

public life remains proscribed, as does investigation or criticism of all the important ministers or government servants closely connected to Saddam Hussein himself, it is in many respects a vain endeavour. Although he has systematically avoided responsibility to any institution or body of people, Saddam Hussein has regularly claimed sole responsibility for every important policy initiative. Thus, whatever the issue, there is little doubt where ultimate responsibility must lie. This is the autocratic fallacy and, generally, the undoing of most autocrats. Having claimed absolute power, they are perceived as having absolute responsibility for all developments in public life. Each issue, however small, brings with it questions not only about their policy choices, but also about their authority. Their own sensitivity encourages such a link, quite apart from the accusations levelled against them by those who may be contesting such policy choices. The process of intimidation and pre-emption which this establishes may, in turn, provide the catalyst for the attempt physically to remove the autocrat. This has been and remains the flaw at the heart of Iraqi politics. Saddam Hussein has successfully avoided its consequences during the 1980s, in the sense of having succeeded in staying ahead of the game. During the 1990s, however, the efforts made by Saddam Hussein to remain ahead, as well, of course, as the success of these efforts, will largely shape the course of Iraqi politics.

3 IRAQ AND THE ARAB STATES OF THE GULF: FULL CIRCLE

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 threw the whole of the region and much of the world into turmoil, and caused disarray amongst the community of government and academic analysts of Iraq and the Gulf. Indeed, most were taken unawares, having previously concluded that Saddam Hussein would prove to be essentially a rational actor in international affairs, since his recent record appeared to show both a need and an intention to continue on a moderate course. This chapter traces the original transformation of the Iraqi regime into its more moderate self of the 1980s, before considering the question of the apparent sudden reversal in the summer of 1990.¹

Saddam Hussein, oil, and regional politics: origins of a metamorphosis

In the heady days of the 1960s and early 1970s, Iraqi foreign policy was characterised by the preponderance of the elements of socialism, revolution and pan-Arabism—witness the report of the 8th regional Congress of the Ba'th Party in Iraq, in 1974. Two of the basic considerations underlying the Party's foreign policy had a particularly ominous ring for the Gulf monarchies: (a) 'The requirements of the Arab liberation struggle and its main issues, especially those of Palestine and the Gulf'; and (b) 'the need to protect the revolution in Iraq as a fighting base for the movement of Arab Revolution in pursuit of the objectives of Unity, Liberty and Socialism'.² However, whereas the revolutionary and socialist strands had been dominant until the early 1970s, the element of pan-Arabism gained in relative weight from 1974, as Saddam Hussein's domination of the formulation of ideology and decision-making grew into a monopoly. Indeed, over the following years one finds a definite evolution in the Ba'th's position. Linked with this was an emphasis on non-alignment (rather than alliance with the Soviet Union). This, it was argued, was not only desirable in itself but constituted the only sensible way of handling the changing global system that was gradually becoming multi-rather than bi-polar.³ This

combination of Arab perspective and non-alignment was compatible with a more pragmatic approach to international relations, and was in fact partly prompted by the latter. The main source of this pragmatic line was Saddam Hussein. Although the Ba'ath's ostensibly 'revolutionary' orientation was not immediately dropped, developments from the mid-1970s made it clear that the regime in fact desired normal relations with the other Arab states of the region. In addition, an injection of pragmatism was necessary in order to allow Iraq to assume the more active and leading role in the Arab world and in the Third World, which was regarded by Saddam as the country's logical task.⁴ It becomes particularly clear, with hindsight, that the personal factor was equally important in this respect: one of the driving forces was Saddam's desire to manoeuvre himself into the position of 'a, if not *the*, leading Arab statesman'.⁵ In the report of the Ninth Regional Congress of the Ba'ath Party, held in 1982, this shift is explicitly recognised, and, implicitly, the coinciding of this evolution with Saddam's formal take-over of the reins of power is laid out for all to see. The report stresses the strong development of participatory activities in Arab and Third World affairs between July 1979 and the beginning of the war (as well as subsequently). Even on the political level the 'fight against imperialism', was relegated to the background, with the stress shifting to the economic: it was argued that, with the world recession and higher energy prices, the main danger for Third World countries had become economic, and thus economic help became the prime necessity.⁶

However, Iraqi foreign policy behaviour from the mid-1970s was not determined solely by the party line as described above. Indeed, Saddam himself pointed out that the positions of party and state do not necessarily always coincide: 'the state has to adapt to changing circumstances and conduct day-to-day affairs; the party does not'.⁷ As Saddam was effectively the main ideologue in the party, the party line came to include an array of pragmatic attitudes that made it easier to defend elements of Iraqi foreign policy behaviour as ideologically sound. The 'pure' Ba'ath line, progressively dominated by the issues of non-alignment and Arab nationalism, was, for instance, visible in strong opposition against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the diversification of arms imports sources, the assumption of a central role on the Palestine issue, and—as regards the Gulf—in resistance against Persian domination of the region and against the apparently unquestioning alliance of the Gulf monarchies with the United States. In addition, two other categories of elements influenced the foreign policy behaviour of the Iraqi state. First, there were pragmatic but ideologically 'sound' considerations. These included the change in attitude that allowed Iraq

to assume its logical leading role in the non-aligned movement and the Arab World, and a shift in the stance on the Palestine question for tactical reasons. Considerations of strategy and *raison d'état* were put forward to justify new policies in terms of 'defending the revolution in Iraq'.

Secondly, one can identify a number of domestic motives which help explain the shift to 'moderation' and towards the West. On the one hand, and having in the wake of the oil price hikes of 1973-4, acquired sufficient funds to speed up development at an unprecedented rate, Iraq needed the West to sell it the building blocks for that development and for later imports of consumer goods. Not all of these could be provided by the Soviet Union. The shift to moderation was an element that helped draw the West closer. The acquisition of oil wealth also gave Iraq the financial independence and economic freedom to opt for a shift to the West. On the other hand, the improved domestic security of the regime against external as well as internal plots, particularly after the 1975 Algiers agreement, meant that it was no longer so dependent on a revolutionary posture in order to dismiss rivals and opponents. Moreover, the regime understandably felt that it could gain enormously in domestic prestige from an enhanced position in the non-aligned movement and the Arab world, which could be achieved only by moderating its policies. In addition, having realised the potential importance of having allies to rely on in the event of renewed tension with Iran, the Iraqi leadership had a further motive for building bridges.

More recently, yet another element in Iraq's changing attitude was becoming obvious, confirming this apparent evolution and giving it a long-term character. Particularly from 1979 onwards, a policy of economic liberalisation was adopted, which gradually introduced a degree of *infitaah* and privatisation. Springborg has convincingly argued that this was at least partly a reflection of Saddam's efforts to enhance his grip on power by weakening the hold of the Ba'ath over the economy through the encouragement of the private sector, and that this paved 'the way for the emergence of a new, as yet amorphous group rather than class, upon which an increasing amount of the President's political base and legitimacy rests'.⁸ This ties in with the work of Isam al-Khafaji, who has presented evidence for the existence of an alliance of the ruling group around Saddam with the Iraqi commercial bourgeoisie.⁹ As indicated, this adds to the general contextual change behind Iraqi foreign policy.

Clearly, then, Iraq's foreign policy had by 1980 acquired a substantially different character. This was illustrated in the 'National Charter

for the Arab States' which Saddam put forward on 8 February 1980. This document stressed strict non-alignment, peaceful means of solving problems between Arab states, Arab mutual defence, the adherence to international law, and Arab economic integration. Most remarkable, perhaps, was the implied recognition of the existing Arab state system.

Iraq's behaviour towards the Gulf Arab states before the war evolved within the parameters of the government's changing overall foreign policy. To an extent, of course, the changing circumstances in and around the Gulf—and the policy alterations which these required—can be assumed to have influenced Iraq's overall foreign policy orientation. The implications for the Gulf of the pan-Arabist and non-aligned strands of Ba'thism have been noted above. It would appear, as Niblock has argued, that frictions between Iraq and the Arab states of the Gulf before the war resulted mainly from the interaction between (1) the Iraqis' insistence on keeping the non-aligned as well as the Arab character of the Gulf (the latter implying the importance of Iraqi influence); (2) the Gulf Arab states' attitude towards Iraq, the West and Iran; and (3) the Iranian attitude. The principle of the Arab character of the Gulf and the necessity of an Iraqi role in the Gulf meant opposition to Iranian (i.e. to non-Arab) influence and, because of the degree of Iranian control over the Shatt al-Arab, also necessitated some Iraqi control over the Kuwaiti islands Warba and Bubiyan, which 'blocked' the approach to the second Iraqi port, Umm Qasr. With the Gulf states sticking to a staunchly pro-Western line and preferring Iran rather than Iraq as an ally, there is a case for arguing that 'the Ba'th's 'subversive' role . . . may have been more the effect than the cause of the problems in Iraq's relations with the Arab states of the Gulf'.¹⁰ It goes without saying that, apart from possessing an 'ideological' rationale, the Warba/Bubiyan issue was of major strategic significance for Iraq.

The crucial factors, therefore, which, in practical terms, influenced Iraq's behaviour towards the Gulf Arab states were (a) Iran, and (b) the orientations of the Gulf states themselves. There were several dimensions to this. First, strategic, in that Iranian control over the Shatt al-Arab (coupled with Kuwaiti sovereignty over Warba and Bubiyan) jeopardised Iraq's military capacity in the Gulf; second, economic, in that the Shatt al-Arab and the Gulf constituted one of Iraq's main outlets to the world; and third, ideological, in that non-Arab and pro-Western Iran's influence had to be curbed. Fourth, and more broadly political, Iraq's position and influence in the region had to be strengthened.

As already indicated, events in the Gulf itself seem to have had a major impact on the overall direction of Iraq's foreign policy. One may note that the shift towards international pragmatism coincides roughly with the Algiers agreement of 1975, and the further shift in 1978–79 with the Iranian revolution. In the Gulf, the Algiers accords temporarily ended the perception of Iran as a direct rival and a source of threats. Differences with the Gulf Arab states on this account thus diminished. The Iranian revolution re-introduced the Iranian threat, but this time the Gulf monarchies felt equally threatened and therefore objectively and subjectively ended up (or remained) in Iraq's camp. For Iraq, the new configuration also heightened the need for the construction of pro-Iraqi *axes*, to include all anti-Iranian forces.

Following consultations from early 1978, a mutual internal security agreement was signed with Saudi Arabia in February 1979; Iraq declared it would defend the Kingdom against any infringement of its sovereignty. This was broadened on 6 February 1980, when the Iraqi Information Minister declared: 'Any attack on any of the Arab Gulf states is a direct aggression against Iraq'. Relations with Kuwait had also warmed considerably (although a round of security talks did not lead anywhere at that stage), and when the Kuwaiti heir apparent came to Baghdad in May 1980 to discuss economic co-operation, he was given a very warm welcome.¹¹

During the last months before the war, Iraqi diplomatic activity further intensified. Pro-Iraqi Shaikh Saqr of Ras al-Khaimah was invited to Iraq and was received by Saddam. Renewed border demarcation discussions were suggested to (and accepted by) Kuwait in early July.¹² Then, of course, there was Saddam's much commented-upon surprise visit to Saudi Arabia on 5 August, when he and a top delegation met with King Khalid, Prince Fahd and Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal for talks on 'the current situation in the Middle East and the Gulf region', during which at least the possibility of tackling the Iranian threat by military means was discussed. The joint communiqué focused discreetly on the threat of sanctions against states recognising Israel's annexation of Jerusalem—but even here it is telling that the position on the Palestine question was very moderate in comparison with earlier Iraqi declarations.¹³ Furthest among the Gulf states from Iraq had been Oman, where the rebels of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman had received support from Baghdad until the early 1970s. But diplomatic relations were established in 1976 and a subsequent further warming of Iraq's attitude towards the Sultanate was indicated by the reception given to Qays al-Zawawi on his visit in late May 1980, when Iraq is reported

specifically to have promised to send troops to Oman in case of a South Yemeni attack.¹⁴

However, it was not all plain sailing. The above mentioned determinants also explain why some points of friction or disagreement remained. Warba and Bubiyan retained their strategic and economic importance (and Kuwait remained unwilling to share control). Iraq continued to oppose any regional 'bloc formation' outside the Arab League, although willing to contemplate non-aligned regional security arrangements if it was included. And it kept trying to woo the Gulf Arab states away from their *de facto* alliance with the West. Particularly where Oman was concerned these last two issues remained problematic. The 1980 Iraqi proposal for a Gulf security arrangement that would include the six Gulf states and Iraq itself, was, according to Ramazani¹⁵ 'largely designed to counter the plan of Oman', which the Ba'th's mouthpiece *Al-Thawra* described as 'a new imperialist alliance'. The Iraqis, notes Ramazani, 'did everything to discredit it among the Arab states'. The Omani plan centred on the security of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, and implied accepting financial and technical aid from major oil-consuming nations.

Next, let us consider the view from the Gulf Arab states themselves. Among the main determinants of Saudi foreign policy which concern us here is the fact of the absolute primacy of national and regime survival, while a second crucial determinant lies in the Kingdom's very weakness. Judged by most standards, Saudi Arabia was no match for the other major actors in the Middle Eastern arena except financially. The country's oil wealth and installations, moreover, are highly vulnerable; hence the need for manoeuvring towards a moderate Arab consensus, and for keeping open channels towards as many actors as possible. Added to this is the need always to take into account the effect that certain policies will have on domestic legitimacy—a particularly relevant consideration as regards Islamic and Arab legitimacy. Quandt has summed up well the overall consequence of these determinants for the nature of foreign policy: 'Pushed and pulled in various directions, [the Saudis] will try to find a safe middle ground, a consensus position that will minimise pressures and risks'. This is exacerbated by another determinant of Saudi foreign policy output, *viz.* the decision-making process. Whereas King Faisal was able to put his very personal stamp on foreign policy, decision-making became more diffuse after his assassination. In addition to those of King Khalid and subsequently King Fahd, decisive voices have been those of the senior princes Abdullah, Sultan and Na'if, each with somewhat differing backgrounds, views and sympathies. As Quandt points out, consultation and

consensus are key words in such a context: 'decisions may be postponed or compromises forged to preserve the facade of consensus'.¹⁶

The policy output in the regional arena has been marked by a tendency for *raison d'état* to assume greater importance than Islamic and anti-communist ideology. This became marked as the progressive Arab regimes on their part began to show pragmatism, and was reinforced when in that same period, after 1975, Crown Prince Fahd became the Saudi regime's strong man—even if this was not to the extent of controlling foreign policy. This links with a second characteristic, already referred to above, namely the preparedness to co-operate with the Arab 'radicals' if that would lessen intra-Arab tensions and improve the chances for a moderate consensus. Thirdly, the Saudi leaders have taken care never to move too far away from the main body of Arab governmental opinion. A fourth characteristic has been the use of the country's oil wealth where this could help smooth relations, reduce radicalism, or reduce over-dependence on the Soviet Union. Fifthly, with a view to its Islamic credentials, Saudi Arabia has tried to maintain good relations with all the major Islamic countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian verbal attacks after the revolution were initially played down by the leadership in Riyadh.¹⁷ However, when they later concluded that the Iranian regime had become a real threat to stability and security in the region that would not be subdued by conciliatory gestures, some assertive reaction, using Islamic symbols, became justified. Finally, as already indicated, the nature of the decision-making process has meant that Saudi foreign policy has often suffered from indecisiveness. A related result has been that a degree of apparent inconsistency has crept in from time to time.

Before moving on to a brief appraisal of the attitudes of the Gulf Arab states towards Iraq before the war, it is worth considering some of the constraining factors on the foreign policies of the smaller Gulf states. The most important point is that they are small and weak. None of them can escape the significance which their location in and around the vital oil and shipping region of the Gulf has for bigger powers; their utter vulnerability only serves to increase this realisation. Nevertheless, actual international stances can diverge—as illustrated for example by the positions of Kuwait and Oman. In Oman, which was virtually locked away from the rest of the Arab world until twenty or so years ago, Arab nationalism does not have the same legitimising force as elsewhere. Conscious of Western support, Sultan Qaboos has very much gone his own pragmatic way. Even so, this has still implied a need to maintain the bridges with the moderate Arab majority, and, at the same time, to give careful consideration to the vulnerabilities related to

the geopolitics of the Strait of Hormuz. Kuwait, on the other hand, is characterised by (a) its position next to Iraq, and (b) a relatively more politically articulate population. Both of these led it to adopt a more distinctly Arab nationalist stance and a more genuinely non-aligned foreign policy. The other Emirates occupy a middle position. The five states cannot afford to ignore either neighbouring Iran, in part because of their sizeable Shi'i populations, or Iraq, partly because of the salience of Arab nationalism as a legitimising factor. For the UAE there is the additional factor of lively trade relations with Iran, as well as joint management of some oil fields, and Bahrain and Qatar have also had a significant trade with the Islamic Republic. All five, of course, also have to take some account of Saudi positions.

Although one can easily observe a legacy of distrust in the attitude of the Gulf states towards Iraq during the second half of the 1970s, they were nevertheless ready to enter into economic co-operation with it.¹⁸ In the case of Saudi Arabia, there was an interplay between the opening-up of Iraqi foreign policy as described earlier, the Saudi desire to respond to any such overtures, and the growing pragmatism under the influence of Fahd. Although the two still competed for influence over the smaller Gulf states, improved relations with Iraq provided the Kingdom with a welcome counterweight against Iran. When Iraq seemed, after Camp David, to be on the way to capturing at least a central role in Arab politics, the Saudis had an even stronger motivation for cultivating their Ba'thist neighbour. After the radicalisation of the Iranian revolution, both the Gulf monarchies and Iraq all found that they had a similar perception of the threat which this presented. For the Gulf six, an alliance with Iran was no longer an option. Iraq's general moderation and its growing coolness towards the Soviet Union, played a further important role in the changing attitude of the Gulf states towards Baghdad. Finally, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, apart from speeding up change in Iraq, directly influenced the other Gulf states' view of regional security: one Gulf official was quoted as saying that it had made Iraq 'the second line of defence for protecting the region's oil producing areas'.

As a result, the Iraqi opening up was mirrored in Gulf attitudes, and all of the Gulf states except Oman quickly expressed support for the 'National Charter' which Saddam had proposed. In the period leading up to the war (especially after Iraqi-Iranian tension started to mount during April 1980), the position of the Gulf Arab states shifted further as the Iranian threat of exporting the revolution became more clearly spelled out.¹⁹ The conservative regimes of the Gulf increased their diplomatic activity towards Iraq from May 1980 onwards.²⁰ Oman even

sent its foreign minister to Baghdad, and Salalah radio quoted him as saying that Oman wished to initiate co-operation with Iraq and to 'remove any misunderstanding that might have arisen as a result of certain political opinions'. Zawawi belatedly expressed Oman's support for the National Charter (although claiming later that there was no radical change in Oman's policy).²¹ Overall, governmental and press attitudes in the Gulf Arab states became decidedly more pro-Iraqi.²² As has been argued elsewhere,²³ it is very likely that Saudi Arabia at least, and probably the other Gulf states as well, was informed in advance of Iraq's plan to invade Iran, and that Saudi Arabia at least had given the green light, probably on the occasion of Saddam's visit to Riyadh in August. All six, we believe, showed varying degrees of support for Iraq's initiative, after having come reluctantly to the conclusion that there appeared to be no effective alternative. Iran was not thought to be able to put up a serious battle, and the consensus was that a *Blitzkrieg* could cut the revolutionaries down to size. Among the seven emirates of the UAE, Dubai and Sharjah were the main exceptions to this general stance.

The economic aspect of the relationship between Iraq and the Gulf Arab states became increasingly important after 1975. Apart from other considerations, this ties in with Saddam's more explicit emphasis on interlinking the Arab economies as a prerequisite for Arab unity.²⁴ By 1980, this had led to a structurally higher level of relations, both governmental and private, accompanied by the improvement of the physical infrastructure linking Iraq to the six. It is worth noting that Iraq was a participant in a whole range of pan-Gulf organisations, ministerial conferences and joint projects in the agricultural, industrial, service, banking, health, educational, information and cultural sectors, and in the field of labour and social affairs. Nevertheless, trade on the whole remained low. Yet a fairly dramatic expansion of economic relations took place with Kuwait, especially from 1980, with some major contracts in Iraq being awarded to Kuwaiti companies. In addition there was the revival, in the wake of the May 1980 visit by Crown Prince Shaikh Sa'd, of the projects involving the piping of water from the Shatt al-Arab to Kuwait and the linking of the two countries' electricity grids, as well as a major increase in Kuwait's importance as a transit port, with special facilities, because of congestion at Basra and Umm Qasr. It should be noted that UAE ports were increasingly being used for transshipment as well. A final point to be made here is that on several occasions during 1980 Iraq appears to have co-ordinated its oil pricing policy with those of the other Gulf states.²⁵ This could be interpreted as a further sign of the co-operation in strategic economic

matters that was now evolving between the ostensible former 'revolutionary' and 'reactionaries'.

The Iran-Iraq war and its impact on Gulf Arab relations

The Gulf monarchies were effectively on Iraq's side at the beginning of the war. Only the Emirates of Dubai, Sharjah and Umm al-Qaiwain did not fit this picture. A large proportion of Dubai's population is of Iranian origin and of Shi'i persuasion; to a significant extent, they fulfil key functions in the Emirate's economic life. In addition, Dubai has long had important trade links with Iran, both official and otherwise. Sharjah, and to a lesser extent Umm al-Qaiwain, have since the early 1970s had a large stake in Iranian co-operation in the exploitation of the off-shore oil field around the Tunb islands; a considerable portion of Sharjah's income derived from this. From the start these three insisted on, and succeeded in, keeping good relations with the Islamic Republic. The other camp was formed by Abu Dhabi, Ras al-Khaimah, and presumably Ajman and Fujairah. Among these, Ras al-Khaimah appears to have been the staunchest supporter of Iraq, and its ruler Shaikh Saqr is thought to have backed the idea of an Iraqi invasion of Abu Musa and the Tunbs. Abu Dhabi was more cautious, and declined co-operation in such a raid, although reportedly offering shelter to Iraqi planes and ships.²⁶

There were differences in the extent to which support for Iraq was expressed, but the basic picture remains the same, nor was it fundamentally affected, initially, by Iraq's changing fortunes. Although the Gulf states all hastened to express their official neutrality after the first Iraqi *Blitz* had failed to produce the expected quick win, and after Iran had started threatening them because of their co-operation with Iraq, they remained effectively on the side of the latter. In the period of stalemate in the war, from November 1980 to late September 1981, very tangible support for Iraq was given by Saudi Arabia (with transshipment of military as well as civilian supplies, in addition to \$6 billion by April 1981 and another \$4 billion during the remainder of the year) and Kuwait (transshipment facilities and \$4 billion by April). The UAE provided between \$1 and \$3 billion in financial assistance, and Qatar probably some \$1 billion.²⁷ It was also in this period that Saudi Arabia agreed in principle with Iraq on the construction of a crude-oil pipeline to the Red Sea (to be called the IPSA-pipeline). In the Gulf conflict, therefore, the Kingdom was effectively allied to Iraq. Kuwait's vital support did not extend to giving in to Iraq's demand for a 99-year lease of Bubiyan Island. This phase witnessed another

important development, following a near-clash between Oman and the Iranian navy in late 1980 after a naval accident. This led Sultan Qaboos to devise a *modus vivendi* with Iran in Gulf waters. Although remaining politically part of the pro-Iraqi camp, Oman from then on became more and more 'actively neutral'.

In this period, the whole pre-war configuration underlying the initial policies of the Gulf states changed. There was no longer any pressing need for the war, as the aim of denting Khomeini's aura had been achieved. At the same time, they had never wanted a long drawn-out conflict, with its implications of economic drain, military spill-over and superpower involvement. The need to avoid these dangers was more important than anything which could be gained from further bleeding the two combatants. Their main concern therefore became to end the war—a point on which Iraq, particularly from the spring of 1981, was very much in agreement. The second imperative was to prevent an Iranian victory; hence the active support given to Baghdad. However, the Gulf rulers' traditional suspicions of Iraq had not evaporated completely. In the security discussions that led up to the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in May 1981, Iraq was never thought of as a potential partner, and the council's creation confirmed the republic's status as an outsider.

Meanwhile, Iraq was growing increasingly dependent on its conservative allies; this was reflected in the gradually diminishing importance of ideology as a factor that might unsettle its relations with these states. Examples of this were its eventual, and grudging, acceptance of the GCC, and the expulsion of the Baghdad representatives of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman. However, friction with Kuwait over Bubiyan remained.

In the period of the Iranian counter-offensive, from the end of September 1981 to June 1982, Iraq's 'sensitive' attitude towards the Gulf states developed further, and there was not much overt criticism of some of the latter's careful stance. The GCC, for its part, had now clearly profiled itself and Iraq acquiesced in the fact of its exclusion. The tone of the organisation's declarations, urging the end of the war, was neutral, but this covered differing attitudes on the part of its members. The attempted coup in Bahrain in late 1981 was blamed on Iran by the Bahraini and Saudi governments. Subsequently, and on several occasions, Prince Na'if bin Abdul-Aziz, in particular, stated the Kingdom's support for Iraq, urging other Arab states to follow the Saudi example. Na'if, always one of the more outspoken members of the Al-Sa'ud in criticising Iran, was quoted repeatedly as calling Iran 'the terrorist of the Gulf'. In the wake of these developments, the final

border agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iraq was signed. Further considerable financial aid was also forthcoming from Riyadh. Kuwait added another \$2 billion to its assistance in December 1981. This came after the Iranian missile attacks on Kuwaiti oil installations on 1 October, leading to the recalling of Kuwait's ambassador from Tehran. The remaining three states, Qatar, Oman and the UAE, kept very much a low profile.²⁸

During the renewed period of semi-stalemate, until the Spring of 1984 (during which time, however, Iran carried the war into Iraq, attacking Basra and capturing Majnoon), Iraq was highly conscious of its dependence on its Gulf supporters. The GCC's communiqués remained rather bland, although Iran was reprimanded for having crossed the border. Individually, though, the Saudi position, both stated and in substance, amounted to an effective alliance with Baghdad against Iran. This was reflected in Iraq's attitude towards the Kingdom. Having previously rejected the initial Fahd plan on Palestine, for instance, the Iraqi regime approved the 'face-lifted' version at the resumed Arab League summit in Fez in September 1982. Kuwait of course had reason to feel threatened by Iran's thrusts into southern Iraq. Consequently the official neutral stance was strengthened, while at the same time material support for Iraq was maintained. Although there is no firm evidence of significant financial flows for the period 1983-1985, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia began giving some 330,000 barrels/day (b/d) of crude oil for sale to Iraqi customers ('war relief crude') from February 1983. Nevertheless Kuwait was determined to show it would not relinquish Bubiyan, and indicated this by speedily constructing a bridge between the mainland and the island in 1983. The other four GCC members, although temporarily prodded into taking some action by the Iranian incursion, soon reverted to their previous state of low profile and official neutrality. It is interesting to note that Qatar no longer appeared willing to follow the Saudi lead; nor is there much evidence of any pro-Iraqi bias on the part of Abu Dhabi.²⁹

The period from the Spring of 1984 to January 1986 may be called one of internationalised conflict and stalemate, in which Iraq's siege of Kharg and of Iranian oil outlets and tankers was countered by Iranian retaliation against Arab ships and tankers carrying Arab oil. Iran's repeated threats against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait prompted these two states to persuade the GCC explicitly to criticise Iran by sponsoring a UN resolution that condemned Iranian attacks. Iran's verbal assault on the Gulf states was also stepped up in this period, which heightened Gulf antagonism. However, in May 1985, Iran switched to a policy of trying to mend fences with the six, which resulted in a mellowing of

Gulfian attitudes. Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal went to Tehran at the invitation of the Iranian leadership, although the Saudis did not give up their effective support of Iraq. The GCC's November 1985 summit communiqué was more even-handed towards Iran and Iraq than previously, but continued to insist on basing peace negotiations on two UN Security Council resolutions, even though Iran had rejected them. Nor, when Iran's Foreign Minister Velayati visited Riyadh in December, did the talks produce any agreement on ways to end the Gulf War.³⁰ Likewise, accounts of occasional secret negotiations between the two sides from 1984 reveal that while the Saudis were eager to reduce tension and were not wedded to Saddam's leadership, they were by no means prepared to drop support for Iraq, and were constantly irritated by Tehran's intransigence and demands.³¹

Kuwait was similarly open to any improvement in bilateral relations, and welcomed the changing Iranian attitudes from May 1985. But because the Emirate did not reduce its assistance to Iraq, criticism and threats from Tehran soon resumed. Members of the ruling family, followed even more stridently by the press, made their support for Iraq explicit. Following several previous efforts, the National Assembly succeeded, in 1985, in stopping the annual KD100 million subsidy to Syria, on the grounds of the latter's support for Iran, although this necessitated a compromise that would allow the government more funds to disburse to friendly countries at its own discretion.³² Friction with Baghdad over Warba and Bubiyan continued, however. The islands had become even more strategically important to the Iraqis than before, but although Saddam Hussein now reduced his previous demands by asking only for a 20-year lease of part of the islands, the Kuwaiti leadership did not budge on the issue, and rather pointedly transformed Bubiyan into a military island.³³ The island and border issues thus remained a serious irritant in Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations.

As for the southern Gulf states, they had by the end of this period—and with gentle encouragement from Iran—come to accept that neutrality was their best option and it might even help to improve possibilities for peaceful resolution of the conflict. Iraq had come to acquiesce in this reality. Even so, in the framework of the GCC, they still tilted collectively towards Iraq, and it can be argued that it was the understanding stance adopted by the Iraqi regime that helped to avoid possible strains on the relationship between Iraq and these Gulf states.

THE FAO DÉBÂCLE AND ITS AFTERMATH

The shape of the Gulf War was transformed in the second half of the 1980s with the capture of Fao by Iranian forces on 9 February 1986,

with the further escalation of the tanker war, and with the plummeting of oil prices which placed Iraq, as well as Iran, under grave financial pressure. Riyadh and Kuwait strongly and explicitly attacked Iran, and the GCC as a body issued a strong condemnation of Tehran's actions. Nevertheless, even Saudi Arabia still showed a willingness to opt, if possible, for a diplomatic approach and conciliation. Kuwait stands out from the start of this period in that both government and press took an unequivocally pro-Iraqi stance. The authors believe that from around this time, and following a three-year lapse, direct financial assistance to Iraq was once again forthcoming both from the Kingdom and from Kuwait.³⁴ Although government and press in the other Gulf states also condemned the Iranian moves, they nevertheless remained more restrained, and in no case was criticism of Iran as pronounced as in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Iraq's dependence was further heightened and highlighted, thus reinforcing its accommodating attitude towards the Gulf states.

Continuing Iranian pressure, combining the carrot and the stick, gradually succeeded in again reducing the UAE, Qatar and Oman to effective neutrality, and although the GCC umbrella continued to provide cover for the expression of more pro-Iraqi sentiments, these appeared by now to be little more than words urged upon them by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Indeed, it is believed that in August, when the latter two countries pressed their GCC partners to extend the AWACS patrols over the entire Gulf, Qatar, the UAE and Oman refused. On their part the Kingdom and Kuwait are thought to have extended another \$4 billion 'loan' to Iraq in the second half of 1986, while Saudi Arabia is reported to have allowed Iraqi planes to land and refuel following strikes on the Iranian oil facilities in the southern Gulf.³⁵ The general 'camps' within the GCC on relations with Iraq and Iran, which were to endure until the end of the conflict, were now clearly crystallising. They featured the neutral camp of Qatar, the UAE and Oman—working above all towards good bilateral relations with Iran while claiming this had nothing to do with their attitude towards 'sisterly Iraq'; and the basically pro-Iraqi camp of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, cautiously supported by Bahrain. The latter's position may be explained by its experience of Iranian-inspired protest (most importantly the 1981 coup attempt), and the island economy's high degree of dependence on Saudi aid, oil supplies, and military protection.

This configuration did not imply rigidity, however. For example, Oman, which stuck firmly to its pro-Western line, was severely criticised by Iran for hosting the British 'Operation Swiftsword' in November, while on the other hand—and for our purposes more

importantly—Saudi Arabia was by no means implacable towards Iran, being still ready to respond to overtures, and especially keen to co-operate with the Islamic Republic on oil issues. This stand highlighted the friction with Iraq that was apparent during late 1986 and early 1987. Although it should be stressed that there is no evidence that the Saudi authorities officially knew about, or approved of, the shipments of Saudi refined products to Iran after mid-1986, revelations about them must have inspired grave misgivings on the part of the Iraqis. When King Fahd tried in December to convince Iraq to co-operate with OPEC's efforts to control production and thus firm up prices, Saddam Hussein refused, demanding instead a doubling of Saudi and Kuwaiti war relief crude supplies in return for more flexibility, and reportedly even refusing to answer the King's telephone calls. Iraq also insisted that the Saudis stop putting 'technical obstacles' in the way of the free flow of Iraqi crude through the IPSA-1 pipeline, (which had been completed in 1985). This had served as one way of reducing the volume of crude being poured on to the market while simultaneously exerting pressure on the Iraqis. Indeed, the Kingdom reportedly reduced the flow even further in the face of Iraqi bullying, which apparently resulted in Iraq's losing some \$1 million a day in revenues around the turn of the year. It took a late February visit by a high-level Iraqi delegation (led by Taha Yassin Ramadhan, the first Deputy Premier), to obtain the Saudis' grudging agreement to allow through 500,000 b/d—double the average for the first two months of 1987.³⁶

In March, Saudi efforts to find a face-saving formula to end the war proved fruitless, and the Saudi Foreign Minister let it be known that his country would ask the UN Security Council for sanctions against Iran.³⁷ This was probably provoked by Saudi exasperation with Iran's inability to deliver as a consequence of its internal divisions.

From now on, Saudi-Kuwaiti solidarity in supporting Iraq and confronting Iranian threats was once more clearly established. Bombings in Kuwait during April, May and June 1987 served to reinforce this position: Kuwait's government and press generally blamed the violence on Iran. They received severe threats from Tehran in return, and warnings that plans to reflag Kuwait's tanker fleet would not make it any less vulnerable to Iran's wrath. Iran subsequently seized several Kuwaiti speedboats, and in June started deploying Silkworm missiles on the Fao peninsula, directly threatening Kuwait. It may be worth noting that in the days after an Iraqi aircraft struck the *USS Stark*—accidentally or otherwise—there was no comment in the Kuwaiti press. The Saudi position was possibly even more striking: a request from the

AWACS personnel for Saudi planes to intercept the approaching Iraqi aircraft had been handled too slowly to prevent the strike; nor was there any official comment on the event.

Bahrain's Foreign Minister expressed approval for the reflagging operation—which implied a larger presence of foreign naval military strength—although he argued rather implausibly that the (mainly) American military presence should not be seen as a direct challenge to Iran because 'we do not want confrontation with Iran'. He also tried to reassure Tehran that Bahraini military bases would not be used as a springboard for attacks against the Islamic Republic.³⁸

The other states, however—and particularly the UAE and Oman—were making more of an effort to be on friendly terms with Iran, guarded criticism from Baghdad notwithstanding. UAE president Shaikh Zayid stated in May 1987 that foreign protection was not needed for the UAE's ships, and the Iranian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Besharati, singled out the UAE's 'wise attitude'. Iranian sources subsequently suggested that Kuwait might not have informed the UAE about the decision to invite the superpowers into the Gulf. The Iranians capitalised on this mood by sending Foreign Minister Velayati on a tour of the southern Gulf states in late May/early June in a clear attempt to drive a wedge between Kuwait and the others, specifically over the reflagging issue with all its implications. It is probably indicative of Bahrain's continuing suspicion towards Tehran that Velayati cancelled his visit there and sent an aide instead.³⁹ However, such hesitations were no longer part of Oman's policy. Qaboos sent his Foreign Minister to Tehran in May for discussions that resulted in an agreement on economic co-operation and in follow-up visits, the most striking of which was Velayati's visit in mid-August. Nevertheless, although the Omani government, in its official statements, agreed with Iran on the need to avoid superpower interference, the Sultanate did in fact stick to its view that Kuwait had a right to secure passage of its tankers through the Gulf.⁴⁰

All six members subscribed to the GCC Foreign Ministers' communiqué on 8 June which supported peace moves but also stressed anew the principle that an attack on any member state would be considered an attack on all. They condemned 'terrorist and sabotage acts' against Kuwait and supported the latter's measures to secure its economic and commercial interests. Although some of this must be ascribed to heavy Saudi and Kuwaiti pressure, it would also seem to indicate that there were limits to the extent to which Iran could divide the Gulf six.

July 1987 marked the beginning a new period in the war, as well as in Iraqi-Gulf-Iranian relations: at a press conference on 20 July, Kuwait's Crown Prince Shaikh Sa'id came out explicitly and strongly in support of Iraq, and the following day the reflagging operation started. On the same day the UN Security Council issued the famous Resolution 598, which called for a cease-fire in the war, and for a step-by-step resolution of the conflict. Only ten days later, hundreds of pilgrims died in Mecca, in the chaos and violence that had erupted following political demonstrations by Iranians. This followed seven weeks of exchanges of Iranian threats and Saudi warnings about demonstrations during the Hajj.⁴¹

Iran's continued attacks on Arab shipping, its rejection of Resolution 598 (which Iraq had accepted), and its perceived responsibility for the Mecca riots, all helped to worsen the atmosphere. Relations between Riyadh and Tehran consequently soured further (a Saudi diplomat dying after an attack on the embassy in Tehran, and Rafsanjani calling for the Al-Sa'ud to be uprooted from the area), and would continue to decline until the break in Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations in April 1988. Referring explicitly to Kuwait, Velayati threatened that Iran would no longer show restraint in retaliating against countries supporting Iraq, thus strengthening Kuwait's enmity. The Emirate positioned itself squarely behind Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, too, condemned Iran over the Mecca events. Qatar remained virtually completely silent, while the UAE and Oman, as before, tried to steer a neutral course, the UAE refusing Iran's offer to help in clearing mines after the British supply vessel *Anita* was sunk in mid-August, and the Omanis claiming in August (while receiving the Iranian Foreign Minister) that a powerful Iran was a source of pride for the Gulf, even though they supported Kuwait's right to reflag. Baghdad's irritation with the two countries at this point flared up, and the Ba'th Party mouthpiece published a piece criticising those who were receiving 'enemies of the Arabs . . . Islam . . . and humanity'.⁴²

At the meeting of the Arab League's Foreign Ministers in Tunis in August, Sa'ud al-Faisal called the Iranians 'terrorists' and urged sanctions. The meeting stopped short of calling for a break in relations with Iran, but issued a stern warning to Tehran that Resolution 598 should be accepted. Oman and the UAE were among those arguing most forcefully against a break. The contrast with Saudi Arabia, where the press for the first time was now given *carte blanche* to attack Iran,⁴³ could not have been greater.

In September, after a missile attack from Fao, Kuwait expelled five Iranian diplomats, and Bahrain again openly condemned Iran, calling

for international sanctions if Tehran failed to accept Resolution 598. Further evidence of the firm support from Iraq's three Gulf allies may perhaps be sought in the fact that Baghdad felt at liberty to resume the tanker war in late August, and its further strikes on economic and oil targets in September. Saudi Arabia's stand is illustrated by the signing (on 20 September) of the contract for the second phase of the IPSA-pipeline which would, on completion, enable Iraq to export another 1.65 million b/d across the Kingdom. In addition, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are believed to have contributed in excess of \$1 billion during 1987, although one unconfirmed report has the Kingdom giving Iraq an outright grant worth \$2 billion in the wake of these developments.⁴⁴ Bahrain's attitude was recognised by Tehran for what it was, and the commander of the Revolutionary Guards remarked in October that as the island was 'US-occupied', it was fair game for attacks on the Americans. Oman, meanwhile, stated explicitly its desire to see international even-handedness towards Iran and Iraq. The Sultanate was clearly establishing itself as a go-between between the pro-Iraqi camp and the West on the one hand, and Iran on the other.⁴⁵

In the face of such a lack of support from Oman, the UAE and Qatar, Saddam Hussein adopted a diplomatic and pragmatic line, informing the Kuwaiti press that while GCC support stopped short of his aspirations, a GCC state that refrained from harming Iraq was better than one that did—although one that helped Iraq would be better than either.⁴⁶

After two tankers (one US-flagged) were hit in mid-October by Iranian missiles in Kuwaiti territorial waters, the US retaliated by striking and virtually destroying two Iranian oil platforms used by the Revolutionary Guards, an action justified by the press in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Iranians, in turn, hit a Kuwaiti oil terminal on 21 October, which not only kindled Bahraini protest, but also proved to be a 'last straw' in the process of swinging large sections of public opinion in the Gulf against Iran. As one observer noted, 'for most citizens, the Iranian revolution ceased to mean anything more than war against the Arabs'. In Kuwait, 'big Shi'i families went so far as to put ads in local newspapers dissociating themselves from the [Iranian and Iranian-inspired] violence'.⁴⁷ However, official policy in Qatar, the UAE and Oman stayed neutral. Though they subscribed to the strongly-worded statement from November's Arab summit in Amman, which condemned Iran and gave clear support to Iraq, these countries were not quite as anxious to blame Iran. Sultan Qaboos indeed stated his desire to maintain good relations with the Islamic Republic—these relations being 'dictated by history and geography'—and commented

that in the Gulf War *both* sides should observe the cease-fire order. Omani-Iranian economic co-operation, meanwhile, was developing further.⁴⁸ It is worth noting that, prior to the GCC summit of late December, Saddam Hussein sent messages with Tariq Aziz and Sa'doun Shakir to all the Gulf states except Oman. There was no doubt about the continued support of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia: the contract to supply war relief crude oil (which had in fact expired in January 1987 but which had run on because of previous under-lifting) was renewed in November.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, pressure mainly from the UAE and Oman (and probably also Qatar) influenced decisions at the summit. The leaders noted with regret 'Iran's attempt to procrastinate on the implementation' of Resolution 598. Even so, and a personal attack by King Fahd on Iran notwithstanding, the Kingdom and Kuwait acquiesced in the desire of the neutral partners to try to keep channels to Iran open. Shaikh Zayid of the UAE was designated to lead the GCC dialogue with Tehran, in the hope that the Iranian leadership might be persuaded to accept the UN Security Council resolution.⁵⁰

1988: TOWARDS A CEASE-FIRE

The message from Iraq in response to these GCC intentions came loud and clear: no such dialogue was acceptable except on Iraq's terms. Nevertheless, from the beginning of 1988 some movement in the GCC's position was discernible. During January it became clear that, in addition to the three 'neutrals', Bahrain also favoured the principle of dialogue with Iran, although it remained very wary. Manama rather played down a failed coup attempt in February that was at least indirectly Iranian-inspired. The Syrian government indicated that it too was playing a role in getting the dialogue on the road. Iraq was adamant that there should be no such exercise if Iraq was not a party to it or was not satisfied with it. In Kuwait, although newspapers derided the proposal, the official mood also turned more pliant. Saddam had sent Izzat Ibrahim, the vice-chairman of the RCC, to Kuwait as well as to Riyadh, in anticipation that agreement in principle to a dialogue might be announced. But the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister said on 25 January that contacts with Tehran had never ceased, and that the Kuwaiti embassy in the Iranian capital would be reopened.⁵¹ Baghdad's anger at this was expressed through the state-controlled press, with the regime claiming that the GCC overtures to Iran were a flagrant violation of the Amman summit resolutions, and that Syria's hand could be seen in it.⁵² Although Kuwait and Saudi Arabia appeared to be excluded from these accusations, the subsequent statement by the Kuwaiti minister indicated that in fact only the Kingdom was still

holding out. It is worth noting, too, that the rulers of Oman, Qatar and the UAE had all made known their opposition to an arms embargo on Iran.⁵³

Saddam responded by exhorting Arab countries to stand by him in the name of Arab nationalism, while at the same time making it clear that his brand of Arab nationalism was not a threat to any Arab regime. This can be seen as confirming the evolution in Iraq's position that we have noted earlier.⁵⁴

Following the flare-up in February of the 'war of the cities', in which Tehran and Qom were both hit, the press in Kuwait and in Saudi Arabia supported Iraq. The other countries were more circumspect. But Shaikh Zayid warned Iran not to force Kuwait to seek defence aid from abroad, and the Assistant Secretary-General of the GCC, Sayf Hashid al-Maskari, from the UAE, indicated in March that it was now up to Iran to show there was substance to its proclaimed principle of good-neighbourliness.⁵⁵ It should be noted in this context that around this time, Oman's assistance to US operations in the Gulf was openly acknowledged by Secretary of State Shultz.⁵⁶

The improvement in Iranian-Kuwaiti relations received a setback when a number of Iranian patrol boats attacked Bubiyan Island at the end of March (interestingly, the UAE condemned Iran for this) and when a Kuwaiti airliner was hijacked en route to Mashad on 5 April. In both instances probably only a minority faction in the Iranian regime was involved, and Kuwait initially hoped that these hitches could be overcome. Yet the outcome of the hijacking led both the Kuwaitis and the Saudis to accuse Tehran of complicity.⁵⁷ Bahrain reaffirmed its position in the pro-Iraqi camp in a different way, when Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman went to Baghdad for top-level talks, described as 'supportive', on 12 April. Iran continued its own public relations offensive, sending envoys to Oman, Qatar and the UAE to present them with evidence of Iraq's use of chemical weapons against its Kurdish population in Halabja.⁵⁸

This phase of the war effectively ended in mid-April 1988. The escalation of America's military confrontation with Iran more or less coincided with a string of military successes on the part of Iraq. In this last phase of the war, Iran experienced mainly reverses, culminating in Iraq's recapture of the Majnoon islands on 26 June, while the eventual acceptance by Iran of Resolution 598 was to be followed on 6 August by Iraq's agreement to a cease-fire.

In April Iran accused Kuwait of allowing Iraq to use Bubiyan in its successful counter attack and recapture of Fao. The Kuwaiti government denied this, but Iraq's success was hailed by officialdom

and press alike. The same fulsome praise was forthcoming from Saudi Arabia.⁵⁹

In a gesture aimed as much at bolstering his own legitimacy in Islamic terms as at acknowledging the Al-Sa'ud's supportive stance, Saddam Hussein, accompanied by a top-level Iraqi delegation, went to Saudi Arabia on 19 April to perform the *Umra* (or little Hajj) as well as to visit King Fahd. He strengthened Iraq's 'moral' position by the immediate offer of a cease-fire, and only a few days after this latest show of solidarity (on 26 April) the Kingdom severed diplomatic relations with Iraq's adversary, having failed to convince the Iranians to accept a quota of 45,000 persons for the 1988 Hajj, ostensibly for reasons of construction work in the holy cities. Saudi fears about the numbers and activities of Iranian pilgrims at that year's Hajj, and the Iranians' total intransigence on the subject, indeed appear to have been the most important reasons behind the break—although it did of course occur only after months of mutual recriminations. Taha Yassin Ramadhan could on 7 May describe Saudi and Iraqi viewpoints as 'identical', and King Fahd himself, in his *Id al-Fitr* message nine days later, heaped praise on the Iraqi leadership for having successfully withstood the onslaught of 'oppression and tyranny'.⁶⁰

In the wake of the Saudi-Iranian break the Kuwaiti press argued strongly for following the Kingdom's example, urging the other GCC states to do the same, even though Shaikh Jabir's government appears never to have considered this option very seriously. As regards Oman and the UAE, their essentially unchanged position was illustrated by continuing high-level contacts with Iranian emissaries.⁶¹

Meeting in the first week of June, the GCC Foreign Ministers congratulated Iraq on its military successes (Salamchek had been recaptured on 25 May), and appealed yet again to Iran to accept Resolution 598. As usual, the wording was somewhat tempered by the 'neutrals', although Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal's accompanying remarks were not. Bahrain's Minister of Defence, Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa (in a move which, although surprising, was consistent with the state's basic position) actually visited the newly-liberated areas of Fao and Salamchek on an official visit to Iraq on 20 June, being now clearly undeterred by Iran. In a further show of determination, Manama jailed nine Bahraini members of the Tehran-based Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain because of their dealings with Iran.⁶²

The crucial turning point in Iran's attitude (which remained possibly *the* determining factor for the GCC states' attitudes) came on 2 June, when the pragmatic Hashemi Rafsanjani, Speaker of the Majlis, was appointed acting Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. He

immediately stressed the need for Iran to start making friends.⁶³ This was an illustration of the increasing strength of the pragmatic element in the Iranian leadership. The move towards acceptance of a cease-fire was hastened the very next day when an American warship shot down an Iranian Airbus aircraft. This incident also provided the excuse for a gradual and tentative *rapprochement* with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait immediately expressed its 'deep regret and sorrow' and extended its condolences to those affected, stressing at the same time the need to end the war: Iran sent its thanks in return. Saudi Arabia reacted two days later, but also expressed regret for the loss of innocent lives, and called for an end to the war (although the Saudi press still showed little sympathy).⁶⁴

When Iran announced on 18 July that it accepted Resolution 598, there was jubilation in Kuwait, expressed by government, press and public alike. The Saudi reaction was less exuberant and rather more sceptical, while in Bahrain, the Iranian decision was welcomed, and a cautious optimism prevailed. The UAE saw the decision as 'a turning point' and a message from Shaikh Zayid to the Iranian President spoke of Iran's courage in taking the decision; similar reactions were forthcoming from the Omani and Qatari governments and press.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, when Iraq—dragging its feet over the issue of a cease-fire—pushed on and into Iranian territory, several newspapers in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia supported the Iraqi position. The Saudi-funded, London-based *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* even went so far as to advocate the removal of the Iranian leadership. We can assume, however, that all the GCC states, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, were eager for Iraq to show some flexibility, and for the outstanding obstacles still impeding the long-awaited cease-fire to be minimised or removed. There were reports claiming that Riyadh was pressing the Iraqi leadership on this, and the official Saudi denial, on 2 August, cannot quite be taken at face value. Iraq did its best to convince its Gulf neighbours of its own views, by sending top envoys round the Gulf at the beginning of August, but its case was now much weakened.⁶⁶

On 4 August, the Saudi Information Minister was sent to Baghdad, to put the case for implementing Resolution 598 as it stood, and thus for immediately accepting a cease-fire. Having decided at least as far back as 1981 that the costs of a continuing situation of war outweighed the benefits, the Saudis could no longer see any convincing reason for continuing to bankroll Iraqi military adventures once Iran had sued for peace. It must have been as clear to the leadership in Riyadh as it was to the pragmatists in Iran that the Islamic Republic did not really have any alternative to peace. When the Iraqis did a U-turn on 6 August, and

accepted the cease-fire, this followed consultations between Saddam Hussein and Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal, among others, the Saudis (through their ambassador in the US, Prince Bandar) having been closely involved in the UN negotiations before (and indeed after) the Iraqi decision. While on the one hand this illustrates their closeness to Iraq, there can be little doubt, on the other, that they did apply pressure on their ally, particularly before Saddam's 6 August decision. At the same time, the outcome served as another indication of Iraq's dependence on its Gulf backers.⁶⁷

Iraq and the Gulf states, between cease-fire and Kuwait crisis

It did not seem likely that the end of the Gulf War would bring a return to Iraq's erstwhile radicalism. The war itself had done nothing to counter most of the factors which had brought about the pre-war shift toward moderation in the country's foreign policy: Saddam's domination of policy-making had increased further; his interest in building an alliance with the commercial bourgeoisie and giving more opportunities to private capital remained (as was indicated by the further expansion of economic liberalisation policies); the 'new' brand of Arab nationalism, with its pragmatic overtones, remained in place and was in fact made more secure by the direction of Arab politics as a whole; and Saddam's concept of using the international balance of forces for Iraq's benefit was merely reinforced during the war. Some of the financial/economic independence which had made the original shift in the 1970s possible was of course lost during the war. But the fact that it was lost to the conservative Gulf states in effect reinforced the pre-war evolution. It appeared, therefore, that Iraq's foreign policy stance by the end of the war was a result of the combination of indigenous factors with war-time pressures. Some assurance that it would persist was thought to come from another important, global development that had occurred after the outbreak of the war, though unrelated to it: this was the 'Gorbachev-effect', or Soviet international pragmatism translated into pressure on friends to behave likewise. The specific factors that concerned the Gulf states were the fear of Iran and, in Iraq, the importance attached to obtaining Gulf Arab investment—shifting to aid and financing during the war. Although the first element may have become less powerful following what was in effect an Iranian defeat, this can only be temporary. Moreover, the positive outcome of the war for Iraq was largely due to Gulf assistance and to the goodwill of the international community—both, it was presumed, having proved to be gains that were too precious to be put at risk. The existence of points of friction,

such as occasional displays of Iraqi irritation with the lack of support from what we have called the 'neutrals', or even Baghdad's anger at the willingness of the GCC (including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) to enter into negotiations with Iran; none of these seemed to detract from the apparent existence of a 'bottom line' of good relations. The evolution in economic relations and Iraqi domestic policy appeared to confirm this. Throughout the war, economic links between Iraq and the GCC states (particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) developed further, even if the financial pressures of the last six years of the war were translated into temporary constraints in some areas such as trade and construction. The economic and socio-cultural links, both bilateral and with the GCC as a whole, fitted well into a foreign policy concept that viewed them in a long-term framework.⁶⁸ In addition to Iraq's many organisational and functional links in various fields with the GCC, other outstanding examples of practical links were the IPSA pipeline that carried Iraqi crude across Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea, and the gas pipeline connecting southern Iraq with Kuwait, that had since May 1986 brought some 200 million cubic feet per day of gas to the emirate.⁶⁹

Iraq's gradually accelerating turn towards economic liberalisation, on both the domestic and the international level (each with its own strong long-term rationale, as indicated earlier), also implied a long-term commitment.⁷⁰ None of this was compatible with a renewed 'radical' attitude towards the Gulf Arab states. Admittedly, one of the main causes of the acceleration of economic liberalisation after was the pressures of war, and the consequent reconstruction. Yet this was a matter of degree, not of principle, and even these developments of degree and speed tend to have a momentum of their own.

The relationship with Kuwait is a special case, because it contains the border and the Warba/Bubiyan factors. Although a very clear alliance developed between the two states with respect to the Gulf War, potential for friction over the islands remained. The issue was indeed made even more salient by the war, and acutely so after Iran's capture of Fao. Nevertheless, the Iraqi leadership seems to have played the issue down during the last two years of the conflict, in the face of Kuwaiti determination and Iraq's need for Kuwaiti help. Clearly, however, the issue was not about to disappear with the end of the war, grounded as it was in strategic facts.

On the part of the GCC states, the trend towards friendly relations with Baghdad, which had developed before the war, was essentially maintained, in spite of Kuwait's apprehensions, and even though Oman, the UAE and Qatar—when faced with Iranian carrots and

sticks—risked irritating Baghdad for remaining on good terms with Iran. This was due largely to the change in Iraq's own foreign policy and domestic character. All the states, including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, remained intent on reducing tension with Iran when that was possible, but these two were not prepared to reduce their support of Iraq to achieve that aim. Because of Iran's attitude, this caused outbursts of animosity, exacerbated in the case of Saudi Arabia by the Hajj issue. To a large extent, it was the powerful antipathy towards the Al-Sa'ud amongst Iranian radicals and on the part of Khomeini himself, which—translated via political condemnations and tangible acts—eventually pushed the Kingdom into an uncharacteristically tough anti-Iranian stance, that was reflected in a stridently pro-Iraqi position.

Indeed it was Iran's behaviour that remained a key factor in determining the attitude of the GCC members towards their larger Gulf neighbours. Essentially they all want a predictable, non-threatening environment and thus they are quite willing to ignore differing points of view if bilateral and regional stability can thereby be maintained or achieved. They were therefore likely eagerly to accept Iran's outstretched hand when offered at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. This would not necessarily have implied a conscious opting for cooler relations with Iraq—although it could of course be interpreted by the latter, and indeed was, as somewhat of a slap in the face. In any case, Gulf leaders remained uneasy about the prospect of being bullied by an Iraq that felt itself victorious.

It was not surprising, then, that Iran's continuing 'charm offensive' which was aimed at all the Gulf states except Saudi Arabia, resulted in a rapid improvement of their relations with the Islamic Republic. Oman, already on good terms, sent its Foreign Minister to Tehran twice during August and September, the second visit apparently as a result of the GCC Foreign Ministers' meeting on 4-5 September, at which a desire for 'friendship between all the peoples of the Islamic nation' was expressed. It is believed that the GCC decided to probe the possibilities of upgrading relations with Iran, and to send envoys to both Iran and Iraq in an attempt to break the deadlock in the Geneva peace talks. Iranian radio even quoted the Omani Minister as saying that the GCC 'saw no obstacles in the way of a GCC session being held including Iran and Iraq, after the main differences between (them) are resolved'. The Sultanate also signed a wide-ranging economic agreement with Iran, and in a mid-December interview Sultan Qaboos implicitly took Iran's side when suggesting that 'forces' should withdraw behind their own borders. The country

continued its vigorous policy of expanding its links with the Islamic Republic.⁷¹

Qatar maintained its own very quiet pragmatism, although an Iranian claim in March 1989 to part of the gas field off Qatar, is likely to create difficulties. The same problem may surface between Iran and the UAE.⁷²

The UAE continued meanwhile to develop economic relations with the Islamic Republic without any grand announcements, though in some instances it indicated support for Iraqi rather than for Iranian positions, such as over the question of raising the Iraqi production quotas in OPEC in September 1988, when it came out in favour of output parity. In Bahrain, the Foreign Minister confirmed that relations with Iran would be resumed at ambassadorial level. The Iraqis were considerably irked by the GCC's haste to mend fences with Iran—especially so in the cases of Kuwait and, to a lesser degree, Saudi Arabia. A Kuwaiti official told the *Washington Post* on 28 September 1988 that his government was prepared to resume friendly relations with Iran, making the point that they did not need to consult Iraq before doing so.⁷³

The gap between Iran and Saudi Arabia was less easy to bridge, given the legacy of the Mecca riots and Iranian intransigence on the issue of the Hajj, which had led to the rupture in diplomatic relations. This appeared partly to be a reflection of Riyadh's support for Baghdad. Yet Saudi-Iraqi relations were less smooth than the leaderships wanted them to appear, as will be illustrated below. The reasons for the animosity of the ruling Al-Sa'ud towards the regime in Tehran had been the threatening implications of the war; Iran's behaviour towards the Kingdom; and most specifically the Iranian attitude to the Hajj, which, if left unchecked, would have created a serious security risk—both directly, and also indirectly by eroding the regime's Islamic legitimacy. With the end of the hostilities the first point had disappeared. As to the second and third, a pragmatic, accommodationist foreign policy had become evident in Tehran since July, and there was reason to believe that at least some elements in the Iranian leadership might be willing to come to an understanding on the Hajj issue.

Saudi Arabia's conciliatory statements towards Iran from October 1988, and the halting of its press attacks on Tehran, received a positive response. In December Rafsanjani expressed his belief that relations would be normalised 'in the not too distant future', and King Fahd called on the rich Arab states to help both Iran and Iraq in their reconstruction efforts. Negotiations of some kind over the Hajj issue continued into 1989.⁷⁴

One may assume that the GCC members, and particularly Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, remained throughout wary of Tehran's unpredictability: relations could not become relaxed as long as Iran's internal divisions remained unresolved. When Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* exploded on to the Islamic scene and Ayatollah Khomeini issued his *fatwa* of 14 February calling for the author to be killed, it soon became apparent that the voices of moderation were, at least temporarily, being drowned. Even Rafsanjani had to swing into line behind the renewed radicalisation in Iran's foreign policy stance. Yet for the GCC states, Iran appeared to pass the test at least to some extent. Tehran's renewed animosity towards the West notwithstanding, it became clear that there was no change in Iran's attitude towards the southern side of the Gulf. At the Islamic Conference Organisation (ICO) meeting in Riyadh in March 1989, accommodation prevailed once more and a compromise over the Rushdie case was reached, that allowed both Iran and the moderate countries, led by Saudi Arabia, to come away without loss of face.⁷⁵ Whereas relations between the five smaller Gulf states and Iran therefore continued on a reasonably even keel (particularly so for Oman and the UAE), the Hajj question eventually soured the Saudi-Iranian relationship once more. The Iranian side, driven by Khomeini's virulent hatred of the Al-Sa'ud, refused to budge on the issue, while the security implications were too important to allow the Saudi leadership to give in from their side. From April, statements on the question became more aggressive and critical of the Saudi regime, with the Iranians insisting on their right to send 150,000 pilgrims to Mecca and once again accusing the Saudis of the 1987 'massacre'. In this atmosphere of mutual recrimination, Saudi Arabia tried hard to sound reasonable, stressing quite explicitly that it was eager to maintain good neighbourliness and that, provided the Hajj was not disturbed, it would still welcome the quota of 45,000 Iranian pilgrims which the ICO had adopted.⁷⁶

Gradually, however, attacks on Iran became more frequent in the Saudi press. The implacable enmity against the Saudi regime, which was revealed in Ayatollah Khomeini's will, and which, apart from expressing the feelings of at least part of the Iranian political elite, also forced the Iranian pragmatists to stay their hand for the time being, did not leave the Saudis much incentive to continue their active goodwill policy. Not surprisingly, therefore, Riyadh maintained a complete silence on hearing the news of Khomeini's death on 3 June 1989. The other GCC members sent bland messages of condolence to Tehran, and some junior officials attended the funeral.⁷⁷ The leaders in all six Gulf Arab states were no doubt relieved at the Ayatollah's passing, and the

emerging new partnership of Khamenei and Rafsanjani as leaders augurs well for continuing pragmatism. But the still somewhat tenuous nature of their hold on power, as well as the difficulty of shaking off Khomeini's legacy on Saudi Arabia, continued to be causes for concern.

The 'neutrals' could feel fairly comfortable. However, even in Oman, government sources indicated that without some solid evidence of Iran's intentions, they were not keen to give Iran everything at once.⁷⁸ Qatar and the UAE were doubtless shocked by Iran's claim to part of their oil and gas fields—although at the time of writing neither had reacted officially. Both Kuwait and Bahrain remained wary of the Islamic Republic, although relations were restored to their previous level.

Against this background, Iraq's own political offensive took place; focusing in particular on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, it did not neglect the other Gulf countries, although it had to accept the inevitability of Omani neutrality, as well probably as that of the UAE and Qatar. According to an Iraqi official 'familiar with the government's planning', quoted in the *Washington Post* after the cease-fire had come into effect on 20 August, Iraq's Gulf policy would take shape as follows: Iraq would do everything in its power to block any quick restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran; it would seek to establish a new Arab axis with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan; it would compete with Iran for regional influence; economic development would be one of the main foci; and Iraq was unlikely to join the GCC.⁷⁹

Addressing Arab Information Ministers in Baghdad in early September 1988, Saddam Hussein reassured the other regimes once again that the eagerness of 'some' to bring down existing political structures in order to establish Arab unity was a thing of the past.⁸⁰ The Iraqi president clearly had the six Gulf monarchies in mind as his specific audience for these remarks (mentioning Kuwait and the UAE by name), and his oblique admission of Iraq's own past mistakes gave extra credibility to this new statement of policy. The following week, Saddam's long-awaited Arab solidarity appeared to come alive after the US Senate had voted to impose sanctions on Iraq for its use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. The Kuwaiti press immediately came out in full support of Iraq, followed by the governments and the press in all the Gulf states except Oman. As a sop to official Arab opinion, the Sultanate's Foreign Minister said he thought the issue of Iraq's use of chemical weapons had probably been 'inflated a bit'.⁸¹

Nevertheless, Iraq's campaign for the 'Gulf's ear' was not in the end particularly successful. Some of the positive results with regard to Saudi Arabia can equally be ascribed to Iran's behaviour, as illustrated

above. The Iraqi leadership appeared not to expect too much either from Oman, the UAE and Qatar, although it hoped that they could at least be persuaded to support the Iraqi position in the peace negotiations with Iran under the umbrella of the GCC, as well as to support parity in oil output between Iraq and Iran within OPEC. In pursuit of these objectives, Taha Yassin Ramadhan and other top members of the leadership were sent on a major diplomatic offensive around the GCC states during the last four months of 1988. In the event, the UAE did explicitly support Iraqi output parity, but Iraq's claims to have encountered 'identical stands' to its own, appear to be more the result of 'diplomat-ese' or wishful thinking than of substantial policy. Oman's Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs has since explained that the Iraqis were 'sensitive' about the country's dialogue with Iran, but that they accepted that it had been 'kept at exactly the same level' with both countries.⁸² The three 'neutrals', in effect, remained just that: accommodating both Iran and Iraq, while making some allowance for Iraq's Arabness, on occasions such as the US sanctions vote, or in the framework of the GCC.

Bahrain's Sunni leadership, still suspicious of an unpredictable Iran, and in concert with the Al-Sa'ud, stuck to its position of supporting Iraq while maintaining the 'medium' profile it had adopted earlier. It certainly did not want to jeopardise the rebuilding of relations with the Islamic Republic. After assuming the chairmanship of the GCC, Bahraini government statements were more circumspect, and after the GCC Foreign Ministers had agreed in March 1989 to help in mediating between Iran and Iraq, Bahrain contacted both sides. Nevertheless, the rather closer nature of Iraqi-Bahraini links was illustrated by the visit of the Iraqi Interior Minister for discussion on ways 'to co-ordinate bilateral co-operation in the field of security' in early April. This is particularly significant given the mainly Shi'i, and often Iranian-inspired, nature of the Bahraini security threat. If any further confirmation was needed, it came in mid-May in the form of a three-day official visit to Iraq by the Emir and a large, high-level delegation.⁸³

Iraq's relationship with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia remained of a much higher profile, both from the point of view of co-operation and in the evidence of clashes. Both had been allies of Iraq during the war, and links had been firmly established, particularly in trade and commercial activity between Kuwait and Iraq, transshipment from both Kuwait and the Kingdom, the gas link with Kuwait, the IPSA pipeline carrying Iraqi crude across Saudi Arabia, and the massive debt—most of which was effectively, though not officially, written off—incurred towards the

two states. At the same time there remained several issues of contention. One was the desire of the Gulf states to make up with Iran, which corresponded to their basic needs and foreign policy limitations. A second was Iraq's indebtedness. Baghdad wanted further help for reconstruction and indicated that the aid already received should be considered largely as a contribution to the struggle which Iraq had fought on behalf of the Gulf states. A third issue was Iraq's stance in the peace negotiations with Iran. At times Kuwait and Saudi Arabia felt, with reason, that the Iraqi side presented too arrogant and inflexible a front: peace was the first imperative, but a peace which dishonoured Iran would only sow the seeds of renewed conflict. Additionally, there was Iraq's wish to participate in some way in the GCC. Failing an Iranian counterweight, this was unacceptable to all of the six member states. In the Levant, there was Iraq's enmity with Syria, and the consequent disagreement with most other Arab states over Lebanon—not least with the Saudis, who had sponsored the new Lebanese settlement which was being rejected by Saddam's protégé, General Aoun. A final and continuing issue between Iraq and Kuwait was the question of the islands and the border.

KUWAIT

Having offered profuse congratulations to Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people following his acceptance of the cease-fire, the Kuwaitis wasted no time in broaching the border issue with the Iraqi Interior Minister on 7 August; these talks probably re-emphasised the existing differences over the question of the islands of Warba and Bubiyan, about which Baghdad had, as far as one can ascertain, kept a virtual silence for the previous two years.⁸⁴ A certain continuing closeness between the two sides was illustrated by the joint missions to Moscow and Beijing undertaken in August by Shaikh Sabah and the Iraqi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sa'doun Hammadi on behalf of the Arab seven-man committee empowered to follow up the peace negotiations; Kuwait also condemned American sanctions against Iraq over the chemical weapons issue. But in addition to Iraq's demands on the border question there were other causes for growing friction. The war relief crude oil arrangement, under which some 310,000 b/d was still being supplied for Iraqi customers (125,000 b/d from Kuwait's share of the Neutral Zone production), was terminated in the wake of the cease-fire.⁸⁵ Another sore point was Kuwait's improving relations with Tehran, of which Iraq was critical: Kuwait, of course, had its own imperatives on this matter, and undoubtedly felt some irritation with

Iraq, as the remark made in September 1988 by a Kuwaiti official and quoted earlier, indicates.

In December Kuwait's Crown Prince reiterated his congratulations to the visiting Izzat Ibrahim on the outcome of the war, but the strength of feeling among Kuwait's leadership over the border issue became evident when plans were revealed in January 1989 for the construction of a 30-km long causeway at a cost of \$1 billion across the Bay of Kuwait to Subiya, a new city located in the north, just opposite Bubiyan Island.⁸⁶ In terms of urbanisation there was some logic to the building of the new city (with a projected population of 100,000, it was to house the new Kuwait University campus) but the plans, which included the huge engineering project of the causeway, left the Iraqis in no doubt as to the commitment of Kuwait to total sovereignty over its northern territories.

February 1989 brought the spectacle of barely disguised Iraqi-Kuwaiti bickering, as well as revealing divisions within the emirate itself. Both were brought into the open over the visit to Iraq of the Kuwaiti Crown Prince, Shaikh Sa'd. Shaikh Sabah, the Foreign Minister, appears to have opposed the visit, but Shaikh Sa'd went ahead regardless, confident that something could be extracted from the Iraqis in return for Kuwait's support during the war. The Foreign Minister, who was busy leading the Arab committee on Lebanon, was attacked harshly in the Iraqi press at the time of this visit, for having failed to label the Syrian troops in Lebanon as 'foreign' (which would have implied the necessity for their withdrawal). The Crown Prince's own talks in Baghdad from 6 February, produced little more than bland statements and made no progress on the border issue. This failure, which gravely disappointed Shaikh Sa'd, is all the more stark when viewed against the background of the confident forecasts made before the visit in the Kuwaiti and Saudi press. In Kuwait, the press's attitude was, at least partly, a conscious attempt to browbeat the Iraqis, by implying that nothing less than a settlement was expected from Iraq because of Kuwait's unstinting support during the war. From 8 February, they were in turn attacked: whether this reflected emerging difficulties in the talks, was a reaction to Kuwait's stand on Lebanon, or simply highlighted a Kuwaiti-Iraqi disagreement that was there from the start, the Iraqi press insisted that the border issue was more intricate than the Kuwaiti papers had claimed. Through the media Iraq's leadership reminded the Kuwaitis that they should speak not only of Kuwait's support for Iraq, but of Iraq's solidarity in fighting the war on behalf of the Gulf states, stressing that flexibility should not be expected to come from Iraq alone.⁸⁷

A further attempt at negotiation was made in September 1989. An announcement that senior delegations would soon exchange visits to discuss the issue, was followed in mid-September by the Kuwaiti Emir's visit to Baghdad. But while the border question had initially been listed as a key topic, this was denied by the Kuwaiti government spokesman at the time of the visit.⁸⁸ Official declarations merely served, rather ineffectually, to conceal the underlying deadlock, and no further progress was made until—in the middle of the following year—Iraq upped the stakes by launching a sweeping political attack on Kuwait over all the issues of oil, money and territory, following this with the invasion of 2 August 1990, of the State of Kuwait.

SAUDI ARABIA

The Kingdom's support for Iraq in the face of the Iranian threat was never in doubt. But after Iraq's string of military successes, and particularly after Iran's switch to the pursuit of peace, several points of friction became evident. These persisted after the cease-fire. Saddam Hussein indicated his disappointment that aid from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had fallen off considerably after the Fao victory.⁸⁹ Iraq would have wanted previous levels of assistance—presumably including the oil counterpart sales—to continue in view of the country's reconstruction needs, and it repeatedly reminded its backers that the war had been fought to a large extent on their behalf. However, given that the question was no longer one simply of survival, the exigencies of the oil market and more generally the Kingdom's own economic constraints, dictated otherwise. As a result the war relief crude oil arrangement was stopped in the wake of the cease-fire, and, as we have seen earlier, Riyadh made it clear to the Iraqis that it would not finance further military moves by Iraq in the absence of a genuine pursuit of peace. This was indeed another key point of friction: the Saudi insistence on some flexibility in the peace process on Iraq's part, seen against the backdrop of Riyadh's tentative warming towards Tehran.

The Paris-based *Actualités Arabes* in its September 1988 issue reported an 'open crisis' between Iraq and Saudi Arabia.⁹⁰ Evidence of this is also provided by an editorial in the *Saudi Gazette* on 12 September, which directly attacked the Iraqi leadership by criticising the nation which 'convinces itself that it is negotiating from a position of strength and should have its demands conceded by the other party'.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia gave full support to Iraq after the US had voted for sanctions over the chemical weapons accusations, 'denouncing' and 'expressing its deep regret for' the move by the US Congress. The Kingdom also supported Iraq's demand for quota parity

with Iran in OPEC, and was then accused by Iran of sabotaging OPEC agreement with non-OPEC producers for the sake of supporting Iraq. One should view Iraqi-Saudi frictions in the light of these latter positions. Although substantial, they tended to sink back again following a flare-up. An official Saudi source in November 1988 dismissed the *Actualités Arabes* report as 'calumnies and machinations'. It is significant that Riyadh maintained the official line that the outcome of the war was an Iraqi victory: as King Fahd remarked, 'a victory scored for the entire Arab Nation and a source of pride for future generations'.⁹¹ This basic leaning towards Iraq, though it was wary and often critical, can largely be explained by the perception of Iran as being unreliable/unpredictable, and of Iraq as having undergone a genuine change away from its erstwhile leftist radicalism.⁹²

BAGHDAD, RIYADH, THE ARAB COOPERATION COUNCIL AND THE GCC

On 25 February 1989, Taha Yassin Ramadhan went to the Saudi capital to explain the nature and aims of the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC). The ACC, which had been openly mooted since late 1988, was officially set up on 16 February between Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and North Yemen, whose leaders stressed that it was an economic, not a political, grouping, and that it was open to any other Arab country. Congratulatory messages were received from most Arab countries, as well as from the GCC, and King Fahd gave the ACC the Kingdom's blessing.⁹³ Nevertheless, several observers saw these congratulations as less than heartfelt. It was suggested that Saudi Arabia might not have been particularly pleased at the emergence of this new bloc as a potential rival to the GCC, especially since it included the erstwhile regional bully Iraq, and because the presence of North Yemen, traditionally in the Saudi sphere of influence, could be seen as evidence of a 'pincer movement'. Official Saudi sources strongly rejected reports to this effect, and in this particular case, the official Saudi position was probably close enough to the truth. Certain apprehensions notwithstanding, it is likely that on the whole the Kingdom and the other Gulf states were rather pleased with the creation of the ACC, not least because it drew Iraq into the framework of a moderate organisation (thus holding in check Saddam's unilateral Arab leadership ambitions), and away from its attempts to join the GCC.

Even so, the ACC's ostensibly economic rationale should not be taken at face value. The much-vaunted complementarity of the participating countries is in fact not at all impressive, and during the first year of its existence few significant economic decisions were taken. In

any case, the *political* aspects were acquiring just as much importance. The preamble to the group's statutes speaks of Arab support for Iraq in the Gulf War, while 'co-ordination' of foreign policy was agreed in July 1989, and Iraqi concerns were addressed prominently in the ACC's Alexandria summit in June 1989.⁹⁴ But the new grouping should not be seen as an anti-Saudi alliance. It was, certainly, a means for Iraq to shine on the Arab stage again, and for the further glorification of Saddam Hussein. Yet it was essentially limited to just that: he was opting for a new channel, having realised that further integration with the GCC was unlikely. The gist of this would have been made clear by Ramadhan to senior members of the Saudi government during his February visit, and eventually accepted by them. In view of the renewed souring of Riyadh's relations with Tehran, as earlier described, ties with Iraq were once more consolidated as being basically friendly and mutually supportive, although the alliance was less clearcut than previously. This is illustrated by the positive response to Iraq's request for help in the reconstruction of Basra. It also appears that Baghdad negotiated exemption (as it did with Kuwait—see above) from repaying the 'loans' obtained from Riyadh during the war. In addition, of course, Iraq could continue to benefit from its throughput through the IPSA pipeline across the Kingdom to the Red Sea: the integrated system with a capacity of 1.65 million barrels per day became operational in September 1989.

It is in this light that the Saudi-Iraqi non-interference pact of 27 March 1989 must be seen. Although it is true that King Fahd's trip to Cairo at the end of March was at least partly inspired by a desire to secure bilateral commitment to good relations, as well as gratitude for Saudi economic assistance from the Egyptians—in an attempt to cut across any hidden ACC agenda—the visit to Baghdad en route to Cairo was not a panic reaction. Rather, it was a convenient way for Iraq to maintain, and be seen to maintain, a clear formal link with the Kingdom, and thus with the GCC, that would be sealed by a pact, notwithstanding its participation in another grouping. In its stipulation of non-interference and peaceful settlement of disputes, the agreement was similar to those that Saddam Hussein had signed with the ACC members individually, and which he had argued should be signed with all Arab states—i.e., as a bilateral expression of the principles of the 'National Charter' proposed in 1980 and already enshrined in the Arab League Charter. For Saudi Arabia, it set a welcome seal on Iraq's oft-repeated promise not to interfere any more in others' internal affairs.⁹⁶

THE FALSE SECURITY OF ECONOMIC LINKS

As indicated earlier, one of the factors which appeared to confirm the expectation of improved relations between Iraq and the Gulf states—especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—consisted of the expanding set of economic links. Of special interest was the issue of Iraq's debt to its Gulf backers. In the course of the war, Saudi Arabia gave some \$25 billion in financial aid, while about \$10 billion was received from Kuwait, in addition to \$1 billion from Qatar and \$2–4 billion from the UAE.⁹⁷

Iraq also received the proceeds of some \$14–15 billion in oil counterpart sales. This brought Iraq's total indebtedness to Saudi Arabia to around \$34 billion, and to Kuwait to about \$15 billion. However, the conversion of at least the financial part into gifts rather than loans had long been assumed. There was no doubt, too, that Iraq wanted the oil swap debt recognised as a contribution to its efforts in protecting the Gulf against the Iranian threat. After the cease-fire both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait provided further aid, albeit of a more limited kind. In addition to governmental contributions to the reconstruction effort, there were the right sort of signals to banks and funds to help Iraq out. Iraq, realising that further financial aid from the Kuwaiti and Saudi governments would fall short of its expectations, approached the Arab development funds for assistance with reconstruction. The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) had already agreed in December 1988 to extend a \$112 million loan, and in January 1989 the Funds, in the framework of the Co-ordination Secretariat, agreed in principle jointly to provide a loan for some \$1 billion over five years. The AMF and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) subsequently gave further, smaller loans.⁹⁸

The rationalisations of Arab aid institutions and banks for lending to Iraq, went against much of Western bankers' feelings about Iraq as a risky proposition. Even several Arab bankers were reported to 'privately believe that the economic risks of committing large amounts of funds to Iraq remain too high'. In contrast, the official line at the Arab Funds, and even at the Gulf International Bank (GIB), was that 'Iraq is a good risk'. As was the case during the war, this showed a degree of solidarity with Iraq on other than economic grounds. Iraq itself was of course an important member of the multilateral funds, and governmental hints are certain to have been forthcoming. Another interesting development was the establishment, by the AMF and AFESD, of a special fund for countertrade for Arab countries. According to Yusuf Abdul-Latif Al-Hamad, then AFESD's

Director-General, Iraq, with its massive reconstruction needs, was to have been a major recipient.⁹⁹

The links with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were also consolidated through a number of major projects. With Kuwait, these were the gas link, and the new water supply project. Under a deal which had come into effect in May 1986, Kuwait had been receiving 200 million cubic feet per day (cfd) of gas. The water supply project was a clear beneficiary of the cease-fire in the Gulf War: the idea of piping fresh water from the Shatt al-Arab to Kuwait had been conceived long before (it was first suggested in 1953), but had been delayed by the hostilities. During his visit to Baghdad on 14 March 1989, Kuwait's Minister of Water and Electricity signed an agreement for an initial supply of 550 million gallons per day (mgd) of river water, (350 mgd of drinking water, 200 mgd for irrigation purposes). The 290-km pipeline to bring the water from the Shatt al-Arab would be financed by Kuwait. The project's cost was estimated at KD400 million (\$1.4 billion). On the same occasion, the idea of merging the Basra and Kuwait water supply schemes was welcomed, and it was agreed to link the two countries' electricity grids.¹⁰⁰

The most striking tangible link with Saudi Arabia is, of course, the IPSA pipeline connection, which carries Iraqi crude to the Red Sea across Saudi territory. The completion of the second stage of the scheme in September 1989 brought Iraq's export capacity to 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd). Meanwhile, the start of the experimental stage of the project to link Iraq and the Kingdom by a microwave telecommunications net was due in 1990, the project, described as 'strategic' by the Iraqi authorities, having been agreed upon in September 1988.¹⁰¹ The transshipment function of the Gulf states—especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—continued. Even though Iraq was aiming for a speedy restoration of its own port capacity in the Gulf, these channels retained their strategic importance.

Although the potential for trade between the Gulf states and Iraq remained limited by Iraq's cash-strapped position and, from a more long-term perspective, by the limitations of what the Gulf states had to offer, governmental efforts to develop trade and economic links continued after the cease-fire in the Gulf War. For example, in February 1989 Iraq and Kuwait signed joint trade minutes that included a long-term contract to export Iraqi barley to Kuwait, promoted the idea of barter deals, and encouraged 'Kuwaiti investors to utilise the opportunities presented by Arab Investment Law no. 46 of 1988'. Iraq issued the law after the cease-fire in August that year.¹⁰²

Gulf Arab investors in Iraq were granted a tax-free period of up to five years for new ventures, and could remit 25 per cent of their profits in hard currency. This concession, which was part of Iraq's overall opening-up to private investment, combined with the expectation of reconstruction-related contracts, did kindle interest lower down the Gulf. By the end of November 1988, a high-powered GCC business delegation had already visited Baghdad to meet ministers and industrialists and to find out more about Iraq's needs and their own potential role, and this visit was followed by the announcement, in March 1989, that the GCC and Iraq were planning a \$500 million joint venture for industrial and trade projects—the Gulf Iraq Investment Holding Company. Muhammad Abdullah al-Mu'alla, the Secretary-General of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the GCC, indicated that the initiative would take advantage of the policies of liberalisation which Iraq was implementing in order to revive its economy.¹⁰³ However, even before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, there was no tangible evidence of any follow-up; this indicated a continuing mistrust on the part of the Gulf private sector as well as their unease with the financial and exchange restrictions that still remained in Iraq.

*The Kuwait Crisis*¹⁰⁴

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, it became fashionable to argue that academic and government observers should have seen it coming: after all, said the commentaries, the bully in Saddam had always been likely to surface again to look for new prey after the Gulf War; and, more specifically, a number of signals should have provided ample warning.¹⁰⁵ Although there is truth in the latter point as far as the two months or so preceding the invasion are concerned, it will be clear from the foregoing that, significant tensions with Kuwait notwithstanding, such a take-over of the emirate was, until very late in the day, always the least probable of a number of alternatives. At any rate, this was the picture if one assumed Saddam was still the brutal, yet rational, actor that he had shown himself to be during the previous fifteen years.

THE BACKGROUND

Reliable sources close to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border discussions indicate that months before the invasion, the talks had already become extremely problematic. In addition, 1990 saw an increasing divergence between Iraq on the one hand, and Kuwait and the UAE on the other, over oil policy.¹⁰⁶ During the war Iraq, along with the big Gulf Arab producers, had ended up in the camp of those OPEC members who had opted for a

market share confrontation with the non-OPEC producers by raising production and allowing prices to drop temporarily. They were accused by Iran of depressing the oil price on purpose in order to harm the Iranian war effort. The oil ministers of Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had been holding regular meetings to co-ordinate policy: the last of these meetings took place on 3 March. The divergence was rooted in two factors. First, the post-cease-fire environment and the glaring need for cash led the Iraqi leadership to review its own stance on oil prices; secondly, the general feeling that the demand-supply situation over the following five years or so would evolve steadily in OPEC's favour, had given rise to complacency among most producers (Kuwait's oil minister even called for the abolition of the quota system, as it was becoming 'irrelevant'): as a result, quotas were being widely exceeded, which was bound to drive prices down again. In February 1990, the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the worst overproducers, were together pumping 1.6 million barrels per day above quota, so that by the time of the March meeting, the divergence was clear: Iraq wanted the reference price to be raised at least to make up for inflation since 1986, and sensibly suggested that output restraint might well be necessary to achieve this in reality; Kuwait wanted the official \$18 mark to be retained for at least another three years, and Saudi Arabia took a middle position. During the remainder of the month the inevitable slide in prices began, taking the OPEC basket price from \$19/b to \$14/b by mid-year.

As every \$1 drop in the oil price meant a loss of approximately \$1 billion for the Iraqi treasury, the Iraqis upped their campaign for output restraint. Most other OPEC producers came to view some restraint as necessary as well, and the Geneva agreement of 3 May imposed a three-month cutback, which would require Kuwait to return to its 1.5 million b/d quota, and the UAE to cut 200,000 b/d from its output. Saudi Arabia from that point onwards showed itself a firm convert to production discipline, immediately reducing its production to below quota. However, Kuwait and especially the UAE continued to over-produce that month, pumping 1.75 million b/d and over 2 million b/d respectively.¹⁰⁷

THE OIL STRUGGLE

This is the context in which Saddam Hussein made his dramatic decision to turn up the pressure—initially, however, behind the closed doors of the Arab summit in Baghdad on 30 May. The summit was concerned publicly with a strengthened stand against Israel and in particular the influx of Soviet Jews. But in his closing speech to the gathered heads of state, the Iraqi president issued an astonishingly

direct warning to Kuwait and the UAE. Linking losses suffered by Iraq as a result of falling oil prices to those losses incurred by the Arab world as a whole, he berated the overproducers for having allowed this to happen, and put the blame squarely on a lack of a clear (Arab) nationalist vision. The bombshell followed immediately:

I wish to tell those of our brothers who do not seek war, and those who do not intend to wage war on Iraq, that we cannot tolerate this type of economic warfare . . . God willing, the situation will turn out well. But I say that we have reached a state of affairs where we cannot take the pressure.¹⁰⁸

During a visit by the OPEC conference president, Mr Boussena, to Baghdad on 22 June, Iraq's Oil Minister Mr Al-Chalabi for the first time sharply criticised the UAE by name, labelling it 'the only country . . . that did not abide by the Geneva decisions'.¹⁰⁹ In the last week of June, Saddam Hussein followed this up with urgent messages to the rulers of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Sa'doun Hammadi, who was delivering the messages, publicly criticised both Kuwait and the UAE by name for the overproduction and consequent price slide. At the same time, however, the outlines of a solution were being suggested by Al-Chalabi, who proposed that while OPEC's production ceiling could not be raised until prices reached an increased reference price, an amendment could be made to accommodate the UAE with a quota of 1.5 million b/d.

Saudi Arabia then invited the other four main Gulf Arab producers to Jeddah on 10–11 July 1990, and an agreement along precisely those lines was reached. Both Kuwait and the UAE committed themselves to stick to quotas of 1.5 million b/d each. At the same time it was agreed that the quotas would not be raised further until a higher reference price was reached—although that price was left to be discussed later. King Fahd exerted a great deal of personal pressure to achieve this result.¹¹⁰

It looked, therefore, as if the Jeddah agreement had defused the situation. This explains the sense of shock that was felt when Iraq once again denounced Kuwait and the UAE: in a memorandum submitted to the Arab League on 15 July by Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, the oil policy of these states was equated with military aggression against Iraq. Equally ominously, they were accused of effectively being part of an 'American-Zionist plot' (see Chapter 6). Even if it had been possible to interpret the move as a way of frightening Kuwait and the rest of OPEC into adopting the Jeddah proposals at the general OPEC conference later that month (and

adhering to them) the rest of the memorandum made it abundantly clear that the other issues of friction with Kuwait had now taken on the quality of head-on confrontation. Adding little else in the way of grievances against the UAE, the document accused Kuwait of having stolen oil from the Rumaila oil field (the southern tip of which straddles the border) and having encroached on Iraqi territory. Iraq demanded a reversal of oil policy, repayment of the 'stolen' oil (put at \$2.4 billion), a write-off of the loans obtained during the war, and, implicitly, concessions on the border dispute. Two days later, Saddam Hussein again accused the overproducers of supporting American imperialism.

Kuwait rejected the accusations in a reply to the Arab League on 19 July, pointing out that it was in fact Iraq which had a record of encroachment, and suggesting that the boundary question should be put before an Arab League tribunal. It also drew attention to the fact that the oil it produced from the Rumaila field was from wells 'far enough from the international borders to conform with international standards' (for the document see Chapter 6). Envoys were immediately despatched to all the other Arab countries to drum up support for the Kuwaiti position, with particular attention paid to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain—both of which had signed a non-aggression agreement with Iraq—and to Egypt, which was Iraq's largest fellow member in the ACC. Shaikh Zayid of the UAE also contacted President Mubarak over the Iraqi threats.

Official and media reaction throughout the Arab world was cautious and intent on avoiding an escalation of the conflict. In the Gulf states, the only paper to report the facts of the confrontation was the Sharjah-based *Al-Khaleej* on 19 July. The rest of the Gulf press remained silent, avoiding any mention of the Iraqi threats or the issues concerned. Nor were any details released in Kuwait itself either, although editorials were published that implicitly rejected the accusations contained in Tariq Aziz's letter. King Fahd telephoned both the Kuwaiti Emir and the Iraqi president, and Jordan's King Hussein cut short a visit to Yemen to fly to Riyadh, with an offer to mediate. President Mubarak also became actively involved, keeping in touch with both sides and releasing a statement on 20 July that called for 'brotherly dialogue' between Iraq and Kuwait. The leaders were now focusing on the confrontation which seemed most likely to escalate, *viz.* that between Iraq and Kuwait: Kuwait's geographical position, the outstanding areas of dispute with Baghdad, and the contents of both Saddam's speech and Tariq Aziz's memorandum left little doubt that it was Kuwait rather than the UAE which was being targeted. Several

members of the Kuwaiti government at this point took seriously the possibility of an Iraqi military move.¹¹¹

ARMED INTIMIDATION

This perception was confirmed on 24 July, when two Iraqi armoured divisions totalling some 30,000 men—outnumbering the Emirate's total armed forces by three to two—were moved close to the border with Kuwait. In the run-up to the OPEC conference which was due to take place in Geneva two days later, most observers interpreted the move as sabre-rattling to frighten Kuwait into giving up claims to a higher quota, and OPEC into setting a higher reference price. Nevertheless, it was serious enough for the United States to issue a statement reminding Iraq that there was 'no place for coercion and intimidation', and that the US remained 'committed to supporting the individual and collective self-defence' of its friends in the Gulf. It was announced later that joint US-UAE manoeuvres had begun in the Gulf. The same day President Mubarak left for Baghdad, Kuwait, and Jeddah, with the aim of organising a summit meeting between himself and the rulers of these countries.¹¹² A number of Western and Arab press agencies and newspapers, as well as Egyptian officials, subsequently confirmed that Mubarak had been assured by the Iraqi president of his commitment to a peaceful solution.

The Iraqis, however, further hardened their position on the following day by rejecting Arab arbitration over the border dispute. Tariq Aziz also told the Iraqi news agency that 'Kuwait's rulers should study carefully Iraq's memos to the Arab League and repair the damage described therein, without beating around the bush . . . , distance themselves from the circles of conspirators, and distance the conspirators from decision-making circles'.¹¹³ In effect, he was accusing the Kuwaiti foreign minister of being a conspirator with the 'Imperialist-Zionist' plot, calling for the minister's removal, and demanding total concession to Iraq's demands.

Nevertheless, hopes of a settlement were raised by Mubarak's announcement, following his lightning tour, that Iraq and Kuwait had agreed to hold high-level talks on 28 July, while media attacks were to be halted as from 26 July. The latter condition was fulfilled, and it also appeared that Kuwait was ready to grant most of the points which Saddam had listed to the Egyptian president as being a basis for settlement: the Egyptian press reported that Kuwait had told Mubarak that it would stick to its quota; that it had not demanded the repayment of the old war-time loans; and that it was willing to provide further financial support to other Arab states. A senior Jordanian official was

also quoted as saying that the Kuwaitis were intending to cancel Iraq's debts in return for security guarantees in the form of an agreement on the *de facto* Iraq-Kuwait border: he confirmed that the debts were not expected to be repaid by either side, but as long as they remained on the books they were affecting Iraq's credit-worthiness.¹¹⁴ The sticking point, of course, remained the territorial question with its components of the Rumaila oilfield and Warba and Bubiyan islands.

An indication that the troubles were far from over came in an Iraqi government statement on 27 July, informing Crown Prince Sa'd of Kuwait that he must 'know that those [i.e., Sa'd himself] who are coming to meet us must be prepared to wipe out the harm and aggression done to Iraq and respond to Iraq's legitimate demands'. Moreover, the number of Iraqi troops on the Kuwaiti border was approaching 100,000. Yet the OPEC conference which had begun the previous day again provided some relief. Although Iraq had started out from a \$25/b reference price suggestion, which Kuwait's new Oil Minister Rashid al-Amiri had labelled 'unreasonable', deft manoeuvring by Saudi Arabia on the second and closing day brought about a compromise figure of \$21/b. The Jeddah agreement was in essence retained, raising the UAE's quota to 1.5 million b/d, and OPEC's overall production ceiling to 22.5 million b/d. Iraq's Oil Minister Al-Chalabi said he was 'very happy with the agreement'.¹¹⁵ The tension in the region had in any case already raised prices to around \$20/b.

There was hope, therefore, that the talks between Kuwait's Crown Prince and Izzat Ibrahim, the Deputy Chairman of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, which were hosted by King Fahd in Jeddah on 1 August, would stave off further conflict. The Kuwaitis were prepared to compromise on the financial issues, and a number of local and other Arab sources indicated that a lease on part of one of the islands would also be open to discussion.

THE IRAQI INVASION: THE GULF TRANSFORMED

Subsequent events have made it clear that the Jeddah talks were never intended to be more than a distracting side-show—except in the unlikely event of Shaikh Sa'd's having simply given in to every single Iraqi demand (which would have been tantamount to admitting guilt on all counts and signing away Kuwait's sovereignty). Although the talks were inconclusive, further sessions were expected in the following weeks and Shaikh Sa'd and his delegation returned home the same evening. Only hours later, around 2 am on 2 August, Iraq's tanks rolled across the border. By midday Kuwait's independent territorial existence had been extinguished. The armed forces were taken by surprise

and were in any case no match for the invaders. The Emir and most of the royal family and the government escaped to Saudi Arabia, but up to 200 people died before the day was over. Sporadic resistance continued, but the take-over was a fact, with the number of Iraqi occupying troops soon swelling from about 50,000 to around 140,000.

Iraq portrayed the action as having been invited by a 'Provisional Free Government of Kuwait' formed by a group of young revolutionaries who were said to have overthrown the royal family. However, this ethereal body came into being only two days later, and was then composed of individuals who were unknown in Kuwait: most probably they were Iraqi officers. Leading members of the Kuwaiti opposition have since confirmed that they were approached to form the new government, but none accepted, and all the indications are that the invasion effectively united even the most vociferous critics of the regime in defence of Kuwait's independence under the Al-Sabah family. In the face of international condemnation, Saddam Hussein said that his troops would pull out within a week, as soon as the situation had settled and when the Free Provisional Government requested it. But the return of the 'corrupt Al-Sabah regime' would not be accepted.¹¹⁶

The United States immediately condemned this 'naked aggression' and began to draft a Security Council resolution proposing sanctions. On the same day the Security Council passed Resolution No. 660, which condemned the invasion and demanded an immediate and unconditional withdrawal. The Soviet Union cut arms shipments on the day of the invasion and sent a message to Saddam Hussein to the effect that he should withdraw. Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets were frozen in the US and in Italy, and blocked domestically in France, while Britain froze Kuwaiti assets—all with the aim of preventing Iraq or its puppet regime from gaining access to them. On 3 August, the US and the USSR issued an historic joint statement that reiterated condemnation of the invasion and called for an immediate withdrawal. Arab League Foreign Ministers, gathered in Cairo for a meeting of the Islamic Conference Organisation, remained silent, apparently at a loss as to how to proceed. The Gulf Cooperation Council waited until the day after the invasion to react officially, at which time its Foreign Ministers demanded 'an unconditional and immediate withdrawal', and asked the Arab League 'to take a united Arab stand . . . to end this aggression'. That same day, 14 members of the League complied, and, following President Mubarak's lead, approved a resolution condemning the invasion. The Palestine Liberation Organisation, Jordan, Mauritania, Libya, Djibouti, and of course Iraq, did not. King Hussein, meanwhile, tried to mediate and announced on 3 August that Saddam Hussein,

Shaikh Jabir and some other Arab leaders would meet in Jeddah two days later.¹¹⁷ There was, then, still some prospect of containment—as well as of the avoidance of a complete rupture between Iraq and the Gulf states.

From 4 August, these prospects disappeared. The naming of the puppet government that day was accompanied by the announcement that a new 'Popular Army', open to all Arabs, would be set up, to protect Kuwait from aggression. Conveniently, over 140,000 Iraqis were claimed to have volunteered already—about the number of Iraqi troops thought to be in Kuwait at that stage. Shaikh Jabir refused to attend the suggested talks with Saddam in Jeddah as long as Iraqi troops remained in Kuwait, and as a result the summit was scuttled.¹¹⁸ At the same time, around 100,000 Iraqi troops were massing near the Saudi border.

At the insistence of the GCC states, led by Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Conference Organisation, gathering in Cairo, now joined in condemning the Iraqi invasion. The European Community did likewise, imposing sanctions that included a freeze on Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets and an oil embargo. This was followed on 6 August by the unprecedented occurrence in the UN Security Council of an unopposed vote on Resolution 601, which imposed a comprehensive economic boycott. Along with Cuba, Yemen—the only Arab member in the Council and a fellow member with Iraq in the ACC—abstained. Tellingly, in Abu Dhabi a pro-Kuwaiti demonstration on 4 August was permitted and publicised—perhaps, noted *The Financial Times*, the first spontaneous demonstration in the emirate's history.¹¹⁹

Although the Saudi media had until that time still not reported the invasion, and though the only reaction from Riyadh thus far had been to call the events 'regrettable', Saudi Arabia's action within the framework of the GCC, the Arab League and the ICO indicated the country's position. In addition, President Bush had been in touch with King Fahd from the first day, assuring him of American support. The American Defence Secretary, Richard Cheney, flew to Saudi Arabia on the day Resolution 601 was passed, to discuss the opening of Saudi landing strips to US planes, and the possibility of closing down the IPSA pipeline.¹²⁰

The Saudis were generally acknowledged to be in a precarious position. The international economic boycott of Iraq could only really work if the pipeline *was* shut, and if Saudi oil production was raised to help make up to the world for the loss of some 4 million b/d of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil supplies. Saddam made it clear that either action would be seen as an act of aggression, and in view of the troops massing on the

Kuwait-Saudi border, these were not empty words. In order to be able to join any international boycott of Iraq, the Saudi ruling family needed three things. The first two, pertaining to the question of legitimacy (for the regime and for the action), had already been obtained: cover from the United Nations, and official condemnation of Iraq by the GCC and the Arab League. The third requirement was immediate and massive military protection, which only the United States could provide. In the event, the consensus among the Al-Sa'ud went against the option of appeasing Saddam Hussein, as this would not guarantee security either in the short or the longer term.

On 7 August the puppet government in Kuwait declared the country a republic, while Iraq announced the merger of the two currencies. Thereupon King Fahd cut through the knot and asked for international military assistance to defend the Kingdom against the Iraqi threat, Iraq's assurances that it had no designs on Saudi Arabia notwithstanding. On the same day, the US ordered planes and troops to the country. It was only then that the Saudi press was allowed to report the invasion, along with details of the UN Security Council resolution.

Clearly, another watershed had been crossed. The previous day, Saddam Hussein had still been saying that he wanted 'normal relations' with the United States. Now the Gulf states had come down off the fence and troops were on their way. Equally important, Turkey had finally closed down the pipeline that carried Iraqi oil to Çeyhan on the Mediterranean. In response, the Iraqi president defiantly declared the annexation of Kuwait on 8 August. An emergency Arab summit was called by Mubarak and even King Hussein rejected the annexation, stating: 'we continue to recognise the emiri regime'. Britain announced that it would send troops to join the Americans in Saudi Arabia—the start of the military operation's internationalisation—and the Iranian government stressed that it could not accept any change in Kuwait's borders.¹²¹ At the United Nations, the Security Council passed another resolution condemning the annexation, and this time Yemen voted in favour. King Fahd himself, in a speech to the nation the day after the annexation, condemned Iraq's acts in the harshest terms and confirmed the arrival of Western troops: he described the invasion as 'the most horrible aggression the Arab Nation has known in its modern history' and announced that he had asked 'Arab and friendly forces to participate' in the defence of the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia, he added, 'demands the restoration of the situation to what was before the Iraqi invasion and the return of Kuwait's ruling family under Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad Al-Sabah'.¹²²

To complete the tightening of the net around Iraq, and in order to add much-needed legitimisation to the foreign military presence in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh and Cairo used all their powers to persuade the Arab League to support the idea of a multinational deterrent force for the Kingdom. All the Arab League member states, except Tunisia, gathered for an emergency summit in Cairo, where, after much effort, Mubarak managed to push through a vote on a GCC-sponsored resolution that called for the Arab League to send Arab troops to the Kingdom: these would be stationed alongside the other forces in Saudi Arabia, to deter an Iraqi attack. The resolution was supported by 12 members, Iraq and Libya voted against it, the PLO, Yemen, and Algeria abstained, and Jordan, Sudan and Mauritania 'expressed reservations'. The result was a narrow majority in favour, and Egypt, Morocco and Syria announced that they would send troops.¹²³

The authors do not intend to provide a complete record of the Gulf crisis, beyond describing the initial moves and the subsequent crystallisation of the international community's position, as outlined above. In the sequence of events as they unfolded over the following months until late November 1990, however, six developments which further affected the nature of the situation must be mentioned.

The first was the effective internationalisation of the military presence in Saudi Arabia, and the provision of facilities by the other GCC states. Two months after the invasion there were—in addition to some 130,000 American troops, and about 2,000 each from Pakistan and Bangladesh—nearly 50,000 Arab soldiers in Saudi Arabia, including some 15,000 Syrians (of which at least 1,000 were in the UAE), 20,000 Egyptians, 2,000 Moroccans, 5,000 Kuwaitis and up to 5,000 from the remaining Gulf states.¹²⁴ As well as the United Kingdom and France, Belgium, Australia, Canada and others were also sending naval forces. Further commitments followed as the crisis continued. The other aspect of internationalisation was financial: on 15 September the American Secretary of State, James Baker, could announce that his fund-raising efforts for sharing the burden of the military and economic costs involved had resulted in the following pledges: \$5 billion from the exiled government of Kuwait; up to \$12 billion from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states (half of which would go towards the cost of the military operations, and the other half towards relieving the burden on those countries suffering most from applying the sanctions); \$4 billion from Japan; \$2 billion from the European Community; and another \$1.8 billion from West Germany individually.¹²⁵

The second new element was UN Security Council Resolution 665 of 25 August, which authorised the enforcement 'by such measures . . .

as may be necessary' of the UN-decreed sanctions. This legalised the interdiction of Iraqi or Iraq-bound traffic in the Gulf by (mainly) US naval forces, and, together with the subsequent approval of an air blockade, completed the sanctions network.

Three further new elements were introduced by Iraq itself. On 12 August, Saddam Hussein proposed that any withdrawal from Kuwait should be linked with the issues of the Israeli-occupied territories and a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. If foreign troops in the Gulf were also withdrawn and sanctions frozen, he suggested, a solution could be worked out for the current crisis. This idea of linkage, although clearly intended to regain legitimacy and support for Iraq among the Arabs, was to prove a persistent factor in subsequent developments. Even if the formal link was rejected by the West, the Gulf and Palestine had become objectively connected, both because much of the growing popular opposition against the 'American' presence was clearly directly due to the legacy of the Palestine problem, and also because of the implied threat to those regimes that were friendly to the West, if the West failed to address the issue. The Arab states, France, and eventually also Britain and the US itself, all began to stress the importance of finding a solution to the Palestine question, even while rejecting any formal linkage.

The second of these new elements was the astonishing reversal on 15 August by Saddam Hussein, when he agreed to accept Iran's stated terms for peace. This meant a return to the pre-Gulf War situation, with shared sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab, immediate withdrawal of any Iraqi troops remaining on Iranian soil, and the release of prisoners of war. The Iranian government reacted positively, and although President Rafsanjani maintained that Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait and that the UN sanctions would be applied, it became clear within the next few weeks that Iraq no longer had to worry about an enemy on its eastern flank.

The third element introduced by Iraq was the taking of hostages. Although they were referred to as 'guests', 'detainees' or otherwise, the thousands of Westerners, Japanese, Soviets, and others who were prevented from leaving Kuwait or Iraq, were certainly used as hostages. On 17 August the Speaker of the Iraqi National Assembly announced that 'the people of Iraq have decided to play host to the citizens of these aggressive nations as long as Iraq remains threatened with an aggressive war'. In a speech two days later, Saddam confirmed this effective internment and indicated that these 'guests' would be placed near strategic installations to deter attack.¹²⁶ Gradual releases of women, children and some others did not affect the basic nature of this strategy.

At the same time, however, it became apparent that it would not substantially weaken the international community's determination to bring Iraq to heel.

The final new element to be highlighted here, is the effective break-up of the Arab League. Following the vote on 10 August to send troops to Saudi Arabia, the Arab states were essentially split into those twelve who had supported the move, and those who had not. This became evident in a number of ways. A further Arab League Foreign Ministers' meeting at the end of August was attended only by the twelve (plus a Libyan representative), and the resolution which resulted (condemning Iraq and holding it responsible for any damages and losses to Kuwait) was passed by the same twelve. On 3 September Chadli Klibi, the Tunisian Secretary-General of the League, resigned, and later that month the League's ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, the Lebanese Clovis Maksoud, also resigned. And on 10 September, the 'twelve' decided to go ahead, as had been planned well before the crisis, with moving the League's headquarters from Tunisia back to Cairo—notwithstanding a boycott by Tunisia, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, Mauritania, and the PLO.¹²⁷

Whatever else happens, Arab politics will never be the same. This is illustrated by the difference in post-invasion behaviour between the three main Arab groupings—the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)—but perhaps even more dramatically so by the developments within each of these blocs. The GCC was forced into a redefinition of its own role, strengths and weaknesses; from the AMU there were as many initial reactions as there were member states; and the ACC for all practical purposes ceased to exist. Iran's position and potential role in the Gulf region, moreover, has undergone a major transformation. More specifically, in the relationship between Iraq and the remaining monarchical systems of the Gulf a drastic break with the past was made. The Gulf states and especially Saudi Arabia, showed themselves increasingly decisive in their stand against the invasion and its perpetrator, the Iraqi regime. As related earlier, initial caution was soon followed by energetic Saudi action to obtain Arab condemnation of Iraq. Nevertheless, the speech by King Fahd on 9 August was still a departure from previously established norms of diplomacy and consensus-seeking in the Arab arena. For the first time, too, the press was given free rein to attack the Iraqi president. Calling in US troops—and moreover against another Arab state—was, of course, the most dramatic break with established policy. Against the expectations of many observers, the Kingdom did cut Iraq's oil exports, raising its own

production to help the world cope with the shortfall, knowing that both acts were equated with aggression by Saddam Hussein. This illustrates, however (as did the firm support given to Iraq during the Gulf War) that when it comes to the crunch, the usually slow, cautious and even indecisive Saudi foreign policy-making system *does* have the capacity to take difficult decisions and follow them through. Iraq's response will only have reinforced the determination in Riyadh and to a less outspoken extent in the other Gulf capitals to stand up to Saddam Hussein and not to give him the benefit of the doubt in future. On the day that the Arab League resolved to send troops to the Kingdom, the Iraqi President discarded the hitherto valid trappings of Arab interstate politics, by appealing directly to the peoples of the Arab world over the heads of their governments. By calling on them to 'rebel against all efforts to humiliate Mecca' he was, in effect, urging the overthrow of the regimes aligned against him—first and foremost those of Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

All this was taking place in the context of what already amounted to a new world order—though not quite yet the order variously envisaged by 'East' and 'West'. The very fact that it made little sense any more to use these terms indicates how dramatically the state of international relations had changed by the time Saddam decided to swallow Kuwait. In turn, the Kuwaiti crisis served as an additional catalyst bringing Washington and Moscow closer together; this was evident in the early joint declaration, in the unopposed UN Security Council resolutions, and in official Soviet approval of the American deployment in the Gulf. The other obvious background factor—i.e., soaring oil prices that reached \$40/b by the end of September—had not, by the time of writing, dented the international community's determination to turn back the Iraqi aggression.

As a consequence, the incidence of 'sanctions-busting' was very low. Few countries were prepared to risk becoming pariahs themselves, and this was also valid for Iran, Jordan and Yemen. The services of unofficial middlemen and smugglers were, on the whole, far too expensive to provide any significant relief for an Iraq which had increasingly little with which to pay them. Thus with virtually no exports and increasingly scarce imports, Iraq was likely to suffer soon. Domestic agriculture was not able to produce enough for the Iraqis' own needs, and most foodstuffs were stockpiled for periods of between three and six months. Industry relied on foreign inputs of technology, spare parts and chemicals. Construction and public infrastructure was similarly dependent, often dependent on the services of many foreign experts. And the armed forces themselves relied on

foreign suppliers for most of their requirements and for a continued supply of spare parts and even, for example, items like textiles for uniforms and tents (from Turkey).

The international community, then, appeared to be using its opportunities wisely, pulling the net of sanctions ever tighter, yet at the same time showing flexibility. Humanitarian food supplies were exempted from the embargo. Even the American and British leadership began increasingly to stress that a peaceful solution was preferable and that economic sanctions would be given a fair chance (although without going back on the principle that force would have to be used if nothing else worked). Simultaneously, more signals were being sent that something needed to be done about the Palestine issue. Landmarks in this respect were the speeches by President Mitterrand of France to the UN General Assembly on 24 September, President Bush's speech on 1 October, and the proposal from Douglas Hurd, British Foreign Secretary, on 4 October to convene a Middle East Peace Conference with the UN Security Council once Iraq had withdrawn. The killing by Israeli security forces of 21 Palestinians around the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem on 8 October could have provided Saddam Hussein with a propaganda coup as he continued to whip up Arab feeling against the 'US-Zionist conspiracy'. Instead, the UN Security Council passed a unanimous resolution that condemned Israel for its involvement, and the Secretary-General was instructed to send a fact-finding mission to report back to the Council (14 October 1990).

WATERSHED: FROM SCR 678 TO 16 JANUARY 1991¹²⁸

The debate on what happened next will continue for a long time to come. Late on 16 January 1991 a coalition of international forces led by the United States unleashed a massive military operation against Iraq, forty-six days after the initial UN decision to allow the use of force had been taken. Following considerable diplomatic efforts and cajoling, America and Britain had succeeded (just before the end of America's term in the presidency of the Security Council) in persuading their key fellow-members to support a resolution that set a deadline for Iraq to implement previous Security Council resolutions, after which members states would be entitled to use 'any means necessary' to undo Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Resolution 678 of 29 November 1990, with only Yemen and Cuba voting against and China abstaining, had set that date at 15 January 1991.

The following day, President Bush proposed to Iraq that the Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz should visit him in Washington while the US Secretary of State, James Baker, would go to Baghdad to meet

Saddam Hussein. This represented a major move on America's part, since previous suggestions that there should be talks *before* Iraq had committed itself to a complete and unconditional withdrawal had always been dismissed by the West and its allies. Baghdad indicated agreement to the principle, but delayed in suggesting any date for the Baker visit. Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein announced on 6 December that all foreign hostages would be released unconditionally. Three days later, the date for the Baker-Saddam talks which the Iraqi government had at last set at 12 January 1991, was rejected by Washington as too close to the UN deadline: the delay of more than a month would mean that observance of Resolution 678 would *de facto* become impossible. However, Baghdad remained adamant, and Tariq Aziz's visit to Washington consequently fell through as well.

While peace efforts continued to be made by officials as well as individuals and other groups from various countries, Iraqi statements reiterated that Kuwait would remain part of Iraq. On Christmas Eve Saddam Hussein made the explicit threat that if Iraq were attacked Israel would be the first target. In this increasingly tense context, and in response to concerns expressed in sections of the US Administration, in European nations and in much of the Arab and Third World that Iraq should be left a ladder to climb down, President Bush proposed on 3 January that James Baker and Tariq Aziz should meet in Geneva on 9 January. This time the Iraqi side accepted. Baker carried a letter to the meeting from President Bush to Saddam Hussein that enlarged upon the message that he himself was conveying to the Iraqi Foreign Minister—*viz.* that withdrawal from Kuwait was an absolute condition for lifting the pressure on Iraq, and that the anti-Iraq alliance was prepared to use massive force if necessary. In the event and contrary to expectation, the meeting lasted over six hours, indicating that the US delegation did try to probe the real, or potential, intentions underlying Iraq's public stance. However, the Iraqi side apparently was unable to give any substantial indications that the Security Council Resolutions might be implemented; the talks consequently failed.

A final attempt was made by the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, who travelled to Baghdad on 13 January. Not only was he treated with an ostentatious lack of respect (being kept waiting for hours, for instance), but the talks themselves fared no better, and he could only indicate afterwards that he had lost any hope he might have had. Subsequent attempts by a number of countries including France to sway the Iraqi leadership were left unanswered while Iraq reiterated its determination to keep Kuwait.

Less than 24 hours after the deadline had passed—at 11 pm GMT on 16 January—Operation Desert Storm was launched.

SADDAM'S MIND

What was it that impelled the Iraqi president to risk not only the tearing apart of a diplomatic strategy carefully pursued over 15 years, which would involve confrontation with the world community, and with US firepower in particular, but also economic and possibly political ruin? Clearly, his move was based on a massive miscalculation, itself a startling departure from his previous astute manipulation of the regional and international scene.

The areas of friction with Kuwait, described earlier, certainly had explosive potential, made worse by Iraq's extremely difficult financial position: there was an urgent need for foreign exchange. Yet as we have argued, these factors by themselves could not have been expected to result in invasion and annexation. Other factors played a part.

First, the Iraqi regime faced increasing dissatisfaction among its own population. The system had never been actively embraced by the Iraqi people, but a combination of repression, foreign policy posturing, the threat from Iran, and economic performance, succeeded in keeping Saddam in the saddle. With the cease-fire in the Gulf War, Iraqis had expected an improvement in their material well-being following the years of belt-tightening. Instead, the new economic policy led to rising prices, while the financial burdens of servicing the country's estimated \$80 million debt, of rebuilding the economic infrastructure and the armed forces, and of paying for the self-aggrandising projects which Saddam did not want to forgo, left the government very little with which to provide affordable food and consumer goods. The move against Kuwait—rich, weak, and considered selfish by many Arabs—offered a diversion from the Iraqis' preoccupation with their own lot. At the same time Saddam Hussein's accusation that Kuwait had in effect stolen many billions of dollars' worth of oil and revenues from Iraq, was a convenient way of offering people a scapegoat for their everyday difficulties. The political importance of gaining access to the Kuwaiti treasury funds in order to help soften the domestic situation needs no elaboration.

The second issue was that of the army which had still not been demobilised. How does one reintegrate almost a million soldiers into normal life, especially if the wherewithal to smooth the process is lacking? If it is decided that this process must be postponed, or done very gradually, how are these men to be kept occupied and under control? Again, the Kuwait adventure could serve well in this respect,

especially as soldiers could expect to return with the odd consumer item, such as confiscated cars.

Thirdly, by controlling Kuwait, or at least its northern area, access to the Gulf would be secured, and Iraq's failure to extract concessions from Iran over the Shatt al-Arab (the main cause of the Gulf War) could be camouflaged.

The signals sent by the West are also likely to have played a role. Saddam Hussein's increasingly aggressive rhetoric was not firmly rebuffed in the West. Until the direct threats to the Gulf states from 30 May onwards, it was perfectly reasonable to interpret such rhetoric essentially as playing to the gallery. Certainly, after the Iraqi memorandum to the Arab League on 15 July, this was no longer true and the subsequent concentration of troops on Kuwait's border, although potentially no more than sabre-rattling, clearly did require unmistakable signals to Baghdad that any further aggressive moves would be countered with determination. In this respect, the now infamous interview between the American ambassador April Glaspie and Saddam Hussein on 25 July may have been the 'fatal sign of American weakness that tempted him over the brink', as *The Economist* interpreted the view of some observers. According to the Iraqi transcript of the interview (the US State Department did not release its own version), the meeting was amicable, with Glaspie suggesting that the Iraqi President appear on US television to make Americans understand Iraq better. She then enquired—'in a spirit of friendliness, not of confrontation'—about the reason for the troop movements. In reply, Saddam Hussein referred to his conversation with the Egyptian President: he had, he said, finalised the arrangements for the Iraqi-Kuwaiti meeting in Jeddah and had promised that he would

not do anything until we meet with [the Kuwaitis]. When we meet and when we see that there is hope, then nothing will happen. But if we are unable to find a solution, then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death.¹²⁹

Although this was hardly reassuring, Mrs Glaspie appeared to consider the reply sufficient (nor have the Americans even questioned the content of the Iraqi transcript). The ambassador's message, then, was clearly not the one called for.

However, there was a fifth and crucial factor: Saddam Hussein's own perception of reality, the world, and his own place therein. With hindsight, the evidence of Iraq's domestic scene might have led one to expect that he could at any moment, particularly when under the pressures described above, leave the bounds of pragmatic rationality in

international affairs (see the discussion in Chapter 2). The invasion was a sign that the Iraqi president had transferred his perception of his own role in Iraq's history (the 'necessary leader' with his three-fold unique ability) to the regional scene; the problem was that he had also transferred his belief that anyone who crossed his designs in any way was betraying the lofty aims which history, aided by his guidance, had in store for Iraq and the Arab world. Any sign of dissent or questioning on the part of those who did not have his insights, was both offensive and an offence. This is well illustrated by the wording of Iraq's attacks on Kuwait in the President's May speech and the subsequent letters to the Arab League: their complete intemperateness, the equating of a straightforward inter-state dispute with military aggression, and the glaring assumption that it was the duty of any of the other Arab recipients of the messages to take Iraq's side (not to mention the negotiating stance that the Kuwaitis had to be serious about satisfying Iraq's demands)—all these factors showed Saddam Hussein playing Iraqi politics outside his own borders. And with it, he showed that his megalomania had finally caught up with his undoubted shrewdness and adaptability.

The argument has since been put forward that perhaps the move *was* calculated rationally. The suggestion then is that Saddam Hussein would have planned all along to overthrow the present state system, to derive his support directly from the people, and therefore to emerge as the Leader of the Arab world without the need to have recourse to the methods of his previous diplomacy. Even if this were true, it would have been at best an enormous gamble—without an escape route. That it is no more than a spurious *post-factum* rationalisation is indicated by the fact that well after the invasion, the Iraqi President was still trying to use the old channels and institutions to obtain support or acquiescence among the other Arab states; moreover, until 6 August he was still calling for 'normal relations' with the US. Only when it became clear that the GCC, the majority of members of the Arab League, and the international community at large were determined to oppose him, did he turn to his new strategy.

Saddam Hussein did not envisage the total opposition that his take-over of Kuwait would encounter both regionally and in the world at large. Nor did he realise how his designs for an increased role for Iraq in the Arab and the non-aligned world, along with access to arms, technology and consumer goods from East and West, would as a result be destroyed. While he was no doubt counting on the other Arab leaders' fear of confronting him, Saddam Hussein also looked to the quasi-alliance which had come into being with the ACC, and to the

non-aggression pacts with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain that had recently been signed. But there was little reason to suppose that any of these governments would have felt bound by such agreements and understandings, after Saddam himself had trampled on many of the most important principles that underpinned the existing Arab system (not to mention the broken promise made to President Mubarak shortly before the invasion, that he would not use military force).

By his actions, the Iraqi President lost the option to use—as a basis for legitimisation or support—either United Nations or Arab League rules of conduct, or the principles that were set out in his own National Charter for the Arab States. He lost any reliable allies in the event of any future conflict with Iran, and he risked direct confrontation with both of the superpowers. The expected economic benefits did not materialise—rather, the reverse was true. Nor was there much probability of a general collapse of the regimes opposed to him taking place before his own time ran out. This assessment confirms that Saddam Hussein, like so many dictators before him, had indeed taken his leave of reality. Both the origins and the consequences of this development were in no small measure due to the power structure in the Iraqi polity. Since no-one around him had either the position or the inclination to confront him with this reality (see Chapter 2), the international community had no other sound option but to treat him as dangerously unpredictable. This was the case *a fortiori* for the regional states.

The new Saudi foreign policy posture was one sign that this had been recognised. Iraqi-Gulf relations had thus come full circle, and subversion was again the order of the day. Contrary to the position two decades previously, however, no Iraqi regime that contained Saddam Hussein or any of his major allies could now hope to regain the lost trust of the Gulf states. In future, any words or diplomacy that are used will be devoid of credibility. It should be stressed that in large measure this also applies to the attitudes of those Arab states which stayed outside the group of twelve: nowhere will the present regime's assurances be taken at face value any more.

Whatever course military action takes, Saddam Hussein (and consequently his regime) is likely to suffer gravely, or even to be defeated altogether, by a combination of domestic, regional and international factors—if not immediately, then very probably in the medium term. In the Gulf itself, as in Egypt or Morocco, opposition to the Western military presence was not of a breadth or depth to bring about the fall of these regimes. At the time of writing, regimes elsewhere, except perhaps in Syria, were taking an attitude that was sufficiently flexible to avoid the risk of a major popular revolt (without,

however, condoning Iraq's actions): none of them was, or was likely to become, an actual ally to the regime in Baghdad. The option of attacking Israel as a way of 'regionalising' the crisis in Iraq's favour, did remain open, but the impact of missile attacks in the course of the first month of fighting was limited in both military and political terms—even though Saddam derived a symbolic 'honour' from it in some Arab and Muslim quarters.

4 THE MILITARY BALANCE IN THE GULF: ONE STEP FORWARD TWO STEPS BACK

Armed conflict, which was the most prominent form of inter-state politics in the Gulf in the 1980s, is in many ways history's ironic reply to the constant accumulation by the Gulf states over the preceding decade of ever more sophisticated weaponry. The war now terminated between the neighbouring countries of Iran and Iraq was the product *par excellence* of 'hot politics' as opposed to 'cold war', and while it lasted, it continually undermined political stability in the entire Gulf region. It can be argued that since the cease-fire the after-effects of that conflict have fuelled inter-state competition and politico-economic uncertainties to such an extent that they have drawn virtually all the Gulf states into a new crisis, bringing about the large scale military intervention of the dominant international actors in this region.

But the condition of 'no war-no peace' which prevailed between Iran and Iraq from July 1988 to September 1990, and which was perhaps more restrained than cold war, ought to have given little cause for comfort, since, as became obvious with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, it was an equation that could degenerate easily and perhaps irredeemably into a 'war-no peace' situation between Iraq and other Gulf states in addition to Iran, and this time with the inevitable involvement of the superpowers and other regional and global actors. In these circumstances, the pressures to militarise, to re-arm and to modernise are as great as in the course of any actual conflict. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has accelerated the process of militarisation and sophisticated arms procurement in the Gulf to such an extent that even as the drama of the 'new' Gulf crisis was unfolding, major new multi-billion dollar arms deals between Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies and the industrialised countries were being finalised.

The military balance in the Gulf—that is, the kind, the quantity, the variety and the quality of military hardware at the disposal of the Gulf belligerents—is a crucial component in assessing the security environment of any given situation. But it also has special significance, given