

Bringing the Leader Back In:  
The Gulf War and the Role of State Leaders in Alignment Decision-Making

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To Joseph and Christine Eckhoff,  
whose unhesitating support made this possible

## Introduction

This paper will investigate the concept of agency in international relations and, more specifically, the role of a state's foreign policy decision-makers in alliance formation. Contrary to the dominant trend in international relations scholarship (i.e. structural realism), which argues that the material capabilities of a state and the imperatives of an anarchic international system determine a state's foreign policy and leave little to no room for the individual decision-maker, this paper will argue that variations among foreign policy decision-makers, and not just variations in the distribution of power, do make a difference in how states form and contribute to their alliances. The test case for this argument is the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing international crisis and Gulf War. It will demonstrate that the beliefs, personalities, backgrounds, leadership styles, and decision-making environments of the foreign policy decision-makers in several Middle East states played a significant role in their respective state's decision to ally with other states in the wake of the invasion.

Much has already been written from the perspective of political psychology about the causes of war. Even with regard to the Gulf crisis, political psychologists and foreign policy analysts such as Stephen J. Wayne, Jerrold Post, and Stanley A. Renshon have written about how the personalities of Saddam Hussein and President George H. W. Bush

contributed to the outbreak of the Gulf War.<sup>1</sup> This paper is not interested in the causes of war, but rather the formation of alliances and the contributions that states made to those alliances. It therefore looks not at the leaders of the major powers and main adversaries in the conflict, but at the leaders of the middling states in the region that were impelled to pick a side in the conflict. In particular, it will follow the foreign policy decision-making of Jordan and Turkey.

This paper cannot offer a cogent theory about the role of leaders in foreign policy and will not attempt to do so. It can only offer evidence to support the claim that the cognitive processes of foreign policy decision makers explain how states form alliances during a crisis and how they contribute to those alliances, and this approach to understanding foreign policy provides a much closer fit to real-world alliance formation than the generalizations that structural realists offer.

#### STRUCTURAL REALIST VIEW OF ALLIANCE FORMATION

From the point of view of realism, the dominant school of thought among scholars of International Relations, the leaders of a state are as interchangeable as cogs in a machine. The behavior of states, they argue, is determined by the imperatives of an anarchical international system in which an individual state must rely on itself to provide for its own security. Within such a system, a state must act in accordance with its national interest, though its range of actions are constrained by its own material power and by the distribution of power among the other states in the system. The interaction among states is therefore analogous to the collisions among billiard balls. The individual state is the agent of change in this model and can be thought of as rational unitary actor, meaning that it acts as a singular entity to assess its range of policy options within the system and choose the option that offers the maximum utility.

Realists do not deny that, in the real world, the task of foreign policy decision-making ultimately lies with the political leader of the state, but because all leaders are

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen J. Wayne, "President Bush Goes to War: A Psychological Interpretation from a Distance," in *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict*, ed. Stanley Renshon (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); Jerrold M. Post, "Saddam Hussein of Iraq: A Political Psychological Profile," *Political Psychology* 12, no. 2 (June 1991): 279-89.

merely generic rational utility maximizers in a deterministic international system, they are of little consequence as individuals and, in fact, practically interchangeable. The decisions and behavior of a given state would be the same, regardless of who is leading it.

This paradigm can now be applied to a state's decision to form an alliance. In the traditional literature on alliance, such as the writings of Morgenthau, alliances are a fundamental element of the notion of the "balance of power," a term that refers to the state of equilibrium or stability in the distribution of power in the international system. As Morgenthau puts it, "whenever the equilibrium is disturbed either by an outside or by a change in one or the other elements composing the system, the system shows a tendency to reestablish either the original or a new equilibrium."<sup>2</sup> Each state in a self-help system has an interest in preserving or increasing its own power, but whenever the state increases its power to the point that it disrupts the equilibrium within the system, then the other states will seek to restore the balance through an alliance whose combined power is capable of re-establishing the equilibrium.

Walt offers a somewhat more nuanced narrative of alliance formation in which states balance against threat rather than merely balance against power. He argues that states tend to ally with (bandwagon) or against (balance) the foreign power that poses the greatest threat, and that the level of threat a state poses is determined by (1) its total resources, (2) its geographical proximity, (3) offensive capabilities, and, most interestingly, (4) aggressive intentions.<sup>3</sup>

In Walt's view, there are good arguments for balancing as well as bandwagoning. One reason a state might choose to balance against the threat is that it might find it safer to join with other states that cannot readily dominate it in order to avoid being dominated by a state that can. Another reason is that joining the weaker side will increase the state's influence within the alliance, because the weaker side has greater need for assistance. On the other hand, a state might choose to bandwagon with a threat because doing so may forestall an attack by it. Also, if the threatening state proves victorious in a conflict, a

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1967): 162.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

bandwagoner may share in the spoils of its victory. A state usually balances against a threat, but it might be more inclined to bandwagon with a threat when it is weak, when it has in adequate access to allied support, and when the threatening state is closer to victory.

A useful test case for this concept of alliance formation is the Gulf Conflict of 1990-1991, which was sparked when Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Iraq, with its sizeable resources and offensive capabilities, not to mention its brazenly aggressive actions, play the role as the threatening state in Walt's model. In reaction to the invasion, the states neighboring Iraq were obliged to choose whether to balance against or bandwagon with the threat. Among them, only Jordan chose to bandwagon, because its close geographical proximity to Iraq and relative lack of resources and military capabilities left it especially vulnerable to an Iraqi attack, which Jordan hoped to forestall by ingratiating itself with the threatening state. Other states in the region, including of course Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, but also Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, chose to balance against the threat, allying with one another and with the United States and other world powers in order to avoid domination by Iraq. Together these states reversed Iraq's gain in the ensuing military conflict and restored the status quo antebellum to the international system.

Conveniently absent from this model are the political leaders, the decision-making elite, of these states. After all, it should matter little who the individual leaders were. Any other rational being in their respective positions would have come to precisely the same conclusions that they did, given the exigencies of the power distribution within the international system and their states' positions in it. There is no need to look any further than that for variables to explain the outcome. Doing so would only muddy the waters of an already clear stream of logic.

#### CRITICISMS OF THE STRUCTURAL REALIST VIEW

The shortcomings of this explanation, however, are readily apparent, and this paper will continue to use the Gulf Conflict as a case for critiquing this realist approach

to explaining alliance formation. One problem is its lack of specificity. The model leaves open the possibility that a state will may choose either to balance or to bandwagon, but does not specify the conditions under which a state will choose to do one or the other or whether states will discriminate in their choice of alliance partners. Would one state join with just any other state in balancing against a state that threatens them both? After all, in the view of structural realists, all states are functionally similar units, so there really should be no problem. But if that is so, then why didn't Israel ally with Saudi Arabia or the other Arab states in the U.S. coalition? If any one state was truly threatened by Iraq, it certainly was Israel, as Iraq rained down missiles on that country throughout the crisis. Why then wouldn't Israel have banded together with the rest?

Moreover, it fails to explain the extent to which a state will contribute to the alliance. Jordan, for example, may have bandwagoned with Iraq, but to what extent did it actually help Iraq? Also, although Egypt and Turkey both chose to balance against Iraq, why did Egypt choose to deploy troops to fight Iraq while Turkey did not? Thus the problem with the structural realist interpretation of alliances is that, as Jervis observed, "the environment may influence the general outline of the state's policy but not its specific reactions."<sup>4</sup> It also doesn't help the structural realist case when Kenneth Waltz, the father of structural realism, sighs that theory is mostly omissions.<sup>5</sup>

Then there is also the issue of a state's aggressive intentions. How is it possible for one state to know in an anarchic international system whether another state has aggressive intentions? Before the Gulf crisis, it might have seemed straightforward enough that Iraq, having amassed troops on the border of Kuwait, had aggressive intentions toward its fellow Gulf state. But what about another similar case in relatively recent history, when in 1941 Germany had amassed troops on the border of the Soviet Union, poised to launch Operation Barbarossa? Although the Soviet Union was well aware of the German military presence on its front doorstep, it refused to heed warnings from Western powers for months and was caught completely off guard when the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976): 17.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth M. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *American Political Science Review* 84, n. 3 (September 1990): 30.

Germany finally did launch its attack. What explains the Soviet Union failure to perceive Germany's aggressive intentions?

These issues are related to another problem with Walt's explanation, and with the structural realist theoretical paradigm as a whole, which is their lack of a robust concept of the agent. Realists treat states, acting as a unitary whole, as the agents within this model. That is, states are "purposeful actors whose actions help reproduce or transform the society in which they live," to borrow George's useful definition of the agent.<sup>6</sup> That a state can be a unitary, purposeful actor is an erroneous assumption from the start. A state is an abstraction and therefore cannot possess agency. The reality is that what determines a state's behavior is the decision-making unit within the state, which is comprised of human beings. Moreover, these human beings, as well all intuitively know already, are not the perfectly rational actors that realists claim them to be, but come loaded with foibles and flaws.

#### COGNITIVE FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

In so doing, this paper will adopt the practices of cognitive foreign policy analysis (CFPA), which is a subfield of International Relations that seeks to explain the process of human decision-making with regard to foreign affairs. This field is largely built on the work of political psychologists such as Jervis, who examined the role of human cognition in the political behavior and how the misperceptions of political leaders led to international conflict. However, unlike political psychology, which tends to focus on the individual level of analysis to the exclusion of all others, and structural realism, which focuses only on the system level of analysis, CPFA "integrates a variety of information across levels of analysis and spanning numerous disciplines of human knowledge."<sup>7</sup> It is an agent-oriented approach, asserting that the foundational level of IR is not composed of states, as structural realists and even liberal IR theorists would argue, but of "human decision-makers acting singly or in groups." In other words, it asserts that human beings

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Valerie Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

are the true agents, or purposeful actors, in IR, and that concrete information about a state's decision-makers is necessary to explain that state's behavior within the international system.

While structural realists assume that individual decision-makers can be treated as practically interchangeable rational utility maximizers, foreign policy analysts know that the human decision-making process is not so perfectly uniform. CPFA is unwilling to black box the state and thereby treat its leaders as functionally irrelevant as separate units within the state. Instead, CPFA asserts that understanding how humans perceive and react to the world around them, and how they shape or are shaped by the world around them, is central to understanding the foreign policy of a state.

This leads to some degree of difficulty when it comes to formulating theories. How can one formulate a cogent theory about foreign policy based on the infinite variation in human features? Even Hans Morgenthau threw up his hands while quoting Blaise Pascal, who observed that "Cleopatra's nose, had it been an inch shorter, the whole face of the world would have been changed." How can one theorize that?

#### RATIONAL ACTOR MODEL VERSUS POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

The realist assumption that leaders can be treated as rational actors is a primary point of contention in this paper, so it is worth devoting a moment to elaborate on this point. Under this model, the goal of the actor is to maximize value under constraints. In order to do so, the actor prioritizes his competing goals, specifies the set of available strategies, collects information about the situation, estimates probable costs and consequences of each strategy, and then selects the strategy that offers maximal utility and minimal cost.<sup>8</sup> Realists use this model because of its parsimony, which allows the individual rationality to be subsumed into the greater collective rationality of the state.

Political psychology, in contrast, argues that political leaders are not perfectly rational decision-makers. Psychological models of political decision-making examine the effect of the following: (1) the content of the individual's beliefs; (2) the psychological

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<sup>8</sup> Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, *Causes of War* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 128-161.

processes through which they acquire information and make decisions; and (3) the personalities and emotional states of the individual. This approach reveals that every step of the rational actor model is an inaccurate and over-idealized representation of the decision-making process—a more prescriptive than descriptive model.

It is not the place to offer a full accounting of the many psychological models relating to decision-making, as it is not the goal of this paper to test any specific one of these models. I will, however, attempt to touch on some of the most important of these models in order to give a general sense of the role that cognition can play in the decision-making process. Here are some of the major psychological models:

1. **Misperception:** The study of the role of misperception in international politics has been pioneered by Robert Jervis. Misperceptions lead to divergent expectations of the outcome of war. The most important misperceptions are those that involve the estimation of the opponent's capabilities and intentions. An exaggeration of either could lead to hostilities, as could an underestimation of them, which could lead to overconfidence in one's own capabilities.
2. **Cognitive biases:** Humans are hardwired with certain information-processing tendencies that cause them to deviate from the rational model. These tendencies are referred to as *cognitive biases*, and include (1) "selective attention," which means the tendency to see what one expects to see based on prior information. Because of this bias, people will be more receptive to information consistent with their beliefs than to information that contradicts their beliefs. Another cognitive bias is the tendency toward (2) premature cognitive closure, which means that one will tend to end a search for information once one's preexisting views gain adequate support. Also, humans have a (3) hierarchically organized belief system, in which the highest-level, deepest-held fundamental beliefs are solidly anchored and therefore difficult to change, despite new and contradictory information. Finally, humans are prone to (4) analogical reasoning, in which they apply lessons from the past, particularly those that occurred recently or affected the individual directly during one's own life.

3. In contrast to cognitive biases are motivated biases, which are derived not from the individual's mental hardwiring, but from an emotional need to maintain an internally coherent belief system and minimize what is called "cognitive dissonance," or internal psychological conflict. These biases include the tendency to view desirable outcomes as more likely to occur while undesirable outcomes are less likely.
4. Another set of psychological models that apply to human decision-making fall under the heading of *prospect theory*. These models explain the extent to which individuals are willing to take risks. In general, humans are more sensitive to losses than to gains (risk aversion), and are therefore more likely to take more risks to avoid losses than to make gains. Also, if the choice is between a certain loss or a gamble that might lead either to a greater loss or to a lesser loss, an individual will tend to take risks in order to avoid the certain loss. However, perceptions of loss depend on how an individual frames his reference point. If an individual adjusts his reference point such that a goal becomes the neutral point and the status quo is viewed as a loss, he or she will tend to take risks in order to "restore" the loss and attain that reference point.
5. Finally, there is a set of models referred to as the *poliheuristic theory of decision making*. These describe how policymakers tend to eliminate unacceptable strategy alternatives from the outset of the decision-making process and thereafter base their rational utility calculation on the remaining alternatives. This is a deviation from the rational actor model, in which the policymaker would carefully weigh the probable utility and cost of all available options.

To make a full psychological assessment of the political leaders of Jordan and Turkey would be beyond the scope of my competence. What I am able to do, however, is present enough evidence to suggest that the states' alignment decisions had less to do with structural factors than with the conceptual framework of the foreign policy decision-makers within the state. In using the term "conceptual framework," I am referring to the leaders' contextualization of the problem and understanding of their states' roles in it, as well as the leaders' goals and motivations in finding a solution to the crisis.

## WHAT LEADERS DO

This paper not only concerned with whether leaders matter in foreign policy, but how they matter. Leaders impact the foreign policy of their states in the following ways:

1. *Leaders define the national interest.* A state can have a jumble of competing foreign policy goals and interests, formed from a complicated web of diplomatic and economic ties that may apply to both sides in a conflict. For a state to follow one goal often means it must sacrifice another. A leader decides which goals and values of the state will take priority over others.
2. *Leaders interpret the international constraints on their state.* Assessing the external structural constraints on a state is not often a straightforward exercise. Leaders often make subjective interpretations on what is possible in a given situation, and very often overestimate or underestimate the capabilities of other states in the international system.
3. Leaders shape the strategies of their state. Leaders decide how a state will employ its resources to achieve its goals. Leaders often have idiosyncratic preferences for certain strategies above others. Saddam Hussein, to use an obvious example, had a preference for negotiating on the battlefield rather than at the bargaining table, even when such tactics seemed unnecessary or counter-productive.
4. *Leaders shape the intentions of their own state and perceive the intentions of other states.* In shaping the strategies of their state, the leaders determine whether it has aggressive intentions against any other state. More importantly, however, the leader is the lens through which a state perceives the intentions of other states. Only Saddam Hussein knew whether Iraq had any aggressive intentions against any states other than those he directly attacked. For states such as Egypt, Syria, Turkey, or Morocco, which Iraq did not directly target until the outbreak of hostilities, their leaders had to interpret the behavior of Iraq in order to determine whether that state constituted a threat to them as well. This addresses the perplexing case in Walt's

argument regarding how aggressive intentions are defined and assessed, as they cannot be determined purely by structural, material factors alone.

5. Leaders respond to domestic pressures. Following Hermann and Hagan, this paper will show how leaders often played a two-level political game, forming a compromise between international and domestic politics.<sup>9</sup>

#### METHODOLOGICAL BARRIERS

This topic does not lend itself easily to a tidy, well-structured study with clear dependent and independent variables. The challenge of the study is to find clear linkages between the alignment behavior of the state and the beliefs of individual actors within the state. The methodological challenges in this paper are considerable. The most important of these is that it is written from a distance, using mostly news reports and other secondary sources, from which it is difficult to piece together a complete psychological map of the leaders they describe. To the extent that these sources are incomplete or inaccurate representations of the beliefs of decision-makers, my analysis will suffer.

This paper does make use of some primary sources, mostly in the form of speeches and quotations from interviews. The memoirs that are available are mostly those of American officials, not Middle Eastern ones. Precious few Middle Eastern political figures have published memoirs, and those who have done so, such as Chief of the Turkish General Staff Necip Torumtay, often have not yet seen their memoirs translated into English. At best, only a few lines from them could be gleaned from secondary sources in which they had been quoted. Furthermore, a researcher must be careful to accept the recollections of politicians with a grain of salt, as their memoirs have often been written several years after leaving office and with an interest in defending their own record in office.

Yet another caveat is that a focus on the role of the individual decision-maker may tend to de-emphasize the legitimate external structural factors that played a role in a state's behavior. Regardless of a decision-maker's diplomatic skill or other individual-

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<sup>9</sup> Margaret G. Hermann and Joe D. Hagan, "International Decision Making: Leadership Matters," *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998).

level variables, he was only able to act within the bounds of his state's material capabilities. What this paper will try to show, however, is that external structural imperatives and the range of a state's capabilities did not have a determinate effect on the behavior of that state with regard to alliance formation, but rather were broad enough to leave a large space open for human agents to play a deciding role.

## Jordan's King Hussein in the Gulf Crisis

Jordan's actions during the Gulf War defy most models of alliance politics. Typically under neo-realist alliance theory, a weak state like Jordan might be expected to bandwagon with, rather than balance against, a strong state like Iraq if allied support is unavailable to the weak state and when the stronger state is perceived as the likely victor in a future conflict.<sup>10</sup> Neither of these conditions, however, was met in the Gulf crisis. Because Jordan had access to a massive coalition of allies whose collective strength vastly exceeded that of Iraq, one might have predicted that Jordan would join the coalition and make at least symbolic contributions, or, at the very least, free ride on the coalition's efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Instead, Jordan conspicuously bandwagoned with Iraq throughout the Gulf crisis, and although its government officially condemned the invasion of Kuwait and continued to recognize the al-Sabah family as Kuwait's legitimate rulers, Jordan sympathized with Iraqi grievances against Kuwait, as well as with Saddam Hussein's efforts to link his occupation to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Syrian lands, and it made little effort to cooperate with the U.S.-Saudi coalition. In fact, it openly condemned the

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<sup>10</sup> For a full analysis of neo-realist alliance theory, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 32.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett et al., *Friends in Need: Burden Sharing in the Persian Gulf War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): 324.

coalition and its efforts to oust the Iraqi occupation forces militarily. This position cost Jordan dearly, alienating it diplomatically from Jordan's traditional Western patron states and Arab neighbors and placing it in grave financial jeopardy by cutting it off from the much-needed economic aid that those countries could offer.

There are many competing explanations for Jordan's behavior during the Gulf Crisis. During the preceding decade, Jordan and Iraq had built strong economic ties with one another to the point of mutual dependency, and Jordan may have become the hostage of its economic reliance on Iraqi transit trade through Aqaba and cheap oil shipments from Iraq. Jordan's populace, over half of which consisted of Palestinian Arabs, was also taken in by the Iraqi dictator's superficial displays of solidarity with the Palestinian cause and strongly supported Iraq throughout the crisis. If the regime were to oppose this popular fervor, it would risk collapse, given its own tenuous legitimacy among its people. The regime may therefore have bandwagoned with the external threat, Iraq, as a means of balancing against this internal threat.

These explanations, while not without merit, are incomplete. While they create a plausible narrative in which the Jordanian regime's decisions are made logical in light of the existing conditions, they neglect to account for how the foreign policy decision-makers within the regime itself, i.e. King Hussein, conceptualized the situation and arrived at the decision to bandwagon with Iraq. This section attempts to restore a sense of agency to the discussion by examining, to the extent possible, the conceptual framework within which King Hussein operated during the Gulf Crisis, by looking at the king's own words, deeds, and personal history.

## INITIAL EXPLANATIONS

### **1. Neo-Realist and Political-Economical Explanations**

The best explanation, in realist terms, for Jordan's behavior is its overwhelming economic dependency on Iraq, which had grown immensely throughout the Iran-Iraq War. This dependency rested on three pillars: (1) Iraq's use of the port of Aqaba; (2) Iraq

as the largest market for Jordanian exports; and (3) cheap oil imported from Iraq. Iraq's war with Iran had led to the closure of Basra and Umm Qasr, its only major ports in the Persian Gulf, and worsening relations with Syria, which supported Iran, led to the closure of the trans-Syria oil pipeline in 1982.<sup>12</sup> Iraq therefore desperately sought the use of Jordan's Red Sea port of Aqaba, which had been made all the more appealing by the reopening of the Suez Canal in 1975. As such, it invested heavily in Jordanian infrastructure related to the port and made monthly payments of \$12 million. By mid-1990, some 70 percent of all the imports and some 25 percent of all the exports through the port of Aqaba were transit trade, and most of it was going to and from Iraq.<sup>13</sup> By 1989, 40 percent of Jordan's non-phosphate exports were going to Iraq.<sup>14</sup> Finally, by 1990, Jordan depended on Iraqi oil to meet 80 to 90 percent of its needs.<sup>15</sup>

A realist would argue that Jordan simply could not sacrifice this economic relationship with Iraq, and indeed during the Gulf crisis, a senior Jordanian official contended that for Jordan to adhere to the U.N. embargo on Iraq would be tantamount to committing economic "suicide."<sup>16</sup> The Jordanian government estimated its financial losses from the embargo at \$1.1 billion in 1990, and its potential losses at \$2.5 billion for the following year.<sup>17</sup> These are all highly significant figures for an economy that was a paltry \$4 billion at the outset of the Gulf crisis.<sup>18</sup>

The reverse, however, is true. Jordan could certainly have expected members of the coalition to compensate it generously for its losses, just as other Middle East members of the coalition received aid, trade deals, and other financial enticements from the United States, the Gulf states, and other coalition members. Jordan was supposed to receive replacement for Iraqi crude through the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, or Tapline, which ran from Saudi Arabia through Jordan to Lebanon. Instead, Saudi Arabia chose to

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<sup>12</sup> Amatzia Baram, "Baathi Iraq and Hashemite Jordan: From Hostility to Alignment," *Middle East Journal* 45 (1991): 58

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Reed, "Jordan and Gulf Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 69 (1990): 24.

<sup>15</sup> Baram (1991), 67.

<sup>16</sup> Reed, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Bennett et al, 325.

<sup>18</sup> Reed, 24.

shut off the Tapline to Jordan in retribution for what Jordan's perceived support for the Iraqi invasion. Moreover, Saudi Arabia refused to buy any Jordanian goods.<sup>19</sup> One could also assume that Jordan lost an additional \$550 million in its annual aid from Gulf states and \$600 million in annual remittances from Jordanians working in the Gulf.<sup>20</sup> The United States even suspended its relatively meager annual aid of \$20 million in military assistance and \$35 million in economic assistance.<sup>21</sup> Finally, trade in and out of Aqaba all but dried up anyway, despite Jordan's refusal to adhere to the embargo, as international shipping voluntarily avoided the port. The argument, therefore, that Jordan's leaders could not oppose Saddam Hussein on the grounds of economic hardship seems to ring hollow. It also fails to explain the sympathetic, and sometimes even effusively laudatory, tone of the media and of political rhetoric in Jordan during the crisis.

## **2. Domestic Political Explanation**

A better explanation comes from the perspective of the state of public opinion in Jordan, and indeed this is the argument most frequently resorted to in analyses of Jordanian behavior during the Gulf War. Although it is tangential to the critique of realism that is presented in this paper, it is nevertheless worth noting for the sake of a full elucidation of the factors weighing on the decision-makers in Jordan. The combination of economic discontent, recent political liberalization, and Palestinian support for Saddam conspired to make for a very delicate political situation for Jordan's king. This section will, however, attempt to show that King Hussein's apparent sympathy for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War seems to have exceeded the nominal support that would have been required to satisfy the populace and instead seems to point to a different explanation based on psychological factors centering around the king.

Jordan's economy was in dire economic straits as a result of the downturn in the Middle East's economy during the late 1980s, which followed the worldwide collapse in

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<sup>19</sup> Reed, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Jamil E. Jreisat and Haana Y. Freji, "Jordan, the United States, and the Gulf Crisis," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 13 (1991): 101.

oil prices. King Hussein was obliged to accept strict IMF policies in order to qualify for financial assistance, thereby further deepening its economic misery. In April 1989, riots broke out in southern Jordan, originating in the town of Ma'an, which had been a traditional "bedrock constituency" of Hashemite rule. The riots brought the downfall of the unpopular Prime Minister Rifai and the replacement of top government and administration officials.

Since there was little the king could do to change the economy, he redirected the frustrations of his people by adopting a policy of "defensive democratization," whereby he allowed greater freedom of the press, which Rifai had sought to stifle, and called the first general elections in twenty-two years. This played into the hands of the Islamic fundamentalists, who won 35 out of the 80 seats, as well as various leftist parties, including the Baath Party and Palestinian leftist organizations.<sup>22</sup> One can easily imagine how the empowerment of these opposition forces would have limited the king's room to maneuver during the coming crisis.

Following the invasion of Kuwait, almost daily pro-Iraqi demonstrations were held in Jordan beginning on the first day of the invasion and continuing until the end of the conflict. At their peak, the rallies included some 70,000 protesters and were tolerated and occasionally even backed by the Jordanian regime, and Jordanians in Amman volunteered in droves to fight for Iraq.<sup>23</sup> This public outpouring of enthusiasm for Saddam Hussein came in response to his linkage of the crisis to Western imperialism and Zionism. Many Jordanians, and not just the 60 percent of them who were of Palestinian origin, decried the perceived hypocrisy of the international response to the occupation of Kuwait and the vigorous enforcement of U.N. Security Council Resolutions against Iraq, while the U.N. Security Council Resolutions against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories continued to be ignored.

Given these factors, some have argued that this domestic pressure dictated the king's actions during the crisis, as any contradiction of Jordanian popular opinion and

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<sup>22</sup> Reed, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Markus Bouillon, "Walking the Tightrope: Jordanian Foreign Policy from the Gulf Crisis to the Peace Process and Beyond," in *Jordan in Transition*, George Joffé, ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 6.

reversal of the process of liberalization would almost certainly have swept him and his dynasty out of power. Because of his fierce criticism of the West, King Hussein's popularity among Jordanians reached unprecedented levels, and Jordanians felt united as never before.<sup>24</sup> The king was viewed as "walking the tightrope"<sup>25</sup> between international reputation and economic survival on the one hand and popular domestic pressures in order to save his throne.

In a refinement of the existing structuralist balance of power and balance of threat theories, Steven David offered an insightful corollary that goes a great way toward explaining Iraq's balancing against Kuwait. He distinguishes Third World states from other states because of their especial susceptibility to internal threats that challenge the regime's hold on power. When making alliance choices, he argues, Third World regimes must take into consideration not only external threats but also internal threats, and those regimes tend to balance against or bandwagon with whichever threat poses the most imminent challenge to the regime's survival. As a rule, David argues, "when a leadership is confronted with a choice between aligning so as to benefit the state but endangering its hold on power or aligning in such a way that harms the state but preserves its power, it will choose the latter."<sup>26</sup> Alignment decisions become more complicated for regimes when external threats and internal threats are interrelated, as when an external threat foments internal insurrection. David refers to the strategy of aligning with or against interrelated threats as "omni-balancing."

In the case of Jordan, the Hashemite regime not only faced a threat on its eastern border, but a threat within its borders in the form of the massive popularity of Saddam Hussein both in the Jordanian street and the Jordanian parliament. This severely restricted the Jordanian regime's options. Siding with the United States against Iraq would have been beneficial for the state as a whole but not for the regime, for it ran the risk of inciting popular outrage against the regime, which Saddam may easily have used to inflame anti-royalist fervor in Jordan. This might well have spelled the downfall of the

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<sup>24</sup> Reed, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Bouillon, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 243.

Jordanian regime. In order to appease both the internal threat and the external threat, which were closely interrelated, the regime engaged in omni-balancing, bandwagoning with both threats and saving itself in the process.<sup>27</sup>

This argument too has its shortcomings. As the proponents of the omni-balancing alignment theory state, “the critical question is whether the king recognized this situation and acted upon it.”<sup>28</sup> That is indeed the critical question. However, there is little evidence to suggest that is how King Hussein conceptualized his situation. While there is no doubt that King Hussein must have felt significant pressure from his people during the crisis, the king’s words, both public and private, and actions do not betray any lack of comfort with his decision to back Saddam Hussein, nor do they show that he viewed Jordanian public opinion as a significant constraint on his actions. If King Hussein’s hands were in fact tied by the interrelationship of internal and external threats, they were tied in a way that seemed to accord well with his own individual beliefs. In other words, King Hussein seemed to have a genuine sympathy for Saddam Hussein and displayed a much greater bias toward him than the exigencies of domestic politics would have demanded.

## KING HUSSEIN’S ROLE IN THE GULF CRISIS

It would be disingenuous to explain Jordan’s behavior during the crisis by reducing it to the personal predilections of its leader, but as King Hussein’s biographer Nigel Ashton observed, “for King Hussein, the Gulf crisis was as much about his relations with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and U.S. President George Bush as it was about oil, the preservation of the international order or the defense of Arab nationalism.”<sup>29</sup> Geopolitical or domestic political explanations may partly account for Jordan’s behavior, but the fullest explanation for Jordan’s anomalous behavior comes

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<sup>27</sup> Richard J. Harknett and Jeffrey A. VanDenBerg, “Alignment Theory and Interrelated Threats: Jordan and the Persian Gulf Crisis,” *Security Studies* 6, no. 3 (1997): 128.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>29</sup> Nigel Ashton, *King Hussein: A Political Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 258.

from understanding the life history, personal relationships, personality, and worldview of King Hussein, and especially his relationship with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The discussion must begin with an account of the actions that King Hussein took during the Gulf crisis. Throughout this period, he devoted his efforts to a quixotic search for a middle ground in the conflict, seeking a negotiated withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

His involvement began when, at the February 1990 meeting of the Arab Cooperation Council, the organization's first anniversary, Saddam Hussein made the announcement that he wanted a complete moratorium on the loans that Iraq had taken from the Gulf states during the Iran-Iraq War, as well as an immediate additional infusion of \$30 billion. He asked King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to relay this message, telling them to "let the Gulf regimes know that if they do not give this money to me, I will know how to get it." King Hussein immediately passed the message on to the Gulf states on Saddam's behalf.<sup>30</sup>

Not only did Saddam argue that the other Arab states were ungrateful for the sacrifice Iraq made during its eight-year war against Iran, which he cast as a war on behalf of the Arab nation, but he further accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of colluding to bankrupt Iraq by exceeding their OPEC quota for oil production and glut the oil market, thus driving down the price of oil. Moreover, he accused Kuwait of stealing Iraqi oil by slant-drilling into the southern sector of the Rumaila oil field, which straddled the Iraq-Kuwait border, and he noted that Kuwait had set up police posts, military establishments, and farms on the border territory that Iraq considered its own. Most worryingly, Saddam began to revive an Iraqi claim that Kuwait was historically a part of Iraq, and thus Iraq had a rightful claim to take control over it.<sup>31</sup> If there was any doubt in King Hussein's mind that Saddam's grievances were legitimate, he did very little to show it at any point throughout the crisis.

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order 1990-1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995): 45.

<sup>31</sup> Ashton, 265.

The Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute came to a head in July of that year, when the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency noticed a build-up of Iraqi military forces on the Kuwait border, which seemed to be far in excess of what Saddam needed if his intent was only to intimidate the Kuwaitis.<sup>32</sup> President Bush spoke to King Hussein over the phone on July 28, expressing “hope that the situation will not exceed the limits of reason.” The king replied, “There is no possibility for this, and it will not reach this point.”<sup>33</sup>

The next day Hussein met with Saddam in Baghdad, expressing his concern that the Americans would intervene in order to reverse an Iraqi attempt to invade Kuwait. The best way to resolve his dispute with Kuwait, he argued, was through a negotiated “Arab solution.”<sup>34</sup> On July 31, Hussein alerted the Americans that the situation was becoming serious. He informed President Bush that “the Iraqis are angry, but I hope that something will take place in the interests of greater cooperation in the region.” Bush asked, “Without war?” Hussein said he hoped so.<sup>35</sup>

Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait on the morning of August 2 seems to have come as a profound shock to King Hussein. He spent all day attempting to reach Saddam by telephone, but Saddam only deigned to answer him in the afternoon, when his forces were already in Kuwait City. Saddam reportedly told him to relax, saying that he was only interested in teaching the Kuwaitis a lesson, not in taking their country.<sup>36</sup> The Kuwaitis’ “nose had to be rubbed,” he told the king.<sup>37</sup>

That day, King Hussein flew to Alexandria to meet with Hosni Mubarak. He cautioned Mubarak against adopting “a position of condemnation and accusation and a tough stance that might pave the way for outside intervention.” If foreigners were to intervene, he warned, “we will tear each other’s eyes out.” Together they telephoned President Bush and pleaded with him not to react hastily and to give the Arabs an ample chance to solve this problem on their own in an “Arab context.” Bush gave them 48

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<sup>32</sup> Freedman and Karsh, 57.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>34</sup> Ashton, 266.

<sup>35</sup> Freedman and Karsh, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Jack O’Connell and Vernon Loeb, *King’s Counsel: A Memoir of War, Espionage, and Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011): 171.

<sup>37</sup> Ashton, 268.

hours to find a solution. They then telephoned Saddam and asked him to receive King Hussein the next day.<sup>38</sup> The king's goal would be to find a "face-saving formula," one that would allow Saddam to withdraw of his own will while still addressing his grievances against Kuwait.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the foreign ministers of the Arab League were beginning to assemble in Cairo for an extraordinary summit, and King Hussein asked Mubarak to delay any public reference to the invasion until after he had spoken with Saddam.

At this point, there are two divergent narratives of what took place. According to King Hussein, who flew to Baghdad and met with Saddam on August 3, Saddam agreed to begin withdrawing from Kuwait in four days, provided that the Arab foreign ministers in Cairo did not blame him for invading Kuwait and no one threatened to eject him by force. Saddam also agreed to attend a mini-summit in Jeddah with other Arab Gulf leaders in order to discuss a resolution to his conflict with Kuwait. King Hussein was elated by this and contacted Mubarak upon his return to Amman. He was dumbfounded, however, when Mubarak told him that he was under considerable political pressure to condemn the invasion, and the foreign ministers issued a condemnation later that day and demanded an unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces.<sup>40</sup>

Mubarak's version of the events was that he and King Hussein agreed beforehand that Saddam would have to meet two preconditions before the attending the mini-summit, namely an immediate withdrawal from Kuwait followed by the restoration of the Sabah family. Mubarak accused Hussein of being too timid to make these demands on Saddam and could not agree to a summit on the basis of such uncertain Iraqi intentions. It is likely, in any event, that Saddam did indeed tell Hussein that he intended to withdraw in four days, as Iraq's military command did issue a statement to that effect that very same day, but it was most likely a disingenuous statement designed to assuage fears that

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Avi Schlaim, *Lion of Jordan: the Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008): 487.

<sup>40</sup> O'Connell, 172.

Saddam would go on to invade Saudi Arabia. Other than a nominal reduction in forces, there was no sign that Iraq intended to withdraw.<sup>41</sup>

Within a few days of the invasion, however, King Hussein was already making public statements that were perceived as sympathetic to Saddam Hussein. In an August 4 interview on Jordanian TV, the king said that the invasion “did not come out of the blue” and that Saddam had legitimate grievances toward Kuwait that needed to be addressed diplomatically.<sup>42</sup> Around the same time, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher complained to President Bush in a telephone conversation that King Hussein was “not helpful. He told me the Kuwaitis had it coming—they are not well liked. But he grudgingly agreed to weigh in on Saddam.”<sup>43</sup>

As the Bush Administration began to conceive of its sanction regime against Iraq, it recognized the unique predicament that Jordan faced, given its economic dependency on Iraq and the vociferous pro-Iraqi sentiments among the Palestinian refugees living in Jordan. They began to organize international financial help and emergency Arab oil assistance, provided that King Hussein implemented the sanctions. The king, however, had been a loud voice in opposition to U.S. and Saudi plans to send a force of American and Arab troops to protect Saudi Arabia, “blasting [the U.S.] in speeches and through the press.”<sup>44</sup>

On August 13, King Hussein asked President Bush for an urgent meeting to discuss the growing crisis in Kuwait. He and several of his advisors arrived at President Bush’s summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine on August 16. Bush recounted that he pressed “for some middle ground that could solve the problem, and I kept saying, there isn’t any—it’s got to be withdrawal and restoration of the Kuwaiti regime.” Hussein tried to explain that he could have achieved an agreement if he had had more time, and also that an Arab solution was still possible. Bush responded that most Arabs were against Saddam, and indeed a majority of Arab League states had voted to send a pan-Arab force to Saudi Arabia less than a week before. Bush prodded Hussein to admit that

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<sup>41</sup> Freedman and Karsh, 70f.

<sup>42</sup> Ashton, 270.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998): 348.

Saddam was a madman, but Hussein refused. Both Bush and Hussein left the meeting highly disappointed in one another.<sup>45</sup> In an interview afterward, one of King Hussein's advisors who accompanied him on the trip said that a recurring topic of conversation between the king and his officials throughout the trip was the duplicity of the Kuwaitis and their supposed theft of Iraqi oil.<sup>46</sup>

Right up until the launch of Operation Desert Storm, King Hussein would cling to this notion that a negotiated "Arab solution" was possible. In general, this "face-saving" formula consisted of the following points: (1) freezing the military build-up; (2) mutual withdrawal of Iraqi and U.S. forces; (3) replacement of those forces by U.N. and Arab peacekeepers; and (4) the establishment of an Arab League committee to discuss the territorial dispute between Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>47</sup> In the decades before the crisis, King Hussein had made a career of finding the middle ground in Arab politics and most recently had acted as an important mediator between Saddam Hussein and the United States during the Iran-Iraq War. He continued to think in those terms, even as he grew increasingly ostracized by the West for his perceived support for Saddam and his growing isolation from, and lack of contact with, the most important Arab leaders. He continued to harbor ideas of mediation even after his meeting with Saddam Hussein on September 5, in which Saddam dismissed his plan outright, stating that Kuwait was the 19<sup>th</sup> province of Iraq and that he wouldn't budge.

Saddam gave him hope, however, when the Iraqi leader began to link the Iraqi-Kuwaiti conflict with the Arab-Israeli one. King Hussein latched onto Saddam's implication at a December meeting, where, incidentally, he helped to convince Saddam to release Western hostages in order to improve his negotiating position with the United States. At this meeting, Saddam hinted that he might be willing to compromise on Kuwait if there were some sort of progress on the Palestinian issue. Hussein evidently did not see through Saddam's feeble ploy to undermine the Arab coalition that was arrayed against him by casting his invasion as a way of promoting the Palestinian cause.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>46</sup> Ashton, 272.

<sup>47</sup> Freedman and Karsh, 162.

Instead, King Hussein began to put forward a new plan in which Iraq would withdraw from Kuwait in exchange for an international peace conference on the Middle East, plus some Kuwaiti concessions. This Maghrebi peace initiative, conceived of in collaboration with King Hassan II of Morocco and President Chadli ben Jedid of Algeria, betrays the full extent of the Jordanian king's naivety. The plan called for, among other things, significant concessions on the part of Kuwait, namely the handing over of the islands of Warba and Bubyah and the Kuwaiti side of the Rumaila oil field to Iraq; the withdrawal of Western troops from the Gulf prior to withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait; a permanent Iraqi troop presence in Kuwait; and the banishment of the Kuwaiti royal family.<sup>48</sup> The plan envisaged a future relationship between Iraq and Kuwait that resembled that of France and Monaco, or, worse yet, Syria and Lebanon, whereby Kuwait would be able to maintain nominal sovereignty under the domination of Iraq. By this time, however, King Hussein had already lost all credibility as an impartial mediator, and his plan was given no consideration.

As late as December, the king still believed that a negotiated solution to the crisis was still possible, and he continued to make wildly unrealistic proposals to achieve this. In a December 6 speech to the Military Staff College in Amman, he attributed the escalating conflict to an "embargo on dialogue" and called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East, to be composed of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, as well as all parties to the conflict, including the P.L.O., for the purpose of simultaneously implementing the Security Council resolutions regarding both Kuwait and the Arab-Israeli conflict. "No one among us," he asserted, "can believe that a single Arab rejects the linkage between the solutions of the Gulf crisis and the solution of the Palestinian problem."<sup>49</sup> He also welcomed President Bush's November 30 diplomatic initiative to exchange envoys with Iraq. He failed to see that

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<sup>48</sup> Amatzia Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent: Iraqi-Jordanian Relations, 1968-92" in *Jordan in the Middle East: the Making of a Pivotal State*, Joseph Nevo and Ilan Pappé, eds. (Ilford, UK: Frank Cass & Co., 1994): 138-9.

<sup>49</sup> King Hussein, "Address, Military Staff College Graduation," in *Selected Speeches by His Majesty King Hussein I, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: 1988-1994*, by International Press Office, Royal Hashemite Court (Amman: Jordan Media Group, 1994): 30.

Bush's gesture was merely a means of showing U.N. allies that the U.S. had exhausted all peaceful solutions before resorting to war. Secretary of State James Baker would not be sent to negotiate or compromise with Iraq, but only to accept an Iraqi commitment to withdraw.<sup>50</sup>

If there was any doubt that the king was biased toward Saddam Hussein during the crisis, that doubt was completely dispelled on February 6, 1990, when the king delivered a passionate address in which he appealed for a cease-fire in the war against Iraq and declared the allied military effort to be "against all Arabs and Muslims and not against Iraq alone," arguing that it was intended to assert "foreign hegemony" in the Middle East. He turned his sharpest vitriol on Arab members of the coalition for contravening the principle of Arab national unity:

"When Arab and Islamic territory is presented as a base for the armies of the allies to destroy the Iraq of Arabism and Islam, and when Arab money is used to finance this war with all this generosity that the Arabs, including us and our brothers the Palestinians in light of our pan-Arab responsibilities and our geographic position, had not experienced, I say—when all this takes place—any Arab or Muslim can imagine the size of the crime committed against his religion and nation."

He even went on to preach solidarity with "fraternal Iraq" and praised it for its courage in standing up to the West:

"As for our people in Iraq, what words can match the peak of their bravery, loftiness, resolve, and their unique power and ability to face 28 allies and 28 armies, led by the world's strongest and greatest armies, in terms of equipment and hardware? To those kinsfolk, we extend all love and pride while they are defending us all and raising high the banner saying God is great, the banner of Arabism and Islam. Greetings to its glorious women and valiant children and its elderly people who are facing with the firmness of the faithful, the aircraft, missiles, and dozens of tons of bombs."<sup>51</sup>

The United States was swift in its rebuke. President Bush viewed this as a personal betrayal and ordered a "review" of the \$55 million American aid package to

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<sup>50</sup> Woodward, 338.

<sup>51</sup> FBIS-NES-91-026, "King Gives Arab, Islamic Nation Speech 6 Feb," Amman Domestic Service [English translation], February 6, 1991, Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports, 28.

Jordan during 1991, which ended in the U.S. Senate's suspension of the aid package. Secretary of State James Baker voiced the Bush administration's alarm and unhappiness with the king's position, though he said that the U.S. intended to "keep lines of communication open to the King notwithstanding the fact that he's on the side and we have a major disagreement here with him."<sup>52</sup> It seems that the Bush administration took into consideration Jordan's strategic position between Israel and Iraq and therefore had little interest in seeing the destabilization of Jordan. They therefore sought to press home their displeasure with the king while at the same time keeping him within arm's reach.

Saudi Arabia was not so ambivalent. Like the Egyptians, the Saudi government had suspected that King Hussein was complicit in the Iraqi invasion since the beginning of the crisis, and they were further miffed by the king's new request to be addressed by the title "Sharif," which was the title used by his great-grandfather Hussein, the emir of Mecca, in the days before the holy city came to be ruled by the Saudi family. Saudi Arabia expelled all Jordanian diplomats and closed the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, or Tapline, through which Jordan was supposed to receive crude oil to replace its lost Iraqi supply.<sup>53</sup> Even long after the war, Saudi Arabia refused to have any financial dealings with Jordan and forbade all Jordanian imports until King Hussein's death in 1999.<sup>54</sup>

Things were much different on the domestic front, as King Hussein reached the acme of his popularity among his citizens in a period of unrestrained adulation that bolstered the legitimacy of the Hashemite regime. Anti-Western demonstrations were held, and for the first time in its history, the regime permitted and even encouraged them.<sup>55</sup>

On February 15, Saddam Hussein signaled that he would be willing to abide by the U.N. resolution calling for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, but only if the allies met certain conditions, including the withdrawal of allied forces, the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories, payment of war reparations to Iraq, and the removal of the

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<sup>52</sup> Jreisat and Freij, 111.

<sup>53</sup> Ashton, 274.

<sup>54</sup> Reed, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Schlaim, 493.

Sabah family from power in Kuwait.<sup>56</sup> While it was clear to all that this was a wholly unrealistic plan designed solely to drive wedges among the Arab members of the coalition and to turn their public against their regimes, King Hussein latched onto the initiative, sending an effusive personal message to Saddam: “With happiness and joy we receive your responsible peace initiative, which is based on your genuine commitment to the supreme Arab interests. The demands contained in your peace initiative are legitimate pan-Arab and national demands which are in harmony with our Arab hopes and with international legitimacy. We do not believe a single Arab can stand against or reject these demands.”<sup>57</sup> In contrast, President Bush dismissed the initiative outright as a “cruel hoax.”<sup>58</sup>

After the launching of the ground offensive against Saddam on February 23 and his inevitable defeat five days later, King Hussein hailed the end of hostilities and congratulated the restored government of Kuwait. The king also wrote a letter to President Bush asking to reestablish discussions with the U.S. and to stanch the deterioration in their relations. The U.S. answered the olive branch by launching an investigation into allegations that Jordan defied the U.N. embargo and smuggled weapons into Iraq during the war.<sup>59</sup> The Bush administration was in no hurry to answer the king, but its new post-war initiative to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict necessitated a rapprochement that started with an April 2 visit by James Baker to Aqaba during his travels among Middle East countries to arrange negotiations. The White House and State Department waited until the end of April to reinstate regular contacts with Jordan.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> “Chronology: 16 November 1990-15 February 1991.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20 (1991): 200.

<sup>57</sup> Freedman and Karsh, 379.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> “Chronology,” 195.

<sup>60</sup> Jreisat and Freji, 116.

## UNDERSTANDING KING HUSSEIN

### **King Hussein's Ideology**

King Hussein followed a distinctly Hashemite brand of Arab nationalism. This combined a pan-Arab sentiment that preached independence from outside control or domination of the Arab world on the one hand with a belief in the destiny of the Hashemite family, the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and erstwhile rulers of Mecca and leaders of the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire, to provide leadership to the Arab world.<sup>61</sup> After the collapse of Ottoman rule, Britain placed the Hashemites on the thrones of the newly independent states of Iraq and the Transjordan. For a brief period in 1958, the two kingdoms were united as the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan, serving as the Hashemite response to the union of Egypt and Syria as the United Arabic Republic. King Hussein is known to have viewed Iraq as part of a lost Hashemite patrimony and never lost his dynastic sentiment for Iraq even after the brutal killing of his cousin King Faisal II in 1958.<sup>62</sup> The King would return to these two themes of Arab nationalism and Hashemite destiny many times in his public statements and speeches throughout his reign, particularly during the Gulf crisis.

### **Personality Traits**

Based on King Hussein's life history and behavior in the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Political psychologist Aaron S. Klieman made four important observations about the king's character and outlook, which are worth recounting here. The first of these is the king's intensely private quality. He seems to rely little on others and keeps few very close advisors. Early in his reign, he suffered a series of betrayals, including a conspiracy to overthrow him in 1957 and several assassination attempts. He felt betrayed by Egyptian President Gamal Abd al-Nasser after the Six-Day War in 1967, and he felt likewise betrayed by Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat following Sadat's visit to

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<sup>61</sup> Ashton, 281.

<sup>62</sup> O'Connell, 162.

Jerusalem in 1974 and his separate peace agreement with Israel in 1977.<sup>63</sup> He even felt betrayed by one of his traditional Western patrons, the United States, after the Lebanon invasion when Reagan placed him in the awkward position of having to reject a plan that would place the West Bank and Gaza Strip under Hashemite tutelage, only for the U.S. Congress to undermine the plan altogether by cutting off American arms shipments to Jordan. This led him to declare in a *New York Times* interview: “I now realize that principles mean nothing to the United States.” The most searing betrayal, however, and the one that, according to his own testimony, is deeply etched in his memory, is the image of his grandfather’s “so-called friends...scattering like bent old terrified women” when that king, Abdullah I, was gunned down at his 15-year-old grandson’s side at the Dome of the Rock in 1951.<sup>64</sup> King Hussein’s sense of loneliness and isolation was reflected in the title of his 1962 autobiography *Uneasy Lies the Head*. He would feel that Jordan shouldered the burden of defending the Arab world by itself—except, perhaps, until the rise of another ardent Arab nationalist in Iraq.

Another characteristic that Klieman has noticed is that the king possesses a distinctive and strict personal code of honor and a powerful sense of duty. Having been thrust into the responsibilities of kingship at the premature age of 17, King Hussein lamented that he never had the opportunity to prove that he could make his way on his own merits. He wanted little more than to demonstrate that he was capable of holding down an ordinary job. He seems to have redirected this desire into a fervent and all-consuming dedication to his duties.

Thirdly, some have taken notice of the king’s tendency toward “pessimism or stoicism that borders on fatalism.” He has been known to swing from moods of heightened expectation to the depths of despair, sometimes withdrawing in long periods of depression. In past crises, when his efforts had been rebuffed, he has been known to

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<sup>63</sup> Aaron S. Klieman, “Jordan’s King Hussein,” in *Leadership and Negotiation in the Middle East*, Barbara Kellerman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1988): 124.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

throw up his hands resignedly, bemoaning the deficiencies of Jordan and absolving himself and his country from responsibility from whatever calamity he foresees.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, another aspect of the king's personality is the sway that his grandfather, King Abdullah I, continued to hold over him long after his assassination. King Hussein felt a constant need to measure up to his grandfather's expectations and political legacy. Days before his assassination, Abdullah charged Hussein "to do you very best to see that my work is not lost." Hussein further recollected that his grandfather always told him that "so much has gone before you—don't be the disappointing link."<sup>66</sup> Hussein would come to view his loss of the West Bank to the Israelis in 1967 to be a personal betrayal of his grandfather's legacy and of the destiny of the Hashemite dynasty, and he seems to have spent the remainder of his reign seeking atonement by championing the cause of Arab national unity.

### **King Hussein and Saddam Hussein**

King Hussein's relationship with Saddam Hussein began in the 1970s, a decade that saw the nadir of relations between Amman and Baghdad. The overthrow of King Hussein's cousin Faisal II on July 14, 1958 understandably resulted in Jordanian hostility toward the new regime in Baghdad, and it reached further and further lows as Iraq tried to place some of its commandos in the service of King Hussein's rival Yasser Arafat, and finally bottomed out when Iraq-based commandos under the command of the break-away Palestinian militant Abu Nidal attacked the Amman Intercontinental Hotel in November 1976.

Meanwhile, Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein, effectively Iraq's second-in-command, and his increasingly powerful circle, who acted largely as the de-facto rulers and foreign policy decision-makers of Iraq under the ailing and elderly president Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, were working at cross-purposes with the rest of the Baghdad regime. They began to redirect the Baath Party first toward a middle course with Amman and then began to court King Hussein intently toward the end of the 1970s. In the early years

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 126.

of the decade, Saddam arranged for the Amman municipality to receive a loan of \$420,000 from Iraq, and the next year Iraq sent delegations to discuss economic cooperation between Jordan and Iraq as well as the unification of the two country's educational curricula, which would encourage cultural exchanges and technical cooperation.<sup>67</sup> This was followed by an initiative in 1976 to send large sums of money to King Hussein, apparently without the knowledge of the Iraqi president.<sup>68</sup> Saddam continued to send financial support to Jordan from that year onward, playing a major role behind the scenes in the 1978 Baghdad Summit pledge to send \$1.25 billion to Jordan per annum.<sup>69</sup> King Hussein seems to have preferred Iraqi aid to aid from other Gulf countries because of the lax manner in which the aid was doled out.<sup>70</sup>

Amatzia Baram, considered Israel's leading Iraq analyst, attributes this change in policy to geopolitical calculations on the part of Iraq.<sup>71</sup> Jordan had been gradually improving its strained relationship with Syria throughout the 1970s, culminating in a full rapprochement in 1975, just five years after Syria invaded Jordan to aid the PLO forces that Jordan violently expelled. Meanwhile, relations between Syria and Iraq were deteriorating rapidly, jeopardizing Iraq's access to Syria's Mediterranean ports. Iraq was desperate to find an alternative, and after the 1975 re-opening of the Suez Canal, Jordan's Red Sea port seemed to be an appealing option.<sup>72</sup>

For Jordan, a close relationship with Iraq had its pluses as well. It would no doubt be much more lucrative for Jordan, given the former's ability to offer not only oil, but also both financial and military support in the event of a conflict with the U.S. or Israel.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Iraqi use of the port of Aqaba would bring an abundance of transit duties, as well as loans and grants targeted at improving roads between Iraq and Jordan and the port facilities in Aqaba.

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<sup>67</sup> Baram (1991), 53.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>69</sup> Ashton, 213.

<sup>70</sup> Robins, 151.

<sup>71</sup> Amatzia Baram serves as the Director of Iraq Studies at the University of Haifa, Israel, and served as a senior reserves officer in Israeli Military Intelligence specializing in the Iraqi political system at the time of the Gulf crisis.

<sup>72</sup> Baram (1991), 54.

<sup>73</sup> Ashton, 212.

In early 1980, Iraq, now under the direct rule of Saddam Hussein, began a major push to win over Jordan as it began to ramp up its war plans against Iran. When the war forced the closure of the Iraq's Gulf ports of Basra and Umm Qasr, followed in 1982 by the closure of the Trans-Syria oil pipeline, Iraq leaned ever more heavily on the Jordanian port, and compensated Jordan heavily in monthly fees and a discounted oil price. As mentioned earlier, Iraqi use of Aqaba, a privileged status in Iraq trade, and the cheap oil that Iraq offered served to cement the two countries together, an effect that was further compounded by the \$853 million debt that Iraq amassed with Jordan.

King Hussein seems to have supported Iraq for reasons greater than economic. In fact, he is noted to have stood out among Arab countries in the fervor of his support for Saddam during the Iran-Iraq War. When an Israeli attack obliterated Iraq's nuclear reactor in Osirak, the king was vigorous in his condemnation of the assault.<sup>74</sup> In January 1982, he announced the formation of a contingent of Jordanian volunteers to fight alongside the Iraqi army against Iran, and throughout the war, he visited Iraq more than any other head of state, meeting with Saddam at least once every two or three months.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the king acted almost as Saddam's public relations manager with Western countries, serving especially as a mediator between the U.S. and Iraq. In 1984, Washington even restored formal diplomatic relations with Baghdad at the king's insistence, having written a series of personal letters to President Ronald Reagan calling for "active cooperation with Iraq, which, he argued, was pursuing its "legitimate self-defense."<sup>76</sup> The king even served as a go-between to pass detailed American intelligence information to Saddam.<sup>77</sup> The success with which the king mediated between Iraq and the United States would later on prove to be an impairment to the king, who later would misapply the diplomatic lessons of the Iran-Iraq War to again formulate an intermediary role for himself during the Gulf crisis.

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<sup>74</sup> Robins, 151.

<sup>75</sup> Baram (1991), 59.

<sup>76</sup> Ashton, 219.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 220. The king's files show that in April 1985 he passed along American intelligence regarding a planned Iranian attack west of the Iraqi town of Hur al-Hawizeh. Either the over-hyped the offensive or Iraq's response deterred the offensive, but the attack was not as strong as anticipated.

After the exposure of the Iran-Contra Affair in 1986, which revealed that the United States had been illegally sending arms to Iran using Israeli middlemen, King Hussein commiserated with Saddam, taking it as a personal betrayal of his trust. He dismissed Reagan's defense of the actions as "flimsy," offering the following response: "In all honesty, sincerity, and friendship, I must admit that all my efforts to comprehend the rationale for the actions of the United States over the last eighteen months were in vain."<sup>78</sup> A few months later, he observed in an interview that "U.S. credibility is almost zero in the region and this is indeed so as far as I am concerned."<sup>79</sup> The king's disillusionment with the U.S. continued through the end of the war.

There are several possible reasons for the king's support for Saddam. For one, the king was wary of any importation of dangerous revolutionary ideas from the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran, which might provoke anti-royalist unrest in Jordan.<sup>80</sup> Hussein also saw Saddam as a potentially effective shield against his regional enemies Israel and Syria, as well as against his domestic enemies.<sup>81</sup> On an ideological level, however, Hussein seems to have viewed Saddam as a champion of the Arab nation and its defender against the new threat from Iran. The Arab national cause could never have seemed more hopeless, especially in the wake of Sadat's perceived defection from the Arab camp. The king, an ardent believer in pan-Arabism, felt that the Arab world desperately needed a charismatic new champion, under whose banner they could all reunite.<sup>82</sup> By all accounts, Hussein genuinely believed that Iraq was acting in self-defense and attempting to regain its territory, waters, and rights, even after it had become clear that Saddam had taken the initiative to instigate the conflict by invading Iran.<sup>83</sup>

As the war progressed, the political relationship between the Jordanian king and the Iraqi president, which was initially based on mutual regional and economic security,

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 223. From a letter from King Hussein to Ronald Reagan, 17 November 1986, President Reagan File, Royal Hashemite Archives.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 226. From a King Hussein interview with Radio Monte Carlo, FBIS-MEA-87-002, F1-3, Vol. 5, 14 January 1987.

<sup>80</sup> Curtis Ryan, "Between Iraq and a Hard Place: Jordanian-Iraqi Relations," *Middle East Report*, no. 215 (2000): 41.

<sup>81</sup> Baram (1991), 59.

<sup>82</sup> Ashton, 211.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 219.

developed into a close personal relationship with a momentum of its own. King Hussein admired Saddam as a committed Arabist, regardless of whether he actually was one, and, according to a member of the Hashemite family, thought of Saddam as a “noble savage” and a “Bedouin” who was strict and brutal but fair.<sup>84</sup> It is unclear why the patrician king would consider the low-born Iraqi dictator a “Bedouin,” though it is also unclear that these words are the king’s own exact descriptors. What is clear is that the king held Saddam Hussein in high esteem. This notion is shared by leading Israeli scholars of Jordan and Iraq. Amatzia Baram claims that “by 1988, personal relations between [Saddam] Hussein and [King] Husayn were closer than any two other Arab leaders.”<sup>85</sup> Avi Schlaim likewise claimed that King Hussein was the “only leader in the world who could describe himself as a personal friend of Saddam Hussein.”<sup>86</sup> This notion is also reinforced by an interview with NBC just days after the invasion of Kuwait, in which the king described Saddam as an “Arab patriot.”<sup>87</sup>

Saddam also skillfully played on King Hussein’s Hashemite sensitivities. In July 1988, during one of Hussein’s frequent visits to Baghdad, Saddam took him to Baghdad’s royal Hashemite cemetery, where he and Saddam placed flowers on the graves, and prayers were read for the souls of Hussein’s cousins King Faisal I and King Ghazi. Saddam also announced that he would spend \$3.2 million to renovate the royal cemetery and that the bronze statue of Faisal I, which had been erected in 1930 but torn down by an angry mob on the day of the overthrow, would be re-erected on its original site.<sup>88</sup> King Hussein and Saddam repeated this visit several times, and there was always a

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 211. I queried the author, Nigel Ashton, about the source of this comment, and he clarified that it was “a private comment to me in an off the record conversation with a close family member of the King who asked not to be cited as a source.” One might easily guess that this individual was the king’s disinherited brother, Prince Hassan bin Talal, who is known to have considered Saddam an “incorrigible,” “dangerous,” and “murderous” tyrant. See Jack O’Connell, *King’s Counsel*, p. 161-3 and Avi Schlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, p. 493.

<sup>85</sup> Baram (1994), 126.

<sup>86</sup> Schlaim, 486.

<sup>87</sup> Harknett and VanDenBerg, 148.

<sup>88</sup> Baram (1991), 64.

parade beforehand. It meant a great deal to King Hussein that Saddam allowed this to take place, who warmly remembered these solemn visits long afterward.<sup>89</sup>

The personal bond between the two leaders continued in the years after the cessation of hostilities between Iraq and Iran. In October 1988, King Hussein was called to Iraq when, after Saddam's psychopathic son Uday viciously murdered his father's personal valet and food taster, Saddam was considering executing his own son. Saddam's wife Sajida Talfa recognized the unique influence that Hussein had on Saddam and summoned him to Baghdad to talk Saddam into sparing his son's life. According to one of Hussein's advisors, Uday's life was spared as a result of Hussein's intervention.<sup>90</sup> This incident shows that the Jordanian king had become more than just a political ally to Saddam—he had now become a family counselor as well.

The post-war political connections between Iraq and Jordan strengthened as well. Saddam sent Jordan with large amounts of weapons that had been captured during the war.<sup>91</sup> The two countries deepened their political and economic ties as well. In February of 1989, King Hussein formed an international economic organization with Iraq, as well as with Egypt and the Yemeni Arab Republic called the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) intended to coordinate economic policy between the four countries. King Hussein was almost successful in using the ACC to broker a peace between Iraq and Syria after he proposed Syria's accession to the ACC as a means of indirectly restoring diplomatic ties between the two countries. Earlier, the king was even successful in getting Saddam and Asad to meet one another in Jafr in 1987. The meeting, however, came of nothing, and ultimately the king's efforts to effect a rapprochement between the two countries failed.<sup>92</sup> With the outbreak of rioting in Jordan and the subsequent fall of Prime Minister Zaid Rifai, who had many close Syrian connections and was viewed as the only Jordanian

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<sup>89</sup> O'Connell, 162.

<sup>90</sup> O'Connell, 162.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph Nevo, "Jordan's Relations with Iraq: Ally or Victim?" in *Iraq's Road to War*, Amatzia Baram and Barry Rubin, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993): 139.

<sup>92</sup> O'Connell, 227.

official with enough clout in Syria to effect this sort of rapprochement, the king's initiative toward Syria was ended, and he remained firmly an ally of Iraq.<sup>93</sup>

Two final events were indicative of the nature of the pre-Gulf crisis relationship between King Hussein and Saddam. The first was Saddam's execution of the Iranian-born British journalist Farzad Bazoft for spying on March 15, 1990. Despite appeals for clemency from British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Saddam forced the journalist to confess to being an agent for Mossad and following a one-day, closed-door trial, Saddam ordered his execution. In the face of widespread outrage in the West, King Hussein defended Saddam's action, speaking of a concentrated attack on Iraq and affirming his full confidence in Iraq's judicial system.<sup>94</sup> Secondly, King Hussein also defended an abrasive speech made by Saddam in which he threatened to "make fire eat half of Israel" if it ever attacked Iraq, and that it would respond to an Israeli nuclear attack with chemical weapons.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusions

Jordan's position throughout the Gulf crisis is best described as bandwagoning. Although Jordan did not openly declare an alliance with Iraq and even criticized Iraq's invasion, it was slow to adopt a U.N. sanction regime against its eastern neighbor and only sketchily enforced those sanctions once it did adopt them; it condemned the allies and their plans to expel Saddam militarily from Kuwait; and it sought a negotiated solution to the crisis that was favorable to Iraq.

There were several major factors that potentially led Jordan's decision to adopt this position. One important consideration was Jordan's high degree of economic dependency on its neighbor, which would have meant grave damage to the Jordanian economy by adhering to the U.N. sanctions regime. However, the shortcomings of this explanation are that Jordan had the option of international financial aid to cover its losses, as several other states who suffered from the sanctions did; also, Jordan's perceived pro-

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>94</sup> Baram (1994), 134.

<sup>95</sup> O'Connell, 264.

Iraqi stance cost Jordan just as dearly from the loss of aid from the U.S. and Gulf states; and Jordanian-Iraqi trade dried up anyway due to allied enforcement of the sanctions. Jordan therefore benefited very little from its pro-Iraqi stance and suffered greatly. If a state were a rational actor, why did Jordan make a choice that proved so detrimental to its economy?

Jordanian public opinion might also have weighed heavily on the government's decision not to side with the coalition. This argument too has its shortcomings. It fails to account for the enthusiasm with which the regime sympathized with Saddam Hussein, which seemed to be in excess of what it needed to satisfy its populace, and there is no indication that King Hussein felt uncomfortable with the domestic political pressure to come out in favor of Saddam.

Jordan's behavior is best explained by understanding its leader, King Hussein. Jordan's behavior seems fully to accord with what is known about King Hussein's personality and personal beliefs. His blend of pan-Arabism and Hashemite dynastic ambitions at least partially explains his affinity for the self-proclaimed pan-Arab champion Saddam Hussein, as well as for the country of Iraq, a former Hashemite realm.

Moreover, the king's personality traits seem to have played a role in Jordanian foreign policy as well. In particular, the king's tendency toward independence and self-reliance that stemmed from a lifetime of significant betrayals, including some by the United States and other Arab leaders. The king's tendency toward fatalism also shows clearly after his efforts to mediate in the crisis were rebuffed.

The most important factor, however, seems to have been the king's personal relationship with Saddam Hussein, which extended back to the rough years of the 1970s and had its origins as a geostrategic marriage of convenience, as Jordan found itself in need of economic benefits and Iraq found itself in need of a port to export its oil. By the 1980s, the contacts between the two leaders grew increasingly cordial as the Iran-Iraq War further entwined Jordan and Iraq, and King Hussein displayed a seemingly genuine admiration for Saddam's pan-Arabist machismo. For his part, Saddam went out of his way to display his respect for the king and his dynasty. Their relationship also

progressed to the point that King Hussein even served as a personal family counselor, mediating a dispute between Saddam and his son Uday. By the end of the war, the king was even defending some of Saddam's blatantly aggressive actions against the West and Israel in the face of international outrage and condemnation. The best explanation for Jordan's bent toward Iraq during the Gulf crisis, therefore, was that it was the continuation of the momentum of this personal relationship between King Hussein and Saddam Hussein, which had been strengthening and thriving with no major mishaps for a decade and a half.

## Turkey's Turgut Özal in the Gulf Crisis

The case of Turkey offers an illuminating contrast to that of Jordan. Both countries were militarily weak compared to their ambitious neighbor. Both countries faced a strong domestic popular and political opposition to any participation in the conflict against Saddam Hussein. Turkey, more so than Jordan, had a long tradition of neutrality in regional conflicts, preferring to build strong trade relationships with all regional actors rather than becoming entangled in the messy squabbles that characterized much of the region's politics since the break up of the Ottoman Empire. Like Jordan, the Iran-Iraq War gave rise to a state of economic interdependence between Turkey and Iraq, with Iraq becoming Turkey's largest regional trading partner, its largest supplier of oil, and a significant source of revenue that Turkey collected from the twin pipelines that conveyed over half of Iraq's oil through southern Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea. Lastly, Turkey and Iraq shared an interest in quashing the separatist tendencies of their sizeable Kurdish minority populations, and, to this end, permitted one another to pursue Kurdish rebels across their borders.

Given this close relationship, it would seem that Turkey and Jordan fulfilled the same criteria for bandwagoning with Iraq, or at least remaining neutral in the conflict. Decision-makers in Turkey, as in Jordan, understood that there was a great deal to lose both in terms of trade and security if they chose to participate in the coalition. Turkey's

NATO membership may have given it greater courage and a sense of ease, but, with the end of the Cold War and the reduction of the Soviet threat, against which Turkey had been an important regional bulwark, the commitment of the alliance to Turkey's security grew questionable. Turkey's regime also may not have faced the same level of vulnerability to domestic opposition that the Hashemite regime did, though Turkish domestic politics had a long history of volatility, and there had been many questions surrounding the legitimacy of the election of President Turgut Özal.

Despite this, Turkey contravened its decades-long policy of nonintervention in regional conflicts and sided squarely on the side of the United States-led coalition. Turkey's major contributions included the closure of the Iraqi oil pipeline, the opening up of Turkish bases for use in coalition air strikes on Iraq, and the deployment of 100,000 Turkish troops along the northern Iraqi border. This of course came at great economic cost to Turkey, and domestic political cost to the government as well.

Turkey's behavior does fit somewhat more neatly into the predictive framework of structuralist alignment theory than does Jordan, though many loose ends remain.<sup>96</sup> Like Jordan, Turkey's behavior is better explained by examining the foreign policy decision-making process of its regime. This examination will show that Turkey's alignment behavior in the Gulf War can be attributed to the initiative of just one man, President Turgut Özal. Özal's unique attributes and conceptual framework drove him to bulldoze over strong opposition and even bypass the Turkish constitution to drag his country into the U.S.-led coalition.

At the outset of the Gulf crisis, Turkey was not only in a political flux, but also torn between its desire to ingratiate itself with the West and its close economic ties with Iraq and its harmonious diplomatic relationship with Baghdad. Its role in the coming coalition was therefore far from over-determined. Would Turkey have done the same thing had someone other than Özal been president? The answer, we will find, is undoubtedly not.

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<sup>96</sup> Walt, 33. Walt predicts that states with a greater probability of allied support are more likely to balance against a threatening state. Turkey's NATO membership undoubtedly gave Turkey's decision-makers a greater sense of complacency in dealing with Iraq, though many in Turkey questioned NATO's commitment to Turkey's defense.

## TURKEY AND IRAQ IN THE 1980s

In November 1989, Prime Minister Turgut Özal, who had been a successful as Turkey's prime minister since 1983, and was the most experienced politician in the government, succeeded General Kenan Evren as president of Turkey, a mostly honorary and ceremonial position within the Turkish parliamentary system of government. For the first time in 29 years, a politician with no connection to the military came to occupy Çankaya Villa. Although perfectly constitutional, his election was the outcome of his own party's parliamentary majority, and it was feared that Özal would not separate his role as president from his partisan leanings.<sup>97</sup> Such fears proved well founded. Far from accepting his constitutional role as a symbolic figure, Özal would come to dominate government policy from behind the scenes, taking advantage of malleability of his relatively green prime minister Yıldırım Akbulut.<sup>98</sup>

Özal's tenure in office, both as president and, for six years before then, as prime minister, was marked by a bold new foreign policy. Since the military coup of 1960, Turkey had followed a policy of isolationism, refusing to become involved in the domestic political affairs of—and, more importantly, the numerous interstate conflicts among—its Middle Eastern neighbors, worrying about the possible negative spillover effects of choosing sides in these disputes. It remained neutral in the Arab wars against Israel, and even in the war on its own doorstep between Iran and Iraq. Turkey preferred to identify with the West, valuing its membership in NATO and was even lobbying for membership in the European Community, and as far as the Middle East was concerned, it sought to foster cordial bilateral political ties and trade relations with all states, including Israel. This echoes back to the attitude of the founder of the Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who endeavored to extricate Turkey from the burden of its traditional role as nominal leader of the Islamic empire—a burden that, in the mind of Atatürk, needlessly cost the Turks an incalculable amount of material resources and countless

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<sup>97</sup> Metin Heper, "Turgut Özal's Presidency: Crisis and the Glimmerings of Consensus," in *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, eds. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 188.

<sup>98</sup> Mustafa Aydın, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Gulf War of 1990-1991* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1998), 13.

numbers of Turkish lives.<sup>99</sup> Atatürk's foreign policy doctrine for the new Turkish republic would be neutrality, or, as goes the mantra enshrined in the Turkish constitution, "*Yurtta sulh cihand sulh*"—peace at home, and peace abroad.<sup>100</sup>

In the nearly 70 years between the founding of the Turkish republic and the outbreak of the Gulf War, the one major departure from this Kemalist principle was the Baghdad Pact, which the Turkish prime minister Adnan Menderes signed in 1955. This agreement joined Turkey in an alliance with Britain, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq ostensibly to act as a buttress against the influence of the Soviet Union. Turkey joined the alliance not because of any interest in becoming involved in Middle Eastern affairs so much as to appear useful to NATO, which it had just joined three years previously.<sup>101</sup> The alliance provoked a strong anti-Western backlash that alienated Turkey from its Arab neighbors, who began to see Turkey as the West's policeman in the Middle East and, as a result, were pushed farther toward the Soviet camp.<sup>102</sup> Later on, after a rocky and controversial premiership, Adnan Menderes was overthrown in a military coup in 1960, sentenced to death and hanged. The whole affair left a decidedly unpleasant aftertaste in the mouths of the Turks, and Turkish governments thereafter endeavored never again to be perceived as the stooge of the West in the Middle East. The tradition of neutrality and non-intervention was so ingrained in Turkish foreign policy that at the outset of the Gulf Crisis, many policymakers and members of the public were convinced that Turkey should not and would not deviate from this safe course.

When Turgut Özal entered the political stage, he claimed to be picking up where his contumacious predecessor left off, pursuing a more outward-oriented foreign policy than previous administrations.<sup>103</sup> In doing this, he was driven by a desire to "spread the weight of Turkish trade," increasing Turkey's economic stature and building new trade

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<sup>99</sup> William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf crisis," *International Affairs* 68, no. 4: 681.

<sup>100</sup> Cameron S. Brown, "Turkey in the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003," *Turkish Studies* 8 no. 1: 91.

<sup>101</sup> Brown, 91, note 35.

<sup>102</sup> Berdal Aral, "Dispensing with Tradition? Turkish Politics and International Society during the Özal Decade, 1983-93," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 1: 73.

<sup>103</sup> Nicole and Hugh Pope, *Turkey Unveiled: A History of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1997), 158.

relationships throughout the world.<sup>104</sup> Already in the early 1980s, as the administration's military-appointed "economic czar," he began to engineer a new free-market economic reform plan.<sup>105</sup> He took advantage of the Soviet collapse by expanding Turkish trade into Eastern Europe and Central Asia. He also expanded Turkish trade into the growing East Asian market, and of course strengthened Turkey's economic ties in the Middle East.<sup>106</sup>

His motivations for this single-minded pursuit of a stronger and freer economy included a desire to gain greater political independence from the United States, for whom Turkey was one of the largest recipients of foreign aid, and reposition Turkey into a larger, more multidimensional alliance pattern.<sup>107</sup> Özal himself formulated this new relationship in the motto "trade, not aid" and sought to replace Turkey's relationship of dependence on U.S. military aid with a relationship based on mutual gain through economic liberalization.<sup>108</sup>

Özal held complicated views on Turkey's relationship with the West. On the one hand, he admired the West for its "science, technology, thinking, understanding, and compromise."<sup>109</sup> A relationship with the West offered great economic opportunities, and throughout his time in office, he doggedly strove to obtain the greatest of these opportunities: membership in the European Community. It would be through economic development that Özal would see Turkey take its place in the "modern and (economically) developed world."<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, however, Turkey differed in many ways from the West, most markedly in terms of religion. Özal wanted to end Turkey's Kemalist, secularist ideological bent that suppressed expressions of Islam and placed relations with the Middle East on a secondary footing behind the West. He would rather see a state that embraced the cultural identity of its people and spoke of the

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<sup>104</sup> Muhittin Ataman, "Leadership Change: Özal Leadership and Restructuring in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 1: 132.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, 92.

<sup>106</sup> Ataman, 132.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Aral, 76.

<sup>109</sup> Ataman, 133.

<sup>110</sup> Aral, 74.

possibility of a full reconciliation between Islam and capitalism and liberal democracy.<sup>111</sup> The embrace of Western means would bring a renewed stature to Muslim nations, according to Özal, and with Turkey at the lead of this development effort, it could reclaim its former glory as the leader of the Islamic world.

The 1980s saw a large increase in Turkish exports to Iraq, which, along with its enemy Iran, both turned to Turkey to meet its demands for foodstuffs, consumer goods, and construction materials during their war with one another.<sup>112</sup> From 1980 to 1988, Turkish exports to Iraq increased from \$135 million to \$986 million, raising Iraq to the status of Turkey's third largest market for exports and by far its largest export market in the Middle East.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, a vital oil pipeline had been opened in 1977 between Kirkuk in Iraq and a Mediterranean export terminal in Yumurtalık, Turkey, near Adana. This became an increasingly vital connection for Iraq as its normal export routes through the Gulf had been closed off during the war, and in 1987 a second pipeline was constructed, increasing the total capacity of both pipelines from one million barrels to 1.5 million barrels per day.<sup>114</sup> In addition to receiving 335,000 barrels of oil per day at preferential rates, Turkey collected \$300 million in oil transit fees from Iraq each year.<sup>115</sup> All of this increased Ankara's economic incentives to maintain good relations with Baghdad.

Turkey and Iraq also saw greater political cooperation during the mid-1980s over their common problem of suppressing Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq. Oftentimes, members of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), a Kurdish separatist guerrilla organization in Turkey, would flee across the border and seek refuge in northern Iraq, over which Saddam's forces had lost control at various points during the war with Iran.<sup>116</sup> In 1983, members of the rebellious Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)

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<sup>111</sup> Aral, 76.

<sup>112</sup> William Hale, *Turkey, the US and Iraq* (London: London Middle East Institute, 2007): 33.

<sup>113</sup> Information from Statistical Yearbook of Turkey. In 1980, Iraq was Turkey's fifth largest market for exports, behind Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, and France. By 1988, only Germany and Italy exceeded Iraq in the purchase of Turkish goods.

<sup>114</sup> Hale, 2007: 33.

<sup>115</sup> FBIS-WEU, 6 Aug 1990.

<sup>116</sup> Hale, 2007: 35.

provided Iran with the support and intelligence needed to launch a successful major offensive into the southeastern part of the Kurdish region of Iraq. Iraq's hold on the northern province further deteriorated during the two-year period after 1985, when the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) broke ties with Baghdad and allied with the KDP.<sup>117</sup>

Realizing the potential for chaos on its southern border, Ankara signed a "Frontier Security Cooperation Agreement" with Baghdad in 1983 that allowed it to carry out "hot pursuit" operations in each other's territory.<sup>118</sup> In October of the following year, Turkey concluded another agreement that stipulated that either side would have the right to make incursions of up to five kilometers within each other's borders. Iraq was only too glad to invite Turkey to assist it with its Kurdish problem in this way and widely publicized the details of the agreement as a warning to rebellious Kurds.<sup>119</sup> As the security situation in northern Iraq crumbled, Turkish forces took advantage of these arrangements in 1983, 1986, and 1987 to counter a freshly re-energized Kurdish separatist movement, which had acquired momentum at Iran's encouragement during the war.<sup>120</sup>

Yet another matter complicated Turkey's relationship with its southern neighbor prior to the crisis, namely the increasingly tense dispute among Turkey, Iraq, and Syria over water rights to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The source of the friction lay with Turkey's Southern Anatolia Project (GAP), a \$20 billion endeavor that involved the construction of 21 dams for irrigation and power generation at the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates. This project was intended to bring greater prosperity to a relatively poor and Kurdish-dominated region of Turkey in the hope that it would forestall any insurrectionary behavior in the region.<sup>121</sup> Turkey was able to proceed with the construction of this massive project because its downstream Arab neighbors had been preoccupied with the Iran-Iraq War, but it provoked sharp protest from Syria and Iraq

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<sup>117</sup> Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 243f.

<sup>118</sup> Hale, 2007: 35.

<sup>119</sup> Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol. 9, Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked, eds. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 471.

<sup>120</sup> Hale, 2007: 35.

<sup>121</sup> Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East* (New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), 34.

once they realized the severe extent of the water restriction.<sup>122</sup> This put Turkey on a shaky footing with both of its neighbors and remained a significant bone of contention between Ankara and Baghdad in the years before the Gulf conflict.<sup>123</sup>

#### TURGUT ÖZAL'S ROLE IN THE GULF WAR

Almost single handedly, President Özal engineered his front-line country's entire response to the Kuwait crisis. As has been shown, it was not clear which stance Turkey might take in dealing with the crisis, and if anything, it seemed that Turkey would fall back on its traditional policy of neutrality and non-intervention in intra-regional conflicts. However, from the very onset of the crisis, Özal threw his weight behind President Bush's efforts, ignoring strong domestic political opposition and public opposition, overruling the opinions of key members of the cabinet and military, brushing aside a long-standing foreign policy tradition, and arguably even superseding the Turkish constitution. Turkey's contributions to the Gulf War coalition, which were far from over-determined prior to the crisis, could very easily have been far lower had Özal not been president.

Immediately following the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, Turkey's government offered a cautious and tepid official response, reflecting its reluctance to become involved in an intra-Arab dispute and jeopardize its links with Iraq or any other Arab state. While the United Nations strongly condemned the invasion in Security Council Resolution 660 and demanded the "immediate and unconditional" withdrawal from Kuwait, Turkey's Minister of State for trade and industry offered a tepid statement to the press that "Turkey regretted Iraq's occupation of Kuwait," which represented "a

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<sup>122</sup> Pope, 221.

<sup>123</sup> Aydın, 12. The crisis reached a climax early in 1990, when Turkey unilaterally diverted 75% of the waters of the Euphrates River for 30 days to fill the Atatürk Dam, the largest piece of the project. Syria and Iraq signed a protocol to regulate their share of the water and together began lobbying Arab countries against Turkey, reviving latent anti-Ottoman sentiments in the Arab world. Turkey was extremely ill at ease to see two militarily superior countries on its southern border united in their hostility against Turkey, and it contributed to a desire in Turkey not to provoke either of its southern neighbors, and especially not to jeopardize the cooperation between Turkey and Iraq over the Kurdish issue.

threat to the maintenance of friendship in the region.”<sup>124</sup> Prime Minister Akbulut issued a similarly tentative statement to the press: “This situation gives rise to concern. We wish to see the crisis resolved through the restoration of Kuwait’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. This situation might lead to the further escalation of violence in the region.”<sup>125</sup>

When President Bush called President Özal the next day in the first of what would be many calls that the President would make to Özal throughout the crisis, Özal gave a much different impression. He insisted that President Bush see to it that Saddam “get[s] his lesson.” He didn’t have an immediate response, however, when Bush broached the topic of Turkey’s geostrategic position in the region and the Iraqi pipeline running through Turkey, which Bush asked to be shut off, but Özal acknowledged that a strong international response would be necessary.<sup>126</sup> Two days later, he announced to President Bush that he was prepared to blockade all oil coming from Iraq, and he also urged the president to assemble a regimen of harsh sanctions against Iraq, and even to consider military options. Saddam, he insisted, was ruthless, and would not stop at the borders of Kuwait. He expressed to President Bush his certainty that Saddam would go on to attack Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>127</sup>

Özal may have felt certain of the need for a response, but his people, and even his own Cabinet, were not so certain. As military options began to be considered, polls in Turkey suggested that more than two-thirds of the country was opposed to any participation on the part of Turkey in an international coalition, though not necessarily out of sympathy for Saddam Hussein, but out of wariness that Turkey might be drawn into an unnecessary war and appear to be acting as an agent of American politics in the region.<sup>128</sup> Özal’s cabinet, along with his party’s parliamentary contingent, reluctantly went along with him as Özal ordered the pipeline from Iraq to be shut off and stringently enforced the international sanctions against Iraq, but they drew the line at military

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<sup>124</sup> Aydin, 16.

<sup>125</sup> FBIS-WEU-90-150, 3 August 1990, 26.

<sup>126</sup> George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 326.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>128</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.), 353.

participation. Bush requested that the U.S. Air Force be allowed to use a Turkish base in Incirlik, and although Özal personally wished to show solidarity with the Americans, he could only authorize its use for humanitarian reasons.

Eventually, however, as Özal pushed more forcefully within his government to allow the U.S. to use Turkish bases for offensive operations against Iraq, the Turkish General Chief of Staff Necip Torumtay resigned on December 3—an unprecedented action in Turkish history, which had been accustomed to civilian leaders being forced out by the military, but had never before witnessed a civilian leader forcing a military leader to give up power in this way. Among Torumtay’s grievances were Özal’s cavalier, autocratic style that brushed aside warnings from his more cautious military chief. Torumtay complained that he found out about Özal’s decision to close the Yumurtalık pipeline on television. “Thus,” he said, “we entered a highly critical period with an idiosyncratic, centrist attitude that brushed the established order aside.”<sup>129</sup> He complained that Özal bypassed the normal chain of command, issuing orders directly to the chief of staff and sidestepping the prime minister’s office, in which the constitution had vested responsibility for military matters.<sup>130</sup> The resignations of the Defense Minister and the Foreign Minister preceded that of Torumtay’s by a few weeks. Like Torumtay, they had been offended by the way in which Özal took matters into his own hands and left them out of the loop. Özal never included Foreign Minister Bozer, who opposed the deployment of Turkish troops in the Gulf, in telephone calls with President Bush and left him out of the conversations with Bush when he and Özal visited Washington in September.<sup>131</sup> Özal also left Bozer to learn about his decision to close the Iraqi oil pipelines from the newspapers.<sup>132</sup>

Özal persisted without them, giving the U.S. free rein to use Incirlik airbase. Özal also ordered 100,000 Turkish troops and 35,000 reserves to the Iraqi border, forcing Saddam to divert no fewer than nine divisions to his northern border, where they would be pinned down for the remainder of the crisis, far away from the actual fighting in the

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<sup>129</sup> Pope, 220.

<sup>130</sup> Brown, 93.

<sup>131</sup> Hale, 686.

<sup>132</sup> Ertan Efeğil, “Foreign Policy-making in Turkey: A Legal Perspective,” *Turkish Studies* 2, no. 1: 156.

south.<sup>133</sup> Özal also sought reassurances from NATO that they would come to Turkey's defense should Saddam retaliate for Turkey's participation in the coalition. The NATO secretary general gave him this assurance, and President Bush also persuaded German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to promise that Germany would come to Turkey's defense.<sup>134</sup>

Public opinion strongly condemned these decisions. Polls showed that two-thirds of Turks were opposed to any Turkish participation in the U.S.-led coalition, which many saw as an imperialistic intervention against a fellow Muslim country.<sup>135</sup> The public did, however, view Saddam as a threat, and were perhaps less driven by sympathy for him than by a concern that Turkey would be drawn into an unnecessary war, and everyone was aware of Turkey's shambolic military record in recent centuries.<sup>136</sup> Özal also faced strong opposition in the Turkish National Assembly, even against backbenchers from his own Motherland Party, under the leadership of former Foreign Minister Mesut Yilmaz. Yilmaz, who abhorred Özal's disregard for the Foreign Ministry, joined with opposition leaders Suleyman Demirel and Erdal Inonu to stall Özal's request to dispatch troops to the Gulf.<sup>137</sup> Özal eventually gained this authorization, but the protracted battle in parliament probably convinced him not to push forward with dispatching troops to Saudi Arabia as he had wished.<sup>138</sup>

## ÖZAL'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It was not out of the generosity of his own heart that Özal pursued this path. Özal was worried that with the changing regional dynamic following the end of the Cold War, Turkey would lose its relevance to the United States and to Europe, as well as the accompanying financial assistance, as a frontline state against the Soviet Union. Turkey's participation in the Gulf War coalition would underscore Turkey's continued importance to the United States and forestall any decrease to the considerable aid

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<sup>133</sup> Andrew Bennett et al, *Friends in Need: Burden Sharing in the Persian Gulf War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 198.

<sup>134</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, 332.

<sup>135</sup> Brown, 88.

<sup>136</sup> Freedman and Karsh, 354.

<sup>137</sup> Brown, 89.

<sup>138</sup> Hale, 1992, 686.

package it received, which, by the end of the Cold War, amounted to \$500 million annually.<sup>139</sup> Özal certainly expected a few other kickbacks from other alliance members and from the United States. From the European coalition partners, he expected a more favorable hearing for Turkey as it renewed its efforts to join the European Community. A prior effort to do so received a cool response in Europe. Moreover, Özal expected Turkey to be given an important role in any post-crisis regional security arrangement. Lastly, he expected the Gulf States to compensate Turkey generously for the economic losses that Turkey suffered as a result of its enforcement of sanctions and the embargo, not just in the form of direct payments, but also in the form of new contracts for Turkish companies in the Gulf and new markets for Turkish imports. For his part, President Bush also made an effort to grant Turkey greater access to the U.S. textile market, and the U.S. military also offered to assist Turkey in the modernization of its armed forces.<sup>140</sup>

A large element of Özal's motivation was the prospect of increasing Turkey's international standing through membership in the European Community. This was an issue that had been dear to Özal's heart. Özal was especially keen to see the removal of quotas on Turkey's textile imports. In April 1987, Özal entered an official application for membership, but European countries rebuffed the request on the basis of Turkey's violation of human rights. By aligning Turkey with the U.S., Özal hoped that a grateful U.S. would lobby European governments to admit Turkey to the EC.<sup>141</sup> In the first month of the crisis, he gave a television interview in which he stated:

“We are the only Islamic country that is a parliamentary and multiparty democracy. Our system is based on a market economy. The state is non-confessional. By giving the example of a moderate policy to the Islamic world, instead of taking the path of fanaticism, Turkey shows that a solution to economic problems is possible. It would be a very short-sighted to leave Turkey out of the EC just because it is a Muslim country. If, on the other hand, the EEC is ready to accept a Muslim member, as NATO is, Turkey could become an example of development and progress.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Bennett et al, 206.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 207.

<sup>141</sup> Aral, 78.

<sup>142</sup> FBIS-WEU-90-167, 28 August 1990, 39.

There is a good deal of information available regarding President Özal's personal opinions regarding Saddam Hussein and Turkey's role in the Gulf crisis. This information supports the notion that this one individual single-handedly drove Turkey's response to the crisis as he pushing against, and often pushed aside, the recalcitrance of bureaucratic forces in the Turkish government.

After the March 1988 ceasefire agreement that ended the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam used the opportunity to take his revenge against the Kurds for engaging in rebellion in collusion with the Iranian regime. In a campaign codenamed the "*Anfal*" (the "spoils"), Saddam savagely destroyed 800 Kurdish villages and forcibly resettled 250,000 people in the south and center of Iraq, leaving the Turkish border region uninhabited, and in August he used chemical weapons against the Kurdish militiamen who attempted to flee to Turkey. Faced with a humanitarian crisis, Turkey contravened its own agreements with Iraq regarding the right of pursuit and refused to permit Iraqi forces to pursue Kurds into Turkey and accepted the settlement of some 63,000 Iraqi Kurds in Turkey.<sup>143</sup> In retaliation, Iraq unilaterally abrogated both "hot pursuit" agreements.

This sudden reversal of policy can be traced to the sudden negative shift that *Anfal* had produced in Turgut Özal's attitude towards Saddam Hussein. Until then, Özal had been willing to overlook Saddam's ruthlessness provided that he did no damage to Turkey's national interests, but, as ministers in Özal's government later recounted, the brutality of Saddam's attacks upset Özal very seriously. From these events, he drew the conclusion that Saddam was "a despot lacking in normal human values," and that he might use his horrific chemical weapons on anyone, including Turkey.<sup>144</sup> Given the important decision-making role that Özal would assume during the Kuwait crisis, this change in attitude was a highly significant portent of Turkey's later decision to forsake Saddam and throw its support behind the coalition forces.

This belief in Saddam's moral depravity explains why, during the Kuwait crisis, Özal was so keen to denounce Saddam and insist to President Bush that he needed his comeuppance. The effect of Özal's opinion is further highlighted when one examines the

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<sup>143</sup> Hale, 2007, 36.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 37.

pre-conflict relationship between Turkey and Iraq and finds few other causes for conflict between the two countries, which had an excellent economic relationship with each other and, until the *Anfal*, a neatly arranged solution to their mutual “Kurdish problem.”

Özal is also known to have held a personal grudge against Saddam for an incident in 1988 when Özal made a prime ministerial visit to Iran. He spoke about this in an interview on Turkish television:

“We informed Iraq that the Turkish prime minister would be visiting Tehran for two days and asked them to stop the missile barrage for the duration. He did not stop. Some 15 missiles landed during our visit.... What I am trying to say is that he [Saddam] had no mercy. Just the opposite occurred when I went to Baghdad two months later. The Iranians informed us that they would not send missiles while I was there.”<sup>145</sup>

In the same interview, he went on to criticize Saddam for his lack of gratitude regarding the use of the Turkish oil pipeline during the war. “At the end of these eight years,” he said, “we believed that Iraq would be more helpful to Turkey.... Unfortunately, that was not the case. As soon as the war was over, assuming the airs of a victor, Iraq raised the issue of water.” In Özal’s eyes, Iraq’s war experience stoked Saddam’s haughtiness, and after the war, he turned threatening glance toward Turkey regarding the massive dam project on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which Özal considered to be “Turkey’s lifeblood.” With Iraq’s growing military strength and aggressive history, and with the possibility that volatile issues such as water distribution, Kurdish separatism, or royalties from the oil pipeline could touch off a future conflict with Iraq, Özal wondered, “Doesn’t anyone think that such an aggressive country will, in the future, constitute a problem for us as well?”<sup>146</sup>

A further characteristic of Özal’s foreign policy ideology was his belief in economic liberalism, which drove his desire to diversify Turkey’s economic options and leverage his country’s position during the Gulf crisis to gain it greater access for Turkish products in the American market. Ironically, he viewed this as a means of weakening Turkey’s commitment to Westernization and dependence on the United States in

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<sup>145</sup> FBIS-WEU-91-005, 32.

<sup>146</sup> Brown, 96.

particular. Through the diversification of Turkey's relationship with the United States beyond direct military aid, he hoped to improve Turkey's bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States and reduce Turkish dependence on it.<sup>147</sup> Özal's premiership and presidency had also been characterized by an increasing diversification of Turkey's economic relations with other Middle Eastern countries and, in particular, with the Turkic states of Central Asia.

Whereas previous Turkish leaders saw their country as linked to and oriented toward the West, Özal conceived of Turkey as a bridge between the East and the West, the center of an interdependent and interconnected network of alliances. Under Özal, Turkey improved relations with the Islamic world, East Asian countries, and, eventually, the newly independent states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. His administration signed more international agreements than any other in Turkish history.<sup>148</sup> It also became a more active participant in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which elected Özal to the position of permanent chairman in 1984. The implication of all of this for the Gulf crisis is that, while at first glance, Turkey appears to have allied simply with the United States, Özal seems to have viewed his role as having sided with both the United States *and* a regional Muslim coalition, thereby strengthening his relationship with all of them and thereby diversifying his country's alliance pattern.

Özal was not unaware of the West's antithetical stance toward Turkey's marginalization of the Kurds and claims to Cyprus. He anticipated that through such economic diversification, he could lessen the relative coercive power that Washington could exert to alter Turkish policy regarding those issues. Furthermore, by joining the coalition, Özal gambled that winning for itself a debt of gratitude, as well as more concrete forms of debt, from the U.S., Turkey would weaken American will to contravene Turkey with regard to Cyprus and the Kurdish minority. As he warned the opening session of the Turkish parliament on September 1, 1990:

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<sup>147</sup> Ataman, 133.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 132.

“We should not turn a blind eye to events which could occur in the region during the crisis, or the negative effects on our country of potential changes which could emerge after the crisis. Hence, we should apply a dynamic foreign policy, so as to arrive at a position which will ensure that we have an effective [influence] over these developments and changes. ... Otherwise, we will obviously lose the chance of becoming an influential country in a situation involving Turkey’s vital interests.”<sup>149</sup>

Judging from his earlier history and statements, there is reason to believe that Özal did indeed harbor some neo-Ottoman sentiments. It was alive and well in the pro-Islamist National Salvation Party, in which Özal made his political debut. He was also known to have ruffled the feathers of Saudi Princess Abdullah, who, in the 1980s, protested that he had seen an El Al Israel Airlines plane at the Istanbul Airport. Özal responded with characteristic tactlessness, saying, “Oh yes, but we have one very strong principle. We never interfere in affairs between former provinces of our empire.”<sup>150</sup> In the midst of the Kuwait crisis, Özal also let slip some public statements that suggested the rumors might be true. For example, in September 1990, he stated in an interview with the newspaper *Sabah* that “after the crisis, the map of the Middle East will change completely...if there is a better place for us in the world, we must take it.” The preservation of the existing borders, he continued, “should be reassessed according to the conditions of the day.”<sup>151</sup>

The idea wasn’t as outlandish as it may have seemed. In the minds of many of Özal’s countrymen, Turkey continued to have a moral claim to the former provinces. In the past, a large number of the region’s inhabitants were Turkish-speaking Ottoman immigrants and Central Asian Turcoman nomads, and Atatürk himself even declared them to have been within the boundaries of the republic. Many Turks believed that the only reason that Turkey accepted the 1926 League of Nations decision to exclude Kirkuk and Mosul was because the newly established republic was too weak to resist British

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<sup>149</sup> Ramazan Gözen, “Küzey Irak Sorunu,” quoted in Hale, 2007: 39.

<sup>150</sup> John Golden, interview, quoted in Pope, 225.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 226.

interests in the region.<sup>152</sup> In return for ceding the provinces to Iraq, the League of Nations agreed to grant Turkey 10% of the province's oil in royalties.<sup>153</sup>

For Özal's part, he made no point of concealing his interest in Mosul and Kirkuk. During the Iran-Iraq War, for instance, he notified the United States that if Iraq were to be defeated and disintegrate, Turkey would demand the return of the two provinces.<sup>154</sup> He also generated suspicion when he speculated that the Kuwait crisis might cause a change in the region's geography.<sup>155</sup> Despite this evidence, the consensus seems to be that he seems to have considered the idea briefly and then later changed his mind, probably for the same reasons that General Torumtay objected to the idea—namely, the expectation that the United Nations would strongly oppose the move; the lack of preparedness on the part of the Turkish military to launch such an attack and maintain an occupation; the reduction of Turkish defenses against the USSR; and the fact that Turkey would be just as guilty as Saddam of occupying the territory of a foreign country. Özal also seems to have briefly countenanced the idea of temporarily occupying Mosul and Kirkuk in the event that the possible disintegration of Saddam's regime, which Özal both believed and hoped to be the likely outcome of the conflict, resulted in a power vacuum in the region, which might then provoke Syria or Iran to intervene or provide the Kurds with the opportunity to establish an independent state in Northern Iraq. Özal made statements that Turkey would act to prevent such outcomes, either of which was anathema to Turkish interests in the region.<sup>156</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

What Turkey's experience in the Gulf War demonstrates is the effect that one man, by sheer force of will and strength of personality, can have on his country's alignment decisions in an international conflict. Turkey's decision to ally with the U.S.-

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> David Kushner, "Turkey: Iraq's European Neighbor," in *Iraq's Road to War*, Amatzia Baram and Barry M. Rubin, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993): 205.

<sup>154</sup> Bruce R. Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 2: 45.

<sup>155</sup> Kushner, 210, note 13. Later, in clarifying the comment, he insisted that Turkey wished to preserve Iraq's territorial integrity.

<sup>156</sup> Hale, 2007: 47.

led coalition was far from over-determined. On the one hand, Turkey was a NATO member with strong westward leanings. On the other, it was a country with close economic ties to Iraq, a history of cooperation in their common Kurdish issue, and a strong tradition of nonintervention in regional disputes. Moreover, public opinion was strongly opposed to Turkey's participation in the Gulf War by a margin of two to one.

Özal single-handedly and single-mindedly decided Turkey's position during the Gulf Crisis. Motivated by the prospects of improved trade relations with the United States, a chance at a better hearing for membership to the European Community, a personal dislike for and distrust of Saddam Hussein, and perhaps even an irredentist desire to reclaim the lost Ottoman territories of Mosul and Kirkuk, Özal brushed aside the opposition and pushed for strong measures in support of the U.S.-led coalition. In doing so, he reversed decades of Turkish foreign policy, circumvented the limitations that the Turkish constitution placed on his authority.

While structural theories of alignment can serve as a useful predictive framework, those models assume a state that is guided by purely rational actors. They ignore the possibility that the state's position in the international system must be interpreted through the subjective lens of human foreign policy decision-makers. In this case, Özal's assessment was in accord with structural theory. This, however, was a trait unique to Özal, and it is only through an understanding of the personal proclivities and history of this leader that one can fully explain Turkey's alignment decision in the Gulf Crisis.

## Conclusion

The goal of this paper is to restore a sense of agency to international relations theory. States are not rational unitary actors that follow the dictates of external structural imperatives. Human leaders govern states, and as such state behavior can only be as rational as the cognitive processes of human decision-making. The experience of Jordan and Turkey in the Gulf Crisis suggest that the proclivities of leaders can have a more determinate impact on state behavior than external factors.

Jordan presents a difficult case for structural realists. The best explanation comes from a refinement of the balance of power or balance of threat theories called “omni-balancing,” in which a Third World regime might balance or bandwagon with an external threat in order to protect itself from a more pressing domestic threat, as long as those two threats were interrelated. Given the strong support for Saddam Hussein among Jordan’s population, King Hussein may have bandwagoned with Saddam Hussein in order to bandwagon with the population. If he hadn’t, he risked the overthrow of his regime, which was of questionable legitimacy among Jordanians. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that this is how King Hussein conceptualized the problem. Instead, Jordan’s alignment decision had more to do with personal factors such as King Hussein’s pre-existing relationship with Saddam Hussein and the king’s history as a mediator in

prior conflicts, and even ideological factors such as pan-Arabism and an affinity for the lost Hashemite realm of Iraq.

Structural realism can offer a plausible account for Turkey's behavior in the Gulf Crisis. Faced with an aggressive neighbor, it sided with the powerful coalition to defend itself from the threat. A closer look at Turkey's situation reveals that Turkey's position was far from determined. President Özal overrode stiff opposition from the legislature, military, and the public to align his state with the U.S.-led coalition. His motivations in doing so, which we know from his own words and actions, were to gain greater access for the Turkish exports in U.S. and European markets, to improve Turkey's chances of admission in the European Community and the neutralization of an aggressor on the southern border that could one day turn against Turkey in a dispute over water rights. There is also evidence to suggest that President Özal held a personal distrust for Saddam Hussein because of the attacks on the Kurds and the shelling of Iran during Özal's prime ministerial visit.

While the scope of this paper is too limited and its methodology too loose to establish an alternate theory for understanding state alignment, it succeeds in pointing out some of the weaknesses in structural realist alignment theories. These theories offer only the vaguest general explanations for a state's alignment decision, with no clear criteria to determine whether a state will move in one direction or the other. For a fuller account of alignment behavior, it can be much more useful to examine the beliefs of those who make the decision. On a larger scale, it may benefit international relations theorists to keep in mind that behind all state behavior is a human actor, and that world politics is only a macro-level amalgamation of micro-level human interactions. Given this, one cannot assume that state behavior can be calculated in the same way that colliding billiard balls can, but rather is subject to all the flaws and foibles that human decision-making entails.

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