

remaining neutral in the dispute, but it is hard to believe that it is genuinely impartial. On the whole it has shown considerable caution in dealing with the situation in the Gulf but, nonetheless, there have been several notable incidents in its relationship with the belligerents. In 1972 the Soviet Union concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Iraq; however, despite this it stopped supplying Iraq with arms as soon as the war broke out and offered military assistance to Iran instead. When the latter rebuffed this offer, Moscow then reversed its position and resumed selling arms to Iraq in 1982. Since then the Soviet Union has tried to keep in with both sides by selling arms to Iraq on the one hand, while providing economic assistance to Iran on the other. As noted above Iran receives arms manufactured in the Soviet Union from both Syria and Libya. This somewhat unusual position on the part of the Soviet Union must be seen in terms of its geopolitical situation, its relations with the Arab world and its attitudes to Iran which stretch back into history. It is worth noting that the Soviet Union keeps warships, minesweepers and merchant ships in the Gulf, though it has fewer of these stationed there than does the West.

The attitude of the other countries in the region seems to depend more on their prospective gains or losses from the conflict and on the fears it arouses in them rather than on their ideological affinities. Not long after hostilities began several Arab states — Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania and the Gulf monarchies: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman and Qatar — expressed their support for Iraq, partly out of Arab solidarity, but also because of their opposition to the new Islamic Republic. The Gulf monarchies, which are particularly worried by the prospect of regional instability, have since then provided Iraq with considerable material and financial aid and have also set up the Council for Cooperation in the Gulf (CCG), whose *raison d'être* is to strengthen their collective security in face of the threat from Iran. Of the Arab states only Libya and Syria support Iran, for reasons which derive either from ideology or from the strong rivalry between Iraq and Syria — in 1982 Damascus closed the Syrian section of the pipeline which Iraq uses to carry its oil to the Mediterranean. These different reactions soon led to disagreements within the Arab world.

The non-Arab countries in the area have been loathe to declare themselves in favour of either side although some of them have managed to benefit from the situation. Israel, for example, cannot fail to be satisfied with the dissension in the Arab community which the war has caused as well as the adverse effect which it has had on Iraq, one of Israel's chief opponents on the question of Palestine. Whatever Israel's interest in the ultimate outcome, its supply of spare parts to Iran has

possibly had some effect on the progress of the war and consequently has more than merely commercial implications. Pakistan and Turkey have also profited from Iran's international isolation to increase their economic cooperation with the latter, although Turkey has also helped Iraq by transporting its oil through the pipeline and assisting it to suppress the Kurds in both their countries.

Despite their divergent interests, a large number of Arab countries are worried lest the war should spread and thus endanger the whole region. These concerns were voiced in November 1987 at the Arab League Summit which took place in Amman, Jordan. For the first time this group devoted its attention to the Islamic revolution in Iran and the war in the Gulf, and emphasized that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were being more and more affected by the Iranian attacks. Some of the countries present at the Summit decided to resume diplomatic relations with Egypt, which is important to the region but which had been cold-shouldered by other Arab countries ever since the Camp David Accords in 1979. In December 1987 the six heads of state of the CCG signed an agreement providing for greater cooperation in matters affecting their security.

The presence of both Western and Soviet ships in the Gulf seems to arouse mixed feelings on the part of the local Arab states. If, on the one hand, it lessens the risk of the conflict spreading, it also gives rise to concern that foreign powers may take over the Gulf in the long run. One country to show considerable caution is Saudi Arabia which, although it is an ally of the United States, has never permitted the latter to install air bases on its territory. If Washington maintains its present level of air and naval forces in the Gulf it should bear these facts in mind in making any estimate of how much cooperation it can expect from the Gulf States.

TOWARDS A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

Various organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Islamic Conference Organization, the Council for Cooperation in the Gulf and the United Nations have made efforts to mediate in this dispute in the hope of achieving an agreement. The UN Security Council has unanimously adopted several resolutions calling for a cease-fire and the withdrawal of the belligerents to internationally agreed borders. The most recent of these was resolution 598, of 20 July 1987,⁵ which called for a universal cease-fire under threat of sanctions and the beginning of negotiations for peace. Iran demanded that as a precondition for any such cease-fire an international commission be set up to