Chapter - VI

CRISIS MANAGEMENT
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The Iran-Iraq war became a matter of grave international concern, appalling human consequences in terms of casualties, physical destruction and social disruption. Since the war was taking place in a highly strategic and economically important area of the world, the war became an important test of the capacity of United Nations to maintain international peace and security. Peace initiatives were also taken by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

Immediately after the outbreak of Iran-Iraq war, the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned countries decided in New York on 21 October 1980, on the initiative of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to form a mediation committee to seek a
settlement of the Iran-Iraq conflict.' The decision was made after hearing a report from the Cuban Foreign Minister, Isidore Malmierca, on the result of the peace effort which took him to Baghdad and Teheran where he met President Saddam Hussein and Abolhasan Bani-Sadr. The mediation committee was formed of Foreign Ministers of Algeria, Cuba, India, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Zambia and the PLO. After visiting Iran and Iraq, the committee found no willingness from either of the countries to negotiate, save that each combatant demanded the expulsion of the other from the NAM.'

The Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers' Conference held in New Delhi on 9-13 February 1981, declared:

While expressing their profound regret at the five-month old Iran-Iraq war and at the damage to lives and property it has caused to the two parties, as well as the threat it poses to the Movement of the Non-Aligned countries, the Ministers reiterated and emphasized the principles of the Movement of the Non-Aligned countries that no state should acquire or occupy territories by the use of force, that whatever territories had been acquired in this way should be returned, that no act of aggression should be committed against any state, that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states should be respected, that no state should try to interfere or intervene in the internal


affairs of other states, and that all differences or claims which may exist between states should be settled by peaceful means in order that peaceful relations should prevail among member states.'

The New Delhi conference replaced the seven-member committee with a four-member committee. The seven-member committee could not take off primarily because of Iraq’s opposition to Algeria, Iran’s reservations about Pakistan and Iraq’s displeasure with Yugoslavia’s mode of functioning. The four-member committee consisted of Cuba, India, Zambia and the PLO.

The mediation committee frequently visited both Iran and Iraq to ease the difference between them and to ask for an end to the conflict by peaceful means. Foreign Ministers of India, Zambia and the Head of the PLO’s political department visited Baghdad on 6 April and on 11 April 1981.' But they could not achieve any progress, because of the attitudes of Iran and Iraq towards a peaceful settlement. The Non-Aligned mediation committee admitted on 18 April 1981 that it had been unable to reconcile the conflicting demands of the two


'Patriot (New Delhi), 15 February 1981.

'Keesing’s, n.1, p.31015.
sides.' Once again the Committee visited Teheran on 10 May and Baghdad on 11 May 1981, and again it was confronted with mutual recriminations between Iran and Iraq.' Further, the Committee visited Teheran on 6 August and Baghdad on 8 August 1981. The Iranian Prime Minister Rajai, told the delegation that the mission had "...not been very useful in clarifying the stance of aggressor and the situation of the nation against which that aggression has taken place".' Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, however, told the delegation that Iraq would cooperate and receive it any time "...regardless of the stand adopted by the Iranians".'

In Havana, during the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the NAM, the mediation committee held separate meetings with Foreign Ministers of Iran and Iraq. On 5 June 1982, the Committee met and concluded that appropriate conditions did not exist for it to undertake any new initiative in pursuance of its mandate. The Committee subsequently met in Geneva on 10-


'Keesing's, n.1, p.31015.

'Keesing's, n.2, p.31524.

'Ibid.
It had a detailed exchange of views on the Iran-Iraq conflict and its implications for peace and security in the region. In July 1982, the committee met the Minister of Youth and Sports of Iraq and the Foreign Minister of Iran. "During these separate meetings, the Ministers of Iran and Iraq reiterated the positions of their respective countries. The Committee assessed the results of the meetings and came to the conclusion that the positions of the parties to the conflict were still wide apart. It was also the view of the Committee that there was danger of further intensification of the hostilities."

The question came up before the Seventh Summit Conference of the Head of the State or Governments of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New Delhi on 7-12 March 1983. The summit was originally planned in Baghdad but Iran opposed the venue. Iran stated that unless Iraq paid reparations to Iran for the war and unless its President Saddam Hussein, was removed, the movement should not hold its summit there. "Iran's aim certainly was to politically humiliate Baghdad by forcing it to cancel the meet."

"UN Doc. A/37/540-S/15454.

"Ibid.

"Times of India (New Delhi), 24 July 1982."
In the New Delhi summit, on the issue of conflict between members of non-aligned countries, a formula was proposed by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and UAE. It called for an immediate ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war and withdrawal to pre-war boundaries, with UN involvement in peacekeeping and a suggestion that UN should impose sanctions on either country if the formula was not accepted. This was the first time that the notion of UN peacekeeping operations for the Iran-Iraq war discussed at an international forum. Teheran rejected the NAM resolution, while Baghdad, increasingly feeling the burden of a costly conflict, expressed a desire to negotiate a peaceful settlement.

In April 1984 another peace plan was initiated by Egypt and forwarded by India, as Chairperson of NAM, to Teheran. The elements of peace plan were: an immediate ceasefire, return to international borders by the combatants, stationing of an international force to supervise ceasefire, NAM Commission to determine who started the war and who prolonged it, and setting up of the Islamic Reconstruction Fund to finance reconstruction of the war-damaged zones of both

countries." The plan was welcomed by Iraq but dismissed by the Iranian side.

Finally, after intense negotiations conducted by the Indian Ambassador Natarajan Krishnan with the envoys of the two concerned countries, a draft acceptable to both sides was hammered out on 4 October 1984. The draft finally accepted by Iran and Iraq said:

"need to exert all possible efforts to contribute to the implementation of the principles of non-alignment with regard to the conflict between Iran and Iraq in order to find a peaceful, just and honourable solution to this unfortunate conflict in accordance with the charter of the UN and principles of non-alignment which would bring durable peace and security to the region."

The Iranian amendment wanted the meeting to deplore the alleged use of chemical weapons by Iraq, while Iraq sought disapproval of Iran sending children to the war front. Iran also brought to the NAM its complaints against Iraq's use of chemical weapons on several occasions since 1983. But, it was sidetracked by arguing that it was pointless focusing on just one aspect of the war when Iran was rebuffing all efforts to end it.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India, in his first major initiative as Chairman of the Non-Aligned

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"The Statesman (Calcutta), 6 October 1984."
Movement, on 18 March 1985, appealed to Iran and Iraq not to escalate their 53-month old war. He said that it could jeopardize the stability of the region. He also despatched special envoys, J.S. Teja and A.P. Venkateswaran, to Iran and Iraq. "The special envoys met President Ali Khameini and Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, and conveyed the Non-Aligned Movement's concern at the intensified fighting. The Presidents of both Iran and Iraq replied to the messages sent to them by Rajiv Gandhi calling on them to put an end to the bombing of the civilian areas as a prelude to a de-escalation of the internecine war that was raging between them."

The Ministerial meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned countries held in New Delhi on 16-19 April 1986, reaffirmed the applicability of the principle of non-use of force in international relations with regard to the conflict between Iran and Iraq. The Iranian delegation walked out of the meeting, taking the view that Iran and Iraq had been equated, whereas the latter should have been condemned for starting the war and for using chemical weapons. Iran said that it would


oppose any such appeal at all future non-aligned and other gatherings." The Chairman of the NAM in the keynote address, said,

the commencement of the fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq, its continuation, escalation and violations of international humanitarian law, have caused deep distress to all of us in the Non-Aligned Movement. Tragically neither our efforts, nor those of others, have yet succeeded in bringing about any de-escalation or cessation of hostilities."

In July 1987, when the permanent members of the Security Council agreed on a resolution which called for a ceasefire, withdrawal of troops to international boundaries and exchange of prisoners of wars," the non-aligned members of the Security Council proposed amendments to the draft resolution agreed upon by the five permanent members. One of the amendments which non-alignment insisted upon was that the draft resolution should propose for UN observer to monitor the ceasefire. The other amendment deplored the use of chemical weapons in the war."

"Times of India, 21 April 1986.


"The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 16 July 1987.

"Indian Express (New Delhi), 16 July 1987."
After Iran and Iraq accepted the Security Council Resolution 598, and the hostilities came to an end, the Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned countries, held in Nicosia from 5-10 September 1988, expressed great satisfaction on the decision of Iran and Iraq to accept the implementation of Security Council Resolution 598 on the termination of the Iran-Iraq war and in particular cessation of hostilities as from 20 August 1988 and the commencement of direct talks under the auspices of UN Secretary-General with a view to reaching a comprehensive, just, honourable and durable solution to the conflict."

Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) also made several attempts to find a settlement between Iran and Iraq in order to end the war. On 26 September 1980, the OIC Foreign Ministers decided in New York to charge the Pakistan President, Zia ul-Haq, to head a good offices committee to Iran and Iraq." The team consisting of President Zia ul-Haq, Habib Chatti, Secretary-General


"Dawn (Karachi), 30 September 1980.
of OIC and Yasser Arafat, held talks with President Bani-Sadr and President Saddam Hussein. The ultimate purpose of this mission was to establish a peaceful settlement in the spirit of Islamic solidarity. The Iraqi government responded positively towards the good offices of OIC for a negotiated settlement. But the Iranian government stated that it was "going to fight until the last Iraqi soldier is off Iranian soil."

The extraordinary session of the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference was held in the United Nations on 1-2 October 1980. During the meeting, the Iraqi Foreign Minister Saddoun Hammadi told President Zia-ul-Haq that it would offer ceasefire unilaterally from 5 to 8 October 1980. Iran rejected it on the ground that there was no such thing as a unilateral ceasefire. Further efforts were made by the Secretary-General of OIC, Habib Chatti, to end the conflict between them. He visited Baghdad and Teheran, on 16-20 October 1980, to bring peace between them. President Saddam Hussein of Iraq was ready to cease hostilities and to begin negotiations with Iran on condition that they were based on the recognition of Iraqi sovereignty over Shatt al-Arab."

"Keesing's, n.1, p.31014.

"Keesing's, n.1, p.31014.

"Ibid.
Further, the Iraqi Foreign Minister added that Iran would have to undertake to refrain from any interference in Iraq's internal affairs. The proposal for a ceasefire made by Habib Chatti was rejected by Iran. The Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammed Ali Rajai, told the Secretary-General that Iran would hold no talks on its conflict with Iraq until Iraqi troops had withdrawn from Iranian territory.

The Third OIC summit conference was held in Taif, Saudi Arabia, 25-29 January 1981. The Iraqi President told the summit that he was ready to return land occupied in the war with Iran. He added, "but land and rights which Iran has usurped by force should be restored to their lawful owners." Iran boycotted the summit because of the presence of Saddam Hussein. However, the summit decided to enlarge the good offices committee and also to set up an Islamic force to implement ceasefire if necessary." The Committee visited Iran and Iraq between 28 February to 1 March 1981. The

"Ibid.

"Indian Express, 23 October 1980.

"Times of India, 29 January 1981.

"Keesing's, n.1, p.31014.
OIC Peace Committee in its proposals suggested that a truce should be observed from 5 March to 12 March, conclude a ceasefire on 13 March, followed by a withdrawal of Iraqi forces on 20 March - "the withdrawal to be completed within four weeks". These measures would take place under the supervision of military observers from the Islamic Conference states acceptable to both parties. The question of the Shatt al-Arab would be submitted to a committee of members of the Islamic conference. Negotiations would be held following the withdrawal to find peaceful solutions to other differences.

Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini ruled out any Iranian compromise with Iraq when he met the mediation committee of OIC. He told the Committee, "In Islam compromise with the enemy has no sense." Basically, the Iranian government wanted that Iraq's aggression should be acknowledged internationally and all Iraqi forces should be withdrawn from Iranian territory. Radio Teheran quoted Prime Minister Rajai as saying, after the second round of negotiations with the Islamic mediation committee, on 4 March: "We shall

"Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) News Review on West Asia, April 1981, p.11.

"Patriot, 2 March 1981."
continue resisting and struggling as long as the aggressor is not identified and punished...The war will continue until there is a complete assurance of the termination of aggression and obliteration of its vestiges."

President Saddam Hussein had made the withdrawal of Iraqi troops conditional on Iran's recognition of Iraq's sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab and other disputed territories. The Iraqi News Agency reported on 4 March:

President Saddam stressed that any solution which did not take into account the reasons for the war, including Iraq's sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab and its lands, could not be just and logical solution. During the meeting between the Iraqi side and the good offices Committee...the President said that there could not be any withdrawal before Iran's recognition of those rights and before Iraq's acquisition of practical and legal guarantees."

The Iranian President Bani-Sadr, on the other hand, declared on 5 March that Iran could not accept solutions outside the 1975 Algiers Agreement, that a cease-fire and the withdrawal of Iraq's army must be simultaneous; and that an international delegation should be established to "investigate the aggression". Similarly,

"IDSA News Review on West Asia, n.32, p.11.

"Ibid., p.12.

"Keesing's, n.1, p.31014."
Iran's Supreme Defence Council rejected on 6 March the peace plan proposed by the Islamic goodwill mission to halt the war. Iran said that it rejected the proposals as they did not meet its demands for unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iranian territory and the declaration of Iraq as the aggressor in the war.

Once again the Committee met Saddam Hussein in Baghdad on 31 March 1981. There was no positive development. Consequently, President Sekou Toure said that pending responses from both the sides the Committee had "suspended peacekeeping shuttles at the summit level". The Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference met in Baghdad on 1-5 June 1981. The summit appealed to both Iran and Iraq to end the bloodshed and to endeavour to reach a just, peaceful and honourable solution to their conflict. Saddam Hussein while addressing the summit said that Iraq was willing to reach a "peaceful, just and honourable" solution to war with Iran. Iran boycotted the meeting.

After the failure in June 1981, no further attempts were made by OIC until March 1982. Renewed efforts were


"Keesings, n.1, p.31014.

"Indian Express, 3 June 1981."
made by a five-member mission of OIC, led by President Sekou Toure. The Committee visited Baghdad and Teheran on 7-8 March 1982. The mission failed once again in bringing both parties to a peaceful settlement, but the Committee said that it would continue its peace efforts."

The fourth summit of the OIC was held in Casablanca, Morocco, on 16-19 January 1984. Iran boycotted the summit, charging that a resolution adopted last December at the fourteenth conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers favoured Iraq." The Islamic mediation committee met on 19 July 1984 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in a renewed bid to muster pan-Islamic pressure on Iran to accept a negotiated end to its war with Iraq. But hardly was the session underway when in Teheran Foreign Ministry issued a statement indicating that Ayatollah Khomeini had rejected mediation." Since Iran persisted on removal of Saddam as a condition for terminating war with Iraq, no solution could be reached.

The Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference was held in San’aa in December 1984. The resolution of the

*Keesing’s, n.6, p.31524.

"Beijing Review, vol. 27, No.5-6, 30 January 1984, p.12.

"Patriot, 20 July 1984."
meeting as reported by the Iraqi news agency, "called on Iran and Iraq to cooperate fully and sincerely" with the Committee and appealed to the two sides to observe the rules of the Sharia, the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War (POWs) and the Geneva Protocol on Chemical Weapons. The agency also quoted Tariq Aziz as saying, "it was obvious to everyone that it was Iran that had obstructed the committee's work" and added, "Teheran should issue a clear official affirmation of its acceptance of and abidance by the resolution", so that conclusion can be drawn." Iran dashed the short-lived hopes that the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference in San'aa that had achieved a breakthrough in efforts to bring the 51-month old war to a halt. "A ceasefire is out of question", Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati told a news conference in Teheran on 22 December 1984. "We will continue the war until we achieve the victory". He accused the OIC and Islamic Mediation Committee of being pro-Iraq, reiterating that Iran would not respond to these mediators until Iran ascertained their impartiality."
The Islamic Mediation Committee again met in Jeddah on 11-12 September 1985. The Secretary-General, Syed Shariffudin Pirzada, proposed a comprehensive peace plan, called for an immediate ceasefire, cessation of attacks on civilian and economic targets, end to the use of chemical weapons, withdrawal of forces to the pre-war positions and exchange of POWs. He also suggested that a force be deployed to monitor the peace and negotiations between the two countries should be held under the auspices of the OIC. The Iraqi government accepted the peace offer, but Iran rejected it. The mediation committee's effort to stop the war between Iran and Iraq were in vain since it could not be assured of any favourable responses from both the countries. The Secretary-General, Pirzada, summed up the impasse by saying, "Let's not lose hope...let's pray to Allah. It's a difficult situation but we are trying...fights and quarrels happens among family members...and it could take a long time before other members can help solve it".

The Fifth Summit of the OIC was held in Kuwait on 26-29 January 1987. The final resolution called upon

"Bangladesh Times (Dhaka), 13 September 1985.
"Ibid., 14 September 1985.
"Saudi Gazette (Riyadh), 24 February 1986."
Iran to agree to end the war by peaceful means. It reaffirmed "...the need for an immediate ceasefire and a withdrawal to internationally recognized borders and an exchange of all prisoners within a short time after cessation of hostilities, to be followed by negotiations for peace". Iran boycotted the summit on the ground that the host country Kuwait was an "unsafe venue" and it was supporting Iraq in the war. President Ali Khomeini refused to receive an Islamic goodwill mission, and said that such a visit would be useless as long as the OIC did not condemn Iraq as the aggressor.

**United Nations**

The UN effort to end hostilities began with the Secretary-General's appeal to both the parties on 22 September 1980 to refrain from the use of force. He also offered his good offices to resolve the conflict. The following day, in a letter to Presidents of Iran and Iraq, he called upon each government to "...heed the appeals addressed to you with a view to assisting the


two governments to resolve their differences by peaceful means". The President of the Security Council, in another appeal on behalf of the members of the Security Council, asked the two states to "...desist, as a first step towards a solution of the conflict, from all armed activity and all acts that may worsen the present dangerous situation and to settle their dispute by peaceful means". The Iraqi government responded to the Secretary-General's appeal and clarified its position, while the Iranian government remained silent.

On 28 September 1980, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 479 calling for an immediate end to hostilities, peaceful settlement of the dispute and urged other countries to refrain from any act that might lead to further escalation. The Security Council called the conflict between Iran and Iraq a "situation", while refraining from calling it "war", in order to avoid a discussion of "aggression" which might consequently lead to the possibility of invoking punitive actions under Chapter 7 of the United Nations charter. Nor did Iran and Iraq declare a state of war between them. They had not even severed diplomatic

"UN Doc.S/14193.
"Ibid.
"UN Doc.S/14191 and S/14192.
relations; the embassy of each country was officially in existence in the capital of the other, although the ambassador of each had been recalled, relegating their powers to a charge d'affaires. The Iraqi Ambassador, who participated in the Security Council meeting, accepted in his speech that the resolution basically called for a ceasefire. "Iran, which had boycotted the meeting, informed Secretary-General on 1 October 1980, that it did not see any use in discussing the conflict, as long as Iraq occupied Iranian territory."

Between 26 September-24 October 1980, the Security Council met six times to discuss the Iran-Iraq war. The Council did not publicly meet to discuss the war from the end of October 1980 until July 1982. However, the Secretary-General, over the following years, made a number of attempts to either end the fighting or to reduce the intensity of the hostilities. In November 1980, the Secretary-General appointed Olof Palme of Sweden as the UN Special Representative and was asked to

"UN Doc.S/PV.2248.

"UN Doc.S/14206.

visit Iran and Iraq and explore the possibility of a peaceful settlement."

Olof Palme visited Iran and Iraq five times, once in 1980, thrice in 1981 and once in 1982, and met officials in both the countries. During his visit, he outlined various UN plans for a ceasefire and troop withdrawals. Unfortunately, Palme's efforts were largely unsuccessful. While the Iranians demanded the withdrawal of all forces before they would enter into any negotiation, the Iraqis insisted that withdrawal be included in the negotiations after the acceptance of a ceasefire. Palme stated that he had made every possible effort to end the war, but he did not see any possibility for progress as long as lack of willingness among the parties prevailed.

On 12 July 1982, the Security Council passed Resolution 514, just as Iran had managed to push the Iraqi forces almost back to the pre-war borders and in one area into Iraqi territory. The Resolution 514, differed from the previous one on an important point i.e., it requested a withdrawal to international


"UN Doc.S/15471. 
boundaries and a ceasefire. Iran rejected the resolution. It stated that the Security Council had deliberately failed to recognize that armed aggression and occupation had taken place, to condemn the aggressor, to demand restoration of previous conditions and to recognize Iran's right to punish the war criminals responsible for the destruction and misery caused by Iraqi aggression." Two months later the Security Council met on 4 October 1982, and passed Resolution 522. Resolution 522 basically repeated 514, but added that Security Council welcomed that one of the parties (Iraq) already had expressed willingness to implement Resolution 514.

The Security Council passed Resolution 540 on 31 October 1983. Besides reaffirming the previous resolutions, it condemned the violations of 1925 Geneva Protocol and attacks on civilian targets." While Iraq welcomed the resolution, Iran rejected the resolution and used the argument that the Security Council still had remained in the same unbalanced tradition it had followed since the beginning of Iraq's war of aggression. Hence Iran had no alternative but to

"UN Doc.S/15292.

"UN Doc.S/16092."
continue to dissociate itself from the resolution." The Council passed Resolution 552 on 1 June 1984. It condemned the attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf and affirmed the rights to free navigation in the Gulf. This resolution was passed after the tanker war had escalated considerably. It also stated that the Council would meet to consider more effective measures if the attacks continued."

The next Security Council resolution was passed as a consequence of the dramatic changes on the battlefield in February 1986. As the Iranian forces crossed the Shatt al-Arab and seized the Fao peninsula, a new and threatening military situation emerged. Resolution 582 was adopted on 24 February 1986. It called for an immediate ceasefire, a cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of troops to internationally recognized boundaries, a comprehensive exchange of POWs and, Iran and Iraq to submit all aspects of the conflict to mediation. Despite the fact that the resolution had no impact on the ongoing fighting, it marked an interesting shift, as Iran for the first time noted that it was "a positive step towards condemning Iraq as the aggressor

"UN Doc.S/16213.

"UN Doc./S/16594."
and towards a just conclusion to the war". "Iraq expressed readiness to implement the resolution in good faith provided Iran was ready to do the same."

In October 1986, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 588, by which it called on the parties to implement its Resolution 582 without delay. Iran rejected the resolution stating that it fell short of explicitly identifying Iraq as the aggressor, or of measures to prevent Iraq from further using chemical weapons, attacking civilians and third-party vessels, threatening civil aviation and otherwise violating international law." The resolutions passed in 1986 did not lead anywhere. It became increasingly more evident that the Council had to take a more determined approach. It also needs to be noted in this context that the Cold War was giving way to the new detente and USSR was bending backwards to accommodate USA. Soviet policy was changing in Afghanistan. Similarly, USSR was gradually withdrawing its protective political cover vis-a-vis Iran in the Security Council. That strengthened the position of USA and also pro-US regimes in the Gulf. Iraq benefitted from this change to a large extent.

"UN Doc.S/17864.
"UN Doc.S/17897.
"UN Doc.S/18480.
The UN's role in the Iran-Iraq war changed considerably with the Resolution 598 of 20 July 1987. It was a strongly worded resolution and demanded an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of forces to the internationally recognized boundaries. The Secretary-General was requested to send observers to supervise this and to continue his mediating efforts in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and honourable settlement. The resolution also urged the exchange of POWs without delay and requested the Secretary-General to consult with the parties in order to establish an impartial body to inquire into the responsibility of the conflict. Iran, which did not participate in the meeting, declared on 22 July that the resolution suffered from fundamental defects and incongruities, and lacked the minimum balance necessary for future constructive activities. Iran detailed its official position on Resolution 598 on 11 August, charging that it had been formulated by the US with the explicit intention of intervening in the Persian Gulf; that it reflected the Iraqi formula for settling the conflict and, therefore, it could not be considered impartial or practical. It warned that the failure to resolve the crisis would precipitate the

"UN Doc. S/18993."
conflict's expansion to unpredictable dimensions." Iraq, on its part, welcomed the resolution and expressed its readiness to fulfill its obligations in its implementation. Iraq also expressed willingness to engage in consultations with the Secretary-General concerning the inquiry into the responsibility for the conflict."

Resolution 598, however, made no immediate and direct impact on the War. Despite the Secretary-General's frequent meetings with the representatives from Iran and Iraq, and numerous informal consultations with the Security Council, no substantive progress was made during the following months. Finally, Iran accepted the ceasefire on 17 July 1988, when Iranian President Ali Khameini sent a letter to Secretary-General indicating Iran's willingness to accept Security Council Resolution 598 as a framework for ending the war.

Iran's acceptance came after battlefield setbacks in early 1988, and its isolation, which was clearly manifested when USS Vincennes shot down an Iranian Airbus. Iran was also threatened by the prospects of an embargo, and the Security Council underlined its

"UN Doc.S/19031.

"UN Doc.S/19045."
determination "to consider further effective steps" if the parties did not comply with Resolution 598." The ceasefire, as proposed under Resolution 598 of 20 August 1987, came into effect on 20 August 1988. It took the UN eight long years, 11 Security Council resolutions, numerous presidential statements and a long series of mediating attempts by the Secretary-General before the ceasefire came into effect.

Chemical Weapons

Use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War caused great international concern. The Secretary-General dispatched missions to investigate allegations by Iran and Iraq of the use of chemical weapon in March 1984, April 1985, February-March 1986, April-May 1987, March-April 1988, and twice in July 1988. Iran claimed since August 1983 that Iraq had used chemical weapons. However, it was only in November 1983, that the government of Iran formally alleged for the first time, in a communication to the UN, that chemical weapons were used by Iraq." Iran invited the Secretary-General to send an expert to look into the claims. Iraq on its side

"UN Doc.S/PV 2798.

"UN Doc.S/16128.
rejected the alleged use of poison gas by calling it Iranian propaganda."

In February 1984, Iran again charged Iraq of using chemical weapons against its forces and requested the Secretary-General to investigate the use of chemical weapons by Iraq. "Specialists visited Iran on 13-19 March 1984 and submitted a report to the Secretary-General on 21 March 1984. The report concluded that chemical weapons were used, but without naming Iraq as the violator." In a response to the report, Iraq stated that it did not consider itself concerned, because it had not used chemical weapons." The Security Council strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons reported by the mission of specialists; reaffirmed the need to abide strictly by provisions of Geneva Protocol of 1925 and condemn all violations of international humanitarian law."

Following repeated Iranian claims of Iraqi use of poison gas, the Secretary-General decided to send a

"UN Doc.S/16193.
"UN Doc.S/16378, S/16380, & S/16397.
"UN Doc.S/16438.
"Ibid.
"UN Doc.S/PV.2524."
specialist to examine Iranian soldiers who were sent to European hospitals for treatment of injuries allegedly caused by chemical weapons. Manuel Dominguez, a specialist in Atomic, Biological and Chemical weapons visited, from 1-5 April 1985, Iranian patients hospitalized in Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom. The expert concluded that chemical weapons were used during 1985 in the war between Iran and Iraq." A presidential statement was issued that strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons in the war, without mentioning Iraq as the violator."

After another year of similar complaints from Iran, the Secretary-General once again sent a mission to Iran in 1986. The mission visited Iran from 26 February-3 March 1986. The report concluded that the combined clinical and analytical data proved beyond doubt that chemical weapons were used on many occasions against Iranian forces by the Iraqis." The Government of Iran thanked Secretary-General for dispatching the mission and for its well-balanced and fair report." Iraq’s response was that Council "clearly lacked the required

"UN Doc.S/17127 & Add.1.
"UN Doc.S/17130.
"UN Doc.S/17925.
degree of balance". For the first time Iraq was condemned for its use of chemical weapon against Iran in the statement by the President of the Security Council."

The Iranian offensive in early 1987, led to a new upsurge in Iranian complaints. The UN mission visited Iran and Iraq from 22 April-3 May 1987 and submitted a report to the Secretary-General on 6 May 1987. The report confirmed that Iraq continued to use such weapons and civilians had been victims." This resulted in another Presidential statement that again condemned Iraq for its use of poison gas. Iraq, this time, did not reject the charge that it had used chemical weapons, but complained that the report had not sufficiently emphasized the "evidence" of Iranian use of similar weapons." Iran regretted that except for a few minor changes in wording, the Security Council deemed it sufficient in its statement simply to repeat its statement of 21 March 1986."

During the Iranian offensive in Kurdistan in March 1988, renewed complaints and evidence of the use of

"UN Doc.S/17932.
"UN Doc.S/18852.
"UN Doc.S/18870.
"UN Doc.S/18876.
chemical weapons were again produced by Iran. The mission visited Iran and Iraq from 28 March-11 April 1988. The reported stated that chemical weapons had been used against Iranian forces and civilians in Iran, and also military personnel in Iraq had been affected by it. The Secretary-General sent two new investigatory missions during the last months of the war. The mission visited Iran and Iraq, twice in July 1988. These two missions were dispatched after the Security Council Resolution 612 (1988) was passed. It reaffirmed the urgent necessity of strict observance of the protocol for the prohibition of the use in war of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological methods of warfare, signed at Geneva on 17 June 1925. It expected both parties to refrain from the use, in future, of chemical weapon in accordance with their obligation under the Protocol. It called upon all states to continue to apply or to establish strict control of the export to the parties to the conflict of chemical products serving for the production of chemical weapons.

"UN Doc.S/19823.

"UN Doc.S/20134."
Factors Underlying Iran's Acceptance of Ceasefire Resolution

Three sets of events persuaded Iran to agree to a ceasefire in mid-1988. First was the intensive use by Iraq of long-range missiles on cities and use of chemical weapons on the front. Second was a change in the military balance of power on the ground and particularly the collapse of the morale of Iranian forces. Third factor was Iran's increasing isolation.

Iraq launched the war of the cities at the end of February 1988. Unlike earlier aerial raids on Iranian urban centres, Iraq used this time long-range missiles acquired from the Soviet Union that could be fired from Iraqi bases at targets over 300 kms away, deep inside Iran. For the next six weeks Teheran and other major cities and towns were targets of intense missile attacks. Iraq fired more than 200 missiles at the Iranian capital, all of which fell randomly, causing great consternation and led to the flight of nearly half the population. About six million residents took refuge in more distant areas. The effect of these


indiscriminate terror attacks was to instill panic in the urban population. After the war, Rafsanjani was to claim that of a total of 133,000 Iranians killed, 10-11,000 deaths were attributed to air and missile attacks on cities."

In April 1988 Iraq went on the offensive, using brutal but effective tactics to put pressure upon Iran to finally accept the ceasefire. Well-planned and coordinated attacks by Iraqis led to the recapture of all the territories that Iranians had earlier seized from them. Iraq’s series of military victories began with the recapture of the Southern Fao Peninsula in April 1988. The Peninsula had been occupied by Iran for more than two years. A month later, Iraq drove Iranian forces out of the Shalamoleh area east of Basra, before going on to recapture in June the oil rich Majnoon islands and in July the Zubeidat area in the North East. Finally, the Iraqi army drove into Iranian territory, where it destroyed the cohesion of Iranian forces and carried back to Iraq massive amount of Iranian equipment. In this offensive Iraq also took


"Sunday Observer (London), 24 July 1988."
additional Iranian prisoners of war partially to offset Iraq's POWs held in Iran.

The string of Iraqi military victories hastened Iranian leaders to get Khomeini's approval for Iran's acceptance of a ceasefire. In some of these Iraqi offensives chemical weapons were used. Rafsanjani was later to tell the Revolutionary Guards that the war had shown chemical and biological weapons to be 'very decisive', and that "all the moral teachings of the world are not very effective when war reaches a serious position".

Iran's isolation, both political and military, and the threat of future comprehensive arms embargo increased the psychological pressure on Iran. The Operation Staunch, in existence since 1984, was taken more seriously by the US which appeared to be in a vengeful mood after the 'Irangate' revelations. European governments also began to take the issue more seriously. Thus, Iran's access to arms was being curtailed at precisely the time when its strategy called for more

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"Chubin, n.88, p.12."
resources and when existing stocks could no longer be revised to serve as improvised replacements.

The destruction of an Iranian civilian Airbus by a missile of a US naval vessel in early July 1988 provided a convenient occasion for the announcement of the acceptance of ceasefire. The World's lukewarm response to the shooting down of their airliner was a clear signal to the Iranians that their isolation in the international community was virtually complete. Despite the enormity of the mistake, Iran was unable to muster sufficient support at the UN to condemn the US action. Its isolation and weakness were never more apparent. As Rafsanjani noted just before the Airbus incident, 'we created enemies for ourselves' in the international communities. 'We have not spent enough time seeing that they become friends'. The Airbus incident was preceded by US taking military action against Iranian naval installations and warships in the Gulf. These two incidents gave clear indication of possible direct US military involvement in the war against Iran. Iran was not prepared to take on USA as well. Hence, it opted for the ceasefire that the UN had proposed about a year back.

UN Mediated Peace Efforts for Implementation of Security Council Resolution 598 and its failure

The Secretary-General announced on 9 August 1988 that the two countries would observe ceasefire from 20 August and begin "direct talks" five days later in Geneva to implement Resolution 598. According to the terms of that resolution the ceasefire should be followed by a withdrawal of all Iranian and Iraqi armed forces to their own territories, and by negotiations leading to a permanent peace treaty. While the ceasefire was maintained, no progress was made on other issues. Shatt al-Arab river, which forms the common border between Iran and Iraq, immediately emerged as the major issue dividing the two countries. Other issues also proved to be equally intractable: withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Iranian territory, exchange of POWs, the fate of Iraqi Kurds who had fled to Iran during the war, status of Iraqi nationals of Iranian origin who had been expelled into Iran, reparations, and Iran's insistence on the right to search for contraband on vessels bound to and from Iraq.

UN mediated talks held in Geneva on 25 August 1988 under the Chairmanship of UN Secretary-General, soon reached a deadlock over the Shatt al-Arab issue." Iraq

felt that it deserved more than a return to the status quo ante. For Iraq, a simultaneous implementation of all aspects of Resolution 598 was unfavourable for Iraq since it would have to give up conquered Iranian territory and deal with an impartial body designed to determine the aggressor in the war, which could have led to costly reparations (paragraph 6 of the resolution). Iraqis also called on Iran to cease its interception of Gulf shipping. They requested an immediate exchange of POWs, since Iran had roughly twice as many as Iraq. Iran did not give in to Iraqi pressure and, insisted on complete Iraqi withdrawal before a comprehensive, rather than sequential, implementation of Resolution 598 could occur." Negotiations were adjourned on 13 September 1988 and were resumed briefly in New York on 1 October 1988.

The second round of negotiations that began in New York made little progress. It began with Secretary-General, Perez de Cuellar, presenting a compromise plan to break the deadlock. He asked Iran to guarantee the right of passage for Iraqi shipping in the Gulf and to allow Shatt al-Arab waterway to be reopened, and called on both sides to follow through on mutual withdrawal of

occupation forces." Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, addressing the UN on 6 October told that Iraq would withdraw from Iranian territory only after Iran had agreed to clear Shatt al-Arab and cease its searches of Iraqi ships in the Strait of Hormuz." Iran tentatively agreed that it would halt these searches.

The deadlock in the September deliberation gave way to third round of talks that were held in Geneva. The third round commenced on 1 November 1988. It ended in a stalemate on 5 November, after having failed to agree on troops withdrawal or on exchange of POWs. At the conclusion of the peace talks, the UN Special Representative, Jan K. Eliasson, admitted that on substantive issues there was no breakthrough or any major progress." The only tangible result of this round of talks was an agreement reached in discussions with ICRC to exchange sick POWs but not the 100,000 who were well. An agreement was reached on 11 November, on the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners. The two parties


"Foreign Broadcast Information Services-Near East and South Asia (FBIS-NES), 6 October 1988, pp.26-36.

"The Hindu, 12 November 1988."
agreed to a proposal by the ICRC to exchange 1158 sick and wounded Iraqis for 411 Iranian POWs, all to be repatriated during a three-week period beginning 20 November 1988. Finally, Iran unilaterally released 80 sick POWs in February 1989.

The fourth round of negotiations began on 20 April 1989 and ended within three days because of conflicting views over the dredging of the Shatt al-Arab and Iraqi troop withdrawal from Iranian territory. The Secretary-General presented a four-point proposal:"

(a) Withdrawal to international boundaries based on 1975 accord;

(b) Iran's self-restraint in searching ships;

(c) Mutual exchange of POWs; and

(d) Opening of the Shatt al-Arab.

He also suggested a new timetable that called for troop withdrawals within 15 days and exchange of POWs within 60 days. The Iraqi Foreign Minister reportedly indicated that withdrawal was not possible until the dredging of Shatt al-Arab was completed." Iran maintained that the


"FBIS-NES, 24 April 1989, p.69.

"Ibid., p.17.
impasse was due to Iraq's obstinate, unacceptable claim to sovereignty over the entire Shatt al-Arab. It also complained that Iraq's reluctance to implement Resolution 598 stemmed from the lack of resolve by Security Council members to apply pressure on Iraq, since they were concerned with their own political interests than with the implementation of justice."

The deadlock in the talks was carried over into the Summer of 1989 with no breakthrough in sight. Both the parties persisted in calling for the implementation of Resolution 598, but with fundamental disagreement on the applicability of the 1975 Algiers Accord concerning the boundary of Shatt al-Arab. In November 1989, the UN Special Envoy, Jan Eliasson, began a 16-day mission of shuttle diplomacy between Iran and Iraq, to break the deadlock." However, Iraq did not compromise its position on the Shatt al-Arab issue, and no positive result came from the mission.

In order to break the deadlock, Saddam Hussein came out with a proposal. In his Army Day speech on 5 January 1990, Saddam Hussein offered alternate meetings in

"FBIS-NES, 4 May 1989, p.52.

Teheran and Baghdad under UN auspices, an immediate exchange of sick POWs, and the reopening of airline offices in both the countries for exchange of religious groups to each country's holy places." Iran did not reject this proposal, but responded favourably to a Soviet offer of mediation. Iran's Ambassador to the UN clearly stated that his country's acceptance of the Soviet offer was conditional on its content. He said that the Iran-Iraq talks that were expected to be held in Moscow must pursue the implementation of Resolution 598 and also be based on the premise of the Algiers Accord which lays down the Iran-Iraq boundary." This initiative did not progress any further due to complications over the Shatt al-Arab and POWs issues.

Prior to the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq launched a major peace initiative with Iran in the Spring of 1990. Saddam Hussein in his letter to Rafsanjani on 21 April 1990, proposed direct meetings between the Iranian and Iraqi leadership, mediated by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia." In responding to Saddam's letter, Rafsanjani stressed Iran's desire for a "lasting peace in the framework of Resolution 598, and this absolutely was not

"FBIS-NES, 5 January 1990, p.17.


"FBIS-NES, 1 November 1990, p.40.
a tactic". He declared that the "continued occupation of part of our land could stop our movement to achieve peace". Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Ali Mohammed Besharati, said, "Iran is ready to have direct talks with Iraq under the supervision of the United Nations." Iran continued to stress the importance of Resolution 598 and the role of the United Nations. Its main concern was that Iraq would use direct talks to undermine a UN sponsored dialogue. However, Saddam Hussein did encourage secret meetings at the United Nations in Geneva between the Iranian and Iraqi ambassadors and was happy about Rafsanjani's implicit acceptance of direct talks.

The final statement of the Baghdad Arab Summit, in May 1990, called for resuming direct talks between Iran and Iraq under the UN Secretary General, 'in a manner which ensures Iraq's rights and sovereignty over its territory, particularly its historic right over the Shatt al-Arab. The Iranian Foreign Ministry declared the summit declaration to be in contradiction with Iraq's peace gestures." President Rafsanjani said that the

"Ibid., pp.40-41.
"FBIS-NES, 10 May 1990, p.41.
"FBIS-NES, 19 May 1990, pp.41-43.
"Parasliti, n.103, p.230.
"resolution of the Baghdad summit discouraged us in our assumption that the Iraqis are serious in the establishment of peace." Further in a letter dated 18 June 1990 to Saddam Hussein, he maintained his country's interests in involving the United Nations, "confining the peace process to direct talks will be avoided and we will not close off other paths to ourselves, including the main road which has already been partly travelled."

On 1 July 1990, Saddam Hussein publicly revealed that Iranian and Iraqi representatives were meeting directly; a reference to secret talks in Geneva." For the first time the Foreign Ministers of Iran and Iraq met face-to-face on 3 July 1990 since the ceasefire. The first round of expert talks were set up in Geneva under the supervision of UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson. A statement was issued stressing their commitment to Resolution 598 and the importance of mediating role by the United Nations." However, it failed. Iran insisted that Iraq should first withdraw its troops from Iranian territory. But, Iraq said that the two sides should

"FBIS-NES, 6 June 1990, pp.43-44.

"FBIS-NES, 18 June 1990, pp.43-45.

"FBIS-NES, 3 July 1990, p.20.

first agree to clear war debris in the Shatt al-Arab. Iraq also wanted a quick exchange of POWs."

Saddam Hussein's letter on 16 July 1990 probably, reflected his feeling of urgency in conciliating Iran before invading Kuwait. He offered to send a special Iraqi envoy to Iran to sort out the difference between them. Further, on 30 July 1990, he tendered a new proposal which offered troop withdrawal and POWs repatriation within two months. Diplomatic relations would be re-established and the section of Resolution 598 dealing with culpability for the war would be disregarded. However, Saddam Hussein did not offer any real shift on the Shatt al-Arab issue."

Kuwaiti Crisis and its impact upon Iran-Iraq relations

The situation changed abruptly when Iraq attacked Kuwait on 2 August 1990 and annexed it. While strongly condemning Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, Iran's neutral stance during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis led to closer relations between Iran and Gulf Arab states. The Iranian Foreign Ministry said,

Iran rejects any form of resorting to force a solution to regional problems. It considers

"New Strait Times (Kuala Lumpur), 5 July 1990.

"FBIS-NES, 1 November 1990, pp.45-47."
Iraq's military action against Kuwait contrary to stability and security in the Persian Gulf region and condemns it...Iran calls for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops to recognized international borders and for a peaceful solution to the dispute."

Though condemning the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, Iran was totally opposed to massive build-up of Western forces in the Gulf. The condemnation of Iraq presented Teheran with an opportunity to improve its ties with the outside world.

Saddam Hussein, in his letter to Rafsanjani on 3 August 1990, emphasized Iraq's "interest in peace as soon as possible so that we can keep the two countries out of the whirlwind of change in the region". On 15 August 1990, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein unilaterally conceded the three major points of contention with Iran. He agreed to accept the Shatt al-Arab boundary as defined by the 1975 Algiers Accord, to evacuate the occupied Iranian territory within a week and to implement an exchange of POWs." On 17 August 1990, Iraqi troops started withdrawing from Iranian territory leaving only police and border security guards on the frontier. Iraqi President's decision to withdraw his


"International Herald Tribune (Paris), 16 August 1990.
troops from Iranian territory was apparently meant to deploy them against Western and Arab forces along the Saudi border with Kuwait. Regarding the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iran, the Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, told Radio Teheran, "this was the biggest victory of the Islamic Republic of Iran throughout its history."  

Iran's rapprochement with Iraq, was motivated by a desire to resolve the outstanding conflicts with its neighbour to Iran's advantage. During his visit to Teheran on 10 September 1990, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz officially proposed to normalize relations between them. The two foreign ministers agreed to set up a joint committee, meeting alternately in Teheran and Baghdad, to oversee repatriation of all POWs. By the time Iraq had withdrawn completely from Iran more than half of the POWs had returned home. He offered a peace treaty and non-aggression pact to Iran.  

The two countries decided to re-establish diplomatic links. In his visit to Iran on 10 October  

"Ibid.  

"Times of India, 10 September 1990.  

1990, Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister, Wisam al-Zahawis, re-established diplomatic relations on 14 October and also signed an agreement to set up a Joint Military Committee to deal with border issues." Iraq reportedly offered to expel the Mojaheddin-e-khalq, the main Iranian opposition group, from Iraq in order to appease Iran." The border issue was discussed during the visit of Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council Vice-Chairman, Izzat Ibrahim, to Iran in January 1991. Iran and Iraq agreed on half-a-mile wide border buffer zone. Thus, ten years after the outbreak of the war, mutual relations returned to normalcy. But there was a difference. While in September 1980 the Iranian government was isolated and insecure, a decade later the regime in Baghdad found itself in a similar situation.

The Kuwaiti crisis not only isolated Iraq, but the Security Council resolutions also enabled the so-called coalition forces under the US leadership to attack Iraq, to liberate Kuwait. Iraq came under air attack. The arrival of over 100 Iraqi aircrafts in Iran in January-February 1991 also posed a potential dilemma for Iran’s ‘neutrality’ during the Kuwaiti crisis. Iran declared that these aircrafts were to be impounded until after

"FBIS-NES, 19 October 1990, p.51.

"Parasliti, n.103, p.235."
the war, and there was even some speculation that Iran might hold on to the aircrafts as reparations from Iraq. Rafsanjani apparently rejected a request by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Saddoun Hammadi that the aircrafts be released in the event of an attack by Israel on Iraq. However, on 23 February 1991, the day on which US-led military forces began their ground offensive to liberate Kuwait, Foreign Minister Velayati said, "an Israeli attack on any Muslim country is unbearable for us, and in that case we will not be neutral." Iran's conduct during the war was designed to maximize its political advantages. It refused to be drawn into an alliance with Iraq, and held on to the aircrafts.

The military defeat of Iraq in 1991 and the subsequent civil war in that country caused Iran to abandon its neutral stance and in effect side with the anti-Iraq coalition forces in calling for Saddam Hussein's overthrow. The damages inflicted on the holy Shii shrines in Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala during Baghdad government's attack to contain the Shii uprisings in the south further alienated the Iranian authorities and caused Iran to encourage the Shii uprisings. Although Iran's interests dictate that Iraq

"Ibid., p.238.

"Ibid.
remain intact and that a stable and non-hostile government be established in Baghdad, the Iranian leadership was well aware that a stable and non-threatening Iraq must empower its large Shi'i population and its Kurdish minority. That is why President Rafsanjani in his speech on 8 March 1991 urged Saddam Hussein to "step down and give in to the will of the people of Iraq." It was a reflection of Iran's desire to maintain Iraq's territorial cohesion while undermining its nemesis - the ruling Ba'ath Party in Baghdad and Saddam Hussein.

Prisoners of War (POWs)

The Prisoners of War (POWs) issues has been a contentious point between Iran and Iraq, since the ceasefire agreement was reached. Article 3 of the Resolution 598 "urges the POWs be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949". Since the hostilities ended with the ceasefire taking effect on 20 August 1988, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), on 23 August 1988, sent a letter to both countries stressing the obligation to return the POWs.

"International Herald Tribune, 9 March 1991."
According to UN report on POWs on 1 September 1988, Iran held approximately 70,000 Iraqis and Iraq held about 35,000 Iranians. In addition to those POWs identified by the UN, Iraq claims that Iran holds "more than 30,000" Iraqi POWs who have not been registered by the ICRC. Iran also claimed that Iraq had seized 700 Iranians after the ceasefire agreement had been reached.

The ICRC sent a memorandum on 4 October 1988, to each country that called for the release of POWs under Article 118 of the 1949 Geneva Convention concerning POWs, and also under Resolution 598. Iraq consented to the ICRC proposals, but Iran refused, maintaining that cessation of hostilities would remain in question until Iraq withdrew from all Iranian territory. During the third round of talks between Iran and Iraq, an agreement was reached on ICRC’s proposal to exchange sick and wounded prisoners on proportional basis. The November 1988 agreement called for 1,158 Iraqi prisoners to be released by Iran in return for 411 Iranians. The exchange was supposed to take ten days, with 115 Iraqis and 41 Iranians released each day. The exchange of POWs


"FBIS-NES, 9 May 1989, p.53.

"UN Doc.S/20888.

"FBIS-NES, 7 February 1989, p.21."
began on 24 November, but was suspended by Iran on 27 November 1988. "Iran asserted that Iraq was not returning the requisite number of POWs and therefore it stopped the exchange." However, Iran had sent three groups of 52, 51 and 52, while Iraqis had sent groups of 19, 18 and 19. The result was the release of 155 Iraqis and 56 Iranians.

While the agreement on the return of sick and wounded POWs was honoured only in part, both Iran and Iraq have released a considerable number of such prisoners unilaterally. Although figures vary considerably, Iran in 19 stages has released 1,346 disabled Iraqi POWs, but Iraq has only freed 949 Iranian POWs, including 459 civilians." Iran claimed, since October 1984, that it had arranged monthly family visits of POWs. Also, it released 1,456 sick and wounded POWs, as well as 49 non-Iraqi captives."

UNITED NATIONS IRAN-IRAQ MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP (UNIIMOG)

The acceptance of Resolution 598 by Iran on 17 July 1988, paved the way for the Secretary-General to decide.

"FBIS-NES, 26 January 1989, p.60.

"Ibid.

"FBIS-NES, 11 April 1989, p.51.

"UN Doc. S/21078.
that ceasefire would begin on 20 August 1988. The first task for the United Nations was the establishment of a peacekeeping force to monitor the ceasefire. On 9 August 1988, the Security Council adopted Resolution 619, by which it decided to set up United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG). Two days later, Perez de Cuellar named Major General Slavko Jovic of Yugoslavia to head UNIIMOG as its Chief Military Observer. Both countries announced ceasefire, which went into effect at 0300 hrs GMT on 20 August 1988, silencing the guns along their 1,200 km war front after almost eight years of fighting that had killed upto a million people. A 350-man force of blue-berets from 24 countries took up positions along the border to monitor the ceasefire. It was entrusted with the task of establishing ceasefire lines, monitoring compliance with ceasefire and supervising the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries.

The Secretary-General's report on 25 October 1988, stated that the patrols had the double task of verifying the Forward Defence Lines (FDLs) occupied by the two sides when the ceasefire came into effect and of defusing confrontations resulting from actual or alleged

"Times (London), 11 August 1988."
breaches of the ceasefire." By February 1989, a total of 409 UN military observers had been stationed in the area. This included 350 ground observers, 18 members of an air unit, 37 military police, and 4 medical personnel. There were also 117 international civilian staff members and 41 local staff members. The main functions of these forces have been to monitor the ceasefire and facilitate troop withdrawal. According to the Secretary-General's report of 2 February 1989, "As of January 1989, UNIIMOG had received 1,960 complaints of alleged ceasefire violations". He explained that "ceasefire violations have generally consisted of the movement of troops or the establishment of observation posts (OPs) or other portions of FDLs and engineering works to strengthen defensive positions".

Resolution 642 of 29 September 1989, extended the mandate of UNIIMOG until 31 March 1990. The Secretary-General's report of 22 March 1990 stated that the UNIIMOG had successfully monitored the compliance with ceasefire. He explained that, "As the withdrawal of forces to internationally recognized border has not yet taken place, parts of UNIIMOG mandate remain

"UN Doc. S/20242

"Ibid.

"Ibid.
On 29 March 1990, the Council adopted Resolution 651 which extended the mandate of UNIIMOG until 30 September 1990.

The situation changed drastically with the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990. Iraq started the withdrawal of its troops on 17 August 1990. UNIIMOG's operations have been confined primarily to monitoring the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries as mandated by the Security Council. The main problem experienced in the withdrawal process has been the danger of mines. Following the withdrawal, UNIIMOG proposed to both parties for the establishment of areas of separation and of arms limitations along the internationally recognized boundaries. In particular, it proposed that neither side should deploy military forces closer than one kilometre to the boundaries. In his report, the Secretary-General stated that UNIIMOG concentrated its efforts on supervising, verifying and confirming the withdrawal of the two sides' forces and their assumption of new positions on or close to the border. It defused any local tensions that occurred. However, on 20 November 1990 there were still 18 Iraqi positions that UNIIMOG

"UN Doc., S/21200.

"UN Doc., S/21803."
judged to be on the Iranian side of the border and 24 Iranian positions that were judged to be on the Iraqi side." Further, on 28 October 1990, the Chief Military Observer convened the first meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group. However, it was cancelled due to certain difficulties of political nature that could not be solved at the technical and military level."

With the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, the Secretary-General called for a reduction of UNIIMOG forces in the region." He also recommended UNIIMOG to resolve the remaining problems on the border and try to arrange an exchange of information on unmarked mine fields." According to report of Secretary-General on 28 January 1991, the activities of UNIIMOG were considerably affected by the developments in the Persian Gulf region. The outbreak of hostilities in the area effectively prevented UNIIMOG from continuing its operations in Iraq and all UNIIMOG personnel in Iraq had to be temporarily relocated." The majority of them were moved either to Cyprus or to Iran. As on 26 January

"UN Doc., S/21960.
"Ibid.
"UN Doc., S/21960.
"Ibid.
"UN Doc., S/22148.
1991, Iran had withdrawn from 13 out of 17 disputed positions and Iraq had withdrawn from 23 out of 29 such positions."

In a technical meeting between military delegation of both parties, held at Teheran on 6 January 1991, substantive agreement was reached on matters relating to UNIIMOG's task. The two parties reached agreements on the question of disputed positions along the internationally recognized boundaries. It was agreed that they would all be removed by 22 January 1991 and that UNIIMOG would then verify and confirm the completion of the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries in accordance with 13 June 1975 border agreement. "On 20 February 1991, UNIIMOG was able to confirm that the last of the disputed positions along the internationally recognized boundaries had been withdrawn. This enabled UNIIMOG to complete verification and confirmation of the withdrawal in accordance with its mandate deriving from Para 1&2 of Security Council Resolution 598 (1987)."

"Ibid.

"UN Doc., S/22148.

"UN Doc., S/22263.
The Secretary-General established a UN Office of the Secretary-General in Iran (UNOSGI) and in Iraq (also referred to as UNOSGI). The legal status, privileges and immunities of the office at Teheran and Baghdad, was concluded on 3 June and 27 June 1991, respectively, with both the governments. Six military observers, provided by six different states, were attached to UNOSGI, three of them based at Baghdad and other three at Teheran. Both, Iran and Iraq, alleged ceasefire violations by the other. UNOSGI at Baghdad was able to respond to 37 Iraqi requests for investigation. In 30 of these 37 instances the investigations carried out by the military observers led to the conclusion that the alleged violations should be confirmed. UNOSGI at Teheran carried out 11 investigations at the request of Iranian authorities, as a result of which it confirmed eight ceasefire violations. However, the operations of UNIIMOG came to an end by February 1991. The Secretary-General recommended the Council not to extend the mandate of UNIIMOG beyond 28 February 1991. The same day the

"UN Doc., S/23246.

"Ibid.

"Ibid.

"UN Doc., S/22263.
Security Council confirmed the recommendation of Secretary-General."

The Iran-Iraq war had its impact not only in the regional level, but also at global level. Peace initiatives taken by International Organizations, like NAM and OIC, did not materialize. They passed resolution after resolution, and offered peace plans, without any effect on the belligerents. The UN which mediated right from the beginning of the war, was able to bring a ceasefire between Iran and Iraq only in 1988. Rather, it reflected the spirit of co-operation between the Permanent Members of the Security Council to seek an end to the conflict. Iran's acceptance of Resolution 598 followed after a number of setbacks on the battlefield and also after the United States had showed its willingness to fire at Iranian targets. This led to Iran to accept the UN ceasefire resolution on 18 July 1988 and ceasefire came into effect on 20 August 1988. UN military observers were deployed between the Iranian and Iraqi border in order to verify their compliance with the ceasefire agreement negotiated by the UN Secretary-General on the basis of Security Council Resolution

"UN Doc., S/22280."
Although ceasefire brought peace, bitterness remained. The deadlock in the talks remained till July 1990 with no breakthrough in sight. The situation changed with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. Iraq withdrew all its troops to international border and agreed to abide by the 1975 Algiers accord. Though the crisis has been contained, yet, there is no sign that the conflict will be resolved in the near future, as both the parties are yet to sign a peace treaty between them.

"For the complete text of UN Resolution 598 see Appendix-IV."