

## **The Politics of Conflicts: Iran, Iraq and the West (1980-2016) Western Impacts and Solutions**

**Saikou Kawsu Gassama** - Executive Director, Centre for Governance and Development (CeFGaD), Gambia.

**Mansoureh Ebrahimi\*** - Academy of Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 UTM Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia.

**Kamaruzaman Yusoff** - Retired Professor of History at Universiti Teknologi, Malaysia.

Received: 17/03/2021

Accepted: 18/04/2021

**DOI:20.1001.1.17354331.1401.18.68.15.7**

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### **Abstract**

In spite of ancient and serious disagreements, Iran and Iraq did not go to war until 1980. Why? What changed the equation? Three-plus decades later, Iran is still a main actor in Iraq's internal affairs. What motivates this involvement? Our main objective is to explore the politics of the Iraq–Iran conflict and attending influence of Western powers from 1980 onwards. In this study, we analyse the history and causal factors in light of Western foreign policies, and seek grounds for bilateral rapprochement and note cooperation between Western powers, proposing that if the West can cooperate to achieve respective national interests, so can Iran and Iraq. Coherent policy landscaping characterizes national and international levels on looking at theoretical global governance, but academia has yet to pay attention to extant actors and institutions required to govern energy concerns. A classical realist approach reveals that Western Powers pursued and continue to pursue respective interests at all costs. How their several interventions have affected the Iran–Iraq conflict has thus far remained undisclosed.

**Keywords:** Iran-Iraq Conflict, War-Making, Western Powers, Realist Foreign Politics.

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\* E-mail : mansoureh@utm.my

### **1. Introduction**

JM Abdulghani traced the origin of the contemporary Iran–Iraq conflict and dates animosities to rivalries between Ottoman Turks and Persians during the sixteenth century Shi'ite shrines in what became Iraq and guardians of Shi'ia dogma have endowed the region with a traditional aura of Persian control. The Ottomans, being averse to Persian control sought to trim this aura with multi religious and ethnic diversity. Throw in economic concerns and wars are fueled by ongoing complicated disputes over border zones that continue even today. These temporarily ceased with the Ottoman defeat during WWI and the ceding of Iraq to a British Mandate in 1921. Despite Persia's recognition of an independent Iraq (1929), disputes re-emerged over the Shatt al-Arab waterway which were submitted to the League of Nations in 1936 for arbitration. Iran insisted on joint administration per Thalweg principle. Iraq refused. Other disputes include Iran's support for the Kurds and an ancient rivalry for glory and dominion (Abdulghani, 2012).

The emergence of the Ba'th Party under Saddam Hussein and of Khomeini's theocracy in Iran exacerbated deeply embedded tensions between diametrically opposed ideologies and theological persuasions. Saddam's Arab nationalism and socialist mania embraced secularism in stark contrast to Khomeini's global evangelical message of theocentrism, particularly among Iraq's Shi'ite majority. The Algiers Agreement of 1975 had provided an avenue for limited rapprochement but this abruptly ended with the rise of Iran's Islamic Republic (1979) and Iran–Iraq war (1980).

Iran's revolution swept the Shah and a long history of monarchy clean away. Khomeini then promoted theocratic overhauls of despotic military dictatorships and non-democratic monarchs in the Middle East (ME), which did not go down well with Ba'th Party ideology or squirming conservative monarchies. Arab nationalism in lieu of conservative monarchies based on the Ba'th model has grown roots in support of Iraq. The UN Security Council was unable to resolve the conflict and neither could the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The horrific war ended in 1988. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait brought a US-led War (1990) that Iran supported. With “no fly zones” and US sanctions, Iraq disintegrated with irreparable harm. The West then accused Iran of harbouring plans for nuclear weapons. Iran suddenly hosted IAEA inspectors and sanctions for non-cooperative

behavior. Luft (2009) alludes to a nuclear program that apparently “threatened the region” because a former Iranian President was bent on Israel’s destruction. A recently concluded (2016) “5+1” deal with a right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes seems to have eased tensions. Yet the conflict with Iraq continues. Why?

The Persian Gulf is an epicentre of global importance for geo-political and geo-economic reasons. Any threat to its stability is far reaching (Ekovich, 2004). Eruptions of Iran–Iraq enmity therefore impact the status quo, and when coupled to the five largest producers of hydrocarbon energy resources, adds fuel to ancient fires that attract the West.

## **2.Iran**

De Carmoy (1974) states Iran’s oil reserves were estimated at 9,290 million tons in 1973, second only to Saudi Arabia’s and equal to Kuwait’s. Most are in Khuzistan under management by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in association with foreign concerns (Ebrahimi,2016). Iran’s nationalization of oil production opposed foreign hegemony when Iran handed over the assets of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) to NIOC and began 50-50 joint venture refining activities in Madras and Johannesburg. NIOC also took over international marketing from a Consortium after which production rose an average of 14.3% annually for ten years. The National Petro-Chemical Company (1965) soon followed as an NIOC subsidiary, spurring additional companies such as Abadan, Shahpur and Kharg Chemical. The National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) was set up in 1967, specifically to tap wasted gas resources.

De Carmoy notes five-year development plans (1963–1968 & 1968–1973) that dedicated resources to the development of agriculture, industry, mines, social welfare and education. Iran’s economy grew by 9.9% annually from 1962 to 1967, and by 12.9% annually from 1967 to 1972. Per capita GNP rose from USD \$301 to \$535 during a Fourth Plan, and GNP reached 30% by 1973 — all stimulated by oil revenues. These exceptional earnings allowed Iran to advance-pay external loans, grant aid to developing countries, and even loan money to the UK. Iran also maintained a tidy balance between East and West by selling gas to the Soviets while buying arms from America.

Iran's control of its resources obtained an ability to develop economically and even debate oil prices with OPEC (Gassama, and et al,2020). From the time of the Shah, Iran's pundits deemed its oil reserves sufficiently scarce to justify maximizing revenue by setting a high price for crude. This enabled modernization and preparations for a post-oil era (Ebrahimi,2017). Saudi leans opposite, with a smaller population and larger reserves. Hence, OPEC debates primarily concern Iran and Saudi Arabia and often end in compromise.

A centuries-old dispute continues over the Iran–Iraq border from Kurdistan through Khuzistan and Shatt-al-Arab. Iraq claims convenient jurisdiction over Iran's Khuzistan province, which they call 'Arabistan' (Amin,1982). Relying on a 1937 Treaty between Iran and British mandated Iraq, Iraq also claims all of Shatt-al-Arab. Iran disputes this, saying the Treaty framed contemporary British pressure during a time of Iranian weakness. Iran therefore calls for the application of the thalweg median line principle (Amin,1982). Claims and counterclaims continue over delineations and exclusive economic zones, with gains accrued from transit charges paid by shipping companies and commercial fishing.

In spite of ancient and serious disagreements, both countries did not go to war until 1980. Why? What changed the equation? Three-plus decades later, Iran is still a main actor in Iraq's internal affairs. What motivates this involvement?

During the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988), Western powers supported Iraq. America then invaded Iraq (1990) after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Iran condemned Iraq and supported the US-led invasion. Iraq's two wars and devastating sanctions was followed in the mid 1990s, by sanctions on Iran for her supposed intent to produce nuclear weapons. The impetus continued with Bush's "pre-emptive strike" doctrine, which launched the 2003 Iraqi war against Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). Iran averted war through diplomacy and has since reached the 2016 nuclear deal.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Coalition's 2003 invasion, the Shi'ite–Sunni divide moved into unprecedented prominence. Further, apart from the Arab-Israeli conflict,

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1. Negotiators (Iranians, Americans, European and the so-called P5 +1) concluded an agreement in 2015 in Lausanne, Switzerland, after years of talks: a "huge victory for diplomacy over war" (Bennis,2015).

ME wars between Muslim countries have been costlier in casualties and resources (Luft,2019), and we can now add Syria and Yemen to the list. This deepening Sunni–Shi’a rift worsens matters on all fronts; especially considering Shi’a holy sites (flash points) like Karbala and Najaf are in Iraq. Western powers (US and Allies) want a steady and affordable supply of oil and gas and were/are prepared to use force under the Carter Doctrine (by all means necessary). Their “Coalition of the Willing” has tortuously convulsed Iraq since 2003 on false WMD premises. The Chilcot Commission noted several factors used by the British to justify the insult: “The risks of internal strife, active Iranian pursuit of its interests, regional instability, and al-Qaeda activity in Iraq were each explicitly identified before the invasion”. In addition, the coalition invaded without UN Mandate, revealing the big game’s move in violation of international law.

Key questions are as follows:

- Have Iran and Iraq learned from their mistreatment by the West?
- Can they turn Western ploys into profitable lessons?
- Are there opportunities for rapprochements that strengthen cooperation and which counter Western machinations?
- How can Iran and Iraq turn decades of conflict into opportunities for peace and sustained development?

### **3.The Conflict(s)**

Stewart (1998) says conflict can be constructively managed and turned from “life-destroying” to “life-building” ends. Nonetheless, escalating Muslim conflicts are often discussed but without any offer of effective means of resolution (Gause,1995). The intense Shi’a vs. Sunni rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia for Muslim leadership, for example, is core to managing feasible resolutions in the ME (Chubin and Tripp,1996).

RPH King examined Iran–Iraq relations from 1980–1986, beginning with disagreements between Saddam and Mehdi Bazargan’s provisional government, especially citing cross border incursions by Iraq to quell the Kurdish rebellion. Iran accused Iraq of interfering in its Khuzestan province (Arabestan by Iraqi preference). Differences widened and war broke out. Meanwhile, theoretical praxis of UN member states was to submit complaints under Chapter VI of the Charter, fully expecting UN Security Council intervention. It seems both avenues were meagrely employed. In November 1980, the Security Council appointed Olof Palme Special

Representative to Iran and Iraq and both countries submitted grievances over Shatt al-Arab. Diverging leaders and perspectives overwhelmed all efforts, coupled to an abject lack of cooperation between America and the USSR (King,1987).

The West also scrambled to compete in the lucrative ME weapons market. Arabs became principal third world buyers of lethal arms, spending an annual average of \$100 billion over twenty years (Brynen and Korany, 1995; Ibrahim,1995). This conveniently failed to ease rising levels of conflict and is particularly alarming when reviewing the spread of WMDs (nuclear and chemical). The Report of the Iraq Inquiry into the 2003 war—conducted by a Committee of Privy Counsellors, British Parliament—noted the UK had participated in an “invasion and full-scale occupation of a sovereign state” for the first time since WWII (Chilcot and Council,2016). It describes Saddam Hussein as a ruthless dictator “guilty of aggression against neighbours” (Iran and Kuwait), saying he had ‘suppressed and murdered scores of his own people and violated obligations and sanctions enacted by the UN Security Council.’ Of interest is the acknowledgment of “Iraqi aggression against Iran,” which, had not previously been acknowledged. The report concludes the UK did not exhaust peaceful options prior to the invasion and that military intervention was not a measure of last resort. It also notes that the threat posed by Iraq’s purported WMDs did not align with evidence. The ‘War Coalition’ also ignored warnings of negative post-Saddam outcomes consequent to insufficient planning and preparations, while disregarding the majority view of the UN Security Council, which was to continue inspections and monitoring (Chilcot and Council,2016).

#### **4.Strategic Interests**

On 26 September 1980, four days after Iraq invaded Iran, Stork and Wenger queried US neutrality after the Saudis requested American arms (1984):

Washington’s neutrality has been extremely flexible from the beginning of this war. Iraq relied heavily on Western intelligence evaluations of Iranian military capabilities when they invaded Iran in September 1980, and leading Iranian counterrevolutionary figures such as Gen. Oveissi visited Washington and Baghdad in the weeks prior to the war.

Surely ambiguous. Covert Amero-Western sources also fed information regarding Iran’s military preparedness to Iraq, which informed their decision

to invade. Hence, the question of US neutrality is moot, as they were party to both invasion and war. Moreover, when military stalemate became clear in 1983, Assistant Secretary of State Murphy informed a US congressional committee that “Victory by either side is neither militarily achievable nor strategically desirable” (Wenger,1984). Therefore, US policy makers wanted this very outcome in concert with direct involvements via sundry support networks, arms and economic aid.

America overtly supported Iraq but covertly sold weapons to Iran after declaring neutrality. Despite this support, as well as from NATO and ME allies, Iraq failed to halt Iran’s military advances. The US decided an Iranian victory was “contrary to US interests” (Gibson,2013:186). All open efforts thenceforth were forestalled and US foreign policy-makers pursued back avenues. No more special envoys like Rumsfeld (1983) (Ashton and Gibson, 2013), instead, Reagan spoke to Saddam via Mubarak, when offering military intelligence. Howard Teicher, National Security Staff to Rumsfeld, said CIA Director William Casey led efforts to arm Iraq. Similarly, CIA deputy director, Robert Gates, approved the sale of non-US-origin weaponry to Iraq and Bush Sr (then VP) was a key proponent:

In 1986, President Reagan sent a secret message to Saddam Hussein, telling him that Iraq should step up its air war and bombing of Iran. The message was delivered by VP Bush who communicated via President Mubarak (Gibson,2013:186).

With the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq war, Saudi Arabia requested military assistance from America. Defence Secretary Brown and National Security Adviser Brzezinski saw opportunity to sell arms and quickly capitalised with a “transfer of forty F-14 fighter planes from the aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower, already in the Arabian Sea and a similar number of F-15 fighters from US air bases” (Wenger,1984). Several hundred US military technicians soon followed to help operate Hawk anti-aircraft missiles. Hence, the Iran–Iraq war gave opportunity for “intimate Saudi collaboration with a long-term build-up of US military forces in the region” (Wenger,1984). In 1981, Reagan sold USAF Airborne Warning and Control Aircraft (AWACs) to Saudi Arabia (Wenger,1984). So, the regional arms race was on and the US cashed in on sales to all parties, covert and not.

In 2004 GW Bush said “Dependence on foreign oil was a tax on the American People,” indicating oil’s significance to national interests and

security. The US traditionally arrogated responsibility to defend the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, in line with the Carter Doctrine, which authorized “by any means necessary”. Luft writes that when Iranian forces attacked Kuwaiti Tankers during the war, Reagan reflagged the ships under US Navy protection. Similarly, Bush Sr authorised military action against Iraq in 1990 to protect Kuwaiti and Saudi oil-fields. The Coalition also created a no-fly-zone over Iraq and provided weapons training to regional friendlies (Luft,2009).

While the West agrees on a stable ME for energy security, they differ on approaches. America uses all means necessary while Europe prefers market forces and economic interdependences. Luft notes: “Some Europeans even see the US Militarization of energy security and its military presence in the ME as disruptive, which only builds tensions and undermines energy security.” Both also disagree on NATO’s role in matters of energy security. Europeans do not want to send wrong signals to Russia, even though NATO Secretary-General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, acknowledged that “energy security is a NATO-relevant subject” (Luft,2017:8).

For Europe, resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflicts is key to energy security and ME peace. An Iraqi Study Group even urged America to take an aggressive approach to solve the conflict. Luft recounts that former Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, was opposed to the creation of Israel: “It would seriously prejudice our ability to afford protection to American interest, economic and commercial ... throughout the area” (Luft,2017:9). To the contrary, the Friends of Israel Group has always advocated de-linking the issue from other regional problems. Although Luft argues the “oil weapon is obsolete”, he notes it purchased a deeper understanding among Muslims for “the use of energy as a political weapon and legitimate strategy”, concluding that Persian Gulf states are becoming more powerful than ever and that energy security requires careful management of ME relations.



**Table A**  
**Military Expenditures: World Shares and Growth Rates, 1972-1982, By Groupings of Countries**  
(In percent)

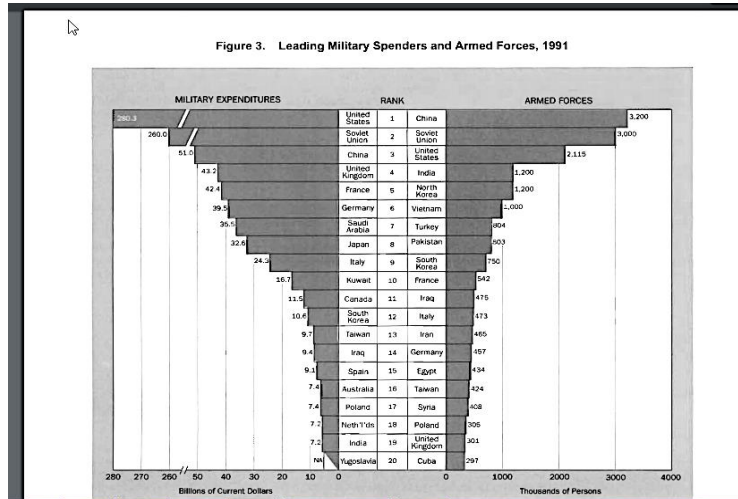
	Share		Growth Rate,*
	1972	1982	1972-1982
World	100.0	100.0	2.9
Developed Countries	81.6	76.7	2.4
Developing Countries	18.4	23.3	5.0
Region:			
Africa	1.3	2.0	8.0
East Asia	11.3	10.2	2.5
Europe	54.2	51.5	2.5
Latin America	1.5	2.0	5.0
Middle East	2.7	7.8	11.4
North America	27.5	24.8	1.9
Oceania	0.7	0.6	2.5
South Asia	0.9	1.1	4.6
Organization:			
NATO	41.5	37.7	2.0
Warsaw Pact	37.8	36.7	2.6
OPEC	2.4	7.5	13.3
OECD	45.3	41.3	2.1

\*Average real growth is calculated as a compound rate and fitted to all years. (See Statistical Notes.)

(Source: USACADA,1984:3)

The ME market for lethal arms amounted to \$100 billion annually (1970s–90s) (Brynen and Korany,1995). Nitzan and Bichler identified symbiotic growth between oil revenues and arms sales, calling it the “Weapon Dollar–Petrodollar Coalition”, a cosy relationship that increasingly fed on the “energy conflict” in the “world’s hotspot of conflict” (Bichler,2002:24–30). Moreover, according to World Military Expenditure, Arms Transfer and Other Statistics, 1972–1982, 1984 (USACADA,1984), ME shares in armament sales rose from 2.7% in 1972 to 7.8% in 1982.

Easy access to munitions from America, Great Britain, Canada, Germany, France and Russia during the Iraq–Iran war did not aid peace. Thomas Snitch reports that Eastern European countries filled the gap arms sales to Iraq when Russia refused. Iraq, a regular buyer from Russia in 1970s, was forced to turn to the West in 1981 (Snitch,1984). The ME arms race continued and soon surpassed Far Eastern and East Asian markets (Bichler, 2002). World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1991–92, reports that Iraq ranked 14th globally in terms of leading military spenders in 1981, ahead of Spain, Australia and The Netherlands. Iraq and Iran ranked 11th and 13th in terms of armed forces, ahead of Germany and the UK (USACADA,1994). All reports fail to link the US with arms transfers during the Iran–Iraq war.



(Source: USACADA, 1994)

President Reagan’s war policy, “Peace Through Strength”, sought US interests (Sidey, 2006) via wielding hegemony over Iran & Iraq via “political and military consultations with ... key allies and Gulf States” who were willing to cooperate and deter any “interference with non-belligerent shipping and critical oil productions” (Reagan, 1983). According to President Reagan:

It is present US policy to undertake whatever measures necessary to keep the Straits of Hormuz open to international shipping. Accordingly, our military forces will attempt to deter and, if that fails, to defeat any hostile efforts to close the Straits to international shipping. Because of the real and psychological impact of a curtailment in the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf on the international economic system, we must assure our readiness to deal promptly with actions aimed at disrupting that traffic.

Meanwhile, America trolled Soviet intensions in the Persian Gulf and tried to keep the Russians at bay (Intelligence, 1980). The international community and UN Security Council, dominated by America, had not been able to resolve the conflict. All OIC attempts at conflict resolution also failed (Khadduri, 1988). Then, the 1990 US-led war defeated Iraq and imposed a “no fly zone” followed by international sanctions. Iraq crumbled, civilians suffered, the UN’s “Food for Oil” program proved a monstrous failure due to monstrous abuse by Allies and Saddam loyalists. All US-led

endeavours devastated the country and caused countless innocent deaths. Then, America turned to Iran as it recovered from the Iran-Iraq war, accusing Iran of planning to produce nuclear weapons. Suddenly, Iran was subjected to IAEA inspections and sanctions for alleged non-cooperative behaviour.

A policy document entitled, “American Leadership and Engagement: Reducing the Nuclear Threat,” stated the proliferation of WMDs threatened American interests and that “... some countries, e.g., Iraq & Iran, have threatened to use these weapons against their neighbours” (House,1995:2). Hence, strong US support for UN and IAEA “monitoring of the elimination of Iraq’s nuclear, chemical, biological and missile capabilities” while also working to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Hence, ‘American Policy’ explains why Iran and Iraq were subjected to degradation and international inspections. Nonetheless, president Clinton’s 1994 State of the Union address and the cited policy document (House,1995) failed to describe any American role in the Iran–Iraq conflict.

On 12 August 1996, Iran filed a Claim with the Tribunal at The Hague: “The Islamic Republic of Iran, Claimant, Versus United States of America, Respondent” (Murphy,1996). Iran alleged “The United States has violated its commitments under the Algiers Accords by interfering in Iran's internal affairs and implementing economic sanctions against Iran.” In line with Tribunal Orders, 21 August 1996, the US submitted its defence claiming “Iran’s claim ... is utterly without foundation” and that the US had fulfilled its obligations under the Accord and thus urged the Tribunal to reject Iran’s claim.

A US–led Coalition invaded Iraq in 2003 on the pretext of ridding the world Saddam’s WMDs. This collapsed his regime with horrible consequences and an ongoing civil war to date. Although opposed to the invasion, Iran infiltrated Iraq after the war during a time of alarming sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shi’ites. The rising Shi’ite dominion in Iraq, hitherto Sunni dominated, allowed increasing Iranian involvement. Nonetheless, US hegemony and antipathy persisted militarily, economically and politically. We ask: what strategic interests were involved (?) and why does Iran continue to meddle in Iraq’s internal affairs (?). Both answers are found in US relations with Iraq and Iran from 1980 to 2016.

### **5.US Policy and Relations with Iraq and Iran**

Freidel and Sidey cited Reagan's "peace through strength" policy (Sidey, 2006) which emphasized military power coupled to subtle strategies. Defence spending had increased by 35% and the Persian Gulf was given significant consideration to ensure a steady oil supply. "By ordering naval escorts in the Persian Gulf, Reagan maintained the free flow of oil during the Iran-Iraq war" (Sidey,2006). A Confidential National Security Decision Directive (NSDD114:23Nov1983) by Reagan outlined US policy and concerns over security and stability of oil supplies and sought allied and Gulf State collaborations to defend the international supply route at all costs (Reagan,1983).

A Congressional Committee report on the Iran-Contra Affair said the Shah was a "friend and strong ally" ( Hamilton and Inouye,1995). Authors observed that Iran's Armed Forces under Shah Pahlavi were a "deterrent to regional aggression in this conception of American policy", referring to Nixon's Guam Policy. President Carter also saw the Shah as supportive; meaning less direct military involvement in local or regional conflicts by US and Allied forces. Hence, Carter's Tehran Statement (1977) stated "Because of the great leadership of the Shah, [Iran] is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world" (Hamilton and Inouye,1995:157). The cited Congressional report also noted that Iran's strong military force (350,000 men) was "America's policemen in the Gulf", apparently referencing American hegemony as a post-Vietnam policy enunciated under Nixon's use of proxies to do "dirty work", and this, as Cold War strategy.

Kissinger signalled the use of collective regional security systems in the service of US interests during an informal discussion on US policy in SE Asia:

What we do want to discuss, as I pointed out, is how these countries visualise their own future because, as one looks ahead to the next decade, it is self-evident that the future of Asia, South East Asia, which we will be visiting, will have to depend, not on prescriptions made in Washington, but on the dynamism and creativity and cooperation of the region (Kissinger, 2011).

Such military disengagement was informed by the Vietnam debacle and momentous Guam Policy (25July1969), later called the Nixon Doctrine, which, according to Kissinger, "excluded ... automatic America

participation in wars” yet maintained US military and economic assistance to regional Allies and friends (Kissinger,2011).

Adam Tarock’s research focused on US and Soviet involvement in the Iran–Iraq war. Both superpowers offered both nations armaments, economic and logistical support. CIA Agent, Bill Hermann, declared that “During the Iran–Iraq war I supplied [arms] to both sides. I was told to by the Agency (CIA) to keep the war even” (Tarock,1998:91). The Iran-Contra affair revealed a covert avenue of US support for Iran. Further, from late 1982 to early 1983, more than 5000 Soviet military advisers were operating in Iraq as Soviet missiles hit Iran. Soviets also helped Iran circumvent US sanctions by trading with Iran. Tarock writes that because of Iranian victories in early 1982, American authorities removed Iraq from its list of States Sponsoring Terrorism (March 1982) “in order to bolster Iraqi morale ...” and “Declassified documents reveal that US assistance to Iraq was almost boundless” (Tarock,1998:173). US policy makers were aware of pushing Iran into Russian arms but thought this better than allowing Iran to rise as the undisputed Master of the Gulf. Tarock quotes *The Economist* (April 1982): “The risk must be run: the mullah’s Iran is too unpredictable to be allowed to become unchallenged kingpin of the Gulf. Iraq is the only country populous enough to act as a counterweight” (Tarock,1998:83). Tarock did not look at America’s role in the Iran–Iraq conflict beyond 1988. Hamilton and Inouye noted a dramatic shift in US policy that longer guaranteed the security of regional allies following the Vietnam debacle. Henceforth, America sought regional friends like Iran, armed them, and charged them to protect themselves from subversion and to “guard regional American interests” (Hamilton and Inouye,1995). Hence, Carter relied on the Nixon Doctrine right up to the Islamic Revolution.

Nevertheless, there came a shift or discontinuity under Reagan (1981–89) in the wake of the Islamic Revolution. The Congressional report cites a senior interdepartmental meeting on US–Iranian policy. They concluded that discouraging third party arms transfers to Iran would have a marginal effect of the war’s outcome and thus provide opportunity for the Soviets. They suggested a rigid policy of ‘no arms transfers’ would be contrary to US interests. Nonetheless, the Joint Chiefs opposed all arms sales to Iran because they believed other Arab nations (moderates) would see it as “directly counter to their interests”. On the other hand, the senior

interdepartmental group noted that a greater supply of arms to Iran would certainly intensify the war (Hamilton and Inouye,1995).

America had instituted an arms embargo along with trade and financial transactions on Iran after the Hostage crisis of 1979. However, Hamilton and Inouye report that in spite of the arms embargo Iran continued to receive weapons from more than forty countries. This definitely shifted the war in Iran's favour. Moreover, Israel urged America not to sell arms to Iran but had sold Iran ample American munitions by May of 1982. America then urged other countries to stop supplying arms to Iran, but not Iraq, via "Operation Staunch" (14Dec1983) by deploying global diplomatic missions. America did not want a "negotiated end to the Iran-Iraq war" and so increased levels of surveillance and the monitoring of arms and equipment shipments with a view to halt the flow. In spite of this strict surveillance, the Congressional report notes that Israel continued supplying weapons to Iran in clear breach of "Operation Staunch" (Hamilton and Inouye,1995).

The US flouted its policy by arms sales to Iran during Reagan's presidency (Al-Shiraa, 03Nov1986) (Hamilton and Inouye,1995); although vehemently denied by an administration that "didn't make deals with terrorist regimes", except for the release of hostages in Lebanon. Iran received arms, three hostages were released and three more captured. This deliberate breach of policy also breached US policy in Nicaragua. Hamilton and Inouye reported, via the Attorney General, that proceeds from Iran arms sales supported Contra rebels in Nicaragua in violation of a congressional prohibition of military aid to them. Their report stated the Iran-Contra Affair had serious foreign policy implications and challenged America's rule of law.

The report on the arms-for-hostages deal with Iran indicated the Secretary of State had designated Iran a "state sponsor of international terrorism" (Congressional Quarterly,1987). They cited a memo from Under Secretary of State. Armacost (02July1986) addressed to Secretary of State, Shultz, alerting him to renewed interest in an arms-for-hostages deal. Hence, the Reagan Administration acknowledged the covert program despite public denial.

Saman Fayazmanesh (2008) claims the policy of not letting Iran win did not mean letting Saddam win either. The US desired balance. He quotes Defence Secretary Weinberger (May 1982) saying, "We want to see the war

end in a way that does not destabilize the area ... an Iranian victory certainly is not in our interest” (Fayazmanesh,2008). What was not clear was how this could be achieved? This statement agrees with US policy just prior to Iraq’s removal from the Terrorism list (26Feb1982), as reported by The Washington Post (Fayazmanesh,2008:29). Fayazmanesh says this gave Reagan leeway to provide support for Iraq and follow up with “Operation Staunch”. All of this helped avoid an Iraqi defeat. Facts on File World News Digest reported on 31 Dec 1982: “The US was granting Iraq USD \$210 million in food credits” even though America and Iraq lacked diplomatic relations. Iraq had been buying US food commodities “with financing from conservative Arab states” (Fayazmanesh,2008:29). Similarly, American supported arms sales. All proved instrumental to a military stalemate following Iraq Chemical weapons assault on Iranian forces in March of 1984 (Fayazmanesh,2008:31).

Iran had recovered territories taken by Iraq which attracted the attention of US policy makers. National Security Decision Directive (NSDD139) of 05 April 1984, postulated the following scenario:

An escalation of that conflict or a terrorist campaign<sup>1</sup> threatens vital interests of the US and its allies. Measures must be taken to improve our immediate ability to deter an expansion of the conflict into the Persian Gulf and, if necessary, defend US interests” (Reagan,1984:1).

With this Decision, America implemented interagency collaboration as a “political-military mission” to marshal logistical support from friends and allies for the deployment of US forces, if necessary, in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman.

The goal was “To review possible escalation scenarios and associated warning indicators and obtain agreement for contingent access to Gulf facilities on warning of likely escalation” (Reagan,1984:1). NSDD139 thus envisaged a strengthening of US forces (naval and air) by securing facilities with cooperative measures that reduced vulnerabilities and improved defensive potential. Reagan’s Administration recognised “a growing threat of Iranian-sponsored terrorism” and devised counter-terrorism measures through joint efforts between the CIA, Secretary of Defense, and allies, including friends in the Gulf region. NSDD139 also prepared a plan “to avert Iraqi collapse”. Hence, following an Iraqi ‘military needs assessment’,

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1. Iran and Iraq were designated State Sponsors of Terrorism by Reagan in 1984.

allies provided Iraq with covert and overt military support. The directive clearly confirms US support of Iraq during the Iran–Iraq war (Reagan, 1984), specifically to avert Iraqi Collapse.

McNaugher and Quandt suggest that an Iranian victory would have affected the flow of oil in the short term and regional power in the long term (Quandt,1984). This thinking also informed US policy NSDD139. The authors say the Iran–Iraq war’s disruption of oil flow was insufficient to increase prices. They hypothesized:

The oil market could ... be decisively changed by an out-and-out Iranian victory, which would make Iran the dominant influence on production and production decisions in much of the Gulf region. This could reduce the range of available capacity for world oil supplied in the rest of the 1980s and into the 1990s, and make an Iranian-dominated coalition the swing supplier in OPEC (Quandt,1984).

A CIA document proposed that Soviet Power was anchored on military power, if at a military or geographic advantage, would likely challenge Western dominion in the third world. The Soviet backed 1979 Nicaragua Revolution and their invasion of Afghanistan indicated they would support global leftist revolutions directly or via Cuba. As for the Iran–Iraq war, the CIA theorised the Soviets preferred an outcome that made both countries dependent on them, meaning also a ready supply of oil from Iraq for Soviet Bloc countries. Hence, the USSR would attempt to maintain Iraqi dependency on Soviet arms and would do all “to prevent any improvement in US–Iranian relations and to influence the Khomeini succession in a way that might lead a follow-on regime to adopt a posture more favorable to Soviet interests” (DOCI Agency,1981:5).

As early as 1981, the CIA must have considered Ayatollah Khomeini a transient, whose regime would soon collapse. However, there seems to be no evidence of planning for regime succession. Wishful thinking? The grave miscalculation then faced a protracted Iran–Iraq war under Khomeini followed by a quick Iranian recovery.

The CIA expected the Soviets to leverage their presence in Afghanistan and influence in Syria, Libya and Southern Yemen to “preserve and exploit strategic advantages” in the Persian Gulf. Similarly, they expected Moscow to tease Gulf States away from “a pro-Western to a more ‘nonaligned’ and eventual pro-Soviet position,” while assisting “national liberation



movements that could seize power in the Gulf” (DOCI Agency,1981:4). Such an approach would purchase better relations with conservative, pro-Western Gulf States and “improve Soviet access to, and ultimate control over Persian Gulf oil ... which would enhance Soviet leverage over Western Europe and Japan” (DOCI Agency,1981:4). This thinking guided US policy makers during the Iran–Iraq war. They did not want Iraq’s collapse at the expense of Iran and did not want either country under Soviet influence.

A similar CIA report (Intelligence,1984) claims the Soviets held “deep hostility to US aims and interests” globally. The USSR perceived America as seeking “to strengthen US alliances and conduct regional security policies, all for the purpose of containing and reducing Soviet influence in world affairs” (Intelligence,1984:3). Despite Soviet dissent and the absence of direct military confrontation, America insisted they were undermining US ME interests with a focus on the Persian Gulf. Hence, vigorous Russian diplomatic efforts became focused on ME East peace and Arab-Israeli conflict. The same report acknowledged “current US frustration with moderate Arab states and lack of movement on regional issues” such the Soviet Peace effort could potentially prove a cheap bargain that purchased comparability with the US. This CIA report thus warned that US intervention or an Iraqi defeat could induce the USSR to militarily pressure Iran to end the conflict, thereby projecting itself as superpower in the region: “Major US intervention on Iranian soil would likely induce the Soviets to take direct military measures toward intervention” (Intelligence, 1984:9,13). This indicates the USSR had been a restraining factor and that US policy makers made a cost–benefit analysis of direct military intervention.

Akan Malici and SG Walker noted that relations between the US and Iran problematically continue over international security (Malici and Walker, 2016). The authors attempted to address the following questions: Why did America and Iran become enemies? When did relations worsen? Was it avoidable? What lessons can be learned? Is there a way forward? Milestones include the Islamic revolution, the hostage crisis, and the Iran–Iraq war. Dynamics appear to center on Iran’s desire to chart an independent path of sovereignty in international political relations, which was resisted by America and which engendered animosity (Malici and Walker,2016).

Ben Offiler surveyed US–Iranian relations under Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Nixon. He claims all worked hard to shape Iranian domestic and foreign policy under the Shah (Offiler,2015). Offiler recounts the prioritisation of maintaining Iran’s stability at the expense of its development: “... cold war concerns regarding Soviet expansionism and maintaining oil, successive US governments prioritised national security and Iranian stability over political development and neglected serious humanitarian issues” (Offiler,2015). This view informed closer ties with the Shah under Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, which later rebounded on the overthrow of the Shah. Offiler provides excellent background but he does not explore America’s role in the Iran–Iraq conflict.

The absence of any structured global governance over hydrocarbon reserves promotes the abject unilateralism described above. Florini and Savacool (2009) examined this vacuum and compared it with regulated sectors such as health. They focused on academic research on what governments actually do rather than what is obtained outside of formal governmental structures. Coherent policy landscaping characterizes national and international levels on looking at theoretical global governance, but academia has yet to pay attention to extant actors and institutions required to govern energy concerns. Albeit, international relations researchers do have pet interests to bear when considering non-governmental governance in lieu of an absence of formal world governance of trans-border issues.

## **6.Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Research Management Centre, for 16H48 grant that supported this research.

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