

Iran-Iraq War

1980-1988



<http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/7535/2681/1600/1990Iraniansoldierwatchiranianrefin.jpg>

The Iran-Iraq war was a brutal and costly eight year conflict which claimed the lives of approximately 1 million people. The war was fought for a number of reasons, the most important being a dispute over oil rich territories located along the two countries borders. Another significant reason the war was fought was that the two countries were unstable. Both had recently gone through coups and revolutions which placed new and radical leaders in charge of the oil rich nations. Beyond their political instability was the religious aspects of Iran and Iraq. Iran being led by a Shi'ite government and Iraq being led by Sunnis. This division goes back to the early years of Islam.

TIMELINE

1968- Ba'thist Party led by [Hasan al-Bakr](#) stages coup and takes power in Iraq.

1969-

1970- The Kurdish rebellion continues in Iraq. Military aid was given to the Kurds by Iranians.

1971-

1972-

1973-

1974- Border clashes between the Iraqi and Iranian militaries occur.

1975- Iran and Iraq sign [The Algiers Agreement](#) settling the border dispute over the Shat al-Arab and ending Iranian aid to the Kurdish rebels on March 6.

1976-

1977-

1978-

1979- [The Ayatollah Khomeini overthrows Reza Shah Pahlavi](#), the President of Iran, and established the Islamic Republic of Iran. An uneasy peace exists between Iraq and Iran. [Saddam Husein](#) stages an internal coup within the Ba'thist leadership and takes control of the government.

1980- **Saddam Husein claims the Algiers Agreement is "null and void". [Iraq officially invaded the Iranian province of Khuzistan on September 22.](#) Iran launches air strikes in retaliation targeting Iraqi oil terminals, pipelines, and a nuclear reactor near Baghdad.**

1981- Iraqi invasion stalls after experiencing heavy Iranian resistance along the border. Saddam orders his army to withdraw to the border and take up defensive positions.

1982- On July 13, Iran launches a counter invasion targeting the port city of Basra. The invasion soon stalls, marking the beginning of the 'war of attrition' also known as the [war of the cities](#).

1983-

1984- [Tanker War and direct US involvement begin.](#)

1985- Iraq receives financial aid from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait which allows it to launch a new offensive. No significant gains made and Iran launches another counter offensive.

1986-

1987- Iraqi fighter jet attacks US warship protecting shipping lanes killing 37 sailors. US continues to supply Iraq with

aid to help defeat the Iranians. [UN Resolution 598 Proposed.](#)

1988- After 8 years of war, a peace agreement was reached on August 20th.

A War of Ideologies

The Iran-Iraq War can be looked at as a war of ideologies deeply seated in religion and history; Shiite versus Sunni, Arab versus Persian, and the battle of good versus evil.

Shiite	Sunni
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayatollah Khomeini and the majority of the Iranian population are Shiite Muslims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Iran is 98% Muslim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 89% Shiite ▪ 9% Sunni • In the era of the caliphs, they believed the only rightful heirs to the throne were relatives of the Prophet Mohammad and Fatima 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Saddam Hussein and the Baathists are Sunni Muslims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Iraq is 95% Muslim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 60% Shiite ▪ 35% Sunni • Sunni minority in Iraq did not matter because of the violent nature of the Baathist regime • In the era of the caliphs, they believed the most accomplished man should rule the empire • Saddam claimed the Persians had murdered the first three caliphs of the Islamic empire, making them enemies of Islam

Arab	Iranian/Persian

- Saddam Hussein adopted the idea of Arab Nationalism in his attempt to assert Iraqi dominance in the Middle East
 - Part of his reasoning for invading Iran was the liberation of historical Arab lands and Arab peoples living in Iran
- In the 1970's, Saddam's Iraq began making billions in oil revenues
 - the influx of oil revenue allowed Iraq to expand its military
- Under the Shah, Iran held supremacy over Iraq in part because of American aid
- Funded Kurdish rebels fighting Iraqi troops in Iraq
- In the 1960's Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi began making moves to assert Iranian regional dominance
 - *(captured a number of islands in the Persian Gulf)*
- Iranian Revolution in 1979
 - installed a Shiite government under Ayatollah Khomeini
 - Acting in accordance with the new Iranian constitution, Ayatollah Khomeini began talking about "exporting" the revolution to Iraq
 - There were a number of Shiite Holy sites in Iraq which Iran wanted to control
 - A majority of Iraqis were Shiites



The Battle of Qadisiya was fought between Arab Muslims and Persians of the Sassanian Empire in 637. An outnumbered Muslim army arrived on the field of battle to face the powerful Persian army. Against all odds, the Muslims defeated the Persians which opened up the rest of present day Iraq and Iran for Islam to spread.

The battle held great significance at the time of the Iran Iraq War. It proved to the Arab Muslims, many of whom live in present day Iraq, that the Persians, who lived in present day Iran, would not be victorious over them. Even

after hundreds of years, the Battle of Qadisiya is still a source of national pride for Iraqis, and a black eye for the Iranians.

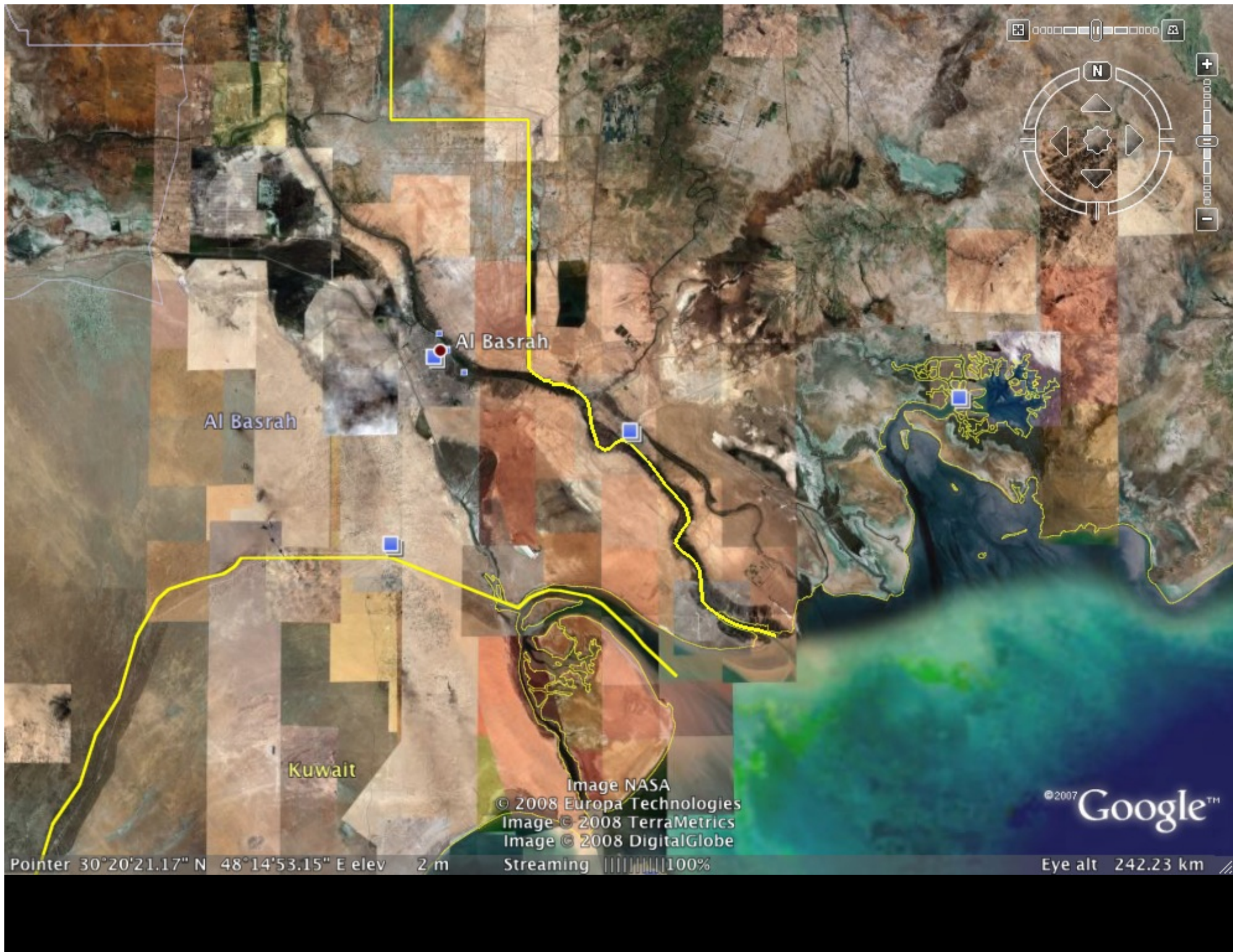
The Battle of good versus evil

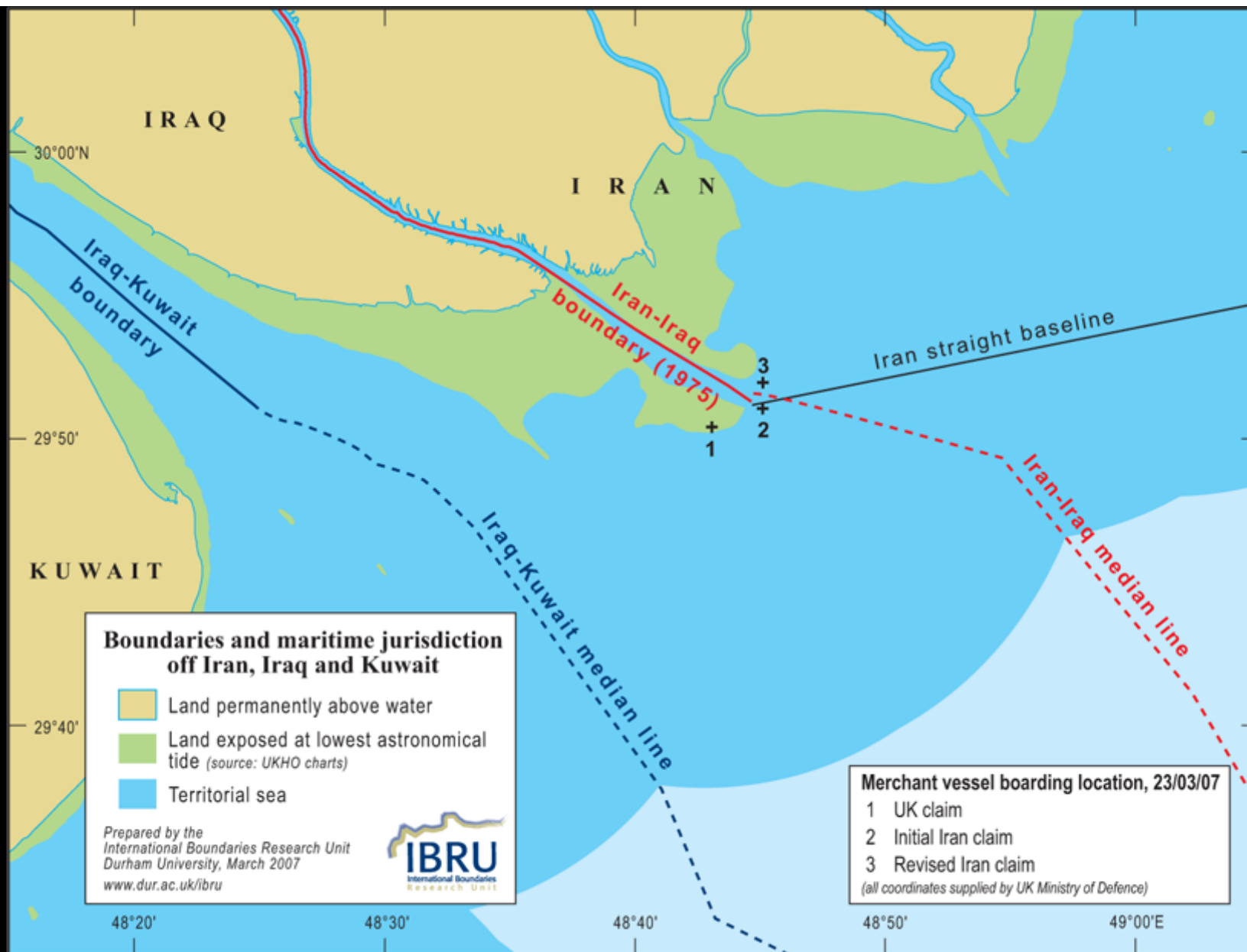
At the time of the Iran-Iraq War, both countries were ruled by totalitarian leaders who were seeking to maintain their power. That idea is about all they had in common, due to the differences which are discussed above. During the war, both Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini took positions of absolute righteousness to justify their ambitions and actions in the war.

Sadam told his country that Iran was occupying Arab land and that it was his responsibility as an Arab leader to take it back from the Persians. He used the Battle of Qadisiya to garner support for the war. He mentioned the Arab victory in speeches, named operations in the war after it, and even named the war itself 'Sadams Qadisiya.' He argued that since the Arabs had defeated the Persians in 637, then the Arabs again will defeat the Persians when they invade to take back Arab land.

On the otherside of the border, Ayatollah Khomeini was bracing for the war and rallying the support of his countrymen. Khomeini used the same tactics that Sadam was using on the other side of the border. He spoke about the dominance of the Iranian people over the Arabs and used Shiism as a propaganda tool against the Sunnis.

Both the Iraqis and the Iranians believed that the war they were fighting was the just war. God was on their side and would help them prevail. Maybe that is why the war lasted so long and so many people died.





([Link to map and additional information on the Shatt al-Arab](#))

[The Leadership](#)[Map of Oil and Water Resources of Middle East](#)[Geography, Climate, and Resources of the Shatt al-Arab](#)

Statistics

The statistics given at all sources are inaccurate due to both countries manipulating the numbers for their political needs.

<http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/war/docs/3203/appf.pdf>

	Iraq	Iran
Mobilized Manpower	1,000,000	2,000,000
Air Craft	632	70
Tanks	4,000	1,040
Armored Vehicles	3,000	750
Dead	150,000-340,000	450,000-730,000
Financial Loss (USD)	>500 million	>500 million



http://www.iranchamber.com/history/iran_iraq_war/war_pictures/war_pictures.php



<http://conflictiran.blogspot.com/2006/04/iran-iraq-war-pictures.html>

Research Materials

The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988 by Efraim Karsh

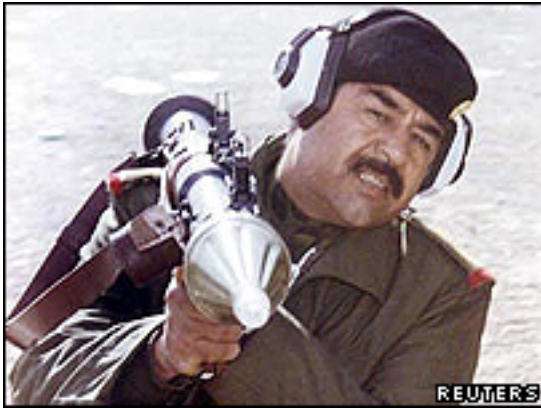
A History of Iraq by Charles Tripp

Modern Iran by Nikki Keddie

Wikipedia (Iran Iraq War)

Saddam Husein

- Ba'thist Party Leader and right hand man to Hasan al-Bakr, the leader of the 1968 Coup
- Employed violent tactics against political opposition, Kurds, and Shi'ite Muslims to advance his position in the Party
- Eventually became president in 1979 through an internal coup
- Expelled Ayatollah Khomeini from Najaf in 1978
- Invaded Iran on 22 September, 1980 to 'take back' the Shatt al-Arab and capture the oil fields of Khuzestan



President Abd al-Rahman Arif

- President of Iraq from 1966-1968
- Acted as the 'underdog' to the growing power of Iran in the 1960's
- Overthrown in the 1968 Ba'athist Coup

Ayatollah Khomeini

- Leader of the Iranian Revolution
- Exiled by the Shah of Iran to Najaf, because of his radical views
- Returned to Iran in 1979 and took over the revolution
- Led the unhappy middle class and overthrew the Shah within months of his return
- Established the Islamic Republic of Iran and became Supreme Leader of the country



Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammad_Reza_Pahlavi#Modernization_and_autocracy)

- Iranian Monarch who ruled from 1941 to 1979
- Turned into an autocratic ruler
- Helped make Iran the major economic and military power in the Middle East during his reign
- Alienated the Iranian middle class by destroying their livelihoods (more about this)

The Shatt al-Arab comprises about half of the border between Iran and Iraq. It runs for about 120 miles and often changes its course due to the swampy and sandy banks along its course. This means that sometimes Iraq has more land than Iran and vice versa; you can see why it is a contested region. The SAA is fed by the Karun River originating in Iran and the Tigris and Euphrates flowing through Iraq.

The region adjacent to the Shatt al-Arab is generally a flat, swampy area. In Iran, just to the east of the SAA are the Zagros Mountains. They have proven to be a great natural defense of the peoples of Iran because of their height and ruggedness.

The opposite exists to the west in Iraq. There it is a hot, flat desert with very little vegetation. Oil is found along both banks of the SAA.

[Click here for more geographical info on Iraq.](#)

