



# A Re-examination of the First Persian Gulf War and United States Foreign Policy towards Iraq: An Analysis of How Missed Dialogue and Missed Opportunities Changed the Fate of a Region

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A Re-examination of the First Persian Gulf War and United States Foreign Policy towards Iraq:  
An Analysis of How Missed Dialogue and Missed Opportunities Changed the Fate of a Region.

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A Thesis in the Field of International Relations  
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## Abstract

There have been a number of theories pertaining to the First Persian Gulf War (PGWI) including why or how the war started between Iraq and the United States (US) and the subsequent policy fallout in the Middle East. Some historians and scholars lay the blame at the feet of the US for missing several social and regional economic indicators that should have signaled to the West there was something amiss in Baghdad. Others insist it was the despotic military aspirations of Saddam Hussein who ultimately wanted to expand Iraqi influence upon the Arab states and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the region. This work reexamines how Hussein may have believed Iraq should be the prime state shaping policy in the region, rather than Western Governments. Comparatively in 1990, there was a stark realization that US foreign policy in the Middle East had become reactive rather than proactive. Such actions became a catalyst toward expediting a destabilizing US foreign policy in the Middle East over the next several decades.

## Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my kind and wonderful wife, Sharon, who works so hard in making sure our life and our little family is always taken care of and always functioning as it should be. She is an operating room registered nurse who went back to school and graduated with honors, Summa Cum Laud, with a Bachelor of Science in nursing. I am so proud of her. It is with her love, patience and support she helps to guide and inspire me to be a better man and husband and for that I am eternally grateful. I would also like to acknowledge my close friends, Harvard classmates and church family who encouraged me along the way, as I am sure they know who they are. In addition, I wanted to thank my thesis advisor, Harvard Professor Donald Ostrowski who always challenged me throughout the thesis proposal process and helped to provide sincere objectivity into the development of my thesis proposal. Lastly, I would like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Michael Miner, for his patience and input in helping me with the guidance and the overall direction of this thesis.

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## Preface

This thesis explores several questions regarding the events that transpired in 1990 between Iraq and the United States (US) prior to the First Persian Gulf War (PGWI). For example, how did the United States and its allies misinterpret both dialogue and intention given the history of Iraq's past actions? Furthermore, a corollary to that question is whether these misperceptions by the US and its coalition allies contributed to the failure of US foreign policy, resulting in Saddam Hussein's mistaken belief that he could invade Kuwait with impunity? Were the diplomatic overtones, signals and warnings by the US clear enough or direct enough for Hussein and his cabinet? Or did Hussein and those within his interior ministry believe it was in Iraq's best economic interest to mass forces at Kuwait's border in order to force Kuwait and OPEC at the bargaining table to establish oil prices and quotas? Where it appears that Hussein may have unknowingly began a course of action that put both his country and US led forces on a collision course towards war, by inadvertently creating an opportunity to prove to the whole world that he was the true Arab leader he projected himself to be.

Therefore, it is within this context in mind that two distinct hypotheses naturally begin to emerge within the scope of this writing. First, had the US been more deliberate in its dialogue with Saddam Hussein and taken a direct approach towards him and his senior staff regarding Iraq's preeminent invasion of Kuwait, it is plausible to consider that he could have been persuaded to withdraw his forces from Kuwait's border without sending US and allied forces into combat. In contrast, a second more nuanced hypothesis explores Hussein's calculated risk of massing troops at Kuwait's border to force negotiations between OPEC and Iraq. Where it is

conceivable to suggest that Hussein perceived that he was faced with no other choice but to invade Kuwait based on the perception that no one was willing to help Iraq's economy after its long war with Iran. Moreover, Hussein was purposely willing to deceive everyone, including his own Arab allies, if he believed that Kuwait could not be reasoned with in order to get a strategic advantage after the invasion had begun.

This thesis highlights examples of misperception regarding the failure US foreign policy to deter Saddam Hussein from invading Kuwait or face military interdiction, and Hussein's inept attempt at international diplomacy by massing troops at the border in order to force a deal between Iraq and Kuwait. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate a different approach towards the use and implementation of US foreign policy abroad. Had the US employed a direct and deliberate stick policy of deterrence, while simultaneously implementing a carrot policy of cooperation and understanding prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the first modern American conflict in the Middle East may have been a mere footnote in the history of the Persian Gulf. Instead, there is now widespread turmoil in the region including the destabilization of allies via the rise of a burgeoning Iranian hegemony. Absent a balancing power in Hussein's Iraq, the subsequent vacuum after his removal created opportunity for Tehran versus constraint.

By examining these questions more in depth within context this thesis, we can better understand events that transpired during 1990 that led up to PWGI in 1991. Foremost among them, a different perspective that more strongly considers important tools of American foreign policy that were either overlooked or are now thought of as less important. Any such analyses of this type may contribute to avoiding certain foreign policy outcomes, such as the experiences encountered with Iraq, when moving forward with other authoritarian run states.



## Key Terms and Models

According to Stephen Walt, the spiral model is where states are aggressive, solely because they are insecure, and reassuring them is one of the best ways to avoid war. In the deterrence model, in contrast, states are either aggressive or become aggressive because they are simply greedy or ideologically driven, and the only way to avoid war is to pose a credible existential threat that acts as a deterrence.<sup>1</sup>

CW (Chemical Weapons) – mainly used by Iraq prior to the First Persian Gulf War.

IR (International Relations) – the study of the interconnectedness of politics, economics, and the law at a global level.

IRG (Iraqi Republican Guard – approximately established in 1964-2003)

SIRG (Special Iraqi Republican Guard – approximately established 1992/1995-2003)

IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran – approximately established in 1979 to present)

ISIS/ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant)

NEA (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs aka: Bureau of Near East Asian Affairs)

ODSd (Operation Desert Shield – From: August 1990–January 1991)

ODSm (Operation Desert Storm – From: January 1991–February 1991)

PGWI (First Persian Gulf War – From: August 1990–February 1991)

PGWII (Second Persian Gulf War – From: March 2003–December 2011)

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “WikiLeaks, April Glaspie, and Saddam Hussein,” Foreign Policy.com, January 9, 2011. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/09/wikileaks-april-glaspie-and-saddam-hussein/> (accessed July 25, 2019).

UN / UNSC (United Nations and/or United Nations Security Council)

USSFRC (US Senate Foreign Relations Committee)

## Research Methods

Ultimately, this thesis will not be able to answer every question regarding US foreign policy towards Iraq prior to the PGWI due to a number of underlying factors. One of the main challenges faced while attempting to broach a subject like this, stems from limited access to important classified security transcripts or videos from Saddam Hussein's interrogations after his capture in 2003. Furthermore, most of Hussein's senior officials have either died or have removed themselves from public life altogether, making it difficult, if not impossible to list their version of events. However, senior advisor Tariq Aziz conducted a number of PBS Frontline and BBC interviews before he died in 2015 that provide new historical insight towards understanding the Iraq's perspective prior to the events that led up to the PGWI.

Additionally, this paper considers two of the most prominent and common types of IR modalities are referenced and explored. Spiral and deterrence models are examined and employed within the context of this paper. Each helped, hindered, or was simply never employed by US foreign policy efforts. In simplistic terms, did US foreign policy outcomes lead us to war with Iraq? For spiral and deterrence model theories, this paper employs the methods outlined by Stephen Van Evera's "Causes and Prevention of War," and Robert Jarvis' revised edition of *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. This research utilizes a flow chart diagrams in conjunction with sections of Stephen Van Evera's outline of spiral vs. deterrence models for clearer depiction of US decisions and Iraqi perceived responses and outcomes. This referenced material will follow and adhere to both Harvard's and MIT's fair use policy regarding the acknowledgement and credit of ideas and concepts.

In addition to exploring spiral and deterrence modalities, a critical examination which drives both hypotheses is the direct testimony from April Glaspie, former US Ambassador to Iraq (September 1988 – July 1990), before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (USSFRC) on March 20, 1999.<sup>2</sup> Another set of primary sources comes from declassified transcripts from the online database at the National Security Archive at George Washington University, specifically, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) interviews with Saddam after his capture in 2003. These 2004 interviews are an important premise to this thesis. They paint a different picture of Hussein’s actions and perceptions of himself and the US prior to and after both Persian Gulf Wars. As Joyce Battle notes, “Saddam’s historical recollections include his ascendancy within the Ba’athist party in 1968 and 1969; his disappointment after the Iran-Iraq war with Arab governments for their lack of gratitude for Iraq’s “saving all of the Arab world” from occupation by Iran; details about the 1991 Persian Gulf war; and the post-war Shi’a uprising in Iraq’s south, which he characterizes as “treachery” instigated by Iran.”<sup>3</sup>

This thesis interacts with Battle’s commentary via the once classified US State Department archived documents, which will be footnoted as such, [Document #]. There will be other primary and secondary sources that this paper will glean from including Charles A. Duelfer and Stephen B. Dyson’s 2011 article in *International Security*, “Chronic Misperceptions and

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<sup>2</sup> April Glaspie also testified on March 21, 1991 before The Hearing of the Europe and the Middle East Sub-Committee of the House of Foreign Affairs Committee, Hence, it was not necessary to use much of this testimony because in a great many parts it is a recapitulation of her testimony before the USSFRC.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce Battle, “Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI: (20) Twenty Interviews and Five Conversations with ‘High Value Detainee # 1’ in 2004.” National Security Archive – George Washington University: National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 279. Edited by Joyce Battle Assisted by Brendan McQuade: Posted - July 1, 2009. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed Nov 1, 2019). Also, it should be noted that during these FBI interviews, they were conducted with an unknown translator speaking to and answering from Saddam Hussein in Arabic; thus some quotes are direct and some maybe paraphrased thoughts from Arabic to English on Hussein’s behalf. This was told to me directly by Joyce Battle on a phone interview (July-August, 2019).

International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience,” which provided the impetus and inspiration to the further explore the ideas brought forth within this paper and provide a solid ground to approach this thesis subject and test its hypothesizes via a deductive methodology.

## Introduction

When people think of the First Persian Gulf War (PGWI), between US-led forces and Iraq, they may immediately focus on the opening salvos and decisions that led up to the conflict, often missing the deep historical cultural narrative of the region that preceded the war. Likewise, many overlook the contextual and dispositional attitudes shared between the US and Iraq prior to the beginning of the PGWI. However, considering all the questions this subject draws to the surface, there is a constant theme worth exploring: what were the real underlying factors and developments that caused US foreign policy to change its attitude and direction towards Iraq, who was once considered a close ally and friend in the Middle East?

The premise within the first chapter is to briefly explore several historical events that shaped the region religiously, politically, and geographically. In doing so provides a sense of respect and dignity to both the cultural and historical context to the subject that is being examined. Most importantly, context for further discussion. Therefore, a cursory explanation of European colonialism within the greater Iraqi region after World War I provides additional insight, as European powers began to carve up various sections of the former Ottoman Empire. The last part within this chapter, deals with an abridged assessment between the historical dichotomy that took place within Iraq and Iran during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1979 Saddam Hussein came to power in Baghdad at the same time the over-throw of the pro-west Pahlavi dynasty in Tehran by Shiite fundamentalists. Hence, the West's view towards both countries began to shift from a region that was considered benign in nature, to one where it

was beginning to be viewed as potential hotbed of fundamental Islamic activity near most of the world's oil reserves.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter two tests the first hypothesis by first analyzing the constructs of perception and misperception within the context of foreign policy and international relations models. This analysis contributes toward a better understanding of how both countries perceived one another prior to and after the PGWI started. The premise is to ascertain that if the US had sent clear and direct warnings to Saddam Hussein, the invasion of Kuwait may not have taken place and the war with Iraq could have been avoided. Chapter three shifts toward a critical approach of examining whether April Glaspie's testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee (USSFRC) revealed that she may have seemed satisfied about what took place during her meeting with Saddam Hussein. By identifying context of both her testimony and dialogue with Hussein it stands to reason, that he may have misperceived the US would not take sides or proceed with any type of military interdiction between two neighboring Arab states.

Chapter four explores the second hypothesis, where Saddam Hussein believed that his only option in bringing Kuwait and OPEC at the bargaining table was to begin to mass troops on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. The evidence presented suggests that it is reasonable to consider that Hussein felt isolated by the surrounding Arab community after his eight-year war with Iran.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is essential to consider a number of constructs that drove Hussein's perception

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<sup>4</sup> F. Brinley Bruton, "Iran and Iraq: A Short Look at a Long History," Reporter: msnbc.com – February 3, 2009, <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/28559546/> (accessed July 21, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> G. Simon Harak, "Hypertexting the Gulf War," *CrossCurrents* 41, no. 4 (Winter, 1991-1992): 509.

of exclusion by fellow Arab states as well as the West. These may have been due to his perceived misunderstanding regarding the funds that were lent to him by other Arab states were given in the spirit of Arab brotherhood to combat Iranian expansionism, and not necessarily expected to be repaid by Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

Well-known peace advocate and theologian G. Simon Harak observes: “After the Iran-Iraq war, Hussein was increasingly isolated, politically and economically. He was some \$60 billion in debt from the war, and the West had cut off his credits after he had a British reporter executed as a spy. The West was also concerned that its overall strategy would be upset, since Iraq now had an army second in power only to Israel in the Middle East.”<sup>7</sup> Lastly, April Glaspie’s meeting with the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee (USSFRC) will continue to be assessed regarding how she perceived the situation when meeting with Saddam Hussein, as he continued to work diligently to deceive both the Arab states and the US simultaneously to better prepare for his military invasion of Kuwait.

The conclusion underscores the hypothesis that stems from the research and evidence examined. An analytical and logical explanation regarding causes that led up to Saddam Hussein’s actions and eventual war with the US and its allies. It is plausible to conclude Washington had missed several opportunities to ascertain the situation in Baghdad, by choosing to either dismiss Iraq’s movements, or make a better effort to seriously evaluate Hussein’s plight and grievances towards Kuwait and OPEC, as he attempted to rebuild Iraq’s economy after eight long years of war with Iran. Instead, the evidence demonstrates that

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Duelfer and Stephen Dyson. “Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience,” *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 95.

<sup>7</sup> Harak, *Hypertexting the Gulf War*, 509.



although Hussein and his regime were duplicitous in their actions because they believed economically that they had no other course of action but to invade Kuwait and force a leveling of OPEC; the US had missed several opportunities during 1990 prior to Iraq's invasion in August, to use the mechanisms of peace and diplomacy too ward of Saddam's aggression and in doing so, it could have provided a pivotal and constructive role in helping to stabilize this part of the Middle East over the next several decades.

## Chapter I

### The Sands of Time: Contemporary Historical Context of Iraq and Iran

Throughout the centuries, the greater Persian Gulf has become a landscape that has lent itself to an uneasy settling of different Bedouin tribes and religious sects. It should come as no surprise that many of these groups have raised not only family and livestock, but in doing so have developed a rich cultural heritage that has become complex and diverse. In the arid outer parts of Iraq, a number of minority groups such as Turkmens, Kurds, Yazidis, Mandaean, Solluba, Romani and Assyrian Christians had carved out settlements to the west and far north of the country, while large pockets of Sunni and Shia populations had started to settle more thoroughly in the lush center, south and eastern parts of the country.

In the later centuries, tribal unrest became a common occurrence, as various factions of Turks and Kurds used “jihad” to constantly fight against Assyrian Christians, which finally caused the Assyrian Diaspora of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> Jubin Goodarzi, notes another important indigenous conflict that would rife the landscape with sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia,

An important turning point for both came in 1501 when Shiite Islam became the state religion in Persia (Shiite Islam is distinct from the religion’s other major branch, Sunni Islam). Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, two of Shiite Islam’s most important centers, for which Iran pays for much of the upkeep, are still visited by thousands of Iranian pilgrims and clerics every year, as well as local Iraqi Shiites. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Iraq became part of the Sunni Ottoman Empire, which stood in contrast to Persia’s Shiite one. Ottoman control over Iraq waxed

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<sup>8</sup> Ronald S. Stafford, LT. COL. D.S.O., M. C., “The Tragedy of the Assyrian Minority in Iraq,” 1935, (republished by Gorgias Press, Piscataway, New Jersey, LLC Dec. 28, 2006), 27. <https://books.google.com/books> (accessed July 18, 2018). My insertion: there were events during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that had also contributed to the later Assyrian diaspora.

and waned over the centuries but was finally relinquished in the years following the end of World War I in 1918 and the empire's subsequent dismantlement. While Iraq was considered a backwater province during Ottoman times, Sunnis were elevated as the local ruling class.<sup>9</sup>

Historically, the construct of “nationalism” within a Middle Eastern context, aside from religious identity, was a largely unknown concept to many Arabs during the past millennia. Yet, centuries later this construct of regional identity began to change in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as many large and powerful Arab Bedouin families begin to maneuver back and forth in order to form distant alliances among themselves to gain favor and influence among colonial powers in Western Europe.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, when it came to Iraq and Kuwait, in 1899, Britain had an agreement with the ruling al-Sabah family that they would not cede or sell any territory without British consent.<sup>11</sup>

As years progressed, the al-Sabah family had inevitably become richer and more influential in the region and had endeavored to play British colonial interests off against other Arab families as well. These families included: The Ottomans in the far north east, the Saud family to the south west, and the families in the provinces of Basra and Baghdad to the central east.<sup>12</sup> Within the ruling Arab Bedouin culture, it was understood that the territory from Baghdad south to the Gulf (including what is now Kuwait) was always considered traditionally to be part of Iraq.<sup>13</sup> This dynamic came as no surprise that from an economic

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<sup>9</sup> Bruton, “Iran and Iraq: A Short Look at a Long History,” Bruton’s interview with Dr. Jubin Goodarzi, author and consultant for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

<sup>10</sup> Harak, *Hypertexting the Gulf War*, 507.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

context, the al-Sabah family (of modern Kuwait) desired to "carve out" from that territory a fiefdom of sorts for themselves, and in doing so, would eventually be free to do business and trade as it pleased without any external influence, whether it be Arab or colonialist.<sup>14</sup>

Subsequently, borders and boundaries became defined geographically in a region that previously never possessed any such type of distinctions. Moreover, when these interstate boundaries started to become defined by colonial powers, there was little to no consideration whatsoever to the surrounding communities and inhabitants who for generations coexisted in an uneasy symbiotic relationship with one another. Similarly, G. Simon Harak notes the immediate aftereffects of the secret "Sikes-Picot" agreement between Britain and France that began to demarcate the Arab world,

The Arab populaces, recently "liberated" by those powers from the domination of the Ottoman Empire, felt betrayed by this action when they learned of it. It still rankles today. The agreement was given official status by the League of Nations when the provinces of Basra and Baghdad became a British "mandate" (read: colony). Thus in 1922, Sir Percy Cox, Britain's steward in the Gulf, arbitrarily and unilaterally decided to "draw a line in the sand," creating modern Iraq. His Iraq included not only the provinces of Basra and Baghdad, but also the Kurds to the north (abrogating the 1920 Ottoman-Allies Treaty of Sevres which promised the Kurds independence<sup>5</sup>). The same move "created" Saudi Arabia, and the country of Kuwait. The arrangement favored the free status of the al-Sabah family and deprived Iraq of easy access to the Gulf (the Shatt al-Arab waterway was shared with Iran), ignoring the traditional understanding of Iraq's extension to the Gulf.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to Great Britain's departure from Iraq in 1932, oil exploration had begun in the surrounding areas of Mosul revealing large oil deposits in 1927, causing a rivalry not only among traditional Bedouin families, but also among competing colonial oil companies well.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Harak, *Hypertexting the Gulf War*, 507.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmad Quni, "Iraq Oil: The Target for Years," ProCon.org (originally published on AlJazeera.NET: August 10, 2003). <https://usiraq.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=000907> (accessed December 12,

The result divided Iraq's oil fields into five portions among oil companies from Europe and the US.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, the surrounding Iraqi tribes and peoples were not included in such negotiations except for those who were left in power after Great Britain's exodus, the Sunni Hashemite monarchy, which was subsequently toppled two decades later by Iraq's young officer core of whom many had embraced the utopian ideal of socialism, promising Iraq's people a share in its oil wealth.<sup>18</sup>

Afterwards, Iraq's leadership initially held to its promises and begun to build its infrastructure with roads, schools and hospitals via its oil revenues; however, in the late 1960s, a change in direction by the country's leadership embarked on a campaign to steer a large portion of its economy towards the modernization of its armed forces under the pretense of protecting its oil interest in the region. Interestingly, this change in direction by Iraq to modernize its armed forces largely went unnoticed by the West and the US. It is in this period during Iraq's early history, a fragile Sunni government becomes a flashpoint for Arab nationalism in the region that ultimately brought about the emergence of the national socialistic Baath Party in 1967-1968.<sup>19</sup> A few years later, the Baath Party, largely made up of idealistic military officers, finally made its transition into power and in the ensuing decades this predominately Sunni led government begins a suppression towards Kurdish, Yezidi, Assyrian Christians and other minority sects, while at the same time it was facing an ever-growing Shiite majority in larger provinces of Baghdad, Mosul and Najaf.

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2019). Also, in 1920, the League of Nations decides to initially grant Great Britain a mandate for the region of Iraq.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Bruton, *Iran and Iraq: A Short Look at a Long History*.

As the decades moved forward in the Persian Gulf, the mid-1960s and 1970s produced a self-exiled Shia cleric from Iran, Ruhollah Khomeini. Iraq had permitted Khomeini to begin his exile from the Shah of Iran by staying in the neighboring province of Najaf, Iraq. While living in Najaf for more than a decade, Khomeini constantly espoused the need for both religious and political reform against the Shah's pro-West government.<sup>20</sup> According to FBI transcripts taken in 2004, Hussein commented that he had always viewed Khomeini as a religious fanatic who wanted to meddle in both Iraqi and Iranian affairs and felt that he had forgotten he was a guest of Iraq.<sup>21</sup> And, more importantly, he felt that Khomeini blatantly disregarded the 1975 Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran which in turn led to his forced exodus to Paris in 1978.<sup>22</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Saddam Hussein initially welcomed the Shah's departure in 1979, as Iraq tentatively sought better relations with Iran's new theocratic government.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, during this time as Iran transferred between government structures, Hussein did not initially exploit Iran's internal struggles to gain strategic advantage over his neighbor and he made no attempt to reverse his earlier concessions, even though Iran did not fully comply with the terms of the 1975 (Algiers) agreement.<sup>24</sup> While, Ruhollah Khomeini, on the other hand, was

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails, Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 110.

<sup>21</sup> US Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baghdad Operations Center (Baghdad International Airport), February 8, 2004, Interview Session Number: 2, with Saddam Hussein. Conducted by SSA George L. Piro, Arabic/English Translator "Unknown," The National Security Archive at George Washington University, 1. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed September 5, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy.com*, November 3, 2009, 53. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/03/an-unnecessary-war-2/>, Original publication date: *Foreign Policy*; Jan/Feb 2003; 134; *ABI/INFORM Global*, 53, (accessed February 12, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

determined to extend his revolution across the Arab Peninsula, starting with Iraq. In the eve of 1979, Tehran was starting to openly support Kurdish and Shiite populations in Iraq to revolt and topple Hussein, and during this time, Iranian operatives were trying to assassinate senior Iraqi government officials. Furthermore, during this period, border clashes became frequent by early spring in 1980, due in large part to Iran's instigation in the hopes to test Iraq's military response and readiness.<sup>25</sup>

During the early 1980s, the Middle East had begun to experience a number of crises that were developing in every corner of the region. Joyce Battle, editor of the National Security Archives at George Washington University, writes about the hotbed of activity taking place in the Middle East, "The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) was one of a series of crises during an era of upheaval in the Middle East: revolution in Iran, occupation of the U.S. embassy in Tehran by militant students, invasion of the Great Mosque in Mecca by anti-royalist Islamicists, the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan, and internecine fighting among Syrians, Israelis, and Palestinians in Lebanon. The war followed months of rising tension between the Iranian Islamic republic and secular nationalist Iraq. In mid-September 1980 Iraq attacked, in the mistaken belief that Iranian political disarray would guarantee a quick victory."<sup>26</sup>

According to Charles Duelfer and Stephen Dyson, "Saddam Hussein viewed the battle between Iranian revolutionaries and Washington over U.S. hostages in 1979–80 as clear evidence of the congruence of Washington's and Baghdad's interests, and as reducing

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Joyce Battle, "Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein: The U.S. Tilts towards Iraq, 1980-1984." The National Security Archive – George Washington University, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No.82. Edited by Joyce Battle, February 25, 2003, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/> (accessed June 2, 2019).

to zero the chances of U.S. intervention on the Iranian side during the coming Iran-Iraq War.”<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, it was no surprise that Hussein wanted to assure the US and the West that he would hold up the West' foreign policy doctrine of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” in the hopes of shoring up support for his rule internationally.<sup>28</sup>

Over the next several years, the stark realization and unnerving question on everybody's mind was, how far was the West willing to help Iraq – while at the same time look the other way in order for Hussein to prove his worth to the international community regarding Iran and its potential threat of destabilization to the region? The answer started to unravel by the summer of 1983 as Iran begun to report the use of chemical weapons by Iraq to the UN.<sup>29</sup> Joyce Battle notes:

By the summer of 1983 Iran had been reporting Iraqi use of using chemical weapons for some time. The Geneva protocol requires that the international community respond to chemical warfare, but a diplomatically isolated Iran received only a muted response to its complaints. It intensified its accusations in October 1983, however, and in November asked for a United Nations Security Council investigation. The U.S., which followed developments in the Iran-Iraq war with extraordinary intensity, had intelligence confirming Iran's accusations, and describing Iraq's "almost daily" use of chemical weapons, concurrent with its policy review and decision to support Iraq in the war. The intelligence indicated that Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranian forces, and, according to a November 1983 memo, against "Kurdish insurgents" as well.<sup>30</sup>

In March of 1984, Hussein authorized the use of chemical weapons on Iranian troops in the Majnoon Islands in Iraq.<sup>31</sup> During this period, dozens of other chemical attacks on Iraq's

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<sup>27</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *Chronic Misperception and International Conflict*, 84.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein” [Document 24].

<sup>30</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein” [Document 25].

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan B. Tucker, *War of Nerves: Chemical Warfare from World War I to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 256-257.



Kurdish population occurred regularly throughout the decade, many of them going unnoticed or unreported.<sup>32</sup> History records that no actions that were specifically taken against Iraq to curb its continued use of chemical weapons during this time, even as Hussein continued to intensify his treatment of Shia, Kurds and other minority groups in the outlying provinces of Baghdad.

Looking back at the rivalry that existed between Iran and Iraq prior to the PGWI, it is not difficult to see how incredibly entangled the past has linked both states through the years. Both states shared similarities of trying to define themselves as sovereign entities while coming out of a backdrop of European colonialism. Also, both regimes came to power by overthrowing monarchies setup by Western governments. Iran, led by religious clerics, chose an Islamic theocratic approach in a Shia led government in response to modernity. Iraq, on the other hand, embraced a far more authoritarian socialistic secular form of rule in the attempt to deal with its infrastructure and lack of modernization. In the end, the history between these two countries has impacted the Middle East more than any other region on the continent. Indeed, in retrospect, it is easy to see how provincial aspirations and perceptions of each country have led to an incredible amount of destruction and suffering in a region where Eden is said to have existed and the cradle of civilization had begun.

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<sup>32</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein” [Document 25]. Johnathon B. Tucker shares this sentiment as well throughout – Wars of Nerves.

## Chapter II

### Misperceptions and Perceptions: The Science of Avoiding War

At the beginning of Robert Jervis' article, "War and Misperception," Jervis observes what causes misperceptions in wars, "War has so many causes in part because there are so many kinds of wars and misperception has so many effects again in part because there are so many kinds of misperceptions that it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions about the impact of misperception on war."<sup>33</sup> Ascertaining what causes misperceptions in conflicts and wars is difficult on the best of days and impossible to determine with certainty on the worst of them. Yet it should still be attempted because it helps to refine and temper international relation theorems by weeding out the good and bad ideas. Therefore, if this chapter is to add any value to the subject matter broached within this thesis, it should take note at the importance of examining the cognitive and contextual processes towards understanding how perceptions and misperception work within the discipline of international relations and foreign policy.

When scholars attempt to look at war without misperception, one can argue that inevitably, by definition, a proposition comes to fruition that every war involves at least one strong causal effect towards misperceptions. Jervis believes that although it is hard to distinguish what drives misperceptions, one still must make an effort and try, because at times we may need to distinguish between misperceptions of a state's predispositions –

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (Spring, 1988), 675.

motives, interests, goals, and objectives – and misperceptions of the realities that is faced by each state. These symptoms can lead to incorrect diagnosis by other states and it is often difficult to determine which kind of error was made.<sup>34</sup> Thus, when the unexpected behavior is undesired, decision-makers usually think that they have misread the other state's motives, not the situation it faced. Hence, in Saddam Hussein's case, his economic motives for seizing Kuwaiti oil fields and bring oil prices up drove both his perception and misperception of reality. Hussein believed Washington understood this and would inevitably comprehend his course of action, and not attack Iraq if he invaded Kuwait.

Janice Stein notes that our perceptions are often influenced by our world view, hence when our perceptions are strongly colored by our beliefs concerning how the world works and what patterns it is likely to present us with. Inevitably, decision-makers whom believe the other side is hostile will see ambiguous information as confirming this image, where the same information about a country thought to be friendly would be taken more benignly.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1970s Washington worked against Iraq, it viewed the country as a quasi-Soviet client state because of its strong socialistic leanings. However, when the 1979 Iranian revolution took place, the US rebalanced alliances favoring Iraq. Although Saddam Hussein viewed the US as ally against Iran, he knew that the US could just as quickly turn against him, as it did in 1990. Hussein knew the US was stronger in every way and presumed since this was clear, he felt US would still allow him to press the issue with Kuwait and OPEC, while at the same time viewing Iraq as a stalwart ally against Iranian expansionism. Thus, the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Jervis, Richard Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 18.

dangers of perception of information prior to the PGWI ascribed by both sides was fraught with assumptions and premonitions regarding how either side would act.

In retrospect, it can be surmised rather pointedly, Saddam Hussein's decision to move forward and go to war with the US were riddled with *several* misperceptions, not just the one. Observers cannot dismiss the American perception of Iraq and its leader prior to the war. The US may have assumed that it still had an accurate picture of Hussein and might convey the seriousness of his actions and talk him out of attacking Kuwait. As a result, the viability to presume that the US clung to its own overestimation that it made things clear to Hussein; do not invade, or you will be attacked militarily. Consequently, from a US perception, it was a reasonable assumption that Hussein would not necessarily act because he was facing a far stronger military than his own, and he knew that if he moved forward militarily, he would lose a war with the US and its allies.

Similarly in 1973, both the US and Israel had the perception which discounted the viability of a joint Arab attack on Israel due to the strength Israel's military capabilities versus Egypt and Syria.<sup>36</sup> In this instance, both countries were wrong and Egypt and Syria caught Israel off guard in the beginning of the war until Israel rallied to defeat both. Yaacov Vertzberger writes: "The U.S. intelligence community's assessment of Arab intentions in 1973 was closely related to its estimate of Arab capabilities, which were judged by the humiliating defeat in 1967 and the lack of military success in the War of Attrition in 1969-

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<sup>36</sup> Yaacov Y. I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 325.

70. U.S. intelligence assumed that the Arabs, being aware of the military inadequacies, would not dare to attack Israel.”<sup>37</sup>

Jervis points out that even when each side perceives the other to be accurate, misperceptions still follow. War can still occur even when both sides see each other accurately, and misperception often plays a large role. This is particularly relevant criteria regarding judgments and misjudgments of another state's intentions and capabilities. Both of these assessments can sequentially overestimate and underestimate the levels of hostilities that have led to wars in the past.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, by acknowledging that misperception is an inevitable consequence that exists between states regardless of how their intentions are perceived, misjudgments still arise because decision makers cannot simply account for unforeseen events that have shifted away from previous foreign policy decisions that may, or may not have worked in the past.

Perceptions and misperceptions also involve how each state views their current circumstance regarding what they perceive to be important to their own national interest and contextualization. Professor Jack Levy highlights that much is known about the sources of misperception, but less about their consequences.<sup>39</sup> Levy also notes that misperceptions are commonplace; but he ascertains that little attention has been given to the question of what kinds of misperceptions are most likely to lead to war, and to the specific theoretical linkages

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Jervis, *War and Misperception*, 675.

<sup>39</sup> Jack S. Levy, “Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems,” *World Politics* 36, no. 1 (1983): 78. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2010176> (accessed September, 21 2019).

through which they often operate.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, if any type of foreign policy is to proceed or have some success, it is important to try and consider, the perception of each state's internal and external outlook towards their own environment and stimuli. In other words, bad actors do not wake up one morning and decide to invade another country, especially when said actor has already come from a long campaign of recent wars. Rather, there is a motive and rationale, whether flawed or not, that ends up often being portrayed as legitimate.

This legitimization seemingly percolates in an actor's mind for some time before they suggest it externally to other cabinets and ministries who may knowingly share similar sentiments. When Saddam Hussein was faced with a devastated economy (internal stimuli) because of his eight-year war with Iran, he blamed Kuwait and OPEC for Iraq's economic woes because they could not agree on oil prices and production quotas (external stimuli). Consequently, given Iraq had the largest armed forces in the region, Hussein may have viewed his surrounding environmental perception, as one where he had determined that Kuwait, Iraq's nearest existential threat, had to be dealt with. And, to make Hussein's external environmental view easier to digest, he had always viewed Kuwait and her islands as an unofficial province of Iraq. Levy notes the discrepancies found in misperception, "Misperception involves a discrepancy between the psychological environment of the decision makers and the operational environment of the "real world." Decisions and actions may be determined by the former, but their effects or consequences are constrained by the latter."<sup>41</sup> Levy points to Robert White and John Stoessinger's studies which attempt to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Levy, *Misperception and the Causes of War*, 79.

highlight a state's characterization (perceptions/misperceptions) of another state relevant to the start of a conflict or war.<sup>42</sup> This is structured in the following table:

White's categories towards misperceptions	Stoessinger's categories towards perceptions
<p><b>1. Diabolical Enemy Image:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US. Iraq - Saddam had marginal success portraying US as invading imperialist.</p> <p>US - US has larger success via national news outlets projecting Saddam as an evil madman bent on destruction - This portrayal continues into PGWII and up to Saddam's death in 2006.</p>	<p><b>1. A Leader's Perception of Himself:</b> Projected mainly by Iraq. Iraq - This appears to be identical to White's category analysis regarding Virile Self-Image.</p> <p>US - Not necessarily important by Western standards N/A</p>
<p><b>2. Virile Self-Image:</b> Iraq - Projected by Iraq. Iraq - Saddam is portrayed by state media as a strong Arab leader with military prowess - Pictures of him throughout Iraq of him being an Arab ruler of old.</p> <p>US - Not necessarily important by Western standards N/A</p>	<p><b>2. His Perceptions of His Adversary's Character:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US. Iraq - It appears that Saddam may have believed that President Bush is weak and does not possess the will to fight a long sustained war with high losses.</p> <p>US - It's plausible that President Bush believed that Saddam is duplicitous and calculating, but also he is not fully aware of our commitment to the region.</p>
<p><b>3. Moral Self-Image:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US. Iraq - Saddam views this as both a military and religious excursion between two Arab states. Projects the US as a godless people that lack social moral norms - compared to modest norms practiced by Muslims.</p> <p>US - The US believed that Iraq was a bully towards its neighboring state and they should be ones to stop Iraqi aggression, as this considered their duty to all mankind - likened to WWII and Hitler.</p>	<p><b>3. His Perceptions of the Adversary's Intentions:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US. Iraq - Saddam believed the US would not act based on meetings with US-Iraq consulate and US support during the Iran-Iraq war.</p> <p>US - This is hard to ascertain, as it seems the US may have adopted a wait-and-see approach. This could be seen as a failure within US foreign policy analysis - because of US confidence to project its power anywhere globally.</p>
<p><b>4. Selective Inattention:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US. Iraq believed the US will not invade based on a lack of US response and actions.</p> <p>US not looking at the facts that Iraq amassed troops in the same manner 10 years prior with Iran. The US also believed it made its position clear towards Saddam regarding a US response and commitments to the region.</p>	<p><b>4. His Perceptions of his Adversary's Power and Capabilities:</b> Projected by the Iraq and the US, but in different ways. Iraq - Iraq believed US would ultimately win, but did not have the will to fight</p> <p>US - believed that its army was well equipped enough to fight the US in a ground war for several months. And that the Iraqi army was experienced in war.</p>
<p><b>5. Absence of Empathy:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US, but in different ways. Iraq - Saddam drove his foreign policy based on Iraq's current economic situation, and he did not consider the damage he was causing to the region over the long-term.</p> <p>US - The US did not seem concerned with Iraq's economic plight - whereas this misperception could have been crucial in dealing with Saddam prior to the PGWI.</p>	<p><b>5. A leader's capacity for empathy with his counter-player on the other side:</b> Projected by neither side.</p> <p>This was not necessarily a factor as these countries were too far apart regionally to consider one-another's grievances. However, this could be considered a failure by US foreign policy as to not try and ascertain Iraq's economic interests.</p>
<p><b>6. Military Over-Confidence:</b> Projected by Iraq and the US, but in different ways. Iraq - Iraq believed that US would not attack because it would be too difficult to deploy such large force to the Saudi Desert. Also, the US could not endure to suffer large casualties in a prolonged conflict. Saddam believed his army was large enough to deter such a campaign.</p> <p>The US believed that it could simply project power anywhere and because of this they considered that Saddam must also be aware of this and back down.</p>	

Table - 1

Although Levy believes the general characterizations within White and Stoessinger's studies

<sup>42</sup> Levy, *Misperception and the Causes of Wars*, 78-79. Although Levy finds the list of White and Stoessinger's conceptualization's limited because they fail to distinguish between misperception and the source of misperception - this is not my intended purpose. My purpose is to simply identify common markers and characterizations that often ends up pertaining to a number states and actors - my table goes a step further and is modified as such to initially ascribe misperceptions and perceptions to each state.

are limited regarding why misperceptions occur, they still hit their mark outlining a cognitive analysis of misperceptions that were projected between the US and Iraq prior to and during the beginning of the PGWI. Identifying the above list of characterizations is important as they can eventually develop into a different paradox that can exist between two opposing states. These paradoxes shape a number of constructs of preconceived views that states have about each other that are wrong, but yet maintain linking perceptions that can be considered valid, or correct. This is reinforced by the conceptualizations consistent with Ole R. Holsti's analytical distinction that existed between belief system or image, versus the concepts of perception and misperception. For the actor it is both possible to construct a bias that depicts a "diabolical enemy image" of one state or actor, while at the same time possessing a perception, that is correct regarding the other state's intentions or capabilities in a particular situation even if other sources of perception may seemingly dominate their contextual outlook.<sup>43</sup>

The realities of unmotivated biases affecting perception among states because it skews their perceptions towards any kind of deterrence, perceived threats and information that could be true or even useful. Therefore, biases arise because the problems of dealing with complex and ambiguous information leads people to adopt shortcuts toward rationality that simplify perceptions in order to make the task more manageable and assess operational environments.<sup>44</sup> Any type of bias may result in systematically affecting both deterrence and

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<sup>43</sup> Levy, *Misperception and the Causes of War*, 79.

<sup>44</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 18.



threat perception.<sup>45</sup> Thus, by identifying and understanding specific biases, we can grasp some common patterns and some common errors that in principle, could be corrected.<sup>46</sup>

Vertzberger confirms that bias affects perception within foreign policy by stating, “A biased sensitivity to confirming evidence leads to a decreasing awareness or even a complete disregard for disconfirming evidence, which provides a false sense that the belief in question is valid and reliable.”<sup>47</sup> Subsequently, when examining the causes of perceptions and misperceptions that knowingly exists in conflicts and wars; it seems that it is easier for states to subscribe to their own initial perceptions rather than make the arduous journey to avert conflict. Moreover, if states seemingly know that they are affected by both internal and external stimuli, yet still move forward to implement their own version of foreign policy via military action, as the case with the US and Iraq, the outcome forced both states to act accordingly per their own perceived environments.

Jervis concludes, by stating “although war can occur in the absence of misperception, in fact misperception almost always accompanies it. To say that statesmen's beliefs about both capabilities and intentions are usually badly flawed is not to say that they are foolish. Rather, errors are inevitable in light of the difficulty of assessing technological and organizational capabilities, the obstacles to inferring others' intentions correctly, the limitations on people's abilities to process information, and the need to avoid excessively painful choices.”<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, if each state actor attempts to perceives one aspect of the other

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, 327.

<sup>48</sup> Jervis, *War and Misperception*, 699.

correctly, there are other aspects that each state will miss, despite past historical indicators suggesting otherwise; choices still need to be made on how to act, and understanding the underlying factors that make up both perceptions and misperceptions can help nations move forward when it comes to avoiding conflict, instead of having their heads in the sand and sabers rattling.

### Chapter III

#### Misperceptions and Perceptions: The Art of Avoiding War

In 1990, on hot and humid July night in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein summoned April Glaspie, the senior US official in the region and US Ambassador to Iraq, to his office late in the evening to inquire what the US's response would be if Iraq were to move forward militarily against Kuwait?<sup>49</sup> Glaspie's famed response regarding that the US would not take sides in an Arab to Arab dispute gave credence to the old Arab proverb, "If I listen, I have the advantage. If I speak, others have it." Hence, Hussein perceived Glaspie's response during this meeting as a signal by the US that it would not interfere in an Arab dispute and allow Iraq to force Kuwait and OPEC to level off oil production quotas. The goal within this chapter is two-fold. First, examine Glaspie's Senate testimony during the weeks prior to the war. Second, explore the complex dichotomy of misperception concerning Washington's view of Saddam Hussein and the Middle East versus how Hussein viewed his relationship with US and how he viewed himself, personally and militarily, as the leader and rightful protector of Arab interests in the Persian Gulf.

When it came to misperceptions in dealing with Saddam Hussein prior to the PGWI, it is conceivable, if not clear, that Congress and those within the White House benignly looked the other way during Hussein's tenure as Iraq's ruler during the 1980s. In retrospect, this attitude of looking the other way in dealing with Iraq was apparent during the opening

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<sup>49</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq:" C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 12:01min; <https://www.c-span.org/video/?17179-1/us-policy-iraq> (accessed June 25, 2019).

remarks of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting in March 21, 1991, with former US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, as she was set to discuss her dialogue with Hussein and his cabinet prior to the PGWI regarding her version of events. Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI), the Chairman of the Committee, made this candid statement during the meeting's introduction:

I do believe that over many years we sent Saddam Hussein several wrong signals, and that our policy did encourage him in the belief we might not react strongly if the invasion occurred. This policy was set when we did nothing in response to Iraq's unjustified attack on Iran in 1980, when we did nothing when Iraq illegally began to use chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war, and when we did nothing when Iraq made extensive use of chemical weapons against its own Kurdish minority. It was the opposition of both administrations to Congressional efforts to sanction Iraq for its illegal and immoral conduct that sent the real signal, in my view, to Saddam Hussein that his ambitions in the region were unlikely to be thwarted by the West.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, it was no revelation for many in the US Senate that they too might have to come to terms with the semi-estranged nation it legitimized during its war with Iran and its very own people, as the US developed closer ties with Iraq during its war with Iran (1980-1988). In hindsight, the decision to develop better relations with Iraq during the early 1980s was only highlighted by Donald Rumsfeld visit to Baghdad in December of 1983, as Joyce Battle notes:

Soon thereafter, Donald Rumsfeld (who had served in various positions in the Nixon and Ford administrations, including as President Ford's defense secretary, and at this time headed the multinational pharmaceutical company G.D. Searle & Co.) was dispatched to the Middle East as a presidential envoy. His December 1983 tour of regional capitals included Baghdad, where he was to establish "direct contact between an envoy of President Reagan and President Saddam Hussein," while emphasizing "his close relationship" with the president. Rumsfeld met with Saddam, and the two discussed regional issues of mutual interest, shared enmity toward Iran and Syria, and the U.S.'s efforts to find alternative routes to transport Iraq's oil; its facilities in the Persian Gulf had

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<sup>50</sup> Claiborne Pell, US Senator, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq:" C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 02:13min; <https://www.c-span.org/video/?17179-1/us-policy-iraq> (accessed June 25, 2019).

been shut down by Iran, and Iran's ally, Syria, had cut off a pipeline that transported Iraqi oil through its territory.<sup>51</sup>

Duelfer and Dyson note similar intent by the US towards Iraq when Hussein saw a similar analysis regarding the Iranian revolution instigated by Shia clerics and the taking of US hostages in Tehran. Hussein began to substantiate formal diplomatic relations in Washington as both the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations began to call on him in Baghdad during the 1980s.<sup>52</sup> Hence, it was no coincidence that Washington had concluded that it could not afford to have Iraq lose the war with a theocratic Iran. Washington provided nonmilitary assistance and intelligence to Hussein.<sup>53</sup> In 1980, Chip Gagnon noted the shift in US policy towards Iraq, as the US Defense Intelligence Agency reported that Iraq had been actively acquiring chemical weapons capabilities since the mid-1970s, and in the beginning in the spring of 1982, a transitional tilt towards Iraq by the Reagan Administration had begun to transpire.<sup>54</sup>

Joyce Battle notes that the US moved on behalf of Iraq to secure loans for its war with Iran, “Prolonging the war was phenomenally expensive. Iraq received massive external financial support from the Gulf States, and assistance through loan programs from the U.S. The White House and State Department pressured the Export-Import Bank to provide Iraq with financing, to enhance its credit standing and enable it to obtain loans from other

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<sup>51</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein” [Document 28, 31].

<sup>52</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 84.

<sup>53</sup> Chip Gagnon, “Our History with Iraq,” Cornell University, October 22, 2002, Talk given at Teach-in on Iraq:2pm Willard Straight Hall, <https://chipgagnon.com/us-iraq-history/>, Assistant Prof., Dept. of Politics, Ithaca College, Visiting Research Fellow, Peace Studies Program, Cornell University, (accessed July 24, 2019).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

international financial institutions.”<sup>55</sup> In addition, it was noted that the U.S. Agriculture Department had provided taxpayer-guaranteed loans for purchases of American commodities, to the satisfaction of U.S. grain exporters.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, because of the policy shift towards Iraq in the early 1980s, it is fair to presume that Saddam’s perception and framework lent him the idea that he most likely felt secure towards his relationship with the US.

In December of 1983, Donald Rumsfeld visited Iraq and began a series of meetings with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, where both agreed that the US and Iraq shared many common interests throughout the region, including stability.<sup>57</sup> Rumsfeld also affirmed the Reagan Administration's "willingness to do more" regarding the Iran-Iraq war, but Rumsfeld made clear that our efforts to assist were inhibited by certain things that made it difficult, citing the use of chemical weapons, possible escalation in the Gulf, and human rights.<sup>58</sup> Although Hussein and his foreign ministry may have recognized that the reason for the US’ move towards Iraq was most likely due to its immediate war with Iran; they may have also realized that Washington’s other motive was to curtail any future arms sales with the Russians, with the end game of preventing Moscow from the possibility of dictating any further policy in the region.

The shift of US foreign policy toward Iraq was the beginning of a close relationship between Washington and Baghdad, as the US started to actively support Iraq with military

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<sup>55</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein” [Document 32].

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

intelligence and advice regarding the war with Iran.<sup>59</sup> This uneasy pivot be questioned not far down the road, as the US reexamined in its relationship with Saddam Hussein due to his use of chemical weapons in the mid-1980s. In March of 1984, Iraqi jets flew less than 800 feet below the normalized flight deck and bombed Iranian troops in Iraq's island, Majnoon using chemical weapons.<sup>60</sup> Iran filed formal charges against Iraq to the United Nations (UN) for the use of banned weapons, but little was done to curb any future use chemical weapons by Iraq.<sup>61</sup> Tehran submitted a draft resolution asking the UN to condemn Iraq's continued chemical weapons use.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the US delegation to the UN was instructed to lobby friendly delegations in order to obtain a general motion of "no decision" on the resolution. This was unrealistic, and the US delegate was to abstain on the issue.<sup>63</sup> Iraq's ambassador met with the US Ambassador, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and asked for "restraint" in responding to the issue with Iran – as did the representatives of both France and Britain.<sup>64</sup>

The core perceptions of Saddam Hussein regarding US involvement in the region suggested nothing was going to happen to Iraq because the US and the West might look the other way or soften its response concerning future Iraqi incursions. Joyce Battle observes the interaction between Nizar Hamdoon, Iraqi Section Head and acting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, James Placke, "Iraqi interests section head Nizar Hamdoon met with

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<sup>59</sup> Chip Gagnon, *Our History with Iraq*.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan B. Tucker, *War of Nerves*, 257.

<sup>61</sup> Battle, "Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein" [Document 50].

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Battle, "Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein" [Document 54].

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State James Placke on March 29, 1984, Hamdoon noted that Iraq had strongly preferred a Security Council statement to a resolution and wanted the response to refer to former resolutions on the war, progress toward ending the conflict, but to not identify any specific country as responsible for chemical weapons use.”<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Placke stated that the US could accept Iraqi proposals if the Security Council went along. He asked for the Iraqi government's help "in avoiding...embarrassing situation[s]" but also noted that the US did "not want this issue to dominate our bilateral relationship.”<sup>66</sup> Subsequently, because of this overreaching concern regarding Iraq’s strained but continued relationship with the US, it is reasonable to consider that Saddam thought as long as chemical weapons would be used against Iran specifically, the US would curtail any Iranian outcries about the use of chemical weapons to the UN.

This view about non-intervention by Washington can be substantiated as Iraq continued to use chemical weapons for the remaining four years of war with Iran. One of its most devastating attacks in March 16, 1988 in the city of Halabja, where chemical weapons were used on both Kurds and Iranian troops, killing an estimated 2000-5000 people.<sup>67</sup> However, even with all of the media outrage flowing from the Americas to Western Europe and bilateral UN condemnation, no military or economic sanctions were taken against Iraq. Comprehensive, reasonable projections suggest that Hussein believed if he was operating in alignment with US interests, he would be allowed to do what was necessary to win his war

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Battle, “Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein” [Document 54].

<sup>67</sup> Tucker, *War of Nerves*, 282.



with Iran. However, this perception by Hussein was earmarked by Iraq's future willingness to win not just a war against the encroaching Persians, but also against any Arab ally as well.

Saddam Hussein's perception toward what he thought the US and the West might do if he were to invade Kuwait, keeping in mind that in no less than a year and half earlier, he used chemical weapons on Iranians and Kurds, this action would not necessarily suggest anything new to the West. Moreover, the fact that he took Kuwait without chemical weapons may have caused him to believe that this only enhanced his standing of having Iraq's military actions being viewed as being carried out 'cleanly' with minimal casualties. Perhaps a reassurance for Arab neighbors and the West that Kuwait would be handled differently than his conflict with Iran.

When April Glaspie finally meet with the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, she openly stated without reservation, "...he (Hussein) was told that we would continue to defend our vital interests in the Gulf and we would continue to support the sovereignty and integrity of the Gulf States. He was reminded that while we would not take positions on the equities of bilateral Iraqi-Kuwaiti disputes, we would insist, I repeat insist, that disputes be settled peacefully and not by threat or intimidation."<sup>68</sup> Yet, what did this statement by Glaspie really mean, and how did Hussein perceive it? It is conceivable had Hussein received this message earlier that he may have ascertained that unless Washington was clear, meaningful, and direct instead of standard diplomatic platitude, they were not going to offer something genuine for him to seriously reconsider his present course of action. Hussein was

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<sup>68</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, *U.S. Policy Towards Iraq*: C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 09:01min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

not going to capitulate, but rather continue to mass troops and equipment on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.

Two critical dynamics suggest misperception in motion. First, this statement by Glaspie could have insinuated that the US was simply unprepared to act because it did not know how to respond to Hussein's line in inquiry regarding a US response if he moved forward military against Kuwait. Second, this statement may have confirmed that Hussein's perception of the meeting between him and Glaspie was that he heard what he wanted to hear; whereby, if Washington was going to appear to be ambiguous or vague on this issue when it came to Arabs attacking other Arabs far from any perceived US interests. All the more so given there was no US military presence in the Persian Gulf during this time. Mearsheimer and Walt conceptualize what perception Hussein came away with after meeting with Glaspie:

Saddam reportedly decided on war sometime in July 1990, but before sending his army into Kuwait, he approached the United States to find out how it would react. In a now famous interview with the Iraqi leader, US Ambassador April Glaspie told Saddam, "We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border is agreement with Kuwait." The US State Department had earlier told Saddam that Washington had "no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait." The United States may not have intended to give Iraq a green light, but that is effectively what it did.<sup>69</sup>

To further corroborate this sentiment perceived by Iraq regarding a US response towards Arab interstate conflicts, Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) referred to the same transcript that was handed by the Iraqi embassy listing their version events regarding their meeting with Glaspie and other diplomats on July 25, 1990, "Ambassador Glaspie, I would like to ask, because it has been something that's been commented on many times one way or another, and we have here the transcript that was handed out by the Iraqi embassy regarding

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<sup>69</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 54.

your conversation with President Saddam Hussein, I would like for you to hear your comment and explanation of the conversation on page seven and what the context of that was when you were quoted in this as saying, "We understand that, and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country, but we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts like your border disagreement with Kuwait."<sup>70</sup> Although Glaspie contested her assertion before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the validity and accuracy of the Iraqi transcript, there are many instances during her testimony in which she conveys the same sentiment regarding non-US interference in Arab matters.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, if the US and allies allowed Saddam Hussein action towards Iran ten years prior, why it would be any different with an Arab neighbor who was purposely hurting Iraq's economy. Hussein's framework likely allowed him to perceive that it would be too late for the US and its allies to get involved, as he would be entrenched in Kuwait for several months or even up to a year before a responsive action. In addition, he may have felt that the US would not dare involve itself in a long military dispute so far away due to what he perceived as being logistically unsustainable. Because of this assessment, regarding Hussein's perception about the US willingness to fight a prolonged war so far away from Washington, it is fair to suggest that he thought no genuine military reciprocity by US forces would follow.

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<sup>70</sup> Pell, US Senator, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq," C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 20:51min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

<sup>71</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq," C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 08:38min; 09:01min. (accessed June 25, 2019). Glaspie told the sentiment that US would defend our "vital interests," but I assert directness at this point would have been far more certain than subtlety.

Based on the aforementioned Iraqi transcript provided by the Iraqi embassy, true or false, it could be fair to assess once again that Hussein was going to move forward with threats towards Kuwait, he may have been convinced that any conflict between two Arab states would be free to resolve a conflict like this on their own without Western interference. Duelfer and Dyson furthered this sentiment regarding Hussein's line of thinking when it came to non-interference by the US, "By contrast, Glaspie had been given instructions that Washington considered clear and firm. As President George H.W. Bush later wrote, "No one, especially Saddam Hussein, could doubt that the US had strong interests in the Gulf and did not condone aggression." In fact, Saddam doubted that very thing (regarding US involvement in the region)."<sup>72</sup> Subsequently, when Hussein was interrogated on January 17, 2004, regarding what he recalled about his meeting with Glaspie, Hussein stated that he remembered little about it, but that he came away from that meeting as a dispute between Iraq and Kuwait and that the United States would not interfere in a dispute between two Arab neighboring countries. And that after the meeting was over, he was "relieved that America was not going to get involved."<sup>73</sup>

There is no doubt that Glaspie should have been crystal clear about her words and not chance it as to whether Hussein and his advisors picked up on Washington's intent before reporting back to her superiors. Glaspie stated during her US Senate Foreign Relations Committee testimony, "Just hours later, we responded. We responded publicly and we responded privately. To the best of my knowledge, we were the only government ever to

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<sup>72</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 86.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

respond publicly on behalf of Kuwait. Publicly, you recall, Margaret Tutwiler on behalf of the United States government said that we would certainly, under any circumstances, we would defend our vital interests. She said we were strongly committed to the individual and collective self-defense of our friends in the Gulf. That's a pretty clear statement, I think.”<sup>74</sup> However, the tonality assumption that Saddam Hussein or his staff could read between the lines and he was simply ‘playing dumb’ or ‘being purposely coy’ was something that Glaspie, based on her number of years in foreign policy corps, should have picked up on if this was indeed the case.

Further, Glaspie should have understood from experience that there are times for tactfulness and there are times you must be direct to avoid misunderstanding that could lead to hostilities. In 1987, the Regan Administration appointed Glaspie as US Ambassador to Iraq.<sup>75</sup> Prior to that, her serving many years in various posts in Kuwait, Syria, and Egypt only serves to highlight Washington’s failed perception of Saddam Hussein even more. Had it been someone with less experience in the region, one could fault unknown cultural variables or different social constraints within a Middle Eastern context. Glaspie, for her part was considered a well-known expert in Middle East culture and affairs. Therefore, it was here that the US ignored or failed to recognize they were beyond the diplomacy of spiral policies and

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<sup>74</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, “U.S. Policy towards Iraq,” C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 08:06min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Norman Kempster, *Insider*: “U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Muzzled by Washington: April Glaspie met with Saddam Hussein shortly before his army invaded Kuwait. Now she is a bureaucratic non-person, and some fear a scapegoat as the Administration’s prewar policy is debated,” (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times, February 5, 1991); <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-02-05-wr-840-story.html> (accessed September, 6, 2019).

were quickly missing the opportunity to implement any type of deterrence policy when dealing with Hussein.<sup>76</sup>

Hussein and his advisors were confused by Washington's response after meeting with Glaspie prior to the war. Many Iraqi senior staff members were perplexed as to why Washington did not work harder to dissuade Hussein that it would definitely consider taking stronger stance militarily if Hussein persisted with this endeavor towards Kuwait.<sup>77</sup> When a reporter directly asked the former U.S. Ambassador why her attempt at deterring Hussein and his advisors had been unsuccessful, she responded that “we foolishly did not realize that he was stupid, that he did not believe our clear and repeated warnings that we would support our vital interests.”<sup>78</sup> Hence, in one night, knowingly or not, it is as if April Glaspie had removed the US’ big stick of deterrence (a swift show/use of US military force) and replaced it with some type of carrot (a US position of non-interference and considered an Arab matter) that held no certain promises if Hussein would make the effort to reach out and grab it.

This idea is reinforced on two fronts. First, when the UN Security Council resolution 661 trade sanctions were imposed on Iraq on August 6, 1990, four days after the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein may have felt both emboldened and compelled even more to hold on to part of Kuwait’s oil fields despite pressure from the US and the UN.<sup>79</sup> Based on

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “WikiLeaks, April Glaspie, and Saddam Hussein,” Foreign Policy.com, January 9, 2011. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/09/wikileaks-april-glaspie-and-saddam-hussein/> (accessed July 25, 2019).

<sup>78</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 86.

<sup>79</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 89.

Hussein's disposition he may have preferred sanctions over direct UN/US military intervention. Second, even when the US and coalition forces started to flex the potential use of force, by staging large amounts of troops and equipment in the Saudi Desert; Hussein may have still felt this show of force was simply a ploy by the US to get him to withdraw his forces from Kuwait, but nothing more, despite US warnings to withdraw or face military interdiction.

However, this line of thinking regarding Saddam Hussein's failure to leave Kuwait once the United States demanded a return to the status quo ante did not compel him to leave.<sup>80</sup> It is reasonable to consider that a prudent leader should have abandoned Kuwait before getting hammered by the US and its allies militarily. In hindsight the answer appears obvious, but Hussein presumably had good reasons to believe that hanging tough would eventually work out in the end.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, it was not initially apparent the US would stay and fight, and that during this period many Western military experts predicted the Iraqi army would eventually mount a formidable defense. Although these forecasts seem foolish today, many people believed them before the war began.<sup>82</sup>

Washington had been viewing Saddam Hussein from the wrong perspective. The United States failed to recognize Hussein's disposition towards his role in the future development of Arab affairs within the Middle East.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, Washington succumbed to a comparable volume of misperceptions on its own, often casting doubt on commonplace

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<sup>80</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 54.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. "*Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 74.

assertions about the battle of ideas in an open democracy being less likely to produce false images of the world than the internal dynamics of a dictator's thoughts. And, despite a long period of intense focus on Hussein, US decision makers seemingly failed to grasp key aspects of Hussein's worldview.<sup>84</sup>

Duelfer and Dyson note, "Far from being a kind of cartoonish evil villain, Saddam saw himself as playing the role of a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar, Hammurabi, or Saladin, giving him a very long view on questions of victory, defeat, and Iraqi interests."<sup>85</sup> As a result, Hussein thought of his endeavors to bring respect, wealth, and prosperity were not for just Iraq alone, but for all the Arab people in the Middle East. When Hussein saw that all had done for the region was not necessarily appreciated, he assumed it was right as Arab ruler of old, to seize Kuwait's rich oil fields and bring a leveling of OPEC to a much-depleted Iraqi economy.<sup>86</sup>

Saddam Hussein's decision to mobilize Iraq's forces and invade Kuwait was primarily an attempt to deal with Iraq's continued vulnerability. Iraq's economy, was severely decimated by its war with Iran, continued to decline after that war ended. Furthermore, an important cause of Iraq's difficulties was Kuwait's refusal both to loan Iraq more than \$10 billion and to write off debts Iraq had incurred during the Iran-Iraq War. Hussein believed Iraq was entitled to additional aid because the country helped protect Kuwait and other Gulf states from Iranian expansionism.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 54.



The same sentiment is conveyed in the February 24, 2004 FBI interview, where Hussein believed that Khomeini and Iran would have occupied all of the Arab world if it had not been for Iraq. Iraq expected the Arab world to support them during and after the war. However, Iraq saw the opposite regarding support, especially from Kuwait.<sup>88</sup> Historically, it is fair to conceive that from Hussein's perception, he viewed the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait as well deserved in a large part for keeping Iran's its radical strain of Islamic extremism at bay.<sup>89</sup> From Hussein's perspective, it was Iraqi blood that was spilt over eight long years of war with Iran in the interest of the Arab people inside Iraq and across the Middle East.

In addition, notably France and Russia provided weapons and direct military assistance and financed largely on credit against future Iraqi oil sales.<sup>90</sup> Several Arab Gulf states also provided credit to Hussein to help finance his eight-year war effort against Iran. Thus, Hussein perceived Iraq's role as leading the "Arab nation" against a Persian revolutionary threat—a role that logically would inevitably make Baghdad Washington's best ally in the region.<sup>91</sup> Iraq's Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz sincerely believed Iraq's perception of its position within the gulf-states had genuine merit, "I think it was 100 percent related. Let us not fool ourselves. The Arab countries who supported Iraq were protecting

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<sup>88</sup> US Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baghdad Operations Center (Baghdad International Airport), February 24, 2004, Interview Session Number: 9, with Saddam Hussein - Conducted by SSA George L. Piro, Arabic/English Translator "Unknown," The National Security Archive at George Washington University, 1. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed September 5, 2019).

<sup>89</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *"Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 74.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

themselves. Their financial and political support of Iraq was not rejected by the United States government. It was okay. So, there was no contradiction between their attitude towards Iraq and the American strategy in the region.”<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, prior to his invasion of Kuwait, Hussein believed that at worst he would be able to secure U.S. neutrality, and at best tactic support, for his actions.”<sup>93</sup>

The United States largely failed to understand Saddam Hussein’s grievances toward the world around him, tending to take his actions as evidence of uncalibrated hostility and aggression. Hussein believed his annexation of Kuwait in 1990 to be an entirely justified response to the ingratitude of the Arab states for his country’s sacrifices and expenses in pushing back the Iranian threat by way of the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War. When these states, which had advanced loans to Iraq to fuel the war effort, began to call in the debt, Hussein was incredulous that his fellow Arabs would take such action, and viewed this as economic aggression designed to keep Iraq weak and sought the annexation of oil-rich Kuwait as a ready fix.<sup>94</sup>

In February of 2004, FBI transcripts pick up on Hussein’s sentiment regarding Iraqi loans by other Arab countries as being considered debt free, “Regarding loan debts owed to Gulf countries as a result of support received during the Iran-Iraq War, Hussein stated these were not loans and were supposed to be free aid from these countries.”<sup>95</sup> The countries had

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<sup>92</sup> Tariq Aziz, “The Survival of Saddam,” *Frontline*:1810, Air date: January 25, 2000, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saddam/interviews/aziz.html> (accessed August 3, 2019).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. “*Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 75.

<sup>95</sup> US Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baghdad Operations Center (Baghdad International Airport), February 24, 2004, Interview Session Number: 9, with Saddam Hussein - Conducted by

originally used the word "loan" as a formality only to disguise the purpose of the funds from Iran. When Iraq was informed the money was to be paid back, Hussein was incredulous that these debts now needed to be resolved. However, because the money had been "registered as loans" to Iraq, Iraq could not secure loans from other world banks to rebuild Iraq's its economy and infrastructure.<sup>96</sup>

History recalls that when the US sent technical assistance to Iraq a few years prior to the first Gulf War, with the good-will of strengthening formal ties with Hussein, Saudi Arabia and Israel ended up paying the price for Washington's action. According to Chip Gagnon, in 1988 the Regan Administration approve exports to enhance Iraq's Russian made SCUD missile systems, where by these enhancements would give the SCUD longer and more accurate extension capabilities.<sup>97</sup> Later, the West found out the hard way that dealing with an actor such as Hussein, at times had a price. When Hussein knew there was no way out of the war with US and its allies, he believed that by launching SCUD missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel, he hoped that he could draw an Israeli response for such attacks. Subsequently, Israel's restraint had to be put in check rather quickly by the US, as not to disrupt the Arab Coalition during Operation Desert Storm.

Washington and allies suffered from misperception. So too had Hussein misjudged US intelligence and its intentions prior to both wars. Moreover, Hussein seemingly suffered from a general overestimation of what he believed Iraq and the US had in common, as he often saw the two countries as natural allies and himself as a useful tool in the Middle East to

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SSA George L. Piro, Arabic/English Translator "Unknown," The National Security Archive at George Washington University, 2. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed September 5, 2019).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Chip Gagnon, *Our History with Iraq*.

stop Iran's exportation of radical Islam.<sup>98</sup> Further, Hussein saw American intelligence as something close to omniscient, leading him to the misperception that the US had disinterest in his initial moves toward Kuwait during 1990 as lack of concern rather than lack of understanding, which also lead him to believe in 2003 that the United States knew he possessed no weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and so was engaged in some kind of elaborate bluff or ruse.<sup>99</sup>

Months leading up to the PGWI, Hussein failed to consider that Washington no longer had to entertain troops and equipment in the European theatre, due mostly in part to the break-up of the former Soviet Union. This thrown in with an unanticipated miscalculation regarding how rapidly the US could deploy troops in any part of the world may have caught him completely off guard, coupled with the fact that Hussein believed that Russia and other allies on the UN Security Council could hold off the US from eventual attacking Iraqi forces in Kuwait.<sup>100</sup> Another interesting point that should not be overlooked: Hussein counted on in the hopes of warding off US interference. Hussein knew that the US had asked the surrounding Arab states if it would be wise for the US to come to the Middle East to potentially enforce its stance against Iraqi aggression.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *"Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *"Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 73.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Saddam Hussein still believed that the other Arab leaders would not allow Western forces to stage in the Saudi Desert, next to Islam's holiest shrines. And, that US forces would not be able to sustain a long campaign in the region due to the heat and the conditions the desert presented.

Unfortunately, the US was told that Arabs would feel uneasy about a US presence in the Persian Gulf. April Glaspie affirms this sentiment:

Those points were cabled to American embassies in the area. All ambassadors were instructed to act upon them immediately. In the case of my colleagues, they were, of course, asked to consult with host governments to point out what we had said, what we were urging, and to ask them to undertake vigorous diplomacy, as well. You'll recall that the Arab states took the position that this was an Arab matter and we should stay out of it...And I think there were two miscalculations. First that the Arabs would not agree to any force being used, that they would never agree to American forces coming to the Middle East. And, that was true until August 2nd.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, it is understandable to see why Hussein was seemingly caught off guard by a change in Arab policy towards Western interdiction in the Middle East. Hussein was aware of the reply from the UAE regarding non-Arab interference and believed the US would honor this request because no Arab wanted Western forces in the Saudi Desert near Islam's holiest shrines. Apparently, the surrounding Arab states who considered these events an Arab to Arab matter, assumed Hussein was never going to invade another sovereign Arab state, yet they changed their tone immediately after the August 2 invasion and asked for US assistance.

There is no discernable evidence suggesting that Saddam did not fully weigh his options carefully even if they seem flawed. He simply believed that he needed to use force because he was facing a serious challenge economically and because, in his view, he had several good reasons to think his invasion would not readily provoke any serious opposition internationally.<sup>103</sup> Hussein's serious error came from his failure to recognize that Kuwait was not some estranged nation with a radical theocratic bent like Iran. Quite the opposite view

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<sup>102</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq," C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 09:36min; 16:03min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

<sup>103</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 54.

was held towards Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as Kuwait was seen comparatively as an opening, modernizing state.

Consequently, Hussein miscalculated perceived international interests when he invaded Kuwait thinking that no one would care or go out of their way to protect such a tiny country far from Western interests. Moreover, this misperception added to his confusion as to why the West perceived him as a threat to oil production in the Persian Gulf. Hussein naturally assumed that everyone knew that it was going to be oil that would be the sustaining catalyst in rebuilding the Iraqi economy. In hindsight, it is reasonable to see how perceptions and misperceptions between the US and Saddam could have transpired. Hussein believed that his war with Iran had served both Baghdad's and Washington's purposes in the region, after all, the US provided much needed intelligence to Iraqi forces during the war, and by his reckoning, this could only lead to better relations between both countries in the long run.<sup>104</sup> In addition, the US failed to understand the context of how Hussein viewed Iraq's role among fellow Arab states.

For instance, King Hussein of Jordan, who had several substantial interactions with Saddam Hussein over the decades, told Duelfer in a 1995 interview that "Saddam did not think like Westerners." King Hussein gave two examples of Saddam Hussein's perception of himself. The first being the absence of Iraq's ability to export oil following the PGWI. When King Hussein suggested to Saddam Hussein that the West would be very conscious of certain unrealized oil revenues and that Saddam Hussein understood this concept, and he told Hussein that he should think of the oil in the ground like bank savings account. Second, King

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<sup>104</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. *"Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*, 73.

Hussein emphasized that Saddam Hussein focused on the long-term perceptions of himself and Iraq. Saddam Hussein thought of his reputation and how history would view the next hundred years.<sup>105</sup>

When Saddam Hussein meet with Glaspie on July 25, 1990, he may have sincerely believed US would not take sides if he moved forward military against Kuwait. Hussein might have anticipated some type of response by the US and its allies, whether it be in the form of more sanctions or embargos. Consequently, when misperception occurs between two states like the Iraq and the US, sorting through the ambiguity lies within this construct in the hopes of an accurate assessment of both parties. Duelfer and Dyson note that “inherent ambiguity” are *defacto* contributors that make up misperceptions within IR, “Misperception has both situational and individual causes. It is more likely in situations with inherent ambiguity, involving complex causal interactions among actors and where many interactions are occurring simultaneously.”<sup>106</sup> In international relations, states seemingly interact with each other in numerous ways with often murky or unclear drivers and motives. Many states will frequently operate in a context that switches between zero-sum and positive sum depending on the issues and actors involved, and frequently such states possess haphazard decision-making processes internally.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, the dynamic from the US side of the equation: how did an ambiguous tone projected by a US Ambassador produce uncertainty? How could they not be more direct with an actor accustomed to having things explained to him in a clear manner? The answer was

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Duelfer and Dyson. “*Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience*,” 76.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

given when Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA), asked April Glaspie, “Well did you say “We Have no opinion on the Arab to Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait?””<sup>108</sup> April Glaspie’s response was, “Yes, that was one part of my sentence. The other part of my sentence was, “But insist that you settle your disputes with Kuwait non-violently.””<sup>109</sup>

There can be no doubt that Glaspie’s answer indicated to Saddam Hussein that Arab to Arab matters would be free of Western interference for the time being. Indeed, even if Hussein was looking to trap Glaspie by calling her in late in the evening to his headquarters to ask her what the US response would be if Iraq were to take action against Kuwait, she still should have been prepared given the context of the looming situation. Where, this interaction between Glaspie and Hussein only highlights the lack of preparedness by her and Washington is rather astonishing at best during this critical juncture in Iraq and US relations.

In retrospect, history can attest that Saddam Hussein was looking for a way out in blaming the vagueness of the US response upon Glaspie and her superiors. Hussein could have ascertained that Glaspie was not experienced in dealing with a crisis at this level, as she normally dealt with humanitarian issues during her two-plus year appointment in Iraq.<sup>110</sup> Despite all of Glaspie’s years in the State Department, regardless of instructions from the

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<sup>108</sup> Alan Cranston, US Senator, *U.S. Policy Towards Iraq*: C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 31:09min; <https://www.c-span.org/video/?17179-1/us-policy-iraq> (accessed June 25, 2019).

<sup>109</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, “U.S. Policy towards Iraq,” C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 31:18min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

<sup>110</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, “U.S. Policy towards Iraq,” C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 29:42min, (accessed June 25, 2019).



White House, Glaspie was out of her element in dealing with a military crisis of this magnitude. Thus, it is not a stretch to consider that when Glaspie responded to Hussein suggesting the US desired friendship with Iraq; Hussein may have realized that this meeting was not going to reveal Washington's true view, and moreover he could have sensed in Glaspie's disposition that the White House had already determined to implement a wait-and-see approach towards what his next movements would be as Iraq prepared to mobilize its forces at the border.

In a PBS Frontline interview with General Norman Schwarzkopf, the interviewer inquiries about US perception towards the Iraqi 1990 build-up of forces on Kuwait's border, Schwarzkopf states, "As the build-up was going along the border, we really weren't quite sure what we were seeing. We knew that the area to the west of Basra was a traditional maneuver area for the Iraqi military forces and particularly for their armored forces. So initially when we saw the armored divisions moving down to that area, we weren't sure whether there was a build-up along the border to threaten Kuwait or whether it was just maneuvers we were seeing and because it was the same time that they normally conduct their maneuvers."<sup>111</sup> Yet, with respect to US military intelligence and analysis, how could the US and the West have missed these similar signals when ten years prior Hussein massed troops and equipment in the same way on the Iraqi-Iranian border? It seems that no one in Washington can give account for this question. Even, months prior to the events of July and August 1990, the US seemingly missed several opportunities to try and elevate Hussein's concerns about what role Iraq had to play in the Middle East after its war with Iran.

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<sup>111</sup> Norman Schwarzkopf, PBS, FRONTLINE/BBC:140T; "The Gulf War: Oral History," Air date: January 28, 1997, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/gulf/oral/schwarzkopf/1.html> (accessed August 3, 2019).

During a PBS interview, Tariq Aziz discussed what he thought the US mindset was towards Hussein and Iraq, “We didn't have any plans to threaten anybody, neither the United States nor others. They could have talked to us, frankly, and we could have discussed this matter with them in a very constructive manner. I am sure of that, quite honestly. But they gradually played against us. By 1990, the American press was hostile, against us ... Saddam Hussein, the most dangerous man in the world, the Enemy Number One of the people. Why?”<sup>112</sup> To honestly answer Aziz’s question, it appears plausible that the US was attempting to make up for its lack of conscience regarding Iraq’s use of chemical weapons against the Iranian and Kurds during the 1980s, ergo the demonization of Hussein’s face across America’s newsrooms and television screens only intensified after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.

Instead of the US being direct and deliberate in its foreign policy concerning Saddam Hussein prior to the lead up of events in July and August, it is plausible to consider how the US gave subscribed to its perception’s about Iraq. Hence, the actualization and validity of White and Stoessinger’s list of characterizations were actively taking place between each country. It is easier for states to internally construct fragmented images of one another to reconcile their justification of perceptions and misperceptions about each other, rather than seek to work diligently to employ mechanism that will help to avoid conflict and ease tensions.

In the end, Hussein’s belief that Kuwait and other Arab nations in the Persian Gulf region were ungrateful and stood by without suffering any damage while Iraq protected Arab

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<sup>112</sup> Tariq Aziz, *The Survival of Saddam*, FRONTLINE:1810, Air date: January 25, 2000, (accessed August 3, 2019).

interests only reinforced his resentment towards Kuwait. In Glaspie's cable to the State Department after she met with Saddam on July 25<sup>th</sup>, Hussein, himself directly stated,

Iraq wants friendship, but does the USG (United States Government)? Iraq suffered 100,000's of casualties and is now so poor that war orphan pensions will soon be cut; Yet, rich Kuwait will not even accept OPCE discipline. Iraq is sick of war, but Kuwait has ignored diplomacy. USG maneuvers with the UAE will encourage the UAE and Kuwait to ignore conventional diplomacy. If Iraq is publicly humiliated by the USG, it will have no choice but to "respond," however illogical and self-destructive that would prove.<sup>113</sup>

One does not have to try to read between the lines during Hussein's meeting with Glaspie. It seemed perfectly clear that Hussein left no reservation about Iraqi intentions regarding what he would do to address the situation with Kuwait in order to fix Iraq's economic interests. Yet, the US continued to ratify and reinforce its perception against Hussein and his regime. The wait-and-see attitude by Washington ultimately proved to be the wrong course of action as the world watched in real-time the failure of Western leadership in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The US never gave Hussein a reason to reconsider his course of action towards Kuwait. To sum up the failed misperception of US foreign policy towards Iraq prior the PGWI, Mearsheimer and Walt write, "Saddam invaded Kuwait in early August 1990. This act was an obvious violation of international law, and the United States was justified in opposing the invasion and organizing a coalition against it. But Saddam's decision to invade was hardly irrational or reckless. Deterrence did not fail in this case; it was never tried."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *WikiLeaks, April Glaspie, and Saddam Hussein*, Foreign Policy.com, January 9, 2011, (accessed July 25, 2019).

<sup>114</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 54.

## Chapter IV

### Saddam Hussein and the US: Misplaced Misperception

In the article “*When Misperception Matters*,” Arthur Stein attempts to argue that misperceptions throughout history have been given too much credence in what starts conflicts and wars. Indeed, within the practicum of foreign policy, Stein takes value in trying to highlight the genuine realities of misperceptions versus what a state’s actual intent is. “The importance of misperception as a cause of international conflict, especially war, is commonly accepted. Whether as a primary determinant or a residual one, misperception has been linked with most 20th-century wars, including both world wars and the cold war. Its importance has been emphasized by general work on the role of cognitive processes and by analyses of decision making in the study of foreign policy; yet a theory of misperception remains to be formulated.”<sup>115</sup> This chapter does not give the formulated constructs of misperception a pass, just for the sake of validating the failures of US foreign policy towards Iraq and vice-versa, Iraqi misunderstanding of perceived US intent. The mere occurrence or idea of misperception is all too often taken as *prima facie* in that it affected the misperceiving actor's decision, and thus the outcome itself.<sup>116</sup>

Given the conditions prior to the beginning of the PGWI, it is worth considering how perceptions and misperceptions could have been the main causation of hostilities between

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<sup>115</sup> Arthur A. Stein, “When Misperception Matters,” *World Politics* 34, no. 4 (July 1982), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2010332> (accessed September 20, 2019), 505.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

Iraq and the US. Where it can be said that these misperceptions seemingly put Saddam Hussein on a rapid collision course with US led forces. Diplomacy should provide some type of sustainable recourse where international intervention would prevent hostilities. However, a question arises from the quagmire often found within the stables of foreign policy; should all conflicts be blamed entirely on misperception alone? Unfortunately, we can discern from history that misperceptions perpetually exist in conflict. In the case of Iraq, whom was at fault, and whether or not each country acted fast enough is the subject of exploration by many scholars. Hopefully practitioners can learn from these trendlines and experiences to better understand this case study.

Was Saddam Hussein's intent on reckoning Iraq's financial interests clear enough to the US and the rest of the international community? Iraq's war with Iran had a devastating effect on its economy, making things even more difficult for Iraq to rebuild was the low oil prices enacted by OPEC. Subsequently, as most analysts conclude, Hussein was in no position to go to war, and yet pursued invasion. The idea fermenting within this chapter considers that Hussein believed he had no recourse but to invade Kuwait because the lack of Western interests to remedy Iraq's economic hardship and that although misperception did occur, it was not necessarily the driving factor for Hussein to wage an unwinnable war against the US and Western allies.

Although, it is reasonable to suggest that under the right circumstances, the result of misperception by an actor or country is one where conflict could have otherwise been identified and perceived as avoidable, there are just as many times where this construct may not be true. Where international conflicts are often attributed to misperception, international

cooperation never is.<sup>117</sup> When it comes to contextualizing Iraq's movements towards Kuwait, misperception here was not the primary onus for Hussein's decision to act the way he did. Although, the West portrayed Hussein as an aggressive bully, who was always menacing his Arab neighbors, contextually, this could be anything further from the truth after his long and costly war with Iran. It was clear that Hussein was in no position to menace anyone after eight years of war.

One of Iraq's main drivers for war with Iran, besides Iranian interference in Iraqi regional affairs, was to secure a sustainable passage to the Persian Gulf via the Shatt al-Arab Waterway, which in the end, Iraq never secured.<sup>118</sup> Regarding Hussein's behavior prior to the PGWI, Mearsheimer and Walt state "The answer is no. Once again, a careful look shows Saddam was neither mindlessly aggressive nor particularly reckless. If anything, the evidence supports the opposite conclusion."<sup>119</sup> The evidence that Mearsheimer and Walt are referencing is based on both Iraq's internal and external pressures: The fact that Iraq's economy was in horrible condition could be attested to as understatement; the fact that Kuwaiti's were deliberately hurting Iraq's gross domestic product, GDP, oil, on purpose, was not.

Saddam Hussein's immediate perceptions towards the ongoing negotiations with Kuwait and OPEC was, at least from his part, was always being done from the position of a *teleological* framework. Meaning, when Hussein believed that Kuwait and OPEC were not going to lower prices over the long haul and that diplomacy was going to fail within months

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Orfra Bengio, "Iraq: Al-Jumhuriyya al-'Iraqiyya," *Middle East Contemporary Survey* 14 (1990), Editor: Ami Ayalon, 379.

<sup>119</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 54.

or a year; his perception was not necessarily the deciding factor, insomuch that his entire cabinet may have genuinely felt they had no choice but to stop Kuwait's incursion into Iraq's territory and economy, and to make matters worse, Kuwait was overproducing the quotas set by OPEC which drove down world oil prices and reduced Iraqi oil profits. Hussein tried using diplomacy to solve the problem, but Kuwait hardly budged.<sup>120</sup> "Saddam Hussein biographer Inari Rautsi notes, the Kuwaitis "suspected that some concessions might be necessary but were determined to reduce them to the barest minimum.""<sup>121</sup>

At the end of the war, Iraq began the process of rebuilding, but according to Hussein, the price of oil was approximately \$7 per barrel, and Iraq could not possibly begin to rebuild its infrastructure and economy with oil prices at this position, and he and his cabinet were convinced that Kuwait was especially at fault regarding these low oil prices.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, Iraq did try to employ diplomacy towards Kuwait and the leaders of OPEC on several occasions after the Iran-Iraq War. In a well-known September 4, 1990 letter from Tariq Aziz, to all of the foreign ministers within the international community, Aziz writes on the predicament that Iraq faced due to low oil prices and overproduction quotas:

Before waiting for the matter to be discussed in OPEC, they proceeded to flood the oil market through overproduction, bringing about a sharp fall in prices and a rapid decline in Iraq's already debilitated revenues. In the weeks that followed, the price of oil went down to \$11 per barrel, meaning a reduction of several billion dollars in Iraq's income, at a time when the country was encountering the

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> US Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baghdad Operations Center (Baghdad International Airport), February 24, 2004, Interview Session Number: 9, with Saddam Hussein. Conducted by SSA George L. Piro, Arabic/English Translator "Unknown," The National Security Archive at George Washington University, 2, 3. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed September 5, 2019). Saddam Hussein's estimation was off by about \$4/b-\$5/b dollars, as barrels may have only sunk very briefly to \$11/b-14/b, but even this amount for a short time would hurt Iraq's economy and infrastructure – this sentiment applies to the next reference as well.

very heavy economic burden left by the cost of the war. Iraq sought to draw attention, by diplomatic means and through bilateral contact, to the destructive consequences to its economy because of this policy. Iraq dispatched envoys to Kuwait, the Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and other countries; but, all to no avail.”<sup>123</sup>

Historically, two years prior to the PGWI, Iraq tried to discuss an agreement with Kuwait regarding the long-standing interstate quarrel of the actual physical lines of border demarcation between the two countries. In June of 1988, during the Arab league summit in Algiers, Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz took the initiative to meet with the Foreign Minister of Kuwait to immediately discuss the border situation, only to be purposely stalled and finally be put off a month later until July.<sup>124</sup> Finally, in December of 1988, Iraq sent Vice-Chairman of the Revolution Command Council, Mr. Izzat Ibrahim to Kuwait City to once again discuss the border situation, only to be put off until February of 1989.<sup>125</sup> Even after Saddam Hussein’s famed February 1990 speech to the Arab Summit in Amman, regarding US involvement in the region, there was still no border agreement discussed.<sup>126</sup> Subsequently, Hussein was under the perception based on reports by Hammadi’s visit to Kuwait, that Kuwait would not act this way by herself, but only if it was backed another power seeking to control Arab affairs in the region.<sup>127</sup> Beneath the surface, it appears Kuwait was emboldened

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<sup>123</sup> Fred Moore, “Iraq Speaks: Documents on the Gulf Crisis,” A letter by Tariq Aziz titled: The Kuwait Question, To the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all the countries in the world, Baghdad, September 4, 1990, (DIANE Publishing: December 31, 1992), 40. <https://books.google.com/books> (accessed October 23, 2019).

<sup>124</sup> Moore, “Iraq Speaks,” 39.

<sup>125</sup> Moore, “Iraq Speaks,” 39, 40.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> US Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baghdad Operations Center (Baghdad International Airport), February 24, 2004, Interview Session Number: 9, with Saddam Hussein - Conducted by SSA George L. Piro, Arabic/English Translator “Unknown,” The National Security Archive at George Washington University, 1. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed September 5, 2019).



by internal and external forces as it was acutely aware of Iraq's depleted economy, yet still did not want to lower OPCE production quotas.

In late June of 1990, when Iraq sent Deputy Prime Minister, Sa'doun Hammadi with the responsibility to personally deliver letters regarding a personal meeting with Saddam Hussein, to King Fahd (Saudi Arabia), Jabir al-Ahmed (Kuwait) and Sheikh Zayid (United Arab Emirates, UAE) to help resolve Iraqi-Kuwaiti economic policies. The advisors to the monarch of Kuwait and the UAE decided that they did not necessarily want to meet with Hussein personally, but instead suggested that a meeting like this be in a more formal setting between the oil of ministers of each country, rather than its leaders.<sup>128</sup> On July 10, 1990, five oil ministers met in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and agreed on oil production and OPEC quotas.<sup>129</sup> However, after the meeting ended and each minister returned home, a few days later, Kuwait announced that it would not necessarily abide by the agreements made at Jeddah and it would continue to increase its oil production by the end of October 1990.<sup>130</sup> The perception by Kuwait's response not too lower quotas was a mindset long-shared within the Ministry of Oil for many years:

Differences between the oil policies of Kuwait and Iraq were highlighted when the Kuwaiti Oil Minister declared that quotas were irrelevant from a practical point of view. He also said: "I think that our obligation to stay within the quota applies when the price of the OPEC basket is below \$18.0/b. If the price is above \$18.0/b, I think everyone should be, and even be encouraged to be, producing above quota." (MEES, 12, February 1990). It is interesting that President Saddam Hussain's messages to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and the meeting between the oil ministers of the three countries in Kuwait came soon after this statement by the Kuwaiti Oil

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<sup>128</sup> Moore, "Iraq Speaks," 41.

<sup>129</sup> Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES), *The First Oil War: Implications of the Gulf Crisis in the Oil Market*, ed. Leonie Archer, Phil Barnes, Cristina Caffarra, Joyce Dargay, Paul Horsnell, Coby van der Linde, Ian Skeet, Ala'a Al-Yousef and directed by Robert Mabro (Oxford: Oxford Institute for Energy Studies 1990), 39.

<sup>130</sup> OIES, *The First Oil War*, 41.

Minister. In addition, Iraq's opposition to the abolition of the quota system was reiterated by its oil minister Isam al-Chalabi in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Qabas* (MEES 23 April 1990).<sup>131</sup>

According to Saddam Hussein's FBI interview in February of 2004, Iraq had also sent its government officials to Saudi Arabia to convince the Saudis to put pressure on Kuwait to come to the bargaining table. The Saudi Minister of Oil came to Iraq and held meetings about oil prices, the Iraqi economy and Kuwaiti actions. Hussein claimed that a Kuwaiti official said, "We'll make the economy in Iraq so bad; one would be able to sleep with an Iraqi woman for ten dinars." Hussein, then told the Saudi officials that if Kuwait persisted and did not stop its interference in Iraqi affairs, he would be forced to make Kuwait's dinar worth ten fils.<sup>132</sup> To add insult to injury, according to Hussein, Kuwait seemed to have an ambivalent attitude towards the sovereignty of Iraq's oil fields, "...when Kuwait was faced with the facts regarding "stealing" Iraqi oil using the practice of slant drilling, they admitted to having taken "only two-and-half billion barrels." They stated this as if it were not significant!"<sup>133</sup>

Harak also notes the attitude and disposition regarding the drilling of the Rumailah oil fields by Kuwait's ruling al-Sabah family, "Meanwhile, the al-Sabah family continued to slant-drill, and to sell to the West at below OPEC prices, despite Hussein's actions in the Arab League and protests to OPEC. The al-Sabah's also continued to deny him access to the Gulf. By now, Hussein was requesting the use of the unpopulated Bubiyan and Warba islands, to avoid having to use Basra on the Shatt-al-Arab, since he shared that waterway to

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> US Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baghdad Operations Center (Baghdad International Airport), February 24, 2004, Interview Session Number: 9, with Saddam Hussein - Conducted by SSA George L. Piro, Arabic/English Translator "Unknown," The National Security Archive at George Washington University, 2. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/> (accessed September 5, 2019).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

the Gulf with Iran. Finally, the al-Sabah family declared that the \$17 billion it had given Hussein was not a gift (or an exchange for the Rumaila oil), but a loan which must be repaid.”<sup>134</sup>

For a better understanding of OPEC’s oil prices during the end of 1989 and 1990, a series of events are outlined to provide context of interaction between Iraq and OPEC. In November of 1989, OPEC met in Vienna, Austria to discuss potential production quotas for 1990 along with Iraq’s looming oil export situation. Data figures presented in points one through nineteen (1-19) are derived directly from the 1990 Oxford Institute of Energy Studies publication report - *The First Oil War: Implications of the Gulf Crisis in the Oil Market*.<sup>135</sup>

1. In November 1989, OPEC meets in Vienna. A press conference is held after the meeting by Kuwait’s Oil Minister, Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah, who pledged a production reduction of at least 500,000 b/d in the first quarter of 1990.
2. This meeting also allowed for the overproduction of oil by the UAE. Yet, it was emphasized that this must not be an excuse by other OPEC nations to renege on their commitments and overproduce. The initial goal for 1990 is a cut into oil production lower than the 23.3 mb/d from the last quarter of 1989.
3. During this meeting, the UAE could exceed its 1.095 mb/d., OPEC also suggested that Kuwait should increase its output from 1.149 mb/d of oil production to 1.5 mb/d. Hence, the predicted change brought the OPEC output ceiling from 20.5 mb/d to 22.0 mb/d which brought projected production differences to approximately -1.3mbd to -1.5mb/d.
4. In the months of November and December 1989, the change in oil production was immediate and brought the price of oil up to \$18.0/b.

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<sup>134</sup> Harak, *Hypertexting the Gulf War*, 509. This is derived directly from the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies assessment of Iraq’s continued request for OPEC to limit its production and/or rise oil prices accordingly to aid in Iraq’s infrastructure rebuilding after its long war with Iran.

<sup>135</sup> OIES, *The First Oil War*, 39-41. Production goals of the meeting produced in Vienna at the end of 1989 are ideally set to effectively drive 1990 oil prices and quotas by each OPEC state (Oil price monthly averages are only presented, not daily fluctuations which are commonly driven by stock commodity changes).

In 1990, oil production quotas and prices become affected during the year as Hussein begins to put pressure on OPEC to lower oil prices and decrease oil production among the leading Arab states.

5. In January 1990, the oil price of \$20/b is almost reached, as OPEC oil production fell in the first three months of 1990.
6. Between February 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> of 1990, Iraqi President, Saddam Hussain, sends messages to the heads of state of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, respectively, urging each country to restrain their production and to keep prices above \$18.0/b.
7. In February 1990, oil prices reach \$19.10/b. However, this price increase is short lived and oil prices begin to tail downwards.
8. On March 3, 1990 – a meeting in Kuwait takes place between the respective oil ministers of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq concerning the commitment that took place in Vienna, November 1989. The agreement was reaffirmed by all three countries. However, a key difference begins to emerge regarding long-term policies towards production, as Iraq is in favor of raising prices, while Kuwait wants to maintain the agreed \$18.0/b target level.
9. In March 1990, oil prices begin to fall to \$17.75/b. In April, oil prices continue to decline prompting the OPEC President (the Algerian Oil Minister) to announce an urgent meeting of the eight-member Ministerial Monitoring Committee (MMC) in Geneva on 2 May.
10. On May 2, 1990, the MMC meets in Geneva, where it agreed to cut back total production to the ceiling of 22 mb/d agreed in November from the actual volume of 23.5 mb/d achieved in April. This implied a cut of about 1.5 mb/d, where bulk decreased amount would be primarily contributed by the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. However, the Saudi's end bearing the brunt of the reduction.
11. May 3, 1990, on the day after the MMC meeting both the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, and the ruling Ba'ath party newspaper *al-Thawra* issued warnings to those members of OPEC who had been overproducing, describing the overproduction as a "Zionist-imperialist campaign against Iraq." These statements have the opposite effect on OPEC and Kuwait.
12. Throughout May of 1990, the average price of oil continued to fall, reaching \$15.45/b. The price fell further in June reaching \$14.0/b implying that most Gulf crudes were selling for about \$12.0/b.
13. On July 10 – 11, 1990, in Jeddah Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government along with Kuwait and the UAE pledge once again to cut production, as Iraq begins to put pressure on the Gulf countries by massing more troops on its border with Kuwait – OPEC immediately raised its prices from \$14.0/b to \$18.0/b.

14. However, on July 16, 1990, a statement by Kuwait's new Minister of Oil, reveals that the Jeddah meeting would suggest that it had agreed to raise Kuwait's production quota in October.<sup>136</sup> However, Iraq did not see it this way which once again reinforced Hussein's perception that Kuwait was not serious about cutting its production quotas.<sup>137</sup>
15. July 17, 1990, the following day during the anniversary of the Iraq's revolution, Saddam dedicates almost his entire speech to address those he suspects of blatantly overproducing in order to thwart Iraq's economy. The next day, the Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz sends an open letter to the Arab League accusing Kuwait and the UAE of plotting against Iraq.
16. By July 26, 1990, the scheduled OPEC conference meeting in Geneva took a different tone amid the rising tensions in the Persian Gulf region. Iraqi troops intensified its mobilization efforts on Kuwait's border. The meeting was to also affirm the Jeddah agreement of July 11, 1990, which agreed to raise the UAE quota to 1.5 mb/d. Thus, allowing for a small increment of OPEC's production to 22.491 mb/d.
17. The Geneva meeting also had reached a compromise on a minimum price of oil to \$21.0/b despite Iraq's insistence to raise oil prices up to \$25.0/b. However, Iraq's minimum price level was reached within just days prior to its invasion of Kuwait.<sup>138</sup>
18. On July 31, 1990, Kuwaiti and Iraqi delegations met once again in Jeddah. The meeting was uneventful and led to no resolution of their disputes.
19. Finally, on August 1, 1990, second unfruitful meeting was held. The Iraqis were reportedly incredulous by the Kuwaiti's intransigent position.

Although there are several indicators that one could explore regarding Iraq's treatment by OPEC prior to the PGWI. One looming consideration was that Saddam Hussein did not have a disagreement with a small rise oil output by OPEC due to the UAE standard production quota increment. The UAE is not a big oil producing country and OPEC has always allowed them to overproduce through the years due to the size of its oil fields and facilities. This one consideration though seemingly beguine, demonstrates Hussein was not necessarily some

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

unpredictable actor that could not be reasoned with, as he knew very well how the considerations within OPEC operated. However, as prices begin to fall in June of 1990, it is probable to postulate that Hussein felt that since Iraq was weak economically, OPEC could exploit this situation and make it clear to him that Iraq was no position to dictate production policy to them.

Moreover, Saddam Hussein continued to reason it was Iraq alone who stopped Iranian aggression in the peninsula; he as an Arab brother was being treated unfairly and unjustly by his fellow Arabs whose countries were not economically affected by Iraq's war with Iran. When Hussein realized that diplomacy among the Arab heads of states within OPEC was not getting him anywhere, he would use the Middle East's largest Arab army to ratify his position more seriously to get OPEC to change its course towards oil production, which it did, albeit too late. Robert Jervis writes about a state's actions when it surmises that diplomacy is not working, "Military optimism is especially dangerous when coupled with political and diplomatic pessimism. A country is especially likely to strike if it feels that, although it can win a war immediately, the chances of a favorable diplomatic settlement are slight, and the military situation is likely to deteriorate."<sup>139</sup> This was Iraq's exact predicament! What seemingly irritated Hussein the most was that he had to waste vast resources to mobilize forces to get OPEC and Kuwait's attention, and by his reckoning once he withdraw his forces, OPEC would once again renege on their production commitments, but this time they would do it with the backing of the US and its allies.

In hindsight, it would seem that while the main grievance of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was the latter's oil policy, other factors, such as the debt, border disputes and a

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<sup>139</sup> Jervis, "War and Misperception," 676.

variety of regional political issues, further aggravated the situation.<sup>140</sup> To highlight the continued strained relationship between Iraq and Kuwait, Adel Safty notes, “The Iraqi-Kuwaiti negotiations on a number of issues were experiencing serious difficulties. Of significance to Iraq was the issue of two uninhabited Kuwait islands. Syria, which sided with Iran in its war with Iraq, had shut off the oil pipeline that gave Iraqi oil access to the Mediterranean. Iran had easily interdicted Iraqi access to the Gulf. Iraq's two new pipelines passed through Saudi Arabia and Turkey, both close allies of Washington.”<sup>141</sup> In addition, Iraq had proposed to build a naval facility at the Persian Gulf village of Umm Qasr, linked to the Iraqi inland port of Basra. Iraq requested from Kuwait that it needed to lease its two completely uninhabited islands of Bubiyan and Warba to provide for the security of the new port. Although these Islands did not pose a security threat to Kuwait; Kuwait, once again stalled on the talks only to provide an unresponsive answer to Iraqi requests in leasing the islands or even allow them to make other offers that would benefit both countries.<sup>142</sup>

During the course of 1990, Iraq realized its end game needed to incorporate diplomatic resolutions within OPEC in the hopes to accomplish its economic endeavors. Saddam Hussein faced a system run by Arab oligarchs who seemed more concerned with implementing oil production quotas rather than helping a fellow member. Hussein viewed Iraq's infrastructure recovery as the most important endeavor in Iraq's history after its war with Iran. It was not misperception that hurt Hussein's efforts to have OPEC decrease production quotas and raise oil prices. For Hussein, it was all about Iraq's survival as country

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<sup>140</sup> OIES, *The First Oil War*, 39.

<sup>141</sup> Adel Safty, “The War against Iraq: New World Order or the Same Old Order?” *Source: Peace Research* 23, no. 2/3 (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite University, May 1991): 19, accessed October 16, 2019).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

and a brighter economic future in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War. However, there is a legitimate criticism towards Hussein's perception externally, when he viewed America's interest in the Persian Gulf as incursion into Arab affair, ultimately to get Arab states to do its bidding regardless of outcome.

However, the evidence regarding Kuwaiti behavior towards Iraq, Hussein was not under a false pretense that Kuwait was interfering with Iraq's economy. Thus, while diplomacy was failing at all levels throughout the region, Hussein believed that he only had one course action to get OPEC act, as all other courses may not get the desired results he was looking for. Stein reiterates this logic by stating:

The argument that misperception affects an actor's decision presumes that the actor has a choice. Some maintain that actors do not always see that they have a choice and misperceive others to have a wider latitude. Indeed, national leaders may not have choices because of structural or systemic constraints, or because of their own cognitive processes. But if they see themselves as having only a single course of action, then their assessment of the intentions and preferences of others is moot, and their belief that others have alternative choices affects only their expectations. There is no reason to argue that they would have acted differently had they perceived others accurately.<sup>143</sup>

Just a few days prior to the August 2nd invasion of Kuwait, OPEC finally agrees to raise oil prices over the agreed minimum of \$21/b to that approaching upwards of \$25/b.<sup>144</sup> Hussein entertained negotiations all the way up until August 1 to ensure to the other Arab states and the West that he was willing to give diplomacy one final chance. On July 31 he secretly told King Hussein of Jordan that he simply wanted to teach Kuwait a lesson and he planned to withdraw his troops over the weekend.<sup>145</sup> Yet, he warned King Hussein that if condemnation

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<sup>143</sup> Stein, "When Misperception Matters,"

<sup>144</sup> OIES, *The First Oil War*, 40.

<sup>145</sup> Safty, "The War against Iraq," 2-12.



were massed against Iraq from the Arab world, this would complicate his withdrawal plans because it would make him to be seen as weak and that he was caving into pressure externally.<sup>146</sup>

In hindsight, whether Saddam Hussein was being duplicitous in stalling for time to mass his forces to ensure a quick victory, as he knew that Kuwait was being obstinate because of US assurances of protection, was not the real issue at all?<sup>147</sup> The real issue: why did the US not go to OPEC on behalf of Iraq and help mediate the situation? The US would have not jeopardized OPEC output quotas by interfering in Arab matters, when many other countries like Jordan, a strong US ally, supported Hussein and questioned other Arabs for trying to hurt Iraq's economy. One cannot forget how readily the surrounding Arab states requested help immediately after Iraq invaded Kuwait. It stands to reason within this context the US could have forgone Arab pride for the sake of peace and stability: what the Arab states declared to the West after Hussein invaded Kuwait.

More importantly, if Iraq massed troops ten years earlier with Iran to gain access to the Shatt al-Arab waterway, why would anyone think he would do the same thing when Iraq's economy desperately needed oil and free access to the Persian Gulf to survive? Hussein was not going to close the Gulf for his own purposes. On the contrary, he needed OPEC to lower its quotas so Iraq could ship out oil to Asia and Eastern Europe. Kuwait was accessing the Rumailah oil fields on Iraq's via slant drilling, and if the US had simply come

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. My insertion. Jordan, which traditionally enjoyed privileged relationships with the West and which had been displaced by Egypt's rise as Washington's junior strategic ally after Israel, saw the crisis looming at the horizon. Jordanian officials say that they were surprised by the Kuwaiti defiant attitude and that they were told by Kuwaiti officials that Kuwait had received assurances from Washington that the United States would intervene militarily to back up the Kuwaitis against the Iraqis.

to Iraq's aid and brokered a deal by supporting it early on in 1990, as it did prior to its eight-year war with Iran, escalation might have been avoided. Hussein was perplexed why the US changed its position. The circumstances could have been different during the opening days of August 1990.

The same disposition is reflected by Jordan's King Hussein. "The 54-year-old King, now in his 38th year on the throne, says he believes that a peaceful end to the Kuwait dispute is possible, but only if there is a greater willingness to compromise by the United States and its Arab allies, and what he called "an end to the current embargo on dialogue."<sup>148</sup> Even though, the US had previously arrested Iraqi spies in 1989 for trying to export classified electronics components, why wouldn't the US and its allies see the bigger picture of creating stability within the region?

Instead of looking for a reason to isolate Saddam Hussein, the US could have created a system of support to show other Arab nations that it indeed did care about their security and infrastructure, and that oil was not the only consideration for their wellbeing. In essence, this reflected a missed opportunity to see the bigger picture by helping Iraq and easing tensions across the Persian Gulf peninsula. If the US had gone before OPEC and the Arab states supporting Iraq with sustainable oil production quotas, it would have been much easier to provide a long-term security plan within the Persian Gulf. This could have resulted in not only a sustained US presence in the region, but more importantly, a welcomed one.

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<sup>148</sup> Judith Miller, "Mideast Tensions; King Hussein on Kuwait and Dashed Hope," *New York Times*, October 16, 1990: A version of this article appears in print on Oct. 16, 1990, Section A, Page 1 of the National edition. <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/16/world/mideast-tensions-king-hussein-on-kuwait-and-dashed-hope.html> (accessed 12, 2019).

By the US supporting Iraq, Hussein's outlook and framework towards working with Kuwait and OPEC and the international community could have become favorable and consolatory. In turn, US civil contractors would have been able to help build Iraq's infrastructure and afford other nations the confidence in doing business with Hussein. However, none of this came to fruition, because it did not matter how enlightened the US perceived itself to be when it came to foreign policy in the Middle East, being the most powerful country has little use, if it cannot constructively use its influence to righteously ward off wars and conflicts.

## Conclusion

### The Failure of US Foreign Policy: Introspection for the American Soul

Examining historical events that define the Persian Gulf as we know it today, one views a region fraught with tension and cultural animosities. The delicate balance of power that existed in the region, and any interruption within this balance, had long lasting consequences. US foreign policy seemingly failed to account for existing drivers within the region underpinning a number of animosities. So too, stability. Not only among neighboring states, but outside the region. The short-sightedness of US foreign policy rested on the premise that it could secure interests through military strength. Had US foreign policy more strongly considered the historical construct that intertwined Iraq and the surrounding nations within the Persian Gulf, hostilities with Iraq could have been avoided. An alternative diplomatic course of action might have been implemented towards a once former ally in the Middle East with a better outcome for all parties.

The failure of US foreign policy to comprehend the driving force behind Saddam Hussein's motives, rationale, and worldview was dismissed, neglected, or never even considered. The deficiencies in US foreign policy included a lack of preparedness to implement either a stick policy of deterrence or a carrot policy of cooperation to squelch Hussein's ambitions in Kuwait. This poor planning by US foreign policy, coupled with the deficit response by the US to ascertain Iraq's economic condition to rebuild its infrastructure after the Iran-Iraq War compounded perceptual challenges. Fear and misperception that the Persian Gulf's oil production would be cutoff if Iraq invaded Kuwait, despite increased oil

output by OPEC and Non-OPEC members, suggested otherwise.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, if there is to be any indicator at all that US foreign policy is to move forward in diplomacy with authoritarian run states in the years ahead, it must first come to terms with its own deficiencies and short-sightedness.

This short-sightedness portrayed during the events that led up the PGWI stems from decades where US foreign policy did not adequately comprehend the Middle East as it pertained to cultural and religious identity. The complexity of the region was not simply Arabs not liking Persians and vice-versa, in so much as it had to do with understanding the complexities of an Islamic identity and the construct that existed within this context. Nondeliberative US foreign policy caused immense damage to a region where states and cultures were already at odds with each other. By removing Saddam Hussein, a Sunni, the US has created both a power vacuum and an imbalance in the region giving way to a burgeoning Iranian hegemony that is on the rise, and one that the US has always feared and tried to contain after 1979. Bob Baer notes that end of the Iran's eight- year war with Iraq, Iran not only survived this war of attrition with Iraq, but it came out of the war with a new ability to wage a different kind of warfare.<sup>150</sup> "Iran and its proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah, found out they could win by discarding terrorism for a radically new form of guerrilla warfare: roadside bombs, sophisticated precision-guided rockets, and the ultimate smart bomb, the suicide bomber. These are the same weapons and tactics that now have us stalemated in Iraq and Afghanistan. And along the way Iran just as certainly acquired an

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<sup>149</sup> OIES, *The First Oil War*, 12-14.

<sup>150</sup> Robert Baer, *The Devil We Know* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2008), 2.

appetite for hegemony, a belief that it's powerful enough to challenge the United States for dominance of the Persian Gulf—not just control of Iraq but of the Gulf's oil...”<sup>151</sup>

From a historical context, the inhabitants of the Middle East have always viewed the West with a wary eye concerning Western intrusion into their lands. This predisposition of caution towards the West was primarily due to the historical treatment of Persian Gulf inhabitants by Western colonialism during the early oil exploration during the 1920s and 1930s. Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele note the attitude and disposition that existed among colonial oil companies during this period,

In Iraq, restricted production is an old story. It has often been the victim, ever since oil was discovered near Kirkuk and Mosul in 1927, within miles of the biblical fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. The Iraq Petroleum Co., jointly owned by U.S., British, French and Dutch oil giants, drilled the first well. It gushed at a rate of 100,000 bbl. a day. That much cheap oil was that last thing the international oil companies wanted. They clamped a lid on the well and sat on the field through the 1930s because the world was awash in oil, and prices were already depressed. Texas crude had fallen from \$1.30 per bbl. to 5(cents).<sup>152</sup>

Although both Arabs and Persians have learned to coexist symbiotically with the West, they have never forgotten how outsiders cheated the regions inhabitants out of years of oil revenue, less than half a century ago. Moreover, Saddam Hussein would echo this sentiment prior to the First Persian Gulf War and afterwards in a vain attempt to rally other Arab nations to Iraq's cause of resistance towards Western interference within the Arab community. It cannot be helped to assume that Hussein was correct in his assessment of Western interference into the Persian Gulf.

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<sup>151</sup> Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, “Iraq's Crude Awakening” (Time Magazine: Saturday, May 10, 2003), <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,450939,00.html> (accessed August 8, 2019).

In the late 1950s, a resurgent Arab nationalism swept through the Middle East causing a number of Arab scholars and leaders to rethink their long-term economic interests, as it pertained to their main source of revenue, oil. The sentiment felt among the region's inhabitants believed that the West did not necessarily care for their wellbeing, but only about the commodity that lie beneath their soil. For many Arabs and Persians alike, this animosity had percolated just beneath the surface for generations. This course of action inevitably reinforced competition between Arabs and Persians by marking territories and constructing state lines that previous did not exist. In 1960, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela formed OPEC to control their own economic interests in response to the West's ever-growing appetite for its oil.<sup>153</sup> However, as the decades progressed the uneasy alliance among the OPEC's states would become strained and fractured as internal conflicts and border disputes began to destabilize the region.

The Yom Kippur War started in the early part of October in 1973, as Israel was initially attacked by Egypt and Syria. Iraq, wanting to expand its influence in the region joined the conflict by mobilizing a portion of its mechanized forces hundreds of miles away and drove through Syria to join the war. This move by Iraq to purposely insert itself in a war with Israel would serve as an early indicator to both the Israeli's and the US regarding Hussein's willingness to use its burgeoning military force to address its own foreign policy concerns.<sup>154</sup> What Hussein failed to realize is that Israel would neither forgive, nor forget this action by Iraq years later.

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<sup>153</sup> OPEC, "Brief History," [https://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/24.htm](https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/24.htm) (accessed December 12, 2019).

<sup>154</sup> W. Andrew Terrill, "Iraq's Role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War," (Small Wars & Insurgencies: 2000), 1-2. DOI: 10.1080/09592310008423287 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09592310008423287> (accessed December 28, 2019).

The historical narrative that took place in the Persian Gulf during the 1970s must include aspects of the Iranian equation. Iran was considered, by some analysts, the strongest power in the Persian Gulf possessing one of the largest oil reserves as well as one of the largest populations in the Middle East, almost three times that of Iraq.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, Iran had a modern military due to its acquisition of 70 modern US F-14 Tomcat fighters from the US. This compared to Iraq's meager air force which consisted of spattering of old British and Soviet fighters was no match for constant incursions by the Iranians into Iraqi airspace.<sup>156</sup> Thus, with Iran in possession of US military hardware, coupled with the Shah's confidence of continued US military support, relations between Iran and Iraq during the 1970s became more estranged. Constant border clashes between the two country's increased in frequency. These encounters often left Iraq in no position to counter continued Iranian aggression, as the Iranians constantly tested Saddam Hussein's regime by interfering and fermenting unrest among Iraq's sizable Kurdish minority in the north.

"In March 1979, Saddam Hussein spoke in a private meeting of high-level Baathist officials, that Iraq would hope seek to obtain a nuclear weapon from the Soviets as a deterrent to counteract Israeli threats of nuclear retaliation, and thereby enable a "patient war" in the form of attrition that would aid in reclaiming Arab Lands lost in the 1967, Six Day War."<sup>157</sup> However, Saddam's misperception that his fellow Arab leaders would appreciate his actions in the future were short sighted. When two years later, on June 7, 1981,

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<sup>155</sup> Pierre Razoux, "The Iran-Iraq War," trans. Nicholas Elliot (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 14.

<sup>156</sup> Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 138-139.

<sup>157</sup> Hal Brands and David Palkki, "Saddam, Israel, and the Bomb: Nuclear Alarmism Justified?" (Cambridge, MA: Published by The MIT Press International Security, Vol. 36, No. 1, Summer 2011), 133. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289691> (accessed December 14, 2019).



eight Israeli F-16s and eight F-15s destroyed Iraq's French built Osirak reactor near Baghdad, setting back Hussein's nuclear ambitions another ten to twelve years.<sup>158</sup> The attack by the Israeli Air Force was considered a great success, but more importantly for the Israeli's and the surrounding Arab states, it achieved a psychological effect that anyone's air space could be violated at any time and that it was not immune from outside interdiction. This event would begin to act as catalyst for Iraq's isolation as Hussein was incredibly disappointed by the lack of interest and response from his Arab counter parts who did nothing against Israel for the attack on the Osirak facility.

US foreign policy failed to understand the complex interstate narrative the drove the region's uneasy tensions that existed between Iraq and regional neighbors. For instance, Saddam Hussein boasted that the Osirak reactor located in the city of Tuwaitha would someday bring a détente between Iraq and its neighboring Arab states. When in fact the French built reactor was designed to produce electricity with minimum risk towards the possibility of producing any fissionable materials for weapons grade research, even the Iranians, Israeli's and the US suspected as much, but they still attacked it to prevent further development of the nuclear program.<sup>159</sup>

Although Hussein's bolstering rhetoric concerning the injustice of early European colonialism and Western interference did him no favors prior to the First Persian Gulf War; Hussein believed that he could still rally support behind his cause to let Arabs handle their own affairs. After he invaded Kuwait, Hussein embarked on an unsuccessful campaign of

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<sup>158</sup> Whitney Raas and Austin Long, "Osirak Redux? Assessing Israeli Capabilities to Destroy Iranian Nuclear Facilities," *Quarterly Journal: International Security* 31, no. 4 (Spring 2007): 8, 11.

<sup>159</sup> Bennett Ramberg, "Osirak and Its Lessons for Iran Policy" (2012), Arms Control Association, Arms Control Today, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2012-05/osirak-its-lessons-iran-policy> (accessed December 21, 2019).

anti-Western imperialist's propaganda, frequently invoking images of him being the solemn Arab Muslim ruler unafraid to fight the Western crusaders incursion into the Arabian lands. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that Hussein was initially correct regarding Western interference in Arab interstate disputes, which indeed enabled Kuwait and OPEC to be resistive towards negotiating a rise in oil prices and a lowering production quotas.

Later when Iraq massed troops on Kuwait's border, the US failed to recognize the same pattern that took place a decade earlier when Iraq invaded Iran. Hussein felt that Kuwait, like Iran was interfering with Iraq's internal policies. Iran not, only fermented unrest in Iraq's Shia and Kurdish populations, it also began assassinating high ranking Iraqi government officials.<sup>160</sup> Thus, for Hussein if the US and the West was indifferent towards Iraq's external circumstances, instead helping those country's seeking to hurt Iraq's economy, Hussein felt that he had no choice but to play the foreign policy cards he was dealt to pressure the outcomes he wanted.

However, not to dismiss Saddam Hussein's culpability, US foreign policy should have been mature enough to see through Hussein's machismo and come to terms in understood Iraq's predicament by extending an olive branch of diplomacy and offer to help Iraq while allowing Hussein to save face before his Arab brethren. Providing a legitimate, diplomatic off-ramp steeped in the history and perspectives of all parties might have assuaged those concerned and prevented war. The US choose to believe that if Hussein went uncontained in Kuwait, oil flow from the Persian Gulf would be closed and a hike in oil prices would immediately follow, sending the world's economies into a panic. However, the concurrent OIES 1990 year end quarterly report indicated that other OPEC and non-OPEC

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<sup>160</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *An Unnecessary War*, 53.

countries could pick up the slack over a six to eight month period if the war was drawn out.<sup>161</sup> What was obviously unrecognized by the West in understanding Hussein's grievances, is that he needed the Persian Gulf opened, not closed, in order to export Iraq's oil and rebuild the country's economy.

The decision to go to war with Iraq in 1990-1991 was based on several substantial misperceptions concerning Saddam Hussein's stability as a state leader next the world's largest oil reserves. Chaim Kaufmann offers a valid criticism towards Kenneth Pollack's assertion that Hussein could not be reasoned or dealt with on equal terms prior to both Persian Gulf Wars because he was viewed as unpredictable and reckless. It is commonly recognized by most foreign policy analysts that it was Pollack's book, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* became a catalyst that swayed a number of liberal and moderates on Capitol Hill, including a number of senior officials on President Bush's staff, to have a second gulf war with Iraq and remove Hussein from power to stabilize the region.<sup>162</sup> Pollack argued Hussein was "one of the most reckless, aggressive, violence-prone, risk-tolerant, and damage-tolerant leaders of modern history," even "inadvertently suicidal."<sup>163</sup> Thus, from Pollack's framework, Hussein's prior endeavors, from 1974 through 1993, proved his point regarding Hussein's stability, and that no normal state actor would consider such actions. However, upon critical examination of Pollack's assertions, there is no

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<sup>161</sup> OIES, *The First Oil War*, 12-14.

<sup>162</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 11.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

significant evidence that truly support his conclusions. The facts contest his assessments regarding Saddam Hussein's stability as a state leader.<sup>164</sup>

For instance, Pollack believed that Saddam Hussein had made a catastrophic foreign policy miscalculation in 1974 by rescinding the autonomy agreement that had ended the 1969-70 Kurdish rebellion. Furthermore, Pollack ascertained that Hussein had made a foolish move because he assumed that the Shah of Iran would stay out of hostilities.<sup>165</sup> Further, when it was revealed that Iran was actively and openly supporting the Kurds, Hussein became apprehensive because he inherently thought that the Shah was potentially looking for an excuse to invade Iraq, leaving Hussein with little choice, but to accept an unreasonable peace and lose face.<sup>166</sup>

Was this really the case? Historically, Iraq nor the Kurds had sincerely honored the 1970 ceasefire agreement. The Kurds were constantly being aided by Iran, and the Iraqi government believed that it could not give legitimacy to the Kurds by surrendering oil fields near Kirkuk.<sup>167</sup> Iran's involvement was part of its continuing campaign to assert its influence throughout the region. From 1966 onward Iran, the US and Israel, sent military aid to the Kurds to help undermine the Baathist regime Baghdad.<sup>168</sup> And, in 1969 Iran unilaterally revoked the 1937 treaty that deeded Iraqi ownership of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway.

However, Hussein wanting the crises to end quickly had agreed to divide the waterway with

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 12.

Iran. In return, history proves that Hussein had suffered little, while Iran ended up abandoning the Kurds.<sup>169</sup>

During 1976, Pollack suggested that Hussein's unpredictability was on full display when he made a no assessment risk by entering into a border dispute with Syria. Pollack paints a scenario that Hussein had to be rescued from a likely military defeat as the Arab League ratified Syrian control of Lebanon, thus, allowing him to back out without losing face.<sup>170</sup> However, Pollack is mistaken about the reason and outcome, as the main dispute was in regards to Syria's damming of the Euphrates River. Also, Hussein appealed to Syria via Arab to Arab and successfully coerced Syria into releasing the same water flow as before without the need for hostilities between two neighboring states.<sup>171</sup>

Another example by Pollack regarding Hussein's irrational behavior took place in 1980 when he attempted to invade Iran in the midst of its revolution, where he underrated Iran's capacity for resistance, which Pollack deems "another colossal miscalculation that nearly cost him nearly everything."<sup>172</sup> However, this assessment sincerely overstates both the error and the risk made by Hussein. Many of the world's major powers also made the same misjudgment, and several country's including the US had reversed its support of Iran and changed sides and begun to support Iraq in its war with Iran, because of the perceived threat of Iranian expansionism towards the region after the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1979.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

Pollack also held to the belief that Hussein could not have been deterred from invading Kuwait in August 1990 because he had in essence, made up his mind to fight world's only remaining superpower and in doing so, he thought that if he could win a war of attrition with the US, this would allow him to be perceived by the Arab world as one of the greatest Arab rulers ever. Pollack makes a bases for this speculation based on a number of interviews given by Iraq's former Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz in mid-1991 after the First Persian Gulf War ended. What Pollack fails to ascertain is that during these interviews, Aziz often provided two contradictory arguments as to why the war should be blamed on the US.<sup>174</sup>

Pollack does not explain why he subscribes to one version of events offered by Aziz, yet choses to ignore and dismiss Aziz's many denials that Iraq still possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction, WMD's, which was one of the main points in his book and one of the driving forces that he had advocated for a second Persian Gulf War with Iraq and the removal of an unpredictable Saddam Hussein from power. "The interpretation of this case best supported by the evidence is that deterrence failed not because Hussein was unusually willing to run risks, but because the United States could not declare that it would fight for Kuwait because that decision was not made until after the invasion took place."<sup>175</sup>

Upon examination of Kenneth Pollack's assertions, strong evidence supports the opposite conclusion that Saddam Hussein was not unusually reckless, and he could be reasoned with is approached in the right way. Moreover, the evidence presented thus far, suggests historically that Hussein acted rationally for the most part, to get the desired out-

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

comes he wanted. It may have seemed an unorthodox method that Hussein used, but again the Middle East is incredibly unorthodox region of the world and methodologies can be quite different than Western standards. And, whether it was a disdain for many Westerners to look past his Arab machismo that personified himself as a great ruler; the fact remains that Hussein recognized the dangers of Shia radicalism in Iran long before the West, and in doing so had the uneasy task of trying to contain it via Western support leading him to be confused as to why the US and the West was turning its back on him, after aiding him for eight years against the Iranians. Although, the media in the US and foreign policy analysts like Kenneth Pollack painted Saddam Hussein as maniacal despot, bent on destruction and regional aggression; the truth is that Iraq, like most Arab and Persian countries had a valid historical concerns regarding Western intrusion into Middle East affairs, and blamed the US for Kuwaiti's lack of interest to come to the bargaining table.

As this thesis concludes, it still must address the initial endeavor of this writing and come to terms with the failures that were endemic within US foreign policy prior the First Persian Gulf War. The US failed to use the mechanisms of diplomacy at all levels to avoid war with Iraq. If the US had used both the stick policy of deterrence and the carrot policy of cooperation, it is plausible to consider that Iraq would have withdrawn from Kuwait's border with Saddam Hussein's pride intact and more important with the stability of the region intact.

In the weeks that led up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, it started became apparent that the US and its allies had either ignored or neglected to recognize that they were beyond the diplomacy of spiral policies and were quickly missing the opportunity to implement any type of deterrence policy when dealing with Hussein. It is as if the big stick of deterrence was removed and replaced with some type of carrot that held no certain promises

if Hussein reached out and grabbed it. And, even when the US and coalition forces started to flex its military muscle, by staging large amounts of troops and equipment in the Saudi Desert, Saddam may have felt that the US was simply bluffing to get him to withdraw, because so far, he had no reason to think otherwise regarding US foreign policy towards his regime.

The United States should have been clear with its intentions and put the onus on Hussein; if he did not take corrective action immediately by withdrawing his forces, the US and its allies would respond with immediate and direct force, and not the kind of force that took time to implement or stage in a remote desert. Robert Jervis suggests that a state must be prepared to display the ability and willingness to wage war. Although it may not be able to ignore minor conflicts or judge disputes on their merits alone; disputes that arise of little intrinsic value become highly significant as an indicator of resolve.<sup>176</sup> Hence, it is critical that a respected actor such as the US employs its responsibility to demonstrate its resolve as clearly as possible towards a lesser smaller state regardless if the competing state believes itself to have the upper hand or not. The delicate balance suggested here is one where the US would have to appear both strong and uncompromising while at the same time, let Iraq maintain an air of dignity, as it withdraws its forces from Kuwait's borders with banners still held high.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 is an example where the United States would not appear to acquiesce to the Soviet Union when it came to remove outdated missile systems from Turkey. Even though President Kennedy had ordered American missiles out of Turkey

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<sup>176</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University Press: 2017), 59.



before the Cuban missile crisis, he would not agree to remove them as the price for obtaining Soviet cooperation.<sup>177</sup> Many conflicts resemble the game of “Chicken,” and, in such a game, as Thomas Schelling argues, “It may be safer in the long run to hew to the center of the road than to yield six inches on successive nights, if one is really going to stop yielding before being pushed onto the shoulder. It may save both parties a collision.”<sup>178</sup>

An example of a successful deterrence policy by the US towards Saddam Hussein can be illustrated by Stephen Van Evera’s construct highlighting the differences between spiral and deterrence modalities. The purpose is to draft out a set of responses and outcomes between the US and Iraq, prior to its invasion of Kuwait.<sup>179</sup> By doing this we can see what actually happened versus what should have happened and in doing so, prescribe a foreign policy outcome to the situation at hand. In this instance, the prescription here is that US foreign policy should have made a concerted effort to employ a stick policy of deterrence, the immediate willingness to use force by the US via the deployment of two carrier battle groups to the region; while at the same time, employ a carrot policy of open cooperation, where the US should have used diplomacy and interfered on Iraq’s behalf to OPEC and Kuwait to lower oil production quotas.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 59

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Stephen Van Evera, “Causes and Prevention of War,” spring 2009 class, outline. MIT Open Course Ware, [https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/political-science/17-42-causes-and-prevention-of-war-spring-2009/lecture-notes/MIT17\\_42S09\\_spiral4.pdf](https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/political-science/17-42-causes-and-prevention-of-war-spring-2009/lecture-notes/MIT17_42S09_spiral4.pdf) (accessed July 24, 2019). Van Evera, “Causes and Prevention of War.” These models are outlined in Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, chapter 3 (“Deterrence, the Spiral Model, and Intentions of the Adversary”), 58-113. Jervis spoke only of “deterrence,” not of a “deterrence model,” but the set of 19 concepts he defines as “deterrence” comprise a model, so I refer here to a “deterrence model.” The flow chart diagram is my design along with US and Iraq insertions.

## Initial Response – Outcomes/Consequences Explained

Roles of Spiral and Deterrence models outlined

The *spiral model* and *deterrence models* can easily appear very similar in kind, but are actually opposite in substance and implementation.

Both models try to explain the outbreak of war. Both models also assign a central role to the national misperception (**this is critical towards forming a public and political construct in the hopes of moving forward towards a potential military conflict/war**). In addition, both *spiral* and *deterrence* models posit that states adopt war-causing policies in the false expectation that these policies will elicit some sort of compliance towards the opposed state. Within this construct projection of project national unity and resolve is displayed; however, there is a contingency that this sort of provincialism will potentially posit the desired effect. So, the implementation of this often fails within free states, but in isolated states, despotic leadership can at times use this to their advantage to rally initial support for conflict/war.

The *spiral model* posits that conflicts arise from punishment when applied in the false expectation that it will elicit better behavior from the other side – when in fact it elicits worst behavior. Angered or frightened by the punishment, the other becomes more aggressive adopting wider aims and/or becomes more willing to use force to defend themselves. The first side responds with more punishment, assuming that its first punishment was too mild while the other side grows still more belligerent, easily offended, unreasonable etc. In this way, the two sides are divided by only minor differences, but this is the reality that can easily spiral into intense confrontations and/or threats leading ultimately to armed conflict and even war itself.

**Prescription:** Early and clear threat of punishment can at times work better than cooperation. ***Sticks at times when portioned carefully and tactfully*** i.e. timing, economic sanctions other forceful incentives can be safer than carrots. Whereby, peace is preserved via sincere unyielding policies. The US should have been extremely clear with Saddam prior to the war, as Saddam may have preferred directness vs. diplomatic subtlety. **However, neither sticks, nor carrots were ever implemented when dealing with Saddam Hussein – until after he invaded Kuwait.**

Response: This is what took place in both the US and Iraq. In the US, national news outlets perpetuated the idea that Iraq provoked this conflict via personification that Iraq/Saddam was a cruel neighborhood bully always harassing its neighbors, while Kuwait was being deemed as a benign and defenseless neighbor. Meanwhile in Iraq, Hussein tried to convince both the general populace and the military with the narrative that the imperial West was looking for an excuse to seize oil and meddle in interstate Arab affairs.

Result: This succeeded in the US, but in Iraq, Hussein had minor success to a lesser extent. However, this approach begins a negative spiral modality that is set in motion on both sides – consequences may have strong desired effects; however, the hope for a peaceful resolution is set further out and hostilities become more likely.

Response: Both policies sometimes succeed, but both can also make things much worse ***if not implemented correctly and early on***. Sticks can provoke a hostile response as Saddam felt backed up; thus, he had to make a point as a strong military ruler to stand against the imperialist's as the US finally put pressure on him. However, in truth, Hussein did not want to appear weak to other Arab states and just as important, he did not want to appear weak ethnically/religiously before Iran i.e. the Persians/Shiites.

## Roles of Spiral and Deterrence models outlined

## Initial Response – Outcomes/Consequences Explained

The *spiral model* incorporates one misperception, as stated earlier: The punishing state falsely expects that the punishment will elicit better behavior from the other, yet at times it can elicit worse behavior.

The *deterrence model* incorporates two misperceptions: The appeasing state falsely expects that appeasement will elicit better behavior, when in fact it elicits worse behavior. And, the appeased state then falsely expects the appeaser won't carry out its later threats, when in fact it will.

The *deterrence model* posits that these misperceptions on either side can trigger conflict. For example, country A believes that it has coerced or frightened country B (known as the appeaser). Country B offers concessions and country A assumes that more threats will elicit even further concessions. Hence, it makes more demands, backed by threats. However, when country B tries to make threats, then then changes back to appeasement and/or moves to adopt a policy of deterrence now causing country B to even appear weaker and thus loses credibility on all fronts, which in turn emboldens country A to become more aggressive and the possibility of conflict/war becomes more likely or inevitable. US deterrence happened too late it is possible to consider clear message (Spiral model).

Since there was not punishment the *spiral model* was not implemented until afterwards, what should have simply been a deterrence model initially towards Hussein morphed into something that was reactive rather than proactive. This has been the normal US policy since World War II, the Cold War and unfortunately has still had made its way into US foreign policy.

The *deterrence model* is non-applicable prior to PGWI. The US and its allies are simply unprepared to deal with Hussein's invasion of Kuwait until afterwards. It is at this point that the deterrence model is after the fact and loses both its credibility and momentum when dealing with an unstable actor who seemingly only responds to force. This can be seen even after the US and its allies finally arrived in Saudi Arabia – Saddam Hussein was still defiant!

It is possible to conceive that Saddam Hussein left signals about his displeasure with the US and the West in the early part of 1990, thus giving Iraqi state news service an outlet to suggest Western interference towards Arabs and the Iraqi people. US foreign policy should have picked up on this early on. **Carrots** and **sticks** could have worked symbiotically to reach desired outcomes towards peace and stability.

**Prescription: The Use of both a stick and a carrot policy should have been implemented to deter Saddam Hussein.** If the goal is truly deterrence, one must be willing to diversify its foreign policy and use both **sticks and carrots simultaneously**. This is a hard balance for most states, as it consumes time and resources and it seldom works because a country must have both resolve and the willingness to project power decisively, effectively and immediately. **Sticks** - had the US sent a battle group/s in the spring of 1990 to the Persian Gulf (despite regional protests by some Arab states) coupled with **Carrots** - speaking to OPEC and the Arab league on behalf of Iraq; it could be hypothesized that Saddam Hussein would have viewed this act as a genuine concern by the US for Iraq's wellbeing and ease tensions on Kuwait's border. Arab sentiments about US presence cannot affect US resolve for stability in the region.

On the basis of Van Evera's outline, one might assess that Washington was viewing Saddam Hussein from an entirely different perspective from the one Hussein had of himself. As Stephen Walt has suggested, "this incident seems to be a classic illustration of a country applying what IR theorists describe as a 'spiral model' remedy to a 'deterrence model' situation."<sup>181</sup> Here the spiral model of handling Hussein and his regime would have been of great benefit in helping to defuse the situation with Kuwait. Even Glaspie stated in her US Senate Foreign Relations Committee testimony, "on July 17th, Saddam Hussein made a state of the union message, that's what he called it – in which he completely switched his focus from Israel and the threat that he declared he perceived from Israel to Kuwait. And he announced in that speech, in the crudest and most unmistakable way, that if Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates did not revise their oil policy and produce according to their OPEC quotas, Iraq would take upon itself effective measures to make sure that they did. This was a naked threat...."<sup>182</sup>

Regardless of how the threat was perceived, Saddam Hussein's statement suggests that he was looking for an economic outcome before military a military one. It is conceivable that measures could have been taken to convince Hussein otherwise if a carrot policy of cooperation by US foreign policy makers had been proactive rather than reactive. The US and its allies could have requested or even demanded an emergency meeting with OPEC regardless of Arab sentiments of Western interference. Such an act by the US may have reassured Hussein that the US recognized the concerns of Iraq's economic circumstances and more importantly, to continuingly solidify Iraq's place within the Persian Gulf Union of States. However, as history

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<sup>181</sup> Walt, *WikiLeaks, April Glaspie, and Saddam*.

<sup>182</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, *U.S. Policy Towards Iraq*: C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 07:19min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

dictates, we will never know if a carrot policy of cooperation with Iraq would have precipitated a stand down towards tensions and allow diplomacy to work. It is plausible to consider that Hussein would have interpreted this act of goodwill by the US, which could have opened the door for diplomacy and allowed Hussein to operate.

Furthermore, Washington could have been appreciative of Hussein's past efforts to stop Iran's export of global terrorism in the region. Had various attempts to reduce a negative spiral modality by US foreign policy been employed towards Saddam Hussein (regarding his ego, temperament and insecurities), it is plausible to consider that prior to the war, a "stick" policy of deterrence would have been more effective with Saddam before he massed troops on Kuwait's border and before he attacked Kuwait on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

When Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) stated to April Glaspie "Almost no one believed that any diplomatic representation would have made any difference in the process. But, for the sake of history, perhaps, in hindsight, if you had carried along your own tape recorder, bellowed at Saddam Hussein, 'If you attack, I'm going to send 500,000 people after you,' that would have looked useful."<sup>183</sup> Glaspie's response is to this "And, I would have been fired," is undoubtedly true, yet one cannot help but wonder if she missed the underlying point to his remark.<sup>184</sup>

After the July 25<sup>th</sup> meeting with Hussein, Glaspie's should have stressed to Washington that Saddam was going to act unless something was done immediately. Washington and Glaspie should have read the situation more clearly, and by doing so, conveyed to Saddam in a direct and

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<sup>183</sup> Richard Lugar, US Senator, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq," C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 36:42min; <https://www.c-span.org/video/?17179-1/us-policy-iraq> (accessed June 25, 2019).

<sup>184</sup> April Glaspie, Former Ambassador to Iraq, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq," C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 37:07min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

forthright manner that if he proceeded to invade Kuwait, it would mean war with the US and the inevitable destruction of and occupation of Iraq. If this type of message was conveyed to Hussein clearly, the region may look completely different than presently. And, more importantly, a US stick policy of deterrence would not have gained just a short-term victory in the Middle East, it would have paved a forward-looking policy towards other authoritarian run states in the Arabian Peninsula in the decades to come.

Months prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; the US could have deployed two battle groups within the Persian Gulf. One off the Saudi Arabian port city of Khafji and another near the entrance of Shait al Arab Waterway to project power in a clear and unmistakable tone towards US resolve. Senior US Naval historian, Edward J. Marolda writes:

“Ivory Justice, a July 1990 exercise ordered by Washington, involved only two American frigates, several Air Force aircraft, and a few jet fighters of the United Arab Emirates. It could not be called a show of force. A swift and simultaneous movement of the *Independence* carrier battle group and other naval forces toward the Strait of Hormuz might have made a difference. National security policymakers, however, did not want a spotlight on American military power. When their low-key approach to the crisis was coupled with Ambassador Glaspie's muted warning to Hussein, it is hardly surprising that the Iraqi generalissimo felt he had little to fear from American arms.”<sup>185</sup>

Ultimately, had the US acted quickly and deployed its naval forces rapidly with a clear intent to take immediate punitive action against Iraqi forces at Kuwait's border, Saddam Hussein would have had a lot more to consider than oil prices and production quotas, it would have had its very existence to consider.

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<sup>185</sup> Edward J. Marolda, “The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf,” Naval Historical enter: Wednesday Aug 23 12:09:20 EDT 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/u/the-united-states-navy-and-the-persian-gulf.html> (accessed December 28, 2019).

Although Saddam Hussein erred by simply believing the United States and her allies would never entertain the idea of invading a country in the Middle East. Hussein believed that the terrible defeat the Soviet-Union endured in Afghanistan would throw caution if the West thought otherwise of landing an army in the Saudi Peninsula. This coupled with the fact that Iraq's main forces were over a million strong, with a semi-modern army, would surely be enough to deter the US and its allies from any thought of invasion.

Yet, regardless of Hussein's foreign policy short sightedness; US foreign policy had still miscalculated several strategic moves based on an established history of using sectarian division to achieve its goals in Iraq. Ultimately, the question that US foreign policy must ask itself prior to the First Persian Gulf War is whether it really understood or knew Saddam Hussein and Iraq at all? Former US ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie sums this sentiment up this way when addressing the USSFRC, "Well, we certainly, like every other government in the world, made a serious mistake about him, but I think the mistake is the one that Senator Kassebaum suggested; we did not understand. We, the whole world, and especially, his neighbors, who presumably know him better than we do that he would be impervious to logic and diplomacy. After all, it wasn't just the United States, it was the President of the Soviet Union, the Secretary General of the United Nations, various world statesmen..."<sup>186</sup>

If the United States wants foreign policy to move forward with authoritarian states, it must drop the cold war mentality of the mid-20th century, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," and come to grips with its deficiencies and short-sightedness. The US can no longer

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<sup>186</sup> April Glaspie, "U.S. Policy towards Iraq," C-SPAN Video testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1991 – Time Stamp: 33:14min, (accessed June 25, 2019).

afford to deliberately use cultural animosities as means to end and drive foreign policies like it did with Iraq, Iran and the Kurds of Iraq. Thus, US foreign policy, if it is to succeed, must begin to use both historical and cultural differences in a positive manner that allows for dialogue to be bridged, rather than employing tones of division or agitation. Nor can it afford to be subtle in its policies abroad like it did with Saddam Hussein, who was left with an impression of non-interference by US, but instead got completely the opposite reaction. Washington and allies around the world must be forward looking by adopting (a carrot policy) of cooperation and direct and honest communication with friends and foes alike. More importantly US foreign policy cannot simply view regional resources as a justification towards a means to end, it must genuinely understand a regions unique historical context and economic infrastructure before it ever hopes to connect on a meaningful, sustainable level.

However, if the US decides to use military action (a stick policy) it should only do so with a clear and open pretext that all other avenues have been pursued. Once the decision has been made, decisive and clear action should be taken as swiftly as possible. If US foreign policy can learn to implement a stick policy of deterrence and a carrot policy of cooperation simultaneously on a more effective level, future US foreign policy outcomes towards North Korea and Iran may prove superior in policy goals.

Mastering statecraft in the years ahead will not be easy if US foreign policy cannot pursue genuine introspection and implement lessons learned in the past. Washington, if it chooses to be forward looking, can lead a free and prosperous world versus one of anger, resentment, and fear. Needless to say, when governments plot and plan from afar, viewing the local populace as sectarian zealots bent on killing one another, there is no moral qualm about expediting the process for regional security. Yet upon deployment of boots on the ground driven



by misperceptions in their foreign policy, the narrative changes forever and those governments become part of a complicated history they did not understand.

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