

POLITICAL GAMBLE IN LIBERIA: THE RISE AND FALL OF PRESIDENT SAMUEL DOE

George Agbango*

Since the 1960s, most Sub-Saharan African countries have witnessed a succession of military rulers -- a situation that poses serious threats to the region's political stability and politico-socioeconomic development. The few Sub-Saharan African countries that have escaped military rule are not entirely safe from military adventurism.

This paper examines the causes and effects of one such military coup d'état in 1980 in Liberia that led to the rise of Master-Sergeant Doe (who later promoted himself to a five-star general and President of Liberia). Doe ruled Liberia for nearly a decade. During this period, the political and socioeconomic climate in Liberia degenerated and it became another example of an African Country with disastrous experiences with military dictatorship.

In 1990, Doe was killed at the height of a civil war that devastated his country. Whereas Doe's rise to power sends a lesson to African civilian regimes that fail to provide honest and democratic leadership, his fall also serves as a warning to African military dictators who ignore the wishes of the majority of their citizens.

CAUSES OF THE 1980 COUP IN LIBERIA

The circumstances leading to the 1980 coup in Liberia have their roots dating as far back as the 1820's when the state of Liberia was founded. Founded as a colony for freed slaves from the United States, the country's code of arms has the inscription, "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here." Ironically, "liberty" was not extended to all sectors of the Liberian population, and this problem, in the last decades of the twentieth century, escalated into civil strife. In the first place, land was forcefully acquired from the indigenous people around the coastal lands of present day Liberia. Secondly, the settlers, comprising freed slaves from the Americas and slaves captured from slave ships off the coast of the Americas (referred to as "recaptives"), considered themselves superior to the indigenous people who were in the majority. Thirdly, among the settlers, the recaptives were discriminated against by the freed slaves from America who regarded their ethnicity to be "Americo-Liberian." There is no doubt that the indigenous people were then regarded as barbarians since a provision in the declaration of independence described the land as a "barbarous coast."¹ The Americo-Liberian cult of ethnic superiority was resented by the indigenous population, and occasional feuds among the three groups reflected the mutual animosities that prevailed between them.

There were several motives underlying the repatriation of Negroes from the Americas to Africa. Saigbey Boley has vividly analyzed the motives of the Colonization Societies of the United States in the repatriation of the freed slaves and suggests that the fundamental reasons were the following:

1. The desire to rid America of the care and danger of poor and disgruntled blacks who could repeat the rebellious terror of Nat Turner.
2. To create a shortage of black labor and hence stimulate white immigration to America from Europe.
3. To reduce the alarming growth rate of Blacks in America.
4. To use Negro settlement in Liberia as a nucleus for the spread of Christianity in Africa.
5. The fear that America will lose its racial and cultural identity if the Negroes were allowed to mix with whites.²

Whatever the motives of the Colonization Societies, it is reasonable to deduce that it was also in the self-interest of the freed slaves to flee the racist climate in America -- hence the

* George Agbango is an Assistant Professor and Chairman of the Department of Political Science, Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania.

¹ G.E. Saigbey Boley, *Liberia: The Rise and Fall of the First Republic*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 29.

² *Ibid.* 6-7.

"love of liberty" brought them to Liberia. Yet those who were fleeing from discrimination in America were willing to practice the same against the natives and the recaptives. The indigenous population was not only treated with contempt by the recaptives, but they were recruited against their will and supplied as "laborers for Firestone and other foreign employers."³ Slave labor was also exported to Spanish plantations abroad in places such as Fernando Po.⁴ According to Raymond Buell, such practices led to complete "disorganization of the native village life, a high death rate in labor compounds, and depopulation of the villages."⁵ Following investigations it was not surprising that Liberia was censured by the League of Nations for its slave practices. This led to the resignation of President King and his vice-president, Allen Yancy, and other Liberian officials.⁶

The resignation of King and his accomplices did not end slavery in Liberia until as late as 1962: "One-fourth of the wage-earning labor force was recruited involuntarily."⁷ This part of Liberia's history widened the rift between the indigenous population and the Americo-Liberians. Unfortunately, succeeding political leaders ignored or did little to reconcile the feuding factions.

Economically, the national wealth of Liberia was never equitably distributed. Physical development in Liberia was concentrated around Monrovia (inhabited by a large percentage of Americo-Liberians) whereas the hinterland (which is largely inhabited by the indigenous people) was left undeveloped. As socioeconomic conditions between the urban areas and the countryside widened, so also did the social class strata. As Dunn and Tarr put it:

Wealth tended to be concentrated in the upper crust of repatriate society (broadly defined), which hardly exceeded one percent of the population. At the other extreme were the indigenous mass of rural poor and an ethnically mixed urban poor, underclass repatriates being included.⁸

Politically, a broad mass of the Liberian population was alienated from the political process. Since the founding of Liberia in 1821, until the coup of 1980, political power and the "authoritative allocation of values" was the exclusive preserve of the expatriate elite and the True Whig Party. The alienated groups resented this. As early as the 1930s, this resentment materialized in a coup plot. At the trial of the ringleaders, it was revealed that "... at the founding of their Youth Association in 1937, there had been a plan 'to destroy the Americo-Liberian aristocracy, and to put all the aborigines in the government of the country.'⁹ Yet no efforts were made to defuse any potential explosion of violence by sharing political power.

With the emergence of the continent-wide independence struggle in the post World War II era, it was hoped that the ruling elite in Liberia would progressively loosen up political controls and allow for democratization of the political process. This did not happen. The ruling elite under President William Tubman's leadership lost the unique opportunity to initiate reforms during this period. In addition, Tubman's repressive rule fueled the already volatile situation. As Wreh succinctly puts it:

He [Tubman] surrounded himself with a network of security services and a plethora of agents to ensure that dissenters were silenced, being consigned to jail under the catchall, nebulous crime of "security risk." The police, the army, the arms of the security service were all part of the apparatus used by Tubman to cow the people and make his regime seem faultless with himself as "god-king" who saw all and knew all. . .

Not only was power and decision-making Tubman's exclusive preserve, but the means of redress and dissent open to the citizen were also restricted. Institutions that provided the constitutional checks and balances were never allowed to take an independent course unfavorable to his Administration.¹⁰

³ *Ibid.*, 43,45.

⁴ Martin Lowenkopf, *Politics in Liberia*, (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 36.

⁵ Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, Vol. II (Frank Cass & Company, Ltd., 1965), 833; quoted in Boley, *Liberia: The Rise and Fall of the First Republic*, 45.

⁶ Lowenkopf, *Politics in Liberia*, 36.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ D. Elwood Dunn and S. Bryon Tarr, *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*, (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1988), 39.

⁹ *The African Nationalist*, December 7, 1940; quoted in Tuan Wreh, *The Love of the Liberty... The Rule of William V.S. Truman in Liberia, 1944-1971*, (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1976), 62.

¹⁰ Tuan Wreh, *The Love of Liberty...*, 23.

Personal greed crowned Tubman's repressive rule. For instance, in 1951, Tubman purchased an expensive Presidential yacht for his exclusive use at the state's expense. Again, in 1966, Tubman devoted large sums of money for the celebration of his 76th birthday.¹¹ This was at a time when the country needed better health and educational facilities [more] than ever. Tubman's national priorities were glaringly misplaced.

On July 23, 1971, William Tolbert succeeded Tubman following the death of the latter. Tolbert pledged to transform the Liberian society into one "which shall require the total dynamic involvement of every Liberian, and of all within our borders for an ever-spiraling advancement of productivity and achievement."¹²

The early years of Tolbert's administration witnessed a profound change in the political climate which may be likened to a "Monrovia Spring" -- freedom of the press, speech, and association were attempted. It was during this time that several pressure groups were formed: The Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) and The Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) were both founded in 1973. A year later, local chapters of Liberia welfare associations throughout the U.S.A. amalgamated to form the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA).

The "Monrovia Spring" was short-lived. The guarantees of freedom of the press, speech and association never materialized as corruption became the norm of the day. However, a National Force for the Eradication of Corruption was formed:

Dishonesty and corruption in government became widespread and uncontrollable ... Friends and relatives of the President as well as those well-connected citizens [involved] in dishonest or corrupt practices were seldom prosecuted ... Moral deterioration in society reached its lowest ebb.¹³

Several factors account for the incidence of coup d'états in Sub-Saharan Africa: greed, corruption, nepotism, moral decadence, ethnic strife, and the willingness of the army (or a wing thereof) to stage a coup d'état. The True Whig Party under Tolbert, by 1980, was deeply entrenched in these social evils. Tolbert's government was filled with relatives and friends -- only a few of whom earned their positions by merit. MOJA, PAL and other political associations exerted pressure on the Tolbert administration to rid the country of corruption and to democratize. The masses rallied around these formidable groups with the sole objective of presenting their grievances to the government in an organized manner. PAL under Gabriel Baccus Matthews was at the forefront of the organizations demanding reform. It successfully registered a Peoples Progressive Party as an alternative to the True Whig Party.

In the midst of these aggravations, in April 1979, the Liberian government raised the price of rice (the country's staple food). This action was resisted by the populace. As organized labor and the masses demonstrated against the government price policy, the government mobilized the army and police to ruthlessly suppress the demonstrations. For instance, on April 15, 1979, about one hundred people lost their lives and some 500 people were injured during a demonstration.¹⁴ Consequently, as the popularity of the Tolbert regime continued to decline, the opposition groups continued to gain popular support.

The climax of Tolbert's political problems was the coup of April 12, 1980. Tolbert was killed in the wake of the coup and thirteen of his cabinet ministers were executed later. Master-Sergeant Doe who led the coup declared himself the head of state. The coup did not come as a surprise. Soldiers are "people" first and "soldiers" second. They are part of the society that is a conglomeration of members of their family, ethnic group, fraternal and religious groups. They see the worsening plight of their people. They are not unaware of the contradictions of a society in which the wealth and splendor of the ruling elite contrast sharply with the poverty of the broad mass of the people. Added to this concern, is the usual ambition of soldiers to rule. Hence, the April 12, 1980 coup d'état did not surprise political analysts.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹² G.E. Saigbey Boley, *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*, 77.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴ Dunn and Tarr, *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*, 77.

Nor was it surprising that a vast majority of Liberians welcomed the coup.

Any political system that does not lend itself to peaceful change may subject itself to a forceful removal. That accounted for the fall of Liberia's first republic. Similarly, the fall of the Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party government in Ghana in 1966 was partly due to the inability of the populace to effect a change through the ballot box. Ghana's experience was replicated in Liberia (1980, 1990), Uganda (1971), and Ethiopia (1984).

In his broadcast to the nation after the coup, Samuel Doe pledged to rid Liberia of all the pre-coup vices and to install a government that was to be responsive to people, and one in which justice, equality, and fairness would prevail. Doe's ascension to power ended the Americo-Liberian elite's monopoly of political power in Liberia.

In the years that followed, the behavior of Doe and his ruling People's Redemption Council government revealed that Liberia in the post-coup era was like George Orwell's "Animal Farm" in which the pigs (as the rulers of Manor Farm) were no better than the men they replaced. Ruth First has rightly noted that no matter the noble intentions of the Army, they often seize power because of their own corporate interest.¹⁵ The post-coup era in Liberia confirmed First's analogy. Dunn and Tarr recount:

Military spending became illustrative of this emerging pattern. While the immediate post-coup seizure of private property may be viewed as part of a revolutionary political change, their conversion to personal use in the visibly ostentatious living of leading military personnel quickly reversed the image of young soldiers committed to rectifying the evils of the past and working in the masses' interest. In 1980-81, the first full fiscal year after the coup, \$144 million (80% of the recurrent budget) was spent on personnel services (wages, salaries, benefits, housing, etc.). The amount was double the \$72 million spent on the same items in 1978-79 — the year of Tolbert's benefits increase for the professional category of civil servants.

Overall, spending on national security — defense and costs classed as "public order and safety" — increased from \$17.8 million in 1978-79 to \$44.6 million in 1980-81. The cost of national security as a percentage of total government expenditures also went up significantly after the coup. From security spending of 6.2% of the budget in 1978-79, the proportion of spending rose steadily from 10.1% in 1978-79 to 15% in 1980-81; in 1986, it is nearly one-third. At the same time, according to the World Bank's annual World Development Report, relative government spending on education and health fell from 30% of total government spending in 1977 to 23.6% in 1981.¹⁶

The history of military intervention in the politics of Sub-Saharan Africa reveals that the military on seizing power cling to it until they are forced out of office. In Somalia, Siyad Barre clung on to power for over twenty years until his overthrow in early 1991. In Benin, Matthieu Kerekou was in power from 1972 to 1991. He was defeated in 1991 during a national election forced on him by pro-democracy movements. In Mali, Moussa Traore was in power from 1968 until February 1991, when pro-democracy forces necessitated a palace coup. In Togo, Gnassingbe Eyadema rode high on dictatorial rule until labor movements and democratic forces ended his "invincible" monopoly of power in mid-1991. After seizing power in 1965 in Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko still clings to authority despite the overwhelming national opposition to his rule.

THE FALL OF DOE

Samuel Doe, like the Machiavellian prince, outmaneuvered other members of the PRC. Five members of the PRC were executed in August 1981 for plotting to overthrow Doe. The elimination complied with the Machiavellian dictum that one way a prince can maintain political power is by getting rid of those who are capable of removing him from power.¹⁷

To legitimize his continuous hold on power, and partly due to external pressure from the United States, Doe made overtures towards a return to constitutional rule. He began with the appointment of a National Constitution Commission that drafted a new constitution. It was revised by a Constitutional Advisory Assembly and later submitted to the populace for ratification in a national referendum on July 3, 1984.

¹⁵ Ruth First, *Power in Africa*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 20.

¹⁶ Dunn and Tarr, *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*, 96.

¹⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), 34.

Following the lifting of the ban on party politics, Doe launched his National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL). Other political parties sprang up, but in the end it was a contest between the NDPL and the Liberian Action Party (LAP).

In the ensuing elections, the NDPL emerged victorious by winning 50.9 percent of the votes. But it was widely claimed by observers that the LAP won by 62.8 percent of the votes cast.¹⁸ As leader of the NDPL, Doe became President of the Second Republic of Liberia in 1985.

Meanwhile, the economy of Liberia continued to decline. In 1984, a "Report of the Committee to Review the Present Economic Situation in Liberia" had indicated that Liberia was at the brink of a financial and economic collapse which could lead to social and political chaos.¹⁹ By 1987, the Liberian economy was suffering from acute economic distress. Doe in desperation hired seventeen operational experts -- the apex men -- from the United States to help control Liberian government spending as well as minimize the chronic corruption.²⁰

As the Liberian economy declined and Doe increased his grip over the country, Charles Taylor (a former ally of Doe) and Prince Yormie Johnson organized a guerrilla campaign against Doe. Johnson and Taylor eventually split company due to ideological differences in February 1990. However, both factions continued to fight against forces loyal to Doe. In these encounters, a full-scale civil war developed and many innocent civilians became victims. During the last Sunday of July 1990, 600 people who had sought refuge in a church outside Monrovia were massacred by forces loyal to Doe.²¹ As the civilian population continued to suffer great casualties, the number of refugees entering neighboring countries (Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Guinea) escalated. It was no longer a Liberian problem. Hence the Economic Commission of West African States, in the interest of the innocent lives lost daily in the civil war and in the interest of the member countries affected, commissioned some of its member states to deploy a peace keeping force in Liberia.

Consequently, an ECOWAS peace keeping force under the command of Lt. General Quainoo of Ghana was deployed to maintain law and order in Liberia. This intervention was resisted by the warring factions of Johnson and Taylor on the grounds that they may protect the interests of Doe.

In September of 1990, Samuel Doe was abducted by forces loyal to Johnson, from the grounds of the ECOWAS peace keeping headquarters in Monrovia. The captured and wounded Doe was taken to the Johnson camp where he was tortured, dismembered and allowed to bleed to death. However, the exit of Doe did not minimize the intensity of the civil war. By December 1990, nearly 400,000 Liberians fled the war torn country and took refuge in neighboring countries.²² With the fall of Doe, both Johnson and Taylor claimed the Liberian presidency. However, Amos Sawyer, a relatively neutral party in the civil war, was sworn in as interim president of Liberia pending general elections. Since then, shuttle diplomacy for a lasting peace in Liberia has intensified.

LESSONS FROM THE LIBERIAN EXPERIENCE

Liberia in the 1990s is certainly worse off than Liberia at the end of the 1970s. The Liberian experience clearly demonstrates the likely outcome of a nation state that fails to mobilize its people for national development. The Americo-Liberian dominance of Liberian politics was replaced by the personal rule of Doe with the support of his Krahn ethnic group. The gains envisaged under the military rule never developed.

Samuel Doe would have remained a hero to the masses of Liberians if he had handed over power to an elected government in the early 1980's. The demise of Doe is similar to the fate

¹⁸ Dunn and Tarr, 120.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁰ *The Economist*, November 28, 1987.

²¹ *African Events*, August/September, 1990, 8.

²² *African Business*, September, 1990, 13.

of General Ignatius Acheampong of Ghana who, in 1972, was hailed for his coup -- but by 1977, his repressive and corrupt rule led to his overthrow in a palace coup. In 1979, while he was tied to a stake and executed by a firing squad, the crowd cheered. Similarly in 1971 when Idi Amin overthrew the government of Milton Obote in Uganda, he was well received by the people. However, by 1975, Amin had become the "butcher of Kampala" and he presided over a reign of terror unprecedented in Uganda's history until his overthrow by the invading Tanzanian forces in 1979.

Unfortunately, these experiences fail to deter personal and dictatorial rule in Africa and many third world countries. Samuel Doe's sad end suggests that once political power has been seized, measures must be put in place for a popularly elected government to take control of affairs. Coups should not be an avenue for personal gain. Coups should be patriotic and selfless acts. Once the corrupt political leaders have been removed from office, the task of national governance should not be the preserve of the coup plotters or leaders. The unwillingness to involve the broad masses in the decision making process has often led to the demise of many coup leaders in the Third World. Consequently, it is necessary to question the motives of coup leaders in any coup in the developing nations. Perhaps the greatest lesson from the Liberian experience is that the military cannot be relied upon as an instrument of social and political change.

The intervention of ECOWAS forces to maintain peace in Liberia is worthy of praise. It is a laudable African initiative at solving African problems without foreign intervention. The ECOWAS experiment in Liberia lends credence to earlier calls for continental unity by the pioneers of African liberation such as Kwame Nkrumah. A united Africa with an African High Command could minimize regional conflicts.

The Liberian experience is a vivid depiction of the socioeconomic and political problems created by military intervention in the politics of Sub-Saharan Africa and the developing countries in general. It is also a warning to African countries that refuse to democratize. The essential elements of democracy must be respected and preserved by all countries aspiring to build their political institutions. These elements are: majority rule, free speech, freedom of association, freedom from want, and respect for the fundamental human rights of citizens as outlined in the United Nations Charter on Human Rights. Though "... democracy has tended to lose its meaning in political debate,"²³ its vital qualities, such those outlined above, still remain. To this end, former President Kaunda of Zambia deserves credit for gracefully leaving office following his defeat at the polls. However, his twenty-six years of personal rule and mismanagement of the Zambian economy are unforgivable. Doe's tragic fall also serves as a warning to African military dictators who consider themselves indispensable to their countries. Civilian and military rulers must realize that the state in the long run will survive them. Their duty is to serve well and to bow out gracefully when the signs indicated they should get out of the way.



²³ Jay M. Shafritz, *The Dorsey Dictionary of American Government and Politics*, (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1988), 162.

US-IRAQ RELATIONS AND THE GULF WAR: THE DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by
Ngozi Caleb Kamalu, Ph.D.*

Following the August 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States masterminded the proposal, passage and enforcement of a U.N. imposed embargo against Iraq. Also, on November 29, 1990, due to intensive American lobby, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the use of "all means necessary" to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. This U.N. authorization, coupled with the passage of Joint Resolution (HJ Res 77) by the United States Congress in support of U.N. measures to force Iraq out of Kuwait, gave the impetus to President George Bush to launch an armed attack against Iraq on January 16, 1991.¹

Prior to the gulf war, long-lived and warm U.S.-Iraq relations had become murky and tarnished in the prevailing political climate of distrust, blame, distortion and hate, even to the extent of personalizing the conflict between Saddam Hussein and George Bush. In an apparent reference to the mistreatment of diplomatic personnel by Iraq, President Bush on November 1, 1990, compared the Iraqi leader to Adolph Hitler, saying that Hitler did not respect much, but at least he did "respect the legitimacy of the embassies."²

This paper takes the position that the U.S., by virtue of its policy of appeasement toward Iraq, was partly -- in a conscious or unconscious manner -- responsible for the gulf war. In other words, the United States, in an attempt to curry favor with the Hussein regime in Iraq, failed to assert its position on basic issues of international law affecting its interest and relations with Iraq. Thus, the United States indirectly encouraged and abated the excessive and belligerent Iraqi behavior toward its neighbors. The basic reference to this premise was reflected in the statement of Iran's Spiritual Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who accused the United States of making Saddam Hussein "arrogant enough to invade Kuwait because of its support of Iraq in its 8-year war against Iran."³

This paper, therefore, is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) Explore the nature, scope and dynamics of U.S.-Iraq relations prior to the gulf war.
- (2) Determine whether there were inconsistencies in American policy toward Iraq and their possible causes.
- (3) Identify the impacts of disparate domestic interests and politics on the formulation, nature and execution of U.S.-Iraq policy.
- (4) Discuss the present state and nature of the Clinton Administration policy toward Iraq in the post-gulf war era.
- (5) Predict what the attitude of the Clinton Administration toward Iraq will likely be in the near future.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES, REVOLUTIONARY IRAN AND AMERICA'S TILT

Since the Vietnam war, which cost the United States about 58,000 troops, American foreign policy makers have responded to rising domestic pressure to avoid any reckless international entanglements that would cost American lives. Thus, the United States has relied on the use of proxy (third parties) to fight America's wars and in some cases, to contain Soviet expansionism and those of its client states or allies. In the Middle East, the United States has long relied on the use of regional powers (middle powers) as caretaker of its regional interests.

In return, the United States extended its political, economic and military support to sustain such regimes. The arrival of Mohammed Reza Shah on the Iranian political scene gave an

* Ngozi Caleb Kamalu, Ph.D. is a member of the Political Science Department, North Carolina A&T State University.

¹ *Congressional Quarterly*, (January 19, 1991): 182.

² *Congressional Quarterly*, (January 5, 1991): 43.

³ Bruce W. Nelan, "Call to Arms," *Time* September 24, 1990: 33.

impetus to this policy, so that Iran started to reestablish its national destiny that arrogated it to the role of regional "policeman". The Shah's nationalist commitments to "greater Iran" compelled him to occupy the tiny but strategically important islands of Abu Musa and the narrow accesses to the entrance of the Persian Gulf. In 1977, Iran intervened militarily to help the Sultan of Oman's southern province of Dhofar. The Shah's political role as a regional activist was heightened in 1955 when he embraced the "Baghdad" pact to form a northern tier alliance between Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Iraq. The alliance was later joined by Britain in order to form a shield against Soviet expansion and ideological influence in the North.⁴

In 1958, Iraq withdrew from the pact which resulted in its being renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The Iraqi withdrawal was a manifestation of its rivalry with Iran for regional dominance. This struggle for regional hegemony was later magnified by their border disputes over control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway that would allow access to the Persian Gulf, with all its military advantages, which would confer upon the victor the benefits of formidable naval power. By the 1970s, oil revenues had made Iran a strong competitor and a second ranking power in international politics -- "the gendarme of the Persian Gulf."⁵ The rivalry -- which ended when the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein of Iraq signed the Treaty of Algiers in 1975 -- gave rise to a new era in Iran-Iraq regional relations. It was called the period of "pax Irana." During this time, Iran progressed from a "revisionist" to a status quo power with regional stability as its rallying cry. The post Algiers Treaty era was then characterized by an atmosphere of reduced tension which lasted for about half a decade.⁶

The Iranian revolution and the inception of the theocratic state (Islamic republic) under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini reversed all prevailing regional arrangements by turning against Western influences and ideology. The leaders of Iran, including the Shah, have always been Sunni Moslems even though the majority of the population is Shiite. Traditionally, Iran has identified Iraqi leadership with Yazid, the ruler of ancient Iraq who, in the 17th C., was implicated in the death of Hossein, one of the founders of Shiite Islam and the grandson of Prophet Mohammed. This eventually became the source of the ancient animosity between the two religious sects.⁷

The danger the Islamic-Republic-of-Iran's ideology presented to American political interests in the Middle East was attributed to the Shiite brand of Islam. It has been the religion of dissent in Iran, where the clergy has emerged as the most vocal opponent of unpopular monarchs, fueled by memories of persecution suffered at the hand of the Sunnis. Also, Shiite dominated Iran has been fundamentally anti-western and believes in exporting its ideology to other Moslem states, especially the secular ones in the region comprising among others, Baathist Iraq. Khomeini has been designated by the Ithna Ashari Shiite theory of government as the leader of all Moslems in the world, totaling about 800 million.⁸

The magnitude of the threat posed by the Iranian revolution to the moderate monarchies of the Gulf States could not be underestimated. In June 1979, Iran incited a revolt in Iraq by overtly urging the Iraqi population to rise and overthrow the Baath regime. Iran also went further in order to escalate its anti Baath campaign by supporting anti-nationalist forces in Iraq, which included resumption of support for Iraqi Kurds; provision of aid to underground Shiite movements, especially the Daawa Party in Iraq and initiating terrorist attacks aimed at undermining the Iraqi regime. The most publicized of these subversive activities was the abortive attempt on the life of Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister in April, 1980.⁹

In contrast, Iraq -- in an attempt to consolidate power and preserve its legitimacy through

⁴ Miron Rezun, "Iran and Afghanistan with Specific Reference to their Asian Policies and Practices," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 30. 1-2 (1990): 10-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶ Efraim Karsh, "Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War," *Middle East Journal*, 44. 2 (Spring 1990): 256-268.

⁷ Rezun, 11-12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ Karsh, 266.

checking internal dissent -- clamped down on Shiite underground movements and even expelled Iranian citizens residing in Iraq. It also threw its support behind Iranian separatist elements such as the Iranian Kurds and Arabs in Kurdistan.¹⁰ A series of charges and counter charges between the two neighbors deepened their rift and led to skirmishes along their common borders. This convinced the Iraqi regime that war was the only viable means to permanently contain the Iranian threat. In 1980, Iraq, under the pretext of its displeasure with the Algiers agreement launched an attack against Iran.

In addition to Lebanon, Iran commanded a large Shiite following which it constantly exploited. Kuwait has about 30-40% Shiite Moslems in its population; Dubai has 30%; Qatar 20%; Oman has 50%; Iraq has 60% while Bahrain has 75%. In Lebanon, Shiites outnumber all of Sunni Moslems, Maronites and orthodox Christians put together. All these scattered concentrations of Shiite elements have been incited by their counterparts in Iran to overthrow the Sunni-led minority regimes.¹¹ The potential of the destabilizing influences of Iranian Shiite fundamentalism has been demonstrated in a number of gulf states.

In December 1981, Iran went on record as instigating the overthrow of the government of Qatar. In 1983, a failed coup was reported in which Iran was implicated. September 1982 witnessed the activities of Iranian Shiite leader, Hujjat Al-Islam Musavi Khuayni during the Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where he preached the violent overthrow of the corrupt Saudi Royal family by his Shiite followers.

In August 1987, a similar incident resulted in a riot and an attempt to seize the sacred mosque at Mecca. The event which led to the death of 400 pilgrims was instigated by Iranian worshippers who attempted to topple the Sunni-ruled kingdom and proclaim Khomeini the undisputed Iranian leader. But the situation was contained by the intervention of the Saudi security forces.¹² In Syria, the government is controlled by Moslem Alawites who owe their allegiance to Ismailism, one of the offshoots of the Shiite movement. The Alawites have had more affinity with the Shiites in Iran than with the Sunni Arabs in other gulf states. The closeness between Syria and Iran is explained by the formers' rivalry with Baathist Iraq. Nonetheless, Syria has had its problems with the Moslem Brotherhood sect which has traditionally aligned with Iran. Thus, Syria in the 1980s rid the Bekaa Valley of the Hizballah, the ardent supporters of Shiite Iran.¹³

The ascent to power of the revolutionary Shiite government in Iran was a basis of common concern among the gulf states that host a significant portion of Shiite groups in their population. If left unchecked, this could have a contagious effect on the behavior of Shiite majorities who could threaten the survival of those regimes with minority Sunni governments in power. Hence, when Iraq fought Iran in the 1980s, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates extended moral, political, and financial support to Iraq. At the time, Iraq was perceived as the lone bulwark the tide of Iranian expansionist drives that threatened their regimes.

Even the United States and its allies, France and West Germany, perceived against political and economic threats posed to their governments by the possibility of Iranian regional dominance. The U.S. provided Iraq with military, financial and food assistance. Ultimately, when Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds - who were accused by Baghdad of conspiring with Iran in its war against its sovereignty - the West failed to mobilize international public opinion against Iraq.¹⁴

It has been argued that American support for Iraq during its war with Iran was precipitated by U.S. obsession with the danger posed to the gulf states and to oil supplies by Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini. While this policy was sound at the outset, it was pursued to an excessive

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Rezun, 17.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁴ Mervat F. Hatem, "The Gulf Crisis: A Political Perspective," *New Direction* (Winter 1991): 30-32.

degree during the dying period of the Iran-Iraq war because the U.S. government failed to foresee the danger the Iraqi regime would constitute to her and its interests. The Iran-Contra testimony revealed that the United States, with the collusion of its Western allies, sold weapons technology to Iraq and channeled credits and loans in the range of \$2.24 billion.¹⁵

In fact, American preoccupation with Iraq resulted from its concern about Iranian intentions, and the drive to maintain a balance of power in the Persian gulf while safeguarding the West's vital oil supplies. Several factors led to America's embrace of the oppressive regime in Iraq. The U.S. was concerned about the radical influences of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, Iran's taking of American hostages, and the controversial arms-for-hostage deals during the Reagan Administration. Hence, Hussein was seen as the "lesser of two evils" and a wedge against Iran's ideological stance which threatened the security of the moderate regimes of the gulf states on which American political and economic interests rested. Thus, the "American policy of seeking to improve Saddam's international behavior through limited cooperation with Iraq" was endorsed by the Bush Administration.¹⁶

DOMESTIC FORCES AND U.S.-IRAQ RELATIONS

American attitude towards countries that support terrorism, or even nations that sympathize with those who indulge in it, has been hostile. The political consequences of terrorism can best be demonstrated by the American reaction to the incident in October 1983, when the United States Marine barracks at Beirut International Airport was attacked by terrorists, killing 241 American soldiers. The troops had been dispatched to Lebanon as a peace-keeping force in the wake of an Israeli invasion. Israel claimed that its invasion was necessary to rid its territory of Palestinian soldiers who occasionally crossed into Israel on hit-and-run operations. In response to American public opinion calling for the withdrawal of American troops from the Middle East, President Ronald Reagan in February 1984 withdrew the remaining U.S. forces.¹⁷

Reports of uncompromising Iraqi positions in support of groups allied with the Palestinian cause (groups which the United States has accused of involvement in terrorist activities and, of which, the Abu Nidal Organization was a typical example), convinced Senator Berman to sponsor a provision to put Iraq on the terrorist list. But, according to Congressional Records, State Department officials insisted that the mere threat of the provision was enough to persuade the Iraqis to moderate their views on terrorism.¹⁸ Also, U.S. officials warned Iraq that Congress would pass the measure unless Abu Nidal, a suspected terrorist, was expelled from Baghdad. In response, Iraq encouraged Abu Nidal's group to temporarily leave the country. After the departure, the U.S. government resumed diplomatic relations in 1984, which had been severed in 1967 after the Six-Day Arab-Israeli war. In a letter to Berman, Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz stated that "... under the circumstances, the legislation which Berman proposed would be resented in Baghdad as a foreign attempt to dictate Iraqi policy, and thereby severely disrupt America's diplomatic dialogue with Iraq."¹⁹

The consequence of this was a "return of Iraqi support for terrorism after a brief pause."²⁰ This inconsistency in foreign policy permitted Abu Nidal and his group to mastermind the terrorist attack on the Achille Lauro cruise ship, during which American tourist Leon Klinghoffer was murdered. Despite government assurances to take appropriate action consequent to the event, the Reagan Administration failed to put Iraq on the terrorist list.²¹ In 1990, Senators Claiborne Pell (D-RI) and Jesse Helms (R-NC), reacting to public pressure to check the spread of chemical weapons, introduced legislation to attack their proliferation

¹⁵ Lally Weymouth, "Iraqi Quicksand," *The Washington Post* Aug. 1990, sec. C: 2.

¹⁶ David Hoffman, "Saddam was seen as lesser of two evils," *The Washington Post* 19 Aug. 1991, sec. 21: A33.

¹⁷ Robert E. Hunter, "The Reagan Administration and the Middle East" *Current History* (January 1989): 41. 57-58.

¹⁸ *Congressional Quarterly*, (April 27, 1991): 1069.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1072.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

by imposing sanctions on nations that used them in conflict and foreign firms that supplied them. The Foreign Relations Committee approved the measure on October 6, 1990. But, it was later turned down by the Senate Banking Committee which demanded a watered down version (one with moderate language) that would command a consensus.

A similar bill which provided broad Presidential discretion passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee because it received the support and approval of the President. In fact, the Ways and Means provisions called on the Administration to reassess the use of sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy if other nations refused to impose them as well.²² Senator Daniel K. Inouye, (D-Hawaii) inserted language into the fiscal 1990 foreign aid appropriation measure stating that export-import guarantees be included in American aid prohibited to Iraq. This amendment was opposed on the Senate floor with a provision added at the instigation of John Heinz, R-PA, to allow the President to waive the prohibition if he found it in the national interest to do so.

Heinz's waiver was suspected to have been influenced by pressures from American companies who lobbied to keep trade channels with Iraq open. This occurred at a time when the Iran-Iraq war had just ended, and American companies were eager to participate in Iraq's post war reconstruction with its huge financial promise. While the mood in Congress was for a limited American trade with Iraq, a mixed signal was emanating from the State Department. At the Baghdad International Trade Fair, Ambassador April C. Glaspie said that the Embassy of the United States "placed the highest priority on promoting commerce and friendship between Iraq and the United States."²³

In Congressional debate over Inouye's amendments, Rep. Charles Wilson, (D-Texas), championed its defeat by arguing that "American businesses ought to be able to compete for the massive construction Iraq would embark on."²⁴ The proposal became palatable to the President because of the Heinz waiver which was attached to it. In signing the order, the President complied with the provisions of the amendment and justified his decision on the grounds that it was in the interest of the United States to continue export-import bank guarantees to Iraq.

BAATH PARTY IDEOLOGY AS AN OBSTACLE TO AMERICAN POLICY

Arab nationalism has been the hallmark of Baathism, the official political ideology of modern Iraq. It is a Pan-Arab nationalist ideology based on the premise that there is only one Arab nation which has been partitioned by Ottoman, European and American imperial forces. It therefore believes that the only way to realize the unity and mythology of the "great Arab" entity would be to thwart any plans of the outside forces of division - which are the root causes of inter-Arab conflicts - through the instruments of liberation, integration and consolidation.²⁵

The Iraqi government has consistently worked to rewrite the history of Kuwait, which by design became a British creation. This phenomenon of partitioning the colonies of the British territories was evidenced by the partitioning of Africa by the Western European nations at the Berlin Conference in 1884. The modern borders of Saudi Arabia were established by a British imperial fiat. But for Iraq, British partitioning was responsible for denying them maritime access to the Persian gulf. The struggle to establish a beach head was causal factor in the Iran-Iraq war over the control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway.

On many occasions, the Iraqi leadership has offered contradictory explanations for its invasion of Kuwait. The most resonant has been the feeling that the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq would finally rewrite the wrong perpetrated by British imperialism. This widely held notion about British intentions in the gulf was reflected in the address by Saddam Hussein had to the Iraqi people on August 10, 1990. He noted that the foreigners had entered Arab

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "Blood and Baath: Saddam's Path to Power," *Toward Freedom* 39, 7, Oct.-Nov. 1990: 1

lands; and that Western colonialists divided the lands and established weak states ruled by families that offered them services which facilitated their missions; ensured their petroleum interests and set up artificial petroleum states that kept the wealth away from the masses of the Arab people.²⁶

To many historians, Iraq's claim to Kuwait has legal validity, even though it was denounced by the Arab Baath Socialist party in which Hussein held membership during its brief spell in power in 1963. Since then, Iraq has never acceded to any specific border configuration. Hence, it was widely believed that following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi forces would not withdraw. Even if Iraq was compelled to do so, it would probably not agree to relinquish the strategic Islands of Bubiyan, Warba and the Saddamiyat Mitlaa strip. Also, Iraq claims drilling rights over Rumaila oil field, which straddles the border between Iraq and Kuwait. The oil field is believed to hold about 30 billion barrels of oil which amounts to about 25% of Iraq's oil reserves. Iraq had always accused Kuwait of stealing oil from its territory using the "slant drilling technique" which taps oil from across its border.

The decree which was promulgated to facilitate Kuwait's annexation separated the strip from the rest of Kuwait by placing it in the province of Basra. To the Iraqi masses, Kuwait is historically part of Iraq. Nevertheless, it was carved out by Britain as a strategic design. British ties to the gulf date back to the 18th Century, when the British began setting up trading posts and strategic alliances along the coastal routes stretching all the way to India.

After the first world war, Britain and France partitioned the territories of what was left of the Ottoman empire. Colonial Britain drew new borders and installed ruling families (monarchies) loyal to the colonial states. One of the new states was Iraq. It was carved out of the amalgam of ethnic and religious units comprising former Turkish provinces of Kurdish-dominated Mosul, Sunni Moslem Baghdad, and Shiite Moslem Basra which came into existence in 1922. Iraq as an entity became an "artificial state," in which ethnic, religious and other characteristics were never taken into consideration in their creation. Preceding the discovery of oil, modern Iraq preserved its wealth and political sophistication in the gulf region. But, its strategic drive for regional hegemony has been impeded by its lack of access to the sea, reflecting the British grand design to limit its influence in the gulf and possibly keep it dependent on the British Crown. Thus, the British strategic plan in the area was to prevent Iraq from emerging as a gulf power capable of challenging its interests and those of its Western allies.²⁷

In the Uqair conference of 1922 which examined the border disputes among Iraq, Kuwait and Iran, Iraq never abandoned its claims over Kuwait. In 1930, the Iraqi King, Ghazi Ibu Faisal proposed a union with Kuwait, which met with opposition from the British and Kuwait's ruling Sabah family. After the 1958 coup which overthrew the Iraqi monarchy, Baghdad made new unification demands. With the withdrawal of British troops after Kuwait's declaration of independence in 1961, Iraqi military leader, Abdul Kareem Qassem threatened Kuwait's territorial sovereignty by massing troops along their common border. At the intervention of British troops at Kuwait's request and the diplomatic involvement of the Arab League, the dispute was temporarily diffused when a contingent of Arab League troops were deployed to replace the Iraqis. Qassem blocked the Kuwaiti admission into the United Nations until his overthrow in 1963. The emergent Baath party preceding Saddam Hussein's regime later came to terms with Kuwait. In principle, the Baath party recognized the sovereignty and independence of Kuwait, but without the application of general principles to any specific physical border lines.

Given the Iran-Iraq cease-fire, Iraq's control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway appeared to have secured its military and political objectives. Unfortunately, at the end of the war, the Shatt-al-Arab lost its attractiveness because it was out of bounds to commercial vessels due to blockages and obstructions resulting from debris and vessels sunk during the war. The task

²⁶ Jim Hoagland, "Saddam's Big Lie," *The Washington Post* 3 Aug, 1990, sec. A3.

²⁷ Hatem, 31.

of restoring the waterway to its original pre-war state would require enormous capital investment in dredging. Neither Iran nor Iraq was in any financial position to undertake projects of that magnitude due to their accumulated war debts.

The meager resources available in each country were directed to the course of domestic human affairs with special focus on rehabilitation and resettlement of war refugees and the implementation of programs in reconstruction. With Iraqi attraction to the Shatt-al-Arab diminishing, the tendency on turn to Kuwait, over which it already had historical claims, could not be resisted. As demonstrated by the U.S. blockade of Iraq in the gulf crisis, Iraq's political and economic vulnerability was magnified. Since Turkey and Saudi Arabia turned off Iraq's inland access pipelines, through which it transported oil to the coast for export, it was unable to challenge the American Naval blockade in the Gulf and Red Sea area because of its lack of deep ports capable of supporting a large navy.

Even the Iraqi Port of Umm Qasr, located about 20 miles inland, was idle. It represented the last hope of satisfying Iraq's full need for maritime access to the gulf. Iraq had invested enormously in construction to improve the facility. In January 1989, Iraq hired Volker Stevin -- a Dutch firm -- to dredge navigational channels that could handle large ocean-going vessels. The Kuwaiti port of Al Kuwayt promised to give Iraq access to the waters of the Persian Gulf through which most of the world's commercial goods pass. However, in order for Iraq to carry out its territorial designs, it invented an incident that could serve to justify the invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Hence, the concept of war debts and economic insecurity came into play.

The cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq that brought about the U.N. sponsored cease-fire gave rise to Iraq's need to resettle its war refugees and to rehabilitate its war victims. As a result of the conflict, Iraq was heavily in debt and desperate for cash to support its reconstruction and rehabilitation programs. However, the bankruptcy of the Iraqi regime would not allow it to fulfill its nationalist dream of assuming Nasser's Pan-Arabist mantle. Thus, Iraq hoped that "Kuwaiti finances would build her into a new Prussia."²⁸ Accordingly, Iraq pressed Kuwait and other wealthy gulf states to forgive debts owed to them (estimated at \$30 billion), and also to cut their excessive oil production to give her more opportunity to sell its oil and make more profit. Perhaps what finally pushed Hussein to invade Kuwait was the threat to his regime at home generated by growing discontent and domestic opposition to a failing economy and the deteriorating standard of living.²⁹

THE APRIL GLASPIE BLUNDER

The meeting between the American Ambassador to Iraq, April C. Glaspie, and the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, hours prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 has been widely used as a litmus test to measure the sincerity of American foreign policy toward Iraq. In some instances the nature and style of diplomatic communication has been construed to show the American policy as one of appeasement toward Iraq. Other foreign policy analysts believe that Glaspie's poor performance, mixed signals, lack of assertion and clarity to the Iraqi leader about American foreign policy positions regarding any attempts to invade or in any way violate Kuwait's territorial integrity and national sovereignty was responsible for the gulf war.

A number of views have been posited to support this assumption. First, in 1990, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, a leading spiritual leader in Iran said that American alliance with Iraq in its 8-year war with Iran was responsible for making the Iraqi leader "arrogant enough to invade Kuwait."³⁰ Also, in a congressional debate after the invasion, Senator Howard L. Berman, (D-CA) stated that the failure of both Congress and

²⁸ Nora Boustany, "Domestic Troubles and Pan-Arab Vision Led to Iraq's Campaign," *The Washington Post* 12 Aug 1990) secs. A1; A22.

²⁹ James Rupert, "Iraq's Saddam is Strapped for Cash; Obligated to Army," *The Washington Post* 4 Aug. 1990, sec A15.

³⁰ Bruce W. Nelan, "The Gulf: Call to Arms," *Time* September 24, 1990: 33.

the Bush Administration to act more decisively against Iraq led Saddam Hussein to believe "he could get away with anything knowing full well that the United States as a superpower would not really care."³¹

Charles Krauthammer supported this view when he stated that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was made possible because "Hussein knew he had little to fear from a country that has been shamelessly propitiating him since it helped him win the Iran-Iraq war in 1988."³² The diplomatic performance of the United States on the Kuwaiti issue was clarified in Glaspie's testimony before Congress. The possible inaptness of her response to the Iraqis may shed some light on whether the Iraqis were naive about America's positions or simply that they believed in America's acquiescence toward their foreign policy behaviors. In the testimony, Glaspie was alleged to have told the Iraqi leader that the United States had "no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, like the border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait."³³

When further pressed to explain Iraq's claim that the United States had "no opinion" on the border disputes between Iraq and Kuwait, Glaspie replied that although she personally believed that the border disputes were not America's business to settle, "it was emphatically America's business that they make the settlement in a nonviolent way."³⁴ Ambassador Glaspie attributed the disagreements over the accuracy of the Iraqi transcript relative to the American version as due to error by omission.

The majority of members of Congress came away from the testimony with the impression that her statements were not convincing. For example, Lee H. Hamilton (D-Indiana), and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, cited the contradictions in the Administration's positions. He recalled the briefing by Margaret D. Tutwiler that the United States did not have a defense commitment to Kuwait prior to the invasion. He also referred to the statements made by John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State to his panel a few days before the invasion of Kuwait that the United States would be extremely concerned by any Iraqi aggression against Kuwait even though he would decline to speculate whether force would be used.³⁵

Even those who did not blame the Ambassador for being responsible for the conflict expressed disappointment over her communicative performance as a seasoned diplomat. As Claiborne Pell, (D-Rhode Island) and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee said, "I question the instructions."³⁶

CONCLUSION

The August invasion of Kuwait by Iraq revealed the failure of the American policy of appeasement toward Iraq. America's drive to pose as global "policemen" and to maintain the balance of world power through the containment of Communism caused the U.S. to rely on middle or regional powers like Iran to be the caretakers of its regional interests in the Middle East. In return, the United States lent its political and economic support to the preservation of its agent regimes. However, the emergence of radical Shiite-ruled Iran following the overthrow of the Shah, coupled with the threat which revolutionary Iran under Khomeini posed to moderate gulf states friendly to the United States, made the United States throw its strategic support behind Iraq. It should be noted that at the time, Iraq was geographically and ideologically well placed to challenge Iran's hegemony in the region. Also, Iraq was perceived by the United States as the lone bulwark against Iran's expansionist threat to the weak states of the gulf, which included Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Thus, the United States, other Western States and many of the gulf states poured money, armaments, technical assistance and food aid into Iraq's war effort during its 8-year war with

³¹ *Congressional Quarterly* (April 27, 1991)

³² Charles Krauthammer, "A festival of Appeasement," *The Washington Post* 3 Aug. 1990, sec. A23.

³³ *Congressional Quarterly* (March 23, 1991): 759.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 760.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Iran. From the outset, the United States knew the nationalist tendencies of Iraq's Baath Party, and Iraq's historic claims to Kuwait which was carved out of ancient Iraq under British colonial rule. However, given the strategic importance of Iraq in the gulf, the Bush Administration pursued a policy of "limited cooperation" with Iraq, in which it tried to use trade, credit and other incentives to moderate its international conduct and behavior.

The American commitment to its foreign policy principles soon became tested when pressures to impose sanctions against Iraq because of its support of terrorist groups and its use of chemical weapons in the 1980s mounted. Unfortunately, the United States compromised its foreign policy stand to avoid alienating Iraq.

Institutional politics also took its toll on the bills which would have contained legally binding policy proposals. Due to the threat of executive veto, the language of the bills was either changed, modified or watered down to the extent that deterrent effects were lost. The moderate language promised the only hope for a compromise and consensus existed in the form of flexible and discretionary clauses and even waivers designed to win presidential support, prevent a presidential veto and gain overwhelming congressional approval.

The chances for the passage of strict laws with stiff penalties against Iraq were thus eroded. This was the result of the demands and pressures exerted on the system by business lobbies and the State Department's willingness to involve Americans in multi-million dollar construction ventures in Iraq's post war reconstruction. Furthermore, the executive branch did not want to compromise its constitutional role of managing American foreign policy to its institutional competitor, the legislative branch. Hence, the President chose to thwart any attempt by congress to encroach into the foreign policy arena by maintaining his course on Iraq policy.

Congressional members who wanted to create jobs and attract Iraqi businesses to their economically depressed constituencies played a big role in diluting the strength and language of the bills. Even the performance of Ambassador April Glaspie, that perhaps could have averted the invasion of Kuwait, showed that the soft language used by the Ambassador regarding America's resolve to act negatively toward Iraq if it invaded Kuwait was designed to placate rather than deter.

Since the end of the gulf war and before the Bush Administration was voted out of Office, it maintained an antagonistic policy toward Iraq. It tightened its grip on the Hussein regime by establishing, with the aid of its gulf allies Britain and France, a "no fly zone" below the 32nd parallel. This plan was designed to restrain Hussein's army and air force from attacking or disrupting internal rebel movements trying to overthrow the Iraqi government. The Iraqi government has been threatened by the rebellious activities of Shiite Moslems of Southern Iraq scattered along the marshes of the Euphrates River, in the towns of Karbala, Najaf and Safwan near Basra. Already, the Kurdish resistance has gained ground in the cities along the Tigris River which include Mosul, Zakho, Irbil, Kirkuk, Tikrit, Samarra, Khanaqin and Kut. While the main aim of the Bush Administration was to undermine and if possible, overthrow the Iraqi government, it had justified its action under the pretext of enforcing U.N. resolution 688 which while failing to order any military enforcement, prohibits Saddam Hussein from prosecuting the people of Iraq.

The Clinton Administration has not wavered from the Bush Policy. It has publicly stated its commitment to continuation despite Iraqi overtures to establish a rapprochement with the United States in the Post Bush Administration era. Many policy actions by the Clinton Administration support this position. Following investigations into allegations that Iraq attempted to assassinate President George Bush during his visit to Kuwait in April 1993, the Clinton Administration retaliated by launching Tomahawk cruise missiles at the Headquarters of the Iraqi Intelligence service in Baghdad on June 26, 1993.

Also, in July 1993, United Nations inspectors were refused permission by Iraq to install surveillance cameras at an Iraqi missile test site. The cameras were required by the U.N. to ensure that Iraq would neither develop nor test long-range missiles banned under the terms of the Persian Gulf war cease-fire. In response, the Clinton Administration threatened military action against Iraq that eventually caused them to yield. It is unlikely that there will be a significant change in the attitude of President Clinton toward Iraq as compared with President Bush.