

SBSMUN 2019

**COMMITTEE:
CABINET OF IRAQ**

**CRISIS AT HAND:
IRAN-IRAQ WAR
(1980-88)**

FREEZE DATE- September 22, 1980

Dear delegates,

We are going to convene on the 26th-28th of July in order to re-write history as we know it. You will be in the driving seats for the creation of this alternate history, and though it is no easy task, I'm looking forward to innovative solutions to the monumental problems that the crisis at hand has brought with it. You've been given a unique chance to carefully understand what happened in reality through a retrospective lens, understand what went wrong and where, and ultimately create better outcomes for the committee.

This war cabinet is going to be a chess match. There's going to be strategies, tactics, anticipation, actions and consequences. You need to think on your feet, respond swiftly to threats and capitalise on opportunities, and as a collective, direct this committee into achieving its goals.

That being said, I have several expectations from you all. As delegates, you're all expected to be decent and polite at the very least. Yes it is a war cabinet, yes it can get very heated, but no one is allowed to disrespect any other member of committee in any way. For the purpose of awards, awards will be given not on the basis of how dominating you are, not on the basis of how much better you can drown out those around you, but they will be given out on the basis of how efficiently and effectively you can put forward your points. You will be marked on your manner- way of speaking, matter- content of your speeches, and method- structure of your speeches. Lastly, yes, facts are important and everything in committee will need to have a factual basis, but I urge you all to go beyond the statement of facts and into the logical analysis of them. Facts are not unique to anyone, what does in fact make your contribution to the committee unique is the different ideas and thought processes you can bring to the table- which build on the facts you know.

As the Executive Board, we'd further expect you to be able to answer several substantive questions, some of them regarding-

1. Effective mobilisation of more manpower and resources
2. Retention of existing manpower and resources
3. Methods to deal with the larger allies of our enemy
4. Expansion of ideology and countering conflicting ideologies
5. Mobilisation, utilisation and retention of our own allies

Further, in your directives, you're expected to elaborate on not only the "what" but also the "how". Directives which include aspects like a detailed plan of action, methods of financing etc... will really help bring clarity to the Executive Board and the committee.

Lastly, this background guide is a mere, bare skeleton of what the Iran-Iraq War really was. As delegates, you're recommended to go far beyond this guide in your attempts to develop a holistic perspective on the events that transpired, and the **ideologies** that backed them. You need to understand how actions taken tie in with these ideologies. The references used in the making the background guide have been listed below.

I hope to be part of a dynamic, engaging conference with you all.

Siddhartha Rai Tandon

Chairperson, Iraq War Cabinet

NOTE- This background guide may contain facts and figures from beyond the freeze date. They are included only to give some perspective. Once the conference starts, these facts will be disregarded. Further, this background guide may contain views that are contrarian to our actual stance on certain issues. These have been included only for informative purposes.

Introduction and Causes:

The protracted war between these neighbouring Middle Eastern countries resulted in at least half a million casualties and several billion dollars' worth of damages, but no real gains by other side. Started by Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein in September 1980, the war was marked by indiscriminate ballistic-missile attacks, extensive use of chemical weapons and attacks on third-country oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. Although Iraq was forced on the strategic defensive, Iran was unable to reconstitute effective armoured formations for its air force and could not penetrate Iraq's borders deeply enough to achieve decisive results. The end came in July 1988 with the acceptance UN Resolution 598.

During the eight years between Iraq's formal declaration of war on September 22, 1980, and Iran's acceptance of a cease-fire with effect on July 20, 1988, at the very least half a million and possibly twice as many troops were killed on both sides, at least half a million became permanent invalids, some 228 billion dollars were directly expended, and more than 400 billion dollars of damage (mostly to oil facilities, but also to cities) was inflicted, mostly by artillery barrages. Aside from that, the war was inconsequential: having won Iranian recognition of exclusive Iraqi sovereignty over the Shatt-el-Arab River (into which the Tigris and Euphrates combine, forming Iraq's best outlet to the sea), in 1988 Saddam Hussein surrendered that gain when in need of Iran's neutrality in anticipation of the 1991 Gulf War.

Three things distinguish the Iran-Iraq War. First, it was inordinately protracted, lasting longer than either world war, essentially because Iran did not want to end it, while Iraq could not. Second, it was sharply asymmetrical in the means employed by each side, because though both sides exported oil and purchased military imports throughout, Iraq was further subsidized and supported by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, allowing it to acquire advanced weapons and expertise on a much larger scale than Iran. Third, it included three modes of warfare absent in all previous wars since 1945: indiscriminate ballistic-missile attacks on cities by both sides, but mostly by Iraq; the extensive use of chemical weapons (mostly by Iraq); and some 520 attacks on third-country oil tankers in the Persian Gulf-for which Iraq employed mostly manned aircraft with antishipping missiles against tankers lifting oil from Iran's terminals, while Iran used mines, gunboats, shore-launched missiles, and helicopters against tankers lifting oil from the terminals of Iraq's Arab backers.

When Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, quite deliberately started the war, he miscalculated on two counts: first, in attacking a country greatly disorganized by revolution but also greatly energized by it-and whose regime could be consolidated only by a long "patriotic" war, as with all revolutionary regimes; and second, at the level of theatre strategy, in launching a surprise invasion against a very large country whose strategic depth he was not even trying to penetrate. Had Iran been given ample warning, it would have mobilized its forces to defend its borderlands; that

would have made the Iraqi invasion much more difficult, but in the process the bulk of Iranian forces might have been defeated, possibly forcing Iran to accept a cease-fire on Iraqi terms. As it was, the initial Iraqi offensive thrusts landed in the void, encountering only weak border units before reaching their logistical limits. At that point, Iran had only just started to mobilize in earnest.

From then on, until the final months of the war eight years later, Iraq was forced on the strategic defensive, having to face periodic Iranian offensives on one sector or another, year after year. After losing most of his territorial gains by May 1982 (when Iran recaptured Khorramshahr), Saddam Hussein's strategic response was to proclaim a unilateral cease-fire (June 10, 1982) while ordering Iraqi forces to withdraw to the border. But Iran rejected a cease-fire, demanding the removal of Saddam Hussein and compensation for war damage. Upon Iraq's refusal, Iran launched an invasion into Iraqi territory (Operation Ramadan, on July 13, 1982) in the first of many attempts over the coming years to conquer Basra, Iraq's second city and only real port.

But revolutionary Iran was very limited in its tactically offensive means. Cut off from U.S. supplies for its largely U.S.-equipped forces and deprived of the shah's officer cadres who had been driven into exile, imprisoned, or killed, it never managed to reconstitute effective armoured formations or its once large and modern air force. Iran's army and Pasdaran revolutionary guards could mount only massed infantry attacks supported by increasingly strong artillery fire. They capitalized on Iran's morale and population advantage (forty million versus Iraq's thirteen million), but although foot infantry could breach Iraqi defence lines from time to time, if only by costly human-wave attacks, it could not penetrate deeply enough in the aftermath to achieve decisive results.

By 1988 Iran was demoralized by the persistent failure of its many "final" offensives over the years, by the prospect of unending casualties, by its declining ability to import civilian goods as well as military supplies, and by the Scud missile attacks on Teheran. But what finally ended the war was Iraq's belated reversion to main-force offensive action on the ground. Having long conserved its forces and shifted to all-mechanized configurations to circumvent the reluctance of its troops to face enemy fire, Iraq attacked on a large scale in April 1988. The end came on July 18, when Iran accepted UN Resolution 598 calling for an immediate cease-fire, though minor Iraqi attacks continued for a few more days after the truce came into effect on July 20, 1988.

The roots of the war lay in a number of territorial and political disputes between Iraq and Iran. Iraq wanted to seize control of the rich oil-producing Iranian border region of Khūzestān, a territory inhabited largely by ethnic Arabs over which Iraq sought to extend some form of suzerainty. Iraqi president Saddam Hussein wanted to reassert his country's sovereignty over both banks of the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab, a river formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that was historically the border between

the two countries. Saddam was also concerned over attempts by Iran's Islamic revolutionary government to incite rebellion among Iraq's Shi'ite majority. By attacking when it did, Iraq took advantage of the apparent disorder and isolation of Iran's new government—then at loggerheads with the States over the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehrān by Iranian militants—and of the demoralization and dissolution of Iran's regular armed forces.

General Iraq profile - Timeline

1534-1918 - Ottoman rule.

1917 - Britain seizes control, creates state of Iraq.

1932 - Independence, followed by coups.

1979 - Saddam Hussein becomes president.

1980-1988 - Iran-Iraq war.

1990 - Iraq invades Kuwait, putting it on a collision course with the international community.

1991 - Iraq subjected to sanctions, weapons inspections and no-fly zones.

2003 - US-led coalition invades, starting years of guerrilla warfare and instability.

1917 - Britain seizes Baghdad during First World War.

1920 - League of Nations approves British mandate in Iraq, prompting nationwide revolt.

1921 - Britain appoints Feisal, son of Hussein Bin Ali, the Sherif of Mecca, as king.

Independence

1932 - Mandate ends, Iraq becomes independent. Britain retains military bases.

1941 - Britain re-occupies Iraq after pro-Axis coup during Second World War.

1958 - The monarchy is overthrown in a left-wing military coup led by Abd-al-Karim Qasim. Iraq leaves the pro-British Baghdad Pact.

1963 - Prime Minister Qasim is ousted in a coup led by the pan-Arab Baath Party.

1963 - The Baathist government is overthrown, but seizes power again five years later

Baathists in power

1968 - A Baathist led-coup puts Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr in power.

1972 - Iraq nationalises the Iraq Petroleum Company.

1974 - Iraq grants limited autonomy to Kurdish region.

1979 - Saddam Hussein takes over from President Al-Bakr.

Iran-Iraq war

1980-1988 - Iran-Iraq war results in stalemate.

1981 June - Israeli air raid destroys Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak near Baghdad.

1988 March - Iraq attacks Kurdish town of Halabjah with poison gas, killing thousands.

Iran-Iraq War, 1980 – 1988 (Detailed Timeline)

The Iran-Iraq War permanently altered the course of Iraqi history. It strained Iraqi political and social life, and led to severe economic dislocations. Viewed from a historical perspective, the outbreak of hostilities in 1980 was, in part, just another phase of the ancient Persian-Arab conflict that had been fuelled by twentieth-century border disputes. Many observers, however, believe that Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iran was a personal miscalculation based on ambition and a sense of vulnerability. Saddam Hussein, despite having made significant strides in forging an Iraqi nation-state, feared that Iran's new revolutionary leadership would threaten Iraq's delicate Sunni-Shia balance and would exploit Iraq's geostrategic vulnerabilities--Iraq's minimal access to the Persian Gulf, for example. In this respect, Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iran has historical precedent; the ancient rulers of Mesopotamia, fearing internal strife and foreign conquest, also engaged in frequent battles with the peoples of the highlands.

The Iran-Iraq War was multifaceted and included religious schisms, border disputes, and political differences. Conflicts contributing to the outbreak of hostilities ranged from centuries old Sunni-versus-Shia and Arab-versus-Persian religious and ethnic disputes, to a personal animosity between Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini. Above all, Iraq launched the war in an effort to consolidate its rising power in the Arab world and to replace Iran as the dominant Persian Gulf state. Phebe Marr, a noted analyst of Iraqi affairs, stated that "the war was more immediately the result of poor political judgement and miscalculation on the part of Saddam Hussein," and "the decision to invade, taken at a moment of Iranian weakness, was Saddam's".

Iraq and Iran had engaged in border clashes for many years and had revived the dormant Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab) waterway dispute in 1979. Iraq claimed the 200-kilometer channel up to the Iranian shore as its territory, while Iran insisted that the line running down the middle of the waterway negotiated last in 1975, was the official border. The Iraqis, especially the Baath leadership, regarded the 1975 treaty as merely a truce, not a definitive settlement.

The Iraqis also perceived revolutionary Iran's Islamic agenda as threatening to their pan-Arabism. Khomeini, bitter over his expulsion from Iraq in 1977 after fifteen years in An Najaf, vowed to avenge Shia victims of Baathist repression. Baghdad became more confident, however, as it watched the once invincible Imperial Iranian Army disintegrate, as most of its highest ranking officers were executed. In Khouzestan (Arabistan to the Iraqis), Iraqi intelligence officers incited riots over labour disputes, and in the Kurdish region, a new rebellion caused the Khomeini government severe troubles.

As the Baathists planned their military campaign, they had every reason to be confident. Not only did the Iranians lack cohesive leadership, but the Iranian armed forces, according to Iraqi intelligence estimates, also lacked spare parts for their American-made equipment. Baghdad, on the other hand, possessed fully equipped and trained forces. Morale was running high. Against Iran's armed forces, including the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard) troops, led by religious mullahs with little or no military experience, the Iraqis could muster twelve complete mechanized divisions, equipped with the latest Soviet materiel. With the Iraqi military build-up in the late 1970s, Saddam Hussein had assembled an army of 190,000

men, augmented by 2,200 tanks and 450 aircraft.

In addition, the area across the Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab) posed no major obstacles, particularly for an army equipped with Soviet river-crossing equipment. Iraqi commanders correctly assumed that crossing sites on the Kharkheh and Karoun rivers were lightly defended against their mechanized armour divisions; moreover, Iraqi intelligence sources reported that Iranian forces in Khuzestan, which had formerly included two divisions distributed among Ahvaz, Dezful, and Abadan, now consisted of only a number of ill-equipped battalion-sized formations. Tehran was further disadvantaged because the area was controlled by the Regional 1st Corps headquartered at Bakhtaran (formerly Kermanshah), whereas operational control was directed from the capital. In the year following the shah's overthrow, only a handful of company-sized tank units had been operative, and the rest of the armoured equipment had been poorly maintained.

For Iraqi planners, the only uncertainty was the fighting ability of the Iranian air force, equipped with some of the most sophisticated American-made aircraft. Despite the execution of key air force commanders and pilots, the Iranian air force had displayed its might during local riots and demonstrations. The air force was also active in the wake of the failed United States attempt to rescue American hostages in April 1980. This show of force had impressed Iraqi decision makers to such an extent that they decided to launch a massive pre-emptive air strike on Iranian air bases in an effort similar to the one that Israel employed during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

Iraqi Offensives, 1980 - 1982

Despite the Iraqi government's concern, the eruption of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran did not immediately destroy the Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement that had prevailed since the 1975 Algiers Agreement. As a sign of Iraq's desire to maintain good relations with the new government in Tehran, President Bakr sent a personal message to Khomeini offering "his best wishes for the friendly Iranian people on the occasion of the establishment of the Islamic Republic." In addition, as late as the end of August 1979, Iraqi authorities extended an invitation to Mehdi Bazargan, the first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to visit Iraq with the aim of improving bilateral relations. The fall of the moderate Bazargan government in late 1979, however, and the rise of Islamic militants preaching an expansionist foreign policy soured Iraqi-Iranian relations.



The principal events that touched off the rapid deterioration in relations occurred during the spring of 1980. In April the Iranian-supported Ad Dawah attempted to assassinate Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz. Shortly after the failed grenade attack on Tariq Aziz, Ad Dawah was suspected of attempting to assassinate another Iraqi leader, Minister of Culture and

Information Latif Nayyif Jasim. In response, the Iraqis immediately rounded up members and supporters of Ad Dawah and deported to Iran thousands of Shias of Iranian origin. In the summer of 1980, Saddam Hussein ordered the executions of presumed Ad Dawah leader Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqr as Sadr and his sister.

In September 1980, border skirmishes erupted in the central sector near Qasr-e Shirin, with an exchange of artillery fire by both sides. A few weeks later, Saddam Hussein officially abrogated the 1975 treaty between Iraq and Iran and announced that the Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab) was returning to Iraqi sovereignty. Iran rejected this action and hostilities escalated as the two sides exchanged bombing raids deep into each other's territory, beginning what was to be a protracted and extremely costly war.

Baghdad originally planned a quick victory over Tehran. Saddam expected the invasion of the in the Arabic-speaking, oil-rich area of Khouzistan to result in an Arab uprising against Khomeini's fundamentalist Islamic regime. This revolt did not materialize, however, and the Arab minority remained loyal to Tehran.

The first day of the war

On September 22, 1980, formations of Iraqi MiG-23s and MiG21s attacked Iran's air bases at Mehrabad and Doshen-Tappen (both near Tehran), as well as Tabriz, Bakhtaran, Ahvaz, Dezful, Uromiyeh, Hamadan, Sanandaj, and Abadan. Their aim was to destroy the Iranian air force on the ground--a lesson learned from the Arab-Israeli June 1967 War. They succeeded in destroying runways and fuel and ammunition depots, but much of Iran's aircraft inventory was left intact. Iranian defences were caught by surprise, but the Iraqi raids failed because Iranian jets were protected in specially strengthened hangars and because bombs designed to destroy runways did not totally incapacitate Iran's very large airfields. Within hours, Iranian F-4 Phantoms took off from the same bases, successfully attacked strategically important targets close to major Iraqi cities, and returned home with very few losses.

Simultaneously, six Iraqi army divisions entered Iran on three fronts in an initially successful surprise attack, where they drove as far as eight kilometres inland and occupied 1,000 square kilometres of Iranian territory.

As a diversionary move on the northern front, an Iraqi mechanized mountain infantry division overwhelmed the border garrison at Qasr-e Shirin, a border town in Bakhtaran (formerly known as Kermanshahan) Province, and occupied territory thirty kilometres eastward to the base of the Zagros Mountains. This area was strategically significant because the main Baghdad-Tehran highway traversed it.

On the central front, Iraqi forces captured Mehran, on the western plain of the Zagros Mountains in Ilam Province, and pushed eastward to the mountain base. Mehran occupied an important position on the major north-south road, close to the border on the Iranian side.

The main thrust of the attack was in the south, where five armoured and mechanized divisions invaded Khouzestan on two axes, one crossing over the Arvand-Roud(Shatt al Arab)

near Basra, which led to the siege and eventual occupation of Khorramshahr, and the second heading for Sousangerd, which had Ahvaz, the major military base in Khuzestan, as its objective. Iraqi armoured units easily crossed the Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab) waterway and entered the Iranian province of Khuzestan. Dehloran and several other towns were targeted and were rapidly occupied to prevent reinforcement from Bakhtaran and from Tehran. By mid-October, a full division advanced through Khuzestan headed for Khorramshahr and Abadan and the strategic oil fields nearby. Other divisions headed toward Ahvaz, the provincial capital and site of an air base. Supported by heavy artillery fire, the troops made a rapid and significant advance--almost eighty kilometres in the first few days. In the battle for Dezful in Khuzestan, where a major air base is located, the local Iranian army commander requested air support in order to avoid a defeat. President Bani Sadr, therefore, authorized the release from jail of many pilots, some of whom were suspected of still being loyal to the shah. With the increased use of the Iranian air force, the Iraqi progress was somewhat curtailed.

The last major Iraqi territorial gain took place in early November 1980. On November 3, Iraqi forces reached Abadan but were repulsed by a small Pasdaran unit. Even though they surrounded Abadan on three sides and occupied a portion of the city, the Iraqis could not overcome the stiff resistance; sections of the city still under Iranian control were resupplied by boat at night. On November 10, Iraq captured Khorramshahr after a bloody house-to-house fight with the local people. The price of this victory was high for both sides, approximately 6,000 casualties for Iraq and even more for Iran.

Iraq's blitz-like assaults against scattered Iranian forces led many observers to think that Baghdad would win the war within a matter of weeks. Indeed, Iraqi troops did capture the Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab) and did seize a forty-eight-kilometre-wide strip of Iranian territory.

Iran may have prevented a quick Iraqi victory by a rapid mobilization of volunteers and deployment of loyal Pasdaran forces to the front. Besides enlisting the Iranian pilots, the new revolutionary regime also recalled veterans of the old imperial army, although many experienced and well trained officers had been purged. Furthermore, the Pasdaran and Basij (what Ayatollah Khomeini called the "Army of Twenty Million" or People's Militia) recruited at least 100,000 volunteers. Approximately 200,000 soldiers were sent to the front by the end of November 1980. They were ideologically committed troops (some members even carried their own shrouds to the front in the expectation of martyrdom) that fought bravely despite inadequate armour support. For example, on November 7 commando units played a significant role, with the navy and air force; in an assault on Iraqi oil export terminals at Mina al Bakr and Al Faw. Iran hoped to diminish Iraq's financial resources by reducing its oil revenues. Iran also attacked the northern pipeline in the early days of the war and persuaded Syria to close the Iraqi pipeline that crossed its territory.

Iran's resistance at the outset of the Iraqi invasion was unexpectedly strong, but it was neither well organized nor equally successful on all fronts. Iraq easily advanced in the northern and central sections and crushed the Pasdaran's scattered resistance there. Iraqi troops, however, faced untiring resistance in Khuzestan. President Saddam Hussein of Iraq

may have thought that the approximately 3 million Arabs of Khouzestan would join the Iraqis against Tehran. Instead, they joined the Iran's regular and irregular armed forces and fought in the battles at Dezful, Khorramshahr, and Abadan. Soon after capturing Khorramshahr, the Iraqi troops lost their initiative and began to dig in along their line of advance.

Tehran rejected a settlement offer and held the line against the militarily superior Iraqi force. It refused to accept defeat, and slowly began a series of counteroffensives in January 1981. Both the Basij (Popular Mobilization Army or People's Army) volunteers and the regular armed forces were eager to fight back. Armed forces were seeing an opportunity to regain prestige lost because of their association with the shah's regime.



Iranian's holding the Iraqi Tanks back

Iran's first major counterattack failed, however, for political and military reasons. President Bani Sadr was engaged in a power struggle with key religious figures and eager to gain political support among the armed forces by direct involvement in military operations. Lacking military expertise, he initiated a premature attack by three regular armoured regiments without the assistance of the Pasdaran units. He also failed to take into account that the ground near Sousangerd, muddied by the preceding rainy season, would make resupply difficult. As a result of his tactical decision making, the Iranian forces were surrounded on three sides. In a long exchange of fire, many Iranian armoured vehicles were destroyed or had to be abandoned because they were either stuck in the mud or needed minor repairs. Fortunately for Iran, however, the Iraqi forces failed to follow up with another attack.

Iran stopped Iraqi forces on the Karoun River and, with limited military stocks, unveiled its "human wave" assaults, which used thousands of Basij (Popular Mobilization Army or People's Army) volunteers. After Bani Sadr was ousted as president and commander in chief, Iran gained its first major victory, when, as a result of Khomeini's initiative, the army and Pasdaran suppressed their rivalry and cooperated to force Baghdad to lift its long siege of Abadan in September 1981. Iranian forces also defeated Iraq in the



Abadan suffered heavy damages

Qasr-e Shirin area in December 1981 and January 1982. The Iraqi armed forces were hampered by their unwillingness to sustain a high casualty rate and therefore refused to initiate a new offensive.

Despite Iraqi success in causing major damage to exposed Iranian ammunition and fuel dumps in the early days of the war, the Iranian air force prevailed initially in the air war. One reason was that Iranian airplanes could carry two or three times more bombs or rockets than their Iraqi counterparts. Moreover, Iranian pilots demonstrated considerable expertise. For example, the Iranian air force attacked Baghdad and key Iraqi air bases as early as the first few weeks of the war, seeking to destroy supply and support systems. The attack on Iraq's oil field complex and air base at Al Walid, the base for T-22 and Il-28 bombers, was a well-coordinated assault. The targets were more than 800 kilometres from Iran's closest air base at Urumiyeh, so the F-4s had to refuel in midair for the mission. Iran's air force relied on F-4s and F-5s for assaults and a few F-14s for reconnaissance. Although Iran used its Maverick missiles effectively against ground targets, lack of airplane spare parts forced Iran to substitute helicopters for close air support. Helicopters served not only as gunships and troop carriers but also as emergency supply transports. In the mountainous area near Mehran, helicopters proved advantageous in finding and destroying targets and maneuvering against anti-aircraft guns or man-portable missiles. During Operation Karbala Five and Operation Karbala Six, the Iranians reportedly engaged in large-scale helicopter-borne operations on the southern and central fronts, respectively. Chinooks and smaller Bell helicopters, such as the Bell 214A, were escorted by Sea Cobra choppers.

In confronting the Iraqi air defence, Iran soon discovered that a low-flying group of two, three, or four F-4s could hit targets almost anywhere in Iraq. Iranian pilots overcame Iraqi SA-2 and SA-3 anti-aircraft missiles, using American tactics developed in Vietnam; they were less successful against Iraqi SA-6s. Iran's Western-made air defence system seemed more effective than Iraq's Soviet-made counterpart. Nevertheless, Iran experienced difficulty in operating and maintaining Hawk, Rapier, and Tigercat missiles and instead used anti-aircraft guns and man-portable missiles.

Iraqi Retreats, 1982 - 1984

The Iranian high command passed from regular military leaders to clergy in mid-1982. In March of same year, Tehran launched its Operation Undefeatable Victory, which marked a major turning point, as Iran penetrated Iraq's "impenetrable" lines, split Iraq's forces, and forced the Iraqis to retreat. Its forces broke the Iraqi line near Sousangerd, separating Iraqi units in northern and southern Khuzestan. Within a week, they succeeded in destroying a large part of three Iraqi divisions. This operation, another combined effort of the army, Pasdaran, and Basij,



Iraqi POWs

was a turning point in the war because the strategic initiative shifted from Iraq to Iran.

In May 1982, Iranian units finally regained Khorramshahr, but with high casualties. After this victory, the Iranians maintained the pressure on the remaining Iraqi forces, and President Saddam Hussein announced that the Iraqi units would withdraw from Iranian territory. Saddam ordered a withdrawal to the international borders, believing Iran would agree to end the war. Iran did not accept this withdrawal as the end of the conflict, and continued the war into Iraq. In late June 1982, Baghdad stated its willingness to negotiate a settlement of the war and to withdraw its forces from Iran. Iran refused.

In July 1982 Iran launched Operation Ramadan on Iraqi territory, near Basra. Although Basra was within range of Iranian artillery, the clergy used "human-wave" attacks by the Pasdaran and Basij against the city's defenses, apparently waiting for a coup to topple Saddam Hussein. Tehran used Pasdaran forces and Basij volunteers in one of the biggest land battles since 1945. Ranging in age from only nine to more than fifty, these eager but relatively untrained soldiers swept over minefields and fortifications to clear safe paths for the tanks. All such assaults faced Iraqi artillery fire and received heavy casualties. The Iranians sustained an immense number of casualties, but they enabled Iran to recover some territory before the Iraqis could repulse the bulk of the invading forces.

By the end of 1982, Iraq had been resupplied with new Soviet materiel, and the ground war entered a new phase. Iraq used newly acquired T-55 tanks and T-62 tanks, BM-21 Stalin Organ rocket launchers, and Mi-24 helicopter gunships to prepare a Soviet-type three-line defence, replete with obstacles, minefields, and fortified positions. The Combat Engineer Corps proved efficient in constructing bridges across water obstacles, in laying minefields, and in preparing new defence lines and fortifications.

Throughout 1983 both sides demonstrated their ability to absorb and to inflict severe losses. Iraq, in particular, proved adroit at constructing defensive strong points and flooding lowland areas to stymie the Iranian thrusts, hampering the advance of mechanized units. Both sides also experienced difficulties in effectively utilizing their armour. Rather than manoeuvre their armour, they tended to dig in tanks and use them as artillery pieces. Furthermore, both sides failed to master tank gunsights and fire controls, making themselves vulnerable to antitank weapons.

In 1983 Iran launched three major, but unsuccessful, human wave offensives, with huge losses, along the frontier. On February 6, Tehran, using 200,000 "last reserve" Pasdaran troops, attacked along a 40-kilometer stretch near Al Amarah, about 200 kilometres southeast of Baghdad. Backed by air, armour, and artillery support, Iran's six-division thrust was strong enough to break through. In response, Baghdad used massive air attacks, with more than 200 sorties, many flown by attack helicopters. More than 6,000 Iranians were killed that day, while achieving only minute gains. In April 1983, the Mandali-Baghdad north central sector witnessed fierce fighting, as repeated Iranian attacks were stopped by Iraqi mechanized and infantry divisions. Casualties were very high, and by the end of 1983, an estimated 120,000 Iranians and 60,000 Iraqis had been killed. Despite these losses, in 1983 Iran held a distinct advantage in the attempt to wage and eventually to win the war of attrition.

Beginning in 1984, Baghdad's military goal changed from controlling Iranian territory to denying Tehran any major gain inside Iraq. Furthermore, Iraq tried to force Iran to the negotiating table by various means. First, President Saddam Hussein sought to increase the war's manpower and economic cost to Iran. For this purpose, Iraq purchased new weapons, mainly from the Soviet Union and France. Iraq also completed the construction of what came to be known as "killing zones" (which consisted primarily of artificially flooded areas near Basra) to stop Iranian units. In addition, Baghdad used chemical weapons against Iranian troop concentrations and launched attacks on many economic centres. Despite Iraqi determination to halt further Iranian progress, Iranian units in March 1984 captured parts of the Majnoun Islands, whose oil fields had economic as well as strategic value.



Iranian Troops on the move

Second, Iraq turned to diplomatic and political means. In April 1984, Saddam Hussein proposed to meet Khomeini personally in a neutral location to discuss peace negotiations. But Tehran rejected this offer and restated its refusal to negotiate with President Saddam Hussein.

Third, Iraq sought to involve the superpowers as a means of ending the war. The Iraqis believed this objective could be achieved by attacking Iranian shipping. Initially, Baghdad used borrowed French Super Etendard aircraft armed with Exocets. In 1984 Iraq returned these airplanes to France and purchased approximately thirty Mirage F-1 fighters equipped with Exocet missiles. Iraq launched a new series of attacks on shipping on February 1, 1984.

The War of Attrition, 1984 - 1987

By 1984 it was reported that some 300,000 Iranian soldiers and 250,000 Iraqi troops had been killed, or wounded. Most foreign military analysts felt that neither Iraq nor Iran used its modern equipment efficiently. Frequently, sophisticated materiel was left unused, when a massive modern assault could have won the battle for either side. Tanks and armoured vehicles were dug in and used as artillery pieces, instead of being manoeuvred to lead or to support an assault. William O. Staudenmaier, a seasoned military analyst, reported that "the land-computing sights on the Iraqi tanks [were] seldom used. This lowered the accuracy of the T-62 tanks to World War II standards." This was the result of poorly educated and trained commissioned officers and field commanders. In addition, both sides frequently abandoned heavy equipment in the battle zone because they lacked the skilled technical personnel needed to carry out minor repairs.

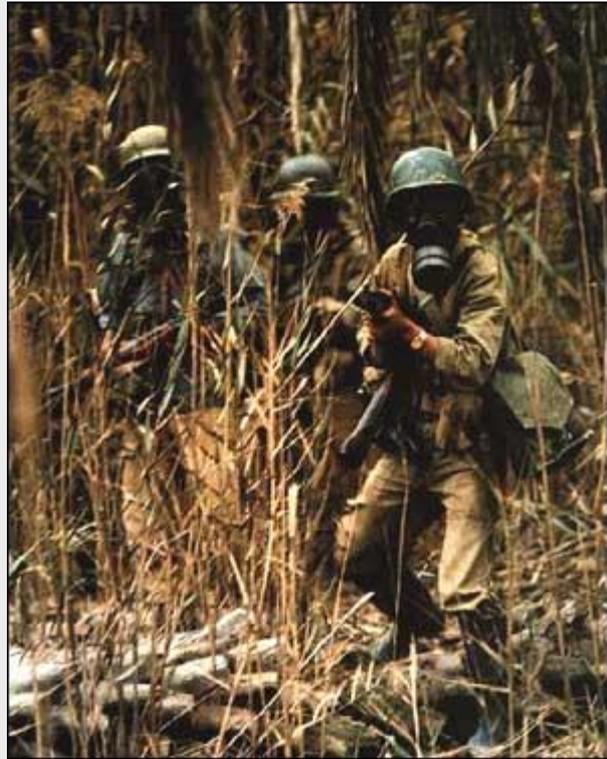
Analysts also assert that the two states' armies showed little coordination and that some units in the field have been left to fight largely on their own. In this protracted war of attrition, soldiers and officers alike failed to display initiative or professional expertise in combat. Difficult decisions, which should have had immediate attention, were referred by section commanders to the capitals for action. Except for the predictable bursts on important anniversaries, by the mid-1980s the war was stalemated.

In early 1984, Iran had begun Operation Dawn V, which was meant to split the Iraqi 3rd Army Corps and 4th Army Corps near Basra. In early 1984, an estimated 500,000 Pasdaran and Basij forces, using shallow boats or on foot, moved to within a few kilometres of the strategic Basra-Baghdad waterway. Between February 29 and March 1, in one of the largest battles

of the war, the two armies clashed and inflicted more than 25,000 fatalities on each other. Without armoured and air support of their own, the Iranians faced Iraqi tanks, mortars, and helicopter gunships. Within a few weeks, Tehran opened another front in the shallow lakes of the Hawizah Marshes, just east of Al Qurnah, in Iraq, near the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Iraqi forces, using Soviet- and French-made helicopter gunships, inflicted heavy casualties on the five Iranian brigades (15,000 men) in this Battle of Majnoun. Lacking the equipment to open secure passages through Iraqi minefields, and having too few tanks, the Iranian command again resorted to the human-wave tactic. In March 1984, an East European journalist claimed that he "saw tens of thousands of young boys, roped together in groups of about twenty to prevent the faint-hearted from deserting, make such an attack." The Iranians made little progress despite these sacrifices. Perhaps as a result of this performance, Tehran, for the first time, used a regular army unit, the 92nd Armored Division, at the Battle of the Marshes a few weeks later.

In February 1984 the Iraqi command ordered the use of chemical weapons. Despite repeated Iraqi denials, between May 1981 and March 1984, Iran charged Iraq with forty uses of chemical weapons. The year 1984 closed with part of the Majnoun Islands and a few pockets of Iraqi territory in Iranian hands. Casualties notwithstanding, Tehran had maintained its military posture, while Baghdad was re-evaluating its overall strategy.

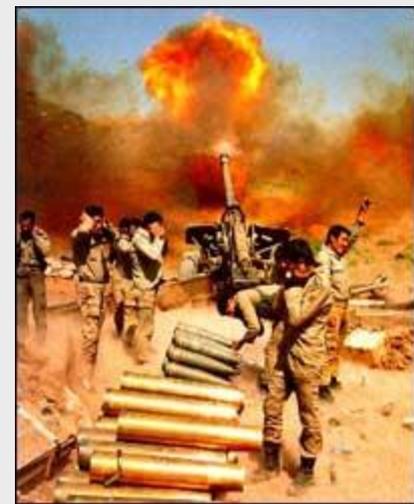
The major development in 1985 was the increased targeting of population centres and industrial facilities by both combatants. In May Iraq began aircraft attacks, long-range artillery attacks, and surface-to-surface missile attacks on Tehran and on other major Iranian cities. Between August and November, Iraq raided Khark Island forty-four times in a futile



Iranian troops under Iraqi Chemical Weapon attacks

attempt to destroy its installations. Iran responded with its own air raids and missile attacks on Baghdad and other Iraqi towns. In addition, Tehran systematized its periodic stop-and-search operations, which were conducted to verify the cargo contents of ships in the Persian Gulf and to seize war materiel destined for Iraq.

The only major ground offensive, involving an estimated 60,000 Iranian troops, occurred in March 1985, near Basra; once again, the assault proved inconclusive except for heavy casualties. In 1986, however, Iraq suffered a major loss in the southern region. On February 9, Iran launched a successful surprise amphibious assault across the Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab) and captured the abandoned Iraqi oil port of Al Faw. The occupation of Al Faw, a logistical feat, involved 30,000 regular Iranian soldiers who rapidly entrenched themselves. Saddam Hussein vowed to eliminate the bridgehead "at all costs," and in April 1988 the Iraqis succeeded in regaining the Al Faw peninsula.



Iranian Artillery Battery

Late, in March 1986, the UN secretary general, Javier Perez de Cuellar, formally accused Iraq of using chemical weapons against Iran. Citing the report of four chemical warfare experts whom the UN had sent to Iran in February and March 1986, the secretary general called on Baghdad to end its violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol on the use of chemical weapons. The UN report concluded that "Iraqi forces have used chemical warfare against Iranian forces"; the weapons used included both mustard gas and nerve gas. The report further stated that "the use of chemical weapons appeared to be more extensive [in 1981] than in 1984." Iraq attempted to deny using chemicals, but the evidence, in the form of many badly burned casualties flown to European hospitals for treatment, was overwhelming. According to a British representative at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in July 1986, "Iraqi chemical warfare was responsible for about 10,000 casualties." In March 1988, Iraq was again charged with a major use of chemical warfare while retaking Halabjah, a Kurdish town in northeastern Iraq, near the Iranian border.

Unable in 1986, however, to dislodge the Iranians from Al Faw, the Iraqis went on the offensive; they captured the city of Mehran in May, only to lose it in July 1986. The rest of 1986 witnessed small hit-and-run attacks by both sides, while the Iranians massed almost 500,000 troops for another promised "final offensive," which did not occur. But the Iraqis, perhaps for the first time since the outbreak of hostilities, began a concerted air-strike campaign in July. Heavy attacks on Khark Island forced Iran to rely on makeshift installations farther south in the Persian Gulf at Sirri Island and Larak Island. Thereupon, Iraqi jets, refuelling in midair and using a Saudi military base, hit Sirri and Larak. The two belligerents also attacked 111 neutral ships in the Persian Gulf in 1986.

Meanwhile, to help defend itself, Iraq had built impressive fortifications along the 1,200-kilometer war front. Iraq devoted particular attention to the southern city of Basra, where concrete-roofed bunkers, tank- and artillery-firing positions, minefields, and stretches of

barbed wire, all shielded by an artificially flooded lake 30 kilometres long and 1,800 meters wide, were constructed. Most visitors to the area acknowledged Iraq's effective use of combat engineering to erect these barriers.

By late 1986, rumors of a final Iranian offensive against Basra proliferated. On 08 January 1987, Operation Karbala Five began, with Iranian units pushing

westward between Fish Lake and the Arvand-Roud (Shatt al Arab). This annual "final offensive" captured the town of Duayji and inflicted 20,000 casualties on Iraq, but at the higher cost of Iranian casualties. In this intensive operation, Baghdad also lost forty-five airplanes. Attempting to capture Basra, Tehran launched several attacks, some of them well-disguised diversion assaults such as Operation Karbala Six and Operation Karbala Seven. Iran finally aborted Operation Karbala Five on 26 February 1987. Although the Iranian push came close to breaking Iraq's last line of defence east of Basra, Tehran was unable to score the decisive breakthrough required to win outright victory, or even to secure relative gains over Iraq.

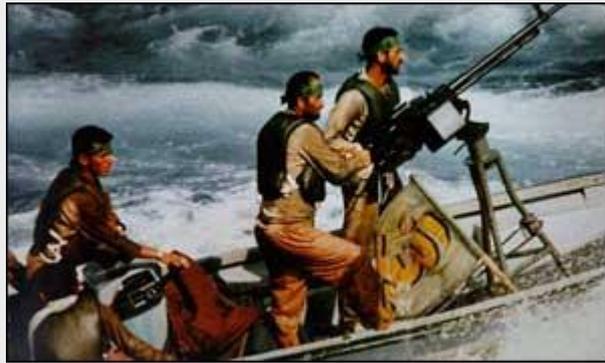
In late May 1987, just when the war seemed to have reached a complete stalemate on the southern front, reports from Iran indicated that the conflict was intensifying on Iraq's northern front. This assault, Operation Karbala Ten, was a joint effort by Iranian units and Iraqi Kurdish rebels. They surrounded the garrison at Mawat, endangering Iraq's oil fields near Kirkuk and the northern oil pipeline to Turkey. Believing it could win the war merely by holding the line and inflicting unacceptable losses on the attacking Iranians, Iraq initially adopted a static defensive strategy. This was successful in repelling successive Iranian offensives until 1986 and 1987, when the Al-Faw peninsula was lost and Iranian troops reached the gates of Al-Basrah. Embarrassed by the loss of the peninsula and concerned by the threat to his second largest city, Saddam ordered a change in strategy. From a defensive posture, in which the only offensive operations were counterattacks to relieve forces under pressure or to exploit failed Iranian assaults, the Iraqis adopted an offensive strategy. More decision-making authority was delegated to senior military commanders. The change also indicated a maturing of Iraqi military capabilities and an improvement in the armed forces' effectiveness. The success of this new strategy, plus the attendant change in doctrine and procedures virtually eliminated Iranian military capabilities. As the war continued, Iran was increasingly short of spare parts for damaged airplanes and had lost a large number of airplanes in combat. As a result, by late 1987 Iran had become less able to mount an effective defence against the massively resupplied Iraqi air and ground forces.



Iranian troops in their trenches

The Tanker War, 1984 - 1987

Much of Iraq's export capability was lost during the Iran-Iraq War, either to war-related damage or due to political reasons. In 1982, for instance, Syria (allied with Iran at the time) closed the 500-mile, 650,000-bbl/d-capacity Baniyas pipeline, which had been a vital Iraqi access route to the Mediterranean Sea and European oil markets. By 1983, Iraq's export capabilities were only 700,000 bbl/d, or less than 30% of operable field production capacity at that time.



Iranian Speed Boats used to attack tankers

Iran's revenue share fell after the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution, followed soon thereafter by the Iran-Iraq War for much of the 1980s. All Iranian onshore crude oil production and output from the Forozan field (which is blended with crude streams from the Abuzar and Doroud fields) is exported from the Khark Island terminal located in the northern Persian Gulf. The terminal's original capacity of 7 million bbl/d was nearly eliminated by more than 9,000 bombing raids during the Iran-Iraq War.

The tanker war seemed likely to precipitate a major international incident for two reasons. First, some 70 percent of Japanese, 50 percent of West European, and 7 percent of American oil imports came from the Persian Gulf in the early 1980s. Second, the assault on tankers involved neutral shipping as well as ships of the belligerent states.

The tanker war had two phases. The relatively obscure first phase began in 1981, and the well-publicized second phase began in 1984.

The relatively obscure first phase began in 1981, and the well-publicized second phase began in 1984. As early as May 1981, Baghdad had unilaterally declared a war zone and had officially warned all ships heading to or returning from Iranian ports in the northern zone of the Persian Gulf to stay away or, if they entered, to proceed at their own risk. The main targets in this phase were the ports of Bandar-e Khomeini and Bandar-e Mahshar; very few ships were hit outside this zone. Despite the proximity of these ports to Iraq, the Iraqi navy did not play an important role in the operations. Instead, Baghdad used Super Frelon helicopters equipped with Exocet missiles or Mirage F-1s and MiG-23s to hit its targets. Naval operations came to a halt, presumably because Iraq and Iran had lost many of their ships, by early 1981; the fighting lasted for two years.

In March 1984, the tanker war entered its second phase when Iraq initiated sustained naval operations in its self-declared 1,126-kilometer maritime exclusion zone, extending from the mouth of the Arvan-Roud (Shatt al Arab) to Iran's port of Bushehr. In 1981 Baghdad had attacked Iranian ports and oil complexes as well as neutral tankers and ships sailing to and from Iran; in 1984 Iraq expanded the so-called tanker war by using French Super-Etendard combat aircraft armed with Exocet missiles.

In March 1984 an Iraqi Super Etendard fired an Exocet missile at a Greek tanker south of Khark Island. Until the March assault, Iran had not intentionally attacked civilian ships in the Persian Gulf. Neutral merchant ships became favourite targets, and the long-range Super-Etendards flew sorties farther south. Seventy-one merchant ships were attacked in 1984 alone, compared with forty-eight in the first three years of the war. Iraq's motives in increasing the tempo included a desire to break the stalemate, presumably by cutting off Iran's oil exports and by thus forcing Tehran to the negotiating table. Repeated Iraqi efforts failed to put Iran's main oil exporting terminal at Khark Island out of commission, however.

The new wave of Iraqi assaults, however, led Iran to reciprocate. In April 1984, Tehran launched its first attack against civilian commercial shipping by shelling an Indian freighter. Iran attacked a Kuwaiti oil tanker near Bahrain on May 13 and then a Saudi tanker in Saudi waters five days later, making it clear that if Iraq continued to interfere with Iran's shipping, no Persian Gulf state would be safe. Most observers considered that Iraqi attacks, however, outnumbered Iranian assaults by three to one.



An Oil Tanker in Persian Gulf is attacked

Iran's retaliatory attacks were largely ineffective because a limited number of aircraft equipped with long-range antiship missiles and ships with long-range surface-to-surface missiles were deployed. Moreover, despite repeated Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormoz, Iran itself depended on the sea-lanes for vital oil exports. These sustained attacks cut Iranian oil exports in half, reduced shipping in the Persian Gulf by 25 percent, led Lloyd's of London to increase its insurance rates on tankers, and slowed Persian Gulf oil supplies to the rest of the world; moreover, the Saudi decision in 1984 to shoot down an Iranian Phantom jet intruding in Saudi territorial waters played an important role in ending both belligerents' attempts to internationalize the tanker war. Iraq and Iran accepted a 1984 UN-sponsored moratorium on the shelling of civilian targets, and Tehran later proposed an extension of the moratorium to include Persian Gulf shipping, a proposal the Iraqis rejected unless it were to include their own Persian Gulf ports.

Iraq began ignoring the moratorium soon after it went into effect and stepped up its air raids on tankers serving Iran and Iranian oil-exporting facilities in 1986 and 1987, attacking even vessels that belonged to the conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf. Iran responded by escalating its attacks on shipping serving Arab ports in the Persian Gulf. As Kuwaiti vessels made up a large portion of the targets in these retaliatory raids, the Kuwaiti government sought protection from the international community in the fall of 1986. The Soviet Union responded first, agreeing to charter several Soviet tankers to Kuwait in early 1987. Washington, which has been approached first by Kuwait and which had postponed its decision, eventually followed Moscow's lead. United States involvement was sealed by the

May 17, 1987, Iraqi missile attack on the USS Stark, in which thirtyseven crew members were killed. Baghdad apologized and claimed that the attack was a mistake. Ironically, Washington used the Stark incident to blame Iran for escalating the war and sent its own ships to the Persian Gulf to escort eleven Kuwaiti tankers that were "reflagged" with the American flag and had American crews. Iran refrained from attacking the United States naval force directly, but it used various forms of harassment, including mines, hit-and-run attacks by small patrol boats, and periodic stop-and-search operations. On several occasions, Tehran fired its Chinese-made Silkworm missiles on Kuwait from Al Faw Peninsula. When Iranian forces hit the reflagged tanker Sea Isle City in October 1987, Washington retaliated by destroying an oil platform in the Rostam field and by using the United States Navy's Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) commandos to blow up a second one nearby.

Within a few weeks of the Stark incident, Iraq resumed its raids on tankers but moved its attacks farther south, near the Strait of Hormoz. Washington played a central role in framing UN Security Council Resolution 598 on the Persian Gulf war, passed unanimously on July 20; Western attempts to isolate Iran were frustrated, however, when Tehran rejected the resolution because it did not meet its requirement that Iraq should be punished for initiating the conflict.

In early 1988, the Persian Gulf was a crowded theater of operations. At least ten Western navies and eight regional navies were patrolling the area, the site of weekly incidents in which merchant vessels were crippled. The Arab Ship Repair Yard in Bahrain and its counterpart in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), were unable to keep up with the repairs needed by the ships damaged in these attacks.

Gradual Superpower Involvement

Iranian military gains inside Iraq after 1984 were a major reason for increased superpower involvement in the war. In February 1986, Iranian units captured the port of Al Faw, which had oil facilities and was one of Iraq's major oil-exporting ports before the war.

In early 1987, both superpowers indicated their interest in the security of the region. Soviet deputy foreign minister Vladimir Petrovsky made a Middle East tour expressing his country's concern over the effects of the Iran-Iraq War. In May 1987, United States assistant secretary of state Richard Murphy also toured the Persian Gulf emphasizing to friendly Arab states the United States commitment in the region, a commitment which had become suspect as a result of Washington's transfer of arms to the Iranians, officially as an incentive for them to assist in freeing American hostages held in Lebanon. In another diplomatic effort, both superpowers supported the UN Security Council resolutions seeking an end to the war.



Iranian Troops on the move

The war appeared to be entering a new phase in which the superpowers were becoming more involved. For instance, the Soviet Union, which had ended military supplies to both

Iran and Iraq in 1980, resumed large-scale arms shipments to Iraq in 1982 after Iran banned the Tudeh and tried and executed most of its leaders.

Subsequently, despite its professed neutrality, the Soviet Union became the major supplier of sophisticated arms to Iraq. In 1985 the United States began clandestine direct and indirect negotiations with Iranian officials that resulted in several arms shipments to Iran.

By late spring of 1987, the superpowers became more directly involved because they feared that the fall of Basra might lead to a pro-Iranian Islamic republic in largely Shia-populated southern Iraq. They were also concerned about the intensified tanker war.

Special Weapons

To avoid defeat, Iraq sought out every possible weapon. This included developing a self-sustaining capability to produce militarily significant quantities of chemical warfare agents. In the defence, integrating chemical weapons offered a solution to the masses of lightly armed Basif and Posdoran. Chemical weapons were singularly effective when used on troop assembly areas and supporting artillery. When



Iranian Troops with Gas Masks

conducting offensive operations, Iraq routinely supported the attacks with deep fires and integrated chemical fires on forward defenses, command posts, artillery positions, and logistical facilities.

During the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq developed the ability to produce, store, and use chemical weapons. These chemical weapons included H-series blister and G-series nerve agents. Iraq built these agents into various offensive munitions including rockets, artillery shells, aerial bombs, and warheads on the Al Hussein Scud missile variant. During the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi fighter-attack aircraft dropped mustard-filled and tabun-filled 250 kilogram bombs and mustard-filled 500 kilogram bombs on Iranian targets. Other reports indicate that Iraq may have also installed spray tanks on an unknown number of helicopters or dropped 55-gallon drums filled with unknown agents (probably mustard) from low altitudes.

Iran launched an unsuccessful attack on the Iraqi Osirak nuclear reactor on 30 September 1980. On 07 June 1981 Israel initiated an air attack on the same Iraqi Osirak reactor, destroying it. Iraq launched seven air attacks on the Iranian nuclear reactor at Bushehr between 1984 and 1988 during the Iran-Iraq War, ultimately destroying the facility.

In response to Iranian missile attacks against Baghdad, some 190 missiles were fired by the Iraqis over a six week period at Iranian cities in 1988, during the 'War of the Cities'. The Iraqi

missile attacks caused little destruction, but causing almost 30 percent of Tehran's population to flee the city. The threat of rocketing the Iranian capital with missiles capable of carrying chemical warheads is cited as a significant reason why Iran accepted a disadvantageous peace agreement.

War Termination

Four major battles were fought from April to August 1988, in which the Iraqis massively and effectively used chemical weapons to defeat the Iranians. In the first offensive, named Blessed Ramadhan, Iraqi Republican Guard and regular Army units recaptured the Al-Faw peninsula. The 36-hour battle was conducted in a militarily sophisticated manner with two main thrusts, supported by heliborne and amphibious landings, and low-level fixed-wing attack sorties. In this battle, the Iraqis effectively used chemical weapons (CW), using nerve and blister agents against Iranian command and control facilities, artillery positions, and logistics points. Three subsequent operations followed much the same pattern, although they were somewhat less complex. After rehearsals, the Iraqis launched successful attacks on Iranian forces in the Fish Lake and Shalamjah areas near Al-Basrah and recaptured the oil-rich Majnoun Islands. Farther to the north, in the last major engagement before the August 1988 cease-fire, Iraqi armoured and mechanized forces launched a joint attack with the Iranian opposition forces of Mojahedin (based in Iraq) and penetrated deep into Iran, defeating Iranian forces stationed in Bakhtaran (Kermanshahan) province and capturing some amounts of armour and artillery.

The Iran-Iraq war lasted nearly eight years, from September of 1980 until August of 1988. It ended when Iran accepted United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 598, leading to a 20 August 1988 cease-fire.

Casualty figures are highly uncertain, though estimates suggest more than one and a half million war and war-related casualties -perhaps as many as a million people died, many more were wounded- and millions were made refugees. The Iraqis suffered an estimated 375,000 casualties. Another 60,000 were taken prisoner by the Iranians. The war claimed at least 300,000 Iranian lives and injured more than 500,000, out of a total population which by the war's end was nearly 60 million.

At the end, virtually none of the issues which are usually blamed for the war had been resolved. When it was over, the conditions which existed at the beginning of the war remained virtually unchanged. The UN-arranged cease-fire merely put an end to the fighting, leaving two isolated states to pursue an arms race with each other, and with the other countries in the region.

The Ayatollah Khomeini died on 03 June 1989. The Assembly of Experts (an elected body of senior clerics) chose the outgoing president of the republic, Ali Khamenei, to be his successor as national religious leader in what proved to be a smooth transition. In August 1989, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Majlis (National Assembly), was elected President by an overwhelming majority. The new clerical regime gave Iranian

national interests primacy over Islamic doctrine.

A variety of unresolved humanitarian issues from the Iran-Iraq war include a failure to identify combatants killed in action and to exchange information on those killed or missing. Iran agreed to the release of 5,584 Iraqi POW's in April 1998. The Iranian government pledged to settle the remaining POW issues with Iraq in 1999. And joint Iran-Iraq search operations were initiated to identify remains of those missing in action.

Chemical Warfare

In November 1980, Tehran Radio was broadcasting allegations of Iraqi chemical bombing at Susangerd. Three and a quarter years later, by which time the outside world was listening more seriously to such charges, the Iranian Foreign Minister told the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva that there had been at least 49 instances of Iraqi chemical-warfare attack in 40 border regions, and that the documented dead totalled 109 people, with hundreds more wounded. He made this statement on 16 February 1984, the day on which Iran launched a major offensive on the central front, and one week before the start of offensives and counter-offensives further south, in the border marshlands to the immediate north of Basra where, at Majnoon Islands, Iraq has vast untapped oil reserves. According to official Iranian statements during the 31 days following the Foreign Minister's allegation, Iraq used chemical weapons on at least 14 further occasions, adding more than 2200 to the total number of people wounded by poison gas.

Types of substances:

Mustard gas

From an unexploded bomb found at an Iraqi-attack site, the UN team drew a sample which its analysts in Sweden and Switzerland later found to be high-quality mustard gas.

Effectiveness of mustard gas

Mustard gas can be spread from munitions deliverable by virtually any type of weapon, including the mortars, artillery and aircraft with which Iraqi forces are reported to have used it. Among the many air-deliverable mustard munitions which Britain produced during World War II, one report judged the most cost-effective to be no more than a 5-gallon oil drum filled with mustard and fitted with a simple burster charge. The munition from which the UN team retrieved its sample in Iran appears to have been a light-case 250-lb white-phosphorus bomb, such as might otherwise be used for smoke-screening or incendiary purposes. Published eye-witness accounts suggest that Iraqi practice was for eight such bombs to be carried per ground-attack jet aircraft, dropped from a height of 200-300 metres. There may well be an international trade in such munitions. It would be relatively easy, though hazardous, to exchange the phosphorus payload for mustard gas.

Tabun

The second poison gas identified by the UN team was the nerve-gas tabun. This was found in a sample which the team was assured by Iranian authorities had been drawn by an Iranian soldier from a dud bomb. The bomb was said to have had the same appearance as the one from which the UN team had drawn mustard gas.

Effectiveness of Tabun

Because tabun acts much more rapidly than mustard, it could be thought capable of stopping massed infantry assaults on the move, at least when dropped in large air-burst bombs. In static situations, it would probably not, in warm weather, be significantly more effective than mustard gas as a weapon of attrition. The chief significance of the tabun reports is twofold. First, if the reports are true, they may well be describing the first ever use

of nerve gas in combat operations, thus providing lessons which military authorities around the world may be eager to absorb. Second, if resort to tabun has been motivated by the military consideration just outlined, there may well be powerful incentives operating upon the Gulf War belligerents to introduce those even deadlier nerve gases that offer still more potential for rapid mass-destruction: agents such as the sarin, VX and, reportedly, soman stockpiled by the USA, France and the USSR. Against unprotected people an aircraft armed with sarin could be as destructive as the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Tear gas: In August 1982, US officials were quoted in the press as being "confident" that the Iraqis did not possess any "deadly chemical weapons", only tear gas.

Choking gas: Chlorine, the archetypal war gas, is included in at least one of the lists of Iraqi chemical-warfare agents published this year by Iranian authorities.

Arsenicals: Iran informed the UN Secretary-General last year that "compounds containing arsenic" had been used in Iraqi chemical weapons. Speaking to reporters, one of the Swedish specialists treating Iranian gas casualties said he thought it probable that the latter had been exposed to a mixture of mustard gas and lewisite. Such mixtures were standard munition-fills in the arsenals of Japan, the USSR and probably other states too during World War II.

Nitrogen mustard: Official Iranian sources have several times stated that an agent of this type had been identified by Iranian military experts in samples from Iraqi chemical munitions. "Knowledgeable" but unidentified US officials have also been reported as speaking of Iraqi nitrogen mustard.

Germ-warfare agents: Israeli intelligence sources have been cited for reports that anthrax had been found in hospitalized Iranians. Iranian sources have referred to Iraqi use of "microbic" and "bacteriological" weapons.

Mycotoxins: A Belgian forensic toxicologist has claimed that his laboratory has found mycotoxins (T2, HT2, nivalenol and verrucarol) in addition to mustard gas in samples of blood, urine and faeces taken from Iranian gas victims hospitalized in Vienna, but this claim currently remains unverified and open to question. There are reports of similar findings from patients hospitalized in Belgium, France, FR Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, but these too still remain open to doubt, especially since, in the Swedish case, the Swedish authorities concerned have expressly repudiated the report. The UN team inspected cadavers returned to Tehran from Swedish and Austrian hospitals, but its report makes no mention of any post-mortem tissue samples having been taken for analysis. Mycotoxins were sought but not found in the chemical samples analyzed by the UN team. The search method used had a detection limit of 0.00005 per cent: i.e., capable of finding mycotoxins at loadings greater than a third of a gram per 250-lb bomb.

Novel unidentified agent: There has been speculation in the press about Iraqi use of a toxic

agent unknown in the West. This was excited by reports early in March from the Gzaiel sector, just to the north of Basra, of groups of Iranian corpses having been seen that were said to bear no external trace of injury--looking as though they had fallen asleep in their foxholes.

Indigenous or external sources of supply?

With the exceptions, maybe, of the last two of these different categories of putative Iraqi agent, sources of supply might as well be indigenous as external to Iraq, given the technology implied. Involvement of the last three categories would, in some circles, implicate the USSR as supplier, for the reason that the USSR is said, on evidence that has yet to be solidly substantiated but which has nonetheless attracted some firm believers, to have weaponized all three of them in recent years. For its part, the USSR has expressly denied supplying Iraq with toxic weapons. Reports of Soviet supply attributed to US and other intelligence sources have nonetheless recurred. The earliest predate reports of Iraqi use of chemical weapons in the Gulf War.

Official Iranian commentaries, too, have pointed to the USSR as a supplier of the Iraqi weapons. These sources have also accused Brazil, France and, most conspicuously, Britain of supplying the weapons. No basis for any of these Iranian accusations has been disclosed. France, alongside Czechoslovakia and both Germanies, is reportedly also rumoured, among "foreign military and diplomatic sources" in Baghdad, to have supplied Iraq with chemical precursors needed for an indigenous production effort. Unofficial published sources have cited Egypt as a possible supplier of actual chemical weapons. In the mid-1960s, when Iraq was alleged to be using chemical weapons against insurgent Kurdish forces, Swiss and German sources of supply were reported in the Western press.

Production capability in Iraq

Increasingly persuasive evidence is now emerging in published sources that, whether Iraq has or has not been receiving chemical weapons from abroad, it has been acquiring a development and production capability for them of its own. An official Iranian commentary dates the beginning of this effort back to 1976, claiming that information to that effect had been provided to Iran by West German intelligence officials. Unidentified US intelligence sources have been quoted as saying that Iraq began making mustard gas in the early 1970s. Such sources have been quoted as believing that Iraq is now attempting to produce sarin nerve gas. Associated with this belief is the assessment, it was reported in the US press at the end of March, that, while Iraq has already been using nerve gas in the Gulf war, this has been on an experimental scale using stocks accumulated during the development programme; supplies of nerve gas from large-scale production facilities were expected--the reporting continued--to be available within a matter of months, even weeks. Further, the press has reported US government sources as having identified three, possibly five, chemical-agent production sites in Iraq. The locations that have been specified in the press are Samawa, Ramadi, Samarra and Akashat. The last of these has, however, been toured by foreign correspondents, including a British journalist who has reported finding only contra-indicative evidence of a nerve gas plant being there.

Technological capacity

Other than the need for elaborate safety measures, there seems to be nothing about the technology of producing mustard gas or tabun--or lewisite or nitrogen mustard--that would obviously be beyond the capacities of the Iraqi chemical industry: an industry which has been growing rapidly in size and sophistication since the early 1970s. However, if nerve gases of a type whose production would necessitate the technically demanding and comparatively specialized processes of phosphorus-fluorination and/or phosphorus-alkylation--i.e. nerve gases such as sarin, soman and VX--foreign technology might very well have to be imported. There is strong public evidence (but by no means conclusive yet) that Iraq has been endeavouring to acquire these or related technologies from private corporations in the USA, Britain, FR Germany and Italy since 1975; and that it has been dissembling these endeavours under the guise of acquiring production capacity for organophosphorus pesticides.

The search for materials

Any need to import special chemical-process plant and associated know-how could be lessened by importing, instead, some of the chemical intermediates needed to produce chemical-warfare agents, rather than attempting to manufacture those intermediates from indigenous raw materials (of which the Iraqi mining, petroleum and related industries appear to provide the full range needed for mustard and nerve gases, with the possible exception for some of the latter of fluoride minerals). Certain intermediates can be identified which could reduce the requirements for chemical plant to processing equipments of standard off-the-shelf or easily improvised types. Iraq has not concealed the fact that it is in the market for chemicals which do indeed fall within this category. This has been most conspicuous in Iraq's search in America for supplies of methylphosphonous dichloride and dimethyl methyl-phosphonate. These two chemicals do, however, have certain civil applications. But at least in the former case they are not ones which, in the normal course of events, Iraq might obviously be expected to exploit.

Key Relations

United States

The US faced two problems with respect to the middle east:

1. The pillar of the US in West Asia, the Pahlavi monarchy in Iran, was overthrown by a massive popular upsurge which the US was powerless to suppress. This made the US and its client states deeply anxious at the prospect of similar developments taking place throughout the region.
2. In Iraq Saddam had drawn on the country's oil wealth to carry out a major military build-up, with military expenditures swallowing 8.4 per cent of GNP in 1979. Starting in 1958 Iraq had become an increasingly important market for sophisticated Soviet weapons, and was considered a member of the Soviet camp. In 1972 Iraq signed a 15-year friendship, cooperation and military agreement with the USSR. The Iraqi regime was striving to develop or acquire nuclear weapons. Apart from Israel, the only army in the region to rival Iraq's was Iran's. But after 1979, when the Shah of Iran was overthrown, much of the Iranian army's American equipment became inoperable.

The Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980 (on the pretext of resolving border disputes) thus solved two major problems for the US. Over the course of the following decade two of the region's leading military powers, neither of them hitherto friendly to the US, were tied up in an exhausting conflict with each other. Such conflicts among third world countries create a host of opportunities for imperialist powers to seek new footholds, as happened also in this instance.

Despite its strong ties to the USSR, Iraq turned to the west for support in the war with Iran. This it received massively. As Saddam Hussein later revealed, the US and Iraq decided to re-establish diplomatic relations —broken off after the 1967 war with Israel—just before Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980 (the actual implementation was delayed for a few more years in order not to make the linkage too explicit). Diplomatic relations between the US and Iraq were formally restored in 1984 —well after the US knew, and a UN team confirmed, that Iraq was using chemical weapons against the Iranian troops. (The emissary sent by US president Reagan to negotiate the arrangements was none other than the present US defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld.) In 1982, the US State Department removed Iraq from its list of "state sponsors of terrorism", and fought off efforts by the US Congress to put it back on the list in 1985. Most crucially, the US blocked condemnation of Iraq's chemical attacks in the UN Security Council. The US was the sole country to vote against a 1986 Security Council statement condemning Iraq's use of mustard gas against Iranian troops — an atrocity in which it now emerges the US was directly implicated (as we shall see below).

Brisk trade was done in supplying Iraq. Britain joined France as a major source of

weapons for it. Iraq imported uranium from Portugal, France and Italy, and began constructing centrifuge enrichment facilities with German assistance. The US arranged massive loans for Iraq's burgeoning war expenditure from American client states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The US administration provided "crop-spraying" helicopters (to be used for chemical attacks in 1988), let Dow Chemicals ship it chemicals for use on humans, seconded its air force officers to work with their Iraqi counterparts (from 1986), approved technological exports to Iraq's missile procurement agency to extend the missiles' range (1988). In October 1987 and April 1988 US forces themselves attacked Iranian ships and oil platforms.

Militarily, the US not only provided to Iraq satellite data and information about Iranian military movements, but, as former US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) officers have recently revealed to the New York Times (18/8/02), prepared detailed battle planning for Iraqi forces in this period—even as Iraq drew worldwide public condemnation for its repeated use of chemical weapons against Iran. According to a senior DIA official, "if Iraq had gone down it would have had a catastrophic effect on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and the whole region might have gone down [ie, slipped from US control—Aspects] —that was the backdrop of the policy."

One of the battles for which the US provided battle planning packages was the Iraqi capture of the strategic Fao peninsula in the Persian Gulf in 1988. Since Iraq eventually relied heavily on mustard gas in the battle, it is clear the US battle plan tacitly included the use of such weapons. DIA officers undertook a tour of inspection of the Fao peninsula after Iraqi forces successfully re-took it, and they reported to their superiors on Iraq's extensive use of chemical weapons, but their superiors were not interested. Col. Walter P. Lang, senior DIA officer at the time, says that "The use of gas on the battlefield by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep strategic concern". The DIA, he claimed, "would have never accepted the use of chemical weapons against civilians, but the use against military objectives was seen as inevitable in the Iraqi struggle for survival." (As we shall see below, chemical weapons were used extensively by the Iraqi army against Kurdish civilians, but DIA officers deny they were "involved in planning any of the military operations in which these assaults occurred".) In the words of another DIA officer, "They (the Iraqis) had gotten better and better" and after a while chemical weapons "were integrated into their fire plan for any large operation". A former participant in the program told the New York Times that senior Reagan administration officials did nothing to interfere with the continuation of the program. The Pentagon "wasn't so horrified by Iraq's use of gas," said one veteran of the program. "It was just another way of killing people—whether with a bullet or phosgene, it didn't make any difference," he said. The re-capture of the Fao peninsula was a turning-point in the conflict, bringing Iran to the negotiating table.

A US Senate inquiry in 1995 accidentally revealed that during the Iran-Iraq war the US had sent Iraq samples of all the strains of germs used by the latter to make

biological weapons. The strains were sent by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [sic] and the American Type Culture Collection to the same sites in Iraq that UN weapons inspectors later determined were part of Iraq's biological weapons programme.

The Soviet Union

When the Baath Party came to power in 1968, relations between Iraq and the West were strained. The Baathists believed that most Western countries, and particularly the United States, opposed the goal of Arab unity. The Baathists viewed the 1948 partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel as evidence of an imperialist plot to keep the Arabs divided. Refusal to recognize Israel and support for the reestablishment of Palestine consequently became central tenets of Baath ideology. The party based Iraq's relations with other countries on those countries' attitudes toward the Palestinian issue. The Soviet Union, which had supported the Arabs during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War and again during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, was regarded as having an acceptable position on the Palestine issue. Thus, the Baath cultivated relations with Moscow to counter the perceived hostility of the United States.

In 1972 the Baathist regime signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. Article 1 stated that the treaty's objective was to develop broad cooperation between Iraq and the Soviet Union in economic, trade, scientific, technical, and other fields on the basis of "respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in one another's internal affairs." Under the treaty, Iraq obtained extensive technical assistance and military equipment from the Soviet Union.

Despite the importance that both the Bakr and the Saddam Hussain governments attached to the relationship with the Soviet Union, they were reluctant to have Iraq become too closely entangled with the Soviet Union or with its sphere of influence. Ideologically, the Baath Party espoused nonalignment vis-a-vis the superpower rivalry, and the party perceived Iraq as being part of the Nonaligned Movement. Indeed, as early as 1974, the more pragmatic elements in the party advocated broadening relations with the West to counterbalance those with the East and to ensure that Iraq maintained a genuine nonaligned status. The dramatic increase in oil revenues following the December 1973 quadrupling of prices by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) provided the government with the financial resources to expand economic relations with numerous private and public enterprises in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States. Iraq also was able to diversify its source of weapons by purchasing arms from France.

The major impetus for Iraq's retreat from its close relationship with the Soviet Union was not economic, despite Iraq's increasing commercial ties with the West, but political. Iraqis were shocked by the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Saddam Hussein's government took a lead among the Arab states in condemning the invasion. Additional strain was placed on Iraqi-Soviet relations in the fall of 1980, when the Soviet Union cut off arms shipments to Iraq (and to Iran) as part of its efforts to induce a cease-fire. This action angered Saddam Husayn and

his colleagues, because Iraq had already paid more than US\$1 billion dollars for the interdicted weapons. Although Moscow resumed arms supplies to Iraq in the summer of 1982, following the Iranian advance into Iraqi territory, Iraqi leaders remained bitter over the initial halt.

Despite Iraq's apparent ambivalence about its relationship with the Soviet Union, in early 1988 relations remained correct. The Soviets were still the main source of weapons for the Iraqi military, a fact that restrained public criticism. Nevertheless, the Saddam Hussein government generally suspected that the Soviet Union was more interested in gaining influence in Iran than in preserving its friendship with Iraq.

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