Persian Gulf region "tightly stretched rubber band"

by robert danner

staff writer

Dr. Mehran Tamadonfar, UNLV Assistant Professor of Political Science specialising in Middle East affairs, compared the conflict between Iran and Iraq to a tightly stretched rubber band ready to snap at any moment.

"The seven-year war," he said, "is a complex economic and political struggle whose historical, cultural and religious problems will not be easily resolved. The dynamic implications, regionally as well as globally, are so enormous that both superpowers have been brought together to find an end to this conflict."

Tamadonfar said Iran and Iraq have always disagreed over the located in the Southwest part of Iran.

located in this area and much of the world supply of oil flows from here. Abadan, a city in the Khuzestan Province, contains the largest oil refinery in the world.

Iraq has always had a claim to this area of Iran. Iraqis argue that since many Arabs live in this belongs to the Arabs.

"The Iragis miscalculated when they invaded Iran," he said. "Believing the Khomeini regime was weak, they felt they could invade Khuzistan and seize that piece of land. This was the beginning of the war.

"There is no question that this war is draining both countries of their economic resources."

Tamadonfar said that Khuzestan Province which Iran has poured a greater amount of money into the war effort because she

Iranian oil fields are has not received much to continue. financial support from Middle East other countries.

Consequently, the Khomeini regime has had problems dealing with its policies economic because all efforts have been thrust into winning

Iraq, on the other hand, province, it rightfully has been helped by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, conservative neighbors within the Arab of world.

Khomeini Some loyalists intend to win the war by exporting the Islamic revolution to Iraq Moslem other countries.

"However," Tamadonfar said, "I do not believe that anyone can win that war. Certainly, there are those within the regime that want to see an end to the conflict while there are others who want the war

"Obviously, there is no consensus among the Iranian leaders to end the war."

He said that Saudia Arabia and Kuwait should be concerned about an Iranian victory.

"If Iran were to win the war, there would be a domino effect. Iran would then go after other conservative Arab countries to stamp its own Islamic form revolutionary government.

"The political impact of such a victory would be very drastic to the conservative Arab countries whose economic wellbeing depends upon the exportation of oil."

Syria and Libya, in the past, had given support to Iranian cause. However, that has diminished because Iraq has since mended its

fences with the more radical elements of the Arab world

"As far as the role of the United States is concerned," Tamadonfar said, "the significance of the war is not only related to the vital oil importance, but also to the crucial from losing so many peo-

Union."

He said the United States should be concerned with the Soviet goals within this region and how they will become involved.

"Now that Iran and Iraq are fighting with each other, Russia really wants to be close to both countries. This puts the Soviet Union in a very precarious position."

"That the United States should have brought in its enormous number of ships and soldiers into this region in debatable. There is no question that since there are so many concerns over there in such a small area, there will be the potential for confrontation," he said.

While the Iranian government has shown it does not have the ability to fight the United States, it does know its limitations.

"Therefore," he said, "it is possible that Iran would try to threaten here and there just for domestic consumption.

"The Iranian government, feels that if it makes peace now, the people are going to wonder what they have gained from this war, geographical location ple and putting so much

and proximity to the Soviet economic resources into this effort which would be lost if they made peace

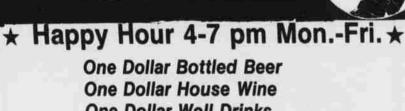
> "It would certainly be to the benefit of the Iranian people to end the war. But, one must look one step further and ask whether the Iranian leaders would benefit from a resolution to the conflict.

"They would, providing they could save face with an explanation which they could sell to their people. That is the sticking point of the whole problem."

He said there is no question that the Iranian people are tired of fighting. Since they have lost so much, they feel a peaceful solution would satisfy some of their needs.

"Again," he said, "I think it is very difficult to say what will happen. If the Khomeini regime were to be toppled, those assuming leadership could admit that it was a mistake to continue the fighting. The same could be said about the Iraqi government."





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