UNIDAD EDUCATIVA PARTICULAR BILINGÜE ECOMUNDO
Informal Formative Individual Activity
World History

Name: _____

Date: _____

CONTINGENCY 2 – Causes of the Gulf War

Source B: Religious differences and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War

Islam is the main religion in both Iraq and Iran. However, there are two major branches of Islam: Sunni and Shia Islam. The division began in the seventh century because of disagreements about who should lead the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.



Shia Muslims believe that leadership should have remained within the Prophet Muhammad's family, beginning with his cousin and son-in-law Ali. Sunni Muslims, on the other hand, accepted leaders chosen by the Muslim community. Over time, these differences developed into separate religious traditions.

In Iraq, the majority of the population is Shia Muslim, while Sunni Muslims represent a smaller percentage. However, during Saddam Hussein's government, which began in 1979, political power was mainly controlled by a Sunni-led ruling elite. Saddam Hussein belonged to the Sunni Muslim community, and his government restricted political opposition, including movements supported by Shia religious leaders.

In Iran, the majority of the population is Shia Muslim. In 1979, the Iranian Revolution overthrew the monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and established an Islamic Republic led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The new Iranian government wanted to spread its revolutionary ideas to other countries, including Iraq. This worried Saddam Hussein because he feared that Iraq's Shia population might rebel against his government and support Iran.

Why did Iraq attack Iran in 1980?

Several political, territorial, and religious factors contributed to the outbreak of war. First, Saddam Hussein feared that the Iranian Revolution would encourage Shia opposition inside Iraq and threaten his political authority.

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Second, both countries disputed control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, an important route for transporting oil. Although an agreement was signed in 1975, tensions continued over borders and control of this strategic waterway.

Finally, Saddam Hussein believed that Iran was weakened by the revolution and its internal political problems. He saw an opportunity to strengthen Iraq's regional influence, gain control of disputed territory, and establish Iraq as the leading power in the Persian Gulf.

On September 22, 1980, Iraqi forces invaded Iran. Saddam Hussein expected a quick victory, but Iran resisted strongly. The conflict developed into an eight-year war, causing enormous human and economic losses in both countries.

II. Answer the following questions.

1. Multiple choice (1 point)

What is the main difference between Sunni and Shia Islam?

A. They believe in completely different religious books.

B. They disagreed about who should lead the Muslim community after Muhammad's death.

C. Sunni Muslims do not believe in Islam.

D. Shia Muslims do not recognize religious leaders.

2. True or False (1 point)

Write T (True) or F (False).

a. _____ The majority of Iraq's population was Shia Muslim.

b. _____ Saddam Hussein belonged to the Shia Muslim community.

c. _____ The Iranian Revolution took place in 1979.

d. _____ Saddam Hussein supported the Iranian Revolution.

3. Matching activity (1 point)

Match the historical terms with their correct descriptions.

Column A	Column B
1. Saddam Hussein	A. Iranian religious leader who led the revolution.

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2. Ayatollah Khomeini	B. Important waterway disputed by Iraq and Iran.
3. Shatt al-Arab	C. Iraqi president who ordered the invasion of Iran.
4. Iranian Revolution	D. Overthrew the Shah and established an Islamic Republic.

4. Classification of causes (2 points)

Classify the following causes as Political (P), Religious (R), or Territorial (T).

a. _____ Saddam Hussein feared that Shia groups in Iraq would support Iran.

b. _____ Iraq and Iran disputed control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway.

c. _____ Saddam Hussein wanted to strengthen Iraq's regional power.

d. _____ The Iranian government wanted to spread its revolutionary ideas.

5. Short-answer questions (2 points)

a. Why did Saddam Hussein feel threatened by the Iranian Revolution?

b. Why was the Shatt al-Arab waterway important to both countries?

6. Cause and consequence (1 point)

Explain how religious and political tensions contributed to Iraq's decision to invade Iran in September 1980.

7. Historical analysis – IB History (1 point)

To what extent were political factors more important than religious differences in causing the Iran-Iraq War?

Support your answer with two examples from the reading and a final judgment.

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