

# The Inter-Arab System and the Gulf War: Continuity and Change

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## **Executive Summary**

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The description of events during 1990 draws heavily on my chapter, "Inter-Arab Relations," *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. XIV, 1990, Ami Ayalon, ed., Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco and London, forthcoming).

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For decades to come, declared Morocco's King Hasan in the fall of 1990, Iraq's invasion, subjugation and attempted incorporation of Kuwait as Iraq's "19th province" will be a dividing line in modern Arab history. 1 Indeed, never in the checkered and conflict-ridden 45-year history of the Arab League had the tenets of Arab solidarity and good neighborliness embodied in the League's founding charter and Joint Defense Pact of 1950 been so blatantly violated. Moreover, the decision to invade was preceded by months of diplomatic activity culminating in a frenzy of mediation efforts, the kinds which had scored considerable successes in past inter-Arab wrangles. The shock was therefore that much greater, and the departure from established norms that much more pronounced.

Saddam's act, unique in the annals of modern Arab history, prompted a similarly unprecedented response by his Arab neighbors. Long-held norms and taboos were cast aside in the realms of both individual and collective Arab policies. Saudi Arabia abandoned its traditional squeamishness over the presence of Western forces on its soil, even at the risk of creating an affront to Muslim sensibilities. Egypt forsook the traditional modus operandi of the Arab League—adopting resolutions on the basis of consensus—and fashioned an anti-Iraqi majority coalition from among the 21 League members which both endorsed the mustering of Western forces in the Saudi desert and gave the green light to Arab military participation in the anti-Saddam international coalition.

At the same time, the crisis contained many of the enduring themes of inter-Arab affairs over the past half century: a particular country bidding for regional hegemony, in the service of which it invoked a combination of patriotic, pan-Arab and Islamic themes; the banding together of other Arab countries to act as a counter-weight; and peripatetic efforts by various Arab parties to mediate a solution. One was also reminded of numerous past instances in which Arab countries turned to global powers for both overt and covert help in confronting inter-Arab challenges.

The immediate outcomes of the crisis are, of course, now part of the historical record. What remains to be seen is the extent to which King Hasan's dictum will prove to be accurate or whether the Gulf crisis will turn out to have been more of an aberration in inter-Arab history whose effects would ultimately be limited in their duration. In discussing the Gulf crisis-its immediate antecedents, the events between August 2, 1990 and the ceasefire of February 28, 1991, and its aftermath-this essay enumerates and analyzes the elements of both continuity and change in the system of inter-Arab relations and thus provides a more reliable road map for understanding the ever-changing course of Middle East politics.

#### Background to the Crisis

By the end of the 1980s, inter-Arab relations seemed to have reached a level of equilibrium not previously attained. Over the course of eight years of war between Iraq and Iran, an Egyptian-Iraqi alliance had served as the linchpin of a large, loosely grouped majority bloc of Arab states, which also included Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and the smaller Gulf principalities. Its *raison d'etre* was to contain the geopolitical and ideological-culture threat posed by Iran's Islamic Republic. Most of the group also shared a general desire for a political resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Both Egypt and Iraq had derived important tangible benefits from the alignment. In return for extending its support in the way of surplus weaponry and more than two million workers, Egypt was able to break down the walls of inter-Arab isolation which had been built up around it as punishment for concluding a contractual peace with Israel. Moreover, in the latter stages of the war, as the Iranian threat increased, Egypt became increasingly identified as an important factor in maintaining the security and well-being of the Gulf Arab states and the overall regional balance of power. Egypt's full return to a pivotal position in the Arab firmament was consecrated at the 1989 Casablanca Arab summit conference. By the end of the decade, every Arab country except Libya had reopened its embassy in Cairo (although Egyptian-Libyan relations were fully restored in all but name).

Ironically, it had been Iraq which had taken the lead in 1978-79 in imposing sanctions on Egypt. However, once it became clear to Saddam Husayn that he had overextended himself in Iran, he shifted course and aligned Iraq with Egypt and the conservative Arab oil-producing monarchies. Thanks to both Arab and Western assistance, the war ended with Iraq in a position of what can be termed "triumphant survivalism."

For a time after the war, it appeared that a new era of more sober, mature and stable inter-Arab relations was in the offing. Radical pan-Arabism had already met its Waterloo in June 1967, 2 and subsequent bids for Gamal Abd al-Nasir's mantle by Iraq and Syria, respectively, had come up short. To be sure, the Middle East remained a zone of endemic conflict and instability throughout the 1970s and '80s. But these conflicts were primarily normative, in that they had more to do with

territorial disputes between states and rival ambitions for hegemony (e.g., Libya in Chad, Syria in Lebanon, Egypt versus Libya, Syria versus Jordan, Syria versus Iraq, Morocco versus Algeria in the Western Sahara) than any overarching pan-Arab philosophy.

By the end of the 1980s, a number of factors were at work. The durability of multiple, independent Arab states had been proven, the continuous confrontation with Israel and Iran had produced a kind of collective exhaustion, and the end of the Cold War promised to have a major strategic impact on the Middle East. Moreover, pressing domestic needs in the face of falling oil-generated revenues, skewed development, rapidly increasing populations, and growing fundamentalist movements all seemed to necessitate an Arab political order which would place a premium on economic development and inter-state cooperation. In addition, the imminent EC economic union (scheduled for 1992) further reinforced the notion that if the Arab world was to avoid being further marginalized in the international system, it needed to create new cooperative structures.

To these ends, two new regional blocs were created in 1989. The first, the four-member Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), was composed of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and North Yemen and marked the formalization of the war-time Egyptian-Iraqi alliance. The second was the Arab Maghrib Union (AMU), composed of the five Arab states of North Africa. The six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), composed of Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab principalities along the Gulf, had been created in 1981. With the addition of the two new groups, 15 of the 22 members of the Arab League were now parties to more compact regional organizations based on geographical proximity, mutual affinities, and common economic and political interests and thus were presumably better equipped and more motivated than the unwieldy and historically ineffective Arab League to promote economic and political coordination.

Syria was the only major state standing apart from these developments, thanks to the long-standing contentiousness between Syria and Iraq. Their dispute, which dated back to the mid-1960s and was fueled by Syria's active support for Iran against Iraq during their eight-year war, was underpinned by geopolitical considerations and bitter personal and ideological rivalries between their respective wings of the Ba'th Party. In 1989, the continued bitterness between Damascus and Baghdad seemed to be the only dark cloud in an otherwise increasingly "purified Arab atmosphere." To extract revenge against Damascus for its alliance with Tehran, Saddam Husayn attempted to undermine Syria's position in Lebanon by supplying the anti-Syrian forces of Gen. Michel Awn with heavy weapons and taking the lead in anti-Syrian efforts in the Arab League. But Syria was able to withstand the pressure and maintain its preeminence in Lebanon. Moreover, at the end of 1989, Syria restored diplomatic relations with Egypt after a twelve-year hiatus, in part in order to create a counterweight to an increasingly assertive Iraq. Although Syria and Egypt still differed on key issues—the Arab-Israeli conflict, Yasir Arafat's leadership of the PLO, and Lebanon-high level dialogue and commercial relations rapidly expanded during the following months.

For Egypt, the normalization of ties with Syria seemed to place it squarely in the center of regional affairs. So did the decision by the Arab League Council in March 1990 to return the League's headquarters to Cairo from Tunis, where it had been transferred as part of the anti-Egyptian sanctions in 1979. To be sure, the League as an institution could count few achievements to its credit during its 45-year existence. Achieving its professed goals of greater Arab solidarity and "joint Arab action" in the service of a common Arab future had proven most often to be a chimera,

foundering on the shoals of very real disparities in social structures, regimes, histories and economies. Nonetheless, even if the League was mainly a debating society, its return to Cairo signified for Egyptians that the inter-Arab center of gravity had been restored to its rightful place. Concurrently, however, Saddam Husayn had begun making the most concerted bid for all-Arab leadership since the days of Gamal Abd al-Nasir, one which would rock the inter-Arab system to its core.

The first signs to that effect came at the four-way ACC summit conference held in Amman, Jordan, on 23-24 February 1990. The sharp contrast in tone and content between Husni Mubarak's and Saddam Husayn's public remarks at the summit pointed to serious differences between them over how to best ensure "the Arab future." Behind the scenes, it turns out, their differences were even sharper. These would be played out again at the all-Arab summit conference in Baghdad three months later. Still, Mubarak continued to publicly defend Saddam against Western and Israeli charges of aggressive intent. Both Mubarak and Saddam would avoid direct confrontations with one another right up until 2 August, the former in the hope that Saddam's good behavior could best be ensured by cajoling him, the latter so as not to rock the inter-Arab boat prematurely.

The issue on which both Arab leaders and the Arab media were expressing themselves most forcefully in early 1990 was that of Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel, the dimensions of which had only recently become apparent. For Saddam, it was an ideal tool through which to assert his brand of regional leadership. The end of the Cold War, he declared at the ACC meeting, had conferred heretofore unknown power on the US, enabling America to exert pressure on the Soviet Union for "an unprecedented exodus of Soviet Jews to Palestinian territory...whether in Israel or in the occupied territories." Moreover, he warned, the possibility of American-backed Israeli military adventures was very real, since time in the long run was now on the side of the Arabs, with their growing scientific and military capabilities. Saddam also foreshadowed his later actions by insisting that the US withdraw from the Persian Gulf and warned the Gulf Arab states of American dominance if they were "not careful." Finally, he suggested that the oil-producing Gulf states think of using their assets to advance overall Arab interests (as defined by him) in order to create a new international balance of power based on Arab strength, like-mindedness and a well-defined plan of action. 3

Mubarak's remarks struck a different balance. The ACC countries, he affirmed, had peaceful intentions, opposed war and violence as a means of solving disputes, and defended human rights. The immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel posed a danger only in regard to alleged plans to settle them in the West Bank. In any case, what was needed was a "historic reconciliation" between Israelis and Palestinians. 4

Behind the scenes, the Egyptians were even more out of step, and their suspicions regarding Iraqi intentions, and Jordanian ones as well, increased. In Egyptian eyes, King Husayn was acting as a point man for Saddam. On a number of occasions during the previous year, King Husayn had sought to add a military-security component to the ACC framework, something Cairo had both repeatedly nixed and informed the Saudis about, causing consternation in Riyadh. At the Amman meeting, King Husayn also told Mubarak that Jordan and Iraq intended to press for the creation of an "Arab cooperation fund" to channel money from the oil-rich Arab states to their poorer brethren. Egypt, the King said, would get the lion's share. But Mubarak refused to countenance "begging." In

the aftermath of the invasion of Kuwait, the Egyptians angrily concluded that Jordan had been working hand in glove with Iraq to enmesh Egypt in a "council of conspiracy" to bribe, or at least neutralize, Egypt's response to the planned invasion. 5

The Egyptian charge of Jordanian complicity with Saddam's ambitions seems unwarranted.

Jordan's efforts to add a defense component to the ACC framework should be understood in two contexts: its desire for support vis-a-vis Israel, which the Jordanians genuinely feared would seek to solve the Palestinian problem at its expense; and its need for a more stable inter-Arab equilibrium, which in turn would reinforce Jordan's own security. To that effect, Jordan repeatedly attempted to mediate the Iraqi-Syrian dispute.

The Iraqis, on the other hand, were clearly not equanimous regarding the regional status quo and viewed the ACC as a vehicle to promote their ambitions. With hindsight, it is clear that the Gulf states were in Saddam's sights. One account of the ACC discussions had Saddam directing the other leaders to inform the GCC states that he needed \$30 billion in aid: "If they don't give it to me," he is quoted as saying, "I will know how to take it." 6 More verifiable evidence points in the same direction: Saddam's warning to the Gulf states regarding a continued American presence; his concurrent diplomatic overtures to Iran which, if successful, would require Saddam to obtain compensation elsewhere, i.e., Kuwait; and his newly fiery statements on the Arab-Israeli conflict. With regard to the latter, Saddam's boasting of Iraqi capabilities to incinerate half of Israel and his willingness to do so, if necessary, marked the recycling of an old, and somewhat neglected, inter-Arab theme: adopting a militantly anti-Zionist posture in order to advance one's more immediate plans by legitimizing one's status as a defender of a sacred Arab cause and distracting attention from one's actual designs.

Hosting an all-Arab summit conference in Baghdad on May 28-30 was Saddam's next step. For it to take place, he had to overcome the reluctance in Cairo and Riyadh. Leaders in both capitals were by this time uneasy with Iraq's more aggressive posture and concerned that a stridently anti-American and anti-Israeli stand would be both ineffective and deleterious to their relations with the West. Egypt, in particular, was waiting to see if an American-led initiative to convene an Israeli-Palestinian meeting in Cairo would bear fruit. Moreover, the Egyptians and Saudis also believed that a Baghdad summit would merely reinforce inter-Arab divisions unless it was preceded by a Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation. By the second week of May, however, the prospects for either an Israeli-Palestinian meeting or a Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation had dimmed, and Baghdad had its way.

The Baghdad summit was boycotted by Syria (with Lebanon in tow as well). Ironically, Syria's absence gave Saddam a freer hand in demanding consensual resolutions backing Iraq against the Western and Israeli "threats." Mubarak did use the occasion to reiterate his insistence on solving conflicts by peaceful means and on promoting a more pragmatic and cooperative vision of the Arab future. Nonetheless, both the Saudi Arabia's King Fahd were on the defensive throughout the gathering, and the summit's final resolutions were more suited in tenor and tone to Iraq than to Egypt. In particular, Iraq received unequivocal support against the "threats, hostile tendentious political and media campaigns, and the scientific and technological ban" being imposed on it by the West. As for Western criticism of Iraq's growing unconventional weapons program, the summit confirmed Iraq's right to "the possession of advanced science and technology" for the purposes of safeguarding its security and promoting development, as well as Iraq's right "to reply to aggression by all means they deem fit." 7

In light of what was to come, this last statement was an ominous one. In fact, unbeknownst to observers at the time, Saddam delivered a not-so-veiled warning on the last day of the summit against "some of our Arab brothers" for ignoring OPEC production quotas and thus sending oil prices plummeting. Billions of dollars had been lost by Iraq, he said, and tens of billions by "the Arab nation" as a result of this unjustified mistake." Whether intended or not, the result was that war was being waged against Iraq by economic means, something to which Baghdad could no longer turn a blind eye. 8 To further emphasize its pan-Arab credentials and its intention to represent the interests of the Arab have-nots, the Iraqis also proposed the creation of an oil revenue-based adjustment fund to promote Arab development plans.

In retrospect, Saddam's warning was the opening shot in the campaign to take Kuwait. In an interview with an American journalist in late June, Saddam expounded further on the "conspiracy against the region's economy" being waged by "some of my friends in the region." 9 Nonetheless, neither the Kuwaitis nor the Saudis-nor the Egyptians, for that matter-ascribed too much significance at the time to his remarks. While aware of the need to appear to be placating him in the short term, they grossly underestimated Saddam's underlying intentions to radically alter the regional status quo.

The final count-down to the invasion began on 16 July. On that day, Iraq's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz dispatched a long memorandum to Arab League Secretary-General Chedli Klibi which starkly detailed the alleged crimes committed against Iraq by Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Together, they had worked to create an oil glut. Kuwait's sins also included the "theft" of oil from the Iraqi share of the al-Rumayla oil field astride their common border, physical encroachment on Iraqi territory, and refusal to forgive Iraq's wartime debts. 10 The next day, the anniversary of the Iraqi Ba'th party's takeover of power in 1968, Saddam Husayn went public, condemning the two Gulf states' "subversive policy" in support of the campaign being waged by "imperialism and Zionism" against Iraq's "scientific and technological advancement....Instead of rewarding Iraq (for defending the GCC states against the Iranian threat), they have...thrust their poisoned dagger into our back." 11 A subsequent memorandum to the Arab League Secretariat revealed details of Iraqi efforts during the previous two years to solve long-standing territorial issues with Kuwait, including Iraqi demands for access to the Kuwaiti islands of Bubiyan and Warba at the head of the Gulf. 12 Reports of large-scale Iraqi troop movements toward the Kuwaiti border indicated that this might not be a purely verbal exercise.

Responding to the sudden escalation of tension, the wheels of inter-Arab diplomacy quickly spun into high gear. Mediation efforts had always been an integral part of inter-Arab political life and not infrequently contributed to containing conflict situations within manageable proportions. In this instance, both Arab leaders and Arab and Western observers were confident that Arab mediators would again be successful.

The primary actors in the mediation phase were President Mubarak and King Fahd, assisted by King Husayn and Secretary-General Klibi. All apparently still believed that Saddam's ambitions could be held in check and that an all-out inter-Arab confrontation could be avoided. To that end, Mubarak advised the Kuwaitis to be flexible with regard to both financial concessions and territorial adjustments. 13

The crisis seemed to be on its way to a peaceful resolution on 25 July, when Mubarak issued an upbeat statement announcing that senior Kuwaiti and Iraqi officials would hold bilateral discussions (Iraq insisted that no third parties attend) in Saudi Arabia's port city of Jidda on 28 or 29 July. To improve the atmosphere further, the mutual media campaigns against one another were to be halted forthwith. The Iraqi media did temporarily cease its attacks on Kuwait but continued to pour condemnations on the UAE, which had asked for, and received a show of, air and naval support from the US. To further assuage Iraqi sensitivities, Mubarak made a special point of calling on the US "not to escalate the matter" so as to avoid further complicating the situation. 14 The Jidda meeting was held on 31 July, but the Iraqis claimed that it was a meeting of protocol only. It ended in confusion, and no date was set for the resumption of talks. Whether or not Iraq would have invaded Kuwait even if it had capitulated to all of Iraq's demands remains unknown. Kuwait had in fact sought to appear conciliatory by agreeing to write off Iraq's \$14 billion war time debt and to allow Iraq to use the smaller Warba island for its oil operations. 15 However, the Kuwaitis had no intention of meeting Iraq's very stiff conditions for a settlement, a fact of which the Iraqis were well aware. Thus, Iraq's behavior at Jidda indicates that the decision to invade had already been made. The chances of achieving the much sought-after yet perpetually elusive "Arab solution" to the crisis died at Jidda.

### **The Guns of August: Challenge and Response**

Only two Arab countries, Morocco and Algeria, issued same-day demnations of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Other Arab states initially held back, preferring intensive consultations with one another to determine the most effective response while preserving their own particular interests. By contrast, the UN Security Council was quick to pass resolutions condemning Iraq's invasion and demanding its unconditional withdrawal.

As is so often the case in inter-Arab politics, personalities now played a key role. Saddam Husayn had in essence thrown down the gauntlet; Husni Mubarak took it up. Having believed that he had obtained an unconditional commitment from Saddam to refrain from the use of force, Mubarak felt deeply insulted, even humiliated, by the invasion. Moreover, he was now well aware that his previous strategy of trying to contain Saddam had produced the opposite of the effect intended. Consequently, Mubarak now took the lead, in consultation with the Saudis, in mobilizing an anti-Saddam coalition.

In doing so, he found himself working at cross-purposes with King Husayn. In previous years, the two had evolved a pattern of almost bimonthly meetings. Now, however, they stood in sharp disagreement with one another. On the afternoon of 2 August, the two leaders met in Alexandria. King Husayn pressed Mubarak to delay in issuing Egypt's own condemnation and to block the Arab League Council from doing so as well, so as not to make Saddam more inflexible. Conscious that the Arab world was already trailing behind the UN Security Council, which "beat us to a decision, as though the issue were not Arab and the Arabs were a motionless corpse," 16 Mubarak uncomfortably agreed to a one-day delay and had his Foreign Ministry, and not his own office, issue the first Egyptian condemnation. On 3 August, King Husayn informed Mubarak that Saddam Husayn had agreed to the idea of a "limited summit." However, the King could give no assurances that Saddam was ready to commit himself beforehand to withdrawing his forces and restoring Kuwait's legitimate government. Given what the Egyptians and Saudis viewed as Saddam's stalling

tactics, the Arab League Council, meeting in emergency session in Cairo that evening, sharply condemned Iraqi "aggression" against Kuwait and called for the "immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of Iraqi troops. The statement also opposed any intervention by foreign forces. 17 Saddam's adversaries and sympathizers would exchange bitter accusations during the coming days and weeks over which party bore responsibility for the introduction of Western troops to the region.

The vote on the resolution provided the first concrete indication of inter-Arab divisions over the Iraqi invasion. Six League members of the 20 present (Libya did not attend) refused to endorse it: Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, the PLO, Sudan and Mauritania. Together with Tunisia, Algeria and occasionally Libya, this group would constitute a loose, minority alignment throughout the crisis. Many would find that their relations with the anti-Saddam majority coalition, spearheaded by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria and backed by the smaller GCC states, would be severely affected.

That same evening, Iraq proclaimed the establishment of a "Provisional Free Kuwaiti government" and that a withdrawal of its troops would begin on 5 August "unless something emerges that threatens the security of Kuwait and Iraq." 18 King Husayn and Yemen's President Ali Abdallah Salih found this declaration sufficient to press for a mini-summit in Jidda on 5 August, with the participation of Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Yemen. However, the meeting never materialized. The Jordanians and Iraqis accused the Saudis and Egyptians of reneging on a commitment to attend in order to welcome American forces to Saudi Arabia that began arriving on 7 August. Mubarak, on the other hand, denied that there had been an agreement to hold the meeting, since Saddam had not acceded to the necessary minimal conditions for holding one. Saudi Arabia's initial reaction to the invasion had been one of extreme caution, to the point where American officials were concerned that Riyadh would undercut its efforts to force a total withdrawal from Kuwait. 19 Contrary impulses were at work in Saudi Arabia: a concern with exacerbating an already acute situation by needlessly antagonizing Iraq, suspicions that Iraq had designs on Saudi Arabia's eastern provinces, uncertainty over the degree of the American commitment to Saudi Arabia's defense, and a desire to see if inter-Arab mediation efforts might bear fruit and to measure the extent of opposition to Iraq among other Arab governments. However, Saudi Arabia's inability to clarify Iraqi intentions and American determination to fully commit US forces to protect the Kingdom resulted in Saudi Arabia's abandonment of its long-held preference of keeping the American defensive presence "over the horizon," that is, off of Saudi soil. 20 By this time, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had so polarized the Arab world that the stage was set for the most openly confrontational Arab summit conference since the first one was convened in 1964.

The last all-Arab summit in Cairo had been held in 1976. That one, which put the collective Arab seal of approval on political and security arrangements for Lebanon and established common guidelines regarding the Arab-Israeli peace process, was a model of Arab consensus fashioned out of the conflicting views of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. 21 Fifteen years later, these three countries now found themselves on the same side of the inter-Arab fault line created by the Iraqi invasion and determined to use the Cairo summit to further their common aims. On the other side, Iraq came to Cairo in a combative mood, while its sympathizers were anxious to soften anti-Iraqi sentiment. Thus, instead of a consensual summit celebrating Egypt's renewed pride of place in the Arab League, the emergency meeting in Cairo, which convened on 10 August at Mubarak's initiative, deepened inter-Arab divisions in an unprecedented fashion. Instead of presiding benignly over a new era of inter-Arab harmony, Mubarak was now forcefully taking the lead in combating



Saddam Husayn's bid for regional hegemony. Doing so marked the renewal of an enduring pattern in Arab and Middle Eastern history: the competition between Mesopotamian and Nile Valley-based power centers for regional preeminence.

The Egyptian President and his GCC allies sought two concrete steps from the summit. The first action they wanted taken was the dispatch by Arab governments of armed forces to the region. Were the Iraqis to withdraw either wholly or even partially from Kuwait, an Arab peacekeeping force would be installed along the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border, as had been done during the Iraqi-Kuwait crisis of 1961, until a negotiated settlement of outstanding issues could be reached. Given Iraq's defiant stand, however, the intent at this stage was for Arab troops to take up defensive positions alongside of Saudi Arabian forces facing down Iraqi units across the border in Kuwait. Doing so would mark the most tangible expression possible of Arab solidarity with the Saudis against the perceived Iraqi threat. Moreover, and even more importantly, an Arab military presence in Saudi Arabia would legitimize the other act which Egypt and the GCC states desired from the summit—the endorsement of Saudi Arabia's invitation to American forces to enter the Kingdom to assist in its defense, an invitation whose unstated corollary was the application of at least the threat of force in order to compel Iraq to disgorge Kuwait. The Egyptian-GCC strategy at the summit was to submit a prepared resolution to that effect and bring it to a vote as quickly as possible.

Their opponents tried a number of different avenues to block the Egyptian-led majority. The Iraqis were utterly defiant, even threatening at times. PLO leader Yasir Arafat, Libya's Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi and Yemen's President Ali Abdallah Salih all sought to forestall a condemnation by having the summit send a committee to Baghdad for talks with Saddam. However, the Egypt-Syria-GCC group considered it a non-starter without a prior Iraqi commitment to the status quo ante and thus would not even allow the idea of a mission to Baghdad to be discussed. As the day went on, the Egyptians became more and more convinced that Arafat was merely doing Iraq's bidding by trying to divert the summit's attention from the issue at hand. 22

Despite the lack of consensus, the Egyptians and Saudis mustered a majority of 12 states behind Arab League Resolution 195. Its operative parts denounced Iraq's "threats" to the GCC states and its concentration of troops on the Saudi border and then expressed support for the steps taken on behalf of Saudi Arabia's "right of legitimate defense," namely, the request for foreign forces to be stationed in Saudi Arabia. This right was anchored in the Arab League's Joint Defense Pact of 1950, Article 51 of the UN Charter, and Security Council Resolution 661 adopted four days earlier. In addition, clause six of the resolution declared the summit members' intent to comply with the request from Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states to dispatch Arab forces to help them defend their territories "against any foreign aggression." 23

The 12 states favoring resolution 195 were: Egypt, the six GCC states, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Somalia, and Djibouti. Three participants voted against-Iraq, Libya and the PLO (which on the following day changed its vote to one of abstention); Algeria and Yemen abstained, and Jordan, Sudan and Mauritania expressed reservations. Tunisia had already expressed its position by not attending. Never before in the 46-year history of the Arab League had such a controversial resolution been adopted in the face of active or passive opposition by almost half of the member states. Since the early 1980s, there had been repeated talk among both Arab officials and intellectuals regarding the need for Arab majorities to make operative decisions even when an

Arab consensus was lacking. Most of the time, support for this view stemmed from frustration over Syria's ability to effectively block decisive action on a wide variety of issues. 24 Ironically, Syria was now an important part of the majority grouping aligned against Iraq. In praising Mubarak's decision to push through the resolution, an Egyptian journalist declared the conference was a sign that the Arabs were entering the "spirit of the age," and that the summit's results were not a sign of division but a "form of resolution" which had always been required. 25

Mubarak wasted no time in dispatching forces to Saudi Arabia. The first of what would come to be 30,000 Egyptian troops began arriving on 11 August. Morocco followed shortly afterwards with a symbolic contingent of between 1,000-1,200 troops (a 5,000 man unit had been stationed in the UAE since 1986). The arrival of Syrian troops was especially significant in political terms. Given Syria's traditional posture as the standard bearer of pan-Arabism and resister to American preeminence in the region, its participation made the anti-Saddam coalition more than a club of conservative, pro-Western regimes. By the end of the year, the breakdown of Arab armed forces deployed in Saudi Arabia under a Saudi-headed unified command was as follows: Egypt 30,000; Syria 17,000; Morocco 1,000-1,200; Kuwait 3,000-5,000 and the four smaller GCC principalities approximately 3,100. Token Egyptian, Moroccan and Syrian contingents were also deployed in the UAE. With Saudi Arabia's 45,000-man force included, the total number of Arab ground combat troops taking part in the international coalition against Iraq was approximately 100,000.

As for those who opposed the Arab League's resolution, the common theme running through their statements was that the crisis was being exploited by the West to impose economic and military hegemony in the region. While most emphasized their support for the principle of Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, they were like-minded in declaring that foreign intervention posed the greater threat to the region and had made it that much more difficult to mediate a solution. 26

Apart from these common threads, each party was acting according to a number of more specific considerations. Saddam Husayn's depiction of himself as the hero of the poor Arab masses and defender of Islamic and Arab sanctity against corrupt Arab regimes and the villainous, imperialist West resonated in a number of Arab countries. In Algeria, the intensely competitive political environment made the Gulf crisis an important issue around which both the Islamic fundamentalist and secular opposition groups and the increasingly vulnerable ruling Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) tried to mobilize their supporters. Tunisia's reluctance to oppose Iraq was also partly due to the government's concern with not giving Tunisian fundamentalists political ammunition. The presence of similar sentiment in Morocco compelled King Hasan, a member of the anti-Saddam coalition, to tread lightly as well.

Jordan, more than any other Arab country, found itself caught between competing currents. Like Algeria, Jordan was in the midst of a significant opening up of its political system, a process which had already witnessed the emergence of a strong Islamic fundamentalist movement now utterly opposed to Western intervention. Moreover, the Palestinian "street," in both the East and West Banks, was extremely vocal in support of Saddam in light of his promises to effectively challenge Israel. In fact, only two days after the Cairo summit, Saddam sought to capitalize on this sentiment by linking any solution to the Gulf crisis with a resolution to the Palestinian question and, for good measure, Syria's domination of Lebanon. Given the favorable reaction among Palestinians, King Husayn believed that he could ill afford to even appear to be swimming against the tide of his own public opinion.

Other factors were at work as well. Jordan had been one of Iraq's most ardent supporters during the Iraq-Iran war and, as a result, had derived considerable economic benefit from the relationship, particularly in the realm of overland trade and transit, which had come to constitute 25 percent of Jordan's GNP. The imposition of UN economic sanctions against Iraq would cause severe damage to the Jordanian economy. During the previous year, the King had broadened areas of cooperation between the two countries to the military field as well, as he sought to bolster Jordan's strategic posture vis-a-vis Israel. The risks entailed in too tight an embrace of the much stronger Iraq could not have been lost on the King. Nonetheless he deemed it prudent to forge friendly ties with the growing power to the East, even while maintaining good relations with his other Arab neighbors. With the onset of the crisis, however, this became untenable.

No one was more angered with King Husayn's position than Saudi Arabia. The King's mediation efforts, his criticism of the Cairo summit and of the West's purported designs to dominate the oil fields, and his unwillingness to publicly criticize Saddam all led the Saudis to conclude that he was acting as Saddam's apologist and advocate. Consequently, whatever financial commitments the Saudis had made at the May Baghdad summit were now inoperative. Thus, Saudi aid, which had amounted to 15 percent of the annual budget, and Saudi shipments of oil ceased. Moreover, a number of Jordanian diplomats were expelled from Riyadh, the Saudi-Jordanian border was closed for a time, and the Saudis even reportedly began extending more active support to major tribes and clans in the southern part of Jordan contiguous to Saudi Arabia.<sup>27</sup> The crisis in Saudi-Jordanian relations also carried echoes of what had been a central thread of inter-Arab relations for more than half a century, up until the end of the 1950s: the competition between the Saudi and Hashimite royal houses. King Husayn's directive to the Jordanian media that he be referred to as sharif (a reminder that as a Hashimite he was a descendant from the family of the Prophet Muhammad) particularly irked the Saudis, who were already sensitive to Iraqi charges that they had forfeited the right to serve as protector of the holy sites of Islam by allowing the "infidels" to trample on Saudi, and therefore sacred Islamic ground. Moreover, the title immediately evoked the memory of Husayn's great-grandfather, Sharif Husayn's who had ruled Mecca and Medina until being ousted by the Saudis in the mid-1920s. Could King Husayn's tilt toward Iraq and renewed emphasis on his sharifian lineage be a prelude to a grand scheme to wrest the Arabian peninsula from Saudi hands and restore the Hijaz to the Hashimites? With the Middle East constituting fertile ground for conspiracy theories, this one was not dismissed by the Saudis.

Although less vulnerable than Jordan, recently united Yemen shared some of the same dilemmas. Like Jordan, it had derived economic benefits from its support for Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war. Like Jordan as well, it hoped to benefit, both economically and politically, from membership in the ACC, which held out the promise of much needed development aid and political support from Iraq and Egypt. With the imposition of UN sanctions, Yemen, again like Jordan, found itself torn between international pressures to tow the line and Iraqi inducements and blandishments to avoid compliance. The latter may have included efforts to station Iraqi air force planes on Yemeni soil. Moreover, as the only Arab League member on the UN Security Council, Yemen was repeatedly forced to take a stand on the crisis in the full glare of the international limelight. While voting against only two of the 12 UN resolutions passed between 2 August and 31 December, it consistently sought to soften or modify the terms of the UN resolutions and often abstained or absented itself from the voting. Finally, like Jordan, Yemen's tilt toward Iraq enraged the Saudis,

who were already concerned over the potential long-term threat to its southern border posed by a unified Yemen, 28 and not dismissive of the possibility that Yemen too was part of an Iraqi conspiracy to dismember the Kingdom. 29 To punish the Yemenis, the Saudis imposed strict residency regulations on Yemeni nationals working in the Kingdom, resulting in the exodus of an estimated 1 million persons. Their departure carried the bonus of easing a potential threat to Saudi Arabia's internal security. The Saudis also acted to mobilize Yemeni tribal leaders on their behalf and against the central government, a time-honored pattern. 30 For Yemen, the sudden massive return of so many people created a crushing burden, and the specter of increased political instability hung over the government's head. Like Jordan, Yemen had been put on notice by the Saudis that there was no middle ground in this most divisive of any inter-Arab conflicts.

The PLO's situation was especially untenable. Having lost much of his freedom of operation in Lebanon and with Tunisia a poor center for training and operations, Arafat had transferred much of his activities to Baghdad during the previous four years. Saddam had not imposed conditions on him during 1988-89, when Arafat sought to translate the Palestinian intifada into concrete political gains. In June 1990, however, the PLO's Iraqi-based operations were put on international display when one of its constituent groups launched an unsuccessful raid on Israeli beaches, an act which led to the suspension of the American-PLO dialogue. Now, with the Gulf crisis unfolding, Saddam was calling in his chips, and to a receptive audience. Within the PLO, as well as the Palestinian rank and file in Jordan and the Israeli-occupied territories, the image of Saddam as a latter-day Saladin ready to punish Israel with the sword had great appeal. Arafat himself seems to have become enamored with Saddam's vision of Arab power as well. Thus, he tilted toward the Iraqis, to the outrage of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, his main financial backers. No amount of verbal twists and turns could undo the image of Arafat embracing Saddam, an image which was projected on television screens across the Middle East and the world at large.

The Cairo summit thus consecrated the new lines of division in the Arab League which had been forming in the previous weeks. A number of questions remained, however. How much like-mindedness would the key parties of the anti-Saddam coalition-Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria-demonstrate? What would be the attitude of the anti-Saddam coalition in the event that the Iraqis remained steadfast against international pressures to withdraw from Kuwait? Would the Arab countries support a military option? Would they participate in it, and to what extent? Conversely, how would they react in the face of Iraqi flexibility? Would new life be breathed into mediation efforts? How much would the Palestinian issue intrude, either by Iraqi design or independent of it, on the calculations of Arab decision-makers? Would there be developments in the "Arab street" which would compel policy reassessments? And what role would Iran play in the crisis?

The answers to these questions can be summarized briefly. The anti-Saddam coalition remained firm throughout the countdown to January 15, 1991, the deadline set by the UN Security Council for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Iraq's unwillingness to countenance seriously the myriad proposals tendered by would-be Arab and international mediators made it easier for the Arab members of the anti-Saddam coalition to maintain their position and strengthened their resolve to participate in the upcoming military operation to expell Iraq from Kuwait. As the party most traditionally opposed to Western domination of the region, Syria was thought to be a weak link in the international coalition opposing Iraq. However, Syria reaped numerous tangible benefits by remaining in the anti-Saddam camp. Its isolation in the region and internationally was eased, epitomized by George Bush's meeting with Syria's President Asad in Geneva, and the Saudis

immediately came forth with much needed financial aid, estimated at \$2 billion. Syria's alliance with Iran was newly appreciated by the GCC states, so much so that Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad could break a long-held taboo in late September by making his first official visit to Tehran. Although the two sides did not completely see eye-to-eye on the Gulf crisis, particularly with regard to the presence of foreign forces and the nature of post-crisis security arrangements for the region, Asad left satisfied that Iran would continue to oppose the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and observe the UN-sponsored economic sanctions against Baghdad. 31 Most important, perhaps, Damascus apparently received a green light from the Saudis and the US in Lebanon (whether explicit or tacit is not known) to remove rebel General Michel Awn and impose a Pax Syriana, based on the 1989 Ta'if Accords.

In mid-October, the violence on Jerusalem's Temple Mount temporarily shifted the focus of Arab and international attention back to the Palestinian-Israeli arena. However, to the relief of the anti-Saddam coalition, and to the disappointment of Iraq and the PLO, the furor over the Temple Mount incident proved to be only a temporary detour from the ongoing Gulf crisis. As for the "Arab street," Saddam's Robin Hood stance against the wealthy Arab shaykhs and evil Western imperialists did resonate among Palestinians, in Yemen and in North Africa, where the Gulf crisis was wound up with domestic political considerations. Saddam's message may have had some appeal in Egypt as well, but the government made sure to place limits on the expression of pro-Iraqi sentiment. The bottom line was that Saddam's appeal to the "Arab masses" to rise up and punish his opponents never happened. He had far less public appeal than Gamal Abd al-Nasir during the 1950s and '60s and a record of brutality and opportunism almost unmatched in the Arab world. Moreover, his Arab opponents possessed far greater means to maintain internal stability. Finally, there was his undeniable, aggressive actions against a fellow Arab state, Kuwait. Thus, Saddam's invokings of pan-Arabism and Islamic piety could not generate a response sufficient to reverse the steadily tightening circle around Iraq.

As the January 15 deadline approached, King Husayn lamented the "great tragedy" which would result from the impending "destructive war." It could be avoided only by ending the "embargo on dialogue" and giving Arab mediation a chance. 32 But the middle ground that the King had been seeking since the start of the crisis did not exist. Despite King Husayn's insistence, Saddam Husayn showed no inclination to negotiate his withdrawal from Kuwait. Thus, Saddam's brazen act on 2 August had rent the Arab world asunder, leaving little or no room for would-be rebuilders of the shattered vessel of Arab consensus, not to mention the cherished and abiding principle of Arab solidarity.

### **The Denouement and Beyond**

The swiftness of the war and the decisive defeat of Iraq was gratifying to Saddam's Arab adversaries. Fears of widespread domestic unrest had proved unfounded; Iraq's formidable military machine had been decimated almost without a fight; Israel's restraint had allowed the anti-Saddam Arab states to avoid the potentially embarrassing situation of fighting on the same side with Israel against another Arab country; Iraq's defeat did not result in its dismemberment, a matter of some concern to both the Saudis and the Egyptians; and aligning with the victorious US promised to result in tangible benefits.

The war's results initially held out the prospects for significant modification on two issues: the question of collective security in the Gulf and for prospects of progress in Arab-Israeli negotiations. These changes were expected to be underpinned by sober-minded, hard-headed attitudes shorn of the debilitating illusions of pan-Arab grandeur which had been so damaging in the past. President Bush's talk of a "new world order" was mirrored by Saddam's Arab opponents. A "new Arab order" was in the offing, declared GCC Secretary-General Abdallah Bishara. It would be based on "legality, mutual respect, noninterference in internal affairs, and the primary role of the economy to create mutual interests." 33

On 6 March, the foreign ministers of the six GCC states, Egypt and Syria issued the "Damascus Declaration," their blueprint for the post-war era. Its guiding principles were those which Husni Mubarak had been trumpeting in collective Arab forums for years: good neighborliness, the respect for all states' unity and territorial integrity, the inadmissibility of seizing territories by force, nonintervention in each other's internal affairs, the settling of disputes by peaceful means, and the bolstering of inter-Arab economic cooperation with the goal of establishing an Arab economic grouping able to keep pace with international developments, most notably the imminent economic unification in Europe. In deference to the GCC states, which had found themselves vulnerable during the Gulf crisis to charges of being stingy with "Arab" resources, the declaration emphasized the importance of respecting "each Arab state's sovereignty over its natural and economic resources."

Gulf security figured prominently in the declaration. The presence of Egyptian and Syrian forces in the Gulf, it declared, constituted "a nucleus for an Arab peace force" which would guarantee the security of the GCC states and "the effectiveness of the comprehensive Arab defense order." With Iran in mind, the "Damascus Eight" made sure to stress that their program was not directed against anyone and could serve as the basis for dialogue with "Islamic and international parties." 34 One week later, following an unprecedented meeting with US Secretary of State James Baker, their eight foreign ministers repeated the essence of the declaration, with accompanying praise for America's role in liberating Kuwait and President Bush's remarks on the need to solve the Palestinian question. A new era, in which inter-Arab, regional and Arab-Western security arrangements would be knit together to stabilize decisively the Gulf, thus seemed to be imminent.

Crucial matters, however, remained unsettled: the size and composition of the Arab peace force, the nature of the Arab-Iranian relationship, and the extent and length of the US presence. The Iranians were said to be strongly opposed to the continued presence of any non-Gulf Arab forces in the region. The Egyptians, for their part, felt unappreciated for their contribution to the war effort, were piqued by what they considered to be an inadequate share of contracts for Egyptian companies to participate in Kuwait's reconstruction, and were uneasy about the GCC's eagerness to include the Iranians in security discussions. In a calculated move to draw attention to their grievances, Egypt brought most of its armed forces home in mid-May, with Syria following suit, although both reiterated their willingness to participate in a security framework for the Gulf. Consultations among the GCC states, between the GCC states and Iran, and among the Damascus Declaration signatories continued into the summer months, with the intent of ironing out the details of a security system and institutionalizing their alliance. Ironically, the defeat of Iraq, Iran's slow shift toward greater pragmatism in foreign affairs, and the popularity in Kuwait of the Western, as opposed to Egyptian and Syrian troop presence had combined to lower the sense of urgency surrounding Gulf security.

Whether this would result in the reemergence of differences among the parties or, alternatively, give them the time to devise a durable framework remained to be seen.

The slow pace of forging a regional security system was paralleled in the Arab-Israeli sphere. While an explicit linkage between the events in the Gulf and the Arab-Israeli conflict had been steadfastly resisted by the anti-Saddam coalition throughout the Gulf crisis, there was considerable hope in the Arab world that the end of the Gulf war would lead to renewed Western efforts to promote an Arab-Israeli peace process. However, neither the GCC states, nor Syria, nor Israel for that matter, were themselves eager to undertake bold diplomatic initiatives alone. By the end of Secretary of State Baker's fifth visit to the Middle East since the cessation of the Gulf war, each party to the conflict desired to avoid being branded as the primary obstacle to a peace process. There was thus enough operating room for the US Administration to at least keep Arab-Israeli diplomacy alive, and by mid-summer, the US had narrowed procedural gaps between Israel and its Arab neighbors and was on the verge of issuing invitations for a regional peace conference.

The GCC states were a special target of American efforts to promote confidence-building measures. The results were mixed. The GCC countries balked at rescinding the Arab boycott against Israel and at actively participating in a Middle East peace conference. On the other hand, after much prodding, they agreed that a GCC representative could attend such a conference as an observer. In mid-July, the Saudis also expressed a willingness to suspend the boycott as a *quid pro quo* to Israel's suspending the building of settlements in the territories occupied by Israel in the June 1967 war. The GCC states were also apparently willing to meet with Israel in the context of a parallel conference addressing issues of regional development. What was clear was that their most pressing priorities were elsewhere: the reconstruction of Kuwait, sorting out Gulf security arrangements, keeping a close eye on developments in Iraq, and opening up a new chapter in relations with Iran. With regard to the Palestinian question, Saudi Arabia's and Kuwait's disgust with the PLO leadership was well known. However, this did not translate into greater Saudi and Kuwaiti willingness to press actively for changes in the leadership of the Palestinian national movement or indicate an abandonment of the Palestinian cause *per se*. Nor did it result in a greater willingness to adopt a higher profile in Arab-Israeli diplomacy.

Syria was extremely ambivalent about an Arab-Israeli initiative and spent much time weighing its options. Since 1974, the Arab-Israeli status quo (regarding the Golan Heights and the Palestinian question) had allowed Hafiz al-Asad to win legitimacy as the steadfast standard bearer of the Arab cause against Israel, to consolidate Syria's preeminence in Lebanon and to keep his country in a perpetually mobilized, and therefore politically quiescent, state. Moreover, Syria had derived much financial and political benefit already from its participation in the anti-Saddam coalition without having to alter its long-held positions on Arab-Israeli issues. Thus, Syria's traditional instincts to avoid rushing into a diplomatic process remained strong, particularly in the absence of any indication that negotiations with Israel would produce both a complete return of the Golan Heights to Syria and achievement of Palestinian self-determination in a manner for which Syria could take credit. On the other hand, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War and the profound changes in the Soviet Union left Asad without the possibility of achieving his long-sought goal of strategic parity with Israel. The Middle East after the Gulf war was almost an exclusive bailiwick for American diplomacy. One cannot therefore rule out that Asad was beginning to adjust his sights accordingly. An additional incentive toward flexibility emanates from

the Israeli-Palestinian sphere: the closer the reality of a separate Palestinian-Israeli dialogue, whose success would leave him alone facing Israel on the Golan and tarnish his claim to Arab leadership, the more likely he is to insist on being part of any diplomatic process (which would not preclude, and might even be complemented by, military moves, by proxy or directly, either in southern Lebanon or along the ceasefire line in the Golan Heights).

Egypt, the leader of the anti-Saddam coalition and the only Arab country to have concluded a formal peace with Israel, was particularly interested in seeing an Arab-Israeli peace process get underway and was willing to serve as a venue for Israeli-Palestinian meetings. For Mubarak, it would amount to a further vindication of his policies in the eyes of the Egyptian populace and in the region. He would also accrue further tangible benefits in the sphere of Egyptian-American relations. But Egypt's leverage on the other Arab parties and Israel remained limited.

As for the Arab "losers," those who had either listed toward Saddam or were perceived as such, the post-war period was a time of both stock-taking and attempting to repair the damage to relations with the anti-Saddam group. The PLO, in particular, was faced not only with internal rumblings over its tilt toward Iraq, but also with an increasingly assertive and restive Palestinian constituency in the West Bank and Gaza, which is desperate for tangible progress after three and one-half years of the intifada. Palestinian self-criticism and reassessment was considerable, particularly in the West Bank, and included calls for giving Palestinians in the territories greater weight within PLO institutions. To repair its tarnished image and weakened standing, the PLO sought to rebuild bridges to the Saudis, Egyptians and Syrians. The increasingly precarious state of Arafat's loyalists in southern Lebanon vis-a-vis the Syrian-backed central government and pro-Syrian militias made a Syrian-Arafat understanding essential, but unlikely. The PLO thus needed to renew ties with Egypt and Saudi Arabia which could act as a counter-weight to Syrian pressure. But thus far, the GCC states have not hurried to repair their links with Arafat. Some of the same considerations were behind the PLO's demonstration of tactical flexibility in Arab-Israeli procedural matters. In a move similar to one taken in the aftermath of Arafat's expulsion from Lebanon in the early 1980s, the PLO agreed to countenance participation in a Middle East peace conference in either a Jordanian-Palestinian or united Arab delegation.

King Husayn, for his part, emerged from the war largely unscathed politically, although the economic devastation wrought by the crisis was expected to take a long time to repair. The US, Israel and even Saudi Arabia apparently developed a renewed appreciation for Hashimite Jordan's role as a moderate, buffer state. Moreover, the King's standing among the Palestinians on both banks of the Jordan River was higher than it had been in many years. Thus, he was able to reduce the influence of Islamic fundamentalists in his cabinet, to speak of the need to break old taboos regarding direct, above board meetings between Arabs and Israelis, and to make himself available as an interlocutor for Palestinians, should they so desire. It remains premature, however, to speak of the renewal of a "Jordanian option" for the West Bank and Gaza. If Jordan is to play a role, it can only be done in conjunction with West Bank Palestinians and with the assent of the PLO leadership. But the PLO was fearful that the recent governmental reshuffle in Jordan, which is now headed by a prime minister of Palestinian origin, might somehow usurp the PLO's negotiating prerogative.



It is clearly too soon for a definitive evaluation of the long-term impact of the Gulf crisis on regional and domestic Arab politics. But preliminary observations may nevertheless be of some value. In geopolitical terms, Saddam Husayn's Iraq was unabashedly revisionist. Thus, his withdrawal from Kuwait and the partial destruction of his armed forces both restored the territorial status quo ante and insured the continued survival of the Gulf Arab states. On the other hand, Saddam's continued survival lingers on as a cause of concern and explains Kuwait's preference for a continued Western military presence. One important, related lesson of the war was that the US is willing to commit forces to the defense of regional allies and vital economic interests. How that will effect the course of future regional disputes cannot be known, but the perception of American resolve will undoubtedly have to be factored into the calculations of policy makers in the region.

Iraq's defeat provided post-Khomeini Iran the opportunity to reassert its geopolitical preeminence in the Gulf. As for Iraq's western flank, Hafiz al-Asad could take great satisfaction in the destruction of the armed might of Saddam Husayn, his most bitter foe, and in the accompanying political benefits he obtained from the West and in Lebanon. But it also meant that the chance of reviving the eastern military front against Israel was now ever more remote. In ideological terms, Saddam's failed bid to drape himself in the mantle of militant pan-Arabism demonstrated anew what many observers have been saying for some time—that however strong the emotive power of Arabism, it could no longer compete as a workable, practical ideology with *raison d'etat*. The triumph of *raison d'etat* also meant that alliances and/or agreements with non-Arab countries, both in the region and beyond, will be considered even more legitimate than before. The implications of this for the long-term evolution of Arab-Israeli relations should not be underestimated.

The Arab world is now truly multi-polar, with the unabashed defense of national prerogatives a principle overriding all others. Inter-Arab relations will always have a special cast, owing to common linguistic, cultural and historical bonds as well as common problems. But the golden days of a charismatic leader leading the Arab world against the West has seemingly forever passed. For the foreseeable future, the only workable mode of pan-Arabism will be the forging of cooperation between independent states on the basis of mutual interests. This was in fact supposed to be the *raison d'etre* of the ACC. However, its collapse has not discredited the model of regional groupings *per se*, but only compelled a closer examination of the underlying motivations of potential partners in future Arab groupings. Ironically, the triumph of the regional status quo leaves room for the continued survival of the venerable and much-maligned Arab League as a collective Arab umbrella, even if its effectiveness in promoting closer inter-Arab ties continues to be limited.

For all of his cynicism and attempts at self-aggrandizement, Saddam Husayn's attempt to appear as a self-styled Robin Hood and Saladin all rolled into one possessed at least transitory appeal in the Arab world. As such, the crisis pointed to the underlying acute issues confronting Arab governments and societies: huge disparities between Arab "haves" and "have-nots"; failures to develop productive economies; large numbers of young, politically mobilized, but politically disenfranchised youth; and the continued appeal of Muslim fundamentalist movements. Arab intellectuals have redoubled their calls for building real democratic institutions as the only way out of their economic, social and political quagmire. Indeed the questions of democratization, political participation and even human rights are in the air, from Algeria to Jordan to Kuwait to Iraq itself. So far, however, those who have benefited most from liberalization steps have been Muslim

fundamentalist movements, which too often view the democratic process expediently, as a way to attain power but without a commitment to genuine democratic politics.

As part of a diverse, and multi-polar system, each Arab country will follow its own course. But each will also be closely watched throughout the rest of the Arab world. Saddam Husayn's audacious behavior demonstrated that actions by one Arab state still carry important consequences for all the others. Inter-Arab alliances will thus continue to be formed, dissolved and reformed according to the momentary exigencies of national self-interest. The primary challenge for the ruling elites in each Arab country is to juggle the conflicting pressures imposed by internal, regional and international demands in order to ensure their continued survival and achieve a modicum of progress for their populations.

## Notes

- Note 1: Speech to the Moroccan parliament, Rabat TV, 12 October - Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS), Near East and South Asia, 16 October 1990. Back.
- Note 2: Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1978-79, p. 357. Back.
- Note 3: Iraqi News Agency (INA), 19 February, Amman TV, 24 February - FBIS, 20, 27 February 1990. Back.
- Note 4: Amman TV, 24 February, Radio Amman, 25 February - FBIS, 27, 28 February 1990. Back.
- Note 5: Radio Cairo, 28 August - FBIS, 29 August; Middle East News agency (hereafter MENA), 27 September - FBIS, 28 September; interview with Iraq's First Deputy Prime Minister, Taha Yasin Ramadan, al-Tadamun, 29 October - FBIS, 30 October; Judith Miller, in *New York Times* (NYT), 12 November 1990. Back.
- Note 6: Mubarak was said to have angrily refused to be "a party to extortion." Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, *Saddam Hussein and The Crisis in the Gulf* (Times Books, NY, 1990), pp. 12-13. Back.
- Note 7: For text of the summit's final statement, see Radio Baghdad, 30 May - FBIS, 31 May 1990. Back.
- Note 8: Radio Baghdad, 18 July - FBIS, 19 July 1990. Back.
- Note 9: Interview with Wall Street Journal, text released by INA, 1 July - FBIS, 3 July 1990. Back.
- Note 10: Text of Aziz's letter to Klibi in INA, 18 July - FBIS, 18 July 1990. Back.
- Note 11: Radio Baghdad, 17 July - FBIS, 17 July 1990. Back.
- Note 12: INA, 24 July - FBIS, 24 July 1990. Iraq possessed only 35 miles of shoreline on the Gulf, much of which was dominated by the two islands. Back.
- Note 13: Radio Cairo, 8 August - FBIS, 8 August 1990. Back.
- Note 14: Middle East News Agency (MENA), 25 July - FBIS, 26 July 1990. Back.
- Note 15: Interview with Kuwait's Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah, al-Musawwar, 17 August 1990. Back.
- Note 16: Radio Cairo, 8 August - FBIS, 8 August 1990. Back.
- Note 17: MENA, 3 August - FBIS, 6 August 1990. Back.
- Note 18: Radio Baghdad, 3 August - FBIS, 6 August 1990. Back.
- Note 19: Thomas L. Friedman, NYT, 5 August 1990. Back.
- Note 20: On Saudi Arabia's inability to obtain reassurances from Iraq that its forces were not being deployed to threaten Saudi Arabia, see the comments by Saudi Ambassador to Washington Prince Bandar Bin Sultan as relayed to US Congressman Stephen Solarz, NYT, 4 October; on Cheney's visit, a different version of Saudi Arabia's decision to accept American troops and Bandar's role in

the process, see Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, (NY, Simon & Schuster, 1991), pp. 239-77. Back.

Note 21: Daniel Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," *Middle East Contemporary Survey (MECS)*, Vol. 1, 1976-77, Colin Legum and Haim Shaked, eds. (Holmes and Meier, NY, 1978), pp. 147-50 Back.

Note 22: *Al-Ahram*, *al-Akhbar* and *al-Gumhuriyya*, 12 August 1990. Back.

Note 23: For the text of the resolution, see *MENA*, 10 August - FBIS, 13 August 1990. Back.

Note 24: Daniel Dishon and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in *MECS*, Vol VI, 1981-82, Legum, et. al. eds. (Holmes and Meier, NY, 1984), pp. 227-29. Back.

Note 25: *Al-Ahram*, 12 August 1990. Back.

Note 26: Tunisia's President Zayn Al-Abadin Ben Ali, in speech broadcast by Radio Tunis, 11 August - FBIS, 13 August; King Husayn's speech at Cairo summit, text released by Radio Amman, 12 August - FBIS 14 August 1990. Back.

Note 27: *Financial Times*, 1 October 1990. Back.

Note 28: According to Yemen's President Salih, the Saudis had actively tried to thwart the union by bribing South Yemeni officials; *NYT*, 20 October 1990. Back.

Note 29: *Al-Wafd*, 15 October 1990. Back.

Note 30: *`Ukaz*, 2 September - FBIS, 14 September; *al-Bilad*, 17 September; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 21 September - FBIS, 25 September 1990. Back.

Note 31: *Kayhan*, 27 September - FBIS, 11 October; *al-Ittihad*, 29 September; *Radio Monte Carlo*, 30 September - FBIS, 1 October 1990. Back.

Note 32: *Radio Amman*, 9 December - FBIS, 10 December 1990. Back.

Note 33: Interview in *La Repubblica*, 24-25 February - FBIS, 28 February 1991. Back.

Note 34: *Radio Damascus*, 6 March - FBIS, 7 March 1991. Back.