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THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR: A MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq which has already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, cost the participants billions of dollars in lost resources and revenues and destroyed many dreams of a happier future, has been continuing for about four years without any sign of immediate ending. Possibly it is one of the few events in the contemporary history which is so bewildering to outside observers. The war is also unique in the sense that both the superpowers, despite their geopolitical and strategic stakes, have only little or no leverage on the parties involved in the conflict. Furthermore, the war is being fought in such an area where the political regimes are too divergent and critically vulnerable. The economic importance of the region, on which the West has to depend for about two-thirds of its imported crude petroleum, can not be overemphasized. The Iran-Iraq war, the longest war between two Third World countries, has not only threatened the security of the region but also significantly influenced the whole gamut of present international relations.

The most frustrating and unfortunate aspect of the war is that inspite of numerous efforts and initiatives from different international organizations, like the UN, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Non-aligned Movement, the Gulf Cooperation Council and from

individual countries like Algeria, Turkey, Syria, Kuwait, Egypt and others, to find out a peaceful solution of the conflict, the war continues because of the intransigent attitude of the parties, their incompatible stance and insurmountable demands. Meanwhile, in the war itself neither party has so far been able to come out decisively victorious, rather it has turned into a stalemated war of attrition with a huge loss of human and material resources. The recent developments in the war, particularly, the fresh attacks on oil transportation in the Gulf and Irani threats to close the straits of Hormuz through which the lion's share of Gulf oil is exported to West, have given the conflict a new dimension and made the superpowers more concerned about the future of the region again with limited scope to be involved directly in the war. But the fact remains that the future of the war, be it militarily determined or settled through negotiation, would depend on respective military, economic and political strength of the parties.

In this backdrop the paper aims at analysing the likely course of the war by finding out the possible forces and factors that may determine or at least seriously affect the future trend of the long standing war. Emphasis will be put on the military strength, economic potentials and socio-political dynamics of the parties with a view to making an assessment of the future.

The paper is divided into four parts ; in the first part an attempt will be made to analyse the military power and strength of both Iran and Iraq with a view to finding out each one's potential to force a purely military solution of the conflict. In the second part economic strength and resources of the warring countries will be brought out to analyse the economic potentials of the parties to sustain a long war. Part three will deal with the socio-political dynamics of Iran and Iraq, as a parameter of their strength in the war. Lastly, part four will examine the possibility of direct involvement of external forces in the conflict, particularly, the Arab countries and the super powers.

I

Although the war between Iran and Iraq broke out in September 1980, the rivalry between two Persian Gulf neighbours is rooted deep in history. With the Baathist revolution in 1968 Iraq emerged as a new power and intended to play the leadership role in the region, but because of the strong position of Shah of Iran, with total US patronage, the Iraqi dream could not be materialized. In the meantime, relations between the two countries became rather tense because of Iraqi accusation of Irani involvement in Kurdistan where the Kurdish rebels were fighting against the central government of Iraq. The relations between the two neighbours were, however, improved after signing the Algiers Treaty in 1975 where freedom of navigation in the waterway of Shatt-el-Arab, for both Iran and Iraq, was recognised and the parties promised not to interfere in each others internal affairs. The relations had entered into a new phase in 1979 when the Shah of Iran was overthrown by the Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. President Saddam Hussein, who himself was the signatory of the Algiers Treaty, not only renounced the same but also insisted that the 1937 treaty that confirmed Arabistan (the home of Iran's Arab mincrity) as an integral part of Iran no longer applied.¹

At the initial stage of the war Iraq made a remarkable success and occupied a vast territory of Iran but soon President Saddam Hussein came to realize that he had seriously miscalculated, if not militarily but politically, the strength of new Iran. With the outbreak of war the Islamic Revolution in Iran was more consolidated, the performance of the poor trained Revolutionary Guards were improved and the image of the spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini was tremendously enhanced and integrated. In the second year of the war Iran was not only able to recover her lost territory but also entered into Iraqi territory and captured some areas. Later, however, the war turned into a deadlock situation and inspite of all efforts no party has so far been able to make a breakthrough of it. How to explain this stalemate and what would

1. For details, see Tareq Y Ismail, *Iraq and Iran ; Roots of Conflict* (Syracuse University Press) 1982, pp. 57-61

be balance sheet of military score of the warring parties in future ? An answer is attempted in terms of respective military strength.

Military strength and power is the basic and prime precondition for winning and/or sustaining a war which is more significant for Iran-Iraq war because of its specific nature and characteristic. In military terms Iran, with its huge area and manpower, is in a stronger position in comparison with Iraq. The Shah of Iran, playing the role of US policeman in the Gulf, dreamt to make the Iranian army best in the region and, to some extent, he succeeded in doing that. After the Islamic Revolution things however, took a different direction. The old army was demobilized, number of armed personnel was reduced drastically and many of the US trained experienced generals were either executed or arrested because of their controversial role in the Revolution. The number of armed personnel was decreased from 285,000 to 90,000 or 100,000, the Air Force from 100,000 to 30,000 and the Navy from 30,000 to 15,000 or 20,000.² Simultaneously, procurement of new arms and equipments was suspended, US military experts were expelled and negotiations were started with the US to sell back some of the sophisticated arms. Construction of some important military installations, including the Cha Bahar naval base, were either halted or converted for civilian use.³ As shown in Table-I, the defence

Table I : Defence Expenditure of Iran and Iraq

Year	Population (million)		G D P (\$ billion)		Defence Expenditure (\$ billion)		Defence as % of GDP	
	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq
1978	36.4	12.5	72.6*	16.3*	9.94	1.66	13.69	10.18
1980	38.2	13.8	76.1*	39.98*	4.2	2.98	5.51	7.64
1982	41.5	14.3	127.7*	33.4*	6.9-13.3	7.7*	5.4-10.4	23.05

* Estimated.

Source : *The Military Balance 1978-1979 to 1983-1984*, IISS (London)

2. Sreedhar, State of Iranian Armed Forces, *Strategic Analysis*, IDSA, Vol. IV No. 3, June 1980. p. 108
3. *Ibid*, p. 108

expenditure of Iran in 1980 was reduced to \$4.2 billion as compared to \$ 9.94 billion in 1978, while for Iraq the expenditure was increased from \$ 1.66 billion to \$ 2.98 billion for the same period. But in 1982 the defence expenditure of both the countries increased significantly, for Iraq the figure was \$ 7.7 billion i.e. about 23 percent of GDP, while for Iran the figure was from 7 to 13 billion US dollar i.e., from 5 to 10 percent of GDP.

With further escalation of the war the number of armed personnel was increased. For Iran the total number of armed personnel in 1983, compared to 1980, increased about 10-fold (including the para-military

Table 2 : Military Strength of Iran and Iraq

	1978		1980		1983	
	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq
Total Armed Forces (000)	413	212	195 ¹	242 ²	2,000 ³	517 ⁴
Army personnel (000)	285	180	150	200	150	475
Tanks	1,735	1,900	1,985	2,380	1,190	2,460
Air Force personnel (000)	100	28	70	38	35	38
Combat Aircrafts	459	339	445	332	70 ⁵	330
Navy personnel (000)	30	4	20	4.2	20 ⁶	4.2
Major Craft	28	32	30	44	33	45

1. 74000 Gendermerie and Revolutionary Guards.

2. 4,800 security troops, 75,000 People's Army.

3. Including para-military forces.

4. Mostly conscripts.

5. Only serviceable aircrafts.

6. Including Naval, Air and Marines.

Source : *The Military Balance 1978-79 to 1983-84*, IISS (London)

troops), while for Iraq the number was doubled. In the field of military hardwares the number of tanks in Iran in 1983 was decreased to 1,190 from 1,735 in 1978, while for Iraq it was increased from 1900 in 1978 to 2460 in 1983. But the most striking change took place in the Iranian air force where the number of personnel was decreased from 100,000 in 1978 to 35,000 in 1983 and the number of combat aircrafts had reduced from 459 to 70 over the same period. Meanwhile, the number of Iraqi combat aircrafts was increased from 339 in 1978 to about 400 in 1983 (including 60 helicopters). In the naval force Iran, with its 33,000 personnel having 3 destroyers, 4 frigates and 7 large petrol crafts, has an absolute superiority over the Iraqi navy, with its tiny 4,200 personnel with 1 frigate and 5 large crafts. But during four years of the Iran-Iraq war it has been observed that the navy had a limited role to play rather the war is mainly concentrated in the land

Iraq's apparent superiority in military strength is being countered by Iran's organisational strength, revolutionary zeal and ideological commitment.

front and the army, supported by air, has the key role to play where Iran is in an advantageous position because of her huge manpower. Reports issued by both Iran and Iraq are so confusing that it is very difficult to know the actual situation of the front, but it is recognised and accepted by Iraq that Iran has captured some of the Iraqi territories, including the man-made Majnoon island where Iraq has an estimated reserve of 7 billion barrels of oil, a tenth of her total oil reserve.⁴

According to another report, Irani forces had reached within 10 kilometers of Iraq's Darbardikhan dam and the major Baghdad-Solaymaniah highway which is only 130 km. from the main oil centre Kirkuk, the starting point of Iraq's only pipeline for exporting oil through Turkey. The Iranians have also, reportedly, captured the town of

4. *Newsweek*, 19 March 1984, p. 12

5. *The Bangladesh Observer*, 13 February 1984

Penjwin and two strategic heights, dominating the road to Kirkuk.⁶ So, it seems that, the Iranians are in an advantageous position in the front. However, Iraq, with new acquisition of sophisticated arms from different sources, has improved her position in comparison to that a year before. She has been procuring arms from different sources, including Brazil, Indonesia, Spain, Jordan, Egypt, Switzerland, USA and China (Annexure-I). Nevertheless, Soviet Union, France and Italy still remain the main arms suppliers to Iraq.

The Soviets, inspite of their Treaty of Friendship with Iraq, from the beginning of the war were maintaining considerable neutrality and supplying limited arms through third countries, but recently they have come forward to help Iraq directly.⁷ The Soviets are supplying sophisticated arms to Iraq, including the MIG-25/27 combat aircrafts and T-62/72 tanks. (see Annexure-I). According to a report in early 1984 Iraq took delivery of long range Soviet made SS-12 missiles with an effective range upto 800 km. She had already short-range Soviet Scud-B and French Exocet missiles in her arsenal.⁸ Moreover, a huge number of arms ordered by Iraq are in the pipeline.

On the other hand, since Iran has not been purchasing arms from open market, it is difficult to know what sort of arms she has been procuring and from what sources. From Annexure-I, it is seen that she has been getting some arms from France, Italy, Syria and China. She has also been purchasing substantial arms from black markets on cash payments—mainly from Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Britain and Israel. Although figures are not available military experts think that she has been getting a number of sophisticated arms from Soviet Union. From various reports it seems that Iran has been suffering more from scarcity of spare parts than from the problems of acquiring new arms.

6. *The Sunday Times*, 23 October 1983, p. 11

7. *The Economist*, 26 May 1984, p. 11

8. *The Jerusalem Post*, 25 January 1984

The most controversial arms deal in the Gulf war was the Iraqi acquisition of Super Etendard sophisticated aircrafts from France in October 1983. The French delivery of Super Etendard allowed Iraq to attain a superior position in the air because the planes with a range of 800 km. armed with Exocet missiles can hit deep inside and much more targets in Iran. The Iraqi leaders were optimistic about the success in the war by using the Exocet missiles, as President Saddam Hussein said, "Our victory over the Iranian enemy will be achieved soon, and they will suffer a decisive defeat".⁹ In the like manner, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister even before getting the Super Etendard planes made the comment, "Iraq has means and it will have stronger means in near future to block Iran's crude exports, thus putting an end to the abnormal situation."¹⁰ But so far Iraq has neither been able to come out as victorious nor to block the export of Iranian oil and to end the "abnormal situation". It is still not confirmed whether Iraq has been using the Super Etendard in the war which can pose serious threat to Kharg island from where Iran exports about 90 percent of her oil. However, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, in an interview with Newsweek in March 1984 disclosed that Iraq had not yet used the Super Etendard planes in the war but he confirmed, "they are capable planes and when the time comes to use them, we will."¹¹ Observers analysing the recent Iraqi attacks deep inside Iran are convinced that Iraq has already been using the planes in the war. According to military experts Iran has also the capability to counter the Exocets by her American built F-14s and it would be deadly if armed with phoenix missiles. But Iran has probably failed to use them successfully in the war due to technical and maintenance constraints.¹²

So it appears that Iraq is in a superior position with her recently acquired sophisticated arms, particularly aircrafts including the Super

9. *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1983

10. *Strategic Analysis*, IDSA, vol. VII, January 1984, p. 800

11. *Newsweek*, 5 March 1984, p. 19

12. Quoted in, *Strategic Analysis*, IDSA, vol. VII, January 1984, p. 800

Etendards. But Iran with its inferior military technology and out-dated arms ammunition can successfully counter Iraq by her organizational strength, revolutionary zeal of the mass, ideological commitment of the Revolutionary Guards and improvisational capability of the armed forces. The Irani airforce even with their old and inferior aircrafts so far has been able to carry selective and successful attacks on enemy targets. Moreover, unlike Iraqi planes Iranian aircrafts can be over their Iraqi targets in five or six minutes, can fly low all the way and launch attacks from variety of angles.

Furthermore, Iraq can not, even if she wants, deploy her full strength to destroy the Irani oil installations and transportation because of some political and strategic constraints. Iran has warned clearly that in case of Iraqi attacks on Irani oil tankers she would close the strait of Hormuz through which about 8 million barrels of oil regularly pass to the markets of the West and Japan.¹³ According to an estimate the closure of the strait of Hormuz could increase the spot price of oil upto \$ 60 or more a barrel.¹⁴ So the West, particularly the US and her allies in the Gulf who are already afraid of the Irani threat, will obviously not encourage Iraq to escalate the war further by attacking the Kharg oil terminal to endanger their oil route through Gulf when Iran has assured that she would not close the Strait unless her oil export through Gulf would be disturbed. Some reports even suggest that the oil rich Arab countries, the main financier of Iraq, have been putting pressure on Iraq not to attack the Irani oil installations. Secondly, Iraq is not capable of blocking Irani oil export totally even by attacking Kharg island by Super Etendard planes. According to experts Iran can use port Sirri, near the mouth of Gulf, which believed to be outside the range of Exocet attacks, as a loading terminal for

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13. 1.4 million barrels from Iran, 0.9 million barrels from Kuwait, 0.4 million barrels from Neutral Zone, 3.2 million barrels from Saudi Arabia, 0.3 million barrels from Qatar and 1.1 million barrels from UAE (Source ; *The Economist*, 26 May 1984, p. 11)
 14. *The Economist*, 26 May 1984, p. 11

foreign vessels and from Kharg terminal oil can be transported to Sirri by small tankers. It is believed that Iraq will not be able to attack these small tankers mainly because of two reasons—firstly, it is not cost effective to attack small tankers by Exocets, secondly, Iraq has not sufficient number of Exocets to destroy all tankers. (It is estimated that Iraq has about 40 Exocets). Thirdly, Iraq's main oil field and only oil outlet Kirkuk is only 130 km. from Penjwin which is under the control of Irani forces. So in any further escalation the Iraqi oil fields, its pipeline through Turkey and communication lines are more vulnerable and fragile than Irani oil installations.

Despite military superiority in some aspects and others the parties have so far not been able to deploy their full strength in the war because of various constraints and the war has turned into a stalemated situation. And it seems that neither Iran nor Iraq is in a position to end the war militarily, but they have the capacity to impose continued devastation on the other and hardship on their neighbours. Iraq, for whom the war has become too costly (\$ 9 million per-day), has been trying to get out of it or at least to share the burden with other countries, particularly with the oil rich Arab countries. So as an alternate way Iraq may try to internationalize the war by attacking the Irani oil positions and provoking her to close the strait of Hormuz which may involve the US and the oil rich Arab countries into the conflict directly and that may be the most dangerous development of the 45 month old Gulf war. But considering the recent developments in the region, cautions and reservations expressed by the parties and the superpowers, it is very unlikely that the Gulf war would spread futher, rather it may continue as a protracted war between Iran and Iraq.

II

While military muscle is a decisive factor in war, economic potentials provide the base for sustaining a long war and it is more significant for the Iran-Iraq war which has been continuing for about four years and has already cost the parties hundreds of billions of dollars. The

overall economic condition of Iran, with her vast area and huge manpower resource, is better than that of Iraq. Moreover, the Iranian economy has less suffered by the war than that of Iraq. The war has seriously damaged the oil installations and its exports—the main source of revenue for both the countries. As table-3 shows, in 1981 because of war the oil export of Iran was reduced to only 15

Table 3 : Production, Trade and Consumption of Oil

Year	Production		Exports		Consumption (per-capita)	
	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq
1970	71	69	71	72	90	93
1975	100	100	100	100	100	100
1979	60	153	52	158	102	179
1981	24	40	15	36	143	138

Index Numbers 1975=100 indices

Source : *Yearbook of World Energy Statistics* 1981, Table No. 18 p. 327, United Nations, New York, 1983.

percent of the export level of 1975, while for Iraq the figure was 36 percent. Meanwhile, the domestic per capita consumption of oil in Iran in 1981 increased about 40 percent in comparison to 1979, while for Iraq it was reduced about 23 percent over the same period. Iran, on the other hand, was able to improve the situation more rapidly and in 1982 Iranian export of oil was 1.6 million barrels per day compared to only 0.8 million barrels per day in 1981. In 1983 the oil export increased upto 2.2 million barrels per day which could further be extended upto 3 million barrels per day. As a result the revenue from oil was increased from 8.6 billion US dollars in 1981 to about 21 billion US dollars in 1983. But in the case of Iraq the situation was catastrophic. At the initial period of the war the Iraqi oil export through Gulf was closed and she had to depend on only two pipelines for exporting oil—one through Syria to the Mediterranean and other through

Table 4 : Oil Exports and Revenues of Iran and Iraq

Year	Net Exports (million barrels p/d)		Revenues (billion US dollars)	
	Iran	Iraq	Iran	Iraq
1978	4.5	2.4	20.9	9.6
1980	1.1	2.4	15.5	26.0
1981	0.8	0.7	8.6	10.4
1982	1.6	0.7	19.0	9.5
1983	2.2	0.8	21.0 ¹	10.2

1. Estimated

Source : *Middle East Review* 1984, Tenth Edition, pp. 23, 117,123.

Turkey. The situation worsened in early 1982 when, because of her hostile relations, Syria closed the pipeline for which Iraq had to loss about 17 million of US dollars from oil revenue per day.¹⁵ The total oil export of Iraq in 1982 was only 0.7 million barrels per day as compared to 3.3 million barrels per day in 1979. As a result the oil revenue drastically fell from 26 billion US dollars in 1980 to only 10 billion dollars in 1983, which was not at all sufficient to cover the war expenses and to continue the development projects. So the country had to depend on external assistance and, it is reported that, the current external debt of Iraq exceeds 50 billion US dollars, the major share coming from the Gulf countries. The foreign exchange reserve of the country has decreased from 35 billion US dollars before the war to 3 to 4 billion US dollars in 1983.¹⁶ Due to severe budget deficits Iraq had to cut its various development projects and payments of different foreign companies had to be deferred.¹⁷ Iraq had also sought financial assistance, loans and trade credits from other sources. In 1983 the US Department of Agriculture granted Iraq \$ 230 million credit for buying food

15. *Middle East Review* 1983, Ninth Edition, p. 165

16. *Middle East Review* 1984, Tenth Edition, p. 121

17. For details see, *Ibid*, pp. 125-126

grains and other agricultural products, which was an extension of \$ 220 million credit for the similar purpose. Negotiations are also going on with the US to finance Iraq's multibillion dollar project of oil pipeline to Jordan.¹⁸

An economic, trade and cooperation agreement was signed with China in June 1983 and there are reports that China has been providing attractive financial assistance to Iraq. Among the Arab countries (excluding the Gulf states), Egypt and Jordan have been providing Iraq with some financial assistance. The Arab Monetary Fund and Islamic Development Bank are also providing significant assistance to Iraq to continue her development projects. But still the external assistance is not sufficient to cover the growing Iraqi expenses including the war. The problem became more acute in 1983 when assistance, till then totalling to \$25 billion, from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf countries was dried up, as also confirmed by the Iraqi Representative in the UN.¹⁹

On the other hand, after four years of chaos, stagnation and neglect the Iranian economy gradually picked up and began to thrive again. Revenue from oil is sufficient both for the purposes of con-

Economically, Iran with its huge manpower and natural resources, holds stronger potential to sustain a long and protracted war.

ducting the war and stimulating the domestic economy. The Government has committed itself to an ambitious five year development plan, launched in 1983, with a targetted growth of 7 percent a year (present rate of GDP growth is about 5 percent).

In the case of other mineral resources Iran, with its proven reserve of over 600 trillion cubic feet gas (next to the Soviet Union) is much richer than Iraq.

18. *The Egyptian Gazette*, 6 May 1984

19. *Middle East Review* 1984, Tenth Edition, p. 126

In other sectors of economy like industry, agriculture and trade Iran is in a more advantageous position. Irani industry, with its huge steel, petrochemical and oil refinery complexes, is more diversified than that of Iraq. From Annexure-2, it is seen that the contribution of oil industry to GDP in Iran is about 30 percent while for Iraq the share is more than 70 percent. Irani industrial complexes are scattered and located in different places whereas the main Iraqi industrial area is in and around Basra which is vulnerable to attacks.

The agricultural sector of both the countries are undeveloped and because of food deficit every year the parties have to spend about 12-13 percent of their import bills for procuring foodgrains. Nevertheless, Irani agriculture, with its contribution of 16 percent to GDP, is in a better position.

The Iranian trade is considerably diversified. In 1978 Iran's trade with the OECD countries was about 84 percent but in 1982 it was reduced upto 50 percent. As Table-5 shows, in 1978 Iran's import from US totalled 3.7 billion US dollars which had fallen to only 0.12 billion dollars in 1982. But recently, it seems that, the commercial

Table 5 : Summary of Iran's Imports (in billion dollars)

Supplier	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
US	3.7	1.02	0.02	0.30	0.12
Japan	2.67	0.95	1.58	1.85	0.94
Europe ¹	8.70	3.73	5.70	5.63	5.40
Soviet bloc	0.88	0.92	1.53	1.9	2.0*
Lesser-developed countries	1.29	1.11	2.21	1.97	3.0*
World total (excluding armaments)	13.5	9.7	11.4	12.1	14.2*

1. 15 main suppliers

* Estimated.

Source : IMF and OECD plus individual countrys' publications.

activity between Iran and US has been picking up. In 1980 less than \$ 500 million of bilateral trade was conducted between Iran and US, while in 1983 the figure was more than \$ 1 billion. Observers think that the trade between the two countries is much higher if indirect transactions through agents or their intermediaries are included.²⁰ Trade with East bloc countries rose from 5 percent in 1978 to 16 percent in 1981. Irani trade with Third World countries has also significantly increased. According to one report the principal purchasers of Iran's oil in Asia are Japan, India, North and South Korea, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan and Singapore and in Europe the main buyers are the north European countries. In Africa the main buyers are Tanzania, Sierre-Leone, Madagascar and Burundi and among the Latin American countries Nicaragua is the principal buyer of Iranian oil.²¹ On the other hand, the Iraqi trade is less diversified, about 98 percent of her export revenue comes from oil and the main partners are France, Japan, German, UK and USA. Iraqi imports are also highly concentrated, about 30 to 40 percent of her total imports come from only two countries-Japan and German. (Annexure-2).

So from the economic point of view it seems that a long war may favour Iran because of her strong economic base and she may prefer to prolong it with a view to inflicting more damages to Iraqi economy and thus to consolidate her economic strength and potentials. On the other hand, Iraq may seek more external assistance from different channels and mobilize her internal resources to sustain the war. And it is widely believed that as long as the war will continue Iraq will have no problem to cover the war expenses because the oil rich Arab states and West, specially the US, will continue to provide Iraq with financial assistance to sustain the war for the sake of their own interests.

20. *Times of India*, 2 January 1984

21. *Weekly News*, published by the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran, Dhaka, Vol. I, No. 29, 26 April 1984, p. 5

III

Internal stability, political dynamism and psychology of the warring parties are significant parameters for sustaining a long war and it is more important for the Gulf war where both the regimes are authoritarian in nature and divergent in character. From socio-political and religious points of view both the countries qualitatively differ from one another.

Iraq, ruled by Arab Baath Socialist Party since 1968, believes in pan-Arab nationalistic ideology where the leadership thinks that only party, the natural expression of the peoples' wishes, can serve the mass properly. While the Islamic Republic of Iran believes in "Allah's exclusive possession of sovereignty to right to legislate and the necessity of submission to His commands",²² and the purpose of the establishment of state is seen as a means for achieving the return to Allah in the hereafter and the establishment of Allah's justice in creation and legislation.

Iraq seriously miscalculated the socio-ethnic integrity and political dynamism of Iran. At the initial stage of the war, the Iraqi leadership was convinced that in case of a war the Arabs in Khuzistan would revolt against the Shiite regime in Tehran and would join hands with Iraq but subsequent events proved that their loyalty to the Islamic Republic was stronger than ethnic fellow-feeling. The war failed to discredit the revolutionary regime in Iran and to accentuating the ethnic issue, rather the social forces proved to be more consolidated against their common enemy. The war helped the Islamic militants to break the back of the moderates and to consolidate their position. The Iranian army, ravaged by the revolutionary purges, was reorganised and the rivalry which was observed at the initial period of the revolution between regular army and Revolutionary Guards was over-ridden.²³

In the like manner, the Iraqi assesment over the political leadership of Iran was based on wrong premises. Iraq was suspicious about

22. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article-I

23. *The New York Times*, 25 May 1982

the political future of Ayatollah Khomeini. So even in March 1982, when the Iraqi forces launched an offensive against Iran, President Saddam Hussein in an interview with French Television said, "Surely the situation in Iran will not stand two more years or one and a half more years of war"²⁴. But on the contrary, with the continuation of war, Islamic Revolution in Iran has been crystallised, an Islamic constitution has been adopted, the posts of President and Prime Minister have been institutionalized and an elected Parliament (Majlis) has been functioning normally. A succession plan of the spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini has been finalized. Almost all the functions of day-to-day affairs of Iran are being performed by the elected organs of the state and the role of Ayatollah Khomeini is being reduced day by day. Political observers in the West seem to be convinced that the transition of power in Iran will preserve the present order and even after Khomeini's death, "there will not be any immediate revolt or unravelling"²⁵. Dr. Syed Athar Abbas Rizvi, a scholar in the field of oriental civilization of Australian National University after a long tour in Iran, portrayed Iranian society as, "the spirit of dynamism the Iranian nation had displayed at several historical turns is today transformed into a revolutionary Islamic fervour. This almost overnight conversion of the people to the Islamic prospects will sustain the revolution even after Khomeini."²⁶

With the consolidation of Islamic ideology the leadership also sewed the seeds of revolution very deep to the society upto the grass-root level of village people. This ideological fundament was more crystallised by the supreme sacrifice and devotion of the guards of the Islamic revolution and their demonstrated commitment. In spite of various negative factors including the poor economic performance and heavy financial burden due to the war with Iraq, it seems that the support to the regime is constantly high which indicates that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been successful in infusing Islamic social consciousness

24. *The Washington Post*, 16 March 1982

25. *Newsweek*, 20 February 1984, p. 32

26. *Dawn*, 9 February 1982

among its people who are willing to defend their country for ideological reason even at the cost of their supreme sacrifice.

Meanwhile, a number of institutions have been set up to bring the revolution to the doorstep of the common Iranian people. One of such organization is Jihad-e-Sazandigui (Jihad for Reconstruction), which has been working for the implementation of the Islamic revolutionary life in the field of social and economic development. With the outbreak of war this organization concentrated its activities on mobilizing resources in the villages to finance the war and giving assistance to war affected civilians.

Another active social organization, playing significant role in consolidating the Islamic revolution, is the 75,000 Mosques in Iran, which along with its normal religious functions perform a number of socio-economic activities. Every night after prayer mosque authorities also train people in the use of various arms and so far it has trained millions of workers, students and others.²⁷

Meanwhile a number of measures have been taken to improve the socio-economic life of the common people of Iran. All anti-religious activities and practices have been uprooted, salary and other benefits of the workers have been increased several times, the unemployed persons are getting loans on easy terms and housing facilities are being made available for all. The armed forces personnel who died in the war is considered alive (as Quran says) and the families of martyred get the same pay and allowance as he used to get and his promotion continues still his service period is ended.²⁸

As a result a remarkable change is being observed in the Iranian society since the revolution. In spite of the war with Iraq Government's expenditure on defence has been decreased as compared to pre-revolution period, while the expenditure on various social sectors, like education and health, has been increased significantly. For example,

27. *Arabia : The Islamic World Review*, May 1982, p. 28

28. *The Bangladesh Observer*, 10 February 1984.

in 1982 expenditure on education rose to \$ 77 per capita compared to only \$ 45 in 1972.²⁹

Nevertheless, the sources and elements of socio-political instability are still present in Iran which sometimes seriously threaten the stability of the regime. A number of divergent political groups and parties, starting from pro-monarchists to extreme leftists, are working in the country who do not recognise the present political reality in Iran and seek external assistance to overthrow the regime. The Government is also considered as one of the most repressive regimes of the world. But taking all these into account one cannot deny the fact that the socio-political fabric of today's Iran is more consolidated than post revolution period and the power base of the ayatollas seem to be stronger and well integrated than widely expected. The doubts

Socio-political fabric of both Iran and Iraq are fragile and both the countries have been using the war to consolidate national unity and cohesion.

and suspicion that spread all over the world, particularly in the West, that after the death of Khomeini Iran may turn into reverse direction appears to be wrong, rather the new leadership with their practical and bitter experience may be more radical and fanatic with former conviction to continue the war.

The socio-political fabric of Iraq is more complicated and confusing. The Arab Baath Socialist Party has been ruling the country since 1968—with the Sunni dominated government, although the Shiites are the majority in Iraq (about 60 percent of total population). In all government high positions the Sunnis are dominating and in the armed forces the Shiites are mainly soldiers under the command of Sunni officers. So after the revolution in Iran one of the possible threats for Iraq was the Shiite revolt against the regime. But the later developments showed that in spite of continuous Irani call to revolt the

29. *World Development Report 1983*, World Bank, Table-26, p. 199

Shiites in Iraq put their national interest above their sectarian loyalties.

Another important issue that may destabilize the internal situation of Iraq is the Kurdish problem. The Kurds are demanding full autonomy, withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kurdistan, to arm the Kurds and a fairer share of the country's oil revenue. After long negotiations throughout 1983 in early 1984 government signed an agreement with the Kurdish leaders which envisaged, among others "free and democratic election" for legislative and executive councils for the autonomous region of Kurdistan. The agreement also proposed the formation of a 40,000 member Kurdish army, "to protect Kurdistan against foreign enemies."³⁰ The Iraqi government had also promised to allocate 30 percent of the state budget to rehabilitate the war-destroyed areas of Kurdistan. But the main problem is that the Kurds are divided into various divergent groups and differ in their opinion. For example, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan opposed the agreement with the central government, the Iraqi communists also, by and large, share the same view. Even many Kurds are convinced that Iraqi government is not going to implement the agreement rather buying time to keep Kurdistan relatively quite so long as the Iraqi troops are engaged in fighting with Iran.³¹ So inspite of all efforts, it seems that, Kurdistan will remain as a source of internal tension and instability for Iraq, at least for the time being.

Despite all problems the regime of Saddam Hussein appears to be not such weak as widely suspected, rather he has a control over party and government and at present there seems to be no alternative to him. The advantages in money and kind that are being offered lavishly to the soldiers will help to make them loyal to his regime. The widow of an officer killed in front is being given a piece of building land and attractive pension linked to the cost of living. Widows of soldiers are also being given building plot, an interest free loan repayable over 25 years and a lump sum which could amount to 20,000 dinnars (about

30. *International Herald Tribune*, 4 January 1984

31. *The Guardian*, 6 May 1984

\$ 7,000).³² Another reason of the stability of his regime is the continuous Irani attacks on Iraq and the humiliating demands made by Tehran. Even many Iraqis who do not want war and dislike President Saddam Hussein are not ready to accept the Irani dictation and interference in their internal affairs. As Washington Post put it by quoting one Asian diplomat in Baghdad, "The people do not want the war to go on, and some may even blame Saddam for it, but they do not want the revolution of Iran to happen here, and that includes the Shiites."³³

Nevertheless, the weakness of the regime is concealed in the very nature of the Iraqi state where state itself functions as a bourgeoisie, on behalf of the leading elements in the state apparatus.³⁴ Since the economy is extremely centralised under strict control of the state, the political and economic powers are naturally concentrated to a number of handful individuals which is a point of both political and economic weakness of the state.³⁵

Western observers think that the survival of the regime of Saddam Hussein will mainly depend on the course of the war, if Iran forces a complete Iraqi retreat his credibility will seriously be undermined and he possibly might be overthrown by group of young nationalistic officers who may seek closer ties with the Soviet Union and already there are evidence when several coup attempts were made to overthrow him which were subdued with the most repressive measures.

IV

The future of Iran-Iraq war, to a great extent, would depend on the scope and possibility of direct involvement, including military, of external forces, particularly the Arab Gulf states and super powers in

32. *Ibid*

33. *The Washington Post*, 18 March 1982

34. Joe Stork "State Power and Economic Structure ; Class Determination and State Formation in Contemporary Iraq", *Iraq : The Contemporary State* edited by Tim Niblock, 1983, p. 44

35. *Ibid*, p. 45



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the conflict. The conservative Arab Gulf states were afraid of the Shiite Revolution in Iran and its possible consequence. So when the war broke out and Iraq was making significant success in the front they apparently had given their stamp of approval to Iraq.³⁶ But from the very beginning of the war the Arab countries preferred to provide Iraq with financial assistance, rather than getting involved directly into the war. President Saddam Hussein from the very beginning tried to project the war as Persian-Arab conflict but that did not seem to have brought any positive returns. He was rather dissatisfied with the role of his Arab fellow nations. The Persian Gulf states have really been caught in an awkward position due to the war and at the same time very much concerned over the developments in the region. One Kuwaiti official put it: "The situation in Lebanon concerns us, but the Iran-Iraq war terrifies us".³⁷ But at the same time they have very limited scope to influence the course of the war. They are supporting Iraq and have already pumped about 40 billions US dollars as financial assistance. But it is unlikely that they will join Iraq to fight against Iran and thus to further antagonise their relations with Iran who has already warned the Arab states not to be involved in the war. With the experiences of the attempt of seizure of Holy Makka by radical extremists and coup attempt in Bahrain, the Arab Gulf leaders will prefer a status quo in the region, rather to escalate the situation which may further endanger their stability. Secondly, the geographical location of the Arab Gulf countries is vulnerable and among them Kuwait's position is more volatile. In case of any future escalation Kuwait which is only several kilometers from the war front, could well come under Iranian attack and if she is attacked the other five members of GCC would have to enter the fray³⁸ to oblige the common security arrangement within the framework of GCC.

Thirdly, a strong Iraq-Arab alliance is fraught with difficulties because of some very basic ideological and political differences between

36. Claudia Wright, "Implications of the Iran-Iraq war" *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1980-1981, pp. 275-303

37. *Newsweek*, 20 February 1984

38. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 May 1982

the Baathist socialist regime of Iraq and the Islamic conservative monarchies of the Persian Gulf. Shah's Iran was closely associated with the regional enemies of Iraq and claimed that opposing Iraq was essential for the common interest in the region. In the 60s and 70s Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two pillars of US policy in the Gulf, worked jointly to deter the influence of communism and Baathist socialism in the area. Meanwhile, Iraq always tried to antagonise the Arab-Persian relations and in 1969 when Iran refused to recognise the sovereignty of Bahrain and demanded territorial claim over the island Iraq tried to exploit the situation and proposed a military agreement with Saudi Arabia to counter the Persian influence, but it was apparently rejected by the Saudis. The Arab Gulf states also accused Iraq of fueling their domestic situations by helping and providing arms to underground radical extremist groups with a view to exporting Baathist socialist ideology.³⁹ Observers think that when the Iraqi attempts to form an anti-Persian coalition on the basis of Arab nationalism to counter the growing Iranian influence failed, Iraq was vigorously seeking alliance from outside and in 1972 a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed between Iraq and the Soviet Union for 15 years.⁴⁰ The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 overturned the political balance in the region and relations between two Persian Gulf giants—Iran and Saudi Arabia—deteriorated, while the relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia improved on the basis of their common perception of threat to the region.⁴¹ However, many Arabs were suspicious about the real Iraqi intention and expressed their doubts that because of war with Iran, Iraq has come closer to the Arab Gulf but she has her own revolutionary mission vis-a-vis the region.

Fourthly, Iraq had a long territorial dispute with her Persian Arab neighbours. She had a long-standing territorial dispute with Kuwait

39. John Duke Anthony ; "The Persian Gulf in Regional and International Politics ; The Arab side of the Gulf" *The Security of the Persian Gulf*, edited by Hossein Amirsadeghi, London 1980, p. 178

40. Edmund Ghareeb, "Iraq Emergent Gulf Power", *The Security of the Persian Gulf*, edited by Hossein Amirsadeghi, London 1980, p. 204

41. *The Washington Post*, 13 April 1980

over the Iraqi claim on the Kuwaiti Islands of Warbah and Bubiyan.⁴² In the like manner, there were also disputes with other countries over the question of frontier delineations, the neutral zone, tribal migrations and smuggling. The disputes were solved by signing bilateral agreements between Iraq and the Gulf countries. But many Arabs in the Gulf are still convinced that although the disputes are dormant at present, they could become issue in future.

Outside Gulf, Jordan and Egypt are the two Arab countries who actively support Iraq since the beginning of the war and it is reported that in 1982 about 60 Egyptian pilots were flying on Iraq's Soviet made aircrafts, and about 400 Egyptian soldiers were fighting against Iran along with their Iraqi counterparts.⁴³ A number of volunteers from Jordan are also fighting in the Gulf war. While Syria and Libya, expressed their total support to Iran since the beginning of the war. In support of Iran, in 1982 Syria closed Iraqi pipeline through which she had been pumping oil to two Mediterranean terminals.⁴⁴ However, it does not imply that Syria and Libya supported Iran for their real love or commitment to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, rather they came closer to Iran because of their common radical stand in the Arab world and personal antipathy toward Saddam Hussein.

In spite of all these issues of contentions it is widely believed that as long as the war will continue the oil-rich Arab Gulf countries will provide Iraq with financial assistance and at the same time will try to find out a peaceful solution of the conflict.

In the meantime, the other supporters, Jordan and Egypt, who have been supplying limited arms to Iraq, will hardly come forward to increase their involvement. On the contrary, they may seek a peaceful solution of the crisis and to develop their relations with Iran. As the Egyptian President in his May Day address in 1984 said, "we look forward to the day on which relations between Iran and all Arab

42. *John Duke Anthony, op. cit.* p. 176

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

44. *Dawn*, 12 April 1982

countries will be restored to the level that is commensurate with the unity of interests and destiny and the profound spiritual bonds between the brotherly Iranian people and all Arab countries.⁴⁵

The role of superpowers, possible scope of their direct involvement, is one important factor for determining the future course of the Iran-Iraq war. In fact, in the Gulf war the superpowers have been caught in an uneasy situation. Despite the grave strategic concerns and having vital interests in the region the superpowers have only limited or no leverage either to control the situation or to defuse the tension.⁴⁶ The US, having three-fold objectives in the region —to deter the perceived Soviet influence, to protect Israeli interests and to ensure the free flow of oil to the West—is more concerned than the USSR. Another reason for US concern is that in case of spreading the war over the Gulf the security of the regimes will be threatened and the US interest will be jeopardised. But the most striking thing is that, although the US is greatly concerned over the developments in the Gulf and has vital interests in the region, she has no diplomatic relations with either of the conflicting parties. Iraq severed diplomatic relations with US in 1967 in protest of US support to Israel in the Arab-Israeli war, while her relation with Iran was broken in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution there under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. The US tried to improve her relation with Iraq but the Iraqi leadership was suspicious about the US role in the region because of their previous policy toward Iran. During Carter Administration intensive efforts were made to reopen formal relations with Iraq but Baghdad was not convinced and in 1979 President Saddam Hussain said that the relations with the US would be re-established when it was found to be the Arab world's interests.⁴⁷

With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war and with the beginning of the US hostage crisis in Iran it was widely assumed that Iraq-US

45. *The Egyptian Gazette*, 6 May 1984

46. *Time*, 27 February 1984

47. *The Washington Post*, 15 February 1979

relation might turn into a new phase. Many US high officials, including the then National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brezezinski, advocated in favour of improving relations with Iraq. The US-Iraq relations, however, suffered a serious setback in 1981 with the Israeli attack on Iraqi nuclear station. Although US tried to negotiate with Iraq on the issue through UN channels, the bid failed because the Iraqi officials were convinced that Washington had advance knowledge of the strike.⁴⁸

As the war continued the US interests were severely affected and fresh attempts were made to improve US-Iraq relations. At the end of 1983 President Reagan's special Middle East envoy Donald H. Rumsfeld during his visit to Iraq expressed US willingness to establish

Despite strong political and strategic stakes, the Gulf countries and the superpowers have limited scope in using their leverage on the parties to bring in a negotiated settlement.

full scale diplomatic relations with Iraq.⁴⁹ But no significant development has yet been observed in the Iraq-US relation. One of the main obstacles of US-Iraq relation is Israel who considers Iraq as an eternal enemy of the Zionist state and with whom the US has a strategic co-operation agreement.

Recently a shift in US-Iraq relation is being observed when President Reagan strongly criticised Iran, openly declared that a defeat of Iraq in the war will be contrary to the US interest in the region and offered US help in the war.⁵⁰ Baghdad has also softened her position toward US and seeking US help mainly because of two reasons; firstly her difficult position in the war; secondly her willingness to satisfy

48. Barry Rubin, "United States-Iraq Relations : A Spring Thaw" *Iraq ; The Contemporary State*, edited by Tim Niblock, 1983, p. 119

49. *International Herald Tribune*, 2 January 1984

50. *The Tribune* (India), 3 January 1984

pro-west fellow Arab nations. But at the same time, being the cradle of Arab Baathist ideology, champion of the Palestinian cause, an active member of the Non-aligned Movement and with the bitter experience of Portsmouth Treaty and Baghdad Pact for which Iraq had to pay a very high price, it is most unlikely that Iraq may again turn into a Western ally.

Iran, with whom the US has tense relation since the revolution in 1979, is still too important to US both economically and strategically. Since the US interest in Iran lie with the moderate elements, US from the beginning of the revolution relied on them and tried to strengthen their position, but the recent developments in Iran show that the fundamentalists have consolidated their position and the moderates have been cornered. So, it appears that, with the present regime in Iran, where the leadership describes US as "great satan" and thinks, "the danger that America poses is so great if you commit the smallest oversight, you will be destroyed"⁵¹, the US-Iran relation can hardly be improved.

The longer the Gulf war is continuing the more the US Administration is becoming worried and preparing fresh strategies for deploying US air, naval and ground forces in the region. US Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy during his visit to the Gulf in mid-April 1984 tried to persuade the conservative Arab Gulf states, particularly, Oman, Bahrain and UAE, that they should help US in time of crisis by consenting to American use of their military facilities. The US Administration wants to convince the Arabs that in the event of major crisis the Gulf states will be unable to protect themselves and will have no one to turn to but the United States. But the Arabs are afraid that by cooperating too openly with Washington they will invite a radical backlash.⁵² The members of the GCC prefer to consolidate and strengthen their forces to protect their interest but reluctant to see American combat forces on their soil. Most of the Gulf leaders

51. The Thoughts of Ayatollah Khomeini, *South*, May 1982, p. 25

52. *Newsweek*, 23 April 1984, p. 15

53. *Arabia ; The Islamic World Review*, December 1983 p. 49

oppose "gun boat diplomacy" in the region and are against any direct or indirect military intervention in the Gulf by the superpowers.⁵³

So, inspite of all concerns and worriness, US had only little leverage on the Gulf war and her options are strictly limited, as one State Department official said, "the war between Iran and Iraq is one of the few conflicts where we do not have an ally or at least friend we can lean on".⁵⁴

The overall Soviet attitude toward the conflict is rather complicated and confusing. From the beginning of the conflict the Soviet response was surprisingly cautious. The Soviets, inspite of their Treaty of Friendship with Iraq, for their part did not conceal the view that Iraq was involved in the war without sufficient provocation.⁵⁵ In fact the Soviet indifference toward Iraq was mainly because of their greater stake in Iran. In spite of helping Iraq in war they hurried to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with Syria—the only supporter of Iran in the Arab East. The Soviets welcomed the revolution in Iran and hoped to come in terms with the fundamentalist regime of Tehran on an anti-American platform. Another Soviet objective in Iran was to seek her support to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. But the subsequent developments showed that despite all efforts the Soviets, somehow, failed to convince the leadership of Iran and Tehran was not ready to join the Soviets in any anti-American alliance. In early 1984 the Soviet Union expressed its willingness to join Iran in an anti-imperialist struggle but it was outrightly rejected by Iran, rather she responded that the Soviet Union should take its own message seriously and should not, "pour its missiles on civilian population" (reference to Iraq's use of Soviet-made missiles).⁵⁶

The Soviet-Iran relation suffered a serious setback in early 1984 when Irani military tribunal sentenced 87 members of the outlawed

54. *The New York Times*, 14 July 1982

55. Richard Cottam, "The Iran-Iraq War" *Current History*, January 1984, p. 9

56. SWB, Part 4, 19 January 1984, Quoted in *IDSIA News Review on West Asia* (New Delhi), Vol 15, No 1, p. 4.

pro-Soviet Tudeh party who were convicted for attempts to overthrow the Islamic government of Iran. Iran also strongly criticises the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and demands unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

So, it seems that, despite all efforts by the Russians, revolutionary Iran, who characterises Soviet Union as "the aggressive plunder of the East",⁵⁷ will hardly agree to join the Soviets or to act under their influence.

Recently it has been observed that the Soviet Union has come forward to help Iraq directly. But Middle East political observers are convinced that the Soviets will not come forward with any serious diplomatic offensive to end the Gulf war, rather they will prefer to complicate the situation and will try to catch fish in the troubled water, of course keeping in mind their greater stake in Iran.

V

From the analysis of all aspects of the war conventional wisdom would suggest that the present situation of war favours Iran because of her larger reserve of manpower, stronger economic base, revolutionary zeal and the closeness of Iraqi main lines of communication to the front. But conventional wisdom does not always hold good, particularly, in the case of Iran-Iraq war. After a long defeat in the war, recently Iraq seems to be in a stronger position, her forces are well dug in, its Shia community appears to be loyal to the regime, the Kurds issue, has been tackled by the government, growing economic assistance are coming from different channels and her old ally Russia is pumping in arms. There is no doubt that Iraq is in a superior position in arms and ammunitions, both qualitatively and quantitatively, but her forces are ideologically less committed and tired with the long insane war. On the other hand, although Irani arms are mostly outdated, inferior in quality and she

57. The Thoughts of Ayatollah Khomeini, *South*, May 1982, p. 25

has been suffering seriously from the lack of spare parts and technicians, but she has the revolutionery zeal, strong organizational structure and ideological conviction and commitment.

Iraq has suffered more severely in the war than Iraq, her economy has paralysed, oil export has reduced upto one third of pre-war level, main industrial complexes near Basra has been seriously affected and agri-culture has suffered a set back, while Iran has been able to maintain the normal export of oil and economic condition has been improved since the war. So it is most likely that Iraq may launch a massive attack on Irani oil positions to cause severe economic damage and to block her oil export. On the other hand, Iran may consolidate and strengthen her postion in the front to launch the much-heralded "final offensive" to cut the Iraqi communication lines and to damage the only pipeline through Turkey.

In the socio-political life both the countries have so far been able to use the war successfully to consolidate their regimes and to strengthen national cohesion and integrity. In the present context the widely spread view that with the change of leadership in either of the countries the Gulf war may turn into a new phase, does not seem to be valid. With the continuation of war the Islamic ideology has been consolidated in Iran, the anti-revolutionary elements are being uprooted gradually and a number of socio-political institutions are emerging which may function normally, atleast for the lime being, even after the change of leadership. In Iraq although the socio-political fabric seems to be more votatile and fragile the recent trends show that President Saddam Hussein has been able to consolidate and strengthen his position by using the war with Iran.

About the possible involvement of external forces it is most unlikely that, inspite of their great worriness and grave concerns, either the Gulf countries or the superpowers will come forward militarily to join Iraq to fight against Iran. At the same time military incidents between Iran and the Gulf countries may occur from time to time but the possibility of a full scale war is remote. The United States

will maintain a very cautious and careful policy toward the conflict because of her sensitive relations with both the warring parties. With the recent developments in the Gulf war the US Administration tilted toward Iraq and expressed willingness to be involved in the conflict but the GCC countries are reluctant to accept the US military presence in the region rather they prefer to unite their own strength and effort to counter the Irani attacks and to secure their oil route through Gulf.

The Soviet Policy appears to be more confused. The Soviet Union is actively fighting the radical Islamic forces in Afghanistan while in Iran, inspite of strong criticism of Soviet Policy, expulsion of Soviet diplomats and execution of Pro-Soviet Tudeh party learders, the Russians are giving tacit support to the Islamic fundamentalist regime and trying to enter into an alliance with Iran on an anti-American platform. Observers however think that there will be no serious Soviet diplomatic initiative to any direction.

So it seems that the future of the Iran-Iraq war, the longest bilateral war after the World War-II, is very much obscure and despite all concerns from different quarters it may continue as a protracted war between the parties without much direct involvement of external forces into it.

Annexure—1
Registered Arms Trade with Iran and Iraq 1982

Recipient	Supplier	No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order	Year of delivery	No. delivered	Comments
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Iran	France	(66)	MM-38 Exocet	ShShM	(1981)			Order unconfirmed
	Italy	(100)	Seakiller/ Marte	AShM	(1978)	(1978)	(50)	Ongoing dispute concerning delay of deliveries; acc to Sistel spokesman, some 50 missiles remain to be delivered
	Syria	(120)	T-55	MBT	(1982)	1982	(120)	
		(100)	T-62	MBT	(1982)	1982	(100)	Syria and Libya supplied at least 350 MBTs late 1981-early 1982
	UK	1		Support ship	1974	1982	1	Embargo lifted; guns to be removed before delivery
	China	100	F-6	Fighter	1983	—	—	

Annexure-1 Contd.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Iraq	Brazil	—	EE-11 Urutu	APC	(1979)	1979	(50)	Number delivered unconfirmed
						1980 (1981) (1982)	(50) (50) (50)	
		(300)	EE-11 Urutu	APC	1982	—	—	Total value incl. EE- 3 Jararaca : \$ 250 mn ; in addition to earlier deliveries of the EE-series
		—	EE-17 Sucuri	TD	1979	1979	(50)	Number delivered unconfirmed
						1980 (1981) (1982)	(100) (100) (50)	
		(300)	EE-3 Jararaca	SC	1982	—	—	
		—	EE-9 Cascavel	AC	(1979)	1979	(150)	Number delivered unconfirmed
						1980 1981 (1982)	(200) (200) (200)	
	Egypt	—	T-55	MBT	1981	1982	(100)	—

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Annexure-1 Contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Iraq	France	(150)	Alpha Jet	Adv trainer/ strike	(1981)	—	—	Negotiating ; partly built in France and partly locally assembled ; agreement not yet signed
		14	AMX-30 Roland	AAV	1981	(1982)	(40)	Ordered Feb. 1981
		85	AMX-30- 155 GCT	SPG	1982	—	—	—
		24	Mirage F-1C	Fighter/ interc.	1980	(1982)	(12)	Second order reduced from 36 due to wish to buy Mirage-2000 instead
		29	Mirage F-1C	Fighter/ interc.	1982	—	—	In addition to 60 now being delivered; ordered Feb 1982
		—	R-440	Landmob SAM	(1979)	1981 1982	(50) (50)	—
		—	R-530	AAM	1979	—	—	Delivery may have started

Annexure 1 contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Iraq		150	Rolad-2	Landmob SAM	1981	(1982)	(50)	Ordered Feb 1981
		40	SA-33OL	Hel	1979	1981 1982	(20) (20)	Ordered Jul. 1979
		(20)	SA-34K	Hel	(1978)	1981 1982	(10) (10)	In addition to 40 previously delivered
		—	SS-11	ATM	1979	—	—	On order
		—	Super Frelon	Hel	(1981)	—	—	Unspecified number on order
Indonesia		—	Bo-105CB	Hel	1980	—	—	Undisclosed number ordered ; to be armed with French ATWs
Italy		—	Aspide	AAM/SAM/ ShAM	1979	—	—	Arming 4 Lupo Class frigates ; designation unconfirmed
		2	Esmeraldas Class	Corvette	1981	—	—	—
		4	Lupo Class	Frigate	1981	—	—	—
	—	Seakiller-2	ShShM	1979				Army 4 Lupo Class frigates ; designation unconfirmed

Annexure 1 contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Iraq		1	Stromboli Class	Supply ship	1981	—	—	Support ship; ordered with 4 Lupo Class frigates and 4 Wadi Class corvettes
		4	Wadi Class	Corvette MBT	1981	—	—	—
Jordan	—	—	Khalid	MBT	1982	1982	(20)	Small number transferred as military aid
Spain	—	—	BMR-600	ICV	1981	—	—	On order
	—	—	C-101 Aviojet	Trainer/ strike	(1981)	—	—	On order
	20	—	C-212-200	Transport	1981	—	—	Incl. in \$900 mn 5-year programme
Switzerland	(44)	—	PC-7	Trainer	(1981)	(1981) (1982)	(22) (22)	—
UK	58	—	Saboteur	APC	1982	1982	8	—
USA	6	—	L-100-30	Transport	1982	—	—	US ban lifted Apr, 1 1982; unconfirmed
USSR	—	—	—	LST	1979	—	—	Ordered Jan. 1979
	—	—	MiG-25	Fighter/ interc.	1979	(1979)	(5)	Deliveries reportedly re-started 1982
						(1980) (1982)	(5) (10)	

Annexure 1 contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Iraq		—	MiG-27	Fighter/ strike	(1979)	(1979) (1980) (1982)	(7) (8) (10)	Small number of MiG-23/27s and MiG 25s reportedly delivered 1982
		—	SA-6 Gainful	Landmob SAM	1979	(1980) (1981) (1982)	(90) (50) (50)	Believed to have received a limited number
		—	SA-8 Gecko	Landmob SAM	(1982)	1982	(72)	—
		3	—	Submarine	1979	—	—	Ordered Jan. 1979
		—	T-62	MBT	(1982)	1982	(100)	Supply of T-62/72s resumed in 1982
		(150)	T-72	MBT	1980	(1982)	(50)	—
China	260		T-69	MBT	1982	1983	—	—
France	43		Mirage F-1	fighter	1983	—	—	—
	5		Super Etendard ¹	fighter	1983	1983	5	—
		20	Exocet	ASM	1983	—	—	—
USSR	—		Scud T-62 MiG 23/25	SSM, SAM, fighter	1983	—	—	—

1. Delivered at the end of 1983, confirmed by the Ministry of External Affairs of France.

Source : *World Armaments and Disarmament SIPRI Year Book 1983*, pp. 317-319,
and *Military Balance 1983-1984*, IISS, London.

Annexure—2

Iran and Iraq : Basic Economic Indicators

Item	Iran	Iraq
Area	0.64 m. sq. km	0.17 m. sq. km.
Population	41.5 m (1983)	13.5 million (1983)
GNP	\$121.7 billion (1981)	\$ 38.0 billion (1981)
GDP growth rate	5% (1982)	5% (1982)
Oil		
-Proven reserve,	58 bn. barrels (1980) (2nd largest in OPEC) -90% in Khuzistan	21 bn. barrels (1980) (3rd largest in OPEC) -Main oil field Kirkuk -around Basra
-Production,	2.6 million barrels per day (1983)	0.9 million barrels per day (1983)
-Exports,	1.1 million barrels per day (1980) 2.2 million barrels per day (1983)	2.4 million barrels per day (1980) 0.8 million barrels per day (1983)
-Revenues,	13.5 billion US dollars (1980) 21.0 billion US dollars (1983)	26 billion US dollars (1980) 10.2 billion US dollar (1983)
Other Minerals,	-Gas (over 600 trillion cu. ft) (second to Soviet Union 900 tr. cu. ft.) -Iron ore (upto 670,000 tonnes) -Zinc (80,000 tonnes) -Chromium, Copper, Manganeze	-Gas (780 bn. cu. cm.) -Sulphar, Salt, Zinc, lead, Iron ore Copper

Annexure-2 Contd.

Item	Iran	Iraq
Industry,		
-Base	-Steel, Petrochemical Oil refinery, Sugar refining, Carpets, Textiles	-Steel, Petrochemical, Cement, Carpet, Oil & refinery etc.
-Major concentra- tion	-Tabriz, Mahabad, Isfahan, Shiraz Abadan	-Basra, Baghdad
-% of GDP	-Oil (about 30%) -Manufacturing 10-12%	-Oil (about 70%) -Manufacturing 10%
Agriculture		
-Arable land	43.7 million acres (about 12% of total land)	13.8 million acres
-Forest or wood land	11.5%	5%
Agro-belt	-Khuzistan	-Mainly South
-% of GDP	15.8 (1983)	about 10%
-Main crops	Wheat (5-6 m. Tonnes) -Rice, burley, sugar beat, cotton etc.	-Dates (over 60% of agr. exports) -Wheat, burley, rice, fruits
-Food	-Deficit 13% of merchandise imports	-Deficit 10-12 percent of total imports
Trade,		
-Export	—	Oil 97-98%
-Main destination	-Japan, German, Brazil, Pakistan, Turkey, (In 1978, the share of OECD countries was 84% percent in 1982 only about 50%)	-France, Japan, UK, Spain

Annexure-2 Contd.

Item	Iran	Iraq
-Import	-Machinery, equipments (44% of total import), food	-Machinery and equipment (about 50% of total import), food.
-Main sources	-Japan, Germany, East bloc countries, smaller European countries -Third World countries	-Japan (18-22%) Germany (12-15%) USA, France, USSR
Trade deficit	\$ 2.5 bn (1981)	\$ 9.5 bn (1981)
Inflation	-About 60% percent per annum	-About 40% percent per annum.
Foreign Exchange Reserve	\$ 15.5 bn (1980) \$ 3 bn (1983) (including gold and note cover)	\$ 35 bn (1980) \$ 3-4 bn
Foreign Debt	—	About \$ 50 bn (Mainly Gulf)
Official Aid	\$753 million (1978) \$ -150 million (1981)	\$ 231 million (1978) \$143 million (1981)
War Expenses	\$ 1 billion (per month)	\$ 9 million (per day)

Sources : Compiled from *World Development Reports 1979 to 1983*, World Bank, *Middle East Review 1980 to 1984* and *Middle East and North Africa 1982-83*.