

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)



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Agenda: Iran-Iraq War

Chair: Abhinav Subramaniam
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¹ <https://defenceindepth.co/2017/12/04/iran-and-iraq-during-the-second-world-war/>

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Message from the Dias

Delegates,

Welcome to UCBMUN XXVI! My name is Vishwaa Sofat, and I will be your Chair for the UNSC: Iran-Iraq Conflict. From the deep-rooted history of geopolitical and economic disputes to religious and cultural ties to current concerns over international security, the Iran-Iraq relations is one of the most interesting and concerning entanglement of international relations around the world. Our historically based committee will provide us an environment where we can better analyze and understand the intricacies of the globally impactful relationship between Iran and Iraq. I am interested to see how you stabilize the tensions between the two countries and bring forth nuanced ideas that the UNSC could have done.

Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions!

Best,

Vishwaa Sofat

Chair, UNSC: Iran-Iraq Conflict

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Greetings Delegates!

I, Sharicka Zutshi, am beyond thrilled to serve as your Crisis Director for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) committee discussing the Iran-Iraq Conflict at BearMUN 2021.

The Iran-Iraq conflict represents a tumultuous history of war, instability, and regional conflict which led to long-term implications on geopolitics in the Middle East. As a historic UNSC committee, we have the chance to enact strategies to curb the impending war that was fought between the two countries from 1980-88. Through our debate at BearMUN, we hope to analyze past solutions and conflicts, while formulating practical ways to curb the ill-effects of the ongoing conflict and continued crises in our timeline.

A little about me, I am a junior studying Bioengineering and Public Policy at UC Berkeley. Career-wise, I am an aspiring Bioengineer who hopes to work in Global Public Health and Social Service. In my free time, I take a keen interest in watching and critiquing documentaries and reality shows. My friends would describe me as an energetic and enthusiastic soul who brings soul to any occasion. However, I have never been a conventional STEM student. Being the great-granddaughter of an Indian freedom fighter and being of Kashmiri descent, I have always felt passionate about geopolitics, international relations, and their impact on our daily lives.

In professional life, I want to dive deeper into policy-making and international relations through the lens of its impact on the scientific world, a passion that the recent COVID-19 pandemic has only legitimized and amplified. Being an international student from India has allowed me to experience Berkeley from a unique perspective. Berkeley is an amalgam of different cultures and schools of thought and BearMUN is a place to bring those differences together in a discussion about larger international issues.

Please reach out with any questions or concerns you may have about our committee. As your crisis director, I am looking forward to observing exhilarating debates fuelled by your exceptional talent and ideas!

Sincerely,

Sharicka Zutshi

Crisis Director, UNSC: Iran-Iraq Conflict

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Procedural Overview

This Committee will abide by all BearMUN Rules of Procedure and will strictly follow the Code of Conduct. The Chair and Crisis Director will have the discretion to make any final decisions with respect to committee flow to make the debate experience equitable for everyone. Due to the unique nature of the UNSC, we understand that several questions about committee procedure may arise. If you are uncertain about a certain aspect of committee procedure, feel free to raise a Point of Parliamentary Inquiry. If you need some clarification about your crisis arc(s) or need to talk to the crisis staff about your backroom performance please inform the Dais about the same. We will do our best to accommodate everyone's inquiries and feedback requests. As outlined by BearMUN Rules of Procedure, this crisis will be using a double-notepad system. Only one notepad may be submitted to the backroom at a given time. Please take time to draft crisis notes on your second notepad while waiting for a response on your initial notepad. Both notepads cannot be out of the committee room simultaneously, unless this is being done by the Crisis Director's discretion.

BearMUN policy makes it expressly clear that we have a zero-tolerance policy for any harassment via notes. If you feel uncomfortable with a note sent to you, please bring it up to the Dais as soon as possible. Similarly, notes containing unacceptable content are also prohibited, and all final decisions on this regard are the dais's discretion. If you have further questions on what constitutes acceptability, feel free to reach out to BearMUN staff. Conflicts between your in-committee delegations or countries must be kept out of any out-of-room discourse. All in-room discourse on such conflicts must remain cordial and respectful. All language used in committee should be appropriate and respectful.

The Crisis staff will implement the following restrictions to maintain a respectful and cordial environment in committee:

1. In light of COVID-19 and its impact, all virological arcs are expressly prohibited.
2. Arcs involving the exploitation of minorities and human trafficking are prohibited.
3. Arcs that promote real-world misinformation are expressly prohibited. Note, this is not a ban on misinformation arcs, this is a ban on arcs that attempt to deny any real-world events or facts such as genocides and exoduses.
4. Fantasy arcs that do not have a basis in reality are discouraged due to the historic nature of this committee.
5. Anything else that is deemed inappropriate, insensitive, or offensive by the Code of Conduct will not be a part of proceedings.

If you have questions about your arcs, feel free to reach out to Crisis staff before the conference or during proceedings.

Committee Overview

Our committee is set in 1979, amidst an increasing escalation of the conflict between Iran and Iraq. Although the war has not occurred yet in our timeline, it is important to understand the major events, geopolitical factors, military strategies, and outcomes of the actual conflict to properly navigate committee settings. Delegates are encouraged to pay detailed attention to the strategies different nations employed to de-escalate the conflict and are encouraged to maintain utmost respect for the different religious and cultural identities of the population of the Middle East when discussing the social and cultural background of the conflict. Committee flow will be determined initially by historical fact, but will slowly advance into arcs and dynamics inspired by the creativity that delegates demonstrate in their directives and crisis arcs.

The Iran-Iraq war remains one of the longest conflicts in the history of the Middle East. The war continues to define Iran's foreign policy. Philosophically, the cost of the conflict can be attributed to the prioritization of ideology over strategy. This was not just an interstate conflict fought for territorial adjustment or limited political objectives: at stake was also a contest of ideologies and a competition for power.² Supreme Leader of Iran³, Ayatollah Khomeini's first declaration after the beginning of the conflict stressed, "You are fighting to protect Islam and he [the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussain] is fighting to destroy it."⁴

Despite the diverse outcomes of the conflict, the roots of the Iran-Iraq war lie in fundamental territorial disputes and political tensions between the two nations. To improve their economy, Iraqi leadership had been using their influence to gain some overlordship over the oil rich region of Khuzestan, a territory near the Iranian border since the region started prospering in the mid 20th century. Additionally, Iraqi President Saddam Hussain's attempts to establish control over the banks of the Shatt-al-arab river—formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers—increased geopolitical tensions between the two nations. Strategically, these two geographical regions will be monumental to the conflict because they were the root cause and the battlefield for the war itself. In addition to these externalities, Iraqi officials were also concerned about the new Iranian Islamic Revolutionary political landscape's ability to influence Iraq's Shi'ah majority into rebellion. In order to attack Iran successfully, the Iraqi establishment would have to do so when Iran's relationship with world leaders was poor enough to limit initial international intervention.⁵

²<http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/mei/00263141/v64n3/s3.pdf?expires=1627341438&id=0000&titleid=72010011&checksum=D29476EB1FEE2F4A1502F143C25B53C8>

³ All titles used are in reference to the titles used for these historical figures at the time of the conflict

⁴ Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 38.

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-Iraq-War>



Figure 1: Geographical location of Khuzestan with respect to Iran and Iraq⁶

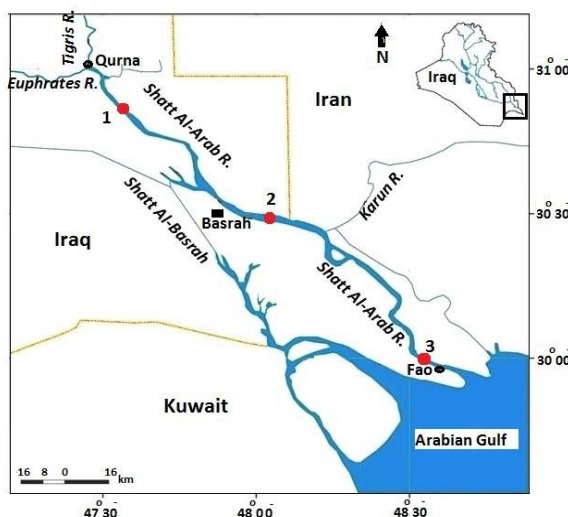


Figure 2: Physical Map of the Shatt Al-Arab river⁷

On 22nd September 1980, the Iraqi army invaded Khuzestan along a broad front, much to the astonishment of the Iranian establishment, given that Iran was preoccupied in dealing with a tumultuous relationship with the United States. Further escalations and periods of stalemate have been accounted for in the following sections. Iraq's invasion initially scored impressive gains, as the Iranian city of Khorramshahr fell and the important industrial cities of Abadan and Ahvaz were besieged and isolated. After the extended war, Khorramshahr was termed "the city of blood". Saddam flamboyantly proclaimed his desire to fight "until every inch of usurped land was restored to Arab control," an unsubtle claim on the oil-rich Khuzestan province.⁸

⁶ <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/jul/29/iran%E2%80%99s-challenges-converge-khuzestan>

⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Shatt-Al-Arab-River-with-locations-of-study-sites_fig1_326774131

⁸ Ralph King, *The United Nations and the Iran-Iraq War* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1987), pp. 15-17.

Nonetheless, Iraqi President and infamous dictator Saddam Hussain's ambitions for Iraqi glory did not match up to their actual military resources and fervor. The Iraqi army was met with a stiff Iranian resistance. These initial clashes marked the beginning of the conflict that permanently changed the landscape of Middle Eastern politics.

Given this background, delegates are expected to minimize the damage done in this conflict and simultaneously position themselves in the world order by using their portfolio powers and available resources.

History and Timeline

The following section will examine before, during, and after the conflict between Iran and Iraq. For the crisis component of this committee, please only use this as a point of reference. Do not allow historical facts to restrict your creativity, but be mindful about various sensitive aspects of the conflict. We are looking forward to nuanced ideas throughout the committee.

Before the Conflict

Historians have struggled to agree upon a single cause of origin of the war, consequently, several theories have been proposed about the same. The first theory determines that the primary reason for the war was the underlying border dispute.⁹ Iran and Iraq have historically been fighting for centuries over boundary disagreement, particularly the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The Shatt al-Arab waterway is a 120 mile-long river, of which the southern end of the river constitutes the border between Iraq and Iran.¹⁰



Figure 3: Map of the Shatt Al-Arab river and the Iran-Iraq border ¹¹

⁹Swearingen, Will D. "Geopolitical Origins of the Iran-Iraq War." *Geographical Review*, vol. 78, no. 4, 1988, pp. 405–416. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/215091. Accessed 16 July 2021.

¹⁰<https://www.britannica.com/place/Shatt-Al-Arab>

¹¹https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Shatt-Al-Arab-River-with-locations-of-study-sites_fig1_326774131

The disputes concerning the Shatt al-Arab waterway have been subject to dispute for nearly five centuries, and a total of 18 treaties have been signed between Iran and Iraq in an attempt to settle the dispute.¹² The first treaty was signed in 1639 between the Ottoman Empire, which later became the Republic of Turkey and surrounding countries, and Safavid Persia, which consists of the modern nations of Iran, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan, to define a border in the region, in which it recognized Ottoman control over what would become the *Modern state of Iraq*.¹³ However, boundaries were historically defined according to the local people and nomadic tribes in the area, which meant that the treaty only provided a vague border rather than a line as to what the modern understanding of border is.¹⁴ Thus, a border zone, rather than a precise boundary, was created between the Zagros Mountains on the east and the Tigris and Shatt al-Arab waterways on the west.¹⁵ Other treaties that were significant in terms of leading up to the conflict were those of 1847, 1913, 1937, and 1975.

- The Treaty of Erzerum in 1847 was again surrounding the issue of Shatt al-Arab. The United Kingdom and Russia wanted a more precise definition of boundary for the purpose of their imperial interest in the region, specifically for trade and shipping routes. The result of the 1847 treaty led to a huge loss of territory for the Ottoman Empire and later for Iraq.
- The 1913 Treaty modified the Treaty of Erzerum, in which Iran was granted a five-mile stretch of territorial waters in the Shatt al-Arab. Due to the fact that oil had been found in southwestern Iran in 1908 by British Petroleum, the United Kingdom required Khorramshahr port to facilitate its oil industry, which as a result of the treaty the port was transferred to Iranian jurisdiction.
- The 1937 Treaty was again aimed to allow the United Kingdom to further export oil from Iran, in which it rearranged Iran and Iraq's boundary off Abadan. Iraq lost territory from this treaty again.
- Lastly, the 1975 Algiers Agreement is the most important boundary change. It further shifted the boundary, which made Iraq an entirely landlocked country. Not only did this treaty cut off all connections of Iraq from the world in terms of trade, it also diminished Iraq's status as a Persian Gulf power.¹⁶

¹² Swearingen, Will D, p 409.

¹³ Swearingen

¹⁴ Melamid, Alexander. "The Shatt Al-'Arab Boundary Dispute." *Middle East Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1968, pp. 350–357. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4324304. Accessed 16 July 2021.

¹⁵ Swearingen

¹⁶ Ibid



Figure 4: From left to right: Mohammed Raza Pahlavi (The Shah), Mediator Houari Boumédiène, and Iraqi Leader Saddam Hussain discussing the 1975 Algiers Agreement.

These four treaties significantly decreased Iraq's national territory, especially because it was the result of political coercion by external powers. Thus, the boundary dispute is one of the most commonly known reasons as to why the conflict began. One can argue that the humiliation of the 1975 Treaty was the last straw for Iraq.¹⁷

However, the conflict between Iran and Iraq is more complicated than just the boundary dispute. Social and political factors have also played a significant part in the lead up to the conflict. In terms of social factors, ethnic animosity between Arabs and Persians could be traced back to 633 AD, in which the Rashidun Caliphate conquered Persia and led to the fall of the Sassanid Empire of Persia¹⁸; the once major power lost its status.¹⁹ Second, rivalry between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims is another interpretation of why the conflict occurred²⁰. Third, ideological differences between Iran and Iraq is another argument as to why the conflict began. On the one hand, in the post-Shah era Iran, Islamic fundamentalism was the central ideology, in which it plays on the ideas of "...anti-Western, antimodernist sentiments and stresses a return to the true Islamic values of the past." On the other hand, due to the fact that almost 60% of Iraqis are Shi'a Muslims, religion cannot be the central ideology; thus, Arab nationalism prevails that emphasizes secularism. The result of conflicting ideology is a clash of "...two mutually exclusive types of legitimacy, two different and opposing sets of values."²¹

In addition to social factors, political turmoil in the two countries also played a major role in the lead up to the conflict. The struggle for status as the dominant regional power is one of the most prominent political reasons as to why the conflict began. Prior to 1979, Iran was the dominant military power in the gulf region with support from the United States. With the fall of the Shah in

¹⁷ Swearingen

¹⁸ <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/arab-ii>

¹⁹ More specifics in Social and Cultural Differences.

²⁰ More specifics in Social and Cultural Differences.

²¹ https://www.jstor.org/stable/42909183?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Iran, ending the Persian monarch ruling, Iraq sought to fill the power vacuum that was created in the region to become “...the leader of the Arab countries and the regional superpower.”^{22 23}



Figure 5: In this Jan. 13, 1979 file photo, a banner denouncing Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi is put up at the entrance of Tehran University in Tehran, Iran. (AP Photo/Bernhard Frye, File)²⁴

Yet, some still argue that the social and political factors do not adequately explain why the war began. However, scholars have claimed that a geopolitical analysis is what presents the best understanding of why the conflict began. According to scholars, the two key reasons why the conflict was geopolitically originates was, first, aside from the Shatt al-Arab boundary dispute there were at least five other major territorial issues:

1. The strategic heights of Zain al-Qaws and Saif Saad [2 Iraqi territories] south of Qasr-e Shirin,
2. Water rights to rivers shared by the two countries (Almost thirty rivers and streams rise in Iranian mountains and flow into Iraq),
3. The Kurdistan independence movement in northern Iraq,
4. Shi'a majority region within southern Iraq,

²² Swearingen

²³ See next section for more specifics.

²⁴

<https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-ap-top-news-religion-iran-united-states-343d87fdb960424e9ec0f4a90dc64fcb>

5. Khuzistan, a point of contention for almost 60 years before the conflict, in which Khuzistan was originally part of Iraq, but post WWI, the United Kingdom gave the entire province to Iran.

Thus, with all the territorial disputes, some scholars have claimed that the conflict originated from a geopolitically driven origin. On top of that, the political aspect of the territorial dispute comes down to the interpretation that Iraq went to war for territory due to its “symbolic importance”. As discussed previously, boundary dispute treaties and all the loss of territory has humiliated Iraq significantly for centuries. Experts have argued that the action of Iraq in 1980 was for the purpose of redeeming itself and recovering its national pride²⁵.

An additional interpretation of the origin of the war comes down to personal animosity between Saddam Hussain and Ayatollah Khomeini, which was manifested in Iran and Iraq’s state policies. In 1978, Hussain under the Shah’s order, expelled Khomeini from Iraq where he was exiled. When Khomeini came into power in 1979 in Iran, he called for the overthrow of Hussain, which later turned into an inflexible condition to ending the conflict.

All of the above factors provide some explanation about the origins of the conflict. The period of time before 1980 was deeply impacted by the historic themes of the conflict.

During the Conflict

After centuries of tension and disagreements, a turning point occurred when the Iranian Revolution of 1978 - 1979 took place, in which the pro-Western Shah was overthrown by a fundamentalist regime led by Ayatollah Khomeini. For Iraq, this event created fear for Saddam Hussain, who became president in July 1979, that the revolution would spill over and allow the Shi’a majority in Iraq to revolt against the ruling Sunni minority population and himself; thus, Saddam sought to overturn the 1975 Algiers Agreement in order to demonstrate control over both sides of the Shatt al-Arab. Moreover, during 1979 an officer purge took place in Iran, in which by September 1980, the government had purged 12,000 army officers. The result of which led to a drastic decline in Iran's military operation capacities. With Iran’s domestic instability, Saddam took the opportunity to preemptively strike against Iran. On September 22, 1980, Iraqi armed forces launched air strikes on Iranian air bases and invaded the western border of Iran in the region of oil producing Kuzestan.

The first battle on September 22nd was a prolonged fight in the city of Khorramshahr, which resulted in 7,000 dead on each side. Iraqi forces were initially successful with the capture of the city of Khorramshahr and taking over other territories by November. However, Iraqi advances slowed due to Iran’s stiff resistance. In 1981, Iran launched a counteroffensive, which by 1982,

²⁵ More on geopolitics in Geopolitics of the region: History and Present situation

Iran regained almost all the lost territories. With Iran attacking back, by the end of 1982, Iraq attempted to establish peace; however, under Khomeini, Iran refused, with the goal of overthrowing Saddam's regime. In July 1982, Iran invaded the Iraqi port city of Basra, which was one of the many other attempts. With Iran on the offensive now, Iraqi defenses stiffened, the conflict fell into a stalemate. Both sides began to attack cities, military sites, and oil facilities with air and missile strikes. The result of which led to an international concern over the output of oil to the global market; thus, the United States and other Western nations sent warships to the Persian Gulf to regulate without getting involved directly with the conflict. The stalemate continued and the conflict became known as a war of attrition. A war of attrition is a military strategy, in which to win the war they will attempt to wear down the enemy to the point of collapse by losses in personnel and resources.

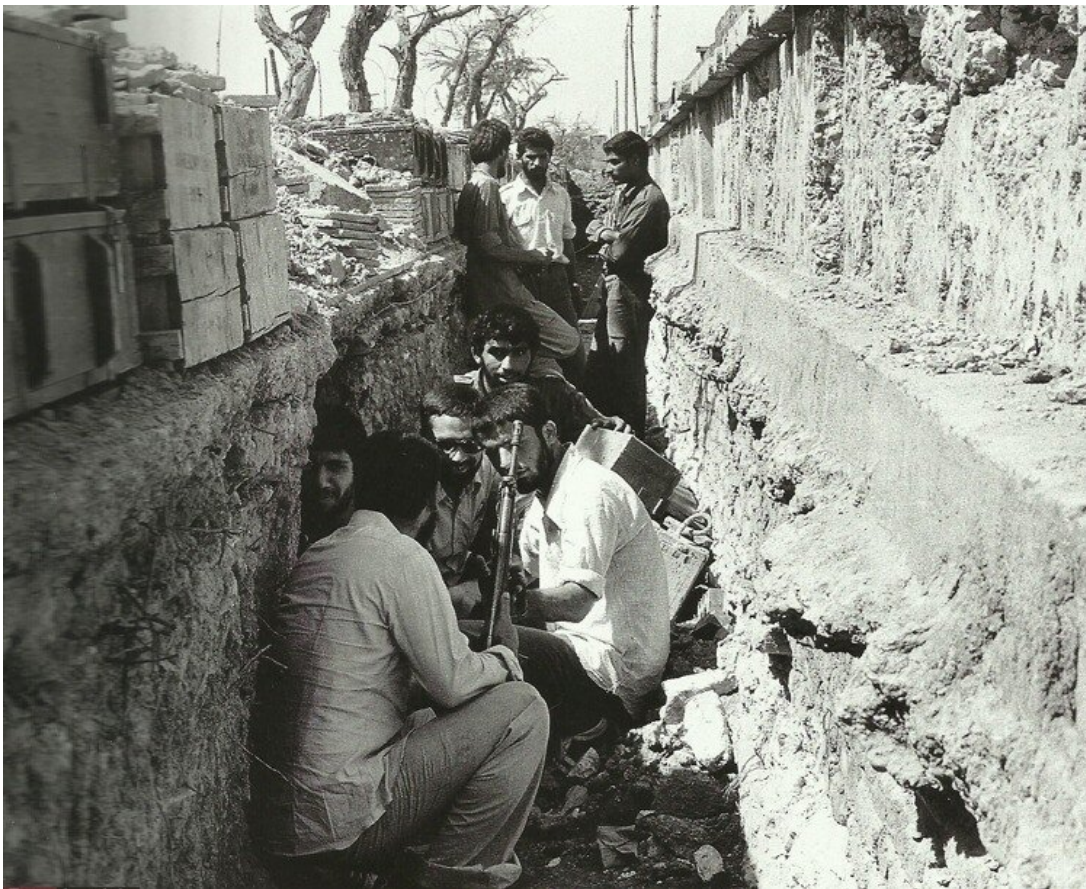


Figure 6: Khorramshahr in the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan was captured by Iraqis on October 26, 1980 during the early months of the war and was liberated on May 24, 1982.²⁶

²⁶<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449873/Commanders-to-recount-Khorramshahr-resistance-against-Iraqi-invasions>

On the international side, Iraq was supported by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Arab states as well as Western nations, such as the United States through provision of better weaponry. For Iran, due to the 1979-1981 hostage crisis that occurred at the U.S. embassy, Khomeini's regime became isolated from the rest of the world, in which the only allies they had during the conflict were Syria and Libya. At a disadvantage, Iran began using human wave attacks against the Iraqis. Although "human wave attacks" was a debated tactic among historians²⁷, Iran had the upper hand in numbers, which allowed them to use a large number of troops to overwhelm the Iraqi lines with no regards of losses. Despite the fact that the human wave attacks were extremely bloody, it was successful for the side of Iran.

By 1985, Iraqi forces were receiving financial support from their allies and bought a large amount of arms from the Soviet Union, China, and France; and for the first time since their attack in 1980, Saddam launched new offensives²⁸. The conflict continued all the way till 1988, which in the spring of 1988, neither Iran or Iraq were in the position of victory. In July, the two nations agreed to accept a ceasefire facilitated by the United Nations under Security Council Resolution 598. Although the conflict formally ended on August 20, 1988, normal diplomatic relations and withdrawal of troops did not happen until August 16, 1990 where a signing of peace agreement occurred. The casualties are uncertain, but are estimated around 1 to 2 million.

Post-Conflict landscape: The Legacy of the War ²⁹

The Iran- Iraq war can be described as the deadliest conventional war in modern history due to the extensive use of chemical weapons and the constant nuclear threat that loomed around the conflict. After the 1988 UN resolution, both armies withdrew from the usurped territories and the borders for both nations returned to their pre-war conditions. Economic catastrophe caused by the conflict can be traced well beyond the borders of the nations involved. Further, some historians emphasize the fact that the war may have played a catalytic role in dividing the Middle East along sectarian lines due to the confrontation between a Sunni-Muslim majority Iraq, and a Shi'a Muslim led Iran.³⁰

Future Escalations

The legacy of the war can be traced into 21st century warfare in the region. The massive loans that Saddam Hussain had accumulated due to the prolonged war with Iran has been speculated to be one of the triggers for the Iraqi invasion of the oil-rich and economically thriving region of Kuwait in 1990. Further, this invasion led to a vigorous attack on Iraq by the United States of America leading to the fall of Saddam Hussain's dictatorial regime after a US invasion in 2003.

²⁷ Pelletiere, Stephen (1992). *The Iran–Iraq War: Chaos in a Vacuum*. ISBN 978-0275938437.

²⁸ Specific battles see timeline.

²⁹<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/10/09/how-the-iran-iraq-war-will-shape-the-region-for-decades-to-come/>

³⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/22/legacy-of-iran-iraq-war-still-reverberates-40-years-later>

Ultimately, the Iran-Iraq war can be credited for fundamentally changing the structure of government and leadership in the Middle East. In the 80s, most Gulf states supported Hussain's regime because Saddam's Iraq was a force that challenged Iran, one of the growing superpowers in the region. Given Tehran's growing influence, the fear of an Islamic revolution, similar to Iran, in the extended Middle East still persists amongst member states.³¹



Figure 7: On August 2, 1990, at about 2 a.m. local time, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait.³²

Military Strategy and Influence

Although the war ended in a stalemate, it was a true pressure test for the then nascent Islamic Republic, Iran. It was an existential battle for Iranian leadership having come just one year after the 1979 Iranian revolution. Strategies employed during the war can be attributed to Iran's newfound status in the Middle East. In the decades since the war, Iran has developed a marked capacity to mobilize Shiite communities across the region, penetrating previously impervious political and ideological spaces, particularly in Iraq but also in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. The proxy networks created during the start of the war have now become extended networks across

³¹ Ibid

³² <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/iraq-invades-kuwait>

the region. Tehran's mobilization of revolutionary groups was a key dynamic that assisted them during the war. Although Iranian support for the Kurdish freedom movement was elemental in mobilising groups in their favor, the Iranian mobilization of Shi'ate groups has proved to be the most effective strategy to retain power in the region employed. Revolutionary fervor has been crucial in honing Tehran's ability to fight back against a technologically advanced enemy with a clear advantage, however this strategy was not fruitful when fighting against Iraq. It is speculated that the nationalistic sentiments and Iraqi patriotism movement that developed during Saddam's reign helped Iraqi Shi'ates retain their loyalty towards the nation. The Ba'ath regime's strategy to combat this threat led to the country gaining more and more Shi'ite influence as the war progressed.

During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran established its most important foreign legion in the form of the Lebanese Hezbollah. The institution has surpassed all state institutions in importance since its establishment in 1982. The institution is now indispensable for Iran's expansionist ambitions and proves to be a great ally for the nation in the region, with several widespread affiliates and connections. In Iraq, the Badr Brigade, a paramilitary force said to be formed due to the losses of the war, has a wide range of influence in the Iraqi political apparatus. It dominates the 100,000-plus Popular Mobilization Force, and has extended its reach into Syria to help prop up President Bashar Assad's regime.³³

Foreign Policy

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was Iran's leader at the time of the war, whereas the current President Hassan Rouhani was the commander of Iran's Air Defense. Similarly, several leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) established themselves during the war and now account for a significant portion of Irani leadership. In some ways, the war solidified the myth of an Islamic Republic and helped the regime stay in power. To this day, Iranian leaders continue to emphasise the global isolation Iran was subjected to during the war. Incidents such as the 1988 downing of an Iranian aircraft carrying 300 passengers by U.S. Military forces serve as fuel to fire the narrative that the Islamic Republic has no allies in the western world.

Additionally, Iran took the war to the Gulf Arab states, calling on their Shiite populations to rise up against their governments. Gulf monarchies, in turn, came to see Iran's new leadership as an existential threat, which in turn prompted Saudi Arabia to unleash its own proselytizing brand of fundamental Sunni Islam and support for groups that could mount a pushback against Iran's encroachment. The Gulf monarchies have since increasingly viewed their relationship with Tehran through the prism of their own restive Shiite communities, communities that have

³³ Ibid

long-standing political, socio-cultural, and religious ties to Shiite centers of power and influence elsewhere in the region.



Figure 8: Hassan Rouhani, who was re-elected president in the May 19 presidential election, met on Tuesday with a Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khomeini.

In conclusion, the legacy of the war has fundamentally changed Middle Eastern politics for the decades to come. There is still unfinished business within the realm of complaints that started the war in the first place. The proxy network created as a product of the war is a key area for the international community to focus on. The reverberations of the Iraqi offensive military strategy and the consequences of the Iranian Shi'a mobilization will be central to any future geopolitical challenges in the Middle East.³⁴

Geopolitics of the region

In a geopolitical conflict, gaining and maintaining control of disputed land is the only means of demonstrating power. The origins of the Iran-Iraq war were geopolitical in two key ways. First, territorial issues were a direct cause of the war, and second, Iraq went to war to capture their alleged territories for symbolic importance.

Despite the disproportionate attention it receives, the combined weight of all territorial disputes was much more than the dispute over the Shatt Al-Arab river. One of the conditions of the 1975 Treaty was that Iran would return the forcefully-annexed territories of Zain al-Qaws and Saif Saad south of Qasr-e Shirin to Iraq. Much of the pre-war shelling of Iraqi towns occurred from these regions. According to the Iraqi interpretation, this event started the war. Both regions wanted to further exploit the oil-rich border regions.

³⁴ Ibid

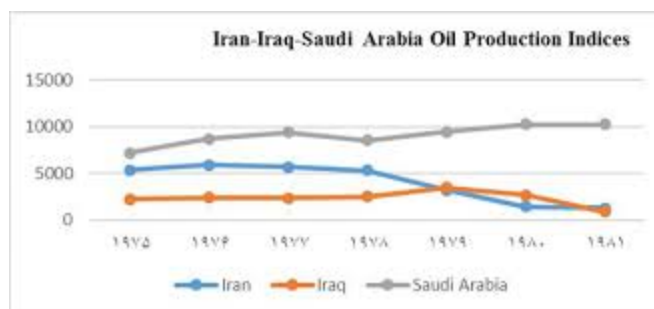


Figure 9: Iran-Iraq Oil Dependences during War³⁵

The second main territorial dispute in the conflict was over bodies of water. Almost thirty rivers and streams rise in Iranian mountains, flow into Iraq, and then drain chiefly into the Tigris River. Increased Iranian diversion of water from these streams, which included the diversion of an entire stream in 1959, created much hardship for Iraqi riverine settlements. The water dispute was a question about survival and had deeply strained the diplomatic relations between the countries over the years.³⁶



Figure 10: Proposed geography of Kurdistan³⁷

The third territorial issue relates to the Kurdish population and has been highly misinterpreted by analysts. At this point in history, Kurdish people have demanded the right to self-governance and rebelled against Iraqi authorities. However, the Kurds are primarily concentrated in Northern Iran, which is the highest oil-producing region in the country. Self-governance in this region

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/215091.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae657b7c3040c4898119adff1348a9703>

³⁷ <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/3/14/the-missed-kurdish-moment>

would be highly detrimental to the Iraqi oil industry. In 1975 Iraq was forced to sign a humiliating treaty to stop Iranian support of Kurdish rebels that threatened Iraq's loss of northern territory.³⁸ By 1980 the Iranian government was instigating yet another Kurdish rebellion to jeopardize Iraqi sovereignty over the northern oil-producing region.

The Iraqi government's fear of a Shia rebellion can also be attributed to this territorial issue. The Sunni Arab minority government was threatened by the prospect of a rebellion by the Shia majority group causing an imbalance of power. Iraqi capture of this province was an effective counter threat to dismember Iran. Khuzistan indirectly was a final important territorial issue underlying the Iraqi invasion of Iran. The status of Khuzistan has been a point of contention between the two countries for more than sixty years. Under the Ottoman Empire, western Khuzistan had been part of what would become Iraq; however, after World War I, the United Kingdom ceded all of the province to Iran. In 1960, Iraq helped establish a popular front as part of an irredentist campaign to detach the Arabic-speaking portion of the province from Iran, and by the late 1960s, Hussain was a driving force behind that campaign. After 1975, Iraq ostensibly dropped its claim to the region and its support of the Khuzistan rebel movement. Nonetheless, the Iraqi invasion of Khuzistan in 1980 raised speculation that repossession of the province was an ultimate goal of the Iraqi government.³⁹

In sum, the origins of the Iran-Iraq war were essentially geopolitical in two important ways: the immediate objects of dispute were territories, and control of them was to demonstrate prevailing power. Examination of the origins of this war eight years after its outbreak is not simply an academic exercise. Resolution of the conflict will almost certainly have to address origins, and formulation of foreign policy toward the two countries requires an understanding of the conflict and its sources.^{40 41}

Political Analysis⁴²

Before the Iran-Iraq war, Iran had just gone through the 1979 Islamic revolution, installing the Supreme Leader, but then President, Ayatollah Khomeini into power, whereas, Iraq had just experienced a transition of power from President Ahmed Al-Bakr to his then Vice-President, Saddam Hussain. These domestic political matters played a vital role in the events leading up to the war on either side. To understand the strategy each country employed during the Iran-Iraq war, it is important to understand the political turmoil in each of the two nations. The ideological background of the Irani and Iraqi administrations can yield important information about how the eventual outcome of the war came about.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Murray Gordon, *Conflict in the Persian Gulf* (New York, Facts on File, 1981), 157-159

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ http://journal.iag.ir/article_82981_262a05c24e671cdaffa4fbbe32f1844c.pdf

⁴² https://www.jstor.org/stable/41394115?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Iran

The White Revolution (1968 - 1978) was Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's effort to implement societal and cultural reforms in Iran. The Shah's reforms were specifically designed to disrupt the existing hierarchy in Iran by implementing land reform, enfranchising women, nationalising important industries, and implementing better wages for workers. The Shah aimed to use this opportunity to westernize Iranian society and associate his dynasty with the peasantry instead of the aristocracy. However, the Shah's plans lead to an increase in social tensions across Iran and caused widespread discontent for his policies amongst the growing class of intellectuals and working people. Additionally, the trickle-down economic strategy and reforms did not bode well with the working class people and trade unions.⁴³

The general discontent against the Shah culminated into widespread protests against his rule. By 1978, the people were anticipating an Islamic revolution. The westernised values that the Shah had hoped to inculcate into Iranian society were promptly lost and replaced by traditional, fundamentalist, and oppressive values in accordance with the Islamic Sharia laws. Despite his explicit disdain for the Iraqi establishment during the war, Ayatollah Khomeini spent most of his 14 year political exile in the Iraqi town of Najaf. After the Islamic revolution and growing pressure to concede, the Shah left Iran in January, 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran in February, 1979 and was celebrated as a hero. On 5th February, 1979, Khomeini declared the formation of an interim revolutionary government, and appointed opposition leader Mehdi Bazargan as his Prime minister.⁴⁴

Although the fall of a despotic monarchy left an already unstable Iran in shambles, the 1979 Iran hostage crisis and the 1980 Iraqi invasion made matters worse. Nonetheless, Ayatollah Khomeini's faction was able to consolidate complete power in the region by 1982. The war and the revolution set a precedent that has resulted in Iran's current political structure. The people of Iran elect the President, Parliament, and Council of Members through democratic process by voting every 4 years. The Supreme Leader of the nation is chosen by the Council of Members who in turn appoints the Guardian Council and Expediency Council that resolves any parliamentary disputes.

Iraq

For two decades before the war, Iraq had seen continuous changes in government and leadership. During the 14th July revolution in 1958, the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown after a left-wing military coup by Abd-al-Karim Qasim. In 1963, then Prime Minister Qasim was ousted in a coup

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Axworthy, Michael (2013). *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic*. ISBN 9780199322268.

led by the pan-Arab Ba'ath Party. This event is also known as the Ramadan revolution. In 1963, the Ba'athist government was overthrown but the party seized power again by 1968. Through the 17th July revolution of 1968, a Ba'athist led revolution put Iraqi leader Ahmed Al-Bakr in power as the President of Iraq. Al-Bakr then appointed his cousin, Saddam Hussain as his Vice-President. Iraq experienced significant economic growth during Al-Bakr's term due to the increasing nature of international oil prices at the time. Nonetheless, during the 1970s, Al-Bakr started losing power to a younger, more charismatic, and well-connected Saddam. In 1979, Al-Bakr stepped down from all government offices and handed power to Saddam Hussain. In 1980, Saddam was elected the President of Iraq and remained in power as a dictator until the U.S. Invasion of Iraq in 2003. Saddam was a feared figure in Iraqi politics due to his ruthless approach to consolidating power. On 22nd July 1979, Saddam Hussain videotaped a meeting of the Ba'ath party where Muhyi Abdel Hussain Mashadi, a party member, read out a confession stating that he was involved in an alleged coup against Saddam within the party and named 68 co-conspirators. The 'disloyal' members were taken out of the room and 22 of them were immediately executed. By 1st August 1979, several high-ranking members of the party were executed on grounds of treason. It is claimed that the allegations against these party members and the confession by Muhyi Abdel were indeed false and the whole purge was just Saddam's method to establish complete dominance and cultivate blind loyalty for his reign. By 2003, at least 250,000 Iraqi people had perished under Saddam's cruel reign. Eventually, the former President was tried for his crimes against humanity through torture, genocide and other war crimes. On 5th November 2006, he was sentenced to death by hanging and was executed on 30th December the same year.

Following the overthrow of the Ba'ath government in 2003, the United States and its coalition allies established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), headed by a senior American diplomat. In July, the CPA appointed the 25-member Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which assumed limited governing functions. The IGC approved an interim constitution in March 2004, and a permanent constitution was approved by a national plebiscite in October 2005. This document established Iraq as a federal state in which limited authority—over matters such as defense, foreign affairs, and customs regulations—was vested in the national government. A variety of issues (e.g., general planning, education, and health care) are shared competencies, and other issues are treated at the discretion of the district and regional constituencies.

The constitution is in many ways the framework for a fairly typical parliamentary democracy. The president is the head of state, the prime minister is the head of government, and the constitution provides for two deliberative bodies, the Council of Representatives (Majlis al-Nawwāb) and the Council of Union (Majlis al-Ittiḥād). The judiciary is free and independent of the executive and the legislature.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq/Government-and-society>

Military Analysis

Primary Military Strategy

In retrospect, both Iran and Iraq failed the test of strategic competence during the war. Both ends combatted battleground failures by throwing more men and resources into the war rather than changing their war strategy. Iraq's use of chemical weaponry made the battlefield more gruesome, but the fact that Saddam Hussain used these weapons against rebellious sects of his own people gave this strategy a different meaning. Subsequently, Iran had also left few laws of humanity intact through their use of the narrative of "religious martyrdom" to coerce 12-17 year olds to clear fields with land mines and the strategy to send human-wave assaults to confront prepared Iraqi forces. The manner in which both countries chose to use their military and personnel resources reveals a lot about why the eventual outcome of the war came about.⁴⁶

In the turning point in the war, the Irani and Iraqi militaries faced each other along a 730-mile front from Turkey to the Persian Gulf. Since 1982, the front lines have approximately coincided with the international border. Along this vast front, only about 250 miles along the central sector, from Mandali, Iraq, to Bostaan, Iran, provide the relatively flat, dry terrain and clear fields of fire that permit the high degree of artillery support, air support and armored mobility necessary for modern mechanized warfare. Iraq's superiority in armor, air power, mobility and training, and its ability to coordinate combined arms operations, showed the best advantage on this ground. Every major Iranian attack in this sector has been a bloody disaster, due to their disadvantage in numbers and artillery. The Iraqis would undoubtedly want to make the most of this battleground but the Iranians, naturally, did not oblige; their major effort was in the southern sector, with a respectable secondary effort in the north. In the north, the nearly 320-mile front from Oshnoviyeh, Iran, to Khanaqin, Iraq, is mountainous, with peaks ranging from 3,000 to 10,000 feet in height and averaging around 4,000 feet. This sort of terrain allows restricted fields of fire and less effective tactical air support. Mobility is very limited for anything but troops on foot, and armor is largely restricted to a few easily blocked roads.

Since air power, firepower, armor, and mobility are Iraq's chief military assets, the northern sector is a difficult sector to guard for the Iraqis. By the same token, the poorly trained and lightly equipped infantry formations that make up Iran's Basij militia (Popular Mobilization Army) and the somewhat better-trained and better-equipped infantry units of the Pasdaran (Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps [IRGCs]) show the best advantage in such terrain. Despite the northern sector's intrinsic suitability for Iranian operations, it was not until March 1988 that the Iranians made what appears to have been their main effort in this area. When they finally did so, the results were spectacular. Iranian forces captured several Kurdish towns, including Halabja, the location for the infamous 1988 Iraqi attack on the Kurdish people, and penetrated to

⁴⁶ <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1124084.pdf>

within 75 miles of Kirkuk and 15 miles of the Darbandikhan Dam. This brought the vital Kirkuk oil fields within range of Iranian missiles and the dam within Iranian artillery range. The dam, situated on the southern shore of Lake Darbandikhan, is about 18 miles from Halabja, and supplies much of Baghdad's electricity and water. Only 2 Iraqi forces still remained inside Iran in a number of places (notably in the central sector), and Iranian troops had captured territory inside Iraq (notably in Iraqi Kurdistan).⁴⁷

During the War, after initial gains by the Iraqi army, the fighting settled into years of trench warfare. These trenches were crucial for Iran because of the inherent numerical disadvantage that they had in terms of army men. Iran also engaged in World War I–style human wave attacks that was an offensive strategy as unsuccessful and bloody as it had been 70 years earlier.⁴⁸ The Bombers used by the Iraqi military in the war were imported from the Soviet Union. The Soviet T-72 tank was greatly feared by the Iranian tank crews. Imports from the Soviets accounted for 32% of all arms imports to Iraq during the war. Iran had a monopoly over certain oil and natural gas resources in the region so it was strategically beneficial for foreign powers to isolate the country and attempt to profit from the resources of the region by backing Iraq and forming an economic alliance that would allow them to exploit the oil-rich land resources gained from the conflict.⁴⁹ Iraq's primary backers amongst the Gulf States were oil rich countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Each country contributed \$30.9 billion, \$8.2 billion, and \$8 billion respectively.⁵⁰ Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both Sunni majority countries, supplied Iraq with arms as well because of the fear of a Shi'ite uprising in the Gulf. The United States supported Iraq by opening up diplomatic channels, enabling the exports of dual-use technology, and assisting in the establishment of operational military hardware and intelligence networks. Likewise, France provided Iraq with \$50 billion worth of military assistance, and also provided them with chemical precursors used in chemical warfare since 1986.⁵¹ Italy, the U.S. , and Spain also provided Iraq with helicopters and anti-tank missiles. While the United States fought Iran outwardly, it also indirectly supplied weapons to Iran as part of a complex programme known as the Iran-Contra affair that secured the release of hostages for the USA, and made them some money to support the contras rebels in Nicaragua.⁵² According to the Stockholm International Peace Institute, China was the largest foreign arms supplier to Iran between 1980 and 1988. North Korea was also a supplier of arms to Iraq and often acted as a third party in any transactions with the communist bloc. Within the gulf states, Libya, Lebanon, and Syria proved to be Iranian military allies.⁵³

⁴⁷ https://www.jstor.org/stable/20043572?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁴⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/story/did-trench-warfare-end-with-world-war-i>

⁴⁹ <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3248.pdf>

⁵⁰ "Iraq debt: Non-Paris Club Creditors". Archived from the original on 12 October 2017. Retrieved 25 July 2006.

⁵¹ Bulloch, John; Morris, Harvey (1989). *The Gulf War: Its Origins, History and Consequences* (1st published ed.). London: Methuen. ISBN 978-0-413-61370-7.

⁵² Terrill, W. Andrew (Spring 2015). "Iran's Strategy for Saving Asad". *Middle East Journal*. Middle East Institute. **69** (2): 222–236. doi:10.3751/69.2.13. S2CID 142964464.

⁵³ *Ibid*



Figure 11: An Iranian Oil Tanker being attacked in the Persian Gulf

Due to the extensive attacks on merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf, the 1984-1988 period of the Iran-Iraq war was known as the Tanker war. The war was started by Ba'athist Iraq in an attempt to damage Iranian exports. Missions included sinking Iranian tankers or Kuwaiti oil carrying tankers to harm their economy. Iran had a strategic advantage despite having a smaller navy due to having ideologically sound commanders at the time. The United States intervened in 1986 to protect Kuwaiti oil-carrying tankers for trade purposes.⁵⁴

The Use of Chemical Weapons

The use of chemical weapons could be dated back to antiquity, when forces often poisoned the water supplies of their enemy. However, chemical weapons did not become a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) until WWI. The German army introduced modern chemical warfare by using chlorine to attack Belgium on April 22, 1915. By the end of the war, both sides had used a huge amount of chemical weapons that caused about 1,300,000 casualties. The horrific result of WWI made many world leaders realize the need to ban the use of chemical weapons. At the 1925 Geneva Conference for the Supervision of the International Traffic in Arms, the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which made it internationally illegal to employ chemical or biological weapons, was signed by most countries in the world. However, the ban only extended to those who signed the treaty.⁵⁵

The Iran-Iraq conflict is often referred to as the most extensive use of chemical weapons post WWII. Iraq used the nerve agents sarin and tabun, riot control agents and blister agents to attack Iran, which resulted in tens of thousand casualties. On November 1st, 1983, the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs reported that the U.S. State Department has information confirming

⁵⁴ Dudley, William S. (2007), "Navies, Great Powers – United States, 1775 to the Present – The tanker war", in Hattendorf, John J. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*, Oxford University Press, doi:10.1093/acref/9780195130751.001.0001, ISBN 9780195307405

⁵⁵ <https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/npr/81ali.pdf>

Iraqi chemical weapon use and Iraq has acquired chemical weapons production primarily from Western firms, including possibly a U.S. foreign subsidiary. In response to Iraq, Iran made efforts to develop chemical weapons and may have used them against Iraq, which Iran has denied. On March 4th, 1984, General Fakhri—a senior Iraqi military official—was quoted by the New York Times that Iraq reserves the right to use chemical weapons against Iran because “we will use all possible means to protect our country.”⁵⁶ Moreover, not only did Iraq use chemical weapons against Iran, they also used it against Iraqi Kurds who were considered to be in opposition with Saddam's regime. The most infamous attack happened in 1988 in the city of Halabja, where 5,000 Kurds were killed, including civilians.



Figure 12: Iranian soldiers wearing protective masks amidst Sarin gas attacks by the Iraqi Administration⁵⁷

The use of chemical weapons shocked and outraged the rest of the world. In 1984, a United Nations mission was sent to investigate Iraq's use of chemical weapons, and on March 13, 1986, they concluded that Iraq had used chemical weapons “on many occasions”. In response to the chemical warfare, the United States on June 5, 1986 in an attempt to keep chemicals out of Iran, imposed a ban of chemical export to Syria, who was an ally for Iran. Another United Nations team was sent to investigate chemical weapons reports in 1987 that Iraq had begun using chemical weapons against Iranian civilians. Throughout the entire conflict, the UNSC issued resolutions condemning the use of chemical weapons.⁵⁸ By mid 1988, Tariq Aziz, Iraqi Deputy

⁵⁶ https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Iran-IraqWar_Part1.pdf

⁵⁷ <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/iran-iraq-war>

⁵⁸ See specific resolutions in Iran-Iraq conflict: As presented to the UN

Prime Minister, admitted that Iraq used chemical weapons in the war; however, Aziz emphasized that Iran was the first to use chemical weapons in the war. Allegations against Iran's use of chemical weapons were later discredited by Joost Hiltermann, the principal researcher for Human Rights Watch, in 1994, in which the lack of specific evidence has failed to support the claim.

The use of chemical weapons is one crucial factor that UNSC must take into consideration throughout the committee.

*The Threat of Nuclear Weapons*⁵⁹

During the war, there was a looming threat of the use of nuclear weapons due to the involved parties and their allies. Under the leadership of Saddam Hussain, Iraq actively pursued nuclear weapons from the early 1970s through 1991. Following the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq's program was subject to unprecedented international oversight under United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 687. By 1994, inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) believed they had verified the complete dismantlement of Iraq's nuclear weapons program.⁶⁰ During its initial efforts, Iraq pursued the plutonium pathway to the bomb, acquiring two research reactors from France in 1976 (the larger 40MW Osirak reactor, or Tammuz I, and the smaller 800KW Isis reactor, or Tammuz II), as well as a fuel manufacturing facility and a pilot plutonium separation and handling laboratory from the Italian firm SNIA-Techint in 1979.⁶¹ Greatly concerned by Iraq's increasing nuclear presence, Iran first bombed the nuclear site on 30th September 1980 with two F-4 Phantoms. However, the project bounced back, as Israel bombed the Osirak facility on 7th June 1981, destroying the reactor core as part of Operation Opera.⁶² In October 1998, Iraq rejected further cooperation with the IAEA, prompting concerns that Iraq might not have abandoned its nuclear weapons ambitions. A second brief inspection process began in November 2002, but it was ultimately cut short by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

⁵⁹ https://www.jstor.org/stable/4418494?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁶⁰ Federation of American Scientists, "IAEA and Iraqi Nuclear Weapons," www.fas.org.

⁶¹ Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia & The Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 143.

⁶² "1981: Israel bombs Baghdad nuclear reactor". *BBC News*. British Broadcasting Corporation. 7 June 1981. Retrieved 30 November 2010.



Figure 13: Osirak reactor site after the Israeli attack during Operation Opera⁶³

By the time of the 1979 revolution, Iran had developed a massive base to cultivate nuclear technologies. However, a significant subset of Iran's nuclear talent fled the country in the wake of the Revolution.⁶⁴ This loss in scientific expertise and talent, compounded by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's opposition to nuclear technology, resulted in the systematic disintegration of Iran's nuclear program after the 1979 revolution. Nuclear projects that had been ongoing under the Shah Pahlavi, such as construction of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, were suspended. However, in 1984 Khomeini expressed a renewed Iranian interest in nuclear power, seeking the assistance of international partners to complete construction at Bushehr.⁶⁵ During the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq definitely had an edge on Iran with respect to the potential to develop nuclear technology. After 1988, freed from the burden of the costly war, Iranian leaders began refocusing on nuclear technology acquisition in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Iran signed long-term nuclear cooperation agreements with Pakistan and China, in 1987 and 1990 respectively.⁶⁶ The nuclear sanctions implemented on Iran after the war are not directly relevant to the committee progression, but could potentially play a role in the approach delegates decide to take when combating the regional conflict.

Social and Cultural Differences

Social and cultural factors are extremely important to understanding this multifaceted conflict between Iran and Iraq. The following section will provide an overview of religious, ethnic, cultural, ideological, and linguistic divides that further contribute to the differences of the two countries. (Note: these are only a few of the socio-cultural differences, please use this section as a jumping off point for your own research).

⁶³ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Osirak_reactor_site_damage.jpg

⁶⁴ *Iran's Strategic Weapons Programmes: A Net Assessment* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2005), p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Iran's Strategic Weapons Programmes: A Net Assessment* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2005), p. 12.

⁶⁶ Joseph Cirincione, Jon Wolfsthal and Miriam Rajkumar, "Iran," in *Deadly Arsenals: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Threats* (Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 303.

Shia-Sunni Conflicts Within the Islamic Community

The origin of the split between Shia and Sunni Muslims traces back to some 14 centuries, in which the dispute over who should succeed the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Islamic faith divided the Islamic community. Some believe that the leadership should be given to the qualified individuals; others believe that only Mohammed's bloodline could be the legitimate ruler.

Today, out of 1.6 billion Muslims around the world 85% are Sunni and 15% are Shia.⁶⁷ Despite their differences Sunni and Shia have lived alongside each other in relative peace for most of history until the late 20th century. The tension escalated and exploded into violence as extremists of both brands of Islam battled for political and religious supremacy.⁶⁸

Iraq

The conflict between Shia and Sunnis in Iraq begins with a disagreement over the relative population of the two groups. According to the CIA's World Factbook, Shia Arab Muslims account for 60% of Iraqis, while Sunni Arab Muslims account for 37% of the population.⁶⁹ Particularly, Sunnis are ethnically divided into Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen. Many Sunnis are adamant about their minority status, including ex-Iraqi Ambassador Faruq Ziada,^[114] and many believe the Shia majority is "a myth spread by America". Jordan's King Abdullah and his then-Defense Minister Shaalan echoed the Sunni assumption that Shia numbers in Iraq were inflated by Iranian Shias crossing the border. Vali Nasr, a Shia academic, says that the election participation in June and December 2005 proved Iraq's substantial Shia majority.

Iran

Iran is unlike any other Muslim country in that its population is primarily Shia rather than Sunni (Shia Muslims make up 95 percent of the population), and its constitution is a theocratic republic ruled by a Shia jurist. Despite the fact that the Islamic Republic's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, advocated for amicable Sunni-Shia relations, Sunnis have complained of discrimination, particularly in high-ranking government jobs. Sunni Shiekh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in a joint appearance with former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani calling for Shia-Sunni unity, lamented that no Sunni ministers have served in Iran for a long time, that Sunni officials are scarce even in regions with majority Sunni populations (such as Kurdistan or Balochistan), and that despite the presence of Christian churches, as a prominent example of this discrimination. Although reformist President Mohammad Khatami promised to build a Sunni mosque in Tehran during his election campaign, none was erected during his eight years in power. The president clarified the situation by stating that the idea would be rejected by Supreme

⁶⁷ <https://www.cfr.org/sunni-shia-divide/#!/sunni-shia-divide>

⁶⁸ Further reading on the origin of divide and modern history: <https://www.cfr.org/sunni-shia-divide/#!/https://www.history.com/news/sunni-shia-divide-islam-muslim>

⁶⁹ <https://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/>

Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Other concerns may play a role in the conflict, as they do in other regions of the Muslim world, because most Sunnis in Iran are ethnic minorities.

Sunni leaders from Kurdistan, Balochistan, and Khorassan formed Shams, short for Shora-ye Markaz-e al Sunaat, to unite Sunnis and campaign for their rights shortly after the 1979 revolution. However, six months later, they were shut down, their financial accounts were frozen, and its leaders were imprisoned by the government on charges of being backed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Ethnic Diversity of the Region

Iran and Iraq are two very ethnically diverse countries. The following is a brief overview of the ethnic diversity in the two countries, and how it may contribute to the tension between Iran and Iraq. The distinction between Persians and Arabs is an important one to note. Persians primarily live in Iran, and constitute roughly 60% of the population there. Arabs live in many countries across the Middle East. In fact, some Arabs live in Iran, where they make up 3-7% of the population. Persians speak Persian, an Indo-European language distantly related to Greek and Latin. Roughly 120 million people speak Persian in the world; half of them live in Iran. In contrast, Arabic is an Afroasiatic language, influenced by ancient Semitic tongues like Aramaic, and took root in the second-century B.C.E. The Qur'an, the central text of the Islamic religion, was written in classical Arabic. Most Persians, including most Iranians, practice Shiite Islam. Most Arabs are generally Sunni Muslim.⁷⁰

Iran

Iran's ethnic groups consist of Persian, Azeri, Kurd, Lur, Baloch, Arab, Turkmen and Turkic tribes. Despite the fact that Iran's national religion is Shiite Islam and the bulk of its population is ethnically Persian, the country is home to millions of people of many ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.⁷¹ Ethnic Kurds, Baluchis, and Azeris are among these communities. They are often discriminated against and reside in poor areas. They have protested in the past, but they have primarily agitated for greater rights rather than greater autonomy. The vast majority of Iranians are incorporated into Iranian society, participate in politics, and identify with the Iranian country. Tehran occasionally accuses the U.S. and Israel of inciting unrest among Iran's large ethnic groups, but the amount of outside participation with these organizations is unknown.⁷²

⁷⁰ <http://www.us-iran.org/resources/2016/10/21/myth-vs-fact-persians-and-arabs>

⁷¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Persian>

⁷² "Iran". *CIA World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency.

Iraq

Iraq's dominant ethnic group are Arabs, who account for more than three-quarters of the population.

According to the CIA World Factbook, which cites a 1987 Iraqi government estimate, Iraq's population is made up of 70% Arabs and 25% Kurds. Other communities, including as Turkmen, Yazidis, Shabaks, Kaka'i, Bedouins, Roma, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Circassians, Sabaeen-Mandaeans, and Persians, are said to make about 5% of the country's population, according to the estimate. However, according to the International Crisis Group, figures from the 1987 census, as well as the 1967, 1977, and 1997 censuses, "are all considered highly problematic, due to suspicions of regime manipulation," because Iraqi citizens were only allowed to indicate belonging to one of two ethnic groups: Arab or Kurdish; as a result, the number of other ethnic minorities, such as Iraklis, was skewed.

According to a report published by the European Parliamentary Research Service in 2015, there were 24 million Arabs (15 million Shia and 9 million Sunni); 8.4 million Kurds; 3 million Iraqi Turkmen; 1 million Black Iraqis; 500,000 Christians (including, in alphabetical order: Arab Christians, Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldean Catholics, and Syriac Orthodox); 500,000 Yazidis; 250,000 Shabaks; 50,000 Roma; 3,000 Sabean-Mandaeans; 2,000 Circassians; 1,000 Bahá'í; and a few dozen Jews.

Two specific tensions between ethnic groups must be pointed out. First, Arabs vs. Persians. The tension can be traced back all the way to the Arab conquest of the Persian empire. The Rashidun Caliphate led the Muslim conquest of Persia, also known as the Arab conquest of Iran, from 633 to 654 AD, which resulted in the fall of the Sassanid Empire of Persia and the final decline of the Zoroastrian faith. Persia was experiencing unprecedented political, social, economic, and military weakness at the time of the ascendancy of Muslims. After decades of conflict against the Byzantine Empire, the Sassanid Empire, once a significant world force, had drained its manpower and material resources. Today, although the historical tension has faded, ethnic division between Arabs in Iraq and Persians in Iran further deteriorates the situation.⁷³

Second, ethnic Kurds in both countries are an important group to point out. Kurds are Iran's third largest ethnic group, after Persians and Iranian Azerbaijan, accounting for around 10% of the country's population in 2014, according to the CIA. According to the CIA World Factbook, Kurds are Iraq's largest ethnic group, accounting for between 20% and 25% of the country's population. Mulla Mustafa Barzani created the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946 to campaign for Kurdish autonomy within the Iraqi government. Later, mAbdul Karim Qasim

⁷³ Further historical reading:

<https://www.macalester.edu/classics/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2013/09/Clas194-01.pdf>

staged a coup against the British in 1958, and the Republic of Iraq was born. The Kurds had hoped to acquire their promised rights soon, but the political climate was not conducive. In Baghdad, the KDP launched an insurgency against the government in 1961. Their rebellion was partially successful, since the Bazzaz Declaration granted official Kurdish organisations some privileges in 1966, and the 1970 Peace Accord established a principle of Kurdish autonomy.



Figure 14: A landscape of the Kurdish population in the Iran-Iraq region

Kurdish cultural, social, and political rights were recognized under fifteen points of the 1970 Peace Accord. However, these rights were not established as a result of Arab willingness, but rather as a result of political changes. Nonetheless, from 1970 to 1974, the Kurds had more freedom. However, in March 1975, Iraq and Iran negotiated an agreement, and within hours of the accord, Iran cut off all assistance to the KDP, leaving its members and their families with the option of going into exile in Iran or surrendering to Iraqi authority. The majority of KDP members decided to live in exile, and the insurgency was proclaimed over. As a result, another political party in Iraqi Kurdistan, led by Jalal Talabani, arose in 1975: the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Since its inception, the PUK has lacked cooperation and has been at odds with the KDP over ideas, demography, and ambitions. The Anfal campaign, which was designed to increase Arab influence on the Kurds, ran from March 1987 to 1989. During the Anfal campaign, the Iraqi forces used chemical weapons to target roughly 250 Kurdish villages, destroying 4,500 villages and evicting their inhabitants. The Halabja massacre in March 1988 marked the end of the campaign.

Ideological Differences: Arab nationalism vs. Islamic fundamentalism



Figure 15: Flag of the Arab Revolt⁷⁴

In his critically acclaimed literary piece called *The Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East*, Author Martin Kramer's study delves into the two major ideological-political forces-Arabism and Islamism-which have dominated political life in the Middle East for over a century. These movements promised social and political renewal and power through national awakening or religious revival.

Arab nationalism, the major ideology since the turn of the century, has been supplanted by the rising force of Islamic fundamentalism-a religio-political ideology seeking to institute Islamic politics. The author maintains that despite their populist appeal, the two ideologies are ridden with contradictions and are removed from the realities of Middle East politics: They both carried the seeds of their own failure. In the end, neither movement delivered on its promise of Arab-Muslim liberation and strength. Rather, Arab nationalism bred oppression, division, and dictatorship; Islamic fundamentalism fomented intolerance, sectarian fratricide, and religious authority.⁷⁵

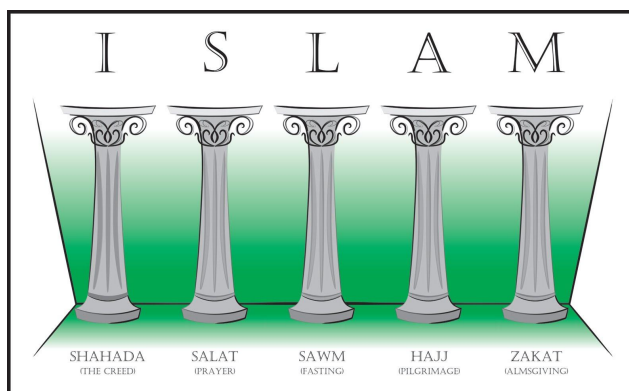


Figure 16: The 5 pillars of Islam⁷⁶

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_Arab_Revolt

⁷⁵ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1408565.pdf>

⁷⁶ <https://www.dar-alifta.org/Foreign/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=65&CategoryID=2>

Another challenge to the new Middle East order is the emerging force of Islamism—an ideology on the march. Rising Islamic fundamentalism may be replacing Arabism as a political ideology of salvation and strength. This is political Islam—a religio-political force seeking to disestablish existing regimes and reinstitute Islamic governments in accord with Islamic Shari'a law. It has swept across the Arab-Muslim lands from the Maghreb to the Arabian peninsula, shaking Arab politics to its foundations and calling for a revival of true Islamic governance and ethos.⁷⁷

Arab nationalism is a non-sectarian movement. With Shi'a Muslims accounting for about 60% of Iraq's population, the dominant Sunni Muslims are unable to emphasize religion. They emphasize Arab unity and socialism instead. In Iran, Islamic fundamentalism plays on anti-Western, anti-modernist feelings and emphasizes a return to traditional Islamic values, in which the five pillars of Islam are upheld.⁷⁸ Delegates should keep these ideological differences in mind when dissecting the political and social structures of the nations involved in this conflict.

Economic Implications of the war

During 1978–1988, the average annual economic costs for an Iranian were USD 3,150. The lowest average annual cost was USD 1,572 (in 1978), while the highest annual financial burden was USD 5,135 (in 1981). In all, Iraq received \$35 billion in loans from western superpowers and between \$30 to \$40 billion dollars from the Gulf States in the 1980s.⁷⁹

If Iran had not experienced the revolution and subsequent war with Iraq, it could have allocated oil revenues to military spending, education, health, and physical infrastructure instead, creating higher productivity in the long run (see Farzanegan 2011 for a study on oil and government spending in Iran, and Farzanegan 2014 for the nexus between military spending and economic growth in Iran).

Furthermore, the Islamic Revolution and the war affected the economic position of social classes in Iran, with significant consequences for economic development. Economic disruptions and negative growth rates, which were partly caused by the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) led to a significant decline in the size of the middle class, with its lowest level coming in at just above 15 percent of the total population in 1988.⁸⁰

Since the war is yet to occur in our timeline, delegates will only be concerned with understanding the sources of Iran and Iraq's debt. The larger implications of the conflict on

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ <https://classroom.synonym.com/traditional-islamic-values-12085589.html>

⁷⁹ "Annex D: Iraq Economic Data (1989–2003)". *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI [Director of Central Intelligence] on Iraq's WMD*. 1 of 3. Central Intelligence Agency. 27 April 2007.

⁸⁰ <https://www.bourseandbazaar.com/indicator-articles/2020/12/15/what-were-the-economic-costs-of-the-islamic-revolution-and-the-iran-iraq-war>

international oil-trade will depend on the actions delegates decide to take during the committee. We encourage delegates to understand Oil-trade in regions other than the Middle East to look for potential methods to manipulate this aspect of the conflict.

The United Nations and the Iran-Iraq conflict: Potential Solutions

During the first six years of the Iran-Iraq war, most of the actions of the Security Council varied between leaving things much as they were or making them worse. The Security Council first met to discuss the war on September 26, 1980, four days after Iraq launched its attack. On September 28 the Council adopted Resolution 479 calling for a cease-fire.

This resolution was notable on two accounts:

1. First, it referred to the conflict as a "situation" rather than a "war," thereby evading the Security Council's responsibility under the UN Charter to determine if an aggression had occurred.
2. Second, it called for no withdrawal of Iraqi forces, which by then had penetrated well into Iran's Khuzestan Province. When both parties ignored it, the Council put the subject aside on October 24 and did not raise it again for nearly two years.

The Council's lack of an active approach to its responsibilities on issues of international peace and security was more than oversight. Iran, which was still holding 52 American hostages in flagrant disregard of the United Nations and international law, had no support from any quarter.

A number of members of the Council quietly hoped that Iraq's attack, which was originally intended to inflict a crushing defeat on Iran in the first few days, would succeed in bringing down the Khomeini regime. When that failed to materialize, there was a reluctance, especially among the Arab states, to chastise an Arab government while it was fighting the Iranians. Moreover, once the initial shock had subsided, the superpowers and others concluded that their interests could best be served by letting the two regimes exhaust themselves on the battlefield.

As a cold calculation of immediate state interests, that decision may have been warranted. The failure to rise above narrow national interests in the early days of the war, however, tacitly associated the UN Security Council with Iraq's war aims and severely hampered its efforts to forge a peace settlement in later years. Efforts at negotiation and mediation were left principally to individual states and to the UN Secretary-General, who appointed Olof Palme as his special representative. Palme focused most of his efforts on attempts to free the many ships trapped in the Shatt al-Arab and to develop a negotiating agenda. The effort to clear the Shatt al-Arab foundered when Iran insisted on joint sponsorship of the operation while Iraq demanded sole responsibility - a rehearsal of the disagreements that reemerged in the 1988 peace talks. Other

mediation efforts were initiated by the Islamic Conference Organization and the Non-Aligned Movement. Neither produced any substantial progress.⁸¹

The conflict between Iran and Iraq, which Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim accurately characterized as "not an incident," but "war," prompted several different peace initiatives by the United Nations within a week of the Iraqi air attack of September 22, 1980. On the day of the attack, the Secretary-General promptly offered his good offices to help end the conflict. On September 23, 1980, the Security Council, by presidential declaration, appealed to Iran and Iraq to "desist from all armed activity ... and to settle their dispute by peaceful means." As expected by most delegates, however, the declaration and offer of good offices were not strong enough to quell the fighting.

On September 28, 1980, the Security Council adopted Resolution 479. Although obviously stronger in form than the declaration, it was not much stronger in substance. The resolution simply supported the Secretary-General's offer of his good offices and called upon Iran and Iraq "to refrain immediately from any further use of force" and to settle their dispute by peaceful means. Moreover, Resolution 479 did not name Iraq as the aggressor, a failure which would be cited repeatedly by Iran as evidence of the Security Council's bias toward Iraq. Not surprisingly, because the resolution effectively called for a cease-fire with Iraq in possession of Iranian territory, Iraq stated that it would accept the resolution if Iran did. Iran rejected the resolution, however, vowing not to cease fighting until the last Iraqi soldier had been driven back across the border.⁸²

United Nations Security Council resolution 514 was adopted unanimously in July 1982, and it basically encouraged a ceasefire and noted the mediation efforts of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Non-Aligned Movement.⁸³ Resolution 522, adopted in October 1982, called for an immediate ceasefire in the region.⁸⁴ Resolution 540, adopted in 1983, was adopted with 12 votes and 3 abstentions. This resolution specifically condemned all acts of violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and affirmed the right to free navigation in international waters amidst the brewing tanker war in the Persian Gulf.⁸⁵

United Nations Security Council resolution 552 was adopted in 1984 after the Council heard complaints about Irani attacks on ships from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The council condemned the attacks and encouraged member states to refrain from using military force in this matter, a condemnation that did not impact the eventual

⁸¹https://www.jstor.org/stable/4327921?casa_token=pgNiiEprK6sAAAAA%3AgEjc9n_VgHT4NFTdAaE7oxzBDc8GWzLmyRUXUYgYzUmlCahOk0wYE0IWM1iXGLaCva39pWGBE4cKAqBv9uWTcyCXJRLTMfsK3e6k5HGoeMIAyJPOfJA&seq=8#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁸² <https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2908&context=vlr>

⁸³ [https://undocs.org/S/RES/514\(1982\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/514(1982))

⁸⁴ [https://undocs.org/S/RES/522\(1982\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/522(1982))

⁸⁵ [https://undocs.org/S/RES/540\(1983\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/540(1983))

outcome of these attacks. The resolutions demanded that Iran cease all attacks on Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian ships specifically. Having experienced similar attacks from Iraq, this resolution further isolated Iran from the international community due to the clear bias demonstrated by the UN in this one-sided condemnation.⁸⁶ On the days following the adoption of this resolution, two Saudi Arabian F-15s shot down two Iranian F-4 Phantoms over Saudi Arabian airspace.⁸⁷

United Nations resolution 582 was adopted in 1986 and condemned the territorial incursions, violation of international law, attacks on neutral shipping, and use of chemical weapons in contradiction with the Geneva Protocol during the war.⁸⁸ This was the first resolution to request the exchange of prisoners of war. Resolution 588 urged the parties involved to implement the clauses on Resolution 582 without delay.

UN resolution 598 was adopted unanimously in 1987 and called for an immediate ceasefire between Iran and Iraq. It also demanded the repatriation of prisoners of war on both sides, and that each party withdraw from the international border. The UN Secretary General oversaw the ceasefire while a permanent settlement was reached. Both sides eventually withdrew to the international border in the coming weeks, with Resolution 598 becoming effective on 8 August, ending all combat operations between the two countries. UN peacekeepers belonging to the UNIIMOG mission took the field, remaining on the Iran–Iraq border until 1991.⁸⁹

When the foreign ministers of Iraq and Iran met for the first time in Geneva in August 1988 and later in 1989, there was no progress on how Resolution 598 was to be implemented. Iraq demanded the full exchange of prisoners as the first step, while Iran insisted that withdrawing Iraqi forces from Iran should precede the exchange of prisoners. The border dispute remained an ongoing point of friction between the two countries, even though Iran eventually allowed Iraq to make limited use of the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab. In 1990, Iraq implied that it was ready to return to the 1975 agreement, but nothing came of the overture. Occasional diplomatic initiatives were afterward interlaced with small-scale military incidents along the border. Each country supported opposition groups that worked against the rival’s government. Iraq sheltered the Mojāhedīn-e Khalq—an Iranian extremist group—and Iran lent support to various Iraqi Shi‘i groups. Guerrilla attacks and terrorist incidents were frequent in the years after the war.⁹⁰

Arguably, the Iran-Iraq conflict was never fully resolved. The aggression and political motivations on either end were simply deviated away from the region of conflict. The solutions

⁸⁶ [https://undocs.org/S/RES/552\(1984\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/552(1984))

⁸⁷ Hume, Cameron R. (1994). *The United Nations, Iran, and Iraq: how peacemaking changed*. Indiana University Press. p. 74. ISBN 978-0-253-32874-8.

⁸⁸ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/116401?ln=en>

⁸⁹ Dodds, Joanna; Wilson, Ben (6 June 2009). "The Iran–Iraq War: Unattainable Objectives". *Middle East Review of International Affairs*. **13** (2).

⁹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq/The-Iran-Iraq-War#ref794476>

that the UN resolutions attempted to implement were incomplete because they failed to take into consideration the impact of the extensive foreign involvement in the region and only held some parties in the conflict accountable. Delegates should consider critically analysing these UN resolutions to understand the potential solutions that were not explored during the United Nations Security Council deliberations in the 1980s. Given that we are a crisis committee, delegates are also encouraged to recognize that the conflict, and thereby potential solutions, will be highly dependent on the direction that delegates decide to take the committee in. The dynamic nature of our Security Council should encourage delegates to exploit resources they have outside of the committee to come up with potential measures to de-escalate the regional conflict.

Iran-Iraq War: 1975-1980 Timeline⁹¹

6th March, 1975	The Algiers Accords is signed. Saddam Hussain gives partial control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway to a militarily superior Iran. In return, the Shah promises to respect Iraq's security and stop Iranian aid to Iraqi-based Kurdish rebels.
1st February, 1979	Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran following 14 years of exile in Iraq and France.
August, 1979	Iraqi authorities invite Mehdi Bazargan, the first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to visit Baghdad. This meeting is intended to improve bilateral relations between the two countries.
8th February, 1980	Saddam Hussain proposes a pan-Arab charter calling for a "nonaligned" Arab world and opposing the presence of either superpower in the region. Aside from being an attempt to place Iraq at the center of a new Arab coalition, the move is seen as part of Saddam's determination to resist Soviet expansionism after the invasion of Afghanistan.
April, 1980	The Iranian-backed militia group Al-Dawa attempts to assassinate Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. Shortly after this failed assassination attempt, the group tries to kill Latif Nusseif al-Jasim, the Iraqi Minister of Culture and Information. Iraq responds by immediately rounding up members and supporters of Al-Dawa in Iraq, and deporting thousands of Iraqi Shiites to Iran.

⁹¹ https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Iran-IraqWar_Part1.pdf

7th April, 1980	Iran puts its armed forces on "full alert," declaring this is in response to repeated Iraqi attacks on oil and other facilities near the border between the two countries.
17th April, 1980	In the last of a series of steps designed to block most transactions with Iran since the U.S. embassy seizure in November 1979, President Carter prohibits all financial transactions, imports from and travel to-and-from Iran. He also impounds all military material previously under order from Tehran.
Summer 1980	Saddam Hussain orders the execution of Al-Dawa leader Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.
17th September, 1980	Iraq abrogates the 1975 Algiers Accord signed with Iran
22nd September, 1980	The Iraqi military sends a 10,000 man force from Basra to invade southern Iran with the goal to invade the Iranian air base, Dezful. The air strikes largely fail. Further North, a second front is launched from Baghdad straight into the central provinces of Iran by an Iraqi mechanized mountain infantry division. This initial attack was successful in capturing several hundred square miles of Iranian territory.
Late September, 1980	Iranian armed forces begin shelling the Kurdish stronghold of Mahabad killing an estimated 325 Kurdish civilians.
Mid-October, 1980	Some Iraqi troops advance towards the strategic oil fields of Abadan while others move towards Ahvaz, the provincial capital and site of a crucial Iranian air base. Backed by long-range artillery fire the Iraqis advanced almost eighty kilometers during the first few days of the attack. In the battle for Dezful, an Iranian general requests air support leading President Bani Sadr to release many Iranian pilots still loyal to the Shah from jail. They come to the aid of Iranian ground forces largely curtailing any further Iraqi advances into Iranian territory
10th November, 1980	Iraq captures Khorramshahr but loses over 6,000 troops while Iranian casualties are even higher. Soon after their costly victory, Iraqi troops begin to dig in and slow their advance into Iranian territory.
December, 1980	Saddam Hussain accuses the U.S. of supporting "Iran's 'aggression' against Iraq." Saddam Hussain says that the Iraqi front-line will be the new military border between the two countries until the war is over. Hussain also rules out a

	withdrawal until Iran accepts full Iraqi control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway as well as self-rule by the ethnic Arab population in Southwestern Iran.
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Country Matrix

Note: This country matrix was constructed using a collection of countries that served in the Security Council between 1980 and 1990 that could have significant geopolitical or strategic involvement in the conflict.

USA

The United States was indirectly involved in the Iran-Iraq conflict after the Tehran Hostage Crisis in 1979. Arguably, the United States unambiguously supported Iraq throughout the conflict by providing military intelligence and armistice to Saddam's regime in order to curtail the spread of Iran's religious propaganda. However, the scandalous Iran-Contra affair of 1985 revealed that the US Government was arming and negotiating with Iran despite the fact that it had been termed a terrorist state by US authorities. While playing this contradictory role in the conflict, the United States was a western superpower that pursued actions to benefit the material interests of their nation. Ultimately, some experts argue that American presence in this conflict led to further exacerbation of the already volatile conflict and contributed to the lasting political insecurity in the region.⁹² Iran attempted to bring up Iraq's inhumane use of chemical weapons at the United Nations in 1983. A memorandum by the Secretary of State George P. Schultz in the same year read noted: "We know that Iraq has acquired a CW [chemical weapon] production capability, presumably from Western firms, including possibly a U.S. foreign subsidiary." Unconcerned with the roots of the conflict and Iraq's atrocities, the U.S. worked in short-term self interest. A fear of Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalism and the U.S. desire for continued access to Gulf oil ultimately informed the constantly shifting policies.⁹³

United Kingdom

From 1987 to Iran's acceptance of the United Nations resolution 598 in 1988, the United Kingdom justified their presence in the Gulf as a means to protect British interests in the region. The non-provocative British strategy paid off as ultimately no British vessels were attacked during shipping activity. Although the UK government condemned Iraq's invasion of Iran, the use of chemical weapons, as well as the attacks on mercantile ships, the British establishment generally maintained a policy of non-intervention and impartiality that paid off. Compared to other European powers, the UK generally maintained a neutral tone and contributed very briefly

⁹² Steven A. Yetiv, *The Absence of Grand Strategy: The United States in the Persian Gulf, 1972-2005* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 57.

⁹³ Lawrence G. Potter and Gary Sick, *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2, digital file; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age*, 2005 ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 144.

to any discussions regarding the conflict at the United Nations. They did provide general, but not unequivocal, support to the United States' efforts. The UK's main interests were to protect their interests in trade and maintain their networks in the Middle East by exploring international waters in the region.⁹⁴

France

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini spent the last leg of his 14 year exile in France. The revolutionaries in Tehran lauded French leaders for being hospitable toward their spiritual leader. They had no hatred of France, which lacked colonialist aspirations regarding Iran. After 1979, France saw Iran as a destabilizing force in the Middle East that may threaten the secure and free flow of oil through the Persian Gulf.⁹⁵ After the Tehran hostage crisis, France also imposed sanctions on Iran like most other western nations. During the war, France provided significant military aid to Iraq due to their foreign policy that aimed to balance the European power in Arab states. The Parisian tilt towards Baghdad fuelled Tehran's mistrust in them. France continued to openly trade with Iraq even when Iranian-inspired terrorists took French hostages in Lebanon. During the course of the war, France had supplied Iraq with a vast supply of aircrafts, helicopters, chemical weapon precursors⁹⁶, and established a strong infrastructure for the Iraqi nuclear program.

China

As part of a larger strategy to compete for economic and political influence in the oil-rich Gulf, China maintained good relations with both parties during the Iran Iraq war. The two mediums used to accomplish this goal were aggressive trading, and artillery sales. China's intermediary involvement positioned them to take over a significant share of the inevitable post-war reconstruction efforts. By sending Chinese laborers to assist in the reconstruction effort, China estimated to earn upwards of \$2 billion dollars from this labor exchange alone. Although the Chinese foreign ministry claimed that China played no part in encouraging the Iran-Iraq conflict and maintained a strict neutrality policy, US Intelligence reports stated that China was one of the biggest military suppliers in the region and heavily borrowed its engineering designs from previous Soviet models. It is suspected that Baghdad paid for their share of the arms using an oil trade deal and increased the amount of their trade deal to much higher than the published numbers. China also helped facilitate the exchange of arms and airpower between the Gulf states and North Korea.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ https://www.jstor.org/stable/759736?seq=8#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁹⁵ <https://www.mei.edu/publications/iran-and-france-shattered-dreams>

⁹⁶ Ibrahim, Youssef M. (September 21, 1990), "Confrontation in the Gulf; French Reportedly Sent Iraq Chemical War Tools", *New York Times*

⁹⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/01/13/china-plays-both-sides-in-persian-gulf-war/e5f921aa-5797-467c-9d6d-293eed9911dc/>

USSR

From 1980 - 1982, the Soviet Union maintained a fairly neutral position with respect to the Iran-Iraq War although Soviet leadership was generally displeased with Iraq's aggressive military towards Iran. Although Soviet allies such as Syria and Libya sold arms to Iran during the war, Iran maintained a fairly distant foreign policy towards the Union due to a history of general distrust towards them. By 1982, it was clear that Iran had the upperhand in the war and that an Iranian victory would mean the spread of the Islamic Revolution the country had just experienced to different parts of the Gulf. Fearing the repercussions of this cultural change on trade. To prevent Saddam's reign from toppling, the Soviets provided an extensive amount of arms to Iraq. After Iraq established trade relations with the US and the consequent start of the tanker war, the Soviet Union increased their arms deals with Iraq to help prevent increasing US presence in the region. After the Iranian invasion of the Faw peninsula, a fear of Iranian involvement in Afghanistan led the Soviet Union to explicitly support Iraq in the war and provided them with artillery, airpower, and other weapons for defense.⁹⁸

Egypt

In 1978, Baghdad held an Arab league conference condemning Egypt for signing the Camp David Accords that openly supported Israeli claim to Palestinian territory and were written without consulting any Palestinians. Nonetheless, Egypt displayed strong diplomatic support for Iraq during the war. This support encouraged better relations between the countries. Since the early 1980s, Iraq had been a strong supporter of making sure Egypt gains its rightful position amongst the Arab nations. In 1984, Iraq successfully led a coalition meant to ensure Egypt's membership in the OIC. However, the relations between the two countries became worse once again when Egypt joined a United Nations coalition to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait.⁹⁹

Kuwait

In 1982, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait saved Iraq from bankruptcy due to the war.¹⁰⁰ Although Iraq had been hostile towards Kuwait, Iranian fundamentalism was much more feared than any potential threat Iraq may pose.¹⁰¹ Several Kuwaiti tankers carrying Iraqi oil were attacked by Iran during the tanker war period of the conflict.¹⁰² In 1985, Kuwait was a major financial contributor that supported Iraq's offensive strategies towards Iran. After the capture of the al-Faw peninsula, due to the proximity of Iranian forces and the fear of an impending attack, Kuwait increased its financial support for Iraq. Amidst the tanker war in 1987, Kuwaiti tankers were offered

⁹⁸ <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2007/N1524.pdf>

⁹⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2008/10/6/egypt-envoy-in-historic-iraq-visit>

¹⁰⁰ Brogan, Patrick (1989). *World Conflicts: A Comprehensive Guide to World Strife Since 1945*. London: Bloomsbury.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Karsh, Efraim (2002). *The Iran-Iraq War: 1980-1988*. Osprey Publishing. pp. 1-8, 12-16, 19-82. ISBN 978-1-84176-371-2.

protection by the American government under Operation Earnest Will.¹⁰³ After the war, Iraq had built up a significant amount of debt to Kuwait. In 1990, Iraq accused Kuwait of slant drilling and stealing oil resources to justify the Iraqi Invasion mission leading to the second Gulf war.

Libya

During the war, Libya was one of the only Iranian allies in the period of western isolation the country was experiencing. In the last two years, Iran's leaders, seeking to improve the country's image abroad and win support for its war policy, have traveled extensively. Just after Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, negotiated a deal in Libya to secure Soviet-made Scud missiles in June 1985, for example, he flew to Damascus to help arrange the release of 39 Americans taken hostage in the hijacking of a Trans World Airlines plane. Libya supplied Iran with Soviet-made tanks, Katyusha artillery rockets, SAM-7 missiles, anti aircraft guns, anti tank missiles, artillery shells and a small number of armored personnel carriers.¹⁰⁴

Bangladesh

In 1972, Iraq became the first Arab state to recognize Bangladesh as a sovereign country. Although the country was not actively involved in the conflict, its geographic proximity as a country in the subcontinent made it an important center for different intelligence networks to set up bases. In the aftermath of the war, Bangladesh provided soldiers to man the Iran-Iraq border in the aftermath of the war and was part of the UN coalition designed to help the region recuperate from the damage caused by the war.¹⁰⁵ Bangladesh was also part of Operation Desert Storm, a war waged by a coalition of 35 nations that freed Kuwait from Iraqi invasion.¹⁰⁶

Afghanistan

After a 1978 Afghan coup, the Soviet military invaded Afghanistan to set up a pro-soviet government. In the 1980s, Babrak Karmal was installed as Afghanistan's Soviet-backed ruler. Groups of guerrilla fighters known as mujahideen or holy warriors mount opposition and a jihad against Soviet forces. The ensuing war leaves about 1 million Afghan civilians and some 15,000 Soviet soldiers dead.¹⁰⁷ Soviet interests in Afghanistan likely dictated a lot of their geopolitical strategy during the war. Afghanistan also had a Shi'a mobilization during the war. Khomeini continued to invest in reinforcing cross-border links with revolutionary Shia cadres in neighboring Afghanistan. There were several channels of interaction between Afghan Shia jihadi factions and the Islamic Republic administration, but the most significant was with Afghan Shia

¹⁰³ Cordesman, Anthony. "Lessons of Modern War: The Iran–Iraq War" (PDF). Archived (PDF) from the original on 4 January 2014. Retrieved 28 May 2013.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/25/world/iran-in-6-year-search-for-arms-finds-world-of-willing-suppliers.html>

¹⁰⁵ "Bangladesh & The World". *15th Anniversary Special*. Retrieved 23 April 2017.

¹⁰⁶ <http://archive.newagebd.net/41562/kuwait-to-hire-more-bangladeshi-troops/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/19/1028472005/afghanistan-conflict-timeline>

who had earned strong support from Khomeini because of their early loyalty to the Iranian revolutionary cause.¹⁰⁸

Norway

Although Norway was not directly involved in the war due to the geographical position of the country, some events from the war impacted the country. In 1987, Twenty-one crewmen were killed in the worst single attack on merchant shipping of the Persian Gulf war. Iraqi jets pumped Exocet missiles into the 218,467-ton Norwegian-operated tanker *Susangird*, owned by the National Iranian Tanker Co., as it sailed fully loaded from the Kharg Island terminal. Norway's distance and lack of incentives in the matter make it the perfect candidate to take the lead for any foreign diplomatic involvement.¹⁰⁹

Portugal

During the war, Portugal supplied both Iran and Iraq with arms and was heavily involved in the controversial 1985 Iran-Contra affair having supplied \$8.3 billion worth of supplies to the Nicaraguan contras through the US government. From 1981 - 1986, about 75% of Portuguese arms were being exported to the Middle East.¹¹⁰ The Portuguese government's involvement in the war was revealed after further investigation of government activity following the 1980 Camarate Air Crash that took the lives of several high-ranking Portuguese officials. By 1982, Iraq was heavily in debt to the Portuguese government. To combat this financial liability, Portugal sanctioned arms sales to Iran in 1983. In 1984 Portugal sold Iran 1.5bn escudos' worth of arms, making it Portugal's second-largest customer after Iraq.¹¹¹

Mexico

In 1978, Iraq had an embassy in Mexico City and Mexico had an embassy in Baghdad. In 1980, Mexico was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. In September of the same year, Mexico voted in favor of the UN Resolution 479 that called upon all parties involved in the Iran-Iraq war to withdraw their troops and enter into diplomatic negotiations on the issue instead.¹¹² In 1981, Mexico publicly condemned actions taken by the Iranian and Israeli government in Operation Opera, the bombing of Iraqi nuclear reactors on the outskirts of Baghdad. In 1986, the Mexican embassy in Iraq closed down as a result of the war.

¹⁰⁸<https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/soleimanis-shadow/iii-crossroads-in-khuzestan-afghan-shia-mobilization-during-the-iran-iraq-war/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-12-14-mn-19349-story.html>

¹¹⁰ Jose Judice and Benjamin Formigo, *Expresso*, 24 January 1987, "Armas para o Irao: os misterios de Lisboa - Guerra do Golfo consumo 75% do armamento portugues"; included in *Diario da Assembleia da Republica*, 7 February 1987, Series II number 40 Archived 2013-11-03 at the [Wayback Machine](#), pp. 1773–77

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹²<http://institucional.us.es/revistas/Araucaria/A%C3%B1o%2014%20%20N%C2%BA%2028%20%202012/La%20pol%C3%ADtica%20exterior%20de%20M%C3%A9xico.pdf>

In 1990 as well, Mexico supported UN resolution 660 and supported the implementation of sanctions against Saddam Hussain's regime. Coincidentally, Mexico was a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2002 and despite strong US persuasion, the country refused to support the Iraq war triggered after the invasion of Kuwait and openly condemned the actions of the international community for breaching national sovereignty.¹¹³

Venezuela

In the 1980s, the fluctuation in oil prices in the global market due to the regional conflict in the Middle East affected economies way beyond the geographical scope of the Gulf. Carlos Andres Perez served as the Prime Minister from 1979. Despite leading a populist, anti-neoliberal campaign, Perez proved to be a closet liberalizer and globalizer.¹¹⁴ In February 1989, Perez's reign saw an uprising that he crushed with an eventual death toll of 276. Eventually, he was replaced by Rafael Caldera in 1993. This domestic dispute caused turmoil internally but also impacted Venezuela's foreign affairs policy in the middle east. As an oil producer, the Latin American country had stakes in the matter. Given the fact that the western world was backing Iraq during the war with the primary motive of exploiting the oil-resources in the region, it was beneficial for another oil-producing country like Venezuela to back Iran in order to make sure that world oil trade remains far from western domination. Tehran has worked hard to consolidate this friendship since the revolution, in particular its entente with fellow oil producer Venezuela during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad between 2005 and 2013.¹¹⁵ Delegates should consider how solidifying this friendship earlier may have been beneficial for changing the war landscape and increasing domestic stability in Venezuela.

West Germany

At the time of the Iran-Iraq war, Germany was still divided into East and West Germany. At the start of our committee, the delegation will represent West Germany. Keep in mind that East Germany was still an observer nation in the UN in 1972 and can be a potential collaborator for West Germany in committee. In 1982, West Germany sold Iraq pesticides and chemicals that could be used in the creation of chemical weapons.¹¹⁶ In 1987, after Operation Karbala-5, Iraq only had 100 qualified fighter pilots remaining; therefore, Iraq began to invest in recruiting foreign pilots from countries such as East Germany.¹¹⁷ Germany was one of the members of the Paris Club of debtors that contributed the majority of the \$21 billion loan that Iraq owed in

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Ali, Tariq (9 November 2006). "A beacon of hope for the rebirth of Bolívar's dream". *The Guardian*. London. Retrieved 12 October 2008.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1801096/middle-east>

¹¹⁶ King, John (31 March 2003). "Arming Iraq and the Path to War". U.N. Observer & International Report. Archived from the original on 18 September 2017. Retrieved 6 January 2005.

¹¹⁷ "Kaveh Farrokh | Western, Pakistani and Egyptian pilots flying Iraqi Combat Aircraft during the Iran-Iraq War". Archived from the original on 16 November 2018. Retrieved 29 September 2018.

debt.¹¹⁸ By the end of the war it was revealed that factories in both East and West Germany had been supplying Iraq with raw materials used to create chemical weapons. In 1989, just after the official end of the Iran-Iraq war and just before the invasion of Kuwait, the Berlin Wall fell and the two divided territories joined to become the united nation of Germany.

Questions to Consider

1. What roles do previous treaties between Iran and Iraq play and how should they play? Specifically, in terms of the Algiers agreement. In historical context, what were these treaties missing?
2. How did the geopolitical factors of both countries contribute to the conflict? What should the UNSC do in mitigating the geopolitical disputes between Iran and Iraq?
3. How much influence does domestic politics play in the deterioration of relations between Iran and Iraq? When should the UNSC intervene with domestic politics that could overspill into the international realm?
4. How much did the involvement of foreign powers in providing armistice contribute to escalation of the conflict and cost of lives? Should the foreign countries be penalized/sanctioned from profiting off of the conflict?
5. What could have been done to protect minority ethnic groups within both countries? How does social/cultural tension further escalate the conflict? As foreign nations, what should the international community do in response to the ethnic genocide that was taking place (i.e. Kurds)?
6. What was the role of oil in this conflict? What about the international economic system? How did the key players that benefit from economic transactions with either Iran and Iraq respond to the war? Did the war impact the economic balance in the region and worldwide?
7. Think about the chemical warfare and nuclear threats that occurred during the Iran-Iraq war. What role did foreign nations play in enabling the actions of those involved in human rights violations? How could the use of these dangerous weapons be prevented? What role did the Iran-Iraq conflict play in increasing the use of bioweaponry in mainstream warfare?
8. What role could the individual members of the UNSC play in shaping the conflict in the Middle East? Who are their allies, trade partners, and supporters? What are the economic, political, and social factors that can enable the respective member nations of the UNSC to gain power and influence in the midst of the conflict?

Further readings:

1. <https://www.history.com/news/sunni-shia-divide-islam-muslim>

¹¹⁸ Pike, John (ed.). "Iraq debt: Non-Paris Club Creditors". Archived from the original on 12 October 2017. Retrieved 25 July 2006.

2. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/modern-sunni-shia-tensions>
3. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-sunni-shiite-divide-in-the-middle-east-is-about-nationalism-not-a-conflict-within-islam/>
4. “IRAN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND.” Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran, by MEDEA BENJAMIN, OR Books, New York; London, 2018, pp. 166–195. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv62hfzm.13.
5. [Abdo, Geneive, and Nathan Brown. CONTEMPORARY SHIA-SUNNI RIVALRY AND THE ERUPTION OF VIOLENT SECTARIANISM. Atlantic Council, 2016, pp. 12–13. RELIGION, IDENTITY, AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03677.9. Accessed 1 July 2021.](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03677.9)
6. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/18/the-sunni-shia-divide-where-they-live-what-they-believe-and-how-they-view-each-other/>
7. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/irans-ethnic-groups>
8. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/479\(1980\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/479(1980))
9. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qujpeKcUx2sC&oi=fnd&pg=PA4&dq=iran-iraq+war+UN+&ots=4TD1YdsyRc&sig=z_JhUD23AWumSNJ5SDwx0KVwsME#v=onepage&q&f=false