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THE REALIST EXPLANATION OF WARS IN THE PERSIAN GULF REGION AFTER THE COLD WAR

BY

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War in late 1989, the international environment has witnessed a myriad of internal armed and regional conflicts. Of all these, Wars in the Persian Gulf region have been the most differently interpreted, particularly from the strategic, legal and Marxist or radical scholars' perspectives. This paper provides an alternative explanation to the Western military campaigns in the region from the realists' perspective. The paper argues that although war and possibility of war among great and small powers have been the motor of international politics, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the US-led action to evict the invading forces as well as subsequent Western military campaigns in the region were power moves; that is, the pursuit of interests defined in terms of power. The paper concludes with an observation that international conflicts and the resulting wars would typically be resolved on the balance-of- power principles.

Key words: Realism, War, Persian Gulf Region, USA, Iraq, Post-Cold War era

Introduction

Over the past two and half decades, among the issues that have attracted immense and diverse discourse in the international system have been the endemic and protracted crises that have engulfed many regions of the world. Admittedly, the immediate post-Cold War era till the present time has been characterized by steady increase in “classic” or inter-state conflict, “failed” states and internal armed conflicts, international terrorism and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) (Teixeira, 2002: 5-9). Other sources of the challenge to global peace and security include the continued presence of contested borders between militarily potent states, which have resulted in the invasion and *de facto* intervention in the territory of other sovereign states, irredentist and revisionist movement as well as the continued use of force as a means for settling regional and international disputes (Dickson, 2014a). Consequently, the end of the Cold War did not usher in a period of peace in the world as was envisaged.

Glaringly enough, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and even Europe have all endured crises of one sort or another since 1990. In the Persian Gulf region of the Middle East in particular, the United States-led international coalition *Operation Desert Storm* formed under the authority of the United Nations to evict the invading Iraqi forces from Kuwait (hereinafter referred to as the First Gulf War) and the 2003 United States-led intervention in Iraq under the aegis of 'Coalition of the Willing' (the Second Gulf War) have become the largest, longest and most costly use of armed force by the Western powers since the Vietnam War in 1973 (Simons, 1998: 1-10; Hall and Kirk, 2005: 876-7; Farrel and Schmitt, 2012: 27). These wars are the first and second major post-Cold War military actions undertaken by the Western states and the first US experience as an occupying power in the Middle Eastern country.

However, ever since the crisis in the Persian Gulf erupted, an increasing number of authors, scholars, lawyers, diplomats and practitioners of international affairs as well as media practitioners

have commented on the subject from different perspectives. For instance, while scholars of conflict and strategic studies viewed the crisis created by Iraq invasion of Kuwait as an omen of a post-Cold War world characterized by a proliferation of local or regional conflicts (Carpenter cited in Bassey, 1999: 84-108) on the one hand, political scientists and scholars of international affairs have interpreted the crisis, particularly the invasion as an act of aggression and threat to international peace and security on the other. For the latter reason, the Western powers' prompt action under the aegis of *Operation Desert Storm* have been portrayed as intervening, not only to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, but also to re-establish peace and security in the Gulf region in particular and the world at large (Khadduri and Ghareeb, 1997: viii).

Alternatively, scholars of international law see Iraq's act of aggression as a violation of the provision of the United Nations Charter, which prohibits aggression and calls for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. Arguably, as Khadduri and Ghareeb further observe, neither the intervention to restore the *status quo* instead of dealing with crisis whose roots and cumulated differences between two neighbours over frontiers, territory and sovereignty nor the settlement of the crisis reached under pressure a guarantee for future peace and security in the region. In a similar vein, the Marxist scholars argued that crises in the region were capitalist and imperialist wars fought on the basis of world market and access to oil resources needed for commodity production and capital accumulation (Geier, 1999; Slaughter, 2003: 12). Paradoxically enough, these views and continued interpretations of the Gulf crisis from the strategic, political, legal and Marxist or radical scholars' point of view, however, appear one-sided.

Although the invasion decisions were in some respect unprecedented, particularly concerning the Western robust military involvement in an Arab or Muslim country, the point here is that wars in the Gulf, in the post-Cold War era are *sui generis* and could also be usefully understood from the other side of scholarly endeavours. The

purpose of this paper, therefore, is to provide readers with views from the realist scholars' perspective. The intention, however, is to analyze the events and differences that culminated in the invasion of Kuwait and subsequently to examine Western intervention and its consequences using Realism as analytical guide. It also explores how contending interpretations of wars in the Gulf during the New World Order can add to the understanding causes of war generally. It equally traces the linkages among the contending theoretical perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

Since World War II, 'Realism' (otherwise called '*realpolitik*' or 'power politics' has been the dominant theory in explaining international politics. Although realism as a paradigm has many strands and its contours very familiar, classical realist perspective most commonly associated with the writings of Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes and most recently, Hans J. Morgenthau provides normative and empirical analysis of international relations and pay attention to interests as well as material powers. In general terms, realism emphasises the constraints on international politics imposed by human nature and the absence of international government, which makes international relations largely a realm of power and interest (Donnelly, 2004: 9). In other words, realists assumed that human nature is bad, sinful and wicked (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1989), and that, like individuals, states pursue self national interest that often times generate conflicts in international relations (Aremu and Bello, 2013: 22-8).

The historian Thucydides, author of the classic *History of the Peloponnesian War* is often cited as the father of realism. The first realist principle illustrated by the Peloponnesian War between the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta in 431 BC - 404 BC is the importance of power in interstate relations. Because in ancient Greece, as in the modern world, there was no central authority to regulate interstate relations, the security and well-being of the city-state was ultimately in the hands of each state. The second illustrates

the importance of a balance of power in fostering stability in an anarchic and decentralised system. The third principle illuminated by the war is the importance of alliances in interstate relations. The fourth realist norm illuminated by Thucydides is the account of human nature assumed to be motivated mainly by self-interest, power, and fear (Amstutz, 2005: 156).

Thomas Hobbes, in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, published originally in 1651, presents a classical example of realism. His idea about the 'State of Nature' incorporates some of the main realist principles such as anarchy, arguing that people are naturally equal, that they are driven by competition, diffidence and glory. Given the nature of men and while interacting in the absence of government they put their natural freedom to destructive, even self-destructive use. Thus, international politics remains a domain of anarchy, a state of war, in which "Kings and Persons" of Sovereign authority... [are] in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another (par. 12). Hobbes draws famous conclusion that without a world government, the system is subject to a state of anarchy and of "a war as of every man against every man" (Boucher, 1998; Donnelly, 2004: 14).

Machiavelli in his *The Prince* believes that the structure of the world system is anarchical, with no supranational power to override states' sovereignty. Therefore states act in the name of self-interest in order to achieve goals of maintaining security, increasing power and expanding its territory in an environment of competing political interests of states. The result of the quest for increasing power and territory expansion is nothing other than war. Similarly, Hans Morgenthau's principles of realism can be summarised as follows: first, that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature; second, the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power; third, power and interests are variable in content; fourth, universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states;

fifth, realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nations with the moral laws that govern the universe and sixth, the autonomy of political sphere (Morgenthau, 1985: 10-13).

In summary, as Nye and Welch (2013: 62) have pointed out, realist of all stripes agree that states are the most important actors in the international system, that anarchy has a powerful effect on state behaviour, and that at the end of the day all politics is power politics in which, as Goldstein (1994) and Lebow (1994: 250) have noted, all states tend to pursue their interest in power. Therefore, wars (in these case Wars in the Persian Gulf) are inevitable permanent features of global politics.

Background to the Study Area

The Persian Gulf region, which in the modern has become Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the smaller Gulf States, is an extension of the Arabian Sea, positioned in the heart of the Middle East. It connects with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea through the Strait of Hormuz. The region is certainly one of the most vital bodies of water on the planet, as gas and oil from Middle Eastern countries flow through it, supplying much of the world's energy needs. Over many centuries, the Persian Gulf has been a flash point for controversy and warfare has been a common activity among the people of the area. For instance, the area was subject to a bewildering sequence of foreign intervention and conquerors by known kings such as Sargon, Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Alexander the Great, among others (Hall and Kirk, 2005: 40-54).

Interestingly, during the centuries of Greek and Roman domination, the Gulf region was of limited interest to the major powers. But since the Portuguese invasion in 1507, the region became one of the most critical regions of the world (Ghasemi, 2014; Ramerini, 2014). The strategic importance of the region became increasingly apparent as the oil industry developed in the twentieth century. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran all claimed some of the territory of the Gulf States during the years between World War I and World

War II, leading to border disputes and political differences. But Britain's firm resistance to these claims and to foreign incursion enabled the Emirates to maintain their territorial integrity without resorting to armed conflicts. The importance of the region increased after the withdrawal of Britain in 1971 and it expanded over time. These have made the area more unstable till the present.

Chronology of Wars in the Persian Gulf

As indicated above, since the withdrawals of the British imperialist from the region, a number of conflicts have occurred that undermined the stability of the area. This includes the Iran-Iraq war which lasted between 1980 and 1988, the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the 2003 US-Iraq War. Let us examine these wars *seriatim*.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)

The first major conflict in the Persian Gulf, which occurred during the Cold War period, was the bloody and lengthy eight years Iran-Iraq war. On September 22, 1980, Iraqi military forces invaded Iran, sending seven divisions deep into Iranian territory along a 500 kilometre front. At the same time, formations of Iraqi MiG-23s and MiG-21s attacked Iran's air bases and radar stations at Mehrabad and Doshen (both near Tehran), as well as Tabriz, Bakhtaran, Ahvaz, Dezful, Urmia (sometime cited as Urumiyeh), Hamadan, Sanandaj, and Abadan in an attempt to neutralize Iranian air power (Venter, 2004; Tripp, 2008: 368-383). But on September 23, a day after, Iran responded by bombing military and economic targets in Iraq.

After the initial Iraqi offensive which lasted between September 22, 1980 and January 1982, in March 1982, Tehran launched its *Operation Undeniable Victory*. That event marked a major turning point in the Iranian military onslaught as the Ayatollah's forces were able to gain access to Iraq's so-called 'impenetrable' lines. The immediate effect was to split the opposing military structure and force the Iraqis to retreat (Venter, 2004: 40). This was followed simultaneously by the war of attrition and the

tanker war between 1984 and 1987, respectively. The bloody conflict in which hundreds of thousands of people died, chemical weapons repeatedly used by Iraq and civilian areas in both Iran and Iraq routinely bombarded, however, ended in a United Nations-brokered ceasefire in August 1988.

Several reasons as to why Iran and Iraq - the two major powers in the Gulf region had to fight such a long war have been given by scholars. First, these two historic rivals had long-standing territorial disagreements over control of the Shatt al Arab waterway - which forms the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers - into the province of Khuzestan, Iran's richest oil-producing area. Second, the deteriorating relations between Iraq and Iran dating from the fall of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1979 and his replacement as Iranian leader by Ayatollah Khomeini created the context for the war. The Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had hoped to overthrow Khomeini's Shiite-led Iran who sought to subvert Iraq's Shiite Muslim and to spread Iran's extreme band of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Gulf, thereby undermining Iraq's influence. Third, Saddam also sought to advance its own grandiose plans for the regional domination and to knock out Iran while it was still in the throes of revolution (Yetiv, 1997; Khadduri and Ghareeb, 1997; Tripp, 2008: 370).

Initially, the war which only peripherally affected the Persian Gulf states later threatened the security of other states in the region. As a result, in May 1981, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirate banded together in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to protect their interests and if necessary, to defend themselves.

First Persian Gulf War (1990 - 1991)

On August 2, 1990 Iraqi forces invaded and occupied the small but oil rich neighbouring state of Kuwait. Four days later, the whole territory of Kuwait was annexed as Iraq's nineteenth province (Jackson and Sorensen, 2013: 266). This act of aggression, however,

compromised the political sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait. It has been argued among scholars that the Iran-Iraq war set the stage for the Iraq invasion and annexation of Kuwait (hereinafter, the First Persian Gulf War) in many ways. Firstly, the war created significant military imbalance in the region, where Iraq emerged as the most powerful military and unchallenged nation in the Gulf area. Thus, President Saddam Hussein had wanted to establish Iraq as the regional 'hegemony' or dominant state in the Persian Gulf.

Secondly, the Iran-Iraq war left Iraq with a devastated economy and large debts to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Iraq needed an increase in global oil prices to get back on its feet. Iraq demanded, among other things, that Kuwait to forgive the Iraqi debt and to agree to OPEC oil quotas. When Kuwait refused both demands, war became the only option (Yetiv, 1997; Agi, 2001: 18-25; Hall and Kirk, 2005: 877; Frederking, 2007:81). Thirdly, after the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq's huge standing army could not be effectively reintegrated into a shaky Iraqi economy. For this reason, when Iraq began to reduce its standing army, it decided to reinforce its rearmament programme at the same time. As a consequence, the rearmament programme, as well as the servicing the huge foreign debt, became a heavy burden on the country's budget (Khadduri and Ghareeb, 1997: 95-96).

Alternatively, in justifying his invasion and annexation of Kuwait, President Saddam Hussein claimed, among other things, first, that Kuwait was an artificial state carved out of the Iraqi coast by Western colonialists. Thus, Kuwait having once been one nation under the Ottoman Empire (1307-1882) was the 19th Province of Iraq. Second, that Kuwait was illegally siphoning off oil from Iraqi territory, particularly from Babiyan Island and Rumeilah field, one of the world's largest oil pools. Third, Saddam accused Kuwait of undermining the Iraqi economy and post-war economic reconstruction efforts by boosting oil production quotas and exceeding the petroleum production levels set by the OPEC, thus forcing down the price of crude oil in the international market which adversely affected Iraq's income. Fourth, Iraq also accused Kuwait of

refusing to forgive Iraq's debts from the Iran-Iraq war, and failing to extend reconstruction credits to Iraq after the destructive eight-year war (Ekpe, 2004: 113-123; Basu, 2005: 313).

The Iraqi act of aggression, however, did not only attract international reactions, but also condemnation. For instance, the US President George H. W. Bush immediately condemned the Iraqi action, as did the governments of Britain, China and Soviet Union. Also, countries considered traditional allies of Iraq France and India unanimously condemned the Iraqi action and called for the immediate withdrawal of its forces from Kuwait. In response, on August 7, 1990 the United States organized and led a massive international military deployment codenamed *Operation Desert Shield*, headed by Commander-in-Chief of the United States Central Command, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, to defend, deter and contain potential attacks on Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States while trying to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait (Reich and Gotowicki, 1991: 73-81).

Interestingly, between August 2 and November 20, 1990, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed 12 resolutions on the Gulf crises, beginning with resolution 660 condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. On August 6, 1990 the Security Council imposed mandatory economic sanctions on Iraq, following which the Security Council invested the United States and other Western powers, which had assembled a naval armada in the Gulf to use "measures" necessary to enforce the economic embargo on Iraq. At the same time, the Security Council activated the Military Staff Committee (MSC) which was not functional throughout the Cold War period (Basu, 2005: 313). Of note, Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait, was the first major crises in the post-Cold War era of easing tension between the superpowers and a test of the New World Order.

As a result of Iraq's non-compliance with all relevant resolutions and sundry directives, on November 29, 1990 the UNSC passed resolution 678 authorizing "all necessary means" including force to uphold and implement all relevant resolutions, to remove

Iraq's forces from Kuwait and to restore international peace and security in the Gulf region, giving the deadline of midnight of January 16, 1991. After a series of failed negotiations between the major world powers and Iraq, as well as negotiations between US Secretary of State James Baker and Iraq's Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, Congress authorized President Bush to use American troops to evict Iraq from Kuwait (Tristram, 2014; Hickman, 2014).

On January 17, 1991 the United States-led international coalition from about 30 countries *Operation Desert Storm* launched air attacks against Iraq and later started a war that lasted for 42 days. On February 27, 1991, Kuwait was liberated from Iraq and the US-led forces suspended their offensive combat operations against Iraq after it had agreed to honour all UN Security Council resolutions. It is important to note that although the operation was authorized by the UN Security Council, the collective security enforcement in the Gulf leaves a lot to ponder about. For instance, Peters and Deshong (1995) described the liberation of Kuwait as a decisive victory for the coalition forces. But from the point of view of Agi (2001: 18-25), "it would appear that the war was embarked upon by the US-led forces under the auspices of the UN principle of collective security".

Events Leading to the Second Gulf War (2003)

At the close of the First Gulf War, with the suspension of military hostilities on February 27, 1991, the United Nations Security Council on April 3, 1991 adopted a permanent ceasefire resolution (hereinafter the Persian Gulf War Security Council Armistice Resolution 687), which required, among other things, the nuclear, chemical and biological disarmament of Iraq. Under this resolution, Iraq was barred from committing or supporting any act of international terrorism or allowing any organization with interest towards the commission of such acts to operate within its territory. It is important to note that Resolution 687 was enacted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (peace and security). Hence, within the provision of this Chapter, the resolution could be enforced through military action, if need be (Dickson, 2014: 14a).

Over the years, the Security Council became increasingly disunited over whether Iraq had fulfilled the disarmament requirements and other provisions of the armistice resolution or not. In particular, the US, UK and their allies sought to adopt unilateral enforcement action against Iraq over the strong objection of other members France, Russia and China. It has been argued that the disagreement among the permanent members was as a result of the consideration of their conflicting interests in the Middle East generally and in the Persian Gulf in particular. Consequently, in the process of safeguarding these interests, American and the allied forces embarked on military actions such as *Operation Desert Shield*, *Operation Desert Fox* as well as the unilateral imposition of No-fly zones on Iraq. It is important to reiterate here that while the Security Council did not explicitly authorise these military actions, the West believed that the actions were to contain Iraq, ostensibly 'enforcing' existing Council resolutions. These unilateral military campaigns, at first accepted by other Council members, generated escalating resentment. After France ceased to participate in these actions as a result of American activities, the unity of the Council's purpose on Iraq was shattered. As a result, and coupled with the alleged Iraq's non-compliance with the disarmament provisions, on March 20, 2003, the US-led "Coalition of the Willing" a *de facto* force, invaded Iraq.

Analysis

Unlike other schools of thought, scholars of the realist school have also provided solid basis for the understanding of Gulf crisis and the American existence in the Persian Gulf region of the Middle East in the 21st Century. Specifically, taking their stance from the second proposition of realism, which provides that "states pursue their interests, defined as power", or "states interests, rather than their values or ideological preferences are the reason behind every state act". On the one hand, they perceptively argued that Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, which eventually culminated in

the First Gulf War was a power move by the Iraqi regime in the Persian Gulf region. Differently put, it was simply a chance for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to maximize its power against Kuwait and the other key states in the region. In other words, it had nothing to do with its leader, Saddam Hussein or his personality and the authoritarian nature of the Iraqi political system. Therefore, the invasion of Kuwait was in Iraq's interest and would have happened regardless of the leader, political system, or beliefs in Iraq (Kaarbo and Ray, 2011: 163, 314).

On the other hand, the United States-led military coalition to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was also the maximization of power by the Western states on consideration of their interests in the region. The US power and interests in the region were threatened by the Iraqi invasion, therefore, to safeguard these interests, particularly maintaining its power in the region, the US-led action and subsequent unilateral campaigns became apposite. This, according to the adherent of the realist school is because power is the primary goal of states in the international system. The implication of the maximization of power in a states' interest is because; first, state is the primary actor and exercise sovereign authority over a defined territory; second, no other actor in the international system has a higher authority over states; and third, there is no world government to look after individual states' interests. Ozdemir (2011: 103-114) corroborates the above viewpoint and explain that:

First of all, mankind has constantly been in pursuit of power throughout the history and the struggle for power is a part of human nature. From the very early times on, in every single community, there has always been a competition among people to lead the society in which they have lived. The states, on the other hand, consist of people and it is natural for them to compete with one another to be a leading actor in the international system as

this is an objective law having roots in human nature.

Thus, crises, in the Gulf seem to prove a very well known significant element of the realist tradition, which opined that when a hegemonic power in the international system wants a war, there is almost nothing that other actors in the system can do to prevent that power from going to war. In other words, it portends the reverberation of Thucydides proverbial statement; "strong hegemonic power (the US) did what she had to do and the weak (Iraqi regime) accepted what she had to accept".

It has also been contended that the 1990-1991 Gulf War fits into the traditional realists' account of war when examining it from the following perspectives; (i) the US dominance and balance of power, (ii) the Western oil interests and (iii) the importance of military power (Baylis *et al*, 2008: 43). The United States' of America had emerged from the Cold War confrontations as the so-called "leader of the free world" and sole Superpower, when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait after a long argument over the price of oil and outstanding war debts, its expansionist actions threatened to upset the regional balance of power. Thus, the US interest lay in preventing any one power from dominating the Gulf region. It could be recalled that in the past, the US had allied itself with Iraq against Iran in order to maintain that balance, a history that, among other factors, may have convinced Baghdad that President George H. W. Bush's administration would not oppose its action militarily. Obviously, the US-led action against Iraqi regime was contrary this.

In this regard, it is argued that the US action demonstrated that it would not tolerate open defiance of its demands, threats to its interests in political stability and the continuous supply of oil from the Gulf, or broader attempts to overturn the US-led international order. As a dominant power in the international system, the US would act to protect the stability of the system, and thereby ensure perpetuation of its own pre-eminence. The Gulf War therefore demonstrated both America's dominance of the international system

and its resulting relative freedom in enforcing its interests, consistent with the tenets of realist paradigm (Baylis *et al*, 2008: 42).

Alternatively, realists could account for wars in the Persian Gulf in terms of the price of oil and who controls it. In this case, it is opined that if Iraq had successfully annexed Kuwait, it would not have only reclaimed territory but would have controlled 20% of the world's reserves of oil, and would probably have dominated the decision-making of the OPEC. Therefore, Iraq could have bullied Saudi Arabia into damaging oil price hike and caused catastrophic economic recessions in the industrialized North. Iraq, therefore, represented the exercise of state power to protect its economic interests. The viewpoint come close to the realists believe that powerful states are able to shape the international political economy in ways favourable to them (Krasner, 1978: 111).

However, since realists have traditionally focused on military power as the defining attribute of state power and interest, attributing the Western military actions in the Persian Gulf to economic interest does not diminish *realpolitik* to a limited extent. It has also been asserted that military force remains the most important measure of assessing state strength. Although great powers must excel across a range of capabilities, the realist tradition places military force at the top of the hierarchy. Clearly, the swiftness of the US-led coalition's defeat of Iraq and subsequent wars in the region points to the continuing relevance of this sight.

It is, however, important to note that the Gulf War have also revealed some of the limitations of traditional realist framework for assessing military force. Despite its overwhelming military power, the United States was unable either to deter Iraq from invading Kuwait, nor compel it to withdraw without initiating military action under the UN banner. Conversely, Iraq could not deter an attack by the US and the allied forces despite its status as the fourth largest military in the world and possession of chemical weapons.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to explain wars in the Persian Gulf region in the post-Cold War era using the realist theoretical perspective. What has been discovered is that, of all the theories adopted by writers in interpreting the wars in the region, realism offer the most compelling and clear-cut explanations of the crisis, describing war as a function of state interests defined in terms of power. For realists, aside from state interests, the distribution of power in the international system is one of the factors that affect the likelihood of war between states. The leading power always struggle for dominance for gain, status, or security, and are willing to use force to this end. For instance, in the immediate post-Cold War period, Iraq emerged the most powerful in the Persian Gulf region and acted through its leader Saddam Hussein to maximize power in order to maintain its strategic and economic interest in the region.

Similarly, US that emerged as lone Superpower on the global stage never wanted any ultra-modern regime in the region that would threaten its interests. Hence the maximization of power by both the Iraqi regime and the Western states on consideration of their national interests. The study concludes that in the process of maximizing power, however, a certain degree of temporary stability may emerge through a balance of power among the most dominant states due to their mutual deterrence or their intention to avoid mutually destructive wars.

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