



The Extent to Which Ideational and Material Concerns Were Driving Factors in Saddam's Decision to Invade Kuwait

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper aims to theorize Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait in August 1990, which had a huge and changing impact on the Middle East, especially the Gulf region. Such an act of aggression was not influenced by one or two variables but a consequence of inter-Arab politics as well as a product of the international environment, which was dominated by a nation-state conflict. **Method:** This paper is mainly based on secondary sources, such as books and academic articles, for theorizing the stated objective and analyzing the internal and external implications of the study regarding the invasion. However, using primary sources or competing or emphasizing narratives on the Gulf War is impossible due to the limitations of the article. Instead, many best-known sources are cited because these materials have been carefully selected to reflect the position and ideology of Saddam during this particular time period. **Results:** The dominant discourse espoused from Iraq from the end of the Iran-Iraq war up to the invasion of Kuwait was the demonization of Gulf Arab states, especially Kuwait. Towards this end, the regime cited material interests as antagonism for the aggressive foreign policy move but these were imbued with ideational overtones. **Conclusion:** Saddam did not expect the armed response elicited by his invasion. Material gains from the invasion would be realized in the long-term, not immediately. It is possible that that Saddam miscalculated the American response with hindsight.

Keywords: Gulf crisis, Kuwait, Iraq, International relation, Modern history.

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Introduction

Theoretical Framework

The changing international system, intricacies of inter-Arab politics, and emerging domestic problems influenced the decision to invade Kuwait in 1990. Thus, setting a framework for the discussion of the causes of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is necessary. The debate between neorealists and constructivists is a key point of departure. These theories, which intend to elucidate the interaction between states in the international system, present pros and cons. These aspects will be discussed in an endeavor to reach an overall framework from which to launch the question.

Neorealists, as typified by Kenneth Waltz, (2010, p.62-71) portray the international system as one that imposes constraints and structures on individual states. In other words, a state should exhibit only a limited number of behaviors if it intends to survive. No higher international power controls states; however, state behavior is constrained by international structures, that is, the international system is characterized by an order of anarchy (Mearsheimer, 2007). Central to the neorealist thesis is power, which is the central concern of all states, whereas international relations are characterized by an endless battle to become the most powerful state from the military, economic, and political perspectives. States are not imbued with differences due to culture, history, or language, but all are, in essence, the same (Mearsheimer, 2007, p.74-76). Therefore, little room is reserved for individual agency as states will act the same regardless of the person in power or the prevailing governmental structure. Two branches are embedded within neorealism, namely, defensive realism and offensive realism. The first holds that pursuit of power is foolhardy because the international system will punish the state for gaining excessive power. The second posits that gaining as much power as possible and pursuing hegemony are in the best interests of the state (Mearsheimer, 2001; Schweller, 2008).

The bottom line of this discussion is state survival as the state is the sole unit of analysis with regard to international relations (Mearsheimer, 2007, p.47-50). In addition to the notion that states are rational actors, an underlying assumption exists that all states are the same and that material

concerns are the main indicators of state action and behavior (Mearsheimer, 2007). However, although material and power concerns may seemingly explain the aggression of several states and the outbreak of wars, neorealism fails to consider individual actors as well as the impact of history, culture, and ideology on state behavior. Constructivists endeavor to include the above-mentioned factors in the analysis of international relations by highlighting that international relations are but a social construction. Therefore, realities are different depending on domestic social ones (Fierke, 2007, p.166-180). Additionally, constructivists consider individual agency as a factor of international relations in response to the over-determination of structure in the neo-realist school of thought (Fierke, 2007). In essence, constructivism enables the analysis of the role of ideational factors in relations between states and highlights the importance of domestic politics, much like the liberal school, to the construction of foreign policy.

For its purposes, the paper holds that systems and subsystems are bound to the structural constraints of international systems, but are informed by historical and social influences, especially sub/regional systems. In other words, all states differ and do not constrain or determine the behaviors of individual actors in a holistic manner. Individual actors and personalities determine the behavior of states but, in general, within the rules of the system. That is, a government and its personalities influence the foreign policy of a state.

Another important point of the debate in discussion of the cause of Kuwait crisis is the assessment of whether ideational or material concerns were driving factors in Saddam's decision to invade. Neorealists purport that states are driven by material concerns and only enter conflict on the basis of their gain from it. However, considering material concerns as the only factor that influences state behavior is a reductionist view. Gerges (2018, p.144-156) suggested that ideology and beliefs also play a central role in shaping state and individual behaviors. Humankind is a product of history and the environment, which imbues humans with morals and values applied to daily living or major decisions at the political level. Material and ideational concerns are not mutually exclusive, and the two tend to coalesce and influence action.

Methodology

This paper is mainly based on secondary sources, such as books and academic articles, for theorizing the stated objective and analysing the internal and external implications of the study regarding the invasion. However, using primary sources or competing or emphasizing narratives on the Gulf War is impossible due to the limitations of the article⁽¹⁾. Instead, many best-known sources are cited because these materials have been carefully selected to reflect the position, vision, and ideology of Saddam during this particular time period. Furthermore, I rigorously re-visit a broad range of academic literature on the subject, including works from diverse disciplines, such as modern history, international relations, comparative politics, and security. An integral part of the paper addresses the explanation of policy input (i.e., factors influencing foreign policy making) and policy output (i.e., dimensions of political decision making). Specifically, the paper aims to establish patterns that provide an important basis for testing the explanations for Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait. Toward this end, the subject matter of the paper leads to the examination and analysis of Saddam's behavior at the time of the invasion as an individual tyrant figure because he was the sole political figure in decision making in Iraq from 1979 to 2003. As such, this concept will be viewed in the context of the interplay between material and ideational factors that led to the invasion. This article underscores an important point: throughout the course of the paper, emphasis will be consistently limited as much as possible to analysis instead of description. Perhaps I would add a word here about what this article does not seek. It absolutely does not seek to justify Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait or interpretation of his political actions to consolidate his rule. Nor does it intend to provide a psych political analysis of the invasion, nor elaborate on his domestic politics. My approach is to examine the ideational or material factors, within his tyrannical rule, that led him to make his unjustified decision to invade.

(1) In this article, I have not used historical documents because they have not been published yet in the local or global public archives. However, some of the best-known contemporary history books are included to grasp Saddam's catastrophic decision to invade Kuwait.

Contextualisation of Pre-Invasion Events

To analyse the causes of the conflict, a contextualisation of the run-up to and the invasion of Kuwait is necessary. Such contextualisation is in line with the assumption that social and historical visualizations and realities influence the behavior of states and individuals in their relations with the international community (Mearsheimer, 2001). The Iraqi state is central to any discussion of the invasion. Iraq and a few Arab states are frequently cited as archetypal “artificial states” within a regional system dominated, partly but not mainly, by Europe-created states (Long, 2004, p.8). The borders of formerly Ottoman areas were drawn by European powers, such as Britain and France, as a result of the mandate system that prevailed after World War One and as negotiated in the Sykes–Picot agreement (Gause, 2009b, p.16-32). The importation of the Euro-centric “modern state” to a region unfamiliar with and without history of such states led many scholars to conclude that these former Ottoman areas will always evolve and develop because they are non-naturally occurring modes of organization (Hourani, 1981; Gerges, 1994).

Iraq was created by the drawing of borders around three historic Ottoman territories, namely, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. These territories were home to diverse spectra of peoples, cultures, and religions with little similarities to bind them as one nation (Gause, 2009b, p. 3-9). Therefore, the nation–state module imported from Europe struggled to contend with a heterogeneous society. In other words, domestic politics were destined to be tainted by sectarian grievances. To address the problem of unity, successive Iraqi governments identified Arabism as a mean of uniting the ambiguous identity of Iraq (Hassan, 1999). The rhetoric of Arabism was central to politics in the Arab World since its foundation in the early 20th century and was one of the founding principles of the Ba’ath party, which ruled Iraq at the time of the invasion of Kuwait. Arabism lacked a concrete definition; however, the overarching association with Arabism was the desire to unite all Arabs as one nation–state. The feasibility of this initiative and the influence of Arabism were subjects of much debate. However, disregarding this aspect as a contributing factor to the identity of the Iraqi state and the Iraqi people and, therefore, a factor that influenced foreign policy, is impossible (Dawisha, 2003, p.166-170).

Many scholars have concluded that ruling Iraq will always require an iron fist, where the strong man rule by the minority group was the choice of the British (Aburish, 2000; Gerges, 2018). This concept resulted in many scholars concluding that Iraq is endemically violent; domestic politics was dominated by violence since Iraq's inception, and its power is gained and maintained via brute force and the army (Aburish, 2000; Gause, 2009b). Domestic politics is a factor in shaping foreign policy. One can say that violent domestic politics will manifest itself in violent foreign policy. However, this notion can be viewed as over-deterministic and a generalization of society in Iraq. However, Saddam was clearly a violent man, and as central to the formation of foreign policy, his personality directly affected the foreign actions of his state.

The governmental system of a country influences its domestic politics, which is inextricably linked to foreign policy decisions. Saddam, the Iraqi regime, and the Iraqi state can be used interchangeably due to the highly centralized and personalized rule in the totalitarian state. Although the Ba'ath party was the nominal leader of the one-party state, this designation belies the fact that the Abu Nasser clan from Tikrit, which forms Saddam's immediate family, occupied and dominated the highest positions of the Iraqi state apparatus. The reason for Saddam's reliance on family and clan is linked to the desire to maintain power (Hinnebusch, 2003, p.92-92). The narrow base of his innermost circle was an endeavor to enhance his power because these members lacked popular support or legitimacy for holding positions of power due to their familial link to Saddam. Therefore, they were unlikely to oppose or overthrow him (Khalidi, 1991; Tripp 1996). However, such a closed circle of ruling elite led to problems. The endemic corruption and narrow basis of support resulted in alienation from society and the need for a unifying ideology through which to seek legitimacy. Hassan (1999) found that Arabism was always a strong rallying cry for governments in the search for legitimacy in Iraq. Furthermore, this crisis of legitimacy was considered a cause of the invasion. The resulting alienation from society was a direct factor in the increased arms projects and violent foreign policy (Hassan, 1999), as the regime sought to distract the people from the deteriorating domestic situation.

Iraq was at war with Iran for eight years when a ceasefire was finally called in 1988. As a result of the war, Iraq's economy was militarily focused and collapsed. Iraq emerged from the war with \$80 billion in foreign debt and a one million-man army (Algosaibi, 1993, p.11). A highly militarized economy that lacked funds meant that the soldiers were unable to be re-absorbed into the civilian workforce. With Saddam's strategy of keeping bellies full as a means of quelling rebellion, he was unable to demobilize these men (Algosaibi, 1993). Notably, the army played a central role in the politics of Iraq and became the source of many coups (Aburish, 2000, p.253). In other words, the army was viewed with fear and suspicion, and keeping them happy was essential for the survival of the regime. Saddam's continued focus on arms projects, especially biological and chemical weapons, is another indication of his alienation from the people. The economy was directed toward protecting his regime and his position of power rather than as a means of protecting the Iraqi sovereignty (Hassan, 1999, p.77). Instead of paying the salaries of the soldiers, purchasing new equipment, and funding elaborate arms projects, the money could have been used in the civilian sector for the benefit of society. However, the fear of the potential actions of an unappeased army implied that Saddam could or would not cease funding even to the detriment of society in general (Ali Zainy, 2003). The highly militarized economy was unable to meet the expectations of the Iraqi population. Since his emergence from the political scene in Iraq, Saddam provided well for his population: literacy rates were the best in the Arab World, basic food items were heavily subsidized, and Iraqis experienced the most calorific diet among the Arab states (Aburish, 2000). Iraqis then became accustomed to receiving certain benefits and high living standards from the state. After the war, many people expected the situation to improve, but the Iraqi economy could not afford to fund the visions of a better life that they held (Aburish, 2000). Saddam faced a volatile domestic situation. However, instead of facing and solving the problems, he directed an attack against a sovereign country as a mean of quelling popular discontent.

An easy point of access in assessing the causes of the Kuwait crisis is by scrutinizing the rationale that legitimized the aggressive action, as declared by the Iraqi regime. To do so effectively, such factors are catego-

rized into two groups, namely, material and ideational, which poses the question in the international relations framework previously discussed. In the speeches and rhetoric that emanated from Baghdad, material considerations are deemed as the main reasons for the Iraqi grievances against Kuwait and, hence, reasons for invasion. In early 1990s, Saddam demanded that Kuwait write off its wartime debts and gift Iraq with \$10 billion to help re-build its crumbling infrastructure. Kuwait considered such demands unreasonable given the vast amounts of aid Iraq received during the war (Mylroie, 1996, p.44). Saddam was desperate for funds to placate his domestic population suffering from a ravaged economy that was geared toward war. However, another interpretation is that Saddam could have made these demands with the knowledge that Kuwait would justifiably refuse, thus giving him a propaganda “win” by showing the world that Kuwait was attempting to destabilize Iraq through economic warfare.

On July 15, 1990, an emergency meeting among the foreign ministers of the Arab League convened at the request of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Tāriq ‘Azīz, the former Iraqi foreign minister, circulated a memorandum to the ministers detailing the actions perceived by the Iraqi regime as “offenses” committed by Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The memorandum baselessly accused the UAE and Kuwait of exceeding their quota for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and thus committing economic warfare on Iraq. Kuwait was also accused of encroaching on Iraqi territory and its oil fields (Mylroie, 1996). The overproduction of oil was due to the desire of Kuwait and the UAE to maintain a low oil price. However, Iraq wanted to increase the price to aid its reconstruction and the infusion of the economy with much-needed cash (Hassan, 1996). The accusation of encroaching on Iraqi territory was linked to the claim that Kuwait was “stealing” oil from the Rumaila oil field, which lies on the Iraq–Kuwait border. Iraq accused Kuwait of taking more than its fair share from the field, thus stealing from Iraq (Matthews, 1993, p.83). In the eyes of the Iraqi regime, the situation was another instance of Kuwait sabotaging the recovery of Iraq. This incident occurred after months of intensifying complaints emerging from the Iraqi regime against the Gulf nations.

A claim frequently reiterated by the Iraqi regime was that of economic warfare. At several meetings, the Iraqis stated that for every \$1-drop in the

oil price, Iraq lost \$1 billion in annual revenues (Khalidi, 1991, p.281). Iraq portrayed itself as a victim of the indifference and arrogance of the Gulf toward “northern Arabs”. This highlighted a conflict in the Arab World arising from oil: the vast difference between the “haves” and “have nots” (Ali zainy, 2003, p.224). Saddam was adept in using underlying tension to strengthen his position. Using emotive language, Saddam intended to gain popular support for Iraq within the Arab World. The effectiveness of this scheme was evidenced in the OPEC meeting in July 1990, where Kuwait agreed to lower its production output to within its OPEC quota. However, Mylorie (1996) pointed out a day after the meeting, Kuwait announced that it would only limit its output for three months.

However, ideational factors can be perceived from the subtext of actual utterances and actions leading up to the crisis. The groundwork for the confrontation with Kuwait began nearly immediately after the end of the Iran–Iraq war as Saddam sought to exploit his newfound, self-perceived position of supremacy in the Arab World. Iraq hoped to capitalize on its “victory” in the Iran–Iraq war to enhance its position in the region. Scholars proposed that Saddam viewed his position “as victor as an opportunity to place himself as leader of the Arabs and to advance his hegemony over the Arab World, especially the Gulf region, which had most directly benefited from his war with Iran” (Gause, 2009b, p.77; Halliday, 2003, p.83). Saddam intended to transform Iraqi national interests to Arab interest and was thus attempting to position himself as leader of the Arabs. He assumed that he was the only reliable defender of the Arab World against non-Arab neighbors and the West (Hassan, 1999).

To this end, the official Iraqi discourse was imbued with Pan-Arabist tones in an attempt to position themselves as leaders of the Arab World. They depicted the sacrifices that Iraq made during the war with Iran as protectors of the Arabs (Tripp, 1996, p.26). This claim fed into the derogatory discourse against Kuwait, whom the Iraqis claimed benefited from Iraq’s sacrifice and was now seeking to advance its national interest at the expense of Iraq and, by extension, the rest of the Arab World (Tripp, 1996). Saddam’s efforts to become leader of the Arab World were met with resistance from the region as the states doubted his intentions.

As previously mentioned, the material and ideational factors obviously converged to formulate a justification, undoubtedly only in the minds of the Iraqi regime, for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Material factors appeared to dominate the debate; however, classifying material factors as more important than ideational factors is relative to one's outlook. Ideational factors tend to exert more influence as they are typically ingrained within the population and the psyche of rulers. The causes of a conflict are directly related to the perception of decision makers. Therefore, if Arabism or victimhood was central to Saddam's portrayal of the reality, then ideational factors would be the cause instead of the desire for money.

One constant throughout the run-up to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was the references to a conspiracy theory that Saddam assumed was formulated against him to remove him from power. This aspect highlights the influence of individual personality on the behavior of states toward the international environment. Saddam believed the world was turned against him, wanted to destabilize his regime, and eventually overthrow him. In this case, Kuwait became a scapegoat for the paranoia of Saddam. Notably, however, Kuwait was deemed to have been selected as an enemy only months before the invasion occurred. The central concern exhibited in the majority of Saddam's speeches leading to the invasion focused not on Kuwait but on the "imperialist-Zionist" conspiracy he believed was brewing against him and Iraq (Gause, 2002; Hassan, 1999). Saddam justified this claim by modeling Iraq as the vanguard of the Arab nation and, therefore, an obstacle to American hegemony in the region. He believed that the "American-Zionist" plot aimed to weaken Iraq internationally and destabilize it domestically (Gause, 2009a, p.277). Kuwait entered the equation in 1990 when Saddam attempted to portray the Gulf states as agents of American imperialism and international Zionism, as exemplified by their effort to keep the oil prices low, which benefited America more than the oil producers (Hassan, 1999). Halliday (2003, p.84) linked this statement to the death of Āyat Allāh al-Khumaynī, who died in 1989. With his death, Saddam lost a long-time adversary and regional scapegoat. To continue his policy of transposing domestic problems onto external elements, Saddam was compelled to find another enemy, preferably one that he could dominate and therefore Kuwait fit the bill.

Although many people are quick to dismiss any mention of a conspiracy theory, rationalizing how an insecure leader can jump to such conclusions is easy. Saddam acted suspiciously, ‘witnessed the international pressure on him, and culminated in an editorial from the Voice of America, which Saddam perceived as a direct attack against his regime’ (Brands & Palkkl, 2012, p.650; Joffe, 1993, p.184). The editorial could easily have been interpreted as out of the ordinary (Palmer, 1992, p.156). In Brussels, the assassination of Gerald Bull, a Canadian armaments scientist advising the Iraqi regime on rocketry, added fuel to an already raging fire in the eyes of Saddam⁽²⁾. Although unproven, much of the Iraqi population and others accepted the claim that Mossad killed Bull (Stein, 1992), which, for Saddam, became additional evidence of an international effort to destabilize his regime and to maintain and expand American interest and hegemony in the Arab World.

An indication of the degree of severity with which Saddam considered such perceived threats to his regime was his domestic reaction. Many critics pointed to the “mysterious” death of General ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh, the former Minister of Defense and Saddam’s cousin and brother-in-law. ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh died when his helicopter crashed in northern Iraq during a sandstorm. Many people viewed the crash as an assassination by Saddam for fear of the popularity of Khayr Allāh in the army. Other opinions implied that Khayr Allāh was planning a coup against Saddam (Aburish, 2000; Hassan, 1999). The death of Khayr Allāh was an addition to the mass execution of scores of army officers from 1988 to 1989, many of whom were considered heroes of the Iran war, due to their membership in a secret organization planning to overthrow Saddam (Gause, 2009a).

Clearly, Saddam became paranoid of losing power due to a conspiracy against him. This tendency can be considered a mean of covering up the

(2) Gerald Bull was a Canadian engineer who developed long-range artillery. He moved from project to project in his quest to economically launch a satellite using a huge artillery piece, to which end he designed the Project Babylon “supergun” for the Iraqi government. He was killed outside his sixth-floor apartment in a fashionable Brussels suburb on March 22, 1990. For more details, visit <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20160317-the-man-who-tried-to-make-a-supergun-for-saddam-hussein> (accessed on 30-12-2020).

legitimate dissatisfaction with a regime that could no longer provide for its population. Rather than face domestic pressure, Saddam preferred to defer responsibility to an international conspiracy. This tactic is evidenced in his belief that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and America were infiltrating the Iraqi society to collect evidence to pressurize the government and stir unrest within the domestic environment (Gause, 2009a). The theory of a conspiracy relieved Saddam of addressing legitimate domestic concerns and instead transplanted the problems he faced onto a scapegoat. Playing the victim ensured that the Iraqi people and, Saddam hoped, the Arab people would be sympathetic to his plight and support any international action he initiated.

The effect of this scheme on Saddam and his regime with regard to foreign policy is undeniable. Perception or imagined reality denotes the manner in which ideas about the world are formed and inform behavior. Therefore, the conspiracy theory should be considered an essential part of the causes of the invasion of Kuwait. Despite endeavors to contain the invasion as an Arab problem, the international community cannot be viewed as passive bystanders. The effect of the changing dynamics of the international system was evident in Iraq's behavior due to perception of the international scene at the time or the actual changes that occurred.

Rise of a Unipolar World Order

The Gulf crisis came at a time of great change in the international scene. The collapse of the USSR as a world superpower, the fall of the Berlin wall, and the wave of democratization that swept through eastern Europe not only affected those directly involved but also transformed the international environment, and therefore exerted an influence on every state (Gerges, 1994, p.22-30). The Cold War led to a certain amount of stability and continuity to the international system. Superpower rivalry dominated, whereas competition to maintain spheres of influence typified the arena of international relations. Despite the dominance of only two states and constant tension prevalent in the international system, the Cold War provided certainty and rendered the possibility of war small (Gerges, 1994). Although, the rivalry ensured the continuation of on-going conflicts, the threat of mutually assured destruction existed, which acted as a deterrent

to the eruption of many of these conflicts into full-scale wars (Matthews, 1993, p.52).

With the majority of the world's states coming under the influence of at least one of the two superpowers, aggressive action against another state under the influence of the other superpower always held the potential to usher the superpowers to war and the possibility of a nuclear attack. However, with the USSR reflecting inward, reforming itself politically and economically, and looking to the West for economic help for survival, the dynamics of the old Cold War eventually faded away. This development changed international structures and constraints, thus essentially transforming the international "game" of politics (Matthews, 1993). This change exerted a knock-on effect on Soviet-sphere states, who relied on the USSR for military equipment, training, and financial aid (Matthews, 1993).

The Iraqi regime was confined to the old system and closed to the changing of the working environment. As such, considering that Saddam failed to understand the new workings is possible. However, active restraint from both of the great powers was lacking, which almost implied that Saddam had free rein. As previously mentioned, if Saddam was inherently violent, then he can be expected to act violently with such free rein (Hinnebusch, 2003). The retreat of the Soviet Union from the international arena and result regime changes in eastern Europe led to another affect. States that were friendly with the USSR were concerned about the potential effect of such changes on their regimes (Gause, 2009a). As previously cited, Saddam attempted to reflect concerns for his position and threats to power onto external sources, which added fuel to the fire because it led to greater insecurity for the regime and heightened the need to find an external scapegoat on which his population could focus.

Much of the literature on the Kuwait crisis focuses on the miscalculations of the Iraqi regime and the international community (Finlan, 2003; Lowry, 2008). Therefore, determining whether the cause of the war was due to the mutual misinterpretation of possible outcomes from the rhetoric of many of the world's capitals is essential. Perception is of central importance to the analysis of the behaviors and decisions of political actors. Therefore, discussing Saddam's perception of how the world would have

reacted in addition to the external perceptions of the actions that Saddam was capable and willing to do is necessary. In this case, the principle actor would be the USA. As the dominant world power, it was the main source of possible reactions to an invasion.

At the summit of the Arab Co-operation Council in 1990, Saddam voiced his opinion on America's changing role in the world,

All strong men have their Achilles' heel.... We saw that the US as a superpower departed Lebanon immediately when some Marines were killed [in 1983].... The United States ... has displayed signs of fatigue, frustration, and hesitation when committing aggression on other people's rights (Long, 2004, p.16).

This statement can be interpreted to imply that Saddam deemed that America would avoid forcible action against his invasion of Kuwait. America was retreating from intervention in other arenas. Intrinsic to this notion is the opinion that America was unprepared to sacrifice American lives in a foreign arena (Mylorie, 1996). The American public was greatly affected by casualties in a manner that Iraq was not. Having emerged from a war where hundreds of thousands of men were killed or injured, the Iraqis were familiar with making sacrifices but not America (Mylorie, 1996). This statement is not intended to mean that Iraqi lives were not as valuable as American lives. However, both countries differed in the sacrifices that each country was willing to make. This perception of American indifference to Iraqi action was reinforced by mixed messages from the government. The Congress wanted to push sanctions on dual-use technology and loans, whereas the executive branch sent messages of friendship as well as attempted to block congressional votes on such sanctions (Aburish, 2000, p.262). In January 1990, the US state department openly criticized the Senate vote that banned agricultural loans to Iraq (Bulloch & Morris, 1991).

Adding to the confusion, two days before the invasion of Kuwait, Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly testified at the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee: "We have no defense treaty relationships with any Gulf country We have historically avoided taking a position on border disputes or on internal OPEC deliberations" (Bulloch & Morris, 1991, p.2).

Despite the overtures of the desire for a peaceful solution, a key point that would have been identified by the Iraqi regime was that America had no legal obligation to aid Kuwait if it were attacked. Although it was not a sanction for invasion, the assumption gave Saddam the impression that America may avoid taking sides in a conflict. People hear what they want to hear. Thus, Saddam may have interpreted the unsaid context as uttered context. Perhaps the most infamous event preceding the invasion, which is frequently cited as the catalyst to Iraqi violence, was the comments directed to Saddam from April Glaspie, US former ambassador to Iraq. On July 25, 1990, Glaspie held her first meeting with Saddam Hussein since her appointment as the US ambassador to Iraq. The quote most identified as signaling what scholars considered “the green light” for the invasion was when she assured Saddam that America “had no opinion on Arab–Arab conflicts, such as your border disagreement with Kuwait” (Gause, 2002, p. 62; Matthews, 1993, p. 47). This statement was essentially saying to Saddam that America had no wish to deter or interfere in the affairs and foreign policy of Iraq. However, this quote is frequently taken out of context to justify individuals who want to vilify America as an incompetent world policeman. Thus, April Glaspie became the scapegoat for a policy that she did not make. The comments from Glaspie were released at the end of a long line of mixed messages received by Saddam. Therefore, they cannot be the catalyst for the invasion.

Moreover, this situation is indicative of America’s lack of deterrence exhibited in the years after the Iran–Iraq war. The Glaspie incident may have been interpreted as a green light. However, it was preceded by amber lights from the global community. This lack of deterrence, as Kenner (2011) found, was probably a result of the American miscalculation that Iraq would not use military force against Kuwait. America interpreted the rhetoric coming out of Iraq as mere words in an inter-Arab argument, which can be resolved through Arab diplomacy. This notion was reinforced by Prince Bandar, former Saudi Ambassador to America, by relaying messages from the region, especially from President Hosni Mubarak, that the situation was under control and would be remedied between Arabs (Mylroie, 1996).

The miscalculations regarding Saddam and his regime are also an important point of enquiry to explain why Saddam opted to invade Kuwait. Firstly, Saddam's assumptions about the response of the Arab World to his foreign policy move was entirely miscalculated. Iraq assumed that its "Arab brothers" would not use physical force or join and support the West in military action against Iraq (Hassan, 1999, p. 35). On the surface, the assumption may have been naive as Saddam was attacking a sovereign Arab state. Therefore, the choice would have been between two Arab states instead of between an Arab state and an outsider. However, the signals emanating from Arab capitals hinted that the problem would be confined within the Arab World, and an Arab solution would be found (Hassan, 1999). King Fahd of Saudi Arabia initially confided in President Mubarak of Egypt that he wanted an Arab solution to the problem to avoid foreign troops on his soil (Aburish, 2000). The likelihood of the Gulf states or other Arab states sending in troops was minimal, and a diplomatic solution would have been formulated. However, this assumption was flawed because Saddam decided to invade the entirety of Kuwait instead of a partial invasion. Saddam decided on a full invasion because he calculated that if only part of Kuwait were occupied, then the Kuwaiti government would invite American troops into unoccupied areas (Stein, 2000, p.168).

However, these assumptions were based on the premise that Iraq would invade Kuwait. The Arab World was just as convinced as the rest of the world that Iraq would not use military means to deal with their problem with Kuwait. Instead, they believed that diplomacy, concessions, and appeasement would prevent the invasion. America, Iraq, and a few Arab states seemingly succumbed to misinterpretation, confusion, and miscalculation. In addition, the lack of an apparent deterrence plan by America ensured that Saddam believed he had free rein to act as he wished to maintain and enhance his power and position at home and abroad.

Conclusion

In summary, one can easily deduce that the dominant discourse espoused from Iraq from the end of the Iran–Iraq war up to the invasion of Kuwait was the demonization of Gulf Arab states, especially Kuwait. Towards this end, the regime cited material interests as antagonism for

the aggressive foreign policy move but these were imbued with ideational overtones. Iraq reaped no immediate economic reward from invading Kuwait. War is expensive, and Kuwait's assets were below the ground, which effectively cut off financial aid from the entire world because major international financiers were quick to condemn Saddam's action. This result suggests that Saddam did not expect the armed response elicited by his invasion. Material gains from the invasion would be realized in the long-term, not immediately. It is possible that that Saddam miscalculated the American response with hindsight. The apparent explanation from the miscalculations is that the Iraqi regime misunderstood the international system, whereas America underestimated Saddam and failure to censure him resulted in his takeover of Kuwait.

The overriding concerns for Saddam were the maintenance of his power and the enhancement of his position in the world order. In the attempt to divert domestic attention, he contemplated that invading Kuwait would solve these problems. Therefore, perhaps the strongest cause of the Kuwait crisis was power. In summary, the paper illustrated that to understand Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait in August 1990, one can deduce that the decision itself was influenced by various analytic perspectives. Hence, future research can benefit from a close scrutiny of the manner in which the concepts of ideological influences, psychological needs, the end of the Cold War, and constructivism and realism theories influenced Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait.

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إلى أي مدى كانت المخاوف الفكرية والمادية من العوامل الدافعة إلى قرار صدام حسين بغزو الكويت؟

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تنظير قرار صدام حسين بغزو الكويت في أغسطس 1990، الذي كان له تأثير هائل ومتغير على منطقة الشرق الأوسط، وخاصة منطقة الخليج. لذلك، لم يتأثر هذا العمل العدواني بمتغير واحد أو متغيرين، بل كان نتيجة للسياسة العربية البينية بالإضافة إلى نتائج البيئة الدولية التي هيمن عليها صراع الدولة القومية. **المنهج:** تعتمد هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي على مصادر ثانوية؛ مثل الكتب والمقالات الأكاديمية، لتنظير الهدف المعلن للدراسة وتحليل الآثار الداخلية والخارجية فيما يتعلق بالغزو. مع ذلك، فإن استخدام المصادر الأولية أو التنافس أو التأكيد على الروايات عن حرب الخليج أمر من الصعب عمله، بدلاً من ذلك، تم الاستشهاد بالعديد من المصادر الأكثر شهرة لتعكس موقف وأيديولوجية صدام حسين خلال هذه الفترة الزمنية المحددة. **النتائج:** كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن الخطاب السائد الذي تبناه العراق منذ نهاية الحرب العراقية الإيرانية حتى غزو الكويت هو لشيطننة دول الخليج العربية، وخاصة الكويت. لتحقيق هذه الغاية، استشهد النظام بالمصالح المادية على أنها عداء لحركة السياسة الخارجية العدوانية، لكنها كانت مشبعة بإيحاءات فكرية. **الخاتمة:** لم يتوقع صدام الرد المسلح الذي أحدثه غزوه للكويت. وكان يتوقع أن المكاسب المادية من الغزو سوف تتحقق على المدى الطويل، وليس على الفور. ونستخلص أيضاً أن صدام حسين قد أخطأ في تقدير الرد الأمريكي، وأنه أدرك ذلك بعد فوات الأوان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أزمة الخليج، الكويت، العراق، العلاقات الدولية، التاريخ.

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