

Examining the views of Russian thinkers on the developments of the Islamic Revolution (Case Study: The Iran-Iraq War)

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Abstract

Investigating Russian literature shows that from Moscow's point of view, the Iran-Iraq war was rooted in historical, political, and religious challenges. According to the Russians, geopolitical disputes after the fall of the Ottomans, the dispute over the Arvand River, ethnic Kurdish tensions, and long-standing disputes between Shiites and Sunnis are the four key factors that ignited the fires of the Iran-Iraq war. Meanwhile, Moscow had specific interests and policies toward Iran.

Examining Russian literature shows that during the years of the Iran-Iraq war, Moscow made extensive efforts to establish a socialist system in Iran through influence in the leftist political current in this country. The Soviet Union which was deeply concerned about the continuation of the Iranian revolution within its borders, supported Saddam against Iran through arms, military, and intelligence assistance to Iraq. Also, looking at this war from a Russian perspective shows that the Iran-Iraq war not only did not limit US influence in the region, but also increased Washington's military and security presence in the West Asian region .

Hence, the Soviet Union, which had hoped to find a way to gain access to the waters of the Persian Gulf by exploiting the instability of West Asia and providing security guarantees to the countries of this region, failed to achieve its goals. The Soviets also imagined that the Eight-Year War would prevent the continuation of the revolutionary movement of the Iranian people, and that the Islamic Republic would collapse as a result of the costs and problems of the war. But the leadership of the war by Imam Khomeini (may God have mercy on him) and the unparalleled performance of the Iranian people and warriors prevented the realization of the Soviet dream of forming a communist system in Iran.

Keywords

Russian thinkers, Islamic Revolution, The Iran-Iraq War, U.S.

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Introduction

Russia is Iran's northern neighbor and one of the most important and strategic actors in the West Asian region, which has always played an important role in the foreign and defense policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, the study of the approach in Russian literature towards the eight-year Iran-Iraq war can partially represent the view of Russian thinkers and politicians towards The Iran-Iraq War. In this article, the causes of the Iraq-Iran war are first examined; This section examines several important causes, including territorial, geopolitical, and ethnic disputes. In the second part of this article, Moscow's interests in the Iraq-Iran war are examined on the basis of Russian documents. In the final part of this article, the consequences of this war on the region and on Iran's domestic policy, as well as Moscow's role and approach towards the Islamic Republic of Iran are analyzed. Finally, Russia's view of the eight years of The Iran-Iraq War and the transformation of this country's foreign policy towards Iran after the collapse of the Soviets are discussed.

1. Analytical Framework: The causes and roots of the Iran-Iraq war in Russian literature

Russia's view of the sacred defense and the eight-year Iran-Iraq war can be analyzed in many dimensions. The Soviet Union's approach and action to the eight-year Iran-Iraq war must be assessed in the context of its relations with Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although now, decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia is somehow trying to acquit itself of Soviet actions, Russian literature still has a special look on the Iran-Iraq war. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, the southern neighbor of the Soviet, posed a great threat to the leaders of the Communist Party. The Islamic Revolution of Iran, which was based on religious thought and theism, challenged the schools of the East and the West of the world. Hence, both the East and the West made every effort to prevent the export of the Iranian revolution. Thus, during the Eight-Year War, the Soviet Union was one of the main supporters of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq in its war with Iran.

Russian researchers have a superficial and unrealistic view of Iraq's eight-year war with Iran. In Russian literature, there is no trace of Soviet supports for the Ba'athist regime in Iraq and Saddam Hussein, and Iran is not considered an innocent country. In other words, Russian literature tries to analyze the Iran-Iraq war in a conventional and formal framework.

In fact, in Russian literature, it has been pretended that Iran was one side of the war, and not only was the war not imposed on the country, but the Iranian government was also involved in lighting the fire of war with Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviet Union was in its final years and therefore,

in order to defend its interests, sought to play an effective role in the Iran-Iraq War.

Because the Ba'athist regime in Iraq had a socialist ideology close to the Soviet Union, it was an important country for Soviet foreign policy in West Asia. Therefore, it was natural that Moscow not only did not consider Iraq as the main cause of the war, but also considered Iran as an important and decisive party in starting it. Therefore, from this perspective, the Iran-Iraq war had four main roots: (Абелян, 2014:94)

- Access to Arvand River
- Geopolitical conflicts after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire
- Disputes between Shiites and Sunnis
- Kurdish agent

Russian literature believes that the Iran-Iraq war was the product of the geopolitical changes of the last century and the collapse of the Ottoman state. From Moscow's point of view, Saddam Hussein was thinking of reviving the Ottoman Empire and creating an Arab empire, and the war with Iran and then the war with Kuwait were his failed attempts to achieve this goal (Ушаков, 1999:8).

In this sense, the Soviet Union sees this war as the result of Western colonial policies in the region, which, by dismembering the region and creating artificial borders, have institutionalized tensions in West Asia and perpetuated it in the region's geopolitical environment. In fact, the Soviet Union believed that Iraq's claim that parts of southwestern Iran, especially from Khuzestan province, should join to this country did not mean Baghdad's expansionism; Rather, it was an attempt to restore its lost territory and return to the pre-collapse discipline of the Ottoman Empire. (Абелян, 2014:95).

According to Russian literature, another factor that played an important role in the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war was the confrontation of two intra-religious discourses in the Islamic world. While Iraq claimed to be the leader of the Sunni Arab world, Iran emerged in front of it with its Shiite leadership. Hence, the Iran-Iraq war, from the Russian point of view, arose from the Shiite-Sunni confrontation in the Islamic world. By launching a war against Iran, Saddam introduces himself as a defender of the Sunni world against the rise of Shiite tendencies in the Islamic world.

In the meantime, the strategy of exporting the revolution of Imam Khomeini (may God have mercy on him) has been very important and meaningful for Russian thinkers. Often whenever the Iran-Iraq war is mentioned in Russian literature, the strategy of exporting the revolution is also mentioned as one of the most important policies of Iran in the war with Iraq. In this regard, some Russian writers believe that Iran's effort to export the

revolution caused many countries in the Persian Gulf to prevent the formation of the Iranian revolutionary discourse in the region by supporting Saddam Hussein.

Russian thinkers believe that Iran sought leadership in the region by formulating a strategy for exporting the revolution, and this led to a coalition of countries in the region fighting Iran. This was in a situation where countries like Iraq, where more than 60 percent of their population is Shiite, feared the spread of this influence more than others (Абелян, 2015:52). But Iran's strategy in the West Asian region, as well as its successful influence in the new Iraq, showed that Iraq's Shiite population could pave the way for strengthening relations between the two countries and expanding their cooperation in a wide range of fields, including the fight against terrorism and economic activities.

Another issue that has always been of strategic importance to the Soviet Union in the West Asian region is the support of the Kurdish people in West Asia. Moscow used the separatist policies of the Kurds in Iran, Iraq and Turkey as a lever of pressure against these countries, and from this point of view, the Kurdish issue in the Iran-Iraq war was of great importance to the Soviet Union. In Russian literature, it has been pretended that the two sides of the war were using the Kurdish factor against each other, and this issue has been influential in the beginning and continuation of the war.

In fact, Russian literature separates the issue of the Eight-Year War from the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and believes that the Eight-Year War between Iran and Iraq was largely due to geopolitical and historical differences. In this narrative, there is no trace of the efforts of the global arrogant system to overthrow the fledgling system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, the narrative that Russian literature presents about the causes and roots of The Iran-Iraq War is in line with the narratives of Iran's enemies and Saddam's supporters in the war with Iran. However, existing Russian literature considers Iraq to be the initiator of the war. It also discusses Iraq's repeated use of chemical weapons against Iran, urban warfare, and their disastrous inhumane consequences (Соловьева, Запарии, 234).

As mentioned at the beginning, examining Russian literature shows that the reaction of the Communist Party leaders to the Islamic Revolution of Iran was negative. Although this view has moderated after the collapse of the Soviet Union and with the increase in cooperation between Iran and Russia, it cannot be ignored that Iran has always been a great opportunity and at the same time a serious threat for Moscow. In this regard, the Kremlin has always been very sensitive to Iran's domestic and foreign political orientations and its military and security changes.

2. Soviet interests in the Iran-Iraq war in Russian literature

Examining Russian literature shows that the Iran-Iraq war was a platform for Moscow to gain political, economic and strategic benefits. The war and instability in the Persian Gulf was a strategic opportunity for Russia to attract foreign investment. The dependence of crude oil-importing countries on the Persian Gulf, on the one hand, and the instability caused by the Iran-Iraq war, on the other, led to a boom in the investment market in Russia's oil and gas industry.

During this period, Japanese and European companies sharply increased their investment in the development of natural gas. Another economic benefit to the Soviet Union from continuing the Iran-Iraq war was the sale of military weapons to Iraq. During the Eight-Year War, the Kremlin supplied a significant amount of military weapons to the Iraqi market. Hence, the continuation of this war greatly contributed to the prosperity of the Russian arms industry.

In addition to these economic interests, as the Iran-Iraq war continued, Moscow sought political influence and the deployment of its affiliated forces in Iran's political and social structure. In Russian literature, it is seen that the continuation of the Iran-Iraq war and the inadequate economic conditions in Iran, along with numerous security challenges, paved the way for the growth of left-wing communist groups such as the Tudeh Party.

What the Soviet Union expected from the continuation of the war was the collapse of the fledgling system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, Moscow sought to influence the political structures of Iran in order to create a suitable alternative to the Islamic Republic in Iran that is in line with Soviet communist policies and ideology. Therefore, Moscow thought that the Iran-Iraq war would pave the way for the decline and collapse of the political system in Iran, and in this regard, while trying to provide the conditions for collapse, sought to send communist-affiliated currents into Iran in order to create its desired political system (Абелян, 2015:55).

There is no doubt that the Islamic Revolution of Iran was able to shake the pillars of power in the East and the West; In this respect, due to Iran's privileged geographical location, both the superpowers of the East and the West sought to destroy it. Therefore, due to Iran's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, the Soviet tried to gain political influence in Iran and sought to continue its support for Saddam Hussein by sending weapons aid.

During this period, the Soviet Union sought to exploit security instability in West Asia and the Persian Gulf to expand its geopolitical influence in West Asia. However, examining the literature on this subject in Russian documents shows that Moscow's support for the Ba'athist regime in

Iraq was such that it could always maintain some level of relations with Iran. In any case, it should be reminded that what has been collected in this section is only a small part of the Soviet Union's efforts to destroy and eradicate the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

3. The results of the Iran-Iraq war in Russian literature

The Iran-Iraq war was of great importance to Moscow, an active player in West Asia. In this regard, it is necessary to point out the prevailing view of Russian literature on the consequences of the Iran-Iraq war and the changes occurred after that. What can be seen in the Russian literature about the consequences of the Iran-Iraq war is mostly related to the political changes, alignments and transformations that have taken place in the West Asian region and the countries bordering the Persian Gulf. From this perspective, the Russians believed that the Iran-Iraq war strengthened conservative pro-Western currents in the Arab world and formed regional unions such as the Arab League and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (Бадретдинова, 2017).

Moscow believed that the Iran-Iraq war helped strengthen the US presence in West Asia. As a result of the Iran-Iraq war, the United States was able to establish military bases in many countries in the region, including Egypt, Oman, Somalia, and Kenya, with unrestricted Saudi coastal waters in the Persian Gulf, and impose massive arms costs on the countries of this region.

In fact, the Iran-Iraq war helped to institutionalize US influence in the countries of the West Asian region and the Persian Gulf. In this regard, the Soviet Union believed that the main purpose of the Carter Doctrine, which required a clear and unequivocal US commitment to military action in any way necessary against any Soviet geopolitical presence in the world, was to expand US influence and power. It was in the West Asian region (Евгеньевна, 2009: 4).

Another consequence mentioned in the Russian literature for the Iran-Iraq war is the change in Iran's domestic politics and the establishment of a development-building constructive government. A review of Russian literature shows that the constructive government, headed by a well-known and moderate politician, has been part of the Iranian society's response to the eight-year war. In this regard, Russian writers believe that the eight-year war led to an improvement in relations between Iraq and Iran, even after a short period. This period, which coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union, also saw a change in Moscow's foreign policy from Moscow's point of view, which gradually led to an improvement in Iran's relations with the West. Russian thinkers believe that as a result of the Eight-Year War, Iranian society

and elites suffered from a kind of hesitation and a return to revolutionary discourse, which in turn led to reformist policies in the post-war years. In this regard, it should be added that the liberalization of the economy and the efforts for the active presence of the private sector, which also had close ties with political factions inside the country, were part of the constructive government's efforts to compensate for the damage and costs of the Eight-Year War (Бадретдинова, 2017).

Conclusion

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran has conveyed unique and special messages not only for the Western bloc, but also for the Eastern bloc. The Islamic Revolution, which certainly breathed new spirit into the soulless world, challenged the political systems and atheistic ideologies that govern the world. Meanwhile, due to Iran's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union and the strategy of exporting the Iranian revolution, the Soviet government was increasingly afraid that Iran would challenge the foundations of its communist system. Thus, in The Iran-Iraq War, the Soviet Union not only did not defend the newly revolutionized nation of Iran, but also fully supported the Ba'athist regime in Iraq.

Therefore, what Russian literature quotes about the Iran-Iraq war confirms this enmity and hostility with the Muslim nation of Iran. In contemporary Russian literature, there is no indication of the fact that the Iranian people were oppressed, and there is no sign of the legitimacy of their uprising and their vigorous defense against the arrogant governments of the world. In this literature, everything is more like a scientific and historical narrative of a classic war.

In this regard, it should be said that although Russian literature has conflict with the Western imperialist discourse, it is on the opposite side of the struggle against the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and it has not mentioned the enmity of the United States and Europe with Iran in its historical narratives.

Of course, it should be noted that Russia today is significantly different from the Soviet Union during the Eight-Year War. Therefore, the view of Russian literature on sacred defense cannot be considered as the enmity of Russia with Iran in the current period. At present, due to Iran's growing power in the region and its resistance to the West, without considering Iran's strategic considerations in West Asia, Moscow cannot act effectively and will fail to achieve its national goals.

In fact, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Putin's rise to power over the past two decades, not only did Iran-Russia relations gradually improve and in some cases lead to strategic cooperation, but also Russian

approach to the Islamic Revolution of Iran changed. Therefore, ideas against the Islamic Revolution cannot currently be found in the literature of Russian diplomacy and foreign policy. This does not mean that Russia is a strategic ally or a close partner of Iran in the international arena; rather, it shows the extent to which Iran's growing power has been able to force those in power in the world system to accept Iran's role in the region, and change their view of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

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