

**THE REFLECTIONS OF THE SECOND GULF WAR ON THE IRAQI-KUWAITI RELATIONS 1990-2010**

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
The Second Gulf War of 1990-1991 affected Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations, leaving behind negative reflections on the nature of the relationship between them, even after the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003. Despite the presence of some positive stances taken by the two countries towards each other, the relationship between them after 2003 did not go well. It continued at the same pace, but was punctuated by reactions initiated by both parties that made it clear that they were unable to forget what had happened previously. Therefore, the effects of the war were difficult to overcome. In the period that followed the war until 2003, the relationship between the two neighbors was almost broken. After the termination of Saddam's ba'ath regime and until 2010, attempts floated to restore diplomacy between them, some of which ended with success, and others contributed to deepening the negative viewpoint about each other as the psychological impact left by the war still sheds its light on both the governments and people of both countries.	Iraq, Kuwait, Second Gulf war, Saddam Hussein, Jaber Al-Sabah.

**Introduction**

After the Second Gulf War 1990-1991, it was a stage in which its effects were reflected on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. The relationship between the two neighboring countries that share the same geographical borders, and whose economy mainly depends on oil became more tense and unstable than it had been before the outbreak of the war. This has caused damage to the economic and political aspects of both, in addition to the immediate damage, which began to appear clearly and immediately

after the end of the war. The years specified for the study carried positions recorded in the history of the two countries, which reflected the difficulty of overcoming what happened, as the aspects of the relationship between them focused on paying compensation to the injured party, filling Iraq's debts to Kuwait, and trying to solve the long-term problem of border demarcation through international intervention. As for attempts the political, economic and cultural relations, both parties did not initiate any cooperation until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime on April 9, 2003, though the aftermath relations were characterized by gradualness and instability.

The present article sheds light on the nature of the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait after the end of the Second Gulf War, which had negative effects on those countries that extended to include various aspects of life. The psychological impact on the two parties cannot also be overlooked, because it was the core of the relationship. It was not easy for Iraq and Kuwait to overcome those effects and enter the stage of healing, until nearly a decade and a half of their history had passed, the stage of cooperative estrangement ended after 2003 but the psychological impact of that war still drives the nature of the relationship.

The present study is divided into three sections, preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion. The first section is devoted for dealing with the nature of the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait from the beginning of the announcement of the establishment of the State of Kuwait in 1961, until Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and the outbreak of the Second Gulf War in 1991. The second section deals with the reflection of the effects of the Second Gulf War on Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations between 1991 and 2003, while the third section includes an extension of what the second section touched upon in revealing the effects of the Second Gulf War on Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations from 2003 until 2010.

## The Iraqi- Kuwaiti Relations (1961-1990)

The government under the rule of Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qassem followed the Egyptian and Syrian policy of turning to the Soviet Union as a major supplier of military equipment. In 1958-1960, Qasim placed huge orders for Soviet arms making about 75% of the equipment of the Iraqi Army from the Soviet Union. (Hotoon and Cooper, 2019:6)

At the same time, the year 1961 witnessed the fulfillment of the elements for the establishment of the State of Kuwait, with an independent political entity, geographical borders, and a constitution that declared the establishment of the modern State of Kuwait under the rule of the Emir system. Quite number of Arab countries took the initiative to bless this step, with the exception of Iraq, which sent a congratulatory telegram formulated in a way that was intended to be a reminder for the Emir of the State, with Iraq's historical demands in Kuwait, and on May 25, 1961, Abdul Karim Qasim<sup>(1)</sup>, the Iraqi Prime Minister, held a press conference, in which he called on the Emir of Kuwait, Abdullah bin Salem Al-Sabah<sup>(2)</sup> to annex Kuwait to Iraq, considering that it is an integral part of Iraq, and asked him to help the Iraqi government restore matters to their normal course, assuring him that the Iraqi government was in the process of issuing a presidential decree appointing him as district commissioner of Kuwait, who would be affiliated with Basra Governorate, confirming that Iraq had historical documents proving the validity of his claim (Hassan, 2010: 40) .

Kuwait's response to Iraq's demands was the rejection and non-acceptance which in turn led to the deterioration of the relationship between the two parties and a political crisis. This crisis prompted Abdullah bin Salem to seek protection from Britain, basing his request on the friendship treaty he had signed on June 19, 1961 which pledged Britain to repel any threat to the security and stability of Kuwait

beside protecting its interests in the region, especially the British International Petroleum Company. Therefore, Britain, at the request of the Emir of Kuwait, decided to send military forces to Kuwait with the aim of protecting it from any possible Iraqi attack, pledging Qasim to withdraw. The immediate deployment of its forces coincided with the disappearance of the Iraqi threat. However, the presence of British forces did not last long in Kuwait at the request of the League of Arab States <sup>(4)</sup>, after announcing Kuwait's accession on July 20, 1961, which was met with the Iraqi rejection, requiring that the British forces had to be replaced with Arab forces (Saudi, Jordanian, Egyptian, Sudanese), Abdul Karim Qasem did not like the Kuwaiti reactions, who translated his rejection and annoyance at them into taking a number of measures, including seizing a number of Kuwaiti ships and freezing Kuwaitis' money invested in Iraq, which led to worsening the crisis and made it more complicated than before (Benadi, 2014: 505-506).

The government of Qasim continued to broadcast threats that confirmed Iraq's serious attempt to occupy Kuwait and control its oil fields. These threats remained until Qasim's death on February 8, 1963, following a military coup led by Abdul Salam Arif <sup>(6)</sup>, bringing Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations to a new stage which was represented by some detente, which was reflected positively on the nature of the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait (Hassan, 2010:54). The Sheikh of Kuwait sent a congratulatory telegram to the Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Arif, congratulating him on assuming the presidency of the Iraqi government, and the latter responded by sending a telegram that carried meanings of friendliness and welcome. On October 4, 1963, the Iraqi-Kuwaiti sides held a meeting that included political figures from both parties, and the meeting resulted in a number of items, including: Iraq's recognition of Kuwait, with its political entity and geographical borders, as an independent state, that the two governments seek to consolidate internal relations and common interests, and enhance cooperation as well as economic, commercial, and cultural agreement besides the diplomatic representation at the ambassadorial level. The meeting also concluded with the necessity of Kuwait canceling the agreement with Britain on May 19, 1963, and substitute it with military-political agreements with Iraq. In addition, Iraq pledged to supply Kuwait with the water of Shatt Al-Arab, and the terms of the meeting were recorded in the Arab League and the United Nations. However, Kuwait did not adhere to some of its provisions, especially those related to water supplied from Shatt Al-Arab. The 1963 agreement was unable to find a solution to the problem of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti borders, which remained unsettled for many years (Nayef, 2000:133-135).

The period in which Abdul Salam Arif ruled Iraq was considered a period of relative calm that lasted until 1966, while the period extending from 1966 - 1990 witnessed a discrepancy in the nature of the relationship between the two neighbors, at times becoming tense and deteriorating, and at other times returning to what it was before. Perhaps, the main reason behind its deterioration was represented by the borders problem, as Iraq often tried to annex a number of border areas that fall within the territory of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti response to those attempts was rejection, opposition, and taking deterrent measures against the Iraqi attempts. The Iraqi side was not the only one that initiated this, as Kuwait also made similar attempts. In order to seize some areas belonging to Iraq, as it took advantage of Iraq's preoccupation with its war against Iran in the eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to establish a number of border posts and military and oil facilities. This period was not without attempts to establish some economic interests between the Iraqi and Kuwaiti sides, and to achieve mutual investment, especially Kuwaiti investment in Iraq which was successful (Ghurairi, 2006:114-115).

## The Reasons behind declaring war on Kuwait in 1990

In 1990, Iraq was in a bad economic situation due to the war it waged against Iran, which costed huge losses. During the years of the Iraqi- Iranian war, Iraq borrowed money from Kuwait to cover some of the expenses of war. On July 18, 1990, a crisis appeared on the political scene between Iraq and Kuwait, which began when Iraq, represented by its president Saddam Hussein denounced <sup>(10)</sup> that Kuwait took advantage of Iraq's preoccupation with its war to seize some lands within the Iraqi territory and stole oil from one of the oil fields. Saddam also declared his complete rejection of its policy of deliberately flooding the oil market, as it deliberately reduced the price of oil to sell one barrel for 12 dollars only to cause great losses for the Iraqi economy demanding them to pay compensation for these losses, estimated at 1,000,000,000 euros, in addition to his demands to cancel the debts he borrowed during his war. Kuwait's response to those demands was rejection and denunciation, as Kuwait denounced the attempt to infringe its sovereignty through his attempts to dig wells on its territory beside the issue of borders, which was used as one of the reasons for the occupation (Ramadan,1990: 23-27).

## Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990

The Iraqi Army started their build up on 21 July 1990 as about 30.000 troops gathered in Basrah. At the end of the same week, Basrah was jammed with different army vehicles and equipment. In the early morning of the second of August 1990, the Iraqi army launched its attack on Kuwait (Ripley, 1991: 3). The Arab League and the United Nations <sup>(12)</sup> tried to intervene to accommodate the crisis between the two parties, but Iraq remained insisted on its demands, which met with similar insistence from the Kuwaiti side. The Iraqi forces began entering Kuwaiti territory occupying a number of areas, after clashes between the Iraqi forces and the Kuwaiti forces, which were unable to withstand the strength of the Iraqi army. The Iraqi army was able to completely occupy Kuwait whose Emir, Jaber Al-Sabah <sup>(13)</sup> escaped to Saudi Arabia. As a result, Iraq announced that Kuwait is subjected to an administrative division similar to the divisions of Iraqi governorates, and that Kuwait became an Iraqi governorate (Al-Qassas, 2016: 65-69).

The international community responded to the Iraqi occupation by equipping a military force that included Arab and foreign countries. The so called " Desert storm" operation to liberate Kuwait began on 17 January 1991 with air strikes and missile bombardments on the different Iraqi areas (Clarke, 2010 :29. After 7 months, the joint military force was able to end the Iraqi occupation and declare the liberation of Kuwait on February 24, 1991. Iraq's occupation of Kuwait left ominous effects on the two neighboring countries, as Kuwait's losses were estimated as 92 billion dollars, in addition to burning 752 oil wells, which caused severe environmental damage and led to the cessation of oil production for a period of time. Concerning human damage, Kuwait caused approximately 570 deaths and 605 prisoners. Iraq's share of the occupation's damage was large, as a large number of its soldiers were killed, estimated at 80,000, in addition to its losses in military equipment. Its infrastructure was also severely damaged, and the effects of the invasion extended to include the lifeblood of the country. The economic aspect was embodied in the siege that America imposed on Iraq, which lasted for 13 years which caused the economic situation of the country to deteriorate. As for the activity of the relationship between the two countries, what happened was sufficient to abort any attempt aimed at restoring the relationship between the two parties, and the situation continued as it was until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime on April 9, 2003 (Al-Saadoun, 2007: 10-12)

## The impact of the Second Gulf War on Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations 1991-2003

After the end of the Second Gulf War, international sanctions were imposed on Iraq, which had a clear impact, especially after placing Iraq under the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution (No. 687 of 1991), which included the presence of United Nations' forces in Iraq, conducting a comprehensive inspection of weapons and paying compensations of war. Besides that, they imposed economic blockade that lasted for 13 years which left negative effects on various aspects of life in Iraq, in addition to destroying its infrastructure and stopping its exports that exposed Iraq to massive economic losses (Al-Dagher and Al-Rubaie, 1991:46) .

Iraq's debts amounted to 127.7 billion dollars, and as a result, Kuwait exploited the Ramliya oil fields that it seized according to the divisions established at the time by the international committees (Shiyal, 2009:7). It was formed in 1991 pursuant to a special UN Security Council resolution. A committee was formed to demarcate the border between Iraq and Kuwait, and its work lasted for two years until the issuance of Security Council Resolution (No. 833 of 1993) demarcating the border between the two countries (Al-Janabi and Abd, 2013:235). This was met with Iraqi rejection, because it was placed without the will of the Iraqis and caused great harm to them, as it included a lot of Iraqi lands and oil wells to Kuwait, in addition to Iraq being harmed in terms of the maritime borders, as the committee worked to grant Kuwait the deep, navigable waters while granting the shallow, non-navigable side to Iraq. Thus, Iraq was the major detriment, and as a result of international pressure in 1994, it was forced to agree to abide by the committee's decision (Kazem, 2022: 182).

Despite Iraq's approval of the UN Security Council resolutions regarding the demarcation of the borders between the two countries, other international sanctions remained imposed. Iraq tried in the meetings and conferences of the League of Arab States, attended by both Iraq and Kuwait, to demand canceling the economic blockade, but Kuwait was the most opponent of such demands. Not only rejecting that but also demanded tightening the economic blockade. This matter was taken by the United States as a pretext to continue the sanctions and economic blockade on Iraq, considering that the rightful owner rejected that. It seems that Kuwait did not harm the Iraqi government, but rather the Iraqi people, and with this demand it caused the death of many children along these years. The economic situation deteriorated, which in turn was reflected on the health aspect of the country, as the country witnessed the spread of diseases and epidemics and a decline in health care ( Scientific Publishing Council, 2002:440). Kuwait was not the only one demanding a tightening of the economic blockade, as all Gulf Cooperation Council countries stood with this decision (Bouresli, 1995:70).

## The Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations 2003-2010

After the fall of the regime in Iraq in 2003, the Arabian Gulf in general and Iraq in particular witnessed serious transformations that had an impact on the political orientations of the countries. After the United States' attack on Iraq in 2003 in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime, citing a set of claims, the first of which was the possession of Iraq weapons of mass destruction, which poses a threat to the security and stability of its neighboring countries. For this reason, USA and its allies declared war, but in reality, they were hiding other goals, such as controlling the enormous wealth and to be able to control the Middle East region (Kazem, 2022: 84). Kuwait was among the countries that welcomed the American aggression against Iraq. It declared its readiness to receive 62,000 American soldiers during the American aggression to enter Iraq after Turkey refrained from receiving them, and allowed them to use the two military air bases as well as opening their harbors and ports ( Dahham and Al-Kanani, 2007: 18).



It was previously mentioned that the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait was oscillating. Sometimes cooperation was based on the conditions of the relationship between them, and at other times the estrangement shows up as a result of disagreement that dated back to the 1930s. However, after 2003 there was a development in the relations as Kuwait worked to support the Iraqi governments that were formed after 2003, and many mutual visits took place. The aim of these visits was to improve the relationship on different levels and resolve many outstanding issues, such as debt and border issues, as well as some economic issues (Shiyal, 2009: 25).

Despite the improvement in relations, the border issue remained a matter of disagreement, as they witnessed many incidents, including Kuwait building a wall, installing visual and thermal observation towers, and digging a trench around the Iraqi and Kuwaiti borders ( Al-Sihan, 2013: 27).

There were issues other than the borders that remained unresolved, represented by financial compensation and Iraqi debts to Kuwait, as well as the joint oil fields, which were raised in every meeting leading to a kind of tension and disagreements, not to mention the advertising campaigns that had a role in increasing the tension despite the conclusion of agreements and memorandums of understanding as well as opening embassies. Many discussions were held to reach some agreements and solutions. These discussions resulted in the conclusion of the first agreement on December 2, 2004, which included Iraq gets gasoline and diesel in exchange for Kuwait to get gas. The value of the agreement amounted to 870 million dollars (( Al-Sihan, 2013: 30).

This agreement contributed to develop trade relations, which was carried out through the Safwan port, the only land port between the two countries, as well as the entry of many Gulf companies into Iraq, most notably Kuwaiti companies. Excel Kuwait Company was one of the first companies that was able to invest in Iraq. Then, many other companies were able to obtain an opportunity to invest in Iraq ( Kazem, 2022:102).

Despite the improvement in economic relations, which were sufficient to end the state of fluctuation , the year 2005 witnessed the occurrence of a new crisis, when Kuwait confirmed the establishment of an iron barrier to protect its borders, under the pretext of the instability of the security situation in Iraq, which provoked the Iraqi side considering that to be transgressing and led to launch protests that demanded Kuwait to retract the decision, because it violated the Iraqi territory (Shalal & Abdel Hussein, 2017:121) .

Kuwait did not stop at this matter, as it worked to exploit the political and security chaos in Iraq. In 2006 it put forward the border demarcation file again in order to seize part of Iraq's lands, but it failed to do so despite the discussions and dialogues that took place between the two sides. Kuwait was insisting on its decision to demarcate the borders and did not abandon the matter, so it turned to another path by appointing an ambassador to Baghdad in 2008 in order to facilitate the solution of many important issues that were pending. On the other hand, Iraq offered many facilities and concessions, but Kuwait did not accept that and continued to incite against Iraq to remain under the penalty of Clause Seven( Al-Zaman, 2014:26).

Thus, the relation between Iraq and Kuwait were not proceeding at the same pace, but were fluctuating despite the signing of trade agreements. However, problems between them remained ongoing regarding the borders, and discussions continued in order to reach a solution to this problem, when Iraq agreed to fulfill its obligations towards Kuwait, and this is what prompted Kuwait to begin building Mubarak Port, which constituted a major obstacle to Iraq, and paved the way for the character of Iraqi-Kuwaiti

relations to be characterized by instability, especially those related to the border issue, which was and still the focus of disagreement between the two countries( Ibid)

## Conclusions

1. Abdul Karim Qasim's policy towards Kuwait after its independence from Britain in 1961 was aimed at annexing Kuwait to Iraq, claiming that Kuwait was Iraqi land and separated from Iraq by the British policy, announcing the appointment of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah as governor of Kuwait, affiliated with Basra Governorate.
2. The psychological impact that the war left on the residents of the two countries was controlled and guided by the nature of the relationship between them. Kuwait was unable to forget and overcome Iraq's occupation of it and the human, economic, and moral losses that accompanied that, the effects which were reflected on the psychological side of the Kuwaitis who see Iraq with its people and its successive generations as a cause of what happened to them. This was reflected in a negative way on their relationship. The Iraqi people had no role in what Saddam Hussein and Abdul Karim Qasim did before. However, some Iraqis' still see Kuwait as a province of Iraq which is a main reason for what happened to Iraq in 1991.
3. Iraq and Kuwait played the role of the aggressor and did not respect the interests of each other during the period 1990-2010. During the period 1961-1990, Iraq played the role of the aggressor through its demand to annex Kuwait to its territory, and resorting to means of pressure and threats to achieve its goal. On the other hand, Kuwait played the same after 2003 and beyond, as it took advantage of the stage of weakness that Iraq was going through to begin seeking to repay its demanding the debts that had been previously imposed and raised the border problem by encroaching on some of its lands.
4. The deterioration of the relationship reflected, in one way or another, the two lack of a foreign policy that has the ability to direct the relationship with neighboring countries in a way that serves the interests of both sides, and to confront crises and resolve them in a way that does not leave a negative impact.
5. The border problem was the reason for raising problems between Iraq and Kuwait, and both countries used it as a means to achieve their interests at the expense of the other country at different times, which contributed to the perpetuation of this problem, and made it a major reason for the deterioration of their relationship throughout the period 1961 - 2010, which made it difficult to find a solution to address this problem.

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