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Introduction

On 22 September 1980, Iraqi Armed Forces bombed airstrips of Iran and a land invasion of Khuzestan followed ("Iran-Iraq War"). Iranian Armed Forces were weakened after the purges of Khomeini and the Iraqi army seems to have the upperhand currently (Nelson).

The invasion could be justified with various ongoing conflicts between Iran and Iraq, these can be grouped into five: cultural enmity, megalomaniac tendencies of Saddam, a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf, inflammatory Shi'i rhetoric, and Shatta Al Arab dispute (Workman).

Definition of Key Terms

Religious sect: A group of people that has separated their religion from a larger group despite being a part of the same religion due to conflict or disagreement over the religion (Collins). For example, Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims are two different sects of Islam.

Sectarian: A person who very strongly supports the cultural or religious group they are a part of in a way that may cause conflict with other religious or cultural groups (Cambridge). A religious sectarian may discriminate or, in extreme cases, assault someone from another sect in their religion.

Ba'th: Ba'ath Party, Ba'ath also spelled Ba'th, in full Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, or Arab Socialist Renaissance Party, Arabic Ḥizb al-Ba'ath al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī, Pan-Arabist political party advocating the formation of a single Arab socialist nation ("Ba'ath Party").

Demarcation: marking the limits and boundaries of something

Shatta al Arab: The borderline between Iran and Iraq according to 1975 Algiers Agreements

General Overview

In 1975, then Iraqi president Saddam Husein and the Iranian Shah regime signed various treaties regarding the territorial dispute of Shatta Al Arab; Saddam conceded the Iraqi territorial claims in exchange for the cessation of Iranian meddling in Iraq (Britannica). According to the treaty signed on 13 June 1975, Iran and Iraq settled on Shatta al Arab as the demarcation between their countries (No. 14903).

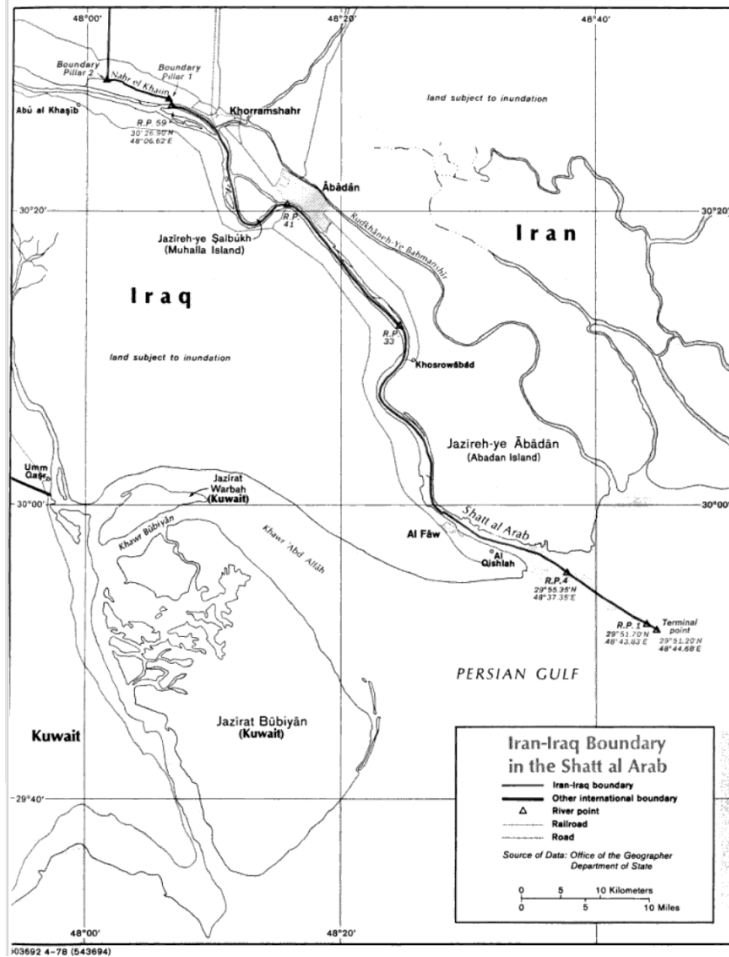


Figure 1: Shatta Al Arab border of Iran and Iraq

Starting in 1977, Iran went through violent riots and a revolution, ending with the dethronement of Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979. Khomeini became the new leader of the new Shia Iran Islamic State (Maloney). Iran went through a complete revolution and a regime change as a result of the riots, now being ruled theocratically.

“The Iranian Revolution of 1978–79 brought the 1975 agreements into questionable standing. Border clashes began occurring from time to time while signs of Iranian interference in Iraq were pronounced. Leaders of Iran’s Islamic republic indicated their desire to “export” the revolution’s concept of Islamic governance guided by Shi’i clergy. Ruhollah Khomeini, the ideological architect of the revolution, had already found an audience for his ideas in Iraq when he was living there during his exile. In April 1980 the deputy prime minister of Iraq, Tariq Aziz, survived an assassination attempt by Iraqi Shi’is sympathetic to the Iranian Revolution” (“Iran-Iraq War”).

The sectarian conflict of Sunni-Shia is one of the most important aspects in this conflict. Sunni-Shia division occurred after the death of prophet Muhammed, some Muslims deemed Ali, son-in-law of

Muhammed, as the rightful ruler, but the majority saw Abu Bakr as the descendant. Supporters of Ali are called Shia and the majority, the supporters of Abu Bakr, are called Sunni (Pruitt).

Iraq's Ba'th regime was secular and was oppressive against the Shia population. "Shi'ism clearly had the capacity, as evident in Iran, to structure and animate social struggles against the Ba'th. Finally, Iraq's socio-economic evolution guaranteed that serious grievances against the regime would arise. Development throughout the post-war period in Iraq was accompanied by extreme social dislocation, particularly as rural reforms eroded living conditions in the countryside and prompted massive migration into the urban centres" (Workman).

Power struggle in Iran in the aftermath of the revolution was still ongoing, the clergy, aristocrats, and the middle class were still fighting for power. In this unstable environment, in order to continue their Islamic rule, they had to influence other countries for Islamic rule as well, exporting Islamism in essence. It is in this manner that Hussein and the Ba'th regime was endangered (Workman).

Hussein justified the border clashes and the invasion of Khuzestan in 1980 by the illegal Iranian presence inside Iraqi borders which were designated according to the 1975 agreements. On 16 September 1980, in a meeting with his generals, Saddam said "We gave Iran all this time and the new regime has been there for a year and a half. That's enough. A year and a half and they didn't return the lands controlled and occupied by them according to the Agreement. This necessitates that we regain it with blood and weapons. The Agreement is dead now. The agreement has ended, legally and nationally. And legally and realistically they [the Iranians] are responsible for ending it" ("Saddam Hussein"). On September 22nd 1980, Iraqi forces made their first attack through an air raid on western Iran, near their shared border (Britannica).

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Iran:

Iran has been an Islamic Republic since April 1, 1979 and the regime wants to export the Islamic revolution to other countries. We can still call Islamic Republic of Iran in a state of postrevolutionary chaos. When Khomeini stated that the regime is now an Islamic Republic, the clergy destroyed the leftists that helped in the revolution. Sharia laws were put in place and the opposition was suppressed each day (Afary).

Iraq:

Saddam Hussein didn't come to power in peaceful ways, the Ba'athist party had its failures in 1963, and learning from those mistakes, Hussein was a fierce dictator, he tolerated no opposition even inside the party. The war he is waging against Iran is a way of legitimizing his own rule, by creating the outside enemy he is able to take full control of Iraq and its resources (Kennedy).

Soviet Union (USSR):

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has documents regarding the Soviet influence in Iraq, Soviet Union was financing Kurdish guerillas against the Ba'th regime and as an aggressor in the Afghan war, the Soviet Union wants to expand their influence in the Middle East, especially through financing various terrorist organisations (Nelson).

United States of America (USA):

In 1979, the Tehran embassy of the USA was encircled by Iranian militias, taking 66 hostages. Also, the Shah regime was a close partner of the USA, thus, the change of regime and an installment of an Islamic Republic is not an advancement the USA was looking forward to (Afary).

Timeline of Events

1975	<i>Algiers Agreements between Iraq and Iran take place</i>
1977	<i>Protests against Shah Reza Pahlavi turns violent</i>
1979	<i>Khomeini assumes control over Iran and declares it an Islamic State</i>
22 September 1980	<i>Iraqi forces invade the western border of Iran via an air raid, making their first attack.</i>
22 September 1980	<i>Saddam Hussein, by showing border clashes as justification, launched an invasion to Khuzestan</i>

Treaties and Events

1975 Algiers Agreements; this is used as casus-belli (justification), by the Iraqi government showing Iranian breaches as a cause, therefore the delegates must understand what these agreements are and what was the aim.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Algiers Agreements were the most prominent previous attempts; however, since 1975, regimes of both countries have changed, Hussein was in a powerful position, however he wasn't the dictator he is now. And Iran was a secular monarchy not an Islamic State, therefore, the delegates should not oversee the fact that any solution that is prior to the regime change won't have a legitimacy as high as an agreement that is signed afterwards.

Possible Solutions

The conflict has recently started, and the Iraqi forces have the upperhand, however, the mobilization of the full Iranian population may turn the tides. On the 22nd of September, 1980, Iraqi forces invaded

western Iran along the shared country border (Britannica). The attack was through a surprise air raid on Iranian air bases. The delegates will begin lobbying in response to this situation.

The delegates must respect the sovereignty rights of each country, however, negotiations for a cease-fire can be issued with diplomatic pressure. Especially the delegates of the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and the USA have high influences in the region, with the combined power of the United Nations, after a cease-fire there can be a new Algiers Agreement.

In case the conflict surges on, the delegates must not overlook the fact that war crimes or any act of chemical weapons are illegal and against the agreements that both Iraq and Iran are cosignatories of. A human rights watch or a team of United Nations investigators can be sent to the fronts.

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