

investigate the responsibility for the conflict (a process which is presumably assumed would lead to the condemnation of Iraq as the aggressor) and a fixed sum be set up for reparations. Iraq, on the other hand, reiterated its preference for a precisely formulated cease-fire, which would be unconditional.

Unlike its predecessors, resolution 598 gave rise to feverish activity, with the result that for the first time both Moscow and Washington have put the resolution of the war in the Gulf high on their respective agendas. Following Iran's refusal to accept the resolution, the United States brought pressure to bear on its fellow members of the Security Council to adopt an embargo on deliveries of arms to Iran. To date, China and the Soviet Union, particularly the latter, have expressed reservations about this proposal.

Canada has always attached great importance to having this conflict resolved through negotiations. It supports UN resolution 598, and is in favour of adopting further measures, such as sanctions, to put pressure on Iran to respect the above resolution. In recent years Ottawa has condemned the attacks on the cities, the use of chemical weapons, and the evident ill treatment of prisoners captured in the course of this war.

If Iran and Iraq do indeed embark on negotiations with the help of a mediator, there are certain conditions which would need to be satisfied for such an undertaking to have much chance of success. For any mediation to succeed it is essential that both the opposing parties either see no further advantages to be gained from continuing their conflict or at least recognize that any gains they may make will be outweighed by the losses they entail. The belligerents must be willing to cooperate and to make concessions. Once the negotiators succeed in identifying the interests common to both parties, this often enables them to propose a compromise which is not too costly for either side. Considering the current climate between Iran and Iraq, it seems quite unlikely that these conditions could be satisfied. Mediation is not the only form of intervention open to third parties, however; they can also participate in peacekeeping operations. The Soviet Union is currently proposing that the United Nations should send a fleet of warships to the Gulf in order to protect the merchant shipping there. Washington rejects this proposal, however, above all because it would require the West to withdraw its ships. Even though both superpowers have accepted resolution 598, it seems unlikely that they will be able to agree on any kind of joint intervention.

There are various factors which affect the possibility of reaching agreement in the Gulf. First of all Iraq,

which is at an advantage both qualitatively and quantitatively as far as equipment is concerned (fighters, armoured vehicles, artillery), is very dependent on the favourable credit facilities which it receives from France and the Soviet Union, and even more on the financial support which it gets from the Arab monarchs in the Gulf, lead by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Iraq is at a disadvantage, however, as far as manpower is concerned, with a population of 16 million compared to Iran's 46 million. If for one reason or another Baghdad were to lose its two main arms suppliers and could no longer rely on financial help from its fellow Arabs, then its capacity to carry on the war would be greatly diminished if not reduced to zero.

Even though Iran has been diplomatically isolated, both regionally and internationally, this does not seem to have had much adverse effect on its ability to satisfy its military requirements. The considerable human resources which it has at its disposal means that recruitment is easier and abundant manpower can compensate for the lack of sophisticated equipment. In addition to the regular army Tehran can make use of the Revolutionary Guard: the "Pasdaran," a para-military force of militant Muslims, as well as of the "Basij," the young volunteers who make up Iran's suicide squads. The religious fervour of the population gives the Khomeini regime a considerable advantage in its continued pursuit of the war. However, unlike Iraq, Tehran has no reliable sources of arms and to this extent it is more vulnerable.

The war is costly for both countries. They finance it with oil, their main source of revenue, but production of this commodity fell sharply at the beginning of the war and has continued to fluctuate ever since. The large part of their national budget which both countries devote to the war gives rise to serious economic problems such as various shortages, a fall in the gross national product (GNP), a lack of economic development, debt and a deterioration in their balance of payments. So far, whether from choice or necessity, the populations of both countries have put up with difficult economic conditions to which they have been subjected, but, were they to show signs of discontent, this might well have an effect on their respective governments and thus influence the outcome of the war in one direction or another.

Despite the hopes which were aroused by the UN's recent initiatives it seems clear that the attempts at mediation which have been made so far have come up against a major obstacle, namely the complexity of the situation which seems to have produced the conflict. Quite apart from the historical factors involved, the dispute over the Shatt-al-Arab and the incompatibility of the two regimes mean that the differences between