



The Unfinished History of the Iran–Iraq War

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), founded after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, is one of the most powerful and prominent but least understood organizations in Iran. In this book, Annie Tracy Samuel presents an innovative and compelling history of this organization and, by using the Iran–Iraq War as a focal point, analyzes the links between war and revolution.

Tracy Samuel provides an internal view of the IRGC by examining how the Revolutionary Guards have recorded and assessed the history of the war in the massive volume of Persian language publications produced by the organization's top members and units. This not only enhances our comprehension of the IRGC's roles and power in contemporary Iran but also demonstrates how the history of the Iran–Iraq War has immense bearing on the Islamic Republic's present and future. In doing so, the book reveals how analyzing Iran's history provides the critical tools for understanding its actions today.

ANNIE TRACY SAMUEL is a scholar specializing in the modern history of Iran and the Middle East. She is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and previously served as a research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Her publications include journal articles in *International Security* and *Diplomatic History*; her commentary on current events has been published in *Lawfare*, *The Hill*, *CNN*, and *The Atlantic*; and she has delivered talks at universities and conferences and briefed government agencies in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.

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The Unfinished History of the Iran–Iraq War

Faith, Firepower, and Iran’s Revolutionary
Guards

ANNIE TRACY SAMUEL
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Notes on Translation, Transliteration, and Citation

In the text, transliterations of Persian words follow a simplified and modified version of the systems adopted by the journals *Iranian Studies* and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* that omits diacritic marks and, in most cases, the hamza and ‘ayn. Persian personal and proper names have been spelled as they are most commonly rendered in English and, for personal names, according to the preference of the given individual if such a preference could be determined. “Formal” transliterations follow the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system. While using that system has some drawbacks, especially in terms of its rendering of Persian vowels and pronunciations, it allows words and their spellings to be presented with a high degree of precision.

Citations for sources are presented in a manner that seeks to balance the desire to present the bibliographic information as completely as possible with the desire to prevent the footnotes from overwhelming the text.

All sources published by the IRGC, including those published by and on the website of the Holy Defense Research and Documentation Center, which is abbreviated HDRDC, and by Imam Hossein University are in Persian. Citations for all Persian sources include only English translations. Non-IRGC Persian sources are identified as being in Persian with “(Persian)” following the citation.

For the IRGC and other Persian sources especially, the number of bibliographic elements that would need to be included to make each citation complete and the irregularity of how these elements are presented in these particular publications make the potential for unwieldiness in the notes more likely. For example, some, but not all, of the publications list individual writers or authors. Some list authors as well as a variety of other contributors, including supervisors and editors, and the manner in which these contributors are listed has changed over time and varies by publication. Therefore, in order to consolidate and

standardize the citations in the footnotes, I have included titles, publishers, and publication years but have not listed individual contributors.

Several of the IRGC sources have been published in multiple editions. If no edition is listed in the footnote, then the edition used is the first or only edition.

Citations for English sources appear in a shortened form in the footnotes.

Most URLs are included in the Bibliography rather than in the footnotes.

Citations generally follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition.

Additional bibliographic information can be found in the Bibliography included herein.

Throughout the manuscript I have replaced dates and years based on the Iranian calendar, which are used throughout Iran and in the IRGC sources, with those based on the Gregorian calendar. In most cases, the converted dates are as precise and accurate as possible. However, in cases when only the Iranian year is provided, as is the case for the publication dates of most monographs, the corresponding year cannot always be determined with certainty, given that each Iranian year begins in March of the Gregorian year and therefore corresponds to two different Gregorian years. In such cases, either both possible years are provided or only the year more likely to correspond to the Iranian year has been included.

The singular personal pronoun in Persian is gender-neutral, which I have tried to replicate by using “their” instead of “he,” “she,” or “he/she” whenever possible.

For additional images and other information, visit <https://sites.google.com/view/unfinished-history>.

List of Abbreviations and Key Terms

Abadan	City in southwestern Iran
Artesh	Iran's regular military
Arvand Rud (Shatt al-Arab)	River that runs along the Iran–Iraq border
Basij Force	Paramilitary, part of the IRGC
Basra	City in southern Iraq
Faw	City and peninsula in southern Iraq
HDRDC	Holy Defense Research and Documentation Center
Imam Hossein University	Affiliated with the IRGC
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (Sepah)
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Khorramshahr	City in southwestern Iran
Khuzistan	Southwestern province of Iran
Kurdistan	Northwestern province of Iran
Majlis	Iran's parliament
Quds Force	Elite IRGC force
SCWS	Supreme Council for War Support
SDC	Supreme Defense Council
Shatt al-Arab (Arvand Rud)	River that runs along the Iran–Iraq border
Tehran	Capital of Iran
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Names of Key Figures

Unless otherwise noted, positions refer to the Iranian government. The descriptions in this list are not meant to be comprehensive but to provide the reader with a way to keep track of the main individuals and their roles in this history. For additional information on key figures in postrevolutionary Iran, see Boroujerdi and Rahimkhani, *Postrevolutionary Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 2018).

- Amir-Entezam, Abbas – Provisional Government deputy prime minister and spokesman
- Ansari, Mehdi – IRGC war researcher
- Ardestani, Hossein – IRGC war researcher, HDRDC director (–2017)
- Bani-Sadr, Abolhassan – First president of the Islamic Republic (1980–81)
- Bazargan, Mehdi – Provisional Government prime minister (1979)
- Doroodian, Mohammad – Early member of the IRGC Political Bureau, IRGC war researcher
- Hussein, Saddam – President of Iraq, leader of the Ba’th regime (1979–2003)
- Jafari, Mohammad Ali – IRGC commander-in-chief (2007–19)
- Khamenei, Ali – Ayatollah, president (1981–89), Supreme Leader (1989–)
- Khomeini, Ruhollah – Ayatollah, Imam, Supreme Leader (1979–89)
- Lahouti, Hassan – Khomeini’s representative in the IRGC (1979)
- Lotfollah-Zadegan, Alireza – IRGC war researcher
- Mansouri, Javad – First IRGC commander
- Mohammadzadeh, Ibrahim Haji – An IRGC founder, first head of the Political Bureau
- Mottaki, Manouchehr – Foreign minister (2005–10)
- Mousavi, Mir-Hossein – Prime minister (1981–89)

- Naini, Ali-Mohammad – HDRDC director (2017–)
Nakhai, Hadi – Early member of the IRGC Political Bureau, IRGC war researcher
Namjoo, Mousa – Artesh ground forces colonel during the war (died 1981)
Naqdi, Mohammad Reza – Basij Force commander-in-chief (2009–16)
Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza – Shah (King) of Iran (1941–79)
Pérez de Cuéllar, Javier – UN Secretary-General (1982–91)
Rafiqdust, Mohsen – IRGC minister (1982–88)
Rafsanjani, Akbar Hashemi – Speaker of Majlis (1980–89), de facto commander-in-chief during the war
Rashid, Gholam-Ali (G. Rashid) – A top IRGC commander, involved in the war history project
Rashid, Mohsen (M. Rashid) – A founder of the IRGC Political Bureau, IRGC war researcher
Rezaee, Mohsen – IRGC commander-in-chief (1981–97), involved in the war history project
Rouhani, Hassan – President (2013–21)
Safavi, Yahya Rahim – Head of the IRGC operations unit during the war, IRGC commander-in-chief (1997–2007)
Salami, Hossein – IRGC commander-in-chief (2019–)
Shirazi, Ali Sayad – Commander of the Artesh ground forces during the war
Soleimani, Qasem – IRGC Quds Force commander-in-chief (1997–2020), assassinated by the United States in January 2020
Vahidi, Ahmad – IRGC Quds Force commander-in-chief (1990s), defense minister (2009–13)
Yazdi, Ebrahim – Provisional Government deputy prime minister
Zarif, Mohammad Javad – Foreign minister (2013–21)

Chronology

1979

January 16	Shah leaves Iran
February 1	Khomeini returns to Iran
February 11	Shah's military and government collapse, revolution succeeds
March 30– April 1	National referendum and establishment of the Islamic Republic
April 22	Khomeini issues decree establishing IRGC
April 25	Passage of statute establishing IRGC
May 6	Official announcement of statute establishing IRGC
November 4	US Embassy in Tehran occupied by Khomeini supporters
November 5	Prime Minister Bazargan and his cabinet resign
November	Khomeini calls for creation of Basij Force
December 2–3	New Iranian constitution approved in referendum

1980

January 25	Bani-Sadr elected president of the Islamic Republic
April 7	United States severs ties with Iran
May 28	Majlis of the Islamic Republic convenes for the first time
September 17	Saddam Hussein abrogates the 1975 Algiers Agreement
September 22	Iraqi forces invade Iran; Iran–Iraq War begins
September 28	UNSC adopts Resolution 479 calling for a ceasefire in the war
October 26	Iraq occupies Khorramshahr

Chronology

xv

1981

- January IRGC assumes control of Basij
 June Bani-Sadr impeached
 September Iran breaks the siege of Abadan
 October 2 Khamenei elected president
 November 29 – December 7 Operation *Tariq al-Quds* (Toward Jerusalem),
 Iran retakes the city of Bostan

1982

- March 22 Operation *Fath-ul-Mubin* (Undeniable Victory),
 Iran retakes the cities of Shush, Dezful, and Ahvaz
 May 24 Operation *Bayt al-Muqaddas* (Jerusalem,
 literally the Holy Temple), Iran retakes
 Khorramshahr
 June – Iranian mission to help counter the Israeli
 July invasion of Lebanon
 July 12 UNSC adopts Resolution 514 calling for a
 ceasefire in the war
 July 14 Iran launches Ramadan (*Ramazan*) operation
 into Iraq

1983–85

- November 1984 Stalemate in the war
 Iraq and the United States renew diplomatic
 relations
 Spring – Iran's diplomatic opening
 Summer 1985

1986

- February Iran takes Faw
 March Iran announces beginning of the “decisive year”
 November Iran-Contra Affair (Irangate or McFarlane's
 Adventure) becomes public

1987

- January 9– February 23 Karbala 5 Operation toward Basra

Spring	Shift in Iran's focus from the southern to the northern front
May	United States agrees to escort Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf
May 17	Iraqi aircraft fires on the <i>USS Stark</i>
July 20	UNSC adopts Resolution 598 calling for an end to the war
July 24	<i>USS Bridgeton</i> , serving as an escort for a Kuwaiti tanker, strikes a mine in the Persian Gulf
September	United States sinks the <i>Iran-Ajr</i> supply ship being used to lay mines
November	Supreme Council for War Support announces readiness week to confront America's aggression
1988	
January	<i>Bayt al-Muqaddas</i> (Jerusalem) 2 Operation, Iran's major operation on the northwestern front
February–April	Fifth and final War of the Cities
March	Operation Dawn (<i>Valfajr</i>) 10, launched by Sepah and Iraqi Kurdish forces in the area of Halabja
March 16	Iraqi chemical attack on Halabja
April 17	Iranian forces expelled from Faw
July 3	<i>USS Vincennes</i> shoots down Iranian civilian airplane, killing all 290 people on board
July 18	Iran agrees to UNSCR 598
July 21	Khomeini declares end of the war
August 20	Iran–Iraq War ends, UNSCR 598 comes into force

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