GEOPOLITICS OF OIL AND IRAQ CRISIS
ABSTRACT
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ABSTRACT

West Asia has been the focus of the international attention for a number of reasons. Historically it was a central meeting place of the three old world continents. More recently, it has become the world’s premier geopolitical flash point for two major reasons: (I) the establishment of the state of Israel centrally in the Arab core of a region which is overwhelmingly Islamic, and (II) the realization by a few West Asian states that, between them, they possess the world’s major reserves of petroleum. War and military forces have long affected the development and security of West Asian energy supplies. The Arab- Israeli wars of 1956 and 1967 each effected the flow of export to some degree. The October war of 1973 triggered an oil embargo that led to a drastic strategic reappraisal of importance of energy exports and imports. The Iran- Iraq war of 1980-1988 and the tanker war between U.S and Iran involved deliberate and systematic attempts to target energy production and exports capabilities in a prolong conflict. Iraq- Kuwait war of 1991 and Iraq war of 2003 further reduced Iraq oil production and exports capacities. The Iraq- Kuwait crisis of 1991 and Iraq war of 2003 were of very serious nature involving major powers of the West openly and influencing the whole world directly. These crises were full and total wars between highly industrialised and super militarized nations under the supreme command of the U.S led multinationals forces on one side and the determined emerging Iraq on the other.

Iraq formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, became independent with a pro- British regime under King Faisal. After World War II the U.S worried about Soviet influence, try to make Iraq the anchor of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) like pro- Western alliance, the Baghdad pact. In 1958 the pro-Western government was over thrown by Abdul Karim Qasim.
A republic was proclaimed in 1958, but in actuality a series of military strong men have ruled the country since then. Qasim survived a Baathist Coup that included participation of Saddam Hussein in 1959. Qasim was overthrown in 1963 by Abdul Salam Arif, apparently with the help of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Arif’s government was overthrown by a Baathist Coup in 1968 with the aid of the United States CIA, which had supposedly been encouraging the Baath and Saddam Hussein for many years. By 1979 Saddam Hussein had become President and began consolidating his power. Under him Iraq became closer military and political allies of the Soviet Union.

Conflict between Iraq and Kuwait traces to arbitrary and unsatisfactory manner in which British colonial authorities drew the Iraqi-Kuwaiti boundaries. Iraq maintained historical claim over Kuwait, arguing that British authorities had carved Kuwait out of Iraqi territory. Twice in 1967 and 1973 Iraq had occupied small parts of northern Kuwait. Iraq on the pretext of meeting the Iranian threats send its troops to Warbah and Bubiyan at the mouth of Shatt-al-Arab.

However, the Algiers Accord of 1975 had supposedly settled the dispute, both Iran and Iraq signed a comprehensive border and peace treaty in that year. The Iranian revolution of 1979 and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in the following year, created a new environment in the Gulf region. The Iraqi and Kuwait threat perceptions of the first events, being identical, brought the two governments on the same side of the spectrum. The war provided an opportunity when, forgetting their bilateral problems, Iraq and Kuwait reached an understanding on confronting and containing Iran. Under the banner of the Arab nationalism and solidarity, Kuwait offered substantial financial, political and logistical support to Iraq during its protracted war with Iran. Despite Kuwait support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq raised the question of control over the Warbah and
Bubiyan islands and justify its demands on national security and strategic grounds. During war with Iran, Iraq redoubled its pressure for securing the Kuwaiti islands. Kuwait, however, eventually relented and agreed to put Warbah, and Faylaka islands under Iraqi control for security reasons. After the cease fire Iraq intensified pressure on Kuwait for the transfer of these islands. However, Kuwait did not agree to transfer its three islands and Kuwaiti official discretely refused to accept the demand of Iraq. During Iran-Iraq war, the U.S and Western power supported Iraq with arms and Western companies helped Saddam Hussein build chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capabilities. The relations between U.S.A and Iraq improved and maintained up to the end of the war. It was certainly true that, as the war with Iran had progress, Saddam Hussein’s regime had become ever more moderate. The general view was that Iraq had won the war, Iran was deliberated and Iraq’s military power was greater than ever. Iraq that emerged from the war with Iran saw itself as having triumphed against the great traditional foe of the Arab World. It also convinced itself that it was Iraq that had stood as a bulwark for the whole Arab World against traditional Persians enemy. Equally Iraq’s sacrifices for the Arab World during the conflict with Iran justified its view of itself as a leading Arab power, with Saddam Hussein as the dominant Arab leader of his generations.

In the Gulf itself, Saudi Arabia become increasingly concerned by Iraq’s apparent determinations to contest its regional hegemony and its dominance within Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). By the end of 1989 it was generally agreed that Iraq was seeking to take on the mantle abandoned by Nasserist of Egypt in 1970. Iraq despite heavy debt to Arab and Western countries continued to spend heavily on arms. Commentators estimated that the Iraqi army was already the most powerful in West Asia. By 1990, Iraq had built the fourth largest army in the world. The expenditure and low oil prices compounded Iraq’s debt crises. Iraq had
emerged from the war a crippled nation with wrecked economy. Economic estimates put the cost of reconstruction at 230 billion US dollar. Iraq had incurred massive debts to finance its war efforts. By the beginning of 1990 these debts was estimated at around 80 billion dollar, with debts service obligation alone accounting for roughly 30% of the Iraq’s projected annual income of 15 billion dollar. The Iraqi government had to manage this burden while pressing ahead with ambitious reconstruction development and rearmaments programmes. Domestic economic problems seemed equally ominous. Not only did the intensive privatization measures taken by Hussein since the late war years proved to be a panacea, they in fact created a severe backlash. To ease economic burden Saddam Hussein in February 1990, during Arab cooperation council submit meeting in Amman demanded that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait should write-off war times loans. He claimed that war with Iran had not been Iraq private business, but a defence of the eastern flank of the Arab World against fundamentalist Iran.

These pressures were significantly intensified in the post war era. He demanded an immediate infusion of additional funds estimated at about 30 billion dollar. It was further charged that the Kuwait and UAE continued to increase their oil production in violation of OPEC quota, since this step had direct bearing on international oil market. Iraq insisted upon the strict adherence to the OPEC’s assigned quota by Kuwait and the UAE. Following the war Iraq demanded that other members of the OPEC should reduce their quota in order to enable the two increase their own production without depressing crises. The UAE and Kuwait had increased their production level by 25%. Saddam Hussein stated that the move cost Iraq 12 billion dollar in lost oil revenue. He threatened to use force to halt over production. Saddam Hussein in fact wanted to maintained oil crises at 25 dollar per barrel without any change in total production of OPEC. On the contrary the Kuwaiti oil Minister was against the quota system itself and
favoured high level of oil production for stable and low price of oil. Iraq also charged that Kuwait had violated agreement on drilling rights in the Rumaila oil field. Specifically Kuwait was accused of using so called slant drilling to siphon off Iraqi oil. Saddam Hussein asserted Iraqi sovereignty over oil in the Rumaila oil field which extended 3.2 Km into Kuwait. He demanded financial compensation to the tune of 12 billion dollar. Kuwait, encouraged by Britain and U.S to stand firm, flatly rejected Saddam demands.

The conflicting postures adopted by the parties involve created tension. As regard the extra regional super power dimension, when the crises war brewing up, the U.S department reiterated that the U.S policy in the Persian gulf was to ensure the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz and to defend the principle of freedom of navigation. At the same time Baghdad was becoming increasingly convinced that Washington would not interfere in its attempts to settled its regional disputes, particularly with Kuwait. The conversation between U.S ambassador April Glapse and the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, just days before invasion, seems to have played a major role in convincing him that Washington would tolerate military action by Iraq. Throughout 1990, particularly during the climax of the crisis in July the United States never warned Iraq explicitly not to use force to settled it dispute with Kuwait. On July 24th, 1990 the state department spokeswoman Margarate Tutwier stressed that the U.S had no defence treaty with Kuwait and no special defence commitment to it. The same policy was express by U.S ambassador to Baghdad April Glapse by telling Saddam Hussein that the U.S had “no opinion on inter-Arab dispute such as your border dispute with Kuwait”. These statement must have undoubtily encouraged Iraq to invade Kuwait without worrying about any serious consequences. The result was that Baghdad intensified its demands on Kuwait.
These development and U.S indifference created tension in the Gulf region. In order to defuse tension Saudi Arabia brought both the parties to the negotiations table on 31st July 1990, to resolve their differences. The negotiations collapse when the Kuwaiti officials insisted on a once and for all settlement that is writing off the debt in return for border demarcation. The talks lasted less than two days and on 1st August the negotiations collapsed amid a bitter exchange of acquisition. The following day 2nd August 1990 Iraqi forces entered Kuwait and on 8th August declared its annexation as the 19th province of Iraq.

The international community reacted strongly to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, condemning Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait and demanding the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops. Within hours Iraq’s assets were frozen worldwide. Immediately the UN Security Council met on 3rd August 1990 and adopted resolution 660 which condemned the invasion and demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Iraqi forces. The speed of the response was due to the fact that neither U.S.S.R nor China – both permanent members of the UN Security Council - attempted to oppose. Majority of the Arab countries condemned the Iraqi invasion in a meeting of Arab league hastily convened in Cairo. Three days later the UN passed its 2nd resolution 661 which imposed a trade and financial boycott of both Iraq and Iraqi occupied Kuwait. Japan, the UK and France and other governments around the world had imposed severe sanctions. The Soviet Union and China ended all arms sales to Iraq. The Arab league and the Gulf Cooperation Council courageously announced its opposition to Iraqi aggression. On the 29th Nov. 1990, the UN passed resolution 678 which gave Iraq a withdrawal deadline of January 15th 1991. The resolution authorised all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660, and its diplomatic formulation authorizing use of force if Iraq failed to comply. Arab mediation efforts were short-circuited when the U.S announced it was sending troops to Saudi Arabia to protect the Kingdom. Western air and naval power began to arrive in the Gulf, the Red
Sea and Mediterranean. Meanwhile, US diplomats, led by then secretary of States James Baker were urging other nations to join UN coalition and condemn Hussein’s invasion of its peaceful neighbours. It soon became apparent that US was preparing for an offensive military action to dislodge Iraqi occupation forces, rejecting any negotiated settlement.

The response to the UN measures were swift and near unanimous. The U.S succeeded in creating a coalition against Saddam Hussein consisting of the European powers, Arab States and others like Japan. Intense diplomacy between US and Iraqi officials failed to bring an Iraqi withdrawal. Finally after the expiry of deadline i.e., 15th January 1991, the U.S and the broad international coalition, consisting of 34 countries, launched Operation Desert Storm on 16th January 1991. The coalition forces began the devastating bombing of Iraq and on her forces in Kuwait. The allied bombing sought to damage Iraq’s infrastructure so as to her ability to make war while also hurting both civilian and military morale. One month into the air war, Iraqi began negotiating with the Soviet Union over a plan to withdraw from Kuwait. U.S did not accept the Iraqi proposal and insisted unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. On 24th February 1991, the allied forces launched long anticipated ground offensive against Iraq. On 27th February 1991, three days after the ground assault began, Kuwait city was liberated. The same day Iraq announced that it would unconditionally accept the UN Security Council’s 12 resolution regarding the Gulf crisis. President Bush on February 27th ordered a cease-fire and the surviving Iraqi troops were allowed to escape back into Southern Iraq. The war ended on 1st March 1991 after 43 days, having involved the most intensive air and armoured operations since World War II. On 2nd March 1991, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 686 which stipulated the coalition conditions for a cease-fire. The Resolution required Baghdad to accept the Security Council 12 previous resolution against Iraq and demanded that Iraq should renounce its annexation of Kuwait, agree to pay reparations, release all prisoner, help removed the land mines, and return stolen
property to Kuwait. Resolution further required that Iraq should cease hostile acts against other countries and parties, including missile attacks and flight of combat aircraft. On 3rd March 1991, Iraq accepted the terms of ceasefire and the fighting ended. The ceasefire resolution 687 was the most comprehensive and longest resolution ever adopted by the Security Council and establishes the range of issues to be covered by the U.S. It included unprecedented infringements on Iraq’s Sovereignty, particularly regarding the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction and related facilities enforce through rigorous inspections by international monitors under the UN Special Commission on Iraq. In addition severe repression by Saddam regime against rebellions Shiites in the south and Kurd in the north provided a pretext for the U.S and its allies to create so called no-fly zones restricting Iraq’s military movement within its own border. Despite the infringement on its sovereignty, Iraq cooperated with the UN inspectors, United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) in the disarmament of Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to put an end to nuclear plans. The UN economic sanction continued there by reducing Iraq to an insignificant power.

The U.S successfully prevented the UN from lifting its sanctions more than ten years after they were first imposed. The continued economic sanction resulted a humanitarian catastrophe; with hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians- primarily children- died from malnutrition and preventable diseases resulting from the inability of Iraqis to get adequate food and medicine or the materials necessary to rebuild the war damage civilians infrastructure. Iraq declared some chemical weapons and materials as required by the resolution but stated that it had no biological weapons programme. In spite of Saddam’s denials and manoeuvres UNSCOM began inspection in Iraq on 9th June 1991. For seven years the process was tortuous game of hide and seek, intimidation and withholding of information, threats and counter threats and spying beyond agenda as proposed the UN mission. During that period Iraq cooperated with UNSCOM and IAEA in some areas but flatly refused cooperation at times in
other areas. Iraq maintained that it had destroyed all its weapons but could not produce a paper trail to fully document their destruction. Between April 1993 and September 1996 the U.S engaged in a series of sustained air strike against Iraq as punitive measures against alleged Iraqi transgression. In the meantime under the Clinton administration the CIA continued to support the various efforts to overthrow Saddam Hussein. During inspections the two sides had constant disagreement and conflicts, which brought about arms inspection crises for many times and ultimately led to the operation desert fox against Iraq launched by the U.S and U.K in December 1998. The stated aim of operation desert fox was to diminish and degrade Saddam Hussein’s ability to use and deploy weapons of mass destruction. Both China and Russia immediately condemned the attacks. France also mildly criticized the attacks; across the Arab and Islamic world numerous populous demonstrations condemned the bombings and expressed support for Iraq. Within the UN Security Council bombing underscored and deepened regarding policy towards Iraq. China urge the U.S and the U.K to end their air strikes against Iraq, and together with Russia continued to maintain that the no-fly zones were illegal because they had not being authorised by the UN. Iraq reiterated that it would not recognise the southern and northern no-fly zones illegally set up in Iraq’s territory by U.S and U.K. Iraq also shelled and intercepted British and American aircraft patrolling in the no fly zones while the U.S and U.K time and again bombed the targets in all even outside the no-fly zones. In December 1998, Saddam Hussein evicted United Nations Special Commission’s (UNSCOM) some inspectors on the ground that they were illegally spying for the US and Israeli intelligence agencies. This allegation seems to hold some truth to it. As a result of the Iraqi expulsion of the UNSCOM inspectors, the U.S and Britain unleashed Operation desert fox on Iraq.

During the Clinton administration the US built the ties to and progressively increased support for several of the Shia’s and Kurdish factions.
In mid-November 1998, President Clinton publicly articulated that regime change was a component of US policy towards Iraq. In order to achieve this objective President Clinton signed Iraq liberation Act in late 1998 which appeared to signal more active support for opposition and made regime change for official U.S policy. The law also gave the president authority to provide up to 97 million dollar worth of defence articles and services as well as 2 million dollar broadcasting fund to opposition group designated by the Clinton administration.

Finally reports of UNSCOM and IAEA filed after they left Iraq stated that Iraq’s nuclear stock were gone and suggested most of its long range delivery system had been destroyed. Numerous outside studies, one from the London Based International institute for strategic studies, have concluded that whole Iraq retains scientific expertise to manufacture nuclear bomb, it lacks the necessary fissile material. Russia and France on the basis of IAEA reports recommended that Iraq’s nuclear file be closed and wanted to establish a roadmap towards Iraqi compliance and the lifting of sanctions. But Washington and London refuse to consider such measures. A year after desert fox UN Security Council created a new arms monitoring body called UNMOVIC through resolution 1284, headed by Hans Blix. In 2001 negotiations sporadically took place between UN and Iraq over the readmission of inspector, But Iraq did not allow UNMOVIC into the country until Nov, 27th 2002. In George W. Bush Administration Iraq policy has been a matter of heated internal debate over how not whether to accomplish regime change. Secretary of State Colin Powell advocated reenergizing Sanctions and inspections behind a reconstructed Security Council consensus while Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld pushed for U.S leadership in military action, whether or not it met with international approval.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre, the U.S began making it successively more clear that it intended to remove the
regime of Saddam Hussein and towards the end of 2002 it became increasingly apparent that the U.S intended to launch renewed invasion of Iraq. To prepare American public opinion, the Bush administration revived predecessor’s concept of rogue state and named as a part of the ‘axis of evil’ along with Iran and North Korea. It was further alleged by United States that the rogue states like Iraq clandestinely had provided weapons of mass destruction to Al-Qaida or some other terrorist group. At a same time it was also alleged that a group called Ansar –al –Islam, linked to Al-Qaida had approached Baghdad to obtain help in making biological and chemical weapons.

In November 2002 United Nation Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 which declared that Iraq was in material breach of multiple resolutions including resolution 687, and retreated that this was its final opportunity. The resolution demanded that Iraq must declare all details of its weapons programme and provide immediate and unconditional access to UNMOVIC and IAEA. After four years UN inspections began on November 27th 2002, and for almost three months UNMOVIC and IAEA were allowed unfettered access to Iraqi military industrial sides. Though the Iraq was largely given a clean cheat on nuclear matters by the IAEA, doubt persisted over Iraq’s chemical and biological capabilities. In January and February 2003, UNMOVIC director Hans Blix and IAEA director Mohammad Al- Baradei briefed the Security Council on weapons of mass destruction inspections. In their report they stated that while no Iraqi weapons of mass destruction have been found, UNMOVIC doubted Saddam Hussein’s intentions to disarm. The belligerence of U.S and its haste for punitive action suffered a setback in March 2003 when Blix told the security council that Iraq had a pro-active attitude and inspection would take months to complete. The inspection process that followed after the implementation of resolution 1441 between November 2002 and March 2003 saw an ebb and flow in the disarmament of the Iraq through UN system. In fact resolution 1441 created an
unprecedented polarisation within the UN Security Council. The U.K and U.S.A consistently pressed for use of military force against Iraq, while France, Russia, China, Germany and Syria favoured for giving more time for weapon inspection.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration unleashed diplomatic offensive against Iraq in the United Nations. It characterised Saddam Hussein a brutal dictator who supress his own people, attack Iraq’s neighbours and produce weapons of mass destructions. On 25th February the U.S.A, U.K and Spain submitted a second resolution, emphasising a serious consequences faced by Iraq as a result of its continued violation of its obligations. But the resolution faced a tough opposition from France, Russia and China. They questioned the need to have second resolution. Eventually when U.S realized that cooperation from expected quarters in the manner it desired was not forthcoming and that delay in proceeding against Iraq would run counter to its strategic objectives, it decided to launch operation Iraqi freedom. President Bush further announced that U.S would go to war against Iraq even if UN does not give the covering sanctions. In his view resolution 1441 already provided the needed international legitimacy. On March 2003, Bush issued a final ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq within 48 hours. The UN was given noticed to withdraw its UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors and others officers from Iraq for reasons of security. The U.S claimed that it had assembled a coalition of willing forces of countries that supported the attack. Finally on March 19th 2003 operation Iraqi freedom launched by U.S and its coalition. In the war Iraq’s conventional military forces were overwhelmed by the U.S and British led 30 country coalition of willing forces assembled. Some Iraqi units and irregular put up stiff resistance and used unconventional tactics. No weapons of mass destruction were used against the coalition forces invading Iraq. The conquest of Baghdad commenced on 3rd April, and by 9th April 2003 the U.S forces was in full control of Baghdad. The removal of Saddam Hussein
from power was symbolised by the demolition of his statue in the centre of Baghdad. He was captured on 13\textsuperscript{th} December 2003 and was hanged on 30\textsuperscript{th} December 2006, for charged of wilful killing of Shiites civilians in Dujail in 1982.