

**Authors  
Blyth & Russ Carpenter**

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**"The Blessings of Bhutan"**

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**Iran**

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Many across Iran share their opposition to a war and distrust of U.S. motives. Ask average Iranians why they think American troops are preparing to attack and the answer is usually the same: to gain control of Iraqi oil. But at the same time, Iran is one of the few Muslim countries where citizens aren't demonstrating in the streets against a U.S.-led attack.

The reason for this dichotomy is that Hussein remains a hated figure here, an enemy who killed a quarter-million Iranian civilians and more than three times as many soldiers in a war that ended in a draw 15 years ago.

The war began in late September 1980, with an Iraqi invasion of western Iranian cities including Qasr-e-Shirin. It began over a territorial dispute over the Shatt al Arab waterway that empties into the Persian Gulf and forms the boundary between Iran and Iraq.

The United States and several European countries became involved in 1987, in response to Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. Iran was ultimately pressured into accepting a United Nations resolution ending the war, but Iraq never signed on and issues between the two countries — including the fate of prisoners of war — remain largely unresolved.

Now that the United States and other nations want Hussein gone, Iranians are at least tacitly jumping

on the bandwagon. While the anti-American government of Iran has been waging a domestic and international campaign against any U.S.-led war on Iraq, the same leaders are quietly providing Iraqi opposition groups backed by the Bush administration with protection and material support.

Yet it's unlikely that most Iranians old enough to recall the eight-year conflict with their western neighbor will change their minds about a war to remove Hussein. Too many innocent people will be hurt, they believe, no matter what assurances President Bush offers.

Shirin Chatr-Simah, 47, who picnicked with her daughters on a recent Friday in a Qasr-e-Shirin park named after the local militia that tried in vain to protect their town in 1980, said she prays the United States will change its mind.

"I'm too old to run again," said Chatr-Simah, 47, who bore her younger daughter, Afsaneh Bouarouh while fleeing into the mountains near town to escape Hussein's advancing forces. Her 11-year-old son, Marzhan Bouarouh, died a month after the invasion, his heart irreparably damaged by a shell that fell onto their neighbor's home.

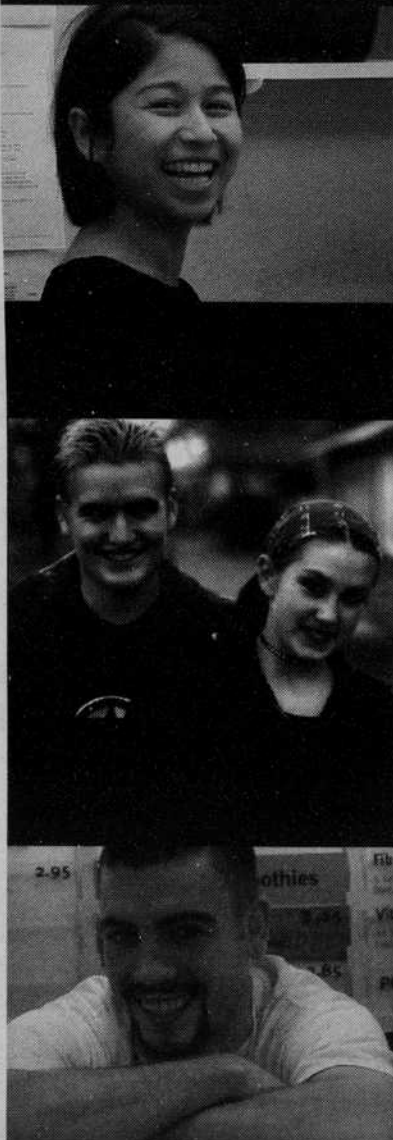
"Maybe this time we won't see Iraqi soldiers and their weapons, but we will definitely see refugees who will cross over and take over our homes and lands," Afsaneh Bouarouh said. "There is nothing good that can come out of this war for the Iraqis or for us."

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- 1 two-year term [midterm] at-large member
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**filing deadline: Tuesday • March 11**