CHAPTER III

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The Iran-Iraq war — the most sanguinary one of the 20th century — broke out on 20 September 1980 as Iraqi aircrafts and army mounted a full scale assault inside Iran. But, according to Iraqi claims the war had actually started around a fortnight ago when the Iranian ground forces crossed the international border on September 4 the same year to launch an attack on Iraq.

Notwithstanding the conflicting claims of the two countries on the actual date of the outbreak of the war, the nature and intensity of the armed bouts between the two armies prior to 20th September Iraqi attack were at best the border skerimishes. The invioablity of the international border was for the first time transgaressed on 20th September only, as Iraqi aircrafts made deep penetration inside Iranian territory. Thus, in legal sense, the war started on that day only.

THE ORIGIN

The origin of the war should be not traced beyond its immediate past. A good number of writings, however, attribute the origin of the war to the centuries-old sectarian and ideological rivalry between the two countries (1). They date it back to historical developments, like the victory of the Arab Islamic forces over the Persian empire in the battle of Qadisya in 637 AD (2), the spreading of Islam and the Arab culture in Persia (637 to 750 AD) (3), the starting of cultural and lingual antagonism and the territorial disputes during the medieval period when today’s Iraq ad Iran were being ruled by the Ottomans and Pahalvis, respectively.

However, it is superfluous to see a symboism between the Arab-persian rivalry and the Iran-Iraq war. Ideologically, the Post-Islamic revolution Iran did not represent the monarchies of Persian empire. The Islamic revolution was the first ever event in the history of Iran towards the abandoning of ‘Persianism’ for a broader goal; assumption of the mantle of the leadership of Islamic ‘Ummah’ which cuts across geographical, racial, sectarian and lingual limitations. The ‘Bathist’ Iraq, did revel in espousing the cause of Arabism, but it too did not represent the contours of Arabism of early medieval and medieval periods.

It would be equally errornous to describe the war as a manifestaton of age-old boundry disputes between Iran and Iraq. Historically, the two countries never fought a full-scale war on the boundry disputes. These disputes cropped up to dangerous proportion a number of times in the past but each time these were settled through diplomatic means(4). In other words, the history of border disputes bewtween the two countries belies the outbreaking of a war.

Their past has unboubtedly been conflict-raven but it can not be described as the main factor behind the war bewtween Iran and Iraq. For, the war is not an evolutionary process. It is, as a matter of fact, an instrument which is resorted to when pacific means to settle disputes
exhaust or both or one of disputants find launching a war more rewarding to their/its national interests.

Had the historical rivalry been the cause of the Iran-Iraq war, wars could have been a regular phenomenon between the two countries as they have more often than not been hostile to each other. A war would have certainly broken out during the Shah’s time when the relations between the two countries were strained no less than what these were after the accession of the Islamic government to the power in Iran. The war erupted in the aftermath of the seizure of power in Iran by the Islamic revolutionaries and the resultant developments inside Iran and throughout the Persian Gulf region. Thus these developments would have been more important a factor behind the war.

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

1) THE PERCEIVED THREAT PROGNOSIS:

It is commonly held that the foremost objective behind the Iraqi aggression was to forestall the chances of the spreading of Iran’s Islamic revolution over to Iraq where Shias constituted the majority and were inclind towards the spiritual leader of their community, Imam Khomeini. In the event of the success of revolution, led by the Shia clergy next door, the fear of insurrection of Shi’e resurgence loomed large. In addition, Ayotollah Khomeini was, those days, exhorting the people in Iraq to unseat Saddam Hussein whom he described “an enemy of Islam and all Mulsims”(5).


Yet, it is doubtful that the perceived fear of the spread of Islamic revolution was really as a factor potential enough to have necessitated a pre-emptive action on the part of the Iraqi government. First, the Shie uprising was not a new phenomenon for the Saddam government. It surfaced as early as the Baathist regime came to power in 1968. Shias of Iraq resented, many a time violently, their suppression and the undermining of the authority of Shi’e clergy by the Baathist government(6).

Second, The success of Islamic revolution in Iran did not alter the nature and course of the She’i opposition into a nation-wide armed revolt. The pro-Iran Shi’e resurgence in 1979-80 was confined to She’i religious centers in Iraq. It had not acquired a popular character either. At best, Ayotollah Khomeini’s call to the Iraqi people to rise to revolt against the Saddam regime had inspired Shias of Najaf, which is the most-coveted place for Shia community the world over and where Ayotollah Khomeini had spent 14 years of his exile and was revered as spiritual leader by the local people (6b). Otherwise, the Arabic-speaking Shias, scattered all over Iraq, were not much amused by his call.

Third, the She’i resurgence had not turned militant. It, by and large, was a feeble,
localised and semi-militant movement.

Fourth, by the time Saddam attacked Iran he had already succeeded in quelling the Shi’e resurgence. Many of the ‘Al Dawa’ leaders, activists and their supporters were executed in early 1980. People of Iranian origin, numbering about 15,368 number, were expelled from the country.

Fifth, Saddam Hussain could ill-afford to launch an aggression against a neighbour had the country internally been strife-stricken.

Sixth, Khomeini’s vow to export his revolution to Iraq was rhetorical. There is little evidence to suggest that the Iranian government fomented the Shi‘e resurgence by giving training in subversive activities to the rebels or providing them any financial and military assistance.

Seventh, Khomeini’s call did not have any special sectarian appeal or was not targeted at a particular country. An overview of his speeches and writings suggest that he called upon the Muslim ‘Ummah’ as a whole to topple the anti-Islamic and puppet governments in all the Muslim countries and not only in Iraq. Nor did he specifically address the Shi‘e people of Iraq.

Last but not the least, Iran after revolution was undergoing a period of internal chaos and disorder. It had inherited a weak industrial base and a disarrayed administrative set up from the Shah. The armed forces were used to be considered loyal to the ousted Shah. Thus the internal condition in Iran were hardly conducive to enable its government to divert its resources and energy towards abetting cross-border terrorism. Notwithstanding the appeal of the Islamic revolution in Iraq, the Iranian government policy towards Iraq lacked the aggressiveness that characterised Shah’s policy towards Iraq.

2) THE PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY PROGNOSIS:

It was not the ‘perceived threat’ from Iran but the ‘perceived opportunity’ that the ouster of the Shah and Islamic Iran’s internal condition presented to Iraq explains Saddam’s September 20 act. The prevailing regional scenario coupled with developments in Iran was the right moment to materialize the long held Baathist dream of playing the role of revolutionary vanguard of the region.

Subjugating Iran, then a threat to the monarchical regimes of the Arab World, Saddam Hussain could fill the leadership void created by the exit of Egypt. Also, Iraq, which was on the forefront of the movement to oust Egypt from the Arab fold and had buried its hatchet with Saudi Arabia, Syria and Libya, badly wanted to give a military dimension to its newly found political role in the region.

A swift victory over the demoralised and disarrayed armed forces of Iran would have,
in one stroke, turned Iraq into the saviour of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, established its military superiority in the region and reaffirmed the importance of the country as the gateway to the Arab world security from the East(16).

Saddam’s decision to attack Iran would have been influenced by the then state of affairs in Iran. The military prowess of Iran took a nosedive as a direct consequence of the success of Islamic revolution. The armed forces were disorganised following the large scale purging of the pro-Shah elements from it. Some 10,000 senior officers were sacked and the conscription of a lot more was reduced(17). In the place of sacked armed forces personnel, who were experienced and well-trained, the young people, without any previous experience, were being recruited. The defence preparedness received further jolt with the cancellation of worth $ 12 b arms deal with the erstwhile ally, the US. The weapons in the Iranian inventory had become sitting ducks in the wake of the shortage of spare parts (18). Over and above, the military concentration on the Iran-Iraq border was reduced by half so as to increase the deployment in Kurd-dominated areas in the north and the areas adjacent to the former Soviet Union (19). The revolution had altered the Iran-Iraq military balance of power as “rather than a strong Iran facing a week and isolated Iraq as earlier, a strong Iraq appeared to face a week and divided Iran”(20).

Politically, Iran was undergoing a transitional phase. The Islamic forces were consolidating control over the strings of government and administration by eliminating the Pro-Shah elements and isolating the one-time revolutionary allies such as the Tudeh Party and the Mujahideen-E- Khalq, who, in turn, were envious of clergy’s rise to power. In the aforementioned circumstances, a military attack from Saddam was bound to receive support from the dissidents. It would have also led to the staging of a military coups by the dissidents, supported by the Iraqi government.

Not the strength and capabilities of the enemy country alone but the confidence in one’s own strength to achieve a decisive victory determines the outbreak of a pre-planned war. Iraq, as stated above, was politically and economically stable and militarily strong. Tariq Aziz, Iraq’s war Foreign Minister, writes in his book that the Iraqi government decided to go to war only after calculating that Iraq was in perfect position on all counts to win it(21). Over and above, Saddam Hussein was also confident of absence of an opposition to his attack from the superpowers, not to talk of any attempt by the superpowers and the regional countries to force Iraq to stop the war(22).

3) THE TERRITORIAL DISPUTES:

The long-standing dispute over the sovereignty over the river ‘Shatt-Al-Arab’(23) and Iraqi territorial claims over Iran’s Khuzestan province (24) were someway or other an issue behind the war. The war preceded the renewal of Iraqi claim over the entire Shatt and the Khuzestan province. Saddam Hussein went to the extent of unilaterally abrogating the 1975 Algiers agreement between the two countries, which established ‘mid-water’ as the demarcating line between the two countries’ boundaries, three days before attacking Iran. Since the
boundary dispute is the Iraqi version of the cause of the war, it must not be taken as it is. A cross-

examination of the Iraqi contention proves that the boundary dispute was more a 'pretext' than

a 'cause'.

To begin with, the boundary issue was not a bone of contention between the two countries
during most the time between the installation of the Islamic government and the outbreak of the

war. When the Islamic government came to power, Saddam Hussein assured it that it would

abide by the Algiers agreement on the question of boundary demarcation. It was as late as

September 7, 1980 the Iranian Charge 'D' Affairs was given a notice that either Iran should hand

over the territories claimed by Iraq or face an Iraqi military attack(26). On 17th of the same

month, Saddam abrogated the treaty. Thus a boundary dispute could not in a span of a fortnight

ripe to an extent that a war had become imminent.

Also, as against the past, the Iraqi government did not make any effort to resolve the

issue through negotiations(26). Had the war preceded unsuccessful negotiations, then only the

waging of war to settle the dispute could have been justified. The boundary dispute was not also

an issue of grave concern to the Iraqi government. It was propped up only in retaliation to the

alleged Iranian involvement in Iraq. So says Tariq Aziz in his book “but when Iran attempts to

overthrow the revolutionary nationalist system in Iran.... then the pursuit of the issues of
territories, the Shat-al-Arab even that Arabistsn will not be wrong attitude from political point

of view”(27).

THE GENESIS OF THE WAR

The Iran-Iraq war is described as the war of two nationalist ideologies, the Arab and the

Persian (28). This rivalry has ethnic and lingual connotations as Iraqis are Arabs and the

Iranians are Aryans,. The two peoples respectively speak Arabic and Persian. But, the war in

question could hardly have been a war of ideologies because of the fact that one of the the

warring countries i.e. Iran, had in part to come out of Shah legacy and in part to carve out a

larger role for the country in the regional affairs, disfavoured its Persian character for a supra-

national character by indentifying itself with Islam.(28)

The Islamic government criticised the Shah’s policy of indentifying Iranians as Arayans.

Imam Khomeini, instead, traced an Iranian’s identity to the religion he or she followed and to

the advent of Islam in the country than its thousands of years old racial connection.

Even Iraq’s did project the war as as a struggle for re-establishing Arab supremacy over

‘Ajam’(non Arab) races. But this policy stemmed more out expediency than any ideological

compulsion. The Arab sentiments were exploited to muster the support of Arabic-speaking

Shias, the Arabic speaking Kurds and the Arabs in Iran, to justify Iraq’s historical claim over

the Khuzestan province of Iran, to win the support of Arabs and to project Iraq as the protector

and the defender of the Arab World.

This war can not be termed as a Shia-Sunni war either. Like its Persian character, the

Islamic government of Iran also downplayed its She’i identity. With a view to establish among
Mulsim Ummah, pre-dominantly Sunni, of its Islamic credentials, the Iranain government aspired for Shia-Sunni unity. Ayotollah Khomeini had indeed taken a few bold steps in this regard. As the spiritual leaders of the Shia community of the world, he asked the Shias to shed their differences with the Sunnis. For instance, he allowed that Shia could say Namaz in Sunni mosque and perform it the way Sunnis performed it, even behind a Sunni Imam (the prayer leader).

Ayatollah Khomeini also differed from Shia Ulema (religious scholars) in many ways.

In his speeches and works he referred excessively to the teachings and sayings of Prophet Mohammed than those of the fourth Caliph, Ali, and 12 Shia Imams, contrary to the general practice among the Shia Ulema. The Islamic revolution was also a departure from the Shia clergy’s preference to the policy of non-interference in the state of affairs of a despot. Otherwise the Shi’e clergy’s stand was that only Imam Mehndi, who is seculsion since many centuries, would would by appearing again, eradicate injustice and supresssion from the world.

The war was not a manifestation of the Shia-Sunni rivalry because the Shia population of Iraq remained loyal to its government. So were the Sunnis of Iran to their government (29). To quote Selernee Micheal, “loyalty to the present states and governments has proved stronger than the religious affinity and distinct ethinic indentitty”(30).

ARMED CLASHES PRIOR TO THE WAR

The full-scale Iran-Iraq war preceded a series of border skerimishes, starting from April 1980. According to the Iraqi claim the seeds of war were swon by Iran on 1st April 1980 when its agents among Iraqis hurled bomb at the Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz in Baghdad University (31). On April 5 bombs was hurled at the funeral procession of those killed in April 1 incident. The Iraqi embassy at Tehran was also attacked during the summer 1980(32). The consualte of the Iraq was attacked on October 11 and 26 and Novemeber 1 and 7 in 1979 (33). According to Iraqi sources, in a span of six months. i.e. between 1979’s winter and the 1980’s summer there took place 249 cases of violation of Iraqi airspace by the Iranian aircrafts, and 244 cases of firing across the border and on the border posts and an equal number of artillery shelligns by the Iranian armed forces(34).

The Iranian sources date back the Iraqi aggression to May 4, 1979 when in a major assault on Iranian villages scores of people were killed and around 6,000 rendered homeless. On November 30 1979, parts of Bosinir and Abadan towns were attacked. Iraq mounted another attack on Nafashah in March 1980. There was heavy artelliary shelling on Kirmanshah on April 4 the same year. On April 12, the Iranian town Qasar-e Shirin was attacked.

On september 4, Iranian armed forces fired artillery shells at the Iraqi city Khanqan and Mandlai from the disputed border area of Al-Quas (35) in retaliation to the rocket attacks on the city of Meharan. Heavy exchange of fire was reported on September 10 and September 14. This also resulted into the occupation of Zainul Qyas by the Iraqi forces. The last round of the border skerimishes was fought on 19th September, a day beofere the full fledge war started.
THE COURSE OF THE WAR

1) THE FIRST PHASE : IRAQ LAYS THE SEIGE OF IRAN:

War of attrition along the border apart, the full-fledge war between Iran and Iraq started on 20-21 September with Iraq launching a broad-front offensive across the Shatt-Al-Arab at four points.

(1) In the north between Qasr-E-Shirin and Naft-E-Shah with a division strength of 10,000.

(2) The further south at Mehran with a strength of 3,000.
(3) Towards Dezful.
(4) Around the oil ports of khurremshaher and Abadan in the Persian Gulf.

It was a full-scale war in terms of the areas covered. Yet, Iraq did not deploy as large a force as warranted. This was probably due to the fact that Iraq had not discounted the possibility of retreating in the wake of either superpower's opposition to the Iraqi attack, leading them to militarily intervene, or an Israeli attack in the West or Syria, a long time Baathist foe, joining the war from the Iranian side.

Iran retaliated by carrying out air raids into Iraqi territories. Iran amassed a large ground forces comprising the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran), the Mustazfeen, regular army personnel and the border tribal militia, equipped with light medium weapons and small artillery. F-4 Phantoms, F-5Es Cobra Helicopters were used by Iran to make low-level interdiction raids on major Iraqi cities viz., Baghdad, Mosul and Kirkukh. Strangely, Iran did not use its air power to bomb the invading armies of Iraq. It also did not provide enough air cover to its own army stranded on borders. The main objective behind the Iranian strategy to make deep raids into Iraq was to target vital economic installations therein as well as block the supply line to Iraqi forces fighting in Iran.

A state of stalemate followed after a few days of the starting of war. The Iraqi strategy to launch a broad front offensive did not pay off due to the failure to commit a sufficiently large army on the war front. The Iraqi army failed to capture vital strategic positions, including the cities of Dezful, Ahwaz and Khorramshaher, in Iran.

This phase of the war was distinct in many ways to the course the war undertook afterwards. The war in this phase was almost directionless. Despite succeeding oft and on in overcoming Iranian resistance, the Iraqi army showed self-restraint in advancing further and preferred to confine to border areas only. This shows that Iraq aimed at achieving limited victory only instead of overrunning the whole of Iran. Iraq's limited objectives were to create internal chaos in Iran, cause the collapse of the Islamic government, occupy the Arab-dominated Khuzestan province of Iran and establish control over the river Shatt.

THE SECOND PHASE (September 1981- 1984) : IRAN FIGHTS BACK:

The Second phase of the war began with Iran bouncing back. It re-captured the
territories it had lost to Iraqi forces and forced them to retreat, which was the first major Iraqi reversal in the war (41). Long and frequent halts in Iraqi attacks during the 1981 summers (42) gave Iran needed time to regroup its armed forces and increase their numerical strength to outnumber the invading army. Since Iran had failed to deploy a large army in the first year of war, which was being re-constituted, it suffered a considerable loss of lives at the hands of Iraqi forces (43).

In December 1981, the Iranian army captured key crossroads linking Iraq's entire southern borders. Iraq made a month-long effort to recapture the junction but failed (44). Another major breakthrough was achieved during early and mid 1982. In February-March 1982, the Iranian army regained control over Dezful-Shouz sector (45). Khorremshaher was also regained in 1982 (46). Finally, the Paaizadaan, largely the teen-aged boys, called "human waves", managed to cross the international border in June 1982. The Iranian government decision to take the war into Iraq aimed primarily at unseating Saddam Hussein from power and also abetting Shia resurgence in Iraq.

Till 1984, Iran continued launching several "human wave" offensives in Iraq. However, the Iranian army failed in breaking into Iraqi defenses. It made an abortive attempt to seize the port of Basra and failed to move into the northern oil fields near Mosul and cut the Basra town from the rest of Iraq. The Iranian bid at Basra cost thousands of casualties. In the Majnoon sector alone, the Iranian army suffered 15,000 to 20,000 casualties (47).

However, the human wave assaults did not leave Iraq without the fear of losing a considerable portion of border areas to the Iranian army. Thus, Saddam offered unilateral ceasefire which Tehran obviously rejected. But, the ill-equipped (48), ill-trained and inexperienced army failed to enter Baghdad. It could not penetrate the strong defense line of Iraq, spread through 180 km border. The Iranian army—over-zealous, spirited but poorly coordinated—made a number of miscalculated attempts. Iraq put up a stiff resistance owing to its superiority in weapon system. The Iranian army also lacked in planning the battle field strategy. For instance, Iraqis foiled the Iranian grand offensive at Majnoon sector by diverting the water from river Tigris and Huwarza through a canal to create an air field lake around the Majnoon islands. When in March 1984 the Iranian troops wade through the Marshland in a planned quick push through a gap in the Iraqi third and fourth armies, the swampy battlefield deterred their progress and made hundreds of them sitting ducks to Iraqi fighters (49).

At the end of the year 1984, it appeared that both the armies were at disadvantage when invading and good in defense. Writes Christopher S. Raj of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, "if at first Iraq had miscalculated in launching an invasion of Iranian territory, it now seemed Iran had equally badly miscalculated in taking the war across the Iraqi territory" (50).

**THE THIRD PHASE: THE WAR OF ECONOMIC ATTRITION:**

The war of economic attrition was started by Iran instead of Iraq as is generally believed. This phase of war is said to have begun with Iraqi attack on Iran's Kharag oil terminal (51) in
spring 1984. However, Iran had launched the war of economic attrition as soon as the war broke out. It resorted to it again in 1983 also by launching Va-Fajr -4 air attack around Kurdish mountain near the Iraqi town of Punjwan on October 20 that year. The main Iranian objectives underlying this attack were to damage the Iraq-Turkey-Mediterranean pipeline through which passed much of Iraq’s export bound oil and to render its Kirkuk oil field ineffective (52). In response to Iranian attack, Iraq bombed the Iranian town of Dezful, Marzed, Suleiman and Behbehan.

Beside bombing Iranian oil facilities, Iraqis also laid down mines at the approaches to the Iranian port of Bandar Khomeini, 80 km east of the river Shatt) and damaged the unfinished Iranian-Japanese joint Petro-Chemical ventures a the same place.

The Iraqi attack on the Kharag turned the Iran-Iraq battle from a ground affair into an air war. However, Iran, like Iraq, did not switch over to air warfare. It conducted at least three of its “human waves offensives” between 1985 and 1987. None of them translated into major breakthroughs. The only success of these offensives was that Iraqi army was encircled in its own land and denied of a chance to intrude into Iran.

It was the diminishing possibility of re-entering Iran that led Iraq to make a strategic shift i.e. the launching of the war of economic attrition through missile attacks and air raids. The Iraqi strategy was to damage the Iranian oil facilities which facilitated 90 percent of Iranian oil exports and earned Iran 80 percent of its revenues. In such an eventuality Iran could have been unable to meet its defense-civil expenditure and settled for peace on Iraqi terms, the Iraqi government planned.

THE TANKER WAR : THE GULF IS ENGULFED :

Failing to wreck enough damage to the Iranian oil installations, Iraq did not spare Iranian oil tankers and cargo ships. These attacks started from May 7 1984 (53). Iran followed the suit. In early months of the 1984 summer, the Iranian jets attacked as many as five ships bound for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia(54). In the ensued war the tankers of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, Panama and Greece were also hit. Iraqi missiles also hit, unwittingly, the tankers of the friendly Persian Gulf states (55). A total number of 67 tankers ships got attacked in the year 1984 alone(56). While the total number of the tankers/ships hit during the tanker war period mounted to as much as 150 (57).

In 1985, more Iranian ships and oil installations were targeted. Since Iran could not give Iraq the taste of its own medicine as due to the closure of the river Shatt the Iraqi oil tankers did not show up in the Persian Gulf waters, it retaliated by launching yet another ground offensive in March 1985.

Tehran Succeeded to cut Basra-Baghdad highway (58). The airlift of arms from Egypt renewed Iraqi forces’ firepower to enable it to push the Iranian army back to borders. By this time Baghdad had also begun using chemical weapons against the Iranian army. In February 1986, Iran made the most successful ground offensive. The Iranian army comprising 10,000
revolutionary guards crossed the Shatt Al-Arab, in small boats, into the Fao peninsula which was captured in less than the twenty-four hours(59).

Later, reorganizing its army and deploying added numbers of arms brigade, Iraq halted Iranian advancement towards Basra. The two armies laid idle face-to-face for the next two months before Iraq decided to drop the move to lay siege of the Iranian army and diverted its thrust to Iran’s’ economic targets once again. In July-August the same year, Iraqi missiles repeatedly attacked Iranian refineries at Shiraz, Isfahan and Tabriz with the Kharag terminal being hit more than hundred times.(60) Air/missile raids were also made at Tanker terminals at Siri Island, situated south of the Persian Gulf, and Larak Island in the Strait of Hurmuz.(61)

The Soviet missiles as well as Exocet missiles, the latter supplied by France and were the latest weapons inducted into Iraqi armory, enhanced Iraqi capability to extend the range of its operation to aforementioned targets(62).

The Tanker War entered its most crucial phase after Iran’s January 6-8 assault—the Kerbela 5 offensive on Basra. Although this offensive incurred a human toll of 40,000 to Iran, it was the second major victory for Iran after the one at Fao in 1986. 20,000 Iraqi soldiers also lost their lives while defending the city. Though the casualties on Iraqi side was half to those suffered by the Iranian army, it was quite a big loss for a country whose population was only one-fourth of Iran’s. The Iranian army also forced half of Basra’s 1,000,000 population to flee(63).

But the event of most far-reaching significance during the Tanker War was, probably, the US acceptance of Kuwaiti request to protect its oil tankers from Iran’s indiscriminate firings in the Persian Gulf waters. Kuwait approached the US to re-flag its oil tankers on January 17, 1987(64). The US decided to escort 11 Kuwaiti tankers on July 22, 1987. On July 24, US-flagged Kuwaiti super tanker struck a mine (65). On Aug. 24, two Iranian vessels were fired by a US destroyer, Kidd (66). On the night of October 8, an Iranian boat fired on American petrol helicopters(67). In retaliation, the American helicopters fired and sank three Iranian petrol boats 15 miles south west of Farsi Island (68). On October 16, the US-Flagged Kuwait ship ‘’Sea Isle City’’ was hit by an Iranian missile while it was in Kuwaiti territorial waters (69). The US navy destroyers retaliated on October 19 by gutting an Iranian derelict oil rig. Iran responded by firing missiles in Kuwait’s island terminals on October 22 (70).

The Iran-US brinkmanship was a turning point in the war. The US entry internationalized the war. Besides US, Netherlands, Britain, France and Belgium also took part in the actions by deploying their naval forces at the US services. The Persian Gulf countries provided the US the naval facilities(71).

The US-Iran hostilities were the beginning of the end of the war. Threatened by the prospects of the US going whole-hog, Iran resorted to re-conciliation. It signaled its willingness by giving a second thought to the UN resolution 598, which it had opposed tooth and nail till then.
THE WAR OF CITIES: THE WAR EXTENDS BEYOND BATTLE FIELDS:

Barring a pause of first four years of the beginning of the war, the cities of the two countries were pounced by missiles and subjected to repeated air raids. This was despite the fact that the two countries refrained from attacking civilian targets. They had also signed an agreement to this effect, brokered by the UN, on June 12, 1984(72).

The attacks on cities began in 1985 when ground engagements reached a state of stalemate. It was started by Iran with artillery attacks on southern Iraqi cities of Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mandali, and Khanaqin. In return, the Iraqi air force bombed the partially constructed nuclear plants at Bushehr and a steel plant in Ahwaz, beside heavily pounding Tehran and 40 other Iranian cities.

The air superiority and the possession of chemical weapons facilitated Iraq's regular raids on Iranian cities. Iran's strategy in the war of cities was to offset the cumulative cost of the

Human Waves offensives (73). However, the casualties on the Iranian side in the war of cities were no less. Also, the air offensives on Iraqi cities proved counter productive in the sense that these affected Iraqi Shias too, eroding the sympathy that they had for the country ruled by their sect. Iran could also not withstand Iraq's superiority in air.

THE LAST PHASE:

The 'war of cities' re-erupted in early 1988. This time it was started by Iraq. Iraq took the advantage of the low morale of Iran. Iranian ground forces had despite lying siege around Basra for the last two years or so failed to conquer the city. Domestic discontentment against an unfruitful war had begun appearing. The moderate elements in Iranian politics were weary of carrying on an endless war at the cost economic dislocation, international isolation, human losses (74).

Iraq's strike capability had increased tremendously after fresh supply of arms from the West European sources at the behest of the US, and also from the Soviet Union. Iran's military prowess was depleting. However, despite all these odds, Iran made a last-ditch effort north of Iraq in the autumn of 1987-88. Iraq, in turn, fired 150 Scud-B missiles (modified by East Germans by extending it range and reducing the payload)(75). Iraq also used SSMs and Soviet fighter aircrafts in pounding at civil and economic facilities in Iran. A total number 10 to 11 thousands deaths were reported on the Iranian side (76).

Iran's autumn offensive boomeranged. Iraq sprayed chemical weapons on Halabja town as the Iranian forces entered the city. Hundreds of Iranian armymen died and twice as much were injured. The Iranian army began retreating. The autumn fiasco followed the loss of Fao peninsula by Iran on April 16-17 1988. After Fao the Iraqi army also recaptured Shalamheh, Mehanar and Majnoon from Iran.

Although the Iraqi army was only able to regain the control of its own territories, the setback suffered by Iran culminated into its acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 598. On June Ayatollah Khomeini appeared on national TV to announce the end of hostilities from
Iran's side, a decision which to him was like quaffing the bitter drink of poison(77).

However, Iran's face-saving should not be read as an outright victory for Iraq because none of the Iraqi military objectives came to be met at the end of the war. Iraq could not occupy even an inch of the Iranian land, not to speak of Arabic-speaking Khuzestan. Iraq only regained the territories it had lost to Iranian army a couple of years ago. In this respect, Iranian performance was relatively better. Not only did Iran liberate its territory overrun by the Iraqi army's soon after the outbreak of the war, but it intruded into the Iraqi territories along the border and retained them under its control for over five years.

The logic that there was a qualitative difference between the Iranian military gains throughout the war and that of Iraq at the eve of the end of the war since the latter forced Iran to cease hostilities does not sound authentic. First, a direct linkage between Iran's acceptance of ceasefire and the Iraqi victory can not be established. Despite Iraqi victories on the homeground, the chances of fresh Iraqi moves inside Iran leading to the occupation of whole or parts of Iran and the toppling of the Islamic government did not really exist. Recognizing its weakness to fight a war inside Iran, Iraq was not prepared to risk its success back home. Second, on several occasions during the war Iraq had also offered to end the hostility in the same way Iran did.

Iraq's political objectives could also not materialize. From the throes of war the Islamic Government emerged stronger. The opposition to the new government took a back seat. Iranian people threw their total support behind the Islamic government. Iraqi Pre-occupation with the war told on its leadership urge as it turned a country financially and morally indebted to the Arab countries and isolated from regional the affairs.

However, compared to Iraq, Iran was more embarrassed. Ayatollah Khomeini had to undergo the trauma of accepting a proposal which he had rejected as "discriminatory" and resolved to defy it "until victory". The war also turned out to be a 'volte face' for Iran. After having occupied Iraqi territories during much of the latter half of the 80s, Iran had to content with withdrawing from there unceremoniously, leaving thousands of its soldiers consumed by the chemical weapons and many more rendered physically disabled and detained.

There general perception of the reasons behind Iran's defeat needs to be re-examined. The yawning gap in the military capabilities of the two countries is described as one of such reasons(79). At the end of the war Iraq was reportedly enjoying 4:1 superiority in tank, 3:1 in artillery and 10: 1 in aircraft.

But, at the same time, it must be borne in mind that Iraqi military superiority never really helped Iraq. For instance, when Iraq was at the receiving end in the war it maintained military superiority but to no avail. Had the military superiority determined the course of the war, Iraq would have won it much earlier.

Lack of coordination between the regular army and the revolutionary guards as well as
Logistical difficulties, such as shortage of arms and spare parts, were also not a factor in the defeat of Iran for the reason stated above. These were the problems which Iran faced since the very beginning of the war, yet it was able to push back the Iraqi army from its territory and then overpower the Iraqi defenses on the Iraqi side of the international border. These mattered in Iran's inability to tread Iraq's inner defense around Baghdad and Basra.

Internal political and economic instability is also advocated to be one of the causes of Iranian defeat. It is difficult to gauge the intensity of political and economic turmoil in Iran at the eve of the end of the war. But one may anticipate that in case there prevailed political and economic uncertainties in Iran, there would have been a widespread protest against the government's sudden decision to end a war after shedding so much of the blood of the people. But that nothing of that sort happened certifies that economic hardship, human agony and the war-weariness had not resulted into resentment and disillusionment. Even People's approval of their government's decision to end the war stemmed from their commitment to state and the government.

The Iranian economy was also not in a topsy-turvy condition. All through the annals of war Iran's economy had been very resilient. In the year of the end of the war, the economy had improved a bit also. The Iraqi attacks on Iranian tankers, cities and economic installation had scaled down, enabling Iran to export more oil than in the previous years.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND THE SUPERPOWERS

THE UNITED STATES:

The major objectives of the United States with respect to the Iran-Iraq war remained unchanged, no matter the war continued for eight years and during this period the office of the president in the US was held by three incumbents. These major policy objectives were; the security of oil supplies, the containment of the Soviet Union and the denial of victory to Iran.

The policy US adopted to pursue the afore-mentioned objectives was, however, subjected to significant changes in tune with the changing fortunes of the war—the changing oil demand and supply pattern and the U turn in Soviet-US relations at the fag end of the war(80). Interestingly, each combatant accused the US of launching an Imperialist-Zionist war against it through its proxy, the other combatant. However hard this argument is stretched, the role of the US in the outbreak of the war can not be even slightly established. It did not have any leverage with either of the belligerents; the post-Shah government in Iran being in total enmity with it and Iraq being a Soviet ally. Furthermore, destability in the region was further harmful to the US which had very recently lost a trusted ally in the Shah, was contemplating 'second oil shock' and was also pre-occupied with the specter of Soviet Union's southward expansion after the latter's occupation of Afghanistan.

THE EARLY NEUTRALITY:
In view of these reasons, the US instant response to the war was that of ‘neutrality’. It hoped that its ‘neutrality’ will also deny the Soviet Union an alibi to take side in the war(81). The US was also made to adopt a neutral stand by the belligerent states as they showed an unwillingness to involve it. Neither of the two sought arms assistance, economic aid and political support from the US.

However, The US ‘impartiality’ in the war did not mean “inaction” or “disinterest”. Thus clarified the US Secretary of State, Muskie. “to be impartial is not be inactive: to declare that we will not take side is not to declare that we have no interest at stake” (82). Rather, US took keen interests in finding a solution to the war but at the same time it was also aware of its limitations as manifested in the US Administration’s official statement, “the war between Iran and Iraq is one of the few conflicts where we do not have any ally or at least friend we can lean on”(83).

The US did not show any panic as the war broke out. It did not increase the military presence in the region. No more naval fleet was sent to Arabian waters. Nor was any wherewithal added to solitary American naval fleet, then consisting of two carrier battle groups, in the Arabian sea (84). The US think-tank was also divided over the issue of providing military assistance to the Persian Gulf allies which were under the threat of being dragged in the war.

THE SHIFT TOWARDS IRAN:

Strangely, a pro-Iran shift was witnessed in American neutrality about a month of the beginning of the war. The US expressed its opposition to an Iraqi victory which led to the dismemberment of Iran as this would have resulted into the emergence of a Soviet ally as a regional power. The US did not want to take any action which would have irked Iran which had held its diplomatic staff as hostages. The US overtly expressed its opposition to Iraq. President Carter exclaimed, “Iraqi force had exceeded the war objectives, which was to take control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway and not the Iranian territory” (85) The US opposition to Iraqi attempt to occupy parts of Iran grew to an extent that the State Department warned that the seizure of Khuzestan “would not be condoned”.

The Deputy Secretary of the state Warren Christopher clarified that US ‘neutrality’ would not come in way of an attempt to dismember Iran. “We certainly would be strongly opposed to any dismemberment of Iran”, he added. The then US Secretary of State also described the Iraqi attack on Iran as “invasion”.

With getting the hostages being the main concern of the US, the Carter Administration offered military assistance to Iran which is known as “arms for hostage deal”. President Carter declared that “if the hostages are released safely we would make delivery of those items which Iran owns— which they have bought and paid for”(86). Even, the Carter Administration remained stuck to the deal in all seriousness despite opposition from the West Asian allies (87) and from the Congress back home (88).
The US also tried to help Iran by offering spare parts the latter badly needed to sustain its American war machine. Advisors of Carter had told him to supply arms and ammunition to Iran to keep the arms race with the Soviet union, which was then the largest arms supplier to Iraq alive (89), alive.

THE PRO-IRAQ POLICY

The US debunked its neutrality or what is described above as 'a pro-Iran shift' in favor of a pro-Iraq policy in the event of Iraqi reverses in the war. If an Iraqi victory was not in the interests of the US, the threat the prospects of an Iranian victory posed were greater. In adopting a thorough anti-Iran posture, the US was also encouraged by the the Soviet failure to break ice with Iran. The US government realized soon that not only had Iran not made any positive gestures towards the Soviet Union but it had also given a lukewarm response to Moscow's advances in this regard.

The efforts to improve relations with Iraq took off as early as March 1981 on the then US Secretary of State Alexander Haig's initiatives (90). In March 1981, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Morris Draper toured Baghdad to brief Saddam of the US policy in the region. The US allies in the region, with whom Iraq had by that time developed close relations, played an important role in bringing the US on the Iraqi side. The US also wanted to cash in on the deteriorated Soviet-Iraq relations (91).

However, the Israeli attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor in June that year put a brake on the progress in Iraq-US relations. The Iraqi government alleged that the US knew of the Israeli design (92). The US government placated Iraqi anguish by condemning Israeli aggression and voting against Israel on this issue in the Security Council beside suspending delivery of four F-16 fighter bombers to Israel as a sign of its displeasure. However, before Iranian recoveries in late 1981, the US bid for a rapprochement with Iraq was confined to improve relations at diplomatic and economiclevels with an aim to cut into Soviet influence in that country. Once the war swung back to Iran's favor, the US began supporting Iraq and asked its western allies to provide Iraq with adequate military equipment.

A major development in US-Iraq realtions took place in 1983. US reportedly instigated Iraq to engage Iran in land war so that it could not turn to blockade the Strait of Hormuz (93). The US support to Iraq became overt by 1984 with President Reagan announcing "that a defeat of Iraq would be contrary to the US interests in the region" (94). The diplomatic ties between the two countries were restored in 1984. After that the US support to Iraq came in form of military and economic assistance also. On military front, Iraq and the US shared intelligence reports (95).

The US also asked its West European allies to pump sophisticated arms in Iraq and provide related assistance, such as helping Iraq in its nuclear and indigenous arms production programs. Beside, the US also sold arms directly to Iraq, though not frequently. It supplied to Iraq over 74 45 Model 214ST Helicopters in 1985, 30 Model 300c helicopters in 1983 and 24 Model 531 MG Helicopters in 1985. Reports also suggest that the US had proposed to place
its troops under the Iraqi command to revert Iranian aggression of Fao in 1985.

The US also provided Iraq over $10 billion in credit each year to meet the cost of its huge arms acquisition (96). On political plank, the US stopped condemning Iraq for starting the war. The Iraqi war was officially described as the one waged by Iraq in self-defense. The responsibility for the continuance of the war was squarely blamed on Iran as reflects the following statement of the US government on the belligerents Iraq.

"Unlike Iraq, Iran is adamantly opposed to negotiations, or mediated end of the conflict" (97).

The US did adopt a pro-Iraq stance but assured itself that it would not intervene in the war. The US choice to intervene in the war always remained captive to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Though the US intervened in the war on behalf of Kuwait in 1987, its decision to come to Kuwait’s help was influenced by the Soviet factor. Kuwait requested the US to come to its rescue in the month of Sept. 1986 and formally in January the following year. But the US turned a deaf ear to the Kuwaiti request for a period no less than six months. In March 1987 it decided to rush to Kuwait’s help when it learnt about a clandestine deal between Kuwait and the Soviet Union according to which the latter had agreed to escort Kuwaiti oil tankers (98).

THE SECURITY OF THE OIL SUPPLIES:

‘Oil’ was probably the most important factor in shaping the US Iran-Iraq war policy. This war was being fought between the countries adjacent to the world’s most busy oil trade sea routes and the region which possesses the largest reserves of the world oil. Also, the combatant countries together were the second largest producer of oil in West Asia. A reduction in oil exports of the two countries would have had shot up the price of oil which had become stable recently only.

The crude oil exports from the Persian Gulf in 1980, the year the war began, was recorded at 16.9 (99) mbpd which constituted as much as one third of the world’s demand for the crude oil, which was 47.5 mbpd (100). In these circumstances, the US did not want to see that the war spilled over to other oil-producing countries of the region also. The US also needed that non-combatant countries of the region increase their output so that the decline in oil production and exports from Iran and Iraq could be offset. Henceforth, the US prevailed upon Saudi Arabia to increase its oil production to 10,400 bpd from the mid-Oct. 1980 from 9500 mbpd in the pre-war period. The oil production of Kuwait also increased from 1350 mbpd to 2300 mbpd in the same period.

Although due to the decrease in global demand which, in turn was caused by the recession in the West, the need of an added supply of oil from the Persian Gulf region had abetted, the importance of the safety of oil trade routes and that of the oil producers remained as it was. The US, its Western allies’ and Japan remained dependent on the Persian Gulf oil, albeit for relatively low quantity. The decreased volume of oil the consumer states needed from the Persian Gulf could, if denied, have been a heavy burden on the limited and fast-depleting reserves in other oil producing regions of the world.
The US was equally concerned about the likelihood of a spiral increase in the oil prices. However, it did not succeed in arresting the price-hike trend as a result of the war. The oil prices went up from $21.67 pb in 1979 to $33.8 at the end of 1980. Afterwards, the oil prices came down or remained static but these never returned to 1979 level (101). It was in 1986 only that the oil prices slumped to $14.57 pb, an all time low during that decade.

The security of oil supplies brought about a major change in the US policy. Instead of trying to hammer out a solution to the war, as it tried to do in the beginning, the US counted on its increased military presence in the region to ensure that any attempt on the part of either of the combatants to strangle the oil supply would be petered out (102). The Carter Doctrine, which declared that the US would use military option in case the oil supplies from the Gulf were stifled by external powers, was a manifestation of this policy. The RDF was deployed in the Arabian waters in 1985. Earlier, the US naval task force stationed in the Arabian Sea was put on alert, and AWACs Planes were sent to Saudi Arabia with a view to monitor Iran’s preparation for a surprise military attack on the US naval force or those of its European allies. Military hardware were also despatched to the regional allies to enable them to tackle a possible Iranian attack so long the US forces did not arrive to their defense (103).

Once the war ceased to be a threat to the security of the oil supplies and the ‘price stability’ (104), the US found its interests served in the continuance of war, although a low-intensity one and confined to the belligerent states only. The political benefits the continuance of the war brought in to the US happened to divert its attention from the damages the war posed to its economic interests (105). Moreover, the war was an ‘stimulant’ to the US arms transfers in the region.

Some scholars have misconstrued the relief the US showed after the war did not remain a threat to the security of the oil supplies as US disinterest in the war. Even some of them have described this war as a ‘forgotten war’, stating that the US evinced interests in this war only when it posed a threat to the US oil interests.

But, on the contrary, the downfall in the US and its allies oil intake from the Persian Gulf region, did not reduce their dependence on the West Asian oil. Had the reduced amount of oil the West was still buying been interrupted, they could not overcome the loss by exploring the same amount of oil from other oil producing regions. This is why when in the later half of the 1980s only a meager 6 to 9 million barrel per day was traded through the Strait of Hormuz and the US share in that was merely 0.5 mbpd, the US kept on warning Iran that any attempt to disrupt the oil supplies would not be militarily tolerated by it.

THE SECURITY OF THE ALLIES:

The security of allies weighed uppermost in the US scheme of things during the war. The victory of an anti-monarchical Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and finally the war came one after another in a short span of one and half years to have exposed the US regional allies to twin-security threats, internal and external. Though Saudi Arabia had favored a war aimed at bruising Iran, the latter’s vow to teach a lesson for contributing to Iraq war efforts exacerbated the security vulnerability of the most powerful peninsular country.
Of the factors which made the US abandon its neutrality, the continuous pressure from the allies was a significant one. It was on July 4, 1980 a ‘White Statement’ formally declared US total commitment to the security and the integrity of the regional allies. Carter was personally in favour of despatching Saudi Arabia the AWACs, the demand for which was made after six days of the beginning of the war, despite Secretary of State Muskie’s opposition (106). Beside Carter, the National Security Advisor, Brezeinski, was of the view that the US should sell the AWACs to Saudi Arabia and also enter into defense agreements with the regional allies(107).

INCREASED MILITARY PRESENCE:

Another significant step the US took in the interest of the security of the allies was to increase its sense of belongingness with them by entering defacto strategic alliances. American warships escorted the oil tankers of the friendly states, its jumbo jets flew regularly into the airports of allied Persian Gulf states and it shared with them all the intelligence informations gathered by Saudi Arab based AWACs, which were supervised by American personnel(108).

Also, in order to deter both of the combatants (later Iran only) from scuttling the oil supplies or spreading the war into the Persian Gulf waters or over to the littoral countries, the US started policing the Gulf from the very beginning. Not merely did it increase its own military presence, but also prevailed upon its West European allies to follow the suit. The number of allied warships of the US, the UK and Australia doubled from 30 to 60 by the end of 1981 (109).

After the assumption of presidentship of the US by Reagan American militarization of the Persian Gulf intensified(110). He concluded an agreement to use airforce facilities at naval facilities at Peshawar with Pakistan, which In the US strategic thinking constituted an integral part of the security of the Persian Gulf region(111). The RDF military units became operational in 1981 and 1982. And by the time the Iran-Iraq war was halfway through, the US had deployed its largest ever naval force in the Arabian Sea waters.

However, the expansion of the US naval presence was not promted by the Iran-Iraq war alone. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was an equally important factor. This is substantiated by the fact that the US naval strength in the Persian Gulf during the 80s was more than enough to tackle a regional challenge. The threats to oil supplies from Iran were few and far in between that did not need to compel the US to station such a large force in the Persian Gulf. As against this, the Soviet threat to the oil supplies was imminent and of a permanent nature(112).

AN ACTIVE BUT NON-COMBATANT ROLE:
The US refrained from entering the war on behalf of Iraq. One of the reasons behind doing so was that the US intervention would have hastened the end of the war. This, in turn, would have reduced the dependency of the regional allies on the US, who welcomed the American military presence and extended strategic facilities to it to deter the Iranian threat. Otherwise, out of the fear of Soviet Union’s retaliation, the regional states had earlier given a cold-shouldered response to US bid to acquire base facilities in the Persian Gulf.
Notwithstanding Iran's vehement opposition to the US, it never became a regional threat to the US interests. Nor was it ever poised to win the war despite maintaining an upperhand. Hence, there hardly arose a situation in which US military intervention could have become urgent. The US Persian Gulf allies were also not in favor of its direct involvement in the war. For, the regional states feared that the US involvement would precipitate internal resurgence (113). They, therefore, reserved this option as the last resort. The US military intervention would have been sought only in the case of an Iranian attack on them. But Iran, anticipating the negative effects of the internationalization of the war, did not actually mean what it repeatedly used to say, that it would take the war to the Arab countries.

However, the US presence in the Persian Gulf can be described as covert military intervention. The US naval fleet and an array of strategic bases in the Persian Gulf were virtually an insurmountable barrier for Iran in spreading the war.

To make a bird's eyview of the US military presence, an anti aircraft carrier, Kitty Hawk, with support ships manned the Gulf of Oman. There were American warships in the Indian Ocean just outside the Arabian Sea area. The aero-naval base at Diego Garcia, though at a distance of 200 miles from the arena of the conflict, stationed 15 large cargo ships and 1500 sailors beside B-52 bombers, could be threatened into war zone at short notice.

A string of strategic facilities from Morocco to Oman enabled the RDF to come into action swiftly. In Morocco the US had access to the airport at Sidi Salman as wayside station. So much so it had access to military airport outside Cairo. In Oman a direct access was available at Seib and Thumarait bases. The Island of Mesirah off the Oman coast was a major US base and also a strategic point where from equipment could be transshipped to other bases in the region. The Bahrain island had the facilities to accommodate the US weapons and American personnel.(114), The Saudi Arabian bases, well equipped, large and deploying the most sophisticated American weapons and thousands of US military advisors, could be used in an emergency situation. Fearing an internal backlash, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf did not officially grant base rights to the US, (115) but for all practical purposes the US controlled these.

As mentioned above, the decision to get directly involved in the war by agreeing to escort the Kuwaiti oil tankers, which sparked off the US-Iran military hostilities, was an expedient move. Having come to know about the Soviet intention to protect the Kuwaiti oil tankers, the US was left with no other option except either to deny the Soviet Union the opportunity or to let it play the role of a regional policeman(116). By heeding to the Kuwaiti request the US also tried to project its anti-Iran credentials to regain allies' whose confidence in it had shattered to a considerable extent following the revelation of US-Iran secret arms deal (117). It may be noted that the security of oil supplies was not the actual reason, as it is generally made out to be, behind the US move to escort Kuwaiti tankers. This is because the oil supplied remained by and large unaffected in the wake of the Tanker War as even less than one percent of the ships, carrying oil, were hit(110).

THE ANTI-IRANINAISM:
The US anti-Iranianism increased with Reagan taking the charge of the office of the President. During his election campaign he had expressed an avowedly anti-Iranian stand, condemned Carter’s arms-for-hostage deal and ruled out the possibility of entering into any arms deal with the Iranian government in case he became the president (118).

The US anti-Iranianism stood, as stated above, for preventing Iran from winning instead of engineering its defeat. Henceforth, needless to repeat, its did not indulge into an armed hostility with Iran except once. Instead, the main feature of the US anti-Iranianism was to deny Iran Western arms. For, an increased military prowess to Iran would have in the wake of its control of the areas close to Baghdad, abridged the difference between Iranian war gains and the total victory. This is also stated by the fact the shortage of spare parts and standby aircrafts incapacitated Iran air power, which consisted of F-14, F-5 and F-5 warplanes covering Iraq’s entire airspace, to break into Iraqi defense and neutralize the Iraqi army’s strength in ground defense.

‘Threat to use force’ was another characteristic of the US anti-Iranianism. The US reminded Iran of severe reprisals in case it tried to mine strait of Hurmuz, blockade it or attacked its allies or even sought direct military help from the USSR (119).
FOR STALEMATE:

Both, the US limited support to Iraq and its non-militant anti-Iranianism also proved that Washington was interested in the status quo, the continuance of war.

Since the war had, contrary to apprehensions, not negatively affected the smooth flow of oil and its reasonably moderate price, nor did it spread over to the aligned countries in the region, the US had no stake left in the end of the war. The stalemate, on the other hand, was in the national interests. The war had tremendously increased the US clout with the regional countries, paved the way for the stepping up of its military presence in the region and taken much of the sting out of the oil weapon, enabling it, thereby, to adopt a bold pro-Israeli stand on the Palestine question.

The US also succeeded to strike a balance of sorts between the two seemingly contradictory objectives i.e. to prevent Iran from spreading the war to the Arab countries of the region, and, to let the war continue as well. What illustrates this policy most plausibly is its military exercises against Iran in 1987. On one hand, these meant to force Iran to stop attacking oil tankers in, and mining the Persian Gulf lanes, whereas, on the other, the US contented itself with launching a low-intensity war so that it did not pave the way for the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

THE IRAN-CONTRA DEAL:

The disclosures on clandestine arms deals, referred to as Iran-Contra deal, between Iran and the US were the most embarrassing moments for the US. The revelation of this secret arrangement, which facilitated the shiploads of arms and spare parts to Iran in exchange for American hostages in Lebanon, upset, to quote a Soviet scholar, “all preceding declarations about the US desire to see the war ended and settled by political means” (120).

More so, the contents and the timing of the deals reveal to one’s amazement that their judicious use would have drawn Iran nearer to victory. The US sent these arms through Israel on a Danish ship in September 1985 and September and October 1986. These coincided with Iranian victories in ground offensives, with one of them also resulting into the seizure of Fao peninsula (121).

The Reagan administration had supplied 2008 Tom Hawk anti-tank missiles and Sidewinder air Maverick missiles, 235 Flank anti aircraft missiles, spare parts for helicopters and fighter planes worth $ 60 million. This gave enough fire power to the Iranian air force to shell Iraqi town falling within the range of these missiles and fighter planes. However, it is difficult to speculate as to what was the main intention behind the US arms supplies to Iran when a lot more related to the this deal is yet to be revealed (122).

THE SOVIET UNION:

Although in the war involved one of its allies, Iraq (123), the Soviet Union did not tempt to take sides. It instead adopted the wait and watch approach. The then Foreign Minister of the USSR declared his country’s neutrality as soon as the war broke out (124). The Soviet union also assured the US that it would not intervene in the war under any commitment to either of
the combatant states.

What guided the Soviet Union to maintain neutrality than to help Iraq out was the fear that its support to Iraq could result into the defeat of Iran leading to the dismemberment of that country or/and the overthrow of the Islamic government. In addition, the deteriorating relations with Iraq, the pre-occupation with Afghanistan and the fear of US backlash also determined the Soviet Union’s aloofness.

The USSR also projected itself as the broker of peace in the region. It invited the US, both during Carter’s and Reagan’s times, for a joint bid to find a solution to the conflict. Also, the Soviet peace proposals were described as one aiming at “crisis management” than the “crisis prevention”.

With the war having threatened to cause dislocation in the West’s oil supplies from the region, its prolongation served Soviet interests also. The Soviet Union also wanted to capitalize Iran’s international isolation for bringing Iran, whose strategic importance had increased by leaps and bounds to Moscow after its invasion of Afghanistan, to its fold. Though Iran had given a lukewarm response to Soviet Union’s goodwill gestures before the outbreak of the war, the Soviet policy makers were under an impression that under the duress of war the former would ultimately turn to it for help and assistance.

This is why the Soviet Union showed a slight tilt against Iraq in the beginning. It described Iraq as aggressor. It refused to supply Iraq arms and ammunition in full disregard of a provision to this effect in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation it had signed with the latter. The Soviet government justified it on the ground that the Soviet-Iraq treaty was “the treaty of peace, not of war”.

The breakdown in Iraq-Soviet relations played a major role in determining the USSR’s attitude towards Iraq in the war. The bilateral relations had started getting strained after the execution of 21 leading members of the Iraqi Communist Party by Saddam’s government in 1978. The Iraqi government had also withdrawn its military officers receiving training in Moscow on the charge that they were being indoctrinated by the Soviet Union. The two countries also had differences over a number of issues concerning bilateral military and economic cooperation. Also, the Soviet Union did not like Iraq’s openings to the US and the West for trade, technology and military equipment.

Iraq lashed out at the USSR for occupying Afghanistan and worked against the Soviet interests in Ethiopia and the PDRY. The Soviet Union was sore over not being consulted by Iraq before its attack on Iran and resented Iraq’s rapprochement with the neighboring pro-US Arab states who were pressurising Iraq to downplay its association with the communist bloc. Iraq did not welcome USSR’s policy of getting closer to its enemy Iran. Reportedly, the Soviet Union had informed Iran in advance about the Iraqi aggressive designs.

Over the question of Soviet invasion of a fellow Muslim state, Afghanistan, the relations
between the USSR and the Persian Gulf countries had turned sour (133). Thus in establishing a close rapport with Iran, the Soviet Union was not threatened with the possibility of losing Persian Gulf’s Arab countries’ goodwill.

The importance of Iran to the Soviet Union was inherent in the former being the buffer zone between it and the US military presence in the Persian Gulf region (134). A strong Iran, capable of withstanding US design north of it, was a precursor to consolidation of Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

Breznev spoke high of the Iranian revolution at the CPSU’s Congress that held soon after the war broke out. The joint communique, issued at the end of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Syria in 1981, lauded Iranian resistance to Iraqi aggrandizement. It declared that Moscow and Damascus “support the inalienable right of Iran to decide its destiny independently, without any interference from outside” (135). The USSR’s also agreed to give Iran arms through the surrogate-countries (136).

But by the end of year 1982, the Soviet Union-Iran honeymoon came to an abrupt end. The USSR turned back to its ally, Iraq. Iran was not satisfied with the USSR’s cautious support to it. It accused the Soviet Union of maintaining neutrality despite “flagrant Iraqi aggression against Iran” (137), and supplying military hardware to Iraq through proxies (138).

Iran’s spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini unequivocally condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, asking the Iranian government to send its troops to help Muslim fighters resisting the Soviet forces (139). Against all expectations of the USSR, Iran continued to club the former with the US by calling both of them “aggressor” and “plunderer” and charged it with instigating the Tudeh party to bring down the Islamic government.

Over and above, Iran arrested 70 Tudeh members in February 1983 on the charge of spying for the USSR and expelled 17 members of the Soviet diplomatic staff in Tehran, accusing them of conniving with the arrested communists.

Until the end of 1982, the Soviet Union used to overlook Iranian criticism of its Afghanistan’s policy and denunciation of its communist ideology for the sake of not spoiling the opportunities of a close bilateral relations. Even the USSR reacted mildly to the annihilation of communist party at the hands of the Islamic government.

The Soviet union redefined its policy towards Iran when the latter came close to trounce Iraq in military invasions inside the Iraqi territory in late 1982. The communist government drove home the point that a victorious Islamic Iran would be more harmful to its West Asian policy than what a victorious Iraq could be, that too when it had forfeited all chances to bring Iran in the communist bloc. Besides, the defeat of Iraq would have cost the USSR its only ally in the Persian Gulf region. Also, the Soviet policy makers concluded that it would be far more difficult to have any leverage with a victorious Iran. Instead, Iran’s victory would make a stimulating effect on the Afghan combatants fighting against the Soviet occupation.

The return to Iraq would have become a strenuous task had the USSR not maintained
workable relationship with the same in the years it had tilted to Iran. The arrangement of arms supplies through proxies was the most important factor in saving the total breakdown in the Soviet-Iraq ties (140).

Yet, the Soviet support to Iraq was not unflinching. It kept the hope of improving relations with Iran alive(141). The soviet Union’s pro-Iraq policy was restricted to arms supplies via third parties and directly only after 1984 (142). However, the Soviet weapons, most apparently the Scud-B missiles, proved a watershed for Iraq in the war. Only after getting armed with some of the most sophisticated Soviet weapons, Iraq re-asserted itself in early 1988. The series of Iraqi victories made a telling impact on the Iranian morale to continue fighting, forcing it to seek end of the war (143).

However, it must not be inferred that the Soviet Union had provided weapons to let Iraq finally score the victory. For, the range of the original Scud-B missiles did not cover the crucial Iranian target from any given point in Iraq. The Soviet Union had advised Iraq against shelling the Iranian cities, using chemical weapons and subjecting the civilian population and targets to attack.

Like the US, the Soviet Union was also not vulnerable to the war. Rather, the end of the war with Iranian or Iraqi victory was unfavorable to the the Soviet Union for a number of reasons. The Iranian victory could have caused the overthrow of the Baathist regime and destabilized Soviet position in Afghanistan in the Persian Gulf region and in the Muslim-dominated republics.

Similarly, the Iraqi victory would have unseated the Islamic government and there had installed in its place a pro-US one, making Iran once again a US ally. In an eventuality of Iran plunging to the US way in the aftermath of an Iraqi victory, some of the analysts of the Soviet policy did not rule out Soviet intervention in Iran in the name of the defence of the Islamic government (144).

In a limited sense, compared to the US and its western allies the USSR was more at ease with the war in view of its non-reliance on a commodity like ‘oil’. The war was also used as an instrument of arms transfers in the region, particularly to the US allies. Obsessed with their security, the US recipient embarked on a policy of multiple-sources arms supplies. The Soviet Union, which was an arms supplier equivalent to US, was automatically sourced by these countries particularly by Kuwait and Jordan.

The war also helped the soviet union de-ideologize its foreign policy and as a result improve relations with strategically important though ideologically opponent countries like Iran(145). At the same time, the Soviet Union also succeeded in not antagonising its traditional client, Iraq. The importance of the Soviet Union as the arms supplier compelled Iraq not to bid farewell to its master in its bid to get closer to the US, the West and the pro-US states in the region.
The war also proved a ready-made instrument to let the US down on the Arab-Israeli issue

The USSR described the war as the part of an Imperialist-Zionist conspiracy to divide the Muslim World by keeping these countries involved in intra-regional issue.

Last but not the least, in spite of prominent role of the US in protecting the Gulf countries, the Soviet Union had also got its image enhanced in the eyes of these countries as a power sustaining the Iraqi war machine (146).

**THE WAR AND THE COLD WAR:**

The Iran-Iraq made a sobering effect on the superpowers’ rivalry. Unlike the Third World crises of those days, in this war the interests of the superpowers coincided, leading them to back the same side. Both were averse to an Iraqi victory in the beginning and sympathized with Iran. Both of them offered to enhance Iran’s defense by giving it new arms and ammunition. But once Iran began to dominate the war and looked in a commanding position, both of the superpowers swung away from it and helped its adversary.

In some respects the commonality of interests setmmed from mutual confrontation. The US saw in the victory of Iraq—a Soviet ally—during the initial years of the war as a major gain to the other superpower. It visualised the dismemberment of Iran as a consequence of Iraqi victory which would have encouraged the Soviet Union to occupy the northern Iran in pursuance to its warm water drive (147). To the Soviet Union, the Iraqi victory would have meant the replacement of the anti-US Islamic government of Iran by a non revolutionary one, close to the US.

The superpowers’ identical perceptions of an Iranian conquest was also imbedded in mutual rivalry. The Soviet Union was wary of it mainly because of the positive influence it would have made on the US backed Muslim resurgence in Afghanistan. Also with the Iranian victory and the resultant removal of the Baathist government in Iraq, the Soviet Union would have lost a strategic as well as an ideological ally.

Thus, in the context of the Iran-Iraq war the superpowers’ policies towards each other was that of ‘collaborative competition’. They understood stakes involved and tried to minimize confrontation between them.

Thus despite persuasion and temptation they stayed away from directly intervening in the war. The US did fight a protracted war against Iran but did not take it further as it would have forced an otherwise passive Soviet Union to protect Iran in defense of its south-east region and Afghanistan.

On its part, the USSR did not interpret the US-Iran military confrontation as a precursor to the American policy of expanding its sphere of action to its peripheries. Both of them unwittingly collaborated in supplying arms and ammunition to Iraq, sharing intelligence data with it and furnishing high-tech assistance to its nuclear program. They literally collaborated in the UN while ensuring the adopting of the UN security Council Resolution 398 (148).
The 'competition' part of their relationship got reflected in their will to optimize the war for increasing influence in the region at the cost of each other. They charged each other with instigating the war, sustaining it and blocking the peace process.

The Iran-Iran war was not a proxy war. The superpowers only partially influenced the course of the war. Although both of the superpowers had prior information of Iraq aggression, they did not prompt it to do so. In fact, they failed in preventing the outbreak of the war despite the fact this was not in their interests.

Frequent halts and cease-fires during the war were not arranged by the superpowers. They were also not instrumental in ending the war. The argument that the US-Iran military entanglements in 1987 reversed Iranian supremacy in the war is a weak one. Even after being bashed up by the US, Iran launched the last Human Wave military thrust. The US offensive was limited in terms of the area it covered. It was a low-intensity war and was short-lived. This, therefore, did not dampen the Iranian morale.

Hardly likely did the war come to an end in effect of superpowers- sponsored Security Council Resolution 598. For many months after its being adopted, the resolution 598 remained operationally ineffective due to its outright rejection by Iran. The resolution did not accompany the threat of the imposition of the economic embargo or military action in case of an incompliance with it by any of the two belligerents. So it hardly carried enough punch and force to compel the fighting countries to end the war. The resolution was accepted by Iran as a face-saving device. It was never accepted by Iran as a blueprint of a just solution to the war.

At best the superpowers played the role of crisis manager, but in a limited sense only. They ensured that the war did not spread. The US saw that the oil exports from the Persian Gulf remained unaffected by the war. Apart from these, the superpowers’ role as the ‘crisis manager’ was non-existent. They could not manage to de-escalate the war, to shorten it and to end it.

Iran-Iraq War contributed to the making of ‘New Detente’ between the superpowers. This might have driven home the point that there were areas and issues where there interests coincided and a collaborative than collision course served their interests better. However, if the war contributed in the easing of tension between the superpowers, it did so to a limited extent only. The evolution of ‘New Detente’ between the superpowers was the culmination of a host of factors and developments in the regions other than the Persian Gulf. If Europe was the region where the Detente began, the West Asia is also said to be the region where the process began very late (149).

THE ATTITUDE OF ARAB STATES

On the face of it, the regional countries declared neutrality. However, their neutrality was, at best, military than political. They assured Saddam of their support before he invaded Iran and then welcomed the Iraqi attack (150). King Khalid, in particular, had reportedly blessed Saddam the success when the latter visited Saudi Arabia a month before attacking Iran.
Other littoral countries were approached by Saddam a few days before the commencement of the war. He is supposed to have sought their support and not the advices as in the case of Saudi Arabia. The disclosure of the decision to attack Iran by Saddam would have been a matter of concern to smaller states. But, at the same time, they had to contend with the inevitability of the war and their inability to prevail upon Saddam Hussein to desist him from it in the interest of their security.

They had also realised that in one respect the war tended to benefit them. They hoped that the Islamic Government of Iran would collapse under the pressure of Iraqi onslaught, ending, thereby, the threat of 'export of a revolution' which was appealing to masses in these countries (151).

THE 'EXPORT OF REVOLUTION' THREAT:

The 'exportability of Islamic revolution' threatened the 'regime’s security' than the 'national security' of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. Ayatollah Khomeini's call, through all means of communication, for the overthrow the imperialist and un-Islamic regimes had begun appealing the rebel elements. The Shei resurgence had raised its head in Saudi Arabia (152), the UAE, Oman and Bahrain. In Kuwait the pro-Iran Sheite party “Al Dawa” stepped up terrorist activities. Politically deprived and socio-economically discriminated, the Shia populace was the potential target of the appeal from across the Persian Gulf. The anti-imperialist, anti-monarchical nature of the Iranian exhortations also aroused the sentiments of other distressed and dispossessed sections of society as well as those of the immigrants from South Asian and Eastern Mediterranean countries, particularly the Palestinians (153).

The Saudi government was anticipating a mass-based anti-monarchical revolt as a consequence of Khomeini’s call than Shia resurgence as Shias constituted merely 2 percent of the total population. So were the countries like Kuwait and Qatar where Shias made up of roughly 17 percent of the total population. Bahrain, where Shias numbered half of country’s population, was most vulnerable to a Shei backlash.

The ‘national security’ of these countries was also slightly endangered. The countries who have already settled their boundary disputes with the Shah feared that the new government would in its antipathy to the former regime abrogate previous treaties and agreements. They also did not rule out the possibility of the disputes being used as a plea by Iran to attack their vital economic facilities and the oil shipment in the Persian Gulf waterways.

Kuwait can be singled out as the country whose ‘national security’ than the regime’s was more under the clouds of Iranian threat. It was geographically closest to Iran and was within the range of Iranian missiles and aircrafts it fired and operated from the places close to Iran-Iraq border. The Shei resentment, on the other hand, lacked popular support and was not, therefore, a potential threat to the Al-Sabah rule as such (154).
Though in the beginning the Persian Gulf countries expected a quick victory by Iraq, they, as the war began showing clear signs of getting escalated, also adjusted their policies to its changing fortunes. In Iran’s engagement in a war with they found that their security was inherent. The Iranian Government’s commitment to export revolution had got relegated to secondary importance due to the trivialities of the war.

THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES:

In the Eastern Mediterranean sector, Egypt and Jordan took Iraq’s side. Egypt’s support to Iraq is more startling a case in point. Irked over Iraq-led move for Egypt’s ouster from the Arab bloc, President Sadat described the Iraqi attack as “recklessness of a blood thirsty boy like Saddam Hussein”. But, very soon Egypt realized that the war had come as a good omen for the end its isolation. Supporting Arabs against Iran Egypt could prove its Arab credentials to the fellow countries. Relying on its huge inventory, Egypt presented itself to Iraq as the supplier of military wherewithal. In order to tide over the Soviet arms embargo Iraq was looking for a source which could supply it the Soviet made weapons (155).

Unlike Egypt, Jordan supported Iraq right from the day first. King Hussein of Jordan toured Baghdad during October 4-5, 1980. This was only the first of his countless visits to Iraq during the war years. Each of his visits culminated into the signing of agreements with Iraq, aimed at strengthening of Iraq-Jordan military cooperation. Jordan also broke off diplomatic relations with Iran. It provided Iraq access to port of Aqba to receive outside military supplies. It proposed to Iraq to form a joint battle force, named ‘Ymahuk’ (156), against Iran.

Iraq received “enemy’s enemy is friend” type of support from Jordan. The principal aim of King Hussein was to help Iraq win the race for the regional power role over its adversary, Syria, a common enemy. Also, the war was a solitary chance for King Hussein to establish, for the first time, relations with Iraq at equal level. In the past, being dependent on Iraq for aid and political support on its Palestine policy, Jordan had interacted with Iraq from the position of weakness.

IRAQ-NEIGHBOURING ARAB COUNTRIES RAPPROCHMENT:

The war brought Arab states and Iraq closer. Earlier, Arab states were interlocked in an ideological rivalry with the Baathist Iraq and considered Iraq as an expansionist power and a backer of internal discontentments.

The process of rapprochement was mooted by the neighboring Arab states. They rushed to revive diplomatic relations with Iraq and elevated it to the position of the protector of territorial integrity of the Arab land (157). They left the task of defending their security with Iraq for two reasons. In the first Place, they knew that Iraq was the only power among them who could take on the Iranian threat. In the second place, they had found that Iraq had taken it upon itself to trounce Iran at a time when they wanted Iran to be battered but were not prepared and ready.
for doing this themselves.

However, the improvement of relations was an expedient move rather than a sincere attempt towards establishing conflict-free relations for the future. No effort was made to settle the issues pertaining to frontier delimitations, the neutral zone, tribal migration and cross border smuggling. The one with Kuwait over two islands, Bubiyan and Warbah, was also not addressed to despite an all the time great relations between the two countries(158).

Thus, Iraq-neighboring Arabs relations were limited to security and financial matters while the age old contentious issues were altogether ignored. To a limited extent, Iraq took some diplomatic initiatives, giving an impression that it had shed its aggressiveness on the boundary issues. But more than this, Iraq highlighted to the hilt the Arab-Iranian divide to coalesce it and the Arab countries into a single political and ethnic unit (159).

ARAB COUNTRIES' SUPPORT TO IRAN:

Iran was not left unfriendly in the war either. Among the Arab countries of the Middle East, notably Syria, South Yemen and Libya extended their support to Iran. The Baathist Syria’s support to Iran was an interesting case. Ideologically, the Islamic Iran was as much at variance with the Syrian Baathism as it was with the Iraqi one. More interesting is the fact that Syria associated itself with Iran in the war solely because of the intra-ideological rivalry with the co-Baathist Iraq.

Syria was the leading supplier of arms, notably anti-aircraft guns, anti tank missiles and rocket propelled guards, to Iran. It also sent troops at Iranian forces’ disposal. It weakened economic mainstay of Iraq by cutting Iraq’s main oil pipeline to the Mediterranean(160). It also overtly aided and abated Kurd movements and other internal rebellions inside Iraq (161). The Syrian support to Iran had strategic dimension also. Siding with Iran it managed to counter-balance the “hostility ring, made up of Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanese phalanghists, surrounding it” (162).

The degradation in Syria-Iran relations was witnessed around 1987. Compelled by oil-price slump coupled with Syria’s failure to pay over $ 2 billion for imports of oil to it, Iran in 1987 reduced oil shipment to Syria. In addition to this, Iran continued supporting the Hizubllahs of Lebanon and did not use its influence to persuade them to support Syria’s Lebanese policy.

Libya was the first Arab country which declared its support to Iran. It did so in order to give vent to its avowed hatred of the US. It also called upon other Arab states to stop backing Saddam. Col. Qaddafi decried purchase of AWACs by Saudi Arabia and condemned the Persian Gulf countries for aiding US in the latter’s efforts to militarize the region. Libya was one of the main arms suppliers to Iran.

The PLO played a low-profile role in the war. Dependent on the Arab assistance and not wanting to lose Iran’s first-ever support to the Palestinian cause, the PLO maintained ‘equidistance’. In this bid of it, the PLO was also helped by the combatant countries who wanted
to maintain friendly relations with it to establish their anti-Israeli credentials. Beside, the combatants did not stand to gain anything substantial, both militarily and economically, in trying to wean the PLO away from each other.

Worried over the degradation of the Palestinian issue, the PLO was most sincere among all regional powers for an early end to the war. But, it lacked leverage with either of the belligerents to play any meaningful role in ending the war.

Algeria's support to Iran was mainly vocal. It stemmed from Algeria's annoyance with Iraq over the latter's support to Morocco on the Polisaric Issue. Algeria held Iraq responsible for the degradation of the Palestinian issue and shifting of international focus from the Mediterranean region to the Persian Gulf, the region far from Algeria's sphere of action.

Israel looked at the Iran-Iraq war from the angle of its national security. Apprehensive of the emergence of Iraq as the fountain-head of the Arab military prowess if it happened to trounce Iran, Israel envied Iraqi victory most. As a result, it implicitly supported Iran brushing aside the latter's rejection of Israel as a sovereign state. The Iranian rhetoric were not a security threat as were the prospects of Iraqi victory. Also, the ouster of friendly regime of the Shah and its replacement by hard-line Islamic government did not undermine Israel's security as these tumultuous events had taken place in a country farthest from it among the Muslim countries of the region.

Thus, fully obsessed with its territorial security, Israel viewed the growing anti-Khomeinism among the Arab countries as the formation of a political and strategic Arab alliance including the erstwhile Arab leader and the principal enemy, Egypt.

The 'Arab fear' would have, among other things, prompted Israel to send clandestine arms supplies to Iran. In connivance with the US Israel supplied Iran spare parts it badly needed to sustain its American armory. Reports also claim that Israel was supplying arms to Iran through out during the outbreak of the war and the revelation of the secret deals.

In contrast to the US, the Arab states and the Soviet Union, Israel was poised to reaping maximum benefits in the eventuality of Iran's victory. The Iranian victory, viewed the Israeli policy makers, would break up the emerging military demon, Iraq, into a Sheite, Kurdish and Sunni states with Turkey "taking upper northern provinces, Iran taking Sheite south and Syria West Iraq".

The continuing standoff between Iran and Iraq was also in the interests of Israel. It, as said above, degraded the Palestinian issue, gave Israel more freedom to crush Palestinian uprising and take on the Lebanon's Hazeboalhs. Thus, when the whole of West Asia was directly or indirectly involved in the war, Israel invaded Lebanon after getting assured that its move will not escalate into an Arab-Israeli war as the two most militarily powerful states of the region were embroiled in a war being fought between themselves.

It was a matter of relief for Israel that the two most powerful of the regional countries—
Iraq and Iran — were exhausting their military strength against each other. The Iran-Iraq war, which re-established West Asia’s prestige as an unstable and strife-torn region, reinforced Israel’s importance as the most reliable and stable state to the US in the region (166).

The war came as a ‘blessing in disguise’ for Israel as it militarily exhausted and economically weakened Iran which, as a matter of fact, must have for the first time participated in any Arab war against Israel(167). The war also minimized the chances of Iran and Iraq ganging against Israel in the foreseeable future.

The war also helped Israel to convince the US that the dangers to the security of oil stemmed not from Arab-Israeli issue but from intra-Muslim countries rivalries. Hence, the US, the Israeli leadership used to point out, needed not to snub Israel for its repression of Palestinians and placate the oil producing countries of the region at the cost of friendly and durable relations with Israel.

PERSIAN GULF STATES’ POLICIES TOWARDS THE WAR:
Back to the Persian Gulf states’ policies towards the war, none of these conformed to ‘genuine neutrality’. For, being the principal aid giver to Iraq they were passive participants in the war. It seemed that as if there was some sort of understanding between Iraq and the rest of the Persian Gulf countries on their respective roles. The Persian Gulf countries pumped into Iraq as much as $50 billion during the war to enable it to meet the cost of defense preparedness and pay back the debts it owed to the Western countries(168). They began cutting down economic assistance to Iraq after 1985. But, this development did not mean any lack in Arab commitment to Iraq. The austerity on the part of the Arabs was the result of a perceptible decline in their national incomes and the compulsion for providing monetary assistance to other aspirants, such as Egypt and the Palestinians.

Although the Arab assistance to Iraq began declining after 1985, its usefulness increased. The Arab assistance after 1984 came when the economy of Iraq was in shambles and its defense expenditure had skyrocketed (169). The withholding of assistance at this stage, when the war from the viewpoint of Iraq was in most cubical stage, could have crippled Iraq’s military might and economic strength. The Persian Gulf states shipped Iraqi oil through their tankers after the closure of the Shatt-al-Arab, Iraq’s only access to the sea, and that of Iraqi oil pipelines passing through Syria and Turkey.

If the support to Iraq from the Persian Gulf countries came mainly in form of the economic assistance, Egypt and Jordan contributed to Iraqi war efforts through furnishing military hardware. Moreover, these countries also helped Iraq by sending contingents of their armed forces to it. Egyptian pilots flew Iraq’s Soviet made aircrafts. Jordan’s armed contingent participated in the war under the command of the Iraqi forces (170).

Yet, the Arab countries of the Persian gulf countries viewed the possibility of an Iraqi victory with anxiety and suspicion. The fear that after its victory Iraq might become bold enough to settle issues with Persian Gulf countries on its own terms or the victory would have given
A fillip to its regional ambitions was haunting these countries. Hence, the Persian Gulf countries became interested in an unending war as this would have meant Iraq’s dependence on the constant inflow of economic assistance from them. They knew that their assistance to Iraq would at the stage when the latter was not doing well, only help it to hold Iran out than to overrun it.

A few scholars even hold the view that the Persian Gulf countries wanted an unending war right from the beginning. But this argument carries little weight. First, the neighbors had given prior approval to Saddam on the account of their perception that the war would be a few days affair, leading to the collapse of the Islamic government of Iran. Second, the financial and logistical support the Persian Gulf countries extended to Iraq at least until in the first one and a half years of the war, when Iraq was dominating the scene, would have meant to contribute towards an early end of the war in Iraq’s favour than a stalemate.

There also came a moment when these countries realized that Iran could not be defeated in this war and, therefore, it would always remain an important actor in the Persian Gulf politics as a radical Islamic state. At this juncture, these countries tried to improve their relations with Iran at diplomatic and economic levels (171). Also, whenever a spill-over of the war threatened the Persian Gulf countries they resorted to a two-pronged strategy. They increased military and economic assistance to Iraq and intensified the effort to find a peaceful solution to the problem. On such occasion came in 1983. They discussed prospects of peace at the GCC summits and even once came up with a proposal which among other things envisaged Saddam stepping down from the power and taking a back seat in Baghdad to accommodate Ayatollah Khomeini’s condition for the end of the war(172).

On a similar occasion in 1986, when in the wake Iranian seizure of Fao peninsula the Iranian army had reached very close to Kuwaiti territory and the oil facilities of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were under the danger of an Iranian attack, both of these states pleaded with Iran not to take the war across Iraq (173).

The prolongation of war came as a blessing in disguise as it kept two most powerful regional powers interlocked with each other. Peace would have come into force as a result of the victory of either of the belligerents, emboldening it to fulfill its other regional ambitions at one go and that too against the relatively weaker enemies.

The continuance of the war served the interests of the regional powers in another respect also. Due to the prevailing security scenario, the regional countries were offered sophisticated weapons the supplier needed to deploy in the vicinity of the war-zone.

For economic reasons, the continuation of war, which reduced the belligerents’ oil exports by 25 to 40 percent, helped Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to maintain their huge quota of oil production and supply irrespective of the sluggishness in the world oil demand (174).

Among all, the prevention of widening of the war assumed top priority in the Persian Gulf
countries' agenda. To this effect, they, firstly and foremostly, decided to refrain from participating in the war from the Iraqi side. The logistical and financial support to Iraq stemmed from this policy-objective. It was used as an alternative. The Arab countries overlooked Iraqi call to join the war with it. They opposed Saddam's proposal for a military coalition of anti-Iran powers (175) and even criticized the Iraqi attacks on Iranian ships in the Strait of Hormuz as it would have invoked Iranian retaliation on the oil ships of the Persian Gulf countries in the absence of those from Iraq(176).

The Persian Gulf's Arab countries gave financial and logistical support to Iraq with assurance that it would not invite anything more than some protest from Iran. For, fearing internationalization of the war with the US entering the fray from its Arab allies' side, Iran could ill-afford to react violently to the Arab countries non-military support to Iraq. The proximity of the whole of Kuwait and oil facilities of Saudi Arabia to the war zone and that of the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain to Iran was the geo-strategic reason behind the Persian Gulf's Arab countries policy of non-involvement (177).

The military options theses countries resorted to were absolutely non-combatant, may it be the strengthening of their defense, the evolution of common defense system and their clandestine military cooperation with the US. The main objective behind these move was to deter Iran from widening the war(178). The shooting down of the Iranian F-14s fighter planes by Saudi F-15s was the solitary instance of any of the Arab Persian Gulf countries' direct involvement in the war. Also, this particular development, as says R. K. Ramazani, "did not show Saudi political resolve and a willingness to use military force to defend its territory"(179).

The Persian Gulf's Arab countries' gave a mixed response to Iran's repeated threat to strangle the Strait of Hormuz. During the deliberations at the GCC summits and on some other occasions a majority of them preferred to use diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran from blocking the strait. They regarded joint military action under the GCC umbrella as the least likely option. It is noteworthy in this connection that the GCC countries were capable of protecting the Kuwaiti oil tanker. Even the Saudi forces with AWACs and F-15s at their disposal were not lagging technically in protecting the Gulf oil lanes from a possible Iranian attack. But despite all these, Kuwait turned to the USSR and the US and Saudi Arabia never came forward to ensure protection to its ships.

The war put the regional countries in the state of dilemma over the issue of the US military presence in the region. They could not ward off an Iranian attack unless the US forces came to their rescue at an early stage of the crisis. This could have been possible only if the US maintained a sufficient force in the region with full facility at the nearby bases. At the same time, a slight miscalculation about the US presence in the region might have provoked Iran to attack these countries. The littoral states' tackling of this issue was, however, cautious and remarkable. They did not invite US to maintain a physical presence in the region. They also told the US to refrain from intervening in the war unless requested to do so(180). They denied base and landing rights to the RDF and the US aircrafts and did not enter into any defense agreements with the
latter (181). Another reason behind their policy to avoid military cooperation with the US was not to let Iran exploit Arab people's anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiments and, as a result, engineer popular revolt.

Otherwise, the Persian Gulf allies of the US banked totally on its over-the-horizon presence in the region (182). They sought the same weapon system from the US which was with the RDF and the CENTCOM to form a coherent defense system. The RDF was linked to the C-3 system and the AWACs Saudi Arabia possessed.

Always in doubts about their capability to deal with war-experienced, relatively heavily populated and big-sized Iran, the smaller and geographically vulnerable Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, such as Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, did not, of course, enter into open military cooperation with the US in order not to antagonize Iran, but they were also pre-decided to move in for the US help instead of invoking GCC-led joint military action in an eventuality of Iranian invasion. This is borne out by the fact that none of the GCC countries opposed the US over-the-horizon presence in the region. Kuwait, which had persistently advocated for pursuing a non-aligned course in the war for the Arab countries, went in quickly for US and also Soviet help for the protection of its oil tankers from Iranian attacks in 1987 (183).

Although no permanent base rights were extended to the US, but it was given right to access so as to deploy equipment and ammunition essential to sustain the US forces for a 90-day intensive war with a regional power. Oman, in fact, granted base facilities to the US at Misirah, Sib Thumarit and at strategically important Kasab which overlooks the Strait of Hormuz. The Sib was a shelter for the US fighter planes and Misirah accommodated US personnel.

The whole of Bahrain was virtually a US base, despite the denial of this by both the countries. Saudi Arabia, unlike the smaller countries of the Arabian peninsula, was least integrated to the US regional defense system, yet its bases were modernized by the US in a way that they looked more appropriate for US military requirements than those of Saudi Arabia. AWACs, which were central to the RDF military strategy, were provided to Saudi Arabia only when the latter conceded joint handling of the same.

The Iran-Iraq War heightened the need and importance of maintaining a war-oriented national security system. To this effect, the regional countries viewed modernization of their respective armories an essential task. Arms acquisitions by them doubled. Qualitatively, one of the most sophisticated weapons were purchased, such as AWACs and the F-15s. The supplier were allured to be provided oil at lower price in exchange for sophisticated weapons. Beside procuring advanced arms, the regional countries also took interest in modernizing their military bases and imparting rigorous training to their armed forces particularly in handling and operating modern weapon system.

Creation of a military bloc against external threat might have not been one of the reasons behind the inception of the GCC. But with a war being fought next door, the member-states could
not overlook the need to form a common defense system. The idea, mooted by Saudi Arabia in mid-November 1980, aimed at creation of Gulf-RDF joint strike force, holding of regular military exercises, creation of unified air defense system, a common military weapon and standardization program and a GCC arms industry (184).

Truly speaking, no progress could virtually be achieved on this front. The idea received a setback as Kuwait at the very outset refused to be the part of any such system. The GCC defense system proved out to be an exercise in formality, limited to holding of joint exercises and maintaining a 7,000-strong armed force, unmatched in all aspects to the military strength of both Iran and Iraq. The failure to come up with a viable defense network can be attributed to the division among the member states on the efficacy and implications of common defense system, with Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar maintaining that this would only antagonize Iran.

The common defense system was suffered the member states’ lack of faith in it. Even in the wake of Iranian attacks they did not take courage to invoke it. It eventually proved out to be a symbol of Saudi leadership of the GCC as smaller neighbors were dependent upon Saudi AWACs for their air defense system(185).

It is difficult to speculate that how long was the idea of the formation of a regional organization in air, but it is undoubtedly clear that the GCC came into existence (186) as a direct consequence of two regional developments, the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War. These developments realized the peninsular countries of their common identity, particularly to the outside world, that is said to be the most pressing reason behind the formation of a regional grouping(187).

The GCC was a Saudi Arabian brain-child. The war provided a fine opportunity to Saudi Arabia to form a group of the Persian Gulf countries which excluded both Iraq and Iran. Otherwise, in a move to establish a regional organization, Saudi Arabia could not afford to drop Iraq because not only was it the part of the same geographical region i.e. Persian Gulf, but an Arab state also. Vulnerable to the spreading of war and aggravation of anti-monarchical internal discontent, the smaller Gulf countries favored a greater level of cooperation among the regional states. Thus, they seconded the Saudi idea of regional grouping(188). In relation to the Iran-Iraq war, the GCC was posed as an Arab non-aligned grouping, a power bloc not in alliance with either of the combatants but a platform to jointly work for the settlement of the Iran-Iraq dispute.

The war, at the very outset, was the result of Iraqi regime’s miscalculations: First, Saddam Hussein exaggerated the weakening of Iranian military strength following the large-scale purging in the Iranian army and taking over of the responsibility of the national defense by the untrained Revolutionary Guards after the revolution. Thinking in these terms, Saddam overlooked the factors, like the numerical superiority of the Iranian forces and Iran’s geo-strategic depth, with Tehran and other political and economic centers being far off for a ground invasion.

Second, Saddam Hussein looked at the negative and purely military aspects of the
repercussion of the revolution on the Iranian armed forces. He failed to comprehend that the revolution had instilled a new sense of confidence, sacrifice and commitment among the Iranian armed forces personnel to the national integrity of the country. The Iranian army did consist of untrained Revolutionary Guards but they were instrumental in the success of the revolution and would have labored doubly hard to protect the country in order to protect the revolution’s success.

Third, Saddam Hussein misunderstood administrative, economic and political problems a country undergoes during the transition of power as internal chaos. He did not gauge the amount of public support behind the new regime and the strength of internal discontent in Iran. Instead of stirring up internal instability, which was of administrative and procedural in nature, the war at this moment was bound to weaken the existing opposition, consolidate the new government’s stronghold over the people, prepare the people to bear hardships for the sake of war and most importantly unite people of different factions, religious sects and regions in the name of a national crisis affecting all and sundry.

THE COMBATANTS WERE EQUALLY POISED:

One of the most startling characteristics of the war was that both of the belligerents were equally balanced but, interestingly, not in same department. In other words one’s strength was the other one’s weakness. Iraq enjoyed logistical superiority. It had access to sophisticated weapons of as many as 32 countries including both the superpowers (189). In 1984 Iraq possessed 2.5 to 1 superiority in tanks and 4 to 1 in aircrafts, APC, infantry and artillery. In 1988, the Iraqi superiority further widened to 4 to 1 in tanks and 10 to 1 in aircrafts (190). However, in artillery it reversed to 3 to 1 in Iran’s favor. Iraq’s defense expenditure was almost double to that of Iran during the war years (191). Over-fed with arms an ammunition, Iraq’s logistical capability was much more than the need and requirements of its armed forces.

On the contrary, from being the region’s most adequately furnished one, the Iranian armory began shrinking with the outbreak of the war as the weapons Iran lost could not be replenished due to an all round arms embargo against it. Iran secured its defense related needs from the Third World countries and black markets. But the arms from these sources fell short of world standard and were costlier.

If in logistical capability Iraq excelled it lagged behind in the number game. Heavily populated, Iran maintained a 4 to 1 edge over Iraq as far as the numerical strength of the armed forces was concerned. The Iranian government was also able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to join the war and. The comparatively smaller population of the country was a stumbling block before the Iraqi government to mobilize people to join the war as this would have caused manpower shortage in civilian and economic sectors.

In the spheres of ‘training’, the Iraqi army had distinct advantage over that of Iran. The Iraqi army was experienced and trained by the Soviet personnel, based on typical hierarchical set up and discipline. Consisting of young Pasdaran ( REvolutionay Guards) and villagers from the war-prone areas, the Iranian army was by and large untrained but in the handling of small weapons. This is why the Iranian army was found lacking in military acumen, strike capability.
the laying of siege and foraying into the opponent’s defense.

Religious dedication and high moral was the kernel stone of the Iranian armed forces’ strength. They were told by their government that they were not merely defending the territorial integrity of the country but fighting a ‘Jihad’ to save revolution and Islam from the infidels(192). The religious duty to struggle and sacrifice imbued the Iranian army with determination to fight and suffer unto victory (193).

IRAQ ADEQUATELY ARMED BUT WEEK IN STRATEGIES:

The Iran-Iraq war would go down in history as the one in which the militarily stronger side was at the receiving end most of the time, except between September 1980 to mid-81 and then again during the the last six months of the war. Iraq’s ruling regime’s military and political short-sightedness underlines this. Iraq erred in not trying to occupy the Iranian mainland in order to achieve its main war objective, i.e. the toppling of the Islamic government, when it was maintaining an upperhand. It made a half-hearted offensives, confined to the peripheries of Iran and without the needed air support. Massive air raids were the only way out to break into the Iranian defense lines as the Iraqi ground forces into Iran had already been outnumbered.

The number handicap always failed the Iraqi military thrusts. For instance, not in a position to bear heavy human losses, the Iraqiforces could not make an all out assault against the Iranian army, essential to break the stalemate the ground battles had generally resulted into (194).

Then there were internal constraints. Iraq was more prone to political destabilization and economic dislocations. It could not automatically mobilize Iraqi people, who in majority were Shias, against a Shei country. Even, there was a threat inherent in recruiting local people in the war. This would have swelled the number of Shias in the army, turning it into a potential threat to the Sunni regime (195).

Military analysts have pointed out that Iraqi military thrusts were poorly conceived and badly coordinated(196). The Soviet training of the Iraqi forces was found inadequate. The Iraqi aircrafts flew at a very high altitude affecting the accurate targeting.

The Iraqi forces were well-trained and experienced enough in comparison to those of Iran but not so by the world standard. Its performances in the 1973 war and against Kurdish rebellion were poor. Against Iran these weaknesses came to fore again. Senior army officers were found hesitant to widen the area of operation. Too much emphasis was laid on the objective of destroying Iran’s economic targets, while the Iranian military installations were spared. Even the Iranian economic targets were repeatedly attacked unnecessarily(197).

THE IRANIAN ARMED FORCES’ STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES:

The Iran-Iraq War derives home the point to a student of Military Science that ‘human factor’ is as important as the ‘technology factor’ in a 20th century war, particularly the one between the two Third World countries. Despite lagging behind the Iraqi forces in tactical capability, it were the Iranian forces which held the sway most of the time. With comparatively
larger armed forces and the availability of the manpower together made it possible for Iran to launch "grand offensives" into Iraq repeatedly, unmindful of human losses. This, in turn, enabled Iran to lay siege around the Iraqi defense, which lessened the chances of Iraqi intrusions into its own territory.

Iran soon overcame the lean period its armed forces underwent following the sacking of a large number of regular military personnel. Except creating some problems in initial stages the step largely helped Iran. The new army was more dedicated to the revolution and, therefore, to the government. There was smooth coordination between the government and the army. The Revolutionary Guards and the regular army were closely knit.

Iraq's geo-strategic disadvantages offset the Iranian armed forces' tactical inferiority. With most of the Iraqi targets being at short-distances, the Iranian aircrafts reached the targets within 5 to 10 minutes and could fly low so as to attack with precision and accuracy(198). This is why the Iranian government used its air power quite effectively in driving the Iraqis out of its territory in 1982(199).

However, Iran's diminishing armory cost it dearly. It made a real difference between the Iranian forces' success in occupying Iraqi border towns and its failure to capture central towns of Baghdad and Basra. Iran, which had in the first few years of the war made most of the use of its air-power, could not utilize it to disrupt the Iraqi defense in the later years as with the passage of time its air prowess declined sharply due to the lack of spare parts supply. As its weapon system was West-oriented, Iran's resort to the non-Western arms suppliers in the wake of the snapping of relations with the erstwhile suppliers after the revolution did not help Iran much. Not merely the weapons it procured from the Soviet Union's clients and the black market were qualitatively inferior but the Iranian army was not trained in operating these arms. Nor could Iran hire the services of the military personnel of the supplier countries.

The Iranian army personnel constituting the 'human waves' happened to be armed with Soviet made AK-47s, RPG-7s and anti tank weapons, which were unmatched to the Iraqi firepower. On top of this, Iran's 3 to 1 advantage in manpower also declined at the eve of the end of the war. Heavy casualties in grand offensives dampened not only the moral of the Iranian army but that of the civilians also, enthusiastically participating in the war earlier. In the last year of the war, the Iranian armed forces strength got reduced to 100,000, equal to that of Iraq's.

IRAQ NOT IRAN WANTED TO REGIONALISE THE WAR:

Contrary to the common perception, it was Iraq, instead Iran, which wanted to spread the war to the Arabian peninsula. The primary Iraqi objective behind attacks on the Iranian oil ships in the Persian Gulf waters was to provoke Iran to hit, in the absence of of Iraqi ships, the oil tankers of the Iraq-friendly states. The importance of regionalisation/internationalization of the war grew to Iraq when it found itself incapable of defeating Iran on its own. Iraq also thought that the direct involvement of the US and the Arab states would be the most effective means to divert Iran's attention from the Iraqi land into the Gulf waters or force Iran to seek peace with Iraq.

Iran did create specter of the spill over of the war among the Persian Gulf countries. But, it was a deterrence only, aiming at preventing Arab countries from joining the war and entering into defense pacts and security agreements with the US. Otherwise, the widening of war was
suicidal for Iran as this would have brought in the US a far superior enemy than Iraq, directly against it. In addition, Iranian onslaught was bound to dub Iran as an "aggressor" which would have had far-reaching implications, from withdrawal of support from some of the Arab and non-aligned countries to imposition of UN economic and military sanctions. Economic reasons alone did not warrant the expansion of the war. An Iran-Arab war had to be fought in the Persian Gulf waters, leading to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and, therefore, the stoppage of oil supplies. Such a situation would have amounted to a self-imposed oil-embargo at a time when Iran was exporting oil beyond its OPEC-fixed quota to meet the expanses of war.

THE LONGEST WAR OF THE 20TH CENTURY:

It was the longest war of this century. None of other wars have been fought over a period which is even half of the Iran-Iraq war's duration. The two other wars which occupy second and third place in the list of the longest wars of this century were no ordinary wars. These were World War I and World War II. Unlike the two world wars, the Iran-Iraq war was fought in an era of technological revolution in warfare, that is said to have increased the chances of an early end of a war.

This makes one ponder that as to what were the main factors which delayed its end for no less than eight years. First, the war continued stretching as both the belligerents were evenly balanced in the sense that both were incapable of defeating each other. Second, there did not come a stage in the war when both of the combatants would have desired peace together. The balance of war kept on tilting from one side to the another and therefore when the losing side tried for peace the other side put forward humiliating and unacceptable terms and conditions for peace.

For instance, Iran considered relinquishment of power by Saddam as the precondition for any peace talks with Iraq. While Saddam Hussein stuck to the transfer of its sovereignty over Shatt-Al-Arab and Khuzestan province by Iran to Iraq. Third, Both of the states possessed an inbuilt economic capability to sustain the war. Iraqi war efforts were funded by the Arab powers. Although, financial assistance to Iraq came largely in form of debt, but their regular supply lessened the burden of war on Iraq's domestic budget. As regards Iran, its expenses on the war were comparatively low while its economy was in a better state of condition. It is not intended to prove here that the war did not weaken the two countries' economies, but it weakened their economy from flourishing ones into a stagnant one. Fourth, there were numerous de-escalation and stalemates during the war. Generally each bout followed a long spell of peace.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The Iran-Iraq War was one of its own kind as far as its implications on the combatants, the regional powers and outside actors are concerned. Succinctly speaking, each of them benefited from it and suffered equally.

IRAN

That the war ravaged Iranian economy is a misconception. For, the graph of the Iranian
economy shows an upward trend with the progress of the war, instead the contrary. The Iranian economy was undergoing a lean period on economic front in the early years of the war. But, it was the after-effect of the overthrow of the Shah and the resultant snapping of economic relations with the US, Iran’s largest trading partner. Had the war been a factor in the 1980-82 Iran’s economic deterioration, it would have aggravated further instead of improving after the outbreak of the war. For example, Iranian oil exports declined to 1.1 bpd in 1980 and 0.8 in 1981 from 4.5 in 1978, but from then onwards these started picking up, reaching 1.6 bpd in 1982 to 2.2 in 1983 (201). Since 1983 till the end of the war Iran produced oil and exported above its OPEC -quota.

The Iraqi attacks on its oil tankers and installations, it is said, brought considerable damages to the Iranian economy. But, on the contrary, despite Iraqi attacks Iran kept on producing and exporting oil in the earmarked quantity each year. From Kharag, Iran’s main island terminal and the target of intensive Iraqi air and missile raids, Iran succeeded in taking oil consignment to the mouth of the Persian Gulf by charting 20 to 25 tankers with each tanker carrying 3.7 million barrel oil (202).

The decline in the Iranian exports and sagging national income was caused by the decline in the global demand of oil. This is why the percentage of the reduction in Iranian oil exports in the 80s corresponds to the percentage-decline in oil exports from other principal suppliers and the decline in the global oil demand. The worldwide recession and Islamic government’s stress on the development of small scale and artisan industries and not the war were the factors behind the stagnation the heavy-industries, particularly steel and petrochemicals, suffered during the war.

Despite the war the Iranian government pursued a self-reliant industrial development and achieved considerable success. This helped the growth of Iranian economy in the second half of the war. The trade relations with the West also picked up during the war. Iranian imports from the US in monetry terms increased from $ 0.02m in 1980 to $ 0.30m in 1981 to $ 2 b in 1983. And in comparison to 1983 the US-Iran trade relations in 1988 had increased six-fold. The war-time military expenditure also did not eat much into the civilian expenditure. Iranian military expenditure during war happened to be much lower than those whopping ones in Shah’s time.

Purchasing of arms from the black markets, the Third World and East Europe did not incur any additional expenditure. Since the arms procured from the black market were of low quality the purchase value of these was many times less that the high cost qualitative weapons. The arms Iran acquired from rest of the sources mentioned above were also cheaper than the West-made weapons of similar category.

The war, as a matter of fact, indirectly contributed the growth of the Iranian economy. For example, to reduce its military-expenditure the Iranian government established arms exports substitution industries for the manufacturing of small arms and ammunition, tanks and spare parts. Although, these did not generate additional income but proved cost-effective(203). An array of agriculture based and small scale industries mushroomed in Iran which gave
employment to a large section of people, arrested the trend of urbanization and created new sources of national income.

The Iranian government tried to evolve a 'mechanism' to withstand the economic pressure of the war. The government launched an ambitious five year development program in 1983 with a targeted growth of 7 percent. Throughout the war the GDP remained consistently at 5 percent, a remarkable growth rate for a country beset with a war. The development of non-oil economy paid-off. The non-oil sector contributed as much as 70 percent to the total GNP of Iran.

Iran's trade relations with the Soviet bloc and the Third World increased many-fold during the war and in comparison to the 70s. The Iranian oil was being bought by Japan, India, North Korea, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore in Asia, all of the East European countries, and Tansierre Leone, Madagaskar, Burundi and Nicaragua in Latin America.

Iran's agriculture sector, which contributed 30 percent of the GDP and employed thousands of people, remained unaffected by the war. Even the recruitment of people to army did not create manpower shortage in the agriculture sector.

One of the most discerning losses Iran suffered in the war was human casualties (204). Around 5,00,000 Iranians were killed, one million wounded and nearly 3 million displaced. by1984, the death toll on the Iranian side had already crossed 2,00,000 mark. In addition, around 6,00,000 people were injured and 8,000 taken as prisoners. Casualties shot up in Iraqi missile and chemical weapons attacks before the end of the war. In February-March 1988 alone 1,000 Iranians were killed in Iraqi missile firings(205). About 5,000 people, who included Kursds and Iran's Revolutionary Guards', were killed when Iraq aplied chemical weapons on Halabja (206).

The human fatalities Iran suffered represent a callous loss in terms of number only. Its effects were not fatal both on the morale of civilians and the army. Islamic fervor coupled with the glorification of martyrdom in the She'i sect of Islam prevented a sense of detachment from the war among the people out of the fear of death. The Iranian government also glorified those killed as martyrs describing them as the companions of Imam Hassan, one of the most revered figures in She'i Islam who, according to the tradition, martyred along with his 72 companions in the War of Karbala. The families of the deceased, injured and prisoners were given generous payment, provided jobs and other facilities, such as houses.

A few writings on the Iran-Iraq war misconstrue the contribution of the success of the Islamic Revolution towards social cohesion in Iran. They describe this as a result of the Iran-Iraq war. It was actually the 'Islamic' dimension of the Anti-Shah revolution which blurred the Shia-Sunni, ethnic and class divide in Iran. It was the achievement of the Islamic revolution that an "overwhelming majority of Iranians without any regard to ethnic identity, clear of sectarian orientation, appeared to have coalesced in what is an essence of national effort to defend the
Similarly, much of the groundwork for the political stability was provided by the revolution and not the war.

The Iranian clergy had come to power with full backing from the people. The opposition movements were weak and lacked political legitimacy even before the outbreak of the war. And there was no squabble for power between various political factions in true sense of the term. Rather, there was total eradication of political opponents by the new government, accomplished finally by spring 1981 with the ouster of the then President Bani Sadar.

The war gave political stability to Iran not by establishing clergy rule in the country but by increasing its credentials as a strong and the best government, successful in foiling the Iraqi invasion and what they called the US imperialist onslaught.

The war did not hinder the democratization of Iran. When the war had broken out, it was speculated that taking the advantage of emergency situation the new government would renege on its promise to set up an Islamic system based on Westminster model. However, it was amid war that the Iranian constitution was adopted, the post of president and prime minister institutionalized and parliament was elected, which kept on functioning without fail from then onwards, and the bureaucratic set up was reorganized.

The war played the role of the cementing force between the Iranian army, the people and the government. After the revolution, both people and the new government has developed a distaste for the army for its oppressive activities during Shah’s rule. This distaste was reflected in the grooming of 'Pasdaran' as the alternative army. However, the war not only increased in the eyes of the government the importance of a regular armed force but gave a chance to the latter to re-establish its commitment to the nation and the new government.

As far as the negative impacts of war are concerned, it accentuated Iran’s international isolation. The revolution followed by the seizure of American Embassy by the Iranians had deteriorated the Iran-US relations only. But, at the same time, it had improved the chances of normalization of Soviet Union-Iran relations.

But, Iran’s war with one of its allies forced the Soviet Union not to go great guns despite immense strategic importance of an anti-US Iran to it. In the initial stages the ‘war’ resulted in a change of heart as far as the US was concerned, but Iran did not reciprocate. Once, the chances of Iranian victory began looking a destabilizing factor to the US regional interests, the Iran-US relations reached the flash point of distrust.

But, it is sheer exaggeration to describe Iran’s isolation as international. Iran maintained diplomatic relations with one of the superpowers, namely the Soviet Union. Iran found a number of takers of its stand against Iraq in the Third World countries, particularly the Middle Eastern ones. The relations with Iraqi supporters were by and large sour. However, there never prevailed a state of war between these countries and Iran. Diplomatic ties were maintained, and both the parties took additional precaution in not provoking each other.

The war indeed brought a few countries closer to Iran, Syria and Libya being the example. Iran’s isolation was not permanent either. The relations with the Soviet Union
fluctuated between normal to worse. When the war was in its last phase, the relations between the two countries improved, resulting into exchange of emissaries, who, among others included Sheverdandze, the then Soviet Foreign Minister.

Iran was indeed absolutely isolated by the US but if the clandestine deals between the two countries are treated as the part of bilateral relationship, then Iran and the US, who exchanged arms for hostages in Lebanon deal (disclosed in 1986), were in good terms for an unknown period of time.

IRAQ

Unlike Iran, the war directly impinged on Iraq's economy. Due to the closure of the Shatt-Al-Arab, Iraqi oil exports fell drastically from 2.4 bpd in 1980 to 0.7 mbpd in 1981. With this, Iraqi oil revenues fell down to $ 10.4 billion in 1981 from $ 26.2 in 1980. The problem accentuated when Syria closed down the Iraqi oil pipeline passing through its territory in April 1982. The Iraqi exports declined to mere 650,000 bd in 1982 and the oil revenue slashed to $ 9.5 billion the same year (209).

The war cost a slur on Iraqi foreign exchange. It began drying up at a fast pace. For instance, within a span of four years i.e. 1979-83 period, Iraq's foreign exchange reserves slumped to $ 3 to 4 billion from $ 35 to 40 billion (210). Iraq's external debt rose, by the time the war came to an end, to US $ 50 billion (211), mostly owed to oil-rich countries of the Arabian peninsula.

With the defense sector being developed to the hilt, the burnt of war were borne heavily by the civilian sector of Iraq. Resorting to a strict 'gun and butter' policy, Iraq took several austerity steps which affected the civilian sector. Imports were slashed by half, development projects, particularly those related to irrigation, reclamation, railways, automobiles, were pared down and the salaries of the government officials were reduced.

The war charged heavily from the Iraqi manpower. Pitted against a country with a population five times over than that of its own, Iraq drew a major chunk of newly recruited armed forces personnel from the civilian sector. Around 65 percent of the people employed in the civilian sector were asked to join the armed forces. The workforce in factories, state and non-government organizations got reduced to half, as a result. The filling in gap strategy of employing foreign labors (212) proved a poor substitution. The foreign workers could be employed in construction and service sectors only. The manpower shortage in the agriculture sector remained unchanged. The agricultural production declined. A country which used to export food items turned a net importer of them. This can be gauged from the statistics that at the end of the first year of the war Iraq's food import bill was around $ 13 million and this amount almost doubled at the end of the next fiscal year.

Maintenance of foreign workers was an additional burden. The depletion of foreign exchange fastened. Any attempt to cutback the amount of remittances resulted into reverse migration by the foreign workforce. With their lives and security in danger, the foreign workers could be allured to stay by being offered an attractive salary and remittance facilities only.
The war did weaken the Iraqi economy but the state of economic condition did not weaken the Saddam regime’s resolve to carry on the war. Iraq, like Iran, also succeeded to manage its economy in a manner that the conduct of the war could have been sufficiently funded.

The foreign aid and assistance played a crucial role in sustaining the economic cost of the war. In the second half of the war the Iraqi economy improved a bit, enabling it to increase its defense expenditure. The marginal economic progress was attributed to an a continuous increase in Iraqi oil exports and growing trade with the West(213). The increased trade with the West was the fallout of the war only. It was the war which brought West closer to a country—Iraq—, which being a Soviet ally could in peaceful situation, and that too during the cold war years, not imagine of getting so much politically and economically closer to the former. This holds true for the close economic relations between Iraq and its Arab neighbors too.

The war constraints made Iraq pursue a more reasonable economic policy. It stopped wasting resources on lavish and prestigious projects. The postponement of the Non-Aligned summit in Baghdad due to the War should have certainly been a political loss to the country and a personal one to ambitious Saddam Hussein, but it saved a lot more money from being squandered on a project which had already consumed US $ 7 billion(214).

The Iraqi government concentrated on projects helpful to expand Iraqi exports. For example, refineries were overhauled, the export of refined products increased, the construction of a major refinery and petro-chemical complex was taken up and completed soon. The economy was liberalized to attract private companies and individuals’ participation, particularly in the service sector.

The war consolidated Saddam’s rule. Iraqi people did not try to de-stabilize his government but supported his political moves out of the fear that in effect of a political change the country will fall to the Iranian army, which most of the time laid siege around the main political and administrative centers of the country. Though not as popular and charismatic as his counterpart, Imam Khomeini, Saddam had the backing of its people to keep on fighting. The undercurrent of Iraqi people’s attitude to Iraqi government during war years is adequately summed up by The Washington Post as;

“the people do not want a war to go on, and some even blame Saddam for it, but they do not want revolution of Iran to happen here” (215)

A war being fought between a Sunni regime ruling over Shias constituting 55 percent of the country’s total population against a Shi country, must have instigated Iraqi Shias to revolt. The chances of a revolt in the army were even greater as the Shia personnel could have not liked the idea of killing the brethren of their sect at the behest of a Sunni regime. But nothing of that sort happened. The most important factor behind this was the fact that as per the long Arab tradition the Iraqi people gave ethnic-cum-nationalistic fervor precedence over their religious identity (216). Beside, Saddam very shrewdly kept the Shia population loyal to the country and
the government by offering various incentives to them, directing the army to protect the Shia religious pilgrimages in the country and entering into political deals with the prominent Shia leaders.

It was not by the people as a whole or the Shei among them was Saddam's government threatened during the war. The regime security threats came mainly from within the ruling elite. A number of aborted coups took place and attempts to assassinate Saddam were made. The most serious was the one in Oct. 1983 when the government foiled a coup attempt by Saddam's brother-in-law and 11 other senior military officers.

However, the above-mentioned rebellions were ruthlessly suppressed, with the main activists being executed and others involved jailed and stripped off their services. The sporadic coup and assassination attempts did not point to political instability in Iraq during the war days as these had come from above, with the general public being aloof from the these developments.

Interestingly, the war subsided the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq(217). Like Shia people, the Kurdish people too were placated. Realizing the necessity of normalization of situation in Kurd dominated areas so that the Iranian army could concentrate in south-east, Saddam Hussein offered to to Kurd leaders peace packages, accepting a majority of the Kurdish demands. Thus in 1984, Saddam Hussein signed an agreement with the Kurd representatives. The treaty provided for free and democratic elections in the Kurdistan, leading to the constituting of a legislative assembly and economic council for Kurds, and a pledge by the Iraqi government to protect Kurdistan from foreign invasion by the Iraqi government(218). The agreement also included a commitment on the part of the Kurdish leaders, particularly Jalal-Al Talbani and those belonging to Patriotic Union Of Kurdistan, to cease hostility and join instead the Iraqi force against Iran.

The deal did not work for long as the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, which had a large following among the Kurds, opposed it. Later relations between Saddam and Jalal-Al Talbani also cooled off. Between 1985 and 1988, Kurds rose their heads again, but their defiance of Iraqi authority was feeble, disorganized and beset with internal factionalism while the Iraqi government unleashed state terrorism, manifested most discernibly in chemical weapons attack on civilian people of Halabja town, to suppress the Kurds.

The Iran-Iraq war took away 6,5000 Iraqi lives and left 3,00,000 wounded. Beside, 60,000 Iraqi soldiers were taken as prisoners of war, the Heaviest toll Iraq suffered in any of the wars it fought in its history. Lacking religious motivation and revolutionary zeal, as was the case with the Iranian people, Iraqis reflected anguish (but did not express it publicly) over the deaths of their relatives and friends. The Iraqi government tried to minimize people's passive resentment by giving facilities to the families of armymen killed in the war. The widow of those killed were given land, attractive house, a grant of US $ 7,000 and loans repayable over 25 years and pension(219).

The Iraqi foreign policy underwent a significant transformation. Its attitude towards the Arab monarchies moderated. The territorial claims over these countries were dropped at least
temporarily, and support to rebels were withdrawn. It modestly expressed its opposition to the Formation of the GCC and its exclusion from it. The differences over the low-profile Arab support to it was also expressed with utmost care and caution.

Most revolutionary change in Iraqi foreign policy was the attitude towards Egypt, whose ouster from the Arab world was earlier orchestrated by Iraq. Later Egypt became the largest supplier of arms and spare parts to Iraq among the Arab countries. Iraq in exchange promised to campaign for its re-entry to the Arab fold. In 1984 Iraqi Vice Prime Minister Taha Ramadan stated publically, “Iraq—government and party—considers Egypt’s return to Arab nations as Iraq’s primary Pan-Arab objective and regard its relationship with Israeli as its internal affairs,” (220).

Surprisingly, Iraqi attitude towards Israel also pacified. In Arab league Conference in Sept. 1982, Saddam Hussein was reported as saying the security of the Israel was a precondition to the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz went to the extent of saying that “Iraq was not opposed to a peacefull settlement of the problem and therefore negotiations with Israel”(221). This volte face in Iraqi policy towards Israel was an amazing development because it had all along described the war as Zionist-Imperialist conspiracy and accused Iran playing in the hands of the these forces. However, it be noted, the friendly attitude towards Israel was the West and the US oriented so as to project Iraq as a regional country not opposed to the latter's interests in the region, particularly the one pertaining to the integrity and the security of Israel.
REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES


2. The battle of Qadisiya was fought between Arab and Zorastrian forces.

3. Though Zorastrians embraced Islam after the battle of Qadisya, they soon adopted the Shi'i sect of Islam as against their Arab co-religionists who belonged to the Sunni sect. This gave birth to the Shia-Sunni controversy with each sect being represented by two different nationalities. For detail see Lawrence Ziring, "The Middle East Political Dictionary," Santa Barbara ABC Cilo, 1984, Pp. 74-77, 79-83.


6B. Aziz Tariq, Who Started the War, P. 101.


9. The total strength of the people of Iranian origin was 35,000.


12. In fact, "export of revolution" drive was essentially for home consumption. That was to consolidate power in the post-revolution period by keeping people loyal to the revolution and the government. See "Neutral or Neutralised: Iran-Iraq and the Super powers" in Shirin Tahir kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (eds.), Iran Iraq War, New York Preager, 1983, P. 176.


15. Syria and Iraq, competitors for the role of the leadership of the Baath movement, had, however, at that time got closer to each other by setting up ‘Joint Political Command’ which stressed the need de-escalate tension between themselves.


22. The regional states were in ‘catch 22’ position. They feared an spillover yet relished the prospects of Iran, which was a potential source to internal instability in these countries, being bashed and the radical Islamic governemnt disposed from power. So were the superpowers as Iran was not the client state of either of the two to have persuaded them to come to its rescue.

23. The river Shatt-Al-Arab, Iraq’s only outlet to the Persian Gulf waters, constitutes the common boundry between Iran and Iraq. It is a wide navigable water which originates from the city of Qurna at the confluence of rivers Tigris and Eupherates in Iraq and extends to the city of Al-Faw on the Persian Gulf. See for more detail Edger ‘O’ Balance N. 6 P. 574.

24. Khuzestan is Iran’s South-West province bordering Iraq. It is inhabited by Arabs. Earlier, the part of the Basra province of Ottoman empire, Khuzestan was ceded to Iran by Britain under a treaty (1925) signed with the then Iranian king, Reza Shah.

25. Aziz Tariq, N. 6b, P. 11


28. The Arab nationalism is mistaken as representing Islam on the basis of the fact the Arab land is the birthplace of Islam and from here this religion spread all over the world. Saddam Hussein also drew an analogy between the Iran-Iraq war and the battle of Qadisya, in which Persia was conquered by the Arab-Islamic forces, describing Iran as "coward who tries to avenge Qadisya".


33. Ibid, P. 167

34. Ibid, P. 167


36. Dezful is strategically vital city of Iran as it accommodates an air base, a hydro-electric station and pumping station for the pipeline linking Iran's southern oil fields to its capital, Tehran.


38. Local people's resistance saved these Iranian cities from falling to the Iraqi army.


40. Iraq knew about dangers inherent in occupying a country larger in size and manpower. The occupation of Iran, populated pre-dominantly by Shias, would have changed the demographic character of Iraq where the Shias were already in majority.

42. In order to avoid human casualties Iraq refrained from making regular invasions inside Iran.

43. "Dangers of Iran-Iraq War", Link, (India), June 24, 1984, P. 244.


48. The Iran-Iraq War coincided with the stoppage of US arms transfers to Iran. Teharan cancelled arms deals worth millions of dollars. Arms supplies from other western sources also halted. An unusual increase in Iranian armed forces' numerical strength further aggravated the shortage crisis.

49. Kumar Shashi, N. 47, P. 51.

50. The war of economic attrition was first of its kind since the Second World War in which Allied Forces carried out systematic attacks on Germany's and Japan's economic installations. Economic targets were also attacked during the Indo-Pak Wars. But, in the afore-mentioned wars mainly the military establishments were also attacked, while in the Iran-Iraq War belligerents' missile attacks and air raids mainly concentrated on economic facilities.


52. Christopher, Raj S., N. 45, P. 255.

53. Link, N. 43, P. 72.


55. For instance, Iraqi missile damaged Saudi supertanker "Al-Ahood". See also Link, N. 43, P. 27.

56. Kumar Shashi, N. 47, P. 51.

58. Miller Judith & Mylroi Laurie, Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Persian Gulf, P. 120.

59. Fao is an uninhabited peninsula. However, given its proximity with Basra, Iraq’s second largest city, it is a strategically vital post.

60. The Economist, January 3 1987.


63. Miller Judith & Mylroi Laurie, N. 58, P. 122.

64. However, the formal request by Kuwait to this effect was made four months ago (in September 1986) in the wake of Iranian attacks on its ships in 1986 summers. See for detail Ramzani R. K. N. 61, Pp. 60-64.

65 Ibid, P. 86.

66. Ibid, P. 86.

67. Ibid, P. 86.

68. Ibid, P. 86

69. Ibid, P. 86

70. Ibid, P. 87

71. The US Navy P-3 petrol aircrafts operated from Masirah Island of Oman. AWACS deployed at Saudi Arabian forces were used by the US personnel to man Iranian military moves in the Persian Gulf.


73. Chubin Shahram, N. 17, P. 317.

74. This viewpoint was held by none other than the present Iranian President, Hashemi Rafsanjani, who then was the commander-in-chief of the Iranian armed forces and the most trusted Lt. of Ayatollah Khomeini. See Chubin and Tripp, Iran and Iraq at War, Pp. 73-74.

With the changes in the international and regional political scenario, the US policy objectives also replaced one another in order of priority. For instance, the objective of the containment of the Soviet Union got in the second half of the war relegated to insignificance due to the subsiding of the cold war from an objective of primary concern in the first half of the war. Similarly, the recession in the West and the accompanying glut reduced the vitality of oil factor a bit.

Within a few days of the start of the war the then US Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie met the his Soviet counterpart Andrei Goromyko in New York. In the meeting between the two, the Muskie maintained that the two superpowers must adopt a non-confrontationist approach vis-a-vis each other in the war. See Gordon Murrey, N. 19, P. 160.

Some of the observers held that US military presence in the the region was inadequate to and ill equipped to counter any Iranian attack.


Washington Post 29 Oct. 1980. Carter referred to the worth $240 million arms supply ordered by the Shah. The supply was withheld after his ouster.

Asopa, Sheel K., N. 8, P. 86.

Gordon Murrey, N. 18, P. 163.


Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigneiw Brezeniski, was also for an improvement in the US-Iraqi relations. See Barryn Rnbin, United states-Iraq Relations : A Spring Thaw in Tim Niblock Iraq : The Contemporary State, 1983 , P. 119

New York Times, 13 December 1981, See also Aideed Dawisha “Iraq : The West’s
Opportuniy ‘' Foreign Policy, Winter 1981-82 Pp. 134, 135

92. Rubin, Barryn, N. 89b, P. 119.

93. Al-Ezhary M.S. The Iran-Iraq War: A Historical, Economic and Political Analysis, D.K. Private Agencies Ltd, New Delhi, India, 1984, P. 129


95. Chubin Shahram, N. 76, P. 12.


98. The Washington Post, March 24, 1987. Explaining the reason behind the US readiness to help Kuwait the then US Secretary of the Defense, Casper Weinberger said, “the American refusal would have created a vacuum in the Gulf in which the Soviet Union would have shortly been projected.”


102. Jasjit Singh, “Iran-Iraq War” Strategic Analyses, August 1985, P. 547. The Carter Doctrine read, “any attempt by any outside force to gain control over the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interest of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force”.

103. It is debatable that whether really the US wanted to strengthen the allies’ security, despite Iran’s unwillingness to escalate the war, by supplying them sophisticated arms in huge quantity or its unrestrained arms transfer policy to the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf stemmed from traditional considerations, such as recycling of petrodollars.

104. The oil prices started climbing down from $26.9 in 1985 to $14.7, $16, $17 per barrel in the years 1986, 1987, and 1988 respectively. The price-crash was caused by the global economic recession and the resultant reduced share of oil in energy consumption.

105. The war came for the US as a ‘blessing in disguise’ which forced its allies to redefine their dependence, who, particularly Kuwait, had embarked on a policy of reapproachment with the USSR, on it. In this context, the Iran-Iraq War started at a right moment as it gave a setback to Moscow’s move to make inroads in the US sphere of action.
106. Muskie held that the supply of the AWACS to Saudi Arabia would come in handy for the Soviet Union to throw its support behind Iran while to prevent Tehran from joining the the Soviet bloc was the main objectives of the US.

107. However, the war was not the only factor behind the US arms sales to its allies in the region during 1980s. Arms were also sold to place them in the vicinity of a region where the US had deployed its naval force. Arms began to turn into a commercial commodity in the wake of increased buying capacity of the recipients and the suppliers' urge to sell them to earn hard currency. It is also doubtful that the US arms supplies to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Persian Gulf countries were meant for preparing them to take on Iran. For, they had shown an unwillingness to enter into a war with Iran and banked on, as did Kuwait, the US to come to their rescue in the eventuality of Iranian attack. Small, inexperienced and ill-trained armed forces of these countries were not capable of handling world's one of the most modern weapons being shipped to them by the US. Thus the US had, taken upon itself the protection of its allies by increasing its military presence and forming strategic alliance with the allies to acquire bases which housed some of the most sophisticated American weapons. For example the weapons such as AWACS, F-15, F-16, Sidewinder air-to-air missile, Hawk missile batteries, which the US sold to its regional allies, could have been utilised by the US in a joint naval-aerial operation. See for details Alam, Sayeed M., Towards the Persian Gulf War: Arms Proliferation in West Asia, Causeway Publishers, New Delhi, India, Pp. 62-8.

108. The US naval task force included a total number of 18 combat ships, 13 support ships, headed by aircraft carriers Midway and Eisenhower.


110. Ahrari, Mohammed E., N. 11, P. 54.


112. That Iran was a small threat to the US in comparison to the one that stemmed from the Soviet Union is borne out by the fact that the US only needed fire-power to batter Iran during its protracted battle with the same in 1987.


114. Both the US and Bahrain denied that Bahrain was an American military base.

115. See Newsweek, 23 April, 1984.


119. The then US Secretary of State declared "there would be no military equipment provided to the government of Iran under earlier obligation and contractual agreements", The Washington Post. January 19, 1981.


121. Link, "Iran-Iraq Conflict: Soviet View", Link, November 15, 1987, P. 2

122. This endangered the Kuwaiti security as the Fao peninsula is close to Umm-e-Qasr, then an Iraqi port adjacent to the Kuwaiti boundaries.

123. This issue came to fore again in the latest presidential elections in the US.

124. Iraq was also tied up with the USSR in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, signed by them in 1972.


126. The Soviet Union was interested in an early end to the war in view of the fact that this would have reduced the possibility of punitive action by the US against Iran, the country adjacent to the Soviet Union, and also stalled the militarization of the Persian Gulf by the US.

127. Such a proposal was put forward by Breznev in a speech in the Indian parliament (New York Times, Oct 1 1980) and at 26th CPSU Congress (New York Times, February 24, 1981). But the choice of the 'venues' point out that the Soviet Union did not directly approached to the US. Also, speeches from the above-mentioned platforms have always smacked of rhetoricism. The international fora, like the UN, would have been the right kind of venue but therein the Soviet Union was conspicuous of not showing any "activism".


130. In the Ethiopian Civil War the USSR was on the side of the Marxist government, while Iraq supported Somalian and Eritrean resurgent.


133. The Soviet occupation halted the process of normalization of relations which was begun by the USSR in later 70s by exploiting regional powers growing disillusionment with the US over the latter masterminding the anti-Arab Camp David plan/accord. The Persian Gulf countries interpreted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as the part of Moscow’s strategy to advance to the Gulf and eventually to attack and subvert them. See Katz, Mark N., N. 109, P. 57.


137. This was told to the Soviet Amabssador in Tehran by the then Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Rejai, in 1981. See The Washington Post, February 16 1981.


140. The Iraqi authorities had acknowledged that amrs supplies from the Soviet Union’s European allies was mainly at the Soviet behest. See The Washington Post, May 1981 and The Washington Post, April 19, 1981.

141. The soviet-Iran relations would have got damaged irrepairably had the Soviet Union as perit promise to Kuwait escorted its oil ships. That could have engaged these two countries in an armed conflict. After the US wrested the initiative the Soviet Union tried to pacify the Iranian anguish over its decision to reflag Kuwaiti oil tankers. For instance, it did not protest the Iranian attack on its frigate vessel during Iran-US hostility. See The New York Times, May 9, 1987.

143. Roughly 1,000 Iranians were killed in missile attacks in Feb-March 1988. These missiles were the enhanced version of the Scuds provided by the Soviet Union.

144. Allison, Roy & Williams, Phill, N. 121, P.161.


146. However, in comparison to the US the Persian Gulf countries welcomed Soviet Union more in the role of a peace broker than of a military giant in the Persian Gulf.


151. The Persian Gulf countries also thought that the war would last a few days only and, therefore, the chances of its escalation were remote.

152. In December 1979, Shias in the oil-rich Eastern region of Saudi Arabia rose up in arms in protest against their treatment as second class citizens. In February 1980, Shia of Saudi Arabia openly celebrated the return of Imam Khomeini to Iran. From 1979 onwards at the occasion of Haj the situation inside Saudi Arabia turned quite tension-some. The Haj pilgrims from Iran and Ayotollah Khomeini’s messages politicised the event challenging the monarchical house’s authority over the twin cities of Mecca and Madina.

154. Not surprisingly, the UAE, which had a long-standing dispute with Iran over three islands, was least affected by the Iranian aggrendizement. This happened due to the fact that in order not to be identified with the previous government, the Islamic government did not highlight the border dispute with the UAE. Instead, Iran's relations with the UAE were more peaceful than with any other Arab country of the Persian Gulf.

155. As early as 1981 did Egypt send first consignment of arms to Iraq.

156. It was named after the battle of "Yamhuk" in which Islamic forces conquered the whole of Persia.


160. The pipeline was closed on April 10, 1982. It passed through Syrian territory and terminated in Ras-al-Baniyan in the Mediterranean.

161. The Middle East Reporter, April 6 1983.

162. Syria was also not alarmed by the Persian Gulf Arab countries' goodwill diplomacy aiming at weaning Syria war from Iran. Failing to erode Iran-Syrian solidarity, these states tried that Syria maintained an equidistance from both of the belligerents.

163. Rubinstein, Alvin Z., N. 51, P. 590.

164. Ayatollah Khomeini described existence of Israel as a blot to Muslim countries. He called upon the Muslims the world over to drown Israel into the Mediterranean.


168. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were the chief donors of economic assistance to Iraq.


172. Kumar, Shashi, N. 47, P. 53.


175. Link, N. 43.

176. Kuwait was only a few miles away from the war-zone and Saudi oilfields as well as those of the other regional countries could be attacked by Iranian planes within 10 minutes of their take off from bases.


180. Saudi Arab’s Official stand was to oppose any military presence “from outside and of any size”. The UAE Foreign Minister is said to have told the visiting British Prime Minister “any foreign presence, especially of superpowers would create tension rather than stability. We do not want to see any one point out our interest to us nor do we need any one to protect our region.”


182. The Washington Post, May 5 1987 quotes one Kuwaiti official as saying that the Kuwaiti request was partly designed to test US commitment to protect the security of the Arab countries of the peninsula in the wake of the disclosure of secret arms deals between it and Iran. However, this theory is doubtful on account of the fact that Kuwait had reportedly approached the US for the first time in September 1986; about two months before the disclosure of the Iran-Contra deal.

184. The tenor and tone of Saudi regime on Gulf security issue reflected their leadership aspirations. Prince Nayef, the Interior Minister of that country said “the security of every state in the Arabian Gulf affects the security of the Saud Kingdom. We will not permit any threat to this security.”


188. Ahrari Mohammed E., N. 11, P. 54.


190. One of the reasons behind Iranian acceptance of the UN resolution 598 was its diminishing military prowess. The yawning gap between the defense preparedness of the two countries was said as one of the main causes of Iranian retreat by the then Commander of Revolutionary Gurads. To quote him, “we were unarmed infantryman against the enemy’s cavalry. There are few instances in history of Islam of such a war”.


192. “Jihad” means struggle in the way of God. According to the Holy Quran, it is not necessarily a war between Muslims and infidels or war for territorial expansion as it is widely understood. The “jihad” is essentially war against persecution and oppression and not necessarily through the use of force, always. In the light of the Quranic definition of ‘Jihad’, it is doubtful to call the Iran-Iraq war by this name as claimed by both the belligerents.

193. The young Iranians were swayed by the Islamic government’s call to fight a Jihad. There were numerous occasions when scores of these youths chanting ‘Kalimah’ stepped on landmines to clear the way for the regular army following them.


196. Cottam Richard, N. 13, P. 10, Chubin, Shahram, N. 17, P. 317

& Rubin Barry, N. 41, P. 31.

197. For instance, between August-December 1988, Iraqi airforce bombed Kharg islands 77 times.

198. Mustafa Ghulam Mohammed, N. 105, P. 300.

199. Chubin, Shahram, N. 17, Pp. 311-313.


201. Mustafa Ghulam Mohammed, N. 105, P. 303

202. Destruction of the Iranian oil refineries and other facilities paved the way for their repairing with a view to modernise them and improve their capacity. Abadan refinery’s capacity increased after its reconstruction, and Esfahan became the second most important oil refinery of Iran after the Abadan refinery.


204. The Iran-Iraq War ranks sixth among most bloody war among the ones fought in the 20th century with as many as 1.2 million people killed from both sides.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Death toll</th>
<th>War</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Million</td>
<td>The World War 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Million</td>
<td>The World War 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Million</td>
<td>The Korean War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Million</td>
<td>The Vietnam war 1965-73</td>
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<td>1 Million</td>
<td>The Sino-Japanese War</td>
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205. Al-Ezhary, M.S. N. 89, P. 118.


207. Halabja is largely peopled by Kurds. It is a small town 40 kms inside Iran and roughly 200 km north-east of Baghdad.

208. Bani Sadar fled to Paris where he formed the Iranian government in exile.

209. The closure of the Shatt not the Iraq-Syria-Med pipeline made the telling effect on Iraqi oil exports. The Shatt accounted for at least 60 percent of the total oil exports of Iraq. Whereas the exports through the Pipelines, lay across syria, constituted roughly 25 percent of the total. The rest of the oil was drained through the pipeline passing through Turkey.

211. Middle East Review, 10th Edition, P. 121. It may be noted that Iran's external debt stood at US $4 billion.

212. The foreign work force in Iraq came mainly from India, Phillipines, North and South Korea.

213. In comparison to 1983, when the Iraqi oil exports hit a record low, the oil exports increased four-fold to 2.75 bpd in 1988, the last year of the war.

214. The 7th Non-Aligend summit held at New Delhi.


216. The Arab-Ajam (non Arab) animosity is far older than the Shia-Sunni one. It came to fore in 7th and 8th centuries only.

217. Khurdish people, inhabitants of the northern Iraq including the oil-rich town Mosul, demanded full autonomy, withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from all Kurdish areas and setting up of a separate Kurdish army.


221. Ibid, P. 351