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**VIENNA INTERNATIONAL
HISTORIC MODEL UNITED NATIONS
(HISTOMUN)**

09 - 13 March 2008

Preparation Paper

Security Council 20 July 1987

Decision on Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988

Conflict description

The military conflict between Iraq and Iran officially started on 23 September 1980 with an Iraqi land and air invasion of western Iran. Iraqi president Saddam Hussein claimed the seeds of the conflict in the territorial quarrels over the Shatt al Arab waterway, which marks the borderline between the two countries.

Iraq declared to exercise full sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab and was thus abrogating the 1975 Algiers Agreement, which attributes partial control of the waterway to Iran. After the fall of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the ousted Iranian autocrat, the fighting power of the formerly superior US-equipped Iranian military deteriorated. Iraq took this as a chance to seize the western-Iranian oil rich region of Khuzestan and successfully captured the port city Khorramshahr.

Iranian resistance proved strong and forced the Iraqi troops out of the occupied territories and back to Iraq by early 1982. The Iranian leader Ruhollah Khomeini, declared that Iran would not stop fighting until the regime of Saddam Hussein is overthrown. Khomeini's troops captured the oil-rich Majnoon Islands in February 1984 offensives and the southern Iraq's Fao Peninsula in early 1986.

In 1984 both sides began to attack their opponent's capitals and the "war of cities" phase started. In 1987 Iran's international reputation was harmed by its attacks on Kuwaiti oil-tankers in the Persian Gulf. The United States and USSR got involved in the conflict to protect Kuwaiti shipping, and arms embargoes stalled war supplies.

Besides the territorial questions and the economic struggle for oil-fields, the ideological differences were of high importance. The fear of a Shia insurgency influenced by Khomeini's Islamic Republic, was high for Saddam's Baath regime, since 60% of the Iraqi population were Shi'ites. They were discriminated by a Sunni minority for a long time. The revolutionary Shia Islamism of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Republic of Iran ("holy defence") opposed to the Arab nationalism of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime were central to the conflict. Both tried to attain regional dominance.

This power game led to the exhausting war with painful losses for both countries. Up to a million people lost their lives, the economic development was stalled, and a downfall of oil revenues combined with ongoing sanctions prohibited effective reconstruction.

Chronology 1980 - 1987**1980**

- 17 09 - Iraq declares to exercise full sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway, abrogating the 1975 Algiers Agreement
- 23 09 - Iraqi forces invade Iran
- 06 10 - Khorramshahr captured, causing the first Street fighting
- 22 10 - The Iraqis beleaguer Abadan
- 24 10 - Khorramshahr falls
- 24 12 - First Iraqi air raid on Iran's main oil terminal at Kharg Island

1981

- 07 06 - Israel bombs Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor near Baghdad
- 27-29 09 - Operation Thamin al-Aimma: Iran breaks the state of siege in Abadan

1982

- 12 04 - Saddam Hussein offers to withdraw from Iran in order to receive the guarantee that this would end the war
- 24 04 - 25 05 - Operation Jerusalem: Iran occupies most of Khuzestan (22 05 - Khorramshahr liberated)
- 12 06 - UN resolution calls for a ceasefire
- 01-10 10 - Operation Muslim Ibn Aquil: directed against Baghdad and Mandali. Repulsed

1984**February Tanker war begins**

- 07-22 02 - First 'war of the cities'
- 24 02 - 24 03 - Iran captures Iraq's oil rich Majnun Island. Iraq attacks Kharg Island oil terminal & Iranian ships in the Gulf

1985

- 22 03 - 08 04 - Second war of the cities

1986

- 09-25 02 - Operation Dawn 8: Iran captures Fao Peninsula on the southern front
- 25 02 - UN resolution on a ceasefire
- 03 08 - Saddam announces a four point peace plan

1987

- 17-25 01 - Third war of the cities
- 23 03 - US offers to protect Kuwaiti tankers in the Gulf
- 14 04 - USSR announces it will lease three tankers to Kuwait to reduce Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti shipping

20 07 - **The UN Security Council meets**

PLEASE NOTE THAT EVENTS HAPPENING AFTER THIS DATE ARE NOT TO BE CONSIDERED!

Prospects

Include a broader context! Try to include as much perspectives as possible, avoiding a one- sided view of the conflict!

Try to slip in the minds of the SC members in 1987, taking into consideration their socio-political contexts, an important factor which considerably influences decision makings.

Critically scrutinize the power game: have in mind the support by the West, USSR and China of the Iraqi side (problem of double standards) v.s. the embodiment of Iran as the evil.

Place emphasis also on the regional level of the conflict (not only the conflict between the two states), carrying in mind the formative pre-historical context.

What themes were missing by the SC? What did the West ignore (intentionally)? Which holes of relevant facts could we fill in our discussion (i.e. chemical weapons into Iran by Iraqi forces, killing thousands of Kurds and Iranians)?

In the broader sense: is a question of guilt possible at all?

Think about what could have been done in a better way!

Links and Literature

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Iran - Council on Foreign Relations: <http://www.cfr.org/region/404/iran.html>

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SC Resolution:

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<http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1987/scres87.htm>

Access to Journals/Articles: <http://www.jstor.org/>

Middle East Institute: www.mideasti.org/middle-east-journal/article-index

Suggestion:

Oil Platforms case, <http://www.icj->

[cij.org/docket/index.php?sum=634&code=op&p1=3&p2=3&case=90&k=0a&p3=5](http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?sum=634&code=op&p1=3&p2=3&case=90&k=0a&p3=5)