
THE GULF, ENERGY, & GLOBAL SECURITY

Political & Economic Issues

edited by
Charles F. Doran
Stephen W. Buck

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Foreword

Lucius D. Battle

As the prospect of a cease-fire emerged in the Iran-Iraq war, there was a strong temptation to put the Persian Gulf area aside for the moment and to consider the greatest conflict in that area in recent history to be finished. Even for Middle East specialists, the Gulf seemed to wane in importance: the flow of oil seemed assured as Iraq and Iran began to lick their wounds and repair their war-damaged economies.

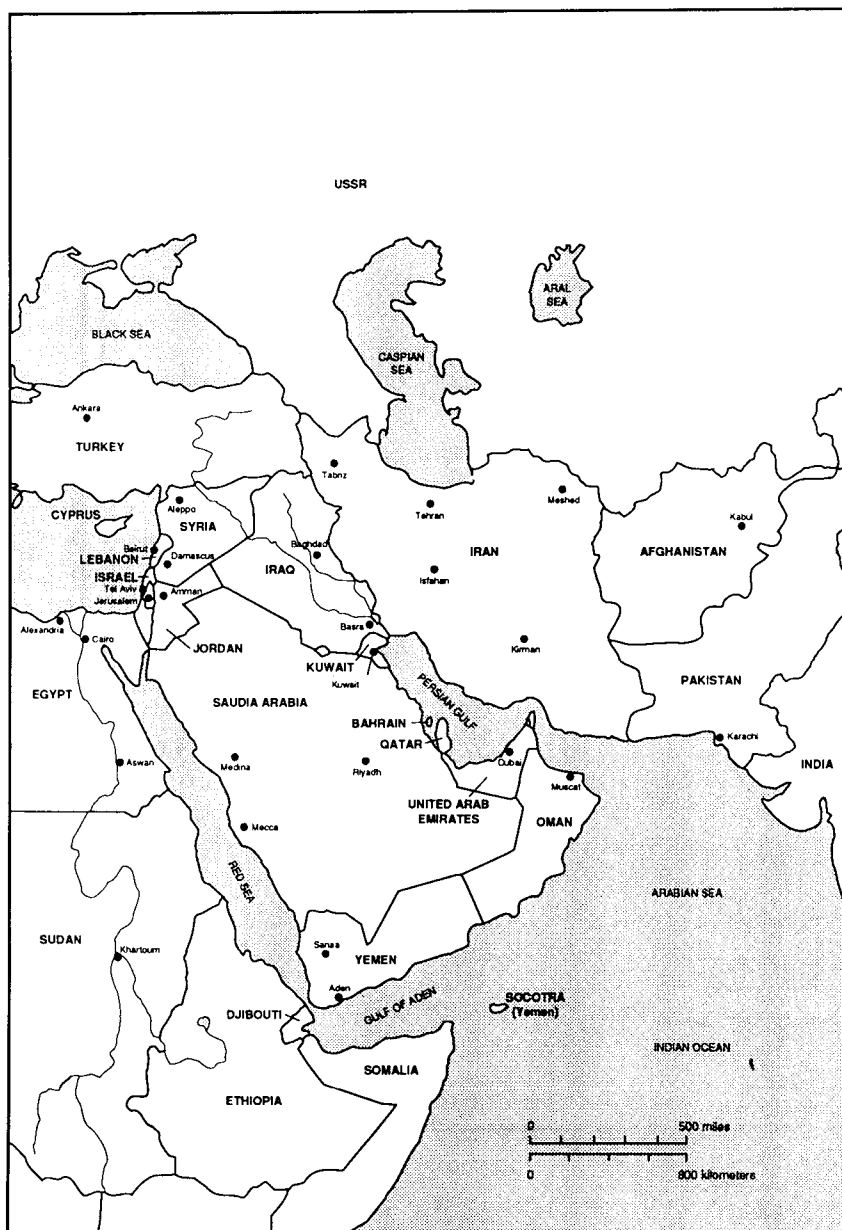
In 1987, a consultant to the Middle East Institute, Alphonse DeRosso, began to discuss the urgent need for a longer-term look at US interests in the Gulf; he thought we should analyze those interests through the year 2000, and try to understand how they might be affected by possible developments during the decade of the 1990s. Growing out of these discussions came his proposal regarding the need for a serious study of US, Western, and Japanese interests in the Gulf, which resulted in this volume. Mr. DeRosso worked out a conceptual framework for the project, and he persisted in pursuing financial support from various foundations.

A preliminary discussion took place in 1989 at a day-long meeting in which experienced representatives of oil companies as well as academicians specializing in the field participated. Later, authors were selected for their expertise on the various topics considered important for the study. In April 1990, the Middle East Institute and the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies hosted a conference in Washington, D.C., bringing together these authors and more than 150 other members of the academic, government, business, and diplomatic communities to discuss and analyze events in the Gulf.

We have assembled some very interesting papers. It was more difficult to anticipate future trends than we realized, but we take pride in what we have done. Whatever the outcome of the current crisis in and around the Arabian peninsula, the Gulf is with us today in a very different form than was the case only a few months ago. We must turn our attention, intelligence, and thoughts—our policy-determinative processes—to the Gulf on a long-term continuing basis, recognizing that change—sudden and perhaps dangerous—is always possible in this region. This book will be useful to many scholars, and to policymakers who need to follow and study the area and who need background and information for making decisions.

I am very grateful to the late Al DeRosso for his initiative, his energy, and his persistence. I am particularly grateful to the MacArthur Foundation for providing us our initial grant, and to the Exxon Corporation, the Pennzoil Company, the Committee for Energy Policy Promotion (Japan), and Ruane, Cunniff & Co. for additional funding. Warm appreciation is extended to Charles Doran and Stephen Buck, the coordinators of the project and editors of this volume.

I also wish to thank the Middle East Institute staff: Christopher Van Hollen, Andrew Parasiliti, and Kristina Palmer, who were actively involved in all aspects of the conference and publication; Robin Surratt of the *Middle East Journal*, who provided valuable editorial guidance; and MEI interns John Schembari, David Gordon, Mark Dennis, and Wade Wootan, who assisted in arranging the conference and preparing research support materials.



The Gulf Region

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Introduction: The Gulf 2000 Project

Stephen W. Buck

Gulf security is important to the West. Equally important is stability for moderate governments seeking to export oil on the world market. Buyers and sellers need each other. But sometimes interests differ, not only between individual buyers and sellers of crude oil, but among the sellers themselves. Given the means to violence in the Gulf area, and the number of unresolved conflicts, the way politics impinges upon economics in the region requires careful assessment.

A review of the prior decade provides an instructive first step in understanding the problems confronting Gulf energy and security policy in the coming decade. (Readers who wish to insert "Persian" between "the" and "Gulf" are welcome to do so.)

In 1980, Americans were transfixed by the hostage crisis, and a US president was to go down in defeat largely because of it. The shah, the lynchpin of our so-called two-tier policy in the Gulf, had been overthrown, and the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan. Khomeini and Islamic fundamentalism seemed grave threats to our remaining friends in the area, as did the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war. As the decade progressed, complacency that the war would be confined to bloodletting between equally nasty regimes gave way to concern that it would spill over onto international shipping and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. US agreement to reflag Kuwaiti tankers led to the ultimate deployment of forty-five US and thirty-five allied naval vessels in the area and a major debate in Congress over US involvement. Iranian support for terrorism and hostage-taking led directly to Irangate, Ronald Reagan's worst crisis and a continued embarrassment for his successor.

Viewed against this backdrop, the decline in attention to the Gulf at the beginning of the 1990s is striking. Khomeini is gone, and his brand of Islamic revolution appeared to be much less of a threat to the region than had been feared. The Iran-Iraq war had stopped, and with it the tanker war and the threat to shipping in the Gulf. (Indeed, some argued that the continued flow of oil from the Gulf during the height of the tanker war showed that no matter what, the world will get its oil from the Gulf and, therefore, not much attention has to be paid to the region.) With the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and *glasnost*, the Soviet threat to the area commanded scant attention.

How quickly events in the Middle East reverse policy! It was this ever-

growing complacency about energy and security in the Gulf that prompted the Gulf 2000 project. From the perspective of April 1990, the task of this introduction was to warn policymakers of the dangers of such complacency:

In short, the Gulf has gone from front to back burner. This may be understandable in the near term, but we in the United States ignore or downplay this region at our peril. While developments in the Gulf in the 1990s may be less dramatic than in the previous decade, the trends in the region and in international markets bearing on the region could well turn out to have more profound implications for Western and US interests than anything that occurred in the 1980s.

The dramatic turn of events in the Gulf since August 1990 has changed complacency to urgency, and is accelerating movement in new directions for the coming decade. But the lesson remains: How quickly events in the Middle East reverse policy.

Nature of the Project

The purpose of the Gulf 2000 project was to formulate and analyze (1) more and less likely courses of political and economic development for each of the nations bordering on the Gulf and (2) the probable interactions among themselves, the United States, and other leading actors. Policy options were to result. We identified nine topics, and chose an expert on each topic to write a paper for the project. Professor Doran prepared a set of four possible scenarios for the authors to consider, modify, or reject in coming to their own conclusions about the security situation in the Gulf during the 1990s from the vantage point of their own topic.

One scenario stressed stability. It argued that "the governments are exhausted by the eight years of fighting between Iraq and Iran." They would now focus upon economic development and reconstruction, a task that would "require considerable political stability at home and in their foreign relations" and "divert them from major confrontation."

A second scenario stressed the theme of ideological radicalization as an outgrowth perhaps of "accelerated economic and social change." In this scenario, "both the possible incidence of major domestic violence and instability, coupled with the possible emergence of regimes less hospitable to cooperation in the short term than the present Gulf governments, could cause problems for US interests in the area."

A third scenario emphasized the possibility of increased regional political instability. In this view, the Iran-Iraq war was not so much settled as "temporarily suspended." Moreover, renewed war in the Yemens might spill over into Saudi Arabia or Oman, and technological advances might enable Iran to directly attack Arab oil fields in the latter part of the decade. It also posed a possibility of more immediate concern: "A quarrel now not foreseen but troublesome in concept

would be that between Iraq and Kuwait or Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In the 1960s the British presence saved Kuwait. Could the US presence do so in the 1990s? At least one observer has come to the 'stark conclusion' that 'both the GCC and the United States may have to consider Kuwait expendable in the event of either an Iranian attack or a Soviet assault' (J. E. Peterson, *Defending Arabia*, 1986). Iraq might have to be added to this list of Kuwaiti opponents difficult to deter."

Fourth, the authors were asked to consider a scenario whose principal characteristic stressed neither stability nor instability "but a new more difficult international political climate," possibly stemming from the Soviet Union or from some other source exogenous to the region itself, in which "the terms of American access to the Gulf region are being redefined" and "American interests are allowed to suffer."

These scenarios were to be treated as suggestive rather than restrictive, and as the base for simultaneous occurrence rather than as strict alternatives. The various authors responded to the challenge with far-reaching and farsighted analysis of the future possibilities and likely trends on their topics.

While this project began more than a year prior to the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, all of the chapters encompass this event in their analysis. The policy conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter of the study, formally presented to the Washington policy community several months prior to the crisis, cover the decade as a whole and seem as valid today as at the time they were first drawn. In that chapter, bracketed inserts update those conclusions, and an epilogue has been added to highlight the implications of the Kuwaiti crisis for the long-term Gulf situation.

In brief, the organizers of the project came to believe that the Gulf was going to become, with a high probability of occurrence, a source of major policy predicament for the United States and its allies in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Iraq, Iran, and the Arms Race

Iraq

Of all the developments and trends discussed in this study, probably the most significant regional development is the emergence of Iraq as the predominant power in the Gulf and the Fertile Crescent. A few years ago US policymakers might have laughed at such a prediction. With its Kurdish problem and majority Shiite population dominated by a radical, Arab nationalist, Sunni regime, Iraq was considered unstable internally and a threat to the moderate regimes of the Arab world. But it was not the region's preeminent power. With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq's oil production plummeted, Iran reversed roles with Iraq as occupier, and by middecade planners were worrying whether Iran's "final offensive" would succeed, with catastrophic consequences not only for Iraq but the whole Arabian peninsula.

It did not happen. The Iranian lines melted away before the Iraqi spring 1988 offensive, and Khomeini had to accept defeat and a cease-fire with well-equipped, battle-experienced Iraqi forces in the region. Throughout the war, Iraq had access to better equipment than Iran, particularly planes and tanks. It aggressively developed its own military-industrial capability, continued many development projects, and ensured that compulsory education continued throughout the country. To quote the original paper by Phebe Marr, "By the year 2000, Iraq may outstrip Egypt as the Arab world's largest military and industrial producer. . . . For the coming decade, Iraq will be the most powerful nation in the Gulf and possibly the most important military power in the Arab world. . . . There is every evidence that the Iraqi army will acquire and develop more high tech weaponry to maintain a military edge over Iran. . . . Iraq's main competitor in the shifting Gulf power balance—Iran—will not be able to match Iraq militarily by the year 2000."

In terms of internal stability, Iraq is in a much stronger position than before the Iran-Iraq war. The razing of Kurdish villages, forced resettlement of Kurds in more easily controlled urban and lowland areas, and resettlement of Arabs into formerly Kurdish territory raises significant human rights questions that are likely to trouble US-Iraqi relations for years to come. Deploable as these actions may be, it is likely, as Dr. Marr indicates, that these actions give Iraq "firm control over its Kurdish border with Iran for the first time since the founding of the state."

If the Iran-Iraq war proved one thing, it is that the majority of Iraq's population, the Shia, are Iraqi first and Shiite second. They did not heed Khomeini's call. Instead, they constituted 70 percent or more of Iraq's ground forces. During the war, President Saddam Hussein downplayed Arab nationalism in favor of an Iraqi amalgam, drawing on 5,000 years of Iraqi history. The war integrated the Shia into the Iraqi state. At the same time, the "self-policing" nature of the Iraqi polity, based on a well-justified fear of Iraq's all-pervasive security apparatus, became even more effective, as Iraqis rallied around Saddam in a war of national survival. The 1989 National Assembly elections and talks of eventual moves to a multiparty system suggested that Saddam realized the need to open up the system. However, there is no significant, organized internal opposition. Hence, barring a successful assassination attempt, the likelihood of Saddam's being president of Iraq in the year 2000 is high, and of the authoritarian system now in place remaining essentially unchanged even higher. Speculation that the stability of Iraq's leadership might make it easier to deal with Iraq, despite continued concerns over human rights problems, has been proven wrong.

Besides its battle-hardened military, Iraq's power in the region is based on its oil wealth. Iraq's oil reserves are estimated to be second only to Saudi Arabia's. By constructing pipelines through Turkey and Saudi Arabia and a strategic north-south pipeline enabling switching of oil export flow as needed, Iraq effectively dealt with the cutoff of its oil exports through Syria and the Gulf. The consensus in April 1990 was that Iraq would maintain this flexibility while expanding exports through the Gulf. With large reserves, enhanced pipeline

capacity, a developed oil infrastructure, and the potential to increase production and export capacity to well beyond 5 million barrels per day, Iraq should become the Gulf's second-largest producer after Saudi Arabia over the next decade. This would ensure it an increasing say in OPEC councils and increasing importance on the world oil scene.

Even with a larger population, Iran may not overtake Iraq because its oil reserves are less. It may have difficulty even maintaining present levels of production. Iran's population growth may, to quote Dr. Marr, "be a liability, not an asset, to economic development." Thus, Iraq's economic and military superiority "have already shifted the balance of power in the Gulf and the Fertile Crescent in Iraq's favor."

Iran

Venturing predictions about Iran ten years hence is much more difficult than for authoritarian Iraq. However, the very factors that make for such uncertainty lead to some important conclusions about Iran's future.

John Limbert convincingly shows that a relatively small clique has retained power in Iran since the beginning of Khomeini's revolution. They have also argued endlessly over paths to be taken—"revolution in one country" versus exporting it abroad, more central control of the economy versus letting the private sector have its way, bringing in needed foreign expertise and capital versus going it alone, for example. Khomeini made a point of letting such factionalism flourish; indeed this was probably a method of governing. His legacy is that severe infighting continues as of this writing and is likely to do so for some time. As Dr. Limbert says, "Without Khomeini, no one has the last word."

Thus, the few dozen leaders who developed factionalism to an art form under Khomeini are likely to string out the end game, devoting all their energies to political survival and little to reconstruction or long-term planning. The spectacle of the Salman Rushdie affair's destroying months of Iranian effort to woo European countries back is likely to be repeated as hard-liners fight the so-called pragmatists. In the meantime, the economic and military reconstruction Iran desperately needs is likely to be delayed. Dr. Limbert concludes that "the current regime has been incapable of taking the decisive political steps necessary to restore the Iranian economy." There is little to indicate that this will change any-time soon.

Indeed, the history of the Islamic Republic to date could easily justify the conclusion that the various factions in the leadership will lurch between conflicting policies for the coming decade. If this happens, it is hard to envisage Iran's being able to make significant progress in economic and military reconstruction, since such action would require consistency in policy over time. If the hard-liners triumph, "self-reliance" and "export of the revolution" will mean further deterioration of infrastructure, isolation, and economic and military decline. Even if the "pragmatists" prevail, their consolidation of power is likely to be marked by costly fits and starts as the hard-liners fight rearguard actions and the pragmatists bow and weave to avoid charges of betraying the revolution.

What this all adds up to is an Iran that will be lucky indeed to have dug itself out from under the destruction of war and neglect by the year 2000. For the Soviets and others, Iran may retain the aura of being the "strategic prize" in the region because of its location, size, and population. But in reality, Iran will be weak, unstable, and beset by problems to the year 2000, and most likely beyond. Indeed, its very population growth (expected to reach 100 million by 2010) may be a liability as oil reserves inevitably decline. In the power equation of the Gulf, Iran is no longer first, and there is little likelihood that this will have changed by the turn of the century.

The Gulf Arms Race

The present "no war—no peace" standoff between Iran and Iraq only encourages the already existing arms race. Iran never could match Iraq's planes and tanks during the war, and at the end of the war it lost massive amounts of equipment, particularly tanks. At the moment, Michael Dunn notes, "Iran's major suppliers remain countries like China and North Korea, whose equipment is by no means comparable to Iraq's French and Soviet aircraft and tanks." Iran cannot hope to acquire equipment to match Iraq's unless the West or the USSR suddenly prove willing to sell massive amounts of equipment, which Iran will not be able to afford in the near future.

Iran's procurement problems will not, however, lead to any slowdown in the arms race. To quote Dr. Dunn, Iran's "population, strategic location, and the fact that it will remain a political question mark for some time mean it will be the benchmark against which its neighbors judge their military arsenals *even if Iran were to prove the best of neighbors*, though the latter is a highly unlikely prospect."

Although the fighting has stopped, the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war has left the Gulf a much more dangerous place. The nature of arms in the region has changed qualitatively—and for the worse. During the war, both sides used chemical weapons and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Despite international treaties, nothing was done to effectively stop such use. One of the most troubling legacies of the war was to widely publicize the efficacy of chemical weapons. It now appears that both sides are developing capabilities to arm their missiles with chemical weapons, and developing biological weapons. Iraq's fear of Iran's three-to-one demographic edge makes it likely that Iraq will try to pursue the nuclear option, even though this runs the risk of another Israeli preemptive strike.

Even if the United States were in the arms supply game, it would be unlikely to have much of an effect on the introduction of the most troublesome weapons in the area, such as intermediate-range missiles and chemical weapons. Despite US efforts to interdict the sale of precursors for chemical weapons, local production is well advanced and stopping supply from all sources extremely difficult. Although the INF treaty bans US or Soviet production of medium-range missiles altogether, this does not stop the Chinese, who have supplied the Saudis with missiles, nor other Third World suppliers, such as Brazil and Argentina,

which are actively engaged in missile production projects with Egypt and Iraq. "It is likely," Dr. Dunn concludes, "that the suppliers of new technologies, those which may contribute most to the destabilizing side of the arms race, will be the newer arms merchants of the developing world, not the US, USSR or Western Europe. . . . Increasingly, the arms race will be one conducted independently of the US. Yet ironically, the long-term stability of the Gulf continues to be one of the US' most important strategic concerns."

Saudia Arabia and the Other Gulf Cooperation Council States

Saudi Arabia

The good news is that the Saudis have weathered a decade of war, threats, and economic downturn well, and the prognosis for internal stability is good. David Long demonstrates that the Saudis do not have to fear for their fundamentalist credentials; their Wahhabite system is just as radical and fundamentalist as revolutionary Iran's, perhaps even more so. Hence Khomeini's message is not a threat. The strong family base of Saudi society is likely to mean continued political stability based on social stability.

The bedrock of US-Saudi relations from a Saudi perspective has always been security and a shared opposition to communist inroads. With a small population and vast resources spread over a large area, the Saudis looked to the United States as their ultimate security guarantee, with the litmus test of US commitment being its ability to provide arms.

As Dr. Long notes, "for years, Saudi Arabia has been taken more or less for granted by Western policymakers." Whether such an outlook contributed to the conditions facilitating the takeover of Kuwait is problematic. Certainly, the aftermath of that takeover has changed the relationship between the kingdom and the Western states profoundly. Not only its external relations have been affected. Its exposure to Western values and individual citizen contact may have altered the traditional fabric of its society irreversibly.

According to Professor Doran, in terms of its foreign policy, Saudi Arabia has had to confront a bitter truth: Arab friendship is not able itself to offset the pressure of hostile nationalism. Similarly, alone Saudi Arabia is unable to defend itself. The GCC is as much a burden and responsibility for Saudi Arabia in security terms as it is a source of common defense. Thus Saudia Arabia must find the outline of a new set of alliance relationships internal to the region, and perhaps external to it. That is one of the principal conclusions that follow from the Kuwait takeover.

The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Smaller Gulf States

Four members of the GCC (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar) account for roughly half of OPEC's production capacity, two-thirds of OPEC proven reserves, and close to half of proven world reserves. Thus when the GCC block is united on oil policy, it carries enormous weight in OPEC

councils. As non-OPEC oil supply diminishes, the clout will only grow. Sometime before the year 2000, Joseph Twinam concludes, it is likely "growing demand for Gulf oil will absorb the present excess capacity in the GCC states as well as in Iran and Iraq. At this point a significant and expensive effort to expand GCC production capacity might be necessary if sharp upward pressure on world oil prices is to be avoided. . . . How the GCC coordinates production and pricing policies is likely to become increasingly critical to world economic health and broad US interests as the year 2000 approaches."

The outlook for the smaller GCC states appears good. Their populations are small, but this makes it easier for rulers to keep in touch, and for economies to ride out slumps in oil prices. This said, some long-term trends and present problems bear watching. Two-thirds of the populations of Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates are foreign. Some are truly temporary workers, but others, such as Palestinians, are longtime "resident aliens," who are going to grow more strident in demanding equal rights. Some could import the political problems of their homelands into the Gulf. Their presence poses a significant long-term internal security problem, "a time bomb that will tick into the twenty-first century."

The smaller GCC countries, particularly Kuwait and Bahrain, can congratulate themselves on having weathered Khomeini's revolution and subversion promoted by Iran in their indigenous Shiite communities. However, this has not been without cost, particularly in terms of shunting Shia aside to "nonsensitive" positions and generally making them feel untrusted. Over time, Shiite-Sunni animosity may grow, undermining the social fabric in some of these countries.

Oman does not have a Shiite problem, but as Ambassador Twinam aptly puts it, newly educated Omanis are coming home looking for work in "a land still notable for the influence of the foreign adviser and the dominance of non-Arabs in the commercial sector." More than thirty years after King Hussein retired Glubb Pasha, Omani officers still find themselves reporting to British officers. It seems unlikely that they will accept this for another decade. Kicking the "foreign habit" is likely to prove crucial to Oman's long-term stability. Whether those in control can bring themselves to do this with sufficient speed remains to be seen.

Outside Powers and the Gulf

A New Soviet Role in the Gulf

In the 1970s, the Gulf remained largely a Western preserve, even after the withdrawal of the British. Soviet involvement was largely with the then peripheral states—Southern Yemen and radical, rejectionist Iraq. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan reinforced the image of the USSR as aggressive and looking for targets of opportunity.

By 1989 exclusive Western influence in the region had virtually ended. Kuwait was no longer the lone GCC state to have relations with the USSR.