

# **Iraq and the Gulf War: Decision-Making in Baghdad**

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## **Introduction/Why the Case is Important**

The Gulf War of 1990-91 was the largest American military involvement since Vietnam, the first major international event of the post-Cold War world, a turning point in the conflictual international politics of the Middle East and a ratification of the fact that the United States and other major economic powers would not allow a single regional leader to control, directly or indirectly, the oil of the Persian Gulf. The results of the Gulf War are important to understanding subsequent American military and foreign policies more generally, the twists and turns of the Middle East during the 1990's, and the ups and downs of the world oil market. It is an interesting story in and of itself.

But aside from these important empirical issues, the Gulf War, and particularly Iraqi behavior in it, raises puzzling theoretical questions about why leaders go to war and persist in war-fighting strategies. Why did Saddam Hussein, the leader of an already oil-rich country that had just emerged from a long and debilitating war with Iran, invade Kuwait in the first place? Why did he persist in holding onto Kuwait in the face of the U.S.-led coalition that had

assembled against him, refusing diplomatic offers to withdraw that would have forestalled the military defeat he suffered?

Certainly the personality of Saddam Hussein himself played a role in these decisions. He believes in the efficacy of violence domestically and war internationally to achieve his ends and has no compunction about sacrificing the lives of his own people to those ends. But to focus only on the person of Saddam is too simple. He had shown in the past that he was willing to retreat in the face of superior power. Why was this episode different? There were numerous occasions, from the 1970's (when Saddam became the dominant player in the Iraqi government) through the late 1980's, when Iraq could have invaded Kuwait. What circumstances triggered his decision to invade in August 1990?

It is in examining the context of Iraqi decision-making in the Gulf War that this case can have theoretical relevance to the general question of why leaders, particularly non-democratic leaders of relatively new states, choose to go to war. We can be thankful that there are not many world leaders as brutal as Saddam Hussein. But there are plenty of leaders who, like Saddam in 1990, face difficult domestic situations; whose hold on power, like Saddam's, is buttressed by neither democratic election nor long historical roots; whose neighbors, like Saddam's, present inviting targets. In understanding Iraq's war decisions in 1990 and 1991, we can better appreciate why the end of the Cold War has not meant the end of regional wars in Asia and Africa.

This case study focuses on the Iraqi side of the Gulf War equation. American policy during the crisis and the war will be treated only insofar as it helps us to understand why Iraq did what it did. There are a number of interesting books and memoirs that deal with American politics, diplomacy and military strategy during this period.<sup>1</sup> Readers interested in American

policy toward Iraq before the invasion of Kuwait should consult works by Bruce Jentleson<sup>2</sup> and Zachary Karabell.<sup>3</sup>

## **Overview of Events**

### **a) Iraq before the Gulf War**

To understand why Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, we have to know a bit about Iraqi history. These few paragraphs are the barest of bones on the topic, enough to make the reader conversant with what was happening before and during the Gulf War. Those interested in more detail can read some excellent modern histories of the country.<sup>4</sup> For a quick overview of the country, consult the on-line CIA World Factbook (<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iz.html>).

Iraq, like the rest of the states of the eastern Arab world, was created after World War I out of territories that had belonged to the defunct Ottoman Empire. Great Britain was granted a "mandate" by the newly-formed League of Nations to administer Iraq, with the proviso that London work to ready the country for independence as soon as possible. The British installed as king of the new country Faysal ibn Hussein of the Hashemite family of Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia. The British had supported the Hashemites during World War I as leaders of an Arab revolt against the Ottomans, who were allied with Germany. Making Faysal king of Iraq was a British attempt to redeem promises made to his family during that revolt.

The country that Faysal inherited was a patchwork of three former Ottoman provinces, which had never been a single, unified political entity in the past. There was a large Kurdish

minority in the northern part of the country, near the borders with Turkey and Iran. The Kurds are an ethnically and linguistically distinct people, Muslim but not Arab, who are found not only in northern Iraq but also in southeastern Turkey and northwestern Iran.<sup>5</sup> Kurdish separatist movements would plague the central governments in Baghdad throughout Iraqi history. The majority Arab population was split between a Sunni Muslim minority and a Shiite Muslim majority. From the time of Faysal to today, the political elite of the country has been disproportionately Sunni Muslim. Holding the country together in the absence of an established bureaucracy was a difficult task, and Faysal relied heavily on British military forces and administrators. Iraq officially became independent in 1932, but Britain remained the dominant player in Iraqi politics for some time thereafter.

The Hashemite monarchy in Iraq was overthrown in a military coup in 1958. Faysal's grandson, who ruled as Faysal II, the Hashemite family, and many of the pro-British political elite were killed. This marked the end of British influence in Iraq. Military governments ruled from 1958 to 1968. In that year another military coup brought to power the Iraqi branch of the Ba'th Party, a pan-Arab political group supportive, in theory, of Arab unity. (The Syrian branch of the party had taken over the government in Damascus five years earlier, but the two branches saw each other as rivals, and no efforts were made to unify the two Ba'thist states.<sup>6</sup>) The president of the new regime was a Ba'thist army general named Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. But very quickly, by the mid-1970's, a civilian party official named Saddam Hussein, who was responsible for internal security affairs, emerged as the real power in the regime.<sup>7</sup> In 1979, al-Bakr, whose health had been in decline for some years, resigned as president and Saddam succeeded him. After coming to power, Saddam ordered the execution of 22 high-ranking Ba'th Party officials accused of plotting against him.<sup>8</sup>

Saddam Hussein reached the presidency at a time of great ferment in the politics of the Middle East. Egypt, the largest Arab state and leader of the Arab world, had just signed a peace treaty with Israel and had been ostracized by the other Arab states. In Iran, Iraq's eastern neighbor, a mass-based popular revolution had overthrown the pro-Western monarchical regime and brought to power Shiite Muslim clerics, headed by Ayatallah Ruhallah Khomeini, who were in the midst of establishing an "Islamic republic" amid continuing revolutionary chaos. The time was ripe for the ambitious new president of Iraq, flush with the wealth that increasing oil prices had brought to his country during the 1970s, to make a play for regional leadership. The target he chose was Iran, and he launched an invasion of southwestern Iran in September 1980.<sup>9</sup>

Iran's army had been decimated by the revolution. It was embroiled in an intense diplomatic conflict with the United States over the takeover of the American embassy and holding of American diplomatic personnel by Iranian "students" supported by the new revolutionary regime. It was certainly an inviting target. But the apparent ease with which Iran could be defeated was not the only factor behind Iraq's attack. The revolutionary Iranian government was, through both the example of its success and its own propaganda machine, encouraging Islamist opposition movements in other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>10</sup> Iraqi Shiites, kept from political power for decades, were a receptive audience. Long historical ties between the Iranian Shiite clergy and Iraqi Shiite leaders and institutions facilitated the transmission of the message. Violent demonstrations in the Iraqi Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala were put down in June 1979. The Iraqi government attributed a series of bomb attacks and assassination attempts on Ba'thist officials in April 1980 to Iranian meddling, and in retaliation executed a high-ranking Iraqi Shiite ayatallah and expelled tens of thousands of Iranians from Najaf and

Karbala. With that, all restraints were dropped in the propaganda war between the two capitals. Border skirmishing began, and the road to war, beginning in September 1980, was paved.<sup>11</sup>

The Iran-Iraq War lasted for eight years, finally ending in August 1988. Each side suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties and billions of dollars in damages and lost revenue. The Iraqis, after some initial military successes, were driven out of Iranian territory by the summer of 1982. From then through 1987, Iran held the military advantage, capturing small parts of Iraqi territory and conducting regular offensives against entrenched Iraqi forces. In 1988 the military tide turned again. Iraqi missile attacks on Iranian cities dented the flagging revolutionary morale of Iranians. Iraqi offensives drove Iranian forces back across the border, and Iraqi troops made a number of forays into Iranian territory before both sides accepted the U.N. ceasefire resolution (Security Council Resolution 598).

#### **b) Iraq's Road to the Invasion of Kuwait**

Based on these late military successes and its steadfastness in resisting earlier Iranian offensives, Saddam Hussein's regime claimed victory in the war. But it was a hollow victory. Iraq gained no new territory. The economic disruptions of demobilizing part of its army – finding work for those returning from the front – were exacerbated by the end of economic aid to Iraq from the Gulf states. Since 1982, the revenue from Kuwaiti and Saudi oil production from the Neutral Zone territory on their border (approximately 650,000 barrels per day) was "loaned" to Iraq to support the war effort.<sup>12</sup> That regular cash infusion, along with other forms of Gulf aid, stopped when the fighting did. The war left Iraq with an enormous debt burden, usually estimated at \$80 billion (\$40 billion to the Gulf states, which would not be paid back but

remained on the books, and \$40 billion to other governments and private creditors).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, during the Iran-Iraq War Baghdad initiated a large-scale economic liberalization and privatization program, which ended up primarily benefiting cronies of the regime. The unintended consequences of this program included "high levels of inflation, unemployment, shortages in basic goods, growing and highly visible economic inequality, and the emergence of a brisk black market in foreign currencies."<sup>14</sup>

As these economic difficulties became more obvious during 1989, Iraq attempted to reap the fruits of its "victory" in the Arab world, but through normal diplomacy, not saber rattling. In February 1989, Baghdad took the initiative in forming the Arab Cooperation Council, a loose grouping of Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and North Yemen, whose publicly announced purpose was to foster greater economic exchange and integration between the members.<sup>15</sup> To allay Saudi worries about the new group, in April 1989 Saddam proposed to a startled King Fahd, visiting Baghdad at the time, that they sign a non-aggression pact. Iraqi diplomacy toward Kuwait, while clearly aimed at securing territorial concessions and economic benefits, was not overtly threatening. The border issue was raised in a number of meetings in 1989, sometimes by the Iraqi side, sometimes by the Kuwaiti side, but the Kuwaitis did not think that it was particularly pressing and the Iraqis did nothing to indicate otherwise.<sup>16</sup> As late as September 1989, Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmad Al Sabah, the ruler of Kuwait, visited Baghdad. He was awarded Iraq's highest honor amid lavish praise from Saddam himself. Likewise, Iraqi rhetoric toward the United States and Israel in 1989 was in the moderate vein adopted by Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq War.

As Iraqi economic difficulties grew, signs of political discontent within Iraq also emerged. In late 1988 and early 1989, scores of officers, many decorated for heroism in the war with Iran, were arrested and executed on charges of conspiring to bring down the government.

Hundreds of high-ranking officers indirectly connected to the accused were forced to retire.<sup>17</sup>

There were reports of a failed coup attempt in September 1989, and the exposure of another coup attempt, coupled with a plan to assassinate Saddam Hussein, in January 1990.<sup>18</sup> The fall of the Soviet Union's Eastern European empire in 1989 further increased Saddam's fears about his own regime. In the summer of 1989 Saddam led a discussion among Iraqi experts about the effects of the collapse of Soviet power, and concluded that Iraq's enemies would use the events in Europe to create an impression among Iraqis that it would also be easy for them to change their government.<sup>19</sup>

During 1989, Saddam Hussein increasingly came to see his domestic economic and political problems as part of a larger effort, orchestrated from outside Iraq, to destabilize his regime and reduce Iraq's role in the region. The regime's leaders came to believe during that year that a number of foreign powers, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, were attempting to infiltrate Iraqi society to collect intelligence and pressure the government.<sup>20</sup> In October 1989, in a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, Tariq Aziz, then Iraq's foreign minister, accused Washington of conducting clandestine efforts to subvert the Iraqi regime.<sup>21</sup> Baker tried to reassure Aziz that the United States policy was just the opposite, seeking better relations with Iraq. President Bush passed the same message to Saddam in April 1990, through Saudi Arabia's ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan Al Sa'ud, when Saddam, through the Saudis, raised similar suspicions of American intentions.<sup>22</sup>

Saddam's view that an international conspiracy was forming against him crystallized in early 1990. Wafiq al-Samara'i, then deputy director of Iraqi military intelligence, who saw the president with some frequency, identified the first quarter of 1990 as the time that Saddam realized that his current policies were failing. "This was reflected in the psychological state of

the president, and led him to make statements and follow policies that were more and more spasmodic."<sup>23</sup> This conspiracy, in Saddam's view, involved not only the United States, but also the Gulf states and Israel. al-Samara'i reports that at the beginning of 1990, military intelligence began receiving a wave of warnings from Saddam's office about Israeli plans to strike at Iraqi nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons facilities.<sup>24</sup> Saad al-Bazzaz, editor of one of the major Iraqi newspapers, reports that the Iraqi leadership fully expected an Israeli military attack sometime in August 1990.<sup>25</sup> al-Samara'i relates a conversation with Saddam, after the former returned from a trip to Bahrain in March 1990, in which the Iraqi president told him: "America is coordinating with Saudi Arabia and the UAE and Kuwait in a conspiracy against us. They are trying to reduce the price of oil to affect our military industries and our scientific research, to force us to reduce the size of our armed forces.... You must expect from another direction an Israeli airstrike, or more than one, to destroy some of our important targets as part of this conspiracy."<sup>26</sup>

Iraqi decision-makers, with Saddam in the lead, increasingly filtered events through this conspiracy framework. Iraqi economic problems were blamed on lower oil prices, which were in turn blamed on the "overproduction" of Kuwait and the UAE, clients of the United States. Small shifts in U.S. policy, like limits on credits for Iraqi purchases of American rice exports and Congressional resolutions condemning Iraq for human rights violations, were read as evidence of Washington's hostility toward the regime. Media attention to the Iraqi nuclear program in 1990, and subsequent British and American efforts to block the export of dual-use technology to Iraq, were seen as part of a concerted effort to build a case for striking at Iraq. Lurking behind these efforts, in the Iraqi view, was Israel.<sup>27</sup> (For an *ex post facto* account of these Iraqi perceptions, see the interview with Tariq Aziz, Iraqi foreign minister during the Gulf War, on the BBC/PBS

documentary *The Gulf War*. Transcript available at:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/aziz/1.html>)

As Saddam and his regime came by early 1990 to see their problems as emanating from the machinations of foreign enemies, the rhetoric and tone of Iraqi foreign policy became increasingly hostile and aggressive. In February 1990, Saddam attacked the United States military presence in the Gulf at the founding summit of the Arab Cooperation Council, and devoted much of his speech to criticism of Israel.<sup>28</sup> His comment that Iraq would "burn half of Israel" with chemical weapons if Israel attacked Iraq followed in early April 1990. At the same time, Iraq's stance toward the Gulf states hardened. In January 1990 Iraq first proposed that Kuwait "loan" it \$10 billion.<sup>29</sup> At the Arab summit of May 1990, Saddam likened the oil production policies of Kuwait and the UAE to an act of war against Iraq.<sup>30</sup>

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait. Saad al-Bazzaz reports on a series of meetings beginning in mid-June 1990 that formulated the plan for the invasion. Two plans were set out, one calling for the occupation of the border area with Kuwait and two Kuwaiti islands and the other calling for the complete occupation of Kuwait. It was only on July 29, 1990, according to al-Bazzaz, that Saddam decided to implement the second plan.<sup>31</sup> Other sources place the decision slightly earlier in 1990. Wafiq al-Samara'i told the producers of the BBC/PBS documentary *The Gulf War* that he thought the decision was made in April 1990, though he did not offer any direct evidence supporting this claim.<sup>32</sup> The then head of the Iranian National Security Council, Hassan Ruhani, reportedly told Arab officials that Saddam Hussein sent a message to Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani in May 1990 that "certain events" would soon take place in the Gulf that Iran should not interpret as directed

against it.<sup>33</sup> Iraqi opposition circles claim that the decision was made in March 1990.<sup>34</sup> No source referring specifically to the timing of the decision places it earlier than the spring of 1990.

The linkage in the first half of 1990 between Saddam Hussein coming to the conclusion that a conspiracy was afoot aimed at undermining him, the change in the tone and rhetoric of Iraqi foreign policy, and the decision to invade Kuwait is extremely strong. The sense that circumstances had turned against the regime, and that something had to be done quickly to reverse the negative trend, is clear in comments by Saddam and those close to him after the invasion of Kuwait. At a meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council and the Ba'th Party leadership held on January 24, 1991 (while the war was going on), Saddam told those present that he had heard some people suggesting that Kuwait should be returned to avoid war. He said:

You must tell those people, 'What were things like before August 2, when Iraq was without Kuwait?' They were conspiring against you to starve you, after they had deprived us of our economic capacity.... Even our standard of living at the time, they were planning to push it backwards in their despicable conspiracies, to crush us spiritually and force us to abandon our role.<sup>35</sup>

At that same meeting, Taha Yasin Ramadan, Iraq's first deputy prime minister, said that: "I am not saying that August 2, 1990 was the best day for the mother of battles. We had not studied the situation for a year, even for months, preparing for the mother of battles."<sup>36</sup> No one would dare criticize a decision by Saddam Hussein in his presence, the implication being that Saddam himself recognized that the decision to invade was made under severe pressures. Ramadan said at the same meeting:

Imagine if we had waited two years, and the Gulf oil policy had continued as it is.... How were we going to maintain the loyalty of the people and their support

for the leader if they saw the inability of the leadership to provide a minimal standard of living in this rich country? In this situation, could you lead the army and the people in any battle, no matter what its level and under any banner? I think not. I am not deviating from my deep faith in victory in this battle, but whatever the outcome, if death is definitely coming to this people and this revolution, let it come while we are standing.<sup>37</sup>

The Ba'th Party apparatus circulated an analysis to ranking party members in February 1991 that admitted that the leadership was forced to take a quick decision to invade Kuwait because of the pressures it was under, even though all necessary preparations for the confrontation had not been made.<sup>38</sup>

With the Iraqi regime feeling threatened and looking to break out of what it saw as an increasingly constricting set of domestic, regional and international circumstances, Kuwait beckoned as an inviting target. The military balance between Kuwait and Iraq was overwhelmingly favorable to Baghdad. Various Iraqi governments in the past had made claims that Kuwait should be part of Iraq (see discussion below in "Historical Controversies"). Al-Samara'i reports that Tariq Aziz told Saddam and the rest of the leadership that tensions between Kuwait and the other Arab monarchies in the Gulf would limit the amount of opposition that Iraq would face within the region. Aziz also, according to al-Samara'i, said that any American reaction would take a substantial amount of time to organize, giving Iraq room to maneuver and consolidate its hold on Kuwait.<sup>39</sup> Baghdad saw the prospects for victory as reasonable; the costs of not acting, and allowing the "conspiracy" against the regime to continue, were seen as high. So sometime in 1990 the decision to invade Kuwait was made.

In the two weeks before the invasion, Saddam practiced tactical deceptions in order to retain the element of surprise.<sup>40</sup> The Iraqi media, which had pilloried Kuwait for months, adopted a much softer tone. Saddam allowed the American ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, to

leave a meeting with him on July 25 with the impression that the crisis was winding down. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt had the same impression after a series of contacts with Saddam. Iraq agreed to an Egyptian-Saudi proposal for a meeting between high-ranking representatives of Kuwait and Iraq, held in the Saudi city of Jidda on July 31, 1990.<sup>41</sup> Both Kuwait and the United States believed that, if Iraq were to use force, it would only be to occupy the border area and the Kuwaiti islands of Warba and Bubiyan, which control access to the Iraqi port of Um Qasr – more a bargaining move than a real military attack.<sup>42</sup> On the morning of August 2, 1990, Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, and within hours had control of the entire country.

### **c) Why Not Withdraw?**

It seems illogical that Saddam Hussein did not grasp at one of the many diplomatic ropes cast his way by Soviet, Arab and French intermediaries before and during the coalition forces' attack on Iraq that began on January 16, 1991. Given the size and technical superiority of the American-led coalition forces against him, and Washington's evident willingness to use force, a withdrawal from Kuwait that spared his army almost certain defeat and his country vast destruction would have seemed to be the best course of action for him. His army would have remained intact, and U.N. sanctions would have been lifted. But he chose the more risky path of military resistance, suffering a crushing defeat. Understanding Saddam's perceptions of his opponents and of the costs to him and his regime of withdrawal will help us to grasp why he followed the course he did.

From the August 2, 1990 occupation of Kuwait through the end of 1990, despite the build-up of American and coalition forces and the series of U.N. Security Council votes that went against Iraq, it seems that Saddam believed that he could avoid a serious military defeat. al-Samara'i reports that the political team around Saddam was convinced that the United States would hesitate to use force against Iraq, and the crisis would turn into a long political contest of wills. He says that Saddam described the strategy on a number of occasions as "holding on to the elephant's trunk," patiently waiting and drawing things out.<sup>43</sup> Saddam believed that, even in the event of an attack, his forces could hold out long enough for the coalition to fragment, as Arab public opinion rose up against Arab members of the coalition and as France and the Soviet Union split from the United States. As American forces sustained casualties, Saddam believed, public opinion in the United States would also turn against the war. As late as January 10, 1991, he told officials from military intelligence that "America is a weak country.... We will not retreat from Kuwait and we will prevail!"<sup>44</sup>

As January 15, 1991, the deadline for withdrawal from Kuwait established in U.N. Security Council Resolution 678, loomed closer, and after the air war against Iraq began on January 16, it became increasingly clear that Iraq would have to fight a large-scale war. al-Samara'i reports that Iraqi military intelligence sent numerous reports to Saddam Hussein that war was inevitable and that Iraq was not well positioned to resist. As the air war began, these reports warned of the very negative consequences for Iraq of a ground war.<sup>45</sup> Iraqi military intelligence also informed Saddam, during the air war, of large-scale Iraqi army defections within Kuwait.<sup>46</sup> While Saddam was receiving these reports and the air war began, he also saw that the coalition remained intact and that Arab coalition members were able to manage whatever public opinion problems they might have had. According to al-Samara'i, shortly after the air war

began Saddam ordered Ali Hassan al-Majid, his cousin and son-in-law whom he appointed military governor of Kuwait, to prepare for the destruction of the Kuwaiti oil wells and other Kuwaiti installations, an indication that he was at least entertaining the prospect that he could not hold on to Kuwait.<sup>47</sup> With his original strategy revealed as badly flawed, Saddam might have been expected to reassess the costs and benefits of remaining in Kuwait and to seek out a diplomatic solution. However, he did not.

Saddam's own rhetoric changed about this time, from claims that Iraq would win a military confrontation (or at least not lose), to assertions that withdrawal from Kuwait would not bring to an end the "real cause" of the war – the perceived international conspiracy against his regime. On January 14, 1991 he told a visiting delegation from Yemen, "We have no guarantees if we withdraw.... Why should we surrender at the last moment?"<sup>48</sup> On the eve of the ground war, after more than a month of sustained air attacks, he told Soviet envoy Yevgeny Primakov (who was trying to negotiate an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait), "If America decided on war it will go to war whether I withdraw from Kuwait or not. They are conspiring against us. They are targeting the leadership for assassination. What have the Iraqis lost? They might yet gain!"<sup>49</sup> After the war, Tariq Aziz was asked on the PBS documentary *The Gulf War* why Iraq did not withdraw when defeat seemed inevitable. He replied: "Iraq was designated by George Bush for destruction, with or without Kuwait. Inside Kuwait or outside Kuwait. Before the 2nd of August or after the 2nd of August."<sup>50</sup>

In effect, since Saddam did not see withdrawal from Kuwait as removing the threat to his power, he was willing to take the very risky course of absorbing the coalition's military attack, knowing from his own military intelligence that he was very likely to lose on the battlefield. The hope, against the odds, that something good might come for his regime from the destruction that

his army and his country were enduring drove him to persevere. In a strange way, the fact that he survived in power despite the war, the popular uprisings against his rule after the war, and continued economic sanctions, confirmed the twisted wisdom of his choice.

## **Historical Controversies**

### **a) Is Kuwait really a part of Iraq?**

After the invasion of Kuwait, the Iraqi government justified its action by claiming that Kuwait was legitimately part of Iraq (its "19<sup>th</sup> province"), broken off from Iraq by British colonialism. The Iraqi claim is based on the fact that the Ottoman Empire never relinquished its claim to Kuwait, considering it part of the province of Basra. The League of Nations mandate, which established the state of Iraq, referred to it as being composed of the former Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Therefore, in the Iraqi logic, Kuwait should have been part of Iraq from the outset. Twice before Iraqi governments have raised this claim. In 1938, the Hashemite monarchy asserted the claim, but did not act upon it. In 1961, upon Kuwait's independence from Great Britain, the Iraqi government of Abd al-Karim Qasim revived the claim, and moved troops toward the border. Great Britain immediately sent troops to defend Kuwait, and a number of Arab states that were opposed to Iraq on other grounds also sent troops to support Kuwaiti independence. Ironically, it was the Ba'thist regime that formally recognized Kuwaiti independence by sending an Iraqi ambassador to the country.

The area around what is now Kuwait City has been under the control of the Al Sabah family, the ruling family of Kuwait, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At times, when it served their purposes, they would accept Ottoman officials in the city and fly the Ottoman flag. But the Al Sabah rulers would also expel those Ottoman officials and conduct direct relations with other powers if that served their purpose. In 1899, Shaykh Mubarak Al Sabah, then the ruler, entered into an agreement of protection with Great Britain. The British kept the agreement secret, so as not to complicate their relations with the Ottoman regime. From that point onward, Great Britain was the dominant outside power in the politics of Kuwait, up to Kuwaiti independence in 1961. Kuwaitis argue that the ability to make and keep international agreements is a sign of independence, and thus take the 1899 agreement as a sign that Kuwait was, in reality, independent of the Ottoman Empire before there was any thought of a state of Iraq. In 1913, British and Ottoman representatives initialed a draft agreement in which London recognized Ottoman formal sovereignty over Kuwait in exchange for an Ottoman declaration that Kuwait was an autonomous district of the empire and an Ottoman promise of non-interference in Kuwaiti internal affairs. That agreement, invoked by the Iraqis during the Gulf War, was never ratified, as it was overtaken by World War I and the subsequent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Legal questions aside, the best test for whether Kuwaitis think that Kuwait is part of Iraq is how they reacted to various Iraqi claims. In 1938 there seemed to be some popular sentiment in Kuwait for union with Iraq, on Pan-Arab and anti-British grounds. By 1961, Kuwait's oil wealth was well-established, and public support for its independence was high. There was little public support in Kuwait for the Iraqi claim then. In 1990, no prominent or even semi-prominent Kuwaiti was willing to serve in the Iraqi occupation authority. There was considerable popular

resistance within Kuwait to the Iraqi occupation.<sup>51</sup> Again, setting legal questions aside, it seems clear that a substantial portion of Iraqi opinion holds that Kuwait should be part of Iraq, and that it was only through British colonial manipulation that Kuwait retained its independence.

**b) Was there an American plot against the Iraqi regime in 1989-90?**

This question will only be answered definitively (if it can be answered definitively) when the American diplomatic archives on the period are opened. Until then, the best that can be said is that there is no evidence of a concerted American policy to destabilize the Iraqi regime in 1989-90. American policy might better be described as working at cross-purposes to Iraq. The United States was clearly becoming concerned during this period with Iraq's efforts to obtain nuclear and other non-conventional weapons. Financial scandals revolving around agricultural credits granted to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War were making news and raising concerns in Washington. Important members of Congress questioned whether the American "tilt" toward Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War should be continued, and Saddam's increasingly bellicose rhetoric in early 1990 was criticized by American officials. However, the Bush Administration, in both its diplomatic contacts with Baghdad and its public statements, emphasized that it wanted a cooperative relationship with Baghdad. It opposed the imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq, a prospect raised in Congress. Reassurance, not threats, was seen as the best way to moderate Iraqi behavior.<sup>52</sup>

One does not have to accept the fact that there was an American-led conspiracy against Iraq to accept that Saddam's belief in such a conspiracy profoundly affected his decision-making in this crisis. Saddam Hussein came to power in Iraq through conspiracy, suspected other Iraqis

of conspiring against him and saw regional politics through the prism of conspiracy. It is not surprising that he would piece together bits of evidence of American hostility, read into the actions of others a purposefulness that was not there, and come to interpret his own difficulties as the result of the machinations of others. It is said that even paranoids have real enemies, and Saddam certainly had his share. But the characteristic trait of paranoids is to create enemies where none existed. Saddam Hussein certainly fits the bill.

c) **Why not use chemical weapons against the coalition?**

While subsequent investigations by U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq established that Iraq was closer to developing nuclear weapons in 1990 than was generally thought, it seems that Iraq did not have a nuclear capacity during the Gulf War. However, Iraq had a clearly established chemical weapons capability. Iraqi chemical weapons had been used against Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, and against the Iraqi Kurdish city of Halabja in 1987, after it had been briefly occupied by Iranian forces. There is evidence that Iraq armed missile warheads with VX nerve gas in the period leading up to the coalition attack in January 1991.<sup>53</sup> Iraq launched missile attacks, armed with conventional warheads, on Israel, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain during the fighting. If Iraq had chemical weapons and the capacity to deliver them, why were they not used?

The answer seems to be effective deterrence. James Baker delivered a blunt threat to Tariq Aziz in their meeting in Geneva on January 9, 1991. If chemical or biological weapons were used against U.S. forces, Baker said, the American response would be to eliminate the current regime in Baghdad. Although Baker relates in his memoirs that President Bush had

already decided not to retaliate with American nuclear or chemical weapons, he deliberately left the impression that Washington might "go nuclear" in response to an Iraqi attack with non-conventional weapons.<sup>54</sup> al-Samara'i told the makers of the documentary *The Gulf War* that the warning was "quite severe and quite effective. The allied troops were certain to use nuclear arms and the price will be too dear and too high." In the same program, Tariq Aziz, asked why Iraq did not use its non-conventional weapons, replied, "It was not wise to use such kind of weapons in such kind of war, with such an enemy." When pressed whether he meant an enemy with nuclear weapons, he said, "You can...make your own conclusions."<sup>55</sup>

Israel, also a nuclear power, probably conveyed a similar warning, indirectly, to Iraq, or perhaps such a warning was not necessary. The Iraqis knew of Israel's nuclear capacity and the high probability of an Israeli nuclear response to any chemical weapon attack on Israel.

## **Theoretical Relevance**

The question of why leaders decide to go to war remains central to the study of international relations. Scholars working from different theoretical perspectives have tried to explain the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as fitting within their general explanations for war. Some have emphasized the personality of Saddam Hussein as the central factor: his aggressiveness, his ambition, his proclivity, both personal and political, to violence.<sup>56</sup> Without denying these descriptions of Saddam, I question whether his personality alone is enough of an explanation. His personality is a constant, and he had been the major force in Iraqi politics since at least the 1970's. Moreover, he had shown in the past an ability to retreat in the face of superior force.

Undoubtedly a less ambitious, more risk-averse, more conflict-avoidant leader, facing the same circumstances that Saddam did in 1990, would have chosen a path other than invasion of Kuwait. But it was those circumstances, and not simply Saddam's personality, that triggered Saddam's decision to invade.

Another approach has been to look for an explanation of the Iraqi decision in the domestic political economy of Iraq. Scholars in this school emphasize the economic difficulties the Iraqi regime was facing, and see the invasion of Kuwait as a quick money grab by Saddam's regime aimed at alleviating a domestic economic and political crisis.<sup>57</sup> However, if domestic economic motivations were the central driving concern behind Saddam's decision, it is puzzling that he did not accept Kuwaiti financial offers before the invasion, pocket that money, and then come back to the table for more. Equally puzzling is why, in 1980, Saddam chose to go to war against Iran, even though Iraq was in the best financial and economic condition it had ever experienced. While it is possible that Iraq's 1980 and 1990 war decisions were made on completely different bases, an explanation that is consistent with both decisions is more intellectually satisfying and reliable.

Other scholars have emphasized the international systemic inducements for Iraq to invade. Kuwait was a weak country, an easy target for Iraq. Kuwait's oil riches would add to Iraq's power in the Middle East, and help Saddam achieve his goal of regional leadership. No regional power could block the invasion; Iran was immobilized after its own war with Iraq, and other Arab countries were either aligned with Iraq or afraid of it. In this view, the American policy of reassurance probably encouraged Saddam to believe that the United States would not take a strong stance against an Iraqi *fait accompli*.<sup>58</sup> This "offensive realist" rationale for an attack on Kuwait, however, had existed for some time. The military balance always favored Iraq

over Kuwait. Both the Arab states and the United States needed Iraq more in the 1980's, when the Iranian revolution was young and seemingly poised to sweep through the Middle East. Moreover, if Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait was based simply on a favorable cost-benefit analysis, it would have made much more sense for him to wait a year or two until his nuclear program had produced usable nuclear weapons. A nuclear Iraq might have made potential adversaries think twice about whether the restoration of Kuwaiti sovereignty was worth the risk.

The explanation put forward in this case study borrows elements from all three "levels of analysis" described above. But it filters them through the prism of Saddam Hussein's belief that threats were mounting to his regime and his hold on power. His personality is certainly important here, but more in terms of his conspiratorial view of politics than in terms of his ambitions. He saw his domestic economic crisis not simply as a matter of incorrect policies, but as part of a conspiracy to weaken him. He thought he could "get away" with the grab of Kuwait and strengthen his domestic and regional position, but the evidence from Iraqi sources is that the invasion was not a long-planned, well-considered diplomatic-military *coup*. Rather, it was a reaction to what was perceived to be an increasingly difficult and threatening set of circumstances.

The sense that trends were moving against him, that he was in danger of losing power domestically and being targeted internationally, that something had to be done before things got worse, dominates Saddam's thinking in my reconstruction of Iraqi decision-making. The fact that Saddam exaggerated the threats against him does not detract from their importance. His perceptions of threat were crucial in framing his decision to take the risk of going to war against Kuwait, and in his decision to risk almost certain defeat by the coalition's military forces. This sense of threat as a spur to the risky decision to go to war is also consistent with his decision-

making in 1980, as he saw the contagion effects of the Iranian Revolution as a potential threat to Ba'thist rule in Iraq itself.

Saddam was certainly not blind to the benefits a successful absorption of Kuwait would have for him, his regime and for Iraq. His sense of the threats around him also did not "make him crazy." He was deterred from using non-conventional weapons during the war by clear American threats. Perhaps if Kuwait had invited American troops in while the crisis was developing, he would have been deterred from invasion in the first place. But a simple cost-benefit analysis cannot explain why Saddam took the risks he did, first in invading Kuwait and then in not withdrawing in the face of superior force. Only by factoring in his sense of the threats around him, his fear that the course of events, if not altered, would ultimately destabilize his hold on power, can we come to a complete explanation of Iraqi decision-making in the Gulf crisis of 1990-91.

## Bibliographic Essay

Much of the information in this case study about Iraqi beliefs and perceptions is based upon books written by two Iraqis who were on the inside of the regime before and during the Gulf War, but who have subsequently defected to the West – Sa'd al-Bazzaz and Wafiq al-Samara'i. al-Bazzaz was general director of Iraqi Radio and Television from 1988-1990, and editor of *al-Jumhuriyya*, one of the major Iraqi newspapers, from 1990-92. Gen. al-Samara'i ended his career after the Gulf War as director of military intelligence in the Iraqi army. He was deputy director during the Gulf War, and in charge of military intelligence on Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. al-Bazzaz now runs an Iraqi opposition newspaper, *al-Zaman*, out of London. al-Samara'i is active in Iraqi opposition circles.

The credibility of accounts provided by such figures could naturally be questioned. However, I am confident that the information they provide is accurate for a number of reasons. First, both authors, because of their positions, had close contacts with the inner circle of the regime. al-Samara'i had regular access to Saddam himself during the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War, which is discussed in his book *hatam al-bawaba al-sharqiyya [The Destruction of the Eastern Gate]*, (Kuwait: dar al-qabas, 1997) The information they provide has the ring of authenticity about it. Second, al-Bazzaz wrote two books about the Gulf War, one when he was still affiliated with the regime and the other after he had severed his ties (*harb tulid ukhra [One War Gives Birth to Another]*, Amman: al-'ahliyya lil nashr wa al-tawzi', 1993; and *al-janarat 'akhr man ya'lam [The Generals Are the Last to Know]*, Amman: al-'ahliyya lil nashr wa al-tawzi', 1996). While there is new information in the second book, the basic story he tells does not change from the

first book to the second. Third, if these authors were looking to make Saddam Hussein out to be even worse than he is in fact, they would have portrayed him as plotting the invasion of Kuwait for years and lying about the feelings of threat and insecurity that Iraq emphasized in the period leading up to the invasion. However, both authors confirm that the regime actually did see a conspiracy taking shape against it. Memoirs can always be questioned as to their reliability as primary sources, but in these cases the private information contained in them corresponds with what the public record shows about Iraqi perceptions.

The major English-language sources on the Gulf War are discussed in the notes to the case. The best general account of the Gulf War, including diplomatic and military fronts, American, Iraqi and other parties' participation, is Lawrence Freeman and Efraim Karsh's *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-91* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). The most interesting account of Arab politics during the war is Mohammed Heikal's *Illusion of Triumph: An Arab View of the Gulf War* (London: HarperCollins, 1993). Heikal was the close confidante of Gamal Abdul Nasser, president of Egypt from 1954–1970, and was editor of *al-Ahram*, Egypt's major newspaper. His access to the upper levels of the governing elite of the Arab world is unequalled.

## Maps and Resources

For a map of Iraq and basic information about the country today, consult the CIA World Fact Book that was mentioned earlier in the case. From that site you can also get basic information on other countries involved in the crisis -- Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, etc.

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iz.html>

The interviews with Tariq Aziz and Wafiq al-Samara'i that were referenced in the text can be found on the PBS series *Frontline*'s website devoted to its broadcast of a very good PBS/BBC documentary on the Gulf War. That website also has a number of interviews with U.S. participants in the war, a chronology of events and a series of maps. The Iraqi interviews can be found at

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/iraqis.html>

Other material can be accessed from the main page on the documentary

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/index.html>

The Kuwait Information Office in Washington, D.C. maintains a web page that includes a Kuwaiti perspective on the Gulf War, on the Iraq-Kuwait dispute and a number of maps.

[http://www.kuwait-info.org/Home/Gulf\\_War/gulf\\_war.html](http://www.kuwait-info.org/Home/Gulf_War/gulf_war.html)

The *Washington Post* keeps an archive on the on-going struggle between the United States and Iraq, from the Gulf War to the present. It is a useful source for those who want to follow up events in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/world/specials/mideast/iraq/>

The Gulf/2000 project at Columbia University is an excellent portal for beginning to research questions about the international and domestic politics of the countries in the Persian/Arabian Gulf. The project began after the Gulf War, so there is not much material there on the Gulf War itself, but it is an excellent on-line source on current political issues in the Gulf.

<http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/>

The U.N. Security Council resolutions adopted in 1990 on the Gulf crisis can be found at <gopher://gopher.undp.org:70/11/undocs/scd/scouncil/s90>

The most important are UNSC Resolution 661, which imposes economic sanctions on Iraq, and UNSC Resolution 678, authorizing the use of force to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. U.N. Security Council resolutions adopted in 1991 on the Gulf crisis can be found at

<gopher://gopher.undp.org:70/11/undocs/scd/scouncil/s91>.

The most important are UNSC Resolution 687, which establishes Iraq's obligations after the war and requirements for the lifting of sanctions, and UNSC Resolution 688, which condemns Iraqi treatment of its own citizens.

Those who want to follow the operations of the U.N. "oil for food" program in Iraq now should consult the website of the U.N. Office for the Iraqi Program.

<http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/>

The now-defunct U.N. weapons inspection organization, the U.N. Special Commission on Iraq, also has a website. Those interested in the efforts to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction should consult it.

<http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For a first-hand, contemporary account, see Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991. Later books that deal well with American policy include Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-91*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1995. Useful memoirs of events on the American side include George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998; James A. Baker, III (with Thomas M. DeFrank), *The Politics of Diplomacy*, New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1995; Colin L. Powell (with Joseph E. Persico), *My American Journey*, New York: Random House, 1995; and H. Norman Schwarzkopf (with Peter Petre), *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, New York: Bantam Books, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-1990*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Zachary Karabell, "Backfire: US Policy Toward Iraq, 1988-2 August 1990," *Middle East Journal* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 28-47.

<sup>4</sup> Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978; Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, Boulder: Westview, 1985; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> For the history of the Kurds in Iraq, see Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A Political Analysis*, New York: St. Martin's, 1999; David McDowall, *The Kurds*, London: Minority Rights Group, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> The rivalry between the two branches is detailed in Eberhard Kienle, *Ba'th v. Ba'th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1990.

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<sup>7</sup> Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, pp. 205-09; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, pp. 217-220, 228-229.

<sup>8</sup> Marr, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>9</sup> For the background to the Iran-Iraq war, see Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988; and R.K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Majid Khadduri, *The Gulf War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 82; Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran*, p. 59; Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran*, p. 60; Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> King Fahd, in a public speech during the Gulf War, listed the amounts of Saudi aid to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), January 17, 1991, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 39; Patrick Clawson, "Iraq's Economy and International Sanctions," in Amatzia Baram and Barry Rubin, eds., *Iraq's Road to War*, New York: St. Martin's, 1993, p. 81, note 12; Amatzia Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Decision-making in Baghdad," in Baram and Rubin, eds., *Iraq's Road to War*, p. 7; Mohamed Heikal, *Illusion of Triumph: An Arab View of the Gulf War*, London: Harper Collins, 1993, p. 178.

<sup>14</sup> Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, "On the Way to Market: Economic Liberalization and Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait," *Middle East Report* 170 (May/June 1991): 17..

<sup>15</sup> On the Arab Cooperation Council, see David Priess, "Balance of Threat Theory and the Genesis of the Gulf Cooperation Council: An Interpretive Case Study," *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 143-171; Curtis Ryan, "Jordan and the Rise and Fall of the Arab Cooperation Council," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 386-401

<sup>16</sup> Sa'd al-Bazzaz, *harb tulid ukhra [One War Gives Birth to Another]*, Amman: al-'ahliyya lil nashr wa al-tawzi', 1993, pp. 41-45.

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<sup>17</sup> Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," in Baram and Rubin, eds., p. 8; Sa'd al-Bazzaz, *al-janarat al-akhr man ya'lam [The Generals Are the Last to Know]*, Amman: al-'ahliyya lil nashr wa al-tawzi', 1996, pp. 36-37, 89-90; Wafiq al-Samara'i, *hatam al-bawaba al-sharqiyya [The Destruction of the Eastern Gate]*, Kuwait: dar al-qabas, 1997, p. 184-85.

<sup>18</sup> Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 29-30; Amatzia Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies, 1991-96," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 1 (1997): 5-6; Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Hussein's Strategy for Survival*, Policy Paper No. 47, Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998, p. 27; al-Samara'i, *hatam*, p. 185.

<sup>19</sup> al-Bazzaz, *harb*, p. 392.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60, 210-213.

<sup>21</sup> Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 265. See also Heikal, *Illusion of Triumph*, p. 159; al-Bazzaz, *harb*, p. 154-160. According to the Iraqi transcript of the meeting in Geneva between Baker and Aziz in January 1991, Aziz reminded Baker of the conversation, and Baker said that he recalled it. Muhammad Muthaghghar Al-Adhami, *al-tariq 'ila harb al-khalij [The Road to the Gulf War]*, Amman: al-'ahliyya lil nashr wa al-tawzi', pp. 100-01.

<sup>22</sup> Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 203-04.

<sup>23</sup> al-Samara'i, *hatam*, p. 214.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>25</sup> al-Bazzaz, *harb*, p. 345.

<sup>26</sup> al-Samara'i, *hatam*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>27</sup> For extended discussions of the Iraqi regime's perspective on events in 1990, leading up to the invasion of Kuwait, see Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, Chapters 2, 3; Heikal, *Illusion of Triumph*, pp. 158-231; Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," In Baram and Rubin, eds.

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<sup>28</sup> Ofra Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis: A Collection of Documents*, Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1992, pp. 37-49.

<sup>29</sup> Heikal, *Illusion*, p. 209.

<sup>30</sup> Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 46-48.

<sup>31</sup> al-Bazzaz, *harb*, pp. 27-36; al-Bazzaz, *al-janarat*, pp. 47-55.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/samarrai/1.html>

<sup>33</sup> *New York Times*, March 20, 1991, pp. A1, A2.

<sup>34</sup> Falih 'Abd al-Jabbar, "The Million Man Army Lies Heavily on the Destroyed Economy of the State," *al-Hayat* (London), May 31, 1991, p. 5; Faleh Abd al-Jabar, "Roots of an Adventure: The Invasion of Kuwait – Iraqi Political Dynamics," in Victoria Brittain, ed., *The Gulf between Us: The Gulf War and Beyond*, London: Virago Press, 1991, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28, quoting from minutes of the meeting.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198-99.

<sup>38</sup> al-Bazzaz, *harb*, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> al-Samara'i, *hatam*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>40</sup> al-Bazzaz, *al-janarat*, pp. 73-74, reports that Saddam told the Iraqi leadership on August 2 that in 1961 Iraqi leader Abd al-Karim Qasim, who had threatened Kuwait, had made the mistake of being too clear about his intentions and had thus lost the element of surprise, allowing the British and the Egyptians to send troops to Kuwait and frustrate his plans. Saddam told the leadership that this time Iraq was doing things differently.

<sup>41</sup> See Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 47-63, for an excellent account of the events leading up to August 2. Iraq contends that it did not mislead its interlocutors, but rather that they misunderstood the Iraqi commitment not to use force before the Jidda meeting. Iraqi sources say that the Egyptians and

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the Americans did not impress on Kuwait the seriousness of the situation and thus allowed the Jidda meeting to "fail." With that failure, Iraqi commitments not to use force were no longer applicable. See also Heikal, *Illusion of Triumph*, pp. 225-229.

<sup>42</sup> In mid-July, U.S. military intelligence sources made this prediction. Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 207-208. The Kuwaiti parliamentary committee set up to examine the events leading up to the invasion reported that the Kuwaiti government was anticipating such a limited land-grab. See *al-Hayat* (London), July 10, 1996, pp. 1, 6, for an account of the leaked committee report. This scenario was clearly circulating in diplomatic and military circles just before the attack, as it is mentioned in both Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 57 and Heikal, *Illusion of Triumph*, p. 244.

<sup>43</sup> al-Samara'i, *hatam*, pp. 321-22.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237-38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 246-47; al-Samara'i interview with PBS,

(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/samarrai/1.html>)

<sup>46</sup> al-Samara'i PBS interview, (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/samarrai/1.html>)

<sup>47</sup> al-Samara'i, *hatam*, pp. 284-85.

<sup>48</sup> al-Bazzaz, *harb*, p. 265.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 399.

<sup>50</sup> Tariq Aziz interview, PBS documentary website,

(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/aziz/2.html>)

<sup>51</sup> For an account of Kuwaiti views on these legal questions, and for evidence of Kuwaiti popular opinion during the Iraqi occupation, see Jill Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1992, pp. 138-147; 155-158. The best account of the long history of disputed Kuwaiti-Iraqi border claims is David H. Finnie, *Shifting Lines in the Sand: Kuwait's Elusive Frontier with Iraq*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

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<sup>52</sup> See the sources referenced in notes 2 and 3 above for extensive accounts of American policy in the period leading up to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

<sup>53</sup> *Washington Post*, June 23, 1998, p. A1.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 359.

<sup>55</sup> Tariq Aziz interview, PBS documentary website,  
(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/aziz/2.html>).

<sup>56</sup> See Jerrold Post, "Saddam Hussein of Iraq: A Political Psychology Profile," *Political Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1991); Laurie Mylroie, "Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Kuwait," *Orbis* 36, no. 1 (1993); and Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Kuwait," *Survival* 33, no. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Chaudhry, "On the Way to Market," and Fred Lawson, *The Social Origins of Egyptian Expansionism during the Muhammad Ali Period*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 156-171.

<sup>58</sup> See Richard Hermann, "Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait, 1990-1991," in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Boulder: Westview, 1994; Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," In Baram and Rubin, eds.

Saudi Arabia has been forging links to Iraq since reopening its Baghdad embassy in 2016. Its adversary Iran has strong Iraqi ties. If Riyadh avoids antagonising Tehran, invests wisely and quiets anti-Shiite rhetoric, Iraq can be a bridge between the rival powers - not a battleground. A minor breakthrough came in 2006 when Iraq's national security adviser and the Saudi intelligence chief, Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, opened a hotline between the two of them, but it ceased to function several years later when the responsible Iraqi personnel left office.<sup>[fn]</sup>Crisis Group interview, former Iraqi security official, Baghdad, March 2018.<sup>Hide Footnote.</sup> See for example, "Iraq: Possible War Crimes by Shiite Militia", Human Rights Watch, 31 The Gulf War. This is the currently selected item. The presidency of Bill Clinton. President Bush had built the UN coalition around removing Iraq from Kuwait, not around the ouster of Saddam Hussein, and the decision to allow Hussein to remain in power proved controversial. <sup>10</sup><sup>{10}</sup>. <sup>10</sup><sup>start superscript</sup>, <sup>10</sup><sup>end superscript</sup>. The Gulf War was hardly the end of United States involvement in the Middle East. Rather, it signaled that at the end of the twentieth century, the foreign policy of the United States was becoming ever-more enmeshed in the politics of the Middle East. <sup>11</sup><sup>{11}</sup>. <sup>11</sup><sup>start superscript</sup>, <sup>11</sup><sup>end superscript</sup>. Before the Gulf War, Iraq claimed that Kuwait was slant-drilling into Iraqi territory to steal its oil. In retrospect, we don't really know, but in my opinion, Bush made a right decision not to pursue into Baghdad and overthrow Saddam Hussein from power. The outcome would have probably have been a lot worse for the world. 668 views · View 3 Upvoters.