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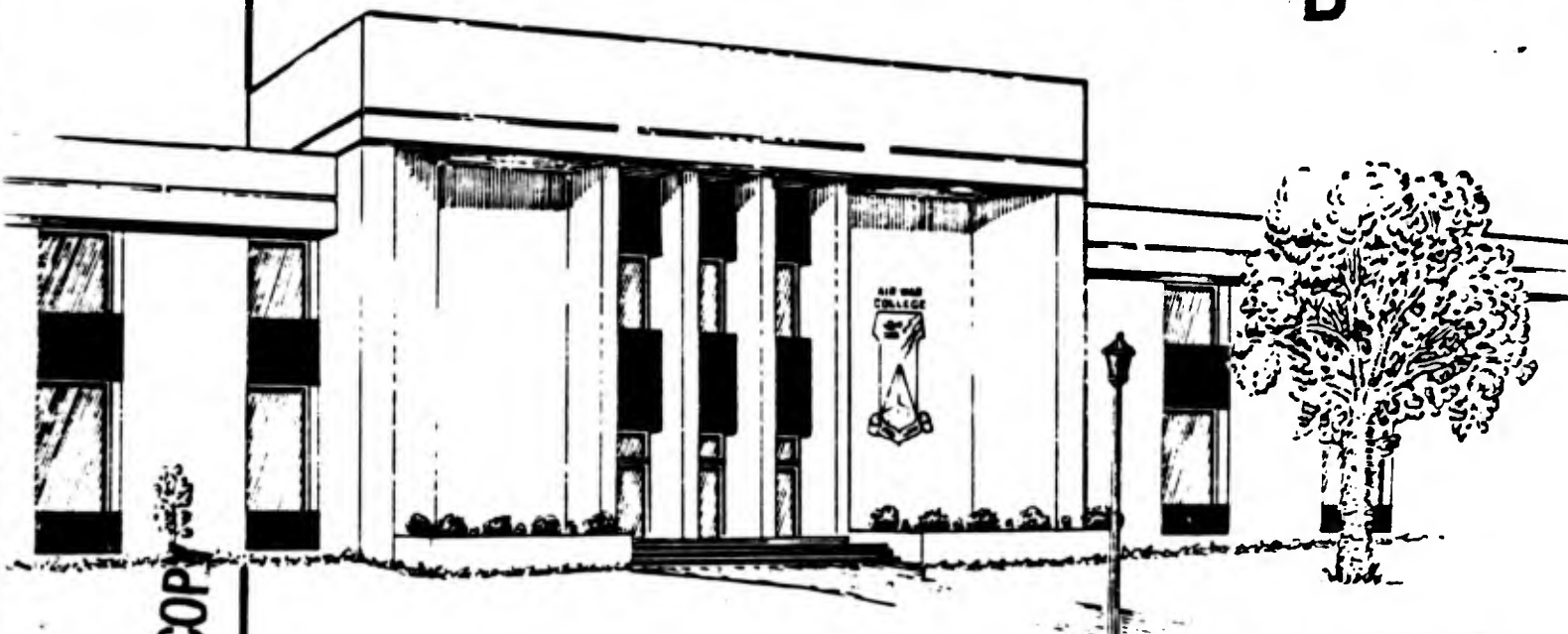
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ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE
IRAQ-IRAN WAR

By COLONEL KEITH H. MANNING

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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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IRAQ-IRAN WAR

by

Keith H. Manning
Colonel, USAF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Dr. David E. Albright

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

May 1986

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Assessment and Implications of the Iraq-Iran War

AUTHOR: Keith H. Manning, Colonel, USAF

The report comments on the religious, ethnic, and territorial background to the Iraq-Iran War. It reviews the military forces and strategies used by both countries in prosecuting the war as well as sources of outside military assistance. The paper analyzes the perceived and actual impact the conflict has had on the world oil supply and presents the economic gravity of the war for Iran and Iraq. The author summarizes the significance of the war on regional stability, emphasizing how nations have aligned with their warring neighbors. Finally, the strategic interests of the United States and the Soviet Union are discussed, and the author states his conclusions on the relevance of the war in each superpower's pursuit of its respective national objectives. A strategy for future U.S. involvement is recommended.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Keith H. Manning (M.S., Oklahoma State University) has extensive military experience in the Middle East, having served as an engineering officer in Turkey 1971-1973 and as a construction officer in Saudi Arabia 1977-1979. In both assignments he was able to travel and gain a first-hand impression of the complex national interrelationships that exist in the region. He is a graduate of the National Defense University, where his paper on the importance of foreign military sales to Saudi Arabia was graded outstanding. Colonel Manning is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1986.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 removed Iran as one of the twin pillars of stability in the Persian Gulf region. The Shah of Iran was replaced by Ayatollah Khomeini, who blamed the United States for promoting the secular condition which had developed under the rule of the Shah. Khomeini labeled the United States the Great Satan and encouraged Muslim countries to return to a fundamentalist variety of Islam, free of Western or superpower influence. (1:33) This call for Islamic revolution was especially disturbing to more conservative, moderate Muslim states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Especially alarmed were the nations in the region with a large Shiite population since Iran is the only nation in the region which has Shii Islam as the state religion. The others are either predominately Sunni or are ruled by Sunni leaders.

Iraq was a favorite target of the Iranian call for overthrow of secular leadership and establishment of Islamic rule. Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, represented nothing acceptable to the religious and political standards of Ayatollah Khomeini. Hussein was a Sunni Muslim, a member of the Baath Party, strongly affiliated with the Soviet Union, and a repressor of the Shiites in Iraq. He had also evicted Khomeini from Iraq in 1978, at which time Khomeini took refuge

in Paris before returning to Iran in 1979. Khomeini considered the Shah, the United States, and Saddam Hussein his three most serious enemies. (1:33)

On 22 September 1980 Iraqi forces launched a border offensive into southern Iran. Saddam Hussein believed the offensive would be successful and would conclude quickly. His objectives were:

- To restore Iraqi control of the Shatt al-Arab river, which is the southern border between Iran and Iraq and Iraq's primary water access to the Persian Gulf.

- To capture the Kuzistan province in Iran, which is heavily populated by Arabic-speaking people and which contains huge oil reserves.

- To destabilize the Iranian government, with the likely demise of Khomeini.

- To emerge as the leader of the Pan-Arab movement.

(4:152)

Unfortunately for Hussein, Iranian society was still highly motivated by the fervor of the Islamic revolution, and early Iraqi military successes did not prevail. Iranian resistance stiffened, and through 1981 and 1982 Iran started recovering lost territory. Unorthodox, even brutal tactics such as human wave assaults placed Iran on the offensive in 1982. Iraq responded by establishing strong defensive positions and resorting to unorthodox tactics of its own. The most significant of these were use of poison gas to

blunt the Iranian human wave assaults and air attacks on tankers hauling Iranian oil from Kharg Island. (12:46-48)

In spite of the minor gains and losses by both sides, the conflict became basically a war of attrition. Iran freely expended its superior human resources. Iraq depleted its economic resources and turned to friendly Arab countries for financial backing. Saddam Hussein wanted to end the war through disengagement and negotiation. Ayatollah Khomeini would not accept negotiations unless they included punishment for Iraq and removal of Hussein as leader of Iraq. (4:152) Since there was no common negotiating ground, the conflict continued.

Why have the United States and other nations not been more successful in hastening the end to this protracted conflict in a region so important to the world economy? The overwhelming evidence in the literature suggests that continuation of the stalemated war, tragic as it is, does not pose a serious threat to the regional objectives of the United States and its major allies. U.S. objectives in the Persian Gulf region are: (14:17)

- To preserve and protect the independence of states in the region, including Israel and friendly Arab nations, from aggression and subversion.
- To help secure a lasting peace for all the peoples of the Mideast.
- To prevent the spread of Soviet influence and the consequent loss of freedom and independence it entails.
- To protect Western access to the energy resources of the area.
- To maintain the security of key sea lanes to this region.

Subsequent chapters analyze the historical and contemporary sources of the conflict, review military forces employed, assess economic factors with emphasis on world oil supply, summarize regional support for the warring nations, and evaluate superpower interests in the area. Comments regarding the war's impact on U.S. regional objectives are included, where appropriate, and a strategy for U.S. involvement in resolving the conflict is recommended.

CHAPTER II
SOURCES OF CONFLICT

The Iraq-Iran war is often described as a territorial dispute over the Shatt al-Arab River which separates the two countries on their southern border. Conflicts over the ownership of this river are centuries old, and numerous treaties and agreements have been signed over the years to resolve the issue. The Algiers Agreement of 1975 was the most recent treaty and addressed ownership of the Shatt al-Arab River, return to Iraq of areas earlier annexed by Iran, and non-interference in one another's internal affairs. (1:34) Iraq needed the treaty to reduce Iranian support for Kurdish rebels in Iraq. The Shatt al-Arab portion of the agreement, which gave each country equal access to the river, was never popular in Iraq. Because the Shatt al-Arab is Iraq's primary access to Persian Gulf shipping, the Iraqis do not want to share it. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1980 was partially based on a decision to break the Algiers Agreement, which had been promoted by the Shah of Iran when Iran was perceived a stronger neighbor.

Religious differences are another major reason for the Iraq-Iran War. (5:67-68) The Islamic revolution in Iran installed a fundamentalist Shia religious system in the country adjacent to Iraq, and Iraq felt the pressure. Saddam Hussein is a Sunni Muslim, and his secular government had

oppressed Shiite Muslims living in southern Iraq. Ayatollah Khomeini openly stated his condemnation of the regime in Baghdad and called for Iraqis to follow the Iranian example and establish a society based on fundamentalist Islamic practices. This meant the deposing of Saddam Hussein.

Sunni Muslims and Shii Muslims have many similarities in their beliefs, but also serious differences. Shortly after the founding of Islam in the seventh century A.D. the two sects split over which was the correct lineage from the Prophet Muhammad. As the two major divisions developed, Sunnis placed civil government in a position exercising a degree of control over religious affairs. On the other hand, the Shiites kept religious leaders separate and independent of affairs of state. Sunnis place emphasis on the ancient teachings and literature of Islam, whereas Shiites use the doctrine of succeeding generations of caliphs. Sunnis favor the best qualified individuals for leadership of the religion; Shiites tend to emphasize hereditary leadership.

Fundamentalist Islam based on Shia precepts was not compatible with Saddam Hussein's view of religion and its relationship to government. His decision to attack Iran was certainly based in part on the need to defuse the religious threat coming from Iran. (5:67)

Ethnic differences between the Iraqi Arabs and Persians of Iran were another factor contributing to the conflict. The Persians have a long history of establishing

empires and generally consider their Arab neighbors as inferior. The Arabs conquered Persia after the rise of Islam, and the introduction of Islam is really the only major Arabic component of Persian culture. The Shah had been feared in the region because of his military strength and Arab concerns for his expansionist goals. Khomeini's rise to power generated similar fears. Ethnic differences were another important factor in Iraq's decision to attack Iran. (5:69-70)

Politics also played a major role in the Iraq-Iran war. Saddam Hussein represented the Baath Party in Iraq with close ties to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Ayatollah Khomeini denounced outside influence in his Islamic revolutionary movement and was prepared for Iran to pursue its development (or lack thereof) alone. Iraq had commenced an aggressive modernization program which relied on Western and Soviet technology for success. Hussein also had plans to fill the leadership vacuum in the Arab world which occurred after the Egyptians signed the Camp David Agreement. How better could he assume the role of spokesman for the Pan-Arab movement than by defeating Iran, generally regarded as an adversary by most Arab countries?

CHAPTER III

MILITARY FORCES EMPLOYED

Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iran appeared to be militarily sound. Iran had lost U.S. support in terms of military equipment and supplies because of the hostage situation. The Iranian military had been purged of much of its senior leadership as a result of the Islamic revolution. (4:152) Foreign advisors who were critically important in keeping the Iranian military equipment operating had departed. Finally, Iran had such severe domestic problems (dropping oil production, unemployment, strikes, land reform, etc.) that it was assumed the military was also suffering. However, revolutionary zeal, an intangible, was an area where Iraq seriously underestimated Iran's capability.

Iraq attempted to gain total air superiority by defeating the Iranian Air Force on the ground. However, poor tactics and ineffective weapons employment rendered this objective unachievable. The Iraqi Navy, not a significant force, was involved in gunboat battles primarily with little influence or impact on events in the conflict. (17:41-44)

In 1981 Iraq found itself in a war of attrition in which the Iranians had the overwhelming edge in population resources (40 million Iranians versus 13 million Iraqis). (15:30) Iraq's use of Soviet equipment and tactics did not have the impact on Iranian forces which Iraq had expected.

Furthermore, even though Iraq later gained air superiority, it was hesitant to commit its expensive air arm to take out low-value ground targets. Iraq became more defensive in its use of military forces to repel the fanatic assaults of Iranian forces. In late 1983 Iraq used poison gas in countering Iranian human wave attacks. (8:11) In an attempt to harm the Iranian war economy, Iraq started attacking oil tankers around Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. Iraq used both helicopters and jet aircraft to launch French Exocet missiles against the tankers. (11:15)

Iran was able to use its air force with surprising effectiveness in the early stages of the conflict. The air force successfully counterattacked both military and civilian targets in Iraq. However, problems with the Iranian logistics and maintenance system and ineffective command and control gradually reduced the military's air capability. As the war progressed past 1981, the Iranian air force was able to use its weapons systems only in a harrassment role.

Iran's army at the beginning of the war was seriously outnumbered in the fighting in the Kuzistan province. Only two armored divisions and an infantry division were deployed at the front, with an armored division and an airborne brigade in reserve facing an Iraqi army of more than 10 divisions. (17:35) After the initial Iraqi advances into Iran the Iranian Revolutionary Guards responded with fervor, using

only light weapons, and halted the Iraqis around Abadan and Ahwaz. By massing regular army units with the Revolutionary Guard, Iran was able gradually to repulse the Iraqis. Iran, throughout the war, has talked of the great offensive to final victory, but this offensive has never occurred. In the absence of air superiority and considering the strong defensive positions of the Iraqis, such a march across Iraq appears unlikely.

A comparison of the relative strength of the military forces as of April 1985 is shown below: (9:32)

	<u>Iraq</u>	<u>Iran</u>
Population	15 million	43.8 million
Armed Forces	642,500	555,000 regulars 250,000 paramilitary
Tanks	5,000	1,000
Artillery	3,500	1,100
Navy	1 frigate	4 frigates
Air Force	580 combat planes	95 serviceable combat planes

Lacking domestic military industry, both Iraq and Iran have relied on third-country support for military supplies. The Iraqis were heavily armed with Soviet weaponry early in the war, but gradually turned more to France for weapons as the war progressed. Without access to the Persian Gulf and with unfriendly neighbors to the north and east, Iraq has used a route through Jordan for military supplies. Iran was armed with mostly U.S.-manufactured weapons, but the U.S. had discontinued assistance and resupply because of the hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy prior to the start of

the conflict. After an initial warming of relations with the USSR, Iran turned to unusual and unlikely sources for its weapons. These countries included Israel, North Korea, Syria, and Libya. (15:43)

At the start of the war the United States was not on good terms with either of the countries in the conflict. However, the Iranian warfighting capability, degraded and depleted as it was, still reflected U.S. training and equipment. The Iraqis appeared to have overall military superiority, but used cumbersome, centralized Soviet tactics and command and control procedures. Iran's ability to stop the Iraqi assault and gradually drive it back must be viewed by the United States with a degree of encouragement as regards U.S. weaponry and tactics versus those of the Soviets.

Staudenmaier lists four military lessons learned from the Iraq-Iran war. (17:46-48)

- High-intensity, high-attrition early resolution warfare similar to the 1973 Arab-Israeli war cannot be a basic assumption for conflicts in the Middle East.

- It is difficult to fight a limited war when the survival of a regime is at stake.

- Assessing the military capabilities of developing countries is difficult. Modern weapons employed with poor tactics and/or poor command and control are not necessarily effective.

- Political, military, and strategic objectives must be clear before starting a war. Hussein was not prepared to pay the price his war required.

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Iranian revolution alarmed the world about losing a key source of international oil supply, and petroleum prices rose accordingly. Initially the Iraq-Iran war caused the same apprehensions. Iran's production had been 5.2 million barrels per day (MBD) before the revolution, declined to 3.2 MBD in 1979, and to 1.5 MBD after the war with Iraq started. Iraq's production had risen from 2.6 MBD in 1978 to 3.5 MBD in 1979. In 1980 this production dropped to 2.6 MBD because of war-related damage to Iraqi oil facilities along the Persian Gulf. (17:53) Iran's oil was shipped primarily on tankers passing through the Persian Gulf and out the Strait of Hormuz. Iraq's oil moved on tankers and through pipelines through Syria and Turkey. In April 1982 Iran persuaded Syria to shut off the Iraqi pipeline to the Mediterranean, thereby reducing Iraq's exporting capacity to only slightly more than 1 MBD. (3:38)

Iraq had an aggressive modernization and development program in progress before the war started. However, the expense of the war, estimated at \$1 billion a month, plus loss of oil revenue due to decreased exporting capacity have made Iraq a debtor nation. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait came to Iraq's aid by loaning Iraq the money generated from selling about 300,000 barrels of oil per day. (3:36) They

considered financing Iraq's war more acceptable than letting an Iranian military success spread into their countries. However, falling world oil demand and lower prices have made this financial assistance by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait increasingly painful. Iraq's initiation of the tanker war in the Persian Gulf was an attempt to retaliate for Iran's success in denying Iraq its oil-exporting capability.

Iran is still a country in turmoil -- partly due to the war and partly as a result of the revolution. Living conditions in Iran are harsh, with high unemployment and low industrial production. Nevertheless, the war has not affected the Iranian economy as seriously as it has Iraq's. Iran continues to generate more than \$20 billion annually from oil sales, and foreign reserves are estimated at \$13 billion. (15:30) In spite of some Iraqi success in attacks on the Kharg Island oil facility and on oil tankers, the Iranians have maintained their exporting capacity and have even petitioned OPEC to raise their export quota above 3 MBD. (16:53)

The current world oil glut and falling petroleum prices could cause a false sense of security among free world countries which import oil from the Persian Gulf. The Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) has failed to reach agreement on production quotas for member countries, and non-OPEC countries have increased production to generate essential hard currency. As a result, crude

oil prices have dropped from nearly \$30 a barrel in November 1985 to \$10-\$12 a barrel in March 1986. This decrease places further pressure on countries with aggressive modernization programs, such as Saudi Arabia, and countries with high foreign debt, such as Mexico, to increase production for needed capital. Both Iraq and Iran will feel the reduced oil prices in their abilities to finance the high cost of continuing the war.

Although the crude oil industry is currently a buyers' market, vulnerabilities still exist. The free world reduced its daily petroleum demand from 52.5 MBD in 1979 to approximately 45 MBD in 1983 and following years. Worldwide excess production capacity is about 10-12 MBD, with 7-9 MBD of this excess possessed by Persian Gulf countries. The free world imports 7-8 MBD of petroleum shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. Therefore, should the Strait be closed or the Iraq-Iran war expand to other Persian Gulf nations, a net deficit of 4-5 MBD could develop, even after non-Gulf countries increase production. (2:34-35)

In response to this vulnerability, several positive steps have been taken to offset the potential shortfall. Saudi Arabia has started moving oil from the Gulf to floating reserves in the Red Sea and other locations. Governments of importing countries have established targets for petroleum storage, similar to the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which has a goal of 1 billion barrels.

In March 1984, 2,494 million barrels of commercial stocks and 583 million barrels of government stocks were stored or in inventories. More pipeline construction from Gulf countries to unthreatened ports is another beneficial outcome of the continued conflict between Iraq and Iran. Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates all plan to construct more pipelines, thereby reducing their dependence on the Gulf terminals and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. (2:37)

Although the United States imports approximately one-third of its oil, less than 5 percent comes through the Strait of Hormuz. Of most concern to the U.S. is continued oil supply for Western Europe and Japan, which import 65 percent and 55 percent from the Gulf respectively. (2:35) The actual and perceived problems in world oil supply caused by the Iraq-Iran war and resulting countermeasures by exporting nations in the region to assure stable production have certainly been in the best interests of the United States and its allies in Europe and Japan.

CHAPTER V
REGIONAL IMPACT

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in September 1980 neither Iraq nor Iran were favorites with their neighboring countries. Iraq had a strong association with the Soviets and wanted leadership of the Pan-Arab movement. Iran had developed a military posture under the Shah which was far superior to any other Gulf nation and caused grave concern to countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. When Ayatollah Khomeini came to power, the concern about Iran was less military and more about the consequences of exported Islamic revolutions in other Muslim countries. Three possible outcomes to the fighting between Iraq and Iran were:

- One country would conquer the other, with a resulting huge shift in the power balance in the region.
- The conflict would spread to other countries in the region, with eventual superpower intervention inevitable.
- The war would become a stalemate. Boundaries would remain relatively steady, attrition of men and material would become a burden, and eventual negotiation and disengagement would occur.

Nations in the region chose sides in the conflict using basically a lesser-of-two-evils theory, with historical and traditional ties playing a secondary role. Iran's only regional supporters have been Israel and Syria. (18:60-61)

Israel welcomed seeing the Arab World occupied with an enemy other than itself for a change and served as a source of military supplies and equipment for Iran. Israel would probably like to see the Iraq-Iran war continue indefinitely, thereby keeping Arab attention focused elsewhere. Syria, an Arab country, also supported Iran, but not based on any affection for the Persians. Syria, like Iraq, desires leadership in the Arab World. Syria's President Assad probably does not want to see Iraq conquered by Iran, but a weakened Iraq without Saddam Hussein in control would be a desirable outcome for Syria.

The countries along the western coast of the Persian Gulf have been Iraq supporters. These rich, but militarily weak nations have little to gain in this conflict and much to lose. Previously fearful of both Iraq and Iran, they now view the fanatic regime in Teheran with more concern, primarily because of the threat of Islamic revolution Iranian style. In response to the conflict between these two regional heavyweights, the western Gulf countries formed the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) in 1981. (10:1406) Member nations are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The GCC started as a framework for increasing mutual cooperation among member nations. As the organization matured, it also moved into mutual defense issues and by 1984 started combined military exercises, began planning for integrated air defense systems, and

formed its own rapid deployment force. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both GCC members, have financed Iraq's ability to stay in the war.

Jordan has also supported Iraq but not in the manner of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Land routes through Jordan have been used to move materials and supplies from the Jordanian port at Aqaba to Iraq. Jordan also offered to send troops to fight with Iraq, if required. (13:44-45) Egypt, long in disfavor with Hussein for the Camp David Agreement, has rejoined the Arab fold and supports Iraq.

Turkey has remained fairly neutral throughout the conflict, with its most noticeable contribution being continued operation of the Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline to the Mediterranean. Turkey's position is rational and beneficial to U.S. interests since Turkey is a NATO member, borders the Soviet Union, and has Kurdish rebel problems of its own. Turkey does not need to be distracted by becoming involved in what could turn out to be a no-win situation.

North and South Yemen have not been major players in the conflict either. Poor, backward countries, they have sufficient problems domestically to remain non-players. Lebanon is similarly consumed with a civil war and cannot influence the Iraq-Iran conflict.

From the United States' viewpoint the alliances that have formed are generally favorable. The GCC is by far the most positive development for the U.S. A strong GCC would

raise the threshold of U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the GCC is a mechanism by which U.S. assistance can be officially requested in times of crisis without any single sovereign nation "opening the doors" to the West. This perceived independence from Western influence is critically important in relationships with these highly nationalistic countries. Egypt's better standing with other Arab countries may make future negotiations on the Arab-Israeli issue somewhat easier. Israel's support of Iran could be damaging to future negotiations, but Israel cannot stand the possible consequences of a victorious united Arab war effort, as would occur if Iraq defeated Iran.

In responding to the perceived threat by friendly Gulf countries, the U.S. has continued to provide military materials, equipment, and training consistent with defense needs. Major efforts continue in Saudi Arabia and in Oman. The U.S. also flies AWAC's and KC-10 missions in Saudi Arabia to assist in defense of vital facilities on the western Gulf.
(7:28)

CHAPTER VI
SUPERPOWER INTERESTS

The Soviet Union has gained very little diplomatically as a result of the Iraq-Iran war. Before the war the Soviets were firmly entrenched in Iraqi affairs and even had limited trade agreements with the Shah of Iran. The Communist Tudeh Party in Iran initially supported Ayatollah Khomeini and the Soviets were prepared to shift their support from Iraq to Iran. However, as Khomeini consolidated power in Iran he rejected the Soviets, labeling them the "lesser Satan" and essentially destroyed the Tudeh Party through subsequent purification of the Iranian society into his Islamic model. (16:69)

Although the USSR still desires a more powerful position in the Persian Gulf region from which to influence activities in the area, it still finds Muslim countries a difficult target. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has certainly not turned that country into a loyal client and stiff Afghan resistance continues. Furthermore, the Afghanistan invasion has not improved Russia's status with moderate Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Recent Soviet statements intimate that military disengagement from operations in Afghanistan is possible.

It appears the Soviets are sincere in their stated role of nonintervention in the conflict between Iraq and Iran.

They understand the regional paranoia over superpower meddling in the area. In light of the Soviets' normally conservative approach and objective of siding only with winners, they will most likely work covertly to enhance their power base in the Persian Gulf. Their best opportunity for disrupting stability in the region would be support of insurgency movements. The most likely targets for their influence are the Baluchi movement in eastern Iran and Pakistan and the Kurdish problem in eastern Turkey and Iran.

The United States is faced with a situation that could be either beneficial or disasterous. So far, our strategy has produced results consistent with our objectives in the area.

- Israel and friendly Arab states in the region are independent and relatively free from aggression.

- All the peoples of the Mideast are not at peace, but our closest friends in the region are.

- Soviet influence in the region is probably less than it was before the Iraq-Iran war began.

- Western access to energy resources in the area is still threatened, but U.S. forces are better postured to intervene if required. Also, alternate sources of energy and energy transportation have been developed to enhance the availability of petroleum.

- Sea lanes are more secure by addition of a U.S. naval force in the Gulf and the continuous presence of U.S.

carrier battle groups in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

The United States, like the Soviet Union, needs to maintain a neutral, nonintervention policy toward the Iraq-Iran war. Only preservation of the two nations is a suitable outcome. The U.S. should use the tension of the war to continue to cement relationships with friendly countries in the region. The U.S. should also commit itself as a mediator in negotiations for a peaceful settlement. Relations with Iraq have improved, and Iran will need the West again if it expects to rejoin modern society. The fall of the Shah and the hostage crisis are history, and the U.S. needs to accept those facts. Iran still has valuable oil reserves and is central to blocking Soviet influence in the Gulf. Patience and objectivity are required if the U.S. is to reestablish a beneficial relationship with Iran in the future.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The Iraq-Iran war has been an unfortunate tragedy for both countries. Militarily neither country has been able to achieve its stated objectives, due to objectives that were not realistic, through poor employment of available military forces, and due to underestimating the resilience of the enemy. The war has also been an economic disaster. Iraq has moved from a modernizing, oil-rich nation into a state of bankruptcy, dependent on other Arab nations to finance its continuation of the conflict. The economic impact on Iran has been less severe, but resources needed to recover from dislocations of the revolution have been used for military needs. Iraq has certainly not established itself as a leader in the Pan-Arab movement. Iran's call for more Islamic revolutions have similarly fallen on deaf ears in the Muslim world.

Despite apprehensions over spread of the conflict, however, it has still had some positive outcomes in the region. Saudi Arabia, a country friendly to the West, has been thrust into a stronger leadership role among moderate Arab countries. Formation of the GCC has given oil-rich, small countries around the Gulf a framework for better economic and military cooperation. Israel has not been overtly threatened by its Arab neighbors except for the

conflict in Lebanon. Oil-exporting countries have taken aggressive action to reduce the vulnerability of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz by constructing alternate transportation modes.

The Soviet Union, occupied with its invasion of Afghanistan, has realized little gain from the instability of the Iraq-Iran war. Rejected by Iran, it still supplies military items to Iraq, but not with the same influence as before. Muslim countries may want Soviet weaponry, but have great reluctance to embrace atheistic Communism in their monotheistic Islamic belief system.

The United States has had little influence so far in resolving the conflict between Iran and Iraq. However, the tension of the war has enabled the U.S. to improve its "over the horizon" presence in the region. Aggressive foreign military sales programs in Saudi Arabia and Oman give the U.S. a valuable partnership in defense of these nations. CENTCOM and naval forces from PACOM further emphasize U.S. commitment and readiness to protect vital resources and shipping in the region.

The U.S. needs to continue its neutrality regarding the war, but ensure that neither country is victorious, even if this means providing surreptitious assistance through third parties. By stating its willingness to assist in restoring peace in the area through disengagement and

negotiation, the U.S. can strive to achieve favorable relations with both Iraq and Iran in the future.

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