

# Political Crisis

by Menahem Neuer

As the Persian Gulf crisis threatens to explode into an all-out war, we can safely call it the international relations disaster of the year, if not the past several years.

Although the crisis caught the world by surprise, the present situation has been long in the making. Let us pause to analyze (some of) the factors which have contributed to the events of the past few months.

First, the Gulf crisis represents nothing less than a complete American foreign policy debacle. However, this may have been expected: ever since the mid-1980s, the policy of the U.S. toward Saddam Hussein has been one of complete economic and diplomatic appeasement.

American policy first tilted toward Iraq when the Reagan administration decided to support Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. Yet since that war ended, the "kinder, gentler" Bush administration has let its policy toward Iraq be guided not by the reality of the brutal neo-Stalinist nature of the Hussein regime, but by the \$700-million U.S. annually paid by Iraq for U.S. grain and food exports. And let us not ignore all the U.S. congressional representatives and senators from the farming states who for years have been vigorously lobbying against any U.S. agricultural sanctions against Iraq.

In fact, six days before the invasion of Kuwait, there was a House proposal to impose agricultural sanctions against Iraq until it cleaned up its horrific human rights record. Again, U.S. farm state lobbying killed the proposal. As late as Aug. 2 (the day of the Iraqi invasion), Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole was still fighting against any U.S. sanctions. Dole, a longtime supporter of Hussein, is from Kansas (one of the U.S. farm states) and coincidentally enough, is one of Israel's most vocal critics in the U.S. Congress.



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Furthermore, in order to help Saddam Hussein pay for his food and grain, the U.S. Commodity Credit Corporation subsidized Hussein's purchases by billions of dollars. This money saved allowed Saddam to spend it on modernizing his military. Thus, the world is treated to the spectacle of U.S. (and international) troops facing an Iraqi army fed with U.S. food and partially built by U.S. subsidies.

And what about Brazil and France, who have helped arm Iraq? In fact, it was the the French who were building Saddam's nuclear facilities when the Israelis destroyed it in 1981. Israel was harshly condemned for it at the time, but can we imagine a Hussein with nuclear weapons?

The diplomatic ironies of the Arab world also merit scrutiny. For several years now, Saddam Hussein's most valuable and willing ally has been PLO boss Yasser Arafat.

While other Arab gulf states merely paid Saddam protection money, Arafat had actually based himself and the PLO Iraq for many years, and is a close friend and supporter of Hussein. Ominously enough, on April 3, Arafat was quoted

by the Iraqi News Agency as saying, "We say to the brother Saddam Hussein — go forward with God's blessing."

Yet, even before the Iraqi invasion (which Arafat has supported from its first day), Arafat was having a rough time.

This past May 30, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), a constituent member of the PLO, attempted a raid on Tel Aviv's crowded beach. Although the Israeli Defense forces managed to stop the terrorists on the beach, the group leader admitted that civilians had indeed been targeted.

Incredibly, although PLF chief Mohammed Abdul-Abbas sits on the PLO executive committee, Arafat refused to rebuke Abbas or accept any responsibility. This eventually caused an embarrassed Bush administration to sever official relations with the PLO. Jewish supporters of Arafat — both in Israel and abroad — felt betrayed.

Arafat finally murdered his carefully-cultivated image as a moderate by unequivocally supporting Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. To this day, he has not criticized the Iraqi aggression.

Supporters of Arafat assert that he was forced into his present position by Israeli intransigence, yet this claim stands on weak ground. Arafat had already chosen Iraq and Saddam Hussein before the hiatus between December 1988 (when he said that the PLO had renounced terrorism and finally accepted Israel's right to exist) and May 30 of this year.

Furthermore, Israeli stubbornness cannot justify Arafat's refusal to condemn the terrorist assault of May 30 or Saddam's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2. If Arafat was the moderate that he and his supporters claim, why did he not condemn Kuwait's invasion along with other Arab leaders?

Israelis and Jews who had been campaigning for an Arafat-led neighboring Palestinian state were appalled. Many Jews on the left had seen a Palestinian state as a bulwark against possible Arab aggression — and here was Arafat supporting a tyrant who had threatened to gas Israel with chemical weapons. Yossi Sarid, for years the most prominent Israeli Peace Now politician advocating a binational solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict, is now famous for his response of "sheyichapsu oti" — basically, "tell them to get lost."

Conversely, the present situation presents itself as a bitter victory for those on the Israeli right wing. For years, Israeli military intelligence has been issuing dire (but unheeded) warnings about Iraq's military build-up and aggressive behavior. Furthermore, those Israelis and Jews who suspected Arafat's moderate stance as a cynical tactical ploy designed to lull Western public opinion have good reason to feel vindicated.

Why has Arafat not sided with Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, the acknowledged leader of the Arab coalition fighting to repair the damage? In fact, why has Arafat not allied himself and

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the PLO with Egypt in the first place as opposed to Iraq? Arafat and the PLO alone are responsible for PLO policy and they must answer the serious questions being asked of them.

Not least of those asking serious questions are the Palestinian Arabs, ostensibly represented by the PLO. While Yasser Arafat was busy urging Saddam Hussein onwards, did he stop and think about the millions of dollars with which the Kuwaiti emirs regularly paid the PLO as protection money? Or what of the Palestinian Arabs who were building Kuwait, now jobless, their Kuwaiti bank accounts gone as Saddam devours Kuwait?

Certainly, those Palestinians who marched in Israel last year, urging Saddam to gas Israel did their cause no good. The way out of the miserable conditions under which Palestinians suffer must lie through consistently moderate policies and pressure on Israel, yet the Palestinian leadership has expressed only the latter.

Finally, the Israelis. It is indeed a bitter reality that 50 years after the Holocaust, the Jews sit in Israel with gas masks on. Phylacteries of shame, gas masks on their heads, death-camp numbers tattooed on their arms. One Arab state attacks another, yet it is Jewish mothers who must place their babies into gas-proof cribs at night.

While the Israelis have been maintaining an intentionally low profile during the conflict, there is no doubt that they are quietly preparing for the worst.

It is also important to remember that Israel is presently in the midst of the most ambitious social program in its history: the accommodation of an anticipated two million Soviet Jews who are fleeing a collapsing U.S.S.R. Even in Russian, it will be difficult to explain Saddam Hussein to these Soviet refugees.



Yet, Israel has not been without critics during the past few months. Those who claim that Israel has been beating the wardrum since the invasion do not seem to realize that the campaign against Hussein is no more "Jewish" than the war against Hitler was a "Jewish" war.

Furthermore, these critics (comprised of a bizarre coalition of U.S. quasi-fascist rightists and extreme leftists) do not acknowledge that it is the U.S.' Arab allies who have been nervously agitating for quick military action.

And finally, those who argue that Saddam's invasion of Kuwait is akin to Israel's capturing the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 do not seem to appreciate that Saddam attacked an utterly innocent Kuwait for his own imperialist ends, whereas in 1967 Israel captured the West Bank only after it was attacked by the Jordanian army.

Thus, when George Bush and James Baker posture about American principles of justice, they and their allies should remember that, to a large extent, they are reaping what they have sown. And while this or that oil field may be recovered, ultimately, there will be no winners in this crisis.



**Yasser Arafat: Appearance as a moderate challenged**

# in Persian Gulf

Since it is obvious that the U.S. and its opportunistic supporters have no intention of promoting democratic ideals in the region, what could be their reasons for orchestrating such a massive military response to Saddam Hussein's abhorrent takeover of Kuwait?

The first reason that comes to mind is that of stressing the point that it is unacceptable behavior for one country to invade another and occupy its territories. This is a line that George Bush and his friends quite often relay to the media whenever they are asked about their objectives in the Gulf.

Unfortunately for Bush and his strongest supporters, this position is not very credible, especially considering that most of them are guilty of invasions themselves.

Has the world already forgotten that less than a year ago, the U.S. attacked Panama and killed somewhere between 4,000 to 6,000 Panamanians during the invasion? All of this was done to depose Manuel Noriega, the military dictator whom the White House had put into power and maintained on the CIA payroll until a few months before the assault.

The U.S. employed the same sort of naked aggression throughout the 1980s when they invaded Grenada and constantly harassed Nicaragua to maintain their interests in the Caribbean Basin. And, of course, it would be inappropriate to overlook the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, simply because a military engagement in the Middle East would result in far more casualties to both soldiers and civilians.

The U.S. is not the only member of the current alliance against Baghdad that has invaded and occupied other countries. When it comes to invasion and occupation, there is no country that is as successful at it as Israel is today.

Since its controversial conception in 1948, Israel has invaded several countries and until this day is still occupying and settling territories which do not rightfully belong to it. The Israeli government has consistently violated numerous international laws by occupying and settling the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Although there has been much international pressure to cease its illegitimate activity in these regions, apparently Israel has no intention of relinquishing the land to its rightful owners. It currently controls the southernmost tip of Lebanon which it has conveniently claimed as a security zone for itself. And it also occupies a stretch of land that is rightfully the property of Syria known as the Golan Heights.

If other nations around the world truly believe that the U.S. and its posse have obtrusively intervened in the Gulf

decisions, then it should be carrying out further action against Israel for refusing to accept its Security Council resolution calling for a U.N. investigation of the bloodbath.

The reason the U.N. will not do this is because the U.S. will step in and block the resolution against Israel as it has done so many other times in the past. If the U.N. is going to be an effective international institution, it cannot accept any sort of double standards. If it does, its legitimacy is undermined.

Essentially, the only reason the U.S., Canada, Britain and Israel are so opposed to the deplorable actions of Iraq against Kuwait is because it jeopardizes their control over the region and its vital resources.

Since World War One, when the imperial powers of Britain and France first divided up the Middle East between themselves, the entire region has been controlled by everyone except the Arabs.

Saddam Hussein's invasion and occupation of Kuwait is a direct defiance to the U.S.'s imperial domination in the region.

The Americans and their allies intend on making Saddam and his belligerent government an example of what it means to defy their rule.

They cannot do this if they allow a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Therefore, to accomplish this, they need to dismantle Iraq's formidable military. And the only way they can do this is through war. A peaceful resolution would mean Iraq still keeps its power base, onto which it can build and make itself even more of a threat to U.S. dominance in the Gulf.

The Americans cannot fathom giving up power over the region; this would mean they would have to relinquish control over the cheap oil upon which their economy (and that of their allies) is dependent for survival.

Essentially, the U.S. and its hitmen nations intend on invading Iraq for the same reasons that Iraq unjustly occupied Kuwait.

Iraq should not be allowed to get away with what it has done to Kuwait and its people. But a U.S.-led multinational invasion of Iraq is not the solution to the problem.

If a war breaks out, pitting the U.S. and its Western allies against any Arab nation in the region, the Middle East will go up in flames like a crate full of matches.

This is one of the most common statements I heard while I was growing up on an American oil compound in Dhahran,

by Bashir Abdul Qader

The simplest way for me to begin addressing the situation in the Persian Gulf is to state outright that I do not believe there will be a peaceful solution at this point in time.

I say this, primarily, because I realize that the countries who have chosen to involve themselves directly in the issue do not consider a peaceful solution advantageous to their interests.

For the politically naive, the United States and its staunchest allies, Canada, Britain and Israel, have assumed such an active role in the crisis because they believe that Iraq's unacceptable occupation of Kuwait has begun to undermine their own geo-strategic and economic interests in the Middle East.

The U.S. and its sidekicks are not in the Gulf because they intend to promote freedom and democracy in the region.

If this was the case, why are they spending billions of dollars to ensure that the Saudi royal family remains in power and that the Kuwaiti emir is returned to this throne? By now, it should be public knowledge that both the Saudi monarchy and the former Kuwaiti emirate have been internationally denounced as two of the most brutal and repressive regimes in the Gulf, perhaps the world.

Furthermore, in the process of constructing their alliance against Iraq, this gang of hypocritical nations has accepted Syria into their pack with open arms. It seems strange that less than six months ago, the leading country of this gang refused to enter into diplomatic relations with the Syrian government because of the brutality Hafez Al-Assad had employed in systematically oppressing his own innocent and defenceless people.

The U.S. and its cronies are not concerned with freedom and democracy because it serves them no purpose in this part of the world. In fact, it is more economically and politically effective for them to manipulate repressive regimes such as the one in power in Saudi Arabia or the one that used to exist in Kuwait prior to Iraq's unacceptable invasion of its territory.

If these countries were democracies, then it would be much more difficult for the U.S. and its allies to control them. After all, it is much easier to persuade a finite government to accept your policies than it is to coerce an entire population into agreeing with your point of view.

Israel is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Israel's survival is contingent upon American military and economic aid, yet because it adheres to a pseudo-democratic form of government, it often disregards American demands and operates independently. The Israeli government represents the needs of its first class citizens not those of the White House and that is why the Americans do not always get their way in Israel.



**George Bush and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd**

crisis to set a precedent against naked aggression and illegitimate occupation, then they deserve to be raped and terrorized themselves by these manipulative, war-mongering governments.

The members of the U.S. posse cannot justify their actions based on this explanation because they are either guilty of aggression themselves, or because they support and aid countries that implement aggression in their foreign policies.

If you accept as truth that the U.S. and its henchmen have intervened in the Gulf to enforce the resolutions recently passed by the United Nations condemning the Iraqi invasion, you would be wrong again. The U.S. and its posse do not really care what the U.N. does or thinks because they realize the U.N. is a tool that the U.S. uses to further its own interests.

The simplest way to prove that the U.N. is not a democratic organization and that it is manipulated by the U.S. and its allies is to examine how the U.N. recently dealt with the Oct. 8 massacre of 20 Palestinian protesters at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. If the U.N. truly operated autonomously, not allowing any one nation to influence its final

Saudi Arabia. And the people who used it most often to describe the political situation in the Middle East were the American expatriates who were there working for the oil companies.

The people of the Arab world believe that the U.S. and its allies are responsible for their atrocious living conditions and their lack of human rights and political freedom.

If the U.S. attacks Saddam, other Arabs will revolt and join forces with the Iraqis against all foreigners in the region. If this happens, thousands if not millions of people will die. Included among these people will be most of my friends and everyone in my family except for the handful that are here.

The war will not end right away. It will continue to grow, size and intensity. The result will be that some of your friends and family will also be sent away to fight for something our country already has: oil.

Unless we take advantage of the fact that we live in a democracy and that we control our government (unlike many of the unfortunate people in the Middle East), we will all lose loved ones and friends.

We should not allow this great country to be dragged into an unjust war. Let us try to solve this one without killing any more people than those who have already died.