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Confrontation in the Gulf: Unintended Consequences

Commander William F. Hickman, U.S. Navy

By invading Kuwait, Saddam Hussein has once again become the catalyst of change in the Middle East. As in the case of his decision to invade and annex the oil fields of southwestern Iran in 1980, he may have calculated that he could achieve his 1990 goals in Kuwait quickly; but just as he did not foresee the fanatical response from Iran, he did not foresee that his actions in Kuwait would forge a new coalition of nations to oppose him. The ultimate result is not yet apparent, but what has already become clear is that Saddam's actions will again have serious but completely unintended consequences, both for Iraq and the world.

Peace or Stability?

Peace and stability have historically been elusive concepts in the Middle East. Although the terms have often been used interchangeably, for purposes of this discussion a clear distinction must be drawn between the two. *Peace* should be understood to mean a non-warring state of harmony and freedom from disorder *to which all parties agree*. *Stability*, on the other hand, should be viewed as an enduring condition of a lack of open warfare *to which all parties submit, but need not agree*.

The Middle East, a region rich in cultural and religious significance for much of the world's population, has for centuries been a battleground on which the competing interests of nations, cultures, and religions have clashed. Although peace has long been the overriding goal of the people of the region, successive generations have been unable to settle their disputes and to forge a lasting peace. Open conflict among the competing interests has been so common that the only periods of stability the people of the region have known have been when a dominant military power subdued the disputes through the force of arms.

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With its military forces arrayed in and around the Saudi peninsula, the United States is viewed by some in the area as merely the latest in a long line of dominant military powers attempting to impose its version of stability on the region. From the U.S. perspective, because American forces are not being used to establish regional hegemony, this is an inaccurate characterization. Because American forces are merely one of several military forces in the region and draw their political impact from the coalition, they are not dominant in the historical sense of the Turks, Mongols, or British. Although this perspective may be accepted in the United States, for a significant segment of the population of the Middle East it has little value.

History provides a theme helpful to analysis of the present situation. All of the attempts to impose stability on the region can be viewed as originating either from within or without the region. Since the success of the current attempt to stabilize the region could ultimately depend upon how Arabs view the Iraqi military in Kuwait vis-a-vis the outside forces arrayed to defend Saudi Arabia, this is an important distinction. No militarily dominant occupying power has ever gained the support of the people of the Middle East. All have faced indigenous forces that have stubbornly resisted external intervention and control. As a result, the stability imposed has been successful only so long as the occupying power has been able and willing to maintain garrison forces. For this reason, the stability provided by most external military powers has been relatively short-lived.

The alternative to externally-imposed stability is a resolution generated from within the region itself, either by military domination or by political compromise. Although one of these is the preferred solution of most Arabs, neither offers much reason for hope. Saddam's attempt to stabilize the region by establishing Iraqi hegemony is the latest attempt to establish Arab political unity, all of which have been unable to overcome the divisive forces of tribalism or nationalism and thus have failed to prevent or resolve major conflicts. Indeed, Saddam's efforts to rally mass support for his action have strained the fragile ties of Arab unity nearly beyond repair. By casting himself as an Islamic warrior resisting foreign invasion of the holy lands, as well as attacking the Arab governments who oppose him, he has deepened the divisions of the Arab world. The moderate Arab governments that make up the majority of his regional opposition are beset by increasing internal social and political pressures which are inexorably pushing them toward revolution or, at the very least, systemic change. Because Saddam's appeals may have hastened this process, which would further undermine the status quo, the West's concern for an enduring solution has been heightened.

Against this background the Bush administration has proposed a different approach to stability: collective defense. Testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary of State James Baker suggested that in view of the unprecedented regional opposition to the acknowledged Iraqi threat,

regional states might agree to a new security structure for the Persian Gulf that would deter Iraq, just as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had for decades deterred the Soviet Union.¹

In making this proposal the Bush administration was voicing its fundamental belief that collective defense, as practiced by the Western democracies since the end of World War II, might be the key to overcoming the instability of the Middle East. Although the administration has since backed away from the proposal somewhat, it has not altered its view that some form of a collective defense arrangement would be stabilizing. In the administration's view, since peace cannot be achieved, stability, to which all need not agree, seems a good alternative. However commonsensical this approach may seem to Americans, those who live in the Middle East view it differently.

Historical Perspectives and Imperatives

Middle Eastern history is a record of strife and conflict between religions and peoples on a grand scale. For more than two millennia the region has been dominated by a succession of external powers that have left a legacy of bitterness, dissension, and suspicion of outsiders throughout the region.

An underlying but often unarticulated perception that arises from this legacy maintains that the peaceful development of Islamic civilization was interrupted by outside powers. This perception holds that through military dominance the Christian Crusaders, the Central Asian Mongols, and the European colonial powers all retarded the political advancement of the region by attempting to suppress Islam.

Perhaps most importantly, this perception holds that the colonial powers prevented the political unification of the region. Although Arabism as a concept was developed only in the twentieth century, the perception is that such a concept (which could have led to political unification) might have occurred earlier had it not been for the intervention of the colonial powers. Political unification was further prevented when these militarily superior powers carved up the region into artificial states that were easily controlled. By arbitrarily drawing lines on a map, the Christian countries forever divided the people, thus preventing political unification of the region. This perception also holds that when it became clear they could not hold on to the region, the colonial powers created one final European colonial outpost: a home for displaced Jews. In the eyes of many Arabs, the United States has become the latest in a long line of colonial powers through its support for this last European colony.

When the United States first became seriously engaged in the Middle East after World War II, it had a degree of credibility unmatched by European nations, largely because the United States was an unknown quantity. Prior

to the June War of 1967, the Arabs generally perceived the United States as evenhanded in its dealings with the region. Since 1967, though, as it has more openly supported Israel (especially after the 1973 Yom Kippur War), the United States has been viewed increasingly as yet another external power imposing its will on the region through its colony, Israel. For many Arabs, by its unwavering support for Israel the United States has lost its credibility as an honest broker and its ability to influence events in the region.

Arabs subscribing to this singular view of external domination also hold a distinctive perception of stability. For them, stability in the region has been possible only during those periods of history in which the Muslims themselves have been dominant. Strong rulers overcoming the domination of the outside world created the only periods of peace and prosperity that the region has experienced in the Islamic era. In this view, if a resolution to the problems of the region is to be achieved, then Salah al Din, the revered twelfth-century Arab warrior who united the Islamic lands of the central Middle East to successfully oppose the Christian Crusaders, showed how it was to be done.²

This Arab historical perception may be difficult for Westerners to accept, but it is held by large segments of the population throughout the Middle East today. There is a dichotomy, however, for existing alongside this perception is a historical imperative which gives back to the United States a degree of influence it loses as a supporter of Israel.

This historical imperative is that among the political systems of the world, monarchical regimes are an endangered species. Those few that remain are largely concentrated in the Middle East. Since the Egyptian coup d'etat in 1952 a succession of Middle Eastern monarchs have passed into history, most of them violently, and often leaving a radicalized society in their wake.³ By their very nature, monarchies are traditional regimes with a conservative outlook. While they may seek to improve the economic conditions of their subjects, they have a vested interest in the political status quo. For them, the forces which transform societies (e.g., education, political participation, modernization) constitute a threat to their survival. In an era when participation in the political process is increasingly seen as a basic human right, the conservative monarchs and their families deny the trend toward political liberalization in order to secure their continued family rule. Apart from these internal threats, the conservative rulers are also acutely conscious of the possibility of subversion or outright invasion by their neighbors. The result of this dilemma has been that conservative states align themselves strategically with the West. Because the United States is the power most capable of providing military assistance to these states, it gains a degree of influence it could not otherwise obtain.

Strategic Objectives

No matter what may be stated or implied by political leaders, reality dictates that nations (or more correctly, governments of nations) act solely in their perceived self-interest. Whether rooted in history, economics, or political expedience, this self-interest, broadly expressed as strategic objectives, provides the motivation for actions of governments. When the strategic objectives of separate nations coincide, they may work cooperatively toward a common goal. If they differ, some form of conflict, armed or otherwise, becomes inevitable. The net result is that as perceptions of self-interest vary, so do alliances.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Middle East. For Westerners conditioned to the stable alliances of a bipolar world, the transitory alliances of the Middle East can be very difficult to understand. The reality, though, is that due to the divisiveness of the disputes, the shared perceptions can only be impermanent. In the current Persian Gulf crisis, the strategic alliances that have been formed are possible only because historic distrust and suspicion have been set aside as each government has perceived a threat to its survival. Although each nation is clearly pursuing other strategic objectives, for the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to focus on how this single shared objective, the most basic of all, shapes the current alliances.

Iraqi officials maintain that Kuwait was invaded because Iraq's economic survival was at stake.⁴ The lengthy but inconclusive war with neighboring Iran had failed to achieve one of Iraq's stated wartime objectives, a reliable economic outlet to the Persian Gulf. Although at war's end Iraq controlled the strategically important Shatt al Arab waterway, because it was clogged with numerous sunken ships and other residue from the war, as well as being heavily silted in its shallow and narrow southern reaches, it was essentially useless without a time-consuming and costly clearing and dredging operation. Because the Shatt had been closed throughout the war, alternative land transport routes to Iraq through Jordan and Kuwait had been developed. These had enabled Iraq to sustain its economy during the war, but were entirely inadequate for postwar needs, for which direct access to the Gulf was required.

More importantly, because the war had left Iraq with a \$60 billion foreign debt, much of it owed to Gulf Arab states, relief from the wartime foreign debt was vital. Accordingly, when Iraq determined that Kuwait was pumping oil from the Rumailia oil field, a field along the common border to which both Iraq and Kuwait lay claim, it demanded a stop.

Thus, when Kuwait did not accede to Iraq's demands on the Rumailia field, for unimpeded access to the Persian Gulf in the vicinity of Bubiyan and Warba, and for debt relief, a perception of impending disaster took root and formed the basis for the decision to invade Kuwait.

The problem with the foregoing economic explanation offered by the Iraqi government is that most outsiders simply do not believe that Saddam Hussein would act solely on economic grounds. His unprovoked attack on Iran in September 1980, his ruthless prosecution of the ensuing war (notably the Scud missile attacks on Iranian cities), and his brutal poison gas attacks on his own Kurdish population make the current effort to cast his invasion of Kuwait in purely economic terms inconceivable to most observers. For them Saddam is simply attempting to use his exceptionally large military to establish regional hegemony.

Saudi Arabia's strategic objective in the current situation is more obvious. Seeing the former Kuwaiti ruling family in exile, the Saudi royal family considers its political, economic and personal survival at stake. What may not be so obvious to Westerners is that to pursue this objective the Saudis were forced to set aside another dearly held strategic objective that had for years formed the basis of the Saudi relationship with the West.

As a traditional, conservative Islamic state entrusted with caring for the holiest sites of Islam, the Saudis have had a vital interest in carefully controlling the intrusion by and the influence of the West on their country. To have the U.S. military available "over-the-horizon" to assist the Saudis in deterring or preventing occupation of the holy lands by Shiite Iran or the atheistic Soviet Union was acceptable, but to allow a Western (and predominantly Christian) military presence on the ground was not. Such a presence would have generated extreme resentment within Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world and could have undercut the legitimacy of the Saudi family itself. This overriding strategic consideration underlay every Saudi security decision for over a decade. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, however, the basic calculus changed immediately. Legitimacy in the eyes of the Islamic world was of little value if Iraqi forces occupied the country. Face to face with survival, King Fahd set aside his previous objective and appealed to the United States for assistance. The smaller Arab states of the Persian Gulf quickly did the same.

Jordan's actions in support of Iraq may have been something of a surprise for Westerners, but they are easily understandable when it is recognized that King Hussein's personal survival was at risk. Long perceived as friendly and moderate, Jordan and its ruler have been regarded favorably in the West. It is often overlooked, however, that Jordan has become home to hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians, who exert significant pressure on the country's political process. As will be discussed below, Saddam's efforts to justify his actions on the basis of opposing Israel play particularly well among this large and rapidly expanding portion of Jordanian society. To oppose such popular sentiment would have set King Hussein apart from his people and clearly threatened his survival.

For the United States, Secretary James Baker outlined four distinct objectives in the current Gulf crisis in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁵ It was President Bush, however, who clarified the fundamental U.S. strategic objective being pursued: "Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom and the freedom of friendly nations around the world would suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell into the hands of Saddam Hussein."⁶ Guaranteed access to the oil resources of the Persian Gulf has been an enunciated strategic objective of the United States since President Carter's response to the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Although in comparison with its European and Asian trading partners the United States imports relatively little oil from the Persian Gulf, because the U.S. economy is oriented heavily toward international trade, the economies of the other industrialized nations have become crucial components of U.S. national security. Therefore, even if the United States imported virtually no oil from the Gulf, the flow of oil from the region would still be a major component of U.S. national security.

This analysis of the strategic objectives of the major actors in the Gulf crisis may seem simplistic, but the extraordinary response by the world community throughout the crisis demonstrates that it is reasonable. Remembering that above all else governments of nations act in their perceived self-interests, unless there were a reasonably simple, easily articulated common strategic objective, it is extremely unlikely that such unusual alliances would have been formed. Condemnation of the Iraqi aggression was to be expected, but talk is cheap. It is the worldwide commitment of military force and the financial backing to support that force that is unprecedented. Such a commitment, even if only a token gesture, represents a major political risk for the nations involved, which gives a clear indication of the motivator for the action: the perception of a threat to economic survival. Although the Bush administration believes this unique situation has created an opportunity for collective defense to succeed, as will be seen, the impermanence of the shared perception argues against it.

Collective Defense

The essence of a collective defense arrangement is a military alliance against a common threat in which the participants agree to pool their resources to provide a level of defense not attainable by any one nation. While simple in theory, an alliance can be very complicated and difficult to administer because in any grouping of nations there will exist differing strategic perceptions. For an alliance to be enduring, the shared strategic perceptions must be persistent, not transitory.

Collective defense arrangements require both an external focus and internal cohesion. While the perception of a common threat provides the external focus, internal cohesion is not possible without shared basic values and

traditions. In Nato, the collective defense arrangement with which the industrialized West is most familiar, the most basic and important shared value is a commitment to participatory democracy. In most Arab nations of the Middle East this important cohesive factor is missing. These nations are a volatile mixture of traditional conservative monarchies ruled by kings or sheiks (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen), tyrannical paramilitary states (Iraq, Syria, Libya), and a quasi-democracy governed by a former army officer (Egypt). In none of these societies do the people have a decisive voice in government.

More importantly, because the differences in the political processes of these states are so profound, the animosities between them have prevented practical unity for decades. Even the cohesive factors of a common cultural and religious identity have not been able to overcome the political differences.

On the face of it, the cultural identity, Arabism, could provide a common focus, but it has been singularly unsuccessful in doing so. The most successful proponent of the concept was Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nassar, who was able to stir the passions of millions of Arabs with his spellbinding oratory; but despite his best efforts to unite all Arabs under one banner, the differences in politics and nationalism proved to be too difficult to overcome. Even Islam, the most powerful cohesive force in the region, has been unable to provide a focus for political unity.

Former Secretary of State George Shultz maintained that alliances are not agreements between rulers or governing elites, but between peoples.⁷ Although he was referring to alliances between democracies, his basic point is applicable to the states of the Middle East. Rulers and governing elites can be eliminated. Unless there is a broad recognition among the population of a country of the value of a collective defense arrangement, it can be repudiated by a new ruling elite, as was the Central Treaty Organization after the 1958 revolution in Iraq.

To further complicate the U.S. view of long-term collective defense possibilities, Saddam Hussein does not provide an external focus sharp enough to support such an arrangement. Despite his invasion of Kuwait, there is no consensus about him in either the Arab or Islamic world. Although most governments and ruling elites have aligned themselves in opposition, there are many Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, for whom Saddam is a modern Salah al Din. Because of this unfocused view, Saddam has had some success in casting himself as the answer to the only threat upon which all Arabs can agree: Israel.

The Wild Card

When discussing the issue of Persian Gulf security, the U.S. government routinely describes a region in danger of being overrun by an invading force

bent on controlling its vast oil resources. From the U.S. perspective, the Soviet Union, revolutionary Iran, and expansionist Ba'athist Iraq have been the villains from which the Gulf Arabs must be protected if they, and the economies of the industrialized world on whom the Gulf states are dependent for oil markets, are to survive. From the Arab perspective, though, discussing the Persian Gulf strategic equation without factoring in Israel is an exercise in futility.

In the Arab world, the broad consensus on Israel transcends differences in philosophy, politics and culture. The Palestinian cause has become a litmus test of Arabism. The refugee camps, the displaced Palestinians, and the occupied territories have defined Arab history since 1967. For the conservative rulers of the Gulf states to divorce themselves from the issue would be to court disaster. Although the effects have not been as dramatic as in Jordan, the large numbers of Palestinians and their supporters resident in the Gulf have had an important effect on the demographics of the region by diluting the populations of the small Gulf Arab states. In 1975, for example, 48.4 percent of the Kuwaiti population of 974,500 were native Kuwaitis. By 1985 the percentage had dropped to only 40.2 percent of a population of over 1,600,000, with non-national Arabs, among them exceptionally large numbers of Palestinians, exceeding natives at 41.2 percent.⁸ By the time of the Iraqi invasion, the demographic trend had driven the percentage of native Kuwaitis even lower.

This combination of political consciousness and demographic change has had major ramifications for the Arab world. In the present Gulf crisis, for example, although the governments of most Arab states are aligned against Iraq, a significant percentage of Arabs support Saddam. This support is most easily seen in states with large Palestinian populations (e.g., Jordan), but it also exists among the populations of the Gulf states and the other frontline Arab states of Egypt and Syria.⁹

As a result, for about half of the Arab world, Saddam Hussein's actions in Kuwait, while regrettable in terms of relations among Arabs, are excusable on broader grounds. For an audience conditioned to view world events through an anti-Israeli lens, Saddam has been successful in shifting the focus of the debate from his actions to the U.S. military presence in the Islamic holy lands. By claiming to stand against the ultimate guarantor of Israeli security, he stirs deep passions among all Arabs; by threatening to attack Israel, he gains respectability.

Unintended Consequences

No matter how clear each nation's objectives may have been at the outset of the Persian Gulf crisis, because of the conflicting interests and concerns discussed above it is impossible to predict with any accuracy the degree of

commitment to those objectives or the ultimate consequences of each nation's actions. Thus, both Iraq and the United States are facing unintended consequences as a result of Saddam's actions.

By invading Kuwait, Saddam stimulated many different reactions. Some he no doubt anticipated, but he clearly did not foresee them all. Saddam has set in motion change that he will have great difficulty controlling.

First, *Saddam's anti-Israeli stance has fostered a renewed fervor among the Palestinians.* Saddam has long sought to be recognized as the leader of the Arab world, an aspiration that has been most strongly opposed by Syria's Hafez al-Asad and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak. If Saddam can co-opt the only issue on which all Arabs agree by acquiring the loyalty of the Palestinians, he can acquire a degree of legitimacy as the primary leader heretofore denied him by al-Asad and Mubarak. Furthermore, the Palestinians gain a new, powerful champion in their drive to regain their homeland.

The unintended consequence of this effort may well be the Israeli reaction. There is no doubt that the Israelis have been watching developments in the Gulf very carefully. The ramifications of an Iraqi victory on the Palestine issue are being vigorously debated among both Palestinians and Israelis. What the Israelis might do about such a development is highly speculative, but given their history of direct response to perceived threats, it is unlikely that they would sit passively while Saddam gained ascendancy.

Second, *despite the appeal of Saddam's anti-Israeli rhetoric, nearly all Arab governments are aligned against him.* Had Saddam foreseen this alignment of Syria, Egypt, and the Gulf states, it is entirely probable that he would have sought some other method of resolving his dispute with Kuwait. Although he has garnered the support of some less significant Arab states, given the long history of animosity in their mutual quest for leadership of the Arab world, to provide Hafez al-Asad and Hosni Mubarak an opportunity to unite the remainder of the Arab states against him is something Saddam would never have knowingly done. As discussed above, the strategic perceptions that underpin the current Arab anti-Iraq alliance may be transitory, but much damage can be done to Iraq's long-term interests before the alliance inevitably shifts once again.

Third, *Saddam was forced to concede to Iran everything for which Iraq had fought in the Iran-Iraq War.* After starting and waging a bloody but inconclusive war with Iran, Saddam felt compelled to secure his eastern border by giving back to Iran 700 square miles of Iranian territory occupied by Iraq during the war and accepting a division of sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab, a point of principle over which he had waged war.¹⁰ The effect of this action was to declare that the war, which had claimed millions of casualties on both sides, had been of no value. While this freed more troops to face the assembled allied forces in the south, it may also have generated unexpected consequences for Saddam's personal security. Predictably, Iran has trumpeted the Iraqi

concession as a great victory. Despite strict press censorship, how the Iraqi army and public view Saddam's action is very much open to question.¹¹ Although he has routinely eliminated all of his opposition and seems relatively secure at present, it is quite conceivable that some senior officer or group of officers could find his repudiation of millions of deaths sufficient reason to stage a successful coup.

On the opposing side, actions by the United States have also stimulated a number of diverse reactions. Some were anticipated, but, as we shall see, at least one unexpected consequence could make moot the entire allied military effort to protect Saudi Arabia from an Iraqi invasion.

First, *U.S. efforts in the United Nations have raised the possibility of future constraints on U.S. actions.* Had the United States decided to pursue a unilateral military option, an Iraqi invasion might have been forestalled but the Bush administration would have found itself in an extremely difficult diplomatic situation. By working through the Security Council the United States has received international validation and support, but these efforts have also acted as a catalyst for restructuring the United Nations Military Staff Committee, a long-dormant advisory body consisting of senior military officers representing the five permanent members of the Security Council.¹² Although the United States has successfully resisted all efforts to place its forces under international command or control in the current crisis, by the very act of seeking U.N. approval, which strengthened and gave legitimacy to the U.N.'s role in military actions, the United States may have heightened that body's desire to more fully control future military operations, perhaps through a restructured and strengthened military committee.

Second, *the United States' special relationship with Israel is undergoing authentic change.* For the United States, a key factor in the current Persian Gulf crisis has been its unprecedented support of, and de facto military alliance with, a majority of Arab governments. In the early stages of the crisis the United States was successful in divorcing Arab concerns about Israel from the decision to band together to oppose Iraq. Despite Saddam's harsh anti-Israeli rhetoric, the Arab governments aligned against him were generally able to ignore the Israeli factor until Israeli security forces killed a number of Arab demonstrators outside Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosques on Temple Mount, the third-holiest site in Islam. This incident forced the United States to make a stark choice between its traditional diplomatic support of Israel and its newly formed and tenuous alliance with the Arabs. The U.S. votes against Israel in the Security Council created a predictable firestorm of protest in Israel and among its supporters in the United States, but the administration remained firm. There have been previous strains in the U.S.-Israeli relationship, but unlike previous incidents, in this case the U.S. government seems to have judged that its budding alliance with the Arab world is more in its interest than continuing its unconditional support for Israel. It is much

too early to predict what this will mean for either country, but it seems clear that for the first time since 1973, the U.S.-Israeli relationship is undergoing authentic change.

Third, *by going to its aid the United States may have actually made the government of Saudi Arabia less stable.* By asking for U.S. military assistance King Fahd may have prevented an Iraqi attack, but at the same time he may have accelerated the demise of his family's rule. As the protector of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the Saudi government is committed to protecting Islam from the unwanted influence of other religions. By calling on Christian nations to protect his rule, Fahd has lost some of his legitimacy as the protector, which in turn could lead to a more important loss of credibility as a sufficiently Islamic leader. Keeping in mind the historical imperative regarding monarchical rulers, the future stability of the Saudi kingdom is very much in doubt, no matter what happens vis-a-vis Saddam Hussein.

U.S. Objectives—Reality Check?

The above discussion inexorably leads to a reassessment of U.S. objectives in the area. The long-standing American practice of perceiving and dealing with current problems in isolation from other issues is a practical method of approaching the world that has served U.S. interests well in other areas. It should be clear by now, however, that in view of the confusing and conflicting interests in the Middle East, such an approach is too simplistic. To be successful, therefore, U.S. objectives must be clarified.

In terms of the current Kuwaiti crisis, a number of questions arise. It is quite possible to push Iraqi forces back and restore the Kuwaiti monarchy, but would that necessarily achieve stability? If Saddam Hussein's military capability is left intact when the forces allied against him withdraw, will the reconstituted state of Kuwait be stable? Having been invaded once, in order to forestall another invasion it is entirely probable that Kuwait would accede to any Iraqi demand. If Kuwait agreed to future Iraqi demands for access to the Gulf or to follow its lead in international affairs, would the United States intercede? If not, could it accept Iraqi hegemony in this form?

Perhaps even more significantly, once Kuwait is restored, the inherently unstable process of political change in that country will begin, with unknown but certainly unintended consequences. In return for maintaining a unified front against Iraq, Sheik Saad al-Sabah, the crown prince and prime minister of the Kuwaiti government-in-exile, has promised to restore democracy to Kuwait once it is again an independent nation. By restoring the 1962 constitution, which was suspended in 1986 after the National Assembly had adopted an alarmingly independent orientation, the al-Sabah family is promising a reconstituted, directly elected, and presumably more independent Kuwaiti National Assembly.¹³ The monarchy will make every attempt to

control this systemic change, but given the history of the previous National Assembly, as well as the history of such efforts throughout the Middle East, once the process begins it develops an impetus of its own which makes it impossible to predict the outcome. If the process leads to a hostile regime, is the United States prepared to accept it?

The most important factor in this clarification of objectives must be a recognition that *the status quo ante cannot be restored*. Despite its importance to the industrialized world, the Middle East is a developing region beset by volatile emotions, systemic conflicts, and untenable governments. Since regional peace must await the maturing of attitudes, stability can be the only reasonable goal. To achieve it, however, the United States must look beyond the near term to carefully assess its long-term interests.

Notes

1. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Baker Foresees a Long Stay for U.S. Troops in Mideast; Urges a Regional Alliance," *The New York Times*, 5 September 1990, p. A1.

2. Salah al Din (1138-1193), known as Saladin in the West, led a successful campaign which culminated in the capture of Jerusalem in 1187. See Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, tenth ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 645-651.

3. King Faruq, Egypt, 1952; King Faisal II, Iraq, 1958; Imam Muhammed el-Badr, Yemen, 1962; King Idris, Libya, 1969; Shah Zahir, Afghanistan, 1973; King Faisal al Saud, Saudi Arabia, 1975 (the only one whose death did not result in a change of the form of government); Muhammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, Iran, 1979; and Sheik Jaber Ahmad al Sabah, Kuwait, 1990.

4. The following description of Iraqi motivations for the invasion was provided by Muhammed al-Mashat, Iraqi Ambassador to the United States, to students of the College of William and Mary at the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 19 September 1990.

5. These are: the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government; the protection of American citizens; and a commitment to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. "America's Stake in the Persian Gulf Crisis," Statement by the Honorable James A. Baker III before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Wednesday, September 5, 1990.

6. R.W. Apple, Jr., "Bush Says Iraqi Aggression Threatens Our Way of Life," *The New York Times*, 16 August 1990, p. A14.

7. George Shultz, "Address to the East-West Center and the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, July 17, 1985," *The Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 85, no. 2102, September 1985, pp. 33-36.

8. J.S. Birks, "The Demographic Challenge in the Arab Gulf," B.R. Pridham, ed., *The Arab Gulf and the Arab World* (New York: Croon Helm, 1988), pp. 146-148.

9. Jill Smolowe, "Me and My Brother Against My Cousin," *Time*, 20 August 1990, pp. 33-36; Otto Friedrich, "He Gives Us A Ray of Hope," *Time*, 27 August 1990, pp. 26-27; Lisa Beyer, "Saddam as the Lesser of Two Evils," *Time*, 15 October 1990, pp. 54-55.

10. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Iraq Seeks Peace with Iran, Turning Back Spoils of War in Move to End Isolation," *The New York Times*, 16 August 1990, pp. A1, A5.

11. Carl Bernstein, "In the Capital of Dread," *Time*, 8 October 1990, pp. 30-33.

12. Jim Mann and Douglas Jehl, "Bush OKs Bigger U.N. Military Role," *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1990, p. 11; Eric Schmidt, "Revived U.N. Military Panel is Seen as Largely Symbolic," *The New York Times*, 4 November 1990, p. A16; and John D. Morrocco, "U.S. Opposes Formal U.N. Command Role in Middle East," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 29 October 1990, p. 23.

13. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Kuwait Rulers See Democracy Moves," *The New York Times*, 14 October 1990, pp. A1, A13.

