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SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY  
OF THE GULF WAR

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degree of Master of Arts (International  
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DECLARATION

This paper is my own original work. All sources used have been appropriately cited.

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September 1985

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## INTRODUCTION

On July 17, 1968, the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP) came to power in Baghdad under the presidency of al-Bakr for whom the Iraqi 'strongman', Saddam Hussein, had deputized. The glaring characteristics of the Iraqi Ba'athist regime had been secularist, radical, revolutionary and anti-imperialist. On the surface, Iraq seemed to be an ideal location for the expansion of Soviet influence. Similarly, from the Baghdad regime's viewpoint, at the time, to have warm, close relations with the Soviet Union was the best option for countering any threat endangering its national interests and security. Such close relations lay in the fact that, apart from being plunged into military confrontation with Israel in the Arab-Israeli theater and border dispute over Shatt al-Arab waterway with the Teheran regime, the Ba'athist leaders in Baghdad were, moreover, politically isolated by the conservative, monarchical, and moderate Gulf sheikhdoms spearheaded by the Riyadh regime.

It is no exaggeration to say that in April 1972 the Soviet-Iraqi relationship was conspicuously highlighted by the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The then Iraqi Vice President, Saddam Hussein's pragmatic policy, as was widely believed, was behind his decision to reach such a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union. Iraqi dependence on the Soviet Union was increased

because of (i) the necessity for suppressing the renewal of the Kurdish rebellion; (ii) the nationalisation of the Iraqi oil enterprise; (iii) the eruption of the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973; and (iv) the massive military build-up of the Shah of Iran. Iraq has been given a large amount of economic, military and technical assistance by the Soviet Union.

Even so, any argument stating that the Kremlin leaders could direct the Baghdad regime's decisions to serve their interests should be questioned. It is necessary to re-consider any such argument for two reasons. First, the Baghdad leaders, particularly Saddam Hussein, firmly put emphasis on their pragmatic and independent approach in order to serve their national interests. Second, despite the conclusion of the friendship treaty, mention should be made of the essential question of whether Iraq should be deemed a 'client' state of the Soviet Union.

Subject under discussion in this work will be the Soviet-Iraqi relationship since the Algiers Agreement on the Shatt al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran on 6 March, 1975 up to the present situation of the Gulf war. Accordingly, the paper consists of four chapters.

The first chapter deals mainly with Soviet-Iraqi relations from the Algiers Agreement of March 6, 1975 to September 1980. The first section covers the discussion of the pragmatic and independent Iraqi decision for sign-



ing the agreement with the Shah of Iran. No doubt, the reaction of the Kremlin leader to this probably unexpected Iraqi decision are examined in the second section. The final section of this chapter offers, at some length, an account of the implications of the Iraqi decision to sign the agreement on Soviet-Iraqi relations which have been far from intimate.

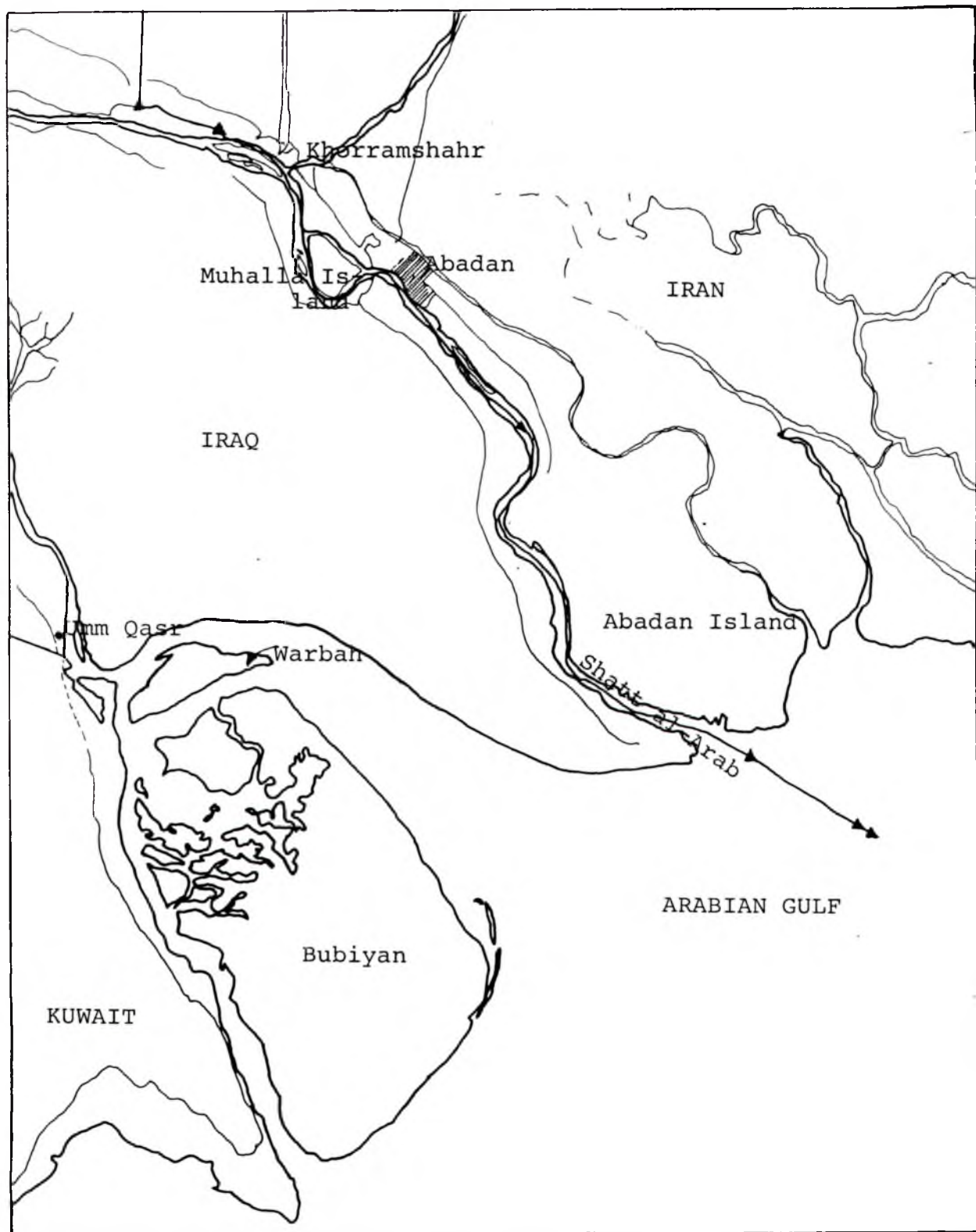
The discussion in the second chapter is aimed at the Soviet-Iraqi relationship during the initial stage of the Gulf war, proceeding from the beginning of the Iraqi invasion in September 1980 to the end of the period of so-called 'stalemate' in May 1981. The first section examines various reasons which justify the pragmatic Iraqi decision for initiating its full-scale invasion of Iran's Khuzestan in September 1980. The following section explores the Moscow leaders' response to the outbreak of the Gulf war. Explanations for why the Soviet Union adopted a position of 'non-interference' are also included. The last section of this chapter illustrates that Soviet-Iraqi relations have witnessed a number of ups and downs from the time of the eruption of the Iraqi-Iranian war.

The development of fierce military fighting in the war is examined in the first section of Chapter III. Closely related to the first section, the ensuing one discusses the Kremlins' changing position from one of 'non-interference' to a posture of 'wait and see'. The

last section of this chapter sheds light on the slightly improved Soviet-Iraqi relationship following the changing Soviet position. It also shows that the Kremlin leaders have gained some Iraqi favour.

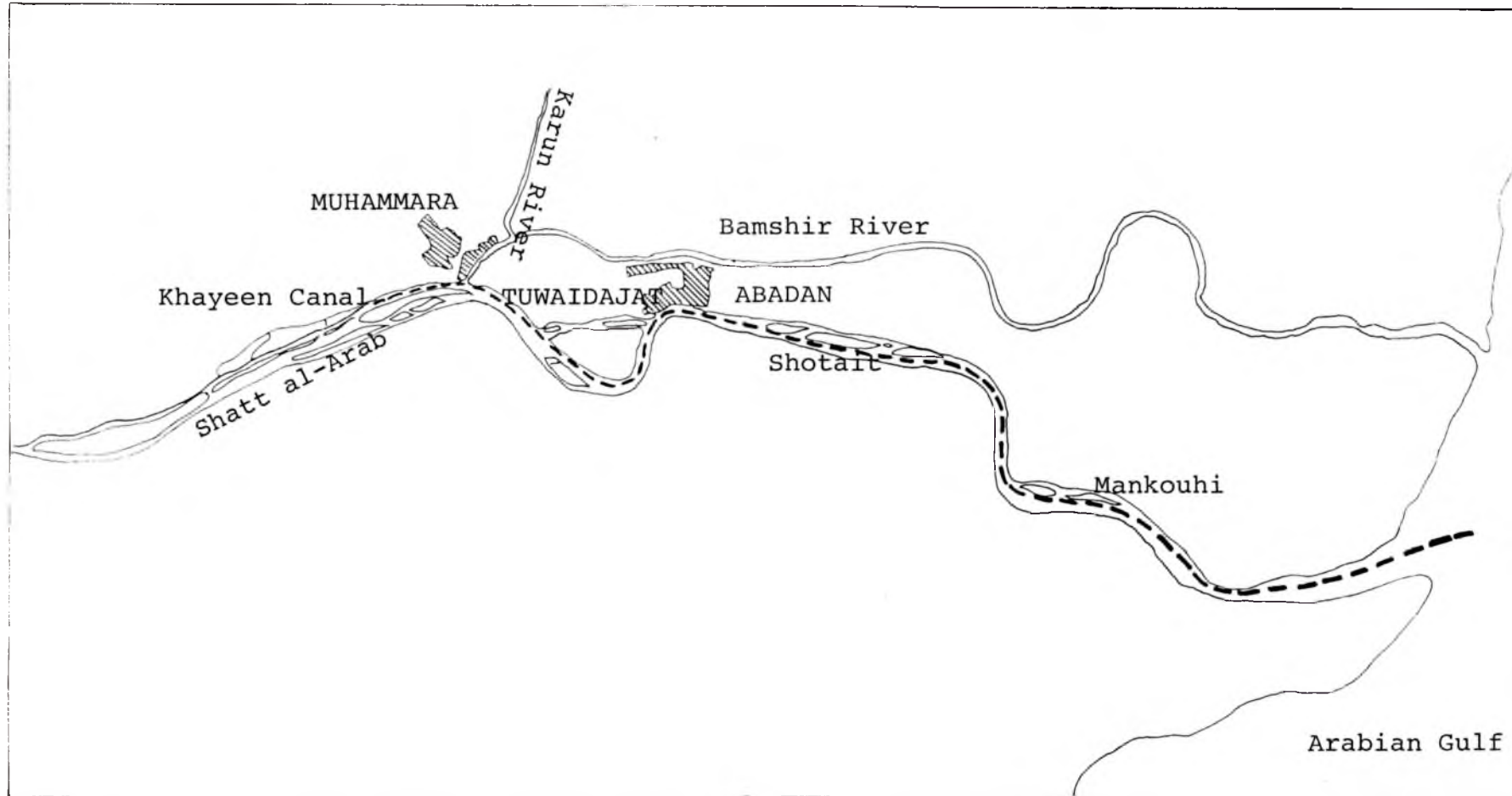
The fourth and last chapter examines the possibility of whether the Baghdad regime would embark on another decision by unilaterally abrogating the friendship treaty. The second section of this chapter provides a critique of the assertion that Iraq should be considered a 'client' state of the Soviet Union.

Map A: The Iran-Iraq Boundary in the Shatt al-Arab



Source: J.M. Abdulghani, Iraq & Iran: The Years of Crisis, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 154.

Map B: The Shatt al-Arab Frontier (Algiers Agreement, 6 March, 1975)



Sources: Tareq Y. Ismael, Iraq & Iran: Roots of Conflict, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), p. 21.

Chapter I: Soviet-Iraqi Relations From the Algiers Agreement of March 6, 1975 to September 1980: Iraqi Attempts to Adopt an Independent Line

Introduction

I have the pleasure to announce to you that a total accord was reached yesterday to end the differences between two fraternal countries, Iran and Iraq. 1

It was President Houari Boumedienne who told the Algerian Assembly that on 6 March, 1975, at the end of an OPEC summit conference in Algiers, Iraq and Iran had reached a new boundary agreement. The aim of which was to put a permanent end to their territorial dispute, particularly over the Shatt-al Arab waterway. It was widely believed that the Algiers Agreement reflected a significant turning point in the Iraqi-Iranian relationship. Similarly, it could equally be argued that Soviet-Iraqi relations also witnessed a major change following the signing of the Algiers Agreement.

Analysis of Soviet-Iraqi relations in this chapter is, therefore, undertaken to investigate the effect on these relations of the Iraqi Ba'athists'

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1 Le Monde, March 8, 1975. Quoted by Daniel Pipes, 'A Border Adrift: Origins of the Conflict', in Shirin Tahir-Kheli & Shaheen Ayubi, (eds.), The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), p. 20.

pursuit of pragmatic and independent decisions. In so doing, the discussions in this chapter will focus on the three following questions:

(i) What were the reasons for the Baghdad regime to sign the agreement?

(ii) What was the Soviet view of the agreement?

(iii) What implications did the Iraqi decision to sign the agreement have for Soviet-Iraqi relations?

#### I: Iraq's Decision to Sign the Algiers Agreement

Following the Iranian unilateral and official abrogation in April 1969 of the 1937 treaty which established an Iranian-Iraqi modus vivendi on the Shatt al-Arab, many futile attempts had been made to bridge the gulf between the two countries. Less than two months before the Algiers Agreement, in January 1975, for example, there was a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of both Iran and Iraq in Istanbul. This meeting was totally unproductive. Returning from Turkey on 21 January after the meeting, Dr. Sa'doun Hammadi, Iraqi Foreign Minister, said that such talks had produced nothing new.<sup>2</sup> The deterioration in these two countries'

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2 Cited in J.M. Abdulghani, Iraq & Iran: The Years of Crisis, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 126.

relations continued until March 1975.

Great credit, therefore, should be given to President Boumiedienne for his role in effecting a reconciliation between the Shah of Iran and the Iraqi Vice President Saddam Hussein.<sup>3</sup> This 'historic' Algiers Agreement of 6 March 1975 provided for the following:

- (1) That the two sides should demarcate their land boundaries in accordance with the 1913 Protocol of Constantinople and the minutes of the 1914 Delimitation Commission.
- (2) That both parties agree to delimit their river boundaries according to the thalweg line, i.e. the median line in the mid-channel.
- (3) That they establish security and mutual confidence along their common borders and undertake to exercise a strict and effective control with the aim of finally putting an end to all subversive infiltration.
- (4) That the two parties also agree to view these provisions 'as indivisible elements of a comprehensive settlement', and that any violation of any provision would be regarded as a violation of the spirit of the agreement. 4

Following the signing of the Algiers Agreement, a number of high-level Iraqi-Iranian delegations exchanged visits in an attempt to implement the agreement. At the end of his official visit to Iraq on 26 March 1975, the Iranian Prime Minister succinctly described the agreement as heralding a 'new chapter' in Iraqi-Iranian relations.<sup>5</sup> It was hoped that a new era of detente and reconciliation

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3 Ibid.

4 See Appendix A.

5 Baghdad Observer, April 1, 1975. Quoted in J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 153.

between the two countries, as well as a resurgence of peace and stability in the Gulf region, would emerge.

Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement did culminate in the Iran-Iraq Treaty on International Borders and Good Neighbourly Relations signed in Baghdad on 13 June 1975. By signing the Baghdad Treaty, both sides were explicitly expressing their willingness to achieve a viable, final and lasting solution to all the problems confronting them. This treaty

- (a) reaffirmed the Algiers Agreement;
- (b) instituted measures and mechanisms to stop any infiltration of a subversive nature along the borders;
- (c) demarcated the river boundary by the principle of thalweg; and
- (d) re-emphasized the indivisibility of the treaty. 6

This meant that the Iraqi-Iranian boundary river line geographically shifted from the eastern bank of the Shatt to the thalweg.

What explains Iraq's decision to reach such agreements with Iran? In the first place, it was the common determination of both Iraq and Iran that a full-scale war must be avoided at all costs. They might have realized that any full-scale war would inevitably have involved the extensive destruction of their oil installations, particularly near Abadan and Basra that are located on the disputed Shatt-al

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6 See Appendix B.



Arab waterway.<sup>7</sup> Saddam Hussein told the Washington Post that the chance of a war 'was a fact all too clear to us and to Iran. Neither party wanted war; both sides decided for peace'.<sup>8</sup>

Second, apparently this agreement constituted an essentially quid pro quo arrangement. In order to sustain the Shah's pledge to end his interference in Iraqi domestic affairs and to cease his substantial military aid to the Kurdish rebellion, which had burdened the Baghdad regime with an enormous amount of financial resources and military capabilities, Iraq took upon itself the unprecedented obligation of granting Iran sovereignty over half of the Shatt-al Arab. One indicator of Iran's massive aid to the Iraqi Kurds was, as Sa'ad Jawad argues, that armed activity in Iraqi Kurdistan had come to an end by May 1975.<sup>9</sup>

Third, in a practical sense, granting Iran half the waterway in return for an (even temporary) end to a crippling civil (Kurdish) war was a cheap price for Iraq; nevertheless, its leaders felt profoundly humiliated by this accord. The Iraqi regime continued to believe that it had signed the accord under duress, in order to fend off

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7 J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 155.

8 Washington Post, April 25, 1975. Cited in ibid.

9 Sa'ad Jawad, 'Recent Developments in the Kurdish Issue', in Tim Niblock, (ed.), Iraq: The Contemporary State, (London; Croom Helm, 1982), p. 57.

immediate threats. From the Ba'athist perspective, the ultimate aim of Iran's enduring support for the Kurds was to dismember Iraq. Hence, the Iraqi regime contended that it had to reach an agreement with the Shah in order to protect its territorial integrity. As J.M. Abdulghani asserts:

The Iraqis have attributed their territorial concessions to the Shah to the failure of the Arab states to support Iraq during the Iraqi-Iranian military confrontation, and to the failure of the Soviet Union to honour its military commitments to Iraq. (emphasis added) 10

He continues by pointing out what was at the time a secret reason that strengthened the Iraqi decision to finalize the agreement:

Saddam Hussein was to reveal in July 1980 that:in March 1975, the Iraqi air force had only three bombs left as a result of the Kurdish war. He also disclosed that there was 'a great shortage of ammunition' which had prevented the Iraqi army from continuing the war. Saddam Hussein maintained that this shortage of ammunition was kept in the utmost secrecy lest it affected the morale of the Iraqi army. According to him, only three people knew about this matter at the time:President al-Bakr, the Chief of Staff, and himself. 11

Fourth, the Baghdad regime, which was always intimidated by Iran's programme for a massive military build-up, attached great significance to the Algiers Agreement as an important conduit for reducing the growing arms race in the region.

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10 In an interview with Hassan Tawalibah, Director-General of Public Relations, Ministry of Information and Culture, Baghdad, September 1, 1981. Cited in J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 156.

11 Ibid., pp. 156-57.

## II: The Soviet View of the Algiers Agreement

By recognizing the existence of both the Algiers Agreement and the Baghdad Treaty, as Aryeh Y. Yodfat explains, the Soviet Union officially 'expressed satisfaction' with the agreements.<sup>12</sup> This is probably because of the special problems of the Gulf region and the dilemma these pose for the Soviets. According to R.K. Ramazani, the Persian Gulf region is as rich in potential conflicts as in oil.<sup>13</sup> Mention should be made of a few examples of disputes in the Gulf region. According to Sreedhar, apart from the Iraqi-Iranian dispute, some of the other important disputes are those between Iraq and Kuwait over their common frontier and the question of control over Warbah and Bubiyan, two strategic islands lying in their offshore waters; between Bahrain and Qatar over the Hawar island group located in their offshore waters; and between Oman and Saudi Arabia over Umm Zamul, a waterhole and surrounding territory in the undemarcated border over the northernmost reaches of the Rub'al-Khali desert.<sup>14</sup>

Most of these interstate conflicts, particularly such deep-rooted simmering conflicts as the Iranian-Iraqi

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12 Pravda, April 17, 1975; Izvestia, June 3, 1975; Cited by Aryeh Y. Yodfat, The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula, (London:Croom Helm, 1983), p. 20.

13 R.K. Ramazani, 'Security in the Persian Gulf', Foreign Affairs, Vol. 57, No. 4, Spring 1979, p. 826.

14 See Sreedhar, 'Flashpoints in the Gulf', The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 46;

territorial dispute, place the Soviet leaders in a political dilemma. They have difficulty in deciding which side, if any, to support. Thus to the Soviet decision-makers, the Algiers Agreement put an end to the political dilemma of the Iranian-Iraqi conflict. This agreement was warmly hailed as 'an important and wise decision by Iraq and Iran'.<sup>15</sup>

Soviet political observer Igor Shavchenko noted:

The Soviet people, who are friendly to the Iranian and Iraqi peoples, wish for the establishment of normal good neighborly relations between them. This indisputable view of the Soviet Union was expressed by Nikolay Podgorny, Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, who said: Bad relations between Iran and Iraq do not tally with the interests of peace, and we have always supported and will continue to support the settlement of the differences between Iran and Iraq...The Algiers Agreement...will probably play a significant role in improving the international situation in the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf region. 16

Apart from praising the Iraqi and Iranian actions, Soviet commentary also attributed any tension in the Persian Gulf to the alleged imperialist-inspired divide-and-rule policy:

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- 14 (cont'd); for further interpretation of the Bahraini-Qatari territorial dispute, see also in Rosemarie Said Zahlan, The Creation Qatar, (London:Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 85-90. The other recently published article discussing problems of historic claims to islands is written by Will D. Swearingen, 'Sources of Conflict Over Oil in the Persian/Arabian Gulf', The Middle East Journal, Vol. XXXV, Summer 1981, pp. 322-27.
- 15 BBC Summary of World Broadcast (SWB):The Soviet Union (SU), 4850, March 10, 1975, p. A4/1. Hereafter:SWB:SU.
- 16 Foreign Broadcast Information Service:The USSR, March 10, 1975, p. F3. Hereafter:FBIS:USSR. See also V. Shmarov, 'Iran-Iraq:Constructive Dialogue', New Times, March 1975, No. 13, pp. 10-11.

There can be no doubt that this agreement is important: it lays down foundations for easing the dangerous tension which had plagued the relations between two neighbouring Middle Eastern states for a long time...The seeds of enmity were sown, and this hardly served the interests of the Iraqi and Iranian peoples. Hard feelings between Iraq and Iran were generated, as is well known, by foreign imperialist powers...In a word, there are quite obviously certain imperialist forces which are trying to play off Gulf countries against one another in order to aggravate the situation there. (emphasis added) 17

Given that the agreement exempted the Soviet leaders from having to take sides in a regional conflict, the outbreak of which would have jeopardized its quest for better relations with both countries, the Soviet leaders were also probably prepared to face any difficulty in their relations with the Iraqi Ba'athist regime. Three reasons account for this.

First, according to article 7 of the 1972 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, Iraq and the Soviet Union agreed to consult each other regularly on all important questions affecting their bilateral and multilateral relations, but it is possible that in finalizing the Algiers Agreement, the Baghdad regime ignored the Kremlin leaders. As Shahram Chubin argues, 'the sudden decision by Iraq in March 1975 to settle its border conflict with Iran came as a surprise to the Kremlin leaders'.<sup>18</sup>

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17 SWB:SU, 4850, March 10, 1975, p. A4/2.

18 Shahram Chubin, Security in the Persian: The Role of Outside Powers, Vol. 4, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982), p. 87.

Second, the agreement was a symbol of the triumph of realpolitik and pragmatism over fiercely held ideological positions. Saddam Hussein is widely believed to have played a decisive role in bringing about the March agreement. It is quite noticeable that, as Amazia Baram maintains, Saddam Hussein, a strongman for many years before taking presidential office in July 1979, was the architect of the ideology of pragmatism that has been a new contribution to Ba'athist ideology in Iraq.<sup>19</sup>

Third and finally, although it is generally believed that Iraq's dependence on the Soviet Union reached its zenith between 1972 (the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation) and March 1975, it is equally the case that Iraq did not become a satellite of the Soviet Union nor even feel itself obliged to pursue any policy contrary to its own national interests. Writing in 1978, Majid Khadduri said:

True, Iraq may have appeared to follow an isolationist policy with its neighbors and a policy more friendly to the Communist bloc for at least two or three years after the coming into force of the treaty with the Soviet Union.

But today it has become quite clear that Iraq, following the termination of the Kurdish war and the settlement of the frontier dispute with Iran, prefers to remain independent in all her actions and to conduct her foreign policy in accordance with what she considers her own national interests rather than the interests of the power or powers with whom she has entered

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19 Amazia Baram, 'Saddam Hussein: A Political Profile', Jerusalem Quarterly, No. 17, Fall 1980, p. 139.

into an alliance. Nor has the Soviet Union shown readiness to meet all Iraqi demands, for on several matters, political and otherwise, Iraqi and Soviet leaders did not see eye to eye. 20

Yodfat agrees that the views expressed at that time about Iraq's becoming a Soviet satellite were exaggerated.<sup>21</sup> In this light, to the Baghdad regime, the agreement became a means of adopting an increasingly independent line in its relations with the Soviet Union.

### III: Soviet-Iraqi Relations Since the Algiers Agreement: Iraq's Independent Posture

As was noted earlier, following the signing of the agreement, the Soviet leaders should have been prepared to face difficulties in their relations with the Iraqi regime. In the event, problems did arise. With the border settlement with Iran in 1975, as Shahram Chubin argues, even though the Iraqi dependence on the Soviet Union did not end, it was reduced materially.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, Soviet-Iraqi relations were far from intimate and this development could be considered as a major setback to Soviet policy. The deteriorating relations were clearly attributable to the following factors:

- (a) Iraq's efforts to improve relations with Persian Gulf states

In an interview with the Washington Post, in

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20 Majid Khadduri, Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1968, (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1978), p. 147.

21 Aryeh Y. Yodfat, op.cit., p. 20.

22 Shahram Chubin, op.cit., p. 88.

1975, the then Iraqi Vice President Saddam Hussein said, 'we hope the spirit of the 1975 agreement will extend to every part of the region'.<sup>23</sup> Before that, he had already, although not explicitly, referred to the same subject when he said in another interview that 'Iraq viewed the agreement in terms of the repercussions throughout this area'.<sup>24</sup> Following the conclusion of the agreement, as far as the security of the Gulf region was concerned, a consensus was reached among the Gulf states that the agreement was a positive development. J.M. Abdulghani argues that it was clear after the 1975 agreement that Iraq implicitly accepted the political status quo in the region.<sup>25</sup> Iraq reached the conclusion that Iraq's concern was to preserve Arabism in the small Arab Gulf states regardless of the political and ideological differences between Iraq and these states. One could argue that a less militant regional diplomacy might make Iraq more acceptable in the Gulf.

The Iraqi leaders attempted to draw up a security formula for the Gulf, in order to keep the region out of the arena of superpower rivalry. This independent Iraqi initiative could be taken as a forewarning of the precariousness of any further Soviet role. The reasons underlying this interpretation are three-fold.

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23 Washington Post, April 28, 1975.  
24 New York Times, March 29, 1975.  
25 J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 158.



First of all, although it is still widely assumed that Iraq's attempt to reach security arrangements with the Gulf states was perhaps dictated by US threats to seize Arab oilfields in the area, threats that alarmed not only the Iraqis but also the conservative regimes in the Gulf, suspicion of Soviet expansionist motives was also not out of question.

Second, symptomatic of Iraq's endeavour to normalise its relations with the Gulf states was the final agreement in July 1975 between Iraq and Saudi Arabia that demarcated the neutral zone equally between the two countries.<sup>26</sup> Iraq had ceased its attempts to destabilize the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the other conservative Persian Gulf regimes. In April 1976 Saddam Hussein paid an official visit to Saudi Arabia. He characterized Saudi-Iraqi relations as 'growing and being consolidated in all spheres'.<sup>27</sup> From the Soviet viewpoint, both advantages and disadvantages were to be found in the new Iraqi initiatives. Should Iraq draw closer to Saudi Arabia, it could conceivably influence the Riyadh regime towards a less pro-Western policy.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, by drawing closer to Saudi Arabia, it could more conceivably be expected that Iraq might itself come under Saudi influence and stay further away from the Soviet Union.

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26 Majid Khadduri, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

27 *Arab Report and Record*, April 1-15, 1976, p. 214.  
Cited in J.M. Abdulghani, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

28 A further study of intra-Arab diplomacy in the 1970s see Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), chapter 7.

Furthermore, equally disturbed by the Iraqi role in the Persian Gulf, the Soviet leaders felt sceptical about the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iraq and pro-Western Oman.

Third and finally, the principal Gulf sheikhdoms-Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman-are pro-Western and have no desire to see Soviet influence increase either directly or through its ally, Iraq. Because of this, the real intention of the Iraqi regime (secularist, radical and revolutionary) to improve its closer relations (or more precisely, to break through its regional isolation) with such Gulf sheikhdoms was still suspect:

The establishment of closer relations (at least on the economic and functional levels) between Iraq and the Arab states of the Gulf after 1975 did not follow from any change in Ba'athist policy towards the traditional structures of power in these states. On the contrary, the Ba'ath remained intent on putting across its own very different ideological perspectives to the populations of the areas, and continued to provide support for groups which shared these perspectives. Only with respect to Oman was there a discernible change: Following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iraq and the Sultan's government in January 1976, Iraq appears to have stopped providing military assistance to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman. General contacts with the PFLO, nevertheless, were maintained. 29

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29 Tim Niblock, 'Iraqi Policies Towards the Arab States of the Gulf, 1958-1981', in Tim Niblock, (ed.), op. cit., p. 145.

(b) Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute over Warbah and Bubiyan  
Islands

The Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement led indirectly to the straining of Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. The most convincing explanation of such relations can be found in Claudia Wright's description of Iraq's geopolitical vulnerabilities. She maintains that:

From the Iraqi point of view, hostile hands are always potentially around the country's throat. 30

She further presents the view that:

Iraq has less than 50 miles of coastline on the Gulf-most of it unusable for shipping. The main port, Basra, is nearly twice that distance away from the Gulf, up the Shatt-al Arab, and even in the best of times it has a three-month cargo bottleneck. Umm Qasr, the Iraqi naval base, lies on the border with Kuwait, and can only be reached by sea through a narrow passage between the Iraqi shore and Kuwaiti islands. The approach to Fao and the entrance to the Shatt estuary is commanded by Iranian artillery and naval posts on an around Abadan island.

Iraq is also the only member of the OPEC whose oil exports cannot reach the outside world without crossing foreign territory in the north (Syria, Lebanon and Turkey), or without coming so close to Iranian territory in the south that it cannot be said to enjoy territorial security at all for its principal means of survival. 31

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30 Claudia Wright, 'Implications of the Iraq-Iran War', Foreign Affairs, Vol. 59, No. 2, Winter 1980/81, p. 277.

31 Ibid., p. 277.

The Iraqi leaders used this geopolitical vulnerability as an impelling factor in acquiring a deep-port facility in the Gulf, in order to provide strategic depth. Iraq was strongly pressing its claims to the islands of Warbah and Bubiyan. It saw the two Kuwaiti islands as indispensable for its deep-water port at Umm Qasr. And it began to put pressure upon Kuwait to lease its half of Bubiyan island for 99 years and to grant sovereignty over the island of Warbah.<sup>32</sup> Dr. Sa'doun Hammadi, Iraqi Foreign Minister at that time, said:

Such an arrangement is a reasonable demand in view of Iraq's security needs and is not unprecedented in the relationship between two neighbours. 33

Because of demonstrative Soviet support for Iraq in its dispute with Kuwait in 1973,<sup>34</sup> Kuwait continued to fear an invasion by Soviet-backed Iraq. However, neither the expansion of its territory nor threats to its neighbouring Gulf states, Saddam Hussein maintained, had been Iraqi aims. Although, in the end, the Kuwaiti government rejected Iraqi demands, both parties, nevertheless, agreed to end their territorial dispute through compromises. But no final agreement was achieved. No doubt, the Soviet objective of maintaining friendly

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32 Washington Post, April 28, 1975.

33 Majid Khadduri, op.cit., p. 158.

34 See Anne M. Kelly, 'The Soviet Naval Presence During the Iraqi-Kuwaiti Border Dispute', in Michael McGwire, Ken Booth, John McDonnell, (eds.), Soviet Naval Policy: Objectives and Constraints, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), pp. 287-301.

diplomatic relations with Kuwait (the sole Gulf sheikhdom enjoying such relations) necessitated the Kremlin leaders mollifying this tiny but economically powerful state. This is evident from the joint communique issued after the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, paid a visit to Moscow at the beginning of December 1975. This communique reads:

Peace and security in this (Persian Gulf) area could be strengthened by prohibiting foreign interference in the affairs of this region, by insuring freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf and by establishing trust and good-neighborly cooperation among all the states in the Gulf zone on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and respect for the right of each to free and independent development. 35

Thus, Kuwait obtained, at least on paper, Soviet support for its independence from Iraq, and, when this happened, the Soviet-Iraqi relationship became further strained.

(c) The ensuing intensification of the Iraqi-Syrian tension

Given the settlement with Iran, it could be argued that the Kremlin leaders expected to see a radical Iraqi-Syrian alliance to confront the American-sup-

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35 pravda, December 9, 1975. Translated in the Current Digest of Soviet Press, 27, No. 49:23. Hereafter cited as CDSP.

ported Arab states. But it was far from true. The other outstanding foreign problem for Iraq was, however, its relations with Syria, and this was one conflict in which the Iraqis could not ask for assistance from Moscow. The Soviet Union's close relations with Syria were underscored during Brezhnev's keynote address to the 25th Party Congress on February 24, 1976. Brezhnev explicitly ranked Syria over Iraq in his list of Arab allies. His speech declared that:

Now I shall say something about our relations with the Arab countries. During the past five-year period we established a good mutual understanding with Syria. We act in concert on many international problems, above all those of the Middle East. The conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq, on the basis of which our relations are developing, was an important event. Cooperation with Algeria and South Yemen is expanding and deepening. 36

The Iraqi leadership failed to appreciate this ranking. Moreover, there were a number of issues engendering rivalry between these two Ba'athist regimes. Obsessed with an ideological dispute with the Iraqi Ba'ath regime, Syria acrimoniously denounced the Iraqi-Iranian agreement. Apart from accusing the Iraqis of abandoning Arab national rights in the Shatt-al Arab and Arabistan, the Damascus regime also accused Iraq of ceding 14 Iraqi villages in the Sulaimaniyah province

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36 Pravda, February 25, 1976. Translated in CDSP, 28, No. 8:7.

to Iran. This led the Syrian government to claim that the Algiers Agreement confirmed Iraq's complete association with colonialism and imperialism.<sup>37</sup>

It could be argued that Syria's denunciation of the Algiers Agreement also stemmed from fear that the settlement of the Iraqi-Iranian dispute would provide Iraq with military and political capabilities directed against Syria. One of the major points of contention between these two Ba'athist regimes is that each claims to be the legitimate organisation and the only representative of the Ba'athist movement which sees itself as the guardian and genuine expression of Arab national interest.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the ideological element, Syria's severe attitude towards Iraq was conditioned by its discord with Baghdad over the allocation of the Euphrates water resources. The Iraqis claimed that, following Syrian construction of the Tabaka dam on the upper Euphrates, the Syrians diverted their share of the waters and ignored the human and agricultural needs of the people of the lower Euphrates. Both countries met under Arab League auspices to work out the percentages of the river's waters each was to receive, yet no final compromise was reached. This was followed by minor provocations on each side, leading to the mobilization

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37 J.M. Abdulghani, *op.cit.*, p. 160.

38 Abbas Kelidar, 'Iraq: The Search for Stability', *Conflict Studies*, No. 59, July 1975, pp. 19-20.

of troops on each other's borders in June 1975. The Iraqi government, moreover, accused Syria of supporting Kurdish insurgents in northern Iraq.

The delicate Soviet position could be also seen in the light of the Lebanese civil war in 1975-76. The Soviets' main allies, the Iraqis and the Syrians, fought each other. Both of them had received Soviet assistance, but both were involved in Lebanon on opposing sides.

By this time, Iraq was strongly opposed even to Soviet-endorsed peace plans for the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as the October 1977 joint statement with the US. The Iraqi leaders perceived that the Soviet leaders orchestrated such a plan because of a desire to regain their Middle East position.

While still seeking to forge an 'anti-imperialist' alignment in the Arab world, the Soviet Union was concerned about the two contending Ba'athist regimes. The Soviet Prime Minister, Aleksei Kosygin, in 1976 shuttled between Baghdad and Damascus. But this effort came to naught. Although Syria and Iraq joined a number of other Arab states in forming the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front to protest President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 (and, more importantly, to nullify Sadat's signing of the Sinai II disengagement



agreement), this unity did not last.

Saddam Hussein's ambition to lead the Arab world has also been described as one reason for the weakening of this unity. Hussein, as was noted, became president only in July 1979, although he had been the effective ruler of Iraq since the advent of the Ba'athist regime in July 1968. The Syrian-Iraqi unity imperiled Hussein's ambitions, Adeed I. Dawisha argues:

since real power would reside with the presidency, which was to alternate between the Syrian President and Iraqi President. Whereas Hussein had always been able to dominate Iraqi politics through President Bakr from the lesser positions of vice president and assistant secretary-general of the Iraqi Ba'ath party, Hussein knew that such a relationship would not be possible in the projected united entity, given Syrian President Assad's strong personality and immense Arab and international prestige. 39

(d) Iraq's persecutions of the Iraqi communist party

The Baghdad regime's policy towards the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) might be referred to as a political barometer in Soviet-Iraqi relations since the beginning of the Ba'athist regime in 1968.<sup>40</sup> From that time, the relations had been full of mistrust, suspicion and apprehension. The Communist Party has been regarded

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39 Adeed I. Dawisha, 'Iraq: The West's Opportunity', Foreign Policy, No. 41, Winter 1980-81, p. 141.

40 See Aryeh Y. Yodfat, 'The USSR and Arab Communist Parties-A Chilling Account of Great Power Penetration', The New Middle East, No. 32, May 1971.

as an alien threat to Arab culture and a conduit of a foreign power.<sup>41</sup> In the Ba'athist view, more specifically, the communists were Soviet agents, serving Soviet interests. The Baghdad regime tacitly and publicly asserted that, preceding the signature of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1972, the Soviets had given assurances that they would not get involved in the relations between the Iraqi Ba'ath and Communist Parties, and that under no circumstances would the Soviet Union conduct its relations with Iraq through activities of the Iraqi Communist Party.<sup>42</sup>

When the ICP participated in the Ba'ath-controlled Progressive National Front in July 1973,<sup>43</sup> the Ba'athists made it clear that they were not prepared to tolerate any political activity by the ICP in the armed forces. They further hinted that any element discovered attempting to organize political cells in the army would be immediately abolished. By 1976, the ICP had rapidly become unhappy with its powerless position in the Iraqi government (there were only two communists in the cabinet), and it had begun openly to demand an increased role for itself in the Progressive National Front. Ba'ath-ICP divisions

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41 Shahram Chubin, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

42 Adeed I. Dawisha, 'The Soviet Union in the Arab World: The Limits to Superpower Influence', in Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, (eds.), The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives, (London:Heinemann, 1982), p. 17.

43 See Robert O. Freedman, 'Soviet Policy Toward Ba'athist Iraq, 1968-1979', in Robert H. Donaldson, (ed.), The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures, (Colorado:Westview Press, 1981), p. 178.

were embittered by:

(i) the ICP's advocacy of genuine autonomy for the Kurds and its open disagreement with the Ba'athist policy of resettling the Kurdish affair outside the Kurdish region, particularly because this involved a concession to the pro-Western Shah's regime in Iran.

(ii) Iraq's consolidation of its economic ties with the West. The ICP denounced what it perceived to be the growing power of 'private capital' and Iraq's continuing dependence on the capitalist world market.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, the ICP reportedly carried on anti-government propaganda among Iraq's Kurds and Shi'ites. In fact, the Ba'athists suspected communist involvement in the Shiite religious demonstrations in early 1977. The Ba'athist suspicion of the ICP's active role in stirring up internal political disorder became stronger when the Ba'athist regime evidently decided that the crackdown took precedence over its relations with the Soviet Union. Naim Haddad, a member of Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), stated that:

All communist parties all over the world are always trying to get power. We chop off any weed that pops up. 45

In May 1978, the Iraqi government executed

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44 Quoted in Robert O. Freedman, op.cit., p. 179.

45 Foreign Broadcast Information Service: The Middle East and North Africa, June 7, 1978, p. E1. Hereafter cited as FBIS:MEA.

21 Iraqi communist accused of attempting to organize political cells in the army. Further news reports indicated that the ICP was involved in an abortive attempt backed by the Soviet Union to topple the Ba'athist regime.<sup>46</sup>

Given the Soviet-backed communist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, it could be clearly argued that that coup might have affected the Ba'ath party perception of and policy towards the ICP.<sup>47</sup> It was claimed that in December 1978 the Iraqi government persecuted a number of Iraqi communists in the army and kept prominent communist party members under control, including a member of the ICP's Central Committee, Majid Abdul-Ridha.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, as Shahram Chubin asserts, the Iraqi regime set up measures to ensure that the communist were under its strict control.<sup>49</sup>

One could argue that the Kremlin was in no position to harm relations with a country which on the one hand, had held an official friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, but on the other hand, undertook the persecution of communists. Yet this argument is far from sound. Following the Ba'ath persecutions of Iraqi

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46 FBIS:MEA, June 19, 1978, p. E1.

47 Middle East Economic Digest, April 25, 1979. Cited as MEED.

48 Middle East Research & Information Project, June 1981. Cited as MERIP.

49 Shahram Chubin, op.cit., p. 88.

communists and the ensuing deterioration in Ba'athist-communist relations, Iraqi-Soviet relations plummeted to a low point. This could be seen in the event of the Gulf war. In addition, as Yodfat argues, in the Soviet Union, the consideration of not sacrificing principles and friends just for temporary and dubious state interests was still in effect. The Iraqi communist newspaper was quoted as saying that:

The widespread persecution of communists in Iraq and repression against the communists party's organizations and press...has been continuing for a year. (The ICP) has made and is continuing to make efforts to halt the deterioration of relations with the ruling Ba'ath Party and not only to preserve the cooperation between the two parties but also to develop and intensify it still further. 50

At this stage, there is every reason to believe that the persecutions of the communists served the dual Iraqi purposes of punishing (and, at its most serious, extinguishing) Soviet-backed dissident groups and of manifesting Iraqi independence of Moscow.

(e) The closer Iraqi relations with the West

The Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement also affected Iraq's relations with the Western powers. The pragmatic Iraqi leaders had made a decision to keep their options open. Iraq adopted a new policy, which led to closer

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50 Quoted in Aryeh Y. Yodfat, op.cit., p. 89.

relations with the West both economically and militarily- in the latter case, particularly with France.

The resolution of the Iranian-Iraqi dispute and the settlement, albeit temporary, of the Kurdish rebellion alleviated Iraq's fear of insecurity and encirclement. With the removal of these two main threats, the Ba'athists became less dependent for military aid on the Soviet Union. In addition, after the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973, the Baghdad regime attempted to end its economic dependence on the Soviet Union. By the same token, because of the absence now of pressing security threats and the availability of its own huge financial resources, the Baghdad regime embarked on an extensive economic development plan and diversified its trade patterns.

Even though in July 1975 an agreement on cooperation between Iraq and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) or COMECON was signed in Moscow,<sup>51</sup> no cooperation with the Soviet Union or other CMEA countries was adequate for the Iraqis' ambitious development projects. The Soviet Union could no longer cope with the multitude of industrial projects for which Iraq could pay in hard currency. Hence the Iraqi government was prepared to deal with Western European, Japanese and even American firms rather than with the Soviet Union

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51 Aryeh Y. Yodfat, *op.cit.*, p. 63. See also Y. Zhuravlyov, 'Iraq and CMEA', *New Times*, August 1978, No. 31, p. 17.

and East European countries.<sup>52</sup> Iraq needed the best and most advanced technology, and this could only be found in Western countries that purchased large quantities of oil from Iraq and were hopeful of reducing their balance of payments deficits.

In effect, its economic relations with the West experienced phenomenal growth and expansion, while those with Moscow declined. As Robert O. Freedman states, in 1977 there was a sharp increase in Iraqi-American trade, equalling the extent of Iraqi-Soviet trade.<sup>53</sup> The volume of trade between Iraq and the United States rose from \$20 million in 1973 to nearly \$500 million dollars in 1976, \$724 million in 1980 and \$914 million in 1981,<sup>54</sup> despite the fact that the two states had no diplomatic relations. At the same time, Iraqi imports from the Soviet Union dropped to a low level, accounting for less than 10 per cent of Iraq's imports in 1975, while its imports from Western Europe and Japan increased tremendously. One significant hallmark of Iraq's policy shift towards diversifying its trade patterns and gaining highly-needed advanced technology from the West was its agreement with a consortium of American and West German corporation to build a petrochemical plant in Southern Iraq.<sup>55</sup>

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52 Robert O. Freedman, op.cit., p. 176.

53 Ibid., p. 178.

54 Khadduri, op.cit., p. 181; Christine Moss Helms, Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1984), p. 197.

55 J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 161.

There was a further agreement with France to build a 70-megawatt nuclear research reactor.

Development in economic relations does not however necessarily result in similar development in the political sphere. The expansion of Iraq's trade relations with the US was not accompanied by an improvement in political relations. Iraq's refusal to resume diplomatic ties with the US stemmed from its perception that the US was continuing to give unrestricted support to Israel against Arabs. In 1977, Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Premier, stated that 'we believe that the United States was and still is siding with Israel in an exceptional way'.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, Iraq's diversification policy extended to the military field. In April 1975, Saddam Hussein asserted that Iraq would diversify its sources of arms as the national interests dictated.<sup>57</sup> France had helped the Baghdad regime to achieve this policy. Iraq was reported to have concluded an enormous arms deal, concerning the sale of 72 advanced Mirage F-1 aircraft, helicopters and tactical missiles.<sup>58</sup> Quite assertively, in June 1980, the Iraqi Minister of Information announced in Al-Nahan that Iraq would seek sources of weapons outside the Soviet Union.<sup>59</sup>

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56 FBIS:MEA, August 5, 1977, p. E3.

57 FBIS:MEA, July 21, 1977, p. E1; Washington Post, June 28, 1977.

58 Washington Post, April 25, 1975.

59 Quoted by Karen Dawisha, 'Moscow's Moves in the Direction of the Gulf-So Near and Yet So Far', Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1980-81, p.225.



Certainly, this diversification embarrassed and worsened Iraqi-Soviet relations because it confirmed the Soviet leaders' perception that the Baghdad regime was attempting to be more independent of Moscow.

- (f) Iraq's disagreement with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

The sharp decline in Soviet influence in Iraq also came from the disenchantment in the Ba'athist elite with the role played by the Soviet Union in the Afghan communist coup in April 1978. It was even less happy when in December 1979 five Soviet divisions crossed the border from the Soviet Union into Afghanistan. Three basic grounds for intervention were claimed by the Soviet Union:

- (a) the Afghan government had requested military assistance;
- (b) under the 1978 treaty, the Soviet Union was committed to give that assistance; and
- (c) it constituted self-defense against foreign armed aggression in accordance with the UN Charter. (Article 51) 60

But at this time, one of high-ranking Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) officials, Tariq Aziz, implicitly expressed Iraq's fears of both super-powers' expansionist ambitions. Hence, when the issue of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan came up in the

United Nations in early January 1980, among the 104 countries voting against Moscow, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein strongly and even more publicly condemned the invasion. The Iraqi Ba'ath Party Newspaper, Al-Thawrah, has stated that 'interference in the internal affairs of others and the wish to impose hegemony on small states and peoples are some of the most prominent rules adhered to by the superpowers'.<sup>61</sup> This further demonstrated Iraq's independence of Moscow.

Iraq also joined the Islamic summit conference at Islamabad in January 1980 which condemned the Soviet invasion. This invasion had, it could be argued, increased Iraqi suspicions of being similarly interfered with by the Soviet Union. The Iraqis concluded that the Soviets might also exploit the internal situation in Iraq in order to intervene and determine the nature of its regime. They further were worried that the Soviets might support some Iraqi dissident equivalent to Babrak Karmal, who had been in exile. Moreover, Iraq perceived that this Soviet action subsequently invited US adventurism and confrontation, which might lead to a division of the region between them. Tariq Aziz said:

We vehemently condemn Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. This intervention is totally unjustifiable. We openly express our disapproval and demand Soviet withdrawal. The biggest attraction for the super-

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61 BBC Summary of World Broadcast (SWB):The Middle East and North Africa, 6311, January 5, 1980, p. A/1. Hereafter cited as SWB:ME.

powers to this region is oil wealth. It is high time that the states possessing this wealth form their defence system in order to protect this wealth. Threats connected with oil are creating unrest in the area. All super-powers should stop threatening the Gulf and the oil-producing Gulf states. 62

In considering Iraq's condemnation of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, two interrelated points should be mentioned. First, Iraq's denunciation of the Soviet invasion could arguably be explained by the fact that both Iraq and Afghanistan are Islamic and non-aligned countries. Equally disturbing for Soviet-Iraqi relations was an Arab Charter<sup>63</sup> proclaimed in February 1980 by Saddam Hussein. In summary, under this Charter, all Arab countries would henceforth dismantle foreign bases and facilities from their soil. As far as Soviet military facilities in foreign countries were concerned, at least on paper, the Soviet Union was in both an unfavourable and even more delicate position than the US. As Geoffrey Jukes argues:

As the United States has, or is acquiring such facilities in several Arab countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Somalia), whereas the Soviets have them only in the PDRY and Syria, the proposed Charter, to the extent that its purpose was not merely to embarrass Egypt and Syria, a favourite Iraqi ploy, appeared on the face of it to disadvantage the US more than the Soviet Union. But in reality, the opposite

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- 62 Cited in Edmund Grareeb, 'Iraq: Emergent Gulf Power', in Hossein Amirsadeghi, (ed.), The Security of the Persian Gulf, (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 222.
- 63 SWB:ME, 6343, February 12, 1980, p. A/1; The main principles of this Charter can be found in 'The Middle East', April 1980, p. 20; Adeed Dawisha, 'Invoking the Spirit of Arabism: Islam in the Foreign Policy of Saddam's Iraq', in Adeed Dawisha, (ed.), Islam in Foreign Policy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 118-19.

was the case...

Withdrawal to or development of facilities in these countries would constitute an operating inconvenience for the Americans, but the consequences for the Soviets would be more disruptive...<sup>64</sup>

Second, what should be noted here is that, based on Tariq Aziz's remark cited previously,<sup>65</sup> Iraq's fear of being similarly invaded has probably been overstated. In any analysis of the reality of the threat of a Soviet invasion of Iraq, some military strategists may have exaggerated the danger of an imminent Soviet invasion of the Middle East for oil supplies. As Geoffrey Jukes persuasively argues, there were distinct Soviet limitations to using Afghanistan as a springboard for invading other countries.<sup>66</sup> In addition, in the absence of common borders, therefore, Iraq's expressed fear of the Soviet invasion could be seen largely as a political ploy to counter Soviet influence. This anti-Soviet attitude can also be seen in the timing of proclaiming the Arab Charter which, although it had little chance of gaining broad support, significantly reflected Iraq's anti-Soviet posture.

- (g) Iraq's displeasure at Soviet support for Ethiopia in both the Ethiopian-Somali conflict and the Eritrean dispute

In the late 1970s, Soviet-Iraqi relations

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64 Geoffrey Jukes, 'The Middle East: The View from Moscow', World Review, August 1982, p. 90.

65 See pp. 30-31.

66 Geoffrey Jukes, 'The Middle East: The View from Moscow', op.cit., pp. 85-6.

deteriorated steadily and were marred by differences over Soviet policy towards the Horn of Africa and the Eritrean question. Soviet support for the Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile-Mariam in Ethiopia against Somalia in the Ogaden war was also a cornerstone of dissension in Soviet-Iraqi relations. Despite being a partner in a Treaty of Friendship similar to the now defunct Somali-Soviet Treaty, Iraq has openly and persistently pledged support to Eritrean and Somali insurgents fighting for independence from Addis Ababa.<sup>67</sup>

The ruling Ba'ath Party newspaper, Al-Thawrah, on August 16, 1977, pointed out that Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa would be detrimental to Soviet interests and beneficial to 'imperialist' strategy.<sup>68</sup>

Iraq's support for both the Eritrean liberation movement and Somali insurgents in their struggle against the Soviet-backed Marxist regime in Ethiopia can be, one could argue, considered in the context of Arab nationalism. Tariq Aziz described the Eritrean revolution as the revolution of an Arab people against a state that did not want to respect its natural right of self-determination. He also further emphasized Arab nationalism

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67 Mohammad Ayoob, 'The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Superpower Involvement', Canberra Paper on Strategy and Defence, No. 18, (Canberra: The Strategic and Defense Studies Center, 1978); Harry Briand, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn of Africa', International Affairs, Vol. 60, No. 1, Winter 1983/84.

68 Cited in International Herald Tribune, August 17, 1977.

by stressing that 'the Red Sea is an Arab sea and all the peoples surrounding it are Arab peoples'.<sup>69</sup> In the light of the Somali-Ethiopian Ogaden war, Iraq considered Somalia an Arab country.<sup>70</sup> Its populations are predominantly Sunni Muslims. The fighting which erupted, he believed, was between countries of Arab and non-Arab origin.

To demonstrate their disenchantment with Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa, the Iraqis banned any Soviet overflights for cargo aircraft destined for Ethiopia.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Iraqi leaders bluntly claimed that Iraq refused to be a bridge to support Ethiopia's policy to suppress the legitimate rights of the Eritrean and Somali people. The Baghdad regime's relations with the Kremlin leaders became even more embittered following the shift of regional alignments in the Horn of Africa culminating in the unilateral Somali abrogation of its Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow on November 13, 1977.

### Conclusion

As was noted earlier, the Algiers Agreement came as a surprise to the Soviet Union and it can be seen as a turning point in Soviet-Iraqi relations. It indi-

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69 FBIS:MEA, August 5, 1977, p. E4.

70 Somalia is now a member of the Arab League but it is not ethnically Arab. Arabic is becoming a standard language, but most people still do not speak it well. One might say that it is more politically Arab than it is culturally or ethnically.

71 J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 163.

cated the determination of the Ba'athist ruling group to pursue policies which were to be increasingly independent of Soviet influence.

The divergences portrayed above indicate that while the Baghdad regime's dependence on the Soviet Union certainly declined, it could not be said to have ceased. The Iraqis were careful not to drift too far from the Soviets. They still wished to have the advantage of being able to criticize Soviet policy. They also wanted both to maintain their freedom of action and manoeuvre, and to receive Soviet political and military support. From the Soviet point of view, Iraq might be seen as its ally, but at the same time, the Baghdad regime itself wanted to be seen in Arab and Western eyes as non-aligned and no longer dependent on the Soviet Union. The Soviets were unable to use Iraq for their own purposes.

Based on this analysis, the discussion in the next chapter will discuss a further example of the pragmatic policy that shaped the independent Iraqi decision to invade Iran in September 1980.

Chapter II: Soviet-Iraqi Relations From the Outbreak  
of the Gulf War in September 1980 to May  
1981

Introduction

The previous chapter suggested that, as a result of Iraq's independent and pragmatic policy, Soviet-Iraqi relations fluctuated after the Algiers Agreement of March 1975.

Following both Iraq's unilateral abrogation of that agreement and its undeclared full-scale invasion of Iranian territory in September 1980, Soviet-Iraqi relations became even more precarious. Despite the fact that Soviet-supplied military assistance played a significant role in Soviet-Iraqi ties,<sup>1</sup> particularly in Iraq's military confrontation with Iran, there is some evidence that the Soviet proclamation of 'non-interference' in the Gulf war from the very first day of its commencement adversely affected its relations with Iraq.

The discussion in this chapter will focus entirely on the initial stage of the Gulf war ranging from the beginning of the Iraqi invasion in September 1980 to the end of the period of so-called 'stalemate'

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1 Shahram Chubin, Security in the Gulf: The Role of Outside Powers, Vol. 4 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982), pp. 74-89.



in May 1981.<sup>2</sup> It addresses the three following questions:

(i) What reasons were there for the Baghdad regime's invasion of Iran?

(ii) What was the Soviet reaction once the full-scale war broke out?

(iii) What implications did the Gulf hostilities have for Soviet-Iraqi relations?

#### I: Iraq's Decision to Initiate the War

According to Daniel Pipes, the September 1980 full-scale fighting basically indicated general hostility between Iraq and Iran in the wider context of Arab versus Iranian, Pan-Arabist versus Pan-Islamist and Sunni versus Shi'a conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the fact that Iraq's motives for its incursion into Iran were complex and multi-dimensional, they are nonetheless also a result of Iraq's pragmatic

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2 Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability: Saudi Arabia, the Military Balance in the Gulf, and Trends in the Arab-Israeli Military Balance, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), p. 667. See also Stephen R. Grummon, The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled, The Washington Papers, No. 92, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1982), p. 21. J.M. Abdulghani, Iraq & Iran: The Years of Crisis, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 209.

3 Daniel Pipes, 'A Border Adrift: Origins of the Conflict', in Shirin Tahir-Kheli & Shaheen Ayubi, (eds.), The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), pp. 4-8.

and independent policies. It was the latter which provided the pressing reasons for the Baghdad regime's decision to invade in September 1980.

Iraq perceived its action as a pre-emptive move designed both to weaken Khomeini's fundamentalist movement and to blunt his endeavour to export his Islamic revolution to Iraq and the Arab Gulf states. As President Saddam Hussein explains it:

Iraq's invasion of Iran has been a battle in defence of the honour, sovereignty, constant historical rights, and legitimate vital interests of our country...(I)t has been a decisive battle for the Arabism of the Gulf, (and) for deterring the expansionist, Persian ambitions. 4

He further portrays the war as necessary for the defence of the Arab homeland by stating that Iraq was fighting on behalf of the Arab nation and the citizens of the Gulf.<sup>5</sup> The claims of other high-ranking Iraqi officials further justified the invasion. For one thing, with regard to international law, Dr. Sa'doun Hammadi described the invasion as legitimate self-defence in conformity with international law, formulated to preserve the safety, security and vital interests of Iraq.<sup>6</sup> It was rather obvious that in referring to international law his aim was to legitimize the invasion

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4 Saddam Hussein's speech on September 28, 1980, in Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraqi-Iranian Conflict, p. 219. Quoted in J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 204.

5 Ibid., p. 205.

6 Sa'doun Hammadi's speech in Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraqi-Iranian Conflict, p. 231. Quoted in J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 204.

by his country. In addition, in terms of military power, Iraq's Defence Minister, Adnan Khairallah, stated that Iraq's invasion had destroyed the myth of Iranian hegemony.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Tariq Aziz should be cited as having said that:

One of Iraq's objectives was to prove in battle that it (Iraq) is stronger than Iran and fully capable of defeating it. And this is what Iraq has actually achieved.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to analyze in some detail why the Baghdad regime reached a decision to invade Iranian Khuzestan in September 1980. Before the eruption of full-scale infantry assault, the hostility between Teheran and Baghdad had manifested itself in sporadic military clashes along the borders, and both regimes had consistently accused each other of violating territorial borders and airspace. J.M. Abdulghani quotes official sources to make the point that while the Iraqi government accused Iran of violating Iraq's territorial borders and airspace on 544 occasions between February 1979 and September 1980, Iran also accused Iraq of penetrating its airspace 182 times, and its border 637 times during the period from March 1979 to September 1980.<sup>9</sup> In sum, the full-scale military encounter had been gradually led up to by a daily pattern of border incidents and

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7 New York Times, January 4, 1981.

8 Tariq Aziz, Iraq-Iran Conflict: Questions and Discussions, transl. by Najî al-Hadithi, (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1981), p. 28.

9 Quoted in J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., pp. 200-201.

military engagements with each side accusing the other of initiating hostilities.

On September 17, 1980, President Saddam Hussein heralded the decision in the Iraqi National Assembly that, given Iran's alleged frequent violations of the Algiers Agreement, Iraq considered it abrogated. Article 4 of the accord, referring to the indivisibility of the treaty and to the fact that any violation of its elements justified making the entire treaty null and void, had been aptly seized upon by Iraq to justify its abrogation. To emphasize this abrogation, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) issued a dispatch on September 20, 1980, which said:

The Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK) has declared its absolute support for the decision abrogating the Algiers Agreement with the Iranian regime. 10

It might possibly be argued that the Baghdad regime launched this campaign in order to show that even the Iraqi Kurdish people, an essential element in the Algiers Agreement, also endorsed Baghdad's decision. But the dispatch was totally misleading. The reason was that on September 18, 1980, the Voice of

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10 SWB:ME, 6529, September 22, 1980, p. A/3.

Iraqi Kurdistan had already broadcast a comment that:

Saddam said in his speech that he held the treasonous 1975 Algiers Agreement to be abrogated. That means that the Algiers Agreement, which is associated with the oppression of our Kurdish people, has gone to hell. As a result of this agreement, our Kurdish people were exposed to the worst forms of oppression, deportation, genocide and humiliation. It suppressed our people's rights and freedom. The only drawback to the death of their agreement is that the Ba'athist regime in Iraq has not died with it. However, that regime is bound to die. 11

Hence, the launching of a full-scale invasion of Iran meant that the Iraqi army had to face the situation of a two-front war. However, the Iraqi full-scale invasion in September still went ahead. There were four main reasons for this.

First, the Iraqis thought that it was a time when the Iranians would be less capable of defending themselves. One and a half years after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took power in Teheran, oil revenues were low while inflation and unemployment rates were high.<sup>12</sup> Tension was growing between the central government and the diverse ethnic and religious minorities in Iran (Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis); resulting, especially

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11 Ibid., p. A/3. The "Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan" broadcasts from an unidentified location in the Iraqi-Iranian border area of Kurdistan. (Letter from BBC dated 17th July, 1985). Content of broadcasts suggests it is Iranian-supported and probably in Iranian territory.

12 Daniel Pipes, op.cit., p. 3.

amongst the Kurds, in open rebellion. In addition, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in Baghdad thought that the demoralization and fragmentation of the Iranian military had occurred:

The large and well-armed military forces built up for years by Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi had apparently collapsed. Morale plummeted, discipline eroded, and troops deserted as the armed forces fell into deep disfavour under Khomeini.

The mullahs purged officers, cancelled weapons purchases, terminated military privileges and set up a loyal force (the Pasdaran, or Revolutionary Guards). 13

Nonetheless, the Baghdad leaders' perception of their relative strength was too optimistic. Although the Iraqi army had been supplied for years by the Soviet Union, it was still in the process of modernizing and diversifying its armed forces. If the Iraqi army, as William O. Staudenmaier argues, had waited to complete its modernization process, an attack could not have taken place in September 1980. He substantiated his argument by stating that:

..., to await completion of the modernization process, which would have required extensive crew training on the new weapons before they could be used in combat meant that an attack could not occur until the fall of 1981 or perhaps 1982. Even a few months' delay would have shown that any possible settlement of Iraqi accounts with Iran could not occur until at least July 1981...Such a delay might have allowed Khomeini time to consolidate his hold on Iran. 14

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13 Ibid., p. 3.

14 William O. Staudenmaier, 'A Strategic Analysis' in Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Shaleen Ayubi, (eds.), op.cit., p. 37.

He further compares Iraqi and Iranian fighting capability in terms of such qualitative military factors as leadership, combat experience, training, logistics and command and control by showing that:

(a) the edge in leadership must be accorded to Iraq, especially just prior to the war, owing to the disarray that existed in Iran.

(b) in light of combat experience of the armed forces...The Iraqi army has had chances to sharpen experiences during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and in counter-insurgency campaign against Kurdish rebels for more than a decade.

(c) in terms of 'training', it has been a problem for both countries because of their rapid force expansion and modernization programs.

(d) in view of logistics, the operational rate of Iranian equipment was just at about 50 per cent, while Iraq was more capable of maintaining and operating its modern weapons.

(e) In Iran, owing to a power struggle between the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian armed forces, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and Khomeini, the split in the armed forces was an outcome. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein as Commander-in-Chief controlled the war through the Revolutionary Command Council. 15

Yodfat asserts that President Saddam Hussein hoped to reach a quick victory, thereby leading to the overthrow of Khomeini's regime.<sup>16</sup> He also hoped to seize Khuzestan (most of the inhabitants in this region are Arabs) within a few days,<sup>17</sup> then trigger successful revolts in Iranian Kurdistan, in Iran's armed forces

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15 William O. Staudenmaier, in *op.cit.*, pp. 30-33.

16 Aryeh Y. Yodfat, The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsular: Soviet Policy Towards the Persian Gulf and Arabia, (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 120.

17 Khuzestan was formerly known as Arabistan. The population has historically been about 80 per cent Arabic-speaking, and it thus seems to the Baghdad regime as part of the 'Arab nation'.

and among the population. Iraq at this point underestimated the Iranian regime's ability to manipulate such religious symbols as Shi'ism, and to stir up Iranian patriotism.

In any analysis of Iran's and Iraq's relative strength, Iran's international isolation and Iraq's strong relations with the Gulf states ought to be mentioned. The Baghdad regime believed that in view of the 1980 presidential election in the United States, any delay in invading might allow Khomeini to settle the American embassy hostages crisis which was isolating Iran internationally. On the other hand, Iraq's strong relations with the Gulf states, all of which shared a common fear of Iran's policy of exporting revolution, were regarded as being to Iraq's advantage. Hence, just two weeks after Iraq's invasion, in order to dissuade the Gulf states from rendering moral and material support to Iraq, the Iranian regime gave notice that it would embark on retaliatory measures against any country suspected of assisting Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Such retaliatory actions were also designed to lessen Jordanian King Hussein's support of Iraq.<sup>19</sup>

Second, President Saddam Hussein started the war in September 1980 because he hoped to be in a posi-

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18 Washington Post, October 10, 1980.

19 On October 4, 1980, Amman Television broadcasted HM King Hussein's statement as saying that 'we are not neutral on the question of the Gulf war. We are totally with Iraq, and will do our best to enable Iraq to retrieve all its rights to the Shatt-al Arab. See SWB:ME, 6541, October 6, 1980, p. A/11.



tion to make personal gain when the conference of non-aligned countries would be held in Baghdad in 1982.<sup>20</sup> If he could defeat Khomeini in 1980 or 1981, perhaps not only would he be the leader of Pan-Arabism, but he might also become one of the most influential leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Third, of the strategically important areas in Iran-West Azerbaijan, Khuzestan, Baluchistan,<sup>21</sup> one could argue that the Baghdad regime attached the greatest significance to Khuzestan. Three salient reasons account for this. In the first place, it had politically symbolic value: as was noted, Khuzestan was formerly known as Arabistan. Hence, had Iraq conquered this land for the Arabs, Iraq's ambition to be recognized as the leader of the Arab world would be greatly improved. Second, Khuzestan is extensively endowed with oil, and occupation of this region would result in a significant increase in Iraq's oil reserves. Finally, it had a strategic contribution: control of Khuzestan, lying along the Persian Gulf, would give Iraq much greater access to the Gulf. Geographically, any military movement on the coastal plains was likely to be impeded by the winter rains in November and to remain hampered until June or July.<sup>22</sup> The flood waters could be utilized to enhance

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20 William O. Staudenmaier, in op.cit., p. 37.

21 See Map C.

22 William O. Staudenmaier, in op.cit., p. 33.

Map C: The Strategic Areas in Iran

Sources: George Lenczowski, (ed.), Iran Under the Pahlavis, (California: The Hoover Institution Press, 1978); National Geographic: Atlas of the World, (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1981), pp. 182-83.

military defense, and September was the appropriate season for an infantry assault, aimed at capturing the area before the rains and utilizing the November-June period of enforced military inactivity to consolidate control and prepared defences against an eventual Iranian attempt to retake it.

Fourth and finally, in late 1980 both the United States and the Soviet Union were occupied elsewhere. While the United States was preoccupied with both seeking a satisfactory solution of the hostage crisis and the presidential election campaign, the Soviet Union was burdened with its involvement in Afghanistan and Poland. In effect, the Baghdad regime might have perceived a freer hand to escalate its military confrontation with Teheran.

However, it could also be argued that because of the 1972 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, Iraq's leaders expected to count on substantial Soviet support in any large-scale military encounter with Iran. But this did not happen because (a) the Soviet Union was plagued with a guerilla war in Afghanistan and a politically and economically unstable situation in Poland; (b) more importantly, before the war erupted, there could be little doubt, as Karen Dawisha notes, that Moscow was courting Iran in the months leading up to

the Iraqi invasion.<sup>23</sup> The likelihood here is that the Iraqi leaders believed a quick victory could be attained without requiring Soviet support, and that the Treaty could be invoked to inhibit subsequent Iranian counter-action.

The Kremlin leaders and Soviet press had at various times expressed their support for the revolution in Iran, characterized in one Tass communique as 'a people's revolution with a clear and noble purpose; liberation from neo-colonialist domination and the acquisition of genuine independence'.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Soviet leaders were concerned that, in the event of a successful rescue of the American hostages in Teheran, the escalation of conflicts along the Iran-Iraq border would eventuate in a US-backed intervention in Iran. Karen Dawisha further indicates that Soviet efforts to curry Iranian favour were reflected in a large increase in Soviet exports to that country.<sup>25</sup> More interestingly, it has been claimed that, in order to ingratiate themselves with the new revolutionary regime and to enhance the influence of the Tudeh Party, the Soviets advised the Khomeini regime, through the Tudeh,

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23 Karen Dawisha, 'Moscow and the Gulf War', The World Today, Vol. 37, No. 1, January 1981, p. 10.

24 Tass, January 16, 1980. Cited in ibid., p. 10.

25 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

of Iraq's military war plans to invade Iran.<sup>26</sup> At this point, although the reality was that President Saddam Hussein was more a scheming opportunist than a holy warrior,<sup>27</sup> one could obviously argue that the Baghdad decision-makers miscalculated what the Soviet Union's position would be.

## II: The Soviet Union's Policy of 'Non-Interference' and Dissatisfaction With the War

The outbreak of the war in September 1980 was inconvenient for the Soviets. For Soviet decision-makers, the Iraq-Iran war posed an unavoidable dilemma. Undecided between Iraq, the emerging regional power with which the Soviets had a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, and radical, virulently anti-American Iran, Moscow found itself in an extremely delicate position. Anything that the Soviets did or said about the conflict could be interpreted by either of the warring parties as taking sides. Tension between the two might complicate the Soviet ability to woo both. Karen Dawisha asserts that, for Moscow, the complexities and contradictions in the

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26 See the statement of Iran's Foreign Minister, Velayati before the UN General Assembly on October 1, 1983. Verbatim Records, A38/PV 13, p. 47. See also J.M. Abdulghani, op.cit., p. 216; Aryeh Y. Yodfat, op.cit., p. 120.

27 Editorial, New York Times, September 23, 1980. Iraq's invasion was characterized as 'Saddam's Qadisiyya'-the Battle of Qadisiyya in A.D. 637, in which the Arabs powerfully defeated the Persian army, led to the collapse of the Persian Empire.

situation were so enormous as to be almost farcical.<sup>28</sup> On the surface, one could possibly have predicted that the Soviets would back Iraq against Iran. However, it was far from clear that the Soviets favoured an Iraqi victory.

Chagrined at the prospect of having to choose sides, the Soviets adopted a policy best described as one of 'non-interference' and at the same time sought to avoid antagonizing either Iran or Iraq by describing the war as promoted by the interests of imperialism.<sup>29</sup> The Soviet tactic was to seek a scapegoat for the war which it found in US imperialism. Two days after the war broke out, on September 24, 1980, Izvestia commentator, A. Leonidov, noted that:

The forces of imperialism have always sought, and are now seeking, to derive a self-fish advantage from contradictions that sometimes arise in relations among developing countries...

It is precisely this tactic that the United States and other Western countries are using now in their approach to the conflict between Iraq and Iran that has broken out in the Middle East. 30

The US's alleged policy of fishing in troubled waters was further emphasized in Literaturnaya

28 Karen Dawisha, op.cit., p. 218.

29 New York Times, September 26, 1980; Robert O. Freedman, 'Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since the Invasion of Afghanistan', Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1980/81, p. 298; SWB:SU, 6545, October 10, 1980, p.A4/7; Soviet News, October 21, 1980, p. 326.

30 Complete text entitled 'Who Seeks to Gain From the Iranian-Iraqi Conflict?' by A. Leonidov, Izvestia, September 24, 1980. Translated in CDSP, October 22, 1980, Vol. XXXII, No. 38, p. 37. See also SWB:SU, 6532, September 25, 1980, p. A4/1.

Gazeta, which stated that:

The US has decided to use the Iranian-Iraqi conflict to its own advantage. In Washington, although what people are saying there amounts almost to 'neutrality', voices have been heard predicting a possible reconsideration of Iranian-American relations. President Carter feels that at this point Teheran will be forced to come to the Americans on bended knee. 31

Moreover, Leonid Brezhnev was quoted by a New Times commentator as saying that:

Neither Iraq nor Iran will benefit from the destruction and bloodshed, and from undermining each other's economies. The only one to benefit is a third party, one to whom the interests of the peoples of this region are alien. That third party is imperialism. 32

'Imperialism' in this context clearly meant the United States.

The Soviet policy of 'non-interference' seemed to disadvantage Iraq more than Iran since Iraq depended upon Moscow for emergency resupplies of spare parts and equipment. As Dennis Ross argues, despite their Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, a treaty which the Soviets had worked to invest with credibility and international standing, they cut off direct or new arms supplies to the Iraqis (although they did fulfill prior

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31 I. Belyayev, Literaturnaya Gazeta, October 1, 1980. Translated in CDSF, October 29, 1980, Vol. XXXII, No. 39, p. 38.

32 R. Andreasyan, 'The Oil Aspect of the Conflict', New Times, October 1980, No. 41, p. 8.

contracts for small arms and ammunitions).<sup>33</sup>

Iraqi leaders could easily perceive the Soviet displeasure with the invasion. On September 22, 1980 when the Iraqi Deputy Premier, Tariq Aziz, flew to Moscow,<sup>34</sup> he was neither met by any of the top Soviet leaders nor officially received. He held talks with Boris Ponomarev, Secretary of the CPSU in charge of the International Department, a candidate member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo, and Viktor Maltsev, one of the two First Deputy Foreign Ministers.<sup>35</sup> No joint official communique was issued. Instead, the report of the two-and-a-half hour meeting said simply that a conversation took place between Ponomarev and Aziz, who was in the Soviet Union for a brief visit.<sup>36</sup> The report went on to say that during the conversation, pressing problems of the current international situation and events in the Near and Middle East were discussed.<sup>37</sup>

As Karen Dawisha points out, the extent to which relations between the two countries had deteriorated is obviously indicated by the absence of any mention of Aziz being an invited guest, of there having been any agreement or even suggestion that talks had taken place on a 'cordial' or a 'business-like' basis.<sup>38</sup>

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33 Dennis Ross, 'Soviet Views Toward the Gulf War', Orbis, Vol. 28, No. 3, Fall 1984, p. 438.

34 Tass, September 22, 1980. FBIS:USSR, September 23, 1980, p. H1.

35 Ibid., p. H1.

36 Tass, September 22, 1980. SWB:SU, 6531, September 24, 1980, p. A4/1.

37 Ibid.

38 Karen Dawisha, 'Soviet Decision-Making in the Middle



The Iraqi News Agency broadcast a report that the two-day official visit of Tariq Aziz to the Soviet Union fell within the framework of joint consultations with the Soviet Union about bilateral relations and international issues of joint interest.<sup>39</sup> But Soviet disagreement with the Iraqi action, and with Baghdad's almost certain failure to inform the Kremlin in advance of its intentions, was further reflected in the failure to mention, in the report, that discussions had taken place within the context of the treaty provisions calling for mutual consultations.<sup>40</sup> The Soviets deliberately tried to downplay the significance of Tariq Aziz's visit to Moscow.<sup>41</sup>

The Kremlin's further disenchantment with Baghdad was also apparent from the signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Syria, Iraq's Ba'athist antagonist, on October 8, 1980. Given Syria's support for Iran (discussed later), this treaty was tacitly seen as a signal of a Soviet shift in favour of Iran.<sup>42</sup> A joint communique was officially issued at the end of the talks between Presidents Brezhnev and Assad, in which a clause supported 'Iran's inalienable right to determine its destiny independently and without any foreign interference'<sup>43</sup> that clearly referred to the Iraqi invasion.

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38 (cont'd) East: The 1973 October War and the 1980 Gulf War', International Affairs, Vol. 57, No. 1, Winter 1980-81, p. 55.

39 Iraqi News Agency, September 23, 1980. SWB:SU, 6531, September 24, 1980, p. A4/1.

40 Karen Dawisha, op.cit., p. 55.

41 FBIS:USSR, September 24, 1980, p. H3.

42 Karen Dawisha, 'Soviet Decision-Making in the Middle East: The 1973 October War and the 1980 Gulf War', op.cit., p. 56.

43 Pravda, October 11, 1980. Ibid., p. 56.

In November 1980, Soviet media reported Tariq Aziz's other visit to Moscow.<sup>44</sup> In like manner, this visit was accorded with a lukewarm reception by Boris Ponomarev and Viktor Maltsev. During Tariq Aziz's one-day visit, a conversation was held during which the sides discussed some questions of bilateral Soviet-Iraqi relations and the current situation in the Middle East. True enough, the issue of the Gulf war came up again in the conversation and met with no further progress. Insofar as the Iranian press report of Soviet arms deliveries to Iraq was concerned, Radio Moscow's commentator Vera Lebedeva strongly stated that 'such reports, scandalously disseminated by the US imperialism, were groundless'.<sup>45</sup> The aim of these reports, he further noted, was 'to produce doubts about the Soviet Union's position on the Iranian-Iraqi war and thus damage the Kremlin's reputation and foreign policy'.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, speaking at the 26th CPSU Congress in Moscow in early March 1981, the leader of the Iraqi Communist Party, Aziz Mohammed, presumably with the Kremlin's approval, both condemned the war with Iran as a 'ruinous military adventure', accusing President Saddam Hussein of bringing economic misery to Iraq,<sup>47</sup> and accused Baghdad of repression and persecution of Iraqi communists and other political forces in Iraq.<sup>48</sup>

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44 SWB:SU, 6575, November 14, 1980, p. A4/4.

45 SWB:SU, 6639, February 3, 1981, p. A4/3.

46 Ibid.

47 Washington Post, March 3, 1981.

48 Ibid.

What explains the Soviet Union's position of 'non-interference' or standing on the sidelines?

As already mentioned, the war came at a bad time for the Soviet Union. One could possibly argue that, once the war began, it would not take the Kremlin leaders long to be aware that the Soviet Union could gain little and risked losing much of its influence. The Kremlin leaders' calculations for pursuing a policy of 'non-interference' were heavily based on the view that a total victory by either of the warring countries was undesirable. Again, as Karen Dawisha discerns, a total Iranian defeat might lead to Khomeini's replacement by a more pro-Western regime while simultaneously deepening Iraq's independence of Moscow.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the Kremlin leaders could derive no benefit from an Iraqi defeat, especially in the light of Moscow's immediate refusal to supply spare parts and equipment to Iraq. In this situation, as one could perceive, subsequent Iraqi leaders and Iraqi public opinion might blame the Soviet Union for the defeat of their country.

Despite the Soviet Union's statement which indicated a policy of 'non-interference', it in fact, although not explicitly, inclined towards Teheran. Moscow's view of Iran was attributable to the following factors.

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49 Karen Dawisha, 'Moscow and the Gulf War', op.cit., p. 11.

First, Iran's policy had become vocally anti-American. The Khomeini revolution shifted Iran from its close relationship with the United States.

Second, the Kremlin was aware of the relatively greater strategic importance of Iran in terms of its geographical contiguity with the Soviet Union, its location along the Gulf, and the vital Strait of Hormuz.

Third, given Iran's common border with Afghanistan, one could not rule out Teheran's aid to the Afghan guerillas against Soviet occupation, should Moscow side with Iraq.<sup>50</sup>

The Soviet ambassador to Iran, Vladimir Vinogradov, met the Iranian Prime Minister, Muhammad Ali Raja'i, and was reported by Iranian radio as saying: 'We can cooperate in various fields and are prepared to help you with military equipment'.<sup>51</sup> One could argue that such report by the Iranian radio, not the most trustful media, was probably not truthful, particularly since by saying that the Iranians had rejected the offer, they saved the embarrassment of having later to account for the non-arrival of Soviet aid at a later date. While Prime Minister Raja'i was reported to have rejected the

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50 Robert O. Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, (New York:Praeger Publishers, 1982), p. 232.

51 Teheran Domestic Service, October 5, 1980. FBIS:South Asia, October 6, 1980, pp. I8-I9.

proposal,<sup>52</sup> such an offer was confirmed by Ayatollah Mohammad Baheshti, head of the ruling Islamic Republican Party in Iran.<sup>53</sup> Tass reported that: 'There have been no proposals from the Soviet side to Iran concerning arms deliveries and, consequently the Iranian Premier had nothing to reject'.<sup>54</sup>

On October 11, 1980, the Iranian President, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, met with Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov and strongly protested Soviet aid to Iraq. The ambassador tactfully replied that his government had been committed to a stance of 'non-interference' since the war began. He added that his country was seeking good and neighbourly relations with Iran.<sup>55</sup>

As the war continued, Soviet dissatisfaction with the hostilities became more apparent since the war brought with it a number of serious problems for Moscow.

For one thing, the eruption of the Iraq-Iran war polarized the Arab world into two contending camps. Whereas Libya, Syria and Algeria and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) came out for Iran, Jordan and the Gulf sheikhdoms openly backed Iraq. The Syrians stressed that the war diverted attention from the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Besides, the

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52 Ibid.

53 FBIS:South Asia, October 9, 1980, p. I5.

54 Tass in English, October 8, 1980. FBIS:USSR, October 9, 1980, p. H10.

55 FBIS:South Asia, October 14, 1980. p. I11.

Libyan President Qaddafi saw the conflict within:

the context of the crusade existing between Moslems and Christians, between East and West and between the Islamic nation and the Europeans. It is, therefore, an Islamic duty to be allied with the Moslems in Iran in this confrontation. 56

In October 1980, the Baghdad regime broke off diplomatic relations with Damascus and Tripoli. A spokesman for the Iraqi Foreign Ministry stated that:

It has been confirmed that the Syrians and Libyan regimes have colluded with the Persian aggressors by supplying them with arms and hardware and by erecting an air bridge linking Teheran with Damascus and Tripoli. 57

Given the severe relations between the Baghdad regimes and the Damascus and Tripoli rulers, a new realignment of powers consequently emerged in the Arab world, as indicated by the emergence of an Iranian-Syrian-Libyan axis versus an Iraqi-Saudi-Jordanian axis. In addition to Iraq breaking off diplomatic relations with Syria and Libya, Saudi Arabia also broke off diplomatic relations with Libya because the Tripoli leader had criticized Riyadh's decision to allow the stationing of US Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) aircraft on Saudi oil. Moscow could see a

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56 SWB:ME, 6546, October 11, 1980, p. A/2.

57 Baghdad Voice of the Masses, October 11, 1980.  
SWB:ME, 6547, October 13, 1980, p. A/4.

a major disruption of the anti-imperialist Arab unity that it had wanted for so long. As New Times commentator Alexander Usvatov lamented:

Fought between two non-aligned countries pursuing anti-imperialist policies, the war is bound to weaken them in the face of intensified imperialist scheming, and sow divisions and disarray in the world's anti-imperialist front, creating a serious threat to peace and international security. 58

This war also weakened the Iraqi-led anti-Sadat Arab coalition. It was Egyptian support for Iraq that precipitated a gradual steady improvement in Egyptian-Iraqi relations. This regional realignment presented a so profoundly complex situation that the Kremlin leaders deemed the containment of the conflict very difficult. As Karen Dawisha argues:

The Gulf war risked escalation because the very lack of clear division into two groups of combatants, each with their super-power patron, increased the chances of either or both superpowers pursuing policies independent of the local conflict to protect their own interests, thereby introducing the possibility of a gradual and uncontrollable escalatory cycle. 59

Second, Moscow feared a major American gain in the conflict that would provide the United States with a pretext for offering 'protection' to the Gulf

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58 Alexander Usvatov, 'Put Out the Fire', New Times, October 1980, No. 40, p. 12.

59 Karen Dawisha, 'Soviet Decision-Making in the Middle East: The 1973 October War and the 1980 Gulf War', op.cit., p. 54.

states and thus building a military presence in the region.<sup>60</sup> As New Times Middle East commentator Dmitry Volsky lamented:

This tragic and senseless conflict, as Leonid Brezhnev described it, is beginning to cause serious unpleasantness not only for the belligerents, but also for the consumers of their oil. And it is no secret that US imperialist quarters are using the conflict as a pretext for stepping up their preparations for intervention in the Persian Gulf. Today it is preparations for intervention, but what might it be tomorrow? 61

At any rate, it can be argued that Soviet leaders possibly believed that the stationing of American AWACS aircraft and ground radar personnel in Saudi Arabia demonstrated American willingness to help defend Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states in time of need and helped neutralize Moscow's charge that the US military increase in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf area was a threat to the Arab world.<sup>62</sup> As a related problem for the Soviets, another spin-off of the Gulf war was the creation of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in February 1981, comprising the conservative monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar. All have diplomatic relations with the United States, the first three maintain

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60 \$WB:SU , 6533, September 26, 1980, p. A4/1.

61 Dmitry Volsky, 'Time Will Not Wait', New Times, December 1980, No. 51, p. 8.

62 \$WB:SU, 6533, September 26, 1980, p. A4/1.



military ties as well, while only Kuwait has even diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Moscow feared that the Council would provide both a military and political setting for increased American activities in the Persian Gulf, particularly in the light of Oman's agreement to provide a base for the American Rapid Deployment Force at Masirah Island.

Third, an inevitable result of the war would be that Iraq and Iran would be both financially and economically exhausted. Moscow became concerned that, once the war was over, both countries might have to turn to the United States and Western Europe for aid in reconstruction. A Tass commentary on October 10, voiced this Soviet concern:

It is easy to see in these conditions the imperialist powers are quite willing to turn the conflict to their advantage, to capitalize on the economic weakening of Iran and Iraq, so as to grant them imperialist economic aid on their own terms, whose aim will undoubtedly be to restore in those countries the positions of Western oil monopolies, to entangle them in the web of predatory financial agreements, in short to restore their economic domination. 63

However, what should be noted here is the fact that the Soviet leaders candidly declared such a posture of 'non-interference' since the outbreak of the war remained controversial. With regard to the account presented in preceding sections, the

Gulf war put the Soviet Union into a quandary about which side should be supported even though, as one could argue, the Kremlin leaders should adhere to the treaty-based commitment to help the Baghdad regime. The Soviet leaders, however, could repudiate such claims by arguing that the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation has specified help by each to the other in the event of any attack by a third party. As Iraq initiated the war, the Soviets could assert that it would not be applicable. Quite likely, that was what they told the Iraqi Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz when he flew to Moscow on September 22, 1980 when the full-scale military invasion of Iran broke out. Despite this treaty, as Dennis Ross had already noted, the Soviets cut off direct or new arms supplies to the Iraqis. Hence, some might hastily surmise that Moscow undertook a position of 'non-interference' in the Gulf hostilities.

It is no exaggeration that such a Soviet position would be likely to be thought of as hollow rhetoric for peace. For the reason that notwithstanding Moscow's decision to cut off direct arms supplies to Iraq, the SIPRI Yearbook on World Armaments and Disarmament reported that the Soviet Union's allies in Eastern Europe-Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, and Hungary did supply weapons to Iraq, and did so with implicit Soviet approval.

III: The Impact of the Soviet Policy of 'Non-Interference' on Soviet-Iraqi Relations

There is little doubt that the Soviet Union's policy of 'non-interference' in relation to the Gulf war brought about acute reactions from high-ranking Iraqi officials. One example of this was Tariq Aziz's dissatisfaction with a lukewarm low-level meeting with Soviet counterparts when he paid a visit to Moscow on September 22, 1980. His reaction was made even clearer when he commented on the question as to whether he had requested any sophisticated weapons or fresh supplies. He bluntly replied that:

We have been buying arms for twelve years and we would not have waged a war in which we would be in need of arms within five minutes of waging it. Our arms are stockpiled and will suffice us for a long war.

The aim of the Moscow visit was to inform the Soviets that it was in their own interests to watch the situation on the Iraq-Iran border and understand what was happening without intervening, as long as the conflict was confined to Iraq and Iran. 64

Iraqi dissatisfaction with the Soviet stance was equally indicated by both the Defence and Foreign Ministers' acknowledgement of the cutting off of weapons and equipment by the Soviets. Both ministers also put

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64 Ash-Sharq al-Awsat, September 30, 1980. Cited in Aryeh Y. Yodfat, op.cit., p. 121.

emphasis on alternative sources of arms supply excluding only Israel.<sup>65</sup> France was ranked as the most significant alternative supplier, while others included Italy, West Germany, Spain and Brazil.<sup>66</sup> Iraqi officials contrasted the willingness of France to honour any agreement with those who sought pretexts to avoid them. They were referring in fact to the Soviets having cut off supplies. From the very outset of the war, France's arms trade policy involved the supply not only of Mirage fighters, but also HOT anti-tank missiles, Matra-Super 530 air-to-air missiles, missile-equipped fast attack craft as well as various models of helicopters (Gazelle, Lynx, Puma and Super Frelon), replacements and spare parts.<sup>67</sup>

It is quite clear that both the Soviet policy of 'non-interference' and the Iraqi response could worsen their already-strained relations. Soviet leaders determined to prevent any further deterioration which might lead to the abrogation of the Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Treaty while the Iraqis made it clear that the Soviet refusal to supply arms during the war with Iran would

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65 Shahram Chubin, op.cit., p. 99.

66 See Table 7.5 tabulating arms resupply and other support to Iraq and Iran, 1980-83 in Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 1984: World Armaments and Disarmament, (London & Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, 1984), p. 198.

67 The Middle East and North Africa, (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1980), p. 122.

not quickly be forgotten.<sup>68</sup> Yet opportunities still existed to avoid deterioration of their relations and to improve ties. It was opportune that on April 9, 1981, the ninth anniversary of the signing of the Soviet-Iraqi friendship treaty was observed in both countries. Both Pravda and the Iraqi News Agency reported an exchange of greetings between Soviet and Iraqi leaders. Both sides called for friendship and cooperation. The Soviet greetings said:

The Soviet Union is prepared to continue developing relations with Iraq on the basis of mutual interest in strengthening friendship and cooperation between our countries. 69

President Saddam Hussein sent a cable of thanks to the Soviet leaders in reply to their congratulatory cable. It said:

...Iraq is prepared to develop the existing relations of friendship with the Soviet Union on the bases of mutual cooperation, bolstering the struggle and independence of the peoples against imperialism and confrontation of all forms of intervention in the region. 70

It seems obvious that both messages purposely avoided touching upon the sensitive issue of the Gulf war. At this point, cooperation in non-political, non-

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68 Karen Dawisha, 'The Correlation of Forces and Soviet Policy in the Middle East', in Adeed Dawisha & Karen Dawisha, (ed.), The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives, (London:Heinemann, 1982), 153.

69 Pravda, April 11, 1981. Cited in Aryeh Y. Yodfat, op.cit., p. 130.

70 SWB:ME, 6696, April 10, 1981, p. A/9.

military fields was still in effect. A delegation of the Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Society visited Moscow, and both they and the Soviets issued statements on ways of enhancing cooperation between the two peoples.<sup>71</sup> In turn, a Soviet delegation led by the Chairman of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, Semyon Skachkov, attended a meeting of the permanent Soviet-Iraqi Commission on Economic and Technical Co-operation in Baghdad.<sup>72</sup> These exchanges of visits held out hope for the development of co-operation in the fields of industry, agriculture, and irrigation.<sup>73</sup>

These were signs of a desire by both sides not to permit their relations to deteriorate any further. They wished to maintain, or even upgrade, them as far as possible while the ensuing situation in the Gulf war gradually changed to a new phase. This involved an Iranian offensive, during which Soviet-Iraqi relations slightly improved.

### Conclusion

There was little doubt that Iraqi leaders embarked on another independent and pragmatic decision to wage a full-scale military confrontation with Iran at what they perceived as a suitable and necessary time.

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71 FBIS:USSR, April 24, 1981, p. H3.

72 SWB:SU, 6701, April 16, 1981, p. 4/2.

73 FBIS:MEA, April 22, 1981, p. E1; FBIS:USSR, June 22, 1981, p. H6.

The Baghdad regime unilaterally abrogated the Algiers Agreement of March 1975 and launched its large-scale invasion of the Iranian province of Khuzestan in September 1980 without giving advance notice to the Kremlin decision-makers. Given Moscow's prevailing policy of courting both countries and its dissatisfaction with the Iraqi decision, a policy of 'non-interference' in the Gulf war was the best option. The Soviet Union's policy of 'non-interference' was used for not taking sides with one of the rivals and for cutting off the supply of weapons and equipment to Iraq. In turn, Iraq's turning to their suppliers, particularly France, further dampened its relations with the Soviet Union.

It is worth noting, however, that both the Soviet Union and the Iraqi Ba'athist regime still had available options for improving their ties and avoiding any further deterioration. The next chapter, therefore, will discuss the way in which Soviet-Iraqi relations improved, though only slightly, as the Gulf war evolved towards a new phase.

Chapter III: Soviet-Iraqi Relations During a Period  
of Protracted War: The Soviet Shift to A  
Position of 'Wait and See'

Introduction

The main discussion in Chapter II clearly showed that Soviet-Iraqi relations underwent a number of ups and downs from the time the intensified Gulf war broke out in September 1980. These fluctuating relations were mainly conditioned by both the Baghdad regime's independent decision to launch the invasion and the Soviet Union's policy of 'non-interference' towards the war.

While it might be argued that the fierce military conflict in the Gulf war beyond the control or even manipulation of external powers, it could equally be asserted that the evolving situation in the Gulf itself had a profound impact on their positions and policies towards the Gulf war, particularly those of the Soviet Union. Quite obviously, the most significant element in the evolving situation was the Iranian counter-offensives that took place after a period of so-called 'stalemate' in May 1981. Whether or not the Kremlin leaders viewed the Iranian counter-offensives as the turning point in the Gulf war, they had, at least, been prepared for modifying their stances and policies towards the Iraqi Ba'athist



regime. The Soviet Union's policy of 'wait and see', then, took precedence over the previous policy of 'non-interference'. This new Soviet position of 'wait and see' denoted the Soviet leaders' calculation of any 'cost and benefit' incurring from the possible further involvement while the situation of the war has evolved. Put simply, this new policy held for the Soviet Union a chance to, even more explicitly, come out more closely for either one of the antagonists.

What should be taken into account here is that one could argue that it is quite difficult to shed light on the distinction between a position of 'non-interference' and a posture of 'wait and see'. This argument is suggested by the fact that when the war broke out in September 1980, the Soviet Union claimed a 'non-interference' posture towards the war, but Tariq Aziz, in November 1980, described the Soviet attitude towards the war as one of 'wait and see'.<sup>1</sup>

Analysis of Soviet-Iraqi relations in this chapter will be carried out in terms of the new situation of the war centred on Iranian counter-offensives. The task of this chapter will be to argue that the Kremlin leaders have pursued (or are even still pursuing) a policy of 'wait and see'. In so doing, three related questions will be considered:

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1. J.M. Abdulghani, Iraq & Iran: The Years of Crisis, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 217.

(i) What was the situation in the Gulf region after the 'stalemate' of 1981?

(ii) How did the Kremlin leaders modify their policies in line with the evolving situation in the Gulf?

(iii) What impact did changing Soviet policy have on Soviet-Iraqi relations?

I: The Situation in the Gulf: The Iranian Counter-Offensives

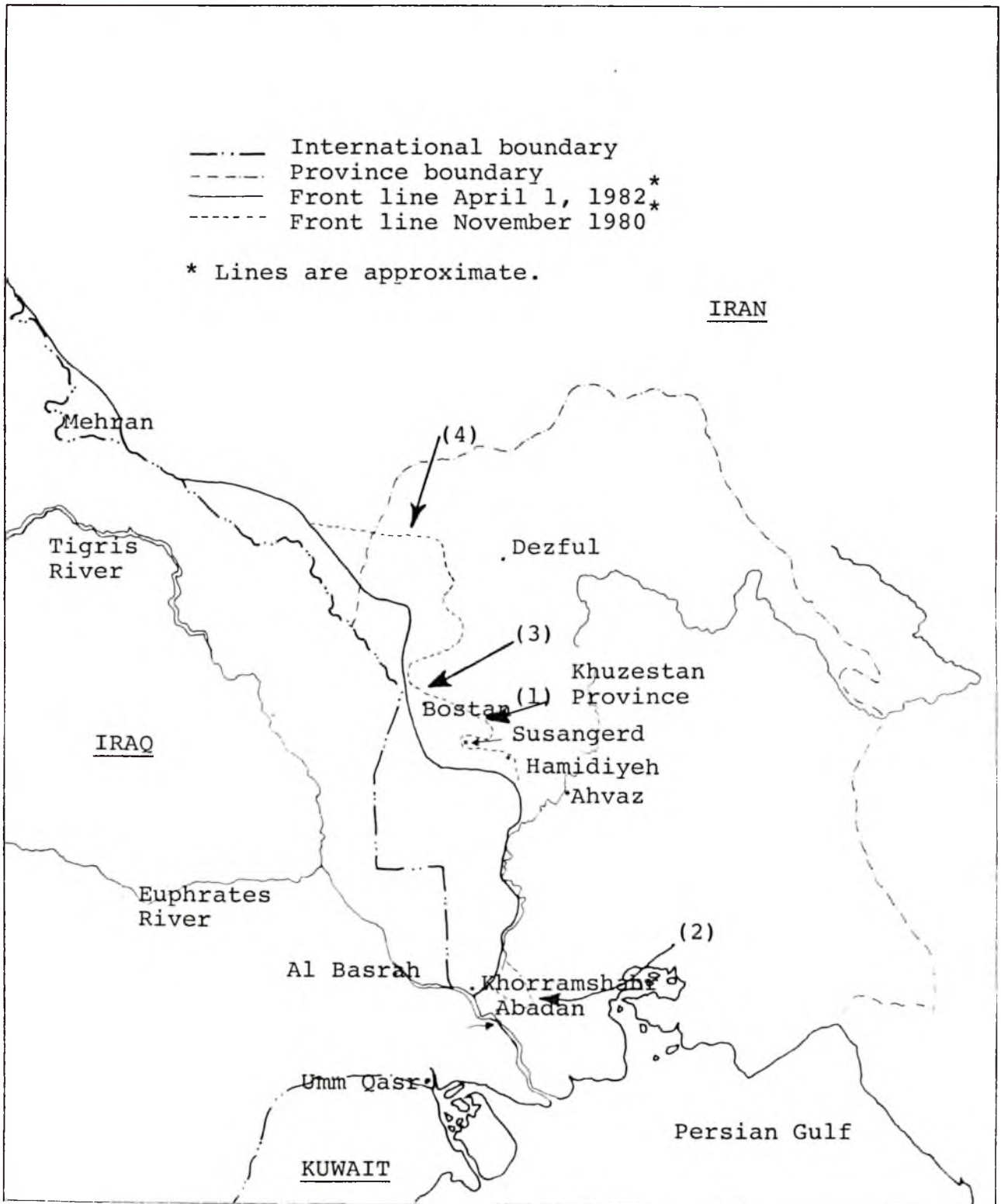
The Iranian counter-offensives have been characterized by a series of local Iranian incursions and victories in particular areas.<sup>2</sup> These military operations were highlighted by the Iranian army's major victories in, firstly, recapturing the strategically important city of Susangerd and surrounding area in May 1981.<sup>3</sup> In September of that year, Iraqi garrisons were expelled in disorder from Abadan.

Iran's military activities continued throughout November and December 1981. The recapture of the strategic town of Bostan built up Iran's confidence and neutralized Iraq's logistic link between Dezful and Ahvas. This, in turn, led to Iran's later capture of strategic locations in the Dezful area in March 1982. More importantly, another major Iranian victory was its effective recapture of the major Iranian city and port of Khorramshahr in May 1982.

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2 Stephen R. Grummon, The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled, The Washington Papers, No. 92, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1982), p. 27.

3 Keesing Contemporary Archives, 1981, pp. 31008-9. See also Map D.

Map D: Changes in the Front Line in Khuzestan Province

Source: Stephen R. Grummon, 'The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled', The Washington Paper, No. 92, (Washington: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1982), p. 28.

Such psychological and political victories whipped up growing Iranian confidence. Speeches in the Majlis (the Iranian Parliament) by various Iranian leaders, as Stephen Grummon speculates, suggested that such victories showed that God was truly on the Iranian side.<sup>4</sup> With this reinforcement of their religious conviction, the Iranian leaders began to threaten to cross the international border into Iraq. For example, they pledged to continue the war until final victory was achieved or peace and stability were established for the oppressed.<sup>5</sup> More intimidatingly, Iranian clergymen called on the Iranian army to liberate the Shi'ite holy places in Iraq from the oppressive Ba'athists.<sup>6</sup> This was confirmed by Mohsen Rezai, Commander of the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran), when he proclaimed that the Iranian paratroops would move forward to Karbala (the Iraqi Shi'ite holy city) in the near future.<sup>7</sup>

To forestall further military losses, the Baghdad regime proposed a cease-fire. A joint meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) of Iraq and the leadership of the Ba'ath Party was held to propose a cease-fire and the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iran, conditional on arbitration as a way to resolve the conflict between the two countries.<sup>8</sup> Together with this proposal, President

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4 Stephen R. Grummon, op.cit., p. 29.

5 FBIS:SA, May 11, 1982, p. I4.

6 Ibid., p. I3.

7 Washington Post, April 13, 1982.

8 FBIS:USSR, June 10, 1982, p. H1.

Saddam Hussein announced in his 'address to the people' that:

According to the announcement of a cease-fire and withdrawal of Iraqi troops from the Iranian territory on June 10, (the Iraqi troops) will be withdrawn to the Iranian-Iraqi border in the course of 10 days. 9

One could argue however that the severity of the war had been greatly aggravated by Khomeini's forceful proclamation of no compromise with the infidel, corrupt Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein:

Now, he (Saddam Hussein) who is well known by all the Iraqi nation, who is he trying to deceive by praying or going to the mosque?...The Iraqi nation knows his inner nature...Only some people who live on the other side of the world, in America, or in Europe, may not know him,... For many years the people have lived with the Ba'ath Party and have suffered many calamities from it...Saddam Hussein has extended his hand to compromise with us. We have no compromise with him. He is an infidel, corrupt, and a perpetrator of corruption. 10

Khomeini further attempted to excite the Iraqi people:

You should rise up and install the Islamic government that you want...(and) greet your Iranian brothers who have been forced to cross over into Iraq to save the oppressed Iraqi people from the dominance of the Ba'ath Party. 11

To underscore its warning, another Iranian military attack on Iraq was unleashed. In July 1982, Iran made

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9 FBIS:USSR, June 21, 1982, p. H1; SWB:SU, 7060, June 24, 1982, p. A4/2. In June 1983, President Saddam Hussein again proposed an agreement on the cessation of military operations between Iran and Iraq. It was again turned down by the Iran; FBIS:USSR, June 17, 1983, p. H2.

10 SWB:ME, 6538, October 2, 1980, pp. A3-4.

11 Washington Post, July 15, 1982.

good its threat by crossing the Iraqi border and launching a full-scale invasion in the Basra region. This could be seen, like the initial Iranian counter-offensives, as a turning point in the Gulf war. Yet, it did not necessarily lead to a victory for Islamic revolutionary Iran. Both Iraq and Iran have been plunged into a war which is unlikely to be conclusive. A series of artillery exchanges and bombardments on both sides' civilian targets and military concentrations along the international border are still in progress.

At the same time, the situation was further complicated by a war of lies. The Iraqi News Agency and the Iranian News Agency (Pars) consistently released military communiques and reports that were completely contradictory. These claims made it impossible to place much faith in the word of either side.

However, attention should also be given to various attempts to bring both parties to the negotiating table. From the very beginning of the war, the United Nations, the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO) and the Non-Aligned Movement simultaneously appealed to both rivals to find a solution through peaceful means. Other attempts at conciliation came from the Palestinian Liberation Organization's leader, Yasser Arafat, the Pakistani President, Zia-ul-Haq, and an Algerian negotiating team.

Quite clearly, the UN Security Council had a vital role in attempting to solve this conflict. The Security Council adopted Resolution No. 479 at session No. 2248 on 28th September 1980 which urged the immediate termination of all combat operations and also the withdrawal of all forces within internationally recognized borders.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Olof Palme, the UN Secretary General's personnel envoy, played the role of go-between.

However, neither this resolution nor Palme's ongoing attempts met with success. The Teheran regime was firmly opposed to the Security Council resolution 479 for two reasons. First, its leaders put emphasis on a claim that the resolution was approved at a time when Iraqi troops were on Iranian soil. Second, the Teheran leaders, insisting that Iraq must be condemned as the aggressor, were obviously infuriated by the Security Council's absence of any condemnation of the Iraqi invasion. Iran, thus, has been very suspicious of the UN's role. Iranian rejection of resolution 479 was echoed in Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr's letter to the UN Secretary-General which read:

The Security Council resolution has been adopted at a time when the Government of Iraq has waged a war of aggression in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations,... which is a vivid example of the true nature and ambitions of the Iraqi authorities who,....

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12 UN Security Council:Official Records, S/INF/36, 1980, p. 23.

have now deceptively used the peaceful initiative of the United Nations.

..., the proposals suggested in your letter and contained in the Security Council Resolution cannot be considered by our Government. 13

Under the auspices of the Islamic Conference Organization, the Islamic Peace Committee<sup>14</sup> was formed in accordance with the decision of the third Islamic summit conference held in Mecca and in Ta'if in January 1981. This committee is 'fully aware of the need to halt the dispute between Iran and Iraq'.<sup>15</sup> The committee believes in the principles of Islam for the propagation of peace and harmony among Muslims brothers. Again, there has been a strong commitment by this committee to present to both sides a comprehensive proposal to facilitate a peaceful solution in accordance with Islam and the principles of justice and international law.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Mr. Habib Chatti, the Secretary-General of the ICO, has shuttled between Teheran and Baghdad at various times in order to reconcile the diverging positions in the conflict.

The contributing role of the Non-Aligned Movement should also not be left out of account. The Non-

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13 UN Security Council:Official Records, 35th Year, Document S/14206, p. 3.

14 The Islamic Peace Committee set up a sub-committee to assist both sides to implement the measures for a comprehensive peaceful solution. It was composed of (1) the Guinean President, Ahmen Sekou Toure (2) the Gambian President, Dawda Jawara (3) the Bangladesh President, Ziaur Rahman (4) the Pakistani President, Zia-ul-Haq (5) Mr. Yasser Arafat (6) the Turkish Premier, Bulent Ulusu (7) the Senegalese Foreign Minister, Moustapha Niasse (8) the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Ahmad Rithauddeen Bin Ismail and (9) Mr. Habib Chatti, Secretary General of the Islamic Conference Organization, SWB:ME, 6666, March 6, 1981, p. A/7.

15 Ibid., p. A/5.

16 Ibid., p. A/6.



Aligned Movement's coordinating bureau has delegated to a committee composed of the foreign ministers of seven member countries the task of obtaining a peaceful settlement between Iran and Iraq.<sup>17</sup> The decision to set up this committee was deemed necessary after the Cuban Foreign Minister, Isidoro Malmierca, had made a peace effort by visiting both Teheran and Baghdad and meeting the Presidents of both countries.<sup>18</sup>

The seventh conference of non-aligned countries was initially scheduled for Baghdad in September 1982. Given the intensification of fighting and the unlikelihood of an immediate end to the war, therefore, the summit was ultimately held in New Delhi, India, in March 1983. At this summit, the non-aligned countries approved the call by the chairman of the movement, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India, to Iran and Iraq to put an end to the conflict:

We express our deep regret at the Iranian-Iraqi conflict which is continuing for 30 months and has brought to the peoples of these two countries big losses of life and material damage.

Iran and Iraq are members of the non-aligned movement, one of the principles of which is the settlement of all differences existing between countries by peaceful means.

We are convinced that the ending of the conflict will be a contribution to the strengthening of the movement's unity and solidarity. For this reason, we call on Iran and Iraq to bring an immediate end to the war. 19

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17 The committee is composed of the foreign ministers of Algeria, Cuba, India, Pakistan, the PLO, Yugoslavia and Zambia. SWB:ME, 6562, October 30, 1980, p. A/4.

18 Ibid.

19 FBIS:USSR, March 14, 1983, p. DD5.

What should be noted here, however, is the fact that these numerous peace initiatives have been to no avail. One could argue that the most common reason for the failures of these peace efforts was the Iranian regime's recalcitrant position. While the Iraqi government welcomed these peace efforts, the Iranian leaders bluntly turned them down.<sup>20</sup> However, this argument is slightly misleading. Two points must be made. In the first place, the Iraqi Ba'athist leaders strongly emphasized a pragmatic position during the course of the war. In other words, the Iraqi leaders conducted 'carrot and stick' diplomacy. The fact that the Baghdad regime was more ready to be cooperative in settling the conflict peacefully did not necessarily mean that the Baghdad leaders would not achieve their aims by force, if possible. On one hand, Tariq Aziz told the UN General Assembly on October 1, 1983 that Iraq accepted the appointment of an arbitration commission to determine which country had provoked the hostilities and whether either country could be held responsible for dragging out the conflict. Iraq, it was added, was prepared to accept the decision of such arbitration.<sup>21</sup> But as an example of the 'stick' approach, disappointed by Iran's refusal to negotiate a settlement of the conflict, Iraq threatened

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20 SWB:ME, 6554, October 21, 1980, pp. A/3-6; 6555, October 22, 1980, pp. A/4-5; 6668, March 9, 1983, p. A/4.

21 See Tariq Aziz's speech before the UN General Assembly, 38th session, Provisional Verbatim Record, A/38/PV 12, October 1, 1983, p. 66.

to impair Iran's oil-exporting capacity by bombing its vital oil installations. Furthermore, in his interview with Kuwaiti journalists, President Saddam Hussein confirmed that 'his country looks forward to peace with its neighbour Iran, but Iraq would not neglect its military preparedness and would escalate the military operations against Iran's Karg (sic) island so that Iran would not prolong the war which has been going on for about four years'.<sup>22</sup> Second, the real motive of the Iraqi leaders' more flexible position in the war was still open to question. It could be argued that, particularly after the Iranian troops had staged their counter-offensives, the Baghdad regime was tactful enough in proposing a conditional cease-fire in order to forestall any further military losses.

At this stage, the severity of the war was further exacerbated by increasingly close Franco-Iraqi relations. France developed a policy of unconditional support for Iraq. The French government was prepared to grant a dangerous 'loan' to Iraq:<sup>23</sup> the transfer of five Super Etendard attack aircraft to the Iraqi government. In addition, the Mitterrand administration announced that it had begun training Iraqi crews in France. This

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22 SWB:ME, 7637, May 8, 1984, p. A/5.

23 The Guardian Weekly, September 4, 1983.

kind of aircraft, armed with AM-39 Exocet air-to-surface missiles increased Iraq's ability to interdict the use of Iranian ports by oil tankers or to strike at Gulf shipping with greater range and diminished vulnerability.<sup>24</sup> In November 1983, Tariq Aziz confirmed the arrival in Iraq of French Super Etendard fighters.<sup>25</sup> This provision of arms by France provoked both regional and global repercussions. The Iranian leaders pledged to close the entrance to the Gulf in the Strait of Hormuz if Iran's key oil installations were attacked.<sup>26</sup> Such retaliation would seriously jeopardize the oil supply routes of a great number of countries particularly Western Europe and Japan.

Furthermore, some mention should be made of the Iranian accusation of Iraq's use of chemical weapons. In early 1984, the Iranian News Agency reported that the Iraqi forces had at various times used chemical weapons against Iranian combatants and civilians.<sup>27</sup> There were also unconfirmed reports that Soviet military experts were training the Iraqi regime's forces in the use of chemical weapons at a military training camp in north Baghdad.<sup>28</sup> The Iranian Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, requested the UN Secretary General to authorize a delegation, comprising military and chemical weapons experts, to inspect the civilian areas which had been attacked and to investigate the use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi forces.

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24 International Herald Tribune, September 17-18, 1983, p. 5.

25 Washington Post, November 3, 1983.

26 International Herald Tribune, op.cit., p. 5.

27 SWB:ME, 7568, February 16, 1984, p. A/11; The Guardian Weekly, March 11, 1984.

28 SWB:ME, 7587, March 9, 1984, p. A/12.

Not unexpectedly, General Adnan Khayrallah, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi Armed Forces and Defence Minister, firmly stated that these Iranian accusations were groundless. He affirmed that Iraq had not at any point used internationally-banned chemical weapons against Iranian forces.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, one could argue that Iraq's armed forces have recently got the upper hand in the war, particularly in terms of air superiority.<sup>30</sup> A Military-Political Review by an international observer, V. Pustov also noted that:

Iraq's obvious superiority in the air, particularly in the region of the fighting, was also of importance. Whereas in January (1985) Iraqi aircraft and helicopters made a little over 100 operational flights a day, in February the figure was around 200, while during the fiercest fighting in March this number was close to 1,000...Iranian military aircraft are obviously inferior to Iraqi military aircraft in terms of numbers and combat qualities. 31

The Iraqi High Military Command had been quoted by Tass as regularly reporting that the Iraqi aircraft had destroyed Iranian shelters, observations posts, combat positions and concentrations of Iranian troops in "the east of Tigris River".<sup>32</sup> It is widely accepted

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29 SWB:ME, 7568, March 8, 1984, pp. A/10-11.

30 The Age, June 8, 1984.

31 FBIS:USSR, March 26, 1985, p. H2.

32 FBIS:USSR, March 25, 1985, p. H4; March 28, 1985, p. H3; March 29, 1985, p. H7; April 5, 1985, p. H1; April 8, 1985, p. H5; April 11, 1985, p. H4; April 16, 1985, p. H4; April 18, 1985, p. H5; April 22, 1985, p. H3; April 25, 1985, p. H2; May 2, 1985, p. H2; May 10, 1985, p. H2. The Observer, June 30, 1985. The Times, July 13, 1985.

that Kharg Island, on which the main Iranian oil terminals are situated, has been the main target of the Iraqi air attacks.

With regard to this intensification of the situation, the Soviet Union's policy of 'non-interference', as noted earlier, has shifted to a position of 'wait and see'.

## II: The Soviet Union's Position of 'Wait and See'

In Chapter II, it was argued that the Soviet Union's policy of 'non-interference' since the eruption of the war was in fact regarded as a tilt towards Iran. However, given better Iranian fortunes in the war and the Iranian counter-offensives against Iraq in July 1982, the Kremlin leaders resumed the supply of arms to the Iraqis.<sup>33</sup> This resulted in the conclusion of a new arms agreement. The agreement has continued. In May 1984, for example, Colin Legum reported that the Soviet Union signed a \$2.5 billion arms deal with Iraq in almost total secrecy in Moscow.<sup>34</sup>

The Soviets, as both Aryeh Y. Yodfat and Karen Dawisha argue, were keen to assist Iran as long as it remained weak, but it would not be to their advantage to help Iran to attain victory. In Chapter II, it was also argued that the Kremlin leaders could derive no

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33 Dennis Ross, 'Soviet Views Toward the Gulf War', Orbis, Vol. 28, No. 3, Fall 1984, pp. 439-40.

34 The Age, May 29, 1984.

benefit from an Iraqi defeat, especially in the light of Moscow's earlier refusal to supply spare parts and equipment to Iraq. In this situation, as has already been noted, subsequent Iraqi leaders and Iraqi public opinion might blame the Soviet Union for the defeat of their country. Two other likely spin-offs of an Iranian victory were important considerations. For one thing, the Arab countries in the Gulf region would probably turn to the US with a subsequent weakening of Soviet efforts at acquiring acceptance in the Arab world. Second, a stronger Islamic Iran might lead to both increased support for the Islamic anti-Soviet elements in Afghanistan and growing appeals to Soviet Muslims to turn to Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>35</sup>

In line with the evolving situation in the Gulf, the Kremlin leaders adjusted their stance. Although they undoubtedly still attached importance to Iran, at the same time they acted, even if implicitly and indirectly, to make it clear that the Iranians' continuing hostility would result in a resumption of Soviet material support for the Baghdad regime. However, this adjustment in the Soviet attitude to Iran did not yet imply any shift towards Iraq. Together with this likely frustrating dilemma, the Kremlin's inability to influence the develop-

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35 Aryeh Y. Yodfat, The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran, (London:Croom Helm, 1984), p. 108. See also Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, (London:Croom Helm, 1983), p. 116.

ments of the war, had, it could be argued, affected Moscow's changing position to one of 'wait and see'.

What should be noted here is that it could be argued that the common thread running through the position of 'non-interference' and a posture of 'wait and see' was the Kremlin leaders' desire to maintain a policy of good-neighbourliness towards both Iraq and Iran. In point of fact, the Soviet leaders should be deemed opportunists who tactfully and shrewdly varied their positions to suit their own analysis of the development of the war.

Following the Iraqi military retreat, emphasis on the Soviet Union's policy of 'non-interference' was less common. The Soviet media encouraged both of the conflicting parties to settle the dispute by peaceful means. Commenting on a peace initiative by the Islamic Conference Organization, Aleksandr Timoshkin stated:

The continuation of the armed dispute between Iraq and Iran will also harm the non-aligned movement, of which Iran and Iraq are members; it will also damage the efforts of the Islamic (Congress) Organization,...

It is worth noting that the meeting of the nine-member committee attached to the organization is taking place amid encouraging circumstances in regard to the Iranian-Iraqi dispute.

It is necessary now to support those (statements with) acts and steps towards halting and settling the dispute. 36



With regard to peace initiatives of the UN to reach a settlement, Tass reported Soviet support for its resolution of the conflict:

Since the beginning of the armed conflict between the two neighbouring states that are friendly to us. O.A. Troyanovskiy, the Soviet ambassador to the UN, said..., the Soviet Union has been stressing the need to end as soon as possible military actions between them so as to settle the disputed questions through negotiation... The Soviet Union supported and continues to support the international efforts to put an end to this conflict, specifically the good offices of the UN Secretary General... The Soviet Union...voted for the resolution. 37

More significantly, Soviet support for the Iraqi proposals for a cease-fire and for troop withdrawal from Iran should be noted. Again, Aleksandr Timoshkin hailed the fact that:

The Iraqi leadership has decided to withdraw its forces from all the Iranian territory which they have occupied for almost 2 years during the armed conflict. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is a positive step by Baghdad and it can bolster the good efforts of various countries and organizations of the world aimed at ending the bloody conflict as soon as possible. 38

Furthermore, on the occasion of the visit by Taha Yasin Ramadan, the Iraqi First Deputy Premier, to Moscow in April 1984, Soviet media reported on his

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37 FBIS:USSR, October 25, 1982, p. H1; July 15, 1982, p. H1; October 12, 1982, p. H1; SWB:SU, 7080, July 17, 1982, p. A/4.

38 FBIS:USSR, June 22, 1982, p. H7; July 16, 1982, p. H8; See also Vladimir Gudev, 'A Needless and Dangerous Conflict', New Times, November 1982, No. 47, p. 23.

meeting with the Soviet Premier, Nikholay Tikhonov, in the following terms:

The Soviet Premier praised Iraq's peace initiatives and acceptance of all mediation to end the conflict peacefully. He affirmed that the USSR will continue its efforts to end the Iraq-Iran conflict, and stressed the importance of stopping the war and solving the problems around the negotiating table. 39

From the Soviet leaders' viewpoint, one could argue that they might have wanted to step in to act as a broker in the settlement of this conflict.<sup>40</sup> This would remind local states that the Soviets could not be excluded from any peace-making efforts; and that the Soviet Union must play a significant role in local security arrangements. However, such a Soviet role was, in fact, far from realized because Soviet leverage on the conflicting parties was, as it remains, tenuous.

Furthermore, the limits of such a Soviet role in affecting any outcome of the settlement of the conflict could be clearly derived from an argument that it is unclear whether or not the Baghdad regime consulted with the Kremlin leaders in advance about its peace initiatives. The Soviet leaders, however, supported the Iraqi peace effort, but this was bluntly rebuffed by the Teheran authorities. Not surprisingly, this rebuff was seen as due to the excessive arrogance of the Teheran leaders,

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39 SWB:SU, 7630, April 30, 1984, p. A4/3.

40 Dennis Ross, op.cit., p. 446.

and was strongly castigated by Soviet commentator, Vladimir Tsvetov, as hindering a peaceful settlement of the conflict.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, there were press reports that the Soviet Union had given Iran a strongly worded memorandum on its intransigent refusal to end the war with Iraq.<sup>42</sup>

In the controversial issue of the use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi armed forces, the Iranian regime, frustrated with the Kremlin leaders' silence on this issue, accused the Soviet Union of involvement in these inhumane operations.<sup>43</sup> Shortly after that, Izvestia, however, firmly stressed that 'neither has the Soviet Union used chemical weapons nor transferred such weapons to any of the combatants'.<sup>44</sup> Whether or not the Soviet Union has actually transferred chemical weapons to the Baghdad regime, it is clear that the Soviet Union was faced with another difficult situation. On the one hand, if the Soviet Union did supply chemical weapons to Iraq, the Kremlin leaders must have realized that the use of such weapons by the Iraqi armed forces could not be controlled in accordance with Soviet interests or purposes. On the other hand, even if the Kremlin leaders had not supplied such weapons to Iraq, the Iranian allegations indicated suspicion of Soviet collusion with Iraq.

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41 SWB:SU, 7692, July 11, 1984, p. A4/4. CDSP, May 23, 1984, Vol. XXXVI, No. 17, p. 9.

42 FBIS:USSR, April 8, 1983, p. H3.

43 SWB:ME, 7590, March 13, 1984, p. A/15.

44 SWB:SU, 7607, April 2, 1984, p. 4/1.

In addition, given Iraq's superior airforces which reportedly attacked targets in Iran, it could be noted that the Soviet media mainly just reported these combat missions but rarely condemned (or even criticized) such attacks. Instead, the Soviet Union repeated rhetorically that it supported the speediest cessation of this fratricidal and senseless war.

This changing Soviet policy did seem to worry the Iranians, particularly when their already severed relations with Moscow had been compounded by, on May 4 1983, their expulsion of 18 Soviet envoys.<sup>45</sup> The expulsions, announced by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, were conducted hours after the Iranian regime dissolved the communist Tudeh Party.<sup>46</sup> It was alleged that leaders of the Tudeh Party were spies and had passed on military and political information to Moscow for decades.

Nonetheless, signs of interest in restoring dialogue and improving relations were not entirely absent. In early June 1984, Sayed-Mohammad Sadr, Director General of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, paid a visit to Moscow and held a discussion with Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Andrei Gromyko. It was said that the discussion was focussed on the Iranian official's concern that the

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45 International Herald Tribune, May 5, 1983.

46 Ibid.

Soviets reduce Soviet military aid to Baghdad.<sup>47</sup> Later, in late June, Deputy Power and Electricity Minister, Aleksei Makukhin, headed a Soviet energy delegation to Teheran, which concluded agreements on Soviet construction assistance for Iranian power plants.<sup>48</sup> One could clearly conclude that, from the Soviet viewpoint, the maintenance (and even improvement) of its relations with the Teheran authorities was of great concern.

III: Impact of the Soviet 'Wait and See' Policy on Soviet-Iraqi Relations

As was suggested earlier, the Soviet media welcomed as a 'positive step' the Iraqi leadership's move to withdraw its forces from the Iranian territory that they had occupied. This meant that in practice Soviet and Iraqi viewpoints were converging more closely than those of the Soviet Union and Iran. As a senior Soviet commentator asserted:

This is a senseless war which has caused, and is still causing, great damage both to Iran and Iraq...some circles in Teheran call today for the continuation of the war in order to punish the Iraqi leaders and spread the Iranian model of Islam. Are those countries not paying too high a price in trying to clarify the point as to who is better, the Sunnis or the Shi'ites? 49

Soviet-Iraqi relations had improved slightly. For example, on July 17, 1982, on the occasion of the

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47 Cited in Dennis Ross, op.cit., p. 445.

48 FBIS:USSR, July 3, 1984, p. H1.

49 FBIS:USSR, August 6, 1982, p. H12.

the fourteenth anniversary of the Iraqi Ba'athist Party's rise to power, Fadil al-'Izzawi, Iraqi's ambassador to the Soviet Union, spoke on Moscow television. He maintained that Iraq had been a progressive, revolutionary country, whose friendly relations with the Soviet Union were enshrined in the friendship and cooperation treaty between the two countries. 'Time has shown that our relations in all areas of life are developing successfully to the benefit of the peoples of these two countries', he further stated.<sup>50</sup> There had been a great number of Soviet-Iraqi acts of cooperation. They included irrigation projects, the construction of the al-Tharthar-Tigris canal and the Fallujah and al-Hadithah dams on the Euphrates River, and joint oil projects in Northern Rumaylah and Nahr Umar.<sup>51</sup> All of these projects were embarked upon with Soviet assistance.

The improvement in Soviet-Iraqi relations was further manifested by the official visits of high-ranking Iraqis, First Deputy Premier Taha Yasin Ramadan and Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz.<sup>52</sup> During the talks, both sides firmly

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50 FBIS:USSR, July 19, 1982, pp. H4-5.

51 SWB:SU, 6998, April 7, 1982, p. A4/1; 7081, July 19, 1982, p. A4/4; FBIS:USSR, July 1, 1983, p. H5; July 6, 1983, p. H5; International Herald Tribune, April 10, 1984.

52 FBIS:USSR, November 21, 1983, p. H5; SWB:SU, 7498, November 23, 1983, p. A4/3; 7627, April 26, 1984, p. A4/4; 7780, October 22, 1984, p. A4/4. On January 24, 1983, Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz replaced Dr. Sa'doun Hammadi as Foreign Minister. Dr. Hammadi reportedly turned over the portfolio for health reasons, MEED, January 28, 1983.

asserted their common interest in maintaining close friendship. Moreover, it was emphasized by the Soviet side that the earliest possible end to the war would fall within the vital interests of both Iraq and Iran and the interests of peace in the region. These visits were more favourably received by Soviet counterparts (Soviet Premier Nikolay Tikhonov and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko) than the Iraqi visits just after the war erupted. Mr. Ramadan was given an unusually warm welcome,<sup>53</sup> which indicated the Soviet Union's shifting position.

However, mention should be made of some issues that could possibly (and even seriously) hamper Soviet-Iraqi relations. For one thing, there was the issue of Iraq's closer relations with the West. The Kremlin authorities expressed their concern that there was a possibility, although not in the near future, of the US and Iraq resuming diplomatic relations which were broken off after the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>54</sup> Before then, on several occasions, President Saddam Hussein had shown his interest in normalizing diplomatic contacts with the US. As Tareq Y. Ismael argues, in the international sphere, Iraq has sought to upgrade its relations with its main ideological rival, the United States.<sup>55</sup> This interest was, to a certain extent, warmly received. For example, the Reagan Administration

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53 International Herald Tribune, April 28-29, 1984.

54 International Herald Tribune, March 30, 1984; The Age, November 23, 1984.

55 Tareq Y. Ismael & Jacqueline S. Ismael, 'Iraq's Interrupted Revolution', Current History, Vol. 84, No. 498, January 1985, p. 39.

removed Iraq from the list of countries accused of aiding and abetting international terrorism.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, on November 26, 1984, it was reported that Iraqi Foreign Minister and Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz met with President Ronald Reagan in Washington, D.C.<sup>57</sup> Later, formal diplomatic relations were resumed, without any official statement to that effect.<sup>58</sup>

French deliveries of the Super Etendards was also a point of contention. Soviet political observer Boris Kalyagin lamented:

Foreign mass information media are reporting on the danger of an extension of the parameters of the Iran-Iraq conflict. The cause for such alarm is information that France has supplied to Iraq five Super Etendard fighters...Iraq could use these planes, equipped with Exocet missiles, for attacks on Iranian oil installations or tankers transporting Iranian oil. 59

Finally, in terms of the Iraqi ideological viewpoint, the Iraq Ba'athist Party newspaper, Al-Thawrah, published an article on Soviet-Iraqi relations that severely criticized the endeavour of the Soviet Union to impose its domination over the world through the international proletarian revolution. 'This', Al-Thawrah asserted, 'is something we cannot agree with'. 60

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- 56 Cited by M.S. El Azhary, 'The Attitudes of the Super-powers Towards the Gulf War', in M.S. El Azhary, (ed.), The Iran-Iraq War: An Historical, Economic and Political Analysis, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 94.
- 57 New York Times, November 27, 1984. Philip Marfleet, 'New Moves on the Regional Chessboard', The Middle East, January 1985, pp. 5-6.
- 58 New York Times, November 27, 1984.
- 59 FBIS:USSR, October 14, 1983, p. H1.
- 60 FBIS:USSR, August 19, 1983, p. H6.



## Conclusion

One could argue that the Iranian counter-offensives and potential Iraqi defeat constituted a grave concern for the Soviet Union. The stalemate on the battlefield, however, remained protracted. Neither of the combatants could gain a decisive victory over the other.

Clearly Soviet-Iraqi relations improved after the initial stage of the Gulf war. Soviet-Iraqi attitudes towards ways of settling the conflict converged. The Baghdad regime proposed both a cease-fire and troop withdrawal from Iran, both of which were warmly hailed by the Kremlin leaders. On the other hand, such Iraqi proposals were resolutely turned down by Teheran. The Kremlin leaders also bluntly castigated what they saw as Iranian arrogance.

The Soviet Union, one could argue, therefore, made use of the situation in the war to shift its position from 'non-interference' to a so-called 'wait and see' policy. The Soviet Union discovered that it could upgrade its relations with the Ba'athist regime, while at the same time not having to break off its relations with the Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran.

The next and last chapter will mainly deal with the general outlook on Soviet-Iraqi relations.

## Chapter IV: The General Outlook on Soviet-Iraqi Relations

### Introduction

Contemporary Iraq, under the leadership of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP) from the time of the July 1968 revolution, found both advantages and disadvantages in maintaining ties with the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Kremlin leaders viewed their relations with the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad as a mixture of both successes and failures.<sup>1</sup>

In previous chapters, it was shown that Soviet-Iraqi relations, particularly from the conclusion of the Algiers Agreement to the present inconclusive Gulf war, are so complex that to generalize about any accurate direction of the relationship is rather difficult. This could be attributed to the fact that the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who presents the image of being pragmatic,<sup>2</sup> undertook and continues to undertake independent decisions aimed at preserving and maximizing the national interests of his country. True enough, two significant examples of such pragmatic and independent decisions were, according to the Kremlin leaders, both the one to reach the Algiers Agreement with Iran and the one which initiated

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- 1 See Robert O. Freedman, 'Soviet Policy Toward Ba'athist Iraq', in Robert H. Donaldson, (ed.), The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 166-86.
  - 2 Peter Manfield, 'Saddam Hussein's Political Thinking: The Comparison with Nasser', in Tim Niblock, (ed.), Iraq: The Contemporary State, (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 65-73.

such an unresolved conflict as the Gulf war. From the Soviet perspective, it is likely that further strain in its relations with the Baghdad regime would result from another of Baghdad's independent decisions.

The discussion in this last chapter will, therefore, examine the two following questions.

(i) Is there any possibility that Iraq will unilaterally abrogate the friendship treaty?

(ii) Should Iraq be considered a 'client' state of the Soviet Union?

#### I: The Viability of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation

On April 9, 1972 nearly four years after the Iraqi Ba'athist party took office in Baghdad, the Soviet Union and Iraq concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. It was no accident that while the Kremlin leaders attached significance to such a treaty as a means of reinforcing their political relationship with Iraq,<sup>3</sup> it was arguably the pragmatic decision of the ruling Ba'athist regime to make the best use of this treaty for, at the time, purposely challenging the exploitation of the Western "imperialists". There is, hence, little doubt that, to the Iraqi Ba'athist leadership, this treaty was deemed to be a conduit for the Iraqi nationalisation of the Iraqi Petroleum Company just less than two months later.

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3 See Zafar Imam, 'Soviet Treaties With Third World Countries', Soviet Studies, Vol. XXXV, No. 1, January 1983, pp. 53-70.

Moreover, based on the treaty, the Baghdad regime expected the Kremlin leaders to be obliged to honour their military commitments in its military confrontation with Iran. The Baghdad leaders, however, met with a Soviet refusal. As was noted in Chapter I, the Iraqi leaders ascribed their inevitable decision to compromise with the Shah of Iran to the failure of the Soviet Union to honour its military commitment to Iraq. Similarly, the Soviet Union refused to supply arms to Iraq once the Gulf war erupted.

It is no secret that in the late 1970s, both Egypt and Somalia unilaterally abrogated their Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union on the grounds that the Kremlin leaders had rejected their pleas for weapons then needed in their confrontation with Israel and Ethiopia respectively.<sup>4</sup> Hence, some might cast doubt on the possibility that the Kremlin leaders would have to face another humiliating, and prestige-eroding setback as stemming from the Baghdad regime's unilateral abrogation of the treaty.

It could be argued that there were at least two major reasons accounting for the abrogation of the friendship treaty. First, Yodfat argues, as was the case with Afghanistan, that 'the justification that the Soviets gave to their intervention in Afghanistan was that, it

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4 See Yaacov Ro'i, 'The Soviet Union and Egypt: The Constraints of a Patron-Client Relationship', in Yaacov Ro'i, (ed.), The Limits to Power: Soviet Policy in the Middle East, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 181-206. See also Mohammed Ayoub, 'The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Superpower Involvement', Canberra Paper on Strategy and Defence, No, 18, (Canberra: The Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, 1978).

fell within the framework of the USSR-Afghanistan friendship treaty'.<sup>5</sup> This invasion had deepened Iraqi suspicion of being similarly interfered with by the Soviet Union. Second, as was noted, the Soviet Union had refused to supply arms for Iraq in the Gulf war.

Given the discussion in Chapter I,<sup>6</sup> the first reason should be doubted. Insofar as Soviet arms supplies were concerned, the second reason should be critically examined. While admitting that Moscow had been curtailing arms and equipment for Iraq since the outbreak of the war, the Iraqi Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz remarked in April 1981 that the Baghdad regime saw no reason to cancel the 1972 treaty with Moscow.<sup>7</sup> Later in November 1982, however, President Saddam Hussein was reported as stating that the 1972 Iraqi-Soviet Treaty of Friendship had not worked since the start of the war.<sup>8</sup> While the real intention behind such a remark was at the time unclear, any conclusion that Iraq was prepared to repeal the friendship treaty was bound to be in some ways misleading. As was noted in Chapter III, given better Iranian fortunes in the Gulf war and the Iranian counter-offensives against Iraq in July 1982, the Kremlin leaders resumed the supply of arms to the Iraqis.

Third, given the unlikelihood that an end to the Gulf war is in the offing, it is worth noting that

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5 Aryeh Y. Yodfat, The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula, (London:Croom Helm, 1983), p. 90.

6 See pages 31-32 in Chapter I.

7 Washington Post, April 19, 1981.

8 Cited in J.M. Abdulghani, Iraq & Iran:The Years of Crisis, (London:Croom Helm, 1984), p. 217.

the Baghdad regime still, in some ways, discerns advantages in keeping the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in effect. Related to both the Soviet Union's position of 'wait and see' and the unyielding Iranian position of settling the hostilities by peaceful means, the Baghdad regime's pledge to peacefully end the conflict is in line with the Soviet Union's interest in putting a quick end to this senseless war. Thus, on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of the friendship treaty with Iraq, a Soviet commentator Viktor (Yuriyev) notes that:

The Soviet Union is confident that the national interests of both Iran and Iraq and of all the states in this region persistently require that this war be halted and all disputed issues be resolved peacefully. What is most important is for both sides to have goodwill, be realistic, and find the suitable climate for beginning a dialogue. The Soviet Union, for its parts, is making every possible effort to contribute to the settlement of the conflict and to guaranteeing peace and security in the Gulf region. 9

Fourth, by recognizing the growing close Soviet-Syrian relationship, it is no exaggeration that had the Baghdad regime unilaterally abrogated the friendship treaty, one could argue that Soviet-Syrian relations would probably be further fostered, but at the expense of the Baghdad regime. This argument follows from the the fact that, as with maintaining close ties with the Marxist regime in South Yemen, the Moscow leaders consider it necessary to maintain (or even consolidate) their position either

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9 FBIS:USSR, April 10, 1985, p. H7.

in Syria or Iraq, or both. From the Iraqi leaders' viewpoint, Iraq is in the geopolitical position of already being outflanked by hostile neighbouring countries. Henceforth, in the case of the rival Ba'athist regime in Damascus, the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad deems it essential to prevent Moscow from totally shifting to the Damascus regime.

Finally, it can be argued that Iraq saw no reason for cancelling the friendship treaty because of its close economic relations with the Soviet Union. Quite repeatedly, on each anniversary of the friendship treaty, economic cooperation between these two countries has always been referred to as being strengthened and developed every year.

In point of fact, however, what should be borne in mind is that while the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union is still in effect, it does not obstruct the economic relationships between Iraq and the West even though they have not any friendship treaties. This diversified Iraqi economic policy manifests the Iraqi leaders' pragmatic decisions.

By considering Article 12 of the treaty which reads:

The present Treaty is concluded for a term of 15 years and will be prolonged automatically for each subsequent five-year period, if neither of the High Contracting Parties declares its desire of terminating its operation, notifying the other High Contracting Party 12 months before the expiring of the term of operation of the Treaty. 10

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10 See Appendix C.

This means that the 1972 friendship treaty, for the first term, will still be tenable until April 9, 1987. What concerns the Kremlin leaders more, it could be argued, is whether the Baghdad regime will honour the treaty after the expiration of the first fifteen-year term rather than whether the Baghdad regime will worsen its relations with Moscow by, as the Cairo and Mogadishu regimes did, unilaterally abrogating the friendship treaty before April 9, 1987. In the light of neither Iraq nor the Soviet Union being opposed to the subsequently automatic continuation of the treaty, the Soviet Union would possibly be in a favourable position to score some diplomatic successes. This could reflect the Kremlin leaders being able to at least maintain or at best further their relations with the Baghdad regime despite the fact that the Soviet-Iraqi relationships had been intermittently embittered by diverging national interests, particularly in the case of the earlier Soviet disruption of arms supplies to Iraq from the very outset of the Gulf war.

Hence, if it is the case that Iraq continues to discern advantages in holding the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, a plausible argument is that Iraq has been and remains a 'client' state of the Soviet Union.

## II: Iraq as a 'Client' State of the Soviet Union: A Critique

A patron-client relationship is one between



unequal partners. In other words, a 'client' state is both militarily and economically weaker than its patron. There must be a vast difference between the military capabilities of the patron and those of the client.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, one could argue that such relationship is based on reciprocity.<sup>12</sup> A 'client' state is given assistance particularly economic, military (or even security protection) and technical, by its patron in return for services and loyalty to the patron.

In point of fact, it seems obvious that, as well as the 1972 friendship treaty, the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad has been given a large sum of economic, military and technical assistance by Moscow. It is, therefore, equally clear that one might hastily assume that Iraq is one of the 'client' states of the Soviet Union. This assumption is, however, an incorrect one for the reasons which follow.

First, Shoemaker and Spanier argue that a patron state seeks to achieve various objectives in a 'client' state, which are ideological objectives, solidarity with the patron, and strategic advantages.<sup>13</sup> However, the Baghdad regime is in no position to serve the Soviet Union in relation to such objectives. Three reasons account for this.

(a) As Robert O. Freedman argues, the Iraqi Ba'athist leaders have applied several aspects of

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11 Christopher C. Shoemaker & John Spanier, Patron-Client State Relationship: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p. 13.

12 Michael Handel, Weak States in the International System, (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1981), p. 132.

13 Christopher C. Shoemaker & John Spanier, op.cit., pp. 18-20.

what might be called the 'Soviet model' to reinforce their control over the Iraqi people.<sup>14</sup> He further maintains that the strict measures in the Iraqi armed forces have been purposely established in order both to prevent a military coup and also to indoctrinate the officers in Ba'athist ideology. The Iraqi leaders, moreover, have kept the party and state separated, with the Ba'ath party in a position to control state activities.<sup>15</sup> Yet, in the case of ideological objectives, the adoption of such a system, similar as it is to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), does not mean that the Iraqi Ba'athist leaders will hold an ideological pattern similar to that of the Soviet Union. As was noted in Chapter I, the Baghdad regime's position towards the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) might be considered a political barometer in Soviet-Iraqi relations. In the Ba'athist view, the communists were Soviet agents, serving Soviet interests. As John C. Campbell convincingly maintains:

...., the Arab variety never found real common ground with Soviet socialism and is moving further away from it...Anti-imperialism was the real cement of the Soviet-Arab working partnership, but this was a matter of interest, not ideology, and some of the interests have changed. 16

(b) As far as the solidarity with a patron

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14 Robert O. Freedman, 'Soviet Policy Toward Ba'athist Iraq', in op.cit., p. 165.

15 Ibid., p. 166.

16 John C. Campbell, 'Soviet Policy in the Middle East', in Roger E. Kanet and Donna Bahry, (eds.), Soviet Economic and Political Relations With the Developing World, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 97.

is concerned, this could possibly mean that a patron hopes to see a 'client' following the same line with it in any political issues. Yet, with regard to Soviet-Iraqi relations, this was rather misleading. In Chapter I, it was suggested that following the signing of the Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran, both the Kremlin and Baghdad leaders witnessed a chill in their relations on the grounds that the Ba'athists pursued pragmatic and independent decisions. Their solidarity with Moscow was undermined by the following factors:

(i) Iraq's attempt to upgrade its relations with neighbouring Persian Gulf states;

(ii) The ensuing intensification of conflict between the two Ba'athist regimes in Baghdad and Damascus;

(iii) Iraq's closer relations with the West;

(iv) Iraq's disenchantment with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan;

(v) Iraq's displeasure with the Soviet support of Ethiopia in both the Ethiopian-Somali conflict and the Eritrean dispute.

(c) In terms of strategic advantages, one could query whether Iraq serves as a strategic advantage for the Soviet Union. Taking the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz as a centrepiece, with Afghanistan situated in the northeast, Iraq in the northwest, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) located in the south

of the Persian Gulf, the Soviet Union has, strategically speaking, undertaken an encircling strategy. This view of Soviet expansion as a plan for encirclement and isolation is held by the Egyptian officials.<sup>17</sup> This expansion can arguably be seen in the form of an Aden-Baghdad-Kabul strategic triangle. The strategic significance of Iraq might be asserted by the argument that Iraq's deep port facility of Umm Qasr, situated at the headwater of the Persian Gulf, is a good position to show the Soviet flag and preparedness to interdict the oil route from the Persian Gulf.

What should be kept in mind, however, according to Claudia Wright's description of Iraq's geopolitical vulnerabilities,<sup>18</sup> is that the strategic advantage of Iraq, more specifically in the case of Umm Qasr, has been misleadingly overrated. Umm Qasr in Iraq is a good place to show the Soviet flag, but it is poorly located for support of combat operations because its outlet to the Gulf is blocked by Warbah and Bubiyan Islands that are under Kuwaiti jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup>

Second, Shoemaker and Spanier maintain that under a situation of high-threat, a 'client' would be in a weak position to control the relationship.<sup>20</sup> The Iraqi decision to invade Iran, as was noted in Chapter II, did not, however, fit in with such an assumption. The Iraqi decision to

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17 Aviation Week & Space Technology, August 15, 1983, p. 138.

18 See footnote no. 31 in Chapter I.

19 Keith A. Dunn, 'Constraints on the USSR in the Southwest Asia: A Military Analysis', Orbis, Vol. 25, No. 3, Fall 1981, p. 623.

20 Christopher C. Shoemaker & John Spanier, op.cit., p. 23.

invade Iranian Khuzestan was made according to their own perceptions of necessity and appropriate timing, the Baghdad regime neither consulted with nor informed the Moscow leaders about its invasion plan.

Once the war broke out, it would be possible to view the Soviet role as one of following, not directing, the policy of the Iraqi leaders. Given the increasingly close Franco-Iraqi relations, particularly in terms of arms supplies, the Kremlin leaders might possibly view this independent Iraqi decision as challenging their own role of arms supplier. The Soviet Union could not, however, interfere with the arms flow from France.

Third, one could argue that the voluntary element of cooperation undertaken by a 'client' state should be found in a patron-client relationship. Therefore, in this particular case of the Baghdad regime, the Iraqi leaders have clearly attached priority to their country's freedom of maneuvering the pragmatic and independent policies for maintaining and maximizing national interests. As has been discussed from the outset, it is not the case that the Baghdad leaders' willingness for cooperation with the Soviet Union will adversely jeopardize their national interests.

Fourth and finally, related to the third reason, the patron-client relationship is based on informality.<sup>21</sup>

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21 Michael Handel, op.cit., p. 134.

In other words, it is less uniform in character than formal alliances. A friendship and cooperation treaty could not, therefore, very well guarantee the viability of the patron-client relationship, particularly, as was mentioned, in the case of Egypt and Somalia. In the case of Iraq, it still foresees advantages in having a treaty in effect, but the Baghdad regime's decisions and policies have not been manipulated by the Moscow leaders.

However, one fact that should not be forgotten is that Iraq still, to a certain extent, depends on the Soviet Union. There took place and continues to take place a large number of Soviet-Iraqi acts of cooperation - for example, cooperation projects in the fields of industry, agriculture, irrigation. All of these projects have been embarked upon with Soviet assistance.

### Conclusion

Concerning the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, it seems obvious that it is pragmatism which keeps the Baghdad regime from not unilaterally abrogating it. The Baghdad leaders realize that, by not abrogating it, they are in a position more favourable for maximizing their interests. However, for its parts, by still maintaining a friendship treaty, the Soviet Union has not been able to achieve its aim of inducing Iraq to declare solidarity with it, nor achieve Iraqi ideological conformity or gain

significant strategic advantage.

As to whether the Soviet-Iraqi relationship is one of patron-client relationship, it has to be concluded that the relationship represents a low-level of Soviet influence over a 'client' state. Iraq has returned little obedience despite a large amount of Soviet assistance. It has been the case that the Baghdad leaders have made efforts to prevent any further deterioration in their relations with the Soviet Union. The prior significance of being able to freely formulate their own decisions is, however, still of great concern to their interests.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the Soviet-Iraqi relationship since the Algiers Agreement on the Shatt al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran on 6 March, 1975 up to the present situation of the Gulf war.

It has been shown that the Kremlin leaders have experienced opportunities, dilemmas and constraints in dealing with the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad. Not only has the Baghdad regime been secularist, revolutionary and anti-imperialist, but it has also been an emerging regional actor in both the Persian Gulf politics and the Arab-Israeli confrontation. It seemed to be a proper opportunity for the expansion of Soviet influence in Iraq. The Soviet-Iraqi relationship was enshrined in reaching, in April 1972, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Moscow and Baghdad leaders. Iraq has been given a large amount of economic, military and technical assistance by the Soviet Union.

However, Soviet-Iraqi relations have been full of impediments. The Moscow regime could not manipulate pragmatic and independent Iraqi decisions to serve its interests. To conclude the Algiers Agreement with the Teheran regime without consulting with the Soviet Union was one of the outstanding independent Iraqi decisions that have brought with them a number of problems for



Moscow. In September 1980, the Kremlin leaders were placed in an unexpected dilemma when the Iraqi regime, again, without informing Moscow in advance, initiated a full-scale invasion of Iranian province of Khuzestan. 'Non-interference' was, therefore, the best option for the Moscow leaders' position in the war that left the Soviet Union impotent on the sidelines. Even the Kremlin leaders could discern the Baghdad regime's acute disenchantment with their refusal of arms supplies, they also equally regarded a good-neighbourly policy with Iran as their major concern. The Soviet-Iraqi relationship had, therefore, witnessed a difficult time during the first stage of the Gulf war.

It was opportune, however, that while the situation of the war evolved toward a new phase of so-called the Iranian counter-offensives, Soviet-Iraqi relations had improved slightly. Even so, the Kremlin leaders have been aware of some major constraints in maintaining their relations with Iraq. In other words, such improvement in Soviet-Iraqi relations has not been necessarily accompanied by Iraq's willingness to conform with the same ideological pattern as the Soviet Union, nor political solidarity with Moscow. It has been the Baghdad regime's desire to maintain its own freedom for embarking on pragmatic and independent decisions.

APPENDIX AALGIERS DECLARATION OF MARCH 6th, 1975. JOINT  
COMMUNIQUE BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAN

During the meeting in Algiers of the Summit Conference of the Member Countries of OPEC and on the initiative of President BOUMEDIENNE, His Majesty the SHAHINSHAH of Iran and H.E. SADDAM HUSSEIN, Vice President of the Revolutionary Command Council of Iraq, held two meetings and had lengthy discussions on the subject of relations between the two countries.

These meetings, which took place in the presence of President BOUMEDIENNE, were marked by great frankness and a sincere wish on both sides to reach a final and permanent solution to all the problems existing between the two countries.

In application of the principles of territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders and non-interference in internal affairs, the two contractual parties have decided:

1. To effect a definitive demarcation of their land frontiers on the basis of the Protocol of Constantinople, 1913, and the proces-verbaux of the Delimitation of Frontiers Commission of 1914.
2. To delimit their fluvial frontiers according to the thalweg line.
3. Accordingly, the two parties will restore security and mutual trust along their common boundaries, and hence will commit themselves to exercising a strict and effective control over their common boundaries with a view to putting a definitive end to all acts of infiltration of a subversive character no matter where they originate from.
4. The two parties also agreed to consider the arrangements referred to above as integral elements of a comprehensive solution. Hence any impairment of any of their components shall naturally be contrary to the spirit of the Algiers Agreement.

The two parties will remain in permanent touch with President BOUMEDIENNE who will offer, in case of need, the fraternal assistance of Algeria to implement the decisions which have been taken.

The parties have decided to reestablish traditional ties of good neighborliness and friendship, particularly by the elimination of all negative factors in their relations, the continuous exchange of views on questions of mutual interest and the development of mutual cooperation.

The two parties solemnly declare that the area should be kept free from any outside interference.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Iran and Iraq met in the presence of the Algerian Foreign Minister on 15 March 1975 in Teheran to fix the details of work for the Joint Iraqi-Iranian Commission created to implement the decisions reached above by mutual agreement.

In accordance with the wishes of both parties, Algeria will be invited to all the meetings of the Joint Iraqi-Iranian Commission.

The Joint Commission will draw up its timetable and work-plan so as to meet, in case of need, alternatively in Baghdad and Teheran.

His Majesty the SHAHINSHAH has accepted with pleasure the invitation which has been conveyed to him, on behalf of H.E. President AHMED HASSAN EL-BAKR, to make an official visit to Iraq; the date of this visit will be fixed by mutual agreement.

Furthermore, H.E. SADDAM HUSSEIN has agreed to make an official visit to Iran on a date to be agreed between the two parties.

His Majesty the SHAHINSHAH and H.E. Vice President SADDAM HUSSEIN wish to thank particularly and warmly President HOUARI BOUMEDIENNE who, acting from fraternal and disinterested motives, has facilitated the establishment of direct contacts between the leaders of the two countries and, as a result, has contributed to the establishment of a new era in relations between Iran and Iraq in the higher interest of the future of the region concerned.

Algiers, 6 March 1975

APPENDIX BTREATY OF INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES AND GOOD  
NEIGHBORLINESS BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAN SIGNED ON  
JUNE 13th, 1975

His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran,  
His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq,

Considering the sincere desire of the two Parties as expressed in the Algiers Agreement of 6 March 1975, to achieve a final and lasting solution in all the problems pending between the two countries,

Considering that the two Parties have carried out the definitive redemarcation of their land frontier on the basis of the Constantinople Protocol of 1913 and the minutes of the meetings of the Frontier Delimitation Commission of 1914 and have delimited their river frontier along the thalweg,

Considering their desire to restore security and mutual trust throughout the length of their common frontier,

Considering the ties of geographical proximity, history, religion, culture and civilization which bind the peoples of Iran and Iraq,

Desirous of strengthening their bonds of friendship and good neighborliness, expanding their economic and cultural relations and promoting exchanges and human relations between their peoples on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity, the inviolability of frontiers and non-interference in internal affairs,

Resolved to work towards the introduction of a new era in friendly relations between Iran and Iraq based on full respect for the national independence and sovereign equality of States,

Convinced that they are helping thereby to implement the principles and achieve the purposes and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations,

Have decided to conclude this Treaty and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran:  
His Excellency Abbas Ali Khalatbary, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran.  
His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq:  
His Excellency Saadoun Hamadi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

Who, having exchanged their full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

#### ARTICLE 1

The High Contracting Parties confirm that the State land frontier between Iraq and Iran shall be that which has been redemarcated on the basis of and in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol concerning the redemarcation of the land frontier, and the annexes thereto, attached to this Treaty.

#### ARTICLE 2

The High Contracting Parties confirm that the State frontier in the Shatt Al Arab shall be that which has been delimited on the basis of and in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol concerning the delimitation of the river frontier, and the annexes thereto, attached to this Treaty.

#### ARTICLE 3

The High Contracting Parties undertake to exercise strict and effective permanent control over the frontier in order to put an end to any infiltration of a subversive nature from any source, on the basis of and in accordance with the provision of the Protocol concerning frontier security, and the annex thereto, attached to this Treaty.

#### ARTICLE 4

The High Contracting Parties confirm that the provisions of the three Protocols, and the annexes thereto, referred to in articles 1, 2 and 3 above and attached to this Treaty as an integral part thereof shall be final and permanent. They shall not be infringed under any circumstances and shall constitute the indivisible elements of an over-all settlement. Accordingly, a breach of any of the components of this over-all settlement shall clearly be incompatible with the spirit of the Algiers Agreement.

#### ARTICLE 5

In keeping with the inviolability of the frontiers of the two States and strict respect for their territorial integrity, the High Contracting Parties confirm that the course of their land and river frontiers shall be inviolable, permanent and final.

#### ARTICLE 6

1. In the event of a dispute regarding the interpretation or implementation of this Treaty, the three Protocols or the annexes thereto, any solution to such

a dispute shall strictly respect the course of the Iraqi-Iranian frontier referred to in articles 1 and 2 above, and shall take into account the need to maintain security on the Iraqi-Iranian frontier in accordance with article 3 above.

2. Such disputes shall be resolved in the first instance by the High Contracting Parties, by means of direct bilateral negotiations to be held within two months after the date on which one of the Parties so requested.

3. If no agreement is reached, the High Contracting Parties shall have recourse, within a three-month period, to the good offices of a friendly third State.

4. Should one of the two Parties refuse to have recourse to good offices or should the good offices procedure fail, the dispute shall be settled by arbitration within a period of not more than one month after the date of such refusal or failure.

5. Should the High Contracting Parties disagree as to the arbitration procedure, one of the High Contracting Parties may have recourse, within fifteen days after such disagreement was recorded, to a court of arbitration.

With a view to establishing such a court of arbitration each of the High Contracting Parties shall, in respect of each dispute to be resolved, appoint one of its nationals as arbitrators and the two arbitrators shall choose an umpire. Should the High Contracting Parties fail to appoint their arbitrators within one month after the date on which one of the Parties received a request for arbitration from the other Party, or should the arbitrators fail to reach agreement on the choice of the umpire before that time-limit expires, the High Contracting Party which requested arbitration shall be entitled to request the President of the International Court of Justice to appoint the arbitrators or the umpire, in accordance with the procedures of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

6. The decision of the court of arbitration shall be binding on and enforceable by the High Contracting Parties.

7. The High Contracting Parties shall each defray half the costs of arbitration.

#### ARTICLE 7

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto shall be registered in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

#### ARTICLE 8

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto shall be ratified by each of the High Contracting Parties in accordance with its domestic law.

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of the instruments of ratification in Teheran.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Plenipotentiaries of the High Contracting Parties have signed this Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto.

DONE at Baghdad, on 13 June 1975.

(Signed)  
Abbas Ali Khalatbary  
Minister for Foreign  
Affairs of Iran

(Signed)  
Saadoun Hamadi  
Minister for Foreign  
Affairs of Iraq

This Treaty, the three Protocols and the annexes thereto were signed in the presence of His Excellency Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika, Member of the Council of the Revolution and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

(Signed)

APPENDIX CTREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNION  
OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS AND THE IRAQI REPUBLIC

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Iraqi  
Republic,

firmly convinced that the further development  
of friendship and all-round cooperation between them  
accords with the national interests of both states  
and serves the cause of peace throughout the world  
and in the area of the Arab countries, the interests  
of freedom of the peoples, their security and res-  
pect for sovereignty,

believing that the strengthening of the soli-  
darity of all forces of peace and progress, includ-  
ing the consolidation of unity of the Arab states,  
on an anti-imperialist basis is a vital means of  
the struggle for a lasting peace and international  
security,

inspired by the ideals of struggle against  
imperialism, colonialism, Zionism and reaction,  
for freedom, independence, and social progress  
of the peoples,

convinced that in the modern world interna-  
tional problems should be settled by means of co-  
operation and a search for mutually-acceptable  
solutions,

reaffirming their peaceable foreign policy  
and allegiance to the aims and principles of the  
United Nations Charter,

moved by a desire to develop and strengthen  
the existing relations of friendship, cooperation  
and mutual trust, and striving to raise these  
relations to a new, still higher level, have de-  
cided to conclude the present Treaty and have  
agreed on the following:

## ARTICLE 1

The High Contracting Parties declare that unbreak-  
able friendship will exist between the two countries and  
their peoples and all-round cooperation will develop in  
the political, economic, trade, scientific, technologi-  
cal, cultural and other fields on the basis of respect  
for state sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-  
interference in each other's internal affairs.

## ARTICLE 2

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the  
Iraqi Republic declare that they will cooperate closely



and in all fields to ensure conditions for preserving and further developing the social and economic gains of their peoples and respect for the sovereignty of each of them over all their natural resources.

#### ARTICLE 3

The High Contracting Parties, consistently conducting a policy of peaceful coexistence of states with differing social systems, will, in conformity with their peaceable foreign policy, continue to work for universal peace, relaxation of international tension, and general and complete disarmament, embracing both nuclear and conventional types of armaments, under effective international control.

#### ARTICLE 4

Guided by ideals of freedom and equality of all peoples, the High Contracting Parties condemn imperialism and colonialism in all their forms and manifestations. They will continue to wage a steadfast struggle against imperialism and Zionism, for the complete, final and unconditional liquidation of colonialism and neo-colonialism, racism and apartheid, and to come out for the earliest and total implementation of the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The Parties will cooperate with each other and with other peace-loving states in supporting the just struggle of the peoples for their sovereignty, freedom, independence and social progress.

#### ARTICLE 5

Attaching great importance to economic, technical and scientific cooperation between them, the High Contracting Parties will continue to expand and deepen such cooperation and exchange of experience in industry, agriculture, irrigation, water conservancy, development of oil and other natural resources, in the sphere of communications and in other sectors of the economy, as well as in the training of national personnel. The Parties will expand trade and shipping between the two states on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and most-favoured-nation treatment.

#### ARTICLE 6

The High Contracting Parties will further promote the development of ties and contacts between them in the fields of science, art, literature, education, health services, the press, radio, cinema, television, tourism, sport and other fields.

The Parties will promote wider cooperation and direct ties between state bodies and public organizations, enterprises, cultural and scientific institutions of both states

for the purpose of a deeper mutual acquaintance with the life, work and accomplishments of the peoples of the two countries in various spheres.

#### ARTICLE 7

Attaching great importance to concerted action in the international arena in the interests of ensuring peace and security, as well as to the development of political cooperation between the Soviet Union and Iraq, the High Contracting Parties will regularly consult each other at different levels on all important international issues affecting the interests of both states, as well as on questions of the further development of bilateral relations.

#### ARTICLE 8

In the event of the development of situations spelling a danger to peace of either Party or creating a danger to peace or violation of peace, the High Contracting Parties will contact each other without delay in order to agree their positions with a view to removing the threat that has arisen or re-establishing peace.

#### ARTICLE 9

In the interests of security of both countries, the High Contracting Parties will continue to develop cooperation in the strengthening of their defence capacity.

#### ARTICLE 10

Each of the High Contracting Parties declares that it will not enter into alliances and will not take part in any groupings of states, in actions or measures directed against the other High Contracting Party.

Each of the High Contracting Parties pledges not to allow its territory to be used for any action to be carried out that would do military harm to the other Party.

#### ARTICLE 11

The two High Contracting Parties declare that their commitments under existing international treaties are not in contradiction with the provisions of the present Treaty and undertake not to enter into any international agreements incompatible with it.

#### ARTICLE 12

The present Treaty is concluded for a term of 15 years and will be prolonged automatically for each subsequent five-year period, if neither of the High Contracting Parties declares its desire of terminating its

operation, notifying the other High Contracting Party 12 months before the expiring of the term of operation of the Treaty.

#### ARTICLE 13

Any differences which may arise between the High Contracting Parties in relation to the interpretation of any provision of the present Treaty will be settled bilaterally in a spirit of friendship, mutual respect and understanding.

#### ARTICLE 14

The present Treaty is subject to ratification and shall come into force on the day of exchange of ratification instruments, which will take place in Moscow in the nearest possible future.

The present Treaty is done in two copies, each in Russian and Arabic, both texts being equally authentic.

Done in the City of Baghdad on April 9, 1972, which corresponds to 25 Safar 1392, Hegira.

For the Union of  
Soviet Socialist  
Republics

A. KOSYGIN

For the Iraqi  
Republic

A.H. al-BAKR

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