SYRIA'S RESPONSE TO THE IRAQ-KUWAIT CRISIS, 1990-91
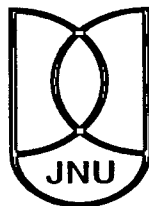
Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
for award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

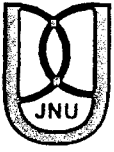I declare that the dissertation entitled **"Syria's Response to the Iraq-Kuwait Crisis, 1990-91"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (M. Phil)** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Supervisor

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Date 29 July, 2008

Saleem Ahamad

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Chapter I

Introduction

Introduction

On 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait in order to establish regional hegemony and to tide over a growing internal economic crisis. The crisis was caused by a combination of factors: the border issue, the cost of repaying the foreign debts incurred during its 1980-88 war with Iran and the expense of funding massive new arms purchases. By 1990, Iraq's debt stood at $80 billion to $ 100 billion and it was unable to meet its debt repayment costs (Cordesman 1996: 263).

Iraq provoked the political crisis during the months before the invasion. It accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of over producing oil and violating the quotas set by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As the crisis unfolded, several divisions of troops near its border with Kuwait deployed and demanded *de facto* control of Bubiyan and Warbah, two Kuwaiti islands near Iraq's port of Umm Qasr. Eventually, Kuwait was completely unprepared when Saddam Hussein ordered his troops to invade the country. Iraqi forces took control of the entire country in just less than two days. Further, within a week of occupying Kuwait, Iraq announced that it would annex Kuwait as its nineteenth province.

The Iraqi invasion and the subsequent entry of US-led coalition forces into Saudi Arabia to ensure the evacuation of Saddam Hussein's troops from

Kuwait had a significant impact on Arab regional politics. One witnessed a strange realignment of forces in the region, leading to the emergence of two blocs. One comprised Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Egypt which was determined to ensure Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait with the help of the U.S-led coalition forces. The other was basically a pro-Iraq bloc consisting of Jordan, the PLO, Yemen and Algeria. Thus, Syria joined the Arab-Western coalition, led by the U.S, against Iraq.

Syria's decision to join the anti-Iraq coalition marked a strategic shift in the country's foreign policy. This shift was a result of President Assad understanding of the new ground realities. The way the Soviet Union fully co-operated with the U.S. to ensure unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, even by military means, provided enough indication to President Assad about the emerging post cold war international order. Therefore, President Assad had to bring a shift in Syria's policy in such a manner that would facilitate the achievement of his objectives under the new circumstance. His main objective was to regain the Golan Heights. At the regional level, he wanted to assume the leadership of the Arab world.

Syria's anti-Iraqi stand created an internal problem for the Ba'ath regime in Damascus. Starting in the earliest days of the Ba'ath regime, Syria's propaganda, communication and educational system had portrayed the US government as a hostile, imperialistic force, dangerous to the Arab nations and to Syria. The head of the regime had to explain the change in this approach,

where by Syria had become an ally of the United States against an Arab State. Saddam Hussein by Syria of breaching the sovereignty of an Arab State, destroying the partnership between Arab States and creating a situation in the region which led to the US intervention.

Syria's participation in the U.S-led coalition forces against Saddam Hussein brought changes in the country's relations both with the Arab states and with the West. President Assad got many concrete short-term benefits. He received major subsidies from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait around $ 2.5 billion, and improved his relations with the Arab States (Pradhan 2003: 176). Further, the establishment of an Egypt-Syria-GCC bloc in response to the crisis triggered the speculation about the emergence of a new Arab order. The Damascus Declaration of 6 March 1991 gave formal expression to such intentions to create a more permanent security structure. According to the Declaration, an Arab peace keeping force would be ensuring for the future security of the Gulf States. In return for their contributions to the force, Syria and Egypt would receive substantial financial assistance from the GCC States (Weitzman and Kostiner 1995: 107-125). Moreover, Syria participated in the multilateral "Middle East Peace Conference" in Madrid in October 1991. For the first time, Syria engaged in direct, face to face negotiations with Israel to regain the Golan Heights, which Israel had occupied in the 1967 War (Lesch 2005: 50).

The relations between Syria and Iraq were characterized by asymmetry and an unequal balance of power. Syria and Iraq were divided by party schism, by geopolitical rivalry and by the personal animosity between Saddam Hussein and the President Assad (Eppel 1991: 210). Iraq intervened in Syrian domestic politics and posed a threat to its independence and sovereignty. Iraq was more involved in Syrian domestic politics and foreign policy but it failed to implement union with Syria. The establishment of union with Syria was the way for Iraq to achieve a sound regional and international status.

The rise to power of the Ba'ath party in both Iraq and Syria in 1963 and the rift between the two parties gave the relations between the two states an "ideological dimension which affected the legitimization of their regimes." The rivalry between the two Ba'ath parties and each one's claim to be the sole, true Ba'ath transformed the relationship between Syria and Iraq into a hostile one wherein each country perceived the other as a threat to its existence. As long as both the Ba'ath regimes remained weak, the question of mutual "legitimization and delegitimization" had played a central role in the relations between them (Eppel 1991: 210).

President Assad's takeover of Syria in 1970 and in 1968 the Ba'ath party came into power in Iraq, created a complex situation whereby a rift between the Ba'ath parties became a rift between the states (Eppel 1991: 218).

A long standing dispute has been over the distribution of the water of the Euphrates. Syria periodically blocked the Euphrates water flowing into Iraq. In 1974, Syria had decided to limit the flow of water that passed through the Tabaka dam (Gogoi 1997: 93). Both the countries needed the water of Euphrates for the irrigation and agricultural development sought to derive political benefits by diverting this water. A second discord was the Iraqi dependence on the transit oil routes across the Syrian territory to the eastern Mediterranean terminals. Syria demanded high royalties for the passage of Iraqi oil through its territory. Syria is in a position to block this pipeline and has done so in the past. This can also be used as a bargaining chip to demand higher oil royalties by Syria (Gogoi 1997: 93).

In the early 1970 s, the alleged manipulation of Iraqi Shi'ties by the Syrian ruling elite was another source of tension. Iraq also accused Syria of aiding the Kurds, for instance. Jalal Talabani, the left wing Kurdish leader is alleged to have been helped by Syria (Gogoi 1997: 94). Further more, when Saddam Hussein came into power in the late 1970s, he, and the President Assad developed an intense personal enmity.

In spite of their ideological rivalry, during the 1973 war, Syria appealed to Iraq for military help, whereupon Iraq dispatched two armed divisions to help Syria. Iraq recalled its forces immediately when Syria accepted U.N Resolutions 242 and 338 and labeled Damascus as 'defeatist' and accused it of recognizing Israel. In 1974 and 1975, President Assad proposed the

establishment of a political-military union between Syria and Iraq which the latter repeatedly rejected because of his readiness to 'make peace with the Zionist enemy' (Ma'oz 1999: 261).

In 1977 when Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat took peace initiative with Israel, Hafez al-Assad launched an initiative for the improvement of relations between Syria and Iraq. However, Iraq's attempt to take on the leadership of the Arab world, its objection to UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and its demands for drastic action against Egypt impeded the rapprochement between Syria and Iraq. Syria sought to strengthen its status vis-à-vis Israel and Egypt, whereas Iraq softened its rigid position. In October, 1978, President Assad visited Baghdad and discussed again a Syrian–Iraqi union with the Iraqi leader. A charter of joint National Action was signed which was called a step to bring "an important qualitative change in the relations". President Assad put the cause of Arabs as the first priority. He declared, "I prefer to be a private soldier in a united Arab world than a general in a secessionist state. My brothers, I have no personal ambition to satisfy: it's the same to me if our capital is Basra or Mosul or Homs" (Seale 1988: 313).When on 26 March 1979, Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel, he was immediately punished. The relations between Syria and Egypt were broken off, Egypt was expelled from the Arab League and the League's headquarter was moved out of Cairo.

The idea of a union with the Syria was raised against Saddam Hussein as an attempt by President Hassan al-Bakr and his supporters to block Saddam Hussein. In July 1979, however, Saddam Hussein announced the uncovering of a plot against him hatched by some of his closet colleagues in league, as he alleged, with a "foreign side" soon identified as Syria (Seale 1988: 354). Twelve days before announcing the plot Saddam Hussein had taken over as president of Iraq from Hassan al–Bakr. This led to the breaking off the relations between Syria and Iraq and the renewal of the rift.

The relations between Syria and Iraq reached the lowest point when Syria allied itself with Iran in its war against Iraq between 1980 and 1988. The struggle for regional dominance led Syria to support Iran, the non-Arab, radical–Islamic enemy of Ba'athist Arab Iraq (Epple 1999: 219). Syria supported Iran, where most of the Arab countries supported Iraq, as "an expression of the historical struggle between the Arab and the Persians".

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took power in Iran in 1979; President Assad considered it a supreme interest to befriend with him. President Assad's decision to back Iran was "perplexing and controversial". President Assad welcomed the Ayatollah's take over in Tehran with warm congratulations. He sent him a gift of an "illuminated Quran carried to Qum by Syria's Information Minister". After kissing the holy book, Ayatollah thanked Syria for the asylum in 1978 when having been expelled from Iraq. Thus, Syrian–Iranian relations developed rapidly after the revolution.

President Assad saw Syria's alliance with Iran in strategic terms: an anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist Iran could be an important ally in the struggle against Israel (especially after Egypt's separate peace with Israel) and could increase his influence with Lebanon's Shites (Drysdale 1993: 288). Moreover, the alliance seemed natural in view of President Assad's bitter rivalry with Saddam Hussein.

President Assad surprised when Iraq launched the war against Iran on 20 September 1980. He condemned Saddam's war as "the wrong war against the wrong enemy at the wrong time" (Seale 1988: 357). He decided to go further and back Iran's war effort. Moreover, Syria blocked Iraqi Oil pipeline to the Mediterranean which run through the Syrian territory. Therefore, Syria seemed to render some truth to the truism "enemy's enemy is my Friend."

In August 1980, Iraqi troops stormed the Syrian Embassy in Baghdad and expelled most of its staff. Iraq charged that they were smuggling guns and explosives to Saddam's Shi'i enemies. In October 1980, Baghdad broke off relations with Damascus.

In 1982, Syria closed its border with Iraq and blocked the flow of Iraqi Oil through the country. In return, Iran provided it with free or low-cost oil and became a major market for Syrian exports. On the other hand, Iran's concrete benefit from the Syrian move was to fragile Iraq. Iran's relationship with Syria has other advantages as an arms supply was one area in which Syria was helpful. Iran was able to buy arms from the Soviet Union via Syria

without having any direct relationship with the Eastern bloc (Chubin and Tripp 1989: 180). With Soviet Union's approval arms were supplied to Iran from Syria. For Iran, Syria's alliance appears to have been important from the military point of view.

Syria-Iran alliance was based on a negative agreement which was to oppose Saddam Hussein. As a Western diplomat observed, without Iraq, Iran would be a "potential enemy" of Syria (Chubin and Tripp 1989: 182). However, Iran is a tactical ally of Syria. Syria very well exploited the relationship with Iran to gain benefits from both the sides. Syria and Iran had also divergent interests in Lebanon. Iran supported the Hezbollah, which aimed at setting up an Islamic republic in Lebanon. The Hezbollah was financed, trained and armed by Iran. They have pushed the South Lebanese Shi'a into a confrontation with Israel. They have also undermined Syria's claim to be the "arbiter of Lebanon's politics". Further, the Hezbollah's "abductions of foreign citizens have embarrassed Syria". Therefore, Syria reacted by the "activities of the Hezbollah". The most sensitive area of relations is in Lebanon, where "ultimate interests do not coincide". The Hezbollah periodically challenges Syria's authority in Lebanon.

In August 1988, Iraq had emerged victorious in the Iran-Iraq war when Tehran accepted a ceasefire with Iraq. Now the Saddam Hussein emerged as a hero of the Arab masses. Iraq also presented itself as the Champion of the Arabs against Israel and relatively advanced technology and human resources.

Furthermore, Saddam Hussein remembered that Syria's support for his enemy and would make life as difficult for Syria in Lebanon by supporting anti-Syrian groups such as the Christian militia led by General Michael Awn (Lesch 2005: 52). General Michael Awn openly challenged the Syrian forces in Lebanon.

In December 1988, President Assad praised Egypt for the first time since the Camp David Peace Treaty and "acknowledged the importance of Egypt in the Arab arena." By the end of 1989, Syria had reestablished full diplomatic relations with Egypt (Lesch 2005: 53). Syria also began to improve its relationship with Saudi Arabia. In February 1989, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and North Yemen established the Arab Cooperation Council, designed to enhance economic and "political coordination and cooperation" between them. Syria was directly harmed by this step economically and politically (Eyal 2001: 53). However Iraq forced Syria to isolate from the Arab World by this tactics.

On 28 May 1990, the Arab Summit Conference opened in Baghdad. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein stated that if Israel attacked we would hit back strongly, and if it used weapons of total destruction against our nation we would use against it the weapons of total destruction which we have. There can be no concession on liberating Palestine (*MEES*, 4 June 1990: 4) Saddam Hussein sent a formal invitation to Syria to participate in the conference in the absence of diplomatic relations. However, Syrian President Assad refused to

take part in the Conference and stated that it was a game meant to serve "narrow and dubious personal objectives". Hence, Syria-Iraq relations remained strained.

Chapter II

Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Issues and Factors

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The border dispute was the actual cause of discord between Iraq and Kuwait. Successive Iraqi leaders, under the Hashemite monarchy and then under the military and Ba'athist regimes, sought control of the strategic parts of Kuwait territory (Sluglett and Sluglett 2001: 15). Although, Saddam Hussein was not the first Iraqi leader to put claim over Kuwait, yet he invaded it. By invading Kuwait on 2 August 1990, President Saddam Hussein reflected an old ambition: "the Iraqi belief that Kuwait is part of Iraq and its 19th province is unshakable" (Muir 2004: 140). He annexed Kuwait and made it an Iraqi province. Even then it was based on the fact that Kuwait was a part of Iraq during the Ottoman Empire. It was reiterated on the on the eve of the Kuwait's independence in June 1961. The reiteration of the claim raised the question of Kuwait's political and legal status in the international arena. Iraq repeated its claim for the second time in 1976. Indeed, Saddam Hussein wanted only a couple of islands in the mouth of the Persian Gulf to be transferred to Iraq. Iraq's basic objective was to widen the passage to the Gulf. Iraq was land locked on three sides with the neighboring countries and having a narrow opening in the south through the Shatt al-Arab under the close supervision of Iran. Therefore, Iraq had been putting pressure on Kuwait to give it a safe passage to the Gulf. It was important for Iraq from commercial and strategic angles.

(A) Creation of Iraq

The history of modern Iraq as a "politically and geographically" well demarcated state began in 1920, when the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, "the three erstwhile V*ilayats* of Basra, Mosul and Baghdad" were amalgamated to form on single political entity (Abidi and Singh 1991: 13). In April 1920, the mandates were shared between Britain and France; Britain was awarded Iraq, Palestine and Trans-Jordan and France was awarded Syria and Lebanon. The British evidence of their "preponderant influence" provided Iraq with king Faysal, who was not of Iraqi origin, but the son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca. In this way monarchy was established in 1921. But Iraq did not remain under British control for a long time. It got formal independence from Britain in 1932. Monarchy was overthrown in 1958 by the military. Iraq became a republic and later one of the centre of "Arab nationalism" under the control of the ruling Ba'ath (Renaissance) party. Saddam Hussein became president in 1979. Oil made the country rich and it contributed up to 95% of its foreign exchange earnings. Iraq under Saddam Hussein fought an eight-year long war (1980-1988) with Iran, which had devastating impact on the economy.

(B) Kuwait's Existence and Iraqi Claim

In the first half of the eighteenth century Kuwait was known as a state. In the late seventeenth century the Bani Khalid tribe who controlled the Qatif Oasis (now in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia) built a small, protracted settlement

of Kuwait (the name in the Arabic diminutive of Kut -A Fort). In 1772, Sheikh Sabah bin Jabir, who is considered to be the founder of the Sabah dynasty from the Anazia tribes, which had migrated from central Arabia to the shore of the Gulf, founded the city of Kuwait. Earlier the territory was under the suzerainty of the Bani Khaled tribe. Kuwait's location on the shore of the Persian Gulf, with an opening to the sea, enhanced its commercial and strategic importance. This is what attracted the attention of many outsiders toward Kuwait at the different periods of time.

Kuwait made its first contact with the British, as the new power in the Gulf. The British arrived in Kuwait in 1775, when the East India Company made it the South Eastern post of its desert mail route to Aleppo. The British connexion became closer in 1792. The East India Company transferred its Agency from Basra to Kuwait. In 1821, the British stationed a political officer in Kuwait.

In 1871 the ruler of Kuwait, Abdullah bin Sabah, accepted the Ottoman flag and the title of *Wali* (Governor). Nevertheless, the Ottomans made no move either to occupy the country or to send their own representative there. During the last decade of the nineteenth century there was a scramble for Kuwait among Britain, Germany, Russia and Turkey. These powers were eager to construct a railway line from the eastern shore of the Mediterranean to the head of the Persian Gulf (Sluglett and Sluglett 2001: 17).

Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah, who came to power in May 1896, opposed Turkey's attempts to incorporate Kuwait. In 1899, British signed a secret agreement with Kuwait. This agreement, which recognized the islands of Bubiyan, Faylaka and Warbah as Kuwaiti territory, bound the Sheikh not to cede, sell, lease or mortgage, or give for occupation, or for any other purpose, any portion of his territory to any other power or government or to any subject or citizen thereof and not to accept representatives of foreign countries without the prior consent of the government of Britain (Abidi 1991: 131). In return, the government of Britain pledged to protect the Sheikh and his territory.

After the Anglo-Kuwait agreement, Germany and Turkey were again involved in an effort to seize Kuwait, but Britain foiled their plan. By 1904, they abandoned their hopes of seizing Kuwait. Finally, the Anglo-Ottoman Draft Convention on the Persian Gulf area of 29 July 1913 provided for Turkey's recognition of Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement of 1899 (Abidi 1991: 131). Turkey also pledged not to disturb the *status quo* in Kuwait. Besides, the convention determined Kuwait's boundary with the *Vilayat of Basra. With* the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Britain established it's protectorate over Kuwait.

Kuwait's northern boundary with Iraq, which is 160 km long, was defined in a friendly agreement on 19 April 1923. The understanding was reinforced by the 1932 Iraq-Kuwait convention on the boundaries (Abidi 1991: 131). The Prime Minister of Iraq, Nuri al-Said, sent an Aide-memoir on 21 July 1932 to the British Political Resident in Kuwait, recording Iraqi recognition of his country's

boundaries with Kuwait as defined in the Anglo-Ottoman convention of 1913

(Abidi 1991: 131).The Emir of Kuwait in a note sent to the Resident on 10 August

1932 confirmed the boundaries between Iraq and Kuwait as described in the letter

of the Prime Minister of Iraq (Abidi 1991: 131). Early in 1951, Kuwait raised the

question of demarcating its boundaries on the ground with Iraq. Iraq indicated that

it would be ready to do so if Kuwait ceded to it the islands of Warbah and Bubiyan.

Thus, for the first time, Iraq linked up the "question of its boundaries" with the

Kuwait with that of "territorial adjustments and demanded transfer" of certain

islands by the Southern Sheikdom. Kuwait rejected the Iraqi demand. Three years

later, in 1954, while negotiations were in progress for providing water to Kuwait

from the Shatt al-Arab, Iraq preferred a claim to about four kilometers of the Khaur

ul- Sabiya coastline, north of the islands by Bubiyan and Warbah. While Warbah is

about 9 kms long and 3 kms wide, Bubiyan is a large island, about 42 kms in length

by 19 kms breadth at the north-western corner of the Gulf; Khor Abdullah it from

the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab. The easternmost point of Bubiyan is called Ras al-

Qaid and the southern point is known as Ras al-Barsha. While Bubiyan is about 1.6

kms form Kuwait and 1 km form Iraq therefore, the islands face Umm Qasr and

Iraq's 0.58 kms of sea coast (Rahman 1993: 192). In 1956, Kuwait rejected a

British proposal that it consider giving Warbah to Iraq in return for Iraq's consent

to supply water to Kuwait from the Shatt al-Arab.

The Revolution of 14 July 1958 in Iraq, which led to the overthrow of the

Hashemite monarchy, was a significant event. The Iraqi Revolution changed the

very politics of the Gulf region. The Iraqi leader, Brigadier Abdul Karim Qassem, who established close ties with Soviet Union and seemed ready to accept Kuwait's independence and to resume Nuri's territorial negotiations. But Qassem's approach changed radically in 1961 when British protectorate over Kuwait ended. As soon as British forces left Kuwait, Qassem declared, "The Republic of Iraq has decided to protect the Iraqi people in Kuwait and to demand the land arbitrarily held by imperialism, which belongs to Iraq". As for the Al Sabah, they were "an irresponsible ruling clique who should revert to their 19th Century status as *Walis* (Governors) under the authority of Basra" (Muir 2004: 157). The government of Kuwait rejected the Iraqi claim and announced that it would defend its independence and territorial integrity. In response to a request from the Al-Sabah for assistance, British troops landed in Kuwait in order to deter Iraq. The Arab League met in July and agreed that an Arab League force would be provided to replace the British troops as a guarantor of Kuwait's independence. This force comprising of contingents from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Republic (UAR) and Sudan, arrived in Kuwait in September. Simultaneously it welcomed Kuwait as a member state of the Arab League and said they would support Kuwait's request for membership of the United Nations. Following intense intra-Arab negotiations, mediation, and bargaining, Kuwait was recognized as an independent sovereign state and was admitted into the League of Arab states as its eleventh member on 21 July 1961 (Abidi 1991: 135). It became a member of the United Nations on 14 May 1963.

Iraqi leader Adbul Karim Qassem was overthrown in 1963. Abdul Salam Arif, who became the new President of Iraq, recognized Kuwait's independence on 4 October 1963 and said it wanted to clear "the sullied atmosphere created by the Qassem's regime" (Pasha 2003: 11). At the same time, Iraq recognized the independence and complete sovereignty of Kuwait and its boundaries as specified in the letter of the Iraqi Prime Minister dated 21 July 1932 and which was accepted by the Kuwaiti ruler. Both agreed to immediately establish diplomatic relations at the level of ambassadors and pledged to work towards reinforcing the fraternal relations subsisting between the two states "inspired by their national duty, common interest and aspiration to a complete Arab unity" (Noorani 1991: 2-3). But this understanding did not lead to the resolution of their border demarcation problem. At the joint committee meeting it was stated: "The question of the legality of the previous agreement and document on the plea that these were signed at a time when Iraq was not really free". Thus, the border demarcation remained unsettled.

After the Ba'ath party captured power in Iraq in July 1968, it added ideological, political, geographical, economic, security and strategic dimensions to Iraq's border problem with Kuwait (Noorani 1991: 2-3). As relations between Iran and Iraq grew tense in April 1969, Iraq requested Kuwait to allow it to station its troops on Kuwaiti soil to protect the port of Umm Qasr. In return, Iraq was willing to allow Kuwait to send its forces for deployment near Basra or any other place on its soil. Kuwait reluctantly agreed to the stationing of Iraqi troops on its soil (Abidi

1991: 136). During the early 1970s Iraq worked out plans to construct an oil terminal and a naval base on Bubiyan Island. Its Foreign Minister even asked Kuwait to cede Bubiyan and Warbah (Abidi 1991: 136). In terms of, would be willing to supply fresh water from the Shatt al-Arab to Kuwait through a pipeline. It expressed the hope that such functional cooperation would pave the way for a harmonious solution of the border problem. Kuwait turned down the proposal. But Iraq desired to widen its access to the Gulf. In March 1973, Iraqi troops crossed the frontier and temporarily seized adjoining Kuwaiti military post, al-Samitah, advancing within the Kuwaiti territories, carrying off 20 Kuwaiti guards as prisoners (Abidi 1991: 136). The Iraqi troops also shelled another border post, killing two and wounding four Kuwaitis. Kuwait Government declared a state of emergency and sent envoys to "friendly" capitals to mobilize world opinion against Iraq (Gazi 1995: 146). It rejected the mediation offer made by the Secretary General of the Arab League, as well as Saudi Arabia and Syria. During this time, Syria took strongly opposed the Iraqi acclaim and demanded immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwaiti post. There were also reports that Iran had offered military support to Kuwait.[1]

Meanwhile Iraq, on 28 April 1973, suggested Kuwait that the border demarcation talks should be resumed and the resolution of the problem should take into consideration the interests of the two countries. At the same time the Iraqi foreign minister emphasized the importance of the two Kuwaiti Islands of Warbah and Bubiyan to Iraq and asserted that, without them, it could not be a "Gulf Power"

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[1] *Arab Reports and Record* (London), 16-30 March 1973. p. 157 see also Abidi, p. 137.

and that it was prepared to give up "all of Kuwait" in return for the islands (Agwani 1992: 64). Iraq had not renounced its claim over Kuwait. The Government of Kuwait not only turned down the offer but also started strengthening its military establishments. When the Kuwaiti National assembly was dissolved in September 1976, Iraq took advantage of the situation and for the first time publicly criticized the Kuwaiti regime and revived their claim to the entire state of Kuwait. In 1977, Iraq and Kuwait held negotiations once again to settle the border problem. No agreement was reached on the islands or the boundary line.

(C) Iran–Iraq War and Kuwait

In 1979 the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war which started the following year 20 September 1980 created a new environment in the region. Because of the war, Iraq and Kuwait decided to forget their border demarcation issues and reached an "understanding on confronting and containing" Iran. At the same time, Kuwait offered substantial financial, political and logistic support to Iraq during its protracted war with Iran. In November 1979, Iraq and Kuwait signed an agreement on the use of the facilities available in the Kuwaiti port of Shuweikh (MEED, 9 November 1979). However, Iraq did not put aside the question of control over the islands of Bubiyan and Warbah. It justified its demand on grounds of national security and strategic requirements. In early 1981, Iraq's interior Minister visited Kuwait to propose that it should lease Iraq the offshore islands of Warbah and Bubiyan. Saddam Hussein, in the summer of 1981, also expressed his desire to control the two islands for five years. Since Kuwait was opposed to the

Iraqi proposal but it signed a treaty in May 1981 to construct a bridge to connect the mainland with Bubiyan Island (Pasha 2003: 20). In 1984, however, to contain the Iranian offensive, Saddam Hussein brought about pressure on Kuwait to hand over Warbah and Bubiyan Island to it. Faced with the threat of Iran at its door step, the Kuwaiti ruler agreed to "place three" of its islands under Iraqi control for security reasons. This agreement was signed in November 1984 by Kuwait's Prime Minister, Sheikh al-Sabah, during a visit to Baghdad (Pasha 2003: 21). In a sense, this was the first *defacto* step towards Iraqi complete control over Kuwait.

After the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq avoided the task of border demarcation with Kuwait. But, Kuwait was confident in the Iraqi friendship, asked for the demarcation of its border. Iraq then sent its interior Minister to Kuwait and both the countries agreed to constitute a joint Committee to complete the task of demarcation.[2] Again, Iraq raised the issue of Bubiyan Island and was firm that unless this was transferred to Iraq, there would be not demarcation (Pasha 2003: 24). Kuwait made another attempt to solve the border problem. Kuwait's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Sa'ad Abdullah visited Baghdad in February 1989. Saddam Hussein was reported to have "prevaricated" the signing of an agreement on demarcation. The Kuwaiti delegation was shocked by Saddam Hussein's "depreciating remarks regarding Kuwait's financial aid and its political and logistical support to Iraq and the backing of its media during the war with Iran". Further he said, "We expected that after the termination of war the Emir of Kuwait would pay visit to Iraq" (Pasha 2003: 27). Iraq stated that Kuwait still have

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[2] *Kessing's Contemporary Archives (London)*, 1985 vol. 31 no-9, p-33885.

dues to pay before they could expect a border agreement. Kuwaitis realized that there was no use of expecting greatefulness for the immense help given to Iraq. Iraq's pressure on Kuwait intensified thereafter and Saddam Hussein's attitude became increasingly hostile and tough.

(D) Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait

The end of the Iran-Iraq war came as great relief to Kuwait. Along with Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf States Kuwait had supported Iraq solidly throughout the war. It became possible for Kuwait to "mend its economy". It was already producing "an average of just less than 2 million barrels of oil a day". At the 1989 Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) summit, Kuwait negotiated a formal increase in its quota in "order to regularize the position". The other members of OPEC were not supportive of this increase but since Kuwait's real production was already well over its agreed quota there was little that could be done (Simpson 1991: 80). Iraq emerged out of the Iran-Iraq war with a shattered economy; it had incurred a debt of more than $ 80 billion. The Iraqi government in reality faced a host of problems after the war. The sharp fall in oil prices further aggravated Saddam Hussein's innumerable problems. At the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) summit in Baghdad on 11 February 1990, Saddam Hussein for the first time revealed that he was in terrible financial crisis. He told a closed session of the summit: "We cannot tolerate this type of economic warfare which is being waged against Iraq" (Pasha 1995: 132). He wanted around $ 27 billion from Kuwait and the Al Sabah regime flatly refused to bail him out.

In May 1990, at the Arab Summit in Baghdad, in the closed sessions,

Saddam Hussein accused that some of the Gulf countries had begun early in 1990

to produce oil beyond their OPEC quotas to such an extent that the prices in certain

instances had plummeted to $ 7 per barrel (Gazi 1995: 62). He claimed that every

one dollar drop in the price per barrel meant a loss of $ 1 billion per annum for

Iraq. Saddam Hussein explicitly stated that in Iraq's present economic state this

over production was an "act of war". He did not disclose the name of any Gulf

countries but at the end of the summit, Kuwait whose over production had

depressed oil prices increasing its own revenues, was clearly signaled out when

Saddam Hussein stated:

> Wars can be started by armies and great damages done through
> bombing, through killing or attempted coup. But the other times a war
> can be launched by economic means. To those countries, which do not
> really intend to wage war against Iraq, I have to say this is itself a kind
> of war against Iraq (Gazi 1995: 63).

He added, "I must frankly tell you that we have a stage where we can no

longer take any more pressure". This was a clear warning to the oil-rich states to

pay Iraq. Iraq was asking them to bail it out from its dire financial straits and

threatening them in case of refusal. The Iraqi position in the summit suggested that

Kuwait was already identified as an enemy. Saddam Hussein sought to leave some

room for maneuvering by Kuwait and said that the future summit would lead to an

agreement (Gazi 1995: 63).

Throughout June (1990) tension persisted as Iraq waited for Kuwait to make some offer to help. Nothing came. Saddam Hussein had been trying in every "possible way and by any means" from early 1990 to push up oil prices. He also called for a summit meeting of OPEC to force an increase in oil prices. But the other Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, did not appear very keen. They feared that such a meeting would be used by Iraq to bring indictments against Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Saddam Hussein sent the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Sa'doun Hammadi, to Kuwait and GCC countries to urge them to fashion a joint Arab Policy on oil prices. He was floating the idea that all members should cut production in order to push the prices up. Soon after on 10 July 1990, Gulf oil ministers met in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to study the Iraqi complaints. Both Kuwait and the UAE officially agreed to adhere to the OPEC quota, but both did not cut the production. Kuwait hoped to earn higher revenues for itself by expanding its market share than by raising prices. Therefore, Kuwait was quietly producing four hundred thousand barrels more per day than its quota of one and half million barrels (Gazi 1995: 65). The UAE was also producing 1.1 million barrels per day in excess of its OPEC quota (Gazi 1995: 65-66).

Tareq Aziz, Iraqi Foreign Minister, sent the letter to the *Arab League. He* again spoke bitterly about the OPEC countries for violateting their quota. Things became more complicated and intense when Tareq Aziz told the summit leaders:

> We are sure some Arab countries are involved in a conspiracy
> against us. We want you to know that our country will not be kneeled,
> our women will not turn to prostitution and our children will not be
> deprived of food (*FBIS-NES,* 18 July 1990: 21).

In a thirty seven-page memorandum, dated 15 July 1990 and addressed to the secretary General of the Arab League, which included figures and facts about the Iraqi claim, Taraq Aziz explicitly named Kuwait and the UAE as the two "culprits in over production" (Khalidi 1991: 5-28). He also articulated in the same memorandum the following points (Khalidi 1991: 11).

The Iraqi debt to Kuwait: Tareq Aziz did not give a figure for this dept, but stated that this "assistance" from Kuwait to Iraq during its war with Iran should not be considered a "debt" and should be cancelled.

- **The oil allegedly taken out form the Rumailah field**: he claimed that during the war Kuwait pumped oil belonging to Iraq from this field, the worth of which was $ 2.4 billion, and which Kuwait owed to Iraq.

- **Kuwait's war on Iraq**: He claimed that Kuwait's pumping of "Iraqi" oil from Rumailah was "tantamount to an act of war," while its attempt "to effect the economic collapse" of Iraq (through over production) was "not less than an act of war".

- **Kuwait's alleged complicity with Foreign powers**: Tareq Aziz claimed that the over production of Kuwait and UAE was "Synchronised with efforts of foreign powers to denigrate Iraq" because of its increasing championship of the Palestine cause and its role as a deterrent to Israel.

- **An Arab Marshall Plan for Iraq**: Iraq claimed it was "entitled to launch a Marshal plan" to support its recovery from the war, "just as the United States had done in Europe after World War II".

- **Kuwait's alleged reluctance to negotiate with Iraq:** Tareq Aziz claimed that in June 1988, even before the ceasefire with Iran and soon after the Iraqi victory at Fao, Iraq informed Kuwait of its readiness to settle all outstanding issues amicably but Kuwait had temporized. There was no mention of Saudi Arabia in this memorandum. Aziz also did not raise the issues either of Iraqi historical claims to Kuwait or two islands of Warbah and Bubiyan. He did, however, refer to "the issue of frontier delineation that remained unresolved in spite of all attempts at the settlement during the sixties and seventies." Aziz left the door open for reconciliation. He expressed the hope that the coming summit in Cairo would address itself to the dispute.

The Kuwaitis were shocked by Tareq Aziz's memorandum. They suddenly moved their border posts and their customs and immigration offices. It also made a counter-accusation that Iraqis were "stealing" from Kuwaiti oil well. Kuwait refused to be "cowed down by Iraq's bullying tactics" which was obviously an attempt at writing off debts (Gazi 1995: 67). On 17 July 1990 which marked the anniversary of the Ba'athist seizure of power in 1968, Saddam Hussein once again repeated his accusation against Kuwait and the UAE. It was on that day, Saddam Hussein, in a televised speech first threatened the use of force to halt over production. He stated:

> They are trying to undermine Iraq after its military triumph...instead of rewarding Iraq, which sacrificed the blossoms of its youth in the war to protect their houses of wealth, they are severely harming it...he also threatened, ...raising our voices against the evil is

not the final resort if the evil continues...If words do not give us sufficient protection then we will have no option but to take effective action to put things right and ensure that our rights are restored...cutting a few throat is better than cutting the means of living....[3]

Thus it was a clear indication of threat. At the same time Iraq hinted that Kuwait's trouble might be over if it was to reach an agreement on oil quotas and pay to Iraq the amount demanded. The telecast was seen and heard in the most of the Gulf and the Arab Countries. Kuwait's ruler was shaken by the vehemence of Saddam Hussein's attacks and open military threat. The Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah al–Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, rushed to Riyadh on 18 July 1990 to try to persuade king Fahd of Saudi Arabia to intervene. The Kuwait's Minister of Justice, said, "The Iraqi memorandum is just the beginning, God knows how far they will go". In response to the Iraqi letter to the Arab League, Kuwait on 19 July 1990 sent a formal letter to the Arab League Secretary General expressing "astonishment and surprise" at Iraqi accusations. Moreover, Kuwait also sent a letter to the UN Secretary General on 19 July 1990 drawing his attention to the "unmistakable threatening" in the Iraqi note against Kuwait and said "it is regrettable" (Pasha 2003: 32).

Kuwait rejected the Iraqi demand in a letter to the secretary General of the Arab League: "the sons of Kuwait, in good times as in bad, are men of principle and integrity. They will not yield to threats or extortion under any circumstances" (Simpson 1991: 100). President Saddam Hussein pressed ahead and on 21 July

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[3] Iraq T.V. 8 P.M. (*IST*), 17 July 1940.

1990 his troops moved towards the border with Kuwait. Iraq was doing this as a prelude to the proposed OPEC meeting in Geneva on 26-27 July where Iraq would use the threat of force and disruption to win agreement for a higher benchmark price. When the meeting started Iraq proposed "the price should be raised from its current level of $ 18 to $ 25 per barrel". After long hours of negotiation, a deal was struck which fixed the price at $ 21 per barrel, the highest price the Saudis and the rest of the GCC states would accept, and a limit on production on 22.491 million barrels per day. The crisis seemed to be over. Meanwhile, US satellite photographs revealed that troops were heading towards south Kuwait. Total number of the Iraqi troops was deployed on the border around 100,000, supported by 300 tanks.

On 24 July 1990, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, listening to each leader's viewpoint and stressing the need for a negotiated settlement. On his return to Cairo, he announced that a special meeting would be held between Iraqi and Kuwaitis delegates in Jeddah at the end of July. He also stated, "The Iraqi President had assured him that he would not take action against Kuwait unless all the diplomatic options had been exhausted." At the same time, however, Iraqi forces were being moved into position for an attack against Kuwait. It was aimed at putting undue pressure on fellow Arab countries "to toe the Iraqi line" at the forth coming Jeddah meeting.

Eventually, the meeting took place in Jeddah on 31 July 1990. It changed everything, but not in the way Saddam Hussein had earlier assumed. The Iraqi team was constituted of Izzat Ibrahim, Vice-Chairman of the Revolution Command

Council, Sa'adoun Hammadi, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Ali Hassan al-Majid, Saddam's Cousin and the Local Government Minister. The Kuwaiti delegation was led by the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sa'ad al-Abudllah al-Salam al-Sabah, who was also the Prime Minister. John Simpson described the Jeddah meeting in the following words:

> It was clear to the Iraqis from the start that Saddam's assumption that the Kuwaitis were looking for a solution of this crisis was wrong. They themselves seem to have had instructions to be as flexible as possible but they found the Crown Prince arrogant and unyielding. Kuwait, he said, had the backing of the US, Britain, and Saudi Arabia and had no need to be black-mailed into paying Iraq. His real opponent was Ali Hassan al-Majid, himself an aggressive man. During the two-hour meeting the Iraqis presented a series of Demands to Kuwait including a requirement that all debts by Iraq should be written off by Kuwait and that Kuwait should cede to Iraq certain areas of Kuwaiti territory. In all, the Iraqis were reported to have demanded 10 billion US dollars in aid: debt write-offs of a further 10 billion dollars; relinquishing of Kuwait's section of the Rumailah oil field which straggled the border between the two countries; 2.4 billion US dollars in payment for oil which Kuwait had legitimately extracted from its section of this field; and finally a long term lease of islands of Warbah and Bubiyan (Simpson 1991: 107).

Hassan al-Majid once again put forward the argument that Iraq had defended Kuwait against the threat from Iran and deserved some compensation. "Why don't you just drink-the sea?", the Crown Prince shouted. Things were so bad that it looked as though a fight would break out and the security guards whom the Saudis had stationed out side the room had to come in and hold the two men apart. It was the last unforgivable insult. When Hassan al-Majid pleaded that the

Iraqis were impoverished because of the war and scarcely had enough money to feed them, the Crown Prince rebuffed thus: "why don't they send their wives out onto the streets to earn money for them?" (Simpson 1991: 108).

Kuwait rejected the demands as "unjustified, unreasonable and threatening in their nature". The meeting broke up and the Iraqi team returned to Baghdad. Saddam Hussein was "wild with anger" when he heard what the Crown Prince had said. He gave the order that the Iraqi troops should move into Kuwait, they should not stop at the Rumailah oil field and that they should take over the entire Country.

The US government was aware of the military preparations and the strategic plans of President Saddam Hussein much before the invasion took place. Just prior to the crisis, there seemed to have existed a "considerable degree of confusion" regarding the US policy to be adopted towards Saddam Hussein's growing aggressiveness. Officials in United States insisted that the US had no defense commitments to Kuwait. On 24 July 1990 the US announced a joint military exercise in the Gulf at the request of the UAE which was just a maneuver for sending of American surveillance planes to the UAE as a precaution in case of Iraqi aggression (Gazi 1995: 72). This move alarmed Saddam Hussein and he summoned the US Ambassador to Iraq, Ambassador April Glaspie to demand an explanation. April Glaspie maintained that "in the event of hostilities between Iraq and Kuwait, the U.S. would assume a neutral stand". In the meeting, she stated:

> We have no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait...we hope you can solve this problem using any suitable methods via Klibi (the head of the Arab League) or via

President Mubarak. All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly...I received an instruction to ask you, in the spirit of friendship... not in the spirit of confrontation... regarding your intentions (Musallam 1996: 95).

But, the US knew about the Iraqi troop movement. Glaspie stated, "In case of any eventuality her country was not going to take sides". Saddam Hussein perceived this as a signal for him to go ahead. She also maintained, "The US-Iraq relations were hoped to be bettered". A very interesting fact came to light when Ambassador Glaspie disclosed in a post-invasion interview with *The New York Times*:

> We never expected they would take all of Kuwait. If Saddam Hussein annexed just northern Kuwait, the US would not have interfered. But, when Saddam Hussein occupied the whole of Kuwait, the US could not stand aside but jumped into the battle on the pretext of defense of the Gulf States (Gazi 1995: 73).

The invasion of Kuwait began at 2 am local time on 2 August 1990 as many as, 300 tanks and 100,000, troops moved rapidly into the Kuwait and the Iraqis were inside the Kuwait city by 7 am local time. By mid-afternoon most of the city was under Iraqi control. The 16,000 strong Kuwaiti forces did not even offer token resistance. The ruler of Kuwait and most members of his government had fled before the invading Iraqi troops and with "Saudi acquiescence, had established a government-in exile" in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia. On 8 August, after six days of "belligerent rhetoric", the Iraqi Government announced the formal "annexation of Kuwait", and at the end of the month most of the Kuwait was officially declared to be the 19th Governorate (*Liwa*) of Iraq.

(E) Syria's Reaction

Syria was among the first Arab states to condemn the Iraqi move "publicly and absolutely" and to "demand immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad immediately sought to help the GCC Countries to counter the invasion. The Arab League foreign ministers were already assembled in Cairo as part of a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), so both Groups held emergency session to debate Iraq's attack.[4] On 3 August 1990, the ministers denounced Iraq's invasion, called for its "immediate and unconditional withdrawal", and asserted their commitment to preserve the "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of member states of the Arab League. The foreign ministers opposed foreign intervention in the crisis, but they also rejected Kuwait's demand that they form a joint Arab force to counter the Iraqi forces. The vote of condemnation at the foreign ministers meeting was significant: 14 voted affirmatively (including Egypt and Syria) and 5 abstained (Jordan, Mauritania, the PLO, Sudan, and Yemen); Iraq was ineligible to vote and the Libyans withdrew on the government's instructions.[5] As a result, the ministers from the GCC issued a separate statement claiming that "the clause with rejected foreign intervention did not apply to adherence to collective international measures endorsed by the United Nations, since the Arab League Charter commits its members to UN resolution"

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[4] Reported in *Foreign Broadcasting Information Service- Near East and South Africa (FBIS-NES)*, August 6, 1990, p. 12 also see, Lesch, (1991), "Contrasting reaction to the Persian Gulf Crisis: Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Palestine," *Middle East Journal*, V. 45, pp. 30-50.

[5] See text of the resolution translated from *Middle East News Agency (MENA)*, 3 Aug 1990, in *FBIS-NES*, 6 Aug 1990, p. 1.

(Lesch 1991: 36). The failure of the foreign ministers to call up "an Arab force and the GCC addendum" opened the door to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia's request for US military support.

US efforts laid the stress on the inability of the Arab world to cope with the challenge presented by the Iraqi action. The US succeeded in getting a series of anti-Iraqi resolutions adopted in the UN Security Council, most important of which was Resolution 660, which imposed economic sanctions against Iraq. It also sent troops to protect Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States against possible Iraqi aggression.

President Hafez al-Assad had come out firmly against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and in support of the "Arab majority and the West", confirming the return of Damascus to "mainstream regional politics". The shift became clear at the Arab Summit in Cairo on 10 August 1990 where the Syrians together with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States again procured a series of anti-Iraq resolution. The summit also passed a resolution to send "an Arab force to the Gulf alongside the US forces". In the wake of this resolution Syria also dispatched troops to Saudi Arabia as part of an Arab deterrent force (MEED, 24 august 1990: 21). At first, on 21 August, 1990 it sent a few thousand Commands, and then on 9 September an Armored Division.

Arab positions were further complicated when Saddam Hussein linked the issue of Iraq's presence in Kuwait to the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, Syrian

Control over Lebanon, and Iraq's territorial disputes with Iran. His initiative on 12 August 1990 proposed:

> All issues of occupation... be resolved in accordance with the same
> ...principles...set by UN Security Council. Withdrawal from the
> oldest occupation... Israel's should take place first and arrangements
> for the situation in Kuwait must take into consideration the historical
> rights of Iraq in its territory and the Kuwaiti people's choice. The UN
> should impose sanctions and an embargo against any party that fails to
> comply with the request to withdraw.[6]

Saddam Hussein sidestepped the issue of whether Iraq's presence in Kuwait constituted occupation, but highlighted the failure of the International Community to respond vigorously to Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and Southern Lebanon.[7] By stressing what was seen as a "double standard", Saddam Hussein "deftly turned the tables on his critics". As a result, policy debates have proved "extraordinary complex and bitter".

US-Syria relations improved rapidly as the two sides apparently discovered common ground. On 12 August 1990 President Bush revealed that he had enjoyed what he described as "a good talk" with Syrian President Assad by telephone "I told him, I am very pleased we are looking at this in the same way". US Assistant secretary of State John Kelly visited Damascus twice, in mid-August as relations between the two countries improved. Kuwait's exiled Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheik Sa'ad al-Sabah, arrived in Damascus on 13 August 1990 to a warm reception, demonstrating Syria's continued recognition of his government. The

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[6] See *FBIS –NES*, 13 August 1990. p. 48, see also. Lesch, p.38
[7] Ibid.,

Syrian stance came in the context of a gradual improvement in relations with Egypt. The two countries positions on regional issues became more alike, particularly on Lebanon after Iraq's indirect intervention. President Assad visited Alexandria on 28 August 1990 for talks with President Mubarak on the military build-up in the Gulf. Syria was working closely with Egypt and the US on ways to achieve the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Further, the Syrian government also offered all facilities to refugees from Kuwait.

Syria's participation in the anti-Iraqi Arab camp was critical to the US as it involved its political credibility. US Secretary of State James Baker acknowledged this on 10 September 1990 when he stated that we think the Syrian position in all of this is quite significant. In a speech on 12 September, the Syrian Leader said, "it is a disgrace to see one Arab Country invade another. It is not Arab way in history for the big to eat the small" and added "the problem is not the presence of foreign forces in the Gulf". The problem is Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The invasion allowed "foreign forces to come to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf". Any Israeli involvement in the present crisis might cause Syria to rethink its position, Mr. Assad warned "of course of the war was between the Arabs and foreigners "Syria would be with the Arabs", but he made it clear that the "problem of Kuwait should be solved between Arabs" saying "when it is over I am sure that all foreign forces will withdraw, but first all Arab countries should stand together against the invasion of one Arab brother by another". Most importantly, he said publicly, "we are ready to send more troops to Saudi Arabia and the UAE if they ask us"–and

according to reports from Damascus on the same day, the Saudis have requested

Syria to send and armored division of up to 10,000 men and 300 tanks to the

Kingdom (*MEES,* 17 September 1990). President Assad's speech went a long way

in dispelling any doubts in Washington.

President Assad arrived in Tehran on 22 September 1990, for a scheduled

three-day visit. This was extended by one day to complete complex and wide-

ranging discussions with Iranian leaders. The basic difference between the two

leaders revolved around the timing of the withdrawal of foreign forces from the

Gulf. Iran argued that their presence represents a threat to regional security at least

as great as the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, therefore they should leave immediately.

President Rafsanjani said:

> we should not allow foreign forces and those hegemonist powers
> who are all geared up to lighten their grip on valid oil resources, the
> Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and other sensitive points of the world to
> remain in the region.

Syria, on the other hand, maintained that the invasion of Kuwait and the

failure of countries in the region to take immediate action brought about the

deployment of foreign forces. Those forces could be expected to leave until Iraq

withdrew from Kuwait. Significantly, President Assad received assurances from

Tehran that Iran would not violate United Nations sanctions by importing Iraqi oil.

A joint communiqué stated that establishment of a regional security system with

the participation of the states of the region is the best and most successful method

to provide security and stability in the region. President Assad added that he and

President Rafsanjani were "in full agreement that the Iraqi aggression must be eliminated and that the foreign presence must be eliminated. There was no point on which we did not reach agreement" (*MEES*, 10 October 1990).

Diplomatic relations between Syria and Britain were restored in October 1990. UK secretary of State Douglas Hurd said he did not believe that relations would be restored. He stated:

> despite Syria's positive contribution to the US-led coalition force in
> the Gulf, obstacles remained before relations could be resumed: still
> to be resolved are the UK's claims of Syrian involvement in terrorist
> incidents, including the Lockerbie air disaster, and the issue of
> hostages held in Lebanon.

According to British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd on 28 November 1990 that "relations with Britain has been restored which were broken off in 1986 after a mis-handled attempt to sabotage an Israeli airliner at Heathrow". Further he stated that we have received from the Syrian Government assurances that Syria would continue its strenuous efforts to obtain the release of western, including British, hostages in Lebanon. A communiqué issued in Damascus on the same day stated, "Syria made it clear to Britain that Syria, and at the same time that it rejects acts of international terrorism and that it will take measures against those who commit such acts." In return, the British have promised to support the Syrian backed Harawi Government in Lebanon and to work to refurbish links between Damascus and the rest of Europe (*MEED*, 7 December 1990).

In the meanwhile, Japan had offered to provide fresh economic aid when Damascus paid off arrears estimated at about $ 20 millions on previous loans. The offer came during a 9-10 October visit to Damascus by Japanese Foreign Affair Minister Taro Nakayama (*MEED*, 19 October 1990: 38). A similar improvement took place in Syria's relations with the west European countries. The European Union began discussing the lifting of trade sanctions imposed on Syria in the late 1980s.

In November 1990, the Syrian media criticized US for its decision to supply emergency military aid to Israel. However, the arrival of 100 Syrian tanks and further 2500 troops at the Saudi Sea Port of Yanbu was a clear sign that despite the anger in Damascus over the extra US aid to Israel, Syria recognized that there could be no turning back as far as crisis was concerned (*MEED*, 9 November 1990: 2). This impression was reinforced when the Syrian Information Minister said:

> While the dispatch of the armored division to Saudi Arabia did not mean that Syria accepted increased American aid to Israel, we are committed to our national pledge to send troops to the Gulf. We will send more troops according to the desire of the Gulf States (*MEED*, 9 November 1990).

On 13 October 1990, when James Baker visited Damascus, President Assad apparently received the green light to move against the Maronite Christian General Michel Awn, who was the main rival of the Syrian leader. Syrian troops attacked Michel Awn's enclave around the Ba'abda Presidential place in Beirut. Michel Awn took refugee in the French Embassy and later went into exile in France. The United States had already advised with Israel not to intervene and allow the Syrian

troops and air force to go into action against Michel Awn.[8] The Bush administration remained silent about the atrocities and Human Rights violations committed by the Syrians troops. By and large, the United Stats needed Syria's help in forming the anti-Iraq Arab coalition to remove Iraq from Kuwait. On 23 November 1990, President. Bush met with President Assad in Geneva, the first such encounter between American and Syrian heads of states in 13 years. According to the American statement, "on the situation in the Gulf, the two Presidents agreed that Iraq's occupation of Kuwait is unacceptable". The leaders also" had an "extended conversation on the question of terrorism, agreeing to continue the US-Syrian dialogue with the goal of achieving positive results." On the Syrian side, Radio Damascus described the talks as "positive" and indicated that the two sides were indeed in agreement as far as the Iraq-Kuwait crisis was concerned, and that both the leaders had "stressed the importance of implementing the emergency Arab Summit resolutions as well as the UN resolutions calling Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and a return to the status that prevailed there before the invasion"(*MEES,* 26 November 1990). Syria's key role in the anti-Iraqi coalition gave Damascus a whole range of options.

However, it became apparent that Syria's participation in the US-led coalition force was transforming its relations with the west. By the beginning of December an estimated 20,000 Syrian troops had been deployed in Saudi Arabia. On 29 November 1990, the United States won UN endorsement for use of force to evict Iraq from Kuwait when the Security Council approved by twelve votes to two

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[8]   *Radio. Damasucs.* 24 October 1990. 25 October 1990.

(Cuba and Yemen), with one abstention (China), Resolution 678. This resolution demanded:

1. "That Iraq comply fully with the Resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and decides, to allow Iraq one final opportunity, as a pause of good will to do so."

2. It also "authorized" member states cooperating with government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 January 1991 fully implements, as set forth in paragraph 1 above, the foregoing resolutions, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement Security Council Resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore peace and security in the area" (*MEES*, 3 December 1990, *MEI*, 17 December 1990: 8).

On 30 November 1990, Iraq rejected Resolution 678, claiming that it was "illegal and invalid" and insisting that "Kuwait was and would remain an integral part of Iraq". On 9 January 1991, Tareq Aziz met James Baker in Geneva. The meeting was seen by both sides as a "final attempt to prevent war". James Baker did his best to impress upon Tareq Aziz that the US coalition was determined to see through the task of removing Iraq from Kuwait. He reiterated his government's determination to "seek compliance with the United Nations Resolutions". Tareq Aziz refused to accept it and also reaffirmed that "Iraq would attack Israel if the coalition forces attacked them in Kuwait and Iraq". At the end of the six-hour meeting, James Baker issued a statement in which he stated that he "had heard nothing new" and that Iraq seemed as determined as ever to hold on to Kuwait.

On 12 January 1990, President Assad sent an open letter to President

Saddam Hussein, asking to him to withdraw from Kuwait and save the Arab world

from an impending war. He suggested that withdrawal would be in Arab as well as

Iraqi interests. He blamed Iraq for the "current difficult situation" in the Arab world

which resulted from the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait. President Assad

assured him that "if Iraq withdrew, then Syria would stand by it in case any attack

was launched and that Syrians would stand in the same trench as the Iraqis and the

two would fight together". The Syrian leader, thus, pleaded with Saddam Hussein

to" withdraw and thereby an end to the foreign interference which would be against

the Arab national interest". By this letter President Hafez al-Assad showed that

Syria's stand was in keeping with the greater interest only.[9]

Saddam Hussein rejected the message from President Assad. On the same

Day, both the houses of the US Congress voted in favour of U.S. led-coalition

forces being used to help liberate Kuwait. Meanwhile the Secretary General of the

United Nations arrived in Baghdad to meet with President Saddam Hussein. The

meeting was eventually held on the following day. It consisted of "a polite

exchange of views" but led to no possible solution (Casey and Vine 1992:154).

Finally, the US-led coalition forces, under the joint command of General

Norman Schwarzkopf and Prince Sultan ibn Abdul Aziz, Defense Minister of Saudi

Arabia were directed to undertake the military action necessary to achieve the

objective of the liberation of Kuwait. On 16 January 1991, "Operation Desert

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[9] *Radio, Damascus*, 12 Jan 1991, and see also Gazi, p. 86

Storm" began just before the midnight. In an attempt to disrupt the coalition forces, Iraq fired *Scud* missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia. By this tactic, Iraq tried to convince Arab countries that the coalition forces are fighting on Israel's side. However, the coalition remained steadfast and united in its demand for an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait.

On 17 January 1991, the Syrian media blamed the Iraqis for the war, one daily, *Tishreen,* reported:

> The responsibility for this catastrophic situation in Iraq and the Gulf
> region now is borne by Saddam Hussein personally and he should pay
> the price of all other crimes he committed against our people in Iraq
> and the other Arabs (*MEES,* 21 January 1991).

On 18 January 1991 Syrian Information Minister stated, "Syria's clear position is that it would not enter a war with Israel unless it was the one which began an attack on Arab countries. If Israel attacked Jordan and it was the first to launch the attack, or if it attacked Iraq in the same way, Syria would stand with any Arab country subjected to aggression". Following attacks by Iraqi *Scud* missiles on Israel, Syria warned Israel not to become militarily involved in the crisis and indicated that it might be obliged to withdraw from the US-led coalition forces in the event of an Israeli attack on an Arab state.

On 22 January 1991, another Syrian news paper, *al-Ba'ath,* reported, "Firing one or two missiles does not liberate Palestine and does not demolish the Zionist entity, but would strengthen Israel and lead to adding destructive weapons

to its arsenal". Immediately, the US provided massive support to Israel. On 30 January 1991, according to the *Damascus Daily*:

> it is true that the ruler of Baghdad is personally responsible for the catastrophe that has be fallen Iraq and the Arab world, but that does not mean that western Governments should take this as an excuse to pour their spite all at once on the Arab nation...the west's recent unlimited support for Israel is considered an aggression against Arabs, all Arabs.

Syria's suspicions about the support have been confirmed when Israeli President Chaim Herzog said bluntly, on 25 January 1991, "strange as it may seem, Saddam Hussein's missile attacks against Israel serve Israel's interest," because "today the world understands that we are a factor without whose participation no new order relating to us can succeed. In others words, in the post-war deliberations Israel's place and status at the negotiating table will be completely different (*MEES*, 4 February 1991).

On 15 February 1991, Iraq announced that it was ready to accept UN Security Council Resolution 660 and withdraw its forces from Kuwait. This raised hopes that the war in the Gulf could be ended without any further bloodshed. The text was announced by the ruling *Revolutionary Command Council (RCC)*. It described this as a "necessary first step" which was "linked" to a number of other developments, including:

- A total cease-fire and the cancellation of all Security Council resolutions since the invasion of Kuwait.

- A withdrawal of all the coalition forces and material within one month of the cease-fire.

- Comprehensive UN guarantees of "Iraq's historic rights on land and at sea."

- Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, the Golan Heights and South Lebanon, and the application of UN resolutions similar to these adopted against Iraq if Israel refuses to do so.

- Political agreements in Kuwait "based upon the will of the people and their right to practice democracy and not on the basis of the rights acquired by the Al-Sabah family."

- The cancellation of all debts owed by Iraq and other countries in the region which have suffered from the war to the countries "which have participated in the aggression (*MEES*, 18 February 1991).

In the West, the initial reaction was deeply skeptical and within six hours after the announcement, US president George Bush had concluded "regrettably, the Iraqi statement now appears to be a cruel hoax". The White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was "clearly trying to manipulate some body here, but it is not clear what his purpose is?[10]

The dramatic announcement in Moscow on 22 February 1991, that Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz had given a "positive" response to peace proposals by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev climaxed a week of "last-ditch" maneuvering

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[10] *MEES*, 18 February 1991. And see also, the text of the statements issued on 15 February 1991, by the *Iraqi Revolutionary Command* was carried by the *Iraqi News Agency (MEES* translated it from the Arabic).

to avoid a full- scale ground offensive by the US- led coalition forces to liberate

Kuwait. According to Soviet spokesman, Vitaly Ignatenko, after "through

discussion and exchange of views" the two sides came to the conclusion that it was

possible "to find a way out of the military conflict in the Persian Gulf" along the

following lines (*MEES*, 25 February1991):

- Iraq announces a full, unconditional withdrawal of its forces from Kuwait.

- The withdrawal of forces begins on the day after the cessation of hostilities.

- The withdrawal of forces will take place during a fixed period.

- Immediately after the ceasefire, all prisoners of war will be released.

- After the withdrawal of two-thirds of all the Iraqi forces, the economic
  sanctions envisaged by the UN will cease to apply.

- The withdrawal of forces would be monitored by countries not taking part
  in the conflict, mandated to do so by the UN Security Council.

- After the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait has ended the reasons
  for the corresponding Security Council resolutions will cease to exist, and
  therefore these resolutions will cease to be effective.

U.S. President George Bush said that after examining the "Moscow

statement" and discussing it with my "senior advisors" and after "extensive

consultations" with our coalition partners, I have decided that the "time has come

to make public with specificity just exactly what is required of Iraq if a ground war

is to be avoided". Most important, the coalition will give Saddam Hussein "until

noon Saturday to do what he must do begin his immediate and unconditional

withdrawal from Kuwait". We must hear publicly and authoritatively his acceptance of these terms.[11]

On 24 February 1991, after all the destruction which had taken place in Kuwait, and after the coalition ground offensive had begun to liberate Kuwait. The Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Mr. Churpin, read a statement. Indicating that the Soviet Government regretted that "a real chance to solve the conflict peacefully and achieve the goals set by UN Security Council resolutions has been missed" (Casey 1992: 155). On the evening of 25 February 1991 the "Iraqi army began pulling out of Kuwait in a state of mounting panic". The next day, the *defacto* withdrawal was made official by a "broadcast given by Saddam Hussein and the Kuwaiti Resistance movement" was in full control of the city.

On 27 February 1991, President Bush addressed the American people and the world: "Kuwait is librated; Iraq's army is defeated; our military objectives are met. This is not a time for excited happiness, certainly not a time to triumph, but it is a time of pride …this is a victory for all mankind and for the rule of law" (Casey 1992: 161).

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[11] *MEES*, 25 February 1991, and see also, the text of the *Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council* Statement of 15 February 1991, (MEES translated it from Arabic).

Chapter III

Syria's response: Rationale and Motivations

Syria's Response: Rationale and Motivations

Syria's President Hafez al-Assad introduced a new style of leadership in the country. He was a realist, as opposed to being an ideologue. He pursued a pragmatic approach in running the country. His pragmatism greatly benefited Syria as the country rose to prominence beyond its economic or military might. According to Christopher Dickey, "President Assad never completely embraced his allies, and never definitively broke all contact with his enemies. He was master of suspense and a Hitchcock of policy" in a complex and unforgiving environment (Ismael 2001: 250). President Assad was cautious but never hesitated to use ruthless means in pursuing his goals. Nevertheless, the cautious and calculating nature of President Assad's presidency enabled Syria to maneouver out of many difficult situations. He seized many opportunities to further Syrian national interests. As a result, Syrian foreign policy under Assad became controversial many a times.

(A) Syria and the Changes at the International Level

After the end of the Iran- Iraq war, Syria's regional isolation and concerns about the reliability of Soviet support compelled the President Assad to review his policies. President Assad was commonly known as the Sphinx of Damascus. He was one of "those few statesmen having a prefect sense of history and the timing". His moves are very "calculative" and he

prepares his ground "without haste," very meticulously. He was "shrewed enough to gauge the direction and force of the tides of world politics" (Pradhan 2003: 175). One important outcome of such ability was the resumption of diplomatic ties with Egypt in 1989. The rapprochement signaled a major "geopolitical realignment" within the Arab World. The fact was that he was ready to explore new approaches to resolving the dispute with Israel. Evidently, President Assad calculated that involving Egypt on Syria's side would strengthen his hand in the peace process and open the door to improved relations with the United States (Drysdale 1993: 276). He also hoped that an alliance with Egypt would counter growing Iraqi power following the end of the Iran-Iraq War.

President Assad's regime was more adversely affected than any other regime in West Asia by the end of the Cold War. When the Soviet Union collapsed, President Assad felt deeply threatened by these changes. In a speech on 17 May 1990, he warned:

> What is coming seems to be more dangerous and far more destructive. And those who do not prepare themselves to counter the approaching deadly monsters will be destroyed by these monsters...there is something new in the World that we must not ignore or neglect (*FBIS-NES*, 17 May 1990: 27-28).

The profound shift in Soviet Union policies under President Mikhail Gorbachev seriously undermined Syria's credibility as a regional power. The Soviet Union made it clear that the relationship had changed fundamentally

and there were limits to its backing. In April 1987, Gorbachev told the President Assad, during a visit to Moscow, that he would not support Syria's quest for strategic parity with Israel, which could not succeed. He also openly persuaded President Assad to seek a political solution with Israel, remarking pointedly "the reliance on military force in settling the Arab-Israel conflict has completely lost its credibility (Karsh 1988: 92).

In September 1989, the Soviet ambassador, during a visit to Damascus stated that Syria's requests for military assistance for the next five year were being "scrutinized critically" and that "if there are any changes, they will be in favour of reductions because the Syrian Governments ability to pay is not unlimited". In the past, he noted pointedly, Syria had paid for its weapons "may be not to the full extent" (Drysdale 1993: 280). But, the Soviet Union was willing to support a doctrine of "reasonable defensive sufficiency," providing Syria with the means to deter Israel from attacking. Therefore, the Soviet Union indicated that it would not support any Syrian attempt to reclaim the Golan Heights through military action. Thus, Syria lost its military option.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union was steadily improving its relations with Israel under Gorbachev. President Assad was very much concerned about the Soviet-Israel relations. Gorbachev concluded that West Asia would no longer be a region of Super Power confrontation and that the Soviet Union could win more influence in the World if it presented itself as a

peace maker. Improving relations with Israel was essential if it was to play a constructive role (Drysdale 1993: 281). Subsequently, high-level contacts took place between the two countries. In September 1990, Moscow agreed to reestablish consular ties, and permitted the resumption of direct Airline flights to Tel Aviv in October 1990. Full diplomatic relations were restored in October 1991, following Israel's agreement to attend the Peace Conference in Madrid, sponsored by both the Soviet Union and the US (Drysdale 1993: 281). A particularly sore point for the President Assad was Moscow's easing of emigration restrictions for Soviet citizens, which resulted in a massive influx of Soviet Jews into Israel. President Assad felt betrayed that its Supporter and ally was supplying its foremost adversary with the "demographic means to consolidate its control over occupied Arab territories and with the opportunity to widen farther its technological superiority" over its neighbours. This was the worst nightmare for President Assad. Because, US supplied Israel with money and arms and the Soviet Union provided it with people.

The collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe also had far- reaching consequences for Syria. All of the Eastern European countries restored diplomatic relations with Israel, leaving Syria "stunned and anxious". President Assad, in March 1990, complained that Israel had been "the main beneficiary among all world nations from the international changes which have taken place". Had anyone predicted ten years previously that

"Israel would achieve such success in the socialist bloc countries?" He lamented, "How different is the situation today from yesterday" (*FBIS-NES,* 9 March 1990: 34).

(B) Syria's Response

The end of Cold War clearly signalled the declining power of the Soviet Union and the unquestioned supremacy of the US-the only remaining Super Power. President Assad was in search of an opportunity to exploit the changing international power equation in its favour. The Iraq invasion of Kuwait probably provided that opportunity.

On 2 August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, President Assad got an opportunity to play active role in regional politics. At that time, Syria was the first country among the Arab world which condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and demanded "immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of Iraqi troops from the Kuwait territory. President Assad denounced deliberately Iraqi move in Kuwait because Saddam Hussein was the main enemy of Assad. In the mean time, President Assad called the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to seek a political solution for the Kuwaiti problem. He viewed the crisis as a "fundamental threat" to the Arab regional system. He believed that Saddam Hussein violated the "basic-codes" of inter Arab relations and thereby exposed the area to the "danger of foreign intervention". Further, he argued that Saddam Hussein "dragged the Arabs

into a side of conflict" and he should have focused on Israel instead of Kuwait.

President Assad fully supported all the anti-Iraq resolutions passed by UN Security Council and at the Arab summit. At the U.N. Summit, Saudi Arabia requested to Untied States for the military support. Immediately the United States sent its troops to protect Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. But President Assad did not want the foreign intervention in the Gulf Region. He argued that Iraq-Kuwait crisis was an Arab-Arab problem and should be resolved by the Arab countries, not by foreign intervention.

At the Arab Summit in Cairo, President Assad promised King Fahd that he would help him and defend his territory. Consequently, first Syrian forces arrived in Saudi Arabia on 21 August 1990. President Assad justified the move with the following arguments.

- "Syrian forces would protect the holy places in Saudi Arabia".

- "As a Pan-Arab act, their presence would help prevent further fragmentation of the Arab states".

- "Arab forces would gradually replace the foreign forces already in the Gulf" (Lesch 1991: 41).

President Assad firmly blamed Iraq for this painful situation, stating at the summit:

The foreigners who came to the region were not responsible for the event; the event brought them to the region. If we want these foreigners to be out as soon as possible, we have to find a solution to these events... So we might not leave a pretext... (for them to remain) as unwanted guests.[12]

The Iraq-Kuwait crisis created a situation in which the United States and Syria found themselves, on a common ground. President Assad aligned himself with the Untied States and sent Syrian troops to the Gulf to fight against an Arab State. Where the US needed Syria's participation in the anti-Iraq coalition, Syria needed US support to curb Saddam Hussein.

President Assad indulged in a dangerous gamble when he joined hands with the US. He adopted this policy without any debate and discussion within the country. When, Syria took the decision to join the anti-Iraq coalition it created an internal problem in Syria. Because, in the earlier times, Syria's propaganda and educational systems had portrayed the US Government as a hostile, imperialistic power which was dangerous to the Arab nation and to Syria (Eppel 1999: 221). Now the government had to explain the change in the approach, whereby Syria became an ally of the United States. The Assad regime had no convincing answers to questions posed by young students and soldiers about the policy shift. The army officers were also perplexed. President Assad himself gave an explanation on 12 September 1990 by stating that once Iraq withdrew from Kuwait, Syria

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[12] *Radio Damascus*, 20 August 1990, as reported in *FBIS-NES*, 21 August 1990, P.41.

would join an "Arab peace keeping force" in Kuwait that would also "provide a buffer" between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. US forces would leave and the Arab Governments could resolve the remaining issues among themselves. Thus, President Assad took a very crucial decision at the right time to stand along with the Untied States. By this policy shift, Syria succeeded in isolating Iraq from the regional politics and improved its relations with Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Rewards for Syrian response poured in when Saudi Arabia "pumped" in the first installment of "one billion dollars and Kuwait added half of this amount".

During the crisis, Saddam Hussein sent an open letter to the Iranian President Hashmi Rafsanjani to seek a political support against anti-Iraq coalition forces in the gulf. This is because Iran was also opposed to the United States and President Rafsanjani was aware of the American threat to regional security. At the same time, Syria visited Iran and played an important role in getting Iran's support for the anti-Iraq coalition or at least securing assurance from Iran that "Tehran would remain neutral and refrain from aiding Iraq in its struggle against the United States and its Arab allies" (Eyal 2001: 56). Thus, President Assad exploited his special relations with Iran by trying to ensure that it would not weaken the unity of the coalition forces.

Had Iran accepted the Iraqi proposal for political support during the crisis the situation would have become very critical for Syria as well as the

anti-Iraq coalition. Thus, President Assad out manoeuvre Saddam Hussein and left him alone to fight with the coalition forces.

As President Assad joined the anti-Iraq coalition under US leadership, one witnessed a great improvement of Syria's image in the Western countries. The Soviet Union renewed its support and the European Community promised a resumption of assistance to Syria. The European Union began discussing the lifting of trade sanctions imposed on Syria. Further, President Assad saw several potential benefits for his country if the US removed Syria from its blacklist, as a state that supported terrorist groups. Then, Syria's access to US "commercial credits and advanced technology" would be possible" (Lesch 1991: 42). In addition, due to the crisis, Syria improved its relations with the West and received huge financial support, in return of Syria's participation in the anti-Iraq coalition.

President Assad also sought to place himself in a leading position in the regional context in order to resolve the fundamental issues. Syria hoped to utilize its alliance with Saudi Arab and Egypt to press for a comprehensive agreement with Israel that would restore Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights and resolve the Palestinian question in a manner acceptable to Syria (Lesch 1991: 42).

In Lebanon, both the Syrian President and his Iraqi counterpart had here strategic interests. President Assad clearly believed that Lebanon was the historical part of Syria. Further, he stated that the Lebanese and Syrians

"are one single people, one single nation... The feeling of Kinship...runs deeper than it does between states in the Untied States."[13] In this respect, he reflected the views of most Syrians not most Lebanese. Nevertheless, President Assad viewed Lebanon is "primarily in strategic, not irredentist" terms. He considered it's a buffer between Syria and Israel. The Kuwait Crisis deflected Iraq's attention from Lebanon and weakened Iraqi support to the Maronite Christian General Michel Awn. Syria took full opportunity of this new situation and allowed its troops to break the political and military "log-jam" in Lebanon (Mathew 1993: 67). Since, Syria was supporting the Untied States against Iraq; President Assad's action in Lebanon was not opposed by the Americans. In fact, there was a tacit deal between Syria and the US by which the former was allowed a 'free hand' in Lebanon. This enabled Syria to establish its domination in Lebanon. The Lebanese army was able to establish its control over the territory with the help of Syrian forces. Lebanon also signed the "Brotherhood coordination and corporations" treaty with Syria (Pradhan 2003: 176). When, Syrian troops ousted General Michel Awn from Lebanon thus ended Iraqi intervention in Lebanon's politics.

On 12 January 1991, President Assad sent an open letter to Saddam Hussein asking him to accept the UN resolutions and withdraw its troops from Kuwait in "the interests of the Arab nations". Even, he committed Syria

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[13] Drysdale, P.286, and see also, *New York Times*, 4 December 1983.

to supporting Iraq if it suffered an attack after withdrawing from Kuwait.[14]

President Assad did not expect that Saddam Hussein would accept his

appeal, because of long history of animosity between the two. Had Saddam

Hussein accepted the U.S. demand for a full and unconditional withdrawal

from Kuwait, that would have severely dented the Iraqi leader's image and

would have amounted to military defeat on the battlefield (Eyal 2001: 58).

Therefore the letter was basically part of a propaganda aimed at the Syrian

domestic evidence.

Syrian participation in the war was at first limited to artillery

exchanges, and that too only in response to an Iraqi attack on Syrian

positions. Syrian cannon deliberately missed the Iraqi targets assigned to

them. Later Syrian forces did engage with retreating Iraqi forces in Kuwait

but not in Iraq itself.[15] Despite the low profile of the Syrian troops in the

war, the fact remained that they sided with the United States in a war against

an Arab state.

Syria was in deep trouble when Iraq launched *Scud* missile against

Israel. Syria found itself side by side with Israel as part of anti-Iraq coalition

force. At the same time, the US provided economic, military and political

support to Israel to meet the missile attacks. Subsequently, the US sent

Patriot surface-to-air missile units to Israel to intercept and destroy the *Scuds*

in the air and for the first time members of the US armed forces were sent to

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[14] *Radio Damascus,* 12 January 1991,

[15] *International Herald Tribune (Hyderabad)* 6 Feb 1991, and also see, Eyal, P.59

operate the Patriot units and help defend the Jewish State (Rabil 2006: 89). President Assad criticized the US support to Israel and stated that it didn't mean that US Government should take this as "an excuse to pour their spite" all that once on the Arab nation (*MEES*, 21 January 1991: 11). This unlimited support for Israel was considered as an aggression against the Arabs. Besides that, President Assad warned Israel not to be become militarily involved in the crisis. He cautioned that in the event of an Israeli attack on an Arab state, Syria might be obliged to withdraw its troops from the US-led coalition forces. Syrian Vice President Abd–al–Halim Khaddam and the Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara categorically stated that they would not let Iraq involve in a war against Israel. They said, moreover, that if Israel retaliated against Iraq, this would lead to a change in Syria's position (Eyal 2001: 61). In any case, President Assad was worried about the balance of power between Syria and Israel, because while Syria sought strategic parity with Israel. The US support only strengthened Israel's position vis-à-vis Syria.

(C) The Damascus Declaration

The establishment of an Egypt-Syria-GCC States group in response to the crisis triggered the speculation about the emergence of a new Arab Order. It was argued that the combined strength of the Arabian Peninsula's Oil wealth and Egyptian and Syrian military power and political influence would create a "new framework for stability and security" in the region (Drysdale

1993: 283-84). The Damascus Declaration of 6 March 1991 gave formal expression to such intentions and signaled the so-called Group of Eight's plan to create a more permanent security structure in West Asia. According to the Damascus Declaration on regional security and economic cooperation, in the wake of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, the Foreign Ministers of the Arab States of the coalition reached an agreement on Post-war defense arrangements in the Gulf, which included the establishment of an Arab peace-keeping force. "The nucleus of this force was to be the Egyptian and Syrian troops which had been deployed in the gulf during the crisis". The Damascus Declaration, agreed upon by the eight participating states, was "originally seen as the cornerstone of a new Arab Order".[16]In return for their contributions to the troops, Syria and Egypt were to receive substantial financial assistance from the GCC States. However, the future of the new arrangement became uncertain when in May 1991; President Mubarak decided to withdraw Egyptian troops from Saudi Arabia.

The signatories to the Damascus Declaration met again in July 1991 in Kuwait but ultimately failed to reach an agreement on the formation of a joint security force. More important, the GCC States were reluctant to rely on Syrian and Egyptian forces, whose performances during the Iraq-Kuwait crisis were far from impressive. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia easily convinced the other GCC States to on this matter. The GCC states supported the idea of

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[16] The text of the agreement was translated from Arabic in *Midaest Mirror*. 6 March 1991, and see also, *Journal of Palestine studies*. v.22, N-4, 1993, p.161.

Syrian and Egyptian troops coming to the Gulf States aid in the time of need, as they had in 1990-1991, but they refused to support their presence on a permanent basis, favouring only adhoc arrangements (Weitzman 1995: 114-15).

Nevertheless, the Damascus Declaration was fully in keeping with Syria's long term strategy whereby Syria could deploy its forces in the region for a long period and President Assad could lead the Arab world.

(D) The Madrid Peace Conference

When the Iraq-Kuwait crisis ended, the United States launched a Peace Conference aimed at resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Peace Conference was in fact the outcome of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. On 6 Mach 1991, President Bush stated that a comprehensive peace must be based on the UN Security Council "Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of territory for peace". This principle must be elaborated to provide for "Israeli security and recognition" and at the same time for "legitimate Palestinian political rights..." The time has come to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict (Rabil 2006: 92).

Secretary of States James Baker visited Damascus and he was trying to find a way to get Syria into the negotiating table with Israel. On 1 June 1991, President Bush sent a letter to Syria outlining his proposals for convening a Peace Conference. On 14 July 1991, after six weeks of

deliberation and intense consultation with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, President Assad characterized the US proposals as "positive and constructive" and agreed that Syria would attend the proposal an international Peace Conference. He also showed willingness to open direct bilateral talks with Israel. He did so because he believed that, in the wake of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, the United States was serious about achieving a comprehensive settlement on all fronts including the Golan Heights based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

The Bush administration engaged Syria as a key participant in the Peace Conference. President Assad also recognized that the United States held all the cards after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Union. He calculated that he had a better opportunity than ever before to regain the Golan Heights through diplomacy as there was no scope for achieving the same through military means. The 1675 sq. km. Golan height, a rocky, largely tree less plateau, was captured by Israel from Syria during the 1967 war. Ever since, this became the bone of contention between the two countries. In July 1991, he received a personal massage from Gorbachev. The Soviet President made it clear that it would be in the greater interest of Syria to go along with the US in seeking a diplomatic solution through negotiation with Israel (Pradhan 2003: 177). Thus, President Assad accepted US proposal to attend the Peace Conference in Madrid.

President Assad's acceptance of the American peace initiative forced Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, to attend the Peace Conference. It needs to be mentioned here that Shamir was strongly opposed to the idea of negotiating with Syria on territorial compromise.

The Peace Conference started on 30 October 1991 in Madrid. Syria's participation in the peace process was a "win-win" decision. On the one hand, it could show the world that it was not "impeding peace", while throwing the ball in "Israeli's court". If Israel did not join the Peace Conference, it would appear to be the party impeding peace in the region. In concrete terms, by participating in the conference Syria hoped to retrieve the Golan Heights. At the Same time, Syria would work on improving its relations with the United States while placing the implementation of United Nation Resolutions 242 and 338 in the American hands (Rabil 2006: 95).

Syria always insisted that the return of the Golan Heights was going to be the key point of negotiation with Israel. For the Syrians, recovery of the Golan Heights was a matter of national honor. It was a *sine quo non* for a peaceful settlement with Israel (Pradhan 2003: 178-79).However, the question that remained unanswered after the Madrid Peace Conference was how long would Syria continue to talk with Israel if the Golan Heights really were non negotiable (from an Israeli perspective)?

Chapter IV

An Assessment of Syrian Position

An Assessment of Syrian Position

The Iraq-Kuwait Crisis brought many opportunities for President Hafez al-Assad and strengthened Syria's position both at the regional as well as international levels. Further, President Assad emerged as a key player in the regional politics. He took an anti-Iraq stand to get closer to the US and obtain the support of the Gulf countries.

As said earlier, immediately after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, President Assad denounced the act and demanded "immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Further, at the Arab League summit, when Saudi Arabia's King Fahd requested to President Assad to protect his country from a possible Iraqi attack. The latter accepted the Saudi request and sent his troops to protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

At the International level, President Assad supported the anti-Iraqi coalition forces which led by the United States. Through this action, the Syrian leader sought to use the Iraq-Kuwait crisis as a tool to improve Syria's diplomatic relations with the western countries. On the one hand, Syria improved its relations with the Gulf countries and received substantial financial support. On the other hand, Syria restored its diplomatic relations with the United States

and with the European Countries and received diplomatic, strategic support from them.

(A) Assad's Expectations

President Assad's decision to support the US-led coalition against Iraq surprised many. But it was "the culmination of the practice of *realpolitic*" (Nasrallah 1991: 20). The Syrian President took the decision with lot of expectations which are enumerable below.

- Syria would return into Arab regional politics and then would be able to restore its position both at the regional as well as international levels.

- Syria's support to the Gulf countries, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, could bring substantial financial support from these countries, which would be of great help to the Syrian economy which has not in a very good condition.

- Syria would get an opportunity to lead the Arab world.

- Syria would be able to isolate its long-time enemy, Iraq, from the Arab regional politics.

- A comprehensive solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on terms acceptable for Syria could be possible. In other words, Syria could regain the strategic Golan Heights from Israeli occupation.

- An assurance from the United States for Syrian security. In other words, a guarantee from the Bush administration that Israel would not attack Syria during the crisis, and probably even after.

- A *rapprochement* with the United States. Resulting in the restoration of friendly relations between the two countries. The normalization of with the US would not only remove Syria from the terrorist list but also enable it to achieve advanced American technology for the country's development.

- The Iraq-Kuwait Crisis would indicate his policy of consistently in opposing Saddam Hussein and backing Iran in the eight-year long war.

- He would get a chance to play a greater role in the resolving the Arab-Israel conflict.

His decision to side with the US did bring many short-term gains.

(B) Assad's short-term Gains

- Syria's immediate reward for supporting the coalition was the US "green light" to take over Lebanon. Syria received tacit US backing for the elimination of its main rival, General Michel Awn, from Lebanon.

- US Secretary of state James Baker visited Syria in September 1990, which effectively ended Syria's isolation. For years, Syria had been isolated both regionally and internationally. With the, Syria hoped to play a key role on the Gulf region.

- President Assad regained the trust of the Arab states which were suspicious of his intentions regarding Lebanon.

- The Gulf States needed Syria and Egypt in the new regional order. Subsequently, Syria's position in the Gulf region became very clear through the Damascus Declaration.

- Syria's diplomatic relations with the UK were restored.

- The economic sanctions imposed on Syria by the European community were lifted.

- In March 1991, an agreement for technical, economic and trade cooperation between Syria and the UAE was signed, and a plan for economic development worth $ 13bn was drawn up by the GCC (*MEI*, 22 March 1991: 21).

- Syria received generous economic assistance from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait amounting around $2.5 billion dollar which greatly improved its economic conditions.

- Syria's status in the Arab world as a whole improved.

- Syria's diplomatic ties with Egypt improved dramatically.

- Syria acquired *Scud-C* surface-to- surface missile, with a range of 600 km., from North Korea. These missile enabled Syrians to establish a "balance of terror" with Israel (Eyal 2001: 64).

(C) Assad's failure

- The Iraq-Kuwait crisis exposed the schism and factionalism in the Arab world.

- The action of the coalition forces also damaged Arab assets which Hafez al-Assad needed in the struggle against the "Zionist enemy".

- Syria's participation in the US-led coalition forces did not bring any improvement in the security scenario vis-à-vis Israel. In other words, Israel continued to look a threat to Syria.

- Disagreement between Syria and the U.S administration continued focusing on the issue of Syria sponsoring terrorist organizations and it violation of human rights by the Assad regime.

- The Arab world did not show any unified front in the Madrid Peace talks. Further, neither the European countries nor the US showed any interest in sustaining the Peace talks after the ceremonial gathering at Madrid: such initiative by the western powers ensured Israeli intransigence.

- In concrete terms, Syria did not get any clear guarantee from the US for the return of the Golan Heights to Syrian hands. As a result, Golan Heights issue remains unresolved till today.

- The basic rationale behind President Assad's gamble was that the US would fulfill its promise to the Arab allies that the issue of the occupation

of Arab lands would be resolved on the bases of UN resolution on the time of the Iraq-Kuwait Crisis, the gamble did nit work.

- He had also viewed that the participation in the coalition force would provide an opportunity to Syria in filling the power vacuum once American forces withdrew, this did not happen.

- The Damascus Declaration was fully in keeping with Syria's long–term strategic interests, whereby Syria could deploy its forces in the region for a long period, and President Assad could lead the Arab world. But the Declaration was a non-starter.

- Syria participated in 'Madrid Peace Conference' in October 1991, and engaged in direct, face-to-face negotiations with Israel to regain Golan Heights. But these negotiations ultimately failed.

- The emergence of the United States from the war as the unchallenged and supreme victor left no room Syrian strategic manoeuvres. So Syria will have to "put up and shut up" (Nasrallah 1991: 21). In other words, the victory of the US went against Syrian long-term calculations in the regions.

- Even after the crushing defeat of Iraqi forces. President Saddam Hussein continued to remain in power; this time virulently opposed the Assad regime.

(D) Final Outcome

The Iraq-Kuwait crisis brought many benefits for Syria and also restored its position both at the regional as well as international levels. Before the Crisis, Syria was isolated from the Arab regional politics, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; Syria entered into the regional politics and emerged as a key player. It also restored its relations with the Gulf countries. In return, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait provided huge financial support to Syria. At the international level, Syria received strategic and diplomatic support from the United States. This was despite the fact that Syria had been long regarded as a country supporting terrorism. Syria also received strategic assistance from the West. However, Syria improved its position at the international level and become a staunch ally of the Untied States only for a brief period.

However, Syria's response to the Iraq-Kuwait crisis was guided by *realpolitik* compulsions in the context of the emerging New World Order. President Hafez al-Assad adopted a pragmatic policy keeping in view of Syria's national interests. But, his pragmatism bought only short-term gains which remained far short of President Assad's long-term strategic calculations and expectations. On many counts, the Syrian leader failed to achieve his desired objectives, the most important bring the non-implementation of the Damascus Declaration that would have ensured Syria's predominant role in

the regional security structure and, of course the recovery of the Golan

Heights from Israel.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Conclusion

When the Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad condemned the Iraqi move and demanded "immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. At the Arab league summit in Cairo on 3 August 1990, President Assad fully supported the Arab majority and thereby rehabilitated himself in mainstream regional politics.' Further, at the Cairo summit on 10 August 1990, the shift became clear when the President Assad, together with other Arab states, succeeded in getting a series of anti-Iraq resolutions passed. In the wake of this resolution, President Assad also dispatched Syrian troops to Saudi Arabia for its security as part of an "Arab deterrent force".

The Syrian–Egyptian relations gradually improved when both the countries adopted similar stances on regional issues. Further, on 28 August 1990, President Assad visited Alexandria for discussion with President Hosni Mubark on the "military build up in the Gulf region". The *rapproachement* between Syria and Egypt benefited both the countries, because, after a long time, both the countries returned into mainstream Arab regional politics.

Relations between Syria and the US also improved dramatically when the two countries apparently discovered same ground. On 13 September 1990, US Secretary of state James Baker visited Damascus to meet President Assad.

Subsequently, one witnessed a major shift in Syria's foreign policy when it decided to join the anti-Iraq coalition forces led by the US. The improvement in Syria-US relations had its positive impact Syria's relationship with other countries. For instance, in October 1990 diplomatic relations between Syria and Britain were restored. Japan offered to provide fresh economic aid to Damascus. Further, a similar improvement took place in Syria's relations with the West European countries. The European Union not only promised resumption of assistance but also began discussing the lifting of trade sanctions imposed on Syria on the late 1980s.

The US decision to supply emergency military aid to Israel created some uncomfortable moments between Syria and the US. The Syrian media criticized when the US decision. However, this did not any way change President Assad's pro-US stance in the Iraq-Kuwait Crisis. Syria recognized that "there can be no turning back" as far as the Crisis was concerned, President Assad dispatched its armored division to Saudi Arabia and stated that "it did not mean that Syria accepted increased American did to Israel, we are committed to our national pledge to send troops to the Gulf".

When James Baker again visited Damascus on 13 October 1990, President Assad apparently received the green signal to move into Lebanon against the Maronite General Michel Awn. Syrian troops attacked Michel Awn's enclave and the Bush administration remained silent about the atrocities and Human Rights violations committed by the Syrian troops. This

was because the United States needed Syria's help in forming the anti-Iraq Arab coalition force to remove Iraq from Kuwait. More significantly President Bush met with the Syrian leader in Geneva in November 1990. Thus, it became clear that Syria's participation in the US-led coalition force was transforming its relations with the West.

On 29 November, 1990, the United Nation Security Council passed Resolution 678 which authorized the use of force to evict Iraq from Kuwait. Iraq was given an ultimatum to withdraw its troops from Kuwait on or before 15 January 1991 or face consequences. Iraq rejected Resolution 678 and claimed that it was "illegal and invalid". On the contrary, Iraq insisted that "Kuwait was and would remain and integral part of Iraq".

Syria fully endorsed Resolution 678 and justified the ultimatum given to Iraq. In this regard, President Assad had personal initiative to convince Saddam Hussein. On 12 January 1991, President Assad sent an open letter to Saddam Hussein, asking him to withdraw from Kuwait and save the Arab world from an impeding war. President Assad sought to persuade Saddam Hussein that Iraq's occupation of Kuwait benefited only Israel. However, The Iraqi leader rejected the Syrian counsel.

Finally, "Operation Desert Storm" began on 16 January 1991, which was led by US-led coalition forces against Iraq. In response, Iraq fired *Scud* Missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia in an attempt to create division within the coalition forces. This was because the military involvement of Israel in any

conflict in the region had been a highly sensitive issue. Syria faced a very delicate situation. However, President Assad handled the issue deftly and thereby foiled Saddam Hussein's designs. On the one hand, Syria condemned the Iraqis for the war and asserted that President Saddam Hussein was personally the responsible for this catastrophic situation in Iraq and the Gulf region and he should pay the price of all other crimes he committed against our people in Iraq and the other Arabs. On the other hand, when Iraq fired *Scud* Missiles on Israel, Syria warned Israel not to become militarily involved in the Crisis. It implied that in the event of an Israeli attack on an Arab state (Iraq), Syria would have no option but to withdraw from the coalition. Thus, Syria was able to keep its troops in the US-led forces evenwhile keeping away Israel from the Crisis in the region.

From the above, it became clear that President Assad was a realist and pursued a pragmatic approach to promote Syria's natural interests under the new circumstances. His main objective was to regain the Golan Heights. His pragmatism greatly benefited Syria as the country rose to prominence beyond its economic might. Syria's decision to join the anti-Iraq coalition marked a strategic shift in the country's foreign policy. This shift was the result of President Assad understands of the new ground realities.

The profound shift in the Soviet Union's policies seriously undermined Syria's credibility as a regional power. President Gorbachev made it clear that "the relationship had changed fundamentally and there were limits to its

backing and would not support Syria's quest for strategic parity with Israel, which could not succeed". He also openly persuaded President Assad to seek a political solution to the conflict with Israel, remarking pointedly that reliance on military force as a method of settling "the Arab–Israeli conflict has completely lost its credibility". Therefore, President Gorbachev indicated that "it will not support any Syrian attempt to reclaim the Golan Heights through military action". Thus, Syria lost its military option.

In contrast, President Assad noticed a steadily improvement in Soviet–Israel relations, which naturally became a matter of grave concern. In September 1990, Moscow agreed to reestablish consular ties and permitted the resumption of direct airline flights to Tel Aviv in the following months. In addition, the collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe also had far-reaching consequences for Syria. All of the Eastern European countries restored diplomatic relations with Israel, leaving Syria "stunned and anxious".

Under these changed circumstances at the international level, President Assad was searching for an opportunity to get the support of the lone surviving Super Power with which Syria had an antagonist relationship since long. Fortunately, the Iraq-Kuwait Crisis brought that much needed opportunity for Syria which not only increased the regional profile of President Assad but also paved the way for improved relations with the United States. Both Syria and the US found themselves on a common ground where confronting the Iraqi aggression. The US needed Syria's participation in the

anti-Iraq coalition Where Syria could not think of removing Saddam Hussein from power without US help. Syria indulged in a dangerous gamble, when he cast his lot with the US and decided this course of action without any debate and discussion within the country. Therefore, when Syria took the decision to join the anti–Iraq coalition this created an internal problem for the Assad regime. Now the head of the state had to explain the change in the approach, whereby Syria had joined the US camp. The regime had no convincing answers to questions posed by young students and soldiers about the policy shift. The army officers were also perplexed. However, because of the policy shift, Syria isolated Iraq from the regional politics and improved its relations with the Gulf countries particularly Saudi Arabia and the Kuwait. Syria was rewarded for it's policy by these two countries through substantial financial assistance.

According to the Damascus Declaration on "regional security and economic cooperation" in the wake of Iraq-Kuwait Crisis, the Foreign minister of the Arab states of the coalition reached an agreement on 6 March 1991, on the post-war defense arrangements" in the Gulf region, including an "Arab peace keeping force". The signatories to the Damascus Declaration met again in July 1991 in Kuwait but ultimately failed to reach an agreement on the formation of a "joint security force". Hence, the Damascus Declaration was fully in keeping with Syria's "long-term strategic interests", where by, Syria

could deploy its forces in the region for a long period and could lead the Arab world.

When the Iraq–Kuwait Crisis was over, the United States sponsored a Peace Conference aimed at resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict. President Assad also recognized that the United States "held all the cards" after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Union. He calculated that he had a better opportunity than ever before to recover the Golan Heights through diplomacy, since military solution was out of question. The Bush administration sought to engage Syria as a key participant in the Conference and President Assad accepted the US proposal to attend the Peace Conference. The Madrid Peace Conference was a landmark event, because for the first time, Syria engaged in direct, face-to-face negotiations with Israel to regain the Golan Heights.

But ultimately, the Madrid Peace Conference failed to reach an acceptable agreement between Syria and Israel. Despite the face-to-face negotiation with the Israel, Syria failed to regain the Golan Heights and the question of Golan Heights remained unresolved.

Thus, by joining the US-led coalition against Iraq, President Assad secured only short-term gains. The shift in the Syria's foreign policy did not bring any long-term benefits for the country as President Assad thought. However, Syria's response to the Iraq-Kuwait Crisis was guided by *realpolitik* compulsions in the context of emerging New World Order.

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