



# THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST GULF WAR

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The Middle East is one of the most complicated regions of the world from geopolitical viewpoint. The rich nature, favorable geographical location, inexhaustible reserves of hydrocarbons of this region have historically occupied a central place in the interest of the great powers. Starting from the beginning of the 20th century this region has been of more actuality and from this point of view, it has attracted the interest of the great powers. Gulf wars, conflict of interest between the influence of the great powers are good examples of it. We have tried to study the genesis, development, real political consequences and prospects of this issue.

A number of events had taken place before the First Gulf War. The most important of these events is the Iran-Iraq War covering the years of 1980-1988. When investigating the Iran-Iraq war, it is important to pay attention to the historical period between these two countries. This historical period can be divided into two stages: the first stage started in 1932 and ended in the beginning of 1970. This stage is characterized with conflicts and border claims of the region states against each other and it is the period of struggle for the geographical area between Iran and the former Ottoman Empire.

Each of the parties tried to prove its sovereignty in the land and water areas recognized by the international community. The main reason of the conflict was the matter of the border passing along Sattul-Arab river between the two countries. Sattul-Arab river was of great importance for Iraq as it was the only access to the Persian Gulf and the oceans. Iraq did not have any other sea route going to the world markets and any strategic points for deploying its naval forces. It wanted to

gain full control over Sattul-Arab river. According to the agreements made between Iran and Iraq in 1937, Iran recognized the sovereign rights of Iraq over these borders and the most part of the river. This deal only allowed to freeze the conflict and give a relative impetus towards the collaborations between the countries. However, it didn't last long. Such that, this agreement was cancelled in the middle of 1969 and since that time on the second stage of the conflict has started. The characteristic feature of the first stage is that the conflict transitioned into the struggle context for the influence and hegemony of the Persian Gulf and it began to take a more critical level. (1)

Iran-Iraq war started on 22 September 1980 with the Iraqi Army attack to the Khuzestan province of Iran. Iraq's achievements gained in the beginning of the war was prevented by the Iranian army and Iran was able to take the occupied lands back from Iraq by June 1982. Iran began to take more offensive operations during the next 6 years. The war was over with the ceasefire achieved on August 20, 1988 and both states returned their borders to the pre-war situation. On September 17, 1980 Saddam Hussein formally denounced (broke) the 1975 Algerian contract and announced the east coast of Sattul-Arab River as Iraqi territories and demanded to clear Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb Islands from the Iranian Army. On September 22, 1980 the Iraqi Army started the large-scale military intervention into the Iranian territory. The pretext for starting the war was the accusation of the Iranian agents in the attempt of assassination against the life of the Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz. Despite the date of Iraqi Army's passing Sattul-Arab River and penetrating into the Khuzestan province of Iran being accepted as a start date of the war, it is considered in Iraq that the war started on September 4 as a result of the armed conflict in Iran-Iraq border (2, page 33).

On September 28, 1980, the UN adopted a resolution titled "Current situation of the relation between Iran and Iraq", No. 479. The resolution demanded the conflicting parties to stop the military operations immediately and solve the conflict according to the international legal framework peacefully and it also demanded from the other states to avoid any actions causing the expansion and future escalation of the conflict.

Despite Saddam's proposing to start peace talks with Ayatullah Khomeini in neutral area, his proposal was not accepted.

In fall 1986 Iran, who tried to use the arisen situation between the parties, proposed the following conditions to Iraq: Saddam Hussein's resignation, Ba'th party's withdrawing from the political arena, Iraq's participation in the war against Israel, establishing a government that can satisfy Iran (3).

In 1986, Saddam Hussein sent an open appeal to Iran and advanced the following proposals: the parties withdraw completely and unconditionally towards the borders recognized by the

international community, return all POW, sign agreement between the two parties on peace and non-aggression, not interfere into each other's work, ensure Iran and Iraq's secure and stable life in the Persian Gulf.

However, the proposals of the either party were not accepted anyhow. Iraq conducted several successful operations towards liberating its territories from the Iranian troops in spring-summer of 1988. Seeing no further perspectives of the war, Khomeini agreed to the peace. Having demonstrated defense strategy in the land war during 6 years, Iraq increased the offensive operations in April 1988, and returned the Fao peninsula as a result of the bloody battles during 48 hours. This event played a role of turning point for Iraq in the war. In May the Iraqi troops pushed off the Iranians from the territory of the Salamanchekha area located in the east of Basra and in June 1985 they liberated the Majnoon islands previously occupied by Iran. In the beginning of June, Irak pushed off the Iranian troops from the Kurdistan province and in the end of the month, it further advanced towards Iran-Iraq border and occupied several border districts that belonged to Iran. Since August 1988, as a result of continuous attacks against Iranians, Iraq liberated several areas (4).

The countries supporting these two countries in the 1980-1988 war were the following: USSR, USA, China, Great Britain, Brasil, Germany, France, Italy and the following states were trying mediation between Iran and Iraq: North Korea, Turkey, Algeria.

On July 20, 1987, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution titled "The relation between Iran and Iraq", No. 598. (5, page 51). This resolution reflected the requirements of the Security Council resolution dated February 24, 1986, No. 582. According to this resolution, the both parties were to announce a ceasefire immediately, to stop all military operations in land, water and air, for the air forces to withdraw towards the internationally-legally recognized borders, for the UN to send an observing group to ensure the ceasefire regime and the retreat of the troops, and liberate the POW according to the Geneva treaty adopted in 1949 and ensure sending them to their own countries after the cessation of hostilities. It was also recommended for the UN General Secretary to establish a special commission for identifying the war criminals. (6, page 177).

In July 1988 Iran-Iraq talks started in Geneva with the mediation of the UN. Khomeini accepted the 1987 resolution of UN Secretary, No. 598. However Iraq had done it several months before Iran.

With the mediation of the UN and Islamic Conference Organization, the implementation of the ceasefire regime started in all the fronts and with this, the war was stopped in August 1988.

In August of 1988 when the Iran-Iraq war was over and the ceasefire was signed, Iraq was in debt morass and its people were on the eve of the social explosion. Most part of the Iraqi debts were to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Iraq asked these two countries to write off their debts, however the both countries rejected its request. (7, page 341-342).

From the other hand, Saddam Husein was trying to develop the relations with the Arabic countries who supported his country in the Iran-Iraq war. And this policy was also supported by the United States of America. The Iraq-Saudia Arabia relations being strong during the Iran-Iraq war, also continued in 1989. A pact was signed between the two states on not interfering to each-other's affairs and non-agression.

In the beginning of July 1990, Iraq openly threatened with military action regarding the Kuwait quote policy against which it was complaining. On July 31, 1990, the Iraqi and Kuwait delegation met in Jiddah city of Saudi Arabia with the purpose of oil conflict between themselves. Head of Egyptian state, Mr. Housni Mubarek also participated in this meeting with the mediation mission between these countries (7).

So, with its geopolitical situation, rich natural resources, being in the centre of the struggle between the great powers influence, the Middle East region is of more actuality in the 21st century. Currently happening processes in the regions are complicating the perspective development of the region. It can be hoped that, each state including the Middle East states will leave these turbulent years behind in the real sense of the word and achieve democratization, stability, development, contribute towards international peace, security and discipline.

Such a proposition is put forward in the article that, the positive tendency of the events in the region will depend on the foreign policy of the states. Iranian policy can be accepted as a sample in this matter. The negative aspects of the relations between separate states put development tendency's leading towards positive results under suspicion. The most positive position is demonstrated by Iran in the region. By conducting the policy of non-interfering into the internal affairs of Suria and Iraq, Iran plays a crucial role in these countries gaining full independence as well as in the solution of economic, moral political and humanitarian problems. Unfortunately, some international powers have some difficulties in understanding the logic behind this strategy. However, the directing wind of time informs about the full freedom of the entire East, including the Middle East not to be far away from now.

## OPINION

**on the article titled “The geopolitical situation in the Middle East on the eve of the First Gulf War” written by Ismayilzadeh Khayyam Farman, the head teacher of the Department of International Relations, of the Faculty of International Relations and Guluzadeh Gulshan Adil, undergraduates of the Department of International Relations**

Ismayilzadeh Khayyam Farman and Guluzadeh Gulshan Adil investigate the very actual issue – the geopolitical situation in the Middle East region in their article, titled “The geopolitical situation in the Middle East on the eve of the First Gulf War”. The authors study the events, conflicts, wars and carefully trace the development tendency of the political processes taking place around the abovementioned region. They truly indicate that the Middle East attracts the interest of the great powers with its geopolitical situation, rich hydrocarbon reserves. Due to this reason, Iran-Iraq War, Gulf War, US entry into Iraq, etc. events create real condition for still preserving the conflicts for this region. The authors carefully studied this issue, indicated the development dynamics of the political events and the logic behind their impetus well. For these reasons, I hereby recommend publishing this article.

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