t; original order for 4
		1	Kharg Type	Support ship	1974	(1984)	(1)	
Iraq	Brazil	(180)	EE-11 Urutu	APC	(1983)	1984	(180)	Total value incl. EE-3
		(50)	EE-3 Jararaca	SC	1982	1984	(50)	Jararaca : \$ 250mn
	China	..	Type 531	APC	(1982)	(1983) (1984)	(50) (20)	Unspecified number delivered
		..	Type 69	MBT	(1982)	(1983) (1984)	(25) (25)	Unspecified number delivered
	Egypt	(80)	EMB-312 Tucano	Trainer	1983			From Brazil and Egyptian licensed production
		..	F-7	Fighter	(1983)	1983 (1984)	(5) (20)	Chinese version of MiG - 21 assembled in Egypt
		(200)	T-55	MBT	1983	1983 (1984)	(30) (30)	Built in Romania; transferred via Egypt until Romanian halt of deliveries
	France	(150)	Alpha Jet	Adv trainer/strike	(1984)			Negotiating; partly built in France and partly locally assembled; agreement not signed
		29	Mirage F-1C	Fighter/interceptor	1982	(1983) (1984)	(15) (14)	Ordered Feb 1982
		(8)	Mirage-5D	Fighter	(1984)	1984	(8)	
		3	Super Frelon Hel		(1982)			
		(150)	AMX-30 Roland	AAV	1981	(1982) (1983) (1984)	(15) (15) (15)	Ordered Feb 1981; number unconfirmed; at least 30 delivered by 1983



## Annexure 2 (contd.)

Recipient	Supplier	No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order	Year of delivery	No. delivered	Comments
Iraq		85	AMX-30-155	SPG	1982			
		..	GCT AM-39 Exocet	AShM	1983	1983 1984	(20) (70)	Arming Super Etendard fighters ; delivery rate : over 5 month
		..	ARMAT	ARM	(1984)	(1984)	(6)	Unconfirmed
		..	AS-30L	ASM	(1984)			Unconfirmed; to arm Mirage
		(600)	Roland-2	Landmob SAM	1981	(1982) (1983) (1984)	(150) (150) (150)	F-1s Ordered Feb 1981
	Germany FR	6	Bo-105CB	Hel	(1984)	1984	6	On 6 Wadi Class corvettes;
	Italy	(6)	A-109	Hel	1985			total cost incl 4 AB-212ASW
		(4)	Hirundo					helicopters : \$ 164mn
		(224)	AB-212ASW	Hel	1984			On 4 Lupo Class frigates
		(60)	Aspide	AAM/SAM/ ShAM	(1984)			Arming 4 Lupo Class frigates
			Otomat-2	ShShM	(1981)			and 6 Wadi Class corvettes
		4	Lupo Class	Frigate	1981			Arming 4 Lupo Class frigates
		1	Stromboli Class	Support ship	1981	1984	1	and 6 Wadi Class corvettes
		6	Wadi Class	Corvette	1981			Order incl 6 Wadi Class
Jordan		(20)	F-6	Fighter	(1983)	(1984)	(20)	corvettes and 1 Stromboli Class support ship
								Commissioned March 1984
								Iraqi designation: Assad Class
								Unconfirmed ; Chinese F-6
								assembled in Egypt reportedly
								transferred via Jordan



Anneuxre (contd.)

Recipient	Supplier	No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order	Year of delivery	No. delivered	Comments
Iraq	Kuwait	(50)	Chieftrain-	5MBT	(1984)	(1984)	(50)	Unconfirmed
	Spain	24	Bo-105CB	Hel	(1981)	(1983)	(12)	Delivery from CASA confirmed by MBB 1984
		..	C-101 Aviojet	Trainer strike	(1981)	1984	(12)	Unconfirmed
		20	C-212-200	Transport	1981			Incl in S900mn 5-year programme
		..	BMR-600	ICV	1981	(1982)	(100)	
						(1983)	(100)	
						(1984)	(100)	
	USA	6	L-100-30	Transport	(1982)			US ban lifted Apr 1982;
	USSR	..	MiG-23	Fighter	1984	(1984)	(15)	Part of large deal signed May 1984;
						(1985)	(15)	estimated total cost : S2 500mn; reportedly guaranteed by Saudi Arabia
		..	MiG-25	Fighter interceptor	1984	(1984)	(15)	Part of large deal signed May 1984
						(1985)	(15)	
		..	MiG-27	Fighter strike	(1979)	(1979)	(7)	
						(1980)	(8)	
						(1982)	(10)	
						(1983)	(10)	
						(1984)	(10)	



## Annexure 2 (contd.)

Recipient	No. Supplier ordered	Weapon designation	Weapn description	Year of order	Year of delivery	No. delivered	Comments
	(200)	T-55	MBT	1984	(1984) (1985)	(100) (100)	Part of large deal signed May 1984
	..	T-62	MBT	1984	(1984) (1985)	(100) (100)	Part of large deal signed May 1984
	..	T-72	MBT	(1984)	(1984) (1985)	(50) (50)	Part of large deal signed May 1984
	..	AS-4 Kitchu	ASM	(1983)	(1984)	(10)	Unconfirmed
	..	AS-6	ALCM	(1983)	(1984)	(20)	Unconfirmed
	..	SA-6 Gainful	Landmob SAM	1979	(1980) (1981) (1982) (1983) (1984)	(100) (60) (60) (60) (60)	
	..	SA-8	Landmob SAM	(1982)	1982 1983 1984	(72) (72) (72)	

Source : *World Armaments and Disarmament SIPRI Yearbooks* 1984 and 1985, (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), pp. 240-41 and 400-401 respectively