



Introduction

The world finds itself in the middle of several major conflicts. In the Middle East, the Iran-Iraq War is tilting in favor of Iran. Powerful outside actors, including the United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab League, are mulling over extending support to prop up a struggling Iraq. In the mountains of Central Asia, the Soviet Union finds itself locked in the Soviet-Afghan War after its invasion in late 1979. As casualties mount, the USSR must determine whether to redouble their efforts, or begin the process of pulling out, admitting defeat in the process. Meanwhile, a cross-Atlantic crisis is brewing as the Argentinian junta sets its sights on the British-occupied Falkland Islands.

At the same time, major changes to the world are occurring beyond the scope of specific conflicts. The 20th century has played host to many changes within the international community – keep in mind that the United Nations was chartered in 1945, only 37 years before your committee is set to begin! During those 37 years, the size, scope, and number of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) has continuously expanded, presenting opportunities and obstacles for national governments to extend their reach.

As members of the Cabinet of the Soviet Union, it is your responsibility to guide your Head of Government, General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, in responding to international and domestic crises of great importance. This briefing will provide an overview of the state of affairs you face.

This briefing is meant to present the primary situation and threats that the Cabinet of the Soviet Union will face as of the conferences' start date – January 16, 1982. All Cabinets and several other committees will be reacting to the same issues. Some may be more important to individual nations than others, but each will shape the landscape of the world. It will be up to each Cabinet to determine how they wish to engage with each.

Committee Background

The Cabinet of the Soviet Union

In order to understand your role as Soviet Ministers, it is first necessary to understand what the Soviet Union is and some of its history. The Soviet Union, or the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR), is a communist socialist state made up of several unique republics.¹ Though in name, it was a union of separate nations, in practice the USSR was a highly-controlled unitary state consolidated under a centralized government.²

Origins

The Soviet Union emerged after the October Revolution of 1917, during which Bolshevik revolutionaries -- led by Vladimir Lenin -- overthrew the Russian provisional government that replaced Tsar Nicholas II. This put an end to the Russian Empire and the Romanov dynasty. The Bolshevik Revolution was followed by several years of civil war.³

From 1918 to 1920, the “Reds” and the “Whites” fought for control over what was formerly Russia.⁴ The Reds were composed of the communist Bolshevik government, while the Whites were a loose alliance of monarchists, capitalists, and supporters of non-Bolshevik forms of socialism. During this period, the “Red Terror” took place, in which the Bolshevik secret police led a state-sanctioned campaign of executions and imprisonments aimed at their political enemies.

In 1922, the communist Reds were victorious in the civil war. A treaty was signed that year establishing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), unifying the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) of the Russian SFSR, Transcaucasian SSR, Ukrainian SSR, and Byelorussian SSR. Vladimir Lenin became Premier, the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Soviet Union. The capital city was established in Moscow.⁵

¹ [Soviet Union timeline - BBC News](#)

² [Formation of the Soviet Union | History of Western Civilization II](#)

³ [Soviet Union - Countries, Cold War & Collapse | HISTORY](#)

⁴ [How Lenin's Red Terror set a macabre course for the Soviet Union](#)

⁵ [World War II – The Eastern Front](#)



The USSR adopted a communist ideology inspired by the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In short, Marx and Engels proposed that capitalism is an economic system doomed to collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. By consolidating wealth in the hands of owners (the bourgeoisie), rather than distributing it among the workers (the proletariat), the workers would become dissatisfied and eventually revolt against their owners (the revolution). This revolution would enshrine a communist economic system, one in which all wealth was equally distributed among the proletariat.

Following the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin's government implemented a series of Marxist-Leninist reforms. They redistributed land from the church, nobles, and landlords to peasants, improved working conditions (including limiting the workday to eight hours), provided evening classes for workers unable to receive an education, and set up a Women's Rights Department.⁶ During this time, all political activities that were conducted outside of the Communist Party — the Bolshevik Party's new name — were quickly suppressed. All newspapers not under state control were banned, as well as the opposition Liberal and Constitutional Democrat parties. Additionally, a secret police force called the Cheka was established. Their job was to report to Lenin on all anti-communist activities.

⁶ [Lenin's implementation of Leninism in Russia and the changes made | South African History Online](#)

Description of the Cabinet

This Cabinet will make up the Council of Ministers of the Government of the Soviet Union, formally known as the All-Union Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The government is led by a Chairman, known by outsiders as the Premier – this is Leonid Brezhnev. The Chairman is nominated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the ruling party, and elected by delegates at the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union. The Supreme Soviet is the ruling legislative body of the Soviet Union charged with appointing the USSR's Head of State, its Council of Ministers, and Supreme Court members.

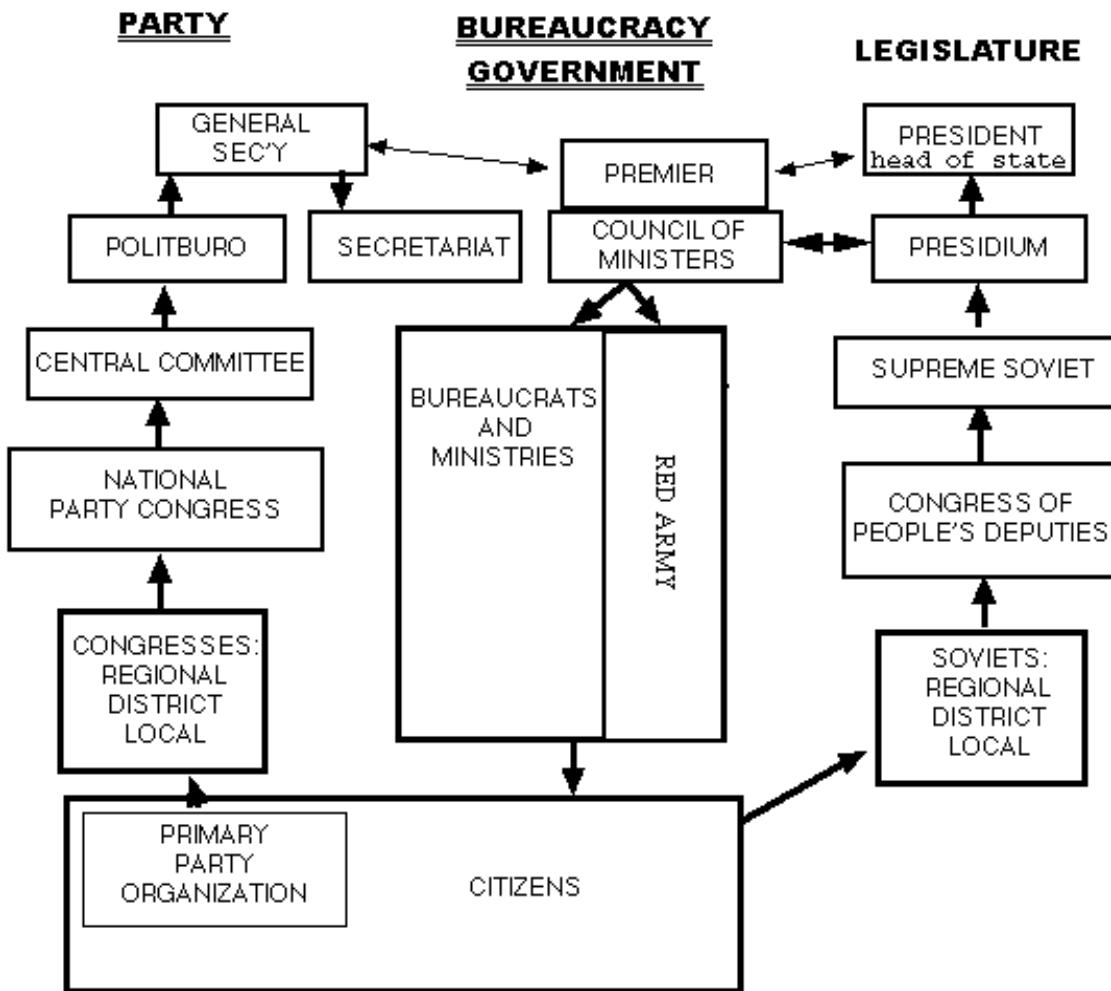
The Supreme Soviet is a bicameral legislature with two chambers: the Soviet of the Union, with delegates elected on the basis of population, and the Soviet of the Nation, with delegates elected to represent specific ethnic populations. At this time, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet is Nikolai Shvernik. In practice, the Supreme Soviet does little more than approve decisions already made by the Communist Party.

In fact, to truly understand the government structure of the Soviet Union, one must also understand the structure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The governing party of the CPSU is the Party Congress. The Party Congress elects a Central Committee, and the Central Committee elects the Politburo and a Secretariat. The Politburo is the highest policy-making authority in the CPSU, while the Secretariat executes the CPSU's day-to-day functions. The Politburo in turn elects the General Secretary, the highest-ranking member of the CPSU, who also serves as the USSR's Chairman and Head of State. In theory, the Central Committee holds supreme power; however, in reality, the General Secretary rules from the top down.⁷

It is also important to recognize that each Soviet Social Republic, or sub-unit of the Soviet Union, possesses its own government and party apparatuses. The Russian SFSR is where the Supreme Soviet is located, as it is the home of Moscow. It is also the largest and the most populous of the Soviet Republics.

⁷ [1936 Constitution of the USSR, TOC](#)

THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS



The Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, also known as the Council of Ministers and the Soviet of Ministers, is the main executive and administrative agency of the USSR. It consists of the Premier, several First Deputies, Deputies, ministers, Chairmen of the state committees and the Chairmen of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Republics. It is accountable to the Supreme Soviet and, in practice, the Central Committee of the CPSU. The following are official responsibilities of the Council of Ministers:

- Management of the national economy and economic development;
- Researching, composing, and proposing Five Year Plans;
- Defending the interests of the state and socialism;
- Ensuring state security;
- Crafting general policies for the Soviet armed forces and Soviet foreign relations.

Head of Government - General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev

Leonid Brezhnev is the second-longest serving General Secretary of the Communist Party, second to only Joseph Stalin.⁸ Brezhnev first was trained as an agricultural surveyor, who then joined the Young Communist League. During his service in the army, Brezhnev was appointed as a political commissar tasked with establishing party control in the province of Moldavia. Seeing the success of his work, Brezhnev was appointed to the CPSU. He was elected chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in 1960, a post he held until 1964 when he led the plot to overthrow First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev. Brezhnev's plot was successful and he was appointed First Secretary of the CPSU in 1966.

Brezhnev's foreign policy is centered around the Brezhnev Doctrine, which calls for Soviet intervention in any case where the essential interests of socialist countries are at stake.⁹ Brezhnev was also an initial supporter of détente with the United States, meeting with President Nixon in 1972. This changed, however, where the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the SALT II Treaty (see below) he had created with President Jimmy Carter.

⁸ [An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Conflict and Conflict Resolution, 1945-1996](#)

⁹ [Brezhnev Doctrine](#)

Historical Background

The Cold War

Background Information

It is difficult to contextualize the state of world affairs in 1982, nor accurately make the decisions of a national Cabinet member at the time, without first understanding the Cold War.

The Cold War refers to a historical era defined by a decades-long rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union – the world’s two preeminent economic and military superpowers at the time – who each sought global dominance. The conflict was rooted in an ideological split between the two states. While the United States sought to protect and expand democracy and capitalism, the Soviet Union subscribed to a communist economic model coupled with centralized, authoritarian leadership. The USSR saw the United States as Western imperialists whose capitalist system was oppressive and fraught with contradictions. Meanwhile, the United States believed the Soviet Union posed an existential and expansionist threat to its liberal system. In the minds of both, the two could not co-exist. The success or empowerment of one was tantamount to the destruction of the other.

The Cold War represents what many international security scholars refer to as a *bipolar* world order. *Bipolarity* is a system of international order in which two competing powers control global economic, military, and political relations, resulting in other states choosing to ally with one of them.¹⁰ As the United States and Soviet Union made their opposition to each other clear, each sought to expand their sphere of influence to other countries – this theme would continue throughout the Cold War. The contrapositive of this was true as well. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s “domino theory” contended that the fall of one country to communism would lead other countries in the area to follow; this thinking shaped much of the United States’ approach to intervening in Cold War-era conflicts.¹¹

A Brief History

Tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States first arose in the aftermath of World War II, during negotiations over the occupation of Germany once the Nazis were defeated. As tensions between the Soviet Union and United States grew, both states quickly rushed to shore up allies and influence in their respective spheres. A public example of this came in 1947, when President Harry S. Truman of the U.S. released the Truman Doctrine. The Truman Doctrine stated that the United States would provide aid to all nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces.¹² This decision was guided by a *containment* policy. First articulated

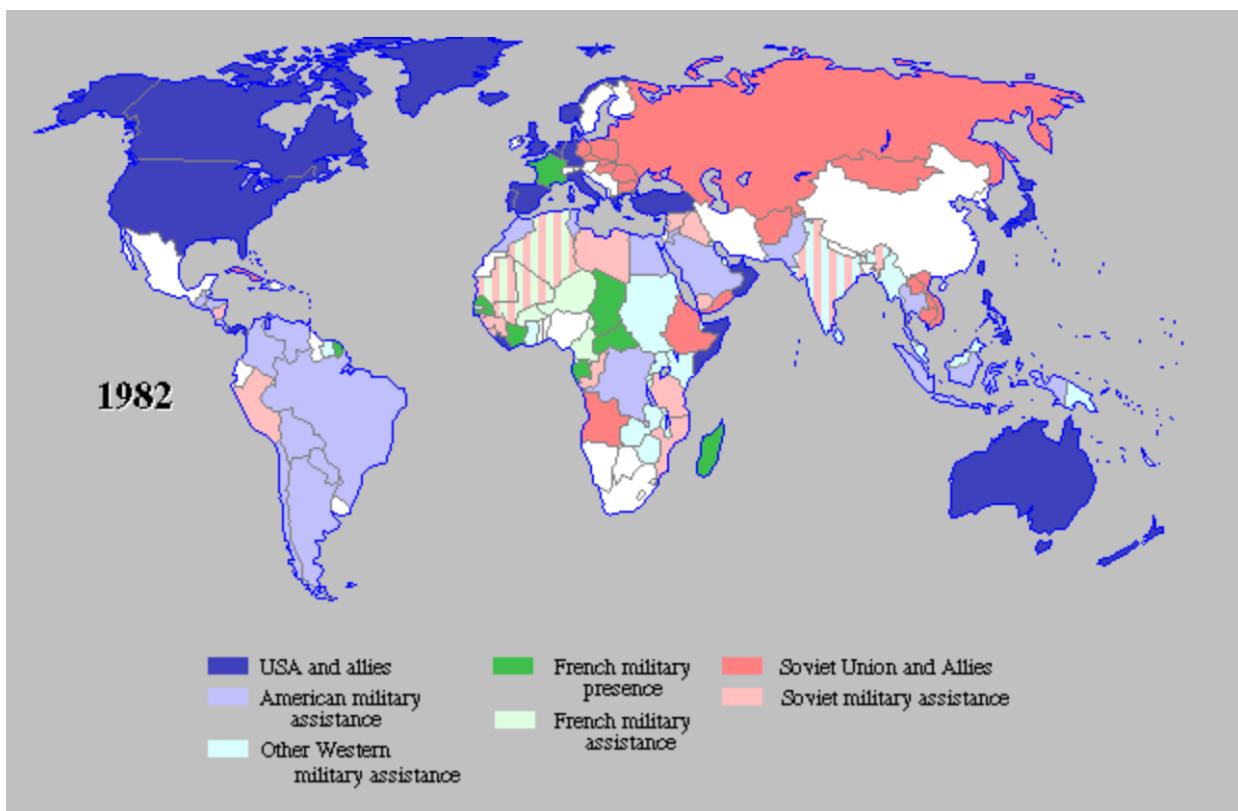
¹⁰ [The politics of bipolarity and IPE in contemporary times](#)

¹¹ [President Eisenhower delivers Cold War “domino theory” speech - HISTORY](#)

¹² [The Truman Doctrine, 1947](#)

by George Kennan, *containment* expressed the political necessity to prevent communism from spreading any further than it already had.

As a result of these growing tensions, in 1949, the United States established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance between several Western countries. NATO was most famously known for Article 5 of its founding treaty, which creates a *collective defense* pact. This means an attack against one NATO member is treated like an attack against all of its members.¹³ The 12 founding members of NATO were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹⁴ The Soviet Union responded in 1955 with the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance between the communist governments of Eastern Europe. The founding members of the Warsaw Pact were the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Albania, though Albania withdrew in 1968.¹⁵ These two blocs would serve as the opposing forces throughout most of the Cold War, led by their respective superpowers.



¹³ [NATO - Topic: Collective defence and Article 5](#)

¹⁴ [NATO - Topic: Member countries](#).

¹⁵ [NATO - Declassified: What was the Warsaw Pact?](#).

¹⁶ [Map - Cold War 1960-1991](#)

Throughout the late 1950s right up until 1982, the United States and Soviet Union – and their respective allies – opposed each other on a variety of fronts. The first of these are hot, *proxy wars*: wars between certain entities instigated by major powers that are not directly involved.¹⁷ These include the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 and the Vietnam War between 1955 to 1975. Throughout the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union often intervened in other countries' affairs to gain political allies or prevent their rival from gaining a potential ally. These proxy wars wreaked havoc throughout the global South, resulting in political disruptions that many regions still suffer the effects of to this day.

The second was nuclear research and weaponry. The first atomic bombs were dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in 1945, effectively ending World War II.¹⁸ Since then, the U.S. and USSR raced to advance nuclear technology and stockpile nuclear weapons. The positioning of nuclear weapons has led to some of the Cold War's most climactic moments, such as the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁹ After the world stood on the brink of apocalyptic nuclear warfare throughout the 1950s and 60s, the U.S. and USSR came to an understanding called *mutually assured destruction* – each has the power to destroy the other with nuclear weapons.²⁰ Mutually assured destruction is a significant reason the United States and Soviet Union never engaged in direct conflict.

By 1982, significant progress had been made on the issue of *denuclearization*: the effort to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, nuclear weapons due to the existential threat they pose. In 1972, the United States and Soviet Union signed the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, or SALT I. In it, they agreed to limit the number of ABM anti-missile missiles, not to manufacture strategic weapons for a period of five years, and not to construct land-based launchers.²¹ However, nuclear peace continues to be a tenuous prospect. Other states seeking to increase their security have developed nuclear weapons of their own, even as much of the international community continues to push for denuclearization through platforms such as the United Nations. These include the United Kingdom, France, and the People's Republic of China.²² Additionally, though the United States and Soviet Union signed a second nuclear limitation treaty called SALT II in 1979, this program has not been implemented due to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan.²³

As a third point of contention, propaganda and espionage served as key tools used by both the United States and Soviet Union to attempt to gain a foothold against the other. The U.S. and USSR used propaganda as a means of psychological warfare to win over the hearts and minds of their citizens and call people around the world to support their ideological perspective.²⁴ Along

¹⁷ [Cold War facts and information](#)

¹⁸ [Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - Causes, Impact & Lives Lost - HISTORY](#).

¹⁹ [The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962](#)

²⁰ [Mutually Assured Destruction: When Not to Play - Farnam Street](#)

²¹ [Foreign Relations of the United States Series: SALT I, 1969–1972 | Wilson Center](#)

²² [Nuclear Weapons by Country 2023](#)

²³ [Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev sign the SALT-II nuclear treaty - HISTORY](#)

²⁴ [Project Troy: How Scientists Helped Refine Cold War Psychological Warfare](#)

with propaganda, both states had large networks of spies coordinated through their central intelligence agencies that sought to bring home military and political secrets.

Finally, it is important to remember that the Cold War consisted of more than the United States and Soviet Union going head to head – the rest of the world was implicated in the process. Countries in the global South sought to assert their own agency throughout this period of history. Some chose to avoid siding with the U.S. or USSR altogether, founding the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955.²⁵ The NAM emerged during the wave of decolonization following World War II and sought to give developing countries a platform to advocate for self determination against colonialism and imperialism.

Timeline of Events

The following is a condensed list of essential moments of the Cold War up to this point.²⁶

- **1945:** World War II ends.
- **1948:** The United States pours billions of dollars of aid into Western Europe through the Marshall Plan. Yugoslavia withdraws from the Eastern Bloc by decree of President Josef Broz Tito.
- **1949:** The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is established. The communist People's Republic of China wins the Chinese Civil War; the Republic of China retreats to the island of Taiwan.
- **1950:** The Sino-Soviet Pact is signed between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. The Korean War between North Korea (supported by the USSR and PRC) and South Korea (supported by the US) begins.
- **1953:** Joseph Stalin, President of the Soviet Union, dies. The Korean War ends in a stalemate.
- **1957:** The Soviet Union launches the first ever satellite, Sputnik 1, into space. This marks the beginning of the Space Race.
- **1959:** Nikita Khrushchev, President of the Soviet Union, visits the United States. He is the first Soviet leader to visit the USA.
- **1960:** The friendship between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union deteriorates.
- **1961:** John F. Kennedy is elected President of the United States. The United States attempts to overthrow Prime Minister Fidel Castro's communist regime in Cuba and fails, strengthening Castro's position. East Germany builds the Berlin Wall, separating both sides of the city. The Soviet Union puts the first man in space.

²⁵ [History and Evolution of Non-Aligned Movement](#)

²⁶ [Cold War Timeline - CVCE Website](#)

- **1962:** The Soviet Union positions nuclear missiles on Cuba, only a few miles from the coast of Florida. The United States responds with a naval blockade. For a few weeks, the world is poised to go to nuclear war; this is called the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- **1963:** President John F. Kennedy is assassinated. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson becomes President in his stead.
- **1964:** Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev becomes First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).
- **1968:** Several states, including the United States and Soviet Union, sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Brezhnev orders Soviet troops to crush the Prague Spring, a liberal uprising in Czechoslovakia.
- **1969:** Richard Nixon becomes President of the United States. The United States puts the first man on the moon.
- **1972:** The United States and Soviet Union sign the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, or SALT I. In it, they agree to limit the number of ABM anti-missile missiles, not to manufacture strategic weapons for a period of five years, and not to construct land-based launchers.
- **1973:** The United States signs the Paris Peace Accords, which enables it to pull out of the Vietnam War. A coalition of Arab countries attacks Israel on the high holiday of Yom Kippur; quickly regains control of the situation and launches successful counter-offensives that push deep into Syria and Egypt.
- **1979:** The United States and the USSR sign the SALT II Agreement, which limits the number of missile launchers and bombers. This agreement has yet to come into force with the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.
- **1979:** The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan to support the ruling communists against counter-revolutionary guerilla fighters. Margaret Thatcher is elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom as the leader of the Conservative Party.
- **1981:** Ronald Reagan becomes President of the United States.

Current Landscape

At this point in history, the Cold War has been an ongoing saga that has defined the lives of both governments and civilians for generations. Several wars have been fought, alliances have been made, nuclear weapons have been built, and some progress toward resolution has even been forged. With the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty signed but not yet enacted, it seems as if the world is beginning to progress toward peace. Even so, this progress is fraught by several challenges.

The first is the re-emergence of conflicts with the potential to grow into large-scale proxy wars. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to support the Afghan communist government during a conflict with anti-communist Muslim guerillas. Backed by the United States, these Muslim guerillas, called the mujahideen, have rebelled against the attempted Soviet takeover. The war between the Soviet Union and the American-backed mujahideen had settled into a

stalemate. Meanwhile, following years of territorial disputes, Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, leading to the Iran-Iraq War. Iran managed to successfully push back Iraqi forces to pre-war lines and the war sits at a tipping point of ending or regaining momentum.

The second is the election of leaders in key countries who seek to restore Cold War divides. In the United States, President Ronald Reagan has been elected Commander in Chief on a staunch wave of anti-communist sentiment.²⁷ With Reagan's primary foreign policy goal being American victory in the Cold War, the United States seems poised to re-ignite simmering tensions with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher leads the Conservative Party. Much of Thatcher's foreign policy profile has been built on criticizing the Soviet Union for its failure to engage in "genuine detente."²⁸ This led to the Soviet press giving her the nickname of "the Iron Lady." The United States and United Kingdom have a Special Relationship, or close alliance between the two nations based on their shared history. Reagan and Thatcher's alignment on foreign policy could lead to a resurgence of antagonistic relations with the USSR.²⁹

Many countries are facing domestic economic crises, some more significant than others. In the Soviet Union, economic productivity has fallen below economic growth under the country's centralized economy.³⁰ The USSR faces the question of whether it must adopt Western technology and decentralization programs in order to keep up with the West. The United States is emerging from a recession that has lasted throughout the early 1980s, the worst economic downturn in U.S. history since the Great Depression.³¹ The United Kingdom is facing high unemployment and a struggling manufacturing sector.³² Much of the world is facing a recession spurred by the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which disrupted the global oil supply.³³

This history shows that Cold War dynamics have evolved and complexified since the initial emergence of the conflict. It is up to Cabinet members to adapt to ever-changing scenarios while considering the relevant historical context and geopolitical positioning.

The Evolution of the International Political Community

The very first Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO) was the Congress of Vienna from 1814 to 1815 to re-establish the territorial borders of Europe after the defeat of French dictator Napoleon Bonaparte.³⁴ Since then, different governments have been working together in various organizational capacities to form the institutions of the international political community that guide the world in 1982.

²⁷ [Ronald Reagan | U.S. Department of the Interior](#)

²⁸ [Thatcher, Margaret | Wilson Center Digital Archive](#)

²⁹ [History of the U.S.-UK Special Relationship and U.S. Policy](#)

³⁰ [Why the USSR Collapsed Economically](#)

³¹ [Recession of 1981–82 | Federal Reserve History](#)

³² [How record-breaking inflation was tamed in the 1980s | The Week UK](#)

³³ [What Iran's 1979 revolution meant for US and global oil markets](#)

³⁴ [From the Congress of Vienna to Present-Day International Organizations | United Nations](#)

The most well-known IGO is the United Nations and all the smaller bodies and committees contained within its reach. The Charter of the United Nations was first ratified on October 24, 1945, in the wake of a devastating Second World War. Now, in 1982, the international political system the United Nations created has expanded to sprawling heights.

The United Nations contains six primary organs³⁵:

1. *The General Assembly*, the U.N.'s main deliberative body, composed of all its Member States, each with one vote;
2. *The Security Council* is directly charged with maintaining international peace and security. It is the only U.N. organ capable of passing binding resolutions, composed of 15 states, five of whom possess veto power;
3. *The Economic and Social Council* serves as the policy hub for economic and social issues within the U.N. system;
4. *The Trusteeship Council* provides international supervision for the U.N.'s Trust Territories and primes these Territories for independence;
5. *The International Court of Justice* settles legal disputes between States, give advisory opinions to U.N. bodies, and serves as the U.N.'s principal judiciary organization;
6. *The Secretariat* carries out the U.N.'s day-to-day administrative work.

Alongside its six organs and six standing committees of the General Assembly, the U.N. now encompasses fifteen specialized agencies legislating on issues from meteorology to telecommunications. Subsidiary bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Trade Organization have been created to work along the U.N.'s main committees.

Post-colonial countries have contributed to a growth in the U.N.'s membership, making the General Assembly a broad forum for smaller countries to have their voices heard. The United Nations has passed an increasing number of treaties on subjects related to disarmament, human rights, and maritime law. All of this growth has increased the scope and influence of the U.N.'s role in the international political community.

It is also important to note that IGOs are not constrained solely to the United Nations. Smaller bodies like the Arab League have emerged as a forum for groups of countries with specific regional or ideological interests to collaborate internally.

³⁵ [UN Structure | United Nations](#).

Major International Touchpoints

Iran-Iraq War

As mentioned, the Cold War manifested prominently in regions other than the European continent. The Cold War has dominated world politics from the end of World War II up until the beginning of your committee, so it naturally follows that other regions have become enmeshed in the conflict. Certain countries have seen pre-existing conflicts become aggravated by proxy wars, attempted to exploit the Cold War divide for their own political gain, or attempted to stay out of the conflict altogether.³⁶ Additionally, the Middle East is a region still recovering from the destructive political and economic impacts of colonialism, particularly French and British colonialism. This context is important to keep in mind when considering the many conflicts occurring within the Middle East in 1982.

The Middle East has been an important site of Cold War tension for several reasons. The first is its strategic location and vast array of natural resources. The region lies between three different continents and is surrounded by four major seas; crossing the Middle East is necessary in many cases to travel between the world's different regions efficiently. The Middle East is also home to large reserves of oil and natural gas. Throughout the 20th century, the industrialized world had become increasingly dependent on burning fossil fuels to function, from the cars of the American urban sprawl to natural gas heating homes during winter. Secondly, the Middle East was already home to regional tension involving the United States and the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. This tension would only become exacerbated as the US and USSR's relationship grew increasingly antagonistic.

This context sets the stage for the Iran-Iraq War, one of the central conflicts of 1982. Though it began as a regional war, the international community is considering and has many reasons to consider deeper involvement – reasons that will be explored throughout this guide.

The Origins of the Conflict

The Iranian Revolution, 1979

One of the most prominent turning points in the history of the Middle East took place in 1979 in the form of the Iranian Revolution. During the Iranian Revolution, the Pahlavi dynasty, led by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown. The Shah's government was replaced by the rule of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who was previously in exile for 14 years. The Iranian people approved a new constitution, instituting the Islamic Republic of Iran as a theocratic republic.

The Iranian Revolution took place after years of tension between the Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini that culminated in 1978, when a campaign of civil resistance began in earnest on

³⁶ [The Middle East during the Cold War](#)

Iranian streets to protest the Shah's rule. Ideologically, the Iranian Revolution was centered on the ideal of Islam (specifically Shia Islam) as the one true liberator of the Third World from oppressive colonialism, neo-colonialism, and capitalism – liberation from the both the East and the West.

The reason the revolution marked such a drastic change in international politics is the following: the Shah's secular, authoritarian government was friendlier to the West. In fact, the coup that brought the Pahlavi dynasty into power in 1953 was orchestrated by the United States and the United Kingdom. In contrast, the new Iranian leaders called for the end of American influence in the Middle East. The Iranian Revolution effectively destroyed the American-Iranian alliance, which had previously guided American policy in the region.³⁷

Most of the world was unprepared for the upheaval the Iranian Revolution would cause to the global order. The Iran-Iraq War, in fact, began as a reaction to the Iranian Revolution. Tensions between the two countries had grown throughout the 1970s as they competed for control of the Shatt al-Arab, the waterway formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the southern end of which forms the border between the two nations.³⁸



The border dispute over Shatt al-Arab had been recurring between Iran and Iraq since the 1930s. In 1975, the Algiers Agreement was signed between Iraq and Iran in which Iraqi control over the waterway was reduced in exchange for Iran withdrawing their support for a Kurdish insurgency in Northern Iraq. Even so, border skirmishes between the countries continued, as Iraq wished to regain control over the territory it had ceded.

Pathway to War

In 1979, the Iranian Revolution inflamed tensions between Iran and Iraq. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein feared that the Iranian Revolution would turn Iraq's Shia minority population against his Sunni-dominated, officially secular Ba'athist government (which was sharply in contrast with Iran's new theocratic rule). Additionally, Iran had long been a pre-eminent power in the Middle

³⁷ [The Iranian Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War](#)

³⁸ [Iran Iraq War - History](#)

East due to its oil wealth and alliance with the United States. Hussein saw the Iranian Revolution as a prime opportunity for Iraq to increase its standing in the region.

At first, it appeared as if Iraq may not invade Iran during its governmental transition. In August 1979, Iraqi authorities invited Medhi Bazargan, the first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to visit their capital of Baghdad in an attempt to improve bilateral relations.³⁹ This was disrupted in November that same year by the Iran hostage crisis. The U.S. embassy in Tehran, the capital city of Iran, was taken over by militarized Iranian students who supported the Revolution; Iran took 66 Americans hostage. The Iran hostage crisis did not end until 1981. As a result of the crisis, Bazargan was accused of plotting to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran – with the help of the Iraqi government.⁴⁰



Iran and Iraq's relationship further deteriorated in April 1980, when an Iranian militia group called Al-Dawa unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the Iraqi Foreign Minister and Minister of Information and Culture. Iraq responded by rounding up Al-Dawa supporters in Iraq and deporting Iraqi Shia Muslims to Iran. Meanwhile, Iran put its forces on alert, publicly stating this was a response to Iraqi attacks on their oil facilities and the border. Ayatollah Khomeini broadcasted a speech encouraging the Iraqi people to “wake up and topple the corrupt regime in your country before it is too late.”⁴¹

At this point, Iran and Iraq are heading closer and closer to open warfare. Saddam Hussein ordered the leader of Al-Dawa be executed and pulled out of 1975 Algiers Accords. Iran began shelling Iraqi border towns. At the same time, in April of 1980, U.S. President Jimmy Carter prohibited all financial transactions, imports from, and travel to Iran. On April 25, 1980, a covert

³⁹ [Iran-Iraq War Timeline*](#)

⁴⁰ [Part 1: Iran's Role in Iraq | Wilson Center](#)

⁴¹ [AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI THE MULLAH WHO TRANSFORMED IRAN - The Washington Post](#)

U.S. operation to rescue the hostages ended in failure. Iranian officials speculated the true cause of this mission was to overthrow the new Islamic regime.

The Iran-Iraq War's First Two Years

The Iran-Iraq War officially commenced on September 22, 1980, when the Iraqi military launched a two-prong invasion against the Islamic Republic of Iran. First, the Southern operation: a 10,000 man force invaded Southern Iran to besiege an air base at Dezful, accompanied by fighter aircrafts to counter any Iranian attacks. This attack largely fails, with Iranian aircraft immediately responding and bombing strategic Iraqi targets. Second, the Northern operation: Iraq launched a second front straight into central Iran. This attack captures several hundred kilometers of Iranian territory, destroys an Iranian oil refinery at Abadan, and sieges the Iranian city of Mehran.



The Iraqi invasion continues and in December of 1980 Saddam Hussein declares the front established by their invasion stand as the new military border of the conflict. Hussein also states that we will not withdraw Iraqi forces until Iran cedes full control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway and accepts self-rule by the ethnically Arab population in Southern Iran (mostly concentrated in a province called *Khuzestan*).

In 1981, the Iranian government had not yet effectively responded to the invasion. Members of Iran's parliament accuse Iranian President Bani Sadr of ineffectively responding to the Iraqi invasion. At this point, Iraq and some entities in the international community sought to bring the conflict to a close. In January 1981, a United Nations Special Envoy named Olof Palme visited both Iran and Iraq. By February, both Iran and Iraq had agreed to peace talks with Islamic leaders. Palme set off on a trip to begin peace talks and a high-level Islamic peace mission presented a detailed cease-fire agreement. However, negotiations failed with both sides rejecting the agreement – Iran refused to accept a cease-fire until all Iraqi troops had left their territory.

The fighting continued, ramping up on both sides. By March of 1981, the Iranian government stated that it would not negotiate with Iraq until Saddam Hussein was overthrown. Meanwhile, the tides of the war began to shift. Iran drove back a large Iraqi offensive on the oil-rich city of Abadan and launched an attack on Iraqi forces in Khuzestan. On January 16, 1982, the Washington Post reported that Iran is now winning the war. This is where we begin.

Regional Factors Influencing the War

There are several factors outside the immediate relations between Iran and Iraq that have deeply influenced the war thus far. The first is the broader geopolitics of the Middle East. Iran and Iraq are not alone in fighting a war. Lebanon is in the midst of an ongoing civil war broadly characterized as between Maronite-Christian and Palestinian forces. Several uprisings are occurring across Yemen, an Islamist revolution in Syria seeks to overthrow the Syrian Ba'athist government, and sectarian violence is ongoing in Eastern Saudi Arabia. Much of the region is in a state of conflict, making it so alliances are rapidly shifting according to which governments are in power in which countries.

Here is a simplified primer on the politics of each major Middle Eastern country at the beginning of 1982, to help orient you within the region's complex dynamics:

- Islamic Republic of Iran - governed by Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic; a theocratic, Islamist state, comprised of a largely Shia Muslim population. Iran is mostly supportive of Shia movements in the region, bolstered by funding from its oil fields.
- Republic of Iraq - governed by President Saddam Hussein and his secular, Sunni-dominated Ba'athist regime. Iraq is mostly supportive of secular, Ba'athist, Sunni governments, which are deeply tied to the Arab nationalist movement. Rather than being theocratic, ideologically Iraq is sympathetic to Pan-Arab causes.
- Lebanon - in the midst of a Civil War between several militia groups vying for power: the Lebanese Front, composed of Maronite Christian clans, the Lebanese National Movement, a coalition of secular leftists and Sunni Muslims, the Amal, composed of Shia Muslim populists, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, representing Lebanon's Palestinian population. In response to the Civil War, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, is also active in the country.⁴²
- State of Israel and the Palestinian Territories - Israel is a Jewish state established in 1949 by the United Nations in the wake of World War II. Its origins are fraught with controversy, as a large Palestinian population was already living on the land when Israel was recognized; Great Britain promised self-determination to the Palestinian popular and then broke this promise. Many countries in the Middle East do not recognize the State of Israel and instead recognize Occupied Palestine. A series of recent military victories have

⁴² [The historiography and the memory of the Lebanese civil war | Sciences Po Violence de masse et Résistance](#)

emboldened Israel's position in the region. It is rumored that an Israeli invasion of Lebanon is beginning to take shape, taking advantage of Lebanon's weakened state.⁴³

- Hashemite Republic of Jordan - The Kingdom of Jordan is governed by a constitutional monarchy led by King Hussein. It is large, populous, composed of a majority Sunni Muslim and minority Arab Christian population, and has mostly managed to avoid conflict with the rest of the region outside of its claims to territory in the West Bank of Israel.⁴⁴
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy unified under the Kingdom of Saud, currently led by an aging King Khalid. Saudi Arabia is majority Sunni Muslim (dominated by the ultra religious Wahhabi movement) and, along with Iran, one of the world's largest oil producers.⁴⁵ Saudi Arabia is allied with Iraq in its war against Iran, along with Saudi Arabia's close allies, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.
- Egypt - President Hosni Mubarak came to power in 1981 after the assassination of Anwar Sadat. Though it was a founder of the Pan-Arab movement, Egypt has isolated itself from much of the rest of the Arab world because it recognized the Israeli state in exchange for the return of its territory in the Sinai Peninsula. This occurred via the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979.⁴⁶
- Yemen - Divided between North Yemen and South Yemen. Though an agreement has stated intentions of Yemeni unification, conflict between the two is ongoing.⁴⁷

Beyond the nation-state level, non-state conflicts and ethnic groups further complicate the dynamics of this war.

- Khuzestan - Khuzestan is a province in Southern Iran that borders Iraq, situated within the fertile crescent. The Khuzestan province was historically home to the Susian people and is known for its ethnic diversity and historic landmarks. Khuzestan's population is predominantly Shia Muslim, but there are small Christian, Jewish, Sunni and Mandean minorities. Beyond religion, Khuzestan is home to Iran's largest Arab community, known as the Khuzestani Arabs.⁴⁸ They primarily reside in the Western half of the province, known as Ahwaz. In 1979, during the Iranian Revolution, a Khuzestan insurgency took place in which the Arab population demanded autonomy. This insurgency included a siege of the Iranian embassy in Kensington, London. However, the uprising was quelled in 1980 by Iranian security forces.

Khuzestan has been a strategic location in the war thus far. The province is home to 80% of Iran's oil reserves and 60% of its gas reserves; it is also situated on the border near the

⁴³ [Palestine-Israel Timeline 1977-1990](#)

⁴⁴ [PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND JORDAN: LINKED TOGETHER FOR DECADES - The New York Times](#)

⁴⁵ [The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | Britannica](#)

⁴⁶ [Peace Treaty Between the State of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt | UN Peacemaker](#)

⁴⁷ [Yemen - Countries - Office of the Historian](#)

⁴⁸ [The Iran-Iraq War](#)

Shatt al-Arab waterway. Consequently, much of Khuzestan has been captured by Iraq during their invasion; the city of Khoramshahr was captured by Iraqi forces in 1980.⁴⁹ The Iraqi government holds onto a vague hope that the Khuzestani uprising will continue into the Iran-Iraq War, making their conquest of the province easier.⁵⁰ This has not yet come to pass. The constant fighting in Khuzestan has led to the destruction and impoverishment of many of its inhabitants, with many defending against the Iraqi invasion. The Iranian counteroffensive in Khuzestan has been growing stronger, and it looks like the Iraqi invaders may not be able to sustain their high casualty rate for much longer.

- Kurdistan - The Kurds, or Kurdish people, are an Iranian ethnic group native to the mountainous region of Kurdistan, which spans Northern Iraq, Northwestern Iran, Southeastern Turkey, and Northern Syria.⁵¹ After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War II, Western states promised the Kurdish people their own independent state – this promise was later reneged in the Treaty of Lausanne, making the Kurds a minority in every new country created in the region.⁵²



The Kurdish nationalist movement continued throughout the 20th century. More than 20 million Kurds still lived across Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria; their struggle for their own nation was opposed by these nations and the Kurdish people were used as pawns in regional politics.⁵³ Shortly after the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi government attempted to curry favor from the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) as potential leverage in its war effort.⁵⁴ In 1981, Saddam Hussein's regime established its first major

⁴⁹ <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-khuzestan-poverty-separatism-bloody-war-memories/29515269.html>

⁵⁰ Karsh, Efraim *The Iran-Iraq War 1980–1988*, London: Osprey, (2002): page 27.

⁵¹ <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004>

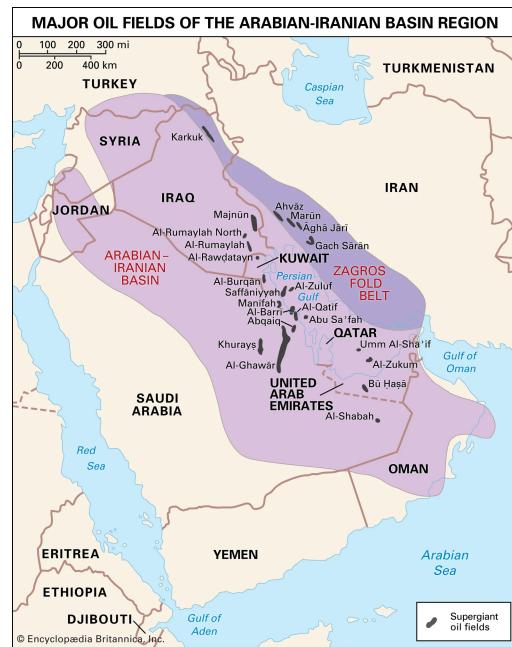
⁵² <https://thelausanneproject.com/history-lausanne-treaty/>

⁵³ [The Kurds' Story | The Survival Of Saddam | FRONTLINE | PBS](#)

⁵⁴ [The Kurdish Factor in Iran-Iraq Relations | Middle East Institute](#)

weapons supply route to the KDPI near the Iranian cities of Nowdesheh and Qasr-e Shirin. The Iraqi government hoped to conquer Nowdesheh to use the highway connecting Baghdad and Tehran. Meanwhile the Kurdish people hoped to establish "Kurdish Liberated Zones" within Iran. However, the Iranian army had launched a series of destructive attacks against the Iraqi Kurds, limiting their military efficacy in the war.

When discussing the Iran-Iraq War, the economic context of the conflict should also be considered. Iraq and Iran are both wealthy countries whose wealth comes from their vast oil reserves. Both Iran and Iraq are members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), an association of the world's leading oil producers who work together to set market prices and production goals. Iraq and Iran have both used the other country's oil fields as strategic targets in the war. While Iraq has attempted to conquer major Iranian oil fields, Iran has attempted to bomb Iraqi oil fields and oil production centers. Both countries recognize how crucial the oil economy is to their and the other's success, and oil is likely to play a significant role in the rest of the conflict.⁵⁵



International Involvement

International involvement in the Iran-Iraq War has been multi-faceted. Regionally, Iran's only major public allies in the conflict are Syria and Libya, while the Iraqi advance is openly financed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and other Arab states in the region. Internationally, countries outside the Middle East view the Iran-Iraq War as a predominately regional conflict. However, this has not stopped them from attempting to take advantage of the situation for their own gain. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the Overseas and Defense Committee of the British cabinet reportedly held a meeting to discuss how to enter "Iraq's lucrative arms market." Though the United States attempted to avoid taking a public stance on the war, they also saw supplying arms to Iraq as a lucrative opportunity. In 1980, the United States began outreach to Italy, seeing Italy as a potential go-between to the Iraqi government.

In January 1981, Saddam Hussein alleged that the United States was supporting Iran by selling them weapons, despite the American embargo on arms sales to Iran. In response to this, the United Nations' Special Envoy Olof Palme began warning of potential superpower involvement in the conflict. That same month, President Ronald Reagan assumed power in the United States

⁵⁵ [The Double-Edged Crisis: OPEC and the Outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War](#)

and the remaining Iranian hostages were released and returned to America. In April 1981, President Regan's Secretary of State stated in a message to the Iraqi Foreign Minister that he believed Iraq was an important country with influence in the region. Later, American officials met with Iraqi officials in Baghdad. As of this time, the United States has publicly rejected all requests from Iran to purchase weapons.

The United States has not been the only superpower to involve itself in the conflict thus far. Kurdish resistance groups in support of Iraq were found using both American and Soviet weapons in battle. An Iraqi spokesperson would claim that they stopped receiving weapons deliveries from the Soviet Union. Even so, this was proven false as the Washington Post reported that the Soviet Union was still supplying arms to Iraq, just indirectly through its allies in Eastern Europe.

Similar collaboration with Iraq was occurring in Europe. In February 1981, a Lebanese newspaper reported that Iraq had received fighter jets from France, despite France being publicly neutral in the conflict. Later in April, French nuclear scientists arrived in Baghdad to begin research on a nuclear weapon. In March, Italy authorized \$1.8 billion dollars in the sale of naval vessels to Iraq. In June, the United Kingdom signed a trade pact with Iraq worth \$2 billion dollars.

Despite the flow of weapons sales, there have been many attempts by the international community to bring an end to the Iran-Iraq War. The Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca Peoli traveled to Beirut, Lebanon in 1981, leading an attempt by the non-aligned bloc to conclude the conflict. His visit was followed by visits from the leaders of Libya, Cuba, India, Zambia and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Islamic peace movement has attempted twice to begin peace talks between Iran and Iraq; the United Nations has attempted no less than five times. The reason for the failures is simple on the surface: Iraq has stated that it will end the war if Iran agrees to its new proposed borders. Iran has refused.

The Soviet Perspective

Thus far, the Soviet Union has remained publicly neutral in the Iran-Iraq War. However, the USSR is a historic ally of Iraq under the 1972 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.⁵⁶ The Treaty, signed on behalf of the USSR by Premier Kosygin, pledges the two countries to cooperate in the political, economic, scientific and military fields. The treaty symbolized the Soviet Union's attempt to gain more of a foothold in the Middle East region, especially because – at the time – Iran was a close ally of the United States. This changed as a result of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and reshuffled the dynamics of the Middle East.

⁵⁶[Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969–1972 - Office of the Historian](#)

At the start of the Iran–Iraq War, while Iraq was on the offensive, the Soviet Union stopped all overt and much of its covert arms shipments to Iraq for 18 months.⁵⁷ Though the USSR has resumed arms dealing with Iraq, this is mostly due to wanting to protect the prestige brand of their weapons. Soviet support for Saddam Hussein has placed it in an unintentional new position – on the same team as the United States. Your actions will decide whether or not this lasts.

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

Origins of the Conflict

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979 – Christmas Eve. The reasons for the invasion are multi-pronged. First, Afghanistan held a location of strategic importance to the Soviet Union. Back during Tsarist Russia, Great Britain fought multiple wars to maintain its control over Afghanistan in order to prevent Russia from accessing the Indian border. As British imperial and military power declined post World Wars, the Soviet Union offered military and economic aid to neutral Afghanistan in order to develop a friendly relationship with the country. Afghan leadership, however, was not responsive to the Soviet advances.⁵⁸



In 1973, Afghanistan's last king was ousted in a coup by his cousin, Mohammed Daoud Khan, who established a new autocratic government. The Soviets initially welcomed this shift, believing Afghanistan to be moving closer to the left. Although Daoud was more nationalist than socialist, his rise to power was dependent on pro-Soviet military and political factions.⁵⁹ A third of Afghanistan's active troops had trained in the Soviet Union and Daoud was supported by a

⁵⁷ <https://web.archive.org/web/20080327003438/http://www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/ShalomIranIraq.html>

⁵⁸ [Why the Soviet Union Invaded Afghanistan - HISTORY](#)

⁵⁹ [The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. Response, 1978–1980](#)

faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the Parchamists, led by Babrak Karmal.

Daoud's reign was rife with tension. Disappointing the Soviets, the authoritarian Prime Minister Daoud Khan refused to let Afghanistan become a Soviet puppet state, stating "Afghanistan shall remain poor, if necessary, but free in its acts and decisions" to Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. Daoud hoped moving away from the Soviet influence and towards the United States would help decrease the radical elements of his government and military. This would prove a failure. He never earned the support of the Khalq faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, while also never effectively governing Afghanistan's many tribal leaders.

Five years after he came to power, Afghanistan President Daoud was overthrown and murdered in a coup led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan's Khalq faction, led by Noor Taraki.⁶⁰ During the coup, soldiers from Taraki's faction assaulted the Presidential palace and executed Daoud. In the days following the coup, Taraki became the Prime Minister. In December 1978, Afghanistan signed a 20-year "friendship treaty" with the Soviet Union which increased the amount of Soviet aid flowing into the country.

Even Soviet assistance, however, could not stabilize Taraki's government. Taraki's Deputy Prime Minister, Hafizullah Amin, received word in 1979 that the Parcham faction was leading a plot to overthrow his regime. In response, Amin took the opportunity to purge and execute many Parchamists and consolidate his own power. Additionally, Taraki's government attempted to incite a Communist revolution in Afghanistan's tribal areas, which led to armed revolt throughout the country. The Soviet Union Feared that Taraki could not effectively govern Afghanistan, even if he was friendly to them. Soviet leaders feared an Islamic government would take power if Taraki were to be overthrown.

In September 1979, Soviet officials sent a delegation to Kabul to assess the situation and shore up Taraki's regime. The political chaos in Afghanistan did not calm; forces close to Hafizullah Amin, Taraki's Deputy Prime Minister, executed Taraki. Islamic insurrections continued. On Christmas Eve, 1979, the Soviet Union decided to take full control itself. The invasion began with the murder of now-Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin and the installation of Babrak Karmal as the Soviet's puppet head of government. Soviets sent in ground forces from the north in an attempt to conquer Afghanistan.⁶¹

Current Situation

The Soviet Union faced more resistance than expected in their attempt to take control of Afghanistan. Outside of their strongholds, Soviet troops faced fierce resistance from the local peoples. Resistance fighters, called *mujahidin*, saw the Soviets controlling Afghanistan as a defilement of Islam as well as of their traditional culture. The mujahidin employed guerilla

⁶⁰ [Afghan president is overthrown and murdered - HISTORY](#)

⁶¹ [Soviet Union Invades Afghanistan - HISTORY](#)

tactics against the Soviets, attacking quickly and retreating into the mountains, using whatever weapons they could find. These guerilla troops enjoyed a natural advantage over their invaders, as they knew the territory and also had local strongholds of support. Soviet troops, on the other hand, did not know the territory, constantly faced surprise attacks, and were not welcomed by local populations. Consequently, the invasion was miserable for Soviet soldiers, most of whom were unprepared for the endeavor.

In addition, the Soviet Union's invasion was opposed by the United States, both publicly and through arms sales to the mujahidin. In the years following the Soviet Union's invasion, Afghanistan quickly became a Cold War battlefield. The United States responded harshly to the invasion, freezing arms talks, cutting wheat sales, and even boycotting the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. American opposition to the Soviet's invasion only increased when Ronald Reagan became U.S. President in 1981. The United States provided arms and other assistance to what Reagan referred to as the "freedom fighters" in Afghanistan. For the Soviets, the intervention has drained both Soviet finances and manpower. In the United States, commentators labeled the invasion of Afghanistan "Russia's Vietnam."

The Soviet Perspective

Thus far, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has proven a difficult, costly intervention. Even so, to pull out of Afghanistan would show weakness and the Soviet Union would give up a strategic foothold in central Asia. Ministers should advise as to whether or not the Soviet Union should stay engaged in this war – and, if so, how to improve their efforts and ensure ultimate victory.

The Falkland Islands

The Special Relationship Between the U.S. and UK

No discussion regarding the United States and the United Kingdom can be complete without acknowledging the Special Relationship between the two states. While the origins of their relationship started out rocky, in the wake of World War II and the emergence of a worldwide ideological conflict they have grown increasingly inseparable. Winston Churchill first coined the phrase in the 1940s⁶², and it has held true from the time of Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt to the current leaders of Prime Minister Thatcher and President Reagan.

The Special Relationship has enabled both states to achieve much in the ways of political, economic, and military gain. Agreements like those of the Quebec Agreement or the US-UK Mutual Defense Agreement promoted the unified work on atomic weaponry and defense⁶³⁶⁴, the millions of U.S. dollars worth of imports and exports exchanged between each yearly⁶⁵, and their

⁶² [The Sinews of Peace \('Iron Curtain Speech'\) - International Churchill Society](#)

⁶³ [Quebec Agreement | The Manhattan Project | Historical Documents](#)

⁶⁴ [US-UK mutual defence agreement \(Washington, 3 July 1958\)](#)

⁶⁵ [Trade in Goods with United Kingdom Available years: 2022 | 2021 | 2020 | 2019](#)

commitments as founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization⁶⁶, all demonstrate the two states' close bonds. The first meeting between Prime Minister Thatcher and President Reagan perhaps exemplifies the bond between the U.S. and the U.K. the best, as Prime Minister Thatcher assured "Your problems will be our problems, and when you look for friends we shall be there."⁶⁷ No interaction with one state will go without notice or potential involvement of the other in some capacity, and their Special Relationship appears all but impenetrable on the surface.

Origins of the Emerging Crisis

The friction between the states of the United Kingdom and Argentina is well known to the United Nations. The United Nations has asked both states to settle this issue as it appears deeply without compromise. The U.K. claims British sovereignty officially over the Falkland Islands and its dependencies, but has been less than enthusiastic about maintaining this standard. Argentina also refuses to cede their claims to sovereignty over the islands, while the people themselves are vocal regarding their refusal to recognize Argentine sovereignty.⁶⁸



An attempt at subtly pushing the inhabitants of the islands toward more favorable views of the Argentinian government was made through the removal of a small freighter ship that would normally supply the islands, and instead replacing it with the usage of an Argentinian provided airlink between the islands and Buenos Aires.⁶⁹ This was met with muted success. In 1977 the new military Argentine leadership began to expect dividends from their investments in the Falklands. Upset by a lack of returns, the lack of a Spanish speaking majority present on the islands, and a still unreceptive audience to Argentine sovereignty, all risked the fate of the Islanders' only link to the mainland. The late 1981 overthrow of Roberto Viola by Leopoldo

⁶⁶ [What is NATO?](#)

⁶⁷ [Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives](#)

⁶⁸ [Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change](#)

⁶⁹ [An Islander's memories of the 1971 Communications Agreement between the Falkland Islands and Argentina – Penguin News](#)

Galtieri has further exacerbated these concerns as the Argentinian government's demand for returns have only grown.

Current Situation

An unsuccessful visit by the U.K. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Nicholas Ridley attempted to sell the Islanders on the idea of a leaseback scheme to solidify them under Argentine sovereignty. In a speech given to the British House of Commons, Ridley received numerous insults and criticisms from 18 separate Members of Parliament for his attempt at selling the islands to Argentina. However, Ridley has publicly responded with his concerns to one MP regarding a lack of agreement, stating "If we don't do something, they will invade. And there is nothing we could do."⁷⁰

Argentina currently finds itself in economic turmoil and civil unrest, especially as public concerns regarding the military junta leadership that has governed the state since 1976 continue to grow.⁷¹ Argentine Admiral Jorge Anaya has long supported the Argentine claim over the islands and now finds himself in a position to act upon these claims. As of now, there also exist members of the Argentine government that believe attempting to mobilize to take the Falklands would increase public support through patriotic fervor, as well as further legitimize the current Argentine government.

The Soviet Perspective

As of now, the Falkland Islands looks to be a small-scale conflict unimportant to broader Soviet interests. Even so, it could prove a pivotal distraction for the United States and the United Kingdom, allowing the Soviets to advance their strategic interests in the rest of the world. The enemy of an enemy is a friend.

⁷⁰ [The Falklands War - Eddy, Paul](#)

⁷¹ [The global debt crisis of 1982–83 was the product of massive shocks to the](#)

Appendices

Other Actors to Keep in Mind

As you navigate the issues listed above, other national Cabinets also seek to advance their country's agenda and positioning in the world order:

- Cabinet of the United States
 - Led by President Ronald Reagan
- Cabinet of the United Kingdom
 - Led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher
- Cabinet of the Islamic State of Iran
 - Led by Ayatollah Khomeini
- Cabinet of the Republic of Iraq
 - Led by President Saddam Hussein

Additionally, the following intergovernmental organizations and national parliaments will be active in real-time decision-making alongside you:

- United Nations General Assembly
- United Nations Security Council
- League of Arab States
- British House of Commons

Final Takeaways

- The world is constantly in flux. We are on a tipping point of the Cold War ending or gaining renewed strength.
- Though the United States and Soviet Union are still considered economic and military superpowers, other countries are looking to assert their agency on an ever-changing global order.
- The Soviet Union must determine how it can use the current world map to advance its agenda of winning the Cold War and spreading communism throughout the world.

Questions to Consider

- In a world with many different crises and conflicts, which strategic objectives are the most important for the Soviet Union? Why?
- What should Soviet involvement in the Iran-Iraq War look like? Should the Soviet Union support Iran, Iraq, neither, or both? In what form?
- Should the Soviet Union continue its invasion of Afghanistan? If the USSR is to continue, how can you secure victory? If the USSR is to leave, how can you mitigate the potential losses?
- Ultimately, how can the Soviet Union win the Cold War?