

Reasons Behind Iran And Iraq War Of 1980's

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The Iran-Iraq borders have been facing hostility from each other for a long. The rough memories are still being carried till today, and the environment is not peaceful between the, two. Iraq was founded after the dispersion of the great Ottoman Empire into certain estates. Since then, Iraq has been known as the corner of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the demarcation of borders gave them the label of independent states like Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. This division between the states was the decision of the winning partner of WWI and the correspondence from the League of Nations. Due to the acceptance of the dominance, all these states became members of the Western countries.

The oil resources of Iraq and Iran were untouched since then and were not used for any means; thus, they turned out to be attractive to the Western countries to plant their units there and to explore the oil resources for more international profitability. This curiosity led to war between the two nations, which caused millions of deaths and enormous damage that is unable to be recovered to this day. The war was carried on for eight long years.

The aim of this essay is to analyze the conflict between Iran and Iraq, which led to the disastrous war, through the study of conflict resolution. It has always been difficult for scholars to discuss the repercussions and the reasons behind this war. However, as this war changed the structure of the area, it is necessary to study the factors that made this battle be fought for eight long years (Donovan, Topple, Naidoo, & Milner, 2015).



Fig: Crude Oil Production

Causes of War

Historical Background of the 1980's War

It has been analyzed that the conflicting situations between the two countries have been observed to be happening for three centuries. The rivalry was developed by the Safavids and Ottomans divisions; thus, the group made them each other's former enemy. However, the conflict of the 17th century was due to political and religious issues. Once the concept of colonialism was established, then the fight for power and the oil resources began. Both countries were blessed with an abundance of natural oil resources and the more the asset of oils was designated to a country, the greater it had strength in that region.

Due to this factor, the stronger economy was fighting over, the weaker one to control their oil

reserves too and to become the most powerful of the region. Before the independent authority of Iran and Iraq was established, Britain was the superpower. When Britain left the area after the Persian Gulf War, there was a void of power or authority to rule the countries. This void leads to the violence embraced upon the weakest countries by the strongest countries so that they can maintain their power and supremacy within the region.



Fig: British Rule before the Gulf War

The border issues were getting more intense, and due to this, a treaty was signed in Algiers that both countries were independent and would not interfere in each other's border parameters. Even then, the border issues were not solved, and Iran and Iraq were going into the cold war. Thus, this added fuel to the fire when the Shah of Iran increased the level of conflicts with Iraq by promoting and supporting the Kurds fighting in the area. This allegedly created a dangerous situation for Saddam, the Iraqi leader, that the insurgencies in Iraq were the result of Iran's intermission in spoiling the peace in Iraq.

Thus, it led or forced Saddam to take action against this movement while targeting the country of origin that had begun this war. Iran was supporting the uprisings of the 'Shia' movements in Iraq, which has disturbed the internal peace and the economy of the country. Thus, after deploying efforts to regain control over the region, Iraq became famous for its efforts. The first ever attempt to confront Iran was by liberalizing the trade connections (Segal, 1988).

The war with the Shah means resentment from the Shia community from the inside of the country. Saddam was ready for this, and he planned this war on the Shia community to stop them from flourishing their wings in Iraq. The Islamic revolution in Iran led to the deployment of the theocratic region. Iraq was following the Secular regime; this was the reason that both countries were unable to consider their stance and respond accordingly, thus violating the Algiers treaty.

One of the leading causes of this war was the differences in the ideologies and the vision of the leaders, which increased the differences between the two countries. The Shah of Iran was a conservative who wanted to implement his law within the state by proving their authority in the region. However, Saddam Hussein was a nationally elected leader and was liked by the majority of the Iraqi population. When Saddam declared war upon Iran, the entire nation stood up with him and supported him in this cause despite knowing that it was a war due to personal differences or ideological differences in the countries. However, Saddam also had this virtue of proving his authority, due to this he had tried to overtake the government through several attempts, but he always failed to do so. It was this time, which he planned strategically that this policy would not help; he planted his cousin Bakar in the government and slowly took over the authority of the entire government. However, when Saddam wanted to impose the Iran and Iraq war, his cousin was unable to give him definite answers on whether he should force war on Iran or not.

After this, his cousin stepped back due to his health issues. Thus, Saddam became an all-in-all man of power; it was his disposal how he wanted to carry the country's affairs. The authority made Saddam ruthless and brutal, and he used to execute hundreds of people a day for conspiring against him. Like the Shah of Iran, Saddam's interest was to maintain his control only. He was also working for the growth of his personal power.

The situation became worse when the former Shah was overthrown by Ayatollah Khomeini, who was the greatest conservative and the national leader of Iran, having the majority of Iran's population. Thus, Khomeini was known as the most precarious existence of Hussein's rule.

Role of International Community

The conflict is a level defined internationally to be dealt with through international standards when the local parties are unable to resolve the matter through peace talks. Thus, it was analyzed that the Western community was responsible for initiating the Iraq and Iran war. Every European country was only seeking his personal interest and was trying to anticipate how the war would be able to facilitate them and increase their business profitability. During the initial stages, when the war was not imposed, the USA was supporting Iraq to play an aggressive role in the region and to prove its authority over Iraq through war. However, Russia, being a superpower, was playing a neutral role and was emphasizing the peace talks.

It doesn't mean that the US government didn't have differences with Iraq; they were also not an ally of Iraq but had more differences with Iran. Therefore, despite forcing a direct war on Iran, it was better to side with the enemy because it was fulfilling the wishes of both the US country and Iraq. The US and Iran issues were based on the political authority within the region. The population of both countries used to consider each other a terrorist state, and the leaders of the two nations were raising more hatred for each other, which was observed in their executions of order.



Fig: Disputed Properties

Due to this, Iraq was promoted to force war on Iran ("The Iran-Iraq War: a military and strategic history," 2015); the US authority had significant disputed conflicts with the Reza Shah, so the scenarios were created to overthrow him from his government. The rule of Reza Shah was also the result of US support, which pursued Reza Shah to take over the Shah's domain in the Iran region. Thus, the US authority has been observed to support violence by directly supplying weapons to Iraq and supporting Iraq's opinions on different platforms regarding the wrongdoings of Iran's leader.

Apparently, Iraq was supported by the western community, more importantly, US. Iraq, during this time, was considered the first line of defense against Iran. If Iran was expected to conduct any insurgency, then it was Iraq who was supposed to protect the sovereignty of the Gulf region. Thus,

Iraq at this time was given the role of savior from the West, and it was due to the efforts of Iraq and the US that Iran was isolated from the Western community.

Russia was a silent observant of the issue, though he was not participating but silently observing the entire situation. As Russia had no personal difference of opinion with Iran, therefore, he was supporting peace talks between the two countries. Moreover, Russia was siding with Iran and preventing it from being isolated from the Western community. Given the Russian government, Iran has all the rights to practice their sovereignty, and no one shall be suppressed due to having multiple conflicts with any of the two states which come together against one state for the purpose of destruction and to establish their rules.

Ethical Conflicts

The conflicts could be observed in the physical form, but ethical conflicts are the type of conflicts that are difficult to see and evaluate. Moreover, these conflicts are complicated to explain and communicate because every country has its code of ethics, and it prefers practicing its ethical values accordingly. One of the examples to show how difficult it is to solve ethical conflicts is the ex-Yugoslavian conflict, which is still not resolved after so many years of dispute.

The ethical conflicts in modern society are known to be the feudalization of societal matters. There are more chances of occurrence of intra-state conflicts when it is observed that the minorities are not given their rights. Rather, they are deprived of their fundamental rights. However, the ethnicities do not get along the same lines for a single border when an interstate conflict is observed. The common factor in both the states was the Kurds, but the Kurds were in the minority.

The strategy adopted to go on the war between the two states is due to the increasing interstate conflicts. The minorities may take help from international borders to come and support them on local grounds, but this depends upon the complete discretion of the foreign authority if they want to side with any country on foreign land. Iran was supported by the Kurd's ethics because of their shared interests. In response, the Leader of Iran was supporting the Kurd's existence in Iraq.

Thus, the diversity of the ethnic values increased the differences between the two countries. Thus, due to this, the violence was enhanced between the two countries, which was not for the nation as a whole but due to the ideological differences. However, when other reasons behind the conflicts were evaluated, the ethnic aspect was given little importance.

Territorial Conflict

As mentioned before, the borders were demarcated after the shattering of the great Ottoman Empire into small states. Apart from the division, only the Kurds were the common factor that existed in both countries despite the division. The borders were facing tension; the war was about to be imposed due

to ideological differences, and the minorities were trying to protect themselves from being overrun by the government, thus creating an intense situation.

Iran and Iraq both claimed to be the superpowers and were trying to establish their authority within the region. After the revolution of Iran, the Shia were given this sovereignty to practice their rights and to stay sovereign to implement their religious views. Despite the differences, Iran was trying to support bringing unity to the region and to establish one rule that was subjected to Iran's sovereignty.

Religious Conflicts

Thus, Islam is the religion of peace and has always promoted peace for resolving any issues. The agenda and strategies of Iraq and Iran were not according to Islamic values. Rather, it depended on the discrete judgment of the ethnic groups known as Shia and Sunni in the region. These conflicts gave the base to the other conflicts, and the issues came out of the bounds of the two biggest sects of Islam to the court of foreign nations for deciding the fate of this region.

The Objectives of War

- On 22 September 1980, Iraq launched a preemptive strike against Iran. The war goals stated by the center of Iraq were:

§ Iraq has a legitimate right to control the land and water inside and outside its region, in particular, the Shatt Al-Arab.

§ Iran shall follow the international principles of God's neighbors and shall adhere to the laws.

§ Iraq wishes to be the dominant state in the Gulf region, and Iran shall accept this dominance. The acceptance shall be at national, political and economic levels.

§ While Iran was weakened after the revolution and cut off from US aid, Iraq was planning to destroy the Iranian military assets and army.

However, Iran expressed its concern toward Iraq through an international forum in 1980 and demanded:

- To end peaceful aggression and to move out of the bounds of the Iranian's borders.
- To pay reparations and to accept the guilt.
- To implement the rule of Shiite Government in Iraq and completely remove the Baathist Government.

The Offences from Iraq

- The war began on 22 September 1980; the Iraqi force was able to push 50 miles within the Iranian boundaries.
- Iraq also stroked through the air force, but this attack was rejected through the Iran air force counterattack.
- Within the first week of the War, 30,000 soldiers moved inside the Iran boundaries, especially in the Khuzestan Province.
- Till this time, the Iraqi army was able to succeed in a strip 800 km long and 20-60 km in depth from North to South.

17 November 1980 – 26 September 1981

The war between Iran and Iraq slowed down because both the resources used for the war were exhausted. They needed to get refueled for the reason that both of them had their military assets but were relying on a third country's military resources; therefore, it took time for them to recoup the funds in a short period.

During this time, Iran strengthened its resources and prepared its army to fight against Iraq. Iran used its volunteer guard to join the military and to strengthen its defenses against international enforcement.

27 September 1981 – October 1983

Iran, after gaining strength, began attacking the Southern sector of Iraq. During this offensive attack, Iran used humans in the form of suicide bombings, which caused major havoc in Iraq. Iran, apart from using the force directly, adopted strategies that gave back a major hold on the Iraqi army. Thus, Iraq named their successful operations after Islamic names like "Fateh Bit-Al-Makes," "Fatma-Al-Zahraa," and Operation "Jerusalem."

Conclusion

Iraq and Iran fought the war for eight long years, resulting in the loss of many lives and assets, which are unrecoverable to this date. Even after this war had harmful effects, it did not result because both countries maintained their sovereign status and followed their religious and political interests. However, if there is no other way than to have war, it depends upon the intellect of people, how they carry the war and how they would end it. It shall be ensured that major public assets are secured

because the war will end one day, but the people suffering through it will experience the repercussions their entire lives.

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