

FORUM: HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL

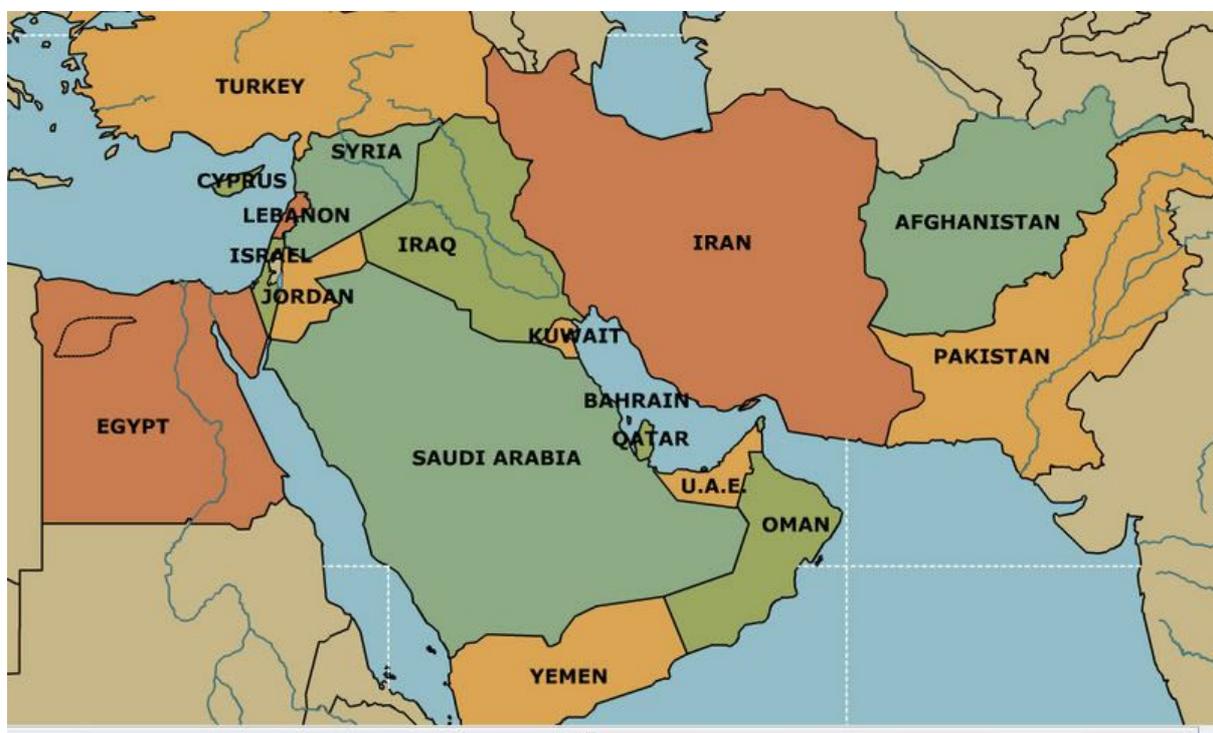
ISSUE: THE FIRST GULF WAR- INVASION OF KUWAIT

ISABELLE BROWNING

INTRODUCTION

“A Naked Act of Aggression”

American President George Bush, 2nd of August 1990



Amazingly, the invasion of Kuwait, the cause of the first Gulf War, happened on the 2nd of August 1990, only twenty five years ago. The Cold War had ended and the Second World War and the First World War were descending into history. The Iran- Iraq war had ended in 1988, a miserable feat for both countries. The invasion, by Iraq, of Kuwait, a small but prosperous country, rich in natural oils, caused international outrage. It is necessary now to understand how the situation could have been improved and properly dealt with, to be prepared to offer plausible solutions that could have saved lives.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Emirate: In some Islamic countries such as Kuwait or Qatar, the head of state is called the Emir. The provinces that this Emir rules over is his/hers Emirate.

Slant drilling: Instead of drilling vertically and therefore making wells that go straight downwards, slant drilling is tilted. In 1990, Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, announced that the Kuwaitis were slant drilling across into the Iraq border and therefore taking their oil.

Petroleum: Petroleum, or petrol, is a thick, flammable, dark coloured liquid that is created naturally in certain parts of the World (for example Kuwait). It is accessed by drilling. It is used for fuel, gasoline and in vehicles. In 1990, North America was consuming 20319 barrels of petroleum a day.

Deadlock: Synonym of stalemate, a deadlock between nations implies an inability to progress.

Oil Glut: mass production of oil, enabling oil prices to decrease.

Embargo: a ban on trade and other commercial/ financial activities with a certain country (like Iraq).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Why was Kuwait invaded? There are many answers to that question. Like most significant happenings, it was not a single event, but compilation of many that caused the annexation of Kuwait.

Originally, Kuwait was a part of the Ottoman Empire, along with the rest of the Middle East. It was an Arab understanding in the early 20th century that all the land south of Baghdad to the Gulf was 'Iraq' and it was ruled by the rich family Al-Sabah. After the dissolvment of the Ottoman Empire succeeding the First World War, the League of Nations (the predecessor of the United Nations) gave to Great Britain the Middle East as a colonies. Britain's steward in the Gulf, Sir Percy Cox, decided to "draw some lines in the sand", in other words to redraw the map. He made Iraq include the provinces of Basra and Baghdad, as well as Kurds, in the North. In doing so, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia became their own countries. Iraq was therefore cut off from the sea and the Al-Sabah family managed to convince Kuwait to join Iraq in 1938. This merger did not last forever, in the year 1963, Kuwait once again achieved independence with the help of Britain. Iraq therefore had a sense of ownership over Kuwait. This sense of ownership would be a strong push factor in the invasion of Kuwait.

Another extremely important event that, as a snowball will, led to the invasion of Kuwait is the Iran- Iraq war (1980- 1988). To begin with, Kuwait was neutral. However, as it became clear Iran wanted to use Kuwait's neutrality to its advantage, the small but rich country turned to Iraq, demonstrating therefore a preference. Between 1882 and 1883, Kuwait sent over 14 000 000 000\$ to Iraq as an economic aid. After the war, which ended after eight years of struggle and no gain on either side, Iraq was economically impoverished. It could not pay Kuwait back. Iraq asked Kuwait to forget the loan, Kuwait refused.

Now, it is important to know that this period was a time of oil glut. Kuwait was producing highly over the quota and enabling prices to soar downwards. In the first six

months of 1990, the price of a barrel of oil went from 20\$ to 13\$! This was terrible news for Iraq whose plan for getting out of poverty was rising oil prices. Kuwait refused to produce less oil and to that Saddam Hussein announced "Such behaviour leads to military aggression".

That was indeed not the first time Iraq had accused Kuwait. In late 1989, Saddam Hussein announced that the Kuwaitis were slant drilling and stealing Iraq oil. This accusation was not taken seriously by any other states.

The final push factor that made Iraq invade Kuwait was done by Avril Glaspie, the American ambassador for Iraq. She made it clear to Saddam Hussein that the United States of America would not impose any economic or military sanctions on Iraq if the country invaded Kuwait. The USA later said they did not think Hussein would go through with it.

We now know that Iraq invaded Kuwait because it thought Kuwait belonged to it, because it couldn't repay its debt, because Kuwait was much richer than Iraq and would not allow Iraq the chance to heal by increasing petrol prices and finally because Iraq assumed it would be safe from American wrath.

Eight days after talking with Glaspie, on the 2nd of August 1990, at two in morning, Iraq started its invasion of Kuwait. Unprepared, unsuspecting, unaware, Kuwait was overpowered quickly. By night time, Saddam Hussein claimed Kuwait. He had used his air force to bomb Kuwait's, his infantry to gain control of Kuwait City and his navy to attack the Dasman Palace, home to the Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. This became known as the Battle of Dasman Palace. The Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as most of the rich influential people of Kuwait escaped to Saudi Arabia. The Emir's younger brother however, died attempting to defend the Palace. It is said that after Fahad was killed, the Iraqis laid his corpse on the floor and drove a tank over it.

On the 8th of August 1990, Saddam Hussein announced Kuwait's annexation for the World. Iraq now owned 20% of the planet's oil supplies.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Iraq itself is of course, a significant player in the invasion of Kuwait. Iraq overpowered Kuwait in military even though it was economically poorer. It is most probable that Kuwait did not stand a chance against its wrath.

Kuwait, the invaded, is maybe not without blame. Had the country accepted to lower its production of petroleum and therefore given the prices a chance to rise, Iraq would have been able to recover from the Iran- Iraq war (we can draw a parallel between this situation and the one in impoverished Germany after WW1).

OPEC: Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. This international organisation, now headquartered in Austria, was founded in Baghdad, Iraq. Its aim was to coordinate oil prices and to make sure no oil producer cut oil prices suddenly (then that producer would king over the petrol market and other producers would also have to lower their prices). OPEC enabled oil producers to become extremely rich and influential people. On the 25th of August 1990, OPEC announced that Kuwait had agreed with the other Emirs to reduce petrol production in order to settle the differences between Iraq and Kuwait.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1982- 1983: Kuwait lends over 14 billion\$ to Iraq to help it during the Iraq- Iran war.

Late 1989: Iraq and Kuwait leaders, Saddam Hussein and the Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, try to reach financial agreements. Due to its war stricken economy, Iraq cannot repay the 14 billion\$ Kuwait lent it during the Iran- Iraq war. Iraq asks Kuwait to forget the debt. Kuwait is not willing. Negotiations end at a deadlock.

25th of July 1990: April Glaspie (USA ambassador for Iraq) meets up with Saddam Hussein. The USA want to know the reason for which Iraq is stationing troops near the Kuwait border. Glaspie announced "we have no opinion on the Arab–Arab conflicts".

2nd of August 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait in the early hours of the morning. The UN immediately reacts and an emergency security council session takes place. The council passed Resolution 660 condemning Iraq's invasion. It is before the council decides to take create this Resolution that our Historical Security Council takes place. Delegates are not expected to know the events that take place after this date.

6th of August 1990: The UN imposes financial and trade embargo on Iraq.

7th of August 1990: George HW Bush, American President, proclaims the start of Operation Desert Shield and the first American soldiers arrive in Saudi Arabia.

8th of August 1990: Kuwait is formally annexed by Iraq: Saddam Hussein names Alaa Hussein Ali as the president of Kuwait.

RELEVANT TREATIES

United Nations Treaties

The UN Security Council was furious! In the evening of the invasion, the 2nd of August 1990, the UN made the first of thirteen resolutions condemning Iraq. The first was Resolution 660 and it demanded Iraq's instant evaporation from Kuwait. It was disregarded.

Saddam Hussein's disregard of the thirteen UNSCRs (United Nations Security Council Resolutions) made the United Nations agree to the use of military force against Iraq on the 29th of November 1990.

The United nations therefore failed to accomplish peace through economic sanctions.

Support from Arabic countries

The Arab League, an organisation composing of twenty two Arab states, drafted a statement against the invasion of Kuwait, supporting the United Nations, on the 10th of August 1990. This statement turned relationships sour however as several Arab countries sided with Iraq.

Palestine was one of these. Kuwait, who was the host of many palestinian refugees, felt betrayed and thus decided to expel all of the refugees.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Kuwait invaded, Saddam Hussein ignoring the Security Council, the United States itching for war, how to deal with such a crisis? Chamberlain's Policy of Appeasement, applied on Hitler in the years before the Second World War could be a solution. In other words, look the other way, as the League of Nations did during the Manchurian Crisis, the Abyssinian Crisis, when Hitler rearmed the Rhineland. Unfortunately, none of these events had particularly joyous outcomes. The use of appeasement, it has been proven, is not **always** the best policy. Another possible solution, from the perspective of the night of the 2nd of August 1990, could be an immediate military outbreak as the United States of America wanted or on the contrary a passive attack on Iraq via its economy. The isolation of the state would harm its already war stricken economy which could weaken its hold on Kuwait.

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APPENDICES

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