KYALMUN'26

H-UNSC

Study Guide

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Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor to welcome you to the Historical United Nations Security Council of KYALMUN'26. This committee places you at a pivotal moment in history—the Iran–Iraq War—where every decision carried significant political, military, and humanitarian consequences.

You are tasked not only with responding to crisis, but with doing so through the lens of historical accuracy and diplomatic realism. I urge you to immerse yourselves fully in this experience, consider the long-term implications of your actions, and engage in decisive yet thoughtful diplomacy. May this committee challenge and inspire you in equal measure.

Sincerely,

Yağmur Sarıtaş

Secretary-General, KYALMUN'26

Letter from the Under Secretary General

The Distinguished Delegates of KYALMUN'25;

I am very glad to welcome you all to our precious committee: Historical United Nations Security Council (HUNSC)! This is Hamza Gezersu, your Under Secretary General, who is a 10th grader at Vefa High School.

First of all, as the whole academic and organization team of KYALMUN'25, we gave our unlimited time and effort to ensure a stunning Model United Nations Conference for all of you. Since we are a family for this conference, I must extend my special thanks to our dearest academic and organization team of KYALMUN'25, who struggled for the purpose of materializing this wonderful conference a reality. Furthermore, I ought to thank your remarkable Co-Chair Boray Bal and Co-Chair Eda Erdönmez Yılmaz, who collaborated with me to prepare this very special committee, and your honorable Academic Assistant Göktürk Uçar, who will be ensuring his best efforts in order to ensure you a memorable experience throughout the conference.

Secondly, it is my utmost pleasure to be your Under Secretary General. As the chair board of the Historical United Nations Security Council committee, we strived to provide you with a prominent study guide in the interest of giving further information on our agenda item, which is the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988). We are planning to have a semi-crisis committee with lots of fruitful debates, thrilling crises, glorious management skills, and sustainable resolutions that would shape the flow of Arabian Peninsula history to redound innovative ways of thinking regarding the policies of each country and the perspective of each delegate. We will be ensuring the beginning date of the committee when we start our first official session; therefore, when you are preparing for the committee, please extend your resources for the details regarding the pre-war situations, current conflict, and post-war circumstances. With my very sincere feelings, I feel very excited to meet with you to simulate the historical affairs that create the current time and future. I have only one demand for you: please be focused on our agenda to learn, search, explore, evaluate, and assimilate, which are the cornerstones of our committee and lives.

KYALMUN'25 will be generated by your participation; thus, you are the stars of the conference, and we are very honoured to welcome you all again for our conference.

Hamza Gezersu
Under Secretary General of the Historical United Nations Security Council

Introduction to the Committee: Historical United Nations Security Council

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the main principal organs of the United Nations (UN) and holds the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Established in 1945 following the conclusion of World War II, the UNSC plays a central role in global diplomacy, conflict resolution, and international security. Its decisions are legally binding for all UN member states, making it one of the most powerful and influential international institutions in existence today.

The Structure of the UNSC

The Security Council is composed of 15 member states, divided into two categories:

Permanent Members (P5):

The UNSC includes five permanent members, often referred to as the "P5." These nations are:

- United States

- Russia (originally the Soviet Union, succeeded by Russia in 1991)

- China

- France

- United Kingdom

These countries hold veto power, meaning that any one of them can block the adoption of a substantive resolution, even if it has received the necessary votes from the broader Council. This veto power is a significant aspect of UNSC decision-making and has often been the subject of controversy due to its potential to stymie action on critical international issues.

Non-Permanent Members:

The remaining ten seats are filled by non-permanent members, who are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. These countries do not have veto power, but they contribute to the discussions and voting on various resolutions. Non-permanent members play an essential role in bringing diverse perspectives and regional concerns to the Council's attention.

Functions and Powers of the UNSC

The Security Council holds several critical responsibilities under the UN Charter, particularly in areas related to the preservation of international peace and security. These include:

Conflict Prevention:
The UNSC can investigate disputes or situations that may lead to international conflict. It can recommend mechanisms for resolving these disputes or impose diplomatic sanctions to prevent escalation.

Peacekeeping Operations:
The UNSC is responsible for authorizing peacekeeping missions, deploying UN forces to
conflict zones to monitor ceasefires, and protect civilians. Peacekeeping operations are essential tools for stabilizing post-conflict environments and ensuring that peace agreements are upheld.

Sanctions:
The Security Council has the authority to impose sanctions on nations, groups, or individuals that threaten international peace. These sanctions can include economic embargoes, arms restrictions, travel bans, and financial asset freezes.

Military Action:
In extreme cases where diplomatic measures fail, the UNSC can authorize military intervention. This is considered a last resort and usually involves the creation of international coalitions to enforce peace through force.

War Crimes and Prosecutions:

The Council has the power to establish international tribunals to prosecute war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Notably, it created the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

Approving UN Secretary-General:

The Security Council plays a role in appointing the UN Secretary-General. Although the General Assembly formally elects the Secretary-General, the UNSC recommends candidates, and any permanent member's veto can block a candidate's nomination.

Decision-Making Process:

To pass a resolution, the UNSC requires at least nine out of the 15 members to vote in favor, including the concurring votes of all permanent members. This system ensures that decisions have broad support but can be hindered by the veto system. The requirement for consensus among the P5, in particular, often complicates decision-making on contentious issues, especially when permanent members have divergent national interests.

The Veto Power and Its Controversy:

The veto power held by the P5 is both a safeguard for ensuring consensus among the most powerful nations and a point of significant criticism. Since any one of these members can block substantive decisions, the veto has been used to halt action on critical global issues, such as military interventions or sanctions.

For instance, during the Cold War, the UNSC was frequently paralyzed by the competing interests of the United States and the Soviet Union, each wielding its veto to block the other's actions. In more recent years, vetoes have been used by Russia and China to block resolutions on the Syrian civil war, while the United States has used its veto power to shield Israel from certain resolutions.

Many critics argue that the veto system is undemocratic and limits the effectiveness of the UNSC, particularly in cases where humanitarian crises or violations of international law are at stake.

Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Interventions

Peacekeeping operations authorized by the UNSC are among the most visible aspects of its work. The Council has deployed peacekeepers to conflict zones across the world, including in regions like Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. These missions, typically composed of military personnel from various UN member states, are tasked with monitoring ceasefires, protecting civilians, and supporting the implementation of peace agreements.

The UNSC's ability to authorize humanitarian interventions in conflict zones is critical in preventing mass atrocities. However, the Council has faced criticism for its inaction in certain cases, such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide, where the failure to intervene led to devastating consequences.

Reform of the UNSC

Given the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, there is increasing pressure to reform the UNSC, particularly its structure and decision-making processes. The composition of the permanent members reflects the global power distribution at the end of World War II, which has changed significantly in recent decades.

Many countries, including emerging powers like India, Brazil, and South Africa, have called for expanding the Council's permanent membership to better reflect current global realities. There are also proposals to limit the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities or humanitarian crises.

Reform efforts, however, have made little progress due to the inherent difficulty of changing the structure of an organization where the current P5 holds veto power. For any reform to pass, it would need the approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly and all five permanent members, making substantial changes to the UNSC a challenging task.

Introduction to the Agenda Item: Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988)

The Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) stands as one of the longest and most devastating interstate conflicts of the late 20th century, reshaping regional power dynamics in the Middle East and challenging the international community's capacity to respond to prolonged military aggression, humanitarian crises, and violations of international law. What began as a border dispute between two sovereign states rapidly escalated into a full-scale conventional war involving trench warfare, ballistic missile strikes on major urban centers, naval confrontations in the Persian Gulf, and the repeated use of chemical weapons in violation of established international norms.

This conflict emerged in the volatile aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which transformed Iran's political landscape and raised concerns among regional governments over the potential spread of revolutionary ideology. Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, sought to exploit Iran's internal instability by asserting territorial claims over the Shatt al-Arab waterway and projecting itself as the dominant Arab power in the region. However, what was initially envisioned by Iraqi leadership as a short and decisive campaign quickly evolved into an entrenched and brutal war of attrition, exacting a staggering human and economic toll on both nations.

The international response to the conflict was marked by geopolitical complexity, Cold War rivalries, and shifting alliances. Major powers, including the United States, the Soviet Union, and various European and regional states, provided economic, logistical, and military support to one or both sides at different stages, often prioritizing strategic interests over conflict resolution. The United Nations Security Council was confronted with repeated violations of international humanitarian law, including attacks on civilian populations, assaults on international shipping routes, and the documented use of chemical weapons. Despite numerous resolutions calling for

ceasefires and an end to hostilities, achieving meaningful diplomatic progress proved immensely challenging until the eventual acceptance of Security Council Resolution 598 in 1988.

As delegates simulate the UNSC during this historical period, they will be asked to navigate a politically charged environment in which national interests, ideological tensions, and global strategic considerations intersect. Understanding the origins, evolution, and international implications of the Iran–Iraq War is essential for evaluating the Security Council's role and capacities during the conflict, analyzing the obstacles that impeded timely intervention, and exploring how diplomatic mechanisms might have been utilized more effectively to prevent escalation and protect civilian lives.

Key Terminology

Shatt al-Arab (Arvand Rud)

A strategically vital waterway formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, serving as a major shipping channel for Iraq and Iran. Disputes over sovereignty and navigation rights in this region were a central cause of the conflict.

Ba'athism

An Arab nationalist and socialist ideology adopted by Saddam Hussein's regime. Its emphasis on Arab unity and regional dominance influenced Iraq's political motives during the conflict.

Islamic Revolution (1979)

The political transformation that replaced Iran's monarchy with an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini. The revolution weakened Iran militarily and politically, creating conditions that Iraq perceived as an opportunity for rapid victory.

War of the Cities

A series of retaliatory missile and airstrike campaigns targeting major civilian population centers in both Iran and Iraq. These attacks significantly increased civilian casualties and psychological warfare.

War of the Tankers

A prolonged escalation in the Persian Gulf in which both nations targeted oil tankers and commercial vessels linked to the opposing side. This threatened the global oil trade and drew international powers into the region to protect shipping routes.

Chemical Weapons

Toxic chemical agents, including mustard gas and nerve agents, used extensively by Iraq against Iranian forces and Kurdish civilians. Their deployment constituted violations of international humanitarian law and became a major focus of Security Council debates.

Human Waves / Basij Tactics

A controversial Iranian military strategy involving mass infantry charges, often by poorly equipped volunteers from the Basij militia. These tactics contributed to high casualty rates but reflected Iran's mobilization of revolutionary fervor.

Security Council Resolution 598 (1987)

A key UN resolution calls for an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal to internationally recognized borders, and the establishment of a peace negotiation framework. It eventually formed the basis for ending hostilities in 1988.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

An international coalition of states not formally aligned with either Cold War superpower bloc. Many NAM members sought neutral diplomatic positions, influencing voting patterns and negotiations within the UN system.

Superpower Involvement

Refers to the complex roles played by the United States and the Soviet Union, both of which provided varying degrees of support, economic, military, and intelligence, to one or both parties over the course of the war. Their actions shaped diplomatic responses within the Security Council.

Kurdish Question

The involvement of Kurdish populations in northern Iraq, who faced repression and chemical attacks (including the Halabja massacre). Kurdish resistance movements added an internal dimension to the conflict, complicating any international resolution efforts.

Stalemate / War of Attrition

A military situation where neither side can secure a decisive victory despite extensive resource expenditure. By 1982, the conflict evolved into a prolonged stalemate defined by trench warfare and heavy casualties.

Specialized Overview

a. Background of Pre-War Conditions

During the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, the Middle East underwent a period of ideological transformation, territorial disputes, and shifting regional power dynamics. Iran and Iraq, both strategically important states in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East region, followed political paths that led to confrontation.

Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution changed the domestic and foreign policies of the country. The collapse of the monarchy and the establishment of a theocratic republic under Ayatollah Khomeini resulted in the rejection of western aligned policies and introduced a revolutionary ideology that emphasized resistance to secular government models. During this period, Iran faced internal political changes, military restructures, and economic disruptions, temporarily limiting its military capacity.

On Iraq's side, under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was under a centralized authoritarian system rooted in Ba'athist ideology and Arab nationalism. Throughout the 1970s, Iraq significantly expanded its military capabilities, which is most due to rising oil revenues. Iraq increasingly positioned itself as a leading power in the region and wanted to shape the regional balance of power in its favor.

Despite the signing of the Algiers Agreement(1975), tensions regarding border demarcation and navigation rights in the Shatt al-Arab waterway remained unresolved. The political uprising in Iran following the revolution was perceived by the Iraqi leadership as a strategic opportunity to revise existing arrangements and assert greater influence in the region.

b. Chronology of Key Events

1980

The Iran–Iraq War formally began on 22 September 1980 when Iraqi forces launched a surprise, multi-front invasion across the Iran–Iraq border. Saddam Hussein's government justified the attack as a response to alleged Iranian provocations and claimed to be reclaiming sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Iraqi divisions advanced rapidly in the first weeks, capturing border towns in Khuzestan and besieging the cities of Khorramshahr and Abadan. However, Iraq underestimated Iran's ability to mobilize quickly despite internal post-revolution turmoil. The combination of volunteer Basij fighters, Revolutionary Guards, and reorganized army units slowed Iraqi advances. By the end of 1980, Iraqi forces became entrenched but overstretched, failing to achieve a decisive victory. Early UN Security Council calls for a ceasefire were largely ineffective, reflecting global uncertainty and geopolitical divisions surrounding the conflict.

1981

Throughout 1981, Iran transitioned from defensive stabilization to coordinated counteroffensives. After reorganizing its military leadership and integrating Revolutionary Guard forces, Iran began pushing Iraqi troops out of key positions near Ahvaz and Susangerd. Iran's capacity to mobilize large numbers of volunteers compensated for losses suffered during Iraq's initial offensive. Meanwhile, Iraq faced growing logistical challenges as units became bogged down in static frontlines. The fighting increasingly resembled trench warfare, characterized by artillery duels, fortified defensive lines, and high casualties on both sides. Diplomatic efforts remained limited, as the United Nations struggled to bring either side to the negotiating table, and neither government was willing to compromise while believing victory remained achievable.

1982

The year 1982 marked a major turning point in the war. Iran launched a series of successful operations culminating in the liberation of Khorramshahr in May, a strategic and symbolic victory that forced Iraqi troops to retreat from most of the territory they had occupied. After reclaiming nearly all Iranian land lost in 1980, Iranian leadership faced international pressure to accept a ceasefire. However, Tehran rejected these initiatives and instead extended the war into Iraqi territory, insisting that the conflict could not end until Iraq was held accountable as the aggressor and until Saddam Hussein was removed from power. This decision transformed the war's character from Iranian resistance against invasion into an Iranian offensive aimed at reshaping regional political dynamics. International perception of the conflict shifted, as many Arab states began supporting Iraq more openly to prevent Iranian expansion.

1983

By 1983, the conflict entered a grinding war of attrition. Iranian offensives aimed at capturing Basra and other strategic Iraqi cities encountered heavy resistance and well-fortified defensive networks constructed by Baghdad. Despite significant Iranian manpower, the operations often failed to achieve decisive breakthroughs. The war

became increasingly internationalized as Gulf states, particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, provided extensive financial and logistical support to Iraq, fearing the ideological influence of Iran's revolution. At the same time, both the United States and the Soviet Union supplied weapons, intelligence, or economic assistance to Iraq, motivated by Cold War considerations and concern over regional stability. The Security Council received regular reports of intensifying violence, but no major resolutions effectively pressured the belligerents to negotiate.

1984

In 1984, the war escalated dramatically with the beginning of the **War of the Tankers** and the more systematic use of chemical weapons. Iraq initiated a campaign targeting Iranian oil tankers and coastal facilities to cripple Iran's economy. Iran responded by attacking tankers belonging to Gulf states that supported Iraq, thereby threatening global oil supplies and drawing international naval involvement into the Persian Gulf. This same year saw Iraq's first confirmed widespread use of mustard gas against Iranian positions, prompting international alarm but weak political responses. Both sides also began attacking civilian population centers, launching long-range missiles in what became known as the **War of the Cities**. The UNSC condemned attacks on civilian shipping and expressed concern over chemical weapons, but geopolitical divisions prevented stronger action.

1985

The war intensified further in 1985, with Iran launching major offensives such as Operation Badr in an attempt to break through the Iraqi defensive perimeter protecting Basra. Iran relied heavily on mass infantry assaults involving thousands of Basij volunteers, many of whom were poorly equipped and suffered high casualties. Iraq countered with increased aerial bombardment, missile attacks on Iranian urban centers, and improved coordination between its air force and ground units. The War of the Cities escalated, causing significant civilian casualties and displacing hundreds of thousands

of people in both countries. Attempts by the Security Council to mediate were consistently undermined by the refusal of either side to accept ceasefire terms that did not fully align with their political goals.

1986

In 1986, Iran achieved one of its most significant military successes by capturing the **Faw Peninsula**, a strategic region that provided Iraq's only direct access to the Persian Gulf. This victory shocked Iraq and its Arab allies, prompting emergency military and financial support from Gulf states. Iraq intensified chemical weapon use and improved its defensive strategy under newly reorganized military leadership. Iran attempted to follow up its victory with additional offensives but struggled to capitalize on its gains due to stretched supply lines and increasing fatigue among its forces. Meanwhile, international anxiety grew as the conflict posed increasing risks to global energy security and regional political stability.

1987

The conflict reached a new level of international complexity in 1987. The Tanker War escalated sharply, leading Kuwait to request U.S. naval protection. The United States began reflagging Kuwaiti tankers and escorting them through the Persian Gulf, while the Soviet Union increased its own naval presence. The Gulf became one of the world's most militarized waterways, raising the risk of superpower confrontation. Recognizing the growing danger, the UN Security Council drafted and passed **Resolution 598**, which called for an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal to pre-war boundaries, prisoner exchanges, and UN-supervised negotiations. Iraq accepted the resolution, but Iran initially rejected it, arguing that it failed to identify the aggressor and did not guarantee reparations.

1988

By 1988, the war reached its destructive climax. Iraq launched a series of well-coordinated counteroffensives, supported by advanced weaponry, intelligence from Western powers, and widespread use of chemical agents. Iraqi forces recaptured the Faw Peninsula, then pushed Iranian troops out of multiple fronts in rapid succession. Iran's military capacity collapsed under economic exhaustion, manpower shortages, and declining morale. In March 1988, Iraqi forces carried out the **Halabja chemical attack**, killing thousands of Kurdish civilians and drawing global outrage. Under immense pressure, Iran agreed to accept UN Resolution 598 in July, with Ayatollah Khomeini describing the decision as "drinking a chalice of poison." Iraq quickly followed suit, and on 20 August 1988, a UN-monitored ceasefire officially ended active hostilities, though peace negotiations continued for years afterward.

c. The Reasons for Disputes

The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War was the result of interconnected territorial, ideological, strategic, and political factors rather than a single cause.

Territorial disputes, particularly the dispute over the Shatt al-Arab. Control over this waterway was the key to oil exports, leading both states to advance conflicting legal and historical claims.

Ideological rivalries had also raised the tensions. Iran's revolutionary government promoted political narratives that challenged secular and monarchic regimes across the Middle East. This approach was not accepted by Iraq and was seen as a threat to domestic stability, given Iraq's regional position. At the same time, Iraq wanted to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideology beyond Iran's borders.

Strategic calculations were also decisive. Iraqi leadership assessed that Iran's post-revolution instability and weakened military structure created a favorable environment for a limited and decisive military campaign. The expectation of a fast victory contributed to the decision to initiate hostilities.

External dynamics, including the rivalries during the Cold War and regional alliances, further shaped the conflict's path. While major powers emphasized regional stability and energy security, inconsistent diplomatic engagements and arms transfers contributed to building an unwanted environment in which the escalation of tensions became more likely.

d. Consequences of War

The Iran-Iraq War evolved into one of the longest conflicts of the late twentieth century, producing extensive humanitarian, economic, and political consequences. The conflict resulted in significant military and civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and affected the civilians' mental state in both countries.

Economically, hostilities damaged oil production facilities, urban centers,s and trade routes severely, especially in the Persian Gulf. Iraq accumulated substantial foreign debt, while Iran faced serious economic isolation and reconstruction difficulties. These consequences affected both countries' economies severely.

On the political side, the war entrenched militarization and centralized authority in both countries. In Iran, the conflict reinforced revolutionary institutions and strengthened the role of the military in governance. In Iraq, war-related pressures contributed to further regional instability in the upcoming years.

At the regional and international level, the war destabilized the Persian Gulf, threatened many global energy supplies, and exposed limitations in international conflict management mechanisms. The delayed and cautious engagement of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) raised critical questions regarding: security, neutrality, and the effectiveness of international cooperation during regional crises.

Major Parties Involved

The Iran–Iraq War involved an increased range of state actors whose roles extended beyond direct military confrontation. At its core were the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq, each pursuing strategic objectives shaped by domestic priorities and regional ambitions. Iran framed the conflict as a defensive effort to preserve sovereignty and its post-revolutionary political order, while Iraq wanted to revise territorial arrangements and strengthen its regional standing.

Major international powers further shaped the conflict through diplomatic positioning and arms transfers. Permanent members of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) operated within a Cold War context, prioritizing regional stability and strategic interests over ideological alignment. European powers balanced diplomatic engagement with security and economic considerations.

Regional actors also played an important role by providing political, financial, and logistical support with their own security concerns. Several states viewed the spread of revolutionary ideology as destabilizing, while others adopted balancing policies to protect trade routes and regional stability. In addition, secondary states influenced the conflict indirectly through arms transfers and diplomatic support.

The involvement of these parties transformed the war from a regional conflict into an international crisis, highlighting the challenges faced by the UNSC in managing conflicts shaped by regional and global interests.

Stances of Other Countries on the Matter

Iran: Iran recognized the war primarily as a defensive struggle aimed at preserving their sovereignty and revolutionary political order. The Iranian leadership rejected external interference and emphasized resistance against perceived aggression, while criticizing the international community for what it viewed as delayed and imbalanced responses.

Iraq justified its actions on the basis of territorial security and the need to revise existing border arrangements. It presented the conflict as a necessary measure to protect national interests and to assert regional influence while seeking diplomatic and material support to legitimize their position internationally.

USA: The United States approached the conflict with a focus on maintaining regional stability and safeguarding strategic interests in the Persian Gulf. They aimed to prevent the emergence of a dominant regional power and to limit the conflict's impact on global energy security.

France: France followed a policy driven by strategic autonomy and regional engagement. While supporting diplomatic initiatives, they also acted in line with their security and economic considerations.

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom prioritized the security of maritime trade routes and regional stability. Its position reflected a balance between diplomatic engagement and the protection of strategic and economic interests.

USSR: The USSR adopted a pragmatic stance shaped by Cold War dynamics and regional interests. It emphasized stability while seeking to preserve its influence in the Middle East and avoid direct military escalation.

China: China maintained a cautious and balanced approach, emphasizing sovereignty, non-intervention, police, and peaceful dispute resolution. Its stance reflected a preference for diplomatic neutrality.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia didn't want any conflict that had a chance of affecting regional security and stability. They were concerned about ideological spillover and prolonged instability; they adopted several policies aimed at containment rather than direct confrontation or military conflict.

Kuwait: Kuwait focused on national security and economic survival due to the fact their country was close to the conflict. Its stance emphasized stability, trade protection, and cautious diplomatic engagement.

UAE: The UAE emphasized regional stability and the protection of economic and maritime interests, particularly in relation to trade and energy exports.

Turkiye: Turkiye adopted a balancing policy aimed at maintainingitsr border security near the region, trade relations with the countries, and regional stability, while avoiding direct involvement in the conflict.

Syria: Syria's position was shaped by rivalries in the region and strategic considerations. They shaped their stance with broader geopolitical interests rather than strict neutrality.

Israel: Israel evaluated the conflict in terms of long-term regional balance and security. Their position focused on preventing outcomes that could significantly change the tide of the war against them directly or indirectly.

Egypt: Egypt emphasized diplomatic engagement and regional stability, seeking to avoid escalation while maintaining its role as a regional actor, and didn't want to be affected negatively in any way.

Libya: Libya adopted a firm stance influenced by ideological views and regional ambitions, expressing its position through political statements while trying to keep itself stable.

Lebanon: Lebanon was influenced by internal dynamics and regional relations, shaping its perspective on the conflict.

Yemen: Yemen approached the conflict with its policies being mostly shaped by its regional relations, context, and domestic considerations.

PROK (North Korea): North Korea's stance was shaped by strategic considerations beyond the region, reflecting its approach to international military and political alignments.

Pakistan: Pakistan approached the conflict with an emphasis on diplomatic balance within the Islamic world while monitoring its security implications.

Role of International Community and Regional Organizations

The international community and regional organizations played a cautious and varied role during the Iran-Iraq war. While the conflict raised some serious concerns about the stability of the region, humanitarian impact, and global energy security, responses remained limited and usually inconsistent.

At the international level, efforts were primarily focused on preventing any kind of escalation in the region. Priorities of all of the countries could lead to delayed and uneven diplomatic engagement. The UN, especially the UNSC, serves as the main platform for debates for all of the countries that are affected or concerned about the conflict.

Regional organizations and neighboring states emphasize stability and policies that wouldn't escalate the tensions in the region, acting largely in line with regional security, stability, and economic concerns. In conclusion, these dynamics highlight both the importance of multilateral and regional mechanisms in addressing interstate conflicts.

Previous Peacekeeping Efforts and Agreements

Early Diplomatic Attempts (1980–1982)

In the early stages of the conflict, the international community attempted to prevent escalation through rapid diplomatic engagement, though with limited success. Shortly after Iraq's initial invasion of Iran in September 1980, the United Nations Security Council adopted **Resolution 479**, which called for an immediate ceasefire and urged both parties to return to their international borders. However, neither side was willing to halt hostilities; Iraq expected a swift victory, while Iran, buoyed by revolutionary fervor, interpreted the resolution as lacking impartial recognition of Iraq's aggression. The Secretary-General at the time, Kurt Waldheim, sent a special envoy to the region to conduct consultations, but both governments dismissed mediation, believing military victory remained possible. As a result, early diplomatic efforts failed to secure even a temporary ceasefire, and the war became increasingly entrenched.

Stalled Mediation and Regional Efforts (1982–1984)

As the conflict intensified and Iran regained territories previously lost to Iraq, regional actors and non-aligned states stepped in with their own peace initiatives. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and individual Arab states, particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, attempted to mediate

between the two sides. However, regional rivalries impeded unified action; many Arab governments, concerned about the spread of Iran's revolutionary ideology, supported Iraq politically and financially, undermining their credibility in Tehran. Iran insisted that any meaningful negotiation requires the identification of Iraq as the aggressor under international law before discussing ceasefire conditions. Iraq rejected this demand outright, creating an impasse that rendered regional mediation ineffective. Despite repeated proposals, including offers of supervised withdrawals and buffer zones, neither nation believed diplomatic solutions aligned with their military or ideological objectives during this period.

UN Security Council Resolutions and Escalating Violations (1984–1986)

By 1984, the war had expanded into the **"War of the Cities"** and the **"Tanker War"**, prompting renewed UN Security Council engagement. Resolution 540 condemned attacks on civilian populations and urged both sides to comply with international humanitarian law, particularly regarding the protection of neutral shipping in the Persian Gulf. Yet the Security Council faced significant limitations: permanent members were divided along Cold War lines and were also providing various forms of material support to one or both belligerents. As a result, resolutions tended to be vaguely worded and lacked enforcement measures. The UN Secretary-General's special representatives continued shuttle diplomacy, visiting Baghdad and Tehran to encourage adherence to international law, but their efforts were continuously undermined by ongoing missile exchanges, chemical weapons use, and attacks on oil tankers. The failure to enforce compliance created an environment in which both states increasingly resorted to escalatory tactics.

Documentation of Chemical Weapons Use (1984–1987)

One of the most significant challenges for peacekeeping was the repeated and verified use of **chemical weapons**, primarily by Iraq, which represented a grave violation of international norms. In 1984, the Secretary-General dispatched expert fact-finding missions to investigate allegations of chemical attacks against Iranian troops. These

missions confirmed the use of mustard gas and nerve agents, prompting the Security Council to issue statements condemning the violations, though without imposing sanctions or specific punitive measures. Iran argued that the UN's reluctance to explicitly name Iraq as the perpetrator emboldened Baghdad to continue such tactics. The Council's careful balancing between condemning violations and maintaining neutrality limited the effectiveness of these efforts. Although the fact-finding missions provided clear documentation and increased international awareness, the absence of decisive follow-up action further eroded trust between Iran and the UN.

Resolution 582 and Renewed Ceasefire Efforts (1986)

In 1986, as the war expanded into densely populated civilian areas, the Security Council adopted **Resolution 582**, which again called for an immediate ceasefire, cessation of attacks against civilian targets, and withdrawal to internationally recognized boundaries. Despite stronger language, the resolution suffered the same fate as earlier efforts, lack of enforceability and mutual distrust. Iraq publicly accepted the resolution, but continued offensive operations. Iran rejected it outright, claiming it failed to address accountability for the aggressor state. The UN attempted to supplement the resolution with renewed diplomatic efforts, sending additional envoys and issuing appeals to both governments, but the absence of binding mechanisms and continued superpower involvement left the resolution largely symbolic. For both Iran and Iraq, battlefield developments still held more strategic weight than diplomatic overtures, ensuring that hostilities persisted.

Breakthrough with Security Council Resolution 598 (1987)

A major diplomatic turning point came with the adoption of **Resolution 598 in July 1987**, widely regarded as the most comprehensive and structured UN effort to end the war. Unlike previous resolutions, 598 outlined a multi-stage roadmap: an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal of forces, exchange of prisoners, and the establishment of a UN-monitored peacekeeping presence to verify compliance. Crucially, it also called for an investigation into the question of responsibility for the conflict, an issue central to Iran's demands. While Iraq quickly announced its acceptance of the resolution, Tehran initially resisted, arguing the terms lacked adequate guarantees regarding accountability. The UN launched a sustained diplomatic campaign, with Secretary-General Javier Pérez

de Cuéllar engaging both sides directly, mobilizing international pressure, and coordinating with regional partners. Over the course of a year, intensive shuttle diplomacy gradually reshaped Iran's position.

Implementation of Resolution 598 and Ceasefire Agreement (1988)

By mid-1988, after a series of military setbacks and growing internal exhaustion, Iran notified the Secretary-General that it would accept Resolution 598 in full. Iraq reaffirmed its acceptance shortly thereafter, enabling the UN to establish the **United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG)** to supervise the ceasefire and monitor the redeployment of forces. The ceasefire formally took effect on August 20, 1988, marking the official end of active hostilities. UNIIMOG personnel were deployed along the front lines to verify compliance, investigate violations, and maintain communication channels between the two parties. While the resolution did not immediately resolve deeper political disputes or determine legal responsibility for the war's outbreak, it provided the first effective framework for de-escalation and established a foundation for future diplomatic engagement between Iran and Iraq, ultimately proving to be the only successful UN peacekeeping initiative of the conflict.

Possible Solutions

A more effective UN approach to the conflict would begin with establishing an enforceable and verifiable ceasefire monitored by UN military observers. Early deployment of a neutral monitoring mission could help supervise disengagement zones, document violations, and reduce mistrust by providing transparent reporting to the Security Council. Strengthening resolutions with clearer enforcement mechanisms, such as automatic diplomatic or economic consequences for noncompliance, would increase pressure on both parties to halt hostilities.

To address the use of chemical weapons, the UN could establish a stronger investigative and enforcement framework. While fact-finding missions confirmed chemical attacks, these investigations could be paired with mandated sanctions, restrictions on chemical exports, and greater cooperation with states producing dual-use materials. Clear

consequences for violations would discourage continued deployment of chemical agents and reinforce international humanitarian law.

Civilian protection is another essential component. The UN could facilitate the creation of humanitarian corridors, temporary safe zones near major population centers, and secure routes for medical evacuation. Coordinating with the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations would ensure uninterrupted delivery of aid while also providing independent documentation of civilian harm. Clear prohibitions on targeting cities and infrastructure could reduce the humanitarian impact of the "War of the Cities."

In the maritime domain, the Security Council could enhance safety in the Persian Gulf by implementing a UN-coordinated monitoring system for commercial shipping. This may include designated safe lanes, international escort arrangements, and strict reporting mechanisms for attacks on neutral vessels. Such measures would protect global energy routes and help prevent further escalation in the region.

Long-term stability requires structured negotiations supported by confidence-building measures. The UN could facilitate talks beginning with less contentious issues such as prisoner exchanges, missing persons, and border minefield clearance. Gradually, negotiations could progress to more sensitive topics like compensation, territorial claims, and accountability. Establishing communication hotlines and regular liaison meetings between military officials would reduce miscalculations and improve transparency.

Finally, reducing external military involvement is crucial. Coordinated arms-control measures, ideally through a Security Council-mandated embargo or monitoring regime could limit the flow of weapons and financial support that prolonged the war. Coupled with post-war reconstruction plans, economic assistance, and mechanisms for investigating war crimes, these steps would help create the foundation for a lasting and stable peace in the region.

Questions to be Addressed

1. Historical Background

- What are the important historical events that have impacted the relations between Iraq and Iran in political, ideological, and ethnic identity?

- How has the region of the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia's complex history influenced the current conflict between the two states?

- How did the existence of competing revolutionary ideologies and regional ambitions affect the circumstances of the rising tensions between the government of Iraq and the government of Iran?

- What were the impacts of major ideologies of countries in the Persian Gulf, such as Ba'athism, Shi'a political activism, and Arab nationalism, that influenced the progression of the conflict?

2. Current Status and Recent Developments (1980–1988)

- What recent incidents or actions taken by Iraq, Iran, or the international community have impacted the situation during the Iraq–Iran War?

- What was the effect of Iraq's initial invasion in 1980 and Iran's subsequent counteroffensives on regional geopolitics and Iraq–Iran relations?

- What developments during the "Tanker War" phase influenced external powers' involvement and shifted the regional dynamics of the conflict?

3. Security Concerns and Regional Stability

- What are the effects of the Iraq–Iran War on regional security and stability in the Persian Gulf, Middle East, and broader Arab world?

- What measures can be taken to address security concerns arising from Iraq's military expansion and Iran's revolutionary mobilization?

- How might the militarisation of Iraq and Iran, including ballistic missile programs and chemical weapons use, impact international security and global military strategies?

4. Human Rights and Humanitarian Concerns

- What are the major human rights violations experienced by civilians in Iraq and Iran, particularly those living near the frontlines and border regions?

- What measures can be taken to ensure the protection of human rights for residents of Iraq and Iran affected by bombardment, displacement, and chemical attacks?

- How did the use of chemical weapons and attacks on civilian infrastructure worsen the humanitarian situation during the conflict?

5. Territorial Disputes and Legal Challenges

- What are the most important legal arguments surrounding Iraq's claims to the Shatt al-Arab waterway and Iran's response to these claims?

- What is the impact of rising tensions between Iraq and Iran on the prospects for resolving territorial disputes peacefully?

- What are the reasons behind the strategic significance of the Shatt al-Arab, Khuzestan, and border regions in the conflict?

6. Diplomatic Efforts and Sanctions

- What major diplomatic efforts and negotiations were undertaken by the UN and regional actors to resolve the Iraq–Iran War?

- To what extent have international impacts, including superpower involvement, shaped the conditions of ceasefire proposals and peace negotiations?

- What are the main obstacles to successful diplomatic talks between Iraq, Iran, and other regional stakeholders during the conflict?

7. Preventing Escalation and Promoting Dialogue

- What strategies can be implemented to ensure stability in the Persian Gulf and the broader Iraq–Iran conflict?

- What measures can be taken by international actors to encourage and support constructive dialogue between Iraq, Iran, and affected communities?

- How could early diplomatic intervention or confidence-building measures have prevented further escalation of the war?

8. Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction

- What measures can the international community implement to provide humanitarian aid to displaced persons and affected populations during the Iraq–Iran War?

- What are the challenges and opportunities in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons from border regions such as Khuzestan, Basra, and Kurdish areas?

- What are the opportunities and challenges of post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq and Iran once hostilities cease?

9. The Role of External Actors

- What is the effect of external powers, including the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Arab League, the United States, and the Soviet Union, on shaping the direction of the Iraq–Iran War?

- What is the role of regional actors such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in influencing the dynamics of the conflict?

- What measures can be taken by international stakeholders to ensure that their involvement encourages stability and resolution rather than escalation or extended proxy competition?

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