External Involvement in the Persian Gulf Conflict*

by
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"We will be the winner of this war [Iran-Iraq War] and no one should doubt its outcome."

Ayatollah Khomeini[1]

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is perhaps the most volatile region in the world today. At the same time, it is the most militarized region of the Third World and the scene of some of the most frantic arms transfers the world has ever witnessed. The combination of political volatility and militarization has made the region susceptible to cataclysmic changes with far-reaching implications for the West as well as for the Middle Eastern states themselves.

The Iran-Iraq War is a clear manifestation of this reality. The conflict is ostensibly between the two Persian Gulf countries over land border territories and the Shatt al-Arab waterway. In actual fact, however, the parameter of the conflict has expanded beyond the geographic boundaries of Iran and Iraq. The participants in the Gulf conflict (direct and indirect players) have included such ideologically and politically diverse nations as North Korea and Israel, Libya and Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and small Gulf states of Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the two super powers and France. The conflict has threatened to pit the United States against Iran in light of the latter's pronouncements regarding the closure of the Strait of Hormuz through which over sixty percent of Japanese and Western oil supplies flow.

The Iran-Iraq War is also demonstrably different from other intra-Third World wars in terms of its destructiveness and unique alliance formations. More than 200,000 people on both sides have been killed or wounded since the war's inception in September 1980, and over two million people have become homeless as a result of Iraqi shelling and aerial bombardment of Iranian cities.

It appears that the conflict has molded itself along two axes of power: Iraq, supported by the conservative pro-Western Gulf states, Jordan and Egypt, with peripheral support from the United States, and Iran, supported by "radical" Arab states of Syria and Libya, as well as by Israel, North Korea, and more recently, by the People's Republic of China. The role these countries have played in the continuation of the war, their motives and the reasons behind allying themselves militarily with the major belligerents in the war and how outside interference by

other Third World countries has contributed to the prolongation of the war will be analyzed in this paper.

THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION AND THE IRANIAN-ARAB TENSIONS

The Islamic revolution, which overthrew the monarchy in Iran in 1979, introduced uncertainties to Iranian-Arab relations in general and to Tehran's relations with the littoral states of the Persian Gulf in particular. The Islamic Republic's religious overtones brought a new dimension to Iran's foreign policy — Pan-Islamism. Moreover, Iran's perception of its security changed dramatically. Former supporters of the Shah's regime, especially the United States, were not perceived to be major threats to the country's stability. As a result, Iran's attitude toward the region was determined by the relationship of each country in the region toward the United States. The conservative pro-Western Arab regimes, particularly Saudi Arabia, began to view the new Iranian regime of Ayatollah Khomeini as a threat to their own stability. The Saudi royal family's claim to the leadership of the Islamic community was challenged by Ayatollah Khomeini on the grounds that the Saudi monarchy was corrupt and morally incapable of acting as the guardian of Islamic holy places. Iranian officials were quick to point out King Fahd's overseas exploits and his reputation as a "playboy" when he was the Saudi crown prince just before King Khaled's death in mid-1982. Further, Pan-Islamic proclamations of Khomeini and his exhortations to the Arab masses to follow Iran's example by overthrowing their own "corrupt" government creating a united Islamic front against the "enemies of Islam" contributed to the already tense situation in the region. Marked by these underlying factors, Iranian/Arabian clashes have occurred on several occasions.

First, in the annual *haj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca in 1981, Saudi police attacked some Iranian pilgrims who had demonstrated against the U.S. and Israel and who had propogated Khomeini's philosophy of revolution. In an exchange of letters with King Khaled, Khomeini vigorously protested the treatment of Iranian pilgrims by the Saudi police, saying that their only guilt was to downgrade "satanic" America and protest the occupation of Islamic holy places by Israel.[2] The Saudis, on their part, called the fundamentalist theocracy in Iran "un-Islamic," while a Saudi Arabian broadcast named the Iranian rulers a "disgrace to Islam. They have wronged Islam and brought disrepute to its followers. In fact, the rulers of Iran have nothing to do with Islam."[3]

Regular, acrimonious exchanges between Iran and Saudi Arabia peaked once again during the 1982 and 1983 *haj*. The Saudis moved swiftly to arrest pro-Khomeini demonstrators and expell hundreds of Iranian pilgrims, including Hojatoleslam Mohammad Hussein Musavi Khoiniha, Khomeini's personal representative and the supervisor of the Iranian *haj* delegation.[4] Once again, Tehran accused Riyadh of acting on orders of "satanic America" and preventing millions of Moslem pilgrims from joining the Iranian delegation in denouncing U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Another major point of contention between Khomeini's Iran and the Arab states is the often-made claim by the latter that Iran routinely intervenes in Arab domestic affairs by either inciting the local Shi'ite population or using "saboteurs" in an attempt to overthrow their regimes. In December 1980, Bahrain announced the arrest of a group of "plotters" who had allegedly been trained by Iranians to overthrow the Bahrain government and create an Islamic republic on that island. This claim was vehemently denied by Tehran. The announcement, nevertheless, "triggered a wave of anxiety in the region, [and] brought a massive expression of Arab support to Bahrain, for many years a target of occasional Iranian territorial claim."[5]

Iranian views on oil pricing and production policies have been another source of friction between that country and other oil producing areas of the Persian Gulf. The Khomeini regime has justifiably blamed Saudi Arabia for overproduction of oil and the creation of the current glut in the market. By branding the Saudi regime as "a puppet of the West,"[6] the Iranian regime has endeavoured to isolate Saudi Arabia and reduce its influence on OPEC pricing and marketing decisions.

Allocation of the production ceiling among OPEC's members — a move engineered in 1981 to maintain order in the pricing structure — was perceived by Iran to be disadvantageous to its position. Consequently, Iran has surpassed its quota of 1.2 million barrels of oil per day and is believed to be exporting between 2 and 2.5 million barrels per day. In the December 1982 OPEC ministerial meeting, Iran warned that OPEC production quotas for each member country should be based on four factors: a country's oil resources, its need for foreign exchange, its population, and the quantity of its petroleum exports in the past decade. The implementation of these proposals would be disadvantageous to the Arabs, especially the largest oil producer, Saudi Arabia. Iran's vast oil reserves, its continuing need for foreign exchange, its population of forty million and its position as the second largest OPEC oil producer before the revolution would all work in its favor. To counter Iran's demands, the Arabs engineered a move which bypassed the election of a new OPEC secretary general. Ironically, it was Iran's turn to have its representative occupy this seat.

THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

In a move to contain Iran's regional influence the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established in 1981 by the conservative Gulf regimes of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. The GCC was designed to coordinate the social and economic policies of these countries and further, to devise unified military and security programs.[7] Although the ostensible military aim of the Gulf Cooperation Council was to coordinate security against possible internal and external subversion, the GCC was perceived by Tehran to be a pro-Western scheme directed against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

While Iranian leaders took pains to reassure the Arab regimes that Iran had no territorial claims on them and that it sought friendly relations with all states that were not under "U.S. control" and were not

"U.S. lackeys, like Egypt and Morocco,"[8] the Iranian clerics cautioned the GCC that Tehran would not allow any country or group of countries to act as the policeman of the Persian Gulf. President Ali Khamanei warned the GCC members of Iran's determination to "crush" any external plots against the country. In a broadcast on Radio Tehran, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's Foreign Minister, asserted: "As the strongest country in the region, we remind those who have ignored our presence that even the U.S. could not do anything against the will of our people."[9] The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament went even further by stating: "All of you together do not even constitute a major city. Your plots are not a problem for the Islamic Republic of Iran."[10]

Nevertheless, the Iranian government was keenly aware of the potential military threat to the country's oil fields that might eminate from the GCC. That is, in a post-Khomeini Iran, the GCC could take advantage of the possible leadership vacuum in Tehran and launch a preemptive strike against key Iranian targets in the south. A U.S.-supported, Grenada-style invasion of Iran, in cooperation with the GCC, is a dangerous, though perhaps unlikely, option in the event that the post-Khomeini Iran became engulfed in anarchy and Western oil supplies became threatened. Certainly, in this context the Iranian regime would have to take seriously the possible military threat from the GCC.

THE ISRAELI FACTOR

Iran's relationship with Israel had its genesis in 1950 when the Shah's regime extended *de facto* recognition to the Jewish state. Despite Iran's objections to the continued occupation of the Arab land captured by Israel in the 1967 war, the Shah's regime maintained close relations with Israel in economic and military spheres. Iran's trade relationship with Israel was quite extensive. Israeli exports to Iran had reached over $70 million by the mid-1970s, and Iran was the main supplier of oil to Israel during the Shah's regime. This relationship became especially critical after 1975 when Israel surrendered the Sinai oil fields of Ab Rudeis to Egypt.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Iranian-Israeli relations revolved around the military-intelligence axis. Israel's intelligence network, Mossad, and the Shah's security organization, SAVAK, were in close contact for nearly twenty-five years. The extent of their cooperation ranged from exchange of information to providing training for a number of SAVAK officials, both in Iran and in Israel.[11] Military training was also provided by the Israelis for Iranian officers, and Iran became a major purchaser of arms from Israel in the last decade of the Pahlavi monarchy.

Israeli arms supplies to Iran have allegedly continued since the Shah's overthrow, and in spite of Khomeini's vehemently anti-Israeli pronouncements. Regular contacts between Israeli and Iranian officers reportedly have been maintained. According to a story in the Israeli publication *Ha'aretz,* one such meeting took place between former Israeli Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon and a high ranking officer of the

Iranian army to discuss further sale of military spare parts to Iran.[12]

The reports of Israeli-Iranian arms deals were first made public by an article in the *Sunday Times* of London and were later substantiated by other sources, including the exiled Iranian President, Abolhassan Bani Sadr.[13] Apparently, the war with Iraq and Iran's need for spare parts for its American-made military hardware prompted the regime to purchase needed equipment from any available source, including Israel. As the Iranian Minister of Industry stated recently: "We get what we need where there are people who like to make a quick buck. And that means everywhere."[14]

In September 1980, Israeli officials notified the U.S. administration of Iran's desire to purchase American-made military equipment from Israel. According to one account, because of the delicate negotiations over the American hostages held in the U.S. embassy in Tehran, the Carter administration did not act positively at that time. The Israeli government, nevertheless, proceeded to sell Iran spare parts for its F-4 fighters, M-60 tanks, and a host of other items.[15] Although Israel has been accused of continuous violations of the U.S. boycott of sale or transfer of weapons to Iran, there are indications that the U.S. government has been at least aware of Israeli-Iranian arms deals. As a Reagan administration's State Department official put it: "We don't give a damn as long as Iran-Iraq carnage doesn't affect our allies in the region or alter the balance of power."[16]

The Iranian government has denied the veracity of any arms deal with Israel and has called reports of such deals a conspiracy against the Islamic revolution by the enemies of the Islamic Republic.[17] Despite the Iranian government's protestations to the contrary, Western sources and Iranian exiled politicians continue to provide documents alleging flourishing Iranian-Israeli arms deals. Former President Bani Sadr, for example, has provided copies of invoices sent by Kendal Holdings Limited, an Israeli-owned company domiciled in Liberia, to the Iranian Defense Ministry for the sale of weapons to Iran, including Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, radar equipment, and other military items.[18]

According to Western sources, the Iranian-Israeli arms network is now led by Farrokh Azizi, an Iranian businessman in Athens and brother of Ali Azizi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister. It also involves Israeli businessmen who had dealt with Iran under the Shah.[19] Regardless of their validity, these allegations have given impetus to Iraq's efforts to obtain more weapons and other supplies from friendly Arab states and portray itself as a defender of the Arab cause against the Iranian-Israeli encroachments.

THE NORTH KOREAN AND CHINESE CONNECTION

North Korea has been another major supplier of weapons to Iran, a fact acknowledged by the Iranian Prime Minister Musavi during his October 1983 visit to North Korea.[20] Some of the weapons sent to Iran are of Western, especially American, origin which North Korea maintains in its inventory. However, increasingly "these arms originate in China."[21] In 1982 alone, Iran purchased two billion dollars worth of weapons from

North Korea, and a small contingent of Iranian pilots have undergone training in North Korea and have flown the Chinese equivalent of MiG-19 and MiG-21 fighters.[22]

China's posture towards the Persian Gulf conflict has undergone a quiet metamorphosis. Like other major powers, the People's Republic of China declared its neutrality at the onset of the Iran-Iraq War. However, a series of events induced Peking to tilt toward Iran. First, in the summer of 1982, Moscow resumed shipment of arms to Iraq after a two-year hiatus. Second, Iran expelled eighteen Soviet diplomats on grounds of espionage and other activities "injurious to the Islamic Republic." Third, the expulsion was followed by the arrest of the entire leadership of the pro-Moscow Tudeh (masses) Party and the detention of some 2,000 members and sympathizers of Tudeh. These actions established "Iran's anti-Soviet credentials and pleased Peking,"[23] greatly improving Sino-Iranian relations which had been strained since the Iranian revolution, principally because of the Chinese support for the Shah's regime in the late 1970s.[24]

Agreements have reportedly been reached to sell Iran, through North Korea, a yet unknown number of Chinese fighter planes Shenyang F-6 (a derivative of the Soviet MiG-19). Although no Shenyang F-6s have been delivered to Iran at the time of this writing (December 1983), it is nevertheless clear that Peking has decided, partly due to Iran's anti-Soviet posture and partly as a means to increase its own foreign earnings, to enter the arms bazaar in the Persian Gulf. However, China has yet to acknowledge publicly its shift toward Iran for "fear of alienating its friends in the Arab world, particularly Egypt."[25]

From a purely military point of view, the introduction of Shenyang F-6 fighters will not change the balance of power in the Gulf War, at least in the near future. However, it does mark the first significant step by Iran to lessen its dependence on Western advanced weaponry. Iranian armed forces in general, and the air force in particular, have traditionally been supplied, and their officers trained, by the West or in the Western techniques of warfare. Since the imposition of the American boycott of arms sales to Iran, the air force of the Islamic Republic has encountered severe logistical problems. Iran's operational aircraft, the bulk being F-4 Phantoms, are now down to eighty in number, as compared to Iraq's four hundred operational fighter planes. By the same token, Iran's inventory of seventy-seven F-14 fighters has been paralyzed by the lack of spare parts and the existence of maintenance problems. Consequently, the advanced F-14s have either been grounded or used sparingly and in non-combat operations.[26]

Consequently the air force, once the strongest leg of the triad of the Iranian defense forces, is now the weakest of the country's service branches. With occasional bombing sorties, its function has been reduced to helping protect the country's major central cities, oil fields and refineries. The southwestern cities of Dezful, Ahwaz, and even Behbahan and Shiraz in the Fars province have been rendered defenseless. The Iranian counteroffensives against Iraq, which rely on

ground forces and "human wave" tactics, are without credible air cover. Colonel Sayyad Shirazi, the commander of the Iranian ground forces, has been successful in repulsing the Iraqi forces and defeating them in the Khuzestan province through relying on "human wave" assaults. However, the human cost (over 100,000 dead and wounded) has been extremely high.

Iran's repeated efforts to procure combat aircraft from NATO or Warsaw Pact countries have been futile.[27] It was in light of these obstacles that Iran's Supreme Defense Council authorized negotiations for the purchase of Chinese Shenyang F-6 combat aircrafts. One should exercise caution in overemphasizing the so-called China connection; nonetheless, Peking could certainly benefit from Tehran's policy of "neither East nor West" by becoming a major supplier of Iran's armed forces, especially if the anti-Western feelings of Iran and anti-Iranian attitudes of the U.S. continue to persist.

THE CAIRO-RIYADH-AMMAN AXIS AND THE MILITARY BALANCE IN THE GULF WAR

Egypt

Despite its ostracism from much of the Arab world since the Camp David accords, Egypt has increasingly become involved in the military affairs in the Persian Gulf region. Under both Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, Egypt has linked its security with stability in the Persian Gulf. Perceived threats from the Soviet Union and, since 1979, from Iran have brought about closer military relations between Egypt and some Gulf countries, especially Oman.[28] Cairo has already demonstrated its willingness to support American military operations in the region. The abortive 1980 U.S. hostage rescue attempt in Iran originated in Egypt. Cairo has also provided base facilities for American forces and participated with them in joint military exercises under the banner of "Bright Star" operations. These have ostensibly been designed to enhance Egypt's defensive capabilities as well as its possible interventionist capacity in the Gulf and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Cairo has once again taken an active interest in standardizing fighter planes among pro-Western Arab countries and establishing a "maintenance facility capable of handling Soviet-built, French and U.S. fighters from throughout the region."[29] In the past, Egypt had attempted to set up an indigenous Arab arms production industry, partly to standardize weapon systems among the Arab countries. The result was the establishment in 1975 of the Arab Organization for Industrialization (AOI), set up in Egypt and financed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. However, this project died in its infancy, shortly after Israeli-Egyptian *rapprochement* and the consequent withdrawal of financial backing by its Arab supporters.[30] In place of the AOI, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq and United Arab Emirates agreed in 1979 to finance an $8 billion arms industry headquartered in the United Arab Emirates.[31] Although this scheme is now theoretically under the Gulf Cooperation Council, the non-GCC Iraq will most certainly become a chief beneficiary.

Egypt, in the meantime, has developed plans to co-produce or to assemble a variety of advanced weapon systems, principally under license from Western countries. In the area of co-production, Egypt has discussed the possibility of working on the "General Dynamics F-16A, the Northrop F-20 and Dassault-Breguet Mirage X, an improved Mirage 5 with a new engine, new avionics suite, increased internal fuel capacity and system changes."[32] Both General Dynamics and Northrup have been negotiating with Egypt since July 1983 to draw up an agreement for co-production of their F-16A and F-20 fighters, respectively. However, talks with General Dynamics have lagged behind those with Northrup[33] and France, for its part, has yet to make an offer on terms and conditions for co-production of Mirage X fighter planes. Egypt appears to be counting on funding "from a third country such as Saudi Arabia or Iraq for the co-production program,"[34] as Cairo views these as Arab, rather than purely Egyptian, endeavors.

The Iraqis have been supplied with Chinese F-6 and F-7 fighters, principally through Egypt and Jordan. According to an authoritative report, Chinese versions of Soviet Mikoyan MiG-21s (designated as F-7s) and MiG 19s (F-6s), which are assembled in Egypt, are shipped to Iraq.[35] Similarly, approximately thirty Chinese F-6 fighters assembled at King Faisal Air Base in southern Jordan have been sent to the Iraqi government. In addition, both Egypt and Jordan are "supplying technical support to Iraq to assist in maintaining combat operational aircraft."[36]

However, Iraq is neither now nor will it be in the near future in a position to finance Egyptian joint production of advanced weapons. The Baghdad regime is heavily in debt (over $35 billion) as a result of its war with Iran, its economy is in a state of disarray. (It is, also, see below, providing a substantial amount of money for Jordanian defense.) The Saudis, on the other hand, will most likely be hesitant to see the introduction of additional F-16 fighters in the region as the aircraft could seriously escalate the Gulf conflict and provoke Iran to retaliate in some fashion.

Jordan

Jordan has long been a perennial favorite of Washington in the Middle East.[37] The Reagan administration's peace intitiative rests heavily on Jordanian acceptance of a West Bank Palestinian entity associated with and under its supervision and control. Despite its pro-Western posture, Jordan has been able to develop a close military relationship with the "radical" Iraq to establish the Iraqi-Saudi-Jordanian axis to counter the Syrian-Libyan axis.[38] For its part, Iraq has provided Jordan, a front line state in the Arab-Israeli conflict, with funds to fortify its defense. Part of Jordan's air defense weapons (Soviet-built SA-8 mobile launchers and radar-directed Shilka ZSU-23-4 mobile guns) were financed by Iraq. Moreover, Iraq is "known to be paying for at least 24 Mirages at a unit flyaway cost of $15-18 million and a program unit cost of approximately $30 million each."[39]

The reason for such an outlay is relatively simple; Iraq has found in

Jordan a competent rival to its chief nemesis in the Arab east — Syria. By funding Jordan's defense requirements, Iraq has sought to check Syria's aggrandizement of her own position in the Middle East. Similarly, Jordan has found it desirable to support Iraq in the Gulf War as a response to Syria's support for Iran. Jordan became the first country publicly to defend Iraq's invasion of Iran, and it has continued to support Saddam Hussein's regime with arms and military manpower. Jordan's Red Sea port of Aqaba has served as a major conduit through which arms and other goods reach their Iraqi destination and Jordanian "volunteers," although their numbers have been militarily insignificant, have fought alongside the Iraqi regular forces against Iran.

The Jordanian armed forces are, in fact, one of the best trained and equipped military groups in the Middle East.[40] The Reagan administration even designed a plan to organize a strike force of Jordanian units to be deployed in the Persian Gulf (presumably against Iran or domestic threats to the Gulf regimes), although the U.S. Senate refused to fund the force for fear it could be turned against Israel. King Hussein's major concern, however, has been portrayed by some to be the outcome of the Gulf War and the potential of a strike force in that context. William Beeman has stated categorically that Jordan's Hussein is

> petrified at the thought of an Iranian victory in the war with Iraq; he is certain that the Shi'ite rule in Baghdad soon would target him for destruction. It is for this reason that Hussein has agreed to cooperate with the United States in establishing a Jordanian Rapid Deployment Force for possible intervention in the Gulf region."[41]

Saudi Arabia

Of all the regional states, Saudi Arabia is perhaps most fearful of the spill-over effects of the Iran-Iraq War. Saudi military build-up since the onset of the Gulf War in 1980 is as much the product of Saudi Arabia's perception of the Soviet threat as it is the result of the Saudi monarchy's growing vulnerability to Iran's ideological challenge.[42] Prior to the Iranian revolution, the Saudis became grudgingly resigned to the massive build-up of the Shah's military power in neighboring Iran. However, Iran's emergence as a regional "superpower," along with the Shah's willingness to project the country's military power beyond the Persian Gulf and into the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, were viewed with considerable unease in Riyadh. The Saudis were resentful of their role as the junior partner of Iran in Washington's security scheme in the region, and they were never "comfortable with the dominant position that Iran under the Shah was creating for itself in the Persian Gulf."[43]

With the overthrow of the Shah's regime and the apparent neutralization of Iran as a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf, Washington proceeded to accelerate the militarization of Saudi Arabia. This process began under the Carter administration when the Saudis were sold sixty F-15 Eagle fighters as part of the "plane

package" of 1978, which included further sales of F-15s and F-16s to Israel and the less sophisticated F-5Es to Egypt.

Shortly after the Iraqi invasion of the Khuzestan province of Iran, the Saudis requested and received four USAF AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) radar planes, presumably to protect them from possible military attacks from Iran. The radar planes have been based at the Riyadh air base and are operated by U.S. crews with Saudi pilots present. The Iranian government has suspected that information gathered by these U.S.-controlled AWACS is passed on to the Iraqis by Saudi Arabia. Tehran has also viewed the introduction of AWACS in the Gulf as yet another manifestation of American strategy of encircling the Islamic Republic by its "puppets and traitors to Islam."[44]

The Iranian suspicion of a U.S.-Saudi collusion was heightened when the Reagan administration, after one of the most intensive lobbying and counter-lobbying efforts in the history of arms sales, obtained congressional approval for the sale of five AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia.[45] Equally disturbing, from the Iranian point of view, was the concomittant approval of the sale of additional F-15 Eagles with advanced air-to-air Sidewinder missiles, extra fuel tanks for aerial refueling and bomb racks. The Iranians charged that F-15 fighters with enhanced capabilities could be used for deep strikes inside Iran, with the AWACS functioning as their command and monitoring platform.

For the Saudis, however, the AWACS and F-15 sales were the litmus test of the "special relationship" that exists between Washington and Riyadh. Implicit in this "special relationship" is the willingness of the United States to provide advanced weapon systems to Saudi Arabia and its allies in the region. In addition, co-production of advanced U.S. weapons has increasingly been viewed by pro-Western regional leaders as another dimension of America's commitment to the security of their respective regimes. Co-production has also been judged to be a way around congressional recalcitrance and objections to the sale of sophisticated U.S. weapons to the Gulf Arab states.

As was alluded to earlier, Northrup Corporation has already entered into negotiations for the possible co-production of its F-20 Tigershark fighters in Egypt and Pakistan, with the funding from Saudi Arabia and other conservative Gulf states. The leaders of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, Egypt and Pakistan seem to concur that the F-20 Tigershark would provide "an aircraft that could be easily absorbed and maintained in smaller nations such as those in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) while obtaining a less costly fighter with agility and weapons system characteristics paralleling those of the F-16."[46]

In addition to its attractive technical features, such as its rapid engine start time (sixteen seconds), rate of climb (52,750 feet per minute) and look-up radar mode, the F-20 has been offered at a comparably low price of $10.3 million (in constant Fiscal 1983 dollars). Northrup Corporation is vigorously pursuing the sale of 150 of these F-20s to Saudi Arabia and fifty to eighty units to the United Arab Emirates.[47] The introduction of F-20s, be it through co-production with regional countries

or through direct sales by Northrup, will further destabilize the volatile balance of power in the Gulf and would further exacerbate the resolution of regional conflicts.

Syria and Libya

From the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, Syria and Libya have been among the most ardent supporters of non-Arab Iran, much to the chagrin of most Arab states. In addition to providing political support, both Syria and Libya have assisted Iran with arms and medical supplies. The extent of military support given by these two countries to Iran has been the subject of much speculation and varying interpretations. As the bulk of Iran's armed forces is equipped with Western, especially American, weapon systems, neither Syria nor Libya (both of which rely heavily on the Soviet weapons) could have possibly provided Iran with advanced weapons from their own arsenals. Furthermore, unlike North Korea, neither of these two countries maintains such weapon systems in its inventory. In other words, weapons supplied by either Syria or Libya have not disturbed the balance of power in the Gulf region.

Contrary to popular reportings in the West, Iran's relations with Libya have not been as cordial as they are commonly assumed to be. A persistent source of tension in Iranian-Libyan relations has been the fate of Imam Musa Sadr, the Iranian-born spiritual leader of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon. Imam Musa Sadr disappeared while on an official visit to Libya in the late 1970s.[48] Also, Libya has become increasingly critical of Iran's denunciations of the Soviet Union as a "satanic" power and the mass arrest of Tudeh Party leadership and Tudeh members.

Syria's identification with the Iranian cause is more a matter of political expediency than a reflection of its genuine commitment to the principles of the Islamic revolution espoused by the Iranian clerics. In fact, Syria, as one of the most secular states in the Middle East, has dealt harshly with its own resurgent Islamic movements, particularly with the Muslim Brotherhood. As was mentioned earlier, Syria's alliance with Iran is, rather, a reflection of President Assad's desire to counterbalance the pressures exerted on his own regime by Iraq and Jordan.

Syria's relations with Iraq, strained for several years over inter-Ba'ath differences, deteriorated rapidly after the onset of the Gulf War. By allying itself with Iran, Syria has been able to take advantage of the Iraqi army's preoccupation in the eastern front and concentrate on carrying out Syrian policies in Lebanon without worrying about a military threat from Iraq. Furthermore, Syria's support of Iran can partly be explained as a consequence of Damascus' deteriorating relations with Amman. In 1980, when Jordan "substituted a new alliance with Iraq for the virtually defunct Syrian alliance,"[49] Damascus felt isolated in the Arab East and became desperate in its search for allies to stem the rising tide of the Baghdad-Amman military axis. A *rapprochement* with Jordan or Iraq could conceivably sway Damascus away from its support of the Islamic Republic and towards a new inter-Arab alliance.

WHITHER THE GULF CONFLICT?

The conflict in the Persian Gulf is a classic case of an intra-Third World conflict whose management has become exceedingly difficult with the passage of time. Although it could be argued that political and ideological differences between Khomeini's Iran and the Ba'athist Iraq would have made the occurence of the Gulf War likely and its management difficult,[50] nevertheless, the massive destruction of human lives and economic infrastructures of both countries would have been less severe had the transfer of weapons to the warring parties been curtailed. Certainly major arms suppliers to Iran and Iraq must bear a significant share of responsibility in the continuing carnage in the Gulf. In so far as both countries have the means to obtain weapons from abroad and considering the rigidity of the positions of both sides on the terms of the settlement of their conflict, there will be little incentive to end the war. Continuing failure of the United Nations, non-aligned, and the Islamic Conference mediation efforts is hardly surprising in light of the aforementioned fact.[51]

There is a greater need for international management of the Gulf conflict. At present, there seems to be no coordination or "rules of the game" between the two superpowers to maintain "the lid on their competition"[52] in the region. Despite the announced superpower neutrality in the Gulf War, the Soviet Union has resumed shipment of arms to Iraq, perhaps as a result of Iran's increasingly anti-Soviet posture. The United States seems to be entertaining the idea of "tilting" toward Iraq, partly as a response to alleged Iranian complicity in the fall 1983 truck-bombing of U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut and Iran's threats to close the Strait of Hormuz if its oil flow is stopped by Iraqi air attacks.[53] Other justification advanced for abandoning U.S. neutrality and siding with Iraq include Iraq's gestures to improve relations with the United States, its expulsion of most of the Soviet advisors from the country, the support given by Iraq to the Gulf Cooperative Council, and the country's effectiveness as a counter-weight to Syria's influence in the Middle East.[54]

On the other hand, as Thomas McNaugher has noted, such a shift would "serve no useful American purpose and might indeed be a grave mistake."[55] Iraq's major financial patrons, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are no longer willing (or able) to subsidize the war. Baghdad's own revenues have been dropped drastically as its Persian Gulf outlet (Khor al-Amaya and Mina al-Bakr terminals) has been rendered unusable and its pipeline traversing through Syria to the Mediterranean Sea has been shut by the Damascus regime, though small quantities of oil are still exported through the Iraqi pipeline crossing Turkey. Apparently Iran is willing to allow this overland pipeline through Turkey to operate because of the burgeoning Iranian-Turkish economic ties. President Ali Khamanei reaffirmed this view stating: "Because Turkish interests are dear to us, we will not attack the Iraqi pipeline that goes through Turkey."[56]

The Iranian economy is in somewhat better shape. Iran's main petroleum shipping terminal on Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf has

been operating at near full capacity, allowing the country to export an average of two million barrels, per day.[57] At the same time, the Islamic Republic has been relatively successful in engaging the Iraqis in a war of attrition which the Iraqi economy is no longer able to sustain.

Dissatisfaction in the ranks of the Iraqi army and among high level functionaries is widespread. The power struggle has even reached President Saddam Hussein's family and his village of Tikrit. Hussein's three step-brothers have reportedly been arrested as ring leaders of a recent coup attempt against his regime.[58] Considering the deteriorating political, military and economic conditions in Iraq, Saddam Hussein has embarked upon a course of action to internationalize the Gulf War and bring about the active involvement of the superpowers. The recent delivery of five French Super Etendard planes, with the ability to use Exocet missiles effectively against moving tankers, could provoke Iran into fulfilling its oft-repeated promise to close the Strait of Hormuz, thereby necessitating a direct American military action in the Persian Gulf region. In the event of Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the United States "would wind up doing what Iraq cannot do for itself. The chances of this may be very slim, but Iraq has little to lose by trying,"[59] to force the issue. A bellicose U.S. posture would, as it has in the past, play into the hands of the Soviet Union and would raise questions regarding U.S. intentions and ultimate motives in the region.[60] More than likely, a U.S. military intervention in the Gulf would be viewed as an attempt to destablize or overthrow the Iranian revolutionary regime. As Feinberg and Oye have noted: "In practice, American destablization programs have worked best against moderate or elected nationalists, such as Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran, Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, and Salvador Allende of Chile... . Fearing subversion, future revolutionary elites will be more inclined to move quickly to consolidate their control and to seek Soviet bloc security assistance."[61]

The Iran-Iraq War will most likely continue until the Iraq regime has fallen or until there emerges a major realignment of domestic forces in Iran. At present, the former is a more likely possibility. In the meantime, the intensity and rigidity of the Iranian and Iraqi claims and counterclaims and their adamant desire to seek victory, military or otherwise, in the Gulf War accentuates the urgency of limiting arms transfers to the belligerents.

Editorial Note

* An earlier version of this article was read at the 1983 meeting of the Southern Section of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia.

Footnotes

1. *Kayhan* (Tehran), special war supplement, September 22, 1983.
2. *Jomhuriye Eslami* (Tehran), October 21, 1981. Also see James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East* (2nd ed.; Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), pp. 395-397.
3. Quoted in *Iran Times,* November 20, 1981.
4. For details see *Iran Times*, September 17, 24 and October 15, 1982.
5. *Wall Street Journal,* December 24, 1981.
6. Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 175.
7. For a description of the programs of the Gulf Cooperation Council, consult Judith Perera, "Caution: Building in Progress," *The Middle East,* no. 78 (April 1981), pp. 8-12).
8. *Ibid.*
9. Radio Tehran (Voice of the Islamic Republic), January 23, 1982.
10. *Iran Times,* January 29, 1982.
11. For further details of Iranian-Israeli relations during the Shah's regime see Robert B. Reppa, *Israel and Iran: Bilateral Relationships and Effects on the Indian Ocean Basin* (New York: Praeger, 1974); Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Iran and Israel: The Discreet Entente," *Orbis,* 18 (Winter 1975), pp. 1070-1087; R.K. Ramazani, "Iran and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Middle East Journal,* 32 (Autumn 1978), pp. 413-428; Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 278-280, and Israel Shahak, *Israel's Global Role: Weapons for Repression* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1982), pp. 32-36. The documents obtained after the seizure of the United States Embassy in Tehran in 1979 also attest to the close Iranian-Israeli relations during the Pahlavi era, especially in the areas of intelligence and military cooperation.
12. *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), June 24, 1983.
13. *Sunday Times* (London), July 26, 1981. Also see *Washington Post,* July 27, 1981.
14. As quoted in *Sunday Times* (London), July 31, 1983.
15. Phil Marfleet and Edward J. Mann, "Seeking Arms From the Devil," *The Middle East*, no. 87 (January 1982), pp. 20-21.
16. As quoted in *Time,* "Arms for the Ayotollah," July 25, 1983, p. 28.
17. *Jomhuriye Eslami* (Tehran), October 2, 1982.
18. See *Boston Globe,* July 27, 1983.
19. *Sunday Times* (London), July 31, 1983, and *Time* July 25, 1983.
20. *Iran Times,* November 4, 1983.
21. Dilip Hiro, "As the Gulf War Enter Year 4, Iran Plays a China Card," *Wall Street Journal,* September 22, 1983, p. 30.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. For a review of Sino-Iranian relations during the Shah's regime see Nader Entessar, "The People's Republic of China and Iran: An Overview of Their Relationship," *Asia Quarterly,* no. 1 (1978), pp. 79-88.
25. Dilip Hiro, p. 30.
26. The Iranian government has stated that the lack of spare parts has been exaggerated. Colonel Mohammad Salimi, Iran's Defense Minister, has contended that the domestic

production of light weapons and military spare parts has been adequate to meet the needs of the country in its war with Iraq. According to Salimi, Iran now produces "sophisticated" spare parts for its fighter planes; it also manufactures artillery batteries, anti-aircraft guns, and the like. See *Iran Times,* October 14, 1983.

27. The Iranian government, however, has been able to purchase six Pilatus PC-7 training aircraft from Switzerland. These planes can be modified and turned into fighter planes. See *Iran Times,* November 18, 1983. Also, Iran has placed its first wartime order of tanks. These German-designed tanks are claimed to be comparable to the highly touted West German Leopard I and French AMX-30 tanks. See *Iran Times,* November 25, 1983.
28. See Gabriel Ben-Dor, "Egypt," in *Security Policies of Developing Countries,* edited by Edward A. Kolodziej and Robert E. Harkavy, (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath, 1982), p. 185.
29. Clarence A. Robinson, Jr., "Egypt Seeks Technology Transfer," *Aviation Week & Space Technology,* August 15, 1983, p. 129.
30. Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 170-172.
31. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1982-1983* (London: IISS, 1983), p. 52.
32. Clarence Robinson, Jr., "Egypt Seeks Technology Transfer," pp. 129-130.
33. *Ibid.,* pp. 134-135.
34. *Ibid.,* p. 135.
35. Clarence A. Robinson, Jr., "Iran, Iraq Acquiring Chinese-Built Fighters," *Aviation Week & Space Technology,* April 11, 1983, p. 16.
36. *Ibid.*
37. For a succinct analysis of U.S.-Jordanian military relations see Anthony H. Cordesman, *Jordanian Arms and the Middle East Balance* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1983), pp. 13-25.
38. See Alan R. Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1983), pp. 81-92.
39. Clarence A. Robinson Jr., "Jordan Seeks Weapon Advances," *Aviation Week & Space Technology,* June 27, 1983, p. 38.
40. For a detailed description of the Jordanian armed forces and their weapons see Anthony H. Cordesman, pp. 61-95 and 145-179.
41. William O. Beeman, "Rise of the Shi'ites," *Today,* December 2, 1983, p. 16.
42. For an analysis of the implications of the Iran-Iraq War for Saudi Arabia see Stephen R. Grummon, "The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled," *The Washington Papers/92* (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp. 86-91; Barry Rubin, "Iran's Revolution and Persian Gulf Instability," in *The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts,* edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi, (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 139-142; and, James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, pp. 395-405.
43. Andrew J. Pierre, p. 176.
44. *Kayhan* (Tehran), December 24, 1982.
45. These AWACS planes have been scheduled for delivery in late 1985.
46. Clarence A. Robinson, Jr., "U.S. Pushes Regional Stability," *Aviation Week & Space Technology,* May 23, 1983, p. 42.
47. "Saudis Facing USSR, Regional Threats," in *ibid.,* p. 66.
48. Nader Entessar, "Arab Factions in Post-Revolutionary Iranian Politics," *Middle East Review,* 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 53-54.
49. Itamar Rabinovich, "Syria", in Edward A. Kolodziej and Robert E. Harkavy, p. 279.
50. See Robert Litwak, *Security in the Persian Gulf: Sources of Inter-State Conflict* (Montclair, New Jersey: Allanheld, Osmun & Co., 1981), pp. 98-99.

51. For a brief discussion of these mediating efforts see Stephen R. Grummon, pp. 72-81.
52. Andrew J. Pierre, p. 278.
53. See the Secretary of State George Shultz's statement regarding the U.S. policy position in the Gulf in the *New York Times,* October 18, 1983.
54. See Christine Helms, "Tilt Toward Iraq," *New York Times,* November 28, 1983, p. 23.
55. Thomas L. McNaugher, "Don't Tilt Toward Iraq," *New York Times,* November 9, 1983, p. 23.
56. As quoted in *Iran Times,* November 18, 1983.
57. For an excellent analysis of economic effects of the war on Iran and Iraq see Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani, "Economic Implications for Iran and Iraq," in Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi, pp. 51-64.
58. The most important shake-up involved Barzan Takriti, Saddam Hussein's step-brother who was in charge of Iraq's secret police. See *Guardian* (Manchester), November 7, 1983.
59. Thomas L. McNaugher, p. 23.
60. Richard E. Feinberg, *The Intemperate Zone: The Third World Challenge to U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), pp. 199-200.
61. Richard E. Feinberg and Kenneth A. Oye, "After the Fall: U.S. Policy Toward Radical Regimes," *World Policy Journal,* 1 (Fall 1983), p. 210.