

**The Foreign Policy of the Arab Gulf Monarchies
from 1971 to 1990**

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides a comparative analysis of the foreign policies of the Arab Gulf monarchies during the period of 1971 to 1990, as examined through two case studies: (1) the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq and (2) the six states' positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The dissertation argues that, in formulating their policies towards Iran and Iraq, the Arab Gulf monarchies aspired to realize four main objectives: external security and territorial integrity; domestic and regime stability; economic prosperity; and the attainment of a stable subregional balance of power without the emergence of Iran or Iraq as Gulf hegemon. Over the largest part of the period under review, the Arab Gulf monarchies managed to offset threats to these basic interests emanating from Iran and Iraq by alternately appeasing and balancing the source of the threat. The analysis reveals that the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual bilateral relations with Iran and Iraq underwent considerable change over time and, particularly following the Iranian Revolution, displayed significant differences in comparison to one another. These developments are attributable to both disparities among Arab Gulf monarchies and change over time with respect to a variety of factors: geostrategic position, military strength, the existence of military aggression, territorial claims, subversive activities, or ideological challenges by either Iran or Iraq, the national and sectarian composition and ideological orientation of the population, and national economic orientation.

The thesis reveals that the Arab Gulf monarchies' policies in the Arab-Israeli conflict were mainly influenced by (1) identity/ideology, (2) religion, and (3) strategic considerations. In consequence, during the entire period under review, all Arab Gulf monarchies, although setting different priorities, shared an objective in the realization of following interests: the realization of Palestinian national rights, the return of occupied Arab lands, and the restoration of Muslim control over the holy places in Jerusalem; the guarantee of regime stability; the preservation of strategic relations with the United States; the containment of Soviet penetration into the Arab world; the maintenance of Arab unity dominated by moderate Arab forces; and the attainment of a holistic peace settlement supported by an Arab consensus. The analysis shows that the Arab Gulf monarchies succeeded in realizing most of these objectives. In addition,

the thesis highlights a significant rapprochement in the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual policies in the Arab-Israeli conflict, a development most visible in the 1980s.

The dissertation identifies the Arab Gulf monarchies as a unit of state and regime entities with broadly similar interests and challenges and, despite a striking power disparity among themselves, inferiority in power status compared with and vulnerability to their neighbours. The similarity of both their objectives and constraints motivated and even required them to cooperate and coordinate in the foreign policy arena. As the analysis demonstrates, this cooperation and coordination increased during the timeframe under review, even when individual foreign policies diverged.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Arab Cooperation Council
ADDF	Abu Dhabi Defence Force
ALF	Arab Liberation Front
ANM	Arab National Movement
AOI	Arab Organisation for Industrialisation
ARMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
BAPCO	Bahrain Petroleum Company
CMAGSAP	Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the Gulf States and Arabian Peninsula
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DLF	Dhofar Liberation Front
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GOIC	Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IR	International Relations
KD	Kuwaiti Dinar
NDFLOAG	National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLF	National Liberation Front (Yemen)
NPMP	Nixon Presidential Materials Project
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PDFLP	Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PFLO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (later renamed Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf)
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PNF	Palestine National Fund
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
PRSY	People's Republic of South Yemen

QPC	Qatar Petroleum Company
RSC	Regional Security Complex
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
RSSC	Regional Security Subcomplex
SAF	Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces
SPA	Saudi Press Agency
TAP	Trans Arabian Pipeline System
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAR	United Arab Republic
UDF	Union Defence Force (UAE)
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Background

This is a study of the foreign policy patterns of a subset of states in the Middle East region, over a period that saw great change subregionally, regionally, and internationally. This juxtaposition, these states' particular features and rapid evolution – contrasting them with most of those around and indeed with other developing states –, and the comparative material all this provides us with at the domestic, regional, and global levels, combine to make for a tempting focus of conceptual/comparative study. The fact that this set of states, and this 'theatre,' remain somewhat less than well-served in conceptual investigation seemed justification enough for starting the current thesis. I hope it will illuminate both the dynamics of policy and of regional patterns in the region in question as well as a number of questions in the field of International Relations.

The aftermath of the Second World War witnessed the emergence of the Middle East as a region of particular global relevance, both politically and economically. The foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 triggered a significant escalation of the Arab-Jewish conflict that, over the course of the next decades, saw a series of devastating wars, displaced millions from their homes, created a vast area of constant insecurity, and established a permanent presence both in the minds of peoples and on political agendas within and without the Middle East. Far from being regionally confined, the manifold repercussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict transgress the geographical boundaries of the Middle East to this day.

The ideological confrontation of the Cold War that rapidly unfolded following the defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan manifested itself emphatically in the Middle East and soon drove a wedge between pro-Western and pro-Soviet regimes. Early on, the Middle East became one of the most fiercely contested world regions in the postwar bipolarity.

The rise of Arab nationalism created yet another ideological front line among polities in the region, raising questions of regime legitimacy among peoples in the Middle East, and turned large parts of the region into the theatre of a second, parallel Arab Cold War. Due to the instrumentalisation of the conflict by

the world's two superpowers to their own regional and global strategic advantage, in form of the U.S. support for conservative monarchical regimes and the Soviet assistance to their Arab nationalist antagonists, regional, intra-Arab, and global aspirations for influence, power, and dominance became closely intertwined.

The discovery and subsequent exploitation of vast oil fields coupled with the swiftly rising global demand for the natural resource further escalated the Middle East's global economic, political, and strategic significance and generated a fast growing dependency particularly of Western industrial nations on previously poor developing countries.

Within the greater Middle East the Gulf subregion¹ soon rose to particular importance in intra-regional and global matters. For one thing, this was due to the Gulf's geostrategic position as neuralgic junction between North and East Africa, the Levant, South-East Europe, the Caucasus, as well as South and Central Asia. Second, the Gulf turned out to be the location of the world's largest and easily exploitable oil deposits, adding up to 60 percent of the world's known resources. Third, the Gulf subregion was the home of the core power of Arab political conservatism, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the mightiest Middle Eastern monarchy, Iran, and later saw the rise of a vastly powerful and progressive Arab nationalist and antimonarchical rival to the other two, Saudi Arabia and Iran's common neighbour state Iraq. Fourth, whilst on first sight of minor significance to the main contesters of the global Cold War, the Gulf subregion is the place of origin and the home of the holiest sites of Islam – including the most important Shiite shrines – as well as the geographical point of intersection of the Sunni-Shiite denominational divide. Fifth, the northern Gulf constitutes the geographical intersection of the *lebensraum* of four ethnicities: Arabs, Kurds, Persians, and Turks. With political borders not paralleling sectarian and ethnic fault lines, the Gulf has long been a conflict prone subregion influencing and repeatedly radiating instability to neighbouring (sub-)regions.

¹ There exists a controversy regarding the proper designation of *the Gulf*, with respect to both the body of water and the subregion. The terms *Arabian Gulf* and *Persian Gulf* are seen to imply a political statement with regard to Arabian or Persian/Iranian actual or historic entitlement to nautical and subregional dominance. In this dissertation, both the body of water and the subregion are neutrally referred to as *the Gulf* in order to prevent any unintended connotation.

For more than twenty years the Gulf subregion had been only a side show in the global Cold War as well as a power-political relict of the fading pre-war era. The United Kingdom's historic political and military dominance had shaped the international relations of the Gulf and had by and large secured the safeguarding of Western regional interests. The UK's landmark decision in early 1968 to leave the Gulf within four years then meant a significant alteration to the subregional status quo and prompted essential questions regarding the design of the post-British era in the Gulf. A subregional power vacuum followed by a struggle for dominance and overall instability was to be expected. With the United Kingdom leaving the Gulf stage not only regional powers saw an opportunity to widen their influence; the Soviet Union and the United States also attempted to enlarge their spheres of influence to the Gulf. Although it never became as highly a contested (sub-)region as others, such as Southeast Asia, the Gulf saw rising superpower contestation in the aftermath of Britain's decision to withdraw its political and military presence.

Hence, while the Gulf had been an area of great regional and global political and economic importance already prior to 1971, the two decades following the British withdrawal witnessed a continuous rise in the Gulf subregion's international significance. For one thing, the two oil price crises of 1973 and 1979/80 fell into this period, both with tremendous repercussions on the (Western) world economy. The rapidly rising oil prices and the stabilisation of the same at a high level in combination with the simultaneous constant increase in the Western economies' oil demand until the early 1980s generated a remarkable increase in the Gulf's relevance in global affairs. The Carter doctrine of January 1980 emphasised the vital importance of the Gulf in U.S. strategic and predominantly economic interest. The U.S. administration's sharp rhetoric went to such lengths that it overtly threatened the Soviet Union with war should it attempt to actively change the status quo in the Gulf to the United States' disadvantage.

The oil crisis of 1973/74 not only initialised a significant shift in the oil producers' power in relation to the importing nations and influence on the latter's economies, it also evoked a permanent change in the intra-Arab balance of power. Saudi Arabia and, to a lesser degree, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies, were able to translate their soaring economic strength into influence over other

Arab states, not least their former adversary Egypt. This allowed Saudi Arabia to effect a substantial alteration in the Middle Eastern Cold War alignment by inducing the Egyptian change of camps, from the Soviet to the U.S. side, in 1972.

In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 the Saudi government played an essential role in creating, staffing, arming, and training the Afghan mujahedeen and supporting their guerrilla war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In doing so, Saudi Arabia contributed substantially to the Soviet Union's lengthy and costly military campaign and their eventual humiliating defeat in Afghanistan, a weighty ingredient in the ultimate collapse of the superpower and the end of the Cold War.

A few years earlier, the Iranian Revolution had severely shaken the status quo in the Gulf and had brought to power a regime the consequences of whose policies transgress the subregional sphere to this day, the disputes about the Iranian nuclear programme being one of them. In 1979, the United States lost an important regional ally and thus forfeited influence in the Gulf. In the course of the subsequent Iran-Iraq War, however, the United States for the first time managed to project directly its military power to the Gulf by dispatching navy units to safeguard the oil export routes through the Gulf waterways against Iranian attacks. This significant extension of the token military presence the U.S. Navy had maintained in Bahrain since the end of World War II set the grounds for the United States' following markedly expanded power status in the Gulf.

The Second Gulf War of 1990/91 then was the first piece of evidence for the dawn of a new post-Cold War era in global international relations. For the first time in its history the UN Security Council authorised military sanctions and a U.S.-led international coalition of 34 states, including the former Eastern block state of Czechoslovakia, liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Operations *Desert Shield* and particularly *Desert Storm* were made possible by the new U.S.-Soviet rapprochement, clearly displayed the United States' unparalleled military power, and heralded the subsequent U.S. supremacy as the world's only remaining superpower.

The foundation of another world changing development was laid out in political decisions taken in and at least partially with respect to the Gulf during the two decades following Britain's withdrawal. The aforementioned very significant, multifaceted support of the Afghan mujahedeen, predominantly on part of Saudi Arabia, in the 1980s sowed the seeds for a development that saw its culmination point in the attacks on September 11, 2001 and the ensuing so called global war on terror. The U.S. military show of force and its sweeping victory over Iraq in 1991, the subsequent UN sanctions against the Saddam regime, and the permanent U.S. military presence in the Gulf, too, were essential ingredients in the rise of anti-Western and particularly anti-U.S. sentiments.

For decades the Gulf has been a subregion whose manifold developments have had tremendous impact on a supraregional and global scale. The period of 1971 to 1990 was not only characterised by events of immediate significance it also saw the beginning of developments whose interim outcomes range among the most relevant matters in today's international affairs. The six Arab monarchies of the Gulf, above all the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, were caught in the middle of these developments and often crucially shaped them.

1.2 Rationale, Research Puzzle, and Scope

This dissertation provides a comparative analysis of the foreign policies of the founding states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates² – during the period of 1971 to 1990, as examined through two case studies. The initial hypothesis, which guided the researcher's approach, was that over the course of the two decades under examination the six Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy positions displayed a gradual rapprochement to one another. This development was attributed to (1) the identity of the six states' foreign policy strategies and (2) developments on national, subregional, regional, and international levels. The latter gradually brought about greater conformity in the states' perceptions of their interests, and particularly in their threat perceptions. The diverging

² In the following referred to as *Arab Gulf monarchies*. The adjective *Arab* in the term *Arab Gulf monarchies* is not meant to clarify the word *Gulf* but the word *monarchies*. Hence, the term *Arab Gulf monarchies* is to be read as *Arab monarchies of the Gulf*, not *monarchies of the Arab Gulf*. The addition of the adjective *Arab* is essential in order to clearly define the respective group of states. This is true due to the fact that, until 1979, Persian Iran was also a Gulf monarchy.

effects of the differing historic, socio-political, and geostrategic characteristics of the Arab Gulf monarchies were mitigated. However, the research has shown that developments were more complex than this, and that in fact while there was convergence in one critical field, there was also divergence in another such field.

The thesis contends that the fundamental guideline of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies was the consistent application of an omnibalancing strategy.³ This omnibalancing strategy was determined to maximise both national security against outside threats and regime stability against oppositional tendencies.⁴ The formulation of national foreign policy can be seen as the strategic response to an individual set of domestic and foreign threats to and opportunities for the realisation of the regime's interests.

This dissertation stands out from previous studies in two respects: the period and the subject matter under review. The time frame of this analysis ranges from Great Britain's political and military disengagement from the Gulf region in 1971 to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, two events that had a lasting significance on the Arab Gulf monarchies' security-political positions. Unlike previous country or policy field specific analyses this study identifies basic foreign and security policy maxims of all six Arab Gulf monarchies, highlights similarities and differences in the actual individual foreign policies, traces change over time, and discloses the underlying reasons for these alterations. By providing both a classification of foreign policies and an analysis of a specific historical constellation, the dissertation lies at the intersection of the academic disciplines of International Relations and Contemporary History.

The starting point of this study is a survey of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy interests and options as well as the main challenges to the survival of the

³ The term omnibalancing was coined by the political scientist Steven R. David in his essay "*Explaining Third World Alignment*." David argued here that Third World states do not only encounter external threats for their national security but also internal threats for the survival of their regimes. This fact, according to David's argument, forces the states to balance internal and external threats. The omnibalancing theory symbolises an advancement of the balance of power theory, which is limited to the balancing of external threats to the national security. See Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (1991), pp. 233-56.

⁴ The term *security* is understood in the light of the negative security concept. In this regard, security means the absence of a military threat or a state's protection from attacks and coups, respectively.

individual states and regimes at the outset of the timeframe under review. Taking into account domestic and external dynamics the chapter will highlight in which way social, cultural, religious, economic, geostrategic, military, and political factors determined the foreign policies of the Arab Gulf monarchies in 1971. To this end, the survey will first examine the nature of the Arab Gulf monarchies' global, regional, and subregional environment. In this context, I will show how the six states were affected by the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, the end of the British hegemony in the Gulf, and interregional dynamics. The Arab Gulf monarchies were caught in between two parallel conflicts for power expansion: the East West conflict as well as Iran and Iraq's competitive struggle for subregional hegemony. The bulk of the chapter will then be devoted to the scrutiny of the Arab Gulf monarchies' military and economic capabilities as well as key domestic characteristics and dynamics. The chapter concludes with a brief section introducing domestic and environmental changes between 1971 and 1990 that had particular influence on the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies.

The ensuing two chapters will then be devoted to the analysis of two pivotal, intertwined foreign policy case studies.

The Relationship of the Arab Gulf Monarchies with Iran and Iraq

In this chapter, I will argue that in formulating their policies towards Iran and Iraq the Arab Gulf monarchies aspired to realise four main objectives: external security and territorial integrity; domestic and regime stability; economic prosperity; and the attainment of a stable subregional balance of power without the emergence of Iran or Iraq as Gulf hegemon. Over the largest part of the period under review the Arab Gulf monarchies managed to offset threats to these basic interests emanating from Iran and Iraq by alternately appeasing and balancing the source of the threat. The only significant failure to do so occurred in the summer of 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The analysis will reveal that the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual bilateral relations with Iran and Iraq underwent considerable change over time and, particularly following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, displayed significant differences in comparison to one another. These developments are attributable to both disparities among Arab Gulf monarchies and change over time with respect to a variety of factors: geostrategic position, military strength, the existence of military aggression,

territorial claims, subversive activities, or ideological challenges by either Iran or Iraq, the national and sectarian composition and ideological orientation of the population, and national economic orientation.

The Position of the Arab Gulf Monarchies in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

This chapter identifies the Arab-Israeli conflict as such and the necessity to publicly position themselves in regard to this conflict as a particular challenge to both the Arab Gulf monarchies' external security and the stability of their regimes. In case of an armed conflict the Arab Gulf monarchies would have to expect a variety of direct and indirect security threats. Much more problematic, however, was the increasing political quandary the Arab Gulf monarchies have been faced with. They have been caught between their common Arab-Islamic identity and the increasingly intensified relationship with the United States. This chapter will highlight that the Arab Gulf monarchies succeeded to the greatest extent in meeting the expectations of their own people without undermining the strategically and economically important relationship to the Israel-friendly United States. This achievement will be attributed to an astute, balanced policy conducted by the Arab Gulf monarchies. In addition, I will show that the positions of the Arab Gulf monarchies as a group changed during the period under review from a rather confrontational to a more cooperative approach. In doing so, the remaining five states' positions displayed a convergence with the previously distinct Omani stance. The same counts for the perceptions of and the relations with the Palestinian liberation movement.

Two pivotal questions will be asked in both case studies:

First, to what extent did the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies show a rapprochement to one another and what were the reasons for this development?

The Arab Gulf monarchies' individual policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict showed significant rapprochement during the timeframe under review. This was clearest in the 1980s when Oman's position converged with those of the remaining states. The case of the six states' individual policies towards and their relations with Iran and Iraq was more complex: an initial trend of gradual rapprochement was stopped by the Iranian Revolution and, particularly following the Iran-Iraq War's initial phase, the Arab Gulf monarchies' policies

showed significant divergence. Both convergence among policies in one field and divergence in the other were induced by external developments. In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, these developments led to a greater conformity in interests and threat perceptions. From 1979 onwards, alterations in the subregional status quo had the opposite effect. Due to differences in their historic, geopolitical, societal, and economic characteristics, the Arab Gulf monarchies faced different and varying degrees of challenges to their policy interests emanating from Iran and Iraq. Consequently, the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual policies towards and relations with the two states varied.

Second, to what degree did the Arab Gulf monarchies cooperate and coordinate with each other in the field of foreign policy?

The analysis will show that, compared to other states in their subregional and regional environment, the Arab Gulf monarchies constituted a unit of state and regime entities with broadly similar interests and challenges. Despite a striking power disparity among themselves, all six states were inferior in power status and consequently vulnerable to most of their neighbours. The similarity of both their objectives and constraints motivated and even required them to cooperate and coordinate in the foreign policy arena. As the analysis will demonstrate, this cooperation and coordination increased during the timeframe under review, even when individual foreign policies diverged. However, the six states did not attribute an intrinsic normative value to cooperation and coordination among each other. Cooperation and coordination in the field of foreign policy were merely the result of rational decisions taken by regimes with similar interests and inadequate capabilities to realise these objectives on their own.

1.3 Literature Review

This dissertation provides a comparative analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign and security policy between 1971 and 1990. Following Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), formulated in their book *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*,⁵ these six countries are to be seen as units in a regional security subcomplex (RSSC) that also included Iran and Iraq. The RSSC Gulf itself constitutes a subunit of the

⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

greater Regional Security Complex (RSC) Middle East, which comprises the entire Arab world, Persian Iran, Israel, and Turkey.

When formulating their foreign policy the countries under review do so as Middle East, Arab, and Gulf states. A proper analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy, therefore, has to begin with a comparative contextual study of Middle East and Arab states foreign policy. In this context, a number of excellent publications shall be mentioned. Bahgat Korany's and Ali Dessouki's edited volume *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*⁶ provides both a theoretical framework, here Paul Noble's "The Arab System: Pressures, Constraints, and Opportunities" deserves particular mention, and a series of case studies including one on Saudi Arabia by Bahgat Korany himself.⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami's edited volume *"The Foreign Policies of Middle East States"*⁸ provides an analytical framework of the Middle East states' foreign policymaking, an analysis of the Middle East regional system's evolution within the context of the international system as well a number of country case studies, including a study on Saudi Arabia by F. Gregory Gause, III.⁹ In *"The International Politics of the Middle East,"* published in 2003, Raymond Hinnebusch presents a revised and more detailed analysis, based on his two introductory chapters published in the volume edited with Anoushiravan Ehteshami.¹⁰ Hinnebusch's approach is based on the IR theory of realism, modified by structuralist, constructivist, and pluralist assumptions. While agreeing with the realist assumptions that the international system is anarchical in nature, that states are the main actors in international relations, and that the regional order is predominantly characterised by balance of power processes, Hinnebusch emphasises the impact of both the so called core-periphery relations on the development of the

⁶ Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991).

⁷ Bahgat Korany, "Defending the Faith amid Change: The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia," in idem and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 310-53.

⁸ Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, (Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

⁹ F. Gregory Gause, III., "The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia," in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 193-211.

¹⁰ Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press and New York: Palgrave, 2003).

regional political system as well as contemporary foreign policymaking processes and the competition between national, sub-national, and supra-national identities on state formation and state sovereignty. Fred Halliday's *"The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology"* provides a theoretical analysis of the international relations of and foreign policymaking in the Middle East.¹¹ Following an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of four other theoretical approaches (historical analysis; realism; foreign policy analysis (FPA); and ideologies, perceptions and norms), Halliday advocates historical and international sociology with its emphasis on analysing the establishment and maintenance of institutions, particularly the state, as theoretical concept to best explain the international relations of the Middle East. With regard to foreign policymaking, Halliday emphasises the internal (bureaucratic interests, public opinion, state capacity, and norms) and external constraints leaders of Middle East states are confronted with. Finally, Gerd Nonneman's introductory chapters to his edited volume *"Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe"* deserve particular mention.¹² Advocating a "complex model of international politics", Nonneman argues that any explanation of international relations needs to be both "multi-level and multi-causal," thus taking into account "domestic political factors and dynamics."¹³ The analysis of "contextuality" is seen as absolute inevitability in explaining foreign policy behaviour.¹⁴

Beside studies focusing primarily on the greater Middle East RSC, there is a multitude of publications dealing particularly with the political development in the Gulf subregion. The academic interest in the subregion, not least due to its global strategic relevance, however, has been subject to considerable fluctuations over the past decades. During and immediately after conflicts and crises of supra-regional or even global scale such as the Oil Price Crisis of 1973/74, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 as well as the First and the Second Gulf War, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the 2003 Iraq War followed by Iraq's fall into chaos, one can observe an increase in the number of publications.

¹¹ Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-72.

¹² Gerd Nonneman (ed.), *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

Regarding the international relations of the Gulf subregion F. Gregory Gause's brilliant account "*The International Relations of the Persian Gulf*" is particularly worth mentioning.¹⁵ W. Taylor Fain's book "*American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region*" delivers an analysis of the international relations in the Gulf region until 1972 with a special focus on the roles played by the United Kingdom and the United States.¹⁶ Shahram Chubin's "*The International Politics of the Persian Gulf*" provides an analysis of developments up to the year 1976.¹⁷ Trevor Mostyn's "*Major Political Events in Iran, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, 1945-1990*" comes up with an excellent overview of the political events in the entire Gulf region as well as a detailed chronology.¹⁸

Literature that deals explicitly with the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy focuses mainly on Saudi Arabia.¹⁹ There are few monographs on the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies.²⁰ Regarding specific topics one can,

¹⁵ F. Gregory Gause, III., *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁷ Shahram Chubin, "The International Politics of the Persian Gulf," *British Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1976), pp. 216-30.

¹⁸ Trevor Mostyn, *Major Political Events in Iran, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, 1945-1990* (New York: Facts on File, 1991).

¹⁹ See, *inter alia*, Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability: Saudi Arabia, the Military Balance in the Gulf, and Trends in the Arab-Israeli Military Balance* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984); Adeed Dawisha, *Saudi-Arabien und seine Sicherheitspolitik* (Munich: Bernhard & Graefe, 1981); Korany, "Defending the Faith;" Safran Nadav, *Saudi Arabia: Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); J. E. Peterson, *Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002); William B. Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981); and Louis Turner and James Bedore, "Saudi Arabia: The Power of the Purse-Strings," *International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1978), pp. 405-20.

²⁰ See Hassan Hamdan Al-Alkim, *The GCC States in an Unstable World: Foreign-Policy Dilemmas of Small States* (London: Saqi Books, 1994); Idem, *The Foreign Policy of the United Arab Emirates* (London: Saqi Books, 1989); Majid Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy: Foundation and Practice* (Westport, CT, and London: Praeger Security International, 2009); Abdul-Reda Assiri, *Kuwait's Foreign Policy: City-State in World Politics* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1990); Anthony H. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the UAE: Challenges of Security* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); Idem with Khalid A. Rodhan, *Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Warfare, Volume One: Overview and Northern Gulf* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); Anthony H. Cordesman with Khalid A. Rodhan, *Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Warfare, Volume Two: GCC & Southern Gulf* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); Anthony H. Cordesman, *Kuwait: Recovery and Security After the Gulf War* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997); and Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1995).

however, resort to a number of articles mostly published in political science journals.²¹

There is an extensive number of studies that focus on the relationship between the Arab Gulf monarchies and the United States. Similarly, the majority of these analyses deals with Saudi Arabia.²² Additional information can be found in surveys on U.S. foreign policy that put the emphasis on the Gulf or the Middle East.²³ The same applies for the relationship between the Arab Gulf monarchies and the Soviet Union.²⁴

²¹ See, *inter alia*, Abdulla Baabood, "Dynamics and Determinants of the GCC States' Foreign Policy, with Special Reference to the EU," in Gerd Nonneman (ed.), *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 145-73.

²² *Inter alia* Lincoln P. Bloomfield Jr., "Saudi Arabia Faces the 1980s: Saudi Security Problems and American Interests," *Fletcher Forum* (1981), pp. 243-77; Naif bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962: Allies in Conflict* (London: Saqi Books, 2010); Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa'ud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); Vo Xuan Han, *Oil, the Persian Gulf States, and the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Parker T. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998); John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992: Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002); Aaron David Miller, *Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy, 1939-1949* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Emile A. Nakhleh, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: A Policy Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975); and Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

²³ *Inter alia* Acharya Amitav, *US Military Strategy in the Gulf* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Andrew Fenton Cooper, Richard A. Higgott, and Kim Richard Nossal, "Bound to Follow? Leadership and Followership in the Gulf Conflict," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (1991), pp. 391-410; Richard K. Herrmann, "The Middle East and the New World Order: Rethinking U.S. Political Strategy after the Gulf War," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1991), pp. 42-75; Robert H. Johnson, "The Persian Gulf in U.S. Strategy: A Skeptical View," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1989), pp. 122-60; Charles A. Kupchan, "American Globalism in the Middle East: The Roots of Regional Security Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 103, No. 4 (1988/89), pp. 585-611; Joseph Malone, "America and the Arabian Peninsula: The First Two Hundred Years," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (1976), pp. 406-24; David D. Newsom, "America Engulfed," *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 43 (1981), pp. 17-32; Michael A. Palmer, *Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992* (New York: The Free Press, 1992); Stephen C. Pelletiere, Douglas V. Johnson, II, and Leif R. Rosenberger, *Iraqi Power and U.S. Security in the Middle East* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1990); Barry Rubin, "Drowning in the Gulf," *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 69 (1987/88), pp. 120-34; Hussein Sirriyeh, *US Policy in the Gulf, 1968-1977: Aftermath of British Withdrawal* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984); Janice Gross Stein, "The Wrong Strategy in the Right Place: The United States in the Gulf," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1988/89), pp. 142-67; and Michael Sterner, "Navigating the Gulf," *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 81 (1990/91), 39-52.

²⁴ *Inter alia* Shahram Chubin, "Gains for Soviet Policy in the Middle East," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1982), pp. 122-52; M. S. El Azhary, "The Attitudes of the Superpowers towards the Gulf War," *International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (1983), pp. 609-20; Robert O. Freedman, "Patterns of Soviet Policy toward the Middle East," *Annals of the American Academy*

There are several studies on the relationship between the Arab Gulf monarchies and Iran and Iraq before and during the period under review.²⁵ In this regard, general analyses of the foreign policy of Iran and Iraq can also be taken under consideration.²⁶ The relationship between Kuwait and Iraq is especially surveyed in studies on the Second Gulf War 1990/91.²⁷

Rosemarie Said Zahlan's study "*Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table*" presents a sound analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' relationship to the 'state' of Palestine.²⁸ Furthermore, a number of papers have been published in political science journals that scrutinise the stance of the Arab Gulf

of *Political and Social Science*, Vol. 482 (Changing Patterns of Power in the Middle East, 1985), pp. 40-64; Fred Halliday, *Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1981); Howard Milton Hensel, *Soviet Policy in the Persian Gulf, 1968-1975* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Mark N. Katz, *Russia & Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy toward the Arabian Peninsula* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Melvyn Pryer, *A View from the Rimland: An Appraisal of Soviet Interests and Involvement in the Gulf* (Durham: University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1981); Carol R. Saivetz, *The Soviet Union and the Gulf in the 1980s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989); and Erica Schoenberger and Stephanie Reich, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East," *MERIP Reports*, No. 39 (1975), 3-28.

²⁵ *Inter alia* Faisal bin Salman Al-Saud, *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf: Power Politics in Transition 1968-1971* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Saeed M. Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations, 1932-1982* (London: Centre for Arab and Iranian Studies and Echoes, 1993); Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations and Regional Order: Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Balance of Power in the Gulf* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996); Henner Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry with Saudi Arabia between the Gulf Wars* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2002); Khair el-Din Haseeb (ed.), *Arab-Iranian Relations* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1998); Tim Niblock, "Iraqi Policies towards the Arab States of the Gulf, 1958-1981," in idem (ed.), *Iraq: The Contemporary State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 125-49; Gerd Nonneman, *Iraq, the Gulf States, and the War: A Changing Relationship 1980-1986 and Beyond* (Atlantic Heights, NJ, and London: Ithaca Press, 1986); and Idem, "The Gulf States and the Iran-Iraq War: Pattern Shifts and Continuities," in Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick (eds.) *Iran, Iraq and the Legacy of War* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 167-92.

²⁶ Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran: A Developing State in a Zone of Great-Power Conflict* (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974); Christin Marshall, *Iran's Persian Gulf Policy: From Khomeini to Khatami* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); and Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1975).

²⁷ *Inter alia* Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993); Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf 1990-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf* (New York: Times Books, 1990); and Harry Summers, *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell, 1992).

²⁸ Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table* (New York: Routledge, 2009). Compare also Gawdat G. Bahgat, *Israel and the Persian Gulf: Retrospect and Prospect* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006); and Rashid Khalidi and Camille Mansour (eds.), *Palestine and the Gulf* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1982).

monarchies in the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict respectively.²⁹

Despite the fact that this dissertation does not feature a separate, detailed analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' oil policies during the timeframe under review it will repeatedly be necessary to dwell on the Gulf States' positions in this particular foreign/economic policy field. The underlying reason for this is that due to the omnibalancing character of their foreign policies oil policy can not be treated as a separate realm but has to be understood as closely intertwined with other foreign policy fields. Due to its global economic relevance the Arab Gulf monarchies' oil policy of the recent decades has always drawn significant attention in the academic community. As initially mentioned, the 1973 Oil Price Crisis, the Second Oil Price Crisis in the late 1970s, and both the First and Second Gulf Wars led to an increased academic preoccupation with the topic. Accordingly, there is very substantive literature available on this topic which can at this point only be presented exemplarily. Most studies concentrate on the analysis of Saudi Arabia's oil policy. This is due to the fact that the kingdom possesses by far the largest crude oil resources of all Arab Gulf monarchies.³⁰

When analysing both the Arab Gulf monarchies' policy responses to the major alterations in the regional and subregional status quo in 1979 and 1980 and the Gulf States' cooperation and coordination in the field of foreign policy one

²⁹ *Inter alia* Jacob Abadi, "Israel's Relations with Oman and the Persian Gulf States," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1996), pp. 46-73; Gawdat Bahgat, "The New Middle East: The Gulf Monarchies and Israel," *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2003), pp. 123-52; Adeed Dawisha, "Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Ups and Downs of Pragmatic Moderation," *International Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (1983); Jacob Goldberg, "Saudi Arabia and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Process, 1977-1981," *Middle East Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1986), pp. 25-33; Uzi Rabi, "Oman and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Reflection of a Pragmatic Foreign Policy," *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2005), pp. 535-51; and Idem, "Qatar's Relations with Israel: Challenging Arab and Gulf Norms," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2009), pp. 443-59.

³⁰ Sheikh Rustum Ali, *Saudi Arabia and Oil Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1976); Y. S. F. Al Sabah, *Oil Economy of Kuwait* (London and Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1980); Abdulaziz H. Al-Sowayyegh, "Saudi Oil Policy during King Faisal's Era," in Willard A. Beling (ed.), *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia*, (London: Croom Helm and Boulder, CO: Westwood Press, 1980), pp. 202-29; L. P. Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975); William Bayne Fischer, *The Oil States* (London: Batsford, 1980); Thomas L. McNaugher, *Arms and Oil: U.S. Military Strategy and the Persian Gulf* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985); Peter Odell, *Oil and World Power: Background to the Oil Crisis*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, MD: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1974); and Merrill Simon, *Oil, Money, Weapons: Middle East at the Brink* (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Security, 1982).

needs to address the creation and impact of the GCC. The majority of the few monographs that explicitly deal with the organisation originate from the 1980s and early 1990s, offering analyses on the initial years of the organisation's work.³¹ The remaining studies are restricted thematically to examinations of more recent cooperation in the economic sector. Emile A. Nakhleh's "*The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems and Prospects*" gives a descriptive overview of the formation, structure, and objectives of the GCC as well as a summary of the cooperative efforts in the security and economic realm.³² R. K. Ramazani's "*The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*" provides an excellent analysis of the motivation behind the foundation of the organisation and illustrates improvements and obstacles in the cooperation *inter alia* in the areas of defence and economic integration.³³ Particularly noteworthy is the wealth of well sorted documents at the end of each chapter as well as the extensive chronology of GCC relevant events of the years 1981-1986. A very detailed analysis of the organisation's formation and development especially in view of the Arab Gulf monarchies' relationship to the United States offers the former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Joseph Wright Twinam, in his book "*The Gulf, Cooperation and the Council*."³⁴

1.4 Primary Source Material and Research Methods

Beside secondary literature, this dissertation also accesses a wide variety of primary sources. These are primarily (1) legal acts under international law as well as the Arab Gulf monarchies' voting behaviour in international organisations; (2) press products from the Gulf subregion; (3) U.S. government documents; and (4) interviews with Gulf and U.S. academic experts and government officials.

³¹ An exception is Matteo Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf: Diplomacy, Security and Economy Co-ordination in a Changing Middle East* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

³² Emile A. Nakhleh, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems and Prospects* (New York et al.: Praeger, 1986).

³³ R. K. Ramazani, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis* (Charlottesville, VA: Virginia University Press, 1988).

³⁴ Joseph Wright Twinam, *The Gulf, Cooperation and the Council: An American Perspective* (Washington D.C.: Middle East Policy Council, 1992). The following analysis is also noteworthy: Hossein Askari, Vahid Nowshirvani, and Mohamed Jaber, *Economic Development in the GCC: The Blessing and the Curse of Oil* (Greenwich, CT, and London: JAI Press, 1997).

The accessibility of relevant sources concerning the foreign policy of the Arab Gulf monarchies is restricted. Many documents by the Arab Gulf monarchies' governments themselves are not accessible to the academic world. There are two underlying reasons for this. First, the regimes are – in contrast to Western democracies – characterised by a very restrictive information policy. Second, the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy activity has always been a pragmatic-strategic balancing act. The publication of documents that trace foreign policy decision making processes would have the potential to put the regimes under distress, both in the domestic and foreign realm.

Nevertheless, a vast number of useful sources dealing with the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign and security policy is accessible. For one thing, there are contracts and declarations of intent under international law within the context of international relations in the Gulf and the greater Middle East region. Furthermore, public and press statements by the Arab Gulf monarchies' governments, as well as their voting behaviour in international organisations, shed light on the motives and objectives of the countries' foreign policy.

Furthermore, one can consult background articles and editorials published in the Gulf states' news media that address current developments and contain statements by and interviews with politicians and experts. Beside newspapers, radio programmes such as that of Radio Baghdad, Radio Tehran, and Radio Riyadh also serve as sources of valuable information. During the period under review, the news media in all Gulf countries were widely censored, in many cases state-controlled, and regularly echoed governmental positions. Hence, an analysis of the Gulf media's coverage allows conclusions on the Gulf states' policy positions. In this context, the yearly volumes of the *Middle East Contemporary Survey* (the first issue covers the second half of 1976 and the first half of 1977) have been particularly helpful as they provide numerous quotations from and summaries of Gulf news media reports relevant to international relations in the Gulf and the Arab Gulf monarchies' positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In addition, U.S. sources offer an excellent insight into the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign and security policy. There are two reasons for this. First, due to strategic and economic interest the U.S. legislative and executive branch

studied the Gulf subregion intensively. This brought to the fore a very extensive collection of documents, which offer detailed insight into the U.S. perception of the developments in the Gulf. Second, a large number of U.S. documents covering the time up to the early 1980s are accessible to the public. This significantly increases their relative value compared to sources from the Gulf region itself.

During a two-month research trip to the United States in the autumn of 2009, I studied primary and secondary sources, many of them recently declassified, at the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, and Jimmy Carter presidential libraries. I was fortunate to have been able to examine a broad spectrum of documents, which proved to be of particular relevance to this dissertation. These sources include diplomatic cables; minutes of National Security Council meetings; country-, region-, and topic-specific CIA and State Department dossiers; White House memoranda; and correspondence of the U.S. executive with political leaders of Middle East states. These documents allowed detailed insight into the U.S. perspective on developments in the Gulf region. In addition, among U.S. diplomatic cables leaked by WikiLeaks in 2010 and 2011 were some documents that contained information relevant to this dissertation.

In April 2011, in the course of a second research trip to the United States, I had the opportunity to interview academic experts on the Gulf region as well as several former U.S. government officials who were concerned with the Gulf subregion during their careers. Particularly interviews with the latter officials, among them were former U.S. ambassadors and other former U.S. state department officials as well as CIA and military intelligence officers, granted me access to first hand information of advisors and decision makers of former U.S. administrations. The fact that this dissertation's period under review ended two decades ago had both a positive and a negative effect on the findings that could be drawn from these interviews. On the one hand, interviewees repeatedly had difficulties recalling details with regard to events, developments, and time sequences. On the other hand, interviewees were free to share information no longer considered sensitive. Besides the conduction of interviews, I had the chance to be among the first academics to review the Saddam Hussein Regime Collection at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic

Studies in Washington, D.C. This collection comprises a vast number of official documents and audio recordings of the Iraqi Saddam regime, captured by the U.S. armed forces in the course of the 2003 Iraq War. While the majority of captured files were at the time still being processed or classified I was able to find some useful documents that shed light on Iraq's relations with the Arab Gulf monarchies.

In the spring of 2012, I conducted two field trips to the Gulf subregion: a three-week trip to the UAE and Qatar in January/February 2012 and a five-week trip to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in April/May 2012. Within the course of such trips, I was able to conduct interviews with key opinion makers and observers of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy. Among interviewees were HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, former director of the Saudi General Intelligence Directorate, Abdullah Bishara, the first Secretary-General of the GCC, and several high-ranking academics from Kuwait University, the Saudi Institute of Diplomatic Studies, and UAE University.³⁵

Interviews with U.S. as well as Gulf experts and (former) decision-makers were all semi-structured, primarily open-ended, and largely conducted face to face. The focus of each interview and the prepared questions were individually matched to the interviewee's specific field of expertise. While the majority of questions were posed to several interviewees, each interview was characterised by a unique set of raised research questions. This as well as both the semi-structured and open-ended nature of the interviews was supposed to allow for the greatest possible access to the individual interviewees' knowledge in predetermined subject areas. Face to face interviews were preferred in order to reduce the distance between the interviewer and interviewee and allow for a maximisation of interaction. Moreover, especially advantageous in interviews with government officials, face to face interviews gave the interviewer the possibility to perceive nonverbal communication. In total, I conducted twenty interviews, of which seventeen were face to face in nature and three were conducted over the phone.³⁶

³⁵ In addition, I conducted interviews with two experts on Bahrain's foreign policy during the 2012 Exeter Gulf Conference at the University of Exeter in July 2012.

³⁶ For a complete list of interviewees, see Bibliography.

1.5 Foreign Policy Analysis

This analysis attempts to identify and compare the foreign and security policy of the six Arab Gulf monarchies from 1971 to 1991. In order to do so it is, in a first step, essential to develop a theoretical framework that explains the nature of international relations and the genesis of state foreign policy decisions. In this respect, the different schools of international relations theory suggest a two-, respectively three-level analysis. The first level of analysis deals with the nature of the international system itself and the rules and limitations it lays out for the development of international relations and state foreign policy. With regard to the implications the nature of the international level has on states' foreign policy one could hypothesise: 'What you [the state] do depends on what the system both allows and forces you to do.'

The second level of analysis then studies the relevant states and addresses, depending on the assumptions drawn from the analysis of the first level, up to two basic questions: First, in which relation do the individual state's material capabilities (characteristics that directly influence international relations, such as military capabilities) stand to the capabilities of the remaining states? Second, how is the state's environment characterised with regard to the quantity and respective capabilities of other states in geographic proximity? As a result, the former question is associated with the assertion 'What you do depends on how powerful you are.' The latter question is grounded on the hypothesis according to which 'where you stand depends on where you sit,' meaning that foreign policy decisions are formulated with regard to a state's immediate environment. In extension of the above mentioned system level limitations, the second level of analysis defines additional, closer boundaries to a state's foreign policy decision making by highlighting its relative capabilities compared to states in its (immediate) environment. While some IR theory schools, such as orthodox realism, only examine these two levels of analysis, particularly a younger trend in IR theory considers a third analytical level.

The subject matter of this third level of analysis is the internal constitution of the state in question. In this regard the analytical focus lies on a wide variety of aspects and their influence on the formulation of foreign policy. Relevant issues include the constitution of the state's political system, the state's economic situation as well as the distribution of welfare, the degree of political and

intrasocietal stability, the extent of ethnic, religious, cultural heterogeneity as well as the existence of potential conflicts related to the former, etc. The analysis of a state's internal constitution again more clearly defines the boundaries for a state's foreign policy decisions and narrows down its foreign policy options. The hypothesis in this respect reads: 'What you do depends on who you are internally.'

Over time IR theory scholarship has seen different eras with differing trends. While the Cold War era was characterised by a dominance of the realist school the past two decades have seen the rise of less material and less state centred theoretical approaches. One example of the latter is the constructivist school. The changes in IR theory scholarship, however, are not only attributable to the emergent appreciation of new perspectives or a general advancement of academia. The continuous adjustments to existing theories as well as the development of new theoretical approaches also reflect alterations in the international system itself. Theories that had their strengths in explaining international relations and foreign policy of the 19th Century or during the heights of the Cold War may very well have lost their explanatory qualities when applied to the contemporary international system. This, however, does not belie the theories' former explanatory power. One example for changes in the international system with remarkable effects on the viability of IR theories is the enlargement of relevant actors in the international arena. While the international relations of late 19th Century Europe were clearly characterised by nation states as the only relevant actors, the situation does look considerably different in the early 21st Century. Today, a very wide spectrum of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ranging from Amnesty International to al-Qaeda, have gained remarkable influence on international relations and the formulation of state foreign policy. Transnational corporations (TNCs), too, have emerged as significant players in the international arena.

Additionally, even during the same epoch of international relations the explanatory power of a specific IR theory may vary between world regions. While theories focusing on questions of identity are little suitable in explaining the regional foreign policy of contemporary Western European states, they are far more applicable to the Middle East.

In consequence, any single IR theory is limited in its explanatory power by time and, to a lesser degree, also by location. Hence, the theoretical approach suggested in this dissertation does not raise the claim to be the one comprehensively explanatory IR theory. On the contrary, it is a theoretical approach particularly fitted to the timeframe and the world region under review. This, however, is not to say that it does not have explanatory power beyond this particular time and place.

This analysis joins a series of other scholars of both general international relations and international relations of the Gulf as well as foreign policy analysis of the Gulf states in suggesting an amalgam of several IR theories. In doing so, this dissertation follows a relatively recent trend in IR theory scholarship to borrow assumptions from several competing schools of thought and create a new transcending theoretical construct.³⁷ This approach is based on the conviction that while competing schools of IR theory – such as realism, structuralism, constructivism, and pluralism – are all indicative in explaining the nature of international relations and foreign policy, they lack the full explanatory power when applied in isolation. Only by considering multiple theoretical perspectives one can explain the complexity of foreign policy processes.

The theoretical fundament underlying the analysis at hand shows notable parallelism to the “modified form of realist theory” approach proposed by Raymond Hinnebusch.³⁸ I, however, consider the term coined by Hinnebusch as suboptimal due to its potential misleading character. While Hinnebusch’s theoretical approach is based on a realist fundament, the so called “modifications” diametrically oppose orthodox realism. Hence, the theory proposed by Hinnebusch is not realist in nature; it merely accepts some of realism’s basic assumptions.

This dissertation’s theoretical framework also shows significant parallels to the theoretical framework Gerd Nonneman suggested in his edited work “Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe.”³⁹ While I agree

³⁷ See, e.g., Raymond Hinnebusch, *Introduction: The Analytical Framework* in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 1-27 and Nonneman, *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policy*.

³⁸ Hinnebusch, *Introduction: The Analytical Framework*, p. 1.

³⁹ Nonneman, *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policy*.

with Nonneman's assumptions and conclusions, the approach presented here is different. For one thing, this dissertation's approach displays a more detailed analysis of the nature of interests and power and describes the boundaries states and state elites face when formulating foreign policy. Moreover, while Nonneman argues for a bottom-up analysis of foreign policy (starting from the domestic realm), this dissertation suggests a top-down approach (addressing international system level effects first before regarding the domestic level).

With regard to the first level of analysis – the system level – this analysis generally agrees with several of (neo-)realism's main assumptions. At this point, two of these claims shall be addressed. First, the international system is of an anarchic nature and has the character of a self-help system and second, states are the main actors in the international arena, the main 'units' in the international system. Firstly, whereas the existence of international law and international enforcement mechanisms of this legal order, such as sanction regimes authorised by the UN Security Council, suggest the existence of a superior global regulation and enforcement regime, decisions to abide to the rules of international law and to sanction violations of the same are primarily finalised on the basis of unilateral power political considerations. Hence, the contemporary international regulation and enforcement regime is merely a particular shape of international anarchy and not the replacement of the same. During the Cold War era, which the timeframe of this analysis falls in, the anarchic nature of the international system was particularly perceptible. In the absence of a functioning superordinate international regulation and enforcement system the international system is characterised as a self-help system. This means that units within the international system are self-responsible with respect to the attainment of their interests. Secondly, while it is undeniable that non-state actors such as NGOs or TNCs have over the past decades gained considerable influence on international relations, states can still be considered the main actors in this arena. This again is particularly the case until the end of the Cold War.

In defining the nature of the international system this dissertation also follows the basic argument of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), formulated in their book *Regions and Powers: The*

Structure of International Security.⁴⁰ While classical realist theory merely analyses the system level on a global scale, RSCT suggests a partition of the system level into the global and regional level. In this context, RSCT emphasises the growing relevance and increasing autonomy of “the regional level of security.”⁴¹ Whereas RSCT was designed to explain international relations particularly in the post-Cold War era, its assumptions are also applicable to the timeframe under review in this dissertation. According to RSCT, the world can be categorised according to several so called regional security complexes (RSCs), “substructures of the international system [characterised] by the relative intensity of security interdependence among a group of [geographically close] units, and security indifference between that set and surrounding units.”⁴²

The analysis of the system level also needs to address the one factor that determines the structure of the international system, meaning the relationship between units within the same. This factor is power. In this dissertation the concept of power is understood as a unit’s ability to realise its objectives within the international system, including the ability to influence and alter the behaviour of other units by resorting to co-optive (soft power) and/or coercive means (hard power). Hereby, power is to be seen as a relative variable that draws its significance from a comparison of the abilities of all units in the international arena. In other words, the degree of a state’s power is contingent on the levels of power of the other states. Hence, power is an analytical concept that allows for a differentiation and hierarchisation of states.⁴³ Based on empirical analysis and following the theoretical assumptions of RSCT this dissertation differentiates between four categories of states, tiered with respect to their relative level as well as geographical spread and reach of power. According to this classification, there are, listed from most to least powerful, namely superpowers, great powers, regional powers, and regular states.

⁴⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁴³ Compare Alexander Siedschlag, *Neorealismus, Neoliberalismus und postinternationale Politik: Beispiel internationale Sicherheit – Theoretische Bestandsaufnahme und Evaluation* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag), p. 94.

The existence of diverging power potentials creates an imbalance in the international power structure. Moreover, the exact division of the entirety of states into the four categories determines the global power structure with the number of superpowers and great powers defining the structure's polarity. On a regional level, in turn, the division of regional states into the four categories defines the regional power structure. In the latter case, regional powers also influence the polarity of the respective regional power structure. On both the global and the regional level there are several potential patterns of power distribution: unipolarity, with only one superpower, great power or regional power dominating either the global or regional international system; bipolarity, with two similarly or equally powerful states dominating the system; or multipolarity. The distribution of power, however, is subject to constant change. Therefore, also the global and regional power structures are subject to recurrent adjustments.

With regard to the practical consequences of power imbalances in the international system, this dissertation partially agrees with a third realist assumption. According to the neorealist school, states disadvantaged by (regional) power imbalances attempt to induce a (regional) balance of power and, when unable to increase sufficiently their individual power position, either form alliances with other underprivileged states or engage in bandwagoning. While there is empirical evidence to substantiate this hypothesis, the existence of an imbalance of power alone insufficiently explains the formation of alliances. In reducing the rationale behind such cooperative steps on mere systemic pressures the assumption misses out important incentives and disincentives for the creation of alliances. This aspect will be addressed in more detail below.

With respect to general state behaviour in the international system, regardless of the individual state's power position, the realist school argues that states are principally rational, as in non-self-destructive and non-suicidal, entities. According to this hypothesis, state elites, the states' foreign policy decision makers, have a vested interest in the state's foreign security. Hence, they formulate the state's foreign policy in such a way as to ensure the state's survival and general security from outside threats. This is attributable to the decision makers' human survival instinct in combination with the general link between the fate of the state elites and the state itself. This theoretical

assumption, however, while generally true, falls short in comprehensively explaining the foreign policy decisions taken by state elites, and therefore needs to be enhanced. I will go into more detail further below.

The above analysis of the system level and its units identified the structural framework of international relations and the formulation of state foreign policy. It argued that first, the international system is anarchic in nature and has the character of a self-help system; second, states are the main actors in this international system; third, the international system can be subdivided into a global and a regional level; fourth, power, defined as the ability to realise one's objectives by referring to co-optive (soft power) as well as coercive means (hard power), is the one factor determining the relations between states in the international system; fifth, the international system displays an uneven distribution of power among states; sixth, states in underprivileged power positions tend to balance out power imbalances; and last, states and state elites are principally rational actors that formulate foreign policy with the intention to guarantee state security.

Following the abstract examination of the fundamental nature of the international system, the second level of analysis studies the specific power position of the relevant states within the international system during the time under review. In order to do so, it is essential to first analyse the power structure of the international system in the given time period. Hence, one has to identify the number of superpowers and great powers in as well as the polarity of the global international system. In a second step, one has to identify the RSC of which the states under review are themselves members. Once the RSC has been defined, an analysis of the regional power structure follows. This also includes the identification of the specific superpowers, great powers, and regional powers that are either member of the respective RSC or, in the case of the former two, influence power patterns in the same from the outside. This three step analysis allows for a proper assessment of the relevant states' power positions on a global and a regional level.

The identification of both the distribution of power in and the power structure of the international system, however, requires a method of measuring levels of power. The definition of power introduced previously – the ability to realise

one's objectives by referring to both co-optive and coercive means – does not provide such a quantification method by itself. Since the abstract term of 'ability' cannot be quantified it seems appropriate to scrutinise the means that provide this ability. In neorealism these means are termed 'capabilities.' An identification of these 'capabilities,' in turn, requires the identification of the relevant states' objectives.

In this context, the neorealist school argues that all states are 'like units' and as such do not display relevant differences in their objectives. According to this theorem, all states share the basic interest of security regardless of their individual characteristics. The security term used here is to be understood in the sense of the negative security concept, the absence of either physical attacks on the state's integrity or threats of the same. The capabilities to achieve this goal of security are then identified as predominantly military in nature. In other words, a maximisation of military capabilities translates into a maximisation of state security. Hence, power primarily stems from military capabilities. Economic and financial capabilities are of secondary importance and only relevant insofar as they can be converted into military capabilities, for example in terms of weapon procurements from abroad. The high relevance attributed to military capabilities is derived from their deterrent effect on potential aggressors. Following this hypothesis, the identification of a state's global or regional power status merely requires a comparative analysis of its direct or indirect military capabilities⁴⁴ with those of the remaining states on a global respectively regional level.

The reduction of state interests to state security and the consequent equalisation of state power statuses to the respective level of military capabilities also provide an explanation for the above mentioned tendency of less powerful states to forge alliances in order to balance out power imbalances. States that are unable to draw level with other states with respect to their military capabilities seek to compensate their deficit by combining their capabilities with those of other equally underprivileged states. In doing so, states attempt to optimise their foreign security by maximising the costs of an

⁴⁴ Indirect military capabilities are understood as e.g. economic strength that translates into military capabilities.

attack on them. An alternative action is the so called bandwagoning, a state's strategic alignment with a more powerful state or group of states.

This dissertation agrees with the neorealist assumption that state security is a main objective shared by all states in the international system and that military capabilities are both an essential means to guarantee this objective as well as an important, whereas not the sole, criterion in the evaluation of states' power statuses. I disagree, however, with a reduction of economic and financial capabilities to merely indirect military capabilities and argue that they are a material source of power on their own. Historic evidence shows that economic and financial capabilities have repeatedly been used successfully as leverage with the intention to adjust foreign policy decisions of other states. Due to the significance of material capabilities as sources of power, the second level of analysis is essential in narrowing down the foreign policy options of particular states. The relevant states' power position within the frame of the global and relevant regional international system restricts the states' foreign policy choices.

In clear contradiction to orthodox realist theory, however, this dissertation argues that a comprehensive analysis of international relations and foreign policy requires the scrutiny of a third analytical level. The underlying assumption is that foreign policy is not entirely predetermined by the nature of the international system. On the contrary, foreign policy is both the result of system pressures *and* domestic processes.

Empirical analysis shows that each state in the international system is characterised by a distinct domestic nature resulting from the concurrence of various factors such as the composition of the population, the economic situation, the political system, the people's relations to state, nation, and other identity-constituting concepts, existing ideologies and value systems, and the (perceived) history of society, state, and nation.

States are accumulations of individuals with various inward and outward oriented interests organised by a political system that translates these interests into domestic and foreign policy. The people's interests arise from a concurrence of several human aspirations and cognitive concepts: First, the desire for security (to be read in the sense of the extended, positive concept of security) and prosperity; second, ideology and normative worldviews (based on

philosophical, religious, and cultural convictions); third, identities (to be understood as an exclusive sense of belonging); fourth, human emotions; and last, historical memory. The distinct composition of individuals and their respective interests in a state society as well as the nature of the political process influence a given state's foreign policy actions by relativising the behaviour determining restrictions of the international system.

There are numerous examples of the effect the prevalence of a specific ideology among state populations and/or state elites can have on state foreign policy. A marked example is the Nazi ideology of the German Third Reich. The internalised belief in cultural and genetic superiority as well as in the destiny to reign over the world gave rise to an irrational and, at least in the case of the senior leadership towards the end of World War II, suicidal foreign policy. Backed by a significant proportion of the population the Nazi regime took a disproportionately high risk to its security in the attempt to gain world dominance. Particularly the continued fighting of an already lost war was attributable to the senior leadership's assignment of more value to the triumph of their ideology over their and their state's physical existence.

As will be discussed in further detail below, especially the Middle East is an area where identities are of particular importance as an influential element on both the genesis of people's interests and state foreign policies. While transnational identities evoke solidarity among populations and states, the exclusiveness of identities also creates cleavages both among and within states. Both phenomena influence foreign policy behaviour, although in different directions.

Human emotions and historical memory, too, are influential factors shaping interests and foreign policy. For example, the Israeli society and the Israeli state's foreign policy are heavily influenced by the historical memory of the Holocaust as well as previous century long discriminations against and persecutions of Jews. This particular Jewish or Israeli trauma manifested in the Israeli population and its state elite a sensitiveness regarding criticism and a *principiis obsta* mentality with respect to foreign policy. In other words, the historical memory of suppression and genocide influenced Israel's policy towards a more robust and offensive foreign policy. Another example of the

influence of collective historical memory on the formulation of foreign policy is the Federal Republic of Germany's principal of 'never again, never alone.' Conscious of the enormous harm, atrocities, and destructions caused by the Nazi regime, German post-war foreign policy is to this day particularly anxious to never again become the aggressor or stand on opposite sides of their Western partners.

The societal desire for prosperity and high living standards, too, influences foreign economic policy and is regularly at odds with normative principles shared by large parts of the population. This can exemplarily be seen in EU trade policy. While EU states make the establishment of trade relationships regularly dependent on the human rights situations in developing countries of minor economic importance, they pursue a far more pragmatic policy towards significant import partners.

In democratically organised states the state elites ordinarily translate the interests of the majority into policies. This is not necessarily the case in non-democratic states. There, the state elites are not directly responsible to the people as they are not democratically elected by the latter on a regular basis. This, however, is not to say that state elites in non-democratic states are free to ignore completely the interests of their subjects. This is deductable from the fact that state elites have a vested interest in regime stability. History shows that all regimes that ignore the interests of their populations will sooner or later fall victim to insurrections. Therefore, in order to sustain regime stability state elites have to guarantee the interests of their populations at least to such a degree as is necessary to prevent a public uprising. In so far, the interests of the people indirectly become the interests of the state elites. Nonetheless, in the case of non-democratic states, state interests are not unitary. There is a distinct difference between the various and at times competing interests of the population and the interests of the state elites. While state elites often share interests with their populations, they additionally have the interest to stay in power.

This dissertation argues that state elites of non-democratic states have two main interests: first, the interest to protect the state's physical integrity against outside threats and second, the interest to safeguard regime stability against

domestic perils. Particularly in world regions that display emphatically lived, parallel and often conflicting identities, state elites are faced with closely intertwined threats and opportunities with respect to both their interests. Middle East history shows clearly that the existence of strongly felt transnational and conflicting identities provides states with opportunities to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states. A state's ability to instrumentalise identities and identity conflicts beyond the domestic realm for the benefit of its own interests can be seen as a non-material source of power. Thus, the level of a state's power is defined by both material and non-material capabilities.

In neorealist theory, with states as 'black boxes' with a one-dimensional interest in mainly negative security and power determined by purely material capabilities, the nature of the international system dictates balance of power politics. The theoretical approach suggested here, on the other hand, views states as fairly transparent 'boxes' with semipermeable boundaries and multidimensional interests. Power is based on material and non-material capabilities. In non-democratic states, national interest is not identical with state elite interest; although they overlap, the latter is characterised by the additional interest in the maintenance of domestic power, namely regime stability. For such state elites the complex nature of domestic and international politics requires a flexible policy that takes into account and balances out threats and opportunities on both the domestic and international level. In his article "Explaining Third World Alignment" Stephen R. David gave this policy the name omnibalancing.⁴⁵

It has been argued that a state's foreign policy is defined with regard to pressures stemming from both the nature of the international system and domestic characteristics and dynamics. There are, however, two more factors that influence the shape of a state's foreign policy.

The first of these factors is the nature of the decision making process itself, meaning the technical process of transforming interests, may they stem from the people and/or the state elites, into policies. In this context, this dissertation draws on Graham T. Allison's 'organizational process model' that rejects the

⁴⁵ David, "Explaining Third World Alignment."

presumption that governments are unitary rational actors.⁴⁶ On the contrary, Alison ascribes governments a complex, compartmentalised character and proves *inter alia* that policy decisions often times rest on compromises made in the light of competitions among specialised departments for intergovernmental power.⁴⁷ The eventual foreign policy actions then do not necessarily coincide with the interests of either the people or the state elite.

The second factor is the personalities and perceptions of decision makers. The underlying assumption here is that, beside the material aspirations and cognitive concepts mentioned above, a decision maker's personal characteristics based on intelligence, education, interests, experiences, opinions, affections and aversions, temper, etc. influence the decision making process.

To summarise, the theoretical approach suggested in this dissertation is tailored specifically for the analysis of the foreign policy of a particular group of states (non-democratic Middle Eastern states) at a particular period of time (during the last two decades of the Cold War). It assumes that a state's foreign policy behaviour is the result of the limitations set by the nature of the international system, the state's relative power status, and the state's domestic characteristics. I argued that states are principally rational actors with an interest in self-preservation and that due to the anarchic and self-help nature of the international system as well as the uneven distribution of power on an international and a regional level, states in underprivileged power positions tend to strive for balance of power. I further contended that power, defined as the ability to realise one's objectives through co-optive and coercive means, rests on material (as in military, economic, and financial) and non-material capabilities; the latter are characterised as the ability to influence domestic dynamics in other states. Additionally, I argued that every state is unique in its domestic nature based on a distinct composition of societal, economic, political, historic, ideational, and identity-related characteristics and that these aspects determine the nature of the people's interests as well as the latter's translation into foreign policy. I asserted that in non-democratic states the elites have an interest in a twofold self-preservation in the form of both state and regime security, and that

⁴⁶ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

⁴⁷ Compare J. Gary Clifford, "Bureaucratic Politics," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (1990), pp. 161-8, p. 161.

in order to realise these interests they tend to refer to a policy of omnibalancing. Lastly, I stressed that the translation of interests into foreign policy is influenced both by the nature of the decision making process and the personalities of the decision makers.

Over the course of the rest of this dissertation I shall apply the above introduced theoretical approach in practice in an attempt to reveal the Arab Gulf monarchies' interests, foreign policy options, and eventual foreign policy decisions in the timeframe of 1971 to 1990 with particular reference to their relations to Iran and Iraq and their policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The following chapter focuses on the year 1971 and provides a comparative analysis of the distinct domestic characteristics of the six Arab Gulf monarchies, their positions in the international and relevant regional system, their foreign policy interests and options of action, and identifies the main challenges to both state and regime security in the individual states.

2. THE ARAB GULF MONARCHIES IN 1971: INTERESTS, OPTIONS, AND CHALLENGES

In the previous chapter I postulated that a state's foreign policy behaviour is the result of the limitations set by the nature of the international system, the state's relative power status, and its domestic characteristics. In this context, the term "power" was defined as a state's ability to realise its objectives through co-optive and coercive means; an ability resting on material and non-material capabilities. Moreover, I argued that a state's foreign policy objectives are influenced by the respective state's individual societal, economic, political, historic, ideational, and identity-related characteristics, the nature of the decision making process, and the personalities of the decision makers in the respective state.

This chapter identifies the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy interests and options as well as the main challenges to the survival of the individual states and regimes at the beginning of the timeframe under review. In doing so, I will first conduct a preliminary examination of the nature of the international and relevant regional and subregional systems the Arab Gulf monarchies were a part of in 1971.

The remainder of the chapter will then be devoted to an evaluation of the Arab Gulf monarchies' relative power positions within their subregional, regional, and global international environment. To do so, it will be necessary to identify both the six states' foreign policy interests and their capabilities to realise these interests.

As argued in the previous chapter, the strive for state security against foreign aggression is a major, although not the sole, foreign policy interest of any state. The degree of a state's material capabilities is the essential means to realise this security interest. A comparative analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' relative military, economic, and financial capabilities will therefore serve as a means to make a preliminary assessment of the six states' power status on subregional, regional, and global levels. In this context, the evaluation of military capabilities will take into account both quantitative and qualitative criteria.

Following the theoretical approach suggested in this dissertation, a state's foreign policy interests are multifaceted and not limited to a striving for negative security. Hence, a complete evaluation of the Arab Gulf monarchies' power status requires a more detailed analysis of the relevant states' foreign policy interests and their capabilities to realise the latter. The identification of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy interests will require a comprehensive analysis of their domestic characteristics. I will discuss how aspects such as demographics, social structure, entrenchment and diversity of religious and sectarian belief systems as well as other ideology-constituting concepts, including ethnic diversity, tradition, the (perceptions) of the history of society, state, and nation, the nature of the political decision making process, the public approval and inner stability of the political elite, and the personality of decision-makers influenced both popular and regime interests. In this context, I will emphasise that the Arab Gulf monarchies' regimes, being non-democratic in nature, had a vital interest in both state security against outside threats and regime stability against domestic opposition.

The examination of the Arab Gulf monarchies' extended foreign policy interests will be paralleled by an evaluation of the states' capabilities to realise these objectives. In this context, the previously measured economic and financial capabilities, based primarily on the export of oil and oil products, will be identified as an essential element in guaranteeing regime security.

In the next step, I will argue that in the Gulf subregion identity-constituting concepts such as sectarian and ethnic affiliation create both transboundary bonds among peoples and cleavages within nation states. This creates opportunities for state interference in the domestic affairs of other states and generates an important source of non-material power and non-material weakness. The analysis will then scrutinise the degree to which the Arab Gulf monarchies were both in the possession of such a non-material source of power and threatened by the possession of such power in the hands of other states in the region and subregion. This evaluation of non-material capabilities then completes the assessment of the Arab Gulf monarchies' power status in their subregional, regional, and global environments.

The chapter concludes with a section that gives a brief overview of the domestic and environmental changes between 1971 and 1990 that were most influential on the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies.

2.1 The Global International System, the Middle East, and the Gulf in 1971

The Global International System

In 1971, the international state system featured two superpowers at the centre: the United States and the Soviet Union. Both states had material capabilities unmatched by any other state. They possessed “first-class military-political capabilities [...] and the economies to support such capabilities.”⁴⁸ Moreover, the two superpowers exercised their military and political reach on a global level and were actively engaged in securitisation and desecuritisation processes in the entire international system. In addition, their claim to superpower status was accepted by the entire state community. Lastly, the two states were perceived as the “fountainheads of ‘universal’ values of the type necessary to underpin international society.”⁴⁹

Due to the existence of these two superpowers, the international system was characterised by bipolarity, reinforced by the bitter rivalry between the two states. In the post-World War II period, conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified rapidly and soon developed into what is commonly referred to as the Cold War. As a consequence, the world was divided into three blocks: a Western block spearheaded by the United States, an Eastern block dominated by the Soviet Union, and a block of independent states neither allied with nor controlled by any superpower. The phase of *détente*, an easing of U.S.-Soviet tensions that had begun in the late 1960s, did not change these general parameters. The superpower rivalry was played out in virtually all parts of the world, including the Middle East.

In addition, there were a number of great powers in the 1971 global international system. According to Buzan and Wæver, the key characteristic of a great power is the fact

⁴⁸ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, p. 34.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 35.

“that they are responded to by others on the basis of system level calculations about the present and near-future distribution of power. Usually, this implies that a great power is treated in the calculations of other major powers as if it has the clear economic, military, and political potential to bid for superpower status in the short or medium term. [This] means that actual possession of material and legal attributes is less crucial for great powers than for superpowers.”⁵⁰

Compared to superpowers, great powers have generally a lower degree of capabilities and a more limited radius of operation and are not involved in securitisation processes in all world regions. In the Cold War era, several states held the position of a great power: these were arguably the United Kingdom, France, China, West Germany, and Japan; the latter two characterised by particularly strong economic capabilities. Of greatest relevance to the international relations of the greater Middle East was the United Kingdom. By the end of World War II, the British Empire disposed of colonies and dependencies in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Latin America, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the post-war era, the British Empire and with it the United Kingdom’s power status began to shrink. Over a few decades the former superpower first dropped to the status of a great power and saw even this position slowly slip away. Due to economic and other political factors the British government advanced the decolonisation process and had granted most former colonies and dependencies their independence by the late 1960s; the independence of India in 1947 and the surrender of the Mandate of Palestine and subsequent transfer of responsibilities over the escalating crisis to the United Nations in 1948 are but two examples. Then, in early 1968, the British government came forward with another milestone decision when it announced its political and military withdrawal from East of Suez by the end of 1971. This announcement as well as the eventual British departure had a most significant impact on the international relations of the Middle East in general and the Gulf in particular.

Hence, at the beginning of the timeframe under review in this dissertation, the global international system was undergoing change of great significance for the Arab Gulf monarchies. The steady decline of the United Kingdom’s great power status affected them directly when the British withdrawal from the Gulf altered permanently the regional and subregional balance of power dynamics.

⁵⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, p. 35.

The Middle East Regional Security Complex

As expounded in the previous chapter, the global international system can be subdivided into regional security complexes (RSCs), “substructures of the international system [characterised] by the relative intensity of security interdependence among a group of [geographically close states], and security indifference between that set and surrounding [states].”⁵¹ One of these regional substructures that emerged in the post-World War II era is the Middle East regional security complex. Both the exact date of the RSC’s formation and the substructure’s membership are difficult to pinpoint. In any case, the RSC Middle East emerged in the course of the decolonisation process. In 1945, the only fully independent states in the greater Middle East area were Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. The remaining states were still colonies, dependencies, or occupations of European powers – the United Kingdom, France, and Spain.⁵² By 1971, the decolonisation process had been completed in this part of the world. Hence, it is without doubt that at that time the RSC Middle East was in full existence. The membership of the regional substructure, however, is disputed. Buzan and Wæver argue that in the period from 1948 to 1990 the RSC Middle East consisted of the members of the Arab League (with the exception of Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, and Sudan), Iran, and Israel. With respect to Afghanistan and Turkey, the two authors argue that the respective states were so called “insulators” between the RSC Middle East on the one hand and the RSC South Asia (Afghanistan) and the RSC Europe (Turkey) on the other hand.⁵³

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) draws on an understanding of security, power, and state capabilities that exceeds the narrow terms of orthodox realist theory. States’ domestic natures, characterised by societal, ideational, identity-related, and other aspects contribute fundamentally to securitisation processes among states and therefore determine the nature of an RSC. Following the theoretical framework proposed in this dissertation, the analysis of the nature of the regional security complex the Arab Gulf monarchies were part of in 1971 will at first be limited to an examination of

⁵¹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, p. 48.

⁵² Libya, formerly an Italian colony, had been occupied by the United Kingdom (Cyrenaica) and France (Fezzan-Ghadames) since 1943.

⁵³ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, p. 187.

security interdependence in the larger Middle East area from an orthodox realist perspective. This will allow for a first rough delimitation of the RSC Middle East. A brief comparative overview of the respective states' material capabilities then gives a first assessment of RSC polarity.

When security is understood solely as a state's protection against foreign direct or indirect (by means of proxies) military aggression, the degree of security interdependence between states can be analysed best by measuring such interstate aggression. An examination of interstate and proxy wars as well as direct military intervention in civil wars in the Middle East area gives clear evidence of both the existence and membership of the RSC Middle East.

First, by 1971 the Arab-Israeli conflict had already brought about three major wars involving Israel and several Arab states (as well as the great powers France and United Kingdom). The wars of 1948, 1956, and 1967 saw different degrees of military participation by Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, South Yemen, Sudan, Syria, and Tunisia. Moreover, from the mid-1960s onwards, Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided significant financial support to Palestinian paramilitaries for their asymmetric warfare against Israel. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, the two Arab Gulf monarchies alongside Libya made massive financial contributions to the so called Arab front states; money that was *inter alia* used to procure weapons that were used against Israel in the 1973 October War. Second, up until 1967, Egypt and Saudi Arabia fought a proxy war in Yemen, in which both parties had a direct military involvement. Third, the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman saw the meddling of Iran, Iraq, South Yemen, and Palestinian factions. Fourth, there is much additional evidence that ties Iran into security interdependence predominantly with the remaining Gulf states. Fifth, the temporary fusion of Egypt and Syria to the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) and their confederation with North Yemen to the United Arab State is another evidence of security interdependence between Middle East states.

Even without any scrutiny of the motives behind direct and indirect military contestations between the individual states, one can confirm the existence of a RSC Middle East. There is much evidence suggesting that by 1971, this RSC consisted of the Maghreb states (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia); Egypt;

the Levant states of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories; the two Yemens; and the Gulf states Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia as well as newly independent Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

A comparison of the RSC member states' material capabilities (military and economic capabilities) reveals that in 1971 the structure of the RSC Middle East was of a multipolar nature. Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, and Syria possessed powerful armed forces that clearly stood out from all other regional states. Saudi Arabia had at its disposal massive economic capabilities with which the Kingdom could both partially compensate its relative military weakness and manage to influence the foreign policy of other states to its advantage. Hence, an overview of material capabilities suggests the existence of six regional powers in the RSC Middle East; states with distinctively greater capabilities than the remaining states within the RSC.

With the completion of French and British withdrawal from the Middle East in 1962 and 1971 respectively, great power penetration of the RSC Middle East had ended. However, in 1971, the RSC Middle East was characterised by significant superpower penetration. As Little points out, the U.S.-Soviet contestation in the Middle East became increasingly stronger between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s. In this context, he identifies the U.S.-Soviet "geopolitical struggle to recruit allies and secure access to strategic resources (especially oil)" and their "diplomatic maneuvers to prevent the Arab-Israeli conflict from escalating into a superpower confrontation" as two main characteristics of superpower intervention in the RSC Middle East.⁵⁴

The Gulf Regional Security Subcomplex

In 1971, the RSC Middle East could be subdivided in three regional security subcomplexes (RSSC): the Maghreb, the Levant, and the Gulf. Together with Iran and Iraq, the Arab Gulf monarchies were part of the latter. In this context, the argument in this dissertation agrees with Gause in not counting the two Yemens as members of the subcomplex. While there was undoubtedly close

⁵⁴ Douglas Little, "The Cold War in the Middle East: Suez Crisis to Camp David Accords," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume II: Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 305-26, p. 305.

security interdependence between these two states and their immediate neighbours Saudi Arabia and Oman, there was a much lesser degree of such security interdependence in the relations between the two Yemens and the rest of the RSSC Gulf member states.⁵⁵

At the beginning of the timeframe under review, the RSSC Gulf was in transition regarding its power constellation. Following the withdrawal of Britain's great power presence from the Gulf and U.S. reluctance to fill the void, the subregion developed a tripolarity with Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia as (sub-)regional powers. In 1971, there was only minimal physical superpower presence in the RSSC Gulf, reduced to a symbolic U.S. Navy presence in Bahrain. At that time, the Gulf did not constitute a main theatre of superpower confrontation.

Even after their independence in 1971, the newly sovereign Arab Gulf monarchies kept close relations with the United Kingdom, an important U.S. ally; this was also true for Kuwait, which had gained independence a decade earlier. Saudi Arabia looked back at two and a half decades of close relations with the United States. Iran, too, enjoyed close relations with Washington; relations that significantly intensified after the 1968 British announcement to withdraw from the Gulf. Hence, the Soviet Union's influence in the Gulf was limited. For strategic reasons, Kuwait had established bilateral relations with the USSR in March 1963⁵⁶; until the late 1980s the Emirate remained the only Arab Gulf monarchy to maintain diplomatic ties with Moscow. Following the Baath party's second accession to power in 1968, Iraqi-Soviet relations gradually improved. By 1971, Iraq had concluded several arms treaties with the Soviet Union. However, the two states were in disagreement mainly regarding the Baath regime's treatment of Iraqi communists and Baghdad's uncompromising

⁵⁵ Compare Gause, *International Relations*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ In November 1961, the Soviet Union had vetoed Kuwait's admission to the United Nations, arguing that due to the Anglo-Kuwaiti agreement signed in connection with Kuwait's independence earlier that year, the Emirate was still *de facto* a British colony. In February 1963, in the light of deteriorating Iraqi-Soviet relations following the Baath Party's takeover, Kuwait sought to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR. Subsequently, in May 1963, the Soviet Union supported Kuwait's renewed application to the United Nations. Compare Mark N. Katz, *Russia & Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy toward the Arabian Peninsula* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 162.

stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵⁷ Their relations were not yet as close as they were to become from 1972 onwards.

2.2 The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1971: Material Capabilities

This section reveals the Arab Gulf monarchies' material capabilities in 1971. As argued above, material capabilities are a composition of military, economic, and financial capabilities.

Military Capabilities

Military capabilities are the traditional source of power in international relations. They allow states to both protect themselves against foreign aggression and put leverage on other states to adjust their behaviour.

Saudi Arabia

In 1971, Saudi Arabia had the by far most extensive military capabilities of all Arab Gulf monarchies. Following King Faisal's accession to the throne, the Saudi armed forces had undergone a process of reform, enlargement, and modernisation. The initial motivation for this development was Egypt's intervention in the civil war in the North Yemen on the side of the anti-Saudi republic faction as well as direct Egyptian attacks on Saudi territory. Once the Egyptian danger had subsided in late 1967, the continued instability of North Yemen, the enmity with Soviet-backed South Yemen, the outbreak of the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman, and the British announcement to leave the Gulf gave Saudi military development plans a new impetus.⁵⁸

In 1971, the total Saudi manpower amounted to roughly 71,000 men of which 35,000 served in the Kingdom's army, 1,000 in the Navy, and 5,000 in the air force; the remaining 30,000 men made up the National Guard, formerly known as the White Army. The Saudi army was divided into four infantry brigades, equipped with ten SAM batteries with HAWK missiles, twenty-five M-47 medium tanks, sixty M-41 light tanks, and 200 armoured cars of the type AML-60 and AML-90. The Saudi Navy was equipped with three torpedo boats, one patrol vessel, two fast patrol boats, and eight hovercrafts. The Kingdom's air force had

⁵⁷ Compare Francis Fukuyama, *The Soviet Union and Iraq Since 1968* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1980), pp. 28f.

⁵⁸ Compare Cordesman, *The Gulf*, pp. 122-47.

in its arsenal a total of seventy-five combat aircraft – including fifteen fighter-bombers of the type F-86 *Sabre*, twenty ground-attack jets of the type BAC-167 *Strikemaster*, and twenty F-52 *Lightning* interceptors – as well as ten C-130 transport planes. Moreover, the Saudi Royal Air Force had at its disposal two SAM regiments equipped with thirty-six *Thunderbird* surface-to-air missiles. To expand its air defence capabilities, the Saudi government ordered twenty fighters jets of the type F-5A *Tiger* and thirty F-5E during 1971. The Saudi National Guard disposed only of lightly armed units.⁵⁹

Kuwait

In the time leading to its independence in 1961, Kuwait established armed forces consisting of army, navy, and air force units. In the light of the Iraqi invasion threat right after its independence⁶⁰, the Emirate expanded its military. Another major military expansion and modernisation was triggered by the British announcement on May 13, 1968 to end the 1961 military assistance agreement three years later. Within a decade, Kuwait's defence expenditure showed a significant increase from KD 16.4 million⁶¹ in 1961 to KD 26 million⁶² in 1971. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti manpower had increased from 2,500 men in 1961 to 14,000 men in 1971.⁶³ Unlike in other Arab Gulf monarchies, the Kuwaiti military was largely manned by natives. The so called "Non-Kuwaiti Professional," e.g. technicians, served "in a quasi-military civilian capacity" and did not have any command authority.⁶⁴ Non-national military personnel were recruited from among Palestinian, Egyptian, and Jordanian nationals in Kuwait's society.⁶⁵

In the autumn of 1972, Kuwait had the second best equipped armed forces among Arab Gulf monarchies. The Kuwait army had three brigades with

⁵⁹ *The Military Balance: 1971-72* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971), p. 31 and Harry T. Drury, III and Peter J. Glenboski, Jr., *Peace Hawk: A Case Study of a Foreign Military Sales Program and its Management*, M.A. Thesis, U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology, Air University, 1977, pp. 57f.

⁶⁰ For a detailed account, see Chapter 3.

⁶¹ This was equivalent to \$45.92 million. Own calculations based on the constant exchange rate in 1961. Compare Richard F. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook for the Persian Gulf States* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2008), p. 431.

⁶² This was equivalent to \$73.32 million. Own calculations based on the average exchange rate in 1970. Compare *ibid.*

⁶³ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 184, 192f. Compare Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 518. The IISS puts the total Kuwaiti manpower at only 10,700 in the autumn of 1972. *The Military Balance: 1972-73* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1972), p. 36.

⁶⁴ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 193.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

armoured, infantry, and artillery units, equipped with eighty medium tanks (each forty Indian-made *Vijayanta* and British *Centurion*) as well as a number of armoured and scout cars. The Emirate's naval forces had eight patrol boats and two landing crafts. Kuwait's air force had a total of twenty-six combat aircraft – fourteen F-53 *Lightning* and twelve *Hawker Hunter* – as well as six light transport planes and four helicopters.⁶⁶

UAE

After gaining independence in December 1971, the UAE had four parallel military forces. The Trucial Oman Scouts, a 1,600 men strong Sharjah-based security force first established by the United Kingdom in 1951, were transformed into the Union Defence Force (UDF), the federal armed forces. The troop continued to be commanded and trained by seconded British Royal Marines officers. Only about 40% of the soldiers were native Emiratis; 30% were Omanis and the remaining men originated from Iran, Pakistan, and India. The unit was equipped with armoured cars and infantry weapons.⁶⁷ Following independence, the UDF's role was not to provide external defence but rather “to maintain order and prevent local disputes from escalating into intertribal or intershaykhdom conflicts.”⁶⁸

Despite verbal support for common forces, the rulers of the individual UAE Emirates did not provide sufficient funding for the UDF and continued to maintain their own armed forces. Most prominent among them and both considerably larger and better equipped than the UDF was the Abu Dhabi Defence Force (ADDF). Established following the British announcement to withdraw from the Gulf, the ADDF had roughly 7,000 men in 1972.⁶⁹ The ADDF, too, had a large number of foreign military personnel: the officer ranks were filled largely by Britons and Jordanians as well as several Indian, Pakistani, and Palestinian mercenaries. As the only UAE force, the ADDF had air force and naval units. Beside each two transport planes and helicopters, the ADDF had at its disposal twelve *Hawker Hunter* combat aircraft, piloted by contracted former

⁶⁶ *The Military Balance: 1972-73*, p. 36.

⁶⁷ The Trucial Oman Scouts were initially named Trucial Oman Levies. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 324 and Colonel Tom Walcot, “The Trucial Oman Scouts 1955 to 1971: An Overview,” *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2006), pp. 17-30, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 325.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 324 and *The Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, 20th ed. (London: Europa Publications, 1972), p. 715.

British and seconded Pakistani air force officers. Moreover, the ADDF had a small naval wing with four patrol boats, also largely British officered.⁷⁰ Additionally, the Emirates of Dubai, Ras al-Khaimah, and Sharjah also had their own armed forces that, however, were significantly smaller than the ADDF. In 1972, the armed forces of Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah had a force level of 1,000 and 250 men respectively.⁷¹

Concerned about the spread of radicalism, both the UDF and the individual emirates' forces discontinued to enlist Dhofari Omanis and Yemenites.⁷²

Bahrain

In the months following Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf, Bahrain had the smallest armed forces of all Arab Gulf monarchies. By the autumn of 1972, the Emirate had a mere 1,100 men under arms. The majority of soldiers served in the army, a troop equipped with armoured and scout cars. The Bahraini navy had some patrol boats. Unlike the other Arab Gulf monarchies, Bahrain had no air force units at all.⁷³

Qatar

Upon independence, Qatar had small armed forces with highly limited capabilities to defend the Emirate against external aggression. Hence, the Qatari military's primary role was limited to the preservation of domestic order and the protection against small-scale border intrusions. In the autumn of 1972, the Qatari armed forces had a combined manpower of 1,800, of which 1,600 served in the army. As in the case of the UAE and Oman, the Qatari army featured a large number of foreign mercenaries. The officer ranks were mainly filled by Britons and to a lesser degree by Jordanian and Pakistani nationals. Among the lower ranks were many Saudis, Yemenites, and Baluchis. Following Britain's announcement to leave the Gulf, the Qatari army had procured several armoured cars and troop carriers, fifteen surface-to-air missiles of the type *Short Tigercat*. A year after independence, the Qatari air force was equipped

⁷⁰ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 324f.

⁷¹ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 715 and *The Military Balance: 1972-73*, p. 36.

⁷² Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 325.

⁷³ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 211 and *The Military Balance: 1972-73*, p. 36.

with four *Hawker Hunter* combat aircraft; the navy was still in development with a number of fast patrol boats on order.⁷⁴

Oman

When the United Kingdom left the Gulf, the Omani armed forces had been fighting for several years in the intra-Omani Dhofar War. Following his takeover of power in July 1970, Sultan Qaboos initiated a significant reorganisation, enlargement, and modernisation of the military. Within the first two years of Qaboos' rule, clear signs of change became visible. For one thing, arms imports and total military expenditure were increased significantly. Under Sultan Said, Oman's overall military expenditure had amounted to less than \$50 million.⁷⁵ In contrast, figures given for 1971 indicate expenditures of \$38.5 million⁷⁶ to \$44 million.⁷⁷

Between 1970 and 1972, Omani manpower was increased from roughly 4,000 to 6,000, the majority of which served in the army. In the autumn of 1972, the Omani army was organised in four infantry battalions and three artillery batteries and equipped with armoured cars. The air force had fifteen combat aircraft – including nine BAC-167 *Strikemaster* –, fourteen air support and three transport planes as well as twelve helicopters. Additionally, Oman had rudimentary naval forces with one patrol vessel and several armed dhows.⁷⁸

During Sultan Qaboos' first years in power, the armed forces continued to feature a very high number of expatriates. All command functions were occupied by British officers. Moreover, many Britons served in lower ranks and as technicians. In addition, there were many Pakistani and non-Omani Arabs serving in the military.⁷⁹ Expounding the motivation behind Sultan Said's heavy reliance on expatriate soldiers, Nyrop et al. state

“[T]he strong expatriate and minority representation in the armed forces, especially in the command structure but also among the troops, has

⁷⁴ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 268-70 and *The Military Balance: 1972-73*, p. 36.

⁷⁵ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 399.

⁷⁶ Own calculations based on data provided by *ibid*.

⁷⁷ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 504. The figures provided by Cordesman are given in constant 1979 U.S. dollars. The \$44 million indicated above are the result of inflation adjustment calculated by the author.

⁷⁸ *The Military Balance: 1972-73*, p. 34.

⁷⁹ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 404f.

served the sultans of Oman well by decreasing the chances that the armed forces might be subverted and turned against the regime. [...] A body of Omani noncommissioned officers and soldiers capable of handling modern equipment was therefore precluded in his time and extremely difficult to develop later.⁸⁰

Sultan Said's paranoia went as far as to discourage literacy among Omani soldiers to prevent their promotion to officer ranks. Due to the very low literacy rate in the Omani population in 1970, an Omanisation of the military under Sultan Qaboos was to take at least one generation. It is interesting to note that even after Sultan Qaboos' accession to power the Omani military was officially referred to the Sultan of Oman's armed forces (SAF)⁸¹; this clearly indicates that Qaboos considered the armed forces to serve primarily him personally and not the country.⁸²

The Arab Gulf Monarchies' Relative Military Capabilities

To assess the scope of the Arab Gulf monarchies' military capabilities, it is necessary to analyse the military capabilities of potential aggressors as well as geostrategic factors.

A comparison of manpower and weapon systems already shows the Arab Gulf monarchies' clear military inferiority to the Gulf powers Iran and Iraq. In 1971, the Iranian armed forces had 181,000 men under arms. The Iranian army with its 150,000 men was equipped with 860 medium and 100 light tanks, 240 armored cars, 870 armoured personal carriers, HAWK anti-aircraft missile batteries, howitzers, anti-aircraft guns, and eight helicopters. Iran's navy was equipped *inter alia* with one destroyer, one frigate, four corvettes, four patrol boats, ten hovercraft, and four landing craft. The Iranian air force flew a total of 140 combat aircraft, mostly modern F-4 and F-5 fighters, as well as forty-two transport planes and seventy-one helicopters.⁸³

Iraq had a total of 95,250 soldiers. Of those, 85,000 served in the army, which was subdivided into two armoured and four infantry divisions and equipped with 860 medium and forty-five light tanks, 115 armoured cars, armoured personal carriers, and 200 Soviet-made artillery guns. Iraq's navy had three submarine

⁸⁰ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 402f.

⁸¹ This remains the case until today.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *The Military Balance: 1971-72*, p. 28.

chasers, twelve torpedo boats, and ten patrol boats. The Iraqi air force flew a total of 220 combat aircraft – including eighty-five MiG-21 interceptors, fifteen MiG-17 fighters, forty-eight Su-7 fighter-bombers, nine Tu-16 medium bombers, and twelve Il-28 light bombers –, fifty-six helicopters, and twenty-four transport planes.⁸⁴

From these figures alone, it becomes obvious that in case of an attack by either Iran or Iraq, the Arab Gulf monarchies would not have been able to defend themselves in any adequate way. Saudi Arabia, which had the largest and best-equipped armed forces among Arab Gulf monarchies, suffered additional problems other than being outnumbered and outgunned. For one thing, Saudi procurement policy had been taking little consideration of the Kingdom's defence needs; Cordesman assesses the air defence package the Saudi government procured from the United Kingdom and the United States in the mid-1960s as “an almost total failure,” as it did not establish “more than the most minimal air defense capability.”⁸⁵ In the following years, the procurement process was not improved markedly. Moreover, the Saudi armed forces lacked coordination within and particularly between individual services. In addition, the Ministry of Defense continued to have significant difficulties in budget, programming, personnel, logistics, supply, and inter-service management. Additionally, despite reforms initialised in 1969, the military promotion system still featured discrimination due to regional, family, and tribal origin, thereby facilitating the ascent to high ranks of militarily incompetent and corrupt officers.⁸⁶

Due to Saudi Arabia's geostrategic position, its large territory, and enormous oil wealth, the Kingdom's relative military weakness was a particular strategic disadvantage. The Kingdom had long land borders with Iraq as well as the two Yemens, all three potential aggressors. Moreover, at its eastern and northeastern borders, Saudi territory was close to militarily much more powerful Egypt and Israel respectively.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *The Military Balance: 1971-72*, pp. 28f.

⁸⁵ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 126.

⁸⁶ Compare *ibid*, pp. 137-41.

⁸⁷ For Egypt's and Israel's military capabilities in 1971, see *The Military Balance: 1971-72*, pp. 29, 32.

Both on the subregional and a regional level the military capabilities of the Arab Gulf monarchies were very limited and did not provide sufficient defence capacities against potential attacks by Iran and Iraq or other regional powers within the RSC Middle East, such as Egypt or Israel.

Economic and Financial Capabilities

Beside military capabilities, economic and financial capabilities are also material sources of power. A state can use its economic and financial capabilities to create positive and negative incentives with which it can influence the behaviour of other states. In 1971, the Arab Gulf monarchies' economic and financial capabilities originated primarily from the export of oil products. Hence, an analysis of their oil sectors is essential for the evaluation of the Arab Gulf monarchies' material capabilities.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi commercial oil production started in 1938. After an interruption during World War II, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO)⁸⁸ resumed production in 1946. Production quickly increased from nearly 60 million barrels in 1946 to roughly 357 million barrel in 1955 and 950 million barrels in 1966.⁸⁹ In 1971, Saudi Arabia was the second largest oil producer in the Middle East and the fourth largest in the world, behind the United States, the Soviet Union, and Iran. In that year, the Kingdom produced a total of 1,740.8 million barrels⁹⁰, 9.6% of the global oil production.⁹¹

All relevant Saudi oil reserves are located in the country's Eastern Province.⁹² The most prominent oil deposit is Ghawar that remains until this day the world's largest conventional oil field. Beside other onshore fields, Saudi Arabia had also discovered several offshore oil deposits prior to 1971. Due to the close proximity of the oil fields to the Gulf, the vast majority of Saudi oil exports were loaded on tankers at the Gulf port at Ras Tanura. In 1970, roughly 20% of Saudi oil production was exported through the TAP-Line (the Trans Arabian

⁸⁸ Until 1944 the company was called California Arabian Standard Oil Company (Casoc).

⁸⁹ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 555.

⁹⁰ *Ibid* and Ali, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 12. This includes Saudi Arabia's share of the production in the Kuwaiti-Saudi partitioned zone.

⁹¹ Own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East 1973-74*, p. 75.

⁹² For a map of giant oil fields in the Gulf, see Appendix, Map 3.

Pipeline System), which connected the Saudi oil fields with the Lebanese Mediterranean port city of Sidon.⁹³

Moreover, Saudi Arabia's oil reserves were enormous. On the basis of data collected through oil explorations, the Kingdom's proven reserves were repeatedly corrected upwards. By the end of 1970, Saudi Arabia had roughly 148.75 billion barrels in proven oil reserves, constituting an approximate 21% of the then proven global oil reserves.⁹⁴ At a yearly production rate of 1.74 billion barrels these resources would have lasted for more than another 85 years.

The massive increase in Saudi oil production was accompanied by an even more significant progression in oil revenues. State income from the oil sector rose from just above \$10 million in 1946 to almost \$2 billion 25 years later. 1971 oil revenues had more than doubled compared to 1969 levels. The significance of these oil-related returns becomes obvious when looking at the Kingdom's 1971-72 budget figures. During this fiscal year, the Kingdom total revenues ranged at \$2.89 billion. Hence, at the beginning of the period under review Saudi state revenues stemmed to roughly 75% from the oil sector.⁹⁵

In addition to crude oil production, Saudi Arabia had also a significant refining capacity of roughly 151 million barrel in 1972. Saudi oil refineries were located at Ras Tanura and Jidda on the Red Sea coast.⁹⁶

Kuwait

In Kuwait, oil was first discovered at Burgan, in the country's south in 1938. Due to World War II, commercial production did not start until 1946. However, when production finally started, it only took until 1953 for Kuwait to become the largest oil producer in the Middle East with a yearly production rate of 317.4 million barrels. The Emirate held the position as Middle East top producer until 1966 when it was passed by Saudi Arabia.⁹⁷ In 1971, meanwhile being the third largest producer in the region, Kuwait produced approximately 1,182 million

⁹³ *The Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, 18th ed. (London: Europa Publications, 1971), p. 35.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 38.

⁹⁵ Partially own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, pp. 76, 556.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 77.

⁹⁷ Partially own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 35.

barrels of crude oil.⁹⁸ In that year, Kuwait's oil revenues amounted to nearly \$1.4 billion. At the end of 1970, Kuwait had 67.38 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. At the 1971 production rate, then known oil reserves would have lasted for 57 years. Beside its large oil production rate, Kuwait had also the second largest oil refinery capacity in the Middle East. In 1972, Kuwait's three oil refineries had a combined annual capacity of 201.58 million barrels.⁹⁹ In 1971, Kuwait had a budget surplus of nearly \$152 million.¹⁰⁰

UAE

In 1971, the UAE were the third largest oil producer among Arab Gulf monarchies. Among UAE emirates only Abu Dhabi and Dubai were oil producers. Abu Dhabi was the first to produce oil, it did so in much larger quantity, and it had significantly larger proven reserves than Dubai. Abu Dhabi's production had begun in 1962 at the Umm Sharif offshore oilfield, almost 100 kilometres off the Emirate's Gulf shore. A year later onshore production started at Murban. In 1964, offshore production was initialised at Zakum. Abu Dhabi's oil production saw a sharp rise from roughly 66 million barrel in 1964 to 329 million barrels in 1971. In that year, Abu Dhabi's oil revenues amounted to \$431 million. By the end of 1972, Abu Dhabi had proven oil reserves of 20.8 billion barrels. At the 1971 production rate then known oil reserves would have lasted for more than 63 years.¹⁰¹ In 1971, roughly 97% of Abu Dhabi's revenues originated in the export of oil. In that year, the Emirate had a budget surplus of \$115 million.¹⁰²

In 1969, production started at Dubai's Fateh offshore field, also roughly 100 kilometres off Dubai's coast. Two years later, the Emirate produced 47.6 million barrels of oil. In late 1972, Bahrain had 366.5 million barrels in proven oil

⁹⁸ Own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 75. This figure includes Kuwait's share of oil production in the Kuwaiti-Saudi partitioned zone. For more information on the Kuwaiti-Saudi neutral zone, see Husain M. Al-Baharna, "A Note on the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone Agreement of July 7, 1965, Relating to the Partition of the Zone," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 1968), pp. 730-5.

⁹⁹ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 76f. and *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ Own calculations based on data provided by Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 146.

¹⁰¹ Partially own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, pp. 35f. and *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, pp. 75f. Nyrop et al. put Abu Dhabi's 1971 oil production rate at 387 million barrels. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 111.

¹⁰² Own calculations based on data provided by Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 311.

reserves.¹⁰³ At 1971's production rate, these reserves would be depleted within less than 8 years.

Despite the economically weak smaller Emirates, the UAE had an estimated surplus of \$109 million in 1971.¹⁰⁴

Bahrain

Bahrain's Awali onshore oil field was discovered in 1932, earlier than any oil discoveries in the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies. Two years later production had set in and already exceeded 8 million barrels in 1938. After a lower production rate during World War II, Bahraini oil production levelled off for several years at above 10 million barrels from 1948 onwards. The Bahraini regime increased its profit share in December 1952 when it reached an agreement with the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) on equal profit distribution. Consequently, oil revenues increased to well above half of total government revenues.¹⁰⁵ Oil production increased again in the late 1950s and mid-1960s – when production at the Abu Safah offshore oil field had set in¹⁰⁶ – and peaked around Bahrain's independence at nearly 28 million barrels per year.¹⁰⁷ Despite this increase in production, Bahrain was in 1971 the by far smallest oil producer of all Arab Gulf monarchies, producing only 1.7% of Saudi Arabia's rate.¹⁰⁸ By the end of 1972, Bahrain had proven oil reserves amounting to 366.5 million barrels; hence, at the current production rate, Bahrain would run out of oil in about 13 years.¹⁰⁹ However, Bahrain played an important role in oil refining, having at that time the second largest oil refinery in the Middle East. In 1970, the Emirate refined roughly 88 million barrels of crude oil, a share of 9.3% of all refined oil in the Middle East.¹¹⁰ In 1971, the volume of oil refined in

¹⁰³ *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 36 and *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁴ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 321.

¹⁰⁵ Fred H. Lawson, *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press: 1989), pp. 48f. and *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 209.

¹⁰⁶ According to a Saudi-Bahraini agreement, oil revenues from the Abu Safah were shared between both countries. Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 94f. and *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁸ Own Calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁹ Partially own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 76.

¹¹⁰ Among Middle Eastern states, only Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia refined more oil. *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 38.

Bahrain had increased to 90 million barrels. Incomes deriving from the export of refined products amounted to \$192 million.¹¹¹

Qatar

Oil was first discovered in Qatar in 1939. After a temporary interruption due to World War II, drilling activities were resumed in 1947 and two years later the first oil shipment was made. In 1966, the Qatar Petroleum Company (QPC) produced 67.5 million barrels per year. In the same year, the Shell Company of Qatar, too, began commercial production; in contrast to QPC, Shell produced oil at offshore fields. In 1963 and 1969, concessions were given to two additional companies.¹¹² In the year of Qatar's independence, the Emirate produced roughly 150.3 million barrels, a 13% increase from the previous years' figures. This made Qatar the fourth largest producer among Arab Gulf monarchies.¹¹³ By the end of 1970, the Emirate had proven oil reserves of nearly 4.32 billion barrels.¹¹⁴ At the 1971 production rate, then known reserves would be depleted within 28.7 years. Oil export revenues had increased continuously in the years prior to Qatar's independence from \$60 million in 1963 to \$198 million in 1971; after slower increases in the previous years, revenues jumped 62% from 1970 to 1971.¹¹⁵ In 1971, oil revenues amounted to roughly 90% of the Emirate's total public state revenue.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, Qatar had a negative balance of payments in 1971 with a deficit of \$21 million.¹¹⁷

Oman

The Sultanate granted a first oil concession in 1937. However, it was not until 1964 that first commercial oil deposits were discovered. Production set in three years later. By the end of 1967, 14.7 million barrel of Omani oil had been produced. In the subsequent years, Omani oil production saw a very significant

¹¹¹ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 102.

¹¹² *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 215.

¹¹³ Partially own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 75. Nyrop et al. put the Qatari oil production in 1971 at an even higher 157 million barrels. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 107.

¹¹⁴ *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 38.

¹¹⁵ Partially own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 76. Nyrop et al. put Qatar's oil revenues in 1971 at a slightly higher \$199.3 million. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 107.

¹¹⁶ Abdulla Juma Al-Kobaisi, *The Development of Education in Qatar, 1950 - 1977: With an Analysis of some Educational Problems*, PhD Thesis, Durham University, 1979, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 251.

increase, reaching a first peak in 1970. For that year, figures given in literature vary between 121.2-126.1 million barrels.¹¹⁸ Due to technical difficulties, the 1971 production level saw a decrease to the previous year's rate and ranged at only 105.6 million barrels.¹¹⁹ In 1971, Omani oil export revenues amounted to \$115 million, making up roughly 96% of the Omani governments total revenues.¹²⁰ By the end of 1972, Oman had proven oil reserves amounting to 4.98 billion barrels.¹²¹ At the 1971 production rate, then known oil reserves would have lasted for just above 47 years. In contrast to the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, Oman did not export its oil through Gulf waters. Oil from the Fahud, Yibal, and Natil fields was transported via pipeline to port facilities near Muscat, at the Gulf of Oman.¹²²

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has shown that in 1971 the Arab Gulf monarchies' military capabilities were highly limited and insufficient to guarantee outside protection. On the other hand, the export of oil products was a source of power for the Arab Gulf monarchies. Particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the largest oil producers among them, had great potential to use their oil production and export rates as a political instrument. For one thing, they could offset military weaknesses by securing outside protection or at the least weapons procurements through *quid pro quo* relationships with militarily powerful oil importing states. Moreover, oil could be used as both a positive and negative incentive to influence policy decisions of oil importing states in general. In addition, with rising oil prices, state revenues would increase, giving the Arab Gulf monarchies the ability to use financial aid as a means to influence policy behaviour *inter alia* of states in the RSC Middle East.

2.3 The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1971: The Domestic Realm

As argued above, it is essential to examine a state's domestic characteristics in order to identify its extended foreign policy interests as well as its abilities to

¹¹⁸ Own calculations based on data provided by *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 37 and *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 75.

¹¹⁹ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 535.

¹²⁰ Own calculations based on data provided by Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 368.

¹²¹ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 76.

¹²² *Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 508.

realise these objectives. The subsequent analysis will reveal great similarities but also significant differences in the domestic natures of the Arab Gulf monarchies.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's political system in 1971 was widely considered by Western observers to be an absolute monarchy. However, the Kingdom's political rule was more complex than that. In this context, Abir states:

“The more appropriate description of the Saudi regime after the death of Ibn Saud is probably an oligarchy whose pillars are the Saudi royal house, the ulama¹²³ and the umara¹²⁴. The conduct of its government follows, especially since the last years of King Abd al-Aziz, the golden rule of consultation (shura) and consensus (ijma'), within the ruling class.”¹²⁵

To understand modern Saudi political dynamics, it is essential to look back at the development and demise of the first two Saudi realms. The first Saudi state (1744-1818) was established upon an alliance between Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud. The former was a strictly conservative Sunni religious scholar, the latter an ambitious and talented but yet unimportant tribal Sheikh from the Najdi town of Dariya, close to Riyadh. The two men entered into a symbiotic alliance: the Al Saud Sheikh dedicated himself to fight a *jihad* to enforce Ibn Abdul Wahhab's religious teachings on the Arabian Peninsula; conversely, Muhammad ibn Saud became the secular leader of the expanding state. By 1811, the Saudi state had conquered the entire Najd, the Eastern Arabian Peninsula, parts of today's Iraq and Syria, and the Hijaz. However, the occupation of Mecca and Medina turned out to be a fatal strategic mistake. The Ottoman Empire based its legitimacy partially on the protection of the Two Holy Mosques and was determined to reconquer them. By 1818, Ottoman troops had not only retaken the Hijaz but occupied the entire Saudi state, and deported or executed its leadership.¹²⁶

¹²³ *Ulama* (sing.: *alim*; scholar). The term refers to the class of religious scholars.

¹²⁴ *Umara* (sing.: Emir). In this context, the term refers to Saudi Arabia's most important tribal rulers.

¹²⁵ Mordechai Abir, "The Consolidation of the Ruling Class and the New Elites in Saudi Arabia," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1987), pp. 150-71, pp. 154f.

¹²⁶ Compare Guido Steinberg, "The Wahhabi Ulama and the Saudi State: 1745 to the Present," in Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman (eds.), *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp. 11-34, pp. 12, 14f.

A second Saudi state began to develop in 1824 and experienced a period of great stability under Imam Faisal bin Turki from 1843-1865. However, after Faisal's death, conflict over succession prompted a civil war, in the course of which the Saudi state continuously shrank until its remnants were conquered by the Al Rashid tribe of Hail.¹²⁷

The fate of the first two Saudi states had significant influence on the Wahhabi *ulama's* political thought. The first state's fatal overextension led the *ulama* to adopt a more pragmatic stance, based on a "desire to strengthen the Saudi state and the ruling family."¹²⁸ When in 1902, Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud (frequently referred to as Ibn Saud) laid the foundation of modern Saudi Arabia, the *ulama* sought to prevent a repetition of the civil war that had destroyed the previous realm and caused a split in its midst. Convinced that only "close to total obedience towards the ruler and the leading *ulama* in Riyadh" could prevent new domestic disturbance, "the scholar's political thinking was [henceforth] dominated by the notions of community (*jama'a*) and obedience (*ta'a*)."¹²⁹ The senior *ulama's* new quietism and strong interest in domestic stability became obvious when they backed Ibn Saud's quelling of the *Ikhwan* uprising in 1930, although the *Ikhwan* were actively spreading the Wahhabi ideals.¹³⁰

Following the end of the *Ikhwan* movement, the *ulama's* influence was greatly reduced; subsequently, Ibn Saud made fundamental policy decisions such as the invitation of foreign oil companies on Saudi territory and regarding the modernisation of the country often without prior approval of or even consultation with the *ulama*. Nonetheless, even when they disagreed with Ibn Saud's

¹²⁷ For a detailed account of the rise and fall of the second Saudi state, see Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Books, 1998), chapters 6-8.

¹²⁸ Steinberg, "The Wahhabi Ulama," p. 16.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19. (emphasis in the original)

¹³⁰ The *Ikhwan* (brethren or brotherhood) were a movement of newly settled and religiously indoctrinated Bedouins who served Ibn Saud as a highly effective military force during the new state's rapid territorial expansion. However, following the conquest of the Hijaz, including the Holy sites in Mecca and Medina, in 1924/25, the *Ikhwan's* religious zeal became a liability for Ibn Saud. The *Ikhwan's* aggressive attempts to force their archconservative religious doctrines upon the more liberal local population threatened stability in the Hijaz. This, in turn, threatened the essential incomes from the *hajj* (pilgrimage). Ibn Saud, consequently, called back the *Ikhwan* to Najd. Further differences arose over *Ikhwan* attacks against Iraqi territory. *Ibid*, pp. 20-2. For *Ikhwan* attacks on Iraq, see Chapter 3. For a detailed account of the *Ikhwan*, see Joseph Kostiner, "On Instruments and Their Designers: The *Ikhwan* of Najd and the Emergence of the Saudi State," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (July 1985), pp. 298-323.

decision, the *ulama* supported him and provided his rule with religious legitimacy.¹³¹

In 1971, Saudi Arabia was ruled by King Faisal bin Abdulaziz, a son of Ibn Saud. With overwhelming support of the royal family and the entire *ulama*, Faisal had replaced his half-brother, Saud, as King in November 1964.¹³² Much like his father, Faisal soon established himself as the “undisputed master of the House of Saud.”¹³³ He reunited the powers of king and prime minister, decreed the Council of Minister’s sole responsibility to the king, and installed important allies in key governmental positions. He also waited four months before nominating his heir apparent and eventually appointed with his half-brother Khaled

“an amiable, low-key prince with useful connections with the Najdi tribes, bypassing Khaled’s senior, but tougher and irascible, full brother, Muhammed ibn Abd al-Aziz.”¹³⁴

In subsequent years, Faisal enlarged his power base *inter alia* by giving the former oppositional Free Princes supervised government posts and appointing technocrats with commoner background to high administrative positions.¹³⁵ Moreover, after the Six-Day War, the Egyptian-backed propaganda campaign by exiled former King Saud and his sons ended.¹³⁶

Virtually undisputed leadership within the Al Saud family was not King Faisal’s only power base; conversely, the support of the royal family was not sufficient to guarantee regime stability.

¹³¹ Steinberg, “The Wahhabi Ulama,” pp. 24-6. However, Ibn Saud postponed the introduction of automobiles, telegraph, and wireless communications until the *ulama* had given its approval. Tim Niblock, “Social Structure and the Development of the Saudi Arabian Political System,” in idem (ed.), *State, Society, and Economy in Saudi Arabia* (London: Croom Helm), pp. 75-105, p. 92.

In less essential matters, King Abdulaziz frequently consulted the *ulama* and accepted contradictory opinions. To this end, Ibn Saud held weekly *majalis* (sing. *majlis*; literally translated: “place of sitting”: public audiences held by the ruler) with the senior *ulama* and daily *majalis* with the *ulama*’s less senior members. Abir, “The Consolidation,” p. 153.

¹³² David Holden and Richard Johns, *House of Saud* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1981), p. 240.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 270.

¹³⁴ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 117.

¹³⁵ Only Prince Talal, the former leader of the Free Princes, was not given any government position. *Ibid*, p. 118.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*.

The *ulama*, led by the Al al-Sheikh family¹³⁷, continued to provide the Saudi leadership and its policies with religious legitimacy, most prominently through *fatawa* (sing. fatwa), religious decrees. It was in the vested interest of both the royal family and the *ulama* to preserve their historical alliance. However, the *ulama*'s policy influence declined further under Faisal's rule; although the King himself was both a pious man and, through his mother, directly related to the Al al-Sheikh. Key judicial positions, traditionally held by the *ulama*, were abolished or remained vacant, non-Sharia administrative tribunals were established, the authority of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice and its *mutaween* (the religious police) was curbed, and Faisal accelerated the Kingdom's modernisation despite the *ulama*'s frequent opposition.¹³⁸

The political influence of the *umara* that had been decreasing since 1930 declined even faster under King Faisal. This was mainly due to the strengthening of the central government, rapid Bedouin urbanisation, and the extension of governmental welfare services.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, tribesmen and leaders remained a source of support for the regime, as evidenced by the loyal tribal-based National Guard.¹⁴⁰

Already in 1962, as Prime Minister, Faisal had started a reform programme that was to change significantly Saudi society and economy. As a shortage of qualified manpower prevented economic development and modernisation, Faisal reformed the educational system. He increased massively the respective budget, promoted school education for women, and encouraged large numbers of Saudis to get higher education abroad. In subsequent years, university-graduates were encouraged to join the administration.¹⁴¹

In the summer of 1970, the First Five-Year Development Plan was inaugurated, which aimed at developing infrastructure, reducing dependence on crude oil exports, maintaining high economic growth rates, improving education and

¹³⁷ The Al al-Sheikh are the descendents of the Sheikh, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab.

¹³⁸ Abir, "The Consolidation," p. 153.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 156.

¹⁴⁰ Compare Gerd Nonneman, "Determinants and Patterns of Saudi Foreign Policy: 'Omnibalancing' and 'Relative Autonomy' in Multiple Environments," in Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman (eds.), *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp. 315-51, p. 320.

¹⁴¹ Abir, "The Consolidation," p. 161 and Mark Weston, *Prophets and Princes: Saudi Arabia from Muhammad to the Present* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), p. 195.

health services, and increasing the well-being of societal groups.¹⁴² Indeed, by the end of 1971, many infrastructural projects had been implemented: e.g. a first oil refinery, allowing for export of petrochemicals, a steel mill and a fertiliser plant, international and regional airports, highways, a desalination plant, power stations, hospitals, and other social institutions. Governmental subsidies encouraged the establishment of small businesses and construction companies. Medical care became free in 1967.¹⁴³ Due to a significant increase in oil revenues between 1970 and 1971, the Saudi regime was able to overcome the previous years' financial straits and finance the large-scale development programme.¹⁴⁴

Despite social and economic development and increased popular participation in the oil wealth, there was discontent in the Saudi society. Serious economic and religious discrimination caused resentment in the Shiite minority of the Eastern Province. The Hijazi population, too, was discriminated against in favour of Najdis in official appointment both in the administration and the military.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, Cordesman reports that "several major tribal groups, which traditionally had been hostile to the Saud family, seem to have been partly excluded from the nation's wealth."¹⁴⁶ Additionally, a growing number of higher (foreign) educated Saudis became discontent with the application of strict Wahhabi rules, governmental corruption, and the highly disproportionate distribution of wealth in favour of the ruling elite.¹⁴⁷ The rising proportion of expatriate workers displeased the *ulama*.¹⁴⁸ Lastly, between May and

¹⁴² Fouad Abdul-Salam Al-Farsy, "King Faisal and the First Five Year Development Plan," in Willard A. Beling (ed.), *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia* (London and Boulder, CO: Croom Helm and Westview, 1980), pp. 58-71, pp. 61f.

¹⁴³ Weston, *Prophets and Princes*, pp. 196f.

¹⁴⁴ Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, pp. 319f.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 270 and Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 140.

¹⁴⁶ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 140.

¹⁴⁷ Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 270.

¹⁴⁸ Weston indicates a 45% proportion of foreigners among urban workforce in 1968, of which the vast majority were unskilled labourers from Yemen, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Moreover, he reports a yearly influx of "tens of thousands of teachers, engineers, and technicians [...] from Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, the United States, Britain, and, after Nasser died in 1970, Egypt." Weston, *Prophets and Princes*, p. 197. There are no reliable population figures for 1971. A UN estimate put the Saudi population at roughly 8 million. *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 555. The IISS puts the Saudi population at 7.4 million. *The Military Balance: 1971-72*, p. 31. However, despite a positive growth rate in the meantime, a Saudi census published in late 1975 indicated a population of only just above 7 million. Two scholars from the University of Durham estimated the population in 1974 at 5.8 million. See Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 393.

September 1969 and again in 1970, the Saudi authorities conducted large-scale arrests of tribesmen, militaries (mainly in the air force), and Yemeni exiles that were accused of having planned coups against the regime.¹⁴⁹

Kuwait

In 1971, Kuwait was a hereditary emirate ruled by the Al Sabah family. Following independence a decade earlier, the power status of the Emir and the ruling family as a whole had been strengthened. In the light of aggressive Iraqi claims on Kuwait¹⁵⁰, the Kuwaiti population had “rall[ie]d around known leadership patterns.”¹⁵¹ Moreover, with the development of modern political institutions, members of the Al Sabah family formalised their influence by taking over key government positions.¹⁵² However, in order to guarantee regime stability, the leadership had to accommodate several societal groups. The Kuwaiti regime had to formulate its policy with respect to the interests of the extended royal family, the most influential tribal leaders and merchant families – the latter became increasingly involved in the government –, the *ulama*, and the senior military functionaries. Furthermore, the constitution of 1962 provided for the establishment of a popularly elected National Assembly¹⁵³, thus both granting limited democratic participation rights and establishing a platform for the communication of popular political will. However, the National Assembly turned out to be a double-edged sword for the regime. Due to the constitutional right of free speech, oppositional movements, such as the leftist Arab National Movement (ANM), were given the chance to call openly for extensive reform. Moreover, increased popular politicisation was paralleled by rising demands the regime was unable to meet. This led to a first significant constitutional crisis in 1965 and repeated cabinet reshuffling.¹⁵⁴ The National Assembly and the general popular politicisation also pressured the regime in the field of foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 138.

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed account, see Chapter 3.

¹⁵¹ Jill Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), p. 92.

¹⁵² Top level positions in the ministries of interior, information, defense, and foreign affairs have been virtually reserved for members of the Al Sabah family. *Ibid*, p. 93.

¹⁵³ The National Assembly had 50 members and was first elected in January 1963.

¹⁵⁴ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 165f., 169.

¹⁵⁵ For a detailed account, see Chapter 4.

A census conducted in April 1970 put the Kuwaiti population at nearly 739,000, of which roughly 53% were foreigners. The by far largest group among non-Kuwaiti citizens (amounting to 20% of the total population) was Jordanians (mostly Palestinians with Jordanian passports) most of whom had left their home in the context of the escalating Arab-Israeli conflict. The remaining expatriates were other Arabs, e.g. Iraqis and Egyptians, as well as Iranians, Indians, and Pakistanis.¹⁵⁶ Nearly 75% of Kuwait's labour force consisted of expatriates.¹⁵⁷

The significant size of the Palestinian minority and particularly the strong Palestinian presence in the Kuwaiti educational, media, and political sector affected the native Kuwaiti population's perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, Egyptian teachers had a significant influence on the prevalence of Arab nationalist ideology in Kuwait's society, a development that caused considerable concern among the Kuwaiti leadership.¹⁵⁹

In the early 1970s, the vast majority of Kuwaiti nationals were Sunni Muslims. Non-Kuwaiti Muslims, too, were largely followers of the Sunni sect. However, Kuwait has since the late 18th Century had a substantial Shiite minority that over time had increased markedly in size. The Kuwaiti Shiite community had increasingly developed a separate identity, not least due to "[d]iscrimination by and conflict with the politically, economically, and socially dominant Sunni community."¹⁶⁰ Exact figures on the size of Kuwait's Shiite minority in 1971 are not available. Nyrop et al. put the proportion of Sunni native Kuwaitis in the mid-1970s at "[w]ell over 90 percent."¹⁶¹

In order to guarantee regime stability, the Kuwaiti government redistributed large amounts of its oil revenues within the Kuwaiti society. In the 1960s, the Kuwaiti regime rapidly developed a public welfare system and also increased gradually the benefits to foreign citizens.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ *Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 436 and Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 127.

¹⁵⁷ Own calculations based on data provided by Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 127.

¹⁵⁸ For more details, see Chapter 4.

¹⁵⁹ Crystal, *Kuwait*, p. 85.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 76f. (quotation on page 77)

¹⁶¹ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 53.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 166, 170.

UAE

As a political entity, the UAE differed significantly from the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies. On December 2, 1971, the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, and Fujairah united to a federal state.¹⁶³ The UAE's provisional constitution provided for a separation of legislative and executive powers into federal and Emirate spheres of authority. The document enumerated the federal responsibilities, including foreign affairs, domestic security and national defence, nationality, education, and public health. The Federal Supreme Council, comprised of the rulers of the individual emirates, was installed as the highest federal authority, vested with both legislative and executive powers, such as the ratification of laws and decrees and the formulation of the union's general policy. The executive day-to-day work was undertaken by the Council of Ministers. The Union National Assembly, whose members represented the individual emirates, had a primarily consultative function. Moreover, the constitution provided for the establishment of a Union Supreme Court.¹⁶⁴

Within the UAE, Abu Dhabi and Dubai had a dominant position, a consequence of their wealth and population size. They were granted veto power in decisions on substantial matters in the Supreme Council and had a larger representation in the National Assembly. Moreover, the Supreme Council elected Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Zayid Al Nahyan as the first President of the Union and Dubai's Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum as his deputy. Furthermore, the most important cabinet positions were held by representatives of the two emirates.¹⁶⁵ According to Anthony, the unequal distribution of power among UAE emirates caused resentment among some rulers and was one factor behind Ras al-Khaimah's rejection to join the Union in December 1971.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Earlier attempts to include Bahrain and Qatar in the federation had failed. For more details on the UAE's formation process as well as Bahrain's and Qatar's opting out, see Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, pp. 336-70.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 375-8 and Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 277, 280.

¹⁶⁵ Sheikh Zayid was Commander-in-Chief of the Union Defence Force. Abu Dhabi also occupied the posts of ministers of foreign affairs and interior, while the sons of Sheikh Rashid held the posts of prime minister, minister of national defence, and deputy minister of industry, finance and economy. Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, p. 375 and Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 104f.

¹⁶⁶ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 105f. Compare Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, p. 369. Moreover, in the autumn of 1971, it looked like Ras al-Khaimah would join Abu Dhabi and Dubai as oil producing emirate. Hence, Ras al-Khaimah's ruler speculated that by entering the union after oil

Upon the UAE's foundation, relations among individual emirates were characterised by many conflicts, tracing back to historic family and tribal feuds as well as ongoing territorial disputes. With respect to the latter aspect, Anthony identifies a "leapfrog pattern" in intra-UAE relations according to which the individual emirates "had poor relations with their immediate neighbours and good relations with the Ruler just beyond."¹⁶⁷

Regarding their territorial, political, economic, and societal characteristics the individual UAE emirates showed similarities but also significant differences. They were all characterised by tribal indigenous societies ruled over by dynastic, authoritarian, paternalistic, personalised, benevolent regimes. Before taking decisions, the rulers consulted personal advisors and representatives of the most prominent interest groups. Moreover, the Emirs held daily *majalis*.¹⁶⁸

However, the UAE emirates displayed marked differences:

1. Territorial size: With above 67,000 square kilometres Abu Dhabi was by far the largest Emirate; the territory of Dubai, the runner-up, had less than 6% of Abu Dhabi's size.¹⁶⁹
2. Population size: In 1970, Dubai had 70,000 inhabitants, followed by Abu Dhabi (60,000), Sharjah (40,000), and Ras al-Khaimah (27,000); Umm al-Qaiwain had only 4,000 inhabitants.¹⁷⁰
3. Economic prosperity: Abu Dhabi (oil industry) and Dubai (trade, banking, and recently oil exports), had rapidly expanding economies. In contrast, the smaller Emirates suffered economic difficulties and depended on financial aid from Abu Dhabi and Dubai.¹⁷¹

reserves had been proven, he might be able to increase his power position. Iran's seizure of the two Tunb islands also played a role in Ras al-Khaimah's rejection to join the union in December 1971. The emirate eventually joined the UAE in February 1972. Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, p. 369 and Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 197. For more details on the island issue, see Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁷ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 109.

¹⁶⁸ Sheikh Rashid of Dubai preferred more informal meetings with citizens to the rather formal *majalis* held by other UAE rulers. *Ibid*, pp. 124, 155, 173, 192, 202, 205, and 212.

¹⁶⁹ Fujairah, the smallest Emirate, had a territory of roughly 260 square kilometres. Own calculations based on data provided by *ibid*, p. 106.

¹⁷⁰ Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, fn. 76, p. 476.

¹⁷¹ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 393f. and Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 134, 168, 190.

4. Expatriates: Abu Dhabi and Dubai's economic success was coupled with high numbers of expatriates. The vast majority of merchants and labourers in Dubai were expatriates. In 1968, estimates put the proportion of Iranians, Pakistanis, and Indians alone at up to 72% of Dubai's population. Moreover, Britons were influential predominantly in the oil (Abu Dhabi), security, and banking sector (Abu Dhabi and Dubai). In Sharjah, too, the largest part of the labour force and a sizeable proportion of merchants and businessmen were foreigners. In contrast, Ras al-Khaimah and particularly Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, and Fujairah had small foreigner communities.¹⁷²

5. Political bureaucracy: Following Sheikh Zayid's accession to power in 1966, Abu Dhabi had developed rapidly a modern government structure. In August 1971, Sheikh Zayid established a sixteen-member Council of Ministers and announced the introduction of a Consultative Assembly.¹⁷³ In contrast, Sheikh Rashid of Dubai intentionally "held the number of administrative bodies and regulatory agencies to a minimum" in order to "maintain[...] the free enterprise nature of [Dubai's] economic system."¹⁷⁴ Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, and Fujairah had little modern bureaucracy and were characterised by a virtual "one-man rule."¹⁷⁵

6. Regime stability: Most UAE emirates featured great domestic stability. Although he had ousted his brother Shakhbut in 1966, Sheikh Zayid's rule was not seriously threatened by intrafamily rivalry. Despite the relatively small size of the Al Nahyan family, the leadership managed to guarantee regime stability by preserving stable relations with the most prominent local tribal leaders, merchants, and commoner families, *inter alia* through intermarriage. Moreover, the Omani Dhofar rebellion motivated Sheikh Zayid to reinvest large portions of oil revenues into welfare and infrastructure development. Finally, the large ADDF also

¹⁷² Partially own calculations based on data provided by Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 136f., 140, 159, 161, 163, 181, 183, 197f., 209.

¹⁷³ Sheikh Zayid had developed departments and ministries in such fields as defence, police, finances, petroleum, and justice. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 287f.

¹⁷⁴ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 155. Compare Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 290.

¹⁷⁵ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 294. Compare Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 192.

contributed to regime security.¹⁷⁶ Due to intrafamily stability among the Al Maktoum, a very fast economic growth, a high standard of living, the exceptional popularity of Sheikh Rashid, and the continued British presence, Dubai's regime enjoyed great stability. The small Emirates of Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, and Fujairah boasted a long history of internal stability, primarily based on a homogenous population and the acceptance of the rulers. Less stable were the regimes in Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah.¹⁷⁷ Sheikh Khalid Al Qassimi's partial abandonment of sovereignty over the island of Abu Musa to Iran in November 1971¹⁷⁸ prompted popular disaffection and, in January 1972, the Emir's assassination by his ousted predecessor, Saqr bin Sultan. Most instable was Ras al-Khaimah's regime, due to traditional intrafamily rivalry and a small but visible group of leftist and Arab nationalist dissidents.¹⁷⁹

Bahrain

When Bahrain gained independence¹⁸⁰ on August 14, 1971, the Emirate had already been ruled by the Al Khalifa family for 144 years.¹⁸¹ However, since the 1950s, the legitimacy of both the hereditary nature of the government and Bahrain's power structure had been challenged. The first significant popular opposition and calls for far-reaching political reforms arose in 1954, when both Sunni and Shiite local leaders organised demonstrations and even a general strike. Beside general popular discontent about the state of the health and education system, the sectarian discrimination by the Sunni dominated courts and police forces caused grief among Bahraini Shiites. The ruler's appointment of advisors for the reduction of governmental anti-Shiite discrimination, a general Advisory Council, and the introduction of municipal councils as well as an Educational and Health Council, both partially elected, fell considerably short of the popular expectations. During the Suez crisis of 1956, the Bahraini regime

¹⁷⁶ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 144f. and Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 288f.

¹⁷⁷ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 167f., 212.

¹⁷⁸ For more details, see Chapter 3.

¹⁷⁹ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 186, 202.

¹⁸⁰ In 1880, Bahrain had signed an Exclusive Agreement with the United Kingdom "that bound [the Gulf state] into exclusive political relations with, and ceded control of their external affairs to, the British Government." James Onley, "Britain's Informal Empire in the Gulf, 1820-1971," *Journal of Social Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 87 (Fall 2005), pp. 29-45, p. 32. The treaty was supplemented by another agreement concluded in 1892. *Ibid*, p. 35.

¹⁸¹ During the first two decades of the 19th Century, Bahrain had been temporarily under Omani and Saudi rule.

was faced with significant popular nationalist protests, calls for political democratisation, and even threats to Sheikh Isa bin Khalifa's life. Domestic order was reinstated only after the proclamation of a state of emergency and British military intervention. Due to imprisonments and exiles of opposition leaders as well as governmental reforms in the labour sector, the regime managed to restore temporarily domestic stability.¹⁸²

Nonetheless, popular disaffection with the political status quo persisted. In the spring of 1965, fear of job cuts in the oil companies prompted another extended strike, accompanied by calls for the overthrow of the regime. Again, British forces had to restore domestic order. The strikes of 1956, 1965, and another one in 1968 were all heavily influenced by nationalist and pan-Arab ideology among the Bahraini labour force. Economic grievances increased both Sunni and Shiite popular sympathies for the ANM, the socialist Baath party, and the Marxist PFLOAG.¹⁸³

Encapsulating the mood in the Bahraini population in the decade before independence, Anthony states:

“[A] growing number of Bahraynis began to speak out against the closed nature of the political system. In particular, they complained about the ban on political parties, the stringent regulation of freedom of speech, assembly and press, the harassment of would-be labor organizers by the government, the continuation of the state of emergency [...] and an overall political climate that forced reform groups to maintain their headquarters outside the [Bahraini] islands.”¹⁸⁴

By 1971, the situation had not changed significantly. Popular discontent was still alive and could not be eliminated by either the regime's promises for gradual reforms or the fact that half of the twelve members the Ruler appointed to the newly established Council of Ministers were commoners.¹⁸⁵ The regime's reluctance to establish a parliament was mainly based in the fear that

¹⁸² Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 45-8.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 63-6; Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 232f.; and *The Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 205. PFLOAG stands for Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf. For more details, see section on Oman below.

¹⁸⁴ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 48.

¹⁸⁵ The Council of Ministers had been established in January 1970 under the name Council of State. It was the first high-level government body without a British member. Following independence, the body functioned as a cabinet. *Ibid*, pp. 48f.; Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 225; and *The Middle East and North Africa 1973-74*, p. 205.

“such a body might unleash forces that, as in nearby Kuwait, would spend much of their energies not on legislative matters but on criticizing the government and, indirectly, the ruling family.”¹⁸⁶

According to a census conducted in 1971, Bahrain had a population of about 216,000; roughly 21% were foreigners, mainly of Saudi, Omani, Iranian, Indian, and Pakistani origin.¹⁸⁷ Bahrain had the largest Shiite community among Arab Gulf monarchies; it can be assumed that in 1971 Shiites were in a slight majority. The Al Khalifa, Bahrain’s commercial elite, and tribes allied with the ruling family adhered to different schools of the Sunni sect. In contrast, the majority of the working class and small farmers were Shiites. As there were also Sunnis in the lower societal class, the claim of a clear-cut division into a rich, politically dominant Sunni minority and a poor, discriminated Shiite majority would be incorrect. There was both a history of anti-Shiite governmental discrimination and sectarian conflict within the working class and intermittent cooperation among Sunnis and Shiites in Bahrain’s nationalist movement.¹⁸⁸

Qatar

When Qatar reached independence in September 1971, the Emirate was ruled by Sheikh Ahmad, the head of the Al Thani family. In April 1970, earlier than any other lower Gulf state, Qatar had adopted a temporary constitution that formalised the Emir’s political dominance. The document enumerated the ruler’s wide-ranging powers and granted him the privilege to expand his authorities by personal decree. The constitution also provided for the establishment of a partially elected Advisory Council. However, Sheikh Ahmad did not implement this provision.¹⁸⁹

Qatar’s ruling family was particularly powerful, not least due to its extensive size.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, both the national security force, a British-officered, 2,200-men mercenary troop that served “as a kind of praetorian guard”¹⁹¹, and the internal police protected the ruling family. In addition, the Al Thani subsidised Bedouin tribes to secure their loyalty and support in time of need. Thousands of

¹⁸⁶ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 54f.

¹⁸⁷ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 210.

¹⁸⁸ Compare Lawson, *Bahrain*, pp. 3, 8, 61-4 and Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 52, 232.

¹⁸⁹ See Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 258-60.

¹⁹⁰ In the mid-1970s, estimates of the number of Al Thani family members ranged up to 20,000. Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 77.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

unarmed retainers also contributed to regime stability.¹⁹² Lastly, the Qatari regime sought to stabilise its rule by popular distribution of oil revenues; the regime *inter alia* established modern and cost-free education and health care systems. However, in 1971, both Sheikh Ahmad and the ruling family reportedly kept up to half of the country's oil revenues for themselves.¹⁹³

Despite some popular calls for reform and restriction of the ruler's power, the main threat to Sheikh Ahmad's rule came from within the ruling family. In the end, intra-family feuds led to the Emir's ousting in February 1972.¹⁹⁴

According to a census conducted in 1970, Qatar had a total population of about 111,000, of which 66,000 were foreigners. Among expatriates, only roughly 35% were Arabs, including a sizeable Palestinian community, while the rest originated mainly from Iran, Pakistan, and India. The reason for the consistent rise in immigration was Qatar's large demand for skilled and unskilled labour.¹⁹⁵ While the most important local merchants were Qatari citizens, the vast majority of medium and small scale merchants were expatriates, many of them Iranians. Although less numerous, Arab expatriates had considerable influence on the society, as the majority of secondary school teachers were Egyptians and many Palestinians worked in the local media sector.¹⁹⁶ This naturally affected the population's view on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the prevalence of Arab nationalist ideology in Qatar's society. The numerically small group of British and other Western expatriates filled key positions in the fields of defence, security, oil and other industries, and banking.¹⁹⁷

Native Qataris traditionally adhered to the Sunni branch of Islam. Qatar was the only Arab Gulf monarchy other than Saudi Arabia, in which a considerable part of both the ruling family and the native population followed the conservative Wahhabi teachings. The Qatari *ulama* had important influence on the educational and judicial systems and was successful in retarding governmental policies towards societal liberalisation. Large-scale immigration following the

¹⁹² Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 85f.

¹⁹³ Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 240, 256.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 262 and Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 86.

¹⁹⁵ Al-Kobaisi, *Development*, pp. 5-7 and Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 83-5.

¹⁹⁶ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 80f.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 79f.

discovery of oil caused an increase in Qatar's previously small Shiite community.¹⁹⁸

Oman

In 1971, Oman was both in an early phase of a profound political reform process and the only Arab Gulf monarchy caught in a civil war.

When on July, 23 1970, Sultan Said bin Taymur, who had ruled since 1932, was ousted by his 28-year old son Qaboos, Oman was by far the most underdeveloped and restrictively governed state among Arab Gulf monarchies. Sultan Said had followed a very rigid austerity policy; he had denied to share with his bitterly poor people both his quite considerable personal wealth, mainly based on successful speculative transactions in Africa, and oil exploration revenues. For fear of popular opposition, the Sultan prevented any modernisation of his country: he minimised his people's exposure to foreign values and ideas by rigid travel restrictions, the prohibition of virtually any foreign goods, and the withholding of a modern education system. Moreover, the Omani people were denied any substantial health care infrastructure, electricity, or running water. Even after commercial oil production started in 1967 and state revenues increased significantly, Sultan Said was reluctant to invest in the development of infrastructure. These factors, as well as the Sultan's strong reliance on British protection, had sparked two armed rebellions since the mid-1950s.¹⁹⁹

In 1954, following the death of Imam Muhammad bin Abdullah Al Khalili, a separatist rebellion rose up in Western Oman. In 1920, the Treaty of Sib had temporarily settled traditional conflict between the Sultans of the Al Bu Said dynasty in Muscat and the popularly elected Imams based in the Western Omani town of Nizwa.²⁰⁰ Parties involved reached a compromise that granted

¹⁹⁸ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 81f., 89.

¹⁹⁹ Marc Valeri, *Oman: Politics and Society in the Qaboos State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 66-8.

²⁰⁰ Historically, the popularly elected Imamate was Oman's dominant political institution. However, in 1786, Imam Ahmad bin Said, the founder of the Al Bu Said dynasty, moved from Nizwa to Rustaq in northern Oman. He subsequently took the title of Sultan and established a hereditary rule. This provoked opposition from the conservative tribes in Western Oman who, consequently, elected another Imam. From that time on, there was, at most times, both an Imam of Oman and a Sultan of Muscat and Oman. The 1910s saw a large-scale tribal rebellion against the Sultan, which was settled by the above-mentioned Treaty of Sib. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 53, 344.

the Imam both spiritual and temporary personal authority over the religiously conservative Western Omani tribes, while the Sultan maintained sovereignty over the entire country. In the early 1950s, Sultan Said bin Taymur's refusal to share oil concession revenues with the *de facto* autonomous tribal leaders in the Imamate's territory intensified the latter's traditional separatist ambitions. In 1954, the new Imam, Ghalib bin Ali Al Hinai, became the leader of a Saudi-Egyptian backed rebellion against the Sultan and, through his brother, applied for membership in the Arab League. With massive British support, the Sultan's armed forces managed to defeat the rebellion in 1959; Imam Ghalib went into Saudi exile. However, rebel terrorist activities continued in the early 1960s as did Saudi and other Arab political support for the Imam.²⁰¹

Meanwhile, a popular rebellion started in Dhofar, where the population suffered most under Sultan Said's restrictive policies. Popular opposition was sparked in the late 1950s when despite a grave economic crisis the Sultan continued to deny the Dhofaris any financial aid and even imposed a trade blockade when they failed to pay taxes on time. Around the same time, many Dhofaris came in contact with radical Arab Nationalist ideology, through their loose alignment with neighbouring South Yemeni tribes and during work stays abroad.²⁰² The early 1960s saw then the gradual development of "a network of paramilitary and revolutionary cells"²⁰³ and the beginning of terrorist activities against oil installations and the Sultan's Armed Forces. Around that time the rebels founded the Arab nationalist Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF). On the occasion of the first DLF congress in June 1965, the rebels proclaimed a full-scale revolution.²⁰⁴

Over the next year, with South Yemeni and Egyptian support, the rebels managed to gain control over substantial parts of Dhofar and even made an attempt to assassinate the Sultan in April 1966. In 1968, the rebel movement underwent a significant ideological change and the civil war was increasingly

²⁰¹ Eventually, the Imamate case was brought before the United Nations and was regularly discussed in the UN General Assembly until Oman's admission to the international organisation in October 1971. Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, pp. 344-6; Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, pp. 13-21, 25; and Cordesman, *The Gulf*, pp. 428-31.

²⁰² Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, pp. 26f.; Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 431; and Valeri, *Oman*, p. 59.

²⁰³ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 431.

²⁰⁴ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, pp. 26f. and Valeri, *Oman*, p. 59.

internationalised. Following the British withdrawal from Aden, radical Marxist-Leninist elements were strengthened in South Yemen and within the DLF. Consequently, in September 1968, the DLF changed its name into the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG); the social revolution of the entire Arabian Peninsula had replaced independence of Dhofar as the organisation's ultimate goal. With the conclusion of Egypt's support after the 1967 Six-Day War, the newly established People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), the People's Republic of China – later replaced by the Soviet Union –, Baathist Iraq, and leftist Palestinian movements became the PFLOAG's main supporters. From then on, the PDRY that increasingly took over control of the PFLOAG served as safe haven and staging ground for the rebels. By early 1970, the PFLOAG had made significant advances and, in June, the newly-founded National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (NDFLOAG), launched attacks in northern Oman.²⁰⁵

Despite rebel advancements, Sultan Said rejected any compromise. He made no efforts to win back the more moderate rebels, refused all reforms, began to imprison and exile critics among his traditional allies, and, afraid of a military coup, refused British calls for the expansion of the SAF. Under these circumstances, the Sultan was ousted by his son Qaboos.²⁰⁶

The new Sultan quickly initialised a far-reaching reform programme:

“Qabus immediately began to share Oman's oil wealth, first with the tribal leaders and the ruling elites in the coastal cities and then with the people of Oman. He initiated a broad program of funding medical, educational, water, and transport projects. This ‘pacification’ program was combined with an offer of sweeping pardons to the Dhofar rebels and other opponents of the former sultan.”²⁰⁷

Qaboos' sign of goodwill soon showed significant effects on the moderate rebels that were suffering under the brutal treatment of the South Yemeni PFLOAG leaders. From mid-September onwards, a large number of Dhofari tribesmen and leaders sided with Qaboos and fought against the PFLOAG in

²⁰⁵ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, pp. 27f.; Cordesman, *The Gulf*, pp. 432, 435; and Valeri, *Oman*, pp. 59-61.

²⁰⁶ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 433.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 434.

tribal units (*firqats*).²⁰⁸ Moreover, Qaboos invested heavily in the expansion of the armed forces by allocating roughly half of the 1971 budget for military expenditures.²⁰⁹ In the autumn of 1971, meanwhile receiving financial and military aid from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Jordan, the SAF had put the rebels on the defensive.²¹⁰

Sultan Qaboos also began to develop a modern government bureaucracy and included tribal leaders and the merchant elite in the political system. In an intermediate period from September 1970 to December 1971, Oman had *de facto* two parallel regimes: Qaboos maintained full authority over foreign affairs, defence, finances, and the Dhofar governorate while Prime Minister Sayyid Tariq, who had been installed by Qaboos' foreign advisors, "began forming a government with ministries of health, education, interior, justice, information, social services and labor, and economy."²¹¹ After Tariq's resignation, Qaboos established a new government in January 1972.²¹²

In 1971, Oman had a population of roughly 750,000. The majority were Muslims of the Ibadhi denomination. Roughly 25% of the population was Sunni, including all Omani Dhofaris. Moreover, Oman had a small Shiite minority and some Hindus among its merchant class.²¹³

2.4 The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1971: Foreign Policy Interests

In the light of what has been shown above, the Arab Gulf monarchies formulated their foreign policies in such a way as to realise two main objectives: external security and regime stability. The six states' military capabilities were insufficient to guarantee security against potential aggressors in their subregional and regional environment. Hence, they sought to balance their military weakness by means of (1) stable relations and dynamic alliances with

²⁰⁸ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 435.

²⁰⁹ J. E. Peterson, "Guerilla Warfare and Ideological Confrontation in the Arabian Peninsula: The Rebellion in Dhofar," *World Affairs*, Vol. 139, No. 4 (Spring 1977) pp. 278-95, p. 282.

²¹⁰ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 435.

²¹¹ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 35.

²¹² See *ibid*, p. 36.

²¹³ *The Middle East and North Africa 1971-72*, p. 507; Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 53; and Valeri, *Oman*, p. 58.

each other as well as with subregional, regional, and supraregional powers²¹⁴; (2) playing off potential aggressors against each other; and (3) using their growing economic and financial capabilities as alternative source of material power. All Arab Gulf monarchies had a vested interest in preserving a stable balance of power in the Gulf and in the greater Middle East and to prevent the emergence of a subregional or regional hegemon.

While the historic memory of fatal overextension prompted a pragmatic Saudi foreign policy, the Kingdom still perceived itself as being entitled to dominance on the Arabian Peninsula.²¹⁵ This was at times cause for concern among the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies; while Saudi Arabia was a source of economic and political support for some (e.g. Bahrain)²¹⁶, the Kingdom refused to recognise the UAE over the Buraimi conflict.²¹⁷

To guarantee regime stability, the Arab Gulf monarchies needed to implement the basic interests of both the elites and the population. As the case of Oman clearly demonstrated, the provision of human development – e.g. housing, education, health care, a welfare system, electricity, physical infrastructure – was necessary to prevent popular uprisings against the regime. To finance such development, particularly with significant population growth rates, the regimes were heavily reliant on steady economic growth that in turn largely depended on oil-product export revenues.²¹⁸ Hence, continuous growth of such revenues became an essential policy objective.

In formulating their foreign policy, the regimes also needed to respect the non-material interests of their people and traditional power bases. In this regard, expectations arising from the supranational concepts of Muslim and Arab identity entrenched in both the societies and influential interest groups (such as the *ulama*) were of particular significance; although to varying degrees between individual states. As chapter 4 will show, this was particularly palpable in context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially after 1967. However, the regimes'

²¹⁴ The newly independent Arab Gulf monarchies' swift accession to the Arab League and the United Nations are to be seen in this context.

²¹⁵ Compare Nonneman, "Determinants and Patterns," p. 339.

²¹⁶ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 68.

²¹⁷ For an analysis of UAE-Saudi relations from 1971-1983, see Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, chapter 6.

²¹⁸ An exception was the Emirate of Dubai, which featured a mainly trade-based economy. In Dubai's case, steadily increasing foreign trade volumes were of great importance.

formulation of foreign policy partially along Pan-Islamic and Pan-Arab lines was not only a pragmatic response to popular and interest group pressure. The concepts of Arab and Islamic solidarity also rated high in the minds of many among the Arab Gulf monarchies' senior decision-makers; a paramount example was the high importance Saudi King Faisal ascribed to the recovery of Muslim control over the Holy Sites in Jerusalem. The granting of large-scale financial aid to Arab and Islamic countries, too, was based on strategic and normative considerations.²¹⁹

A factor that weighed particularly heavy in Saudi foreign policy interests and influenced greatly the Kingdom's policy was anti-Communist ideology. To a lesser degree, this was also true for the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies; even for Kuwait that for strategic reasons maintained relations with the USSR.

On a regular basis, the Arab Gulf monarchies faced the dilemma that their foreign policy interests called for contradictory actions. A prominent example was the Saudi-U.S. relationship that often simultaneously protected and endangered Saudi internal stability and external security. The Arab Gulf monarchies reacted to this challenge by applying an omnibalancing strategy: they dynamically adjusted their policies in such a way as to guarantee all their foreign and domestic policy interests.

2.5 The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1971: Non-Material Capabilities and Weaknesses

As Assiri notes, "the phenomenon of national identity and patriotism is a recent one in Arabia."²²⁰ Ethnic, religious, sectarian, and tribal identities have a much longer history on the Arabian Peninsula and in 1971 were entrenched deeper in people's minds. These non-national identities had the potential to create dangers to the stability of the Arab Gulf monarchies' regimes. Citizens disenchanted with their living conditions, particularly when victimised by state discrimination, identified less with the state and increasingly with their tribal, regional, sectarian, or larger Arab background. This gave outside actors the possibility to intervene in domestic dynamics by instrumentalising transnational and conflicting identities. Both Nasser and the Iraqi Baath party attempted to

²¹⁹ Compare Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 9-11.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 12.

incite revolts against the monarchical regimes by spreading radical versions of Arab nationalist ideology. The discrimination of Shiite minorities in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait caused the gradual development of parallel societies that identified themselves with their sectarian affiliation rather than their citizenship. This later caused parts of discriminated Shiites in the Arab Gulf monarchies to identify with the Iranian revolution and revolt against their regimes. Iraq also made (unsuccessful) attempts to incite revolt against the Saudi regime by bribing and arming Saudi tribes.²²¹

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was able to draw significant power from the transnationality of Islamic identity. As the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina the Kingdom had a prominent position within the Islamic World. This granted the Saudi regime significant soft power.

2.6 Overview of Key Domestic and Environmental Changes, 1971-1990

The previous sections identified the preservation of external security and regime stability as the Arab Gulf monarchies' main policy interests in 1971. Moreover, I gave evidence that at that time the six states had very limited military power, a disadvantage that was partially compensated by economic and financial capabilities, the forging of alliances among each other and with third states, and the playing off of potential aggressors against one another. On the other hand, I showed the existence of substate and transboundary identities rivalling national identities as both a potential threat for domestic stability and a channel of external influence on the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic affairs. I further argued that in order to guarantee regime stability, the Arab Gulf monarchies needed to implement the basic interests (including foreign policy objectives) of both their elites and populations. Faced with the challenge that their various domestic and foreign policy interests called regularly for contradictory actions, the Arab Gulf monarchies applied an omnibalancing strategy with the intention to realise all their objectives. These basic determinants as well as the other fundamental foreign policy interests introduced above stayed the same during the entire period under review.

²²¹ For more details, see Chapter 3.

Within the scope of this dissertation it is impossible to trace in detail the domestic political, societal, economic, financial, and military developments in the Arab Gulf monarchies from 1971 to 1990. However, in order to fathom continuity and change in the six states' foreign policies, it is crucial to highlight several key events and developments in national and international affairs that had major influence on public and regime interests, the options for the realisation of these interests, and eventually the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy formulation.

During the first years of the timeframe under review, three developments had positive effects on the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic stability and external security. At the onset of the investigation period, Oman's domestic stability was greatly challenged by the Dhofar War. However, over the course of the following years, with British, Iranian, Jordanian, and Saudi support, Sultan Qaboos' forces managed to defeat the Dhofar rebels. In December 1975, the Sultan officially declared the end of the rebellion; four months later, the last fighting seized. Henceforth, the Omani regime was less preoccupied with domestic developments and engaged in a more active foreign policy. The end of the Dhofar War also allowed for a reshaping of bilateral relations with Iraq and the PDRY.

Two and a half years earlier, the 1973 October War had served as a catalyst for a development in consequence of which the Arab Gulf monarchies' economic and political power increased considerably. This had both positive effects on medium- and long-term regime stability in the six states and, particularly in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, allowed for greater foreign policy influence on the regional level. The latter aspect became especially palpable with respect to the exertion of influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the incipient peace process.

When the United States granted Israel massive support during the October War, the Arab Gulf monarchies together with other Arab oil exporting states applied the oil weapon: they reduced their production quotas and issued an embargo against the United States (and several other states). The oil production reduction combined with significant market psychological effects provoked a quadrupling of oil prices within a matter of three months. However,

the 1973/74 oil crisis was only one element in a development that turned the Arab Gulf monarchies, less so Bahrain and Oman, into very wealthy rentier states with considerably increased economic power in international relations.²²²

The revolution in the oil market had already begun a few years earlier. In 1971, the Arab Gulf monarchies' profit share in oil exports had been increased from 50% to 55%. In addition, the oil exporting Gulf states (including Iran and Iraq) had obtained the oil companies' agreement to raise oil prices on an annual basis (prices increased from below \$2 per barrel in early 1970 to \$2.90 in April 1973). A few days before the application of the oil weapon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, together with Iran and Iraq, unilaterally increased the price of their oil by 70%; the first time that producer governments dictated oil prices.²²³ Another symptom of change in the oil market was the Arab Gulf monarchies' gradual takeover of control over the companies producing their oil. In 1974, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and Qatar secured a 60% share of their oil concessionaires. A year later, Kuwait became the first Arab Gulf monarchy to nationalise completely its oil industry (nationalisation of Aminoil, which produced oil in the Kuwaiti-Saudi neutral zone, followed in 1977).²²⁴ The takeover of greater control over their oil industries allowed the Arab Gulf monarchies to use oil production and export quotas more effectively as a political instrument.

The massively increased oil revenues made it possible for the Arab Gulf monarchies to develop into rentier states that provide far-reaching services to their populations free of charge; this contributed to domestic and regime stability.

The Arab Gulf monarchies also increased their military potential by investing large amounts in arms procurements (this was particularly true for Saudi Arabia); however, as Iran and Iraq also profited from high oil revenues and

²²² Saudi Arabia's oil revenues jumped from \$4.3 billion in 1973 to \$22.6 billion in 1974, Kuwait's revenues from \$1.7 billion (1973) to \$6.5 billion (1974), and the UAE's revenues from \$0.9 billion (1973) to \$5.5 billion (1974). Gause, *International Relations*, p. 28.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27f.

²²⁴ A first step in this direction had been taken in early 1973, when Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi had ratified the General Agreement on Participation, which established a 25% government share in the concessionaire companies. *The Middle East and North Africa 1980-81*, 27th ed. (London: Europa Publications, 1980), pp. 96f., 99-101.

developed their already superior militaries as well, the Arab Gulf monarchies' relative military power did not increase significantly.²²⁵

The Algiers Accord, reached between Iran and Iraq at the March 1975 OPEC meeting, was the most significant shift in the international relations of the Gulf since the British withdrawal from the subregion in 1971. The Iranian-Iraqi agreement alleviated many of the tensions between Iran and Iraq as well as Iraq and the Arab Gulf monarchies. For a few years, despite their partially contradictory objectives, all littoral states of the Gulf refrained to the largest extent from aggressive rhetoric and behaviour in relations to one another and engaged in limited multilateral cooperation.

Between the autumn of 1978 and the autumn of 1980 a series of developments in the Gulf and beyond had lasting effects on the subregional and regional political status quo and consequently on the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic and external security situation. The 1978 Camp David Accords and the subsequent Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty prompted Egypt's political exile from the Arab fold. This development redefined the inter-Arab balance of power to the disadvantage of the Arab Gulf monarchies. The latter found themselves in a dilemma between their interests regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, the necessity to preserve their strategic relations with the United States, and their desire to both maintain a stable and moderate balance of power in the Arab world and prevent becoming the target of radical Arab factions. The developments following Egypt's separate peace with Israel motivated Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies to develop the first holistic Arab peace plan in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In 1979, the overthrow of the Iranian monarchy and its succession by a Shiite Islamic revolutionary regime under Ayatollah Khomeini radically altered international relations in the Gulf. Subsequently, the Arab Gulf monarchies were faced with an incalculable, aggressive, and subversive adversary that, to different degrees, challenged them ideologically, religiously, and militarily. After initial attempts to maintain solid relations with Tehran, the Arab Gulf

²²⁵ For a detailed analysis of the Gulf states' military development between 1971 and 1984, see Cordesman, *Gulf States*. For later years, see the annually published issues of "The Military Balance," published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

monarchies, to different degrees, opted for a rapprochement with Iraq, the lesser of two evils.

In October 1980, after months of escalating bilateral tensions, Iraq invaded revolutionary Iran. Consequently, the Arab Gulf monarchies were put in the difficult situation to take a stand in the military conflict, and the northern Gulf and later the subregion's economically crucial waterways were turned into war theatres. The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War also served as a catalyst for the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). During the eight-year-long war, the Arab Gulf monarchies, more than before, had to formulate their policies towards each of the conflict parties with particular regard to the effect it would have on the relations with the other. It soon became the Arab Gulf monarchies' vital interest to bring about an end to the military conflict between their two militarily very powerful neighbour states.

In December 1979, another development in their broader geographic vicinity greatly concerned the Arab Gulf monarchies. The Soviet Union's military intervention in the Afghan civil war gave a new impetus to the global Cold War and caused concern about both Soviet advances into the Gulf and an escalation of the superpower contestation in the Arab Gulf monarchies' immediate environment.

Towards the end of the period under review, two further exogenous developments had great effect on the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign relations with Iran and Iraq and their position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first Intifada, a large-scale uprising of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation, which began in December 1987, and the violent Israeli reaction infuriated the populations and regimes of the Arab Gulf monarchies and motivated the regimes to both refocus their attention on the Arab-Israeli conflict and take a more pronounced pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli stance than in the preceding years. In this context, particularly Oman's policy underwent significant change.

Finally, the end of the Iran-Iraq War in August 1988 induced a new profound change in the international relations of the Gulf. Following the ceasefire, Iranian foreign policy towards the Arab Gulf monarchies underwent a shift towards a more pragmatic stance; a development that accelerated after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989. In contrast, Iraq took an increasingly

aggressive attitude towards the Arab Gulf monarchies, particularly Kuwait and the UAE. By the early summer of 1990, Iraq had once again become a significant threat to the security of at least some Arab Gulf monarchies.

The following two chapters deal in detail with two pivotal foreign policy case studies: the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq (chapter 3) and the six states' position in the Arab-Israeli conflict (chapter 4).

3. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ARAB GULF MONARCHIES WITH IRAN AND IRAQ, 1971-1990

During the timeframe under review all six Arab Gulf monarchies formulated their policies towards Iran and Iraq in such a way as to realise four main objectives: external security and territorial integrity; domestic and regime stability; economic prosperity; and the attainment of a stable subregional balance of power without the emergence of Iran or Iraq as Gulf hegemon. In the case of Saudi Arabia, two additional objectives have to be added to the list: the protection of its sphere of influence on the Arabian Peninsula and the preservation of its role as the leader of the Muslim world.

Despite the fact that their basic policy objectives were and remained identical, the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual bilateral relations with Iran and Iraq showed both significant change over time and marked differences in comparison to one another. This was due to the fact that several factors differed from one state to another or underwent change over time. At any given time the individual constellation of these factors defined the basis for bilateral relations. These factors were: geostrategic position, military strength, the existence of military aggression, territorial claims, subversive activities, or ideological challenging by either Iran or Iraq, the national and sectarian composition and ideological orientation of the population, and economic orientation.

As during the entire period under review, Iran and Iraq were in conflict with each other – ranging from uneasy *détente* to open warfare –, the Arab Gulf monarchies had to formulate their policies to each of the two states with regard to the effect it would have on the relations with the other. In this context, the degree of vulnerability to retaliations was an important decision criterion.

In this chapter I will highlight that over the largest part of the period under review the Arab Gulf monarchies managed to offset threats to their basic interests emanating from Iran and Iraq by alternately appeasing and balancing the source of the threat. The only significant failure to do so occurred in the summer of 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. However, in this particular case, the question arises as to whether it had been within the limits of Kuwait's capabilities to prevent the invasion.

In addition, this chapter will reveal that the Arab Gulf monarchies cooperated to a significant degree in dealing with Iranian and Iraqi threats to their interests; this cooperation grew over time as threats intensified.

From Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf to the Iranian Revolution the individual Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq showed increasing convergence. This changed after the upheavals in Iran and particularly following the initial phase of the Iran-Iraq War when the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council were increasingly divided into a neutral and a pro-Iraqi camp. At times, this discrepancy was cause for dispute; however, it also allowed the Arab Gulf monarchies as a group a greater radius of operation. In the post-war phase, Saudi-Iranian relations greatly diverged from the other Arab Gulf monarchies' ties with Tehran; at the same time, the GCC states' relations with Iraq varied between cautious rapprochement, appeasement, and conflict escalation.

The timeframe under review can be divided into four distinct periods: from Britain's withdrawal in 1971 to the Algiers Accord in 1975; from the Algiers Accord to the 1979 Iranian Revolution; from the Iranian Revolution to the end of the Iran-Iraq War in August 1988; and finally from late summer 1988 to the eve of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990.

3.1 The Pre-1971 Era

Before the British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, only Saudi Arabia and Kuwait maintained regular diplomatic relations with states other than the United Kingdom. Bahrain, Qatar, and the seven Trucial states that later formed the UAE were still British protectorates and as such prohibited from entering into diplomatic relations with third states. In the case of Oman, *de jure* not a protectorate, it was by choice of Sultan Said bin Taimur rather than due to treaty obligation that the country maintained little political relations with states other than the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, particularly in the case of the British Gulf protectorates economic, societal, and sub-diplomatic political interaction existed with neighbour states such as Iran and Iraq. This was particularly true for the time after Britain's decision to leave the Gulf.

Saudi Arabia's Relations with Iran in the Pre-1971 Era

Diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran go back to before the foundation of the Saudi Kingdom. In 1929, the Kingdom of Najd and Hijaz signed a Treaty of Friendship with Iran. Reportedly, King Abdulaziz Al Saud, the later founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, had aimed for more than a non-aggression pact. Abdulaziz is said to have proposed Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran the conclusion of a mutual defence treaty, an offer that the Shah declined. In May 1932, Prince (later King) Faisal bin Abdulaziz paid an extended visit to Iran, marking the first high-ranking diplomatic visit in bilateral relations between Riyadh and Tehran. Up until the Allied occupation of Iran in 1941, the two states maintained regular, non-conflictual diplomatic relations.²²⁶

The execution of an Iranian pilgrim found guilty of desecrating the Kaaba during the *hajj* in December 1943, then prompted a diplomatic crisis between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The bilateral conflict escalated until, in March 1944, Tehran abrogated diplomatic relations with Riyadh. In the end, it was King Abdulaziz who took the initiative for the restoration of bilateral relations; a clear sign of the importance the Saudi monarch ascribed to stable ties with Iran. In October 1946, King Abdulaziz sent a personal letter to the Shah, calling for the renewal of bilateral relations "based on old and faithful ties."²²⁷ Diplomatic relations were eventually restored in early 1947.²²⁸

In the following years, Saudi-Iranian relations saw considerable improvement due to the two states' common interests in close ties with the United States as well as in the sphere of oil policy. Saudi non-interference in Iranian domestic affairs guaranteed the continuation of good bilateral relations during Iran's short republican interlude from 1951 to 1953. Following Shah Reza Pahlavi's accession to power in 1953, Saudi-Iranian relations grew consistently closer due to largely identical policy interests and threat perceptions. King Saud's nearly week-long state visit to Iran in August 1955 served as proof of the close bilateral relations. Nonetheless, there were also differences in policy stances between the two states: the Saudi regime rejected the Baghdad Pact Iran was a part of, repudiated Iran's claim to Bahrain, and was upset about Iran's conduct

²²⁶ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 49.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 50f. (quotation on page 51)

²²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 51.

during the Suez crisis when Tehran failed to protest against the invasion of Egypt. Particularly the last aspect caused friction in Saudi-Iranian relations. However, differences could partially be smoothed out during the Shah's six-day visit to Saudi Arabia in mid-March 1957. This time, it was the Shah who suggested a common defence pact, while the Saudi King was reluctant to take up the initiative. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the Shah's visit bilateral relations showed further improvement.²²⁹

An important reason for the continuing improvement in Saudi-Iranian relations was that in the second half of the 1950s, two political developments, one regional and one subregional in nature, posed significant dangers to the vital interests of both states. First, following the 1956 Suez War, Egyptian President Nasser gained rapidly in both regional power and Arab public support. Nasser's progressive, anti-monarchical Arab nationalist foreign policy soon became a threat to the Saudi regime and turned a former ally into a powerful adversary. Moreover, Nasser's increasingly close relations with the Soviet Union stood in clear contrast to the staunchly anti-Communist regimes in Riyadh and Tehran. Second, the overthrow of King Faisal II, coupled with the elimination of the Iraqi monarchical system deeply shocked both the Iranian Shah regime and the Saudi monarchy. Both leaderships were anxious of a revolutionary spill-over to their territory. In consequence, with the steep ascent of Nasser, the extension of Soviet regional influence, and the fall of a first monarchy in the Gulf subregion, Saudi Arabia and Iran shared common threats. Under this impression, Riyadh and Tehran furthered gradually their bilateral rapprochement.²³⁰

The Egyptian-sponsored September 1962 coup d'état in North Yemen that overthrew the Mutawakkilite Kingdom served as further proof of Nasser's objective to rid the Middle East of monarchical regimes. This development, in the course of which an anti-Saudi republican regime was installed in Sana'a, deeply worried Riyadh and Tehran. Both states denied the new regime their diplomatic recognition and provided political and military support to the ousted Imam Muhammad Al Badr in his fight to regain power. While Saudi support for the royalists set in soon after the coup, Tehran was at first reluctant to intervene. Iran eventually initiated its support for the Imam's forces in 1964,

²²⁹ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, pp. 51-4.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 54f. and Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p.1.

once the new Yemen Arab Republic had been in the grip of a fierce civil war. Subsequently, Riyadh and Tehran coordinated their support for the Yemeni royalists. Beside shipments of arms and supplies the Shah supported the Yemeni royalists with military training; for this purpose Yemeni troops were sent to Iran through Saudi Arabia.²³¹

King Faisal's accession to the throne in 1964 led to a further improvement in Saudi-Iranian relations. For example, Riyadh and Tehran both supported Pakistan during and in the aftermath of the 1965 Indian-Pakistani War. Moreover, Iran supported Saudi Arabia's pan-Islamist and Islamic solidarity policy.²³² Nonetheless, Riyadh approached Iran's foreign policy behaviour and objectives with scepticism which had a decelerating effect on the bilateral rapprochement. For one thing, Saudi Arabia frowned at Iran's pragmatic stand towards Israel both for ideological and strategic reasons. Iran's de facto recognition of Israel in 1950 and ensuing relationship with the latter put the Saudi regime in a dilemma. In order to avoid complications in their relations with other Arab states the Saudi leadership had to refrain from too close a relationship with Iran. The Shah, who appreciated the Saudi quandary, agreed "to conduct [...] bilateral relations cautiously and quietly."²³³ This was much in Riyadh's interest, not least since the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, evidenced for example by King Faisal's state visit to Iran in December 1965, was met with significant Egyptian and Syrian opposition.²³⁴ In addition, the Saudi regime was concerned about Iran's ambition to rise to a position of dominance in the Gulf.²³⁵ In this respect, a particular bone of contention was Iran's above-mentioned historic claim to Bahrain. The Iranian government had repeatedly raised protest against what it considered British violations of its sovereign rights

²³¹ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, pp. 56, 129. Fürtig's narrative contradicts Badeeb's description of events. Fürtig claims that Saudi King Faisal "praised the Shah for his generous offer [assistance of the Yemeni royalists] but nevertheless rejected any Iranian involvement in Arab affairs." Surprisingly, Fürtig refers to Badeeb as the source of this information. Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 2. Indeed, when in the mid-1960s the Shah offered Saudi Arabia support (including troop deployments) in its struggle against Nasserite forces in North Yemen and elsewhere in the Arab world, King Faisal countered "that the Shah should *avoid the appearance* of intervening in any Arab country." Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 58 (emphasis added). While this suggests Saudi reservations against direct Iranian military intervention, it does not constitute a refusal of Iranian support in general.

²³² Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 58.

²³³ *Ibid*, pp. 55, 57.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 58 and Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 1.

²³⁵ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 1.

in Bahrain. In November 1957, the Iranian *majlis* enacted a law in which it proclaimed Bahrain Iran's 14th province. To emphasise its claim, Iran symbolically reserved two seats in its legislative chamber for Bahraini delegates.²³⁶

In 1967 and 1968 four events, two in the regional and two in the subregional sphere, redefined Saudi-Iranian relations. The first two events lead to a temporary alienation in bilateral relations while the third and fourth incident triggered a lasting rapprochement. First, following the historic Arab defeat in the course of the 1967 Six-Day War Nasser's and with him Arab nationalism's reputation in the Arab world suffered a massive blow. Moreover, in its recovery from the war's significant damages Egypt became financially and economically dependent on Saudi Arabia and therefore gave up its earlier anti-Saudi policy. Cairo abandoned particularly its massive support for pro-Soviet, anti-monarchical factions on the Arabian Peninsular which had significantly worried Riyadh and Tehran alike. Hence, a common threat that had bound together Saudi Arabia and Iran for roughly a decade was fading away.²³⁷

Second, when, in January 1968, the United Kingdom declared that it would abandon permanently its political and military presence in the Gulf by 1971, Tehran and Riyadh had conflicting visions of the subregion's future order. The Saudi government was increasingly concerned about Iran's hegemonic ambitions. Iran reiterated its claim to Bahrain; now, with Bahrain's days as British protectorate coming to an end, the realisation of Iran's territorial ambitions had become much more realistic. Saudi Arabia strictly opposed Iran's claim, mainly because it wanted to prevent an extension of Iranian political and military power to its immediate neighbourhood. To emphasise its consideration of Bahrain as independent from Iran King Faisal received Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa as Bahrain's "head of state" one week before the Shah was scheduled to visit Riyadh in early February 1968. During Sheikh Isa's visit it was even reported that he had discussed with the Saudi leadership the construction of a causeway connecting their two countries. Protesting against Saudi Arabia's political statement, the Shah cancelled his visit. Following this episode Saudi-

²³⁶ Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Security and Territoriality in the Persian Gulf: A Maritime Political Geography* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 131.

²³⁷ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 3.

Iranian relations were tense for a few months and it took Moroccan King Hassan's conciliation between King Faisal and the Shah to improve bilateral relations again.²³⁸

Beside Bahrain Iran also laid claim on three islands in the Gulf, the Lower and Lesser Tunb islands so far administered by the Trucial state of Ras al-Khaimah as well as the island of Abu Musa controlled by Sharjah. It was in the context of these territorial claims that Iran rejected the creation of a Union of Arab Emirates comprised of Bahrain, Qatar, and the seven Trucial states as the United Kingdom had suggested. When the Shah for his part suggested the establishment of a joint security complex comprised of Iran and the Arab Gulf states, his proposal was rejected by both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Together with Bahrain the two Arab Gulf monarchies had agreed both to form joint security mechanisms excluding Iran and to refrain from entering into bilateral security agreements with Tehran.²³⁹

Third, yet another coup d'état in Iraq brought the Baath Party back to power in Baghdad²⁴⁰, posing a very significant threat to both the Saudi and Iranian regimes. Fürtig encapsulates the threat for Riyadh and Tehran emanating from the new Iraqi government,

“Although the Baath had governed Syria since 1963, Iraq was a direct neighbour with proven economic power, an educated population and huge resources of oil and other raw materials. The slogans of the new strong men in Baghdad, ‘Unity’, ‘Freedom’ and ‘Socialism’, were a direct challenge to the policies of the conservative Gulf monarchies. ‘Unity’ had clear pan-Arab implications replacing the danger of an enforced Nasserite drive for unity with a Baathist one. ‘Freedom’ meant the rejection of any foreign domination of the Middle East and was aimed at the close relationship between the Gulf monarchs and the West. ‘Socialism’, although not interpreted in a Marxist sense by the leaders of the Baath party, was the most hated word of all. It meant republicanism, the undermining of an Islamic basis for claims to legitimacy and, at the least, the liquidation of privileges for present and precious rulers.”²⁴¹

²³⁸ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, pp. 131f. and Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 412.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ The Iraqi Baath Party had first come to power in the course of a military coup d'état, referred to as Ramadan Revolution, which took place from February 8-10, 1963. However, the Baath regime itself became the victim of a coup on November 10-11 of the same year. For further information, see Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

²⁴¹ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 4.

Constituting a significant challenge for both their future security, the Iraqi regime change had a centripetal effect on Saudi-Iranian relations.

Fourth, on November 30, 1967, the socialist Yemeni National Liberation Front (NLF) proclaimed the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY). The firm long-term objective of the newly founded state's regime was to liberate not just Yemen but all of the Arabian Peninsula from autocratic monarchical regimes and foreign domination. South Yemen soon began to strive for the realisation of its objective by supporting and supplying the rebels in neighbouring Oman's Dhofar province in their fight against the Sultan. Hence, with Baathist Iraq and the PRSY there were two revolutionary, socialist, and anti-monarchical states in Saudi Arabia and Iran's immediate neighbourhood.²⁴²

The developments in Yemen and Iraq convinced the leaderships in Riyadh and Tehran of the necessity to cooperate closely in facing the common threats; the dispute over Bahrain had lost significance. First evidence of Saudi-Iranian rapprochement was the signing of a new border agreement including the settlement of a territorial dispute over two islands in the Gulf (Farsi and al-Arabiyyah) in October 1968.²⁴³ The following month the Shah paid an extended visit to Saudi Arabia; the Iranian leader and King Faisal emphasised their countries' joint Muslim identity and agreed "to work together to exclude revolutionary forces."²⁴⁴ Indeed, over the next year the foreign ministers of both states met on a regular basis to discuss political developments in the Gulf.²⁴⁵ Important issues influencing the Saudi-Iranian relations in 1970 and 1971 were the future control over Bahrain and the three islands in the Gulf. As mentioned above, Saudi Arabia had a strong interest in Bahraini independence from Iranian control. Hence, Riyadh was very pleased when the Shah gave up his claim on the island state. In reaction to the settlement, King Faisal sent a message to the Shah in which he

"expresse[d] appreciation for [the] successful steps which [were] taken personally by [the] Shah 'with support of members of his government and representatives of [the] noble people of Iran' which led to a 'peaceful

²⁴² Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 4.

²⁴³ See "Iran-Saudi Arabia: Agreement Concerning Sovereignty over Al-'Arabiyyah and Farsi Islands and Delimitation of Boundary Line Separating Submarine Areas Between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran," *International Legal Materials*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (May 1969), pp. 493-6.

²⁴⁴ Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, pp. 412-4. (quotation on page 414)

²⁴⁵ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 5.

settlement of [the] Bahrain question and her orderly preparation for [the] performance of her duties' as well as Iran's effective contribution to [the] maintenance [of] peace and stability in [the] region."²⁴⁶

Commenting on King Faisal's message to the Shah, U.S. Ambassador Hermann F. Eilts correctly predicted that

"the highly laudatory statements praising [the] Iranian leadership should further serve to improve Saudi-Iranian relations and allow closer cooperation by [the] two countries on Gulf matters."²⁴⁷

Already a month before the eventual settlement of the Bahrain issue, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf, during a visit to Tehran, had praised both the Shah and the Iranian policy which he called "good for [the] entire Middle East." Saqqaf even called Saudi Arabia and Iran's interests in the Gulf identical as both states had the desire to "keep [the] area peaceful, stable, and progressive, making it impregnable to infiltration by those who try to harm [the] interest of [the] region."²⁴⁸

However, the Saudi regime remained concerned about Iranian claims to the three islands thus far belonging to Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah respectively. As in the case of Bahrain, Riyadh also tried unsuccessfully to mediate in the issue of Abu Musa and the Tunbs; for this purpose King Faisal met Iranian Foreign Minister Ardashir Zahedi in Switzerland on October 1970.²⁴⁹ While Iran's eventual forcible seizure of the Tunb islands on November 30, 1971 was not in Saudi Arabia's interest, it was considered by the Kingdom as an acceptable price for the continuation of the Saudi-Iranian cooperation in the Gulf. In contrast, Saudi Arabia was concerned that in light of the island dispute Ras al-Khaimah had since 1970 been seeking a rapprochement with Baathist Iraq. In the end, Iranian occupation of two uninhabited Arab islands, even if that meant increased Iranian control in the Gulf, was much more acceptable to Riyadh than

²⁴⁶ Telegram, Jidda 1874, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Saudi Reaction to Bahrain Settlement," 5/15/70, NND 969033, Box 2112, POL 19 BAHRAIN IS, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Telegram, Tehran 1380, American Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State, "Saudi FonMin Saqqaf Supports Iranian Policy in Gulf," 4/11/70, NND 969033, Box 2112, POL 19 BAHRAIN IS, NARA.

²⁴⁹ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, pp. 62f.

an expansion of radical, revolutionary Iraqi influence on the Arabian Peninsula.²⁵⁰

Saudi Arabia's Relations with Iraq in the Pre-1971 Era

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iraq have been conflictual ever since independence of the Iraqi Kingdom in October 1932. Already a decade earlier, Abdulaziz Al Saud, the later founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, had rejected the British installation of a Hashemite monarchical dynasty in Mandatory Iraq. At the time, the Hashemites, ruling over the Kingdom of Hijaz, were one of the two main opponents of the Al Saud. When, at the March 1921 Cairo Conference, the British mandatory power decided to establish Hashemite rule over the Kingdoms of Transjordan and Iraq, Abdulaziz became partially encircled by his enemies.²⁵¹ On November 4 of the same year, the Al Saud finally defeated their other arch enemy on the Arabian Peninsula, the Al Rashid. Over the next months, Saudi *Ikhwan* forces asserted control over the entire Rashidi territory with the consequence of frequent clashes between the *Ikhwan* and tribes residing partially in territories claimed by Transjordan and Iraq. The United Kingdom had a strong interest in ending these violent confrontations as their planned railway, which was to connect the Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, would cross through the embattled territories. Consequently, on British initiative, representatives of the Al Saud, Iraq, and the Kuwaiti Al Sabah conferred at Muhammara to demarcate their borders. Upon successful negotiations the Treaty of Muhammara was signed on May 5, 1922. After Abdulaziz' objection to ratify the signed agreement, the Treaty of Muhammara was amended by the so called Uqair Protocol on December 2, 1922. This document re-regulated the border between Najd and Kuwait to the advantage of the Al Saud and established a temporary neutral zone to be administered equally by both states.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Compare Saif Mohammad Obaid Bin-Abood, *Britain's Withdrawal from the Gulf: With Particular Reference to the Emirates*, PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2002, p. 352.

²⁵¹ Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), p. 162.

²⁵² Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 44f. For the Uqair Protocol, see "Agreement Concerning the Boundary Between Nejd and Kuwait (with map). Signed at Bandar al-Uqair on 2 December 1922," *Treaty Series: Treaties and International Agreements Registered or Filed and Recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations*, Vol. 1750, No. 1083, pp. 531-4.

Despite the ratification of the Treaty of Muhammara, the following years saw “the outbreak of serious border warfare.”²⁵³ Due to the family ties between the leaderships of the Hijaz and Iraq (and Transjordan), relations between the Al Saud and King Hussein bin Ali influenced the Saudi-Iraqi relations, too. Moreover, when the Najdi-Hijazi conflict escalated, particularly from August 1924 onwards, Saudi-Iraqi relations deteriorated as well. In 1925, following the overthrow of the Hashemite rule over Mecca, Abdulaziz agreed to settle conflicting issues with both Iraq and Transjordan through British mediation.²⁵⁴

In the following years, the *Ikhwan* called for *jihad* against the Iraqi “infidels” but, as he did not want to provoke major conflict with the United Kingdom, Abdulaziz rejected their aspirations. In October 1927, a group of *Ikhwan* attacked an Iraqi frontier post provoking a staunch military response. Despite his personal rejection of the attack King Abdulaziz felt obliged to justify the *Ikhwan*’s action before the United Kingdom and protested against the British-Iraqi military response. At this time, the King was not yet ready to fight the *Ikhwan*. Negotiations to end the conflict failed in April 1928 and numerous clashes between *Ikhwan* and Iraqi forces “brought the situation in Najd close to anarchy.”²⁵⁵

In early 1929, the simmering conflict between the *Ikhwan* and King Abdulaziz escalated into a full-fledged rebellion. Once forces loyal to the King had defeated the *Ikhwan* attacks on Iraq ended. Ironically, after having been defeated in the inner-Najdi struggle, some of the fiercest fighters among the staunchly anti-Iraqi *Ikhwan* sought asylum in Iraq. Iraq’s rejection to extradite them then instigated serious conflict with the Al Saud. However, under British mediation the conflict could be solved and on February 22, 1930 King Faisal of Iraq and King Abdulaziz of Najd and the Hijaz met onboard the British HMS Lupin and signed a friendship and good neighbourship agreement.²⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the relations between the Al Saud and Iraq remained competitive and mostly hostile. The main reason for Iraqi hostility towards King Abdulaziz was that he had dispossessed the Hashemite family of their control over the Hijaz. To counter the perils emanating from the two Hashemite states,

²⁵³ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 45.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 45-8.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 49-52. (quotation on page 52)

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 52-4.

Abdulaziz, meanwhile King of the newly founded Kingdom of Saudi Arabia entered into an agreement with the United Kingdom: Saudi Arabia would respect the integrity of the British Gulf protectorates in return for British assurances that Iraq and Transjordan would refrain from attacking Saudi territory.²⁵⁷ This arrangement satisfied Saudi security interests until the early post-World War II period. However, the subsequent British initiative to reduce its presence in the Middle East in general and its involvement in the politics of Iraq and Transjordan in particular caused new concerns in Riyadh. Particularly worrisome to Saudi Arabia were initially British-backed visions of new state federations – Greater Syria and the Fertile Crescent –, brought forward by the rulers of Transjordan and Iraq respectively. As he had lost his confidence in British protection against the Hashemite danger, King Abdulaziz turned to the United States for security guarantees; a defence assistance agreement was signed in 1951. Moreover, the Saudi King made attempts to balance Hashemite influence by establishing ties with Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states.²⁵⁸

Saudi concerns about the danger to its security emanating from Iraq were increased with the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in November 1955.²⁵⁹

Safran encapsulates Saudi apprehension as follows:

“King Saud and his advisers saw in Iraq’s participation [in the Baghdad Pact] a resurgence in a most virulent form of the old Hashemite threat. They had visions of Iraq with Western help wooing Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon into the alliance, realizing its scheme of the Fertile Crescent, and then turning on them. At the very least, they saw Iraq using its access to the best equipment in the Western arsenals to build up its military power and then using it independently in direct or indirect ways to recover the Hijaz and avenge the defeat inflicted on its ruling family by Ibn Saud.”²⁶⁰

In a balancing move, Saudi Arabia sought a strategic alliance with Egypt. A month before the creation of the Baghdad Pact, King Saud and President Nasser signed a mutual defence treaty. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia and Egypt made efforts to isolate Iraq in the Arab world and destabilise the Iraqi leadership. Moreover, Egypt helped to improve Saudi Arabia’s defence

²⁵⁷ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 59.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 62-8, 71f.

²⁵⁹ The Baghdad Pact, also referred to as Middle East Treaty Organisation (METO) and, later, Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), was a military alliance between Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

²⁶⁰ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 78.

capacities.²⁶¹ Saudi-Iraqi relations improved after a visit of King Saud to Baghdad in March 1957, during which the Iraqi King warned the Saudi monarch of the danger Nasser posed not only to Iraq but also to Saudi Arabia.²⁶²

When the Iraqi regime was toppled in the course of the 14 July Revolution of 1958, the Saudi leadership looked at the development with mixed feelings. On the positive side, the revolution dethroned the rival Hashemite dynasty. It was to be expected that the Saudi annexation of the Hijaz would no longer burden Saudi-Iraqi relations. Moreover, Riyadh was pleased when the new Iraqi regime distanced itself from the Baghdad Pact and eventually withdrew from it in March 1959. In addition, the end of the overly close British-Iraqi relations was also in the interest of the Saudi regime that for years had been in conflict with the United Kingdom over the Buraimi Oasis and had even abrogated diplomatic relations in the course of the Suez War.²⁶³ However, the Iraqi Revolution also entailed manifold threats to Saudi interests. For one thing, Riyadh was very concerned about the appeal Iraqi republicanism and Arab nationalism could have to the Saudi population. Although Saudi-Egyptian relations had not yet deteriorated to enmity, the Saudi regime was well aware of the dangers of facing two Arab nationalist regimes in its immediate environment. Moreover, the Qasim regime turned away from previous Western integration, became hostile towards the United States and other Western powers, and “sought Communist support internally and Soviet military and economic assistance externally to assert ‘Iraq’s independence.”²⁶⁴ Only three days after the revolution, the new Iraqi regime entered into diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.²⁶⁵ Being staunchly anti-Soviet and having a strategic need for close relations with the United States, Saudi Arabia was in complete disagreement with Iraq. Overall, from the Saudi perspective the Iraqi revolution of 1958 caused more concerns than it eliminated.

²⁶¹ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 78f.

²⁶² Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa, *The Baghdad Pact: Anglo-American Defence Policies in the Middle East, 1950-1959* (Milton Park: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 184.

²⁶³ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 55. For a short summary of deteriorating Saudi-British relations over the Buraimi dispute, see Vassiliev, *History of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 345-8.

²⁶⁴ Majid Khadduri, *Republican ‘Iraq: A Study in ‘Iraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 184.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 62.

Over the next decade Saudi-Iraqi relations fluctuated between uneasy and hostile. This was due to the two states' incongruent political ideologies and policy objectives. Yet another aspect Saudi Arabia and Iraq were in disagreement about was Iraq's stance towards Kuwait. The Saudi regime supported Kuwait's independence and membership in the Arab League. When Qasim raised claim on Kuwait and seemed prepared to annex the Emirate by force, Saudi Arabia sent troops to protect its neighbour state.²⁶⁶ Due to Saudi Arabia's diplomatic recognition of Kuwait, Baghdad abrogated bilateral relations with Riyadh.²⁶⁷

As mentioned above, the Baath party's takeover in Baghdad in July 1968 in combination with the upcoming British withdrawal from the Gulf posed serious danger to the Saudi regime. Iraqi policies stood in marked contrast to Riyadh's interests, as Baghdad sought to transform the Gulf according to its socialist, anti-Western, republican, pan-Arabist, and nationalist expansionist political ideology. Moreover, the close Soviet-Iraqi relations seem to have concerned the Saudi regime. In November 1970, acting Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Masud told U.S. Ambassador Thatcher that his government felt encircled by Soviet proxies: Yemen at its southern border and Iraq to its north.²⁶⁸

Kuwait's Relations with Iraq in the Pre-1971 Era

Ever since its 1899 treaty with the United Kingdom, Kuwait's relations with Iraq have been difficult. Following the First World War Iraq supported nationalist elements within the Kuwaiti society in an attempt to weaken British influence in the sheikhdom.²⁶⁹ Between its independence in 1932 and the end of the decade, the Iraqi Kingdom had made repeated attempts to annex Kuwait.²⁷⁰ In the 1930s and 1940s, Kuwait denied repeated Iraqi requests to post an ambassador in Kuwait.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ For more details on the Kuwait crisis, see below.

²⁶⁷ Khadduri, *Republican 'Iraq*, p. 185.

²⁶⁸ Telegram, Jidda 4043, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Saudi Concerns Re Southern Border Areas," 11/8/70, Box 2587, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 XVII, NARA.

²⁶⁹ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 6.

²⁷⁰ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 403.

²⁷¹ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 6.

In 1951, the Iraqi government signified its readiness to demarcate its border with Kuwait; however, only on the condition that Baghdad would be given full sovereignty over Warba Island. Three years later, Iraq extended its territorial claim and demanded additionally sovereignty over roughly four kilometres of the Kuwaiti coastline west of Warba and Bubiyan Island (Khor al-Sabiya). Kuwait rejected both Iraqi demands as well as the British mediation proposal which suggested an Iraqi lease of Warba Island.²⁷²

Following the Iraqi Revolution of 1958, a solution of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi dispute seemed to be within reach. However, Baghdad did not fold permanently its ambitions with regard to its comparatively small neighbour. At first, the newly founded Iraqi Republic implicitly recognised Kuwait as a separate entity as evidenced *inter alia* in diplomatic correspondence between the governments of Iraq and Kuwait, a trade agreement signed in April 1961, Iraqi support for Kuwait's membership in international specialised agencies and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and Iraq's acceptance of Kuwait's founding membership of OPEC in September 1960.²⁷³ However, when Kuwait gained independence from the United Kingdom on June 19, 1961, the Iraqi stance changed significantly. In a first reaction Iraqi Prime Minister Abdulkarim Qasim congratulated Sheikh Abdullah Al Salim Al Sabah "on having got rid of the false [British-Kuwaiti] agreement of 1899, but saying nothing about his independence."²⁷⁴ Barely one week later, on June 25, Qasim publicly laid claim to Kuwait, stating that effective the following day Kuwait would be part of the Iraqi district of Basra. In addition, Qasim uttered a serious warning in the direction of the Kuwaiti Emir, stating, "if he [...] were to misbehave he would receive [...] a severe punishment and be considered a rebel."²⁷⁵ Reportedly, the Iraqi regime immediately started with preparations for a forced annexation of Kuwait.²⁷⁶

²⁷² Majid Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1968* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1978), p. 154.

²⁷³ Trevelyan, *Middle East*, p. 183f.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 186.

²⁷⁵ Cited in Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 19.

²⁷⁶ Trevelyan, *Middle East*, p. 188. In this context, then British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan stated: "On 29th and 30th June, evidence accumulated from a number of sources that reinforcements, especially reinforcements of armour, were moving towards Basar." Cited in Khadduri, *Republican 'Iraq*, p. 170, fn 58.

In prompt reaction to Qasim's announcement, the Kuwaiti Emir declared his and his people's willingness to defend their independence. However, at that time Kuwait's armed forces were limited to a mere 2,000 to 3,000 troops and clearly inferior to Iraq's 60,000 men strong and modern equipped Iraqi military. Hence, the Kuwaiti ruler invoked the friendship agreement he had signed with the United Kingdom barely two weeks earlier. In this treaty the United Kingdom committed to come to Kuwait's defence upon the latter's request. Honouring its treaty obligation the British military initiated Operation *Vantage*. On June 30, the Royal Navy moved a fleet of frigates, commando, and aircraft carriers towards Kuwait. On the following day, 600 British ground troops landed in the Emirate and took position on the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border. Eventually, the British troop level was increased to 5,000. In addition, 5,000 to 6,000 Kuwaiti volunteers as well as 2,000 Saudi soldiers helped to protect Kuwait from an Iraqi invasion. In addition, the Iraqi verbal and military threats against Kuwait were brought before the UN Security Council.²⁷⁷ Harshly protesting the Council's dealing with the issue and reiterating Baghdad's claim on Kuwait, the Iraqi UN representative declared that

"Kuwait is not and has never been an independent State. It has always been considered, historically and legally, a part of the Basra province of Iraq. There can be no question of an international dispute arising between Iraq and Kuwait since the latter is an integral part of the Iraqi Republic."²⁷⁸

In the end, a Soviet veto prevented any Security Council resolution on the Kuwait crisis. Consequently, Kuwait sought broad Arab support and deterrence against Baghdad's aggression. Hence, in a letter to Egyptian President Nasser dated July 12, Kuwait applied for membership in the Arab League. In order to get Nasser's support for Kuwait's admission to the regional organisation, the Emirate had to request the withdrawal of the British troops from its territory. On July 20, against Iraqi protest, Kuwait was admitted as the twelfth member of the Arab League.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 20f.

²⁷⁸ Cited in *ibid*, p. 22.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 23. Before Kuwait's admission was put to vote, the Iraqi delegation walked out of the meeting in protest. Kuwait's admission to the Arab League was then agreed upon unanimously. *Middle East Record, Volume 2, 1961*, ed. by Yitzhak Oron (Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University, 1967), p. 133.

To guarantee a continued deterrence against an Iraqi invasion the British troops were replaced by a joint Arab League peacekeeping force.²⁸⁰ The Arab League troops, numbering roughly 3,300, arrived in Kuwait between September 10 and October 3. The largest contingents of 1,200 men each were provided by the United Arab Republic (UAR) and Saudi Arabia. By October 10, with the exception of a few military advisors, all British troops had left Kuwait. While the UAR troops left Kuwait in December 1961, the remaining troops remained until early 1963.²⁸¹

Even in absence of an Iraqi invasion, Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations remained heavily strained for another two years. Iraq denied Kuwait's statehood recognition and did not enter into bilateral diplomatic relations with the Emirate. In addition, through its Soviet ally Iraq indirectly blocked Kuwait's admission to the United Nations. It took another Iraqi Revolution and the overthrow of Prime Minister Qasim on February 8, 1963 for Iraq's attitude towards Kuwait to undergo significant change. Hoping for improved relations with the new Iraqi regime, Kuwaiti Emir Abdullah Al Salim promptly sent a congratulatory telegram to Iraq's new President, Colonel Abdulsalam Arif. In an attempt to improve relations with the new Iraqi regime,

"Kuwait's government announced in parliament on April 9, 1963, that it would review its friendship agreement of 1961 with Britain and 'adopt a Kuwaiti position' in keeping with the political realities in the region [thereby referring to the success of Arab nationalism not least in Iraq]."²⁸²

However, it took several months before the new regime altered the previous Iraqi attitude towards Kuwait. When Kuwait applied for UN membership again, Iraq renewed its objection, reiterating its "legitimate rights" over Kuwait. However, this time Iraq could not prevent Kuwait's admission.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ The legal basis for the deployment of the joint Arab peacekeeping force was Kuwait's accession to the Arab League Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Co-operation on August 12, 1961. See *Middle East Record, Volume 2, 1961*, p. 134.

²⁸¹ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 23. According to Khadduri, Nassir decided to remove the UAR troops from Kuwait already on October 12, 1961. Khadduri, *Republican 'Iraq*, pp. 172.

²⁸² Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 24.

²⁸³ Compare Khadduri, *Republican 'Iraq*, pp. 172f. On May 7, 1963, upon unanimous decision, the UN Security Council recommended Kuwait's admission to membership in the United Nations. On May 14, 1963, the UN General Assembly, in its 1203rd plenary meeting, passed by acclamation a draft resolution sponsored *inter alia* by the Arab states of Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, Tunisia, thereby admitting Kuwait as the 111th member of the United Nations. See UN documents A/5417; A/RES/1873 (S-IV); A/PV.1203.

A few months later, the situation had changed. On October 4, 1963, Iraq concluded a bilateral treaty with Kuwait in which Baghdad recognised Kuwait's independence and full sovereignty.²⁸⁴ In *The Agreed Minutes Regarding the Restoration of Friendly Relations, Recognition and Related Matters*, as the treaty was headed, Iraq also recognised the 1932 Iraqi-Kuwaiti border demarcation agreement. In addition, the two states pledged to "reinforce[...] the fraternal relations subsisting between the two sister countries, inspired by their national duty, common interest and aspiration to a complete Arab Unity" and "work towards establishing cultural, commercial and economic co-operation between the two countries and the exchange of technical information."²⁸⁵ The first steps of rapprochement were soon taken: On October 19, Kuwait granted Iraq an \$80 million interest-free loan with a long credit period of 25 years; and, also, a bilateral border demarcation commission resumed work. However, it became clear that a compromise on border delimitation would be difficult to reach when Iraq emphasised that its preceding recognition of Kuwait did not mean recognition of the territorial status quo.²⁸⁶ Over the course of the next four years, border demarcation talks were complicated as the Iraqi delegation repeatedly challenged the validity of previous border agreements concluded before Iraq's independence and called for the cessation of Kuwaiti territory to Iraq. Kuwait on its part rejected any cessation of land. In 1967, as differences between the delegations were irreconcilable, the border commission meetings were adjourned indefinitely.²⁸⁷

After the Baath party takeover in 1968, there was some rapprochement in Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations. The Kuwaiti leadership was first to recognise diplomatically the new Iraqi government. In addition, as Niblock summarises,

"by the end of 1969 the two states had concluded an agreement co-ordinating information media (as part of a programme to preserve the Arab character of the Gulf); held a series of talks on military co-operation; agreed on terms for the compensation of nationalised Kuwaiti property in Iraq; and reached an agreement on co-operation in the oil sector."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Khadduri, *Republican Iraq*, pp. 172f.

²⁸⁵ United Nations, Treaty Series, Vol. 485, No. 7063.

²⁸⁶ Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 24f.

²⁸⁷ Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq*, p. 155.

²⁸⁸ Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 143.

Further to this, new bilateral talks regarding border demarcation started in February 1970 and the two states renewed and extended a free trade agreement both parties had signed in 1964. Moreover, both states closely coordinated their policy reactions to Iran's claims on Abu Musa and the two Tunb islands.²⁸⁹ On the other hand, when in April 1969 the Iranian-Iraqi dispute had reached a critical point and war appeared to be imminent Baghdad pressured the Kuwaiti leadership into conceding Iraq the right to station part of its troops on Kuwaiti territory to better protect Iraq's harbour of Umm Qasr. According to the then Kuwaiti Minister of Defence and Interior, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, Iraqi troops moved into Kuwaiti territory before the official Iraqi request was made to the Kuwaiti leadership. Moreover, there had been no explicit Kuwaiti concession, rather a tacit approval that Iraq interpreted as a green light. In the end, Iranian-Iraqi tensions did not escalate into a hot war. Nonetheless, much to the discontent of the Kuwaiti regime, Iraqi troops remained on Kuwaiti soil on the grounds that their positioning there was vital for the protection of Umm Qasr.²⁹⁰

In any case, Iraq had not given up its claims on Kuwait. Irrespective of the regime in Baghdad – monarchy, pro-Nasser or Baathist republic – Iraq's main justification for its claim on Kuwait was historic and legal in nature. Iraq argued that, under Ottoman rule, Kuwait had been governed by a district governor (*qaimaqam*), who in turn was a subordinate of the governor of Basra. As the Basra Governorate now was a part of the independent state of Iraq, Kuwait had to be considered as falling under Iraqi sovereignty, too. The Iraqi regime further contended that the 1899 British-Kuwaiti protectorate treaty was null and void as then Kuwaiti *qaimaqam*, Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah, had not had the competence to sign international treaties.²⁹¹

However, the key motivation behind the repeated Iraqi claims on Kuwait was economic and territorial in character. For one thing, Kuwait possessed extensive oil resources and made high profits from their export. In 1960, Kuwait produced roughly 591 million barrels of crude oil and received 50% of the

²⁸⁹ Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 143.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 155f.

²⁹¹ Compare Khadduri, *Republican 'Iraq*, p. 167.

operational profits from its export.²⁹² In addition, Kuwaiti territory, particularly the islands of Warba and Bubiyan²⁹³, would give Iraq the opportunity to offset a very significant geostrategic disadvantage, if under Baghdad's control. Due to its short seaboard, Iraq had very limited access to Gulf waters and only few potential locations for the construction of deep water ports – installations with high relevance for trade, particularly the export of raw oil and petrochemical products. Umm Qasr, directly on the border to Kuwait, was the only location suitable for an Iraqi deep sea port. In contrast, the Iraqi Faw Peninsula is a swampy and alluvial area and therefore a suboptimal location for a port installation and the inland city of Basra along the Shatt al-Arab river was of limited suitability as sovereignty over and right of use of the river was contested between Iran and Iraq.²⁹⁴ In April 1969, Iran unilaterally abrogated the 1937 Iran-Iraq treaty on the Shatt al-Arab waterway and henceforward claimed the river's *thalweg* (median line) as its border with Iraq.²⁹⁵ Therefore, different Iraqi regimes had a great interest in the annexation of Kuwait or at least the islands of Warba and Bubiyan. As a consequence, Kuwait considered its powerful neighbour a considerable threat to its very existence. Kuwait's concerns about Iraq became very clear when in January 1970 the Kuwaiti government made an urgent request for a U.S. arms sale.²⁹⁶ Within less than a week after the official request, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah reiterated his government's urgent need for the relevant arms. According to U.S.

²⁹² Khadduri, *Republican Iraq*, p. 169.

²⁹³ For a map of the two islands' location, see Appendix, Map 4.

²⁹⁴ Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq*, p. 154. Summarising in more detail the disadvantages of the Faw Peninsula as a location for a port facility, Niblock states, "The disadvantages of developing Fao as Iraq's major point of access into the Gulf were not only that it lay in an exposed position (as became evident in the early stages of the Iran-Iraq war) but also that it lay upstream of the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab such that it could be reached only by ships of under 35 feet draught." Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 126, fn. 1.

²⁹⁵ "Iran-Iraq: Documents on Abrogation of 1937 Treaty Concerning Shatt-Al-Arab Waterway," *International Legal Materials*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (May 1969), pp. 478-92. The 1937 treaty had determined the eastern low-water mark as the border between Iran and Iraq, granting Iraq extensive control over the waterway. The only exception was around the level of the Iranian city of Abadan, where the river's *thalweg* was agreed to be the border. *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ It had been the first Kuwaiti request for an arms deal with the United States. The Kuwaiti government was interested in the purchase of two C-130 cargo planes and 50 M40 recoilless rifles. The M40 is designed basically as an anti-tank weapon. Telegram, Kuwait 57, US Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, Untitled, 1/21/70, NND 969023, Box 1762, DEF 12-5 K UW 1-1-70, NARA.

Ambassador John P. Walsh the foreign minister referred explicitly to his government's strong concerns about the threat emanating from Iraq.²⁹⁷

Kuwait's Relations with Iran in the Pre-1971 Era

In contrast to the Emirate's relations with Iraq, Kuwait's ties with Iran were friendly and cooperative. There had been a Persian expatriate community in Kuwait ever since 1776, when Iran captured nearby Basra. Following the beginning of the oil boom in Kuwait, the Persian community increased very significantly to roughly 30,000 in the early 1950s.²⁹⁸ Despite their large number the Iranian expatriates had been largely "politically quiescent, worked well and co-existed peacefully with their Arab counterparts."²⁹⁹ However, in the 1960s, several factors motivated the Kuwaiti regime to limit Iranian immigration. For one thing, it was a reaction to pressure from the Kuwaiti people and the increasing numbers of Palestinian and Egyptian expatriates that rejected both Iranian trade relations with Israel and Tehran's territorial claims in the Gulf. Another factor influencing the Kuwaiti government's decision was the Iranian-Egyptian rivalry. In this context, Chubin and Zabih state,

"It being an axiom of Kuwait foreign policy not to take sides in intra-Arab or regional disputes and to avoid offense to the larger Arab states, it was perhaps natural that the Kuwait government take [sic] action to limit and restrict immigration—and if possible, to appear to limit Iranian immigration more than that of the fraternal Arab states. There is, in fact, no evidence to show that Iranian immigration has been limited more than that of any other nation, but the *impression* that this was so was certainly something the Kuwait government *may* have sought in the light of domestic and intra-Arab considerations."³⁰⁰

In the end, Kuwait's immigration policy did not cause any strains in Kuwaiti-Iranian relations.³⁰¹

Soon after Kuwait's independence, the Iranian regime sent a delegation to Kuwait to inform Emir Abdullah that the Shah was interested in establishing diplomatic relations and promoting cultural and economic ties. Indeed, Iran

²⁹⁷ Telegram, Kuwait 76, US Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, Untitled, 1/27/70, NND 969023, Box 1762, DEF 12-5 KUU 1-1-70, NARA.

²⁹⁸ Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran: A Developing State in a Zone of Great-Power Conflict* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1974), p. 208.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 209.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 209f.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 210.

welcomed Kuwait's independence and the chance to enter into closer relations with the Emirate than had been possible during the state's protectorate status. Ever since the 1958 Iraqi revolution, the Iranian regime had an interest in offsetting the influence and ambitions of revolutionary regimes in the Gulf by forging close relations with Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states such as Kuwait. During the Iraq-Kuwait crisis in the summer of 1961, when Iraq ceased shipments of foodstuffs to Kuwait, Iran supplied the Emirate, despite Iraqi attacks on Iranian cargo ships. Over the course of the 1960s, Kuwaiti-Iranian trade relations saw a rapid development. For example, Iranian exports to Kuwait more than tripled between 1962/63 (merchandise value of \$7 million) and 1965/66 (\$24.4 million).³⁰²

In the course of a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aram to Kuwait in April 1964, both countries decided to initialise negotiations on their offshore boundaries. In October of the following year, Kuwait and Tehran established a technical committee to deal with the issue. Over the next years, several meetings were conducted and partial agreement (*inter alia* on a maritime water boundary) was reached. However, mainly due to the ongoing Iranian-Iraqi border dispute, final agreement particularly on the demarcation of the continental shelf boundary was still pending in 1971.³⁰³

In light of the soon ending British-Kuwaiti defence agreement and hoping for close future relations, the Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi visited Kuwait from June 5-6, 1970. During his visit, a decision was made to conclude a bilateral continental shelf agreement.³⁰⁴ However, Kuwait also disagreed with Iran on the foundation of a Union of Gulf Emirates, Iranian territorial claims on Bahrain and the islands of Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb, and the general question over the Arab or Persian nature of the Gulf. Kuwait clearly favoured the creation of a federation of Gulf Emirates and rejected Iran's claim to Bahrain and the island state's incorporation into Iran. With respect to the latter issue, Kuwait made attempts to mediate between the leaderships in Tehran and Manama and welcomed Iran's eventual agreement to a UN fact-

³⁰² Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 24 and Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, pp. 406, 410.

³⁰³ For a more detailed narrative of the negotiation process, see Chubin and Zabih, *Foreign Relations of Iran*, pp. 289f. In fact, at the time of writing, a final Kuwaiti-Iranian off-shore boundary agreement has still not been reached.

³⁰⁴ Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 420.

finding mission.³⁰⁵ Regarding the three islands thus far administered by Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, Kuwait was the only Arab Gulf monarchy that took the same stand as Iraq in clearly rejecting Iranian claims of sovereignty. As a sign of protest against the Iranian position, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, rescheduled a visit to Tehran in the summer of 1971.³⁰⁶ Kuwait's comparatively staunch stance on this issue was taken after consideration of both the popular mood in Kuwait and Iraq's expectations. A statement by Foreign Minister Sabah Al Sabah to U.S. Ambassador Walsh suggests that the Kuwaiti government did not see the issue itself as problematic as its policy reaction purported. According to Walsh, the foreign minister expressed his government's concern about Iran's policies regarding the three islands; however, he went on to say that

“he simply could not understand why the Iranians seemed so convinced of [the] military significance of those islands, but [that] he was *prepared [to] accept as [a] reality that they did feel very sensitive about the issue.*”³⁰⁷

Bahrain's Relations with Iran and Iraq in the Pre-1971 Era

For one and a half centuries prior to its independence, Bahrain's relations with Iran were characterised by the latter's claim to the island state. Bahrain had been under Persian rule from 1602, when Shah Abbas I ousted the Hormuzi-Portuguese rulers, to 1783 when the Al Khalifa took over the island state. In 1819, a joint Persian-Omani attempt to reconquer Bahrain was stopped when the United Kingdom agreed with the Al Khalifa to grant Bahrain protection and accept it as a party to the General Treaty of Peace signed in the following year.³⁰⁸ Once Bahrain had entered into treaty relations with the United Kingdom, Iran did not undertake any more attempts to reconquer Bahrain by

³⁰⁵ On the day of the UN fact-finding team's arrival, the Kuwaiti press hailed Tehran's "spirit of cooperation and goodwill for Bahrain and Gulf Emirates in common" and praised Iran for displaying a "spirit of brotherhood and understanding and ha[ving] paved [a] way toward [a] new era of enhanced constructive cooperation in [the] region." Telegram, Kuwait 294, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 3/31/70, "Bahrain," NND 969033, Box 2112, POL 19 BAHRAIN IS, NARA. Praise for the Shah's change of hearts in the Bahrain issue was also expressed by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah in a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Walsh on April 4, 1971. Telegram, Kuwait 324, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, Untitled, 4/6/70, NND 969033, Box 2112, POL 19 BAHRAIN IS, NARA.

³⁰⁶ Compare Chubin and Zabih, *Foreign Relations*, pp. 216, 228.

³⁰⁷ Telegram, Kuwait 324 (1970). (emphasis added)

³⁰⁸ See Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 28-31.

force. However, the regime in Tehran repeatedly claimed sovereignty over Bahrain and protested against actions that violated their alleged legitimate rights. One such example was Iran's formal protest against the United Kingdom's treatment of Bahrain as an independent state in 1927. The Treaty of Jidda, signed on May 20 of that year, in which the United Kingdom recognised King Abdulaziz Al Saud's sovereignty over the Kingdom of Hijaz and Najd, had referred to the British-Bahraini treaty relationship. As the Iranian government considered the diplomatic relations between Bahrain and the United Kingdom a violation of their national sovereignty rights, it categorically rejected the treaty's reference in notes of protests sent to both the British government and the League of Nation's secretary-general. When in January 1928 the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, repudiated the Iranian claim to Bahrain due to the absence of "any valid grounds," Tehran reiterated its claim in another note to London.³⁰⁹ A similar note by the Iranian government was sent to the Secretary-General of the League of Nation in August of the same year.³¹⁰ Only two years later, Iran raised renewed protests. In 1930, the Bahraini leadership granted a first oil concession, prompting another Iranian note of protest to the British government. As "the Bahrayn Islands form an integral part of Persia [...], and [...] Persia possesses incontestable rights of sovereignty over those islands," as was contended by Tehran, the right to grant oil concessions was reserved to the Iranian government and did not fall in the jurisdiction of the Al Khalifa.³¹¹ A similar protest note sent to the U.S. Government in May 1934 read

"According to information recently received by the Imperial Government [of Iran], a concession to exploit Bahrein oil has just been obtained by the Standard Oil Company of California, which has begun operations and has already extracted large quantities of oil. I have the honour [...] to inform you that the concession in question or any other concession acquired by the Standard Oil Company or any other company whatsoever—having been obtained, not from the Persian Government, whose rights of sovereignty over the Bahrein Islands are incontestable, but from legally incompetent authorities [i.e. the ruler of Bahrain] who have no right to grant such concessions—is regarded as null and void. My Government strongly protests against this concession and considers

³⁰⁹ Majid Khadduri, "Iran's Claim to the Sovereignty of Bahrayn," *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Oct. 1951), pp. 631-47, p. 633.

³¹⁰ Husain Al-Baharna, "The Fact-Finding Mission of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Settlement of the Bahrain-Iran Dispute, May 1970," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (July 1973), pp. 541-52, p. 541.

³¹¹ Cited in Khadduri, "Iran's Claim," p. 631.

itself at liberty to claim and demand the restitution of any profit that may accrue from such concessions.”³¹²

In the same year, Iran protested against the construction of a British military base in Bahrain. Following the Second World War Iran put the Bahrain issue back on the agenda. In April 1947, the Iranian *majlis* unanimously passed a bill that requested the government to take appropriate steps to implement Iranian sovereignty over Bahrain. In the first years of the 1950s, nationalist feelings regarding the Iranian claim to Bahrain were widespread among the Iranian people who pressed the government to act accordingly. In November 1957, partially in reaction to the public pressure, the Iranian parliament enacted the above-mentioned law that proclaimed Bahrain as 14th province of Iran. The two reserved seats in the *majlis* then served as a constant reminder of Iran’s claim to sovereignty over Bahrain.³¹³ In 1958, the Shah reiterated Iran’s claim to the island state when he declared during a press conference somewhat provocatively,

“We consider Bahrain an integral part of Iran and will gladly accept the allegiance of Sheikh Sulman bin Ahmad all [sic] Khalifa, the present ruler, in the capacity of the first Irani Governor-General of Bahrain.”³¹⁴

During large parts of the 1960s the Iranian regime refrained from putting forward its claim to Bahrain. During that time Tehran was striving for closer cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in countering Nasser’s growing regional influence and therefore did not want to bring up this bone of contention.³¹⁵ However, once the United Kingdom had announced its withdrawal from the Gulf in January 1968 the solution of the Bahrain issue became politically pressing. Britain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait all approached Iran in mediation attempts. These arbitration efforts were successful in arranging direct meetings between delegations of Bahrain and Iran later that year. However, the secret talks held in Switzerland failed to produce an agreement. Bahrain rejected Iranian suggestions to refer the conflict to the UN Security Council, under Articles 34 and 35 UN Charter, the UN Special

³¹² Cited in Khadduri, “Iran’s Claim,” p. 631f.

³¹³ Hooshang Moghtader, “The Settlement of the Bahrain Question: A Study in Anglo-Iranian-United Nations Diplomacy,” *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Second Quarter 1973), pp. 16-29, pp. 20f. The 1957 bill introduced the 14th province. Prior to this, Iran considered Bahrain as part of the Province of Fars. Ramazani, *Iran’s Foreign Policy*, p. 398.

³¹⁴ Cited in *ibid*, p. 20.

³¹⁵ Compare *ibid*.

Committee on Decolonisation, or the International Court of Justice. Bahrain emphasised that it was neither a colony nor a territory disputed by the two UN members Iran and United Kingdom. Bahrain's counterproposal of mediation by either regional organisations or heads of states with good relations with both conflict parties was in turn rejected by Iran. Despite the failure of these direct talks Manama and Tehran stayed in indirect contact with one another through the United Kingdom as intermediary.³¹⁶

The solution to the dispute was initiated by the Shah, who on January 4, 1969, at a press conference during a state visit to India, declared that he would not use force to assert the Iranian claim to Bahrain against the will of the Bahraini people. The Iranian Emperor then stated his readiness to recognise an independent Bahrain under certain premises. He emphasised that his government would reject and deny recognition to a Bahraini state if it was granted independence by the United Kingdom. The Shah made clear that he would not recognise a union of Arab Gulf emirates if Bahrain were to become a part of it. However, if the Bahraini population verifiably rejected to be governed under Iranian rule, Tehran would accept Bahrain's independence.³¹⁷

Upon the Shah's initiative the governments of Bahrain and Iran entered into new, British mediated talks. In mid-1969 the Iranian Government suggested to use the UN Secretary-General's good offices to settle the Bahrain question. As in the past such settlements had repeatedly been reached after the UN Secretary-General arranged for a referendum in the disputed area, the suggestion was rejected by the Bahraini ruler. In a newspaper interview, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa stated: "There can be no question of a plebiscite, as that would only lead to excitement and animosity between Persians and Arabs in the whole area".³¹⁸

Further Bahraini-Iranian negotiations managed to produce a solution satisfactory to both conflict parties. Instead of a plebiscite, a UN fact-finding mission should determine the wishes of the Bahraini people. On March 9, 1970 Iran formally requested UN Secretary-General Sithu U Thant to exercise his good offices in order to determine "the true wishes of the people of Bahrain with

³¹⁶ Al-Baharna, "The Fact-Finding Mission," p. 543.

³¹⁷ Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, pp. 415f.

³¹⁸ Cited in Moghtader, "The Settlement," p. 25.

respect to the future status of the islands of Bahrain by appointing a personal representative to carry out this mission.”³¹⁹ On March 20, the United Kingdom accepted Iran’s proposal. The terms of reference under which Secretary-General U Thant was mandated to solve the dispute read

“Having regard to the problem created by the differing views of the parties concerned about the status of Bahrain and the need to find a solution to this problem in order to create an atmosphere of tranquility, stability and friendliness throughout the area, the Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested by the parties concerned to send a Personal Representative to ascertain the wishes of the people of Bahrain.”³²⁰

Secretary-General U Thant appointed Vittorio Winspeare Guicciardi, UN Under-Secretary-General and Director General of the UN Office at Geneva, as his personal representative and head of the fact-finding mission. Between March 30 and April 18, 1970 the UN mission consulted with representatives and members of “all associations and organized groups in Bahrain,” namely “religious leaders, municipal councils and other administrative committees, welfare societies, clubs and other community centres as well as professional groups, sports and recreational associations,” in order to ensure the best possible “cross-section in age, activity, status and geographical distribution.”³²¹ The Bahraini people were informed that they had the chance to see the mission and “to express their views on the question at issue freely, in private and in confidence.”³²² In addition, the UN mission visited sparsely populated parts of Bahrain to gather the opinions of the population there. Summarising his findings, Winspeare Guicciardi reported to the Secretary-General that “the Bahrainis I met were virtually unanimous in wanting a fully independent sovereign State. The great majority added that this should be an Arab State.” The large majority of interviewed subjects expressed their hope that “the cloud of the Iranian claim would be removed once and for all.” However, the report said,

“[t]his was never accompanied by the slightest bitterness or hostility towards Iran. On the contrary the wording of the terms of reference was

³¹⁹ Cited in Moghtader, “The Settlement,” p. 25.

³²⁰ Cited in Al-Baharna, “The Fact-Finding Mission,” p. 545.

³²¹ UN Security Council Document S/9772 (30 April 1970), pp. 8f. The report’s annex lists 106 councils, committees, organisations, professional groups, clubs, sports teams, and music bands, whose members and representatives Winspeare Guicciardi consulted. See *ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

used spontaneously to express the wish of all for tranquillity [sic], stability and friendliness in the area. Once the question of the claim had been settled closer relations with other States in the Gulf, including of course Iran, were expected to follow.”³²³

In this context, it is of particular relevance that the findings did not show any sectarian differences; the report emphasised that “[e]ven the religious leaders of the Sunni and Shia sects made a point of being received together.”³²⁴ In conclusion, Winspeare Guicciardi stated

“My consultations have convinced me that the overwhelming majority of the people of Bahrain wish to gain recognition of their identity in a fully independent and sovereign State free to decide for itself its relations with other States.”³²⁵

On May 11, 1970, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 278 in which it “endorse[d]” Winspeare Guicciardi’s report and “welcome[d] the conclusions and findings of the report,” particularly the above mentioned conclusion.³²⁶

Right after the resolution’s adoption, the Iranian representative to the UN, Mehdi Vakil, who had been authorised to attend the Security Council session, addressed the Council and accepted the resolution. Vakil added

“It was my government's wish that the solution of the question should be one acceptable to the inhabitants of Bahrain and not contrary to their wishes. Much as we wished to see Bahrain reunited with us, we contemplated only a voluntary reunion, not one involving a resort to force, which was likely to foster resentment and encounter resistance.”³²⁷

The Iranian delegate also expressed his government’s hope for future Bahraini-Iranian cooperation.³²⁸ Shortly afterwards, a resolution identical to Security Council Resolution 278 was introduced by the Iranian government to the legislative branch and adopted unanimously by the senate and with only a few dissenting votes by the *majlis*.³²⁹

Indeed, immediately after the solution of the Bahrain conflict, Tehran made determined efforts to improve its relations with the leadership in Manama. Still in May 1970, Iran sent a goodwill mission to Bahrain. A month later, on June 13,

³²³ UN Security Council Document S/9772 (1970), p. 11.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 12.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13.

³²⁶ UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/278 (1970).

³²⁷ Cited in Moghtader, “The Settlement,” p. 28.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 28f.

³²⁹ Ramazani, *Iran’s Foreign Policy*, p. 416.

for the first time an official Bahraini delegation visited Iran. At the end of June, Iran abolished the visa requirement for Bahraini citizens. In addition, on June 17, 1971, roughly two months before Bahrain's independence, Iran and Bahrain signed a continental shelf agreement. The extent of the Shah's regime's interest in close relations with Bahrain was demonstrated when Iran became the first state to diplomatically recognise the island state within half an hour of Bahrain's declaration of independence on August 15, 1971.³³⁰

In contrast to the close historic contacts and the long-standing conflict Bahrain had with Iran, Manama's relations with Iraq before 1971 were minimal and mostly limited to commercial ties, especially the entrepôt trade between Bahrain and the Iraqi port at Basra. Ever since the 1958 Iraqi Revolution, the Bahraini government had been anxious about Baghdad's socialist, Arab nationalist (later Baathist) republicanism that stood in marked contrast to Bahrain's political reality. After the Baath party's second takeover in 1968, the Bahraini government was increasingly concerned that Iraq might attempt to undermine Bahrain's regime stability. The apprehension was intensified by the fact that there was a considerable degree of sympathy for Iraq's Baathist ideology among Bahrain's population; particularly among those who had studied at Iraqi universities. There was also a degree of identification between Iraqi and Bahraini Shiites of whom many felt discriminated against by their respective home state.³³¹ Nonetheless, there was an intergovernmental meeting in February 1969, and two months later Baghdad and Manama concluded an economic cooperation agreement.³³²

Trucial State Relations with Iran and Iraq in the Pre-1971 Era

For most of the pre-1971 era, the relations between the Trucial States and Iran were predominantly commercial. Political conflict and Iranian territorial claims only became an issue in the aftermath of Britain's 1968 announcement to leave the Gulf three years later.

Dubai had traditionally close and amicable relations with Tehran. Economic contacts between the Emirate and Iran had been extensive since the 1920s.

³³⁰ Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 419.

³³¹ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 30f.

³³² Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 143.

During that time, numerous Iranian merchants moved to Dubai and as the emirate's entrepôt trade became its main economic activity Iran turned into a vital trade partner.³³³ An example for the cordial Dubai-Iranian relations was that several months before the foundation of the UAE, Dubai, to the disfavour of Abu Dhabi, gave special privileges to Iranian immigrants. Dubai also argued for the UAE immigration law to treat Iranian citizens equally to those of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman and exempt them from visa requirements.³³⁴ Around the UAE's inception Dubai had beside Bahrain the largest Iranian expatriate community of all Arab Gulf states.³³⁵ Sharjah and Abu Dhabi, although to a smaller extent, also had commercial ties with Iran as well as a sizeable community of Iranian expatriates.³³⁶

Relations between Iran and the Trucial States became conflictual as a direct consequence of the January 1968 British announcement to withdraw from the Gulf in 1971. Iran saw Britain's upcoming departure from the subregion as both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, Iran would have the chance to implement its claim for dominance in the Gulf; on the other hand, with the British withdrawal, the political stability of the previous British protectorates as well as Oman and the security of the Gulf waters would be in jeopardy. Tehran was concerned about a continued spread of socialist, anti-monarchical radicalism on the Arabian Peninsula and a potential spill-over of such a development to Iran, thereby endangering Iranian regime stability. Therefore, the Iranian regime had a strong interest in the political stability of and friendly relations with the soon to be independent Arab Gulf states. Iran's second major concern was that following the British departure trade routes in the Gulf and particularly through the Strait of Hormuz might be disrupted as a consequence of subregional political instability. As all Iranian oil exports had to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, uninterrupted navigation through the strait was of vital importance to Tehran's economy.³³⁷ Iran's policy towards the Trucial States was then being conducted in reference to these challenges and associated interests.

³³³ Bin-Abood, *Britain's Withdrawal*, pp. 115f.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 190; 190, fn. 129.

³³⁵ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 18.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 140.

This was obvious in Iran's stance towards both the proposed Union of Arab Emirates and the islands of Abu Musa as well as Greater and Lesser Tunbs.

On February 25, 1968, less than two months after they had been informed about the British intention to leave the Gulf, the rulers of Bahrain, Qatar, and the seven Trucial States met in Dubai. During the summit, they agreed to work towards the establishment of a Union of Arab Emirates. The Dubai Agreement additionally stipulated the establishment of three federal authorities: a supreme council, a council of experts, and a supreme court. At the third supreme council meeting, that took place in Abu Dhabi from July 6-7, 1968, progress was made towards institutionalisation of the Union: the rulers *inter alia* charged a legal advisor with the drafting of a federal constitution, and established a temporary federal council.³³⁸ These decisions, particularly the establishment of a provisional cabinet body, provoked a renunciatory Iranian reaction. The day after the summit ended, Tehran denounced the temporary federal council in strong words.³³⁹ Iran's rejection of the looming Union had three main reasons. First, still claiming sovereignty over Bahrain Iran rejected the inclusion of the island state in a newly to be founded federation of Arab Emirates. This was reiterated in the Shah's speech in Delhi on January 4, 1969. Second, the Iranian regime had a strong interest in obtaining Abu Musa and the two Tunb islands, which would have been part of the Union.³⁴⁰ Third and most importantly, Tehran was concerned about the long-term political stability of the envisaged federation. As Agwani points out, the Shah worried "that a union of economically disparate and politically unseasoned emirates might fall an easy prey in [the] future to army officers or radical groups or both."³⁴¹ As the *Times* aptly put it, Iran had no interest in a "second South Yemen on her door."³⁴² Nonetheless, the Iranian regime had a major interest in the establishment of a federation; they had even pressed the United Kingdom to promote such political integration. At that time however, Iran envisaged a federation comprising only of the politically and economically most viable states (with the exception of Bahrain), namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Qatar, while the remaining Trucial

³³⁸ Compare Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, pp. 343f., 347f.

³³⁹ Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 414.

³⁴⁰ For a map of the islands' location, see Appendix, Map 5.

³⁴¹ Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 139.

³⁴² Cited in Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 411.

States should be placed under Omani protection.³⁴³ In the end, not least after Bahrain had opted out from the federation scheme, Iran was principally prepared to approve the planned United Arab Emirates. However, Tehran made its recognition conditional on its control over Abu Musa and the two Tunb islands.

Historically, Iran had officially laid claim on the three islands before; last in the 1930s.³⁴⁴ In the 1950s and 1960s, the Iranian government had been interested in obtaining the three islands. At that time, the interest had been based on economic considerations; expected oil deposits in the vicinity of the islands promised attractive profits.³⁴⁵ Following Britain's withdrawal announcement in January 1968, Iran brought up the island issue again. As mentioned above, Iran was worried about Gulf maritime security and particularly the safety of trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz in the time after Britain's withdrawal. Control over Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb, claimed by the Trucial States of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah respectively, would go a long way towards securing the waterways through the Strait. Economic considerations also played a significant role. As Cordesman states, "Iranian occupation of the Tunbs and Abu Musa meant that Iran could extend its waters to the edge of the southern Gulf and gain[...] offshore areas with significant offshore oil potential."³⁴⁶ Hence, Tehran was determined to seize control over the three islands and, in October 1970, formally renewed its previous claim.³⁴⁷ Over the following months, Tehran reiterated its claim on several occasions and coupled it with threats. The Iranian regime let the United Kingdom know that in case its claims on the islands were rejected it would in turn refuse recognition to a future Union of Arab Emirates. Moreover, on November 9, 1970, the semi-official Iranian newspaper *Kayhan International* reported of Iran's willingness to forcefully seize control over the islands if necessary. The threat was repeated by Iran's Foreign Minister Zahedi and the Shah in June and September 1971.³⁴⁸ On September 18, the Shah

³⁴³ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 139.

³⁴⁴ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 417.

³⁴⁵ Thomas R. Mattair, *Global Security Watch – Iran: A Reference Handbook* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), p. 16.

³⁴⁶ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 417.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 424 and Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 140.

reiterated his willingness to assert his claim when he stated “we need them [the islands]; we shall have them; no power on earth will stop us.”³⁴⁹

Nonetheless, the Shah’s regime was anxious not to poison relations with Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, and the remaining Arab Gulf states. Therefore, during a state visit to Egypt, Iranian Foreign Minister Zahedi portrayed the island dispute as a conflict solely between Iran and the United Kingdom. Zahedi argued that the islands had taken from Iran by the United Kingdom and that it was London that now attempted to involve the non-participant Sharjah and Rasa al-Khaimah in the conflict.³⁵⁰

At first, the two Emirates were unwilling to compromise. They rejected a British mediation proposal according to which they would cede their claim to the islands in return for financial compensation and a share of the profits made from potential onshore and offshore oil production. However, on November 2, 1971 Iran and Sharjah had reached an agreement regarding the future control of Abu Musa. Accordingly, Iran would get full jurisdiction over a clearly defined part of the island including the right to station troops on this territory, while Sharjah would maintain sovereignty over the remaining island. The partial secession of sovereignty would be compensated by Iran with an annual payment of £1.5 million until Sharjah’s annual oil income would reach £3 million. Moreover, Sharjah and Iran would divide equally the profits from onshore and offshore (within 12 miles) oil production.³⁵¹ With respect to the two Tunb islands, no agreement was reached. In this context, Abbas Masudi, long-term senator and founder of the semi-official daily newspaper *Ettila’at* later stated that

“regarding the two Tunbs neither Iran nor Britain considered the consent of the Sheikh of Ras al-Khaima necessary. For this reason the negotiations between Iran and Britain concluded that Iran could regain its two islands after British withdrawal. But Iran wished to regain its islands

³⁴⁹ Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 141.

³⁵⁰ Ramazani, *Iran’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 422f.

³⁵¹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 142. Cordesman gives a different account; however, without providing a source. Accordingly, Sharjah’s compensation amounted to a minimum annual payment of \$3.5 million over a predetermined nine year period; this payment was to be increased in case the oil production from onshore and offshore deposits would surpass an annual value of \$7 million. Cordesman also puts Sharjah’s share on oil incomes at 35%, Iran’s at 50%, and Umm al-Qaiwain’s at 15%. Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 417.

at the time of the British presence, it did so a day before the British departure.”³⁵²

This statement seems to be supported by the fact that despite no agreement being reached between Iran and Ras al-Khaimah, Sir William Luce, Britain’s special envoy to the Gulf between 1968 and 1971, declared on November 17, 1971 that British-Iranian differences on the three islands had been sorted out.³⁵³

On November 30, 1971 – one day before the United Kingdom left the Trucial States – the Iranian armed forces seized both Abu Musa and the Tunb islands. As Masudi states, Iran’s seizure of the islands was timed deliberately to occur during the last hours of Britain’s status as protectorate power. This was supposed to give the impression that Iran’s action was directed against the United Kingdom’s colonial presence and not against Arab sovereignty rights. On Abu Musa, the Iranian troops were welcomed by representatives of the government of Sharjah. In contrast, Iranian military landing on the Tunbs provoked a short skirmish with Ras al-Khaimah’s police forces that cost a total of seven lives.³⁵⁴

Two days later, the UAE were founded. There is contradicting information about the date of Iran’s recognition of the new state: Ramazani emphasises that Iran had recognised the UAE within one hour of its declaration of independence³⁵⁵; Al-Alkim on the other hand, dates the Iranian diplomatic recognition on December 4, 1971, two days after the UAE’s independence.³⁵⁶ In any case, the Iranian recognition was fast, particularly when compared to Saudi Arabia that did not recognise its neighbour state until 1974. The swift Iranian recognition had a symbolic character. The Shah’s regime underlined its interest in close relations with the UAE and reiterated implicitly that the occupation of the three islands had been a strategic necessity and should not be seen as an unfriendly or even aggressive act against the UAE.

For the longest time before the foundation of the UAE, the Trucial States had very limited contact with Iraq. The existing ties were of a commercial nature.

³⁵² Cited in Ramazani, *Iran’s Foreign Policy*, p. 424.

³⁵³ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 142.

³⁵⁴ Heard-Bey, *Trucial States*, p. 366 and Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 143.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 425.

³⁵⁶ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 140.

However, following the 1968 Iraqi revolution, an expansion of relations could be detected; Baghdad opened trade centres in the lower Gulf, in July 1969 representatives of both governments met, and Iraq supported the formation of the UAE. Nonetheless, Iraq's socialist, Arab nationalist – and now Baathist – ideology and policy intentions in the Gulf had been raising suspicions and concern among merchants and most regimes in the Trucial States.³⁵⁷ An exception was the government of Ras al-Khaimah that in 1970-71 sought Iraqi support against Iran's aggressively pursued claim to the Tunb islands. In late June 1970, Sheikh Saqr bin Muhammad Al Qassimi paid a four-day visit to Iraq during which he thanked the Baathist regime for its constant support of the Arab Gulf states. Clearly hinting at Iran's territorial claims in the Gulf, Sheikh Saqr stated at a press conference, "the Arabism of the Arabian Gulf can not be disputed and its people are capable of repulsing any aggression in cooperation with their brothers."³⁵⁸ As will be shown below, the rapprochement between Ras al-Khaimah and Iraq continued for several years following the foundation of the UAE, much to the disfavour of both the other UAE Emirates and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies.

Oman's Relations with Iran and Iraq in the Pre-1971 Era

Under Sultan Said bin Taimur's reign, Oman's policy was very inward-oriented. The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman maintained few diplomatic relations other than with the United Kingdom. Prior to the bloodless coup of 1970 in the course of which Sultan Qaboos displaced his father as ruler, the Sultanate did not have any official diplomatic ties with either Iran or Iraq. Both Iran and Iraq, however, had some involvement in the internal affairs of Oman. In the case of Iraq, contact was at first minimal. The Iraqi monarchy was hesitant to position itself openly with respect to the Jebel Akhdar War, the inner-Omani conflict between Sultan Said and the Imamate of Oman under Ghalib bin Ali Al Hinai. However, in the end, intra-Arab and popular pressure forced the Iraqi regime to take position against Sultan Said and particularly the British involvement in the Sultan's struggle against the Imamate forces. In this context, a cable sent by the British embassy in Baghdad to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on August 23, 1957 reads

³⁵⁷ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 30 and Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 143.

³⁵⁸ Bin-Abood, *Britain's Withdrawal*, pp. 301, 352.

“the Iraq Government at first hoped that the whole affair would be over before they were compelled by events to take a stand; at that stage their only concern was to ensure that nothing was said publicly to suggest that we were using our staging post facilities at Habbaniya [British Royal Air Force base roughly 90 kilometers west of Baghdad] to assist our military effort so that they could no [sic] be accused by the other Arab countries of assisting imperialism against their ‘brother Arabs’ ... in the end they found themselves obliged to commit themselves, and at this point, despite their correct understanding of the statue of the Sultan, they do not appear to have doubted that the right course was to stand with the other Arabs in disregard of what they knew to be the right cause.”³⁵⁹

On April 13, 1957, the Iraqi government responding to Egyptian and Saudi pressure had co-authored a letter by ten Arab UN member states, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to the UN Security Council’s president calling for the Council to concern itself with “the armed aggression by the United Kingdom [...] against the independence, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Imamate of Oman.”³⁶⁰ Commenting on Iraq’s participation in the joint Arab advance, the British ambassador in Iraq stated,

“I am doing my best to persuade the Iraqis to take a lead in preventing the ventilation of this issue in the General Assembly, but I fear that they will in the last resort follow the wishes of the Saudis. [T]he Egyptians so maneuvered matters that they were able to say to the Saudis: ‘you see, you want this badly but the Iraqis are reluctant to support you’ and the Iraqis had then to cave in.”³⁶¹

After the 1958 Revolution, though, Republican Iraq supported the Imamate forces *inter alia* by providing them with training.³⁶² When the Dhofar Rebellion started in 1962, Iraq early on trained the rebels and provided them with other forms of military assistance.³⁶³ When the rebels institutionalised their subversive actions, founded the DLF, and started a guerrilla war against the Sultan’s forces, Iraq became one of its main supporters.³⁶⁴ In 1968, the DLF was succeeded by the PFLOAG: an organisation with objectives exceeding those of the DLF, which fought merely for the independence of the Dhofar province from

³⁵⁹ Cited in Al-Khalili, *Oman’s Foreign Policy*, p. 36.

³⁶⁰ Cited in *ibid*, p. 39.

³⁶¹ Cited in *ibid*, fn. 135.

³⁶² Hashim S. H. Behbehani, *China’s Foreign Policy in the Arab World, 1955-75: Three Case Studies* (London and Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1981), p. 138.

³⁶³ A training base was installed near Basra. Calvin H. Allen, Jr. and W. Lynn Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos: From Coup to Constitution, 1970-1996* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 27 and Peterson, “Guerilla Warfare,” p. 280.

³⁶⁴ Compare John Townsend, *Oman: The Making of the Modern State* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 97f.

the Sultan's reign. The PFLOAG, on the other hand, had a Marxist ideological orientation and it aimed at the replacement of monarchical by collectivist regimes on the entire Arabian Peninsula. Beside the Soviet Union, the PDRY, and the People's Republic of China, Iraq was among the main supporters of the PFLOAG, providing financial and arms support.³⁶⁵ In 1969, Omani expatriates, most of them students, founded the NDFLOAG in Iraq. Consequently, the Iraqi government supported the rebel organisation, which began conducting guerrilla operations in Oman in 1970.³⁶⁶

In contrast to Iraq, Iran did not support anti-Sultan forces in Oman. On the contrary, the Shah's regime was anxious about the effect a successful Dhofar rebellion and above all the potential fall of the Sultan regime would have on subregional security. Therefore, the Iranian government went as far as to urge the United Kingdom to intervene more resolutely in favour of Sultan Said. Moreover, in April and May 1965, Iran intercepted weapons shipments destined for Dhofar Province. For one thing, as the Omani Musandam Peninsula constituted the southern tip of the Strait of Hormuz, Tehran was concerned about potential disruptive effects on naval trade routes a destabilisation of Oman could entail. The Shah's regime was additionally concerned about the future stability of the Trucial States if the Sultan regime were to fall victim to the rebellion. Lastly, the Marxist orientation of the Dhofar rebels as well as the exertion of influence by Iraq, the PDRY, the Soviet Union, and China on the rebels alarmed the anti-Communist Iranian regime. As not only the PDRY and Iraq but also Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had at least at some point supported Omani opposition groups, Iran was the only independent state in Oman's immediate neighbourhood that was neither interested in weakening nor the fall of the Sultan. This, by default, made Iran to a potential future ally for Oman and provided the fundament for stout Iranian military support for the Sultan a few years later.³⁶⁷ In prompt reaction to Qaboos' accession to power in July 1970

³⁶⁵ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, pp. 432, 435 and Valeri, *Oman*, 60.

³⁶⁶ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 27 and Abir Mordechai, *Oil, Power & Politics: Conflict in Arabia, the Red Sea and the Gulf* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1974), p. 12.

³⁶⁷ Compare Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, pp. 56, 63 and Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 27.

the Shah congratulated the new Sultan via telegram. Diplomatic relations between Tehran and Muscat were established in August 1971.³⁶⁸

Qatar's Relations with Iran and Iraq in the Pre-1971 Era

Prior to its independence, Qatar's relations with Iran were friendly and unproblematic. Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani, the ruler of Qatar, as well as many members of the Qatari elite appreciated Iran as a vacation and hunting destination. Moreover, Qatar had a significant Iranian expatriate community, which was integrated comparatively well into the society. Iranian influx into Qatar had not been a recent phenomenon. While there had been a significant increase in Iranian immigration following the discovery of oil in Qatar, the Sheikdom's society had been intermingled with Iranian immigrants for several generations; many well-established Qatari families traced back to immigrants from southern Iran. The considerable group of third generation Iranian immigrants was being granted full Qatari citizenship. While the largest part of the Iranian immigrants belonged traditionally to the lower working class, Iranians were strongly represented among the predominantly foreign medium and smaller scale merchants in Qatar. In contrast to Bahrain, the Iranian community had at no time provoked any noteworthy sectarian (Sunni-Shiite) or ethno-nationalist (Arab-Persian) contentions within the Qatari society.³⁶⁹ In addition, as Anthony observes, "neither the Shi'ah nor the Sunni Iranians ha[d] been known to organize along lines of religious differences."³⁷⁰ In general, Shiite Iranians tended to keep a low profile and, often publicly identified themselves as Sunnis and Arab *muhawwalah* ("returnees"; descendants of Arab who had emigrated to Iran). Anthony interprets this as a sign of both "deference to the Sunni affiliation of the Qatari ruling family" on the one hand and "political respect for Arab nationalist sentiments" among the native population on the other.³⁷¹ Following the British decision to leave the Gulf the Iranian government made attempts to create amicable ties with Qatar. On September 20, 1969 Iran and Qatar signed a continental shelf agreement that demarcated the maritime border between the two states. A year before Qatar's independence, Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani became the first Qatari ruler to make a state visit to Iran.

³⁶⁸ Peterson, "Guerilla Warfare," p. 286.

³⁶⁹ Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 81, 84, 89f.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 90.

³⁷¹ *Ibid*.

Qatar tried to prevent an escalation of tensions between the soon to be established UAE and Iran regarding the island issue. The U.S. Consulate in Dhahran reported Sheikh Khalifa expressing his intention

“to press Abu Dhabi to use its influence with Shaikh Khalid of Sharjah and Shaikh Saqr of Ras Al-Khalima to arrive at an agreement with Iran before [the] end of 1971 about the islands. If they do not agree, he said, Iran will occupy the island and there could be trouble between Arabs and Persians on the coast. In Khalifa’s view the Shah of Iran could not avoid taking action to protect Persians if violence should erupt against them. This would provoke no end of trouble in [the] area. He was going to try [to] make [future UAE Foreign Minister] Ahmad Suwaidi understand this point, and to stress with hi that the other Arabs must learn there are special considerations Gulf Arabs have to take into account in their foreign relations. Iran is a reality, a neighbor with whom Gulf Arabs must live peaceably.”³⁷²

When Qatar eventually declared its independence on September 3, 1971 the Shah recognised the Emirate via telegram within an hour and emphasised publicly to have been the first state to do so.³⁷³

Prior to 1968 Qatar did not have any significant contacts with Iraq. Historic societal relations as in the case of Iran did not exist. However, following the Baathist takeover in Baghdad relations were expanded. Iraq opened trade centres in the lower Gulf, Qatari and Iraqi governmental officials met in April 1969, and in August 1970 a bilateral economic cooperation agreement was concluded. Nonetheless, like the other lower Gulf state regimes, the Qatari leadership, too, looked sceptically on Iraq’s socialist, revolutionary, and Arab nationalist political ideology.³⁷⁴

3.2 From the British Withdrawal to the Algiers Accord

Britain’s final departure from the Gulf on December 1, 1971 marked the start of a new era of subregional international relations. The phase of political transformation that had begun in January 1968 with the British announcement to withdraw its military and political presence from the Gulf now came to a close. With Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE three new states had just gained independence and full national sovereignty. After ten years, the British-Kuwaiti

³⁷² Telegram, Dhahran 1147, American Consulate in Dhahran, Untitled, 9/7/71, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL QATAR (No Name), NARA.

³⁷³ Ramazani, *Iran’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 419f.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 30 and Niblock, “Iraqi Policies,” p. 143.

defence treaty had been terminated, eliminating the last remnant of Kuwait's status as British protectorate. Iran, Iraq, and also Saudi Arabia, which had gradually stepped out of Britain's Great power shadow, now determined the polarity of the Gulf regional security subcomplex. While Saudi Arabia implicitly claimed its sphere of influence on the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq competed for hegemony over the entire Gulf. Some old territorial claims had been settled peacefully (Bahrain) or forcefully (the Tunb islands), others were still unresolved (e.g. the Kuwaiti islands or Buraimi). Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the smaller Gulf monarchies had a vital interest in the preservation of a conservative political status quo, while Baathist Iraq aimed for revolutionary change. The United States, which had no ambition to take over Britain's role and establish a sizeable physical presence in the Gulf, had begun to support and arm the conservative monarchies, first and foremost the designated twin pillars of Gulf stability, Iran and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the Soviet Union, the United States' contestant in the global Cold War increased its influence in the Gulf through a rapprochement with Iraq. Lastly, on the southern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, the Omani Dhofar War increasingly became a venue where all the conflicting interests collided. This subchapter provides a comparative analysis of the relations between the Arab Gulf monarchies and the subregional powers Iran and Iraq from the British withdrawal to the 1975 Algiers Accord.

Saudi Arabia's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1971-75

The British announcement to leave the Gulf in early 1968 and the Iraqi Revolution later that year initiated a subregional development that posed both opportunities and significant challenges to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Faced with two powerful neighbours, both striving for leadership in the Gulf, the Kingdom perceived Iraq as the larger threat to its external and internal security. This was due to several factors: Iraq's antimonarchical, pan-Arab ideology; its harsh criticism of the Saudi monarchy and its attempts to destabilise the latter; its military strength; its hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf subregion; its claims on Kuwait; the long Saudi-Iraqi border; its destabilising policy in Yemen and Oman; its opposition to the United States; its improving relationship with the Soviet Union; and finally, its claim of leadership in the Arab world. In contrast, Iran constituted a far lesser threat in the eyes of Saudi Arabia. While the Iranian

regime had hegemonic ambitions, they were more moderate than Iraq's. Saudi Arabia and Iran shared an interest in stability and subregional status quo, particularly with regard to regime stability. Moreover, both states were allied with the United States and wanted by all means to prevent an expansion of Soviet influence in the Gulf. The ethnic and religious divide was surpassed by common interests.

Between 1971 and 1975, Saudi-Iranian relations were solid; never hostile but also never cordial. Bilateral ties during this period can be characterised as a temporary alliance of convenience, based on strategic, pragmatic considerations rather than on trust or even friendship. Riyadh and Tehran shared many interests: uninterrupted export routes through Gulf waters and the Strait of Hormuz, external security of and regime stability in all Gulf monarchies (including Iran), containment of socialist, Baathist ideology as well as Soviet influence in the Gulf, and close relations with the United States. All these aspects put them on the opposite side of Iraq and made them allies by default in the face of Iraqi danger to their common interests. However, despite their largely mutual interests and threat perceptions, there was also disagreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran about several aspects such as oil policy and most importantly Iran's self-conception as rightful hegemon in the Gulf. In this context, an April 1972 report by the U.S. Embassy in Jidda stated,

“As new arrangements develop in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia's relations to Iran will become increasingly important. Both share a strong security interest in protecting the Gulf from radical (especially, Iraqi) or foreign influence. The Saudis continue to be aware of the need for good relations with Iran [...] At the same time, the wide 'perceptual gap' between Arabs and Iranians will continue to provide possibilities for future misunderstandings.”³⁷⁵

During a visit to Washington, D.C. in late September 1971, Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, expressed his hopes that Saudi-Iranian cooperation would guarantee stability and security in the Gulf after the upcoming British withdrawal.³⁷⁶ To not endanger their strategic relations with

³⁷⁵ Airgram, Jidda A-42, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “U.S. Policy Assessment: Saudi Arabia 1972,” 4/18/72, Box 2587, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 XI, NARA.

³⁷⁶ Draft Telegram, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Prince Fahd's Views on Persian Gulf, Oman and Yemen,” 9/24/71, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73, NARA.

Iran, the Saudi regime hoped that the dispute over Abu Musa and the Tunb islands could be solved consensually. To this end, Saudi Arabia seemingly attempted to arrange a compromise according to which Iran would lease the islands from the respective Emirates.³⁷⁷ When this aspiration failed the Saudi reaction differed from that of other Arab states. Riyadh reacted with great restraint in marked contrast to Iraq, which immediately abrogated diplomatic relations with Iran and the United Kingdom, and Kuwait, which harshly criticised the Iranian seizure of the islands and recalled its ambassador to Tehran. The fact that Iran occupied Abu Musa and the Tunbs on the eve of Britain's withdrawal saved Saudi Arabia the embarrassment of having failed to protect Arab land in its immediate sphere of influence and therefore allowed Riyadh to refrain from a harsh response.³⁷⁸ In a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Nicholas G. Thatcher on December 3, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf called the clashes Ras al-Khaimah security forces on the Tunb islands "particularly unfortunate [as] Arab feelings had been deeply hurt and [the] bitterness created by [the] arbitrary Iranian steps would not be easily erased." However, Saqqaf emphasised that despite this regrettable development "Saudi Arabia had very much in mind that over [the] long run it is vital to its own interests and those of regional stability that [the] Saudi-Iranian harmony be preserved."³⁷⁹ Accordingly, Saudi Arabia did not follow Iraq's request to abrogate diplomatic relations with Iran.³⁸⁰

Indeed, Saudi-Iranian relations developed favourably. In a conversation with President Nixon on June 15, 1972, Saudi Minister of Defence and Aviation, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, stated that after border disputes had been dissolved Saudi-Iranian relations were now "excellent."³⁸¹ While this charac-

³⁷⁷ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 136.

³⁷⁸ Compare Chubin and Zabih, *Foreign Relations*, pp. 228f. and Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 136.

³⁷⁹ Telegram, Jidda 4083, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Saqqaf Comments on Gulf Situation," 12/4/72, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL 13-10 UAE 1-1-70, NARA.

³⁸⁰ On December 6, 1971, at the opening of an Arab League emergency meeting, Iraq requested all Arab states to follow its example and abrogate diplomatic relations with both Iran and the United Kingdom. Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 144 and "Chronology: November 16, 1971-February 15, 1972," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Spring 1972), pp. 162-79, pp. 168, 175.

³⁸¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Conversation between U.S. President Nixon, Saudi Minister of Defence and Aviation Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Saudi Ambassador Al Sowayel, Secretary, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Laird, 6/15/72, Box 2587, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 XIII, NARA.

terisation of bilateral ties was an exaggeration, Saudi-Iranian relations were indeed improving. In August 1973, the U.S. Embassy in Jidda reported that

“although relations with Iran are still not as solidly based as we would hope, there have been fairly frequent exchanges of view between the two sides, and both Saudi Arabia and Iran seem aware of the extent to which their regional interests are complementary.”³⁸²

Between 1971 and 1975, Saudi Arabia and Iran exchanged several high-level visits. Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf paid a four day visit to Tehran in December 1972 and in June 1974. The Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Khalatbari visited Riyadh in early July 1973.³⁸³

As mentioned above, Saudi Arabia and Iran were very concerned about both Iraq's subversive activities in the Arab Gulf monarchies and the expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East in general and in the Gulf in particular. Hence, Riyadh and Tehran were alarmed by the fifteen-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Iraq and the Soviet Union signed in April 1972 and the subsequent closer military cooperation between Baghdad and Moscow; Iraq went as far as to grant the Soviet navy access to the Umm Qasr port facilities.³⁸⁴ Pradoxically, it was the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement as well as the two states' close relations between the United States that motivated Iraq to intensify its relations with the Soviet Union. Upon conclusion of Saqqaf's December 1972 Tehran visit, the Saudi Minister of State gave a statement in which he claimed that his talks with the Shah had revealed no differences between both regimes and then called upon all Gulf states to unite in order to defeat “conspiracy” in the Gulf.³⁸⁵ It is safe to assume that Saqqaf was referring to the “conspiracy” between radical socialist and Baathist elements, i.e. Iraq, the Marxist PDRY, the Soviet Union, the Dhofar rebels and socialist, anti-monarchical elements in the Arab Gulf monarchies.

³⁸² Airgram, Jidda A-79, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Annual Policy Assessment, Saudi Arabia, 1973,” 8/1/73, Box 2587, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 XI, NARA.

³⁸³ “Chronology: November 16, 1972-February 15, 1973,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Spring 1973), pp. 191-206, pp.196f.; “Chronology: May 16, 1974-August 15, 1974,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Summer 1974), pp. 419-35, p. 427; “Chronology: May 16, 1973-August 15, 197,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Autumn 1973), pp. 483-98, p. 496.

³⁸⁴ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 138.

³⁸⁵ “Chronology: November 16, 1972-February 15, 1973,” pp.196f.

The Omani Dhofar conflict turned into a proxy war between the radical PDRY and Iraq on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and Iran on the other. The stabilisation of Sultan Qaboos' rule was in the interest of both Riyadh and Tehran. A successful overthrow of the Sultan regime would have had several negative effects for Saudi and Iranian interests: first, such a development would have had the potential to destabilise the regimes in the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies as it would have boosted the motivation and legitimacy of radical socialist and Baathist elements elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula; second, Iraqi (and Soviet) influence in the Gulf would have been greatly increased; and third, the security of the trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz might have been challenged. Hence, Saudi Arabia was giving the Sultan diplomatic and economic support and was appreciative of Iranian military support for the Omani regime as long as this support was limited to arms supply.

However, the Saudi regime rejected Iran's active military engagement in Oman, suspicious that Tehran "might have expansionist ambitions to establish a permanent presence on the Arab side of the Gulf." Consequently, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which shared the former's concern, suggested the replacement of Iranian troops in Oman with a pan-Arab force. Despite the fact that neither Sultan Qaboos nor the Shah expressed their opposition to the Saudi-Egyptian proposal, the pan-Arab force was never realised.³⁸⁶

Hence, the Dhofar War revealed both the scope and the limits of the Saudi-Iranian congruity of interests. As much as Riyadh was interested in a loose, pragmatic alliance with Tehran in addressing common threats, the Kingdom rejected Iran's claim for hegemony in the Gulf in general and an expansion of Iranian influence on the Arabian Peninsula in particular. Therefore, the assertion that "[t]he intervention in Oman marked the clearest examples of [a Saudi-Iranian] diplomatic 'division of labour' [with] Saudi diplomatic and economic support [having been] matched by Iran's dispatch of troops and equipment,"³⁸⁷ is not fully accurate. From the Saudi perspective, Iranian military engagement on the Arabian Peninsula was principally unacceptable; only the

³⁸⁶ Background Paper, "The Dhofar Rebellion," undated, White House Subject File_CO 105 Oman, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

³⁸⁷ Richard Haass, "Saudi Arabia and Iran: the Twin Pillars in Revolutionary Times," in Hossein Amirsadeghi, *The Security of the Persian Gulf* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 151-69, p. 161.

realisation that there was no viable alternative that could have saved the Sultan, made it tolerable for the Saudi regime.

Oil policy was another field in which Saudi Arabia and Iran had conflicting interests. Between 1971 and 1975, there were two central issues Riyadh and Tehran disagreed upon. First, while Iran considered oil purely as a commodity and the steady satisfaction of Western oil demands a high priority within the scope of the Cold War, Saudi Arabia increasingly found itself in a dilemma between its economic interests and firm pro-Western stance on the one hand, and its Arab identity and responsibilities in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Disagreement arose when Saudi Arabia began to use its main export good as a political tool, first in form of a positive incentive for a change in U.S. policy and later as leverage. Accordingly, the Shah rejected Saudi warnings to use oil as a weapon during the months leading to the 1973 October War. When the Arab oil producing states eventually embargoed the United States and other countries that were supporting Israel in the war against its Arab neighbors, Iran opted out. Through its continued oil supply to the Western world including the United States, Iran dampened the oil weapon's effect. An important motive behind Iran's decision to walk a different path from its fellow Middle Eastern oil producers was economic in nature. The Shah's regime was in need for high oil incomes in order to finance its very costly societal, infrastructural, and military development programmes; a discontinuation of oil exports, even if only temporary, would have had negative effects on Iran's economy and eventually also on domestic stability. In contrast, by continuing to supply oil to its customers to highly inflated prices, Tehran was able to boost its economy and further improve its standing in Washington.³⁸⁸

The second Saudi-Iranian disagreement regarding oil policy ensued in the aftermath of the 1973/74 oil crisis. Between early October 1973 and January 1974, the price of oil had nearly quadrupled. The increase in oil prices was very much in the interest of the Shah's regime. For one thing, as mentioned above, Tehran needed large incomes to finance its great government expenditures. Iran's comparatively large population was continuously growing, increasing further state expenses. At the same time, oil production rates showed only minor increases. Furthermore, the Shah was confident that the Iranian economy

³⁸⁸ Compare Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, pp. 63f. and Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, pp. 8-10.

would flourish due to the huge petrodollar influx.³⁸⁹ In contrast, Saudi Arabia soon developed an interest in a reduction in oil prices. As early as January 27, 1974, while the embargo against the United States was still in place, Saudi Oil Minister Yamani announced his government's intention to reduce oil prices.³⁹⁰ In May, Yamani called for a decrease of the oil price by \$2; a proposal that was firmly rejected by Iran.³⁹¹ Saudi Arabia's stance had several reasons: first, Saudi Arabia was concerned about the negative effects a too high price level would have on the Western world economy, particularly the U.S. American one.³⁹² Interestingly, within only a few months, the objective to strengthen the U.S. economy in the context of the Cold War motivated first Iran and then Saudi Arabia to object to the other's oil policy. Second, Saudi Arabia had a considerably smaller population and was therefore not dependent economically on oil prices as high as they were in the spring of 1974. Third, Saudi oil production witnessed a considerable increase in the 1970s; between 1972 and 1977 the Saudi production rate increased by an annual 9.8%, compared to a much lower 2.4% increase in Iranian oil production.³⁹³ Fourth, the relatively underdeveloped Saudi economy was not able to absorb effectively the massive influx of petrodollars. It was impossible to accelerate significantly national development without causing considerable societal problems. Reserving the enormous surpluses was not a viable option either; as Safran points out,

“the accumulation of vast reserves when most of the population still lived in difficult conditions would create an explosive political situation. Attempts to explain it in terms of prudent social policy or inadequate administrative apparatus either would not be understood or would underscore the defects of the political system. Most likely, in view of the local tribal tradition and the example of some of the Gulf shaikhs, the conclusion would be drawn that the rulers were hoarding the reserves for themselves, as their own private wealth. Radical propaganda from hostile neighbors was certain to drive the point home to the Saudi people if they did not initially entertain it themselves. Thus, [...] a reduction in [oil] prices would resolve or at least mitigate a major problem, allowing the Saudis to undertake a measured acceleration of development and a modest accumulation of reserves.”³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 9.

³⁹⁰ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 168.

³⁹¹ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 64.

³⁹² Compare Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 168.

³⁹³ Haass, “Saudi Arabia,” p. 156.

³⁹⁴ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 169.

Fifth, the Saudi regime was concerned that continuously high oil prices would accelerate the developing of alternative sources of energy, ultimately resulting in a dramatic reduction of the global oil demand. As the Kingdom had the largest known oil reserves that would not be depleted for decades, such a development would damage greatly Saudi Arabia's long-term economic interests. Sixth, Riyadh was concerned about a deterioration of its relations with the United States; the latter's economy suffered under the high oil prices and put pressure on Riyadh to effectuate a price decrease.³⁹⁵ Safran sees another reason for Saudi Arabia's position in the effects continuously high oil prices would have on the balance of power in the Gulf. Due to their larger population and more advanced infrastructure, both Iran and Iraq could more effectively transform their enormous profits from oil exports into military power than Saudi Arabia.³⁹⁶

In early September 1974, in a conversation with U.S. Ambassador James E. Akins, King Faisal expressed his strong criticism of Iran's oil policy. The King pointed out that his government was willing to bring down oil prices, e.g. by increasing production. However, due to insufficient U.S. pressure on the Iranian regime, he did not see any significant chance of success.³⁹⁷

Despite Riyadh and Tehran's contradictory interests with respect to oil price policy, bilateral discussion on the issue was maintained. In October 1974, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf and Deputy Oil Minister Saud Al Faisal Al Saud paid a visit to the Shah for discussions on oil policy.³⁹⁸ In the end, Saudi Arabia on the one hand and Iran and Iraq on the other – both in favour of high oil prices – reached a compromise at the December 1974 OPEC summit when the decision was made to reduce the oil price to \$10.12 per barrel for the following nine months.³⁹⁹

From Britain's withdrawal to the Algiers Accord, Saudi-Iraqi relations were characterised by fluctuating degrees of hostility. In virtually all policy fields, the

³⁹⁵ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 169f. and Yergin, *The Price*, p. 620.

³⁹⁶ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 130.

³⁹⁷ Memorandum, President's Morning Briefing, 9/8/74, Ford Library Project File of Documents Declassified Through the Remote Archive Capture (RAC) Program_Box 9, NSA. NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 42, Presidential Briefings File August 9, 1974 - October 22, 1974, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 171.

regimes in Riyadh and Baghdad had either contradictory objectives or disagreed about the methods to reach the few shared objectives. Most major aspects of disagreement have already been mentioned. First, Iraq's socialist, antimonarchical, pan-Arabist Baath ideology was in many respects the antithesis to Saudi Arabia's political order. The continuous Iraqi attempts to subvert the conservative regimes in Riyadh and in the other Arab Gulf monarchies then turned Iraq into an existential threat for the Al Saud and the regimes in what Saudi Arabia considered its immediate sphere of influence.

In September 1971, Saudi Prince Fahd expressed his government's concern about the severe threat of Iraqi subversion to the newly emerging states (Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE); an assessment shared by the U.S. government.⁴⁰⁰ As mentioned above, the Iraqi support for the Dhofar rebellion also posed a threat to Saudi interests; for years Riyadh and Baghdad supported the opposite side in the Omani civil war. Saudi Arabia, too, was the target of Iraqi subversive activities. In August 1971, Saudi Interior Minister Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud told the U.S. Ambassador that Iraq had bribed Saudi Bedouin sheikhs near the Iraqi border with arms and money to revolt against the regime in Riyadh. However, according to Prince Fahd, the Saudi regime had good relations with the Bedouin tribes, including some that had fled from Iraq to the Kingdom; hence, if they had decided to do so (read, if the conflict with Iraq were to escalate), the Saudis would be able to use the tribes against Iraq.⁴⁰¹ The U.S. Embassy later confirmed Prince Fahd's assertion. In March 1972, U.S. Ambassador Thatcher reported that "for well over [a] year [the] Iraqis have been trying to foment trouble along [the] border by bribing and arming tribesmen who cross [the] border as part of [the] normal migratory pattern." Ambassador Thatcher further reported that the Iraqi regime accommodated roughly two dozen former Saudi military officers who had defected over the past decade. However, the Saudi regime claimed to be "fully aware of these activities and view them as minor pinpricks, posing no threat to [them]."⁴⁰² Earlier in March 1972, the Iraqi News Agency alleged that a coup attempt had taken place in the

⁴⁰⁰ Draft Telegram, Jidda, 9/24/71.

⁴⁰¹ Telegram, Jidda 2795, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Prince Fahd Comments on Iraqi Efforts to Stir Up Trouble For Saudi Arabia," 8/10/71, Box 2586, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 XI, NARA.

⁴⁰² Telegram, Jidda 1057, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Iraqi Allegation of Attempted Coup in Saudi Arabia," 3/30/72, Box 2586, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 X, NARA.

Kingdom. As there was no evidence of such an event, this was apparently a deliberate disinformation to provoke a revolt in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰³ In general, the Iraqi media were hostile against the Al Saud regime, issuing highly critical comments on Riyadh's close ties with both the United States and Iran, and occasionally even "openly calling for popular revolt against the Saudi regime."⁴⁰⁴

Second, the Saudi regime – and this was particularly true for King Faisal – was distinctly anti-Communist. As Badeeb puts it, the Saudi King considered "communism as the most dangerous and inhuman form of government;"⁴⁰⁵ mainly due to communism's atheist nature. An important reason for the Saudi regime to maintain close relations with the United States was the fact that the superpower was the bulwark against the spread of Soviet communism. For years it had been an important objective of the Saudi regime to contain and roll back Soviet influence in the Middle East. One example of this was the considerable effort the Saudi leadership made to distance Egypt from the Soviet Union following the death of President Nasser in September 1970.⁴⁰⁶ Against this background, it is self-evident that the Iraqi-Soviet rapprochement caused significant concern in Riyadh. The conclusion of the Soviet-Iraqi Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in April 1972 made things even worse. Saudi Arabia felt encircled by Soviet backed enemies in the north (Iraq) and the south (PDRY).⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, as it was an important interest of the Saudi regime to keep the Cold War struggle out of the Gulf, Riyadh feared a Soviet power expansion in the subregion.

Third, Saudi Arabia continued to reject Iraq's claims on Kuwaiti territory and its aggressive attitude towards the Emirate. As both a clear sign of public support for Kuwait and warning to Iraq, Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, informed the Kuwaiti government in mid-April 1972 about Saudi Arabia's readiness to "respond to any request that the Kuwait army

⁴⁰³ Telegram, Jidda 1057 (1972).

⁴⁰⁴ Gause, *International Relations*, p. 36.

⁴⁰⁵ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 65.

⁴⁰⁶ For more details, see Chapter 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Airgram, Jidda A-79 (1973).

would make to us at any time.”⁴⁰⁸ When in March 1973 Iraq erected a border post on Kuwaiti territory, opened fire on Kuwaiti soldiers, and repeated its claim on Warba and Bubiyan, Saudi Arabia gave staunch political support to the Emirate, *inter alia* by “mustering diplomatic pressure on Iraq within the Arab League.”⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, to underline its position the Saudi regime sent 15,000 troops to Kuwait. Safran encapsulates the motivation behind the Saudi support for Kuwait as follows,

“If successful, the Iraqi move [to take over Warba and Bubiyan islands] would not only enhance greatly the strategic position of the port [of Umm Qasr] used by Iraqi and Soviet naval units but could also trigger a collapse of the Kuwaiti regime perhaps even bring Iraqi troops within striking distance of Saudi Arabia’s oil region.”⁴¹⁰

Fourth, closely connected with its territorial claims on Kuwait and its attempts to export the Baathist ideology to the remaining Arab Gulf states was Iraq’s nationalist claim for political hegemony in the Gulf. This, of course, was rejected by Saudi Arabia. Due to the manifold threats to Saudi interests emanating from Iraq, Baghdad’s striving for dominance in the subregion was much more worrisome to Riyadh than Iran’s self-perception as “policeman of the Gulf.” Iraq’s military strength and the long Saudi-Iraqi border caused particular concern in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom was well aware that if relations with Iraq were to escalate into a military confrontation, it would not be able to defend itself against Iraq’s superior armed forces.

Fifth, in the light of massive U.S. support for Israel during the 1973 October War, Saudi Arabia and Iraq basically agreed on the necessity to apply economic pressure to provoke a policy change in Washington. However, Riyadh and Baghdad were in disagreement regarding the exact measures that should be undertaken. The Iraqi government called for drastic anti-American measures that exceeded by far the sanctions the Saudi regime envisaged. Unwilling to compromise, Iraq did eventually not participate in the sanctions applied by the other Arab oil producing states.⁴¹¹ In 1974, Saudi Arabia and Iraq were again at

⁴⁰⁸ Cited in “Chronology: February 16, 1972-May 15, 1972,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer 1972), pp. 290-305, p. 298.

⁴⁰⁹ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 138.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ For a more detailed account, see Chapter 4.

odds regarding oil policy. Like Iran, Iraq also wanted to keep oil prices high, while Saudi Arabia was calling for a significant reduction.⁴¹²

Due to the very tense bilateral relations, there were few direct encounters of high-level representatives of the Saudi and Iraqi governments. Beside highly conflictual contacts between oil ministers within OPEC and meetings at the 1973 and 1974 Arab League summits at Algiers and Rabat respectively, there was only one state visit between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Despite very tense bilateral relations Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf visited Iraq upon invitation by his Iraqi counterpart in mid-September 1972.⁴¹³

Kuwait's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1971-75

The Kuwaiti-Iraqi rapprochement that had set in after the 1968 Iraqi Revolution continued for one year following Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf. For example, when in June 1972 the Iraqi government nationalised the Iraqi Petroleum Company, Kuwait supported Baghdad's decision. However, bilateral relations became conflictual again from December 1972 onwards.⁴¹⁴ Iraq had stationed troops on Kuwaiti soil in the spring of 1969 on the grounds of needing to protect its port of Umm Qasr in the light of an escalating conflict with Iran over the Shatt al-Arab. Despite the fact that the tensions with Iran had begun to subside a few months later, Iraqi troops remained in the Emirate. In consequence, the Kuwaiti regime became increasingly worried that the Iraqi military presence might become a permanent condition; a concern supported by the fact that in late 1972 Iraq had completed a road on Kuwaiti territory connecting the "temporary" Iraqi military post with its territory. A reported Iraqi military build-up at the Kuwaiti border in December 1972 raised additional concerns in Kuwait. Kuwaiti apprehensions seemed to materialise when on March 20, 1973 Iraqi forces put up a defence post at Al Samitah. When Kuwaiti soldiers tried to prevent this, the Iraqi troops opened fire on them; in the course of the violent clash two Kuwaiti soldiers and one Iraqi soldier lost their lives and two additional Kuwaiti soldiers were reported missing. In reaction, the Kuwaiti regime, supported by the National Assembly, proclaimed a state of emergency, sent protest notes to

⁴¹² Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 170.

⁴¹³ Telegram, Jidda 3097, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "MinState Saqqaf Visits Iraq," Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 VI, NARA.

⁴¹⁴ Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 143.

Baghdad requesting an Iraqi troop withdrawal, closed the border to Iraq, and called back its ambassador to Baghdad. This, however, did not prevent Iraq from reasserting its earlier claim on the Emirate.⁴¹⁵ Iraqi Foreign Minister Murtada Abdulbaqi stated publicly that “[t]here is a document saying that Kuwait is Iraqi territory. There is no document which says it is not Iraqi territory.”⁴¹⁶ Stressing their strategic importance for Iraq (see above), Abdulbaqi reiterated Baghdad’s claim on Warba and Bubiyan Island and emphasised that “we are not taking them from Kuwait[;] rather we are giving up Kuwait for the sake of the two islands.”⁴¹⁷ In the end, a combination of several factors forced Iraq to back down: Soviet pressure; an implicit Iranian threat of intervention; Saudi political support and troop redeployment to the Saudi-Iraqi-Kuwaiti tripartite border area – 15,000 Saudi troops later entered Kuwait to underline Riyadh’s support for the Emirate; diplomatic pressure from other Arab League states including the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies; and Kuwaiti threats to freeze all financial support to the Arab confrontation states.

However, Iraqi threat to Kuwaiti integrity was far from over. Diplomatic correspondence between Baghdad and Kuwait failed to reach a settlement of the border dispute. Iraq maintained that previous bilateral agreements demarcating the border between both states were not legally binding as they had never been properly ratified due to Iraqi law. In August 1973, during Kuwaiti Prime Minister Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah’s visit to Baghdad, the Baathist leadership emphasised that their acceptance of the current borders with Kuwait was contingent on Iraqi control over the islands of Warba and Bubiyan. Kuwait rejected this position and the conflict persisted.⁴¹⁸

In an apparent attempt to improve relations with Baghdad, Kuwait allowed Iraqi ships to unload at Kuwaiti ports in light of the Iraqi ports’ capacity overload.⁴¹⁹ Nonetheless, in December 1974 Iraqi military units crossed the border and erected military installations within Kuwaiti territory.⁴²⁰ Iraqi claims on Kuwaiti

⁴¹⁵ Niblock, “Iraqi Policies,” p. 143; Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 54; and Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq*, p. 156.

⁴¹⁶ Cited in Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 54f.

⁴¹⁷ Cited in *ibid*, p. 55.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*; Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq*, pp. 156-8; and Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 126, 138.

⁴¹⁹ “Chronology: August 16, 1974-November 15, 1974,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 1975), pp. 65-80, 74.

⁴²⁰ Naomi Sakr, “Economic Relations between Iraq and other Arab Gulf States,” in Tim Niblock (ed.), *Iraq: The Contemporary State* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1982), p. 154.

territory were reiterated in early January 1975 when the Iraqi pro-government newspaper *Al-Thawrah* implicitly requested the Kuwaiti government to accept Baghdad's "practical and flexible proposals" regarding the solution to the border dispute.⁴²¹

Iran's occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunb islands caused serious friction in Kuwaiti-Iranian relations. On December 12, 1971 the Kuwaiti National Assembly passed a resolution both condemning Iran's action and requesting the government to sever relations with Iran and the United Kingdom. The Kuwaiti government, too, strongly rejected Tehran's action and symbolically recalled its ambassador to Iran. Moreover, the Kuwaiti foreign ministry refused to accept the credentials of the designated Iranian ambassador to Kuwait; the ambassador left Tehran and no replacement was sent until late 1972.⁴²² The Kuwaiti regime's firm reaction to Iran's seizure of the islands was motivated both by popular outrage over the occupation of Arab territory⁴²³ and Iraq's insistence on anti-Iranian sanctions. As the Kuwaiti regime did not want to alienate either its own populace or its difficult neighbour, it expressed its rejection of Iran's action more emphatically than the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies did. Kuwait, however, had no interest in a lasting damage of ties with Iran. Hence, it did not follow the Iraqi call to break completely diplomatic relations with Tehran.

From Britain's withdrawal to the end of 1972, Iran was concerned about Kuwaiti attempts to improve relations with Iraq. Both the Shah and pro-government Iranian newspapers warned Kuwait of a pro-Iraq policy as this would eventually harm the Emirate's interests. Moreover, Tehran strongly rejected a joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi statement that reiterated the Arab nature of the three islands.⁴²⁴

Despite its genuine distaste for both Tehran's occupation of the three Gulf islands and the general Iranian demeanour as policeman of the Gulf, the Kuwaiti regime had an interest in stable, good-neighbourly relations with Iran.

⁴²¹ "Chronology: November 16, 1974-February 15, 1975," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 1975), pp. 179-98, p. 189.

⁴²² Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 144; Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 64f.; Chubin and Zabih, *Foreign Relations*, p. 230;

⁴²³ Reportedly, more than 20,000 Kuwaitis took to the streets and requested their government to break off diplomatic relations with Iran. Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 144.

⁴²⁴ Chubin and Zabih, *Foreign Relations*, p. 230.

However, the Kuwaiti regime had to appreciate the public mood. Arab nationalist and Palestinian influence in the Kuwaiti society was strong. Therefore, the Kuwaiti people rejected vigorously both Iran's striving for dominance in the "Persian Gulf" and its Israel friendly policy. Moreover, the Kuwaiti government was well aware that any close ties with Iran would further complicate its relations with Iraq and eliminate any chance of a rapprochement with Baghdad. Hence, Kuwait refrained from entering into overly close relations with Iran. Nonetheless, Kuwait and Tehran shared a common interest in political stability both in the Arab Gulf monarchies and in the subregion in general.

UAE Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1971-75

In the first phase after the creation of the UAE, its relations with both Iran and Iraq were influenced heavily by the Iranian occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunbs on November 30, 1971. As mentioned above, Iran was quick to issue diplomatic recognition to the newly founded UAE. However, the two states did not enter into diplomatic relations until the autumn of 1972. Even then, the UAE officially announced the establishment of bilateral relations with one month delay. Ambassadors of both nations eventually presented their credentials in December 1972 and January 1973 respectively.⁴²⁵

During the first two years of UAE independence, bilateral relations with Iran were overshadowed by the island issue. The UAE's distant demeanour towards Iran had several reasons. First, the ruling elite of the UAE were genuinely upset about Iran's seizure of islands. This of course was particularly true for the ruling family in Ras al-Khaimah; less so in the case of the not directly affected emirates. The apparent great influence of Arab nationalist advisors to Sheikh Zayid played a decisive role in this context.⁴²⁶ Second, Ras al-Khaimah, which had rejected to join the UAE on December 1, 1971, made its accession to the union in February 1972 conditional on the UAE's pledge to sustain the claim on the occupied islands. This required the UAE to reiterate the unlawfulness of Iran's occupation. Third, the seizure of the islands evoked very significant popular protest in the Emirates. Naturally, the largest protests were seen in Ras

⁴²⁵ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 145.

⁴²⁶ See Telegram, Kuwait 1036, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, "Ruler of Dubai's Views on UAE," 6/10/72, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL 13-10 UAE 1-1-70, NARA.

al-Khaimah and in Sharjah. In Ras al-Khaimah a protest demonstration led by the ruler, Sheikh Saqr bin Muhammad Al Qassimi, called for the deportation of Iranian expatriates from the Arab states of the Gulf as well as the destruction of Iran and Britain's commercial interests in the entire Arab world; the protests saw the destruction of Iranian banks and the burning of Iranian flags. In Sharjah, the deputy ruler survived an assassination attempt on December 2; the angry mob intended to kill him for his ceding of Abu Musa to Iran, as he had welcomed Iran's troops on the island two days earlier. Hence, to avoid popular outrage and a questioning of its legitimacy, the UAE government had to distance itself from Iran for a while.⁴²⁷ Fourth, Iraq pressured the UAE not to enter into relations with Iran. Baghdad emphasised the Arab nature of the three islands and requested the entire Arab world to impose sanctions on Iran for their occupation. The UAE did neither want to antagonise Iraq, whose socialist, Baathist policy concerned them anyways, nor to undermine their legitimacy as a newly established Arab state within the Arab world.⁴²⁸ Hence, five days after the Iranian occupation of the three islands, the newly elected UAE President, Sheikh Zayid, stated publicly, "We condemn the aggression by a neighbouring and friendly state and we are awaiting the Arab states' concrete support to assist us in regaining our rights."⁴²⁹ In 1972, the UAE raised the issue of the occupied islands several times with the Arab League. Moreover, Sheikh Zayid, the UAE Foreign Minister, and other Emirati leaders emphasised on several occasions that the occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunbs "was not a purely local issue, but above all an Arab issue."⁴³⁰ It is uncertain whether the UAE's main motive was to generate Arab pressure on Iran in order to increase the chances for Iran to give in. It seems also plausible that the UAE was trying primarily to satisfy Arab nationalist forces and to distribute responsibility for the expected failure of the islands' recapture.

In the case of the UAE, it is essential to distinguish between federal policy and the individual emirate's policies. While foreign policy is *de jure* a federal prerogative, each emirate *de facto* also conducts individual foreign policies,

⁴²⁷ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 144 and J. M. Abdughani, *Iraq & Iran: The Years of Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 92.

⁴²⁸ Telegram, Amman 3661, American Embassy in Amman to the Department of State, Untitled, 9/2/72, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 V, NARA.

⁴²⁹ Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 144.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 150f.

particularly in the field of foreign economic and commercial policy. Regarding their stance towards Iran, Ras al-Khaimah and Dubai constituted the extremes of a continuum stretching from highly conflictual to cordial relations. Due to the disagreement about the occupation of the Tunb islands no senior official of Ras al-Khaimah visited Iran until 1975. In contrast, having had traditionally strong economic ties with Iran, Dubai had an interest in normalised relations with Tehran. This explains why Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Rashid bin Said Al Maktoum, did not comment publicly on the island issue and even prohibited anti-Iranian demonstrations in his Emirate. Moreover, Sheikh Rashid visited Iran in his function as Emir of Dubai in January 1972, months before the UAE federal government entered into diplomatic relations with Iran.⁴³¹ In a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Stolzfus in June 1972, Sheikh Rashid emphasised the need for good relations with Iran and criticised Sheikh Zayid for "harp[ing] on [the] islands dispute."⁴³² After the federal UAE government had entered into diplomatic relations with Iran, Iranian delegations always visited Dubai and Sheikh Rashid before heading to the federal capital of Abu Dhabi. The close Dubai-Iranian relations were reiterated by a friendly visit of an Iranian Navy destroyer to the port of Dubai in May 1974.⁴³³

The federal UAE foreign policy took an intermediate position between Ras al-Khaimah and Dubai. Despite the island issue the UAE government soon had a strong interest in close relations with Iran. As early as December 2, 1971, two days after Iran's seizure of the islands, Sheikh Zayid had sent a message to the Shah, announcing the UAE's "willingness to strengthen all relations" with both the Iranian government and the Iranian people. The Shah replied expressing his hope that 'brotherly and friendly ties between Iran and all Emirates in [the] Persian Gulf will increasingly develop in [the] future.'⁴³⁴ Tehran, too, was anxious to overcome the island crisis and redevelop and further close ties with

⁴³¹ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 144, 150.

⁴³² Kuwait 1036 (1972). Characteristically for both the significance Sheikh Rashid attributed to cordial relations with Iran and his ignorance of and disregard for the "fine points of diplomatic protocol," the Emir of Dubai and UAE Vice President insisted on receiving a puzzled designated Iranian ambassador who was waiting to present his credentials to the UAE President, Sheikh Zayid. Telegram, Abu Dhabi 62, American Embassy in Abu Dhabi to the Department of State, "UAE-Iran Relations," 1/13/73, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL UAE-A 1-1-72, NARA.

⁴³³ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 150.

⁴³⁴ Telegram, Tehran 6989, American Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State, 12/9/71, "Sheikh Zayid of UAE and Shah Exchange Messages," NND 969045, Box 2640, POL 13-10 UAE 1-1-70, NARA.

the UAE. The two states shared deep concern about Baathist, socialist Iraq and the Marxist PDRY, which were both actively pursuing the objective of subverting pro-Western monarchical regimes in the Gulf. This by default constituted a direct threat to the very existence of the regimes in the UAE and Iran. Radical Arab pressure on the UAE government, however, prevented a meaningful rapprochement with Tehran at that time. In a conversation with U.S. Ambassador William Stolzfus in mid-June 1972, Sheikh Zayid expressed a favourable view of the Iranian role in the Gulf calling it "vital and inevitable."⁴³⁵ A few days earlier, UAE Foreign Minister Ahmad Khalifa Al Suwaidi had gone into much more detail when encapsulating the UAE government's standpoint regarding Iran. According to the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Abu Dhabi,

"Suwaidi stressed that [the] UAE is in urgent need of friendship with Iran, [the] most powerful Gulf state. The UAE had tried unsuccessfully [to] head off [the] seizure of [the] islands. Now there was [the] problem of restoring good relations with Iran while at [the] same time not stirring up wrath and emotions of Arab League members, especially radicals, who [are] incensed over [the] loss of Arab territory. Suwaidi said at this juncture quiet diplomacy was [the] most realistic way to build bridges. [The] UAE desires [the] establishment [of] formal diplomatic ties, but recognized that this would irritate certain Arab states. This was [an] open admission on [the] part of Suwaidi that [the] UAE does not feel strong enough to buck Arab political pressures. Suwaidi said [the] question of how best to approach Iran in order [to] overcome existing problem is now receiving serious study within [the] UAE [government]. He urged [the] U.S. Government] to do what it could behind the scenes to make [the] Iranians appreciate [the] dilemma facing [the] UAE in its efforts [to] improve relations. Suwaidi made [a] strong pitch for [U.S. Government] backing for [the] route of quiet diplomacy."⁴³⁶

In late August 1972 Sheikh Zayid told the U.S. chargé d'affaires that his country's

"top priorities were [the] improvement of relations first with [Saudi Arabia] and second with Iran. [Regarding] Iran, [the] dispute could be quickly and easily settled, but [the] major stumbling block was [the] attitude of Iraq and Libya, and he (Zayid) has asked [Arab League Secretary General] Riad to seek [the] agreement of these countries to drop [their] objections to [a] UAE-Iran settlement at [the] upcoming [Arab League] meeting."⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ Telegram, Kuwait 1038, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, "Saudi-UAE Relations," 6/11/1972, Box 2587, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 XV, NARA.

⁴³⁶ Telegram, Dhahran 916, US Embassy in Dhahran to the Department of State, 6/3/1972, "Tour D'Horizon with UAE Min For Affairs," NND 969045, Box 2640, POL 7 UAE 1-1-72, NARA.

⁴³⁷ Telegram, Kuwait 1642, US Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 9/5/1972, "Meeting with Shaikh Zayid," NND 969045, Box 2640, POL UAE-A 1-1-72, NARA.

The report points out further that “Zayid spent [a] good deal of [the] conversation stressing his desire for friendly relations with Iran.”⁴³⁸ It is important to see the UAE’s desire for close ties with Iran also in context of the tense relations with Saudi Arabia; the Kingdom did not recognise the UAE diplomatically until 1974 due to the unresolved Buraimi conflict. Therefore, closer relations with Iran were also a way to balance out the troubled relations with the powerful neighbour in Riyadh.

The exchange of ambassadors in December 1972 and January 1973 was then the first visible step towards a UAE-Iranian rapprochement. The first UAE state visits to Iran followed in July and August 1973 by the Ministers of Health and Defence respectively. In March 1974 the Iranian Agriculture Minister paid a visit to the UAE. The breakthrough in bilateral relations was reached in August 1974 during a visit to Iran by Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum, ruler of Dubai and UAE Vice-President.⁴³⁹ Subsequent to Sheikh Rashid’s visit, the UAE and Iran signed a border agreement that determined the median line as boundary between both countries’ continental shelves.⁴⁴⁰ The three islands were however omitted from the treaty.⁴⁴¹

Following Sheikh Rashid’s visit and the conclusion of the continental shelf agreement UAE-Iran relations underwent a rapid rapprochement. In the course of the UAE Information Minister’s seven-day visit to Iran in mid-November 1974, both states agreed to organise exhibitions in each other’s states. In an interview in late December 1974, Sheikh Zayid implied a substantial congruity in interests between the UAE and Iran when he stated that “the Arabs and Iranians are both working to maintain Gulf security and stability.”⁴⁴² While the UAE President and other top UAE officials had made similar comments in confidential meetings before, it was the first time that a high-ranking UAE representative did so publicly.

The shift in the UAE’s stand towards Iran had been made possible by a change in popular attitude. By 1974, the population of both Sharjah and, to a lesser

⁴³⁸ Telegram, Kuwait 1642 (1972).

⁴³⁹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 145f.

⁴⁴⁰ “Chronology: May 16, 1974-August 15, 1974,” p. 428.

⁴⁴¹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 145.

⁴⁴² Cited in *ibid*, p. 146.

degree, Ras al-Khaimah had accepted the fact that Iran would not return the islands in the foreseeable future. Additionally, in the case of Sharjah, the financial compensation agreed upon with Iran in November 1971 had a positive economic effect in the Emirate.⁴⁴³ Furthermore, Iraqi, Syrian, and Libyan pressure on the UAE regarding relations with Iran had lessened over time. Sheikh Zayid had been able to win Yasser Arafat's support in this regard. The leader of the Palestinian *fedayeen* pointed out to the leaders in Baghdad, Damascus, and Tripoli "that [the] Gulf Shaikhs have to live with Iran" and that an overly anti-Iranian policy over the island issue "only dissipated the struggle against the Arabs real enemy," Israel.⁴⁴⁴ Hence, the door was open for an accelerated UAE-Iranian rapprochement.

UAE-Iranian trade relations, too, improved significantly during the first years. Between 1971 and 1975 the volume of Iranian imports to the UAE showed a 13.7-fold increase. The vast majority of Iranian imports went to the Emirate of Dubai: roughly two thirds in 1971 and as much as 92% in 1974. Despite the rapid increase in imports from Iran, the share of Iranian products among total UAE imports dropped from 13% to 6% between 1971 and 1975.⁴⁴⁵ The primary cause for both developments was the massive economic growth following the 1973/74 oil crisis.

Despite the rapprochement in UAE-Iranian relations and their wide-ranging congruity in interests, the UAE government did not always agree with Iranian policy in the Gulf. Apart from the ongoing Iranian occupation of the three islands, the UAE disagreed with the scale of Iran's involvement in the Omani Dhofar conflict. The UAE was in agreement with Tehran about the need to support the Omani regime in its "struggle against communism and leftist subversion."⁴⁴⁶ Both states were concerned about a spill-over of this conflict to the UAE or Saudi Arabia. This apprehension is understandable considering the fact that both the PDRY and Iraq supported elements that intended to "liberate" the entire Arabian Peninsula, and not just Oman, from monarchical regimes.

⁴⁴³ Antony, *Arab States*, p. 226.

⁴⁴⁴ Telegram, Dhahran 318, US Consulate in Dhahran to the Department of State, 2/16/1972, "UAE President Zayid on Situation," NND 969045, Box 2640, POL UAE-A 1-1-72, NARA.

⁴⁴⁵ Own calculations based on data provided by Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 155. Unfortunately, figures on UAE exports to Iran were not available for this time period.

⁴⁴⁶ Telegram, Beirut 3377, American Embassy in Beirut to the Department of State, Untitled, 3/26/73, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL UAE-A 1-1-72, NARA.

Therefore, the UAE was very appreciative of Iranian support for the Sultan's forces. However, the UAE government "objected strongly" the introduction of any Iranian forces into the conflict. In a personal conversation with a U.S. diplomat, Sheikh Zayid expressed his concern that the Iranian military intervention might cause a public debate in the UAE.⁴⁴⁷

During the first half of the 1970s the UAE, with the partial exception of Ras al-Khaimah, considered Iraq's policy to be a considerable threat to their interests. As mentioned above, the UAE were very concerned about Iraq's support of radical antimonarchical parties in the Arab Gulf monarchies. For one thing, the UAE government feared destabilising effects an overthrow of the neighbourly Omani Sultan regime through Iraqi backed rebels would have on both the domestic and subregional level. Iraqi subversive activities in other peninsular states, particularly the UAE, were additional cause for alarm. In June 1972 in a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Stolfus, Sheikh Rashid of Dubai "expressed serious personal concern over Iraqi activities, particularly in Abu Dhabi and Ras al-Khaima." The ruler of Dubai added that according to his observation Iraqis in the UAE were "not well liked[,] 'which is [a] good thing because if [the] Iraqis had a Nasser, we would be in for real trouble."⁴⁴⁸

Very troublesome to the UAE government was the apparent Iraqi involvement in the failed coup attempt in Sharjah in January 1972, in the course of which Emir Khalid bin Mohammed Al Qasimi was killed.⁴⁴⁹ Moreover, Iraq's aggressive policy against Kuwait was also against UAE interests.

In addition, the UAE-Iraq relations were burdened by Baghdad's denial to recognise the UAE diplomatically unless the Emirates were to change their policy towards Iran. Specifically, Iraq requested the UAE to reject and annul the 1971 Sharjah-Iranian agreement regarding control of the island of Abu Musa. Baghdad further demanded that the UAE makes the establishment of diplomatic relations with Iran contingent on the return of the three islands. Sheikh Zayid

⁴⁴⁷ Telegram, Beirut 3377 (1973).

⁴⁴⁸ Kuwait 1036 (1972).

⁴⁴⁹ Compare Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 145.

indeed criticised publicly the UAE-Sharjah agreement; however, the UAE did not undertake any legal actions against the validity of the treaty.⁴⁵⁰

In the light of the manifold conflicts between the UAE and Iraq, there was little development in bilateral relations aside from a few visits by UAE officials to Iraq and vice versa. On May 8, 1972, Iraqi Foreign Minister Murtada Al Hadithi visited Abu Dhabi. Upon conclusion of the visit, a joint communiqué was published that reiterated the Arab nature of the three occupied islands.⁴⁵¹ In late 1973, Iraq and the UAE concluded an agreement according to which Baghdad would provide Abu Dhabi with personnel.⁴⁵² In late July of the following year, UAE Prime Minister Khalifa bin Zayid Al Khalifa paid a three-day visit to Iraq.⁴⁵³ It does not seem to be coincidental that Prime Minister Khalifa's visit to Baghdad occurred in close temporal connection with the signing of the UAE-Iranian border agreement of mid-August. It is likely that the UAE government wanted to inform the Iraqi government before taking a significant step forward in the UAE-Iranian rapprochement.

Qatar's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1971-75

In the first years following Qatar's independence, the Emirate's foreign policy was rather passive and in most instances followed the Saudi lead. Qatar's foreign policy objectives were characterised by an interest in subregional stability and regime stability in all Arab Gulf monarchies. Qatar did not face any immediate threats from either Iraq or Iran; neither was the Emirate the subject of Iranian or Iraqi territorial claims nor the victim of any noteworthy meddling in its domestic affairs by any of the two subregional powers. Nonetheless, Qatar was concerned about Iraq's radical Baathist ideology and Baghdad's support of oppositional forces in the other Gulf states. Therefore, Qatar kept a sceptical distance from Iraq. In contrast, as Iran shared Qatar's interest in a stable subregional status quo and had the power to influence subregional relations in this direction, Doha was interested in close, friendly relations with Tehran. This interest was mutual as demonstrated by Iran's above-mentioned emphasis to have been first to recognise Qatar diplomatically. When the Al Thani family

⁴⁵⁰ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 63f.

⁴⁵¹ "Chronology: February 16, 1972-May 15, 1972," p. 302.

⁴⁵² Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 143.

⁴⁵³ "Chronology: May 16, 1974-August 15, 1974," p. 428.

replaced Emir Ahmad bin Ali on February 22, 1972, Iran again was among the first states to recognise publicly Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani's rule. The large Iranian expatriate community in Qatar⁴⁵⁴ continued to cause no noteworthy problems within the Qatari society. On the contrary, there is evidence suggesting that Iran used its influence on Iranian expatriates in Qatar to stabilise the Al Thani regime. Hence, the latter saw in Iran a source of legitimacy, security, and stability for both country and regime.⁴⁵⁵ In August 1972, U.S. diplomatic sources went as far as calling relations between Doha and Tehran "excellent."⁴⁵⁶

Bahrain's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1971-75

Formal diplomatic Bahraini-Iraqi relations had been initiated soon after Bahrain's independence in August 1971.⁴⁵⁷ However, in the first post-independence years Manama's bilateral ties with Baghdad were conflictual and characterised by significant Bahraini suspicion. The policy interests of the regimes in Manama and Baghdad were largely incompatible. This was true with respect to the domestic political order in Bahrain and in the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies as well as regarding relations with the United States and Iran.

Ever since the Iraqi Baath Party had come to power in 1968, the Bahraini regime had been concerned about Iraq's efforts to spread Baathist ideology in the Arab Gulf monarchies, most notably through the newly established Iraqi trade centres. Manama was particularly anxious about Baghdad's support for radical antimonarchical and socialist elements in the Gulf states. Bahrain itself had become the target of such Iraqi actions as Baghdad supported radical Sunni elements in the Emirate whose objective it was to overthrow the Al Khalifa rule.⁴⁵⁸ In February 1972, a high-ranking Iraqi diplomat was taken into custody at Manama airport after having been caught in the attempt to smuggle

⁴⁵⁴ An August 1972 report by the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait put the number of Iranian nationals in Qatar at 30,000 and the number of Qataris of Iranian descent at 48,000. The report further estimates the total population at 130,000. Hence, in mid-1972, Iranian citizens made up roughly 23% of the Qatari population, while another 37% were of Iranian origin. Airgram, Kuwait A-100, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 8/8/72, "Qatar in the Gulf," NND 969045, Box 2640, POL 13-10 UAE 1-1-70, NARA.

⁴⁵⁵ Compare Nyrop et al., *Area Handbook*, p. 263; Anthony, *Arab States*, pp. 89f.; and Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 413.

⁴⁵⁶ Airgram, Kuwait A-100 (1972).

⁴⁵⁷ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 70.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 70, p. 31; Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 408; and Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 126.

automatic weapons in the country.⁴⁵⁹ Bahrain considered Iraq and the PDRY to be the largest threats to the stability and security of the Arab Gulf monarchies and the entire Gulf subregion.⁴⁶⁰

Following the Al Samitah incident in Kuwait, Bahrain's leadership was increasingly concerned about Iraq destabilising Bahrain's domestic order as well as the entire Gulf area. Following a conversation with Bahraini Emir Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa and Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, U.S. diplomat Robert A. Stein stated that "Bahrain's leaders were given quite a jolt by recent Iraqi aggression [sic] against Kuwait."⁴⁶¹

Iraq and Bahrain had contradicting views on U.S. military presence in the Gulf. The socialist, strongly anti-American Iraqi government strictly rejected any U.S. military presence in the area. The Bahraini regime, on the other hand, had an interest in close relations with the United States and to a certain degree also U.S. protection against potential aggressors such as Iraq or a revived Iranian claim on Bahrain. Hence, Manama leased a part of the former British Royal Navy base at Juffair to the U.S. Navy, allowing it to establish a permanent presence in Bahrain and in the Gulf as a whole. This Bahraini policy provoked repeated, strong Iraqi criticism and further burdened relations between Baghdad and Manama.⁴⁶² Conversely, the Bahraini regime was concerned

⁴⁵⁹ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 30, fn. 33. The *Middle East Economic Digest* reported that the diplomat had tried to smuggle ten suitcases of arms into Bahrain. "Chronology: February 16, 1972-May 15, 1972," p. 301. In a personal interview with the author, Anthony identified the high-ranking Iraqi diplomat as Baghdad's designated ambassador to Bahrain. Personal interview with Dr. John Duke Anthony in Washington, D.C. in April 2011.

⁴⁶⁰ Telegram, Manama 376, American Embassy in Manama to the Department of State, "Ambassador [sic] Stoltzfus's Calls on AMC and Foreign Minister," 4/24/72, NND 969033, Box 2112, POL BAHRAIN IS, NARA.

⁴⁶¹ Telegram, Manama 248, American Embassy in Manama to the Department of State, "Security on [sic] Gulf and Bahrain," 4/30/73, NND 969033, Box 2112, POL 19 BAHRAIN IS, NARA.

⁴⁶² Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 126. The so called Administrative Support Unit Bahrain was established by the U.S. Navy on December 23, 1971, some four months after Bahrain's independence. Schneller Jr., *Anchor of Resolve: A History of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 2007), p. ix. The lease agreement provided that, for an annual financial compensation of \$ 600,000, Bahrain would lease the following installations to the U.S. Government: "a. Part of the area known as HMS Jufair [...] b. The antenna farm and towers situated in the tidal flats to the East of HMS Jufair[;] c. At Muharraq the antenna farm and towers situated in the tidal flats[;] d. At Muharraq the single building known as the transmitter building which is situated adjacent to the land side of the antenna[;] e. At a place to be agreed near HMS Jufair an area to operate and repair small service craft and recreational motor and sail boats[;] Berth No. 1 at Mina Suman Jetty and the power connections of the berth. [...] g. Certain landing rights for aircraft at Bahrain International Airport[;] h. Suitable hangar and office space and use of the loading scales at Bahrain International Airport." The lease agreement was limited until June 30, 1972; from then on, the lease was renewable on an

about the accelerated Iraqi-Soviet rapprochement as evidenced by the 1972 bilateral friendship and cooperation agreement.⁴⁶³

Another bone of contention in Bahraini-Iraqi relations was the improving ties between Manama and Iraq's rival in Tehran. The Baath regime strongly criticised Bahrain "for acquiescing in what the Iraqis perceived as Iran's attempt to create a sphere of influence around the Gulf littoral."⁴⁶⁴

In what seems as an attempt to support Bahrain's close Kuwaiti ally and both improve relations with Iraq, the Bahraini regime reportedly offered to mediate in the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border dispute.⁴⁶⁵

While political ties with Iraq were estranged, relations in the economic, educational, and cultural sphere were comparatively close. Iraq had established a trade center in Manama and the state-owned Iraqi Airways and Rafidain Bank had branches in Bahrain. As mentioned above a relatively large number of Bahraini students attended the University of Baghdad and other institutions of higher education in Iraq. This, however, concerned the Bahraini regime as their nationals became exposed and in some cases also attracted to Baathist ideology. Hence, the Al Khalifa considered the educational exchange with Iraq to be a potential gateway for subversive elements and ideas. Lastly, there was a significant Bahraini religious tourism to the holy Shiite sites in Karbala and Najaf.⁴⁶⁶

The conflictual relations with Baghdad and the threat to Bahrain's domestic stability emanating from Iraq motivated Manama to seek close relations with Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies. Beside suggestions of constructing a bridge connection between Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, the Al Khalifa regime also called for a military alliance among Arab Gulf monarchies. While such an alliance or any other meaningful military cooperation

annual basis to the same conditions. Letter, Bahraini Prime Minister Khalifa bin Sulman Al-Khalifa to Rear Admiral Bayne, 12/23/71, DEF 15-4 BAHRAIN-US 1/1/72, NND 969022, Box 1690, NARA.

⁴⁶³ See Telegram, Manama 376 (1972).

⁴⁶⁴ Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 126.

⁴⁶⁵ "Chronology: February 16, 1974-May 15, 1974," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1974), pp. 283-301, p. 296.

⁴⁶⁶ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 70.

failed to materialise for several years, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain symbolically conducted a joint manoeuvre in June of 1975.⁴⁶⁷

Once Iran had dropped its historic claim on Bahrain and accepted Bahraini independent statehood, relations between Manama and Tehran had improved significantly. The Shah's regime's foreign policy had become much less of a threat to the interests of the Bahraini leadership. More than that, both states had an interest in friendly relations in the post-British Gulf era. The Bahraini-Iranian rapprochement, which had begun in 1969 continued gradually after Bahrain's independence. This could be seen *inter alia* by the Bahraini Defence Minister's five-day visit to Iran in late April, early May 1973.⁴⁶⁸ The close economic connection between Bahrain and Iran, advanced by the large Iranian expatriate community among merchants in Bahrain, helped to improve relations between the two states. The opening of several Iranian bank branches in Bahrain was also evidence of thriving economic relations.⁴⁶⁹

Oman's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1971-75

In the first half of the 1970s, the Omani regime under the new Sultan, Qaboos bin Said Al Said, was preoccupied with both nation-building and fighting a war against the Dhofar rebels. Both the rebels and the Sultan's forces received substantial support by outside powers. Iran was, beside the United Kingdom, the largest supporter of Qaboos, while Iraq together with the PDRY and the Soviet Union supported the rebels.⁴⁷⁰ Logically, Iran and Iraq's engagement in the Omani civil war shaped Omani relations with the two subregional powers.

Between 1971 and 1975, Omani-Iranian relations were cordial and considerably closer than Muscat's relations with its Arab neighbour states Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This was evidenced *inter alia* by several meetings between Sultan Qaboos and the Shah in the months following the establishment of bilateral relations as well as the signing of a bilateral border agreement in 1972.⁴⁷¹ Much

⁴⁶⁷ Lawson, *Bahrain*, pp. 126f.

⁴⁶⁸ "Chronology: February 16, 1973-May 15, 1973," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Summer 1973), pp. 353-371, p. 361.

⁴⁶⁹ Anthony, *Arab States*, p. 70.

⁴⁷⁰ The People's Republic of China also supported the Dhofar rebels. However, this support had largely ended in 1970. Al-Khalili. *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 75.

⁴⁷¹ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 183 and Peterson, "Guerrilla Warfare," p. 286

more importantly, Iranian support was instrumental in the Omani regime's fight against the Dhofar rebels and decisive for the Sultan's eventual victory in the Omani civil war; Iranian financial support and shipments of military equipment began in 1971. Soon after Qaboos had taken power in July 1970, his troops supported by British officers and arms made progress in driving back the rebel forces. Towards the end of 1972, the Sultan's advances had prompted the Soviet Union to increase its support for the anti-Sultan front. In reaction, starting in January 1973 and upon request of the Omani government, Iran intervened militarily on the side of the Sultan.⁴⁷² The first Iranian troops to arrive were Special Forces units that, in the spring of 1973, participated in the establishment of the so called Hornbeam Line, a physical barrier that was meant to interrupt the rebels' supply lines. Over the following months, Iran supplied the Omani air force with fourteen helicopters, and in December 1973, the Shah sent a 1,200 man battle group to Dhofar.⁴⁷³ In order to interrupt the rebels' supply lines, the Shah's regime also committed F-5 fighter aircraft to patrol Oman's border to the PDYR. Moreover, destroyers of the Iranian Imperial Navy attacked rebel strongholds from the sea.⁴⁷⁴ When, in December 1974, the final campaign against the rebels started, Iranian forces played an essential role. In this regard, Allen Jr. and Rigsbee summarise

“In the Iranian fashion of massive force, the IITF [Imperial Iranian Task Force] included approximately 4,000 troops with two infantry battalions, a gun battery, Chinook cargo helicopters and Hueys, and naval support from the Iranian navy all under a brigadier-general.”⁴⁷⁵

After an initial setback, the Iranian Task Force managed to capture the rebel's capital of Rakhyut on January 5, 1975, heralding the end of the Dhofar War.⁴⁷⁶

Iran's substantial support for the Sultan had strategic reasons. As mentioned above, the Shah had a vital interest in the stabilisation of Oman under the moderate regime of Sultan Qaboos. A collapse of Qaboos' rule and an ensuing accession to power by the radical Marxist PFLOAG (later PFLO) would have

⁴⁷² Cordesman, *The Gulf*, pp. 435f.; Lt-Col. John McKeown, “Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and its Significance,” M.A. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1981, p. 78; and Peterson, “Guerrilla Warfare,” p. 286

⁴⁷³ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee, *Oman under Qaboos*, pp. 70f. and McKeown, “Britain and Oman,” p. 78.

⁴⁷⁴ Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 78.

⁴⁷⁵ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 72.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

had massive repercussions for Iran's interests. In the light of continuously closer Iraqi-Soviet relations and Baghdad's attempts to export its Baathist revolutionary ideology in the Gulf, the Shah's regime was particularly anxious to prevent further Communist and revolutionary advances in its immediate neighbourhood. The fact that the Omani Musandam Peninsula constituted the southern tip of the Strait of Hormuz further motivated the Shah to bolster Sultan Qaboos and to guarantee good neighbourly relations with Muscat for the foreseeable future. With its massive military intervention in Oman, Iran also reiterated its claim on subregional hegemony; Tehran would not allow developments in the Gulf contrary to its interests. Moreover, the Dhofar War offered an opportunity to the Shah to both demonstrate his military capabilities and give his forces combat training.⁴⁷⁷ The definitive number of Iranian troops deployed to Oman is disputed; based on an overview of different publications, it seems safe to say that Iranian force levels peaked in 1975 with 3,500 to 5,000 troops. As Al-Khalili states correctly, Marshall's suggestion that Iran had between 30,000 and 35,000 troops in Oman is dubious, as this figure was alleged by the PFLO.⁴⁷⁸ Interestingly, Sultan Qaboos admitted publicly Iran's active military involvement in the conflict not before February 1974, and then probably only in reaction to a PFLO conference in Beirut the month before during which the organisation had remonstrated against Iranian imperialist intervention in Dhofar.⁴⁷⁹ It can be assumed that Sultan Qaboos' reluctance to acknowledge Iranian intervention was based on his concern that it would provoke additional radical Arab nationalist propaganda against his rule.

Between 1971 and 1975, direct ties between Baghdad and Muscat were minimal. The Omani Information Minister's visit to Baghdad in June 1971 was the only state visit during that time. Sultan Qaboos' offer to enter into formal relations was rejected by Iraqi President Ahmad Hassan Al Bakr.⁴⁸⁰ Official

⁴⁷⁷ Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 77 and Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 436.

⁴⁷⁸ Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, pp. 77f.; Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 436; Katz, *Russia & Arabia*, p. 112; Marshall, *Iran's Persian Gulf Policy*, p. 9; and Peterson, "Guerrilla Warfare," p. 286. A report by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) puts the number of Iranian troops in Oman in March 1976 at approximately 3,000. DIA Defense Intelligence Notice Message 1234, "Oman: Involvement in Saudi-South Yemeni Rapprochement," 3/13/76, Ford Library Project File of Documents Declassified Through the Remote Archive Capture (RAC) Program_Box 8, NSA. NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 19, Country File Morocco – Oman, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

⁴⁷⁹ Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 77; p. 77, fn 51.

⁴⁸⁰ Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, p. 108.

diplomatic relations between Baghdad and Muscat were not established until January 1976.⁴⁸¹ Paradoxically, Iraq supported Oman's admission to both the Arab League and the United Nations. Regarding Iraq's stand on Oman's admission to the Arab League, Al-Khalili summarises

"Iraq's position toward the entire issue can be described as an incoherent vacillation between rejecting the sultanate's bid for membership and supporting it. In the end, however, Iraq chose to support the sultanate."⁴⁸²

After Saudi Arabia delayed Oman's admission for two weeks, the Sultanate was admitted to the regional organisation on September 29, 1971.⁴⁸³ With regard to Oman's admission to the United Nations, Baghdad's stance was even more surprising. Not only did Iraq vote in favour of Oman's admission to the United Nations on October 7, 1971, it even sponsored the respective UN General Assembly resolution.⁴⁸⁴

In the absence of any official ties, Iraq was heavily involved in inner-Omani developments. As mentioned above, the Baath regime in Baghdad had supported the rebels since the early 1960s both ideologically and physically, and increased greatly its support in the first years of the 1970s. *Ergo*, Iraq was a source of great danger to the interests of the Qaboos regime.⁴⁸⁵

3.3 From the Algiers Accord to the Iranian Revolution

The next phase of the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq set in following the Algiers Accord. This milestone in Iranian-Iraqi relations evoked considerable change in the international relations of the Gulf. Following the Baath Party's 1968 takeover of power the traditionally conflictual Iranian-Iraqi relations had further deteriorated. The decades-long conflict over the Shatt al-Arab escalated once again when in 1969 Tehran abrogated unilaterally the Iranian-Iraqi treaty of 1937 and enforced equal usage rights of the river. Beside their dispute over the Shatt al-Arab, Iran and Iraq also disagreed about other territories along their border. In general, as described in detail above, both

⁴⁸¹ Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 145. Peterson dates the establishment of Omani-Iraqi relations to late 1975. Peterson, "Guerrilla Warfare," p. 289.

⁴⁸² Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 70, fn 17.

⁴⁸³ Compare *ibid*, p. 72.

⁴⁸⁴ See UN documents A/L.636 and Add 1; A/RES/2754 (XXVI).

⁴⁸⁵ Compare Peterson, "Guerrilla Warfare," p. 289.

states had competing interests in the Gulf. The result was hostile bilateral relations. In order to weaken the Iraqi regime, Tehran gave support to the Iraqi Kurdish opposition in its fight for autonomy from Baghdad. When the intra-Iraqi conflict escalated in March 1974, Iranian support for the rebels increased. In early 1975, Iran even intervened militarily on the side of the rebels and provoked border clashes with Iraq in order to disperse Baghdad's forces from the Kurdish front. On March 6, 1975, having reached the verge of war, Iran and Iraq came to a comprehensive agreement that resolved the most important differences. During the OPEC summit in Algiers, the two states settled their land border dispute and agreed upon shared sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab. In return for these considerable Iraqi concessions, Iran pledged to terminate its aid for the Kurdish rebellion.⁴⁸⁶ The principles of the Algiers Accord were codified in Baghdad on June 13, 1975 in the Treaty on International Relations and Good Neighbourly Relations that

“(1) reaffirmed the Algiers Agreement; (2) demarcated the river boundary according to the *thalweg*; (3) instituted measures and mechanisms to stop ‘any infiltration of a subversive nature’ along the borders; and (4) re-emphasized the indivisibility of the treaty.”⁴⁸⁷

In the first half of the 1970s, international relations in the Gulf, particularly between Iraq and the remaining Gulf states, had been characterised by a high degree of tension and conflict. In the aftermath of the Algiers Accord, these tensions gradually subsided as Iraq's foreign policy underwent a transition. In this context Gause points out,

“Iraq's willingness to settle its differences with Iran was but one aspect of a general turn in Baghdad's foreign policy away from ideological confrontation and toward state-to-state cooperation, not just with Iran but also with the Gulf monarchies. While Iranian military pressure through the Kurds was the major reason for this switch, it also reflected the Ba'thist government's appreciation that its previous policies had isolated it both in the Gulf and in the larger Arab region. [...] Baghdad followed the Algiers Agreement with a charm offensive toward Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf monarchies.”⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ Compare Gause, *International Relations*, pp. 36f.

⁴⁸⁷ Abdulghani, *Iraq & Iran*, p. 153 (emphasis in the original). The treaty's fourth article emphasised the *quid pro quo* character of the Iranian-Iraqi agreement. Iraq had to make and honour territorial concessions in order for Iran to end its subversive activities in Iraq. Compare *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ Compare Gause, *International Relations*, p. 38.

Saudi Arabia's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1975-79

The transition in Iraqi Gulf policy had significant influence not only on Saudi-Iraqi but also on Saudi-Iranian relations. Riyadh welcomed Baghdad's initiative towards more cooperative relations with the Kingdom and the remaining Gulf states; a Saudi-Iraqi rapprochement became visible within only a matter of weeks following the Algiers Accord. Nonetheless, major Saudi concerns persisted: about Iraq's ambitions for a leadership role among Arab Gulf states, Baghdad's ongoing, although reduced, support for Baathist elements in the Arab Gulf monarchies as well as Iraq's anti-American stance and friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Regardless, with the immediate danger emanating from Iraq slowly receding, Riyadh's concerns about Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf increased. Against this background, the Saudi regime devised a strategy of partially neutralising Baghdad's and Tehran's ambitions and consolidating its influence in the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies by skilfully playing off both parties against each other.

In general, Saudi-Iranian relations remained friendly and cooperative until the Iranian Revolution. As in the years before, Riyadh and Tehran shared many interests with regard to subregional, regional, and global developments: the maintenance of stability and security in the Gulf; the preservation of regime stability in the conservative Gulf states associated with the prevention of a spread of Baathist and communist ideology; the containment of Iraqi nationalism; close political, economic, and military ties with the United States; the prevention of Soviet intrusion into the Gulf and Soviet advances in the Arab and Islamic world as well as in Africa in general; the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict including the restoration of Islamic control over Jerusalem; and the promotion of Islamic solidarity.⁴⁸⁹

Nonetheless, Riyadh and Tehran were not in agreement in all fields. Following the Algiers Accord, Iran reiterated its calls for the establishment of a comprehensive, multilateral security scheme in the Gulf. In a state visit to Riyadh on April 28, the Shah presented his proposal to King Khaled. While the Saudi regime shared in principal the interest in multilateral security cooperation in the Gulf, it was concerned that the far-reaching Iranian plan, which provided

⁴⁸⁹ Compare Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 67.

for “a substantial mobilization of the resources of the Gulf countries,” would allow Tehran to cement its subregional hegemony.⁴⁹⁰ In this context, the clear Iraqi objection to any multilateral security arrangement served Riyadh as it spared them the need to object to Iran’s proposal.⁴⁹¹ Mainly due to Iraqi opposition the Shah’s vision of a collective defence pact in the Gulf was served a final blow during the November 1976 Muscat meeting of all Gulf littoral states. For Saudi Arabia the failure of the Iranian plan meant the chance to pursue their own Gulf security scheme more effectively and enter into closer bilateral cooperation with the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies.⁴⁹²

Saudi Arabia made further attempts to balance Iranian power and reduce its influence on the Arabian Peninsula. For one thing, Riyadh invested in the Egypt’s economic development as it considered the Sadat regime an important counterweight to Iran on the regional level. Moreover, the Saudi regime had an interest in the elimination of Iran’s military presence in Oman as this was considered by Riyadh as an Iranian intervention in its traditional sphere of influence. Hence, in March 1976, Riyadh established diplomatic relations with the PDRY and subsequently brokered an understanding between the latter and Oman according to which South Yemen would end its support for the rebellion in exchange for a withdrawal of foreign troops from Oman; indeed, in January 1977, Iranian troops were partially withdrawn from Oman.⁴⁹³

Strong U.S. support for the Shah’s Gulf security scheme and the general U.S. perception of Iran as its main partner and guarantor for security in the Gulf upset the Saudi regime. The desire to counter this and improve its own standing in Washington was an important source of motivation for Riyadh to align its oil policy in such a way as to favour the economic interests of the United States.⁴⁹⁴ This led to new Saudi-Iranian disagreement over oil prices. At the May 1976 OPEC summit in Bali, the Saudi delegation rejected the call for a 15% rise in oil

⁴⁹⁰ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 267.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 267f.

⁴⁹² Compare *ibid*, pp. 269f.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 266, 269, 271.

⁴⁹⁴ As pointed out above, Saudi Arabia’s rejection of significant oil price increases in the 1970s had several economic reasons as well.

prices supported by Iran and Iraq. Due to Riyadh's uncompromising stance and its influence as top oil producer, the oil price was not raised at all.⁴⁹⁵

Saudi-Iranian disagreement on oil policy continued in December 1976. At the OPEC summit in Doha the majority of member states, including Kuwait and Qatar, agreed to raise the price of oil by 10% in January 1977, followed by another 5% increase six months later. Saudi Arabia and the UAE both broke ranks and increased the price of their oil exports by only 5%.⁴⁹⁶ Again, economic interests were partially the reason for Saudi Arabia's decision to break ranks with Iran. However, as it was the case in Bali, Riyadh chose its policy with regard to its own relations with the United States and the U.S.-Iranian relations. Saudi Arabia intended to enhance its relative status as important partner in the eyes of both the outgoing Ford and incoming Carter administration.⁴⁹⁷ Iranian reaction was aggressive, however, targeted mainly against Saudi Oil Minister Yamani. The Iranian press called Yamani a "stooge of capitalist circles" and accused him of "scheming to wreck OPEC's achievements."⁴⁹⁸

The ensuing two-tier price system within OPEC remained in existence for six months. At the July 1977 OPEC meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, a compromise was reached. Accordingly, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi increased their oil prices by 5% while the remaining states forewent the previously agreed additional 5% increase for July 1977. Hence, an equal price level was restored.⁴⁹⁹ This compromise had been reached in mid-April in talks in Saudi Arabia between King Khaled and the Shah's personal envoy and step-brother, Prince Gholamreza.⁵⁰⁰ The meeting advanced Saudi-Iranian economic cooperation also beyond the issue of oil prices. Saudi Arabia was reported to have agreed

⁴⁹⁵ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 268 and Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 449.

⁴⁹⁶ Shukri M. Ghanem, *OPEC: The Rise and Fall of an Exclusive Club* (London: KPI, 1986), p. 150. Safran states that Qatar, too, broke ranks and followed the decision of Saudi Arabia and UAE. Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 270. This, however, contradicts other accounts. See e.g. Mohammed E. Ahrari, *OPEC: The Failing Giant* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), p. 217; Ghanem, *OPEC*, p. 150; Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 451; Jan Martin Witte and Andreas Goldthau, *Die OPEC: Macht und Ohnmacht des Öl-Kartells* (Munich: Hanser, 2009), p. 136.

⁴⁹⁷ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 270.

⁴⁹⁸ Yair Hirschfeld and Arveh Shmuelevitz, "Iran," in Colin Legum and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East and Contemporary Survey, Volume One: 1976-77* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978), pp. 369-402, p. 393.

⁴⁹⁹ Ghanem, *OPEC*, p. 150.

⁵⁰⁰ Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, "Iran," pp. 393f.

to give Iran a very significant loan of \$3,000 million. The fact that Tehran decided to obtain the loan from Riyadh and not from a different source, “underlined a political motive, and established Saudi Arabia and Iran as economic partners on an equal standing.”⁵⁰¹ At the Stockholm summit Iran emphasised the end of the Saudi-Iranian disagreement on oil policy with the Iranian chief negotiator giving a statement according to which “Iran’s oil policy was identical with the Saudis’.”⁵⁰²

Following the agreement on oil prices Saudi-Iranian relations improved considerably. In early November, during a visit to Tehran, Saudi Interior Minister Naif bin Abdualziz Al Saud discussed with the Iranian government about joint actions in the fight against terrorism and signed an agreement on information exchange on criminal and subversive activities.⁵⁰³ In mid-January 1978, the Shah paid a visit to Riyadh. His main discussion points with King Khaled were Sadat’s Jerusalem visit two months earlier and the common approach to the developing situation in the Horn of Africa; Marxist Ethiopia, supported by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the PDRY, was fighting Somalia in the Ogaden War. Under these conditions, the Shah initiated a new attempt to establish a Gulf security pact. This time, Saudi Arabia was more susceptible to the Shah’s proposal and, particularly after the Marxist coup d’état in Afghanistan in April 1978 and the pro-Soviet regime change in the PDRY in June, the Saudi regime tried to convince Iraq to agree to a comprehensive Gulf security agreement. To coordinate their positions, Saudi Defence Minister Sultan visited both Iran and Iraq in April 1978. Before these attempts could bear any fruit the Iranian regime crumbled.⁵⁰⁴

The continuous deterioration of Iranian domestic stability over the course of 1978 deeply concerned the Saudi regime. Despite their disagreement with the Shah on certain issues, the Saudi government feared the consequences radical change in Iran would have on the security of the entire Gulf area. Repeatedly,

⁵⁰¹ Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, “Iran,” p. 394.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ David Menashri, “Iran,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Two: 1977-78* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), pp. 463-512, p. 493.

⁵⁰⁴ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 272-4 and Ofra Bengio and Uriel Dann, “Iraq,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Two: 1977-78* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), pp. 513-35, p. 526.

the leadership in Riyadh expressed public support for the Iranian regime. In August 1978, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd commended the Shah for the development Iran had made under his rule and blamed international Communism and global leftist elements for the subversion of the Iranian and other Gulf regimes. Fahd added that should against all expectations the Shah fail to restore internal stability, “the Arab states will have to support Iran and the Shah, because the stability of that country is important to the [entire] region.”⁵⁰⁵ Not only did the Saudi regime see in the potential overthrow of the Shah a loss of a source of Gulf stability, but it also feared the extension of Communist influence in post-Shah Iran; reportedly, “the Saudis were apprehensive that the chaos in Iran was part of a grand Soviet-orchestrated strategy in the region.”⁵⁰⁶

As a general trend, Saudi-Iraqi relations underwent a rapprochement from the Algiers Accord to the Iranian Revolution. Particularly the field of economic cooperation between Saudi Arabia (and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies) and Iraq saw improvements.⁵⁰⁷ Nonetheless, conflict arose over several issues and major differences in interests and political ideology prevailed over the entire period.

On March 25, 1975, a mere three weeks after the conclusion of the Algiers Accord, King Faisal fell victim to an assassination. Two days later, newly appointed Crown Prince Fahd gave a speech in which he outlined the new policy under King Khaled. Fahd used this opportunity to express Saudi Arabia’s “desire to cultivate brotherly relations with Iraq.”⁵⁰⁸ First signs of a bilateral rapprochement became visible in April when an agreement was reached on the partition of the Saudi-Iraqi neutral zone, which had been established by the 1922 Uqair Protocol. Moreover, Saudi Arabia began mediating in the Iraqi-Syrian conflict over the Euphrates River. In addition, Saudi Arabia reportedly granted Iraq a \$200 million loan.⁵⁰⁹ On June 9, the Saudi Crown Prince arrived

⁵⁰⁵ Cited in Menashri, “Iran” (1977-78), p. 493.

⁵⁰⁶ Jacob Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 736-69, p. 749.

⁵⁰⁷ While the Saudi-Iraqi trade relations did not show any significant improvement (Iraqi exports to Saudi Arabia even decreased), the Arab Gulf monarchies and Iraq worked together in several multilateral economic cooperation institutions. For more details, see subchapter on UAE-Iraq relations below.

⁵⁰⁸ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 266.

⁵⁰⁹ In addition, Saudi Arabia and Iraq agreed to rebuild the road connecting Najaf and Medina.

in Baghdad for a three-day state visit, the first high-level state visit between Saudi Arabia and Iraq since Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf. However, at this meeting, the limits of Saudi-Iraqi cooperation and the Iraqi claim to leadership among Arab Gulf states became obvious when Baghdad denied stoutly Saudi attempts to mediate the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait.⁵¹⁰ The fact that the Saudi regime continued its expansion of the military base at Hafar al-Batin in northern Saudi Arabia, close to the tripartite border with Kuwait and Iraq, is indicative of Riyadh's concerns about Iraq's intentions.⁵¹¹

In the first two years after the Algiers Accord, Iraq's rejection of the collective defence pact suggested by the Shah came in useful to the Saudi regime; however, Iraq's interest in a network of bilateral security agreements raised concerns in Riyadh as Baghdad's suggestion was based clearly on a desire to increase its influence on the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies.⁵¹² The renewed aggressive Iraqi stance towards Kuwait from August 1976 onwards caused additional Saudi apprehension.⁵¹³

Another source for Saudi-Iraqi conflict was Riyadh's aforementioned oil price policy at the Bali and Doha OPEC summits. At the December 1976 Doha summit Iraq had called for an even higher increase in oil prices (26%) than Iran (15%).⁵¹⁴ The Iraqi reaction to Saudi Arabia's unwillingness to follow the majority in raising oil prices by 10% provoked harsh Iraqi criticism. After his return to Baghdad, Iraqi Oil Minister Abdulkarim Tayeh accused Riyadh to act "in the service of imperialism and Zionism" and called the Saudi regime "a defeatist and reactionary cell working inside and outside O.P.E.C. against the interest of oil-producing countries and other developing states."⁵¹⁵

Once Iran and Saudi Arabia had reached an understanding and their relations showed significant improvement, the Iraqi government in a balancing move was also increasingly motivated to improve its relations with the Arab Gulf monarchies. As part of a Gulf tour the Iraqi interior minister, accompanied by the

Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 154.

⁵¹⁰ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 266.

⁵¹¹ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 11.

⁵¹² Compare *ibid*, p. 267.

⁵¹³ For more details on this issue, see subchapter on Kuwait-Iraq relations below.

⁵¹⁴ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 270.

⁵¹⁵ Cited in Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 451.

foreign minister, paid a visit to Saudi Arabia to encourage cooperation. This and the détente in Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations were welcomed in Riyadh.⁵¹⁶

As mentioned above, the situation in the Horn of Africa motivated Saudi Arabia to agree with Iran on the need for a multilateral security arrangement in the Gulf. In an attempt to get the Iraqi regime to agree, Saudi Defence Minister Sultan paid a visit to Baghdad in April 1978. Allegedly, the ongoing debate in the U.S. Congress about large-scale arms deals with Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia prevented Iraqi consent. In the end, tripartite negotiations in May and June as well as a visit to Baghdad by Crown Prince Fahd in early August failed to bring about an agreement on collective security measures.⁵¹⁷

In the autumn of 1978, both Riyadh and Baghdad were concerned about the developments in Iran and voiced their support for the Shah's regime.⁵¹⁸ At the same time, Saudi Arabia and Iraq were in disagreement about the appropriate reaction to the Camp David Accords. While Iraq was calling for prompt and severe sanctions against the Sadat regime in the framework of the Arab League, Saudi Arabia was pressing for a softer approach.⁵¹⁹ Indeed, the domestic crisis in Iran and Iraq's response to Sadat's policy towards Israel became closely intertwined.

With the downfall of the Shah becoming increasingly likely, the Iraqi regime saw an opportunity to realise its long-held objective to take the role of protector of the Arab Gulf monarchies and install itself as hegemon on the Arabian Peninsula and in the Gulf at large. To realise this, Iraq applied a skilfully crafted strategy taking advantage of the coincidence of several regional developments. With the security situation in Iran constantly deteriorating, it was Iraq's intention to prevent the Arab Gulf monarchies from turning towards the United States or Egypt (or both) in search for security; instead they should turn to Baghdad as their protector. Safran illustrates Iraq's strategic thinking as follows

“The fact that Iraq had been loosening its ties to the Soviet Union for some time made it more acceptable to the Gulf countries' rulers. Furthermore the fact that the United States had been perceived to be

⁵¹⁶ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 271.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 271f. and Bengio and Dann, “Iraq” (1977-78), p. 526.

⁵¹⁸ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 274.

⁵¹⁹ For a more detailed account, see Chapter 4.

ineffective in countering Soviet advances in Afghanistan, south Arabia, and the Horn of Africa undermined America's credibility as a security asset. Nevertheless, to capitalize on the opportunity, Iraq needed to devise a nonprovocative stratagem to block entirely the Gulf countries' way to the United States and Egypt and leave them no choice but to rally to itself. Egypt's coincidental signing of the Camp David accords under American aegis at that very time gave the Iraqis the perfect chance to attempt such a stratagem.⁵²⁰

In the end, the disagreement between Saudi Arabia and Iraq over anti-Egyptian sanctions was to a large degree an expression of disagreement over the power constellation in the Gulf.

Kuwait's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1975-79

Due to the geostrategic constellation at the head of the Gulf, with Iraq having only very limited deep-water access, Kuwait's relations with Baghdad had traditionally been conflictual. Iraqi claims on Kuwaiti territory, particularly to the islands of Warba and Bubiyan, had been a highly recurrent phenomenon seemingly irrespective of the current relations between Baghdad and Tehran. However, Iraq's demeanour towards Kuwait became more aggressive whenever Iraqi-Iranian conflict over the use of the Shatt al-Arab intensified. Hence, the Kuwaiti regime welcomed the 1975 Algiers Accord, hoping that the Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement would effectuate an easing of tensions with its powerful and aggressive neighbour. However, while Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations showed some improvement, Iraqi claims on the two islands did not subside. In addition, Baghdad did not give up its support for subversive elements in Kuwait.⁵²¹

Following the Algiers Accord the Iraqi government requested from Kuwait a long-term lease of Warba Island and the northern part of Bubiyan Island, so that Baghdad could position military forces there that would defend the Iraqi port at Umm Qasr; in return, Iraq offered to recognise Kuwait in its current borders. Underlining the fact that the islands were uninhabited, Baghdad argued that its demand was reasonable. Nonetheless, Kuwait rejected the Iraqi offer and began with the construction of outposts and other buildings on the two islands

⁵²⁰ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 275.

⁵²¹ Compare Uriel Dann and Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in Colin Legum and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East and Contemporary Survey, Volume One: 1976-77* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978), pp. 403-20, p. 413 and Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 145.

emphasising Kuwaiti territorial sovereignty rights.⁵²² Khadduri summarises the motives behind Kuwait's decision as follows,

“These islands [...] are not a small part of Kuwait; they form nearly a quarter of her territory, and they lie so close to the coast that their control by a foreign country would not only compromise Kuwaiti sovereignty but also might involve Kuwait in conflicts with neighbors to which she would not like to be drawn.”⁵²³

With respect to the latter issue Khadduri adds,

“In conversations with a number of responsible Kuwaiti officials, the writer was reminded time and again that Kuwait has always maintained a policy of peace and neutrality with her neighbors and that Iraq's demand to use the islands of Warba and Bubyān for military purposes would necessarily affect her policy of neutrality.”⁵²⁴

The second half of 1976 saw a serious deterioration in Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations. When the Kuwaiti regime dissolved the National Assembly and suspended basic constitutional clauses on August 29, the Iraqi response was very harsh. Baghdad denounced the Kuwaiti regime and its measures as reactionary; moreover, it renewed its claims on the two islands.⁵²⁵ On September 9, Iraqi troops intruded into Kuwaiti territory and erected a tent camp roughly one kilometre across the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. One month later – on the same day as Acting Foreign Minister Salim Sabah Al Salim Al Sabah met Revolution Command Council Vice Chairman Saddam Hussein – Kuwait agreed to raise its annual liquefied petroleum gas exports to Iraq by 15,000 tons.⁵²⁶ This sequence of events does not seem to be coincidental. Already before had Kuwait tried to mitigate Iraq's aggressive stand by providing financial and economic incentives. In December 1976, the Iraqi government reiterated its claim on sovereignty rights over Warba and Bubiyan, prompting a public denial by Acting Kuwaiti Prime Minister Jabir Al Ali Al Sabah.⁵²⁷ Bilateral relations further suffered when in January 1977 Iraq shot down a Kuwaiti jet, which had allegedly entered Iraqi

⁵²² Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq*, p. 158. Assiri reports that Kuwait had made plans to build a settlement on Bubiyan as well as a bridge to connect the island to the mainland. Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 55f. The bridge was eventually being built from 1981-1983.

⁵²³ Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq*, p. 158.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 158f.

⁵²⁵ Dann and Bengio, “Iraq” (1976-77), p. 413 and Aryeh Shmuelevitz, “Gulf States,” in Colin Legum and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume One: 1976-77* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978), pp. 330-68, p. 345.

⁵²⁶ “Chronology: August 16, 1976-November 15, 1976,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Winter 1977), pp. 47-62, pp. 53, 55.

⁵²⁷ “Chronology: November 16, 1976-February 15, 1977,” p. 196.

airspace.⁵²⁸ Also in early 1977, Kuwait resumed oil production at Jirfan, located close to the Iraqi border within territory claimed by Iraq.⁵²⁹

Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations improved greatly with Kuwaiti Minister of Interior and Defence Saad's seven-day visit to Iraq in late June and early July 1977. Saad Al Abdullah and Saddam Hussein agreed to establish two ministerial committees: one committee was tasked with finding a solution to the border conflict and developing closer bilateral relations; the other committee was assigned the task to oversee day-to-day contacts along the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border. Sheikh Saad and Saddam Hussein further agreed upon the withdrawal of Kuwaiti and Iraqi forces from the joint border.⁵³⁰ Indeed, troop withdrawal began on July 20.⁵³¹ On the positive side, Iraq now seemed ready to recognise Kuwait's sovereignty in principal; however, the basic dissent over the islands and other territorial readjustments had not been removed.⁵³² The Kuwaiti government "angrily denied" reports that suggested that Kuwait had accepted Baghdad's request of a long-term lease of Warba and Bubiyan islands.⁵³³

Despite the ongoing territorial dispute, there was an increase in official visits⁵³⁴ and bilateral cooperation from 1977 onwards. Kuwait and Baghdad agreed to construct a railroad connecting their states. In addition, the two governments concluded agreements on cooperation in the fields of culture, science, information, and agriculture.⁵³⁵ On October 1, 1978, a decision was taken to establish an Iraqi trade center in Kuwait City and a Kuwaiti equivalent in

⁵²⁸ "Chronology: November 16, 1976-February 15, 1977," p. 194.

⁵²⁹ Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 154.

⁵³⁰ Dann and Bengio, "Iraq" (1976-77), p. 413

⁵³¹ "Chronology: May 16, 1977-August 15, 1977," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Autumn 1977), pp. 469-82, p. 474.

⁵³² Compare Edmund Ghareeb, "Iraq: Emergent Gulf Power," in Hossein Amirsadeghi, *The Security of the Persian Gulf* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 197-230, p. 209.

⁵³³ Shmuelevitz, "Gulf States" (1976-77), p. 346.

⁵³⁴ Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jabir Al Sabah met with his Iraqi counterpart in Baghdad in November 1977; Iraqi Interior Minister Al Duri visited Kuwait in May 1978; and Vice Chairman of the Revolution Command Council Saddam Hussein paid a visit to Kuwait in October 1978. "Chronology: August 16, 1977-November 15, 1977," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Winter 1978), pp. 45-58, p. 51; "Chronology: May 16, 1978-August 15, 1978," p. 463; and "Chronology: August 6, 1978-November 15, 1978," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Winter 1979), pp. 45-57, p. 52.

⁵³⁵ Bengio and Dann, "Iraq" (1977-78), p. 526.

Baghdad. In December 1978 and January 1979 further talks were held on closer economic, industrial, and agricultural cooperation.⁵³⁶

Up to the Iranian revolution relations between Kuwait and Tehran were solid, although for the longest time not particularly close. In 1976, after the PDRY had shot down an Iranian military plane in its airspace, Tehran requested Kuwaiti mediation assistance in its attempt to retrieve the pilot, the deceased co-pilot, and the F-14 fighter jet.⁵³⁷ In the following year, it was Iran that reportedly mediated between Kuwait and Baghdad in the conflict over Warba and Bubiyan. The visits of the Kuwaiti Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Al Rashid and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jabir Al Sabah to Tehran in February and May 1977, respectively, also signaled an improvement in bilateral relations.⁵³⁸ In 1978, the Kuwaiti regime became increasingly concerned about the escalating domestic turbulences in Iran as it feared destabilising effects on security and stability in the entire Gulf subregion. Hence, Kuwait hoped for a restabilisation of the Iranian regime and expressed public support for the Shah.⁵³⁹ In October of the same year, after Ruhollah Khomeini had been asked to leave his exile residence in the Iraqi city of Najaf, the Kuwaiti regime denied him the right of residence in the Emirate.⁵⁴⁰ This decision could be understood as support of the Shah.

UAE Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1975-79

The March 1975 Algiers OPEC summit was not only the venue for the groundbreaking Iranian-Iraqi agreement, it was also the occasion of the first meeting between Sheikh Zayid and the Shah since UAE independence. Addressing Iranian media representatives the UAE President emphasised his country's interest in the improvement of economic ties with Iran and the promotion of good bilateral relations in general.⁵⁴¹ Subsequently, the UAE-Iranian rapprochement took an even faster pace. This was evidenced by numerous state visits by UAE and Iranian officials to each other's countries and

⁵³⁶ Eli Flint, "Kuwait," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 449-60, p. 452.

⁵³⁷ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 65.

⁵³⁸ Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, "Iran," p. 394.

⁵³⁹ Menashri, "Iran" (1977-78), p. 495.

⁵⁴⁰ Flint, "Kuwait," p. 452.

⁵⁴¹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 146.

the praise for each other's policies. Moreover, the Shah assured his respect for the UAE's territorial integrity and domestic sovereignty and even pledged to deter foreign and domestic threats against UAE security. In UAE rhetoric, earlier references to an Arab battle for the preservation of the Arab character of the Gulf gave way to an emphasis of the vital necessity of Arab-Iranian cooperation to achieve common goals.⁵⁴² When Sheikh Zayid visited Iran in December 1975, he stressed the "religious and spiritual bonds" between both countries and expressed gratitude for the Iranian people's historic involvement in the development of the Emirates. A joint statement with the Shah upon conclusion of Sheikh Zayid's visit reiterated both countries' intention to collaborate in the fields of Gulf and wider Middle Eastern security, oil policy, and the liberation of Jerusalem from Israeli occupation.⁵⁴³ The following two years saw a continuation of regular visits – including top-level visits by Sheikh Zayid in late October/early November 1977, Sheikh Rashid in December 1976 and May 1977 –, messages, and public praises of bilateral cooperation. In November 1976, in a phase of severe domestic political crisis in the UAE, Sheikh Zayid turned to the Shah for support in convincing the ruler of Dubai to not leave the federation over disagreements. Educational cooperation was improved in May 1977, when Tehran agreed to the admission of UAE students at Iranian universities.⁵⁴⁴ On the occasion of Sheikh Zayid's visit to Tehran in early November 1977, Iran and the UAE reportedly agreed to exchange intelligence on subversive, leftist, and communist groups and activities in the Gulf area. Moreover, the UAE President and the Shah reiterated their common objective according to which regional security should be guaranteed solely through the cooperation among regional states, "without any foreign interference."⁵⁴⁵

The ongoing occupation of the three islands lost in significance and had virtually no hindering effect on UAE-Iranian relations. A communiqué issued upon the conclusion of Sheikh Zayid's December 1975 visit to Iran left the island issue unmentioned. When the UAE President returned to Tehran in October 1977, he went as far as saying that UAE-Iranian relations were free of misunder-

⁵⁴² Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 146f.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 147.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 148f.

⁵⁴⁵ Cited in Menashri, "Iran" (1977-78), p. 494.

standings. Encapsulating the motivation behind this change in UAE attitude Al-
Alkim notes,

“Clearly Iran was important to the conservative governments of the Gulf states, of which the UAE was one, in order to maintain the *status quo*. This in turn explains why the UAE had chosen to suspend the issue of the islands in favour of good relations with Iran.”⁵⁴⁶

Even the previously very tense relations between Ras al-Khaimah and Iran improved during this period. Crown Prince Khalid bin Saqr Al Qasimi’s visit to Iran in early October 1975 was a milestone in relations as it constituted the first such visit by a senior official of Ras al-Khaimah since Iran’s seizure of the Tunb islands. The Crown Prince returned to Iran several times over the following years and there were speculations that he tried to broker an agreement with Iran similar to the Sharjah-Iranian agreement on Abu Musa, which provided for financial compensation and participation in oil production revenues.⁵⁴⁷ In 1977, the government of Ras al-Khaimah declared publicly that it was interested in cooperation with Iran.⁵⁴⁸

Dubai continued to maintain the strongest and most cordial relations with Iran among all UAE emirates. In 1975, in its support for the Iranian regime, the Dubai government went as far to close down a local newspaper that had published an article critical of the SAVAK, Iran’s central intelligence service. Moreover, Sheikh Rashid disagreed with the federal government’s stand when he supported Tehran’s proposal of a Gulf security pact and took Iran’s side in the border conflict between Ras al-Khaimah and Oman that erupted in the autumn of 1977.⁵⁴⁹

In the economic field, UAE-Iranian relations saw major improvements from 1975 through 1978. A milestone in this respect was the comprehensive December 1976 bilateral economic cooperation agreement. Within the scope of the treaty the two parties agreed to establish a Joint Investment Bank with a start-up capital of \$100 million⁵⁵⁰ as well as a joint ministerial committee tasked with the

⁵⁴⁶ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 151. (emphasis in the original)

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, “Iran,” p. 364.

⁵⁴⁹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 150.

⁵⁵⁰ The Joint Investment Bank was mainly established to allow for UAE investments in Iran. Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, “Iran,” p. 394.

improvement of economic and technical cooperation, which was to convene on a regular basis; to hold commercial exhibitions; conduct joint industrial and other development projects; improve trade conditions; encourage the establishment of shopping centres; fight sea pollution; and improve and extend cooperation in the fields of agriculture, mass communication, education, and cultural exchange.⁵⁵¹ Concrete steps towards these goals were taken in April of the following year with the adoption of bilateral memoranda that provided the basis for three major private sector joint ventures: the construction of two hotels in Esfahan and Bandar Abbas by Iran Air and UAE interests; the establishment of a department store chain with branches in Iran, Bahrain, and Dubai by the Iranian Industrial and Mining Development Bank and UAE interests; and a cattle and livestock breeding project in the Iranian Province of Khuzestan implemented by a consortium of the Agricultural Development Bank and private investors from Dubai.⁵⁵² Al-Alkim points out that “it is clear from a reading of the economic co-operation memoranda that the [1976 economic] agreement was, in fact, between Iran and Dubai rather than Iran and the UAE. [...] The use of the name ‘UAE’ in some of the clauses was only to confer legitimacy on the agreement,” since the conclusion of a treaty with a foreign state had to be conducted or approved by the UAE federal authority.⁵⁵³

The volume of Iranian exports to the UAE saw a considerable decline from a trade value of roughly 385 million UAE dirhams (\$97 million) in 1975 to approximately 110 million UAE dirhams in 1978 (\$28.4 million). During the same time period, though, the share of Iranian products among UAE imports increased from 6% to 26%.⁵⁵⁴ Therefore, the decrease in Iranian import figures was caused by a considerable reduction of UAE imports in general and was not indicative of any dissent between the UAE and Iran. Again, the vast majority of Iranian imports entered the UAE in Dubai, amounting to approximately 87% in 1978. In that same year the UAE exported goods to Iran worth just above 595,000 UAE dirhams.

⁵⁵¹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 153.

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, p. 154 and Shmuelevitz, “Gulf States” (1976-77), p. 364.

⁵⁵³ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 154.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 157. The value in U.S. dollars has been calculated by the author based on historic exchange rates between the UAE dirham and the U.S. dollar.

Despite intensified bilateral coordination and cooperation and general improvement of relations, there was also disagreement between the UAE and Iran regarding several issues. One aspect was the Iranian call for the establishment of a subregional security pact. While the UAE shared Iran's conviction that the responsibility for Gulf security should be primarily with the littoral states, the UAE government did not support Iran's proposition. Strict Saudi opposition to the collective security pact had considerable influence on the UAE stand.⁵⁵⁵ As noted above, Sheikh Rashid of Dubai was the only ruler among the Emirates to approve of Iran's proposal. In April 1976, Sheikh Zayid also rejected publicly Iran's proposal for the standardisation of Gulf militaries; however, his argument that "such a policy would weaken the military capability of the armed forces," was little convincing.⁵⁵⁶ It can be assumed that Saudi pressure influenced this decision as well.

Another aspect that caused some conflict in UAE-Iranian, or more precisely Sharjah-Iranian relations was dispute regarding the distribution of revenues obtained from oil production in the vicinity of Abu Musa and the Tunbs.⁵⁵⁷ This, however, did not affect relations in any significant way.

In the field of oil policy, the UAE followed Saudi lead in calling for moderate oil prices. In January 1977, the UAE alongside Saudi Arabia refused to raise oil prices for more than 5% while the remaining OPEC members implemented a 10% raise. Six months later, a compromise could be reached according that ended the first two-tiered price system in OPEC history.⁵⁵⁸

The creation of the Arabian Gulf News Agency in January caused some tension in UAE-Iranian relations. While Tehran did not reject the institution itself, it objected its name; the term "Arabian Gulf" to be precise. Iran had traditionally insisted in the designation of both the subregion and the body of water as the "Persian Gulf;" an expression of Tehran's repeated claim of subregional hegemony. Hence, it considered the name of the newly established institution to be an affront. In consequence, Iran recalled its ambassadors from all founding states of the new institution – the Arab Gulf monarchies, including the UAE, and

⁵⁵⁵ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 148f.

⁵⁵⁶ Cited in *ibid*, p. 149.

⁵⁵⁷ Shmuelevitz, "Gulf States" (1976-77), p. 364.

⁵⁵⁸ For more details, see subchapter on Saudi-Iranian relations.

Iraq – and only sent them back after the term “Arabian” had been dropped from the news Agency’s name. However, the Iranian act had to be understood as a symbolic sign of protest rather than an expression of a serious diplomatic crisis.⁵⁵⁹

As described in detail above, these relatively minor dissensions did not prevent the UAE from considering Iran as an important partner and a source of stability and security in the Gulf. Therefore, the growing domestic instability in Iran in course of the autumn of 1978 concerned the UAE. The maintenance of the Shah’s regime was clearly in UAE interest. However, the UAE government was cautious to not take sides openly in the intra-Iranian dispute. Having close economic relations with Iran as well as a large Iranian expatriate community, and being a militarily weak state in a traditionally conflict-prone area, the UAE regime had to ensure continuously stable relations with Tehran. Having this in mind, the UAE for the largest part neither openly supported the Shah nor his opposition.⁵⁶⁰ The only notable exception was when UAE Foreign Minister Ahmad Khalifa Al Suwaidi met with the Shah and in mid-September 1978. On this occasion, Al Suwaidi expressed UAE support for the Shah’s introduction of martial law earlier that month.⁵⁶¹

The UAE government welcomed the Iranian-Iraqi Algiers Accord as the agreement held out the prospects of both an increase in Gulf stability and a decrease in Iraq’s subversion activities in the Arab Gulf monarchies in general and in the UAE in particular. Despite the fact that Baghdad did not give up its ideological support for radical elements in the UAE and the latter remained sceptical about the Baath regime’s policies, bilateral relations saw gradual improved from 1975 onwards. For one thing, Baghdad did not consider the steadily improving relations between the UAE and Iran as threatening to its interests as it did before its rapprochement with Tehran. Accordingly, the Iraqi regime reduced its political pressure on the UAE government.⁵⁶² Moreover, Iraq had an interest in economic cooperation with all Arab Gulf monarchies, including the UAE. In the second half of the 1970s, the UAE and Iraq became

⁵⁵⁹ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 149 and “Chronology: November 16, 1975-February 15, 1976,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 201-20, p. 209.

⁵⁶⁰ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 152.

⁵⁶¹ Menashri, “Iran” (1977-78), p. 495.

⁵⁶² Niblock, “Iraqi Policies,” p. 144.

co-founders of or were partners in several institutions in the Gulf⁵⁶³: the Arab Maritime Petroleum Transport Company⁵⁶⁴, the Gulf International Bank⁵⁶⁵, the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (GOIC)⁵⁶⁶, the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the Gulf States and Arabian Peninsula (CMAGSAP)⁵⁶⁷, the Technical Consulting Bureau for Gulf Ports⁵⁶⁸, and the United Arab Shipping Company.⁵⁶⁹

UAE-Iraqi trade relations also improved in the second half of the 1970s. In 1976 Iraqi commercial centres were established in Abu Dhabi and Dubai to promote Iraqi exports. Indeed, Iraqi imports to the UAE increased from a trade value of \$600,000 in 1975 to \$1.5 million in 1978. Moreover, while the UAE did not export any goods to Iraq in 1975 they exported goods worth \$3.9 million in 1978.⁵⁷⁰

Between 1975 and early 1979 there were also a few high-level visits by UAE officials to Baghdad and vice versa: in May 1975, the UAE Chief of Staff was invited to attend a military parade in Baghdad; in December of the same year, the UAE Defence Minister held talks with Iraqi government officials in the course of which Iraq reportedly offered the UAE military and technical assistance; and in mid-November 1976, UAE Foreign Minister Al Suwaidi visited Baghdad and met separately with Iraqi President Ahmad Hassan Al Bakr and RCC Vice Chairman Saddam Hussein.⁵⁷¹ It is conceivable that the UAE Foreign Minister used this opportunity to give advance notice to the Iraqi regime of the upcoming economic agreement with Iran. In 1977, in the course of a Gulf tour, Saddam Hussein visited the UAE, accompanied by the Iraqi Ministers of

⁵⁶³ Compare Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 151 and Nazih N. Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), p. 153.

⁵⁶⁴ The Arab Maritime Petroleum Transport Company was founded by the OAPEC members (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) in 1973.

⁵⁶⁵ The Gulf International Bank was established in 1975 by the six Arab Gulf monarchies; Iraq joined later.

⁵⁶⁶ The Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting was founded by the Arab Gulf monarchies and Iraq in 1976.

⁵⁶⁷ The Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the Gulf States and Arabian Peninsula was established in 1976 by all Arabian Peninsula states and Iraq.

⁵⁶⁸ Technical Consulting Bureau for Gulf Ports established by Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in 1976.

⁵⁶⁹ The United Arab Shipping Company was set up by the Arab Gulf monarchies (except for Oman) and Iraq in 1976.

⁵⁷⁰ Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 162.

⁵⁷¹ "Chronology: August 16, 1976-November 15, 1976," p. 53.

Trade as well as the Governor of the Iraqi Central Bank.⁵⁷² Finally, in mid-November 1978, UAE Oil Minister Mana Sayid Al Utayba paid a visit to Iraq as part of a larger tour of oil exporting countries.⁵⁷³

Bahrain's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1975-79

Following the Algiers Accord, Bahraini-Iraqi relations gradually improved. The main reason for this development was the slowly reduced Iraqi support for subversive elements in Bahrain. According to Cordesman, this support came to a full stop in 1978.⁵⁷⁴

Iraq's increased interest in economic cooperation with the Arab Gulf monarchies soon bore fruits and led to improvement in general bilateral relations between Baghdad and Manama. On November 4, 1975, Bahrain concluded its first bilateral economic agreement with Iraq since independence. According to the treaty Baghdad would provide Manama aid in the fields of agriculture and industry.⁵⁷⁵ In January of the following year, Iraq and the Arab Gulf monarchies (with the exception of Oman) established the United Arab Shipping Company.⁵⁷⁶ Also in 1976, Iraq opened a commercial center in Bahrain, and in 1977, while on a tour through the Gulf, RCC Vice Chairman Saddam Hussein visited Manama and brought with him the Ministers of Agriculture and Trade as well as the Governor of the Iraqi Central Bank. The composition of the delegation clearly indicated Iraqi interest in close economic cooperation with Bahrain.⁵⁷⁷ Moreover, Iraqi exports to Bahrain jumped from a trade value of a mere \$0.3 million in 1975 to \$5.8 million in 1978 making Bahrain the second largest importer of Iraqi goods among the Arab Gulf monarchies.⁵⁷⁸

During the same timeframe, relations between Bahrain and Iran were cordial. The only exception was Tehran's symbolic recall of its ambassador to Manama

⁵⁷² Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 155.

⁵⁷³ "Chronology: November 16, 1978-February 15, 1979," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring 1979), pp. 189-205, p. 199.

⁵⁷⁴ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 408.

⁵⁷⁵ "Chronology: August 16, 1975-November 15, 1975," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter 1976), pp. 63-76, p. 68.

⁵⁷⁶ "Chronology: November 16, 1975-February 15, 1976," p. 206.

⁵⁷⁷ Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 155.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 162.

in context of the foundation of the Arabian Gulf News Agency.⁵⁷⁹ Otherwise, bilateral relations were characterised by close economic ties and frequent high-level meetings. The Iranian Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda visited Manama in late November, early December 1975. During Hoveyda's three-day visit it was agreed to establish a high level committee tasked with the effective implementation of economic cooperation agreements.⁵⁸⁰ In May of the following year, Bahraini Defence Minister Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa paid a five-day visit to Iran.⁵⁸¹ Further high level visits were paid by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Ali Khalatbari to Manama in December 1976 and the Bahraini ruler, Emir Isa Al Khalifa to Tehran in June 1978.⁵⁸² While Gulf security was the main issue at the meeting of Emir Isa Al Khalifa with the Shah – in this regard both leaders agreed that subregional security was “the responsibility of the littoral states alone,”⁵⁸³ the two rulers also finalised an agreement on further scientific and cultural cooperation.⁵⁸⁴

Oman's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1975-79

Over the whole period from the Algiers Accord to the Iranian Revolution, bilateral relations between Muscat and Tehran remained very cordial. Iran's continuing military support contributed greatly to Sultan Qaboos' victory in the Dhofar War. On December 11, 1975 the Sultan announced officially the end of the War; the last PFLO attacks ended eventually in April 1976.⁵⁸⁵ Following the end of the Omani civil war, Omani-Iranian strategic partnership continued. For one thing, Iran was still concerned about Oman's domestic stability as the Sultanate remained exposed to a continuous threat emanating from its radical

⁵⁷⁹ For more details, see section on UAE-Iranian Relations.

⁵⁸⁰ “Chronology: November 16, 1975-February 15, 1976,” p. 207.

⁵⁸¹ “Chronology: April 16, 1976-August 15, 1976,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Autumn 1976), pp. 519-38, p. 524.

⁵⁸² “Chronology: November 16, 1976-February 15, 1977,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 189-203, p. 193 and “Chronology: May 16, 1978-August 15, 1978,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Autumn 1978), pp. 457-69, p. 460.

⁵⁸³ Cited in Menashri, “Iran” (1977-78), p. 494.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁵ Compare Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 73.

neighbour, the PDRY. Moreover, the joint protection of the Strait of Hormuz became a new pillar of the strategic alliance between Muscat and Tehran.⁵⁸⁶

In the post-Dhofar War era, Qaboos was interested in an ongoing Iranian military presence in the Sultanate. Indeed, a contingent of 3,200 Iranian troops remained in Oman for an additional 13 months after the declared end of the Dhofar War.⁵⁸⁷ Nonetheless, in January 1977, Sultan Qaboos requested Iran to reduce its military presence in Oman. This decision had been preceded by Saudi Arabia's success to get the PDRY to commit to stop supporting the PFLO in return for the withdrawal of Iranian and all other foreign troops from Oman. However, for Oman the prerequisite for a complete withdrawal of Iranian forces from its territory was the conclusion of a Gulf security agreement with the involvement of Iran and Iraq. As this did not materialise, Sultan Qaboos was only ready to reduce the number of Iranian forces in Oman rather than request their complete withdrawal.⁵⁸⁸ Accordingly, in January 1977, all but roughly 1,000 troops left the Sultanate; those remaining were air defence units stationed at the Midway airbase (later renamed Thumrait air base), located roughly 100 kilometres north of Salalah, in Dhofar Province. In addition, Iran constructed a radar facility at Thumrait, where it also stationed temporarily eight F-5 fighter jets; the latter remained until they were replaced by 12 Omani Air Force jets of the type Jaguar later in 1977. Iranian military presence became even more essential to Sultan Qaboos when the United Kingdom abandoned its military bases in Salalah and on Masirah Island in March 1977.⁵⁸⁹ In consequence, three months later, the Sultan offered Iran control over the base on Masirah Island.⁵⁹⁰

Omani-Iranian relations further improved in the course of the Shah's first state visit to the Sultanate in early December 1977.⁵⁹¹ The Iranian Emperor and

⁵⁸⁶ Compare Aryeh Shmuelevitz, "The Gulf States," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Two: 1977-78* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), pp. 411-62, p. 411.

⁵⁸⁷ Compare Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, "Iran," p. 392.

⁵⁸⁸ Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 82.

⁵⁸⁹ Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee, *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 74 and Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, "Iran," p. 392.

⁵⁹⁰ However, Iran has never taken up Oman's offer. Hirschfeld and Shmuelevitz, "Iran," p. 393.

⁵⁹¹ Sultan Qaboos had paid several visits to Tehran, for example in September 1975 and June 1976. "Chronology: August 16, 1975-November 15, 1975," p. 69 and "Chronology: April 16, 1976-August 15, 1976," p. 526.

Sultan Qaboos discussed further Iranian technical and economic support for Oman as well as the strengthening of both their states' military cooperation with regard to the protection of the shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz. Indeed, in early 1978, Oman and Iran initiated joint naval surveillance activities in the strait.⁵⁹²

When in September 1978 Iranian domestic stability began to deteriorate, Oman expressed unequivocal support for the Shah's regime in Tehran.⁵⁹³

Between 1975 and 1979, Omani-Iraqi relations were influenced positively by both the change in Iraq's Gulf policy following the Algiers Agreement and the end of the Dhofar War. However, the cordial Omani-Iranian relations, particularly Iranian military presence in Oman, Oman's close relations with the United States, and Oman's stand on the Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement and eventual peace treaty cast significant shadows on the relations between Muscat and Baghdad.

As mentioned above, Oman and Iraq established diplomatic relations in January 1976. Around this time Iraqi military support for the PFLO appears to have stopped.⁵⁹⁴ However, in the light of Baghdad's year-long massive support for the Dhofar rebels, relations between the two states remained aloof at first. Nonetheless, Oman and Iraq cooperated with the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies in establishing of Arab Gulf institutions such as the Arabian Gulf News Agency and the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting.⁵⁹⁵

In early May 1977, a state visit to Oman by the Iraqi Ministers of Interior Izzat Ibrahim Al Duri and Foreign Affairs Hamadi helped improve bilateral relations. Beside a call for greater Arab solidarity in general, the Iraqi delegation also expressed Baghdad's desire to expand trade relations and economic cooperation with Oman. However, the two Iraqi officials also reiterated Baghdad's clear rejection of a Gulf security pact for which Oman had been the

⁵⁹² Menashri, "Iran" (1977-78), p. 494 and Shmuelevitz, "The Gulf States" (1977-78), p. 411.

⁵⁹³ Shmuelevitz, "The Gulf States" (1977-78), p. 412.

⁵⁹⁴ However, general contacts between Iraq and the PFLO were not abrogated. Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 145.

⁵⁹⁵ "Chronology: November 16, 1975-February 15, 1976," p. 209 and Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 159.

main proponent.⁵⁹⁶ Ramazani summarises the Iraqi (and Iranian) reaction to Oman's proposal as follows

“Al-Thawra, the mouthpiece of the Baath party of Iraq, dubbed the Omani security proposal as a ‘new imperialist alliance,’ and the Iraqi government did everything to discredit it among the Arab states. [...] The charge that the Omani plan was an imperialist plot stemmed from the fact that it envisaged financial and technical aid from major oil-consuming industrial nations. Rejected by both Iran and Iraq, the plan was subsequently confined to the establishment of a Joint Arab Gulf Force to which participating Arab states would contribute money for arms purchases, but not to the exclusion of assistance from Western industrialized nations.”⁵⁹⁷

In an attempt to further improve bilateral relations, Omani Interior Minister Muhammad ibn Ahmad paid a three-day visit to Iraq towards the end of January 1978.⁵⁹⁸ However, since November of the previous year, Omani-Iraqi relations had been burdened by the two states' disagreement over Sadat's Israel policy. While Iraq harshly criticised Sadat's Jerusalem visit and the 1978 Egyptian-Israeli Camp David Accords and early on called for tough anti-Egyptian sanctions, Oman took the exact opposite stand. Contrary to the majority of all Arab states, Oman endorsed Sadat's Jerusalem visit and the Camp David Accords. When at the Arab League Baghdad Summit in early September 1978 the decision was taken to expel Egypt from the regional organisation should it sign a separate peace with Israel, Oman registered its reservation.⁵⁹⁹

During the entire period, trade relations between Oman and Iraq were virtually non-existent.⁶⁰⁰

Qatar's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1975-79

Relations between Qatar and Iran remained cordial during the entire period. The Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abbas Ali Khalatbari, visited Qatar on November 23, 1976.⁶⁰¹ In October 1977, Qatari Minister of Labour Ali Ahmad Al Ansari paid a seven-day visit to Iran; the great length of the visit was likely

⁵⁹⁶ Dann and Bengio, "Iraq" (1976-77), p. 413 and Shmuelevitz, "The Gulf States" (1977-78), p. 411.

⁵⁹⁷ Ramazani, *Gulf Cooperation Council*, p. 5.

⁵⁹⁸ "Chronology: November 16, 1977-February 15, 1978," p. 193.

⁵⁹⁹ For more details, see Chapter 4.

⁶⁰⁰ Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 162.

⁶⁰¹ "Chronology: November 16, 1976-February 15, 1977," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 189-203, p. 200.

attributed to the large number of Iranian expatriates in Qatar.⁶⁰² In December 1977, Doha and Tehran signed a bilateral health agreement.⁶⁰³ As in the case of the other Arab Gulf states, Tehran recalled temporarily its ambassador from Doha in early January 1976 following the establishment of the Arabian Gulf News Agency. This, however, did not cause any lasting friction in Qatari-Iranian relations.

As a state with a great interest in domestic and subregional stability, Qatar welcomed both the 1975 Iranian-Iraqi Algiers Accord and the subsequently more moderate Iraqi Gulf policy. Relations with Iraq were stable, however, not particularly close; Doha remained concerned about Iraq's Baathist political ideology. In May 1975, the Qatari Chief of Staff, together with his colleagues from Bahrain and Qatar, attended an Iraqi military parade. Two months later, Emir Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani visited Baghdad. Reportedly, the Qatari ruler was offered "technical assistance in the fields of housing and water supply."⁶⁰⁴ During the period under review in this subchapter, the Qatari government welcomed two high-level delegations from Baghdad: Iraqi Vice President Saddam Hussein paid a visit to Doha in April 1976 and Interior Minister Izzat Ibrahim Al Duri visited Qatar in late April of the following year.⁶⁰⁵

3.4 From the Iranian Revolution to the End of the Iran-Iraq War

The Iranian revolution rang in a new era in the international relations of the Gulf, having a great effect on the Arab Gulf monarchies' bilateral relations with both Iran and Iraq. Following years of increasing popular opposition and months-long escalating unrest, the regime of Shah Reza Pahlavi finally fell in January of 1979. The ultraorthodox Shiite movement around the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini had managed to take over the lead of the heterogeneous Iranian revolution and turned the nationalist Persian monarchy into a Shiite Islamic Republic. Both Iran's foreign policy interests and its actual foreign policy took a prompt and extensive turn.

⁶⁰² "Chronology: August 16, 1977-November 15, 1977," p. 55.

⁶⁰³ "Chronology: November 16, 1977-February 15, 1978," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 185-199, p. 196.

⁶⁰⁴ Sakr, "Economic Relations," p. 155.

⁶⁰⁵ "Chronology: February 16, 1976-April 15, 1976," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer 1976), pp. 425-38, p. 431 and "Chronology: February 16, 1977-May 15, 1977," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Summer 1977), pp. 332-47, p. 344.

First, the close strategic U.S.-Iranian relations, which had been in place since the reinstatement of the Shah in 1953 and had intensified following the United Kingdom's decision to leave the Gulf, quickly collapsed. The newborn Islamic Republic of Iran was firmly anti-American in both its rhetoric and policy, portraying the United States as infidel imperialist power that had supported the illegitimate Shah in violating the good of Iran, its people, and Islam. The hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, began on November 4, 1979 and dragged on for over 14 months, ultimately poisoned the U.S.-Iranian relations.⁶⁰⁶ Hence, within a matter of weeks the U.S. Twin Pillar strategy lay in ashes. More than that, the new Iranian regime looked in anger at the Arab Gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia, for their close ties with the "American devil."

Second, the new regime in Tehran saw the ultimate objective of its revolution in the transformation of the entire Islamic world. Naturally, this meant a departure from the Shah's regime's interest in the preservation of a conservative status quo in the Gulf. Within the subregional sphere, the Sunni Arab Gulf monarchies were no longer only confronted with an Iraqi Republic that, despite its preceding gradual policy change, still sought to impose both its Baathist revolution and its hegemonic ambitions on its fellow Arab Gulf states, but also with an Iranian Republic that saw its destiny in the exportation of its strongly anti-monarchical Shiite-dominated Islamic revolution to its Gulf neighbours and beyond.

Saudi Arabia's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1979-1988

For Saudi Arabia the Iranian Revolution turned out disastrous as the cautious but stable alliance of interests with the Shah, important mainly to balance Iraq's ambitions, was replaced by open hostility with the Islamic Republic. Consequently, Saudi relations with both Iran and Iraq underwent significant change. Once the Iran-Iraq War broke out, Saudi Arabia formulated its relations with Iraq mainly in response to the threats emanating from Iran.

In the initial post-revolutionary period, the Saudi regime was concerned about both the establishment of Soviet influence in Iran and the potential of a revolutionary spill-over onto Saudi territory; the fact that the vast majority of the

⁶⁰⁶ The United States officially abrogated diplomatic relations with Iran on April 7, 1980; to this day, relations have not been restored.

Kingdom's Shiite minority resided in the oil-rich Eastern Province amplified this apprehension.⁶⁰⁷ In an attempt to maintain good relations with Iran and to stymie aggressive anti-Saudi rhetoric from among clerics around Khomeini, the Saudi government extended a hand to the new Iranian regime. On April 2, the day after the proclamation of the Islamic Republic, King Khaled sent Khomeini a congratulatory note, expressing his delight about the new Iranian political order's "firm Islamic foundations."⁶⁰⁸ Later that month, Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz stated publicly that henceforward Islam would be the fundament of bilateral relations and common Saudi-Iranian interests.⁶⁰⁹ Moreover, the Saudi regime sought to relax tensions with Iran through direct talks.⁶¹⁰ However, as the moderate forces within the new Iranian government were gradually marginalised, Iran's anti-Saudi actions intensified.⁶¹¹ Subsequently, beside general emphatic calls for the adaption of their revolution by Muslims everywhere in the world, Tehran discredited the Saudi regime and called repeatedly for its overthrow.⁶¹² In addition to speeches by Khomeini and other clerics, Iran conducted this propaganda campaign through the mass distribution of *inter alia* newspapers, books, leaflets, audio and video tapes.⁶¹³ Tehran explicitly attacked the Al Saud regime for its monarchical character, which was allegedly incompatible with Islam, their discrimination of Shiite citizens, their dependence on the United States, and their misuse of their country's wealth.⁶¹⁴

The first significant direct effects on Saudi Arabia became apparent in the autumn of 1979. For one thing, Khomeini instructed Iranian pilgrims to use the *hajj* as a forum for the propagation of the Iranian revolution and calls for the overthrow of the Al Saud.⁶¹⁵ Moreover, in late November, roughly 90,000 Shiites

⁶⁰⁷ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1978-79), p. 749f. Reportedly, the number of Shiites living in the Eastern Province amounted to nearly 400,000. Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 356.

⁶⁰⁸ Cited in Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1978-79), p. 750.

⁶⁰⁹ Compare Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 27. A similar statement was made by Prince Naif in an interview with *Al-Hawadith* on June, 22, 1979. See Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1978-79), p. 750.

⁶¹⁰ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 26.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 27.

⁶¹² Jacob Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 681-721, p. 700.

⁶¹³ Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations*, p. 91.

⁶¹⁴ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, pp. 25f. and 36.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 24 and Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom (1979-80), p. 700.

gathered illegally in the Saudi city of Qatif to celebrate the Ashura festival. The occasion turned into an overt display of anti-Americanism, support for the Islamic Revolution, and demands for an end of discrimination against Saudi Shiites; some protesters even called for the establishment of an Islamic republic in the Eastern Province. Attempts by the Saudi authorities to disperse the demonstration provoked a three-day riot, involving nearly 200,000 protesters in several Shiite-dominated cities and settlements in al-Hasa, and acts of sabotage at oil installations. The National Guard eventually quelled the riots.⁶¹⁶ However, due to the government's robust measures, a lack of meaningful reforms, and the continuation of Iranian propaganda, new protests arose in February 1980 in the course of which Shiite workers at oil installations went on strike.⁶¹⁷

The Saudi regime was also concerned about the disruptive effects the revolution had on both the domestic stability of the other Arab Gulf monarchies, particularly Bahrain⁶¹⁸ and Kuwait, and the security of trade routes in the Gulf and especially through the Strait of Hormuz.⁶¹⁹

Saudi-Iranian relations hit a low after Tehran categorically rejected Riyadh's competence to safeguard the holy places at Mecca and Medina and proposed to transfer this responsibility to a Joint Islamic Committee – a direct challenge of the Al Saud's self-perception as the custodian of the two holy mosques. In reaction, Riyadh started a propaganda campaign against Tehran, denouncing it as un-Islamic.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁶ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 37. In total, the riots and their repression by the National Guard caused 17 fatalities and a large number of wounded. In addition, several hundred individuals were arrested. *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ Some time later, the government initiated a significant development programme in the Eastern Province, covering the infrastructure, health, and education sectors. *Ibid.*, p. 38 and David E. Long. "The Impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf States," in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990), pp. 100-15, p. 107.

⁶¹⁸ In late September 1979, upon request of the Al Khalifa regime, Saudi Arabia deployed two brigades to Bahrain. Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 356. In late November 1979, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain accelerated their plan for the construction of a causeway connecting their states. On December 3, 1979, the *New York Times* quoted a senior Saudi banker "well acquainted with the project" as saying "The kingdom has apparently decided that it is now essential to put a tail on Bahrain so it doesn't float away to Iran. [...] The Saudi Government does not want a Cuba 15 miles off its shores." *New York Times*, December 3, 1979, p. D1.

⁶¹⁹ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom (1979-80), p. 701.

⁶²⁰ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 37.

In the light of the Iranian Revolution, Saudi-Iraqi relations improved. In February 1979, following the Shah's departure, Riyadh and Baghdad signed a bilateral security cooperation agreement and held repeated meetings during the subsequent months.⁶²¹ Moreover, the conflict over the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement was settled when Riyadh, in part due to Iraqi pressure, agreed to cut bilateral relations with Cairo.⁶²² However, two reasons still held back the Saudi regime from entering into overly close relations with Iraq: with a view to the escalating Iraqi-Iranian conflict, Riyadh did not want to antagonise Iran additionally; in addition, the Saudi regime wanted to prevent Iraq from realising its long-held objective of becoming the protector of the Arab Gulf states.⁶²³ Accordingly, when Saudi Arabia arranged meetings with the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies in late June and mid-October to discuss multilateral security cooperation, Iraq was not invited.⁶²⁴

Nonetheless, starting in the second half of 1979 there was a clear rapprochement in Saudi-Iraqi relations.⁶²⁵ In mid-February 1980, the Iraqi regime claimed that Saudi Arabia had approved its pan-Arab National Charter – a collective Arab security plan⁶²⁶; however, probably to avoid antagonising Iran and Iraq's Arab rival Syria, Riyadh never explicitly positioned itself to the initiative.⁶²⁷ To assure the Al Saud regime of Iraqi goodwill, Saddam Hussein stated in March, that in case the Soviet Union was ever to invade Saudi territory, "the Iraqi army would fight them even before the Saudi Army did."⁶²⁸ A clear sign of both Saudi leaning towards Iraq and massive deterioration in relations with Iran was Saddam Hussein's visit to the Kingdom in early August 1980, seven weeks before the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War.⁶²⁹ Much has

⁶²¹ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 62.

⁶²² For a more detailed account, see Chapter 4.

⁶²³ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 355.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid* and Esther Webman, "The Gulf States," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 392-6, p. 392.

⁶²⁵ Daniel Dishon and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 169-230, pp. 196f. and Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 173.

⁶²⁶ For more details on the National Charter, see section on Iraqi-Omani relations below.

⁶²⁷ Compare Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 361.

⁶²⁸ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1979-80), p. 197.

⁶²⁹ Compare Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 361.

been speculated about whether the Iraqi President informed the Saudi regime about his invasion plans. Nonneman, for examples, states that

“it seems highly likely that Saudi Arabia, at least, was informed in advance of Iraq’s plan to invade Iran, and that Riyadh had given the green light, probably on the occasion of the August 5 visit.”⁶³⁰

Prince Turki Al Faisal, at that time director of the Saudi General Intelligence Directorate, strongly disagrees with this account. In a conversation with the author, Prince Turki rejected the claim that Crown Prince Fahd had given the “green light” to Saddam Hussein. In contrast, Prince Turki emphasised that the Iraqi invasion had taken Fahd by complete surprise and that the latter had subsequently tried to convince the Iraqi leadership to end its military aggression against Iran. Furthermore, when confronted with the wide-spread hypothesis that the Iraqi attack on Iran and the ensuing war had at the time been in the Saudi regime’s interest, Prince Turki countered

“Not at all. [...] Fahd saw it as a catastrophe that will upset the peace of the area and basically push the Iranian people to support their government [...] Iran was in the middle of a civil war when Saddam Hussein invaded. So, they just left their differences apart and opposed the foreign invader.”⁶³¹

In the first phase of the war, Saudi Arabia tried to keep an appearance of neutrality in order to not become a victim of Iranian reprisals. Through Radio Riyadh, the Al Saud regime quickly rejected an earlier Iraqi announcement that King Khaled had expressed his support for Iraq.⁶³² In addition, Saudi officials repeatedly called for negotiation between the two belligerents.⁶³³ However, a few days later and probably bowing to Iraqi pressure, Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal declared “our Kingdom has national commitments and obligations towards Iraq which we are not able, neither do we want to, ignore.”⁶³⁴ Additionally, there are strong indications that Saudi Arabia gave Iraq logistic support by granting its jets the right to use Saudi airfields as safe haven and bases of

⁶³⁰ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 173. See also Nonneman, *Iraq*, pp. 22f.

⁶³¹ Personal interview with HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud in Riyadh in April 2012.

⁶³² Fürtig, *Iran’s Rivalry*, p. 62.

⁶³³ Jacob Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 729-59, p. 739.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*

operation.⁶³⁵ To preserve its image of neutrality and to prevent both an escalation of the war and an unnecessary strengthening of Iraq, Riyadh at that time gave no significant additional support to Baghdad's war efforts, "persuaded Iraq to drop the plan of the islands invasion and sent the Iraqi planes back once the U.S. AWACS had arrived."⁶³⁶

When it became clear that Saddam Hussein's *blitzkrieg* had failed and a stalemate set in, the Saudi regime was interested in a rapid termination of the war. As Nonneman puts it,

"[t]he need to avoid a long-drawn-out conflict, with its implications of economic drain, military spill-over and superpower involvement, became more important than anything that could be gained from further bleeding the two combatants."⁶³⁷

Since an early ceasefire failed to materialise, the prevention of an Iranian victory became Riyadh's main objective. Due to the fact that Iranian naval superiority had interrupted Iraq's oil export routes through the Gulf, Baghdad's economy threatened to collapse. Hence, Saudi Arabia began providing Iraq massive financial⁶³⁸ and logistic support. By April 1981, the Kingdom had given Iraq direct financial aid amounting to \$6 billion; another \$4 billion were transferred until the end of the year. In addition, Saudi Arabia transhipped civilian and military goods destined for Iraq at its Red Sea ports.⁶³⁹ Furthermore, the Kingdom "agreed in principle to construct an oil pipeline to the Red Sea," thus creating an alternative Iraqi oil export route.⁶⁴⁰

Saudi support for Iraq against Iran was based on Riyadh's perception of the former as the lesser of two evils. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia was still concerned about Iraq's Baathist ideology and nationalist ambitions. Hence, a clear-cut

⁶³⁵ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 174f.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 175. Compare Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 63. On September 26, the Saudi regime had requested U.S. military support out of concern to get involved in the war. Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1980-81), p. 739.

⁶³⁷ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 175.

⁶³⁸ Indeed, Saudi Arabia became Iraq's largest financial supporter.

⁶³⁹ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 175. However, Saudi Arabia denied reports that they were transhipping military equipment to Iraq. Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1980-81), p. 739.

⁶⁴⁰ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 64. The Iraq Pipeline through Saudi Arabia (IPSA) became eventually active in the autumn of 1985. Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 361-96, p. 385.

victory that would turn Iraq into the hegemon of the Gulf was not in their interest.⁶⁴¹ Strong Saudi initiative towards the establishment of the GCC in May 1981 was partially due to the ongoing apprehension of Iraq's hegemonic ambitions. While the Iranian Revolution had given the Arab Gulf monarchies additional reason to enter into closer collective security cooperation, the war had given them the perfect excuse to do so to the exclusion of Iraq. Thus, Saudi Arabia could increase its influence on the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies.

Following the outbreak of the war, Saudi-Iranian relations continued to deteriorate. Early on, Iran suspected Saudi support for Iraq. In reaction, anti-Saudi propaganda was intensified.⁶⁴² Moreover, Iranian war planes reportedly intruded into Saudi airspace.⁶⁴³ In the autumn of 1981, several developments led to a further increase in tensions. During the *hajj*, there were even more Iranian pro-Khomeini demonstrations than the year before and on several occasions the Saudi authorities clashed with Iranian pilgrims. Saudi complaints to Khomeini only provoked an intensification of anti-Saudi propaganda, in turn triggering massive Saudi counter-propaganda.⁶⁴⁴ Iranian missile attacks on Kuwait in October concerned Riyadh and prompted a strong Saudi reaction, as did the discovery of an Iranian-backed coup attempt in Bahrain in December.⁶⁴⁵ Also in 1981, Saudi Arabia used its power in OPEC to hurt Iran's already struggling economy, by keeping Iran's production quota low.⁶⁴⁶ In December, on the occasion of the signing of a final Saudi-Iraqi border agreement, Saudi

⁶⁴¹ Compare Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1980-81), p. 739 and Jacob Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 776-813, pp. 786f.

⁶⁴² On October 4, 1980, Radio Tehran accused "the 'reactionary, deceitful, filthy Saudi regime' [...] of 'fighting Islam in the robe of Islam.'" Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1980-81), p. 739.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 45 and David Menashri, "Iran," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 532-81, pp. 567f., and Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), pp. 785f. In one comment on Radio Riyadh, the Iranian regime was called a "misguided and ignorant band representing the agents of Satan in Tehran and acting like mentally-retarded persons with all attributes of an insane fascist regime." Cited in Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 786.

⁶⁴⁵ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 176f. Subsequently, Saudi Interior Minister Naif bin Abdulaziz repeatedly called Iran "the terrorist of the Gulf." *Ibid.*, p. 177. For further Saudi reactions, see Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 786.

⁶⁴⁶ Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, pp. 64f.

Interior Minister Naif bin Abdulaziz made the hitherto strongest statement of Riyadh's pro-Iraqi stance in the war.⁶⁴⁷

The turn of the war in Iran's favour in late March 1982 alarmed Riyadh. To prevent further Iranian advances or even a complete Iraqi collapse, Saudi Arabia applied a seven-pronged strategy: Riyadh a) provided Iraq with additional \$4 billion in grants during 1982, \$6 billion in the first half of 1983 and, starting in February 1983, sold 200,000 barrels of its oil per day on Iraq's account; b) continued oil overproduction to keep prices low and blocked an increase in Iran's quotas in OPEC; c) attempted to mobilise joint Arab pressure on Iran; d) pressured Syria to give up its pro-Iranian support; e) tried to convince the Assad regime to reopen the Iraqi-Syrian oil pipeline; f) made direct mediation attempts between the belligerents with Syrian assistance; g) and apparently presented a joint GCC proposal to pay Tehran \$25 billion in war reparations in return for an Iranian ceasefire.⁶⁴⁸ Eventually, all of Riyadh's intensified attempts to end the war failed. With a new stalemate in the spring of 1983, Saudi Arabia reduced its diplomatic activity.⁶⁴⁹

Starting in the autumn of 1983, Saudi Arabia made increased attempts to avoid confrontation with Iran: financial and other "aid to Iraq was provided as quietly as possible, criticism of Iran was toned down and, above all, Riyadh avoided all action liable to be interpreted in Tehran as acts of hostility."⁶⁵⁰ The Kingdom played down Iranian disruptions during the *hajj* and refrained from blaming Tehran for a series of explosions in Kuwait.⁶⁵¹ The beginning of the Tanker War in the following spring briefly intensified Saudi-Iranian tensions before Riyadh sought de-escalation. On June 5, two Saudi F-15 fighters shot down one of two Iranian jets that were preparing to fire on tankers leaving Saudi ports. On the same day, a larger Saudi-Iranian air combat was barely prevented. These

⁶⁴⁷ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 787.

⁶⁴⁸ Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 465-96, p. 486; Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, pp.65f.; Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 787; Joseph Kostiner, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume II: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 729-43, p. 752; and Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 177f.

⁶⁴⁹ Kostiner, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," (1982-83), p. 752 and idem, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 616-37, p. 623.

⁶⁵⁰ Kostiner, "Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1983-84), p. 623.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 624.

events provoked newly intensified Iranian propaganda.⁶⁵² However, only three months later, King Khaled reached out to Iranian *majlis* Speaker Rafsanjani and invited him to participate in the *hajj*. Although Khomeini prevented Rafsanjani from going, the latter entered into secret negotiations with Riyadh. In May 1985, in the light of the burdening war costs, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal visited Tehran and offered to assist in bringing about a ceasefire. However, Tehran's demands for both Saddam's immediate resignation and Iranian "observer rights" over the two holy cities were unrealistic respectively unacceptable. A visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati to Riyadh in December also failed to produce any compromise.⁶⁵³ Nonetheless, Saudi-Iranian tensions lessened during this time. Following Saud Al Faisal's Tehran visit⁶⁵⁴ both sides spoke favourably of the meeting, calling it the basis for cooperation and good relations,⁶⁵⁵ the Saudi media even spoke of a "historical achievement."⁶⁵⁶ Prior to the *hajj*, relations saw additional improvement with Riyadh accepting 150,000 Iranian pilgrims and Iran giving

"an unprecedented instruction to the pilgrims to maintain 'Islamic discipline and dignity' while in Mecca and to 'refrain from conduct which would cause unnecessary clashes with Saudi officials'."⁶⁵⁷

In this period, secret U.S. arms sales to Tehran happened, which were revealed in late 1986 as part of the Iran-Contra affair. The degree of the Saudi regime's involvement remains opaque. However, as Nonneman states, "Saudi 'facilitation' may have been no more than Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi's involvement in the U.S. arms-to-Iran deal, but it would appear the royal family had given its permission."⁶⁵⁸ In addition, the subsequent Saudi oil product sales to Iran "could, presumably, have been prevented" by the Saudi regime.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵² Fürtig, *Iran's Rivalry*, p. 67.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 67f.

⁶⁵⁴ It was the first state visit to Tehran by a senior Saudi official since the revolution. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 109-45, p. 122 and Jacob Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 588-613, p. 605.

⁶⁵⁵ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1984-85), p. 605f.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 606.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 179.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The cautious steps towards a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement were contrary to Iraq's interests. As Baghdad was highly dependent on Saudi support, there was no visible deterioration in Saudi-Iraqi relations; however, there have been speculations that a series of sabotage acts in Saudi Arabia and in other Arab Gulf monarchies, which occurred in temporal connection with Saud Al Faisal's Tehran visit were "initiated by Iraq in an attempt to 'frighten the Gulf States' from a shift in policy."⁶⁶⁰

Following the Iranian capture of the Iraqi Faw peninsula, Riyadh retook a more emphatic pro-Iraqi stance, while still looking for a way to stop the war. Together with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia both tried unsuccessfully to get Damascus to evoke change in Iranian policy and pushed through a strong condemnation of Iran by the GCC. In the second half of 1986, Riyadh reportedly granted Baghdad another \$4 billion loan and allowed Iraqi jets to use Saudi air fields to refuel following raids on Iranian oil facilities.⁶⁶¹ Moreover, there is reason to assume that Riyadh offered to finance further Iraqi-Egyptian arms deals.⁶⁶² However, due to the ongoing oil crisis, partially provoked by Riyadh's year-long overproduction, Saudi Arabia had increasing difficulties to continue its strong financial support for Iraq.⁶⁶³ In addition, reports of increased Saudi support for Iraq provoked an escalation of Iranian threats against the Kingdom as well as attacks on Saudi tankers.⁶⁶⁴ It can be assumed that the reported Saudi involvement in arms and refined oil shipments was meant to reduce tensions with Iran and reach a compromise with Tehran on oil price increases. Once this low-level Saudi-Iranian cooperation became public⁶⁶⁵, Saudi-Iraqi relations suffered and Saddam Hussein subsequently pressured Riyadh to increase the oil flow through IPSA.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁰ Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 460-86, p. 480.

⁶⁶¹ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 181. In March, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait renewed their agreement to sell oil (now 350,000 barrels per day) on Baghdad's account. Bengio, "Iraq" (1986), p. 385.

⁶⁶² *Financial Times*, September 23, 1986, p. 4.

⁶⁶³ Bengio, "Iraq" (1986), p. 385.

⁶⁶⁴ Jacob Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 543-73, p. 562.

⁶⁶⁵ In mid-December 1986, the Guardian reported of Saudi shipments of refined oil to Iran. *The Guardian*, December 18, 1986, p. 17.

⁶⁶⁶ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 181f.

From March 1987 onwards, Saudi support for Iraq was increased. Moreover, Saudi-Iranian relations deteriorated due to new Iranian attacks on Saudi tankers, a series of bomb explosions in Kuwait, the Iranian stationing of missiles on the Faw peninsula, and Kuwait's request for the reflagging of its ships, which Riyadh supported.⁶⁶⁷ In the weeks leading to the *hajj* season, Saudi-Iranian tensions further increased: while Khomeini called on the Iranian pilgrims to stage the largest possible anti-Saudi demonstrations, the Saudi regime banned all political gatherings, expressed the hitherto most explicit warnings, and verbally attacked Khomeini's agitations. After the riots of July 31, which cost hundreds of lives, Saudi-Iranian relations hit an all-time low. Riyadh presented confessions of arrested Iranians according to which more than three fourths of the 150,000 Iranian pilgrims were "Revolutionary Guards [,] suicidal volunteers [and] members of 'the generation of the revolution,' whose multistage mission had been to first take over the Grand Mosque and eventually lead a popular uprising against the Al Saud regime."⁶⁶⁸ On the same day, a Saudi diplomat was killed when demonstrators sacked the Saudi Embassy in Tehran; allegedly on the Iranian regime's behest.⁶⁶⁹ Subsequently, both the governments and media of Iran and Saudi Arabia issued highly aggressive propaganda against each other.⁶⁷⁰

Increasingly affected by the war⁶⁷¹ and very apprehensive of being drawn into open warfare with Iran, Riyadh made new attempts to create a strong Arab front that would pressure Iran to agree to a ceasefire in line with Security Council

⁶⁶⁷ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 182 and Jacob Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 579-614, p. 601.

⁶⁶⁸ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1987), p. 590.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 589, 601.

⁶⁷⁰ The Saudi media issued comparisons of Khomeini with Hitler, called the Ayatollah a polytheist, and even identified him as Satan himself. See *ibid*, pp. 590, 601f. and David Menashri, "Iran," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 391-422, p. 417. In late August, U.S. Ambassador Hume Horan reported "The Saudi propaganda campaign is unprecedented in its intensity and its duration. Since the violent clashes in Makkah between Iranian pilgrims and [Saudi Arabian Government] security forces, Iran has yet to be absent from the front page headlines of the Saudi press." Telegram, Riyadh 8409, American Embassy in Riyadh to the Department of State, "War of Words between Riyadh and Tehran," 8/26/87, disclosed by WikiLeaks.

⁶⁷¹ On August 15, the Iranian-backed Hezbollah of the Hijaz detonated a bomb at a liquid petroleum processing plant at Ras al-Juwayma; in September and October, Iran attacked Saudi tankers; and in October, the Saudi armed forces could prevent an Iranian attack against an offshore oil terminal at Khafji. Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1987), pp. 590, 603.

Resolution 598 of July 20, 1987.⁶⁷² This strategy was partially successful: at the November 1987 Arab League summit in Amman even Syria called on Iran to accept a ceasefire. Moreover, Riyadh managed to isolate Iran at the Geneva OPEC summit in December. However, due to its own economic difficulties, Riyadh was not willing to decrease oil prices any further.⁶⁷³ Meanwhile, Saudi financial support for Iraq continued.⁶⁷⁴

In the last months of the war, Riyadh continued its strong support for Iraq, e.g. in context of Iraqi attacks on Tehran and Qom and the recapture of the Faw peninsula.⁶⁷⁵ Judging from public statements of government officials Saudi-Iraqi relations seemed cordial.⁶⁷⁶ In the meantime, both the Saudi regime and the Saudi media called for UN sanctions against Iran for its refusal to accept a ceasefire and denounced Tehran for training members of terrorist groups. Furthermore, Saudi-Iranian relations were once again burdened over the upcoming *hajj*. In April, Iran, which had repeated its call for an end of Saudi sovereignty over Mecca and Medina, held out even more enthusiastic and vigorous demonstrations for the 1988 pilgrimage. Saudi concerns were increased when the regime learnt that Iran was training 100,000 Revolutionary Guards to cause chaos during the *hajj*. Hence, Riyadh decided to reduce drastically the quota of Iranian pilgrims to 45,000, prompting an aggressive Iranian refusal. In consequence, on April 26, Riyadh unilaterally abrogated diplomatic relations with Iran.⁶⁷⁷

On July 18, the Iranian acceptance of UN Resolution 598 invoked a change in the Saudi stance towards the war. Despite contrasting public statements, Saudi pressure was instrumental in convincing Iraq to accept a ceasefire on August 6. In this context, Nonneman states,

“[h]aving decided at least as far back as 1981 that the costs of a continuing situation of war outweighed the benefits, the Saudi leadership

⁶⁷² Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom” (1987), pp. 590, 595f.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 604f.

⁶⁷⁴ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 183.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 184f. There were, however, reports that Riyadh denied Baghdad the right to refuel its jets at Saudi air fields. Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom” (1987), p. 605.

⁶⁷⁶ Fürtig, *Iran’s Rivalry*, p. 69.

⁶⁷⁷ Jacob Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 675-705, pp. 690f.

could no longer see any convincing reason to continue to bankroll Iraqi military adventures once Iran had sued for peace.”⁶⁷⁸

Kuwait's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1979-1988

As described above, Kuwait's relations with Imperial Iran had never been particularly close. The Kuwaiti regime, not least because of the prevalence of strong Arab nationalist feelings in the society, rejected Iran's self-perception as the guardian of the Gulf. Meanwhile, Iran had been a source of security for Kuwait as it neutralised to a certain degree the dangers stemming from Iraq's territorial claims and contributed to Gulf security in general. Hence, the Shah's fall was not in Kuwait's interest. Khomeini's rise to power was additional cause for concern. For one thing, Kuwait had not only backed the Shah's regime but also denied Khomeini entry into the country after he had been asked to leave Iraq.⁶⁷⁹ Moreover, the Khomeini regime's declared objective to export its antimonarchical Shiite revolution was particularly troublesome to the Kuwaiti government as an autocratic regime ruling over a large Shiite minority; additionally, local Shiite clerics had been in close contact with Khomeini during his years in Iraq.⁶⁸⁰

In contrast to the regime, large parts of the Kuwaiti population welcomed the changes in Iran. The overthrow of the Shah was seen as a popular victory over a tyrannical, secular regime that was closely aligned with Israel's main supporter, the United States. Hence, in the initial phase, the Iranian Revolution had an appeal to many Arab nationalists and devout Sunnis among Kuwaitis.⁶⁸¹ Additionally, the Revolution

“fostered a new assertiveness, pride and consciousness among most Shiites, who as a minority have historically felt themselves to be downtrodden, underprivileged, and subordinated to the Sunni majorities in the Gulf states.”⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁸ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 186.

⁶⁷⁹ David Menashri, “Iran,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 488-558, p. 539.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid* and Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 64.

⁶⁸¹ The Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Watan* was initially very supportive of the Iranian Revolution. Once Iranian propaganda began to have a negative effect on Kuwait's internal stability, the Kuwaiti information minister instructed the editors-in-chief of the Kuwaiti newspapers to limit their coverage of the revolution. Personal interview with Dr. Ghanim Al Najjar in Kuwait in May 2012.

⁶⁸² Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 66.

During the first post-revolutionary months, the Kuwaiti regime made great efforts to maintain solid relations with Tehran. In mid-July 1979, Saleh Al Ahmad Al Saleh was the first foreign minister of a Gulf state to pay a state visit to Tehran.⁶⁸³ A joint communiqué issued following the meeting stressed both states' conviction that "mutual respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity [and] non-interference in other people's internal affairs" should be the basis for the conduct of international relations.⁶⁸⁴ Earlier in July, Tehran had extended an invitation to the Kuwaiti ruler.⁶⁸⁵ Kuwait's relations with Iran remained unproblematic until mid-August, when Kuwait blamed Iran for causing disturbance in its internal affairs. Sayed Abbas Muhri, Khomeini's cousin and personal envoy in Kuwait had been preaching Iranian revolutionary ideology to Kuwaiti Shiites. Subsequently, the Kuwaiti authorities hindered him from preaching and on September 26 rescinded his Kuwaiti citizenship and deported him and his family to Iran. This caused severe tensions in Kuwaiti-Iranian relations.⁶⁸⁶ However, Kuwait was still anxious to prevent relations with Iran from deteriorating. To get in Tehran's good favour, Kuwait rejected anti-Iranian actions in the context of the U.S. hostage crisis. On December 31, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Kuwait defied U.S. pressure and abstained in the voting on Resolution 461, which threatened Iran with economic sanctions if it did not release the U.S. hostages within one week.⁶⁸⁷ Moreover, Kuwait expressed its condemnation for both the freezing of Iranian governmental assets in the United States⁶⁸⁸ and the failed U.S. rescue attempt in April 1980.⁶⁸⁹ Furthermore, in February 1980, Kuwait and Iran reached an agreement on both Kuwaiti shipments of refined oil products and the establishment of bilateral oil and technical cooperation. In the same month, Kuwait supplied Iran with humanitarian aid for flood victims in the country's

⁶⁸³ In fact, at a meeting in Saudi Arabia in late June, the six Arab Gulf monarchies had delegated Saleh Al Ahmad to represent their views in Tehran. Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 356.

⁶⁸⁴ Cited in Menashri, "Iran" (1978-79), p. 540.

⁶⁸⁵ Flint, "Kuwait," p. 453.

⁶⁸⁶ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 68; Menashri, "Iran" (1978-79), p. 540; and Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 356.

⁶⁸⁷ United Nations, *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council, 1979* (New York: United Nations, 1980), p. 25.

⁶⁸⁸ U.S. Executive Order 12170 of November 14, 1979.

⁶⁸⁹ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 69.

south.⁶⁹⁰ In April, Iranian Foreign Minister Qutubzadeh visited Kuwait. However, bilateral relations did not improve in any significant way.⁶⁹¹

Following the Iranian Revolution, Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations saw an acceleration of the previous rapprochement. The reason for this development was Kuwait's increasing apprehension about the danger to its security emanating from Iran. In September 1979, Iraqi Defence Minister Khayrallah visited Kuwait and conveyed Saddam Hussein's reassurance that Iraq would defend the Arab Gulf monarchies against external aggression. However, reminding of Iraq's Baathist ideology, Saddam later added that his government would support the people of any Arab state that chose to change their regime.⁶⁹² Nonetheless, Kuwait was the first Arab Gulf monarchy to express its support for Saddam's Arab National Charter in February 1980.⁶⁹³ In early May, while Iraqi-Iranian tensions escalated, Kuwait's Prime Minister visited Baghdad and expressed his country's strong support for Iraq.⁶⁹⁴ In another sign of rapprochement, Kuwait and Iraq agreed in July to resume talks about border demarcations.⁶⁹⁵

The beginning of the Iran-Iraq War put Kuwait in a very difficult position. On the one hand, two large powers posing threats to Kuwait would now focus primarily on each other. The war might weaken them both, thereby reducing their danger to Kuwait. However, there were grave immediate perils for Kuwait's interests: first, its geostrategic position put Kuwait in close proximity to the war zone; second, the Kuwaiti regime would need to position itself in the war, thereby automatically alienating one of the belligerents and a part of its society⁶⁹⁶; third, the Kuwaiti economy would suffer under both instability in the Gulf and a reduction of trade with the belligerents; fourth, there was a risk of a territorial

⁶⁹⁰ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 69.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.* The fact that four gunmen attacked Qutubzadeh right upon his arrival had certainly an additional negative effect on the meeting. The gunmen later found refuge in the Iraqi embassy. Esther Webman, "Kuwait," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 403-12, p. 406.

⁶⁹² Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1979-80), p. 200.

⁶⁹³ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 361.

⁶⁹⁴ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 173 and Webman, "Kuwait" (1979-80), p. 405.

⁶⁹⁵ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 173.

⁶⁹⁶ Indeed, in the first months of the war, there was an increasing resistance among Kuwaiti Shiites and Iranian expatriates to the Kuwaiti regime's pro-Iraqi stance. See *ibid.*, p. 176.

expansion and internationalisation of the war dragging the Arab Gulf monarchies or even the superpowers into the conflict.⁶⁹⁷

In the light of improved relations with Baghdad, promising prospects for a successful Iraqi *blitzkrieg*, and apprehensions of Iraqi retaliations in case of lacking support, Kuwait sided with Iraq. Early on, Kuwait began transshipping Iraqi imports at its port facilities and allowed for their overland transport to Iraq.⁶⁹⁸ Once it became clear that there would be now no quick Iraqi victory, Kuwait continued its initial logistic support but expressed publicly its neutrality in the war.⁶⁹⁹ However, as early as mid-November, the Emirate became directly affected by the military contestation when Iranian missiles hit the Kuwaiti border post at Abdali. Kuwait protested directly to Iran and sent notes to the UN, the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Non-Alignment Movement. However, “Iran denied any hostile intent and declared itself committed to ‘the safety of, and respect for, Kuwait’s territory.’”⁷⁰⁰

When the stalemate set in, Kuwait shared Riyadh’s main objectives of a rapid termination of the war or at least the prevention of an Iranian victory. Hence, Kuwait also provided Iraq with significant financial support: a \$2 billion loan was given in the autumn of 1980, another \$2 billion the following April. Moreover, Kuwait’s logistic support in transshipping Iraqi civilian and military imports was extended greatly.⁷⁰¹ However, Kuwaiti-Iraqi tensions arose again over Warba and Bubiyan. Due to the blockade of the Shatt al-Arab, Iraq intended to expand its only usable port at Umm Qasr. For better access to the facility, Baghdad repeated earlier demands for a Kuwaiti lease of the two islands; in this context, the Iraqi Interior Minister visited Kuwait in early February 1981. However, Baghdad’s reliance on Kuwait for financial support allowed the Emirate to withstand Iraqi pressure on the issue. In a clear sign of defiance to Iraqi

⁶⁹⁷ Compare Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 70.

⁶⁹⁸ Esther Webman, “Kuwait,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 473-89, p. 480.

⁶⁹⁹ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 175.

⁷⁰⁰ Webman, “Kuwait” (1980-81), p. 480. As a matter of fact, two Kuwaiti ships had been shot at by Iran as early as September 20 and 21, the day respectively two days *before* the war started. Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 158.

⁷⁰¹ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 175.

demands, Kuwait decided to build a bridge connecting Bubiyan island with the mainland.⁷⁰²

Over the following months, Iranian jets repeatedly violated Kuwaiti airspace and in mid-June fired at the Abdali border post. On October 1, Tehran carried a first major assault on the Emirate when it raided Kuwaiti oil installations in retaliation for Kuwaiti support for Iraq; Iran, however, denied any responsibility for the incident. While the Kuwaiti media issued harsh condemnations, the regime exercised great restraint: it recalled its ambassador to Tehran, issued a formal protest to Iran, and requested UN support but otherwise tried to prevent relations with Iran from deteriorating completely. Subsequently, Kuwaiti-Iranian relations fluctuated. Following the revelation of the plot in Bahrain, Kuwait blamed Iran for supporting terrorist infiltrations into the Arab Gulf monarchies and Iran continuously warned Kuwait to stop supporting Iraq. However, Iran launched no further attacks on Kuwaiti territory and in February Iranian President Khomeini even congratulated the Kuwaiti ruler on the occasion of Kuwait's Independence Day. Kuwait for its part, being heavily affected by the war, was particularly interested in a rapid termination of the military contestation and sought to mediate between the belligerents both unilaterally and in cooperation with the other GCC states. Meanwhile, Kuwait granted Iraq another \$2 billion loan in December 1981.⁷⁰³

Iranian crossing of the Iraqi border in July 1982 concerned Kuwait, as this development brought the frontline closer to Kuwaiti territory. Subsequently, the Emirate made increased attempts to not antagonise Tehran by taking a more pronounced "neutral" stance, *inter alia* in the GCC framework, and amplifying its mediation efforts.⁷⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Kuwaiti-Iranian relations deteriorated due to strong Iranian support for subversive activities in Kuwait, which Tehran denied. In relations with Baghdad, Kuwait continued to reject Iraqi demands for a lease of the islands and reduced its overall financial support. Nonetheless, bilateral relations rather improved with high-ranking state visits and regular

⁷⁰² Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 175f. and Webman, "Kuwait" (1980-81), p. 480.

⁷⁰³ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 177; Webman, "Kuwait" (1980-81), p. 480; and Esther Webman, "Kuwait," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 498-509, p. 503.

⁷⁰⁴ In October 1983, Kuwait backed a UAE initiative to mediate between Syria and Iraq. For more details, see section on the UAE below.

intergovernmental consultations. In February 1983 Kuwait started to sell 50,000 barrels of its oil on Baghdad's account; in mid-1983, the daily volume was increased to 130,000 barrels.⁷⁰⁵

In the aftermath of a bomb series in Kuwait on December 12, 1983⁷⁰⁶, Kuwaiti-Iranian relations deteriorated significantly. Despite the obvious connection between the perpetrators and the Iranian government⁷⁰⁷, Kuwait refrained from protesting to Tehran. Moreover, during the subsequent trials, the Kuwaiti authorities neither made charges of political conspiracy nor did they suggest any connections between the accused and Iran.⁷⁰⁸ However, the Kuwaiti attempt to prevent an escalation of tensions with Iran failed. Kuwaiti mass arrests and deportations of Iranian citizens and Iraqi Shiites provoked Iranian outrage; the government issued complaints and anti-Kuwaiti propaganda was intensified.⁷⁰⁹ Despite their resentment over Iranian subversive activities, Kuwait again attempted to calm the waves in its relations with Tehran.⁷¹⁰ This, however, changed with the beginning of the Tanker War. After Iranian raids on two Kuwaiti tankers in mid-May, Kuwait condemned the attacks but still refrained from condemning Iran itself. Nonetheless, together with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait managed to get the remaining GCC members to explicitly criticise Iran and request the UN Security Council to consider the matter; this led to UN Resolution 552 of June 1, 1984, which condemned the Iranian attacks on

⁷⁰⁵ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 177f.; Daniel Dishon and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 191-234, p. 195; and Ilan Karmi, "Kuwait," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 472-85, p. 478f.

⁷⁰⁶ Bombs exploded at the U.S. embassy, on the French embassy compound, near Kuwait airport's control tower, near the premises of the U.S. arms contractor Raytheon, at an oil installation, and at a power station. In total, there were five fatalities and 87 wounded. Dore Gold, "Kuwait," in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 403-12, p. 405.

⁷⁰⁷ The majority of those responsible for the attacks belonged to the Iraqi Shiite opposition party al-Dawa, which received massive support from Tehran and organised most of its activities from Iran. Gold, "Kuwait" (1983-84), pp. 406f.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 405-7. An example of anti-Kuwaiti propaganda on Radio Tehran was a comment in late December, according to which "the arrest of a single Muslim in Kuwait, whatever his nationality or sect, is tantamount to a declaration of war against the Islamic Republic of Iran." Cited in *ibid.*, p. 407, fn. 33.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 407 and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 123-57, p. 132.

Kuwaiti and Saudi tankers.⁷¹¹ After a third Kuwait tanker was hit on June 10 and another Kuwaiti ship was seized by Iran, Kuwait clearly sharpened its tone. Kuwaiti-Iranian relations deteriorated further in late August, when Kuwait refused Tehran's request to let a hijacked Iranian airliner land and instead called the Iraqi air force to escort the plane to Iraq.⁷¹² Diplomatic conflict arose with regard to another hijacking in December, when Iran refused to extradite Hezbollah fighters that had hijacked a Kuwaiti airliner and flown it to Tehran.⁷¹³ Meanwhile, Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations were friendly, although Baghdad repeatedly raised the island issue.⁷¹⁴

By 1985, Kuwait's internal security situation had deteriorated dangerously with increased sectarian tensions, bomb threats and explosions, and an assassination attempt on Kuwaiti Emir Jaber Al Ahmad on May 25.⁷¹⁵ As it was the case after the December 1983 bombings, Kuwait expelled a large number of Iranians – more than 1000 until the end of the year – provoking a continuation of Iranian anti-Kuwaiti propaganda.⁷¹⁶ Bilateral relations were also burdened by Iran's repeated detention of Kuwaiti ships that prompted Kuwaiti protest to the UN Security Council in June 1985.⁷¹⁷ In the autumn of 1985, there was a short *intermezzo* of reduced tensions; in this time fell a meeting between the foreign ministers of both states at the UN headquarters. However, due to the continuation of Kuwait's support for Iraq, tensions soon increased again.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹¹ Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1983-84), p. 134; Gold, "Kuwait" (1983-84), pp. 407f.; and Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 178.

⁷¹² Gold, "Kuwait" (1983-84), p. 408 and David Menashri, "Iran," in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 428-64, p. 458.

⁷¹³ Dore Gold, "Kuwait," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 398-410, p. 403.

⁷¹⁴ Gold, "Kuwait" (1983-84), p. 408 and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1983-84), p. 136.

⁷¹⁵ Compare Lori Plotkin Boghardt, *Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution: 1979-1991 and New Challenges* (Houndsmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 70-102 and Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 162. The Islamic Jihad Organisation, which claimed responsibility for the attempted assassination of the Emir, requested the release of their comrades that had been jailed for their involvement in the bombings one and a half years earlier. Gold, "Kuwait" (1984-85), p. 404.

⁷¹⁶ Gold, "Kuwait" (1984-85), p. 406 and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1984-85), p. 122.

⁷¹⁷ Gold, "Kuwait" (1984-85), p. 406 and Assiri, *Kuwait*, p.162.

⁷¹⁸ Gold, "Kuwait" (1984-85), p. 406.

In the meantime, Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations continued to follow roughly the same pattern as before. The two states conducted regular visits, the most prominent being Kuwaiti Prime Minister Saad Al Abdullah's visit to Baghdad in mid-November 1984. However, there was disagreement about a number of aspects: first and foremost, Iraq continued to pressure Kuwait regarding a lease of Warba and Bubiyan, now reducing the demanded term of lease to 20 years (from an earlier 99 years). However, Kuwait remained steadfast and underscored its position by both erecting defence installations on Bubiyan and repeated visits by the Kuwaiti Defence Minister to the troops stationed on the island. Second, Kuwait had reduced its economic assistance to Iraq due to financial constraints connected to the low oil price. Third, Kuwait was anxious that Iraq's attacks on Iranian naval targets and cities would provoke retaliation against the Arab Gulf monarchies. Fourth, Kuwait was concerned about collateral damage caused by Iraq's use of chemical weapons.⁷¹⁹

The Iranian capture of the Faw Peninsula in February 1986 brought about a very significant change in Kuwaiti foreign policy in general and in their relations with the two belligerents in particular. The Iranian advance moved the frontline very close to Kuwaiti territory, thus increasing the likelihood of Kuwait being directly affected. Kuwait's response was equal to Riyadh's, namely a prompt strong and explicit condemnation of Iran. The Emirate subsequently became the spearhead of pro-Iraqi policy within the GCC. Together with Riyadh the Kuwaiti regime tried to pressure Syria to change Iran's policy, forced through a strong condemnation of Iran in the GCC, and despite its own financial constraints provided Iraq with another comprehensive loan and renewed the earlier agreement to sell 350,000 barrels of oil per day on Baghdad's account.⁷²⁰ Consequently, Kuwaiti-Iranian relations deteriorated significantly. Iran threatened to attack Kuwaiti oil installations if they did not end their support for Iraq. When Iranian helicopters intruded into Kuwaiti airspace and chicaned a Kuwaiti Navy vessel, the Emirate issued both a condemnation and a warning to the Iranian chargé d'affaires; in October, when an Iranian jet violated Kuwaiti airspace, it was fired upon by the Kuwaiti air defence. In February and September, Iranian forces attacked a fishing boat and a tanker respectively; in

⁷¹⁹ Gold, "Kuwait" (1984-85), p. 406 and Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 175, 180.

⁷²⁰ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 181 and Bengio, "Iraq" (1986), p. 385.

the latter case the Iranian chargé d'affaires was summoned again. In April, Kuwait complained to the UN Secretary General about the continued confiscation of a Kuwaiti freighter, Iran had seized five months earlier.⁷²¹

In the light of the increased threats to its security, Kuwait gave up its prior reluctance and joined the GCC mutual defence pact in late 1986.⁷²² At the December GCC summit, Kuwait requested the dispatch of the Peninsular Shield force to Bubiyan Island, joint protection of its commercial fleet in the Gulf, and the expansion of the Saudi AWACS surveillance zone to Kuwait. When its request was rejected, due to some GCC members' anxiety to not antagonise Iran, the Emirate turned to the Soviet Union, the United States, and the remaining permanent members of the Security Council for protection of their commercial interests through the chartering and reflagging of tankers. In the end, Kuwait chartered three Soviet and three British tankers; moreover, from May 1987, eleven Kuwaiti tankers were flying the U.S. American, three the British, and six the Liberian flag. In addition to the reflagging of Kuwaiti ships, the U.S. Navy increased its presence in the Gulf and began escorting the tankers. Kuwait's decision to internationalise the war and involve the superpowers was a clear departure from its prior objectives of keeping foreign powers, especially the superpowers, out of the Gulf.⁷²³

Already prior to the reflagging operation, Kuwaiti-Iranian relations had further worsened. Kuwait blamed Iran for bomb explosions on its territory during the months of April through July. Moreover, on July 20, the day before the reflagging operation started, Kuwait's Crown Prince reiterated his country's strong support for Iraq. Both developments provoked additional Iranian threats and in turn an even clearer pro-Iraqi stance in Kuwait; reportedly, Kuwait supported Iraq with \$1 billion over the course of 1987. After the *hajj* incident, also the Kuwaiti embassy in Tehran was ransacked.⁷²⁴ Once Kuwait's tankers were better protected, Iran partially changed its tactics. From September, Iran

⁷²¹ Bengio, "Iraq" (1986), p. 385; Dore Gold, "Kuwait," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 303-11, p. 307; and David Menashri, "Iran," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 323-60, p. 352.

⁷²² Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 180.

⁷²³ For a summary of the reflagging operation and the accompanying internationalisation of the war, see Assiri, *Kuwait*, pp. 100-28.

⁷²⁴ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 182f. and Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 164.

conducted repeated *Silkworm* missile strikes against targets closer to Kuwaiti territory, particularly against Kuwaiti oil installations.⁷²⁵ After one such attack, Kuwait expelled Iranian diplomats.⁷²⁶

In early 1988, Kuwait defied Iraqi pressure and cautiously favoured in the GCC a joint Omani-UAE effort to convince Iran to accept UN Resolution 598. Moreover, Kuwait's principle readiness to improve relations with Iran became clear when the Kuwaiti foreign minister declared in late January that the Emirate would reopen its embassy in Tehran; a month later he stated that Kuwait was interested in a constructive dialogue with Iran.⁷²⁷ Along the same lines the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States stated in February, "We are playing the role of a mediator between Iraq and Iran and we have never taken sides with one Islamic country against another."⁷²⁸ In this context, the Kuwaiti regime portrayed its massive financial support for Iraq as routine foreign aid and not a taking side in the Iran-Iraq War.⁷²⁹ However, due to Iranian attacks on Bubiyan in late March, the hijacking of a Kuwaiti commercial plane to Iran by Hezbollah in early April, and repeated bombings by pro-Iranian terrorists in Kuwait in February, April, and May, Kuwait reverted to its previous anti-Iranian position.⁷³⁰ Both Kuwaiti government and press hailed Iraq's recapture of the Faw peninsula in April; Iranian accusation that Kuwait had allowed Iraq to use Bubiyan in the reconquest were denied.⁷³¹

Despite pressure from the local press, the Kuwaiti regime did not follow Riyadh's example and did not cut diplomatic ties over the *hajj* controversy in late April. Following the U.S. downing of an Iranian passenger plane in early July, a gradual reduction of Kuwaiti-Iranian tensions could be witnessed. Considering the massive effects the war had had on the foreign and domestic security as well as on the economy of Kuwait, the Iranian acceptance of UN

⁷²⁵ Dore Gold, "Kuwait," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 369-77, p. 374.

⁷²⁶ Assiri, *Kuwait*, p. 163.

⁷²⁷ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 184 and Joseph Kostiner, "Kuwait," in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 436-47, p. 439.

⁷²⁸ Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), p. 439.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁰ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 184 and Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), pp. 437, 440.

⁷³¹ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 185.

Resolution 598 on July 18 was welcomed enthusiastically by both the Kuwaiti press and the regime.⁷³²

UAE Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1979-1988

The Iranian Revolution had a very significant impact on UAE relations with both Tehran and Baghdad. Even more than before the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the UAE shaped their policies towards each of the two subregional powers with great appreciation of the effect it would have on relations with the other. Moreover, particularly in the first years, differences in individual Emirates' policy stances continued to be a characteristic pattern of UAE foreign policy towards Iran and Iraq. Again, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah were the extremes in a continuum ranging from a more neutral policy seeking closest possible relations with Iran to a more pro-Iraqi stance; as in the 1970s, the federal UAE policy took an intermediate position. Despite smaller alterations over time, UAE policy towards the Iran-Iraq War was one of marked neutrality and, beside Oman, the UAE became the leading mediator for a ceasefire and a general reduction of tensions between Iran and the Arab Gulf states.

UAE relations with Iran underwent several phases during the timeframe under review in this subchapter. In the first months following the overthrow of the Shah's regime, UAE-Iranian relations were characterised by a reciprocal charm offensive. As early as February 13, 1979, Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai, conveyed his congratulations to the Iranian transitional government under Mehdi Bazargan; underscoring their two countries' joint Islamic identity, Sheikh Rashid expressed his hopes for improved bilateral relations in line with shared Islamic objectives. Iran, too, adopted a friendly policy towards the UAE. Also in February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini sent a letter to UAE President Sheikh Zayid through PLO Chairman Arafat in which he expressed his gratitude and respect "for the UAE President, government and people, on the basis of their stand towards the revolution."⁷³³ Moreover, Khomeini conveyed his wish for improved and intensified relations with the UAE untainted by the previous Iranian expansionist Gulf policy. For a few months, UAE-Iranian relations saw significant improvement due to mutual

⁷³² Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 185f. and Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), p. 440.

⁷³³ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 154f. (quotation on page 155)

efforts: in early March, the UAE ambassador to Tehran resumed his post;⁷³⁴ in the following month, the UAE Minister for Justice and Religious Endowments, upon his return from an extended visit to Iran, “call[ed] on all Muslims to support the Iranian revolution;”⁷³⁵ and in May, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Courts, Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali, expressed Iran’s desire for improved relations with the UAE when he met with Sheikh’s Zayid, Rashid, and Saqr bin Muhammad Al Qasimi of Ras al-Khaimah. Khalkhali also emphasised that the new Iranian regime had broken with the Shah’s nationalism.⁷³⁶ Curiously, during a visit of the Ayatollah to Dubai, the local government even allowed the Iranian Fada’iyyane Islam party to open a branch in the Emirate.⁷³⁷

However, the first conflicts in UAE-Iranian relations arose when the UAE denied an Iranian request to extradite individuals who had had connections with Iran’s central intelligence service SAVAK. Interestingly, Dubai that for economic reasons had the greatest interest in solid relations with Iran was pressing the UAE government to an uncompromising position. While the federal government had originally only denied the extradition of UAE citizens, Dubai rejected also the handing over to Iranian authorities of foreigners, as the individuals in question belonged to Emirate’s merchant elite. This decision disgruntled the Iranian regime and had negative effects on the bilateral rapprochement. Possibly in consequence to the UAE’s lacking readiness to compromise on the question of extradition, Tehran denied earlier suggestions about a return of the three occupied islands.⁷³⁸

In addition, the UAE were concerned about the Iranian regime’s objective to export its Shiite revolution to the Arab Gulf monarchies.⁷³⁹ The fact that the UAE had large Shiite and Iranian communities – particularly in Dubai – created the possibility for a revolutionary spill-over to the Emirates. In this context, some apprehension was caused by both meetings of Iranian clerics close to Khomeini

⁷³⁴ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 155.

⁷³⁵ Cited in *ibid*, p. 156.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷³⁷ Eli Flint, “United Arab Emirates,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 477-87, p. 480.

⁷³⁸ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 159f.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 162 and John Duke Anthony, *The United Arab Emirates on the Occasion of its Tenth Anniversary: A Political Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: The Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, 1981), p. 22.

with representatives of local Shiite-Iranian communities in the UAE⁷⁴⁰ and Iranian President Bani Sadr's statement in March 1980 that "Iran would support any Islamic movement in any Arab country, on principle, regardless of whether or not there were relations with the ruling regime."⁷⁴¹

Precisely because of these concerns and temporary conflicts with Iran, the UAE made great efforts to demonstrate to Iran its desire for close and cooperative relations. Towards this objective, the UAE government repeatedly criticised U.S. policy towards Iran: the UAE publicly rejected the freezing of Iranian assets by the United States as well as the failed U.S. attempt to free the hostages from the occupied U.S. embassy in Tehran.⁷⁴² In early January 1980, both Sheikhs Zayid and Rashid sent congratulatory messages to the newly elected Iranian President Badi Sadr, reiterating the UAE's desire in improved bilateral relations. Means to strengthen bilateral relations "on the basis of good neighbourliness and Islamic fraternity" were discussed by Sheikh Zayid and the Iranian Foreign Minister Sadeq Qutubzadeh during the latter's visit to Abu Dhabi on April 30, 1980.⁷⁴³

Economic relations between the UAE and Iran were also thriving. The Iranian import volume to the UAE increased from roughly AED 110 million in 1978 to AED 162 million in 1982.⁷⁴⁴ In this context, it is interesting to note that while the imports to Dubai stayed virtually the same, imports to Abu Dhabi declined significantly and imports to Sharjah saw an 11-fold increase. Re-exports from the UAE to Iran increased from roughly \$148.5 million in 1978 to approximately \$234.6 million in the following year. Re-exports from the Emirate of Dubai to

⁷⁴⁰ Eli Flint, "The Gulf States," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 433-39, p. 435.

⁷⁴¹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 159.

⁷⁴² *Ibid*, p. 158.

⁷⁴³ Esther Webman, "United Arab Emirates," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 429-37, p. 432.

⁷⁴⁴ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 155. The 1978 import volume's value was equivalent to \$28.4 million (constant exchange rate between UAE dirham and US dollar in 1978). The 1982 import volume amounted to a value of \$38.6-44.2 million (fluctuating exchange rate between UAE dirham and U.S. dollar during the year 1982).

Iran underwent a smaller but still significant 17% increase between 1977 and 1979.⁷⁴⁵

Following the Iranian Revolution, there were frequent consultations between the UAE and Iraq on the question of how to restore the disturbed Gulf stability. Despite frequent mutual visits, the UAE government remained suspicious and distrustful of the Iraqi Baath regime.⁷⁴⁶ Iraq's emphatic insistence on the return of the Iranian-occupied islands put the UAE in a difficult position. What at first glance appears to be support for the UAE regime was in fact an Iraqi strategy to gain Arab backing in its escalating conflict with Iran and to prevent a UAE-Iranian rapprochement. Indeed, the Iraqi regime made the return of the islands a central condition for an improvement of relations with Tehran. This automatically dragged the UAE into the Iranian-Iraqi conflict as it put pressure on the Emirati government to take a stand. Moreover, the Iraqi demand damaged UAE interests as it reinforced Iran's rejection to return the islands.⁷⁴⁷ However, the major reason for the Iranian rejection to return the islands seems to have been the close relations between the Arab Gulf monarchies and the United States in general and U.S. military presence in the area in particular.⁷⁴⁸

When Iraq invaded Iran in October 1980 it officially declared the return of the islands a main war objective⁷⁴⁹; putting even more pressure on the UAE government to take a stand.

Regarding both the Iraqi demand for the return of the islands and the Iran-Iraq War in general, the individual UAE Emirates were in disagreement. In the initial stage of the war, when it seemed that Iraq was likely to succeed in quickly

⁷⁴⁵ Own calculations based on data provided by Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 157f.

⁷⁴⁶ Flint, "United Arab Emirates," p. 480.

⁷⁴⁷ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 160f. and Esther Webman, "United Arab Emirates," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 502-20, p. 506.

⁷⁴⁸ In March 1980, Iranian President Bani Sadr argued along these lines when he stated, "Evacuate [the islands]? Who is going to take them? To whom do the islands belong? Not to anyone [...] in the south there is Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Oman, Dubai, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia [...] to us these states are connected with the United States and are not independent. At the end of the Gulf there is the Strait of Hormuz through which oil passes. They [the Arab Gulf governments] are afraid of our revolution. If we allow them to have the islands they will control the Strait. In other words the United States would control the waterway [...] If all of them, the littoral states of the Gulf, were independent, we would have returned the islands to them." Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 160.

⁷⁴⁹ Webman, "United Arab Emirates" (1980-81), p. 506.

defeating the Iranian military, the UAE emirates were divided into two camps – a group led by Abu Dhabi and completed by Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, and Fujairah, which was generally supportive of Iraq's attack, and another group consisting of Dubai, Sharjah, and Umm al-Qaiwain that, mainly for economic reasons, took a neutral position and did not favour Iraq's war decision.⁷⁵⁰

Regarding the island issue, the UAE initially refrained from taking a public position. They saw themselves in a quandary as “[t]o take up the Iraqi demand would have earned it [the UAE] Iranian hostility; to disclaim it would have antagonized Iraq.”⁷⁵¹ In early October, Sheikh Saqr of Ras al-Khaimah implicitly expressed his support for Iraq in its war with Iran. Although talks about economic cooperation were claimed as the sole reason for his visit to Baghdad, Sheikh Saqr's meeting with the Iraqi government this early in the war was a clear pro-Iraqi statement. Reportedly, the ruler of Ras al-Khaimah and Iraqi government also reached an agreement on the recovery of the occupied islands. The federal UAE government continued to keep silent on the island issue until mid-December. In the meantime, Arab public opinion had increasingly called into question the UAE government's Arab patriotism. Articles issued in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Bayraq* put additional pressure on the UAE government. The paper referred to opposition movements in the country and alleged threats to leave the union by Ras al-Khaimah over the federal government's lack of a decisive stand on the island issue. Moreover, the Iranian leadership embarrassed the UAE government when it suggested that some UAE rulers had been bribed by the Shah to keep silent on the Iranian occupation of the islands. The UAE government reacted on December 11, when it conveyed a message to the UN Secretary-General insisting on the restoration of UAE sovereignty over the occupied islands and declaring their readiness to enter into negotiation with Iran on the matter.⁷⁵² In the following spring, the UAE government adopted an even sharper tone; the acting foreign minister declared that while the UAE hoped to resolve their disagreement with Iran over the islands “with understanding and [by a] dialogue on logic,” they were now supportive of Baghdad's insistence on the island's return as a

⁷⁵⁰ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” pp. 168, 174.

⁷⁵¹ Webman, “United Arab Emirates” (1980-81), p. 506.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

prerequisite for a ceasefire.⁷⁵³ However, reportedly neither Sheikh Zayid nor acting Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah Al Nuaymi addressed the island issue in meetings with Iranian officials visiting the Emirates.⁷⁵⁴ If true, this would support the assumption that the UAE did only take a stronger stance regarding the islands in reaction to increased Iraqi and general Arab pressure. As in 1970s, the UAE federal government did consider stable relations with Iran more important than the recovery of the occupied islands; without a doubt this was true for most of the individual emirates as well.⁷⁵⁵

Early on in the war, the UAE were expressing their hopes for a rapid end of the fighting. In mid-October, Sheikh Zayid called on the two belligerents to end their military contestation in order to “save Muslim lives.”⁷⁵⁶ Nonetheless, during the war’s first year, the UAE gave financial and very likely also logistic support to Iraq. As Nonneman reports, during this time “[t]he UAE (in essence Abu Dhabi) is thought to have contributed between \$1-3 billion” to the Iraqi war effort.⁷⁵⁷ Moreover, there were unconfirmed Iranian allegations that the UAE gave “shelter to Iraqi naval vessels and aircraft.”⁷⁵⁸ In addition, Anthony reports that “Iraqi planes landed in Dubai en route to Oman and projected bombing of the southern port of Bandar Abbas.”⁷⁵⁹ According to Cordesman,

“[t]here were numerous news reports that Abu Dhabi was prepared to serve as a base for Iraqi fighters and ships and that several members of the UAE would back an Iraqi invasion of the Tumb and Abu Musa islands in return for the promise that the islands would be returned to Iraqi sovereignty.”⁷⁶⁰

This, however, is contradicted by a statement of an unnamed “senior UAE official” referred to by Al-Alkim; the official reportedly claimed that Iraq had requested to use UAE territory as a basis for bomb raids on Bandar Abbas but that the UAE denied Iraqi military jets entry into their airspace.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵³ Cited in Webman, “United Arab Emirates” (1980-81), p. 506.

⁷⁵⁴ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 161.

⁷⁵⁵ Compare Kourosh Ahmadi, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf: Abu Musa and Tunbs in Strategic Perspective* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2008), p. 140.

⁷⁵⁶ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 162.

⁷⁵⁷ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 175.

⁷⁵⁸ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 162.

⁷⁵⁹ Anthony, *The United Arab Emirates*, p. 17.

⁷⁶⁰ Cordesman, *The Gulf*, p. 605.

⁷⁶¹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 162.

Encapsulating the UAE leadership's concerns and hopes regarding the Iran-Iraq War in its first year Anthony states,

“The emirs are concerned about several possible results of the Iran-Iraq hostilities. They fear that if Iraq emerges too dominant, the region's fragile power structure will be thrown out of balance. They also fear that a weakened and destabilized Iran would produce greater radicalism in the area, to which an outraged Shi'i minority in the Gulf states would respond. Worse, if Iran resorted to prolonged guerilla warfare, the fighting could spread across to the islands and to the Peninsula itself. Moreover, a chaotic Iran could provoke the Soviets to adventurism, opening the region to Soviet influence and bringing on a superpower confrontation in the Gulf. What the emirs would like to see is an early end to the fighting without too much humiliation for Iran, with a negotiated settlement that would give Iraq its stated limited objectives, but without over-inflating the stature of Saddam Hussein or his military forces.”⁷⁶²

From 1982, the UAE reduced their support for Iraq – although Abu Dhabi reportedly “contributed another \$1 billion or so to Iraq's coffers in 1982”⁷⁶³ –, sought a rapprochement with Iran, took a markedly neutral position in the war, and made offers to the contestants to mediate between them.⁷⁶⁴ Beside the reasons mentioned by Anthony, the UAE now had a pressing economic interest in a rapid termination of the war. The ongoing military contestation between Iran and Iraq had increasingly negative effects on the UAE economy: following the considerable profits Dubai made in the first months of the war “by transshipping a wide range of badly needed supplies into Iran,”⁷⁶⁵ the Emirate's trade with Iran was now declining and Dubai's overall re-export trade did not develop as fast as it could have due to the war's turbulences. As oil prices fell at the same time, the UAE budget deficit was rapidly growing from \$622 million in 1982 to \$1,447 million in 1983.⁷⁶⁶

The UAE adopted an Iran-friendly policy and distanced itself from Iraq as it was concerned to be dragged into the war or be targeted by Iranian asymmetric retaliations – a fear reinforced by Iranian pressure following its military advances in 1982. Following the discovery of the coup attempt in Bahrain in

⁷⁶² Anthony, *The United Arab Emirates*, p. 18.

⁷⁶³ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 178.

⁷⁶⁴ Compare Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 163-6 and Esther Webman, “United Arab Emirates,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 524-31, p. 527.

⁷⁶⁵ Anthony, *The United Arab Emirates*, p. 17.

⁷⁶⁶ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 163f.

December 1981, the UAE government refrained from denouncing Iran for its involvement. In the only public statement in this regard, Sheikh Zayid merely noted that Iran denied any involvement in the plot. The UAE soon went back to business as usual and hosted the Iranian Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs in March 1982 and a delegation of Iranian parliamentarians headed by Ayatollah Khalkhali in April.⁷⁶⁷ In an interview in early March, Sheikh Zayid reiterated the UAE's neutrality in the war and downplayed the peril emanating from revolutionary Iran to the Emirates. He stated that "Iran has never threatened us [...] there is no pressure" and denied ever having given military or financial support to either Iran or Iraq.⁷⁶⁸ In addition, Al-Alkim cites an unnamed senior UAE official who confirmed earlier assumptions that from 1982 the UAE bowed to Iranian pressure and even made quiet payments to Tehran.⁷⁶⁹ However, there was a boundary to the UAE's readiness to cooperate with Iran. The Emirates did not take up an Iranian proposal to establish a joint UAE-Iranian bank and firmly rejected a suggested "bilateral trade agreement on a barter basis, with Iran paying in crops, minerals, dried fruits and paper for UAE goods."⁷⁷⁰

In May 1982, during a visit to Abu Dhabi by Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati, Sheikh Zayid reiterated that a continuation of the war was in no one's interest and offered his support in reaching a peaceful conflict settlement; indeed, the UAE together with Algeria made attempts to mediate between the belligerents in 1982.⁷⁷¹ Due to the UAE's charm offensive towards Iran, bilateral relations showed clear improvement. In June, Iranian President Khamenei sent a message to Sheikh Zayid, "prais[ing] the UAE's policy as wise and realistic,"⁷⁷² and in October, the first Iranian ambassador presented his credentials to the UAE government in the post-revolutionary era.⁷⁷³

⁷⁶⁷ Webman, "United Arab Emirates" (1981-82), p. 527.

⁷⁶⁸ Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 164.

⁷⁶⁹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 164f.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 165.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp. 165f.

⁷⁷² Webman, "United Arab Emirates" (1981-82), p. 527.

⁷⁷³ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 165f.

UAE-Iranian relations continued to improve over the next years. In fact, among Arab Gulf monarchies the UAE had the best relations with Iran.⁷⁷⁴ During this time, there were regular visits by Iranian officials to the Emirates; examples are visits by Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati in mid-August 1983 and in December 1985, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Besharti in October 1985, and the Director of Arab and Islamic Affairs at the Iranian Foreign Ministry in July 1985.⁷⁷⁵

When Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz in July 1983, the UAE responded in a milder tone than the regimes in Riyadh and Muscat. While the UAE government made clear that it considered the closing of the strait “unacceptable,” both the UAE minister for petroleum and mineral wealth and the foreign minister made public comments calming the mood by stressing that no Gulf state, including Iran, had an interest to follow through with such a threat.⁷⁷⁶ At the same time, to put pressure on Iran, Sheikh Zayid tried to mediate the conflict between Iraq and Syria, Iran’s most important Arab ally. Reportedly, the UAE was even willing to pay Syria for the reopening of the Iraqi-Syrian oil pipeline.⁷⁷⁷

When in May 1984 Arab-Iranian tensions escalated over the Tanker War, the UAE government was anxious to maintain its balanced stance. On the one hand, the Emirates supported the condemnation of Iranian aggression within the framework of the GCC. On the other, the UAE emphasised the need to maintain cordial relations with both Iraq and Iran as this was a precondition for its attempts to bring about an end of the war. The UAE press also exercised restraint regarding its criticism of Iran. In fact, the Emirati newspaper *Al Ittihad* “identif[ied] the ‘key enemy’ as those Western powers which sought to manipulate the conflict in order to re-establish their hegemony over the Gulf

⁷⁷⁴ Dore Gold, “The United Arab Emirates,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 319-22, p. 320 and Idem, “The United Arab Emirates,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 419-22, p. 421.

⁷⁷⁵ Dore Gold, “The United Arab Emirates,” in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 420-7, p. 424; Idem, “The United Arab Emirates” (1984/85), p. 421; and Ilan Karmi, “United Arab Emirates,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 502-11, p. 505.

⁷⁷⁶ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 167.

⁷⁷⁷ Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1983-84), p. 131.

countries.”⁷⁷⁸ Reiterating its connectedness with both belligerents, the UAE equally stressed its common Arab identity with Iraq and the ‘ties of neighbourhood and Islamic brotherhood’ it shared with Iran.⁷⁷⁹

With intensification of the war, the UAE were in a growing quandary: for trade reasons and out of concern about Iranian retaliations, the Emirates had an interest in a continuation of solid relations with Iran; meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were pressing the Emirates to take a more anti-Iranian stand.⁷⁸⁰ The UAE addressed this predicament by applying a three-pronged strategy: first, they maintained to the largest degree a neutral stance in their individual policy, rarely criticising Iran openly. In February 1986, the UAE government condemned Iran’s seizure of the Faw peninsula. However, soon afterwards the Emirates returned to their previous neutral stance. The same was true for the time after the *hajj* incident in July 1987.⁷⁸¹ Second, the UAE backed GCC communiqués and resolutions critical of Iran after making every effort to moderate their tone; the best example was the GCC summit resolution in December 1987.⁷⁸² Third, the UAE intensified its efforts to mediate between Iran and Iraq. In 1987, the UAE made several mediation attempts through Syria, Iran’s main ally in the region. During the December 1987 GCC summit, the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies then entrusted the Emirates to lead a diplomatic campaign to convince Iran to accept a ceasefire. Indeed, the UAE were very active in 1988 and reportedly even offered Iran financial compensation for its acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 598.⁷⁸³ These increased mediation attempts were also motivated by the fact that from 1986 onwards, the UAE were increasingly affected by the war. In 1987, after two ships had hit mines off the coast of Fujairah, the UAE banned commercial

⁷⁷⁸ Gold, “The United Arab Emirates” (1983-84), p. 424.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁰ Compare Uzi Rabi, “The United Arab Emirates,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 386-90, p. 388.

⁷⁸¹ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” pp. 181, 183.

⁷⁸² Rabi, “The United Arab Emirates” (1987), p. 388.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid* and Uzi Rabi, “The United Arab Emirates,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 461-8, p. 464.

shipping in its territorial waters for a month.⁷⁸⁴ Moreover, following the start of the reflagging operation, Iran had increasingly fired upon neutral ships, thus raising the number of attacks near the shores of the UAE. In April 1988, Iran even targeted a UAE installation directly when it attacked the Mubarak offshore oil field in retaliation for U.S. attacks on Iranian targets.⁷⁸⁵

Understandably, the UAE felt relieved when Iran eventually accepted the ceasefire in mid-August.⁷⁸⁶

Bahrain's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1979-1988

The Iranian Revolution was a watershed in Bahraini-Iranian relations. After ten years of increasingly close and cordial ties between Manama and Tehran, the situation changed fundamentally following the advent to power by the Khomeini regime. Over the next years, bilateral relations fluctuated depending on two factors: the degree of Iranian subversive activities in, verbal aggression towards, and threats against Bahrain; and the course of the Iran-Iraq War. During the same period, relations between Manama and Baghdad were also decisively affected by Iran's policy and the developments of the war. Early on, Iraq sought closer relations with Bahrain, as was the case with all Arab Gulf monarchies. Manama's response to this attempted Iraqi rapprochement varied over time; domestic stability and external security being their top priority, the Al Khalifa regime gave strong support for Iraq at times and at other times took an explicitly neutral stance.

The new Iranian regime's intention to export its revolution to the other Gulf states caused great concern in Manama. The Al Khalifa feared that Iranian instigation of unrest could lead to an overthrow of their regime just as it had happened to the Shah. Indeed, Bahrain was very vulnerable to Iranian subversion. For one thing, the island state was the only Arab Gulf monarchy with a Shiite majority among its population. Moreover, Shiite clerics in Bahrain had been in close touch with Khomeini during his exile in Iraq. Most worrisome, however, was the fact that

⁷⁸⁴ Rabi, "The United Arab Emirates" (1987), p. 388. Nonetheless, in May, Sheikh Zayid tried to prevent conflict with Iran when he stated that there was no need for foreign protection for UAE ships. Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 182.

⁷⁸⁵ Rabi, "The United Arab Emirates" (1988), pp. 463f.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 463.

“[m]any of Khomeyni’s accusations against the Shah could equally well be applied to [Bahrain’s] rulers, including those of autocratic government, use of oil revenues for the benefit of a small minority, wide socio-economic gaps, reliance on and imitation of the West, and the failure to maintain an Islamic life-style.”⁷⁸⁷

Furthermore, the Bahraini regime was concerned about a possible revival of the historic Iranian claim on Bahrain when during a press conference on June 15, 1979, Iranian Ayatollah Sayyid Sadeq Ruhani called Bahrain “an indivisible part of Iran.”⁷⁸⁸ However, the Bahraini regime’s concerns were allayed by both an Iranian government statement according to which Ruhani’s comment did not represent Tehran’s official position and more importantly Iran’s appointment of an Ambassador to Manama the next month.⁷⁸⁹

Starting in the summer of 1979, the Bahraini regime became increasingly concerned about subversive activities in the Emirate. In mid-August, a group of Shiite Bahraini clerics called for significant reforms and the proclamation of Bahrain as an Islamic state. A few days later, Muhammad Ali Al Akari, the group’s head, was arrested by the Bahraini authorities upon his return from Iran where he had met with Ayatollah Ruhani. Al Akari’s detention prompted a demonstration in the course of which the Bahraini regime arrested 28 protestors; among the detained was the Iranian national Al Hadi Al Mudaresi, Ayatollah Khomeini’s “personal and unofficial representative in Bahrain.”⁷⁹⁰ The arrests in turn provoked a harsh response from Tehran, which accused the Al Khalifa regime of persecuting the Bahraini Shiite community, demanded the immediate release of the detained protestors, and threatened with open support for Bahraini Shiite subversives. As Bahrain did not respond to Tehran’s ultimatum, the Iranian regime gave staunch verbal support for the Bahraini Shiites through the media. Over the next months, Iranian clerics and government officials uttered repeated threats in direction of the Bahraini regime. In late September, Ayatollah Ruhani issued a clear warning when he wrote to the Bahraini ruler, “If you do not want to stop oppressing the people, we will call on the people of Bahrain to demand annexation to the Islamic government of

⁷⁸⁷ Menashri, “Iran” (1978-79), p. 539.

⁷⁸⁸ Eli Flint, “Bahrain,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 440-8, p. 440.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁰ Flint, “Bahrain” (1978-79), pp. 440f.

Iran.”⁷⁹¹ The Ayatollah repeated his warning in the presence of Khomeini and added that Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa would meet the same fate as the Shah had. In addition, Ruhani demanded a Bahraini referendum, convinced that the majority of the Bahraini people would want to join Iran; Sheikh Isa replied by strongly rejecting Ruhani’s interference in domestic Bahraini affairs.⁷⁹²

Within the first two and a half years following the takeover of the Khomeini regime, Iran’s stance towards Bahrain was somewhat schizophrenic; a result of the Iranian regime’s lack of a concerted foreign policy. On this Lawson encapsulates,

“Representatives arriving in Manama during this period brought messages reaffirming Tehran’s desire to end the rivalry between Arabs and Persians that had characterized the policies of the Pahlavi period. [An example was the visit Iranian Foreign Minister Sadeq Qutubzadeh paid to Bahrain on May 2, 1980.⁷⁹³] At the same time, however, more militant factions within the Islamic Republic continued to broadcast calls by the Islamic Liberation Front-Bahrain and other clandestine organizations for a popular uprising against the Al Khalifah.”⁷⁹⁴

Until early 1980, Bahrain tried to not antagonise Iran; a desire shared by the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies. This was the reason why in mid-October 1979, when representatives of the six states met in Taif, Saudi Arabia, to review the unrest in Bahrain and Kuwait, they did neither invite Iraq, Iran’s nemesis, nor made public the discussion’s results.⁷⁹⁵ However, Bahrain kept a safe distance from Iraq for another reason, too. In September 1979, Iraqi Defence Minister Khayrallah visited Bahrain carrying a message from President Saddam Hussein that emphasised that Iraq would protect the Emirate against external aggression.⁷⁹⁶ In the following month Saddam Hussein said in an interview that

“[h]e [had] told the Gulf rulers that they could ask for Iraqi help ‘to the degree they need it and to the degree they allow us to help.’ He added, however, that Iraq’s rulers were ‘revolutionaries and socialists’ and if the people in the Gulf States were seeking a change of regime, then ‘we are with the people.’ In the eyes of the Gulf rulers, that rider probably

⁷⁹¹ Cited in Flint, “Bahrain” (1978-79), p. 441.

⁷⁹² Menashri, “Iran” (1978-79), pp. 539f.

⁷⁹³ Esther Webman, “Bahrain,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 397-402, p. 398.

⁷⁹⁴ Lawson, *Bahrain*, pp. 124f.

⁷⁹⁵ Webman, “The Gulf States,” p. 392.

⁷⁹⁶ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1979-80), p. 200.

cancelled out whatever pro-Iraqi sympathy the offer of help might have created in the first place.”⁷⁹⁷

In 1980, Bahrain began to take a more pro-Iraqi stance. Manama quickly expressed its support for the National Charter for the Arab States Saddam Hussein proposed in February 1980. From May onwards, in the light of intensified Iranian-Iraqi tensions, the Al Khalifa regime increased its diplomatic activity with Iraq. During a visit to Baghdad, the Bahraini prime minister went as far as to express strong support for Iraq. Bahrain’s pro-Iraqi stance continued in the early phase of the Iran-Iraq War. The regime in Manama hoped that the expected *blitzkrieg* would lead to the overthrow of the Iranian regime and subsequently reduce Tehran’s destabilising influence in Bahrain. However, once Iran had stopped Iraq’s offensive and a stalemate set in, Bahrain was concerned about the repercussions of a continued overt support of Iraq; hence, Manama expressed officially its neutrality in the war.⁷⁹⁸

In mid-December 1981, Bahraini authorities discovered a plot by a group of Shiites to overthrow the Al Khalifa regime. On December 13, Bahraini police arrested 60 individuals, among them 45 Bahrainis, 13 Saudis, one Kuwaiti, and one Omani. The detainees confessed having “planned to seize Government House and take officials hostage during Bahrain’s National Day celebrations Dec. 16.”⁷⁹⁹ Moreover, the arrested individuals claimed to have received training for their coup attempt in Iran.⁸⁰⁰ In consequence, Bahraini-Iranian relations saw massive deterioration. Despite Iranian denials, the Bahraini government immediately handed an official protest note to Hassan Shushtarizadeh, the Iranian chargé d’affaires in Manama. On December 18, the Al Khalifa regime recalled its ambassador to Iran and declared Shushtarizadeh *persona non grata* because of his alleged involvement in the plot – the Bahraini authorities accused the Iranian diplomat of having provided the plotters with weapons and explosives he had previously smuggled into the country.⁸⁰¹ In January 1982, the Bahraini regime identified a group of Shiite Bahraini citizens as the leaders of

⁷⁹⁷ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1979-80), p. 201.

⁷⁹⁸ Compare Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 173.

⁷⁹⁹ *New York Times*, December 19, 1981, p. 5.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid* and Esther Webman, “Bahrain,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 490-97, p. 490.

the plotters; all twelve individuals resided in Iran and were members of the Tehran-based Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, a faction headed by the aforementioned Al Hadi Al Mudaresi, the then Director of the Iranian Gulf Affairs Broadcasting Section. The sequence of the failed plot was later described as follows:

“National Day, 16 December 1981, was zero-hour for the group’s planned demonstration and attack on government installations and officials. Simultaneously, Tehran Radio was to have urged people to rally around the group. Five Iranian hovercraft loaded with troops and equipment were standing by in the Iranian port of Bushehr to fly in support as soon as they received word that the attempted coup was underway.”⁸⁰²

Subsequently, Bahrain abrogated diplomatic relations with Iran and refused Iranian citizens entry into the country. Moreover, Bahrain requested all remaining GCC members to follow its example and cut ties with Tehran.⁸⁰³ In another prompt reaction to the failed plot, the regime in Manama sought a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies as it saw in increased cooperation the best guarantee for security and stability. In the following years, Bahrain was a main driving force behind closer cooperation and integration in the framework of the GCC.⁸⁰⁴ An early example of such intensified cooperation among the GCC states was an emergency meeting by the GCC foreign ministers in February 1982 during which the six states agreed upon joint measures against Iranian-sponsored subversion.⁸⁰⁵

In the summer of 1982, the Bahraini-Iranian relations improved again. During a visit to Manama by two Iranian members of parliament on August 9, officials of both states met for the first time since the abrogation of diplomatic relations. Over the course of the following nine months, several Iranian economic delegations visited Bahrain and in September 1982 both countries announced a plan for the establishment of a passenger shipping service between Manama, Doha, and the Saudi city of Dammam operated by the Islamic Republic Shipping Lines. In the spring of 1983, diplomatic relations were officially

⁸⁰² Webman, “Bahrain” (1981-82), p. 491.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 491f.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 493 and Ilan Karmi, “Bahrain,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 462-71, pp. 464f.

⁸⁰⁵ Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 125.

reinstated, followed by the visit to Manama of a senior official of the Iranian foreign ministry in May. Another two months later, a new Iranian chargé d'affaires presented his credentials to the Al Khalifa regime.⁸⁰⁶ Despite this improvement in political relations, the Iranian media continued their previous critical reporting on Bahrain; the main points of criticism were Bahrain's pro-Iraqi stance in the war and the U.S. military presence in the Emirate.⁸⁰⁷

As regards the Iran-Iraq war, Bahrain called on both belligerents to agree to a ceasefire. However, Manama continued to show a pro-Iraqi stance, although not as emphatically as in the war's initial phase.⁸⁰⁸ In mid-March 1983, Bahrain's Prime Minister, Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, told the Egyptian newspaper *Al Akhbar*

“I say frankly and without hesitation that Iraq did not want this war. The war was imposed on Iraq which found itself, as a revolution and a regime, in a position of self-defence [...] We hope that the Iranian side will now accept mediation.”⁸⁰⁹

Due to its pro-Iraqi stance Bahrain's relations with Iraq were stable. In mid-September 1982, bilateral trade relations were improved when a joint Bahraini-Iraqi economic trade committee agreed to increase further the already significant bilateral trade volume and reduce tariff barriers.⁸¹⁰

During the following years, Bahrain made great efforts to prevent bilateral relations with Iran from deteriorating; the underlying intention behind this policy was to contain both Iranian subversive activities in Bahrain and the risk of being dragged into the war. For one thing, Bahrain kept a relatively neutral stance in the Iran-Iraq War and conducted low-key relations with Iraq; despite the fact that the Al Khalifa regime's sympathy for Iraq far exceeded any it had for Iran. Moreover, when repeated reports made credible claims that Tehran continuously supported Bahraini underground groups, Manama gave no public confirmation. On the contrary, in October 1983, the Bahraini foreign minister stated: “In fact, two years ago there was clear interference, but we hope that

⁸⁰⁶ Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 125 and Karmi, “Bahrain,” p. 465.

⁸⁰⁷ Karmi, “Bahrain,” p. 465.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid* and Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 178.

⁸⁰⁹ Cited in Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 178.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid*.

such things have ended.”⁸¹¹ Furthermore, the Bahraini regime usually ignored the continued hostile reporting on Bahrain broadcasted by Radio Tehran. Despite the fact that the Iranian media clearly attempted to instigate protests among the Shiite elements of the Bahraini population, the Al Khalifa regime did usually refrain from verbal retaliations.⁸¹² From late 1984 onwards, the Iranian government made attempts to improve relations with Bahrain; this rapprochement was part of a larger Iranian strategy to reduce pro-Iraqi support among the Arab Gulf monarchies. Examples of the changed Iranian policy was the congratulatory message Iranian Prime Minister Musavi conveyed to his Bahraini counterpart on the occasion of the Bahraini National Day in December 1984 and the visits to Bahrain by a personal representative of the Iranian foreign minister in the spring and by Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Besharti in late October of the following year. The Bahraini regime was glad about Iran’s more cooperative approach. However, not least since the Iranian media continued to broadcast anti-Bahraini propaganda, Manama remained highly suspicious about Iran’s ulterior motives.⁸¹³

In 1986, Bahrain’s stance towards the Iran-Iraq War began to shift towards a more pro-Iraqi position. Bahrain backed the GCC foreign ministers’ strong condemnation of Iran’s seizure of the Faw peninsula in February 1986. Moreover, both the Bahraini government and the country’s media issued condemnations of Iran’s military advance. Unlike Oman, Qatar, and the UAE, which soon resumed their previous neutral stance, Bahrain kept a tendentially pro-Iraqi attitude. As Nonneman notes, this “may be explained by its own experience with Iranian-inspired protest, and the island’s high degree of dependence on Saudi aid, oil supplies, and military protection.”⁸¹⁴ Bahrain’s increased tilt towards Iraq was evidenced *inter alia* by the visits to Bahrain by

⁸¹¹ Cited in Dore Gold, “Bahrain,” in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 398-402, p. 399.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*

⁸¹³ Dore Gold, “Bahrain,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 393-7, pp. 394f. and *Idem*, “Bahrain,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 299-302, p. 300; and Lawson, *Bahrain*, p. 125.

⁸¹⁴ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 181.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan and the Iraqi interior minister in mid-July and late October respectively.⁸¹⁵

A few months later, Bahrain publicly expressed its approval for Kuwait's reflagging operation. In an attempt to avoid antagonising the Iranian regime with its support for the introduction of a large foreign navy presence into Gulf waters, the Bahraini foreign minister "rather feebly tr[ie]d to reassure Tehran that this would not be aimed against it."⁸¹⁶ However, as its commerce was heavily affected by the Tanker War, the Bahraini regime had a great interest in an increased security of the Gulf waterways; the reflagging operation, so Manama hoped, would go a long way to realise this objective.⁸¹⁷

From 1987, Bahrain took an increasingly anti-Iranian stance. Having taken a neutral stance towards the war for several years, Bahrain now sided more and more with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In June, Bahrain supported a GCC foreign ministers communiqué that harshly criticised Iran for its anti-Kuwaiti actions. Moreover, the Bahraini government publicly condemned Iran following the *hajj* incident on July 31, 1987; an important reason for Bahrain's harsh response was its apprehension that the incident might cause domestic unrest. Another Bahraini condemnation of Iran followed after the Iranian attack on Kuwait in September, as the Al Khalifa regime was very concerned that the GCC states might be dragged into the war. In the light of the immediate danger of a geographic expansion of the war, which might have directly affected Bahrain, Manama advocated firmly UN Security Council Resolution 598, which called for a ceasefire. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September 1987, Bahraini Foreign Minister Muhammad bin Mubarak Al Khalifa went as far as to call for anti-Iranian sanctions if Tehran did not comply with the Resolution. The Iranian attack on a Kuwaiti oil terminal in October prompted yet another strong Bahraini condemnation.⁸¹⁸

It should not come as a surprise that in consequence of Bahrain's increasingly Iran-critical stance, the Iranian attitude towards the Emirate became hostile

⁸¹⁵ Gold, "Bahrain" (1986), p. 300.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁷ Compare Uzi Rabi, "Bahrain," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 364-8, p. 366.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid* and Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 183.

again. In October 1987, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards labelled Bahrain as “U.S.-occupied,” which made the island state “fair game for attacks on the Americans.”⁸¹⁹ In mid-December, Radio Tehran uttered an implicit threat in direction of Manama:

“Regimes like Bahrain’s are too small to remain optimistic about their future security under US support while they continue their policy of supporting US forces and helping the enemies of Islam.”⁸²⁰

In 1988, Bahrain’s stance towards the war was characterised by an even more pronounced anti-Iranian and pro-Iraqi tilt. On the one hand, Bahrain supported the UAE initiative to lead a GCC-Iranian dialogue with the objective to convince Iran to agree to a ceasefire. On the other, Manama denounced the Iranian government for both its attack on the UAE’s Mubarak offshore oil field and its alleged involvement in the hijacking of a Kuwaiti airliner in April. Moreover, the visits of Bahraini Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman to Iraq in the same month and Bahrain’s Defence Minister Khalifa bin Hamad to Faw and Shalanchah on June 20, right after they had been liberated from Iranian occupation, were clear symbols of Bahrain’s siding with Iraq.⁸²¹

When Iran eventually agreed to a ceasefire on June 20 the Bahraini regime was cautiously optimistic.⁸²²

Qatar’s Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1979-1988

From the Iranian Revolution to the end of the Iran-Iraq War, Qatar was careful to maintain stable relations with both Iran and Iraq. The Iranian Revolution caused great apprehension in Doha. With a view to the large Iranian and Shiite communities in the country, the Al Thani regime was greatly concerned about domestic security. The concerns were reinforced when several of Khomeini’s assistants visited the Emirate in order to meet with the local Iranian and Shiite minorities.⁸²³ Fearing Iranian instigation of unrest in Qatar, the leadership made

⁸¹⁹ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 183.

⁸²⁰ Cited in Rabi, “Bahrain” (1987), p. 366.

⁸²¹ Uzi Rabi, “Bahrain,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 429-35, p. 432 and Nonneman, “Gulf States,” pp. 184f.

⁸²² Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 186.

⁸²³ Flint, “The Gulf States,” p. 435.

great efforts to not antagonise the new revolutionary regime in Tehran.⁸²⁴ The Al Thani regime expressed its objection against any forcible U.S. intervention in Iran and “rejected the establishment of foreign bases, or the stationing of foreign military troops, in the Gulf, and advocated keeping the region neutral.”⁸²⁵ In this regard, Doha and Tehran were in agreement. As a sign of stable bilateral relations, Iranian Foreign Minister Sadegh Qutubzadeh paid a state visit to Doha in late April 1980.⁸²⁶

Meanwhile, bilateral relations with Iraq improved as well. This was mainly a result of the accelerated Saudi-Iraqi rapprochement prompted by the Iranian Revolution. In this, the Qatari regime followed the established pattern of looking to Riyadh for policy guidance. Nonetheless, Doha remained suspicious of the radical and overly secular Baathist regime in Baghdad.⁸²⁷

Following the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, Qatar declared its neutrality, a stance it officially kept throughout the entire war.⁸²⁸ Once Iran had stopped the initial Iraqi offensive and a stalemate set in, Qatar shared the other Arab Gulf monarchies’ strong interest in a rapid termination of the war, as its continuation would entail significant risks for the economic prosperity, domestic stability, and external security of the Emirate.⁸²⁹ Consequently, in November 1980, Emir Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani called upon the community of Islamic states to work together towards a termination of the war.⁸³⁰ Underlining its claimed neutrality in the armed conflict, the Qatari regime publicly held the view that the war between Iran and Iraq was the result of the pan-Islamic community’s failure to focus on and unite against the true enemy, Zionist Israel. Qatar repeated this

⁸²⁴ Esther Webman, “Qatar,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 423-8, p. 423.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁸ Compare Uzi Rabi, “Qatar,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 383-5, p. 383; Idem, “Qatar,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 456-60, p. 457; and Esther Webman, “Qatar,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 498-501, p. 499;

⁸²⁹ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 175.

⁸³⁰ Webman, “Qatar” (1980-81), p. 499.

view throughout the entire war.⁸³¹ However, as it became clear that there was no hope for a swift ceasefire and a return to the *status quo ante*, Qatar took sides for Iraq. As mentioned above, Qatar was concerned about the new Iranian regime's policy orientation and the trouble that could arise from Iranian efforts to export the revolution. Therefore, the Al Thani regime considered Iran to be the larger threat to its interests and did not want to see an Iranian victory. Consequently, despite its officially neutral stance, the Qatari regime began to grant Iraq very significant financial aid to further its war efforts; within the war's first year, Qatar is reported to have provided Iraq with "some \$1 billion."⁸³²

In early 1981, Qatar issued the first criticism against the revolutionary Iranian regime. In January of that year, the Emirate supported publicly the Iraqi-UAE demand for the return of Abu Musa and the Tunb islands and in June, Doha condemned the Iranian attacks on Kuwait. However, the Qatari regime made certain to not break with Iran altogether. Exemplary for this was a three-day visit by an Iranian parliamentary delegation to Doha in February.⁸³³

In late 1981, Qatar adopted a sharper tone towards Tehran. The exposure of Iran's sabotage network in Bahrain prompted Doha's first public denunciation of the revolutionary Iranian regime. In addition, Qatar condemned the Iranian execution of 1,500 Iraqi prisoners of war, labelling it a "violation of Islamic religious and moral principles."⁸³⁴

While Saudi Arabia and Kuwait continued their financial support for Iraq from 1982 onwards, Qatar, along with the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, discontinued its previous considerable aid.⁸³⁵ However, despite the termination of financial aid, Qatari Foreign Minister Suhaim bin Hamad Al Thani stated in mid-September 1983, on the occasion of his visit to Baghdad, Qatar's sympathies with the Iraqi regime "in its war at the eastern border of the Arab

⁸³¹ Esther Webman, "Qatar," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 519-23, p. 520 and Rabi "Qatar" (1988), p. 457.

⁸³² Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 175.

⁸³³ Webman, "Qatar" (1980-81), p. 499.

⁸³⁴ Cited in Webman, "Qatar" (1981-82), p. 520.

⁸³⁵ Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 178.

Homeland.”⁸³⁶ Nonetheless, bilateral relations with Iran were kept alive and “Qatar could take some comfort in not having been completely written off by Tehran as an Arab ally of Iraq.”⁸³⁷ Underscoring this fact, several Iranian officials paid visits to Doha over the following years.⁸³⁸ In late 1985, the Iranian Ambassador to Doha expressed on Radio Tehran the Iranian government’s particular interest in an expansion of relations with Qatar.⁸³⁹ Overall, Qatar’s friendly stance towards Iran paid off as the Emirate did not become the target of Iranian subversive activities comparable to that in Bahrain or Kuwait.⁸⁴⁰

Following Iran’s capture of the Faw peninsula in February 1986, the GCC foreign ministers issued a very emphatic condemnation. Chiefly responsible for the joint communiqué’s harsh tone were the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Both the Qatari government and the Emirate’s media issued a condemnation as well. However, as was the case in the Bahrain, Oman, and UAE, Qatari statements were more restrained than those of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In the subsequent months, Qatar returned again to a more neutral position towards the Iran-Iraq War.⁸⁴¹

The longer the war dragged on, the more concerns it raised in Doha and the more negative repercussions it had for the Emirate. Qatar feared both the war’s further escalation and internationalisation. The Al Thani regime feared a spill-over of the armed conflict on its territory and the effects of a superpower involvement in the war.⁸⁴² Most immediate negative effects for the Emirate bore the escalating Tanker War. Due to its geostrategic position, Qatar was heavily reliant on the trade routes through the Gulf. Therefore, any disturbances in the

⁸³⁶ Cited in Ilan Karmi, “Qatar,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 496-501, p. 497.

⁸³⁷ Dore Gold, “Qatar,” in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 417-9, p. 418.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid*; Dore Gold, “Qatar,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 416-8, p. 417; Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1983-84), p. 135; and Rabi, “Qatar” (1987), p. 384.

⁸³⁹ Dore Gold, “Qatar,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 317f., p. 317.

⁸⁴⁰ Rabi “Qatar” (1988), p. 457.

⁸⁴¹ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 181.

⁸⁴² Compare Rabi, “Qatar” (1987), pp. 383f.

Gulf waterways directly affected the Qatari economy.⁸⁴³ Despite both Qatar's attempts to maintain a relatively neutral stance during the war and the Emirate's comparatively stable relations with Iran, its tankers had repeatedly been the target of Iranian attacks.⁸⁴⁴ Moreover, Qatari vessels had been repeatedly stopped, searched, and seized by the Iranian military.⁸⁴⁵ In the end, Doha approved of the U.S. reflagging mission in the context of the GCC. However, the Emirate did not issue any unilateral statements according the same lines.⁸⁴⁶

Until the end of the war, Qatar backed resolutions condemning Iran in both the GCC and the Arab League, however, refrained to the largest extent from unilateral public rejection of Iranian policy.⁸⁴⁷

Having a vital interest in the termination of the war, Qatar gave strong support to UN Security Council Resolution 598 and called on Iran to accept a ceasefire. At the Arab League Summit in Amman in November 1987, Qatar presumably joined the UAE and Oman in their demand to formulate the summit resolution in such way that channels of communication with Tehran would still remain open in order to convince the latter to accept a ceasefire. When Iran eventually did so on July 18, 1988 both the Qatari government and press lauded Tehran's decision; the eventual end of the war a month later then caused great relief in Doha.⁸⁴⁸

Oman's Relations with Iran and Iraq, 1979-1988

As it was the case for the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, Oman's relations with both Iran and Iraq from 1979 to 1988 were shaped primarily by the Iranian Revolution, the altered Iranian foreign policy, and the ensuing Iran-Iraq War. Moreover, in the early years, policy reactions to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the Soviet Afghanistan invasion affected Oman's relations with Iraq.

⁸⁴³ Compare Rabi, "Qatar" (1987), p. 384.

⁸⁴⁴ Rabi "Qatar" (1988), p. 457.

⁸⁴⁵ Gold, "Qatar" (1986), p. 318.

⁸⁴⁶ Rabi, "Qatar" (1987), p. 384 and Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 182.

⁸⁴⁷ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 182f.

⁸⁴⁸ Rabi, "Qatar" (1987), p. 384; Rabi "Qatar" (1988), p. 457; and Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 184, 186.

Having had very cordial ties with the Shah's regime⁸⁴⁹ and having favoured the gradual détente in Gulf relations following the 1975 Algiers Accord, the Sultanate was concerned about revolutionary change in Iran. However, Oman's threat perception regarding the Khomeini regime's policy orientation differed from that of the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies. Oman had no substantive Shiite community and those Shiites that lived in Oman originated from India, a fact that made them much less susceptible to Iranian influence. Hence, in clear contrast to Bahrain and Kuwait, the peril of Shiite upheavals was minimal in Oman. Indeed, following the Iranian Revolution there was no significant Iranian-sponsored subversive activity in the Sultanate.⁸⁵⁰

Early on, the Omani regime emphasised that the Iranian Revolution was a purely domestic Iranian matter; a view the Sultanate reiterated throughout the entire period under review in this section.⁸⁵¹ What concerned Oman most with regard to the change of political status quo in Iran was the security of the Strait of Hormuz. It is true that Oman was economically far less reliant on the Strait as an export route than the other Arab Gulf monarchies – the largest part of the Omani coastline and the major Omani ports are located outside the Gulf, offering the Sultanate alternative export routes. However, Oman and Iran shared sovereignty over the Strait. The responsibility stemming from that gained particular significance as all commercial traffic lanes through the Strait go through Omani territorial waters.⁸⁵² Hence, to guarantee uninterrupted oil export routes, the Sultanate applied a two-pronged strategy. First, the Omani regime tried to maintain cooperative relations with Tehran. To this end, the Sultan sent a delegation headed by his Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, to Iran in late June 1979. Khomeini's pledge to honor all previous agreements in Oman and to engage in close cooperation to ensure Gulf security comforted the regime in Muscat. To underscore Oman's interest in friendly relations with Tehran the Omani Information Minister who had

⁸⁴⁹ Iranian troops remained in Oman until they were withdrawn by the Islamic Republic in 1979. Flint, "The Gulf States," p. 436.

⁸⁵⁰ Uzi Rabi, "Oman," in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 448-55, p. 450.

⁸⁵¹ Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*, p. 90.

⁸⁵² *Ibid*, p. 85 and Rabi, "Oman" (1988), p. 450.

accompanied Minister Abdullah stated upon conclusion of their meeting with Khomeini,

“Iran is our neighbor, we have close historical, religious and geographic links with her and we are eagerly looking forward to expanding pure relations with her in all fields in order to make the region a safer place to live in.”⁸⁵³

In mid-September 1979, the Sultan sent a special envoy to Tehran to discuss the safety of shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz.⁸⁵⁴

Second, Oman tried to put forward a multilateral security plan that would involve all littoral states of the Gulf as well as Western powers – the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, and Japan, the main importers of Gulf oil. The Omani Gulf plan was put forward in reaction to both subregional instability following the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet Afghanistan invasion.⁸⁵⁵ The Sultanate proposed “the setting up of air reconnaissance patrols, electronic monitoring equipment on both sides of the Hormuz waterway, and a fleet of barges and Gulf patrol ships.”⁸⁵⁶ According to Oman’s vision, the new to be established Gulf defence force should consist of approximately 75,000 men and be based primarily in Oman. In order to not eliminate any chance for an Iranian participation, the Omani proposal did not address the domestic security problems Tehran’s actions caused in the Arab Gulf monarchies.⁸⁵⁷ However, an Omani diplomatic mission to promote the security plan was aborted due to the plan’s rejection by all other Gulf states. The greatest opposition to Oman’s proposal was voiced by Iraq. Iraqi officials paid visits to the regimes in Kuwait and Manama to ensure their opposition to the Omani plan. The *Al Thawra* newspaper, the Iraqi Baath party’s mouthpiece, rejected Oman’s plan as “a new

⁸⁵³ Cited in Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 101.

⁸⁵⁴ Eli Flint, “Oman,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 461-70, p. 464.

⁸⁵⁵ Esther Webman, “Oman,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Four: 1979-80* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), pp. 413-22, p. 415.

⁸⁵⁶ Joseph Anthony Gawlick, “Persian Gulf Security: The United States and Oman, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and Western Allied Participation,” M.A. Thesis, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 1982, p. 63.

⁸⁵⁷ Gawlick, “Persian Gulf Security,” p. 63; Webman, “Oman,” p. 415; and Avi Pascov, “Strategic Developments in the Persian Gulf,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 21-47, p. 31.

imperialist alliance.”⁸⁵⁸ To the Iraqi regime, Oman’s proposal “was suspect from the very beginning, because the sultan had a well-known preference for closely cooperating with the West in security matters.”⁸⁵⁹ Having failed to get any support for its security plan, Oman made bilateral arrangements with the United States. The two states concluded a framework agreement according to which the U.S. armed forces would be allowed access to certain Omani air force and navy installations in case of a regional confrontation and upon invitation by the Omani government. The agreement, which was finalised in June 1980, also provided for an increased supply of U.S. military equipment as well as U.S. upgrading of Oman’s military infrastructure. In addition, the United States held out the prospect of an economic aid programme that would benefit the Omani population.⁸⁶⁰ All remaining Arab Gulf states rejected the agreement, with the greatest opposition being uttered by Iraq.⁸⁶¹

Four months earlier, on February 8, 1980, the Iraqi regime had put forward a Gulf security plan, significantly different from Oman’s earlier proposal. Much more abstract and broader in scope, and clearly excluding Iran, the National Charter for the Arab States “stressed non-alignment, the peaceful resolution of problems between Arab states, Arab mutual defense, adherence to international law, and Arab economic integration.”⁸⁶² In what could be interpreted as a warning to Oman, the National Charter’s first article stated,

“The presence in the Arab homeland of any foreign troops or military forces shall be rejected and no facilities for the use of Arab territory shall be extended to them in any form or under any pretext or cover. Any Arab regime that fails to comply with this principle shall be proscribed and boycotted both economically and politically as well as politically opposed by all available means.”⁸⁶³

Having close relations with the United States, being distrustful of Iraq, and preferring a solution that involved Iran, Oman became the only Arab Gulf monarchy that did not express immediate support for the Iraqi proposal.⁸⁶⁴ On

⁸⁵⁸ Cited in Al-Khalili, *Oman’s Foreign Policy*, p. 86.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁰ Gawlick, “Persian Gulf Security,” pp. 46f.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 49f.

⁸⁶² Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 172.

⁸⁶³ Cited in Gawlick, “Persian Gulf Security,” p. 50.

⁸⁶⁴ Compare Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 109 and Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 173. Strictly speaking, Saudi Arabia was another exception. See section on Saudi-Iraqi relations.

May 27, prior to the official conclusion of the U.S.-Oman Military Access Agreement, Oman's Foreign Minister Qays Al Zawawi paid a visit to Iraq. Al Zawawi tried to prevent a further deterioration of the already troubled Omani-Iraqi relations. Upon arrival, the Omani foreign minister stated his country's desire "to initiate cooperation with Iraq and to 'remove any misunderstanding that might have arisen as a result of certain political opinions.'"⁸⁶⁵ Although he later qualified his statement, Al Zawawi even expressed his government's support for Iraqi National Charter.⁸⁶⁶ During his visit to Baghdad the Omani foreign minister tried to explain to the Iraqi government that the soon to be concluded agreement with the United States did not establish permanent U.S. bases in Oman⁸⁶⁷; indeed, a central clause in the U.S.-Omani treaty stated: "no U.S. military units will be stationed in Oman, nor will the U.S. government seek to do so."⁸⁶⁸ However, the Omani argumentation did not convince the Iraqi government.⁸⁶⁹

In general, Omani-Iraqi relations were somewhat strained. Despite the gradual rapprochement with Baghdad after 1975, Iraq's support for radical forces in the Gulf in general and the Dhofar rebels in particular was etched on the Sultan's mind. Moreover, Oman's approval of Egypt's separate peace treaty with Israel along with Muscat's rejection to abrogate relations with Cairo antagonised the Iraqi regime.⁸⁷⁰

Following a meeting between Sultan Qaboos and President Saddam Hussein at the Arab League Amman Summit in November 1980, Omani-Iraqi relations showed considerable improvement. Anxious to enter into closer relations with the Sultanate – the Iran-Iraq War had reached a stalemate and Iraq was in need of political support –, the Baath regime withdrew its diplomatic recognition of the radical PFLO and, in March 1981, expelled the organisation's representative from Baghdad. Around the same time, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz proclaimed that Iraq's previous policy of striving for domination in the Gulf had been replaced by a desire for cooperation. Nonetheless, while

⁸⁶⁵ Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 109.

⁸⁶⁶ Al Zawawi later explained that his statement was not indicative of any "radical change in Oman's policy." *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁷ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1979-80), p. 201.

⁸⁶⁸ Gawlick, "Persian Gulf Security," p. 47. (emphasis in the original)

⁸⁶⁹ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1979-80), p. 201.

⁸⁷⁰ For a more detailed account, see Chapter 4.

tensions between Oman and Iraq subsided and high-level delegations visited each other's countries over the next years, bilateral relations did not become particularly close.⁸⁷¹

In the early phase of the Iran-Iraq War, Oman took a cautious pro-Iraqi stance. The Sultanate initially gave the Iraqi armed forces permission to use Omani bases in missions to reconquer the occupied UAE islands. Reports in this respect vary: the Omani government only confirmed the landing of two Iraqi transport planes in the initial days of the war; another report claims the assembling of Iraqi helicopters and troops in Oman.⁸⁷² Following its initial siding with Iraq, Oman took a neutral stand in the war. This was also attributable to a "near-clash between the Omani and Iranian navy" in late 1980.⁸⁷³ Nonetheless, Oman provided military aid to Iraq by purchasing Egyptian military spare parts for Iraq.⁸⁷⁴

Omani-Iranian relations deteriorated during the first three years of the war. In protest to Iran's rejection of Arab calls for a ceasefire Oman recalled its chargé d'affaires in October 1982⁸⁷⁵ and, soon thereafter, gave the Iraqi government a symbolic \$10 million in war support. Oman's financial contribution to Iraq's war effort was met by explicit Iraqi appreciation.⁸⁷⁶ In marked contrast to later statements in which the Sultan expressed his country's desire for friendly relations with Iran, Qaboos stated in January 1983 *Newsweek* interview in unusually strong words

"They [Iran] are going to cause problems because they are going to use subversive mechanisms in the area, and that is going to create some instability [...] But we are very determined to prevent them from threatening, intimidating or overthrowing the present government."⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷¹ Compare Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 110.

⁸⁷² Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 174.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 176.

⁸⁷⁴ Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 111, fn 113. For another motivation behind Oman's facilitating of indirect Egyptian-Iraqi arms deals, see Chapter 4.

⁸⁷⁵ Diplomatic relations had already before been temporarily abrogated. David Menashri, "Iran," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 521-77, p. 565.

⁸⁷⁶ Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 103.

⁸⁷⁷ Cited in *ibid*.

In July of the same year, an Omani diplomat gave a strong reply to Tehran's threat to close the Strait of Hormuz:

“The Strategic Straits of Hormuz is Omani territory and neither Iran nor any other country has the right to interfere in Oman's internal affairs [...] [We] will not accept this nor allow it to occur.”⁸⁷⁸

However, Omani-Iranian relations recovered within a matter of months. In March 1984, Sultan Qaboos sent “a cable of greetings to Iranian President, ‘Ali Khameneh’i, on the occasion of the Persian New Year, wishing ‘prosperity and stability to the friendly Iranian people’.”⁸⁷⁹ Over the following months several messages were exchanged between the two countries.⁸⁸⁰

Early on, Oman had a great interest in a termination of the war as it feared the consequences of continued fighting. Expressing his concerns, Sultan Qaboos stated in an interview in November 1983,

“In any situation, there is the possibility of hostilities getting out of hand. That's why I believe every possible step—on the national, regional and international level—should be taken to stop the [Iran-Iraq] war. I understand from the Iranian declarations that Iran will not follow through its threats with steps on the ground unless all its oil facilities are crippled or destroyed. In such a situation, the Iranians will have nothing to lose. I believe too that the Iraqis are wise enough to evaluate what they are doing.”⁸⁸¹

Since the very first days of the GCC's existence, the Omani regime had advocated military integration among the six Arab Gulf monarchies. In the war's fifth year, Oman's position changed due to the Sultanate's concern that Iran would consider any form of GCC military pact to be directed against them. In April 1985, Sultan Qaboos told the Egyptian weekly magazine *Al-Mussawar*,

“To be perfectly frank, I say that here in Muscat we do not believe it to be in the interest of security in the Gulf that Iran feels we intend to establish an Arab military pact that will always be hostile to it, or that we are about to form a joint force, whose main task is to fight Iran[...] There is no

⁸⁷⁸ Cited in Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 103.

⁸⁷⁹ Dore Gold, “Oman,” in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 413-6, p. 414.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸¹ Cited in Kechichian, *Oman*, pp. 110f.

alternative to peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Persians in the end, and there is no alternative to a minimum of accord in the region.”⁸⁸²

It seems safe to assume that the Sultan’s change of hearts was based on the assessment that “Oman would be better protected by his taking a conciliatory tone towards Iran, rather than through total solidarity with more pro-Iraqi GCC states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.”⁸⁸³ With very little effect of the war felt in the Sultanate, the Omani government aligned its policy towards Iran in due consideration of the fact that it would have to deal permanently with Iran as its neighbouring country. Hence, a conciliatory policy towards Tehran would be an investment in the future. Along these lines, Sultan Qaboos adopted a pointedly neutral position in the war and initiated attempts to mediate between the two contestants. A marked example for the Sultan’s publicly expressed objective view on the war was his opening speech to the 1985 GCC Summit in Muscat.⁸⁸⁴ Moreover, Oman did not condemn the search-and-seizure operations Iran conducted in both the Gulf and the Arabian Sea; more than that, Omani Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Haytham Ibn Tariq, even publicly “asserted that, under international law, Iran had the right to stop and search ships since it was in a state of war.”⁸⁸⁵ In February 1986, Oman publicly condemned Iran’s capture of the Faw peninsula but soon reverted to its previous neutral stance.⁸⁸⁶ Even after the incident at the *hajj* in July 1987, Oman adhered to the largest extent to its neutrality. Only one month later, when Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati paid a visit to Muscat, the Omani regime “labeled Iran a source of pride for the Gulf (even while supporting Kuwait’s right to reflag).”⁸⁸⁷ In both the GCC and the Arab League, Oman backed communiqués and summit resolutions that condemned Iran; however, the Sultanate made repeated efforts to moderate the organisations statements.⁸⁸⁸ Two prominent examples were the Arab League

⁸⁸² Cited in Dore Gold, “Oman,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume IX: 1984-85* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 411-5, p. 413.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴ Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 111.

⁸⁸⁵ Dore Gold, “Oman,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 312-6, pp. 313f.

⁸⁸⁶ Nonneman, “Gulf States,” p. 181.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁸⁸⁸ Compare Uzi Rabi, “Oman,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 378-82, p. 380.

foreign ministers' communiqué in August 1987 and the December 1987 GCC summit resolution; in both cases Oman together with the UAE tried to mitigate anti-Iranian warnings.⁸⁸⁹ In September 1987, speaking before the UN General Assembly, the Omani foreign minister declared his government's objection against the proposed anti-Iranian sanctions.⁸⁹⁰

In the course of 1987, Omani-Iraqi relations suffered under Sultan Qaboos' repeated reiterations of his country's interest in friendly relations with Iran despite Iran's rejection to agree to Security Council Resolution 598. Baghdad was particularly angered about the Sultan's statement in late 1987, when he emphasised that not Iran but also Iraq should abide by the ceasefire order.⁸⁹¹

Sultan Qaboos considered these statements necessary in his attempt to bring about a ceasefire and restore stability in the Gulf; only by taking a neutral stand would Oman be accepted as mediator in Tehran's eyes and secure friendly relations with Iran for the future. In the end, Qaboos' strategy panned out. In 1987, there were several high-level contacts between Oman and Iran, Oman's support for the reflagging operation did not have any negative repercussions on its relations with Iran, and Omani mediation efforts were successful when Muscat arranged the repatriation of Iranian soldiers that had been captured by the U.S. military.⁸⁹² Having called for and worked towards the termination of the war for several years, the Omani regime was very relieved when Iran finally accepted the ceasefire on June 20, 1988; both the Omani government and press praised Iran's decision.⁸⁹³

3.5 From the End of the Iran-Iraq War to the Invasion of Kuwait

The ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq War caused great relief in all Arab Gulf monarchies. The longest interstate war of the 20th Century had had very negative effects on both their foreign security and their domestic and economic stability. Hence, as Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal stated at a GCC Ministerial summit shortly after the ceasefire, it was their predominant interest

⁸⁸⁹ Nonneman, "Gulf States," pp. 183f.

⁸⁹⁰ Rabi, "Oman" (1987), p. 380.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹² Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 105 and Rabi, "Oman" (1987), p. 379.

⁸⁹³ Kechichian, *Oman*, p. 105 and Nonneman, "Gulf States," p. 186.

“to see the war end in a comprehensive peace agreement and to see security, stability, and peace return to our region.”⁸⁹⁴

However, the potential resumption of Iranian-Iraqi fighting was not the Arab Gulf monarchies' only concern. First, they had realised over the previous eight years that their political influence on the two belligerents was very limited. Throughout the entire war they had made considerable attempts to mediate a ceasefire, but repeatedly failed; even financial incentives, their most powerful foreign policy tool, had not led to success. Second, the war had revealed their striking military inferiority in comparison to Iran and Iraq; a fact that became increasingly worrisome as, upon conclusion of the war, Iraq's military power had greatly amplified.⁸⁹⁵ Against this background, the GCC states made efforts to enter into closer “strategic, military, and security coordination” with Egypt.⁸⁹⁶ Third, with the war having come to a close, the Arab Gulf monarchies were concerned that Iraq might refocus on its revolutionary and hegemonic ambitions towards the Arabian Peninsula. Fourth, the oil glut of the 1980s had greatly reduced the Arab Gulf monarchies' previous economic strength. Nonetheless, it could be expected that Saddam Hussein would demand significant financial support for the reconstruction of Iraq.⁸⁹⁷

Against this background the Arab Gulf monarchies made attempts to mediate an Iranian-Iraqi peace agreement, improve relations with Tehran, and maintain friendly relations with Baghdad.

Leading the GCC mediating efforts towards a peace agreement were Bahrain, the GCC's rotational chairman in 1989, and to a larger degree Oman, the organisation's president in 1990. The latter had the best relations with Tehran and was therefore predestined for the task.⁸⁹⁸ Within the framework of the GCC,

⁸⁹⁴ Cited in Jacob Goldberg, “The Gulf States,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 422-8, p. 425.

⁸⁹⁵ Compare *ibid*, pp. 425f.

⁸⁹⁶ Cited in Goldberg, “The Gulf States,” p. 425. For the Arab Gulf monarchies' role in Egypt's return to the Arab fold, see Chapter 4.

⁸⁹⁷ Compare Goldberg, “The Gulf States,” pp. 425f.

⁸⁹⁸ Rabi, “Oman” (1988), p. 451; Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 119-71, p. 151; Uzi Rabi, “Bahrain,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 285-92, p. 289; and Idem, “Oman,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.),

the Arab Gulf monarchies made great efforts to take a balanced position and reiterated the necessity of “a just peace that takes into consideration the legitimate rights of both parties.”⁸⁹⁹

Rapprochement with Iran

The Arab Gulf monarchies made efforts to improve their relations with Iran both within the scope of the GCC and on a bilateral basis. GCC officials stressed their commonalities with Iran based on neighbourhood, common history and culture as well as a common interest in Gulf stability. The Arab Gulf monarchies’ desire to reintegrate Iran in a subregional multilateral framework was encouraged by a turn towards more pragmatism in Iran’s foreign policy, particularly following the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989.⁹⁰⁰ As early as in November 1988, this change in Iranian attitude became obvious, when *majlis* speaker Rafsanjani blamed the Iranian lack of “tactfulness” in relations with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for the two states’ support of Iraq; shortly afterwards, Rafsanjani remarked that from the Iranian perspective there were “no obstacles” to an improvement in relations with the Arab Gulf monarchies. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati also expressed his hope to enter into a new era of relations, stating “bygones are bygones; we should think of the future.”⁹⁰¹

Saudi Arabia

During the first two post-war years, Saudi-Iranian relations fluctuated between rapprochement and overt hostility. Prior to the ceasefire, the controversy over the quota for Iranian pilgrims had led to the abrogation of diplomatic relations, Iranian boycott of the *hajj*, and massive anti-Saudi propaganda from Tehran. After the war, Riyadh sought an easing of bilateral tensions: in October, King Fahd ordered the local media to cease anti-Iranian commentary; shortly afterwards, at a meeting of Muslim information ministers in Jidda, the King said

Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989 (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 559-66, p. 562.

⁸⁹⁹ This statement was given as part of the December 1989 GCC Summit’s final communiqué. Cited in Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1989), p. 151.

⁹⁰⁰ Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1989), pp. 151f.

⁹⁰¹ Cited in David Menashri, “Iran,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 469-99, p. 482.

that he “would have loved to have seen [his] Iranian brothers here today;”⁹⁰² and in December, Riyadh and Tehran began negotiations on Saudi compensation for the bereaved of the Iranians that had died during the 1987 *hajj* incident. Iran also stated its readiness to “overcome the great misunderstanding between us.”⁹⁰³

In the first two months of 1989, conflict arose *inter alia* due to failure to reach a compromise on the compensation issue, disagreement on Afghanistan, and the probable involvement of Iranian government officials in attacks on Saudi diplomats abroad. Relations temporarily improved through direct meetings in London as well as Omani and Pakistani mediation. At the OIC foreign ministers meeting in Riyadh in March, both states adopted a compromising position on controversial questions. Subsequently, friendly statements were issued by Tehran and Riyadh. However, this rapprochement was short-lived. In April, particularly the resurgence of controversy over the quota for Iranian pilgrims led to a renewed deterioration of bilateral ties, the resumption of mutual media propaganda, and Tehran’s boycott of the 1989 *hajj*.⁹⁰⁴

Another cautious improvement in relations following Khomeini’s death came to a sudden end in mid-September: Tehran was enraged when the Saudi authorities executed 16 Kuwaiti Shiites that had planted bombs in Mecca during that year’s *hajj* and publicised the perpetrators’ confessions that revealed Iranian involvement in the incident.⁹⁰⁵ Over the next months, Saudi-Iranian relations remained hostile: the Saudi regime blamed Iran for

⁹⁰² Cited in Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom” (1988), p. 692.

⁹⁰³ Statement by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati in mid-November 1988. Cited in Menashri, “Iran” (1988), p. 482.

⁹⁰⁴ Jacob Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 572-602, pp. 592f. and David Menashri, “Iran,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 333-71, p. 366. In a message to the pilgrims on July 6, Khomeini’s successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, expressed a strong condemnation of the Al Saud regime, calling it “the sinful idols of arrogance and colonialism [...] who are ignorant of God.” Cited in Menashri, “Iran” (1989), p. 366.

⁹⁰⁵ Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia” (1989), p. 593.

“seeking to dominate the Arab countries of the Gulf, planting agents disguised as diplomats, attacking embassies, hijacking airplanes, and intimidating pilgrims in Mecca, all on behalf of Satanic goals.”⁹⁰⁶

Tehran in turn denounced Riyadh for defying God’s command by limiting the number of Iranian pilgrims allowed to fulfill their Muslim duties and rejected the quota of 150,000.

In April, relations seemed to improve when Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati became the first Iranian official to visit Riyadh since the abrogation of diplomatic relations in 1988. However, subsequent secret talks failed to produce a compromise and both parties blamed each other for this failure. Riyadh had apparently been willing to increase the quota of Iranian pilgrims but rejected the Iranian demand to allow demonstrations during the *hajj*. Tehran accused Riyadh to be under U.S. orders to prevent devout Muslims from demonstrating against Israel and the United States. In the end, the disagreement could not be settled, prompting Iran to boycott the third *hajj* in a row. Riyadh’s provision of large-scale humanitarian aid in response to an earthquake in northern Iran could not mend fences.

Following the accidental death of 1,426 pilgrims during the *hajj*, Saudi-Iranian relations deteriorated even further. Both the Iranian government and media emphasised Riyadh’s incompetence to oversee the *hajj* and reiterated earlier demands for all-Islamic jurisdiction over the holy sites.⁹⁰⁷ Some Iranian media sources went as far as to accuse the Saudi regime of having committed “a premeditated massacre.”⁹⁰⁸ The Saudi reaction was equally denunciatory of the Iranian regime.⁹⁰⁹ Hence, in July 1990, Saudi-Iranian relations had made full circle and were as hostile as they were in the final phase of the war.

Kuwait

Following the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the highly strained Kuwaiti-Iranian relations began to improve, although rather slowly. The Kuwaiti regime was interested in an Iranian reduction of subversive activities in the Emirate, while

⁹⁰⁶ Cited in Jacob Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 590-629, p. 601.

⁹⁰⁷ Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia” (1990), p. 601 and Menashri, “Iran” (1990), p. 366.

⁹⁰⁸ Cited in Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia” (1990), p. 601.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Tehran hoped to improve its standing in the Arab world by entering into more cooperative ties with Kuwait. In September 1988, a Kuwaiti diplomatic delegation re-established the Kuwaiti embassy in Tehran, which had been abandoned in 1987; in this context, Kuwaiti State Minister for Foreign Affairs Usaymi stated, "We want to forget the past."⁹¹⁰ A month later, Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati paid a visit to Kuwait.

In March and May 1989, bilateral relations were burdened by the seizure of two Kuwaiti ships through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard⁹¹¹; the vessels were released following State Minister Usaymi's attendance at Khomeini's funeral in June. In September, both Kuwait's detention of a leading Shiite cleric and its acquiescing to the execution of its Shiite citizens in Saudi Arabia provoked Iranian criticism. However, despite these incidents, both states continued to be interested in an improvement of relations and in late September Iran sent an ambassador to Kuwait, the first since the revolution.⁹¹² Nonetheless, Kuwait apparently continued to be concerned about Tehran's contacts to Shiite underground organisations in the Arab Gulf monarchies.⁹¹³

Kuwait's interest in a rapprochement with Iran increased once the conflict with Iraq had intensified; it was essential to Kuwait that Iran supported the Emirate's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In July 1990, a visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati to Kuwait was praised by both sides as an important step towards mutual understanding and cooperation. Subsequently, Kuwait sent an ambassador to Tehran and the "resumption of shipping, flights, and commercial activities [...] was described as 'imminent.'"⁹¹⁴

⁹¹⁰ Cited in Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), p. 440.

⁹¹¹ It is likely that these actions were not sanctioned by the Iranian government. In early February 1990, Kuwaiti Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Al Shaheen told U.S. government officials that Iran was holding 92 small boats. According to U.S. Ambassador Howell, "Shaheen said the Tehran Government says it doesn't know about the boat seizures 'and we believe them'. He said the central government likely did not control the actions of local coast guard commanders." Telegram, Kuwait 858, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, "Kuwait MFA Official on Iran," 2/8/90, disclosed by WikiLeaks.

⁹¹² Telegram, Kuwait 858 (1990) and Joseph Kostiner, "Kuwait," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 482-98, p. 491.

⁹¹³ Telegram, Kuwait 858 (1990).

⁹¹⁴ Jacob Goldberg and Joseph Kostiner, "Kuwait," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 500-19, p. 508. Compare David Menashri, "Iran," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East*

Bahrain

In September 1988, the Bahraini foreign minister met his Iranian counterpart at the United Nations in New York, where they discussed the implementation of the ceasefire. Two months later, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati paid a visit to Bahrain for discussions on the improvement of bilateral relations. Subsequently, Iran posted a chargé d'affaires in Manama. However, Bahraini-Iranian relations remained burdened by Iran's previous intensive anti-Bahraini propaganda and subversive activities in the island state. Hence, improvement in bilateral relations was rather slow and cautious from Bahrain's side.⁹¹⁵ In this respect, Bahraini Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman stated: "It is important that good intentions be shown clearly [...] time alone can reveal good intentions and with the lapse of time, relations [with Iran] will gradually improve."⁹¹⁶

Qatar

Following the ceasefire, the Qatari government expressed its hopes for an improvement in bilateral relations with Iran. In the summer of 1988, Qatar received acting Iranian Foreign Minister Besharati. During the first months of 1989, the Qatari-Iranian rapprochement continued with Iranian state visits and talks about increased economic and cultural relations. However, in June 1989, Iran claimed a third of the Qatari offshore "North Field" and announced to pump its share of natural gas once it had determined the reserves' exact dimension. In an attempt to placate Iran, the Qatari government refrained from commenting on Iran's claim and subsequently made particular efforts to stress the "good neighborliness and Muslim brotherhood" that characterised bilateral relations.⁹¹⁷

UAE

UAE-Iranian relations had been comparatively good throughout the war due to the UAE's largely neutral stance and the two states' close economic ties. In the post-war period, relations improved further. The year 1989 saw several state

Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990 (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 350-78, p. 367.

⁹¹⁵ Rabi, "Bahrain" (1988), p. 432 and Idem, "Bahrain" (1989), pp. 289f.

⁹¹⁶ Rabi, "Bahrain" (1989), p. 290.

⁹¹⁷ Rabi, "Qatar" (1988), p. 458 and Idem, "Qatar," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 567-71, p. 569.

visits and the establishment of new air routes.⁹¹⁸ Otherwise, the UAE made attempts to contribute to the stabilisation of international relations in the Gulf. For one thing, the Emirates tried to convince Iran of the need to conduct relations with the Arab Gulf monarchies “based on good intentions.”⁹¹⁹ Moreover, Sheikh Zayid’s suggestion to establish an Islamic common market was meant to include Iran in a multilateral framework. In order to not antagonise Tehran, the UAE refrained from taking sides in the conflictual Saudi-Iranian relations or other disputes involving Iran.⁹²⁰ In early July 1989, apparently out of concern for Gulf security, Dubai intercepted canisters of raw material for mustard gas destined for Iran and sent them back to their source of origin in India.⁹²¹

Disagreement arose in oil pricing policy. While Iran was interested in a price raise, the UAE rejected its assigned quotas and overproduced, thus provoking a further slump.⁹²²

Oman

Among the Arab Gulf monarchies Oman was most active in mediating between Iran and Iraq as well as Saudi Arabia and Iran. This was made possible by Muscat’s friendly relations with Tehran. From August 1988 onwards, these relations further improved.

Tehran repeatedly expressed its appreciation for Oman’s balanced stance during the war. In October 1988, Omani-Iranian diplomatic relations were upgraded to the ambassadorial level with the arrival in Muscat of the first Iranian ambassador since the revolution; Oman’s ambassador to Tehran arrived the following September. Moreover, economic ties considerably improved. In October 1988, the Omani oil minister visited Tehran; subsequently, the two states consulted on oil-pricing policy and in 1990, they agreed to proceed with the joint development of the shared offshore Hinjam oil field. In March 1989, on the occasion of the first Iranian heavy industry exhibition in Oman, a bilateral

⁹¹⁸ Uzi Rabi, “United Arab Emirates,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 672-79, p. 676.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 675.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 675f.

⁹²¹ *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1989.

⁹²² For more details, see section on Iraq below.

memorandum on the establishment of joint industrial and commercial companies was signed. In August, Oman's role in Iran's post-war reconstruction was discussed during the visit of an Omani delegation to Iran. The following June, Oman and Iran established a joint industrial and economic commission and signed an economic cooperation and coordination framework agreement. In June 1990, the Iranian-Omani rapprochement became apparent in the military field when two Iranian destroyers visited the Omani port of Qubus and the Iranian Naval Academy commander was given an official reception by the Omani minister of state for foreign affairs. Moreover, it was reported that the two states were negotiating a naval security agreement.⁹²³

Towards the Invasion of Kuwait

As mentioned above, the Arab Gulf monarchies' concerns about Iraq's hegemonic ambitions resurfaced following the end of the Iran-Iraq War. In the first post-war months, Saddam Hussein made efforts to allay these apprehensions by emphasising repeatedly Iraq's desire to build Arab unity based on trust among Arab states. Indeed, relations initially remained cordial with Iraq: high-ranking visits were exchanged and Iraq's historic claims on Kuwait took a backseat.⁹²⁴ However, Baghdad's hegemonic ambitions soon revived with

“Iraq now claim[ing] that its victory over Iran – described by Baghdad as the first Arab victory in modern history – highlighted Iraq's role in safeguarding the entire Arab world from a catastrophe and, by implication, entitled Iraq to a leading role in the Arab world.”⁹²⁵

Having saved them from Iran and being able to do so again due to its military strength and the Arab world's largest arms industry, Baghdad now expected the Arab Gulf monarchies' gratitude, political support in its ongoing conflicts with Iran and Syria, and recognition as their leader. In this context, Iraq requested to be admitted to the GCC, clearly with the ambition to dominate it. When this was

⁹²³ Rabi, “Oman” (1988), p. 451; Idem, “Oman” (1989), p. 562; and Idem, “Oman,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 575-83, pp. 577f.

⁹²⁴ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 139-76, p. 154; Kostiner, “Kuwait” (1988), p. 439; Rabi, “Bahrain” (1988), p. 432; Idem, “Oman” (1988), p. 451; Idem, “Qatar” (1988), p. 458; and Idem, “The United Arab Emirates” (1988), p. 464.

⁹²⁵ Ofra Bengio, “Iraq,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIII: 1989* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 372-418, p. 404.

denied, Iraq founded an alternative regional organisation, the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), together with Egypt, Jordan, and North Yemen.⁹²⁶

Meanwhile, as negotiations with Iran had stalled, Iraq renewed its pressure on Kuwait regarding a lease of Warba and Bubiyan and began to make implicit threats. Kuwait's decision to build a city on Bubiyan Island caused serious friction in bilateral relations. A visit by the Kuwaiti Crown Prince and the Defence Minister to Iraq in early February and May 1989 respectively failed to reach an understanding.⁹²⁷

These developments alarmed the Arab Gulf monarchies that now were particularly eager to improve relations with Baghdad.⁹²⁸ In late March 1989, King Fahd visited Iraq – the first visit by a Saudi King since 1957. The timing of Fahd's visit, only weeks after the creation of the ACC, demonstrated Riyadh's concerns about Iraq's intensified regional ambitions; the composition of the ACC was particularly worrisome for Riyadh as Egypt was an important Saudi ally and counterweight to Iraq⁹²⁹ and North Yemen was considered to be within Saudi Arabia's sphere of influence. During the visit, King Fahd and Saddam Hussein concluded a non-aggression and non-interference agreement; this, too, was clear indication of Saudi anxiety and a sign that the close war alliance had been replaced by a rather distrustful and uneasy relationship. Moreover, an Iraqi announcement that Riyadh would contribute to the post-war reconstruction of Basra seems to suggest that the Saudi regime had to give Baghdad financial incentive to conclude the agreement. Further proof of Saudi concern about Iraq's ambitions was Riyadh's reluctance to deliver its earlier promise to assist with the reconstruction of the Osirak nuclear reactor, Israel had destroyed in

⁹²⁶ Bengio, "Iraq" (1989), p. 404.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 405, 490. At the February meeting, Iraq requested control over half of Bubiyan and Kuwaiti agreement to the construction of an Iraqi naval base on Failaka Island (located south of Bubiyan). Gause, *International Relations*, p. 96.

⁹²⁸ For the improvement in UAE-Iraqi and Omani-Iraqi relations, see Rabi, "Oman" (1989), p. 562 and *Idem*, "United Arab Emirates" (1989), p. 676. Concerned about Iraq's reaction to the Omani-Iranian rapprochement, the Omani information minister stated publicly "that relations with Iran would under no circumstance be at the expense of Iraq." Rabi, "Oman" (1989), p. 562

⁹²⁹ Gause argues in this context that Egypt's only objective in an ACC membership was to gain "economic benefits from closer ties to Iraq, not to play second fiddle to Saddam's regional ambitions." Gause, *International Relations*, p. 89.

June 1981. King Fahd made his government's support conditional on both the purely civilian purpose of the project and its international supervision.⁹³⁰

In December, Bahrain had been making efforts to strengthen its relations with Iraq and signed a similar non-aggression and non-interference pact with Baghdad.⁹³¹ A year earlier, the Bahraini prime minister had made a statement indicative of the Emirate's concern about Iraq's post-war power position. In mid-December 1988, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman had told the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Siyasa* "Iraq triumphed [...] and we cooperated with it and helped it achieve this victory [...] Iraq will not forget its brothers' assistance."⁹³²

In early 1990, Iraq's policy began to adopt an increasingly aggressive tone. As Gause argues, Saddam Hussein had become convinced

"that domestic, regional and international forces were working against him, to the extent that the survival of his regime was at stake. [...] His response to this perceived threat was a much more bellicose stance toward what he saw as his unfaithful allies – the United States and the Gulf monarchies, particularly Kuwait – and a return to anti-Israeli rhetoric to mobilize regional support."⁹³³

General Wafiq Al Samarai, then chief of the Iraqi general military intelligence, later reported that Saddam Hussein had told him in March 1990:

"America is coordinating with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait in a conspiracy against us. They are trying to reduce the price of oil to affect our military industries and our scientific research, to force us to reduce the size of our armed forces."⁹³⁴

Indeed, the low oil price⁹³⁵ prevented a badly needed economic upswing in Iraq, having a negative effect on domestic stability. Hence, Iraq was calling for higher oil prices in OPEC. In contrast, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE had an interest in the preservation of the current price and the latter two even wanted to increase their production quotas. In fact, the UAE had rejected its assigned quota of 1.1 million barrels per day (b/d) for the first half of 1990 and produced

⁹³⁰ Bengio, "Iraq" (1989), p. 404 and Goldberg, "Saudi Arabia" (1989), pp. 587f.

⁹³¹ Rabi, "Bahrain" (1989), p. 290.

⁹³² Cited in Rabi, "Bahrain" (1988), p. 432.

⁹³³ Gause, *International Relations*, p. 90.

⁹³⁴ Cited in *ibid*, p. 93.

⁹³⁵ The November 1989 OPEC meeting had set the reference price at \$18 per barrel. David Rachovich, "Middle East Oil Developments 1990," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 277-99, p. 282.

almost double the amount.⁹³⁶ Kuwait, too, was overproducing. In March, Iraq failed in its attempts to win the three Arab Gulf producers' agreement for a rise in the oil reference price both in a tripartite meeting with Riyadh and Kuwait and in an OPEC ministerial meeting. Subsequently, continued overproduction by the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and others led to a further oil price drop. In early May, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE along with other OPEC members agreed to reduce their production rates. However, as these production cuts were never fully implemented, the oil price remained low. As a consequence, on May 30, in his closing speech to the Arab League Summit in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein accused the overproducers – without calling them by name – of conducting “a kind of war against Iraq.”⁹³⁷ After further UAE-Kuwaiti demands for higher production quotas, Iraq began to attack them directly. To prevent a further intensification of tensions, Saudi Arabia intervened and pressured Abu Dhabi and Kuwait to concede. At a meeting of Arab Gulf oil producers in Jidda on July 10, Kuwait and the UAE pledged to stick to their quotas and Saudi Arabia agreed to reduce its production rate; the next day the oil went up almost one dollar.⁹³⁸

Saudi Arabia's intervention was exemplarily for Riyadh's appeasement policy towards Iraq in the months before the invasion of Kuwait. The Saudi regime was cautious not to antagonise Iraq as it feared its militarily far superior neighbour; hence, they gave Baghdad rhetorical support, e.g. when Iraq executed a British journalist accused of espionage in March and when Saddam Hussein threatened Israel with destruction in April. Moreover, despite the obvious disunity of interests a joint statement following Saddam Hussein's meeting with King Fahd in March “read as if Saudi Arabia and Iraq were the closest allies.”⁹³⁹ The Saudi appeasement strategy was most obvious when Riyadh allowed

⁹³⁶ This decision was in line with the Emirates' repeated complaint that the quotas assigned to them “failed to reflect the size of its resources and that concessions to other producers within the cartel were being made at [their] expense.” Uzi Rabi, “The United Arab Emirates,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 693-702, p. 694.

⁹³⁷ Rachovich, “Middle East Oil Developments 1990,” pp. 282-4, 293. (quotation on p. 284)

⁹³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 284f. and Gause, *International Relations*, p. 98.

⁹³⁹ Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia” (1990), p. 600.

Saddam Hussein to dictate policies in OPEC, one of Saudi Arabia's main spheres of influence.⁹⁴⁰

Since 1989, Kuwait had also made efforts to appease Baghdad in several fields: first, Kuwait assured Iraq of their dependability in time of need; Kuwait would support Iraq again as they had done during the Iran-Iraq War. Second, the Emirate tried to improve relations with Iraq by engaging in joint infrastructure development projects; this was successful in reducing tensions in the second half of 1989. During this time, the Kuwaiti Emir was decorated by Saddam Hussein for Kuwait's support during the war.⁹⁴¹ Third, Kuwait was supportive of all efforts to bring about an Iranian-Iraqi settlement; an important reason for that was certainly the hope that with reconciliation between the two states, Iraq would take pressure of Kuwait with respect to the islands. Fourth, the Emirate gave Iraq rhetoric support, e.g. with regard to Iraq's perception of an imminent Israeli threat and the execution of the above-mentioned journalist.⁹⁴²

Nonetheless, Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations deteriorated rapidly due to several issues: first, the above-mentioned disagreement over oil prices and Kuwaiti overproduction; second, Kuwait's denial of an Iraqi request for \$10 billion in emergency aid – Kuwait apparently made a counteroffer of \$500 million over three years⁹⁴³; third, Kuwait's rejection to forgive Iraq's war debts of roughly \$14-15 billion⁹⁴⁴; Kuwaiti refusal of an Iraqi defence cooperation agreement that "would have turned Kuwait into an Iraqi base;"⁹⁴⁵ Iraqi rejection of the 1963 border agreement and accusations of Kuwaiti border violations and oil theft; and reiterated Iraqi demands for the control over Warba and Bubiyan.⁹⁴⁶

Although Kuwait and the UAE cut their oil production according to the Jidda compromise, Iraqi actions became increasingly aggressive. On July 15, in a public letter to the Arab League's Secretary-General, Iraqi Foreign Minister

⁹⁴⁰ Compare *ibid*. The Jidda agreement was confirmed at the OPEC summit on July 26.

⁹⁴¹ Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1989), p. 491 and Goldberg and Kostiner, "Kuwait," p. 510.

⁹⁴² Compare Goldberg and Kostiner, "Kuwait," p. 507.

⁹⁴³ The demand was first made in January and rejected in mid-July. Gause, *International Relations*, p. 97 and Goldberg and Kostiner, "Kuwait," p. 510.

⁹⁴⁴ Reportedly, in September 1989, the Kuwaiti Emir had given Saddam Hussein assurance that Kuwait would not request Iraq to repay its debt. Gause, *International Relations*, p. 97.

⁹⁴⁵ This was the conclusion of a Kuwaiti parliamentary investigation. Cited in *ibid*.

⁹⁴⁶ Compare *ibid*, p. 98; Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XIV: 1990* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 379-423, p. 400; and Goldberg and Kostiner, "Kuwait," p. 510.

Tariq Aziz accused Kuwait of “hav[ing] encroached on Iraq and systematically, deliberately, and continuously harmed it.” In particular, he accused Kuwait of having both “set up military establishments, police posts, oil installations, and farms on Iraqi territory” during the Iran-Iraq War and stolen oil worth \$2.4 billion from the Iraqi Rumaila oil field. Moreover, he accused Kuwait and the UAE of having “implemented an intentional scheme to glut the oil market,” costing Iraq \$1 billion per year.⁹⁴⁷ The next day, Saddam Hussein threatened implicitly to use military force against Kuwait and the UAE, which were stabbing a “poisoned dagger” into Iraq’s back.⁹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Iraq began moving troops towards the Kuwaiti border.⁹⁴⁹

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE reacted differently to Iraq’s verbal aggression. Kuwait, convinced that there was still sufficient room for negotiations, tried to appease Iraq and called for Arab mediation.⁹⁵⁰ Saudi Arabia was alarmed by the growing tensions. However, Riyadh had a deep conviction that Saddam Hussein would not attack Kuwait; the notion of one Arab state invading another was simply inconceivable. Consequently, the Saudi regime misread Iraq’s aggressive posture as a strategic move to get the greatest possible concessions from Kuwait.⁹⁵¹ Egyptian President Mubarak’s meeting with Saddam Hussein on July 24 seemed to confirm that there was no imminent danger to Kuwait’s integrity.⁹⁵²

Among the Arab Gulf monarchies’ leaders, only Sheikh Zayid assessed the situation differently, taking more seriously the Iraqi threats issued against his country. The UAE president was reportedly very concerned about the vulnerability of the UAE’s offshore oil installations to Iraqi long-range air-to-surface capabilities. Soon after the publication of Tariq Aziz’ memorandum, the

⁹⁴⁷ “Letter to Arab League Secretary General Chedli Klibi from Tariq ‘Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Iraq, on 15 July 1990,” reprinted in *Iraq Speaks: Documents on the Gulf Crisis*, compiled by Fred Moore (Darby, PA: Diane Publishing, 1993) pp. 5-8.

⁹⁴⁸ Bengio, “Iraq” (1990), p. 400.

⁹⁴⁹ Gause, *International Relations*, p. 98.

⁹⁵⁰ Goldberg and Kostiner, “Kuwait,” p. 510.

⁹⁵¹ Personal interview with Charles W. Freeman, U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 1989-1992, in Washington, D.C. in April 2001; phone interview with David L. Mack, U.S. ambassador to the UAE from 1986-1989 and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs from 1990-1993, in April 2001; and personal interview with Dr. Judith S. Yaphe, former senior analyst on Near East Persian Gulf issues in the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, in Washington, D.C. in April 2011.

⁹⁵² Saddam Hussein had given President Mubarak his clear commitment to not invade Kuwait. Compare Interview with President Mubarak, *New York Times*, November 8, 1990, p. A14.

U.S. Government had offered the Arab Gulf monarchies military support. Only Sheikh Zayid accepted the offer and requested U.S. refuelling capacity so that his jets could conduct round-the-clock air patrol over the offshore oil installations. In order to not overly antagonise Iraq, U.S. support – mission name *Ivory Justice* – was masked as a joint military exercise.⁹⁵³

Saudi Arabia considered the U.S. involvement an unnecessary provocation of Iraq and tried to prevent it. In the days leading to the invasion, the Kuwaiti government even requested the U.S. Ambassador to stay away from the foreign ministry as to not give the impression that Kuwait was asking for U.S. support. On the eve of the invasion, after the Jidda meeting between Iraqi and Kuwaiti representatives had failed, Kuwait rejected a final U.S. offer to send a deterrent signal in direction of Baghdad. At around 2 am the next morning Iraq invaded Kuwait.⁹⁵⁴

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

During the entire timeframe under review, it was the Arab Gulf monarchies' objective to shape their relations with Iran and Iraq in such a way as to realise the following shared fundamental policy interests: the preservation of external security and territorial integrity, domestic and regime stability, and economic prosperity as well as the attainment of a stable balance of power without the emergence of Iran or Iraq as subregional hegemon. Additionally, Saudi Arabia had a strong interest in maintaining its sphere of influence on the Arabian Peninsula and preserving its role as the leader of the Muslim world.

However, despite the fact that they continuously shared largely the same interests, the six Arab Gulf monarchies' individual bilateral relations with the two subregional powers displayed both considerable alterations over time and significant differences in comparison to one another. The underlying reason was the existence of both disparities among Arab Gulf monarchies and change over time with respect to a variety of factors: geostrategic position, military strength, the existence of military aggression, territorial claims, subversive activities, or ideological challenges by either Iran or Iraq, the national and

⁹⁵³ Interview with U.S. Ambassador David L. Mack.

⁹⁵⁴ Interview with U.S. Ambassador Charles W. Freeman.

sectarian composition and ideological orientation of the population, and national economic orientation.

At all times, the Arab Gulf monarchies formulated their policies towards Iran and Iraq with regard to the effects that their relations with one of these two states would have on their relations with the other. This was due to the fact that, over the period under review, Iran and Iraq were in conflict with each other, to varying degrees of escalation. Under these circumstances, a rapprochement with one of the subregional powers created the risk of retaliations by the other.

The analysis has shown that the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq from 1971 to 1990 can be divided into several sub-periods. Following a trend that had already set in prior to Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf all six Arab Gulf monarchies maintained closer and less conflictual relations with Iran during most of the 1970s. This was mainly due to a greater congruity in interests: the Arab Gulf monarchies and the Shah's regime shared common interests in the preservation of the conservative (monarchical) political order in their states, the containment of both Baathist ideology and Soviet influence in the Gulf and the greater Middle East, the maintenance of the territorial status quo (following the occupation of the three UAE islands), cooperative relations with the United States, and the security of trade routes through the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. In this context, their rapprochement with Iran was also a strategic response to the Arab Gulf monarchies' perception of threat to their interests emanating from Iraq.

From Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf to the 1975 Algiers Accord, Oman had the closest and most cordial relations with Iran among the six Arab Gulf monarchies. This was mainly due to Tehran's staunch support for Sultan Qaboos in the intra-Omani Dhofar War. Iran's military intervention upon Omani request was instrumental in defeating the rebels and stabilising the Sultan's rule. Qatar and Bahrain also had close relations with Iran. After the Shah had given up Iran's historic claim of Bahrain and had agreed to the emirate's independence bilateral relations showed constant improvement. In the case of both Bahrain and Qatar, the large Iranian expatriate community promoted close economic ties with Iran without causing any significant frictions within the two societies. On the contrary, in Qatar the Iranian segment of society even seemed

to have contributed to regime stability following the replacement of the Emir in 1972. UAE-Iranian relations started off conflictual due to Iran's military occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunb islands. Pressure by both the local population and other Arab states – not least Iraq – as well as Ras al-Khaimah's vehement rejection of Iran's actions impeded initially any significant UAE-Iranian rapprochement. However, Dubai's markedly pro-Iranian stance, the need to balance the difficult relations with Saudi Arabia, the threat of Iraqi subversion activities, and generally wide-ranging congruity in interests with Iran soon led to a gradual improvement of bilateral relations between the UAE and Iran. Despite its concern about Iran's nationalistic, imperialist ambitions in the Gulf, distaste of Iran's *de facto* relations with Israel, and disagreement over oil policy, the Saudi regime considered close relations with Iran a strategic necessity. The Shah's regime, too, was interested in close cooperation with Riyadh. This was attributable to joint threat perceptions regarding Iraq's and PDRY policies as well as Soviet intrusion into the subregion, and similar concepts regarding a conservative political order and economic stability in the Gulf. Among Arab Gulf monarchies, Kuwait's relations with Iran were the most distant. The two main reasons were the influence of Arab nationalism and strongly pro-Palestinian attitudes within the Kuwaiti society and paradoxically the highly conflictual relations with Iraq. A strong popular reaction and Iraqi pressure motivated the Kuwaiti regime to protest most emphatically among Arab Gulf monarchies against the Iranian occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunbs. Moreover, Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf and its stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict also caused protest in the Kuwaiti population; an overt Kuwaiti rapprochement with Iran was therefore politically inadvisable. In this context, the distinct characteristics of the Kuwaiti political order with a comparatively influential National Assembly as a central institution for the formulation of the popular political will played an important role. Lastly, while the Kuwaiti government was in dire need for support against Iraq's territorial claims, the demonstration of any meaningful cooperation with Iran would have only increased Iraq's aggressive demeanour towards the Emirate.

In contrast, all six Arab Gulf monarchies had conflictual relations with Iraq or at least viewed Baghdad's Gulf policies with considerable concern. The Iraqi regime had nationalist ambitions for subregional hegemony and aimed at an

alteration of the political status quo in the Gulf. Iraqi attempts to subvert the monarchical regimes on the Arabian Peninsula with the ultimate objective to install Iraqi-style Baathist regimes showed significant similarities to revolutionary Iranian policies a few years later. Without any doubt, Kuwait was most threatened by Iraq as evidenced by the latter's aggressive claims on Warba and Bubiyan islands and other parts of Kuwait's territory. The Emirate was also the only Arab Gulf monarchy to be subject of repeated intrusion by the Iraqi military. In Oman, Iraq made active attempts to overthrow the Sultan by giving significant support to the Dhofar rebels. Saudi Arabia was also the target of Iraqi aggression: Baghdad bribed and armed Bedouins and incited them to revolt against the Al Saud regime, engaged in massive anti-Saudi media propaganda in the hopes to instigate a revolution, and provided a safe haven for Saudi deserters. In the case of Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE Iraq gave support to oppositional elements and used its trade centres "as channels for Ba'athist influence."⁹⁵⁵

From the Algiers Accord to the Iranian Revolution the Arab Gulf monarchies continued to show significant similarities in their relations with Iran and Iraq. As was the case in the previous period, their relations with Iran were closer, more cooperative, and less conflictual than their ties with Iraq. The major difference to the pre-1975 period was, however, the notable improvement in the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iraq. The underlying reason for this development was a change in Iraqi policy, characterised by both Iraq's rapprochement with Iran and its general desire for greater cooperation with all Gulf states. This cooperation was mostly limited to the economic field. Nonetheless, the basic ideological differences between Iraq and the Arab Gulf monarchies – Baathist vs. conservative monarchical and pro-Soviet/anti-American vs. pro-Western – persisted, as did Baghdad's desire to alter the subregional status quo according to its ideological and nationalistic objectives; although, this was mostly pursued in a less aggressive fashion. In contrast, Iran continued to share fundamental interests with the Arab Gulf monarchies: domestic political and territorial status quo, security of export routes in Gulf waters and the Strait of Hormuz, containment of Soviet influence in the Gulf and the larger Middle East, and, although to different degrees, close relations with the United States.

⁹⁵⁵ Niblock, "Iraqi Policies," p. 145.

In this subperiod, among Arab Gulf monarchies, Oman continued to have the closest relations with Iran, on which it depended for military protection. Bahraini and Qatari relations with Iran also continued to be cordial and improved further during this period. UAE-Iranian relations, too, saw very significant improvement as the island issue had lost most of its significance. Saudi-Iranian relations saw some intermittent differences, such as in oil policy or the Iranian hegemonic ambitions; otherwise there was a considerable congruity in interests in Gulf, regional, and global matters. Kuwaiti-Iranian relations were unproblematic but never particularly close mostly due to the strong Arab nationalist and pro-Palestinian influence in the Kuwaiti society. In the light of the increasing instability in Iran, all Arab Gulf monarchies were concerned about a potential overthrow of the Shah's regime as the latter had largely served their interests.

Meanwhile, none of the Arab Gulf monarchies had particularly close relations with Iraq; too great were the differences in policy objectives. Kuwait had the most conflictual relations with Iraq; although there was a reduction in tension from mid-1977 onwards, the territorial dispute remained unsolved. Oman's relations with Iraq improved after Iraq ended its support for the PFLO; nonetheless, conflict arose over Iran's military presence in Oman, U.S.-Omani relations, and Egypt's Israel policy. Saudi-Iraqi relations also showed improvement but the two states' visions of the political order in the Gulf were largely contradicting. While Bahrain's, Qatar's, and UAE relations with Iraq improved particularly in the economic sphere, suspicions about Iraq's subversive activities prevented any meaningful political rapprochement.

In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, the Arab Gulf monarchies' policies towards Iran and Iraq underwent considerable change and displayed increasing differences. This growing discrepancy was attributable to the different degree the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic, foreign, and economic security were affected by the alteration in Iranian foreign policy and the military conflict between the two subregional powers.

The fall of the Shah and the advent of the Khomeini regime caused concern in all six Arab Gulf monarchies. They all feared negative effects on Gulf (economic) security and – less so in the case of Oman – a spill-over of the

Shiite revolution to the Arabian Peninsula. Hence, in the initial post-revolutionary period all six states made efforts to enter into stable relations with the new Iranian regime. The constitution of their societies (read the number of disillusioned and discriminated Shiites and expatriates receptive for the ideals of the Khomeini movement) and the varying degree to which Iran engaged in subversive activities in the different states shaped decisively the development of individual bilateral relations. In addition, Iran's direct challenge of Saudi Arabia's role as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and its utilisation of the *hajj* as a propaganda platform on the one hand and the mutually beneficial UAE-Iranian trade ties on the other, greatly affected Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE respectively.

Following the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War and particularly after the failure of Baghdad's vision of a *blitzkrieg*, the Arab Gulf monarchies all shared the same basic interests and, to different degrees the same dilemma. It was in the interest of all six to guarantee their internal, external, and economic stability and security. To this end, it was their objective to see a rapid termination of the war and prevent both an Iranian victory and a clear-cut Iraqi triumph. For one thing, the continuation of the war carried the risk of territorial expansion (direct involvement of the Arab Gulf monarchies) and internationalisation of the war (involvement of the superpowers and their rivalry) as well as economic hardship (through the disruption of maritime trade routes). On the other hand, an Iranian victory would allow the Khomeini regime to export its antimonarchical Shiite revolution to the Sunni Arab Gulf monarchies much more vigorously. A clear-cut Iraqi victory, in turn, would increase Iraq's power to export its own antimonarchical Baathist revolution and enforce its hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf. These objectives remained the same until the end of the war, the only exception being the deliberate internationalisation of the conflict in the light of the Tanker War.

The dilemma that all Arab Gulf monarchies shared was that the need to take a stand in the war would ultimately alienate one of the powerful belligerents. In the end, their positioning in the war shaped to a large degree the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq. Eventually, the group of six was split. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, most affected by Iranian subversion and by the war, and in the case of Kuwait highly sensible to Iraqi pressure, took the most

distinct pro-Iraqi stance. They both provided Baghdad with very significant political, financial, and logistic support; despite repeated attempts to prevent a complete deterioration of relations, their bilateral ties with Tehran were mostly hostile. Bahrain, which was also heavily affected by Iranian subversion, sought stronger relations with Iraq in the initial phase and temporarily cut relations with Iran in January 1982; following a temporary rapprochement with Iran, Manama followed increasingly an anti-Iranian and pro-Iraqi approach during the war's last two and a half years. Oman, Qatar, and the UAE maintained the least conflictual relations with Iran and following pro-Iraqi support in the war's initial phase took a largely neutral position and became most active in mediation attempts.

Among all Arab Gulf monarchies, Oman had the most conflictual relations with Baghdad. This was due to Muscat's repeated pro-Iranian statements, particularly in the war's final years. Kuwait's constant refusal to lease Warba and Bubiyan to Baghdad clouded relations with Iraq; however, Iraq's reliance on Kuwait's massive financial and logistic support prevented a significant strain in bilateral ties. Saudi Arabia was Iraq's largest financial supporter; nonetheless, Iraqi demands for even larger grants and intermittent Saudi attempts to improve relations with Iran caused some friction.

In the light of the common challenges to their interests, the Arab Gulf monarchies increasingly coordinated their policies in the framework of the GCC. Although the organisation *per se* did not provide any meaningful security to its member states, it allowed the individual states more flexibility in their foreign policy. The more moderate states could issue Iran-critical and pro-Iraqi statements on a multilateral basis, placating Iraq without endangering their position in Iranian eyes. At the same time, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were able to be indirectly involved in mediation attempts with Tehran without provoking too much Iraqi backlash.

In the first two post-war years the individual Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran showed significant differences: while all had a basic interest in less conflictual and more cooperative ties with Tehran, their success in achieving this objective was mixed. Following the general trend during the final years of the war, Oman's relations with Iran improved the most significantly. The other

four small GCC states witnessed a slower but still remarkable rapprochement in ties with Tehran. The exception was Saudi Arabia: despite intermittent improvements bilateral relations with Iran continued to be heavily strained particularly due to harsh disagreement over the *hajj* and Saudi control over the holy sites in Mecca and Medina as well as the continuation of Iranian sponsoring of asymmetric attacks on the Kingdom.

The individual Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iraq were all burdened by Iraq's increasingly aggressive posture; however, not all GCC states were equally affected and they did not agree in their threat perception regarding Baghdad's policy. Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman all tried to maintain solid, though cautious relations with Iraq. Saudi Arabia largely followed an appeasement policy towards its powerful neighbour. Kuwait's relations with Iraq were the most strained due to both aggressive Iraqi demands for territorial, financial, and oil policy concessions and Baghdad's increasing threats against the Emirate. Kuwait tried largely to appease Iraq but remained steadfast on the island issue and for a long time also on its oil overproduction. The latter aspect heavily burdened the UAE-Iraqi relations as well. In the end, Sheikh Zayid was the only GCC ruler that correctly anticipated Iraqi military aggression and upped its defences by involving the United States.

In summary, the analysis has shown that the individual Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq showed increasing convergence during the first two sub-periods (1971-75 and 1975-79). This changed in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and particularly following the Iran-Iraq War's initial phase. In the final sub-period (1988-90), the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies entered into a rapprochement with Iran, while Saudi-Iranian relations remained highly conflictual; meanwhile, the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iraq ranged from cautious rapprochement to conflict escalation.

Despite their progressively diverging bilateral relations with Iran and Iraq, the Arab Gulf monarchies increasingly coordinated their policies with respect to the Iran-Iraq War. The GCC framework allowed the six states a greater degree of flexibility in their policies: the regional organisation was used as a platform that enabled the neutral group issue multilateral statements critical of Iran and supportive of Iraq, thereby satisfying Iraqi and pan-Arab expectations without

causing too much friction in bilateral relations with Iran; on the other hand, the pro-Iraqi camp could be indirectly involved in mediation attempts with Iran. This increased coordination activity was the Arab Gulf monarchies' reaction to the growing negative effects the Iran-Iraq War had on their fundamental policy interests, particularly their economic prosperity.

Over large parts of the period under review, the Arab Gulf monarchies managed to offset threats to their basic interests emanating from Iran and Iraq by alternately appeasing and balancing the source of the threat. This was particularly effective during the first two sub-periods. Following the Iranian Revolution the new regime in Tehran made considerable attempts to destabilise the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic order. However, despite Iranian-sponsored subversive activities (e.g. during the *hajj*), the regimes in the Arab Gulf monarchies managed to maintain regime stability.

During the Iran-Iraq War, the Arab Gulf monarchies' economic prosperity was considerably challenged by both the Tanker War and the massive financial and economic support particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait granted Iraq at a time of low oil prices. The end of war in August 1988 was welcomed by the Arab Gulf monarchies; it not only alleviated the challenges to their economic interests but saw neither Iran nor Iraq emerging as the clear winner.

Over the longest part of the period under review the Arab Gulf monarchies' external security and territorial integrity remained intact; exceptions were relatively small-scale Iraqi intrusions into Kuwait's territory in the 1970s, the continued Iranian occupation of the three UAE islands, and isolated Iranian attacks on the Arab Gulf monarchies' territories and oil installations during the Iran-Iraq War. However, in August 1990, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait showed the limits of the Arab Gulf monarchies' abilities to balance their military weakness.

4. THE POSITION OF THE ARAB GULF MONARCHIES IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, 1971-1990

The Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the necessity to position themselves publicly in regard to the conflict presented a particular challenge to the Arab Gulf monarchies' external security and regime stability. In case of armed conflicts, they would have to expect a variety of direct and indirect security threats. Much more problematic, however, was the political quandary in which the Arab Gulf monarchies had increasingly found themselves. They had been caught between their common Arab-Islamic identity and their increasingly intensified relationship with the United States. This chapter will show how the Arab Gulf monarchies succeeded in reconciling two fundamental interests: they largely met the expectations of their own people and the demands of the more radical Arab states without undermining their strategically important relations with the Israel-friendly United States. This achievement is attributed to an astute, balanced policy conducted by the Arab Gulf monarchies. In pursuing this policy, they did not achieve the resolution of the key issue. However, this cannot be seen as a failure of their policy but rather as an expression of their limited power. Moreover, I will show that the positions of the Arab Gulf monarchies as a group changed during the period under review from a rather confrontational to a more cooperative approach. In doing so, the remaining five Gulf states' positions displayed a gradual convergence with the previously distinct Omani stance. The same applies to the perceptions of and the relations with the Palestinian liberation movement.

Several general observations can be made with regard to the Arab Gulf monarchies' position in the Arab-Israeli conflict during the timeframe under review: During the entire period, the Arab Gulf monarchies' policy stances were influenced by three main factors: identity/ideology, religion, and strategic considerations. Both the populations and the regimes of the Arab Gulf monarchies share with the Palestinian people as well as the populations and regimes of the Arab front states the feature of Arabness, the quality of being Arab. This commonality created a border-transcending feeling of brotherhood leading to a strong identification with the plight of the Palestinians, the Arabs that fled from war and Israeli occupation, and not least the Palestinian national cause. Hence, both the populations and regimes of the Arab Gulf monarchies

came to see the Arab-Israeli conflict as a common Arab struggle with the clear objective to liberate occupied Arab lands and to establish a Palestinian state. In this context, the notion of Arab nationalism and that of Arab identity had a mutually-enforcing relationship, such that the strengthening of one lead to the strengthening of the other. In Kuwait, where Arab nationalism was most prevalent in the minds of the people and the regime alike, this transnational feeling of Arab brotherhood and identification with Palestinian grievances and with the wider Arab cause in the confrontation with Israel was strongest. This effect was intensified further by the large Palestinian Diasporas in some Arab Gulf monarchies; again this was particularly the case in Kuwait, where Palestinian influence in the media, education, and the political sector was the greatest.

The fact that the majority of Arabs are Muslims while the majority of Israelis are Jews amplified the sense of togetherness in distinction to the non-Arab, non-Muslim other. Israel's occupation and subsequent annexation of East Jerusalem, and with it the third holiest shrine of Islam, gave the conflict a distinct religious element. Particularly, people and regime in Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam and home of the two holiest Mosques in the Islamic world and a religiously very conservative society, were infuriated by the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In the other Arab Gulf monarchies, too, the view on and the aspirations regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict had thenceforward an intensified religious character. The clear objective in this regard became the recovery of Muslim control over the Al-Aqsa Mosque; the only aspect in which particularly the Saudi regime was not ready to make compromises.

In addition, strategic considerations had a great influence on the Arab Gulf monarchies' decision making process. The regimes made policy decisions regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict with great appreciation of their interest to guarantee national security, regime stability, and economic prosperity. As chapter 2 revealed, the Arab Gulf monarchies could be considered relatively weak states during the timeframe under review. Compared to their immediate neighbours Iran and Iraq or the regional power Egypt, the Arab Gulf monarchies were both militarily inferior and had far smaller populations. Their economies and therefore also their regime stability were heavily reliant on the export of oil

products. Moreover, as outlined in previous chapters, they faced considerable external and internal challenges to both their national security and regime stability: the striving for power and hegemony by subregional and regional powers, the latter's interfering in the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic realm by instrumentalising identity conflicts and exploiting regime legitimacy deficits, the global Cold War contestation, and recurrent contradictions between popular expectations for foreign policy behaviour and security necessities. Due to the close interconnection of these domestic and foreign policy challenges, the Arab Gulf monarchies pursued an omnibalancing strategy, dynamically adjusting their policy in a constant endeavour to satisfy their varied interests. Nonetheless, with increasing oil export revenues, the Arab Gulf monarchies, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in particular, gained considerable economic power and political influence which to a certain degree counterbalanced their above mentioned weaknesses.

Among Arab Gulf monarchies, Saudi Arabia had the greatest influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the incipient peace process. This was due to the scope of the Kingdom's economic power and political influence and not least its role as the custodian of the two holy sites of Islam. Saudi Arabia's influence increased rapidly in the early 1970s, especially during and in the aftermath of the 1973/74 oil crisis. To a smaller degree, the same counts for most other Arab Gulf monarchies. Until the 1973 October War, the latter, less so in the case of Kuwait, had been preoccupied with nation building and subregional politics; in the case of Oman, this was true for another few years. During the entire period under review, the Arab Gulf monarchies' influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the nascent peace process was predominantly economic, financial, diplomatic, and political, not militarily.

With the exception of Oman, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies largely shared Saudi Arabia's perspectives on the Arab-Israeli conflict and mostly followed Saudi Arabia's lead regarding their position. The "Saudi group" rejected the notion of Zionism and perceived the Israeli occupation of Arab territory as a major if not the main cause for regional instability. Their rejection of the State of Israel increased in reaction to Israeli military victories, the occupation of Arab lands, and the deteriorating living conditions of the Palestinian people.

The Saudi regime perceived Soviet communism as a more significant long-term threat to its external and domestic security than Zionism. The smaller Arab Gulf monarchies, too, saw a threat in Soviet policy and ideology. Therefore, unlike Egypt (until the early 1970s), Syria, and Iraq, which turned towards the Soviet Union for political and military support, the Arab Gulf monarchies attempted to influence the Arab-Israeli conflict to the advantage of the Arab cause through close relations with the United States, Israel's most important ally.

The Arab Gulf monarchies considered what they saw as unbalanced pro-Israeli U.S. policy dangerous to their interests as it both turned their close relations with the United States into a liability with respect to regime stability and in intra-Arab relations and drove Arab states into the Soviet camp. The last aspect was alleged most emphatically by Saudi King Faisal.

Since the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies considered the Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, particularly East Jerusalem, the creation of a Palestinian state, and the repatriation or appropriate compensation of the Palestinian refugees as the basis for a conflict resolution. From 1974 onwards, Saudi Arabia arose as a moderate negotiator for a comprehensive peace settlement and used its economic and diplomatic power to serve this purpose. In the aftermath of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies supported Saudi Arabia in its intensified endeavour to bring about a first Arab peace proposal.

During the entire timeframe under review, intra-Arab dynamics had a great influence on the Arab Gulf monarchies' stances in the Arab-Israeli conflict. When making policy decisions with respect to the conflict, the Arab Gulf monarchies always took into consideration their policies' expected effect on intra-Arab relations. Conversely, the Arab Gulf monarchies repeatedly formulated their positions in the conflict in response to intra-Arab dynamics. The best example in this regard is Saudi Arabia's announcement of and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies' support for a joint Arab peace initiative at a time when the intra-Arab balance of power had shifted to their disadvantage.

During the better part of the period reviewed in this dissertation, the Omani regime walked a separate path in its policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and the State of Israel. The Sultanate was more intent on reconciliation among all

parties involved, followed a decisively more accommodating policy towards Israel, and was more distrustful of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) than its fellow Arab Gulf monarchies. This changed in the course of the First Intifada when the Omani stance converged with the policies of the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies.

With regard to the Arab monarchies' position in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the time period under review can be discriminated into four distinct phases: from 1971 to the end of the first oil crisis in 1974; from the lifting of the anti-U.S. oil embargo to the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; from Egypt's separate peace with Israel to the beginning of the First Intifada in December 1987; and finally from the start of the Intifada to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990.

4.1 The Pre-1971 Era

The period under review commences amid a transitional phase with respect to all six Arab Gulf monarchies' positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, Saudi Arabia had gradually taken over a more prominent role in the Arab world in general and as a member of the Arab front in the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. Kuwait, too, had become increasingly active and influential in the conflict. In contrast, the influence of the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies was considerably less distinct, mainly due to their preoccupation with domestic affairs as well as their still greatly limited financial resources.

The Early Era

The first links between the Arab Gulf monarchies and the Palestine conflict had been established in the 1930s. King Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia regularly and straightforwardly emphasised in diplomatic contacts with his strategically important British ally his rejection of the rapidly increasing immigration of European Jews to Palestine. Following an extended meeting with King Abdulaziz in 1937, George Rendel, a British Foreign Office envoy, reported to his ministry:

“The Arab quarrel is not against the Jews in Palestine [...] It is against the alien invaders who make no secret about wanting to transform Palestine from an Arab country into a Jewish country.”⁹⁵⁶

As Rendel assessed correctly, the Saudi King’s opposition to the massive Jewish immigration was based on a rejection of foreign intrusion and Zionist ideology, not on a categorically anti-Judaism basis. Accordingly, the Saudi monarch was adamant in his fundamental rejection of any plan to partition Palestine. Despite Abdulaziz’ firm opposition to the 1937 Peel Commission Report, the first official document to suggest a partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, the Saudi King was anxious to not jeopardise his country’s relations with the United Kingdom. Hence, he refrained from publicly taking a stand against British policy.⁹⁵⁷ Despite isolated deviations from this general rule, the reluctance to criticise publicly an important ally’s policy later became characteristic for the U.S.-Saudi relations. British diplomats soon realised that Abdulaziz’ standpoint regarding Palestine was based on irrevocable principals rather than on opportunistic bargaining, wherefore any attempts to bribe the ruler of a still bitterly poor desert Kingdom were doomed to fail. In November 1944, the British Minister of State in the Middle East, Walter E. Guinness, established that

“Ibn Saud’s attitude over the Palestine question borders on the fanatical, and he has assured me that he would, if necessary fight against the cession of any territory in Palestine to the Jews.”⁹⁵⁸

King Abdulaziz’ uncompromising stance on Palestine was reasserted at his prominent meeting with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt onboard the U.S.S. Quincy on the Egyptian Great Bitter Lake on February 14, 1945. President Roosevelt failed in his attempt to convince King Abdulaziz to accept the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Saudi King even extracted from the U.S. President the promise that the U.S. government would not take any decision “with respect to the basic situation in [Palestine] without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews.” Moreover, Roosevelt pledged to “take no action, in [his] capacity as Chief of the Executive Branch of [the U.S.]

⁹⁵⁶ Cited in Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 19.

⁹⁵⁷ Compare *ibid*, pp. 21f.

⁹⁵⁸ Cited in *ibid*, pp. 23f.

Government, which might prove hostile to the Arab people.”⁹⁵⁹ When on October 4, 1946, on the occasion of the adjournment of the Palestine Conference in London, President Roosevelt’s successor, Harry S. Truman, “urged” with respect to the approaching winter “that substantial immigration into Palestine cannot await a solution to the Palestine problem and that it should begin at once,”⁹⁶⁰ King Abdulaziz promptly protested in a letter to the U.S. President.⁹⁶¹ In his response letter, dated October 28, 1946, President Truman renewed his predecessor’s commitments.⁹⁶²

In the end, President Truman’s priorities changed and the U.S. government promoted the creation of an Israeli State in Palestine, much to the frustration of the Saudi administration. When on November 29, 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 in which it suggested the partition of Palestine, Prince Faisal, who represented Saudi Arabia at the session, furiously stormed out of the assembly hall.⁹⁶³ When roughly half a year later the State of Israel declared its independence, the Saudi regime strongly rejected this development, immediately declared war to Israel, and sent a small contingency of armed forces to support its Arab brother states during the First Arab-Israeli War⁹⁶⁴; despite contrary statements in literature, it seems safe to say that Saudi forces also saw war action.⁹⁶⁵ Moreover, the Saudi King threatened to impose sanctions against U.S. oil concessions if the United States were to supply Israel with arms. Evaluating the motivation behind King Abdulaziz’ threat, ARAMCO

⁹⁵⁹ President Roosevelt repeated these promises in a letter he sent King Abdulaziz on April 5, 1945. Cited in The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XIII, No. 330 (October 21, 1945), p. 623.

⁹⁶⁰ “Statement by the President Following the Adjournment of the Palestine Conference in London,” available online on the website of the Harry S. Truman Library (item 227): <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1763&st=227&st1> (accessed on May 3, 2013).

⁹⁶¹ Cited in The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XV, No. 384 (November 10, 1946), p. 848.

⁹⁶² Cited in *ibid*, pp. 849-51.

⁹⁶³ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 34.

⁹⁶⁴ Figures on the exact Saudi troop strength differ. A document by the British Embassy in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, dated August 18, 1948, put the number of regular Saudi troops at 1,200 and speaks of an additional unquantified number of irregular Saudi troops. Compare Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 205, fn. 122.

⁹⁶⁵ Several sources recount that, in October 1948, Saudi auxiliaries (one infantry company) fought at close quarters beside Egyptian troops against the Israeli Givati Brigade at Huleiqat, roughly 20 kilometres northeast of Gaza. Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence through Lebanon* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), pp. 23, 48, 94 and Morris, *1948*, p. 326 (Morris refers to a Hebrew source). Contrasting this, Gawdat Bahgat claims that the Saudi troops did not see any war action. Gawdat Bahgat, “The New Middle East: The Gulf Monarchies and Israel,” *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 123-52, pp. 127f.

Vice President Fred Davies stated that if sanctions were imposed “it would not be because of [the King’s] desire to do so but because the pressure upon him of Arab public opinion was so great that he could no longer resist it.”⁹⁶⁶ In another clear sign of rejection of the newly founded Israeli state, King Abdulaziz prohibited ARAMCO from shipping Saudi oil to Israel.⁹⁶⁷

In the 1930s and 1940s, the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies were still political dependencies of the United Kingdom and therefore no independent foreign policy actors. Nonetheless, at least in the case of some of them, one could witness the beginning of political cross-influence with the Palestine conflict. In June 1936, three months in the Palestinian general strike, the Palestinian authorities called on the Kuwaiti government for financial support. Respectful of his country’s treaty obligations towards the United Kingdom, Sheikh Ahmad Al Jabir denied the Palestinians governmental support and also formally prohibited the Kuwaiti population to make donations to compensate the financial loses of the striking Palestinians. However, when many Kuwaitis defied the Emir’s orders and collected money for the Palestinian cause, the leadership, in a sign of tacit approval, did not intervene. In October 1936, a pro-Palestinian committee, newly established by members of the leading Kuwaiti merchant families, managed to rally a considerable 9,500 rupees, roughly £730, in support of the Palestinian people. Again the government did not intervene; whether this passivity was a sign of the leadership’s approval or due to its unwillingness to infuriate the population remains unknown.⁹⁶⁸ In any case, the fact that so many Kuwaitis were willing to donate from their still highly limited financial resources is clear evidence of the Kuwaiti population’s strong sympathy for and identification with the Palestinian people and their plight. This feeling of solidarity, which was later reinforced by a large Palestinian Diaspora in Kuwait, would decisively influence future Kuwaiti policy towards the ensuing Arab-Israeli conflict, at least until August of 1990.

In the emirates of Dubai and Sharjah, the population also collected money to support the Palestinians; even Sheikh Saqr ibn Sultan Al Qasimi, the Emir of Sharjah, made a considerable financial donation. While the Bahraini population

⁹⁶⁶ Cited in Michael J. Cohen, *Truman and Israel* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), p. 100.

⁹⁶⁷ Compare Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 25.

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 16f.

apparently did not collect money for the Palestinian people they, too, were infuriated by the reports from Palestine and distributed pamphlets that called for Muslim solidarity behind the Palestinian cause.⁹⁶⁹

Oman was a different case. Under the reign of Sultan Said bin Taymur, Oman was virtually excluded from the outside world. Omani foreign relations were conducted via London and the Sultanate had little contacts with the rest of the Arab world. Exceeding that, "Sa'id did not identify his Sultanate as an Arab state."⁹⁷⁰ Accordingly, the Omani Head of State did not consider the Palestine conflict and later the Arab-Israeli conflict to be his country's business. In reaction to the 1937 Peel Commission Report, he went even as far as stating that the conflict was not a pan-Arab affair as it was not the concern of any other Arab state but Palestine. In clear contrast to the Saudi and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies' stance, Sultan Said agreed with the Peel Commission's suggestion of partitioning Palestine as the best course of action, as peaceful coexistence of Arabs and Jews was an unlikely and the expulsion of either party an ineligible option. This remained Sultan Said's only public statement on the Palestine respectively Arab-Israeli conflict.⁹⁷¹ Apart from the obvious self-exclusion from the conflict and the responsibility for its solution that was later at least partially revoked under his son, Sultan Said's statement was already heralding the basic pattern of Oman's independent foreign policy from 1970/71 onwards: a foreign policy aiming at conflict resolution, peaceful coexistence, and non-interference, only marginally influenced by (Arab) nationalist and religious ideology.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the Trucial Coast States also rejected the creation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. However, as they were still British dependencies and not yet autonomous foreign policy actors, they were not in a legal position to join Saudi Arabia in declaring war to the newly founded state or to follow the Saudi example and send military units to participate in the First Arab-Israeli War, which broke out within hours of Israel's Declaration of

⁹⁶⁹ Compare Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 18.

⁹⁷⁰ Uzi Rabi, "Oman and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Reflection of a Pragmatic Foreign Policy," *Israel Affairs*, vol. 11, no. 3 (July 2005), pp. 535-51, p. 536.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Independence.⁹⁷² Moreover, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies were largely preoccupied with domestic political developments whereas the Palestine question and the conflict with Israel were not on the top of their agendas.

In the course of the 1956 Suez War, Saudi territory was for the first time affected directly by the Arab-Israeli conflict when Israel occupied two uninhabited Red Sea islands claimed by the Kingdom.⁹⁷³ Following the combined French-British invasion of Egypt, the reactions of Saudi Arabia and, somewhat surprisingly, the small emirate of Qatar were prompt and resolute, but, in the end, of little lasting impact. Saudi Arabia denounced the attack on Egypt and supported its Arab brother state with roughly \$10 million. Moreover, on November 6, 1956, a week after the Anglo-French invasion, Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic relations with both aggressors and imposed an oil embargo against them.⁹⁷⁴ The Saudi reaction heralded the Kingdom's ensuing strategy in the Arab-Israeli conflict: exertion of influence with diplomatic, financial, and economic and, if at all, only symbolic military means. The oil ban against France and the United Kingdom had limited effect but signalled Saudi readiness to use its vast economic resources as political leverage. Hence, the later use of the oil weapon in the context of the 1973 October War was not the unheard of innovation in Saudi foreign policy as it is mostly depicted as; particularly as Saudi Arabia interrupted oil shipments for political reasons again in 1967.

In Qatar, not only the public but also the governmental reaction to the Suez War and particularly the British involvement was astonishingly vehement. Immediately following the invasion, Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah, condemned the aggression against Egypt and the British participation in the plot. Not only did the Qatari ruler sanction a general strike and mass

⁹⁷² Even without legal boundaries, the British Gulf dependencies' development stage at that time would have likely hindered them to participate in the war anyway.

⁹⁷³ Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia claim sovereignty over the islands of Tiran and Sanafir, located just south of the mouth of the Strait of Aqaba. In 1949, following the Israeli occupation of Umm Rashrash, today known as the Israeli port city of Eilat, Saudi Arabia consented to an Egyptian military presence on the islands in order to interrupt Israeli strategic supply routes through the Gulf of Aqaba. Following a first temporary occupation in the course of the 1956 Suez War, Israel reoccupied the two islands during the 1967 Six-Day War. See Alexander Melamid, "The Political Geography of the Gulf of Aqaba," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (1957), pp. 231-40 and Ali A. El-Hakim, *The Middle Eastern States and the Law of the Sea* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), pp. 135-77.

⁹⁷⁴ Compare Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, pp. 31. Saudi-British relations were only restored in January 1963. Fouad Al-Farsy, *Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (KPI), 1986), p. 38.

demonstrations, he led them. Exceeding this, Sheikh Ali ordered the interruption of Qatari oil shipments to Bahrain, emphasising his protest against British involvement in the war. Moreover, he tolerated that more than two hundred Qataris volunteered to join the Saudi army that was to be deployed to Egypt.⁹⁷⁵

In Kuwait, there were acts of sabotage against installations of the British controlled Kuwait Oil Company. However, there was no significant public criticism on Britain's role in the Suez War from either the Kuwaiti government or the leaderships of any of the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies.⁹⁷⁶

The Suez War marked a turning point in intra-Arab relations. Soon, an intra-Arab Cold War separated the Arab World and put Saudi Arabia on the opposite side of the two most prominent Arab front states, Egypt and Syria. Under Jamal Abd al-Nasser, who after the 1952 Egyptian Revolution had at first been prime minister and then ascended to Presidency in June 1956, post-revolutionary Egypt had maintained a relatively good relationship with Saudi Arabia. This changed, however, in the aftermath of the Suez War, which concluded as a military defeat but political victory for Egypt and served as a catalyst for Nasser's rise to the role of the leader of the greatly strengthened Arab nationalist movement.⁹⁷⁷ After Saudi Arabia had tacitly approved the 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine, the intention of which was to reduce Soviet influence in the Arab world and to weaken the position and policy of Nasser who enjoyed Soviet support and whose Arab nationalist agenda threatened U.S.-friendly Arab monarchies, Saudi-Egyptian relations deteriorated dramatically.⁹⁷⁸ In subsequent years, Yemen became the main theatre of the Saudi-Egyptian contestation as the eight-year long North Yemen Civil War, started with a coup d'état against Imam Muhammad Al Badr in September 1962, turned into a proxy war between Nasserite Egypt and the Saudi Kingdom. Moreover, the Soviet

⁹⁷⁵ Compare Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 31.

⁹⁷⁶ Compare *ibid.*

⁹⁷⁷ This was true despite the fact that, in January 1957, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Jordan concluded a ten-year "Treaty of Arab solidarity." Compare Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Nasser and the Struggle for Independence," in Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 31-41, p. 39.

⁹⁷⁸ The Saudi-Egyptian bilateral relations further worsened when Saudi Arabia sent troops to Jordan to assist King Hussein in a contestation against his pro-Nasser Prime Minister al-Nabulsi. Moreover, on March 5, 1958, Nasser publicly disclosed King Saud's alleged involvement in an assassination attempt against the Egyptian President aimed at preventing an Egyptian-Syrian union. See *ibid* and Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 33.

support of Egypt and Syria discouraged Saudi Arabia from engaging actively in the Arab-Israeli conflict alongside its fellow Arab brother states.⁹⁷⁹

The Six-Day War, the Khartoum Conference, and the War of Attrition

The devastating defeat of the Arab front during the 1967 Six-Day War then not only put an end to the dominance of both Arab nationalism and Nasser himself but significantly changed Saudi and also Kuwaiti influence in the Arab world in general and with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. Following a months-long steady escalation of tensions between the two neighbouring states, Israel started a surprise air strike on all Egyptian airfields on June 5, 1967. After the virtual destruction of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian air forces and the attainment of full air supremacy, the Israeli army managed to conquer the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, the previously Egyptian controlled Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights within a matter of six days. The equally swift and staggering defeat by Israel deeply shocked the entire Arab world and changed permanently political dynamics in the entire region.

In late May, in the light of seriously rising tensions between Egypt and Israel, King Faisal ordered three of the five Saudi infantry brigades to Jordan to support King Hussein's forces in case of a war involving the Hashemite Kingdom. However, a surprising Jordanian-Egyptian rapprochement made King Faisal reconsider. On May 30, King Hussein signed a five-year defence treaty with Egypt, which provided a Joint Defence Council, a Joint Command, and a Joint Staff. Disapproving of Hussein's pact with Nasser, King Faisal ordered his troops to not proceed into Jordan and take positions in the northwestern Saudi town of Tabuk, roughly 100 kilometres from the southern Jordanian border. King Faisal's change of opinion is another piece of evidence of the influence intra-Arab dynamics had on the general Arab and Saudi policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly in the Nasser era. Then, on late June 4, a few hours before the war started, one Saudi infantry brigade crossed into Jordanian territory. However, the Saudi troops, due to their slow proceeding to the

⁹⁷⁹ For a detailed analysis of the Soviet-Egyptian and the Soviet-United Arab Republic relations during this timeframe, see Mohrez Mahmoud El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations, 1945-85* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

frontline, did not see any combat; by the time of the ceasefire they had only reached the Jordanian city of Maan.⁹⁸⁰

Once again, the Saudi reaction to an Arab-Israeli war took place more on a diplomatic, economic, and financial level. On June 7, Saudi Arabia imposed an oil embargo, as they did before in 1956. This time, however, the embargo was not only directed at the United Kingdom but mainly at the United States for their support of Israel. On the following day, Saudi oil exports were completely halted, including those through the trans-Arabian pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea. Much unlike the embargo six years later, the politically motivated interruption of Saudi oil shipments to the United States had little economic effect and was therefore reduced to a political statement of protest. The Saudi embargo stayed in place until right after the end of the Arab League Khartoum Conference on September 1, 1967.⁹⁸¹

The Saudi government had warned the United States indirectly through Robert I. Broughman, ARAMCO's Vice President, on at least two occasions against intervening in the war to the advantage of Israel. As early as May 23, Saudi Oil Minister Ahmad Zaki Yamani warned Broughman that in case of U.S. support for Israel in the expected war, Saudi Arabia would nationalise ARAMCO. When asked why the Saudi government objected to the United States standing up to Nasserite policies, Yamani responded, "We are all Arabs. Your government would be foolish if it does not keep out."⁹⁸² What the Saudi minister implied was that despite the severe Saudi-Egyptian conflict, Saudi Arabia would not and could not afford – both with a view to foreign and domestic policy repercussions – to break ranks with another Arab state during a war with Israel; even if that meant compromising relations with the United States. On June 5, in a conversation between King Faisal and Broughman the Saudi monarch himself

⁹⁸⁰ Edgar O'Balance, *The Third Arab-Israeli War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), pp. 36, 180, 223.

⁹⁸¹ Compare Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 537; Memorandum, Briefing by Director of Central Intelligence McCone, Washington, 6/29/67, 9:51-10:18 a.m., National Security File, NSC Special Committee Files, Economic [2 of 2], Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Telegram, Jidda 874, American Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, 9/2/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 17-1 SAUD, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

⁹⁸² Memorandum for the Record, Harold H. Saunders, "Conversation with Aramco Representative, 5/24/67, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 6 SAUD, NARA.

uttered a warning in the direction of the United States. Broughman recalled King Faisal having stated, without explicitly referring to oil exports, that

“consequences of such involvement on behalf of Israel will leave Arab states no alternative but to take measures against those countries involved in providing such assistance.”⁹⁸³

A resolution passed at an Arab oil ministers conference in Baghdad on June 5 then provided the political basis for the ensuing Saudi oil embargo.⁹⁸⁴ The resolution read

“Arab oil shall be denied to and shall not be allowed [to] reach directly or indirectly countries committing aggression or participating in aggression on [the] sovereignty of any Arab state or its territories or its territorial waters, particularly [the] Gulf of Aqaba.”⁹⁸⁵

The resolution did not specify the countries that were supporting Israel militarily. Indeed, the Arab oil producing countries failed to agree on a joint decision in this regard. Hence, Saudi Arabia had some leeway regarding the timing and the target countries of the embargo. Upon the proposal of Iraq and Algeria and despite initial opposition from the moderate monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya the Baghdad conference adopted a second resolution that provided explicitly for the confiscation of the assets of oil companies owned by nationals of embargoed countries.⁹⁸⁶

Due to the high importance of its alliance with the United States, neither the expropriation of ARAMCO nor the extensive use of an oil embargo was in the Saudi government’s interest. However, as John McCone, the former Director of Central Intelligence, stated in a briefing in late June 1967, the Saudi government faced difficulties in

“maintaining its position, which is essentially friendly, against the demands of such unfriendly countries as Iraq, which are urging the

⁹⁸³ Letter, John J. McCloy to Secretary of State Rusk, 6/5/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 6 SAUD, NARA.

⁹⁸⁴ Participants at the conference and signatories of the resolution were the oil ministers of Abu Dhabi, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Compare Fuad A. Jabber (ed.), *International Documents on Palestine, 1967* (Beirut: The Institute of Palestine Studies, 1970), p. 584f.

⁹⁸⁵ Cited in Telegram, Baghdad 2140, American Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, 6/6/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 17-1 ARAB, NARA.

⁹⁸⁶ Compare *ibid* and Telegram, Tripoli 1900, American Embassy in Libya to the Department of State, 7/15/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 17-1 LIBYA, NARA.

expulsion of Americans and the nationalization and expropriation of the American-owned companies.”⁹⁸⁷

In order to reduce Iraqi, Syrian, and Algerian pressure regarding oil company nationalisation, Saudi Oil Minister Yamani tried his best to portray ARAMCO and the other Western oil companies in the Gulf as “friendly instruments,” referring to their positive influence on their respective home countries’ policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁹⁸⁸

On the second day of the war, Radio Cairo broadcasted the incorrect charge that U.S. military aircraft had participated in the Israeli attacks of the previous day. This misinformation quickly spread in the Arab world and infuriated large parts of the Arab populations. Moreover, Iraq used the pretext to impose an oil embargo and pressured the other Arab oil producing states to follow its lead.⁹⁸⁹ Under this impression, Saudi Arabia had no alternative but to implement the oil embargo against the United States. Had they failed to do so, the Saudi government would have become a target of political attacks from the radical Arab states. Moreover, Saudi regime stability would have been at stake, despite the fact that the Saudi population was not as susceptible to pressure from Nasser as the peoples of other Arab states. In this context, McCone highlighted,

“[p]ublic indoctrination by Radio Cairo is placing the heads of basically friendly Arab regimes in a position where they cannot speak out publicly for fear of the indignation of the masses which, whipped up by Cairo propaganda, might even cause the overthrow of such governments.”⁹⁹⁰

Hence, Saudi Arabia did not lift the oil embargo before the Khartoum resolution gave this action common Arab legitimacy.

Saudi public protest against Israel’s aggression and occupation of Arab territory turned quickly into violence against U.S. installations. On June 7, in reaction to Israel’s capture of East Jerusalem, the work force of ARAMCO in the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran went on strike. The Saudi government, despite its

⁹⁸⁷ Briefing by McCone.

⁹⁸⁸ Aramco Cable, Dhahran, PC 7683, 6/10/67, National Security File, NSC Special Committee Files, Economic [2 of 2], Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Telegram, Department of State to the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia, 7/11/67, *ibid*.

⁹⁸⁹ Telegram, Cairo 8565, American Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, 6/6/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, POL 27 ARAB-ISR, NARA and Telegram, Baghdad 2099, American Embassy in Baghdad to the Department of State, 6/6/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 17-1 IRAQ, NARA.

⁹⁹⁰ Briefing by McCone.

characteristic scepticism with regard to public protest gatherings, allowed a peaceful demonstration to take place in Dhahran the following day. When roughly one thousand demonstrators turned to violence, the Saudi security forces stayed idle and did not intervene. The protesters rallied to the U.S. General Consulate, destroyed windows and cars, and set up a Saudi flag after pulling down the U.S. banner. At the Dhahran air base, the angry crowd “systematically destroyed the homes and cars of foreigners as well as the offices of American Airlines.”⁹⁹¹ In addition, around 300 local students stormed the ARAMCO camp and vandalised cars and the ARAMCO president’s home. In response to the attacks, the U.S. government prepared for the evacuation of its citizens, only to scrap the plan at the last moment.⁹⁹² It can be assumed that by not intervening in the acts of violence against U.S. property, the Saudi government allowed for an outlet for public anger and frustration. Had the government intervened, protecting U.S. installations, the popular anger could have turned against the regime. As no U.S. citizens were harmed during the violent protests, the damage to U.S.-Saudi relations was limited and considered by Riyadh as an acceptable price for continuing regime stability.

On May 18, earlier than Saudi Arabia, Kuwait announced the mobilisation of its armed forces and even placed them under the Egyptian-Syrian Joint Command.⁹⁹³ Moreover, the Kuwaiti leadership sent a military unit, the Al-Yarmouk Brigade, to Egypt; first Kuwaiti units reached Egypt on May 24.⁹⁹⁴ On the day of the Israeli attack, Kuwait declared defensive war on Israel.⁹⁹⁵ The Kuwaiti troops eventually joined the Egyptian armed forces in battle and suffered nine casualties.⁹⁹⁶ As early as on the second day of the war, Kuwait

⁹⁹¹ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 37.

⁹⁹² *Ibid*, pp. 36f.

⁹⁹³ Kuwait had a much less difficult relationship with Nasserite Egypt than Saudi Arabia. For one thing, Nasser had rejected the Iraqi claim to Kuwait in 1961 and both acknowledged and assured the latter’s independence and national sovereignty when he successfully pressed for an Arab League force to replace the British military in protecting the Kuwaiti national integrity against Iraqi intervention. In addition, unlike the Saudi regime, the Kuwaiti government did not feel threatened by the Nasserite Arab nationalism, which had many followers in Kuwait. Compare Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 39.

⁹⁹⁴ O’Balance, *Arab-Israeli War*, pp. 25, 28 and Assiri, *Kuwait’s Foreign Policy*, p. 51. Assiri’s account contradicts O’Balance’s as the former states that the Al-Yarmouk Brigade was not dispatched to Egypt before May 30.

⁹⁹⁵ The decree issued by the Kuwaiti ruler on June 5, 1967, read “We announce and declare that, since this morning, Kuwait, has been in a state of defensive war with the Zionist gangs in Occupied Palestine.” Cited in Jabber, *International Documents*, p. 583.

⁹⁹⁶ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 41.

announced an oil embargo against the United Kingdom and the United States.⁹⁹⁷ Despite this drastic action, the Kuwaiti foreign minister assured the British Ambassador, Geoffrey Arthur, that the oil embargo was a necessary but temporary measure. He further emphasised that Kuwait continuously relied on British protection and had a vital interest in the continuation of good relations with the United Kingdom. Indeed, the embargo against both the United Kingdom and the United States was lifted in early July.⁹⁹⁸

The decision to impose an oil embargo was clearly a strategic move by the Kuwaiti administration. Its objective was to placate both the radical Arab states, particularly Egypt and Iraq, and the Kuwaiti population, which held dear the Palestinian cause and the general concept of Arab nationalism. There is much evidence to support this assessment. In a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Howard R. Cottam on the second day of the embargo Emir Sabah III

“expressed pride in [his government’s] ‘cleverness’ in demonstrating its Arabism by prompt and full cooperation. By cutting off oil shipments to [the United States and the United Kingdom], sabotage had been averted. He hoped oil cut-off would be temporary and have [a] minimum bad effect on Kuwait.”⁹⁹⁹

On June 10 and 11, Kuwaiti oil workers went on strike. At the time, Ambassador Cottam assessed that the strike was not only tolerated but contrived by the Kuwaiti government in order to maximise pressure on both the Kuwait Oil Company and ARAMCO whose representatives met with the oil ministers of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq on June 11. In retrospect, Cottam’s following suggestion regarding Kuwaiti and Saudi strategy in the early days of the oil embargo appears highly plausible:

“Kuwaitis and Saudis may be trying [an] extreme delicate and dangerous game of proving their Arabism and at [the] same time not jeopardizing their long-range interest in keeping oil flowing.”¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁹⁷ O’Balance, *Arab-Israeli War*, pp. 268f. The decision to impose the oil embargo had already been taken by the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers on June 6. See Assiri, *Kuwait’s Foreign Policy*, p. 51.

⁹⁹⁸ Compare Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 41.

⁹⁹⁹ Telegram, Kuwait 1286, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 6/8/67, National Security File, NSC Special Committee Files, Kuwait, Lyndon B. Johnson Library.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Telegram, Kuwait 1322, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 6/11/67, National Security File, NSC Special Committee Files, Kuwait, Lyndon B. Johnson Library.

The strategic nature of Kuwait's oil embargo became clearest when Emir Sabah III suggested what Ambassador Cottam termed "Bedu chicanery," namely the manipulation of cargo manifests to allow for oil shipments to the United States and the United Kingdom despite the ongoing embargo. Upon recommendation of both the British and U.S. governments, as well as the oil companies BP and Shell, the suggestion was not implemented.¹⁰⁰¹

Again, as in 1956, the Qatari popular and governmental reactions to the war were strong. The Qatari government joined Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in imposing an oil embargo against the United Kingdom and the United States. The embargo started on June 20, ten days after the end of the war, and was kept in place until September 5. The population and also the police force reacted highly emotionally to the events of the war. As during the Suez War there were acts of sabotage against the oil infrastructure. Moreover, the Doha "police force broke down and wept, in almost its entirety," due to the catastrophic defeat of their idol Nasser.¹⁰⁰²

The Bahraini regime, too, imposed an oil embargo. Otherwise, the public governmental reactions were relatively muted. Also on a public level, reactions were comparatively limited.¹⁰⁰³

The Trucial States' official reactions to the Six-Day War and its outcome were muted mainly due to the emirates' primary concentration on domestic affairs. Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Ras al-Khaimah saw large demonstrations, mostly peaceful in nature, and some acts of sabotage, e.g. against a British radio station in Ras al-Khaimah. In the case of Dubai, protests were of a much more violent nature and came along with considerable damage to property, *inter alia* of British companies. According to the British resident in Dubai, the riots were orchestrated by Palestinian nationals.¹⁰⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰¹ Telegram, Kuwait 2325, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 6/10/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, POL 27 ARAB-ISR, NARA and Telegram, London 10390, American Embassy in London to the Department of State, 6/15/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 17-1 ARAB, NARA.

¹⁰⁰² Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 42f. and Letter, Secretary of State Rusk to Secretary of the Interior Udall, Washington, 6/8/67, RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Central Files, 1967-69, PET 12-3 US, NARA.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, pp. 45f.

Of all Arab Gulf monarchies, the reactions of both the Omani government and population was the most muted. In line with Sultan Said's earlier stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Omani administration remained on the sidelines. In addition, the Sultanate did not witness a single demonstration.¹⁰⁰⁵ Beside Sultan Said's lack of interest in the matter, mainly the low urban concentration, the absence of other Arab, particularly Palestinian nationals in Oman, and the low degree of technological infrastructure explain the Omani reaction.¹⁰⁰⁶

From August 29 to September 1, 1967, roughly two and a half months after the end of the Six-Day War, the Arab League states came together for the above mentioned Summit in Khartoum. The Summit became a milestone in the history of both intra-Arab relations and the Arab-Israeli conflict. First, the Summit's participants decided that henceforward Arab oil should be utilised as a "positive weapon," producing financial resources to be used for the reconstruction of the defeated Arab states' economies.¹⁰⁰⁷ This departure of earlier calls by the radical Arab states for the use of the negative oil weapon, namely oil embargoes, was in the clear interest of the conservative oil producing monarchies, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya. Crucial in the decision making process was the fact that Egypt, virtually bankrupt after the Six-Day War, needed extensive financial support from the Arab oil exporting states.

Second, the summit resolution expressed appreciation for the Arab oil producing states' previous financial support for "the States affected by the aggression to stand firm in the face of any pressure."¹⁰⁰⁸ This clause did not only signify the increasing importance of the moderate oil monarchies in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it also symbolised the beginning of the end of the Arab Cold War.

Third, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Sabah of Kuwait and King Idris of Libya committed to support financially the war-struck economies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The three Heads of State pledged to grant the Arab front states quarterly payments amounting to a yearly total of £135 million (\$376

¹⁰⁰⁵ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, pp. 43f.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Compare *ibid*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁰⁷ "The Arab League Summit Conference Resolution, Khartoum, 1 September 1967," reprinted in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, pp. 209f., p. 209.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cited in *ibid*.

million) from mid-October 1967 onwards “until the effects of the aggression are eliminated.”¹⁰⁰⁹ The lion’s share of the financial aid (£95 million / \$246.6 million) was earmarked for Egypt and smaller amounts of £40 million (\$111.4 million) and £5 million (\$13.9 million) for Jordan and Syria respectively. Among the three donor countries Kuwait pledged the largest share of £55 million (\$153.2 million), followed by Saudi Arabia (£50 million / 139.3 \$ million), and Libya (£30 million / \$83.6 million). Amounting to more than 20 percent of their respective yearly revenues, the economic aid granted by the three oil monarchies was a very significant financial commitment.¹⁰¹⁰ However, the financial support entailed political benefit in the long run as it gave Saudi Arabia and Kuwait considerable influence particularly in Egyptian policy. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was able to establish itself in a leading role among Arab states.

Fourth, as a *quid pro quo* for the massive financial support, a politically weakened Nasser, agreed to terminate his feud with Saudi Arabia: The Egyptian President renounced his earlier attempts of destabilising the Saudi regime. He ordered the Egyptian anti-Saudi radio propaganda to stop and promised to withdraw all his troops from Yemen; a promise he eventually kept by the end of November 1967. Conversely, King Faisal agreed to discontinue Saudi financial aid for the Yemeni royalists.¹⁰¹¹

Fifth, in the Khartoum Summit resolution, the attending Arab League members agreed on what was later referred to as the “three noes.” They pledged to abide to the main principles of “no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it.”¹⁰¹²

Despite its uncompromising position towards Israel, the Saudi government frowned upon the War of Attrition that Egypt fought with Israel in the attempt to pressure the latter to abandon its territorial gains from the Six-Day War.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Cited in “Arab League Summit Conference Resolution, Khartoum,” p. 210. The financial pledge was subject of an additional resolution. The figures were given in pound sterling. The dollar figures derive from the author’s own calculations conducted on the basis of the pound sterling/U.S. dollar exchange rate on September 1, 1967.

¹⁰¹⁰ Compare *ibid* and Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 254.

¹⁰¹¹ The Saudi-Egyptian accord was reached secluded from the Summit in a private meeting between King Faisal and President Nasser. The meeting took place in the house of the Sudanese, Prime Minister Mohammad Mahgoub, on August 31. Compare Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, p. 254, Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 122 and Bassam Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East, 1967-91: Regional Dynamic and the Superpowers* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 88.

¹⁰¹² Cited in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, p. 209.

According to Safran, the Saudi opposition was motivated by five main factors. First, over the course of the war Nasser continuously intensified its relationship with the Soviet Union and allowed the latter to consolidate its position in Egypt. Egyptian military setbacks were countered by an increase in Soviet military assistance both in terms of arms deliveries and growing numbers of “Soviet advisers.” The Soviet armed forces enjoyed exclusive access to Egyptian air bases and naval installations, Soviet ground and air units defended Egyptian territory, and roughly 17,000 Soviet military advisers infiltrated the different branches of the Egyptian armed forces. As Safran points out, “it looked to most observers, and certainly to the Saudis, as though the Soviets were well on their way toward turning Egypt into a dependent proxy if not a satellite.”¹⁰¹³ Saudi Arabia was already highly concerned about both the Soviet Union’s strong presence in Iraq, Syria, and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen and the superpower’s support for the relevant regimes’ subversive actions. The heavily intensified Soviet engagement in Egypt amplified the Saudi apprehension of a systematic Soviet encirclement.¹⁰¹⁴

Second, regardless of its actual military strategic effectiveness, Egypt’s campaign against Israel served to improve Nasser’s heavily damaged prestige and helped restore ailing pan-Arabism’s radiance in the region. Particularly the resurrection of revolutionary Arab nationalism unsettled the Saudi administration. In May and September of 1969 respectively, the Saudi regime witnessed military coups bringing to power Arab nationalist regimes in both Sudan and Libya. Colonel Muammar Al Qaddafi even went to the lengths of suggesting a merger of Libya with Egypt and other Arab countries. The new Sudanese regime under Jafar Al Numeiry, turned towards socialist reforms and close cooperation not only with Egypt but also with the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹⁵ Moreover, the Saudi regime itself was faced with a coup attempt. Inspired by and collaborating with Saudi socialist opposition movements, military personnel, among them 60 Saudi air force officers as well as the director of the Saudi Air Force Academy in Dhahran, planned to proclaim the “Republic of the Arabian

¹⁰¹³ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 139.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Peninsula” after killing the King and the senior princes in an air strike on the royal palace.¹⁰¹⁶

Third, Nasser instrumentalised this renaissance of pan-Arabism to pressure the Saudi regime into policies consistent with his agenda. At the 1969 Arab League Summit in Rabat Nasser requested Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil exporting states to use oil as political leverage against the United States and the entire West with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁰¹⁷

Fourth, from the Saudi perspective the War of Attrition jeopardised Jordan’s nature as a crucial buffer state. For one thing, Jordan had so far shielded the Saudi territory from the Arab-Israeli war zone. However, beside Egypt, the PLO, operating from Jordan, was the most significant Arab participant in the War of Attrition.¹⁰¹⁸ Moreover, in the course of the war, the Palestinian organisation had gradually established a state within a state in the Hashemite Kingdom and threatened to politically highjack the entire country. This would have served as an additional blow to Saudi security, as the Kingdom would then have faced three radical, revolutionary, and anti-Saudi states at its northern border.¹⁰¹⁹

Fifth, the War of Attrition was characterised by a permanent escalation and bore the risk to turn into a full-fledged war Saudi Arabia would almost certainly have been dragged into. Particularly the Saudi oil export stability would then have been at risk either by the war itself or by a (self-)imposed use of the oil weapon.¹⁰²⁰

Nonetheless, in 1969, the Saudi administration sent a brigade to the Jordanian city of Kerak to assist Arab forces in their fight against Israel. Reportedly, the Saudi brigade suffered one fatality and several wounded.¹⁰²¹ The Saudi military involvement appears to have been based on two main motives: First, it was a reaction by the Saudi regime to its people’s moral support for the *fedayeen*’s

¹⁰¹⁶ The respective opposition movements were the Popular Democratic Front, the National Front for the Liberation of Saudi Arabia, and the Federation of Democratic Forces in the Kingdom. Joseph A. Kéchichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (Palgrave: New York and Houndsmills, 2001), p. 104.

¹⁰¹⁷ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 139f.

¹⁰¹⁸ Jordan and Syria also periodically took part in the attacks against Israel.

¹⁰¹⁹ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 140.

¹⁰²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²¹ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 50.

fight against the Israeli army. In this context, the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia summarised in early 1970

“The fedayeen mystique has captured imaginations here as elsewhere in the Arab world. Saudis, chafing with frustration at the continuous humiliation of Arab armies, take satisfaction in the bellicose stand and reported military successes of the commandos. With Government blessing the Saudi media nourish this enthusiasm with daily stories of commando exploits, real or imagined. Since the January Ghor al-Safi incident, where Fedayeen and Saudi Army efforts to repel [sic] the I.D.F. seem to have been especially lavish in extolling the fighting mettle of the commandos as brothers in arms of the Saudi forces in the thick of the battle.”¹⁰²²

Second, the Saudi regime considered the growing popularity of the *fedayeen* as an opportune offset to the general popularity of Nasser and his Arab nationalist ideology.¹⁰²³

In the following years, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait supported the Arab front states financially as previously agreed. In the aftermath of the 1969 Rabat Arab League Summit the Kuwaiti government announced additional financial support for the PLO. The Kuwaiti administration’s Law No. 3 of 1970 read: “An amount of Fifteen Million Kuwaiti Dinars [equivalent to \$42 million] shall be appropriated for the participation in the support of the *fedayeen* action and the liberation of Arab land.”¹⁰²⁴ In fact, the Kuwaiti government had not planned to pay the full amount to the PLO. In contrast, two thirds of the pledged appropriation (KD10 million/\$28 million) were earmarked for and eventually paid out to Egypt. In this context, referring to a conversation with the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sabah Al Ahmad, in December 1969, U.S. Ambassador John P. Walsh revealed

“it looks better, somehow more patriotic, for the legal record to show that Kuwait has hereby come forth with another 15 million dinar gift to support The Cause in Palestine rather than to record the UAR as beneficiary. The GOK [Government of Kuwait] after all gets full marks locally for backing the fedayeen, whereas local critics of continued gifts to Nasser, while cautious, are more numerous and more vocal.”¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²² Airgram, Jidda A-51, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Saudi Support for the Fedayeen,” 2/23/70, NND 969031, Box 2042, POL 13-10 ARAB 2-1-70, NARA.

¹⁰²³ See *ibid*.

¹⁰²⁴ Enclosure to Airgram, Kuwait A-33, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, “Kuwait Pays its Rabat Assessments,” 3/26/70, NND 969031, Box 2042, POL 13-10 ARAB 3-1-70, NARA.

¹⁰²⁵ Airgram, Kuwait A-33 (1970). The Kuwaiti government’s rhetoric support for fedayeen action in Palestine was made very explicit in the law’s Explanatory Note, which included

Sheikh Zayid of Abu Dhabi also made a voluntary financial contribution to the front states by transferring £1.3 million to Jordan.¹⁰²⁶

The Arab Gulf monarchies' support for Egypt, Syria, and the PLO was prompted by several factors: First, with regard to the magnitude of the Arab defeat during the Six-Day War and the Israeli conquest of even further Arab territory – the Syrian Golan Heights, the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, and not least East Jerusalem – the Gulf States saw an immediate need to support the Arab and the Palestinian cause more vigorously. Particularly the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque (“The Farthest Mosque”), the third holiest shrine of Islam after the Al-Masjid al-Haram (“The Sacred Mosque”) in Mecca and Al-Masjid an-Nabi (“The Mosque of the Prophet”) in Medina, had a very significant psychological impact not least on the deeply religious Saudi King Faisal. Raymond H. Close, CIA station chief in Jidda for the better part of the 1970s, characterises Faisal as having been much more emotional regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict than his considerably more pragmatic successors. Close furthermore identifies the occupation of East Jerusalem as a key aspect in Faisal’s rage against Israel.¹⁰²⁷

Second, by playing a more active role in supporting the Arab cause, specifically Saudi Arabia saw an opportunity to both extend its relevance as leading power among Arab states and to stabilise the newly concluded peace with Egypt by making the latter increasingly dependent on Saudi support.

Third, again, predominantly Saudi Arabia saw a chance to utilise the financial leverage it had gained on Egypt in order to influence the latter’s foreign policy, particularly with regard to Egypt’s strategic alliance with the Soviet Union.

Fourth, the Arab Gulf monarchies’ payments to the front states and their support of the PLO had also domestic policy reasons as it mirrored the population’s moral support for the fight against Israeli occupation of Arab lands. Once again,

following formulation: “[W]e absolutely believe in the benefit of the Palestinian armed struggle which has now occupied an outstanding place in the theater of events, due to the acceleration of its heroic operations in Palestine and the occupied land against the common enemy.”

Enclosure to Air-gram, Kuwait A-33 (1970).

¹⁰²⁶ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 45.

¹⁰²⁷ Phone Interview with Raymond H. Close in April 2011.

the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy decisions with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict were taken in an effort to guarantee regime stability.

The Arab Gulf Monarchies and Palestinian Political Movements

The heavy blow the outcome of the Six-Day War dealt to Nasser and Arab nationalism also influenced Palestinian politics. Prior to the war, the Arab Nationalist Movement, an amalgam of partially competing Nasserist and Marxist pan-Arab subgroups with branches in most countries of the Arab World, was the dominant force in intra-Palestinian politics. In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, the Palestinian nationalist Fatah then became the most influential Palestinian political faction, much to the benefit of the Arab Gulf monarchies. Both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait supported Fatah while being highly critical and wary of other Palestinian liberation movements, especially the radical leftist such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The political ideology and actions of these organisations were detrimental to the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy interests and their regime stability.

The relationship between Kuwait and Fatah was a particularly close one as the Kuwaiti government played a vital role in the creation of the Palestinian movement. Following the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948, entailing a massive wave of Palestinian refugees, Kuwait became the home of a large Palestinian Diaspora. In the following years, the shortage of manpower in Kuwait's fast developing oil industry had an additional increasing effect on Palestinian immigration to the Gulf emirate. However, Palestinians in Kuwait were not all manual labourers. On the contrary, the first Palestinians to come to Kuwait belonged to the intelligencia and soon played a very significant role in Kuwait's education, health care, and media sector and also served as political advisors to the administration.¹⁰²⁸ The Kuwaiti government allowed the Palestinian refugees to use Kuwait as an organising centre for the establishment of a

¹⁰²⁸ Compare Crystal, *Kuwait*, p. 130. Evaluating the influence of the Palestinians on Kuwait's development, Shafeeq Ghabra states: "In almost every phase of development, be it economic, military, administrative, or educational, the Palestinians had a tremendous effect, particularly during the 1948-1965 period. This period was characterized by the laying of Kuwait's modern economic infrastructure [in which] the Palestinian role in the work force was crucial. In 1965, for instance, 48 percent of all employees in Kuwait's public sector were Palestinian [...] In the private sector, Palestinians composed 41.4 percent of all employees." Shafeeq Ghabra, *Palestinians in Kuwait: The Family and the Politics of Survival* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1987), p. 41.

Palestinian national movement. In 1959, with the support of the Kuwaiti government, a group of intellectual Palestinian refugees including Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf, and Khalil Al Wazir founded Fatah in Kuwait, where the movement kept its headquarters until 1966. In the organisation's early years, financial support for Fatah originated mainly from Kuwait; official financial support by the Kuwaiti government, however, set in later and became very significant following the 1967 Khartoum Summit.¹⁰²⁹

When the PLO was founded in 1964, its conception going back to the Arab League's first Summit in Cairo in January of that year, the Kuwaiti administration allowed the organisation to open an office in Kuwait. Moreover, the Kuwaiti leadership permitted the establishment and active political engagement of other Palestinian organisations whose "[a]ctivities ranged from social and cultural programs to union work, fund-raising, and demonstrations."¹⁰³⁰ The government only drew a line when it came to Palestinian paramilitary presence in Kuwait and prohibited infighting among Palestinian factions on Kuwaiti ground as well as Palestinian involvement in Kuwaiti domestic political affairs.¹⁰³¹

Official Saudi financial support for Fatah started in 1965. Previously, Fatah had agreed to refrain from any political or organisational activities in Saudi Arabia. In return, the Saudi regime levied a 5% tax on the salaries of every Palestinian employee in the Kingdom and transferred the tax receipts to Fatah. Moreover, the Saudi regime distributed collection boxes for the Jihad in Palestine all over the Kingdom. Together with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia became the main funder of Fatah. A main reason for the close link between the Palestinian organisation and the two Arab Gulf monarchies was the consensus that Arab nationalism was the connecting element between sovereign Arab states whose territorial integrity and individual interests took precedence.¹⁰³²

A 1973 U.S. Department of State Intelligence note encapsulates the Saudi stance towards the different Palestinian liberation movements:

¹⁰²⁹ Crystal, *Kuwait*, p. 131 and Friedemann Büttner and Helga Baumgarten, "Der Nahost-Konflikt und die Golfstaaten," in Fred Scholz (ed.), *Wirtschaftsmacht im Krisenherd: Die Golfstaaten* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1985), pp. 65-80, p. 68.

¹⁰³⁰ Crystal, *Kuwait*, p. 131.

¹⁰³¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³² Büttner and Baumgarten, *Nahost-Konflikt*, pp. 68, 71.

“Animated by hostility to Israel, sympathy for the Palestinians, and concern about the subversive capabilities of the fedayeen¹⁰³³, King Faysal has adopted a cautious policy of limited support for the Palestinian resistance movement. He has no use for the Marxist iconoclasm of the PFLP or the PDFLP -- organizations which publicly condemn “reaction” and enjoy clandestine logistic and intelligence support for Faysal’s archenemies in South Yemen. Although he might have paid the PFLP a little blackmail on occasion in an effort to keep it from sabotaging Tapline, the only recipient of a regular Saudi subsidy has been Fatah.”¹⁰³⁴

Saudi Arabia repeatedly emphasised their clear preference for Fatah over other Palestinian movements in their dealings with the United States and attempted to convince the latter to modify its policy so that Fatah would be strengthened in relation to the more radical, leftist Palestinian factions. In a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Hermann F. Eilts in late January 1970, Saudi Defence Minister Sultan Al Saud stressed that

“Fatah is [the] only Arab guerrilla organization which has not resorted to outside terrorist tactics. It is operating solely to recover [the] occupied territories. [...] Only [the] Fatah leadership can be relied upon to be anti-Communist.”¹⁰³⁵

The Kuwaiti government shared the Saudi perspective and also considered Fatah and its leader Yasser Arafat as the only reliable Palestinian partner.¹⁰³⁶

In 1965, one year after its foundation, the PLO opened an office in Doha, Qatar. As there was no PLO representation in what later became the UAE, the PLO representative in Doha, Abu Sitah, visited the Trucial States occasionally. Sheikh Zayid of Abu Dhabi financially supported all Palestinian factions irrespective of their ideological standing, as they were all fighting for Palestine’s liberation. Following the Six-Day War, the government of Abu Dhabi gave voluntary financial support to Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Reportedly, Sheikh Zayid saw it as his Arab nationalist duty to support the Arab front states.

¹⁰³³ In this context, the term *fedayeen* refers to armed Palestinian militias.

¹⁰³⁴ Intelligence Note, RNAN-28, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, “Arab World: Fatah Gets Back Into Faysal’s Good Grace,” 6/12/73, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 III, NARA. Compare Airgram, Jidda A-51 (1970).

¹⁰³⁵ Telegram, Jidda 331, American Embassy in Jidda to the Secretary of State, 1/29/70, NND 969031, Box 2042, POL 13-10 ARAB 2-1-70, NARA.

¹⁰³⁶ Compare Paper Prepared by Harold Saunders of the National Security Council Staff, 7/11/72. Cited in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970*, eds. Linda W. Qaimmaqami and Adam M. Howard (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2008), pp. 372-76, p. 376.

However, Abu Dhabi's payments were not made public due to the emirate's treaty obligations to the United Kingdom. In 1968, Sheikh Zayid issued a decree according to which the deportation or arrest of any Palestinian member of a liberation movement required his personal permission. In the following year, Abu Dhabi's ruler decreed the levying of a 5% tax on all Palestinians working in Abu Dhabi as well as the transfer of all of Abu Dhabi's payments to the Palestine National Fund (PNF). As the fund represented all Palestinian factions, Abu Dhabi continued its non-discrimination policy in its support of Palestinian liberation movements. This policy remained in place at least until the end of the period under review. Also in 1969, Sheikh Zayid allowed the PLO to open a local office in the Abu Dhabi, which was completely financed by the emirate. Until the creation of the UAE, Abu Dhabi made several additional payments to different Palestinian liberation movements, including the PFLP. According to Jamil Al Ramahi, the PLO representative in Abu Dhabi, the fact that the lion's share of Abu Dhabi's payments went to Fatah was only attributable to the movements size not its ideological orientation.¹⁰³⁷

4.2 Britain's Withdrawal, the October War, and the Use of the Oil Weapon

The Newly Independent Arab Gulf Monarchies and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Until they reached full independence in 1971, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the seven emirates that formed the UAE, did not consider the Arab-Israeli conflict as an issue of great political importance.¹⁰³⁸ After their independence, they were preoccupied with nation building, state consolidation, and subregional affairs. In this context, then U.S. Consul General in Dhahran, Lee F. Dinsmore, pointed out:

¹⁰³⁷ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 172f.

¹⁰³⁸ Characteristic for the subordinate character of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian cause in the case of these newly independent states was a speech, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Ruler of Bahrain, gave on occasion of the ninth anniversary of his enthronement. U.S. diplomat Dinsmore later recalled: "Next, almost as if he feared that the adulation of Iran had tipped the pan of a delicate balance too far, the Ruler returns to Arabism and adds a gram of reassurance about "cooperation with Arab states." The invocation of the "sacred cause of Palestine," dropped quickly just before a transition to another topic is almost loudly perfunctory to a non-Arab, but not to Arabs themselves. It is an important part of the required litany." Airgram, Dhahran A-4, American Consulate in Dhahran to the Department of State, "Accession Day Speech of the Ruler of Bahrain, 1/6/71, NND 969031, Box 2112, POL 15-1 BAHRAIN, NARA.

“Left alone, the leaders of these states would undoubtedly prefer to avoid involvement in the Arab-Israeli problem. Unfortunately their new status as heads of independent Arab states will not allow them the convenience that went with their former anonymity.”¹⁰³⁹

With their new membership in the Arab League also came the necessity to express a clear position with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. When the Egyptian government announced its diplomatic recognition of the newly independent UAE, it let the administration in Abu Dhabi subtly know that it would expect UAE contribution to the Arab cause. The official Egyptian declaration read “Egypt [...] believes that the new Arab sister state will contribute towards the path of the Arab nation for its glory, dignity and prosperity.”¹⁰⁴⁰

Only a few months after Qatar’s independence, the newly appointed Qatari Minister of Defence, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, announced his country’s plan to develop what U.S. Ambassador William A. Stoltzfus called “a rather grandiose military establishment.”¹⁰⁴¹ With respect to the future role of Qatar’s armed forces Sheikh Hamad declared:

“We believe that our prime responsibility is to protect this (Gulf) Arab front so that the principal Arab forces would be free to confront our number one enemy -- the Zionist invader.”¹⁰⁴²

With this statement the Qatari leadership both emphasised the importance it attached to the Arab cause and signalled that it would not participate militarily in future Arab-Israeli confrontations.

For the most part, the newly independent Arab Gulf monarchies strongly supported both the Palestinian cause and the PLO.¹⁰⁴³ Several factors motivated this policy stance: first, the regime’s decision-makers felt genuine

¹⁰³⁹ Airgram, Dhahran A-151, American Consulate in Dhahran to the Department of State, “Arab Emirates: Their Conduct in Foreign Affairs,” 12/29/71, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL 7 UAE 1-1-70, NARA.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Telegram, Cairo 3008, American Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State “Egypt Recognizes United Arab Emirates (UAE): Other Gulf Developments,” 12/3/71, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL UAE-A-1-1-72, NARA.

¹⁰⁴¹ Airgram, Kuwait A-44, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, “Al-Hawadith Interviews New Qatar Minister of Defense,” 4/29/72, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL QATAR, NARA.

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴³ For UAE support of the Palestinian cause and the PLO, see al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 179f.

sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians and objected to the occupation of Arab lands, particularly in the case of Jerusalem.

Second, Qatar and the UAE had significant Palestinian communities. The roughly 45,000 Palestinians living in Qatar amounted to 22% of the population and even exceeded the community of Qatari nationals. In the UAE, the Palestinian share of the population was even larger with 40,000 Palestinians constituting approximately 30% of the total population. The influence of the Palestinian expatriates in the societies was particularly palpable as they occupied influential positions, for example in the media sector.¹⁰⁴⁴

Third, being a newly independent state, not yet recognised diplomatically by its powerful neighbour Saudi Arabia, the UAE had a vital interest in the recognition of its legitimacy as a sovereign state by as many members of the Arab League as possible. Hence, staunch support of the Arab cause was a strategically advisable policy.¹⁰⁴⁵

Fourth, the individual UAE emirates and Qatar, lacking both the personnel and the expertise, were heavily reliant on foreign Arab consultants in the field of foreign policy. Sheikh Zayid of Abu Dhabi, President of the UAE and main decision maker in the country's foreign policy, relied on an Iraqi foreign policy advisor.¹⁰⁴⁶ Qatar's leadership confided in a former Egyptian diplomat as chief foreign policy advisor.¹⁰⁴⁷ Hence, the foreign policy of the two countries was affected greatly by former diplomats of radical Arab states. For example, in September 1972, the UAE, as the only Arab Gulf monarchy, supported a

¹⁰⁴⁴ John K. Cooley, "Iran, the Palestinians, and the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Summer 1979), pp. 1017-34, p. 1020 and Abadi, "Israel's Relations," p. 52. For example, the director of the newly established radio station in Dubai was a Palestinian. Airgram, Dhahran A-151 (1971). Bahrain and Oman had only very small Palestinian communities. Cooley, "Iran, the Palestinians, and the Gulf," p. 1020.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Personal interview with historian Dr. Frauke Heard-Bey in Abu Dhabi in February 2012.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Adnan Al Pachachi, Iraq's Permanent Representative at the United Nations from 1959 to 1965 and again from 1967 to 1969 as well as Iraqi foreign minister from 1965 to 1967. Al Pachachi, a strong supporter of Nasserite Arab nationalism, left the Iraqi diplomatic service following the Baath party's rise to power in Iraq.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Dhahran A-151 (1971).

proposal by radical Arab states to boycott the 1972 UN General Assembly session in response to U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁰⁴⁸

Only Oman refrained from support of the PLO due to the involvement of Palestinian factions in the ongoing Dhofar Rebellion as ideological and material supporters of the rebel forces.¹⁰⁴⁹

U.S. Policy, the Strength of Communism, and the Predicament of Moderate Arab Regimes

In their dealings with the United States, Saudi Arabia consistently stressed the negative consequences the disproportionate U.S. support for Israel had for the interests of both the moderate Arab regimes and the United States themselves. The main theme of Saudi warnings was the connection between U.S. policy and the level of Soviet influence in the Arab world. In the Saudi administration's logic the U.S. bias for Israel, marked by diplomatic, political, and economic support as well as weapons shipments, drove Arab states into the arms of the Soviet Union; examples of this development could be seen in the cases of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and the two Yemens.¹⁰⁵⁰ In a letter to President Nixon, dated March 22, 1972, King Faisal stated:

“It distresses me [...] to have to say that it is the United States that is inducing the Arab nations to side with the Communist camp in self-defense and for the preservation of their dignity. [...] [C]ontinued political, economic and military patronage and support of Israel by the United States, as well as the United States' readiness to supply arms and aircraft to Israel upon request and on the pretext of preserving the balance of power, have caused the Arab states to give in to domestic public pressure and take a hostile stand toward the United States [...] America's unabashed siding with Israel is responsible for the latter's persistence in wrongdoing, inflexibility and rejection of every plan for a solution [...] As a result of her obduracy and of the United States' siding with her, Israel now sneers at United Nations [sic] resolutions and pays no attention to them. This is bound to result in the growth of Communist influence in the area under the leadership of the Soviet Union, which

¹⁰⁴⁸ The proposal was put forward by Iraq, Libya, the PDRY, and Syria. Telegram, Jidda 3045, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Proposed Arab Boycott of UNGA,” 9/19/72, NND 969031, Box 2042, POLITICAL AFF. & REF. ARAB, NARA.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Compare Allen, Jr. and Rigsbee II., *Oman under Qaboos*, p. 206.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Telegram from the American Consulate General in Dhahran to the Department of State, 2/5/69, cited in *FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIV*, pp. 399-404, p. 399.

sides openly with the Arabs, and in a gradual shrinking of the interests of the United States of America in that part of the world.”¹⁰⁵¹

The connection between U.S. foreign policy and the strength of Soviet influence in the Arab world was appreciated by the entire Saudi administration. Things were different with regard to what U.S. Secretary of State Rogers called sarcastically King Faisal’s “pet theory that Communism and Zionism are twin aspects of the same world-wide conspiracy.”¹⁰⁵² Faisal was of the firm belief that Israel was playing a skilful game of duplicity, pretending to be in a political alliance with the United States, while being secretly in cahoots with the Soviet Union. In the above quoted letter to President Nixon Faisal stated:

“I am absolutely certain that it is Communist influence on Israel that has prompted her to obstruct every proposal for a solution, the reason being to perpetuate trouble in the area so that Communism may be able to spread its influence there and eventually bring all of the states of the Middle East to resolve, against their will, in its orbit.”¹⁰⁵³

While he never openly disagreed with his half-brother, Prince Fahd, already then a highly important figure in Saudi foreign policymaking, did not share Faisal’s belief in the existence of a Communist-Zionist conspiracy.¹⁰⁵⁴

The U.S. foreign policy bias for Israel caused additional problems for Saudi Arabia and other U.S. allies among Arab states. For one thing, the radical factions in the Arab world put significant pressure on the Saudi and other regimes to terminate their strategic alliance with Israel’s main supporter. Saudi Arabia was more and more caught in a substantial dilemma: Close relations with the United States were simultaneously essential for and a liability to the security, economic prosperity, and domestic stability of the Kingdom. As Saudi Arabia was also an important partner to the United States, the Kingdom tried to

¹⁰⁵¹ Memorandum for Henry Kissinger, S/S 7209913, “President’s Meeting with Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia,” 6/10/72, Attachment C: “Faisal-Nixon Letter of March 22, 1972,” Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 VI, NARA.

¹⁰⁵² Memorandum, Secretary of State William P. Rogers to the President, “King Faisal’s Visit: Perspectives,” 5/24/71, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 II, NARA. U.S. Ambassador Nicholas G. Thatcher described it even more drastically as the “King’s Zionist-Communist demon-conspiracy preoccupations.” Telegram, Jidda 1637, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Issues for Meetings with Prince Sultan, Political,” 5/22/72, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 VI, NARA.

¹⁰⁵³ Faisal-Nixon Letter of March 22, 1972.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Compare Airgram, Jidda A-51, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Press Statement by Prince Fahd,” 5/9/72, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 V, NARA and Airgram, Jidda A-168, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Prince Fahd’s Views – Comments on Their Implications,” 11/18/71, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-79 IV, NARA.

persuade the U.S. government that a more balanced foreign policy in the Middle East was in U.S. vital interest, too.

The Kuwaiti government, too, urged the United States to adopt a more balanced policy in the Middle East. Reporting on a conversation he had with Kuwaiti Minister of Interior and Defence Sheikh Saad in October 1971, U.S. Ambassador John P. Walsh stated:

“Sa’ad at that point became rather emotional and said he couldn’t understand our policies. [...] He said every Arab wants the Russians out of the Middle East, but our policies make it almost impossible for any decent Arab Government to survive.”¹⁰⁵⁵

Moreover, Saudi Arabia was concerned about *fedayeen* violence outside of Israel and against non-Israeli targets. The Kingdom was particularly anxious about attacks on the oil infrastructure in the region and actions jeopardising the domestic stability of Jordan. In its dealings with the U.S. government, Saudi Arabia argued that U.S. policy prompted the radical *fedayeen* factions to such actions that were contradictory to the interests of both the moderate Arab states and the United States themselves.¹⁰⁵⁶

Saudi Arabia and Egypt’s Change of Camps

Following Nasser’s death on September 28, 1970 and Anwar Al Sadat’s subsequent succession as president of Egypt, the relations between the Arab Gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia, and Egypt improved considerably. Faisal and Sadat’s longstanding close friendship was essential in the rapid Saudi-Egyptian rapprochement. In a notable example of the mutual respect and trust between the two statesmen, Sadat let the Saudi government know that he had instructed his military command to take orders from Faisal in case of an emergency while he was away on a trip to Moscow in early 1972.¹⁰⁵⁷

¹⁰⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador John Patrick Walsh to Joseph J. Sisco, “Conversation of Amb. Walsh with Shaykh Sa’ad, Kuwaiti Minister of Interior and Defense,” 10/23/71, NND 36029, Records Relating to Kuwait, 1971-1972, KUWAIT Political General 1972, NARA.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Compare Draft Memorandum of Conversation, Prince Fahd, Prince Muhammed, and Ambassador al-Sowayel with Joseph Sisco and Richard Murphy, 9/22/71, Records Relating to Saudi Arabia, 1955-1974, Box 7, Saudi Arabia POL 7, Fahd Visit 1971, NARA and Memorandum of Conversation, “Impact of the Arab/Israel Issue on the Oil Supply Situation,” S/S 7307400, 4/16/73, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 VII, NARA.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Joseph P. Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: Foreign Policy and the Search for National Identity* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 45.

In its relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia utilised its vastly increased oil income predominantly to influence the former regarding its superpower affiliation. It was the distinct Saudi objective to assure that Egypt interrupts its strategic alliance with the Soviet Union and joins the U.S.-led Western alliance. The Saudi intention was based on four main factors: First, the Saudi regime was strictly anti-Communist and considered the Soviet Union a major threat to its foreign and domestic security. Should Egypt defect the Soviet Union and become an ally of the United States, it would weaken considerably the Soviet position in the Middle East and in the entire East-West conflict for that matter.

Second, having the United States as a common ally would tighten the Saudi-Egyptian relationship and further reduce the threat of a renewed enmity between the two Arab states.

Third, by helping the United States to a significant strategic victory, Saudi Arabia would proof its outstanding importance for U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East, further solidifying a bilateral relationship particularly relevant to Saudi Arabia's security and domestic stability.

Fourth, Saudi Arabia hoped that by ensuring that Egypt enters the U.S. camp the United States would reduce its disproportionate support of Israel.

Shortly following Nasser's death, Saudi Arabia attempted to convince the new Egyptian regime to terminate its close relationship with the Soviet Union. In November 1970, in a meeting with President Sadat, the Saudi chief of intelligence, Kamal Adham, conveyed King Faisal's suggestion that a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Egypt would affect U.S. foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict to the advantage of the Arabs. Sadat made a counterproposal: He would order the Soviet military out of Egypt in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the Suez Canal's east bank and the resumption of shipping on the canal; Adham conveyed Sadat's proposition to the United States. In the following months, Adham, who had by then become a regular intermediary between Sadat and the Nixon administration, informed the U.S. government of Sadat's urgent intention to reduce Egypt's dependence on the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, on May 27, 1971, Egypt signed a fifteen-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. King Faisal, who arrived in Washington on the same day, used the occasion of the Soviet-Egyptian treaty

to reiterate the necessity for a change in U.S. foreign policy in order to not further strengthen Soviet influence in the Arab world.¹⁰⁵⁸

In the end, the declaration of close Soviet-Egyptian relations had a little lasting effect. On July 7, 1972, Sadat ordered all Soviet personnel to leave Egypt by July 17 and to take all advanced weaponry with them.¹⁰⁵⁹ Paradoxically, progress in the U.S.-Soviet détente became the trigger for the break in Soviet-Egyptian relations. In the final communiqué of the U.S.-Soviet summit in Moscow in May 1972, the two states agreed on an early warning mechanism to reduce the risk of regional conflict escalation and subsequent superpower involvement. In light of this development, Sadat considered the Soviet military presence in Egypt to constrain his autonomy of decision regarding the conflict with Israel as he expected the Soviet Union to strongly oppose the war option. Ultimately, the assurance of continuous Saudi political and financial support was an essential criterion for Sadat's decision to terminate his country's close relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁶⁰

Saudi Arabia's policy of rapprochement with Egypt and intermediation between Egypt and the United States turned out to be rather successful; two of three main Saudi objectives were realised. Egypt terminated its close relations with the Soviet Union. Over the course of the following years, Egypt became an important ally of the United States in its Cold War efforts against Moscow. The Saudi-Egyptian relationship grew stronger allowing Saudi Arabia to consolidate the role as a major Arab power it had gained following the Six-Day War. However, the Saudi regime underestimated the strength of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. In the end, the Egyptian realignment did not affect either the U.S. relations with Israel, the U.S. stance towards the occupation of Arab land or the Palestinian question in the way Saudi Arabia anticipated or at least hoped for. As a consequence of their failed attempt to alter U.S.-Israeli relations and provoke U.S. pressure for an Israeli policy change, Saudi Arabia eventually referred to supporting another war against Israel in the autumn of 1973.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, pp. 292, pp. 294-6.

¹⁰⁵⁹ El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, pp. 198f.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Naif bin Hethlain, *Saudi Arabia and the US since 1962: Allies in Conflict* (London: Saqi Books, 2010), p. 85. For a more detailed analysis of Sadat's reasoning to order the Soviet Union to withdraw its military personnel from Egypt, see *ibid* and El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, pp. 199-201.

Principal Readiness for Peace

With the exception of Oman, the Arab Gulf monarchies vehemently rejected Zionist ideology as well as Israeli occupation of Arab lands, demanded an immediate Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, particularly East Jerusalem, and publicly supported both *fedayeen* actions against Israel and the notion of “the Battle of Destiny against the Israeli enemy.”¹⁰⁶¹ However, behind closed doors, in contacts with the U.S. administration, the Arab Gulf monarchies showed clearly their principal readiness for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is important to note that King Faisal, likely the strongest anti-Zionist among Arab Gulf monarchs, made a clear distinction between Zionism and Judaism. While he respected the Jewish religion and the right of Palestinian Jews to live in Palestine, he strongly rejected the notion of Zionism. He blamed Western Jewish immigrants and their Zionist-nationalist ideology for the ongoing conflict. In his 1972 letter to President Nixon, Faisal emphasised

“if only the /Near/ Eastern Jews were involved and the Western Zionists were to return to the countries from which they emigrated, the Arabs and they /the Near Eastern Jews/ would be able to live together, as they have in the past, and the problem would be solved entirely.”¹⁰⁶²

In public statements, the Arab Gulf monarchies, again with the exception of Oman, maintained their anti-Israeli stance as well as their strong support for the Arab cause. In an address to heads of Islamic pilgrimage missions in Mecca in January 1973, King Faisal reiterated his call for “a Jihad to defend our holy places, our land, our faith and our dignity.”¹⁰⁶³ Assessing the significance of Faisal’s statement, the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia pointed out that the “King can normally be expected to make such a reference to Holy War against Zionism in any public speech before a Moslem audience.”¹⁰⁶⁴ A joint communiqué of King Faisal and the Qatari Emir, Sheikh Khalifa Al Thani, in May

¹⁰⁶¹ Memorandum, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, “Weekly Summary – January 16-29, 1972, 1/31/72, NND 36029, Records Relating to Kuwait, 1971-1972, KUWAIT Political General 1972, NARA. Compare Telegram, Jidda 1816, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Visit of Emir of Qatar to Saudi Arabia,” 5/2/73, NND 969045, Box 2640, POL QATAR, NARA.

¹⁰⁶² Faisal-Nixon Letter of March 22, 1972.

¹⁰⁶³ Telegram, Jidda 155, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “King’s Routine Call for Jihad,” 1/13/73, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 IV, NARA.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Telegram, Jidda 155 (1973).

1973, took the same line when it called “for [the] mobilization of Arabic and Islamic resources to prepare for [the] ‘Battle of Destiny’” against Israel.¹⁰⁶⁵ In a conversation in the presence of *Newsweek* correspondent Arnaud de Borchgrave in December 1970, King Faisal advocated a very uncompromising position when he said that a return to pre-Six-Day War borders was unacceptable and that “the Arabs would insist on the total elimination of the present Israeli state, and no less than the establishment of a multi-national democratic state.”¹⁰⁶⁶ Following the same logic, Saudi Arabia also rejected UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, which requested the return of Arab territories occupied during the Six-Day War and failed to mention the creation of a Palestinian state. However, in private conversations with U.S. government officials, the Saudi administration adopted a very different attitude, showing significant readiness to compromise. Reporting a conversation with King Faisal in May 1969 U.S. Ambassador Eilts summarised the Saudi monarch’s remarks regarding a territorial settlement with Israel as follows:

“[The] Israelis must be induced [to] lay their cards on the table and [to] indicate what they want. If their territorial demands are reasonable and compensation is offered, [King Faisal] thought Jordan would be willing and able [to] work out something. [The Saudi government] will accept anything which [the] parties directly involved agree upon. [...] Faisal made it clear however, that Jerusalem is [the] single exception to his willingness [to] accept such rectification of boundaries. He insisted that [the] Israelis must get out of Jerusalem. Failing this, [the Saudi government] will not accept any peace settlement and will seek to rally Arabs and Muslims against it.”¹⁰⁶⁷

Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf later indicated to the U.S. administration that Saudi Arabia would neither lead the way and accept Resolution 242 nor submit a proposal for conflict resolution based on the UN document. However, Saqqaf repeated that if the Arab parties directly involved in the conflict with Israel accepted an agreement based on Resolution 242 Saudi

¹⁰⁶⁵ Telegram, Jidda 1816 (1973).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, William A. Rugh to The File, “MEMCON: Arnaud de Borchgrave, Chief Foreign Correspondent of *Newsweek*; John Countryman, American Consulate General, Dhahran [and] William A. Rugh at Countryman home, Dhahran, December 8, 1970,” Records Relating to Saudi Arabia, 1955-1974, Box 6, SAUDI ARABIA Political 1970, POL Political Affairs & Relations – General, NARA.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Telegram, Dhahran to the Department of State, 2/5/69.

Arabia would “abide by it.”¹⁰⁶⁸ A few months later Saqqaf reiterated the boundaries of Saudi Arabia’s readiness to compromise, when he stated that the Kingdom would accept any solution of the conflict as long as it “does not detach [Jerusalem’s] holy places from the Arab world.”¹⁰⁶⁹

The clear contradiction between official and unofficial Saudi statements is attributable to the Saudi regime’s objective to not provoke domestic or foreign Arab opposition to its policy. A peaceful conflict resolution was clearly in Saudi Arabia’s interest. Nonetheless, it was too high a political risk for the Saudi administration to call publicly for a conflict resolution on the basis of recognition of the pre-Six-Day War realities. Moreover, the Saudi government stressed unequivocally that it was not willing to compromise with regard to the holy sites of Jerusalem; a stance that has remained unchanged until today. It is however, noteworthy that while in 1969 King Faisal demanded Israel leaving Jerusalem altogether, three years later Minister of State Saqqaf insisted on the attachment to the Arab world only of Jerusalem’s holy places.

To prevent another Arab-Israeli war, Saudi Arabia tried to contribute to the realisation of an Egyptian-Israeli interim agreement by acting as an intermediary between Egypt and the United States. In a conversation with Joseph J. Sisco, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Prince Sultan “promised that Saudi Arabia would press Sadat to ‘keep his cool’” and expressed his hope that “the U.S. would likewise press Israel not to complicate things.”¹⁰⁷⁰

Also, the Kuwaiti government made public statements that clearly contradicted their unofficial conversations with the U.S. administration. At a reception for Kuwaiti journalists on the occasion of the Eid al-Adha holiday, the Kuwaiti Emir emphasised that “Kuwait stands by the Arab confrontation countries and will not spare any resources, in money or men, for the Battle of Destiny against the

¹⁰⁶⁸ Telegram, The Hague 1493, American Embassy in The Hague to the Department of State, “Visit of Saudi FONMIN to Neths,” 4/9/71, NND 36028 - Records Relating to Saudi Arabia, 1955-1974, Box 7, Saudi Arabia POL 7 – Fahd Visit 1971, NARA.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Airgram, Brussels A-13, American Embassy in Brussels to the Department of State, “Visit of Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,” 1/11/73, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 IV, NARA.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, “Sultan-Sisco Talks - Support for President Sadat Part II of IV, 6/15/72, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 V, NARA.

Israeli enemy.”¹⁰⁷¹ In contrast, around the same time, in a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Walsh, the Kuwaiti Minister of Interior and Defence, Sheikh Saad, expressed considerable concern regarding the possibility of imminent war.¹⁰⁷² Paralleling Saudi statements, Kuwait made clear in contacts with the U.S. administration that it would not deal directly with Israel or accept UN Resolution 242. However, Kuwait would accept any solution agreed to by the Palestinians.¹⁰⁷³

In contrast to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the UAE publicly endorsed UN Resolution 242 on December 7, 1972. Addressing the UN General Assembly the UAE Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Saif Ghubash, requested that the world community press Israel to stop its illegal settlement building in the occupied Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Syrian Golan Heights. The UAE’s endorsement of the UN Resolution prompted criticism by the PLO.¹⁰⁷⁴

The Way into War

The newly gained Saudi influence on Egypt’s policy and the new Egyptian perception of Saudi Arabia as an Arab power in general and an important ally in particular were evidenced when Sadat informed Faisal in April 1973 about the secret Egyptian-Syrian plan to attack Israel in the autumn of the same year in order to reconquer previously lost territory.¹⁰⁷⁵ On August 23, 1973, during an unannounced visit of Sadat to Riyadh, King Faisal promised to support the joint Egyptian-Syrian war efforts against Israel with up to \$500 million and signalled his willingness to use oil as a political weapon to put pressure on Israel’s allies. According to Muhammad Heikal, Faisal emphasised that for the oil weapon to work as a means of influencing the policy of Israel’s supporters, the war needed to go on for more than only a few days. Reportedly, Faisal said

“But [...] give us time. We don’t want to use our oil as a weapon in a battle which only goes on for two or three days and then stops. We want to see a battle which goes on for long enough time for world public opinion to be mobilized.”¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷¹ Memorandum, Weekly Summary, 1/31/72.

¹⁰⁷² Memorandum of Conversation, Walsh to Sisco, 10/23/71.

¹⁰⁷³ Paper Prepared by Harold Saunders (1972), p. 376.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Compare Gause, *International Relations*, p. 30, fn 28.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (London: Collins, 1975), p. 268.

Faisal likely had in mind the first and effectual use of the oil weapon during the 1967 Six-Day War.¹⁰⁷⁷

When the October War¹⁰⁷⁸ eventually broke out on October 6, the Arab Gulf monarchies did (at first) not take part militarily. After initial hesitation, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait each sent a motorised infantry brigade to the Syrian Golan Heights. The contingents that included artillery units reached the Golan Heights on October 13, eight days into the war. The Saudi troops saw merely one day of battle (October 19) on which they later claimed to have destroyed and damaged a total of eight Israeli tanks, while they themselves reportedly lost four armoured cars and nine soldiers.¹⁰⁷⁹ Kuwaiti units are also reported to have been fighting alongside Egyptian and Palestinian forces on the Sinai Peninsula.¹⁰⁸⁰

However, as in previous Arab-Israeli wars, the main involvement of the Arab Gulf monarchies was on a financial, economic, and diplomatic level; particularly active in this regard were Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

Repeated Warnings of Oil Sanctions

For months prior to the outbreak of the October War, the possibility of an Arab oil embargo had been discussed in the international press. When the Arab oil exporting countries began to apply the oil weapon on October 17, the U.S. government was caught by surprise. They had not anticipated Saudi Arabia's not only agreeing to but even actively pressing for the use of oil sanctions against the United States and several European and other nations. However, the U.S. government should not have been taken aback by the actions of Saudi Arabia and the remaining major oil producing Arab Gulf monarchies. Indeed,

¹⁰⁷⁷ There is one account that disputes the general narrative according to which King Faisal was both informed about and supported the upcoming war with Israel. Holden and Johns stress that the joint Egyptian-Syrian attack on October 6, 1973 came as a surprise to the Saudi regime and that "Faisal had counselled Sadat against resorting to arms and still hoped, somewhat naively, that he could bring about the evacuation of the occupied Arab territories through the threat of a squeeze on oil supplies." Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 337.

¹⁰⁷⁸ The October War, which took place between October 6 and October 25, 1973, is also referred to as *Yom Kippur War*, with respect to the start of the war, which Egypt and Syria purposefully scheduled to take place on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. The leadership of Egypt and Syria intended to use the moment of surprise and the holiday-related unreadiness of the Israeli armed forces as a strategic advantage in order to maximise their chances for a fast military victory. The war is also referred to as *Ramadan War*, due to the fact that it fell in the Islamic month of Ramadan (September 28 - October 27, 1973).

¹⁰⁷⁹ Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 338.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Herzog, *Arab-Israeli Wars*, p. 278. The Kuwaiti forces had been stationed at the Suez Canal ever since the 1967 Six-Day War. *Kuwait Times*, October 11, 1973, p. 1.

Saudi Arabia had warned the U.S. administration on several occasions in direct contacts and over the press that under certain circumstances they would see no alternative but to use their oil resources as political leverage. As early as in October 1971, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf warned his U.S. counterpart, William P. Rogers that, while it was not in their interest, the Saudi administration would be politically forced to embargo the United States should another Arab-Israeli war break out.¹⁰⁸¹

The Saudi government clearly wanted to prevent the use of the oil weapon, mainly to not jeopardise their relations with the United States. In August 1972, in an interview with the Egyptian weekly magazine *Al-Mussawar*, King Faisal discarded the use of the oil weapon against the United States, claiming it would only hurt the Arab cause and not affect the U.S. economy, as the United States would “not need a bit of Saudi oil or the oil of the Arab Gulf before 1985.”¹⁰⁸² It is safe to assume that the Saudi King was well aware of the falseness of his statement and that his comment was intended to change the Arab and particularly the Egyptian public’s perspective on the use of oil as a political weapon against the United States.

In mid-April 1973, the Saudi administration altered its previous stance and stressed the connection between the developments of its oil exports with U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. During a visit to Washington, Saudi Oil Minister Yamani suggested that Saudi Arabia could increase its oil production in order to meet risen U.S. energy demands. However, implying the precondition of a U.S. policy alteration, he diplomatically added “it was important to create the right political atmosphere.”¹⁰⁸³

On May 23, King Faisal said in a meeting with several ARAMCO and U.S. government officials that due to the close U.S.-Saudi relations the current U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict caused increasing Saudi isolation within the Arab world. He went on to warn that unless there was a significant change in U.S. policy, the Saudi regime would have to act with the consequence that

¹⁰⁸¹ Telegram, USUN N 3373, U.S. Mission at the United Nations in New York to the Department of State, Untitled, 10/8/71, BOX 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73, NARA.

¹⁰⁸² Telegram, Cairo 2195, American Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Untitled, 8/9/72, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 IV, NARA.

¹⁰⁸³ Memorandum of Conversation, “Impact of the Arab/Israel Issue.”

U.S. interests in the region would no longer be maintained. Henry Moses, Vice President of the Mobil Oil Corporation, later recalled King Faisal having alarmed his U.S. dialog partners with the words “Action must be taken; otherwise everything will be lost.”¹⁰⁸⁴

In the course of July 1973, Saudi warnings towards the United States further intensified. On July 4, King Faisal for the first time declared publicly that an increase in Saudi oil production would be difficult as long as the United States did not adopt a more balanced policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Two weeks later, the King’s warnings escalated further when he expressed that, unless there was an alteration in U.S. policy, Saudi Arabia would be forced to limit its oil supply to the United States.¹⁰⁸⁵

The Kuwaiti government also issued several warnings in this regard. In April 1973, Emir Sabah Al Sabah declared, “[w]hen zero hour comes, we shall use the oil as an effective weapon in the battle.”¹⁰⁸⁶ The following month, on May 15, 1973, on the occasion of the anniversary of Israel’s creation, Kuwait joined the radical Arab states of Algeria, Libya, and Iraq, in symbolically stopping oil production for a short period of time. This action could be seen as a warning shot to the United States and other Israel-friendly states, that Kuwait would be ready to use the oil weapon in coordination with other Arab oil producing states.¹⁰⁸⁷ Along with the majority of Arab states, the Kuwaiti government harshly criticised the U.S. veto of UN Security Council draft resolution S/10974 on July 26, 1973. The draft resolution, that “strongly deplore[d] Israel’s continuing occupation of territories occupied as a result of the 1967 conflict,” had been sponsored by several members of the Non-Aligned Movement, including Sudan.¹⁰⁸⁸ In reaction, Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry sources announced

¹⁰⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, “Faisal’s Meeting with ARAMCO Officials,” S/S 7310262, 5/30/73, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 III, NARA.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Memorandum, Secretary of State Rogers to the President, “Letter to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia,” S/S 7313890, 7/31/73, Box 2585, Documents on Saudi Arabia 1971-73 III, NARA. Compare King Faisal’s *Newsweek* interview published on September 10, 1973. Nicholas C. Proffitt, “Faisal’s Threat,” *Newsweek*, September 10, 1973, pp. 11-3, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Cited in Neil Partrick, *Kuwait’s Foreign Policy (1961-1977): Non-Alignment, Ideology and the Pursuit of Security*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2006, p. 179.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Compare Ali, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁸⁸ The draft resolution is available online on the website of The United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL): <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/D359EEC4EB0E3EA50525652900785400> (accessed on May 3, 2013).

“that the Ministry would launch immediate consultations with the Arab capitals to adopt a unified Arab policy to confront the American - Zionist alliance and consider *all steps necessary* to force the U.S. to abandon its hostile and anti-Arab policies.”¹⁰⁸⁹

Sheikh Zayid, too, issued several warnings of an oil embargo. In interviews to the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraph* on August 6, 1973 and to the Lebanese daily *Al-Anwar* two days later, the UAE President implied that his country would agree to the use of the oil weapon if its application were decided unanimously among Arabs.¹⁰⁹⁰ In another interview to the Kuwaiti magazine, *Al-Hawadith*, on August 23, Sheikh Zayid expressed explicitly his readiness to join in an Arab oil embargo against the United States. He even went as far as to threaten the United States to terminate its support for Israel or to “face the consequences.”¹⁰⁹¹

Application of the Oil Weapon

On October 12, in the light of considerable Arab advances in the first days of the war, the United States started a massive air lift of war material to support Israel’s armed forces.¹⁰⁹² U.S. justifications that their war support of Israel was mere compensation for very significant Soviet reinforcements sent to the Arab states neither convinced the Saudi administration nor did it alleviate its anger.¹⁰⁹³ On October 16, the Saudi government requested the European

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Kuwait Times*, July 28, 1973, p. 1. (emphasis added)

¹⁰⁹⁰ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁹¹ Cited in *ibid*.

¹⁰⁹² Operation *Nickel Grass* was authorised by U.S. President Nixon on October 9, 1973. At first, in order to mask the U.S. support of Israel, only Israeli passenger planes, operated by the El Al Israel airlines, carried U.S. provided military equipment. Due to the inefficiency of this transportation method and the increasing Israeli need for supplies, Nixon, on October 13, ordered the U.S. air force to conduct the airlift of war material to Israel. William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, 3rd ed. (Washington D.C. and Berkeley, CA: The Brookings Institution and University of California Press, 2005) 112-4.

¹⁰⁹³ President Nixon and his Secretary of State Kissinger made this argument in dealings with King Faisal and the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, and Morocco. Kissinger’s letter to King Faisal, dated October 14, reads “In addition, Your Majesty, the Soviets have taken the initiative in launching a massive airlift of arms. They are obviously seeking to exploit the situation to their own advantage in the Arab world. Our intelligence indicates that the number of flights in their airlift has reached 200 as of the moment. In these circumstances, *we had no alternative but to begin our own airlift*. It is equally important to note that it was only after the Soviet supply effort had reached massive proportions that ours began.” Telegram, State 203672, Department of State to the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia, “Message to the King from the Secretary,” 10/14/73, National Security Council Files, Box 1174, 1973 Middle East War 15 – 15 October 1973, Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP), NARA (emphasis added). On October 17, addressing Foreign Ministers Saqqaf of Saudi Arabia, Sabah Al Sabah of Kuwait, Bouteflika of Algeria, and Benhima of Morocco, President Nixon stated, “we tried once it

Community countries pressure the United States to change its policy. Otherwise, Saudi Arabia would reduce its oil production and urge the remaining Arab oil producing states to follow its lead, thereby harming particularly the European states that were highly dependent on oil imports from the Arab world.¹⁰⁹⁴

The governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE were also very upset about the U.S. airlift. The harshest criticism of U.S. policy was voiced by the Emir of Qatar.¹⁰⁹⁵

On October 17, the same day the Saudi and Kuwaiti foreign ministers met with President Nixon in Washington, the members of OAPEC assembled in Kuwait. Present at the meeting were five of the six Arab Gulf monarchies (Oman was not a member of OAPEC) as well as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. During the meeting, Iraq advocated its fellow Arab oil producers to

“nationalize all American businesses in the Arab world, to withdraw all funds from American banks, and to institute a total oil embargo against the United States and other countries friendly to Israel;”

a policy amounting to “a declaration of all-out economic warfare against the United States.”¹⁰⁹⁶ Both the Algerian Oil Minister, chairing the meeting, and Yamani clearly objected the Iraqi proposal whereupon the Iraqi delegation left the meeting in anger. The remaining Arab oil ministers then decided to cut their oil production by five percent and to implement additional monthly reductions of five percent until Israel withdraws from all Arab territories occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War. The decision to reduce overall oil production rather than to embargo single countries was made after considering the previous, effectless Arab oil embargoes of 1956 and 1967, when embargoed nations were supplied

began to avoid fueling the war, especially in our contacts with the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders, and I'm not condemning them, felt they should mount a massive airlift. Only after one week had passed, and over 300 planes had gone in, I decided that we must maintain a balance. This is all we're doing. [...] The problem is that, with the Soviets airlifting in so much before we began to act, we had to take these measures in order to set the stage for a settlement and in order to have influence with Israel in future negotiations. We have no intention of having the airlift do anything more than keep the balance. We are not going to give Israel an offensive capability.” Memorandum of Conversation, President Nixon with Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Kuwait, and Algeria, 10/17/73, National Security Council Files, Box 664, Middle East War Memos & Misc. Oct 6-Oct 17, 1973, NPMP, NARA.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 56f.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 589.

through third nations. The prospect of continued reductions in oil production was supposed to intensify pressure on the United States and indirectly on Israel. The Arab oil ministers added another aspect to the equation when they decided that unspecified “friendly states” would receive oil shipments at previous levels.¹⁰⁹⁷ Thereby, the Arab oil producers intended to “maximize uncertainty, tension, and rivalry within and among the importing countries,” as “[o]ne clear objective of the plan was to split the industrial countries right from the start.”¹⁰⁹⁸ In a secret resolution, the Arab oil ministers recommended subjecting the United States to “the most severe cuts” with the intention to evoke eventually “a total halt of oil supplies to the United States from every individual country party to the resolution.”¹⁰⁹⁹

Saudi Arabia became the first Arab oil producing state to reduce its oil production. On October 18, the Kingdom cut its production by ten percent, double the percentage agreed upon at the Kuwait meeting. Due to the Kingdom’s high production rate of nearly 10 million barrels per day, Saudi Arabia’s production cut was of particular impact. Qatar followed suit the next day, also reducing its production level by ten percent. Bahrain reduced its oil production by five percent on October 20, Kuwait by ten percent on October 21. Iraq, whose radical proposal had been rejected in Kuwait, walked a completely different path. Not only did they not reduce their oil production, they increased it and profited from skyrocketing oil prices.¹¹⁰⁰

On October 19, after giving advance notice to several Arab governments, President Nixon publicly requested the U.S. Congress to appropriate a military aid package for Israel amounting to \$2.2 billion.¹¹⁰¹ This massive interference into the war in support of Israel prompted a significant tightening of Arab oil sanctions against the United States. The UAE were the first Arab country to react. On October 18, on the eve of Nixon’s official request to Congress, UAE Oil Minister Al Utaibah announced at a press conference that the UAE would embargo oil shipments to the United States effective immediately. He emphasised that the embargo would be expanded to any other state supporting

¹⁰⁹⁷ Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 589f.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 590.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Cited in *ibid*, p. 589.

¹¹⁰⁰ Gause, *International Relations*, p. 29.

¹¹⁰¹ Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 590.

Israel in the war. In addition, Said Al Utaiba implicitly called on the remaining Arab oil producing countries “to follow Abu Dhabi’s lead.”¹¹⁰² Interestingly, only the emirate of Abu Dhabi imposed immediately the embargo against the United States.¹¹⁰³ Dubai only followed suit three days later. Second to Abu Dhabi in embargoing the United States was Libya (Oct. 19), followed by Saudi Arabia and Algeria (both Oct. 20), Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar (all Oct. 21). Even Oman, known for its political restraint in the Arab-Israeli conflict, imposed an embargo against the United States on October 25.¹¹⁰⁴ The Saudi embargo was most painful to the United States as the Kingdom had previously shipped 9,794,000 barrels per month to the United States.¹¹⁰⁵

The Bahraini regime went one step further and officially cancelled the December 1971 leasing agreement, which allowed the U.S. Navy to use docking facilities at Jufair.¹¹⁰⁶ This measure was also to compensate the minor effect the reduction of the Bahraini oil production would have; by that time Bahraini production was already declining and at a level of only 68,000 barrels per day.¹¹⁰⁷

The oil embargo did not remain limited to the United States; other countries were added to the list due to their support for Israel in the course of the war. Between October 21 and October 30, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar as well as Libya followed Algerian lead and imposed embargoes against the Netherlands for their staunch support of Israel.¹¹⁰⁸ An embargo was also imposed on Denmark.¹¹⁰⁹ At the Arab League’s Algiers Summit on November

¹¹⁰² Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 182.

¹¹⁰³ Before the embargo, 12% of Abu Dhabi’s oil exports (180,000 barrels per day) were destined for the United States. Partially own calculations based on figures provided by *Kuwait Times*, October 18, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹⁰⁴ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 183.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Kuwait Times*, October 21, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹⁰⁶ A warning that Bahrain would terminate the agreement if the United States did not change their policy in the Arab-Israeli war had been issued by the Bahraini government to the U.S. chargé d’affaires on October 13. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁸ For a detailed analysis of the Netherlands’ support for Israel during the October War and its consequences, see Duco Hellema, Cees Wiebes, and Toby Witte, *The Netherlands and the Oil Crisis: Business as Usual* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁰⁹ Hellema et al., *The Netherlands*, pp. 74, 119, 226.

28, the embargo was further extended to “the colonialist and racist regimes of South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal” for their support of Israel.¹¹¹⁰

With both elements of the oil weapon, production cuts and embargoes, applied, the Arab oil producing states had classified importing countries into three categories: favoured countries that could import Arab oil at pre-October levels, embargoed countries, and neutral countries that would have to divide among themselves what was left of Arab oil exports.¹¹¹¹

In early November, the Arab oil producing states, with the exception of Iraq, decided to reduce their September oil production quotas by 25% including the already embargoed quantities. Moreover, they scheduled an additional 5% production cut for December based on the November quotas. Reportedly, by the time the decision was made, Kuwait’s production rate had already been reduced by 22 to 23%.¹¹¹²

The oil sanction policy was relatively effective with the European states. A declaration by the European Economic Community’s foreign ministers issued on November 6 showed a clear alteration of European policy. The document called for a ceasefire and negotiations toward a “just and lasting peace through the application of Security Council Resolution 242 in all of its parts.” Moreover, the document voiced that the foundation of an Arab-Israeli peace agreement should be

“[t]he inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force [,] [t]he *need for Israel to end the territorial occupation* which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967 [and the] [r]ecognition that in the establishment of a just and lasting peace account must be taken of the *legitimate rights of the Palestinians*.”¹¹¹³

¹¹¹⁰ Declaration of the Arab Summit Conference at Algiers, 28 November 1973. Cited in Meron Medzini (ed.), *Israel’s Foreign Relations: Selected Documents, 1947-1974, Vol. 2* (Jerusalem: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1976), pp. 1074-76, p. 1075.

¹¹¹¹ Compare National Intelligence Estimate, NIE 1-1-73, “The World Oil Crisis: Economic and Political Ramifications for Producers and Consumers,” 12/5/73, NSC Files, Box 362, Subject Files, National Intelligence Estimates, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹¹² *Kuwait Times*, November 5, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹¹³ “Declaration of EEC Foreign Ministers, 6 November 1973,” reprinted in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, p. 224. (emphasis added)

In appreciation of the EEC nations' stance in the conflict, the Arab Oil Ministers, at their November 18 meeting in Vienna, decided to exclude the non-embargoed European nations from the December production cut.¹¹¹⁴

At their December 25 meeting, the Arab oil ministers decided to increase their production by 10% in order to bolster the suffering European and Japanese economies. At the same time, however, the oil embargo against the United States was kept up.¹¹¹⁵ It was not before March 18, 1974 that the Arab oil ministers decided to lift the embargo against the United States. Even then, upon insistence of Algeria, the lifting of the embargo was announced to be only provisional and conditional on continuing U.S. policy.¹¹¹⁶ The embargoes against the Netherlands and Denmark stayed in place for nearly another four months and were lifted only after a decision taken at an OPEC meeting on July 10, 1974.¹¹¹⁷

At first glance, Saudi Arabia's demeanour during the oil crisis looked like a major foreign policy shift. Particularly the oil embargo against the United States appeared as a considerable breach of previous Saudi policy. On closer examination, however, Saudi policy during the oil crisis showed great consistency with the Kingdom's policy both before and after the application of the Arab oil weapon. First, when the October War started, Saudi Arabia felt the need to stand by its relatively new-found allies, Egypt and Syria to prevent a resurgence of the intra-Arab Cold War. Just as before and after the October War intra-Arab dynamics influenced greatly Saudi policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Second, the Saudi decision was highly affected by concerns over domestic instability. Failure to sanction U.S. support for Israel would not only have caused massive opposition from radical Arab elements abroad, it would have infuriated the Saudi population as well. Hence, a demonstration of Arab unity

¹¹¹⁴ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 62.

¹¹¹⁵ Compare Letter from President Nixon to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, 12/28/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 138, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dec 73-Feb 74, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹¹⁶ Compare Memorandum, Henry Kissinger to President Nixon, "Arab Lifting of the Oil Embargo," 3/19/74, NSC Files, Box 320, Subject Files, Energy Crisis, Part 3, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹¹⁷ Hellema et al., *The Netherlands*, p. 249.

and solidarity was in the vital interest of the Saudi regime both with a view to external security and regime stability.

Third, once the tide of the war had begun to turn in clear favour of Israel, it was in Saudi interest to prevent another devastating Arab defeat; for the sake of the Arab cause and not least because of the possible domestic instability such a development could trigger in Egypt and Syria. Particularly the possibility of a coup against Sadat by radical Egyptian factions concerned the Saudi administration.

Fourth, by actively supporting the Arab cause Saudi Arabia saw an opportunity to substantiate its longstanding claim for a leading role in the Arab world.

Fifth, particularly King Faisal had a genuine interest in the restoration of Muslim control over the holy sites in East Jerusalem.

Sixth, as positive incentives had previously proven to be ineffective in prompting the United States to work sustainably towards these goals, Saudi Arabia considered negative incentives worth trying. In consequence of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Gulf, the U.S.-Saudi alliance had increased in strategic importance for the United States. This allowed the Kingdom to adopt a more progressive policy stance without taking too high a risk of jeopardising the essential partnership with the United States. Nonetheless, the Saudi government was highly reluctant to impose an oil embargo against its U.S. ally. However, in the light of the massive U.S. support for Israel the Saudi government could no longer resist the pressure within the Arab world. During a meeting in mid-December King Faisal explained his dilemma to U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger

“Since 1967, a lot of other forces have pressed me not only to cut off oil but to break diplomatic relations with the United States. For years I have resisted pressures from my fellow Arabs not to take more extreme measures. But after the October war, when the US attitude appeared to be one of all-out support for Israel, I had no choice.”¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, King Faisal, Prince Fahd, Prince Nawwaf, and Omar Saqqaf with Henry Kissinger, Joseph Sisco, and Harold Saunders, 12/14/73, RG 59, Central Files 1970-73, POL 27 ARAB-ISR, NARA.

King Faisal was particularly concerned about the harm the oil embargo could do to the U.S. military power.¹¹¹⁹ Therefore, the King wanted to lift the embargo as soon as possible. However, as mentioned above, the Saudi monarch placed high value on the preservation of Arab unity. Hence, a unilateral Saudi lifting of the embargo was out of the question. He emphasised in contacts with the U.S. administration that just as the decision to apply the oil weapon had been taken in accordance with the other Arab oil exporting states, the lifting of the embargo had to be decided collectively.¹¹²⁰ In order to get the radical Arab states to agree to a lifting of the oil sanctions and to be able to justify such an action before the Arab people, the Saudi regime needed U.S. involvement in the post-October reality to the advantage of the Arab states. In essence, this meant successful U.S. mediation efforts towards Israeli disengagement from Arab lands.¹¹²¹ A unilateral Saudi lifting of oil sanctions prior to Israeli concessions would have exposed the Saudi regime to attacks from other Arab parties and revive “all the old accusations of their being tools of the Americans.”¹¹²²

At the December 8 Arab Oil Minister meeting, the Saudi delegate failed to get a majority behind a decision to lift the embargo and all production cuts prior to the Geneva peace conference on December 21, which had been scheduled upon Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy between Egypt and Israel. The eventual decision taken at the OAPEC meeting required the first step of a scheduled complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories as a *quid pro quo* for the lifting of the anti-U.S. oil embargo.¹¹²³ At an OAPEC meeting on December 25,

¹¹¹⁹ Telegram, Jidda 5225, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Willingness of King Faisal to Change Saudi Oil Policy,” 11/26/73, NSC Files, Box 630, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Vol. IV, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹²⁰ Telegram, Jidda 632, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “King Faisal’s Response to President Nixon,” 2/8/74, NSC Files, Box 631, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Vol. V, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹²¹ Compare Memorandum, the President’s Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) to President Nixon, 11/9/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Nov-Dec 1973, NPMP, NARA and Telegram, Jidda 5225 (1973).

¹¹²² Telegram, Jidda 5770, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Saudi Reactions to President Nixon’s and Secretary Kissinger’s Letters,” 12/30/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dec 73-Feb 74, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹²³ Message from Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), 12/4/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Nov-Dec 1973, NPMP, NARA and Telegram, Kuwait 8269, American Embassy in Kuwait to the Department of State, 12/10/73, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, NARA and Message from Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia to the President’s Assistant for

the Saudi Oil Minister again did not get the approval of a clear majority of his colleagues to lift the embargo and production restrictions.¹¹²⁴

In late December, King Faisal authorised the supply of Saudi oil to the U.S. Navy's Sixth and Seventh Fleet. The latter was actively engaged in the Vietnam War and was in need for oil shipments to maintain its fitness for action. As King Faisal did not want to see the anti-Communist U.S. military actions in Southeast Asia jeopardised, he agreed to a top secret breach of the embargo. Faisal's condition was that the circle of persons privy to the oil deal to be strictly limited to minimise the risk of an information leak that would have been catastrophic to the domestic and foreign reputation of King Faisal and his government. Reportedly, the only Saudis that knew about the agreement were Oil Minister Yamani and his deputy, Faisal's son Saud Al Faisal.¹¹²⁵

In early January 1974, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf held out to Kissinger that the oil boycott could be lifted if Israel were to disengage from the Mitla Pass in Sinai as a first step to a full withdrawal from occupied Arab territories and prior to an Israeli guarantee of the Palestinian right to self-determination.¹¹²⁶ Around January 20, there seems to have been disagreement among the Saudi administration's inner circle regarding the lifting of the embargo. Reportedly, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf and Minister of the Interior, Prince Fahd, advocated an immediate unilateral Saudi lifting of the oil embargo while Oil Minister Yamani and the Minister of Finance, Prince Musaad, insisted that Saudi Arabia would have to act in accordance with the remaining Arab oil producing states. King Faisal eventually took Yamani's side and the Kingdom did not lift the embargo unilaterally.¹¹²⁷

National Security Affairs (Kissinger), 12/12/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Nov-Dec 1973, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹²⁴ Telegram, State 251946, Department of State to the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia, "Letter from Secretary Kissinger to Minister Saqqaf," 12/28/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dec 73-Feb 74, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹²⁵ Telegram, Jidda 5763, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Saudis to Supply Sixth and Seventh Fleets with Oil," 12/30/73, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 207, Geopolitical Files, Saudi Arabia, 28 Nov 73-Jan 74, Library of Congress.

¹¹²⁶ Telegram, Jidda 19, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "Letter from the Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to the Secretary," 1/3/74, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dec 73-Feb 74, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹²⁷ Telegram, Jidda 331, 1/21/74, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dec 73-Feb 74, NPMP, NARA.

By the end of January, it seemed that King Faisal and the Egyptian President Sadat had gotten the agreement of the majority of Arab oil producers to lift the embargo. In any case they had obtained approval from Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE.¹¹²⁸ The signing of the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement on January 18 had been helpful in this regard as it could be considered the first step towards Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands. It was agreed that President Nixon would announce in his January 30 State of the Union Address the imminent summoning of an OAPEC meeting that would “discuss the lifting of the oil embargo.”¹¹²⁹ Moreover, upon both Sadat’s and Saudi request, Nixon included in his speech the remark that the Sinai disengagement agreement was “the first step” towards “full implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.”¹¹³⁰ This was particularly supposed to secure Kuwaiti support to the lifting of the embargo.¹¹³¹

It then came as a considerable surprise that upon contacting the remaining Arab oil producers regarding the lifting of the embargo Saudi Arabia only received support from Egypt and Qatar. Algeria, Kuwait, and the UAE “firmly supported” the Syrian stance, that the embargo could only be lifted once Israeli had started disengaging from the occupied Golan Heights.¹¹³²

In early February, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf travelled to Syria to convince President Assad to lift the embargo. To reach a common Arab agreement, Saqqaf suggested a “mini-summit” of King Faisal and Presidents Sadat, Assad, and Boumedienne of Algeria. Saqqaf reported to U.S. Ambassador Akins that Assad wanted to invite the ruler of Kuwait, Sabah Al Sabah, to the summit, a scenario the Saudis wanted to prevent by all means. Akins reported to Washington that Saqqaf expressed his worry that “Sabah might get up on a nationalist soap box and try to win a name for himself by being more Arab than Syria or Egypt.”¹¹³³ Saudi Arabia eventually managed to

¹¹²⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Vol. XXXVI, Energy Crisis, 1969-1974*, ed. Linda Qaimmaqami (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2011), p. 819.

¹¹²⁹ Cited in *ibid*, p. 821.

¹¹³⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 819.

¹¹³² *Ibid*, p. 836, fn 3.

¹¹³³ Telegram, Jidda 682, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “Arab Mini-Summit Conference; Lifting of Oil Boycott,” 2/11/74, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Feb 74-July 74, NPMP, NARA.

schedule the summit at a time when Emir Sabah was travelling elsewhere so on February 15 only the heads of state of Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria met in Algiers. The participants of the Algiers mini-summit “decided in principle to lift the embargo.”¹¹³⁴ As King Faisal later reported to U.S. Ambassador Akins the four heads of state agreed that an agreement on the modalities of Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights would be a sufficient prerequisite for the lifting of the embargo. To prevent another defeat in an OAPEC meeting, King Faisal had previously insisted on postponing a summit that had been scheduled to take place in Tripoli on February 14. This would allow enough time for both the *mini-summit* and progress regarding the Israeli disengagement from Golan.¹¹³⁵

As mentioned above, it took more than another month before the Arab oil ministers decided to lift the embargo. However, it is noteworthy that the decision was made prior to the signing of the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement.¹¹³⁶ Eventually, Libya – as expected all along – and Syria – due to the pending disengagement agreement – did not associate themselves with the official declaration of the embargo’s end.¹¹³⁷

Saudi Arabia was clearly the most influential of the Arab Gulf monarchies in shaping Arab oil policy during the crisis. Nonetheless, the UAE and particularly Kuwait had some influence, too. Interestingly, as already mentioned above, they were partially in opposition to Saudi policy regarding the application of the oil weapon.

The U.S. support of Israel during the October War had a significant effect on U.S.-Kuwaiti relations. A telling example was Kuwait’s rejection to receive U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs Joseph Sisco who wanted to discuss the oil embargo with the Kuwaiti leadership.¹¹³⁸ Both Kuwait and the UAE repeatedly opposed Saudi advocating for the lifting of the embargo against the United States. In mid-December 1973, Saudi Minister

¹¹³⁴ Telegram, Jidda 765, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, “King Faisal: Progress Toward Golan Disengagement a Precondition for Lifting Boycott,” 2/16/74, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Feb 74-July 74, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁶ The agreement was signed on May 31, 1974.

¹¹³⁷ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, 3/19/74.

¹¹³⁸ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 60.

of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf reported to U.S. Ambassador Akins that both Kuwait and the UAE could oppose Saudi calls for the end of the anti-U.S. embargo.¹¹³⁹ The fact that the Saudi regime eventually failed to gain acceptance for its policy during the December 25 OAPEC meeting suggests that Kuwait and the UAE did at least not back the Saudi position. As mentioned above, the two Arab Gulf monarchies later plainly objected the lifting of the embargo prior to initial steps towards Israeli disengagement from Syrian territory.

As in the case of Saudi Arabia, the Kuwaiti government's policy during the oil crisis was the manifestation of a variety of interests. The Kuwaiti administration, too, had a genuine interest in the return of occupied Arab lands and the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. However, in the words of Partrick, Kuwait's policy was also

“a reflection of how a revived Arab nationalist imperative regionally had to be embraced by the emirate. This was [...] part of an ongoing foreign policy construct that Kuwait used to offset both regional and internal criticism in light of its traditional defence alignment with the UK, and now increasingly the US.”¹¹⁴⁰

On the one hand, “Arabism was a language that Kuwait drew on as a safety net to ensure it maintained the sympathy of Arab countries.”¹¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the high degree of internalisation of and support for the notion of Arab nationalism among the Kuwaiti population as well as members of the national assembly had a significant influence on the Kuwaiti government's decision making.¹¹⁴² Particularly this last aspect motivated the Kuwaiti leadership to pursue a more hard-line position than the Saudi administration.

In the case of the UAE, it appears that Sheikh Zayid's personal attitude was an important driving force behind the country's comparatively hard-line policy during the oil crisis. The President of the UAE is reported to have been very bitter about the United States' staunch support for Israel during the war. Reportedly, this was the decisive reason why he unlike the heads of state of the

¹¹³⁹ Memorandum, the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) to President Nixon, 12/20/73, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Nov-Dec 1973, NPMP, NARA.

¹¹⁴⁰ Partrick, *Kuwait's Foreign Policy*, p. 177.

¹¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 180.

remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, later consequently declined all invitations for a state visit to the United States.¹¹⁴³ Moreover, as expounded above, the UAE's large Palestinian community as well as the country's striving for recognition as a sovereign state among the Arab state community greatly influenced its position during the oil crisis. It can be assumed that the latter aspect was an important motive behind the UAE's siding with Syria towards the end of the oil crisis. Furthermore, at that time, the United Kingdom and not the United States was the most important UAE ally. Hence, Sheikh Zayid opposed the indiscriminate oil production cut that also hurt the UAE's British ally.¹¹⁴⁴ In an interview to *Al-Hawadith* Sheikh Zayid later stated:

"I objected to the reduction in oil production because it would have meant a penalty imposed on all; while a distinction should have been made between those who supported the enemy and those who did not. Thus, I suggested that we cut off oil supplies to those who supported the enemy, assisted those who opposed the aggression, and did not inflict any measures on those who were neutral."¹¹⁴⁵

Accordingly, Sheikh Zayid early on called for an oil embargo against the United States. Contrary to earlier announcements that he would not make unilateral moves with regard to oil sanctions, he eventually did not await a common Arab decision and became the first head of state to impose an embargo against the United States.¹¹⁴⁶ In another sign of Sheikh Zayid's serious desire to support the Arab war efforts against Israel, he suggested to his Qatari counterpart the levying of a 25% oil revenue tax to finance the procurement of arms to be used against Israel.¹¹⁴⁷ That it took the emirate of Dubai a few days to impose the anti-U.S. embargo following the UAE President's decision suggests a difference in perspective between Sheikhs Zayid and Rashid.

The remaining three Arab Gulf monarchies had very minor influence on Arab oil policy during the oil crisis. Among them, only Bahrain and Qatar were members of OAPEC and participants at the Arab oil minister meetings. The three countries' oil production levels were comparatively low. In a conversation with U.S. Ambassador Akins, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saqqaf

¹¹⁴³ Personal interview with Dr. Frauke Heard-Bey.

¹¹⁴⁴ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 60.

¹¹⁴⁵ The interview was published on November 4, 1977. Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 184.

¹¹⁴⁶ Compare *ibid*, pp. 181ff.

¹¹⁴⁷ Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, p. 61.

encapsulated the unimportance of Qatar with regard to Arab oil politics during the crisis. Mentioning that Qatar had backed the Saudi plea to lift the oil embargo in early February 1973, Saqqaf reportedly said that the Emirate's voice "doesn't even count."¹¹⁴⁸ Bahraini and Omani oil productions were smaller than Qatar's, and Oman did not even participate in the oil minister's meetings. Hence, the two countries' significance in shaping Arab oil policy was even more remote. Their decisions to follow their fellow Arab oil producers in applying the oil weapon were also motivated to different degrees by a genuine interest in the Arab cause as well as domestic and external pressures to act in accordance with Arab unity and solidarity.

At first sight, the use of the oil weapon turned out to be largely effectless. The United States kept up their political, economic, and military support of Israel. The latter did not withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and the Palestinians did not get their state. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies profited greatly from the results of the oil crisis. First, the Kingdom succeeded in positioning itself as a leading power in the Arab world. This aspect would later influence greatly the Arab-Israeli conflict and the associated peace process.

Second, the skyrocketing oil prices led to a dramatic increase of Saudi Arabia's state revenues, which again had two major consequences: with regard to foreign policy, Saudi Arabia, was able to increase considerably its financial support of and thereby its political influence on the Arab front states, particularly Egypt; with regard to domestic policy, the Saudi regime was able to finance the country's development into a wealthy, modern rentier state with a lasting positive effect on domestic and regime stability.

Third, due to Saudi Arabia's importance in U.S. strategy, the oil crisis had no negative effect on the bilateral U.S.-Saudi relationship. On the contrary, in the post-oil crisis period, Riyadh received more political and military support from the United States than before. Additionally, the Saudi regime reinvested much of its petro-dollars in the United States which gave the Kingdom more influence on the U.S. economy. Leaving aside the fact that the use of the oil weapon did

¹¹⁴⁸ Telegram, Jidda 552, American Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State, "New Arab Condition for Lifting Oil Boycott," 2/3/74, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 139, Country Files, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dec 73-Feb 74, NPMP, NARA.

not help ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, Saudi Arabia's policy during the oil crisis brought the Kingdom significant advantages in both the foreign and domestic realms.

Fourth, the other Arab Gulf monarchies also profited from the oil market dynamics; that was particularly true for Kuwait and the UAE, which had comparatively higher oil production rates. Although not to the extent of Saudi Arabia, financially potent Kuwait was able to increase its influence in Arab politics in general and on the Arab front states in the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular; as in the case of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait's power stemmed predominantly from its financial resources. To a lesser degree, this also implied to the four remaining Arab Gulf monarchies. Just like the Saudi leadership, they were able to contribute to the stability of their regimes through reinvesting parts of their considerably increased oil revenues into infrastructure development.

4.3 Camp David and Egypt's Expulsion from the Arab League

The end of the oil crisis in March 1974 ringed in a new phase of Gulf State involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Henceforth, Saudi Arabia used its increased power status in the Arab world to work towards a holistic conflict settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The most prominent example in this regard was Saudi involvement in pre-negotiations for the planned Arab-Israeli Peace Conference in Geneva. For one thing, Saudi Arabia had still a genuine interest in seeing an end to the Palestinian plight, the creation of a Palestinian state as well as the return of all Arab lands under Israeli occupation.

More importantly, however, Saudi Arabia was interested in a termination of the divide among the conflicting allies of the United States in the Middle East – Egypt and itself on one side, Israel on the other. The motivation behind it was Saudi Arabia's particular interest in the stabilisation of the anti-Soviet front.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia found itself in a dilemma between its responsibilities as an Arab and Islamic power for the common Arab and Islamic cause and its essential strategic partnership with the United States, a nation perceived disproportionately supportive of Israel. This quandary bore the potential to have negative effects on both Saudi Arabia's stance in the Arab and Islamic world and on the Kingdom's domestic stability.

Despite the strong interest Saudi Arabia had in the settlement of the conflict and the considerable readiness to compromise it showed over the years, the Kingdom remained steadfast with respect to the basic Arab and Muslim claims; most importantly Palestinian statehood and the recovery of Muslim control over the holy sites in Jerusalem. On these issues, the Kingdom was not willing to compromise, not for the sake of peace and surely not for an improvement in U.S.-Saudi relations.

The smaller Arab Gulf monarchies had a similar interest in a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Also in their cases a genuine interest in the liberation of Arab lands and the creation of a Palestinian state played a significant role; not least because it was an important concern of their people. Moreover, while not all of them shared the same close relations with the United States as Saudi Arabia, they had no interest whatsoever in a strong Soviet influence in the Arab world. The continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict carried exactly this risk. Furthermore, as long as Arab lands were occupied and the Palestinian people were deprived of their basic rights radical factions in the Arab world would enjoy continuing support. Being moderate, conservative states with close political, economic, and security relations with the West the Arab Gulf monarchies were often at odds with and even targets of these radical Arab factions.

Compared to Saudi Arabia, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies had considerably less influence in the Arab world and on the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict; among them Kuwait was clearly the most influential. Hence, the smaller Gulf States largely followed Saudi lead with respect to the conflict and the way towards its solution. The only exception was Oman that took a path very distinctive from the other Arab Gulf monarchies.

Sadat's Jerusalem Visit

When on November 9, 1977 Egyptian President Anwar Al Sadat announced publicly his readiness to travel to Jerusalem and speak before the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, Saudi Arabia's reaction was mixed.¹¹⁴⁹ First of all, Sadat's

¹¹⁴⁹ Addressing the Egyptian People's Assembly, Sadat emphasised the value he attached to the attainment of peace in the Middle East as well as his readiness to go to great lengths to realise this objective. He then said, "Israel will be astonished when it hears me saying now, before you, that I am ready to go to their own house, to the Knesset itself, to talk to them." Cited in Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 480.

announcement took the Saudi government by complete surprise. Merely one week earlier, on November 2, when Sadat had visited Riyadh to coordinate the two countries' policies in preparation for U.S. President Carter's scheduled Middle East trip later that month, he had not given the slightest hint with regard to his planned revolutionary declaration. The Saudi leadership's surprise was coupled with feelings of confusion, anger, betrayal, embarrassment, and concern. For the preceding six years, Saudi Arabia had supported the Egyptian regime with billions of dollars in order to stabilise Sadat's government, influence its policy, and continuously improve the Saudi-Egyptian relations. That Sadat did not consult or at least inform them prior to his milestone announcement shocked, humiliated, and angered the Saudi regime and revealed the limits of their "riyal diplomacy."

Moreover, by making his announcement shortly after his visit to Saudi Arabia, Sadat conveyed the impression that he had not only consulted the Saudi regime but had also received Saudi approval for his surprising step.¹¹⁵⁰ As Prince Turki, who in 1977 had become director of the Saudi intelligence service, recalls, "both King Khaled and Crown Prince Fahd at the time felt that they were insulted and that they were taken advantage of by President Sadat."¹¹⁵¹ A well informed former U.S. official with close personal ties to then Saudi Crown Prince and de facto ruler Fahd reports that the latter summoned him immediately after he had learned of Sadat's speech. According to the source, Fahd was enraged by Sadat's decision to approach Israel without previously consulting with the Saudi government. Fahd's anger, bitter disappointment, and strong feeling of betrayal was not at all attributed to Sadat's policy change but to the blatant disrespect the latter showed for both Saudi Arabia's status in the Arab world and the Saudi-Egyptian relationship.¹¹⁵² From the Saudi perspective, Sadat added insult to injury when he continuously failed to seek consultation with the Saudi government, while on November 16, the day before he announced his definite decision to speak before the Knesset, he met with Syrian President Assad in an unsuccessful attempt to convince the regime in

¹¹⁵⁰ Having also visited Damascus and Tehran right before his announcement and having invited an unsuspecting Yasser Arafat to the People's Assembly session on the day of his revolutionary declaration, Sadat gave the impression that he had previously consulted Hafiz al-Assad, the Shah, and Arafat.

¹¹⁵¹ Personal interview with HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud.

¹¹⁵² Personal interview with a source that prefers to remain anonymous.

Damascus of his policy's wisdom.¹¹⁵³ The Saudi government gave its first official statement on November 18, nine days after Sadat's announcement before the Egyptian People's Assembly and only one day before Sadat travelled to Israel. In its press statement, the Saudi administration expressed its surprise over Sadat's policy move and emphasised that any peace initiative in the Arab-Israeli conflict "must emanate from a unified Arab stand."¹¹⁵⁴

On November 24, the Egyptian daily newspaper *Al-Ahram* reported that Saudi King Khaled had "praised the sacrifices made by Egypt for the Arab cause" in a message to President Sadat.¹¹⁵⁵ The *Saudi Press Agency* immediately denied the claim and referred to the Saudi government's earlier emphasis on Arab unity with respect to Middle East peace initiatives.¹¹⁵⁶ In early December, the Saudi administration denied firmly another press release according to which the Kingdom, Kuwait, and the UAE had stopped their financial aid to Egypt.¹¹⁵⁷

On December 12, King Khaled called upon the Arab states to close ranks in a joint effort to realise the central Arab objectives: the recovery of Muslim control over Jerusalem, the return of the remaining occupied Arab territories, and the restoration of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights.¹¹⁵⁸ This statement clearly reflected the Kingdom's concern of a renewed polarisation in the Arab world after Sadat's Jerusalem visit. In a December 21 statement, Crown Prince Fahd stressed the strength of the Saudi-Egyptian relations. He pointed out that the Saudi and the Egyptian people belonged together as one family and anything that harmed the Egyptians would also harm the Saudis. Moreover, the Crown Prince stressed that Saudi Arabia would never break off contacts with Egypt.¹¹⁵⁹ This statement was primarily targeted at the radical states that issued anti-Egyptian propaganda.¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵³ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs*, pp. 87f.

¹¹⁵⁴ Cited in Holden and Johns, *House of Saud*, p. 481.

¹¹⁵⁵ Cited in *ARR: Arab Report & Record* (London: Economic Features, Ltd., 1977), p. 930.

¹¹⁵⁶ Cited in *ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 993. Kuwait also denied the claim. *Ibid.*, p. 977.

¹¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 994.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁰ On December 5, in reaction to the declaration of the Tripoli meeting, Egypt severed diplomatic ties to the summit participants Algeria, Libya, Iraq, South Yemen, and Syria. See *ibid.*, p. 1012.

The government of the UAE was highly critical of Sadat's unilateral decision to address the Knesset and publicly voiced its

“deep sorrow over the acute divergence in Arab positions and the tendency of some Arab states [a clear referral to Egypt] to take positions not agreed upon by the rest of the Arab world.”¹¹⁶¹

The press statement continued to stress that “[a]ny settlement in the Middle East had to guarantee the rights of the Palestinians, and this could only be achieved within the framework of complete Arab solidarity.”¹¹⁶² This last statement was both a clear demand in the direction of Sadat to not conclude a separate peace with Israel at the expense of the Palestinian cause and evidence of UAE apprehension of a rift within the Arab world in the course of which the Arab Gulf monarchies would be caught between Egypt and the radical states. However, to reduce pressure on the Sadat regime, the UAE relativised its criticism by emphasising the sacrifices Egypt had made over the preceding years for the common Arab and not least the Palestinian cause and that Egypt as a “confrontation state[...] had the right to take whatever measures [it] deemed necessary to liberate [its] territories.”¹¹⁶³

On November 23, in a first reaction to Sadat's Jerusalem visit, the Kuwaiti administration reiterated its “commitment to the Palestinian people and the relevant resolutions of Arab summit conferences.”¹¹⁶⁴ As the UAE government, Kuwait also emphasised the importance to preserve Arab unity and solidarity. On November 30, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al Sabah stated that “Kuwait's policy is to avoid further cracks in Arab ranks and to make all possible efforts to cement Arab solidarity.”¹¹⁶⁵ Hinting at an invitation by the Libyan government to participate in an anti-Egyptian Arab summit in Tripoli, the Kuwaiti foreign minister declared on November 30 that Kuwait would only participate in Arab summits that were “attended by ‘all the 21 member-states of the Arab

¹¹⁶¹ Cited in *ARR (1977)*, p. 945.

¹¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶³ Shmuelevitz, “The Gulf States” (1977-78), p. 190.

¹¹⁶⁴ *ARR (1977)*, p. 977.

¹¹⁶⁵ Cited in *ibid.*

League.”¹¹⁶⁶ Two days earlier, Foreign Minister Sabah announced an impending Saudi-Kuwaiti diplomatic mission to prevent a rift among Arab states.¹¹⁶⁷

On December 9, Syrian President Assad visited Kuwait for consultations on the developments in the Arab world following Sadat’s Jerusalem visit. According to the Qatari News Agency, Kuwait reiterated its call for Arab solidarity, as “[a]ny split in Arab ranks would affect the struggle for the restoration of occupied Arab land and the rights of the Palestinians.”¹¹⁶⁸ Ten days later, King Hussein of Jordan came to Kuwait also to discuss the development of Arab unity.¹¹⁶⁹

On November 29, in an address to the Qatari Consultative Council, Emir Sheikh Khalifa also warned of the negative consequences of Arab disunity, which he called “the biggest threat to the Arab world.” The Qatari Emir also expressed indirect criticism of Sadat’s unilateral decision to visit Jerusalem when calling the preservation of Arab solidarity through dialogue the duty of the Arabs.¹¹⁷⁰

Beside Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia, Oman was one among only four Arab states and the only Arab Gulf monarchy to publicly support Sadat’s Jerusalem visit.¹¹⁷¹

Most of the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies followed Saudi lead in the weeks after Sadat visited Jerusalem. The only exception was Oman. The remaining four states criticised Sadat’s unilateral decision, however, in a mild and restraint way. They all feared a new polarisation in the Arab world and as a consequence thereof a strengthening of the radical states. Hence, they emphasised the need for Arab unity and solidarity, as they considered this the only way to both prevent an intra-Arab rift and realise the fundamental Arab cause. As a matter of fact, in the weeks following Sadat’s Jerusalem visit the Arab Gulf monarchies met regularly for consultations to coordinate their policies.¹¹⁷²

¹¹⁶⁶ Cited in *ARR (1977)*, p. 903.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 930.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 977.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 929.

¹¹⁷¹ Memorandum, Analysis of the Arab-Israeli Developments, No. 567, 9/22/78, NLC-SAFE 17 B-13-72-4-7, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹¹⁷² *ARR (1977)*, p. 994.

The longer the intra-Arab crisis went on, the more Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies saw themselves in the apprehended dilemma. They were caught in the middle between Egypt, whose willingness to compromise in the Arab-Israeli conflict they generally supported, and the more radical anti-Israeli Arab states, which perceived Egypt as a traitor of the Arab and the Palestinian cause. This dilemma reached its first peak when Egypt and Israel finalised the Camp David Accords almost exactly ten months after Sadat's speech before the Israeli parliament.

The Camp David Accords

Following massive lobbying by the U.S. Carter administration, and despite Saudi intervention¹¹⁷³, Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin agreed in early August 1978 to meet at Carter's Camp David retreat in Frederick County, Maryland the following month. While Iraq and Syria, spearheads of the Arab radical block, rejected the scheduled summit Saudi Crown Prince Fahd lauded the forthcoming meeting speaking of a "courageous" act and a 'giant step' towards peace."¹¹⁷⁴ However, the Saudi leadership was also concerned that the Camp David summit would provoke a serious breach in inter-Arab relations. Hence, the Saudi government was reportedly "pushing for a pan-Arab summit to heal wounds and develop a common strategy for dealing with Israel."¹¹⁷⁵

On September 17, 1978, following two weeks of secret negotiations, moderated by U.S. President Carter and his National Security Advisor Brzezinski, Begin and Sadat signed the Camp David Accords at the White House in Washington, D.C. The Camp David Accords consisted of two framework agreements. The first of these agreements was a framework for negotiations towards the end of the establishment of a self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza within a period of five years. The envisaged solution was supposed "to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people," "satisfy the aspirations of the Palestinians and meet Israel's security needs," and entail "a just

¹¹⁷³ Compare Daniel Dishon and Varda Ben-Zvi, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Two: 1977-78* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), pp. 213-49, p. 231.

¹¹⁷⁴ David Butler et al., "Carter's Risky Summit" *Newsweek*, August 21, 1978, pp. 6f., p. 6.

¹¹⁷⁵ Raymond Carroll et al., "A Salvage Operation," *Newsweek*, August 14, 1978, pp. 18f., p. 19.

settlement of the refugee problem.”¹¹⁷⁶ The agreement both left the Israeli occupied Syrian Golan Heights unmentioned and, much more relevant for the Arab Gulf monarchies and the better part of the Arab world, it failed to address the highly controversial issue of East Jerusalem. The second framework agreement related to the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli relations and built the foundation for the subsequent peace treaty between the two states. According to the agreement, Israel pledged to return the occupied Sinai Peninsula under full Egyptian sovereignty (a), including a complete withdrawal of Israeli military forces (b), limit its military forces within 3 kilometers of the Egyptian border (C in conjunction with f)¹¹⁷⁷, and to allow Egypt free passage¹¹⁷⁸ to Jordan through a new highway to be built (e). In return, Egypt committed to guarantee Israel free passage through the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Suez, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Strait of Tiran (d), to limit its military presence on the Sinai Peninsula (A and B in conjunction with f)¹¹⁷⁸, and to use Israeli built airfields on the Sinai Peninsula solely for civilian purposes (c). Moreover, the two treaty parties determined to invite United Nations forces to ensure the two treaty parties’ compliance with the subject terms of the treaty. Lastly, and most importantly, Egypt and Israel stipulated to enter into “complete, normal relations [...] including: full recognition, including diplomatic, economic and cultural relations; termination of economic boycotts and barriers to the free movement of goods and people, and mutual protection of citizens by the due process of law” once the envisaged bilateral peace treaty was signed and an interim withdrawal was completed.¹¹⁷⁹

In direct reaction to the Camp David Accords the governments of rejectionist Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, and Syria as well as the PLO met in Damascus on September 21 and uttered threats of breaking political and economic relations with Egypt. The PLO was particularly enraged over the agreements

¹¹⁷⁶ “Camp David Framework for Peace – Text of the Agreements Signed on 17 September 1978,” reprinted in Madhi F. Abdul Hadi (ed.), *Palestine Documents Volume 1: From the Pre-Ottoman/Ottoman Period to the Prelude of the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1997), pp. 248-50.

¹¹⁷⁷ Within 3 kilometres of Egypt’s eastern border, Israel’s military presence was restricted to a maximum of four infantry battalions.

¹¹⁷⁸ In a corridor of approximately 50 kilometres east of the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal, the Egyptian military presence was limited to one division. Moreover, in a corridor with a width varying from 20 to 40 kilometres west of the Israeli border and the Gulf of Aqaba, Egyptian security forces were restricted to lightly-armed civil police forces. The exact demarcation of the areas with military restrictions was designated for a bilateral peace treaty.

¹¹⁷⁹ “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel, 17 September 1978,” reprinted in, Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, p. 251.

with some of their members calling for the overthrow of Sadat, Yassir Arafat accusing the latter to have “sold Jerusalem, Palestine and the rights of the Palestinian people for a handful of Sinai sand,” and PFLP leader George Habash threatening with terrorist attacks on U.S. Middle East oil installations.¹¹⁸⁰

Although clearly less harsh in tone and omitting threats the Arab Gulf monarchies’ reaction to the Camp David Accords was largely negative as well. The Saudi government reacted in an uncharacteristically swift fashion and declared with respect to the arrangements regarding the West Bank and Gaza that the agreements reached between Egypt and Israel “cannot be considered a final acceptable formula for peace.”¹¹⁸¹ The Saudi government criticised that the accords lacked a clear Israeli commitment to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, particularly Jerusalem, and failed to recognise the Palestinian right for self-determination, especially regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state “on the soil of their own country.”¹¹⁸² Furthermore, the agreements failed to acknowledge the PLO’s role as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. However, the Saudi administration also emphasised that it

“did not have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab country, nor to dispute the right of another country to regain its occupied territories by armed struggle or by peaceful means, provided this did not clash with ‘higher Arab interests.’”¹¹⁸³

Despite its rejection of the Camp David Accords, the Saudi administration made sure to express its appreciation for U.S. President Carter’s efforts to bring about a peaceful conflict resolution.¹¹⁸⁴ Reportedly, part of the reason for the negative Saudi reaction was the Saudi leadership’s displeasure over the Carter adminis-

¹¹⁸⁰ Angus Deming et al., “The Problems,” *Newsweek*, October 2, 1978, pp. 12, 18, 20, quotation on page 18. A Reuters report quoted Habash as stating that “all American interests in the Arab area are legitimate targets for Arab and Palestinian revolutionary movements.” According to an AP report, another unnamed PLO leader “accus[ed] the US of ‘stabbing us in the back long enough; the time has come for us to strike back.’” Cited in *Analysis of the Arab-Israeli Developments*, No. 567.

¹¹⁸¹ Cited in Deming, “Problem,” p. 18. See also Arnaud de Borchgrave, “The Saudis: Upbeat,” *Newsweek*, October 9, 1978, pp. 16, 21, p. 16.

¹¹⁸² Cited in *ARR: Arab Report & Record* (London: Economic Features, Ltd., 1978), p. 690.

¹¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

tration's failure to inform them about the content of the Camp David Accords prior to their public announcement.¹¹⁸⁵

The smaller Arab Gulf monarchies' reactions followed Saudi Arabia's; both chronologically and, with the exception of Oman, content-wise. The UAE's Federal Council of Ministers also rejected the Camp David Accords labelling them an inadequate "basis for a just and final settlement of the Middle East conflict."¹¹⁸⁶ Through Foreign Minister Ahmad Khalifa Al Suwaidi, the UAE was quick to reiterate both its support for the PLO and its observance to the 1974 Arab League Rabat Summit resolution.¹¹⁸⁷ Even the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum, who was known for his reluctance regarding statements on political issues, publicly opposed the accords. However, despite their voiced opposition to the accords the Arab Gulf monarchies, all refrained from any rhetoric attacks on Egyptian President Sadat and ensured to "carefully leave open doors for continued negotiations."¹¹⁸⁸

The Kuwaiti administration rejected the Camp David Accords on September 20, stressing that "a just and lasting Middle East peace" could only be the result of a complete Israeli withdrawal "from all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and [the restoration of] the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO."¹¹⁸⁹

On the same day, the Qatari government, too, rejected the Egyptian-Israeli agreements, calling them an "unsuitable basis for a just and comprehensive peace." Giving the reasons for its rejection, the Qatari administration stated that in the accords Israel failed to commit to a complete withdrawal from occupied Arab lands. Moreover, the documents did not recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.¹¹⁹⁰

Also on September 20, the Bahraini government rejected the Camp David agreements on grounds that they were in contradiction to the Arab League Algiers and Rabat Resolutions of 1973 and 1974 respectively. Moreover, the

¹¹⁸⁵ De Borchgrave, "Saudis," p. 6.

¹¹⁸⁶ Cited in Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 190.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 190.

¹¹⁸⁸ Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments: No. 567.

¹¹⁸⁹ *ARR (1978)*, p. 676.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 690.

Bahraini administration called for the convening of an Arab League summit meeting “to discuss the ‘*pan-Arab*’ issues of the occupied Arab areas and the Palestinian Arab people.”¹¹⁹¹ With this statement, Bahrain once more stressed the importance of Arab unity in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Oman, the only Arab Gulf monarchy that had openly endorsed Sadat’s Jerusalem visit in 1977, also became the first Arab state to approve the Camp David Accords. On September 25, the Omani government stated that parts of the Egyptian-Israeli agreements constituted “tangible process” towards peaceful conflict resolution. Moreover, Oman reiterated its commendation of Sadat for his Jerusalem visit in the previous year. Lastly, the Omani foreign minister emphasised Oman’s conviction in every Arab state’s autonomy of decision and the principal of non-interference in the affairs of other Arab states, when stating that Arab governments had the right to take any decision of which they were convinced.¹¹⁹² Thereby, the Omani government clearly contradicted Saudi Arabia’s emphasis that Arab national policies must under no circumstances jeopardise “higher Arab interests.” However, with regard to its support for the Camp David Accords, Oman later “backed down after a reading of the public mood.”¹¹⁹³

Over the following weeks, the initial Saudi position towards the Camp David Accords gradually changed. The Saudi leadership emphasised that it clearly opposed a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace unless it would be linked to significant progress regarding Palestinian rights. To prevent Egypt from neglecting the Palestinian cause, the Saudi government made implicit threats to discontinue financing the Arab Organisation for Industrialisation (AOI).¹¹⁹⁴ However, contrary to earlier official statements the Saudi government appreciated the Palestinian self-government over Gaza and the West Bank envisaged in the Camp David Accords as a significant step towards Palestinian self-determination. The Saudi change of attitude was also influenced by the fact that during a meeting of Libyan President Ghaddafi and Yassir Arafat with Jordanian

¹¹⁹¹ Cited in *ARR (1978)*, p. 671. (emphasis added)

¹¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 688.

¹¹⁹³ Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, No. 567.

¹¹⁹⁴ The Egypt-based AOI was established in 1975 by Egypt and the three Arab Gulf monarchies Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE with the purpose of coordinating the development of a joint Arab defence industry.

King Hussein, the former two had implicitly authorised the latter “to negotiate the future of the West Bank on behalf of ‘all Palestinians.’”¹¹⁹⁵ As a strong supporter of the claim that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, Saudi Arabia clearly rejected this development.¹¹⁹⁶ Moreover, Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan’s insinuation that Israel might eventually abandon its opposition against the restoration of Arab sovereignty over East Jerusalem also influenced the Saudi position.¹¹⁹⁷

A few weeks later, on October 24, 1978, in a conversation with U.S. Ambassador John C. West, Crown Prince Fahd expressed his strongest support for the Camp David Accords. Fahd recounted a personal talk with Sadat’s special advisor, Sayid Marii, in which he reportedly gave

“the strongest possible message of support for Sadat and Egypt [...] I assured him that Sadat could count on continued support, both economic and political from Saudi Arabia. I told him that we would not allow any action to be taken against him as a result of the Camp David meeting.”¹¹⁹⁸

Furthermore, Fahd reported he had promised the Egyptian president \$108 million worth of funds to pay for military equipment and to set aside an additional \$350 million for Egyptian F-5 fighter plane purchases. Fahd further accounted that he had passed on to Sadat that he should not “heed what he might hear or read about Saudi frigidity towards him” and that with respect to the Saudi reactions to both his Jerusalem visit and the Camp David announcements, the Saudi regime “decided to support [the respective initiatives] in our own style based on refurbishing our credibility with our effective brethren in the area”. Finally, Fahd reported that he had conveyed to Sadat that he would “see to it that [at the planned Arab League Baghdad Conference] no action would be taken which would embarrass or hurt Egypt.”

¹¹⁹⁵ De Borchgrave, “Saudis,” p. 6. In the meeting between Ghaddafi, Arafat, and King Hussein, the latter was de facto given back the mandate to negotiate for the Palestinians, which four years earlier, at the Arab League Rabat Summit, had been transferred to the PLO. “The Dialogue Goes On,” *Newsweek*, October 2, 1978, p. 17.

¹¹⁹⁶ Saudi Arabia was the main driving force behind the Arab League’s 1974 Rabat Summit resolution, which granted the PLO the sole right of representation in any liberated Palestinian territory.

¹¹⁹⁷ See “The Dialogue Goes On.”

¹¹⁹⁸ Memorandum, Cyrus Vance to President Carter, not dated, Saudi Support for Camp David: Message, Attachment: John West Memorandum of Conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Fahd, NLC-128-11-22-2-1, Jimmy Carter Library.

Moreover, Fahd reported to have argued strongly for Sadat's participation in the Baghdad Summit.¹¹⁹⁹

With regard to the upcoming Arab League Summit, Fahd told Ambassador West that he had agreed to and supported Saddam Hussein's proposal to organise the conference in Baghdad in late October (foreign minister meetings) and early November (head of state meeting), convinced that this would impose on the Iraqi government a special sense of responsibility for the success of the summit. Fahd further recounted that once he had gotten

“indications that the Summit was going to be used as a platform for the Rejectionists to condemn Egypt and isolate them from the rest of the Arab world, I became concerned and determined that this could not be allowed to happen.”¹²⁰⁰

Fahd reported that during a recent visit of Iraqi Foreign Minister Sadoum Hammadi he

“told him in blunt terms [...] that [the Saudi government] would not tolerate or support any action to boycott or isolate Egypt from the rest of the Arab world. Saudi Arabia will oppose any condemnation of Egypt because of its participation in the Camp David talks.”¹²⁰¹

Reportedly, Saddam Hussein, in a subsequent phone conversation with Fahd, assured “that the Summit would not be an instrument of condemnation for Egypt or a platform for the mouthings of the radicals of the Rejectionist movement.”¹²⁰² However, Fahd reported to have devised a contingency plan in case the rejectionists should try to hijack the Baghdad Summit for harsh criticism against Egypt. Apparently, Fahd had agreed with President Ali Abdullah Saleh of the Yemen Arab Republic that the latter would shift the summit's focus by publicly confronting Iraq and Libya with their involvement in the failed coup attempt against him in mid-October.¹²⁰³

According to Fahd's recount, he encouraged the Jordanian leadership to lobby for support of the Camp David Accords among the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank. Moreover, Fahd informed Ambassador West that he

¹¹⁹⁹ Memorandum, Cyrus Vance to President Carter.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰² *Ibid.*

¹²⁰³ *Ibid.*

had sent Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal on a tour through the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies to lobby for support of Egypt during the upcoming Baghdad Summit. Furthermore, Fahd declared his intention to convince Arafat of the opportunities the Camp David Accords offered for the PLO and the Palestinian people. In this context, Fahd pointed out that the Saudi government had

“come to the conclusion that supporting Sadat’s and Carter’s efforts would produce such worthwhile results as no other Arab, or group of Arabs, could begin to bring about.”¹²⁰⁴

In the days leading to the Baghdad Summit, the Saudi leadership was aware that the radical Arab states were preparing not only to reject the Camp David Accords but also to terminate diplomatic and economic relations with Egypt. An essential reasoning behind the Saudi decision to participate in the Arab League summit was to exert a moderating influence on the conference’s final statement.

The Baghdad Summit, which took place between November 2 and November 5, 1978, was characterised by quasi-universal participation; Egypt, which had not been invited, was the only Arab League member state not attending the conference. While the vast majority of states were represented by their heads of state or other high level delegates, e.g. Crown Prince Fahd in the case of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Sudan only sent low level delegates. This clearly demonstrated the two states’ disapproval of anti-Egyptian sanctions envisaged by Iraq and the rejectionist states.¹²⁰⁵

During the summit, the first controversy emerged around the question whether Egypt should be given another chance to reverse its previous policy towards Israel and to return to the general Arab consensus unpunished. Against opposition from Algeria, Libya, the PDRY, and the PLO Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Arab Gulf monarchies were successful in their lobbying for the dispatch of an Arab League delegation to Cairo to offer Egypt economic aid in return for the latter’s rejection of the Camp David Accords. The three-headed delegation that eventually left for Cairo on November 4 was headed by the Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Al Huss and complemented by the Syrian Minister of Information, Ahmad Iskandar Ahmad, as well as the UAE Foreign

¹²⁰⁴ Memorandum, Cyrus Vance to President Carter.

¹²⁰⁵ Daniel Dishon, “Inter-Arab Relations,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Three: 1978-79* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), pp. 213-70, p. 214.

Minister, Ahmad Khalifa Al Suwaidi. It is safe to assume that the financial incentive with which the delegation was tasked to confront Sadat was considerable. In its summit call, Iraq had suggested that Arab annual economic aid to Egypt should amount to no less than \$5 billion. While the dimension of the ultimate offer the delegation was to submit to the Egyptian President remains unknown, it is unlikely that it fell significantly below the benchmark set by Iraq. However, President Sadat refused to meet the delegation altogether prompting the latter's immediate return to Baghdad.¹²⁰⁶

Following the delegation's failed mission to Cairo, the summit participants discussed whether punitive measures should be taken against Egypt. While the radical Tripoli block¹²⁰⁷ advocated immediate sanctions, the Arab Gulf monarchies, led by Saudi Arabia, pleaded against it. The latter argued that sanctions would be counter-productive as they would fail to change Cairo's policy and warned of the consequences of an Egyptian isolation. In the end, both sides agreed on a compromise: The summit participants adopted the general principle of anti-Egyptian sanctions, agreed on a number of broadly defined punitive actions, however, decided neither to apply these measures immediately nor to announce them publicly. An unpublished summit resolution stipulated that in the case of Egypt signing a separate peace treaty with Israel, the following measures would be taken by the remaining Arab League members: first, the termination or suspension of diplomatic relations with Cairo; second, economic sanctions against Egypt; third, Egypt's expulsion or suspension from the Arab League; and fourth, the relocation of the Cairo-situated Arab League headquarters.¹²⁰⁸ Despite the non-disclosure of the resolution in the summit's final communiqué, its content was soon leaked to the press. Moreover, a statement made by the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Saadoun Hamadi, that "[t]he necessary resolutions [had been] taken," suggested clearly that the summit had resolved on more than a rhetoric rejection of the Camp David Accords.¹²⁰⁹

¹²⁰⁶ Compare Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," p. 215f. and personal interview with HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud.

¹²⁰⁷ The term *Tripoli block* refers to the participating states in the anti-Egyptian Summit in Tripoli, which took place following Sadat's Jerusalem visit in November 1977.

¹²⁰⁸ Compare Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," p. 216.

¹²⁰⁹ *Middle East Economic Digest (MEED)*, November 10, 1978, p. 21.

The summit's officially publicised final communiqué was surprisingly mild in tone and did not utter any threats in the direction of Egypt. Referring to the preceding Arab League's 1973 Algiers and 1974 Rabat resolutions the document stated that

“[t]he struggle to regain Arab rights in Palestine and in the occupied Arab territory is a general Arab responsibility. All Arabs must share this responsibility, each in accord with his military, economic, political and other abilities. The conflict with the Zionist enemy exceeds the framework of the conflict of the countries whose territory was occupied in 1967.”¹²¹⁰

The communiqué stressed further that no Arab state had the authority to “act unilaterally in solving the Palestinian question in particular and the Arab-Zionist conflict in general;” any solution of the conflict had to be preapproved by an Arab League summit resolution on the basis of an Arab consensus. With respect to the Camp David Accords, the document stated that the signatories considered the Egyptian-Israeli agreements to “harm the Palestinian people's rights and the rights of the Arab nation in Palestine and the occupied territory” and to contradict previous Arab League resolutions, particularly those of 1973 and 1974, the Arab League Charter, and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Hence, the Camp David accords would “not lead to the just peace that the Arab nation desires.” In consequence, the Arab League members disapproved of the agreements, declared their unwillingness to deal with its results, and “rejected all the political, economic, legal and other effects resulting from them.” Addressing Egypt, the document called on the government in Cairo “not to sign any reconciliation treaty with enemy” and expressed the hope “that Egypt will return to the fold of join[t] Arab action and not act unilaterally in the affairs of the Arab-Zionist conflict.”¹²¹¹ Moreover, as a sign of their support for the Arab cause, the Arab League members decided to set up a fund to support the Palestinians and the Arab front states. For the next ten years, the major Arab oil producing states, among them Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar, would allocate a yearly sum of \$3.4 billion to the Arab front.¹²¹²

¹²¹⁰ “Final Statement of the Arab League Summit Conference, Baghdad, 5 November 1978,” reprinted in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, pp. 260-2, p. 261.

¹²¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹²¹² Saudi Arabia was determined to be the main donor with a yearly amount of \$ 1 billion. Kuwait was allocated a yearly sum of \$550 million, the UAE \$ 400, and Qatar \$220 million. In addition, Iraq pledged \$520 million, Libya \$500 million, and Algeria \$450 million per year. The recipients of the economic aid were Syria with yearly \$1.8 billion, Jordan (\$1.2 billion), the PLO

The Arab Gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia, were responsible for the relatively lenient reaction to Egypt's breach with general Arab consensus. However, in the eyes of some states, including one Arab Gulf monarchy, the measures agreed upon went too far. While the final communiqué was signed by all participants, Oman alongside Morocco and Sudan registered reservations against the decisions taken regarding anti-Egyptian sanctions.¹²¹³

From the First to the Second Baghdad Meeting

Following the Baghdad Summit, Saudi-Egyptian relations remained close. In February 1979, Saudi Arabia committed to finance 50 F-5 fighter jets ordered by the Egyptian government worth \$525 million, clearly exceeding the sum Crown Prince Fahd had promised Sadat's special envoy roughly four months earlier.¹²¹⁴ According to Crown Prince Fahd, Saudi Arabia signed assistant agreements for several non-specified projects in Egypt totalling \$645 million in mid-March.¹²¹⁵

In several meetings with U.S. Ambassador West in March 1979, the Saudi leadership emphasised that they did not want to punish Egypt following an Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement. The Saudi government reported to try its best to convince the other Arab states to forego the envisaged anti-Egyptian measures, but would have to abide to the decisions taken at the Baghdad meeting in November 1978. This was not least the case because the Arab League Charter and the Arab Mutual Defence Pact each provided for these measures in case a member state signed a unilateral treaty with Israel.¹²¹⁶ Emphasising his country's quandary, Prince Abdullah, the Commander of the Saudi National Guard, referred to "Saudi Arabia [as being] caught 'between the fire and the thorns.'"¹²¹⁷

(\$150 million), the occupied territories (\$150 million), and Lebanon (\$100 million). Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," p. 217.

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹²¹⁴ Memorandum, Middle East Desk to National Security Advisor Brzezinski, "While You Were Away Report," 2/16/79, NLC-10R-18-5-1-6, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²¹⁵ Memorandum, The Situation Room for the President, 3/18/79, NLC-128-4-2-13-9, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁷ Memorandum, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/16/79, NLC-128-11-22-10-2, Jimmy Carter Library.

In the weeks prior to the scheduled signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the Saudi government repeatedly asked the United States to amend the treaty in such a way as to give Saudi Arabia substantive arguments to convince the other Arab states to refrain from sanctioning Egypt. It is safe to assume that the Saudi government was hoping for a clear commitment to the Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands and the rights of the Palestinian people. Beside the impending rift within the Arab world, to the disadvantage of the moderate camp, the Saudi government also feared a negative impact on its bilateral relations with the United States in case of their support for anti-Egyptian sanctions.¹²¹⁸ The Saudi leadership initially feared that in reaction to their participation in sanctions against Egypt, the U.S. government would punish Saudi Arabia in turn, e.g. in the form of immediately terminating their military support. These fears were only allayed at meetings between the Saudi leadership and U.S. national security advisor Brzezinski, during which the Saudi government realised that the Carter administration could live with Saudi participation in the anti-Egyptian sanctions; that is, as long as Saudi Arabia continued supporting Egypt financially and formulated only constructive criticism of the peace process. The Saudi administration was very relieved to hear that the U.S.-Saudi relations would not be seriously damaged as a consequence of its official anti-Egyptian stance.¹²¹⁹

Only two days before this reassuring news, U.S. Ambassador West had appreciated the dilemma the Saudi leadership faced and appraised the decision forced on Crown Prince Fahd as “probably the most difficult decision that he has been called upon to make as defacto ruler.”¹²²⁰ According to Ambassador West’s assessment, the Saudi government’s inner circle was divided regarding the appropriate measures following an Egyptian-Israeli separate peace; reportedly the Minister of Defence, Prince Sultan, was “most supportive of the peace process,” while the foreign minister, Saud Al Faisal, was “the most vocal

¹²¹⁸ Memorandum, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/16/79 and Telegram, Jidda 1958, US Ambassador West to Secretary of State Vance and President Carter, “Meetings with King Khalid and Crown Prince Fahd – March 8,” 3/8/79, NLC-128-11-22-8-5, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²¹⁹ Telegram, Jidda 2311, US Ambassador West to Secretary of State Vance, 3/19/79, NLC-128-11-22-11-1, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²²⁰ Memorandum, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/16/79.

and articulate opponent of the present process and [the] biggest advocate for the implementing sanctions through the Arab League.”¹²²¹

The week before the eventual signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Crown Prince Fahd explained the imminent Saudi policy to the U.S. administration. The relevant memorandum of conversation reads:

“He wanted to be sure of U.S. understanding in the event the region experiences ‘acts of destruction’ and the Saudis keep quit [sic] or follow a policy which is ‘not readily understood.’ We should know they are not being destructive but dealing with the matter in their own way. They strongly indicated their preference to proceed in their own manner, with no publicity.”¹²²²

However, in the subsequent days, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd in an interview with *Newsweek* still suggested that the Kingdom would not participate in an Arab economic and diplomatic boycott of Egypt.¹²²³

In mid-March 1979, in a private conversation with U.S. officials, the Bahraini Emir expressed his support for the pending Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty as well as his hopes for a common supportive stance by all Arab Gulf monarchies. However, he remarked that he was expecting an Arab Summit opposing the treaty. Moreover, in clear evidence of Bahrain following Saudi Arabia’s lead with regard to its policy stance relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict the Emir pointed out that he could only take a public stance once he had learned the Saudi position.¹²²⁴

As in the case of Bahrain, the remaining smaller Arab Gulf monarchies, with the exception of Oman, largely followed the Saudi lead in the months between the two Baghdad Summits. This was attributable to both their comparatively smaller political importance within Arab politics and to a far-reaching congruence of interests.

¹²²¹ Memorandum, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/16/79.

¹²²² Memorandum, The Situation Room for the President, 3/18/79.

¹²²³ The relevant part of the interview reads: “Q. Some news reports have indicated that Saudi Arabia will join an Arab boycott of Egypt, cutting economic and diplomatic support. Is this in the cards? A. No such statement has been made by this government.” “The Saudis Play their Hand,” *Newsweek*, March 26, 1979, p. 17.

¹²²⁴ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, “Reactions to the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement,” 3/15/79, NLC-6-52-1-8-9, Jimmy Carter Library.

On March 26, 1979, not least as a result of persistent mediation on part of the Carter administration, Egypt and Israel concluded a bilateral peace treaty based on the Camp David Accords. In direct consequence, the foreign and economy ministers of the Arab League nations convened in Baghdad the following day. The meeting was tasked to determine how to implement in practice the punitive measures against Egypt that had been decided at the Baghdad Summit roughly five months earlier. This time, three delegations stayed away from the conference, clearly signing their disapproval with the impending anti-Egyptian sanctions: Oman, Sudan, and Djibouti.

The second Baghdad meeting was characterised by intense conflict among participants regarding the scope of punitive measures against Cairo. Again, advocating a lenient stance towards Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE pleaded for the mildest possible sanctions in line of what had been decided in November 1978. In the first working session, on March 28, Saud Al Faisal agreed to the relocation of the Arab League's headquarters as well as the suspension of the Egyptian membership in the organisation. However, the Saudi foreign minister emphasised that the decision to withdraw ambassadors from Cairo and cut bilateral diplomatic relations with Egypt had to be taken by the individual Arab states as it fell within their national sovereignty rights. In clear contrast, the Iraqi host delegation and the PLO were calling for much more drastic reprisals. Iraq advocated an oil embargo against Egypt, the PLO even proposed to extent diplomatic, political, and economic sanctions to the United States for its facilitation of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Among the present Arab Gulf monarchies, at first only Kuwait favoured a middle course between the two sides. The Kuwaiti government's comparatively greater sensitivity to PLO opinions explains this behaviour. The dispute between the different factions peaked when the delegations of the PLO, Libya, and Syria walked out of the conference whereupon the meeting was adjourned.¹²²⁵

On March 29, the delegations of the Arab Gulf monarchies left Baghdad for consultations in their capitals respectively for Kuwait, which hosted a conference on the conflict between the two Yemens. On the following day, the delegations of the five Arab Gulf monarchies met to coordinate their positions before the resumption of the Baghdad meeting (Oman remained absent). They

¹²²⁵ Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," pp. 220f.

were joined by the Jordanian foreign minister, who reportedly pleaded for a compromise with the more radical factions. However, a breakthrough was only reached on March 31 after Saud Al Faisal informed Saddam Hussein in a private conversation that the Saudi government had decided to accept stricter sanctions against Egypt. It is safe to assume that Iraq's public declaration that any Arab state that failed to sever completely relations with Egypt was a collaborator of Sadat had at least some influence on the Saudi decision.¹²²⁶ The remaining Arab Gulf monarchies then followed Saudi lead, so that on the same day, soon after the resumption of the conference, a resolution was agreed upon that effected Egypt's virtual isolation from the Arab world.¹²²⁷

The summit resolution stated the signatory states' decision to withdraw immediately their ambassadors from Egypt and to sever political and economic relations with Egypt within one month. Moreover, the Arab foreign ministers decided to consider Egypt's suspension from the Arab League and to move temporarily the regional organisation's headquarters to Tunis. Moreover, the foreign and economy ministers decided far-reaching economic sanctions against Egypt.¹²²⁸

In the case of Saudi Arabia, there were two main factors that prompted the government's change of heart, away from the repeated statements of continued support for Egypt and the stern opposition against all attempts by the radical states to punish the Sadat regime to a backing of Egypt's isolation from the Arab world. First, the Saudi government did not want to break ranks completely with the radical states and the PLO. Too vivid was the memory of the asymmetric tactics applied by the radical pan-Arab forces (led by Nasser's Egypt) against the Saudi monarchy during the Arab Cold War that had only ended roughly one decade earlier; too threatening was neighbouring Iraq, forerunner in sanctioning and ostracising Egypt, particularly since the power triangle in the Gulf had been severely shaken in the course of the Iranian Revolution.

¹²²⁶ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1978-79), p. 746.

¹²²⁷ Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," pp. 221f.

¹²²⁸ Compare "Arab League Summit Conference Resolution, Baghdad, 31 March 1979," reprinted in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, pp. 277-9.

Second and most importantly, the fall of the Iranian Shah itself shocked the Saudi regime to the core and reminded it of its own vulnerability. For one thing, the case of Iran demonstrated that the United States was not able to prevent the fall of one of its closest and strategically most important allies. Moreover, despite the fact that many reasons for public insurrection against and the eventual toppling of the Shah were absent in Saudi Arabia (deteriorating economic situation; isolation of the ruler from his people; lacking human development; the ruler's irreligiousness)¹²²⁹, the Saudi regime had to be careful not to alienate its population. With regard to the Saudi public opposition to the Camp David Accords, particularly due to the perceived "selling-out" of the Palestinian cause and Arab Jerusalem, an explicit or implicit public Saudi government approval of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty would have borne the risk to antagonise the Saudi population against the regime. Moreover, a Saudi siding with Egypt would have given revolutionary Iran additional fuel for its anti-Saudi propaganda.¹²³⁰ Therefore, the decision to support the isolation of Egypt was taken based on strategic consideration of the risks to state and regime security any (perceived) siding with Egypt would entail.

It is interesting to note that both during the cabinet meeting in the course of which the Saudi government decided to abrogate relations with Egypt and the subsequent official Arab League decision in Baghdad, Crown Prince Fahd was on a prescheduled vacation/medical leave in Spain. Hence, while Prince Abdullah served as acting prime minister, Crown Prince, de facto leader, and prospective King Fahd was symbolically absent from the decision-making process when Saudi Arabia imposed sanctions on Egypt. Particularly in Arab culture, and not least in Arab politics, where personal relations are very significant and personal affronts are received bitterly, the de facto ruler's ostensive non-involvement in anti-Egyptian actions would allow for an easier improvement of Saudi-Egyptian bilateral relations in the future.¹²³¹

¹²²⁹ Compare Memorandum, "The Six Crises of Saudi Arabia in 1979," undated, NLC-128-4-2-15-7, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²³⁰ Another development that must certainly have concerned the Saudi regime was the rapprochement between revolutionary Iran and the PLO. Compare Vahe Petrossian, "Khomeini's Iran - How the Palestinians Won a Powerful New Ally," in *Arab Report*, No. 3 (1979), p. 1.

¹²³¹ Compare The Economist Newspaper Ltd., Foreign Report, April 25, 1979.

The Sultanate of Oman, again as the only Arab Gulf monarchy, did not participate in the Arab meeting and consequently did not abrogate its relations with Egypt. Addressing his people on the occasion of Oman's 9th National Day on November 18, 1979, Sultan Qaboos implicitly referred to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty as "a first, hopeful, step along the road to peace in the Middle East." However, emphasising the rights of the Palestinian people Qaboos added

"this cannot be regarded as more than a first step. It cannot be regarded as enough. It is not only peace that is at stake: it is the complete redress of the wrongs and suffering that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people. [...] Neither the intransigence of Israel – in defiance of the expressed will of the United Nations – nor the mischievous activities of those whose interest it is to perpetuate this situation can be allowed to prevent the achievement of this aim. Oman categorically declares that it will warmly support any constructive initiative by any Arab or other leader which may promise to lead to this end."¹²³²

In this context, two aspects are remarkable: first, Sultan Qaboos is referring to Israel by its name in contrast to the two Arab League Baghdad Summit resolutions of November 1978 and March 1979, which referred to Israel solely as "the Zionist enemy;" thereby, Qaboos accorded Israel some form of at least rhetorical recognition; second, while it remains unclear what Qaboos means by "the complete redress of the wrongs and suffering that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people" the strong emphasis to support "any constructive initiative" that realises this objective implicates an inherent readiness to compromise.

Oman's policy stance in the aftermath of Sadat's Jerusalem visit can be explained by two factors: First, it was in line with Oman's previous endorsement of a policy of greater compromise in the Arab-Israeli conflict, its advocacy for non-interference in the foreign affairs of other Arab states, and its lower degree of identification with the Arab cause. Second, Oman was dependent on Iranian, and after the Islamic Revolution, Egyptian military assistance in the Dhofar region. Imperial Iran had for years heavily supported the Omani regime in counter-insurgency warfare against the Dhofar rebellion. As the Shah was a supporter of Sadat and his rapprochement with Israel, Oman could not reject

¹²³² "Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the Occasion of the 9th National Day, November 18, 1979," available online on the website of the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Information: <http://www.omanet.om/english/hmsq/royalspeechese/royalspeeches9.pdf> (emphasis added) (accessed on May 3, 2013).

Sadat's policy without falling from grace in Tehran's eyes. Following the Iranian revolution, Sultan Qaboos found in Egypt a new strategic partner and a provider of military support. Therefore, support of the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was a necessity regarding Omani domestic security.¹²³³

Until the end of May, the vast majority of Arab states followed the Baghdad resolution and closed their embassies in Cairo. The only exceptions were Oman, Sudan, and Somalia¹²³⁴; the former continued to have regular high level meetings with Egyptian officials.¹²³⁵ Moreover, Sultan Qaboos continued to favour publicly the Camp David Accords which, in an interview with the *Journal of Defense and Diplomacy*, he called "the only constructive step toward a peaceful settlement of the ME problem that has so far been achieved."¹²³⁶

Following its expulsion from the Arab League, also Egypt's membership in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) was suspended in reaction to the country's separate peace with Israel. The decision was taken during the organisation's meeting in Fez, Morocco, from 8-12 May 1979. Again, Oman walked a different path from the vast majority of Arab states when it abstained during the voting procedure.¹²³⁷

However, even in the case of the other five Arab Gulf monarchies diplomatic relations with Egypt were not entirely cut. The previously recalled Saudi

¹²³³ Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," pp. 218f.

¹²³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 222.

¹²³⁵ Egyptian President Mubarak visited Oman on February 16-17, 1982, August 9-10 1982, December 2, 1982, March 9, 1983, for the Omani National Day on 18 November 1985 as well as in January and September 1987. Moreover, there was a meeting between President Mubarak and Sultan Qaboos on May 15, 1983. Qaboos visited Egypt repeatedly, *inter alia* on May 8-11, 1982. The Omani Ministers of Education and Information visited Egypt in December 1982 and again in February 1983. In addition, an Omani delegation participated in Egypt's Air Force Day in late October 1982. Also several personal advisors of Sultan Qaboos visited Egypt over the course of the years. See Daniel Dishon and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 221-82, p. 239; Gold, "Oman" (1983-84), p. 415; idem, "Oman" (1984-85), p. 413; Ilan Karmi, "Oman," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 486-95, p. 491; and Rabi, "Oman" (1987), p. 381.

¹²³⁶ Cited in Gold, "Oman" (1983-84), p. 415.

¹²³⁷ The only other Arab states not having voted for Egypt's expulsion from the OIC were Sudan and Somalia. The former walked out before the voting procedure started, the latter's delegation deliberately arrived too late to the conference to miss the item on the agenda. Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," p. 224.

ambassador returned temporarily to Cairo in May 1979; while his visit happened under the pretext of family reasons, he met Egyptian officials for political talks.¹²³⁸ Moreover, the UAE recalled its ambassador from Cairo, however, maintained “a full diplomatic mission [...] with a chargé d’affaires portfolio.”¹²³⁹ Also the Arab Gulf monarchies economic ties with Egypt were never fully cut.

On May 21, 1979 Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Mansuri informed the United States embassy in Riyadh that his government would practice a “dormant” policy towards Egypt for a period of approximately two years, during which Saudi Arabia would refrain from a public reconciliation with Egypt in order to not create problems with other Arab states. However, this period could be shortened in case of “significant progress towards an acceptable settlement of the Palestinian issue.”¹²⁴⁰

In early April the following year, in a conversation with Presidents Carter and Sadat and U.S. National Security Advisor Brzezinski, Saudi Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, said that the Saudi government was generally “prepared to recognize Israel’s right to exist within approximately the borders of 1967.”¹²⁴¹ Moreover, Prince Bandar emphasised that Saudi Arabia would “support a peace process with all [its] weight.”¹²⁴² However, with regard to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty Bandar said, Saudi Arabia did not believe that Sadat’s tactics were right; the Saudi government did not believe Israel would deliver upon its treaty commitments.¹²⁴³ Upon Prince Bandar’s request, President Sadat pledged to halt any criticism on Saudi Arabia in public speeches and in the press.¹²⁴⁴

Three months later, a severe Israeli provocation brought about yet another intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict. On July 30, 1980 the Knesset approved a law with which Israel in clear violation of international law annexed the occupied eastern part of Jerusalem and declared that “Jerusalem, complete

¹²³⁸ Dishon, “Inter-Arab Relations,” p. 222.

¹²³⁹ Al-Alkim, *Foreign Policy*, p. 191.

¹²⁴⁰ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, 5/22/79, NLC-1-10-8-5-6, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²⁴¹ Memorandum of Conversation, 4/9/80, NLC-128-11-18-24-2, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*

¹²⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and united, is the capital of Israel.”¹²⁴⁵ The Saudi reaction was uncharacteristically strident and evidenced the high relevance the Kingdom attributed to the restoration of Arab control over East Jerusalem. In a joint communiqué on August 6, 1980, the Saudi and the Iraqi government announced that they would “sever all political and economic relations with any state which responds favourably to the decision of the Zionist entity and which keeps its embassy in Jerusalem.”¹²⁴⁶ This threat was particularly directed at the Netherlands, one of thirteen states to maintain an embassy in Jerusalem; at that time, the Netherlands imported more than half a million barrels of oil from Arab countries and Iran daily. A total of nine other Arab countries followed suit in threatening with a partial oil embargo; among them were also Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. Once again, taking a more conciliatory path, Oman did not associate itself with the Saudi-Iraqi threats.¹²⁴⁷

4.4 The Fahd Plan and Egypt’s Return to the Arab Fold

The Fahd Plan

The third phase of Gulf State involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict set in following Egypt’s isolation from the Arab world in response to its separate peace with Israel. In reaction to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and its consequences, particularly the shift in the intra-Arab balance of power, as well as other international developments, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd developed a peace plan that he made public on August 7, 1981 in the form of an interview published by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). Fahd’s initiative was a milestone not only in the history of Saudi Arabia’s involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict but in the conflict’s history in general. The peace plan initiated the end of the Khartoum era. Saudi Arabia indirectly consented to make peace with Israel under certain conditions: an Israeli “withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, including Arab [i.e. East] Jerusalem[,]” the dismantling of all “Israeli settlements built on Arab land after 1967, including those in Arab Jerusalem[,]” the Israeli “affirmation of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to return to

¹²⁴⁵ See “Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel,” July 30, 1980, reprinted in Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R. W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader* (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 174.

¹²⁴⁶ Memorandum, Warren Christopher to President Carter, 8/12/80, NLC-128-15-8-7-8, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

their homes and compensation for those who do not wish to return” and the foundation of an independent Palestinian State, consisting of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem as its capital. The initiative is remarkable for several reasons. First, the Saudi regime called Israel by name in an official document. Already by avoiding formulations such as “the so called state of Israel” or “the Zionist identity,” or even “the Zionist enemy,”¹²⁴⁸ Saudi Arabia both demonstrated sincerity with regard to its peace proposal and indicated its readiness to diplomatically recognise Israel as a state according to international law.

Second, Saudi Arabia consented to recognise an Israeli state in the borders prior to the outbreak of the 1967 Six-Day War. In abandoning the claim on the territory conquered by Israel in the course of its War of Independence, Saudi Arabia showed its readiness to an unprecedented major concession.

Third, by stating that “[a]ll States in the region should be able to live in peace in the region” and by assigning the United Nations the responsibility to guarantee the implementation of all of the initiative’s provisions, Saudi Arabia called for a comprehensive peace settlement involving all Arab states.

The motivation and intentions behind both content and timing of the Fahd Initiative were manifold. First, Saudi Arabia intended to end the new divisiveness in the Arab world, particularly Egypt’s isolation, in order to recreate the intra-Arab balance of power the Kingdom had benefited from until the 1978 Camp David Accords. It was in Saudi Arabia’s particular interest to resuscitate the Egyptian antipole to Iraq’s ambitions in the Arab world in general and the Gulf in particular. A comprehensive peace settlement would put an end to the intra-Arab divide, recreate Arab solidarity and a unity of ranks in the Arab world, and terminate the general heightened influence radical and militant actors within the Arab world enjoyed following the Camp David Accords. Hence, Saudi Arabia’s holistic approach.

Second, the Saudi regime hoped that the PLO would support the initiative, as this would increase the chances that the United States would recognise and deal with the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. Following

¹²⁴⁸ For example, the resolution of the Arab League’s 1974 Rabat Summit as well as the 1978 and 1979 Baghdad Summits referred to Israel solely as “the Zionist enemy.”

Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League, Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, had "strongly urged" the U.S. government to enter into a dialogue with the PLO in order to strengthen the position of U.S. allies within the Arab camp.¹²⁴⁹

Third, Saudi Arabia considered a comprehensive peace settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict necessary in order to safeguard its strategic relationship with the United States. Around the time of the plan's publication, Saudi Arabia had a particular interest in gaining a better image in the eyes of the U.S. Congress as the latter's approval was needed for an AWACS deal that had been concluded earlier by the governments of the United States and Saudi Arabia.¹²⁵⁰ A comprehensive conflict settlement would also put an end to the dilemma the Kingdom was facing regarding the economic and security related necessity to partner with the United States, a country widely identified in the Arab world, including in the Saudi population, as close ally and benefactor of Israel.

Fourth, a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would further reduce Soviet influence in the Arab world. The Soviet Union would lose the advantage of presenting itself to the Arab front states as an alternative, Israel-critical political, economic, and military superpower supporter.

Fifth, following Egypt's separate peace with Israel, the Palestinian question had come to the anticipated standstill.

Sixth, Israel had increased its preconditions for a peace settlement.

Seventh, the new Reagan administration did not assign the same value to an Arab-Israeli peace settlement the preceding Carter administration had.

The publication of the Fahd Plan was deliberately timed to coincide with Sadat's visit to the United States. While Sadat and U.S. President Reagan were meeting to discuss the revival of the peace process following the Israeli legislative elections of June 30, 1981, Crown Prince Fahd pointed out the failure of the Camp David Agreement and emphasised the treaty's "uselessness [...]"

¹²⁴⁹ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, 4/24/79, NLC-1-10-5-6-8, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹²⁵⁰ Compare Moshe Gammer, "The Middle East Peace Process," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 151-66, p. 160.

as a framework for a just and comprehensive peace in the M[iddle] E[ast].”¹²⁵¹ Instead, the Saudi Crown Prince suggested his alternative holistic peace plan.

The reaction to Fahd’s initiative was mixed. The Israeli government forthrightly rejected the plan, only welcoming the general Saudi readiness to diplomatically recognise Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Begin criticised the Fahd Plan for neither explicitly calling for a peaceful conflict settlement nor peaceful relations between the Arab states and Israel. Begin emphasised that, in not mentioning the name Israel, the plan’s provision that “all States in the region should be able to live in peace” would even be acceptable to the Arab rejectionist states that denied the existence of the Israeli state.¹²⁵² The United States welcomed the peace plan and praised it as a step in the right direction. However, the Reagan administration did not attribute much political attention to it.¹²⁵³

The Arab world was divided. Beside Jordan, particularly the other Arab Gulf monarchies strongly advocated the initiative. Iraq and Syria were silent at first. The reactions of the numerous PLO factions differed greatly, also reflecting their attitude towards and relations with Saudi Arabia.¹²⁵⁴ At a meeting of the PLO Executive on the very day the Fahd Plan was made public, several radical factions voiced immediate opposition to the Saudi initiative: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), and the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF). The Iraqi controlled Arab Liberation Front (ALF) as well as the Syrian controlled Al-Saiqa did at first not position themselves, just as their respective patron states¹²⁵⁵; both Syria and Iraq kept a low profile and, despite their rejection of the plan, avoided direct

¹²⁵¹ Cited in Gammer, “The Middle East Peace Process,” p. 163. Compare Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom” (1980-81), p. 745.

¹²⁵² Gammer, “The Middle East Peace Process,” p. 160f.

¹²⁵³ Compare Joseph Kostiner, “Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process: The Fluctuation of Regional Cooperation,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2009), pp. 417-29, p. 419.

¹²⁵⁴ Asher Susser, “The Palestine Liberation Organization,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 317-86, pp. 345f.

¹²⁵⁵ Al-Saiqa declared its categorical rejection of the Fahd Plan’s seventh clause in Damascus on September 24, 1981. Susser, “The Palestine Liberation Organization,” p. 338.

public criticism of the Saudi initiative.¹²⁵⁶ Fatah itself was split, too. Major critics among Fatah's elite were Farouq Qaddoumi, the Head of the PLO's political department, as well as Salah Khalaf and Saleh Nimr, both members of Fatah's central committee. However, the different factions within Fatah expressed their support and criticism with great caution in order to neither antagonise Saudi Arabia nor Syria.¹²⁵⁷

On October 5, 1981, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal relaunched the Fahd initiative in his address to the UN General Assembly. In his speech, Saud Al Faisal criticised Israel for having failed to adhere to previous UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions regarding the Arab Israeli conflict in general and the Palestinian question in particular. He added,

“[w]e strongly feel that the need at present is not to adopt similar resolutions but rather to combine all these resolutions in a single resolution to be adopted by the Security Council, and considered as a framework for a comprehensive and just solution to this problem.”¹²⁵⁸

He then suggested the Fahd Plan as a basis for such a resolution. By bringing the Fahd initiative before the UN General Assembly and arguing for an adoption of the same by the UN Security Council, Saudi Arabia showed a public activism previously unknown in its traditionally subtle foreign policy behaviour. This significant change in strategy shows clearly the high importance and urgency the Saudi government accorded to overcoming the intra-Arab divide, the return of Egypt to the Arab fold, and the recreation of a broadest possible Arab consensus and solidarity for the Palestinian cause. In contrast, as the Saudi government anticipated an Israeli rejection to the Fahd Plan, reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict was not the determining motivation behind the active Saudi lobbying for its peace initiative. Indeed,

¹²⁵⁶ Both Iraq and Syria rejected the Fahd Plan, but they did not want to do so publicly. Iraq relied on Saudi support during its war with Iran. Syria, in turn, was at that time relatively isolated within the Arab world and did not want to antagonise Saudi Arabia.

¹²⁵⁷ Compare Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, “Inter-Arab Relations” (1981-82), pp. 221, 224; and Susser, “The Palestine Liberation Organization,” p. 319; Mordechai Gazit, “The Middle East Peace Process,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1981-82* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984), pp. 195-217, p. 213; and Offer Yarimi, “The Palestine Liberation Organization,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Six: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 293-324, p. 306.

¹²⁵⁸ Cited in Gazit, “The Middle East Peace Process” (1981-82), p. 202, fn 19.

Israeli rejection of the Fahd Plan was even more vehement in reaction to Saud Al Faisal's UN speech than it had been when the plan was first published.¹²⁵⁹

The formulation and interpretation of the Fahd Plan's seventh clause had determining influence on further Arab and international reactions to the Saudi initiative. As mentioned above, when the Fahd Plan was first published in August 1981, the English translation authorised by the Saudi Press Agency implicitly suggested a right for peace for "[a]ll States in the region," while the Arabic original left out the word "all." When Saud Al Faisal introduced the Fahd Plan at the United Nations, his reiteration of the peace initiative also omitted the word "all," leaving up for interpretation whether it included Israel or not.¹²⁶⁰ This imprecision in the peace plan's key clause was intentional; it was supposed to leave room for interpretation in order to optimise the likelihood of support from different factions such as the Arab rejectionist states, the PLO, and the United States; Saudi Arabia was however certain that Israel would reject the initiative. Uncertainty regarding the meaning of the plan's seventh clause was fanned further by several contradictory statements by Saudi officials. In an interview with *Time Magazine* published on November 3, 1981, Prince Abdullah bin Abdalaziz pointed out that the Fahd Plan's seventh clause was to be understood as Saudi recognition of Israel.¹²⁶¹ However, when two weeks later, Saudi Arabia's ambassador at the United Nations made a comment along the same lines, he was repudiated promptly.¹²⁶² In early January 1982, the *New York Times* reported Saud Al Faisal to have stated that were Israel to implement the Fahd Plan's provisions Saudi Arabia would in turn "accept" Israel. However, the Saudi administration soon emphasised that the potential "acceptance" of Israel Saud Al Faisal had mentioned would not be tantamount to Saudi "recognition" of Israel.¹²⁶³

To give the Fahd Plan additional weight and to present it to the Arab League as an Arab rather than a Saudi initiative, the Saudi regime put its peace proposal on the agenda of the GCC ministerial meeting in Taif (Aug 31-Sep 2, 1981).

¹²⁵⁹ Compare Gazit, "The Middle East Peace Process" (1981-82), p. 204.

¹²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 203, fn. 22.

¹²⁶¹ Compare *ibid*, p. 203.

¹²⁶² See *ibid* and Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 791.

¹²⁶³ Compare Gazit, "The Middle East Peace Process" (1981-82), p. 203 and Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 791.

The GCC ministerial meeting submitted the plan to the second GCC Heads of State meeting, scheduled for November 10-11, and officially requested Saudi Arabia to place the peace initiative on the agenda of the upcoming Arab League summit in Fez. During the November GCC Summit, the six heads of state then officially endorsed the Fahd Plan.¹²⁶⁴

The First Fez Summit

The Arab League Foreign Minister Meeting, which immediately preceded the Head of State Summit, saw a heated discussion on the Fahd initiative. With the exception of Algeria and Iraq, the members of the Steadfastness group directly attacked the Fahd Plan, particularly the plan's seventh clause. The Syrian foreign minister rejected the initiative, arguing that the recognition of Israel within the pre-Six Day War borders was too much of a concession as this meant the capitulation of "four-fifths of Palestine" to Israel.¹²⁶⁵ The Syrian regime further stressed that the Fahd Plan failed both to claim sufficient rights for the Palestinian people and to determine a definitive time table for the Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hammadi and Farouq Qaddoumi, the PLO representative, also rejected the initiative, however, leaving open the possibility of conciliation at the ensuing Heads of State meeting. The Saudi Foreign Minister, however, insisted that the seventh clause was an integral part of the plan's strategy of stages.¹²⁶⁶

The Saudi government, already disgruntled about the harsh criticism it had faced in the run-up to and during the foreign minister meeting, was offended when only eleven out of twenty Arab heads of state participated in the Fez summit; the Saudi irritation was aggravated by the fact that at the 1980 Arab League summit in Amman, it had been agreed that at future summits, member states would be represented by their heads of state or their deputies. Particularly Syrian President Assad's last-minute decision to stay away from the Fez summit upset the Saudi government. The Al Saud regime had completely miscalculated Syria's reactions to the Fahd Plan and expected all along that the

¹²⁶⁴ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1981-82), p. 223.

¹²⁶⁵ Cited in *ibid*, p. 224.

¹²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 225.

Assad administration would back the Saudi initiative at the Fez summit.¹²⁶⁷ Assad's absence from the meeting proved them wrong and already heralded Syria's opposition to the Saudi proposal.

With the exception of Saudi Arabia and Oman, the Arab Gulf monarchies were represented by their heads of state, emphasising their support for the peace initiative. As the peace plan's official initiator and de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Fahd represented the Kingdom. In contrast, Oman was only represented by one of Sultan Qaboos' personal aides. The Sultan's absence from the summit was most likely a sign of protest against Egypt's forced absence in consequence of its expulsion from the Arab League two years earlier.¹²⁶⁸

The Head of State meeting saw a very heated debate and eventually the meeting was very short-lived. Yassir Arafat and Iraqi Foreign Minister Khaddam toned down the harsh criticism against Fahd and his initiative, praised the Saudi efforts, and prevented the Saudi Crown Prince from taking the peace plan from the agenda. Nonetheless, due to the participants' irreconcilable differences on the Fahd Plan, the summit was adjourned indefinitely after only one four-hour session.¹²⁶⁹

The failure of the Fez Summit and the rejection of the Fahd Plan meant a major, embarrassing foreign policy defeat for Saudi Arabia. By means of an editorial, published in the November 30 issue of the Saudi newspaper *Al Riyadh*, the Saudi government indirectly expressed its resentment with its initiative's opponents. The editorial stated that, with respect to previous events, a review of Arab financing was in order, meaning that Saudi financial support to Syria had to be reconsidered. Moreover, the editorial called on the GCC states as well as conservative Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, and the Yemen Arab Republic to distance themselves from the confrontation states. Furthermore, the Saudi media criticised the PLO for its stance in Fez. However, blame was also placed

¹²⁶⁷ Saudi Arabia tried to get Syrian support for the Fahd Plan by promising financial support for a new major arms deal. Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 798.

¹²⁶⁸ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1981-82), pp. 225f.

¹²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 221, 227.

on other states (particularly Syria) for blackmailing the PLO into opposing the Fahd Plan.¹²⁷⁰

The Second Fez Summit

Despite the embarrassment it suffered at the 1981 Fez Summit, the Saudi regime held on to its peace initiative and, one year later, managed to get the Arab League's endorsement of a revised version as the First Arab Peace Initiative.

The Saudi administration shelved its peace plan until several regional developments had increased the chances for its adoption. First, in April 1982, Israel disengaged from the Sinai Peninsula; a development the Saudi media cheered as both an "all-Arab success" and a turning point in intra-Arab relations.¹²⁷¹ It became clear that Israel was ready in principal to withdraw from occupied Arab territory. Second, Israel annexed the Golan Heights on December 14, 1981 and left Syria politically embarrassed due to its inability to react effectively to Israel's actions. Third, the Lebanon War that took place from June to September 1982 significantly weakened Syria and the PLO.¹²⁷² During the military conflict, Israel shot down several Syrian military jets, adding to the Syrian regime's embarrassment. However, the PLO suffered a by far larger blow, when it was forced to retreat from Lebanon and relocated to Tunis. Following the war, both the Syrian regime and the PLO were more accessible to the Saudi peace plan as they were increasingly reliant on Saudi diplomatic and financial support.¹²⁷³ Finally, Iraq, the other major opponent to the Fahd Plan in the autumn of 1981 was now preoccupied by the turn of the tide in its war with Iran.

Due to Syria's previous harsh disapproval, the Saudi government consulted the Assad regime more intensively prior to the resumption of the Fez Summit in early September 1982. Moreover, it had become clear to the Saudi regime that it had to be ready to compromise in order to have the Fahd Plan accepted by the Arab League.

¹²⁷⁰ Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1981-82), p. 227.

¹²⁷¹ See Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 796.

¹²⁷² On June 6, 1982 the Israeli armed forces invaded Southern Lebanon in an attempt to crush the Beirut-based PLO, which had repeatedly launched raids against Israeli targets.

¹²⁷³ Compare Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 796.

In the end, the Saudi regime agreed to several alterations of its initial plan. First and most importantly, Riyadh accepted to alter the Fahd initiative's controversial seventh clause and thereby the degree of legitimacy the peace initiative granted Israel. Instead of the original plan's affirmation of "the right of all countries of the region to live in peace,"¹²⁷⁴ the eventual Arab peace plan merely delegated to the UN Security Council the responsibility to establish mechanisms to guarantee peace between all states in the region. This provision falls short of the earlier indirect acknowledgement of Israel's right to peace, implying an Israeli right of existence.

Second, the revised version of the Fahd Plan emphasised the PLO's role as the "sole and legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people (new article 4).¹²⁷⁵ Most likely, the Saudi regime had initially refrained from mentioning the PLO and attributing to it such a pivotal role in order to not sabotage any potential chance for U.S. or Israeli approval of the initiative.

Third, by assigning the responsibility for the safeguarding of peace in the region to the UN Security Council, the amended proposal indirectly attributed to the Soviet Union a shared responsibility for the development of the Arab-Israeli peace process, a political gesture important to the Syrian regime.¹²⁷⁶

The Assad regime, too, was ready to compromise. It agreed to vote in favour of the Fahd Plan after the above mentioned alterations had been made. Moreover, Syria dropped its previous insistence on an Arab League resolution condemning the U.S. Reagan Plan and agreed to the appointment of an Arab League commission tasked with further exploration of the U.S. stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Additionally, Syria abandoned its earlier demands to call for the mobilisation of all Arab resources, particularly oil resources, for armed struggle with Israel.¹²⁷⁷

When the previously adjourned Fez Summit reconvened on September 6, 1982, Presidents Hussein of Iraq and Assad of Syria participated, already demon-

¹²⁷⁴ "Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Peace Plan, 6 August 1981," Reprinted in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, p. 288.

¹²⁷⁵ "Arab League Summit Declaration, Fez, Morocco (Fez-Plan), 6 September 1982." Reprinted in Abdul Hadi, *Palestine*, p. 295.

¹²⁷⁶ Compare Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1981-82), p. 255.

¹²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

strating their respective regimes' changes of attitude towards the amended Saudi initiative. Beside the ostracised Egypt, only Libya did not take part in the summit. Once again, presumably in reaction to Egypt's continuing expulsion from the Arab League, Sultan Qaboos stayed away from the conference and sent a deputy.¹²⁷⁸

In clear contrast to Saudi Arabia's failure to get approval of its peace initiative at the first Fez Summit the year before, the 1982 Fez Summit became a great political success for the Kingdom as the revised Fahd Plan was adopted by the Arab League. Due to the expected rejection by the Israeli government, the peace plan came to nothing. However, Saudi Arabia had managed to assert its claim to a leadership position in the Arab world. Moreover, Saudi Arabia succeeded in gathering virtually the entire Arab League behind a moderate and constructive approach with regard to Israel.

Since the adoption of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the ensuing Egyptian isolation from the Arab world, the promotion of a holistic peace proposal addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict had been a main foreign policy concern of Saudi Arabia. Beside the off chance of effectively bringing about a conflict resolution and the aspiration for a more positive image in the eyes of the U.S. Congress, the predominant Saudi motivation behind the Fahd Plan was the restoration of Arab unity and solidarity and the healing of the intra-Arab rift the Camp David Accords had torn. With the adoption of the Fez Peace Initiative, this objective was at least partially met. Hence, in the following months and years, Saudi Arabia refocused its foreign policy attention away from its own peace initiative and was preoccupied with more pressing challenges: the development and the consequences of the Iran-Iraq War, the readmission of Egypt to the Arab League, the support of the Afghan mujahedeen in their fight against the Soviet Union, and other issues such as Syrian-Lebanese and intra-PLO relations. In an interview with the BBC on October 5, 1983, Saud Al Faisal encapsulated the Saudi position on the Arab-Israeli peace process when he declared that by adopting the Fez Initiative the Arab states had demonstrated their capability for serious, positive, and objective action and that it would now

¹²⁷⁸ Compare Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1981-82), p. 253.

be up to the “international community, and [...] the US in particular, to shoulder its responsibilities.”¹²⁷⁹

While Saudi Arabia had been the main champion of its peace initiative and was mainly responsible for its adoption in the Arab League, the influence of the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies was limited. By then united in the Gulf Cooperation Council, the latter had publicly endorsed the Fahd Plan and coordinated with Saudi Arabia their policy stance in the two Fez meetings. Nonetheless, their support and lobbying for the Saudi initiative was not a decisive factor towards the approval of the Fahd Plan by the Arab League members. Following the 1982 Fez Summit, the Arab-Israeli peace process moved to the sidelines of the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies’ foreign policy agendas as well. The subregional developments in the Gulf took precedence. The only exception was Oman, which repeatedly urged a peaceful reconciliation between the Arab world and Israel and at times even called for Arab recognition of Israel.¹²⁸⁰ On September 28, in an interview with the Kuwaiti daily newspaper *Al-Anba* Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf al-Alawi stated that

“in the end there will be direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. The issue has always been discussed from an Arab point of view and with Arab perception, and we have never tried to understand the Israeli point of view and perception. In the end, the Palestinian people have rights and Israel’s people have rights.”¹²⁸¹

However, the Omani calls remained effectual.

Egypt’s Return to the Arab Fold

Egypt’s expulsion from the Arab League and its subsequent pariah status within the Arab world was a direct consequence of its policy related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This development was contrary to the Arab Gulf monarchies’ interest, although five of them felt politically forced to back Egypt’s exclusion. Due to subregional (Iran-Iraq War) and regional dynamics (strengthening of radical forces in intra-Arab affairs), Egypt’s return to the Arab fold was an important objective to the Arab Gulf monarchies. This was true irrespective of the fact that

¹²⁷⁹ Cited in Mordechai Gazit, “The Middle East Peace Process,” in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Seven: 1982-83* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), pp. 150-71, p. 166.

¹²⁸⁰ See Karmi, “Oman,” p. 491 and Goldberg, “Saudi Arabia” (1989), p. 594.

¹²⁸¹ Cited in Menashri, “Iran” (1987), pp. 413f.

Egypt's separate peace with Israel receded into the distance another important objective in the Arab Gulf monarchies' eyes: the return of occupied Arab lands including the holy sites of Jerusalem and the realisation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Early on, Oman was very active in its attempts to reinstate Egypt's membership in the Arab League and to restore Cairo's pivotal role in the Arab world. An early example of this policy could be seen from 1981 onwards, when Oman facilitated Egyptian-Iraqi arms deals with the intention to both support Iraq in its war with Iran and to improve relations between Egypt and one of its harshest critics. While this attempt remained unsuccessful at first, as the Saddam government was not willing to change its general policy towards Egypt, the arms deals were a first meaningful case in which the anti-Egyptian boycott was levered out.¹²⁸² Over the following years, Oman regularly appealed to the Arab League members to resume bilateral relations with Cairo and to restore Egypt's membership in the regional organisation.

Sadat's death on October 6, 1981 allowed for an improvement in Saudi-Egyptian relations. Following the Egyptian expulsion from the Arab League, President Sadat had verbally attacked Saudi policy, the Saudi government, and individual members of the royal family's inner circle on several occasions. In particular, the personal injuries had irrevocably poisoned the personal relations between Sadat and the Saudi leadership and had as a consequence heavily strained the relations between the two countries. Following Sadat's assassination and the inauguration of Mubarak, "the Saudi media launched a campaign of rapprochement, hailing the new President as more committed to the principle of Arab solidarity than his predecessor."¹²⁸³ In addition, the Saudi media called on the remaining Arab states to overcome past controversies and not to stand in the way of a reunification of the Arab world. Admittedly, the Saudi government emphasised that it would not resume official relations with Egypt until the latter had revised its policy and returned to the Arab fold. However,

¹²⁸² Egypt supplied Iraq with urgently needed Soviet military spare parts, which Cairo was in the process of decommissioning as it gradually changed its military arsenal from Soviet to U.S. technology. Compare Daniel Dishon and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Five: 1980-81* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 227-90, p. 258.

¹²⁸³ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 796.

Riyadh made clear its willingness to give Mubarak time; it went as far as expressing publicly its understanding for Egypt's inability to reject binding legal commitments to Israel.¹²⁸⁴ Nonetheless, following the return of the Sinai to Egypt, the Saudi government requested the Sadat administration be less compromising in its negotiations with Israel regarding the autonomy talks over the West Bank and Gaza. When President Mubarak attended Saudi King Khaled's funeral in June 1982, it was the first visit of an Egyptian president to Saudi Arabia in five years.¹²⁸⁵

Starting in late 1983, the Arab world's anti-Egyptian boycott was gradually lifted. The Arab Gulf monarchies and particularly Saudi Arabia played an important role in this development. When Egypt was readmitted to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in January 1984, it was not least due to Saudi lobbying. Already in late October 1983, when Egypt was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Cairo received the votes of the majority of Arab states. Meanwhile, the Egyptian-Iraqi relations had earlier grown closer in the light of the Iran-Iraq War; Egypt had upped its military aid, 1.5 million Egyptians were by then working in the Iraqi labour force, and there had been a number of high-level exchanges between the two governments. Therefore, the Arab support for Egypt in the elections for a seat in the UN Security Council was not least based on a strategic decision to safeguard continued Egyptian support for Iraq in the light of Iranian war advantages.¹²⁸⁶

When Jordan re-established diplomatic relations with Egypt in 1984, the five Arab Gulf monarchies that had not yet restored relations with Cairo themselves reacted cautiously. While they had a clear interest in Egypt's return to the Arab folds, they wanted this development to be based on a general Arab consensus.¹²⁸⁷

¹²⁸⁴ A respective statement was given by the assistant to the Saudi Minister of Information in the Saudi newspaper *Ukaz* on May 13, 1982. See Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 797.

¹²⁸⁵ Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1981-82), p. 797 and Dishon and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1981-82), p. 239.

¹²⁸⁶ Martin Kramer, "Muslim Statecraft and Subversion," in Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume VIII: 1983-84* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 158-82, p. 160 and Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1983-84), pp. 136f.

¹²⁸⁷ See Gold, "The United Arab Emirates" (1983-84), p. 425 and Kostiner, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom, p. 630.

By 1986, almost all Arab countries, including the Arab Gulf monarchies, were maintaining unofficial political, economic or cultural relations with Egypt, reinforced by Egypt's continuous support for Baghdad in the Iran-Iraq War.¹²⁸⁸ Relations between Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE on the one hand and Egypt on the other had become very close. Sheikh Zayid, the UAE President, called implicitly for Egypt's readmission to the Arab League.¹²⁸⁹ When President Mubarak met with Israeli Prime Minister Peres in late summer of 1986, the state-controlled Kuwaiti press went as far as to laude the Egyptian head of state for representing Arab interests. In general, the Kuwaiti press demanded the renewal of Egypt's Arab League membership.¹²⁹⁰ In July 1986, in the first interview a Saudi monarch gave an Egyptian newspaper in seven years, King Fahd stated that "Egypt, the core of the Arab world, is our big sister and always in our heart and thoughts." Furthermore, Fahd attested Egypt a "natural and leading role in the Arab world."¹²⁹¹

However, pending an Arab League Summit resolution calling for the end of the anti-Egyptian boycott, the five Arab Gulf monarchies that had earlier severed relations with Egypt stopped short of restoring official contacts with Cairo.¹²⁹² A breakthrough in this regard was reached at the 1987 Extraordinary Arab Summit Conference in Amman. With the agreement of Syrian President Assad, until then together with Libyan Ghaddafi the strongest opponent of Egypt's return to the Arab fold, the summit resolution provided

"that the diplomatic relationship between any Arab League member state and Egypt is an act of sovereignty decided by every state [...] and is not [within] the jurisdiction of the Arab League."¹²⁹³

This allowed the proponents of a reestablishment of bilateral relations with Egypt to go forward without the need to await a collective Arab decision to do so. Within one week, nine Arab League members re-established *de jure*-

¹²⁸⁸ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume X: 1986* (Boulder, CO, and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 93-126, p. 93.

¹²⁸⁹ Gold, "The United Arab Emirates" (1986), p. 321.

¹²⁹⁰ Gold, "Kuwait" (1986) p. 309.

¹²⁹¹ King Fahd was interviewed by the Egyptian daily newspaper *Al-Ahram*. Goldberg, "The Saudi Arabian Kingdom" (1986), p. 558.

¹²⁹² *Ibid.*

¹²⁹³ Cited in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XI: 1987* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 117-52, p. 146.

relations with Egypt, including the five Arab Gulf monarchies that had abrogated diplomatic ties with Egypt in 1979. First among them was the UAE, which reinstated bilateral relations with Cairo on November 11, the very day the resolution had been adopted. Kuwait (Nov. 14), Bahrain (Nov. 16), Saudi Arabia (Nov. 17), and Qatar (Nov. 18) followed suit.¹²⁹⁴ Not least as a consequence of massive support by all six Arab Gulf monarchies, Egypt's membership in the Arab League was finally reinstated during the Arab League Summit in Casablanca in late May 1989. Demonstrating the importance they attached to Egypt's reinstatement in the regional organisation, the Arab Gulf monarchies had threatened to boycott collectively the summit if Egypt were not to be invited.¹²⁹⁵

4.5 The First Intifada and Oman's Change of Policy

With the outbreak of the Intifada in the occupied Palestinian territories in December 1987, the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy attention refocused on the Palestinian question. Moreover, the events prompted a significant change in Oman's policy stance. In the light of the Palestinian people's plight and the Israeli reactions to their uprising, the Arab Gulf monarchies turned once more to an antagonistic public rhetoric towards Israel. For the first time, this was also true for Oman. Moreover, the Arab Gulf monarchies increased their diplomatic, political, and financial support for the PLO. Even the strained Omani-Palestinian relations saw a significant improvement.

The Arab Gulf monarchies' rhetoric, diplomatic, and political support for the Palestinians and their uprising against the Israeli occupation was staunch. The Kuwaiti Emir, Jabir Al Ahmad, described the Intifada as "heroism which renders us speechless."¹²⁹⁶ Enthusiastic support was also expressed by Sheikh Zayid who was quoted by the *Khaleej Times* in late January 1988 as saying that the Intifada "proved that achieving peace in the region cannot be attained without regard to Palestinian legitimate national rights, the liberation of occupied land, and self-determination."¹²⁹⁷ In the following year, the UAE government even called for an escalation of the Intifada as "there is nothing more important to the

¹²⁹⁴ Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1987), p. 132.

¹²⁹⁵ Maddy-Weitzman, "Inter-Arab Relations" (1989), p. 130.

¹²⁹⁶ Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), p. 442.

¹²⁹⁷ Rabi, "The United Arab Emirates" (1988), p. 465.

Arab and the Palestinians.”¹²⁹⁸ Even the Omani government expressed its full support for the Intifada, calling it “the best way to present the Palestinian issue to the world after all political means have failed.”¹²⁹⁹ The state-controlled Saudi media praised the Intifada as a “heroic struggle of the Palestinian masses against the Zionist occupation” and expressed the hope that the uprising would end in “the liberation of Jerusalem and the holy places” and in “the Palestinians regaining their rights.”¹³⁰⁰ On the diplomatic level, such as in various UN committees, the Arab Gulf monarchies were also actively supportive of the PLO and the Palestinian cause and issued harsh criticism in the direction of Israel. Even the Omani regime, which had previously refrained from overly Israel-critical statements, condemned firmly Israel’s human rights violations in the occupied territories.¹³⁰¹

The Arab Gulf monarchies made significant financial contributions to the Palestinian cause and the support of the Intifada. Once again, the lion’s share was provided by Saudi Arabia. As pledged in the 1978 Arab League Baghdad Summit resolution, the Kingdom had given the PLO financial support totalling \$855 million by the end of 1988. In the light of the ongoing Intifada, King Fahd ordered the continuation of financial support. Henceforward, Saudi Arabia made monthly payments of \$6.02 million to the PLO. In addition, a fatwa issued by the Saudi Council of the Senior Ulama provided for the relaying of the state-levied Muslim charity tax (*zakat*) to the support of the Intifada. Moreover, the Saudi regime installed the Popular Committee for the Support of Palestinian Freedom Fighters, chaired by the Governor of Riyadh, Prince Salman, and encouraged private donations using the slogan “Give a riyal and save a Palestinian.” Including contributions by the royal family, the collected donations reportedly soon reached more than \$13 million.¹³⁰² Kuwait also supported the Intifada financially. Reportedly, Kuwaiti governmental contribution had reached \$22

¹²⁹⁸ Cited in Rabi, “United Arab Emirates” (1989), p. 676.

¹²⁹⁹ Rabi, “Oman” (1988), p. 452.

¹³⁰⁰ Cited in Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom” (1988), p. 695.

¹³⁰¹ Rabi, “Bahrain” (1989), p. 290; Idem, “Oman” (1989), p. 564; and Yael Yishai, “Israel,” in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume XII: 1988* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 543-575, p. 570.

¹³⁰² The dollar figures derive from the author’s own calculations, conducted on the basis of the fixed Saudi riyal/U.S. dollar exchange rate in 1988. Goldberg, “The Saudi Arabian Kingdom” (1988), p. 695 and Idem, “Saudi Arabia” (1989), p. 591.

million by June 1989.¹³⁰³ Moreover, the Kuwaiti regime gave financial support to specific institutions and individuals in the Palestinian territories. In addition, the leading Kuwaiti newspapers organised donations.¹³⁰⁴ Also Sheikh Zayid made a personal donation of \$10 million and the UAE government announced in March 1988 that all employees in the UAE would donate one day's earnings to the Intifada.¹³⁰⁵ Bahrain, too, was reported to have given financial assistance to the Palestinian uprising.¹³⁰⁶

During the first years of the Intifada, there were frequent visits by high-ranking Palestinian officials to the Arab Gulf monarchies. Arafat regularly visited Kuwait to express Palestinian gratitude for continued Kuwaiti governmental and popular support. Arafat and his deputy, Salah Khalaf, visited also the other Arab Gulf monarchies. In January 1989, Arafat for the first time visited Oman, where he met with Sultan Qaboos, symbolising the significant change in Omani-Palestinian relations. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that, in keeping with previous tradition of maintaining relations with all Palestinian factions, Sheikh Zayid had contact with George Habash of the PFLP and Nayef Hawatima of the DFLP as well as representatives of various other PLO factions.¹³⁰⁷

When, on November 15, 1988, the Palestinian National Council proclaimed Palestinian statehood, it was welcomed publicly by the Arab Gulf monarchies. Saudi Arabia and the UAE were among the first Arab states to recognise the "Palestinian State" and to upgrade the PLO representations in their countries to ambassadorial level. Displaying their strong support for the Palestinians and their right to self-determination, the Saudi government donated a very elegant building as the home of the new Palestinian embassy in Riyadh, inaugurated symbolically on Al-Fatah Day, January 1, 1989.¹³⁰⁸ The remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, including traditionally Palestine-sceptical Oman also diplomatically recognised the newly declared State of Palestine.¹³⁰⁹ The Sultanate, however,

¹³⁰³ Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1989), p. 494.

¹³⁰⁴ Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), p. 442.

¹³⁰⁵ Rabi, "The United Arab Emirates" (1988), p. 465.

¹³⁰⁶ Rabi, "Bahrain" (1988), p. 433.

¹³⁰⁷ Kostiner, "Kuwait" (1988), p. 443; Rabi, "Oman" (1989), p. 564; Idem, "Qatar" (1989), p. 570; and Idem, "United Arab Emirates" (1989), p. 676.

¹³⁰⁸ Goldberg, "Saudi Arabia" (1989), p. 591 and Rabi, "The United Arab Emirates" (1988), p. 465.

¹³⁰⁹ Compare Rabi, "Bahrain" (1988), p. 433; Idem, "Oman" (1988), p. 452; and Idem, "Qatar" (1989), p. 570.

refused the PLO an official representation in Muscat.¹³¹⁰ Regarding Oman's recognition of the Palestinian State, Sultan Qaboos disclaimed

“The desire to establish the state of Palestine has been declared, but the state itself has not yet been established. Hence, what has actually taken place was the decision to establish this state [...] The Palestinian brothers have explained to us the nature of recognition which has moral dimensions, so we immediately announced our recognition.”¹³¹¹

Regarding the Arab Gulf monarchies' policy during the first years of the Intifada, only Oman's stance was somewhat surprising. The rhetoric, diplomatic, political, and financial support granted to the PLO and the Intifada by the remaining five Gulf States was in accordance with their previous policies and was therefore to be expected. Oman, however, had been walking a separate path, often contradicting even the most moderate Arab states in its policy stance towards Israel, Palestine, the PLO as well as the greater Arab-Israeli and intra-Arab conflicts. The policy change from late 1987 onwards was then a reaction to the intensified plight and humiliation of the Palestinian people resulting from the indiscriminate and greatly disproportionate use of violence and blatant violations of basic human rights by a modern Israeli occupation force against Palestinian fighters, stone-throwing teenagers, and innocent bystanders alike. The fact that satellite television broadcasted footage of the conditions in the Palestinian territories intensified the effect the news of the developments had on both the Omani regime and its people. Therefore, a departure of previous calls for recognition and peace with Israel and a rapprochement with the comparatively moderate Palestinian factions was inevitable as it seemed both morally and politically necessary. Failure to take a more pro-Palestinian stance would have caused massive Arab outrage against the Omani regime. However, in early summer 1990, Oman gradually returned to its previous policy when it called on the Palestinians to initiate negotiations with the Israelis as this was the only option in the current situation.¹³¹² Nonetheless, in the course of the Intifada, Oman had come significantly closer to the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies regarding its policy stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.

¹³¹⁰ Abadi, "Israel's Relations with Oman," p. 48.

¹³¹¹ Rabi, "Oman" (1988), p. 452.

¹³¹² Goldberg, "Saudi Arabia" (1990), p. 579.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

During the timeframe under review, the six Arab Gulf monarchies' influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict was primarily economic, financial, diplomatic, and political; military involvement was if at all only symbolic. The Arab Gulf monarchies' policies in the Arab-Israeli conflict were mainly influenced by (1) identity/ideology, (2) religion, and (3) strategic considerations. As a consequence, during the entire period reviewed in this dissertation, all Arab Gulf monarchies, although setting different priorities, shared an objective in the realisation of several interests: the realisation of Palestinian national rights, the return of occupied Arab lands, and the restoration of Muslim control over the holy places in Jerusalem; the guarantee of regime stability; the preservation of strategic relations with the United States; the containment of Soviet penetration into the Arab world; the maintenance of Arab unity dominated by moderate Arab forces; and (even before the 1973 October War) the attainment of a holistic peace settlement supported by an Arab consensus. This set of objectives explains seemingly contradictory policy actions by the Arab Gulf monarchies: significant financial, diplomatic, and political support for the PLO and the front states; the (Saudi) support of the Egyptian-Syrian war preparations in 1973; the subsequent application of the oil weapon; efforts to effectuate change in U.S. policy through positive incentives and well-intended warnings; the rejection of the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty (with the exception of Oman); and the championing of the First Arab Peace Initiative.

Saudi Arabia exerted the greatest influence among Arab Gulf monarchies on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the ensuing peace process. This was possible due to Riyadh's economic power, its influence within the Arab world, and its close relations with the United States. Among the smaller states, Kuwait was most active and its policy most influential on the conflict. The Kuwaiti regime's stance was affected greatly by the strong Arab nationalist and pro-Palestinian mood in the Kuwaiti population. Of the Arab Gulf monarchies that gained their political independence in 1971, the UAE's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict was strongest. Several factors motivated the UAE's stance: the desire to increase recognition within the Arab state community, the influence of both the local Palestinian community and foreign policy advisors, and Sheikh Zayid's personal

attitude. Due to their little political and economic weight, Bahrain's and Qatar's influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict was fairly insignificant.

During most of the timeframe reviewed in this dissertation, Oman's policy stance diverged from that of the other Arab Gulf monarchies, as the Sultanate advocated a more conciliatory approach towards Israel and rejected the notion that the policies of individual Arab states have to be subordinated to larger Arab interests. For the better part of the period under review, Oman refrained from taking an anti-Israeli posture. In addition, the Sultanate was the only Arab Gulf monarchy to endorse Sadat's Jerusalem visit, the Camp David Accords, and implicitly also the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Moreover, in contrast to the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, Oman openly opposed the anti-Egyptian sanctions in the Arab League. This distinct stance had its cause in several factors: a lesser identification with Arabness in general and the Palestinian cause in particular, a greater focus on domestic developments, and strained relations with the Palestinian liberation movement. However, the Omani stance underwent significant change in the light of the First Intifada. Subsequently, Oman initiated a rapprochement with the PLO and adopted an unprecedented Israel-critical position. This alteration in Omani policy was due to a combination of increased popular awareness of the Palestinian plight and the escalation of perceived Israeli wrongdoings. In consequence, there was a marked rapprochement between the policy stances of Oman and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies.

The analysis has shown that with respect to the Arab Gulf monarchies' positions in and influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict the period under review can be divided into four distinct phases: from 1971 to the end of the first oil crisis in 1974; from the lifting of the anti-U.S. oil embargo to the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; from Egypt's separate peace with Israel to the beginning of the First Intifada in December 1987; and finally from the start of the Intifada to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The two essential milestones in the Arab Gulf monarchies' involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict were the application of the oil weapon in 1973/74 and the Fahd Plan, which provided the basis for the First Arab Peace Initiative. In consequence of their punitive oil policy triggered by the massive U.S. support

for Israel during the 1973 October War, the Arab Gulf monarchies developed rapidly into economically very wealthy and, in consequence, politically more influential states. Subsequently, especially Saudi Arabia, to a lesser degree also the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies, gained increased political influence in the Arab world in general and on the Arab front states in particular. The announcement of the Fahd Plan in 1981 symbolised the considerable change Saudi foreign policy had undergone since Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League. The Al Saud regime abandoned its previous strategy of resorting to behind-closed-doors diplomacy and promoted publicly a holistic peace initiative. The Fahd Plan was an innovation in Saudi policy as it was the first public expression of the Saudi administration's far-reaching readiness to compromise in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this, the Saudi regime made itself vulnerable to attacks from radical Arab forces; a development Riyadh had usually tried its best to prevent. This revision of its policy approach was mainly motivated by the alterations in the intra-Arab balance of power following Egypt's exile.

In the cases of both the application of the oil weapon in 1973/74 and the development of the First Arab Peace Initiative, the Saudi regime took the lead and the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies followed suit. The GCC endorsement of the Fahd Plan showed the increasing degree to which the Arab Gulf monarchies coordinated their positions towards the conflict. As the Fahd Plan was an expression of great willingness to compromise with Israel, the Omani regime sided with its fellow GCC states more than it had before.

In the end, the Arab Gulf monarchies succeeded in realising most of their interests: they managed to guarantee their regime stability and contain radical Arab pressure while expanding their strategic relationship with the Israel-friendly United States; strengthen moderate Arab forces and re-establish Arab unity after the Camp David Accords; and contain and even rollback Soviet penetration into the Arab world. However, the Arab Gulf monarchies failed in inducing a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict including the creation of a Palestinian state, the return of occupied Arab lands, and the restoration of Muslim control over Jerusalem's holy sites. Nonetheless, the Arab Gulf monarchies managed to get Arab consensus for a peace proposal that demonstrated an unprecedented readiness to compromise. In its slightly

modified version of 2002, this proposal remains until this day the only realistic basis for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

5. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

This dissertation provided a comparative analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies from Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971 to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

In a first step (subchapter 1.5), I developed a theoretical framework that explains the nature of international relations and the genesis of state foreign policy decisions. The suggested approach, which borrows realist, structuralist, constructivist, and pluralist assumptions, is tailored specifically for the analysis of the states and the period under review in this dissertation. It assumes that a state's foreign policy behaviour is the result of the limitations set by the nature of the international system, the state's relative power status, and the state's domestic characteristics. I argued that states are principally rational actors with an interest in self-preservation and that due to the anarchic and self-help nature of the international system as well as the uneven distribution of power on an international and a regional level, states in underprivileged power positions tend to strive for balance of power. I further contended that power, defined as the ability to realise one's objectives through co-optive and coercive means, rests on material (as in military, economic, and financial) and non-material capabilities; the latter have been characterised as the ability to influence domestic dynamics in other states. Additionally, I argued that every state is unique in its domestic nature based on a distinct composition of societal, economic, political, historic, ideational, and identity-related characteristics and that these aspects determine the nature of the people's interests as well as the latter's translation into foreign policy. I asserted that, in non-democratic states, the elites have an interest in a twofold self-preservation in the form of both state and regime security, and that, in order to realise these interests, they tend to refer to a policy of omnibalancing. Lastly, I stressed that the translation of interests into foreign policy is influenced both by the nature of the decision making process and the personalities of the decision makers.

Applying the theoretical approach in practice, chapter 2 provided a comparative analysis of the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policy interests and options as well as the main challenges to the survival of the individual states and regimes at the beginning of the timeframe under review. The study identified the preservation of external security and regime stability as the main policy interests

of the Arab Gulf monarchies in 1971. Further analysis revealed that, at that time, the six states had very limited military power, a disadvantage that could partially be compensated by economic and financial capabilities, the forging of alliances among each other and with third states, and the playing off of potential aggressors against one another. In addition, I identified the existence of sub-state and transboundary identities rivalling national identities as both a potential threat for domestic stability and a channel of external influence on the Arab Gulf monarchies' domestic affairs. I further argued that, in order to guarantee regime stability, the Arab Gulf monarchies needed to implement the basic interests (including foreign policy objectives) of both their elites and populations. In addressing the challenge of their various domestic and foreign policy interests calling regularly for contradictory actions, the Arab Gulf monarchies applied an omnibalancing strategy with the intention to realise all their objectives. These basic determinants, as well as the other fundamental foreign policy interests introduced in this chapter, remained constant during the entire period under review. As to prepare the reader for the following case studies and to allow for a better understanding of continuity and change in the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies, subchapter 2.6 introduced key domestic and environmental changes between 1971 and 1990 that had decisive influence on the six states' foreign policy interests and options.

The bulk of the thesis has then been devoted to the study of two pivotal, intertwined foreign policy case studies: the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iran and Iraq (chapter 3) and the six states' positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict (chapter 4). As the conclusions at the end of both case study chapters already provided detailed synopses, the résumé given at this point will remain brief and concise.

The main research questions that guided the analysis of the two case studies were as follows: (1) To what extent did the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies show a rapprochement to one another and what were the reasons for this development; and (2) to what degree did the Arab Gulf monarchies cooperate and coordinate with each other in the field of foreign policy?

The study revealed that over the course of the two decades analysed in this dissertation, the Arab Gulf monarchies' policies displayed significant conver-

gence in one field, while, in the other field, an initial trend of convergence was later replaced by a development towards greater divergence in individual policies.

The analysis of the six states' positions towards the Arab-Israeli conflict showed that, during most of the timeframe under examination, Oman's policy interests and eventual policy diverged from that of the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies. The Sultanate advocated a more conciliatory approach towards Israel and rejected the notion that the policies of individual Arab states have to be subordinated to larger Arab interests. I attributed this distinct policy stance to a lesser identification with Arabness in general and the Palestinian cause in particular, a greater focus on domestic developments, and strained relations with the Palestinian liberation movement. Two external developments then led to a convergence between Oman's stance and that of the remaining five Arab Gulf monarchies.

First, following the expulsion of Egypt from the Arab League – the direct consequence to Egypt's bilateral peace treaty with Israel – Saudi Arabia's policy underwent considerable change. In abandoning its previous strategy of resorting primarily to behind-closed-doors diplomacy, the Kingdom publicly promoted a holistic peace initiative that demonstrated its readiness to far-reaching compromise in the conflict. Within the framework of the newly established GCC, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies, including Oman, supported the Fahd Plan and worked towards its eventual adoption by the Arab League Fez Summit in the autumn of 1982. Saudi Arabia's public departure from the "three noes," adopted at the 1967 Arab League Khartoum Summit, and the Kingdom's unprecedented peace proposal, effected a rapprochement in policy positions between Oman and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies that largely followed Saudi lead.

Second, in the course of the First Intifada, which erupted in December 1987, Oman's policy stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict underwent considerable change. In the light of increased popular awareness of the Palestinian plight and the escalation of perceived Israeli wrongdoings, the Sultanate initiated a gradual rapprochement with the PLO and adopted an unprecedented Israel-

critical position. Consequently, the policies of Oman and the remaining Arab Gulf monarchies displayed additional convergence.

The dissertation revealed that, regarding their policies towards Iran and Iraq, the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual positions displayed far-reaching similarities and gradual convergence from 1971 to 1979. During this period, all Arab Gulf monarchies, with individual nuances, maintained closer and less conflictual relations with Iran than with Iraq. The underlying reason was a greater congruity in policy objectives: the preservation of the conservative political order in the Gulf monarchies; the containment of Baathist ideology, Iraqi hegemonic interests, and Soviet influence in the Gulf and the greater Middle East; cooperative relations with the United States; and the security of trade routes through the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Without a doubt, Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf were cause for some concern, particularly Saudi. Nonetheless, all Arab Gulf monarchies, including those that initially had conflictual ties with Iran, displayed increasingly close relations with Tehran. Among them, Oman maintained the closest, Kuwait the most distant relations with Iran. In contrast, the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iraq were more conflictual due to largely incompatible policy interests. Most worrisome to the Arab Gulf monarchies' interests were Baghdad's nationalist, hegemonic ambitions towards the Gulf in general and the Arab Gulf monarchies in particular; Iraq's intention to change the political order in the conservative Gulf states; and the cooperative Iraqi-Soviet relations. Among Arab Gulf monarchies, Kuwait (due to Iraqi territorial claims) and Oman (due to Iraqi support for the Dhofar rebels) had most conflictual relations with Iraq. From early 1975 onwards, in the light of an Iraqi policy change towards more pragmatism and a greater interest in cooperation, the Arab Gulf monarchies' bilateral relations with Iraq improved, least so in the case of Oman. Despite improvements in relations, all Arab Gulf monarchies remained suspicious of Iraq as fundamental ideological differences persisted.

In the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and particularly following the initial phase of the Iran-Iraq War, the Arab Gulf monarchies' individual policies towards Iran and Iraq underwent significant change and displayed increasing divergence. Due to differences in their historic, geopolitical, societal, and economic characteristics, the Arab Gulf monarchies' policy interests were

challenged in different ways and to different degrees by the alteration in Iranian foreign policy and the effects of the First Gulf War (1980-88). This, in turn, had diverging effects on the individual Arab Gulf monarchies' policies towards and relations with Iran and Iraq. While they all shared the same basic interest in a rapid termination of the war without the emergence of a clear winner, the Arab Gulf monarchies were increasingly split into a pro-Iraqi and a largely neutral group.

Following the end of the war, the Arab Gulf monarchies' policies towards and relations with Iran displayed a partial convergence. All six states were interested in a reduction of tensions and a general rapprochement with Iran. While the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies were to varying degrees successful in realising this objective – most prominently in the case of Oman –, ideological differences prevented any meaningful Saudi-Iranian *détente*. Meanwhile, the Arab Gulf monarchies' relations with Iraq showed significant differences. While Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar's relations with Iraq remained free of serious friction, Kuwaiti-Iraqi and UAE-Iraqi relations deteriorated rapidly from early 1990 onwards. Saudi Arabia attempted to appease Iraq and to prevent a further escalation in tensions particularly between Iraq and Kuwait. However, Baghdad's aggressive attitude towards Kuwait escalated further and climaxed in the invasion on August 2, 1990. Again, geopolitical position had a decisive influence on the relations between the Arab Gulf monarchies, in this case Kuwait, and Iraq.

The analysis revealed that, in both case studies, the Arab Gulf monarchies increasingly cooperated with each other and coordinated their policy positions. The underlying reasons were the Arab Gulf monarchies' wide-ranging and growing congruity in interests; similarities in challenges to these interests; and their inferiority in power status compared with and vulnerability to their neighbours. In the light of the similarities in their objectives and the limits of their individual power status, the Arab Gulf monarchies had a pragmatic interest in cooperation and coordination in both foreign policy areas analysed in this dissertation.

During the period under review, the smaller Arab Gulf monarchies (with the exception of Oman) largely followed Saudi lead in formulating their policies

towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1981, they all supported the Saudi Fahd Plan and endorsed it publicly in the GCC framework.

The Arab Gulf monarchies increased their policy coordination also with respect to subregional politics. This was the case despite, or rather, precisely because of the differences in their individual foreign policies towards and relations with Iran and Iraq in the 1980s. The GCC framework allowed them a greater degree of flexibility in their policies, as the neutral group could issue multilateral statements critical of Iran and supportive of Iraq, thereby satisfying Iraqi and pan-Arab expectations without causing too much friction in bilateral relations with Iran; on the other hand, the pro-Iraqi states could be indirectly involved in mediation attempts with Iran. This increased coordination activity was the Arab Gulf monarchies' reaction to the growing negative effects the Iran-Iraq War had on their fundamental policy interests, particularly their economic prosperity.

This dissertation's period under review ends with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; an event that caused a radical transformation in (sub-)regional and international relations in the Gulf, bringing to an end the system of relations which had gradually been developed over the previous two decades – the topic of this thesis – and issuing in a very different one. The latter would need to be the subject of another thesis.

Within a matter of hours, the Iraqi armed forces overran and occupied Kuwait. What had previously been inconceivable in the eyes of most Arab Gulf monarchies had become a reality; an Arab state had invaded another. It became clear that, despite all attempts to offset their military weakness through massive arms purchases, their economic and financial power, the formation of collective defence institutions, and policies of appeasing and balancing sources of threat, the Arab Gulf monarchies had failed to guarantee even their most basic security interests. Concerns that Saddam Hussein might also invade the oil-rich Saudi Eastern Province motivated Riyadh to invite roughly half a million U.S. troops on Saudi territory to protect the Kingdom against a potential Iraqi aggression. In the end, only the UN-sanctioned and U.S.-led Operation *Desert Storm* managed to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. As much as they had not been able to prevent the invasion and occupation of Kuwait in the first

place, the Arab Gulf monarchies did not play any significant role in the Emirate's liberation.

Following the end of the Second Gulf War, the United States established a permanent significant military presence in the Gulf; the danger emanating from the Iraqi regime was contained by no-fly zones and economic sanctions. Under the impression of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Arab Gulf monarchies henceforth counted predominantly on the United States as the guarantor of their security.

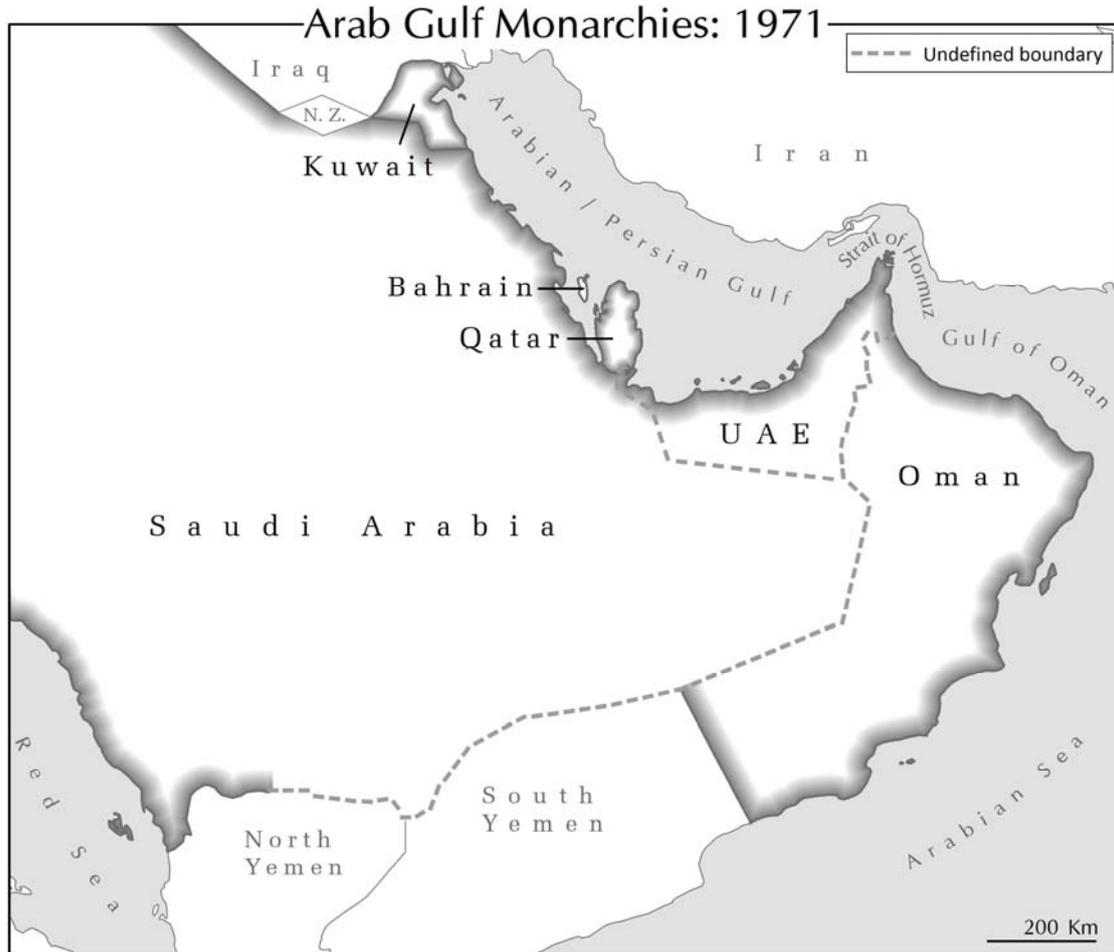
PLO Chairman Arafat's public siding with Saddam Hussein during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait had considerable long-term effects on the Arab Gulf monarchies' position towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Not only did Kuwait, once liberated, expel hundreds of thousands of Palestinians; all Arab Gulf monarchies drastically reduced their financial, diplomatic, and political support for the PLO for several years. The 1990s and 2000s saw even temporary trade and other sub-diplomatic contacts between some Arab Gulf monarchies and Israel, despite the pending resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As much as the British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was a milestone in international relations of the Gulf that heralded in a new era in the Arab Gulf monarchies' foreign policies.

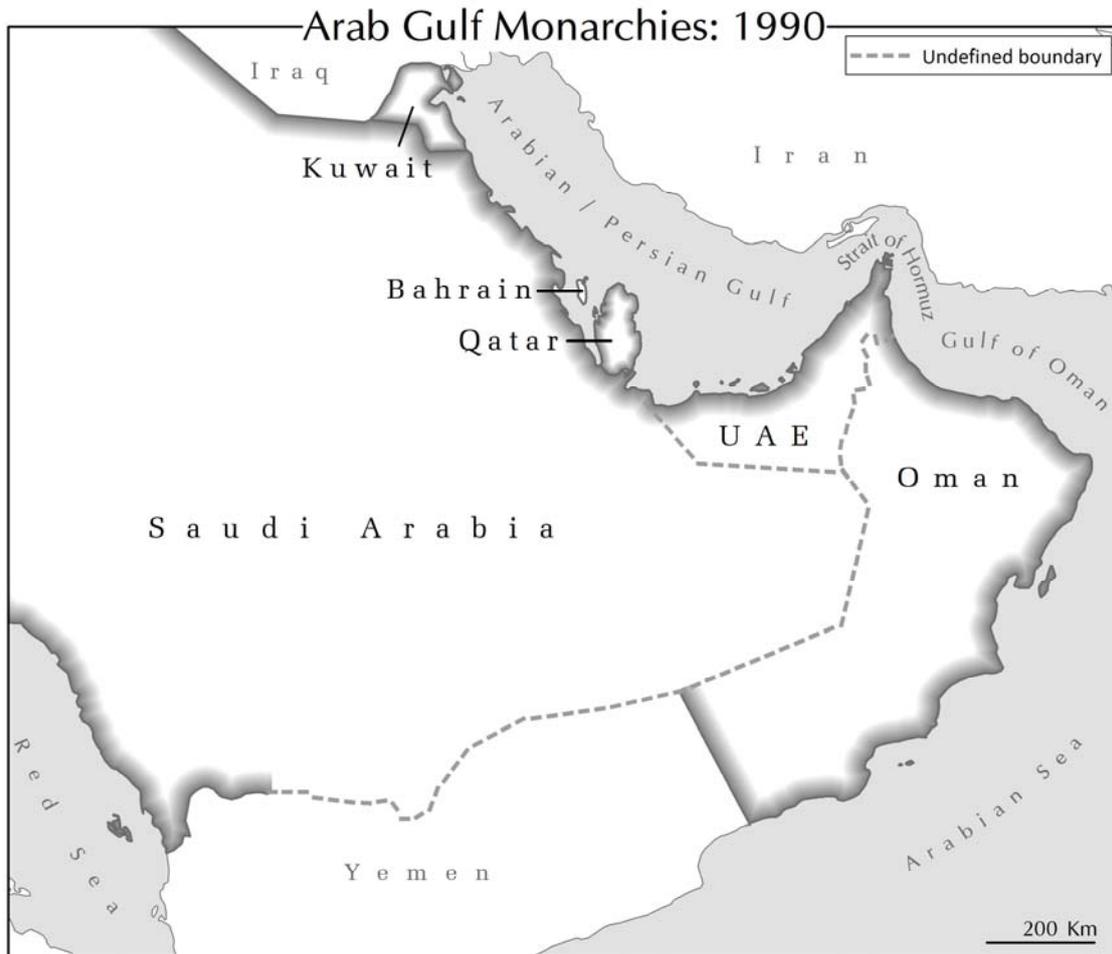
APPENDIX

The following maps are all courtesy of Ashwan Reddy.

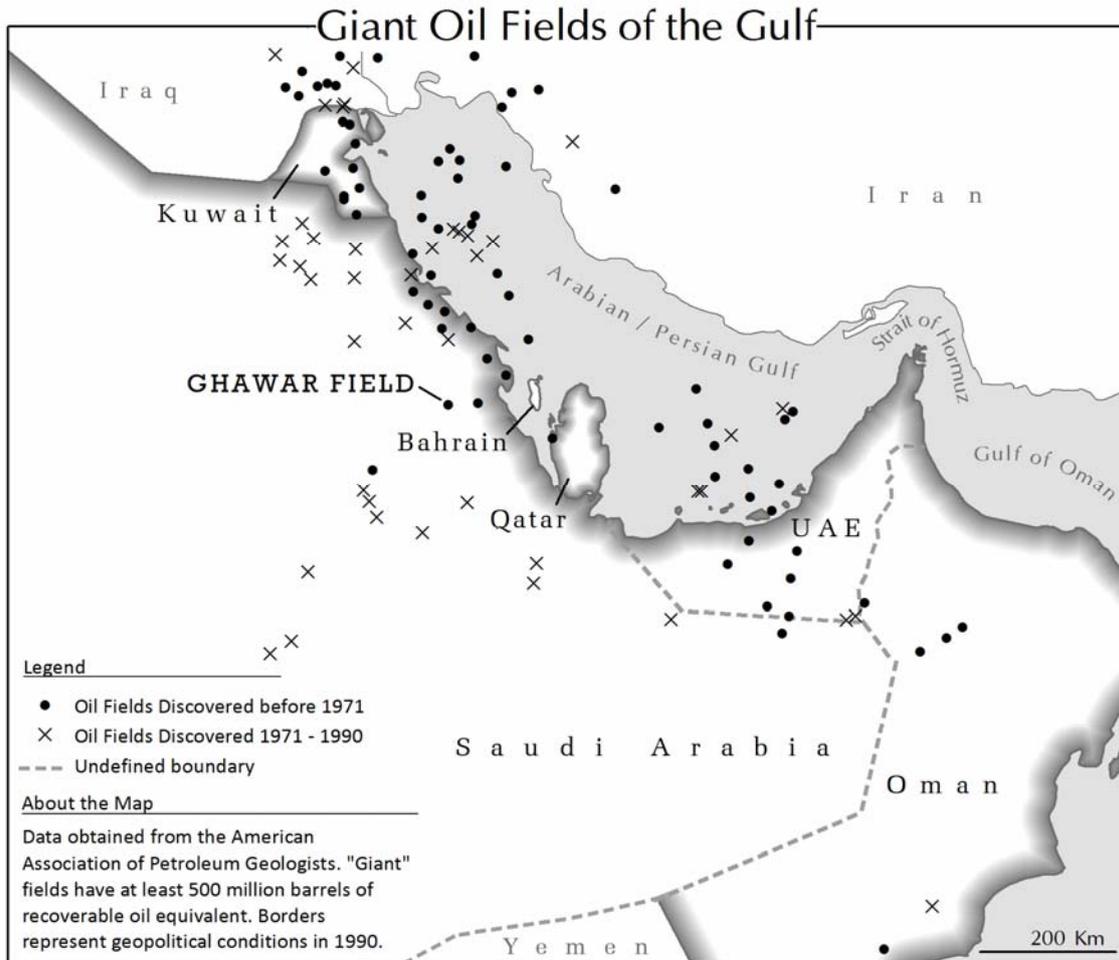
Map 1: The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1971



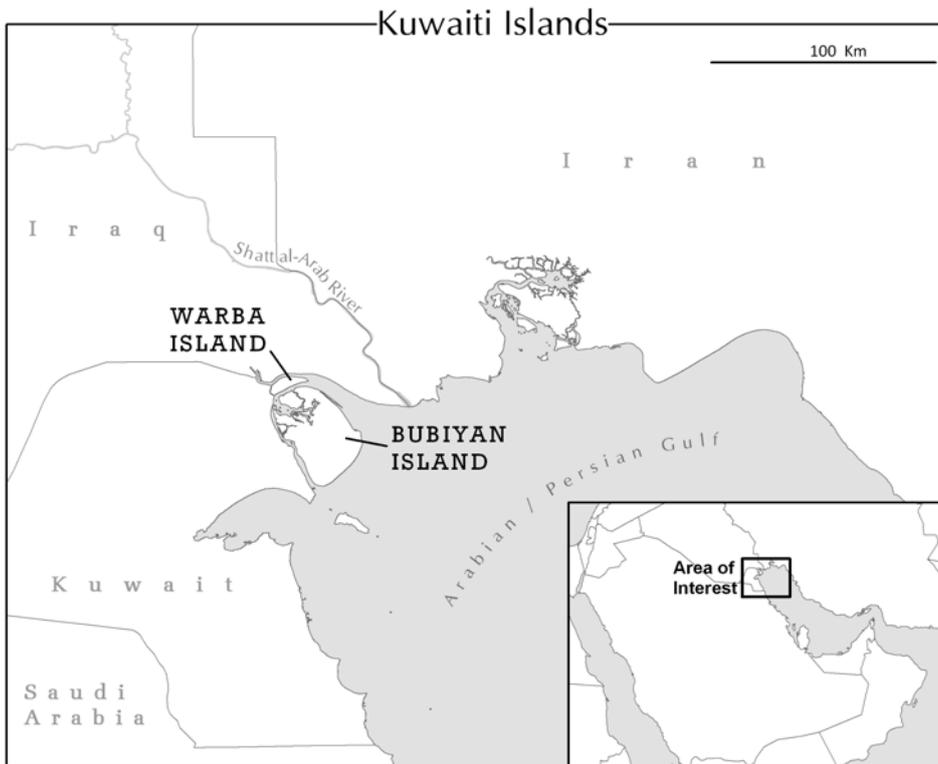
Map 2: The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1990



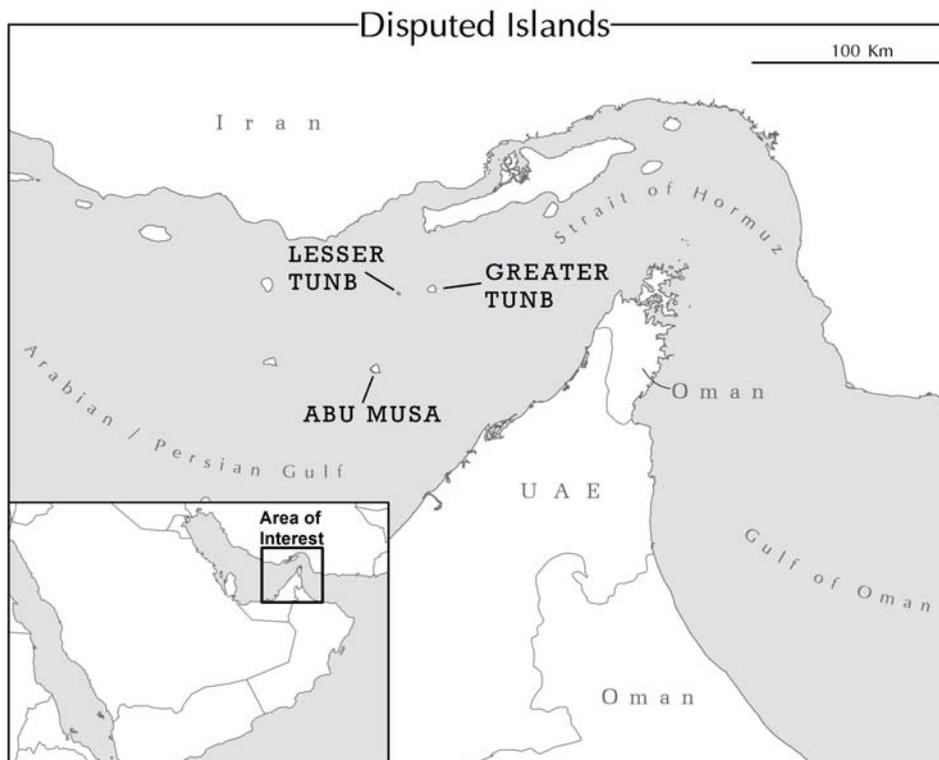
Map 3: Giant Oil Fields in the Gulf



Map 4: Warba and Bubiyan Island



Map 5: Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands



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- Map 1: The Arab Gulf Monarchies in 1971
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- Map 3: Giant Oil Fields in the Gulf
- Map 4: Warba and Bubiyan Island
- Map 5: Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands

Signed on September 4, 2013,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashwan Reddy', written in a cursive style.

Ashwan Reddy

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