



**Chair:**

Farnoosh Mahdavi

[farnoosh@berkeley.edu](mailto:farnoosh@berkeley.edu)

**Vice-Chair:**

Shashank Iyer

Mohamman-Amir Aghaee

## Historic Security Council (HSC)



## Iran-Iraq War

### Chair Introduction

Greetings delegates! I would like to welcome you to the Historical Security Council at the 56th Session of the Berkeley Model United Nations Conference. My name is Farnoosh Mahdavi and I consider it a great honor and privilege to be your Head Chair in what I expect to be a very exciting committee. I am currently a third year student at UC Berkeley where I study the art of Rhetoric.

Helping me run this committee are my wonderful Vice Chairs, Shashank Iyer and Mohammad-Amir Aghahee. In addition to being your Vice Chair, Shashank will also be the Historian for the 56th session of the BMUN conference. He is a sophomore planning to double major in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies. This will be his seventh year in Model United Nations. Mohammad is a second year majoring in environmental science and plant biology.

As you may know, the Security Council is responsible for maintaining peace among nations whenever conflicts arise. The only difference in this committee is that we will be traveling back in time to the year 1982. At first glance, this may seem like an insignificant year, but think again! This year marks the birth of MTV, Michael Jackson's "Thriller", and the Rubik's cube; however, we will not be discussing those topics. Rather, we will be turning our attention to the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet-Afghan War, both of which were on the Security Council agenda at the time. These topics are of great substance as they have had a large part in shaping the world we live in today (not to say that the aforementioned are insignificant).

It is important that all delegates take note that historical accuracy is of fundamental importance to this committee, so make sure that your research is thorough. This is part of what makes this committee more challenging, but more fun as well. You must think as your country would in 1982, and take note that country policies may not be anything like what they were 25 years ago, which is another reason why you should get started on your research early. I know that we will all learn a great deal from the experience.

I look forward to meeting each of you and working together in a very interesting committee that will be intellectually stimulating for everyone. Pax vobiscum.

Best,

Farnoosh S. Mahdavi  
Historical Security Council Head Chair

### Topic Background

The roots of the Iran-Iraq War stretch into a history wherein ethnic hostilities, nationalism, religious prejudices, and frontier disputes paint a troubled past. Prior to 1935, Iran was known as the Persian Empire. The race of Persians in this land had a history of enmity with the neighboring Arabs since 637AD, where in the Battle of Qadisiya the Arabs defeated the Persians, spreading Islam throughout the region. For centuries after the Battle of Qadisiya, the Persian Muslims were Sunnis. However, after the Safavid dynasty took over the Persian Empire, the Muslims in the region became predominantly Shi'a. This split between the two main sects of Islam has been the cause of many battles in the Muslim world.



In addition to the religious and ethnic clashes are the territorial disputes between the two sides. An especially important region to both sides is the Shatt al-Arab (“the Arab River”), an estuary in a strategic point of the Middle East. This small channel is the only waterway available to Iraq as a country bordered by land on all other sides. The eastern banks of the Shatt al-Arab, which border Iranian land, have been occupied by Arabs for centuries, hence their Arabic name, Arabistan. During the Persian and Ottoman empires, the area was a main trade route between the rival empires.

As a result, the commercial port of Muhammah (or Khorramshahr to the Persians) was established in 1812. The Second Treaty of Erzerum in 1847 declared that Muhammah, which had been a point of dispute between the Ottomans and the Persians for many years, was to be placed under Iranian rule, and they would also be granted access to the Shatt al-Arab. The area became of little concern to either side until oil was discovered at Masjed-e-Suleiman on the Iranian side in 1908 whence hostilities began to arise again.

This issue proved to be a continual source of tension between Iran and Iraq. The Iranian city of Abadan became an Iranian refinery town, much to the chagrin of the Iraqis. When the Ba’athist government took power in Iraq in March 1969, they were determined to get what they believed to be theirs. The Iraqis demanded that Iranians pay duties when navigating on the Shatt al-Arab, but the Shah refused and made a statement by moving some warships onto the river instead. Acknowledging its much weaker military strength, Iraq backed down. What was once known as Arabistan became Khuzestan, a major oil

province for Iran where four-fifths of the country’s oil was produced.

Having witnessed the bold moves by the Iraqi government, the Shah tried to get friendlier with the Soviet Union so that he would not have to focus his military in the north, allowing him to bring them down to face the Gulf, i.e. Iraq. The Shah continued to increase his military strength by building up arms, where he was helped out by his friends in the West, especially the United States. Iraq saw this as the perfect opportunity to jump into bed with the Soviet Union, as the U.S.S.R. did not like the close friendship between its Iranian neighbor and its greatest enemy, the U.S.A.

President Boumediene of Algeria decided to help calm the tension on both sides. On March 6, 1976, the Algiers Treaty was signed by Mohammad Reza Shah of Iran and Foreign Minister Saddam Hussein. The two sides settled their border disputes agreeing that Iraq surrender sovereignty over the east side of the Shatt al-Arab. Iraq agreed to this on the condition that Iran would stop sending arms and supplies to Iraqi Kurdish rebels. It seemed as though the 460 year dispute over the region had finally been settled by the two sides.

In February 1979, the Iranian Revolution occurred, and the Shah was ousted from power. After 2,500 years of monarchies ruling Iran, Islamic cleric Ayatollah Khomeini became the supreme leader. This altered the entire paradigm through which Iran was viewed in the eyes of the world. A country that was previously very friendly with the West now had turned its back on its previous best friend, the United States. Nothing made this more clear than the Iranian Hostage Crisis in November 1979 when Iranian students stormed the U.S.



embassy in Tehran and held American diplomats hostage for 444 days.

Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein, who had become the president of Iraq, was brewing plans of his own. Seeing Iran in the midst of a revolution, he realized the perfect opportunity to take action. On October 31, 1979, Hussein demanded the following from Iran: abrogation of the Algiers Treaty and complete control of the Shatt al-Arab granted to Iraqis; evacuation of the islands of Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb, and Ras el-Khaimah (Arab islands to the south); and full autonomy given to Iranian Kurds and Arabs in Khuzestan.

Khomeini refused to comply with any of Hussein's demands. As tensions and border disputes increased, each side withdrew its ambassadors from the neighboring capitals in March 1980. In the following months, explosions believed to be planted by Iraqi terrorists rattled Tehran. President Bani-Sadr of Iran ordered the mobilization of soldiers on the Iran-Iraq border, while Ayatollah Khomeini called to the Shi'as of Iraq to overthrow their president as an act of jihad. From this time to the beginning of the war, Iran cited 546 violations of its territory by Iraqis, while Iraq claimed 300 violations by the Iranians.

By the spring of 1980 it was clear to the United Nations that problems were indeed afoot between Iraq and Iran; however, the Security Council took no actions to ameliorate the situation immediately. It was in the September of 1980 that the Security Council adopted Resolution 479 on the Gulf War which called for a ceasefire but not for withdrawal of forces. Since there was no condemnation of Iraq's act of aggression onto Iranian soil, Iranians felt abandoned by the world.

## The Outbreak of War

On September 17, 1980, President Saddam Hussein abrogated the Algiers Treaty which had been settled five years earlier by demanding that the Iraqis should have complete command of the Shatt al-Arab, including the eastern half which had been given to the Iranians, and that only Iraqi flags could fly on its waters. Hussein accused Iran of violating the Algiers Treaty by refusing to hand over land that belonged to Iraq. He declared that "the waters of the Shatt-al-Arab must return to their former Iraqi and Arab rule and be placed entirely under Iraqi sovereignty." On September 22, 1980, Iraq launched various attacks on Iranian soil, including air raids on nine military bases and the Mehrabad International Airport in Tehran.

Hussein had expected the Arab residents of Muhammarah to join their Arab brethren once the invasion occurred. He launched a pan-Arab charter calling on all Arabs to support one another if ever there were conflicts among any of them with foreign powers; however, his plan fell through. The Arabs living in Iran were loyal to their soil and fought back. Hussein was surprised by this action of the Khuzestan Arabs, and he had not expected that the Iranians would be able to put up such a fight within a short span of time. Hussein lack of military knowledge caused many a blunder for him throughout the war.

As Saddam's plan for the union of Arabs on both sides of the border failed, he began to feel more nervous that the Iraqi Shi'a population would side with the Iranians to help them take over Iraq. This was indeed a reasonable fear, as 60% of Iraq's Shi'a population lived in southern Iraq not far



from the Iranian border. The Shi'a government of Iran made many attempts to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi Shi'as in the region. The Shi'a majority in Iraq were treated as second class citizens by the Sunni leadership in Baghdad.

In both countries, oil was (and still is) the major component of the economy. Both countries cut one another off from their respective ports, and it is common knowledge that Iraq's main objectives included the capture of oil-rich areas on the border of Iran, especially Abadan. During the fighting, one of the largest refineries in Abadan was set on fire and destroyed by Iraqi bombing. Iran, in return, was able to prevent Iraq from exporting its oil. As a result, Iraq has had to rely on Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to allocate oil on its behalf.

At the beginning of the war many political analysts had believed that the war would be an overnight affair, but reality and history have suggested otherwise.

There have recently been talks of what some are calling the "Paris papers". The origin of these documents is unknown as of this time. It is believed that there may have been a clandestine meeting in Paris where representatives from the United States met with royalist backers of the Shah, stating that they would support an Iraqi invasion of Iran. Many have denied that such a meeting ever took place; a thorough investigation is pending.

Throughout 1981, there was stalemate between both sides, where no significant advances were made. In the beginning of 1982 the Iranians became victorious in a number of battles against the Iraqis. Ever since Iraq has been pushed back to its own border, the people in Iraq have become more supportive of the war than ever before.

Now we are in the June of 1982 and we must bring this war to an end before either side makes any more advances. Some analysts believe that the Ayatollah may decide to push into the Iraqi land. Now is best time for a peace settlement as the Iraqis are out of Iran. It is our job as an international community to bring an end to this war while it seems most feasible.

### Issues to Consider

- 1) What is my nation's role or interest within the Iran-Iraq war?
- 2) Who are the key international actors in 1982, and where does my policy lie with them?
- 3) Within the boundaries of being on policy, what are some better actions that my state can take that are different than the history?



## Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

### Topic Background

In order to understand the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, we must turn to the Saur Revolution of 1978. The Saur Revolution was a coup d'état led by the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), overthrowing the government of President Mohammad Daoud Khan. This coup was the result of the political assassination of Mir Adbar Khyber, a theoretician of the Parcham faction, one of two leading Marxist factions in the country. After the assassination, demonstrations erupted around Kabul accusing Daoud's government of planning the assassination, whereupon the coup took place. The coup targeted the air force and army of the country. The rebels were able to take the Presidential Palace, where they demanded Daoud's surrender; after his refusal, the rebels killed Daoud and his family in his own home. The new government was led by radical Marxist Nur Muhammad Taraki.

Soon after becoming the leader of the country, Taraki began torturing and killing people who had sympathized with the previous regime. The country's history was rewritten by the new government, justifying the coup and legitimizing the new authority. Various forms of propaganda relayed to the Afghani people that the coup had the backing of the people, avoiding the fact that the Taraki government was undemocratic.

From the beginning of the takeover, there was a struggle for power between the two factions of the PDPA. Taraki was part of the Khalqi faction, while his rival, Babrak Karmal, was part of the Parcham faction. The Khalqis were the largest part of the

PDPA, and had more influence in the army and air force than the Parchamis. Only six weeks after the coup, several top Parchami leaders were arrested and executed while Khalqis replaced their positions in all top political offices. The government soon became a Khalqi dictatorship.

The two factions of the PDPA eventually split, as there were other differences among the two factions. The Khalqis were Pashto-speakers, while the Parchamis were Persian-speaking; other disparities included class and ethnic differences. With respect to policy, the Khalqis upheld immediate change while the Parchamis supported gradualism and diplomacy in efforts to gain public support.

### Conflict after the Coup

After purging the Parchamis, Taraki implemented some reforms in the country, including programs aimed at increasing literacy. This led to a significant uprising against Taraki's government in the western city of Herat on March 15, 1978. Interestingly, the revolt was sparked by the forced literacy campaign for women that was part of Taraki's reforms. The conservative Heratis that led the insurrection were able to kill hundreds of Khalqi officials with their crude weaponry. The hatred that some Afghans had for the Soviets became apparent when Heratis tortured and killed the Soviet families living in the area. Many of the Afghans believed that the Soviets were the actual rulers of their country managing a puppet government in Afghanistan. More anger was stirred among many Afghans when Taraki decided to change the national flag in June 1978. The new flag was red, very similar to the flag of the Soviet Union and its republics.



Iran recognized the opposition of many Afghans to the PDPA and Soviet influence. Broadcasts from Iran called on Afghans to join in jihad against their Marxist government. By April 1978 the PDPA government severed diplomatic relations with Iran. Many Afghans became more and more annoyed by the demands of the government. Taraki ordered Afghans to paint their houses red and demanded that various traditions be dissolved. As Afghans began seeing more and more Soviet influence in their country and the dissolution of their traditions which many tribes held significant, the Iranians tried to win the hearts and minds of their neighbors. The Iranians cited the atheist tendencies of the Khalqi rulers. This proved to be a big problem in a predominantly Muslim country.

The opposition to the Afghan government was composed of many different groups, with the common aim of ridding their country of Soviet influence. The Taraki government became less and less Muslim for the people, especially the local mullahs. The winter of 1978 was when the real opposition began in provinces that were not under the tight watch of the government in Kabul. Hazarajat, Badakhshan, and Nuristan became independent of the central government in the spring of 1979 by means of resistance. The resistance was composed of small tribes that had not yet united.

Many of the pro-Islam dissidents supported fundamentalism stating that they wanted a “moral and religious reformation.” These fighters came to be known as the Mujahidin, or Muslim fighters engaged in jihad. Sayyid Ahmad Cailani led the National Front for the Islamic Revolution, Sibghatullah Mujaddidi led the Afghan

National Liberation Front, and Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi headed the Movement of Islamic Revolution. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the USA worked together to contain the Soviet power by sending arms to related groups via Pakistan since 1980.

## **Soviet Intervention**

The plan of the Khalqi government was to take any measure necessary to get rid of the rebels while continuing with their own reforms, but by the summer of 1979 it was obvious that their goal had failed. The guerilla rebels had been successful in lowering the morale of the Afghan soldiers, as well as inducing many casualties. Interestingly, many soldiers deserted and joined the ranks of the rebel Mujahidin, most of whom were untrained fighters.

Noticing the increase in guerilla attacks over successive months encouraged the Russians to help their Marxist brothers. By the summer of 1979, Russian military and financial involvement was so great that analysts began to compare it to American intervention in Vietnam. During the chaos of the time, Taraki began to see his right-hand man, Hafizullah Amin, take power into his own hands. On October 6, 1979, Taraki was pronounced dead due to “unknown causes” (although many believe that he was assassinated under Amin’s orders), and Amin became the head of the Khalqis.

Over the course of the next few months, the Soviets built up their military might in Afghanistan after making a bargain with Amin that he would try to create more conciliatory policies toward the Afghani public. Amin did hold up his end of the bargain, but the guerrilla fighting increased and entered Kabul. The overwhelming



fighting led Amin to invite Marshal Pavlovsky, head of the Soviet ground forces, into Afghanistan in October 1979. Under the leadership of the KGB, an airborne brigade landed in Kabul and took control of the area, by taking over parts of the city and arresting members of the government. However, they were soon to realize that the Afghan population opposed Soviet intervention in their nation.

The main military operation occurred in the end of December 1979, when 85,000 Soviet soldiers officially occupied Afghanistan, ending the country's independence. They executed Amin and replaced him with Babrak Karmal as the Soviet protégé. The Soviets claimed that they were upholding a clause of the Friendship Treaty that they had signed with Afghanistan in 1978 by providing military assistance. This move by the Soviets caused massive uprisings, not only by Afghans, but by the world at large. On January 14, 1980, the United Nations General Assembly passed the resolution for "the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan to allow the Afghan people to choose their own government and their economic, political and social system without interference, subversion, pressure or constraint from abroad." This strong reaction was a result of the common interpretation that military occupation is an act of colonial enterprise. Many believed that this move by the Soviets was just the first step to regional domination that would stretch down to the Indian Ocean.

There was anger over the Soviet invasion in the Soviet Union as well, for many people did not understand why their sons were fighting in a country that posed no threat to the Kremlin. Others believed the media

that claimed the Afghan revolution was threatened by the West and the Chinese, requiring the help of the Russians. This was a bad time for the Russians to enter such a campaign because there was a strain on their economy, raising doubts as to whether the Kremlin would be able to continue its intervention successfully.

In January 1980 forty nations united at the Islamic Conference to support the resistance movement in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation because they saw it as a "just struggle to safeguard their faith, national independence and territorial integrity." Unfortunately, the Iran-Iraq War, which began that September, became the major issue that overshadowed the struggle of the Afghans.

At this point in time, it seemed as though the Mujahidin were increasing as their support among the Afghan people grew. With the wave of Islamic fundamentalism evident in the Mujahidin and the recent events in the region (i.e. the Islamic Revolution in Iran), it then appeared that Afghanistan was vulnerable to a fundamentalist takeover. Incidentally, we now know that the Mujahidin were receiving money and arms from the US, Pakistan, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia despite their fundamentalist goals.

## **Issues to Consider**

UN diplomacy is needed to help achieve a lasting settlement that can bring an end to the fighting. Given what we know right now, the compromise that is needed to bring forth a settlement is lacking on both the side of the Soviets and the Afghan resistance.



- 1) Given the support that the Afghan resistance has with the people, what is the likelihood that fundamentalist Islam takes over Afghanistan? Is this preferable to a Marxist government?
- 2) What can we do as the different nations of the world to secure the Afghans' autonomy, while ensuring that neither fundamentalism nor communism takes over the country (unless that happens to be your historical policy)?
- 3) In the case of an Islamic fundamentalist government set up in Afghanistan, is it worth our interference as the Security Council to change the regime? Will we be violating the sovereignty of the Afghan people?

## **Works Cited**

Chubin, Shahram. *Iran and Iraq at War*. London: Tauris, 1988.

Khadduri, Majid. *The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1988.