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**REGIONAL PLAYERS INFLUENCES ON THE IRAQ - KUWAIT
RELATIONS POST- SADDAM ERA (2003-2011)**

HUSSEIN ABDULHASAN MOEH



UUM

Universiti Utara Malaysia

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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RELATIONS POST- SADDAM ERA**



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A Thesis submitted to the Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government
in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
Universiti Utara Malaysia

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Problem Statement?

ABSTRACT

This study examines the divergence of the political and economic interests of the key regional players in the Gulf region, i.e., the United States of America (US), Iran, and the member states of the Gulf cooperation council (GCC) States. The study also analyses how those three main key players influence the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era from 2003 until 2011. Therefore, the general aim of this study is to discuss why, how and what type of roles the three regional players have played in influencing the convergence and divergence of Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. To achieve the aims of this study, a qualitative approach was adopted. This study's framework of analysis is carried out by adopting the Game Theory. This study employed both face-to-face and telephone interview techniques as the primary sources of data collections. The interviewees were divided into three main groups. The first group of interviewees included lecturers from the Political Science Faculty at the University of Baghdad and Kuwait University, whereas the second group of interviewees was diplomats from Iraq, Kuwait and Iran. The last group of interviewees was professional researchers from the GCC States and the Middle East. The other primary sources of data collections derived from the United Nations Security Council Resolutions, official statement and publications of the GCC, and archival documents. As for the secondary data, the sources came from theses, books, journal articles and online and printed newspapers reports. The findings of the study reveal that Iraq-Kuwait relations were affected significantly by the divergent interests of the three regional players (the US, Iran and the GCC). Those interests were reflected by a desire of each party to achieve the greatest political and economic gains. As a result, improving relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam era has been in a snail pace. The two countries have to double their diplomatic efforts in re-strengthening their relations given some difficulties in solving some bilateral and outstanding political and economic issues.

Keywords: Iraq-Kuwait Relations, Post-Saddam Era, the United States of America, Iran, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

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HUSSEIN ABDULHASAN MOEH

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degrees at Universiti Utara Malaysia or other institution.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMEN	vi
DECLARATION	vii
TABLE OF CONTEN... ..	viii
LIST OF TABLE	Xii
LIST OF FIGURES	Xiii
LIST OF MAPS	Xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIO	Xv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.1.2 Statement of the Problem	7
1.3 Research Questions	8
1.4 Research Objectives	9
1.5 Significance of the Study	9
1.6 Theoretical Framework	10
1.6.1 The U.S. Interests Model as a Pivotal State	15
1.6.2 The Iranian Interests Model as a Wing State	16
1.6.3 The GCC States Interests Model as a Wing State	17
1.7 Research Methodology	19
1.7.1 Research Strategy	20
1.7.2 Data Collection Procedure	21
1.7.2.1 Primary Data	21
1.7.2.1.1 Face-to-Face Interview	21
1.7.2.1.2 Reports and Official Documents	24
1.7.2.2 Secondary Data	24
1.7.3 Data Analysis Technique	25
1.8 Scope of Study.....	25
1.9 Limitation of Study	26
1.10 Operational Definition	27
1.11 Organization of the Thesis	29

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	32
2.1 Introduction	32
2.2 Studies on the Effects of the U.S. Interests in Iraq-Kuwait Relations	33
2.3 Studies on the Effects of the Iranian Interests in Iraq-Kuwait Relations	39
2.4 Studies on the Effects of the GCC States Interests in Iraq-Kuwait Relations	45
2.5 Studies on the Development of the Iraq-Kuwait relations	50
2.6 Summary	54

CHAPTER THREE: EVOLUTION OF THE IRAQ –KUWAIT

RELATIONS UNTIL 2003	56
3.1 Introduction	56
3.2 History of Iraq-Kuwait Relations during Foreign Colonization	57
3.2.1 Iraq and Kuwait During the Ottoman Colonization	57
3.2.1.1 The Anglo-Kuwait Agreement of 1899... ..	59
3.2.1.2 The Anglo-Kuwait Agreement of 1900... ..	61
3.2.1.3 The Anglo-Ottoman Agreement of 1913... ..	61
3.2.2 Iraq and Kuwait during the British Colonization	63
3.3 Iraq-Kuwait Relations Pre-Saddam rule (1958-1979)... ..	69
3.3.1 President Abdel-Karim Qasim’s Administration (1958-1963)... ..	69
3.3.2 President Abdul-Salam Arif’s Administration (1963-1966)... ..	73
3.3.3 President Abdul-Rahman Arif’s Administration(1966-1968)... ..	73
3.3.4 President Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr’s Administration (1968-1979)... ..	74
3.4 Iraq-Kuwait Relations during Saddam Era (1979-2003)... ..	76
3.4.1 Kuwaiti Assistance during Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)... ..	77
3.4.2 Iraq Invasion of Kuwait in 1990... ..	78
3.4.3 UN Sanctions Against Iraq	79
3.5 Summary	82

CHAPTER FOUR: U.S. INTERESTS IN THE IRAQ – KUWAIT

RELATIONS	83
4.1 Introduction	83
4.2 U.S. Interests in Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam Era	84
4.3 U.S. Interests in Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam Era	92
4.3.1 U.S. Interests in the Post-Saddam Iraq	92
4.3.1.1 Economic Interests of the U.S. in Iraq	92

4.3.1.2 Security and Political Interests of the U.S. in Iraq	95
4.3.2 U.S. Interests in Kuwait	101
4.3.2.1 Strengthening the U.S. Presence in Kuwait and the Arab Gulf ...	
.....	101
4.3.2.2 Control over Kuwaiti Oil	104
4.4 Role of the U.S. Interests in the Outstanding Problems between Iraq and Kuwait	108
4.4.1 Border Dispute between Iraq and Kuwait	108
4.4.2 Problem of Constructing Kuwait's "Port Mubarak"	111
4.4.3 Problem of Iraq's Debts and Reparations to Kuwait	114
4.4.4 Problem of Iraq Remaining under Chapter VII of the UN Charter	117
4.5 Summary	121

CHAPTER FIVE: IRANIAN INTERESTS IN THE IRAQ–KUWAIT

RELATIONS	123
5.1 Introduction	123
5.2 Iran's role in the Middle East	124
5.3 Iranian Interests in Iraq in the post-Saddam Era	130
5.3.1 Political Influence of Iran in Iraq	130
5.3.2 Economic Influence of Iran in Iraq	135
5.4 Iranian Interests in Kuwait in the post-Saddam Era	139
5.4.1 Political Interests of Iran in Kuwait	139
5.4.2 Economic Interests of Iran in Kuwait	143
5.5 Role of Iranian Interests in Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam Era ...	
.....	146
5.5.1 Iranian Interests in Fueling Sectarian Conflict	146
5.5.2 Iranian Interests to Forestall the American Democracy Project	150
5.5.3 Common Interests of Iran with the Regional States	154
5.6 Summary	158

CHAPTER SIX: GCC STATES INTERESTS IN THE IRAQ – KUWAIT

RELATIONS	160
6.1 Introduction	160
6.2 The GCC As a Regional Power during Saddam Era	161
6.3 The GCC States and Iraq in the post-Saddam Era	165
6.3.1 The Political Interests	165

6.3.1.1	Maintaining the Unity and Independence of Iraq	166
6.3.1.2	Stabilizing the Security Situation in Iraq	168
6.3.1.3	Fear of Increasing Iranian influence	170
6.3.2	The Economic Interests	175
6.4	The GCC and Kuwait's Mutual Political and Economic Interests	178
6.4.1	Political Interests of the GCC States in Kuwait	178
6.4.2	Economic Interests of the GCC States in Kuwait	180
6.5	Role of the GCC in Iraq-Kuwait Relations in the post-Saddam Era	183
6.6	Summary	188
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		189
7.1	Introduction	189
7.2	Discussion of the Findings	190
7.2.1	Role of U.S. Interests	190
7.2.2	Role of Iranian Interests	194
7.2.3	Role of GCC States Interests	199
7.3	Contribution of the Study	204
7.3.1	Theoretical Contributions	204
7.3.2	Practical Contributions	205
7.4	Directions for Future Research	206
REFERENCES		209
APPENDIX		229
Appendix A:	Interview Questions – English	229
Appendix B:	Interview Questions – Arabic	230
Appendix C:	The Iraqi-American Security Agreement	231
Appendix D:	The Security Council Press Statements 2009-2011... ..	238
Appendix E:	Final Statements for GCC States	246

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Iraq's Oil Production, Exports and Oil Revenues from 2003-2008.....	94
Table 4.2	Oil Exports of the Middle East Countries between 2007-2011.....	105
Table 5.1	Length of Iran's Coast and that of the Arab Gulf States.....	126
Table 6.1	Military Spending in GCC States during 2009-2011.....	180
Table 6.2	Production of Oil in the GCC during 2008-2011.....	181
Table 6.3	GCC Intra-Trade: Export.....	182



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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Theoretical Framework of Analysis.....	14
Figure 4.1	Military Expenditure Increase of the U.S. 2000–2009.....	91
Figure 4.2	Kuwaiti Mubarak Port.....	113
Figure 5.1	Trade Exchange between Iraq and Iran 2006-2009.....	138
Figure 5.2	Iraqi Body Count Estimate Trends in Casualties (2003-2010).....	149
Figure 6.1	Iran’s Nuclear Facilities	173



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LIST OF MAPS

Map 1.1	Iraq and Kuwait.....	3
Map 4.1	Oil and Gas Fields in Iraq.....	93
Map 4.2	Main Oil Fields in Kuwait.....	106
Map 5.1	Geographical Location of Iran.....	124
Map 6.1	Members of the GCC States.....	161



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OPEC	Petroleum Exporting Countries
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WTO	World Trade Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
UN	United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEA	International Energy Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
U.S.	United States
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IEA	International Energy Agency



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Iraq-Kuwait relations are one of the most contentious bilateral issues in the Middle East region and there has been a lack of political and economic stability in this region over many decades of the last century (Ahmed 2015:56). The importance of Middle East is due to its geographical location which is connected to the three continents, namely, Asia, Africa and Europe, as well as its possession of many natural resources such as oil, which is estimated to be about 60% of the world's total reserves (Aldlabih 2011:20-21). The United States of America (U.S.) has tried to control this vital area by preventing other international powers from gaining control over the production of oil and also by controlling its price. The U.S. also has supported its allies in this area, especially Israel, in order to ensure its military superiority and this has ignited Arab-Israeli conflicts which have resulted in four wars (1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973). Unfortunately for the Arabs, Israel has proven its superiority by emerging as the victors in all four wars (Al- Brizat 2008:10).

In the eighties of the last century, significant changes took place in the Gulf region and they were the emergence of Iraq and Iran as rival powers each with aspirations to expand their interests over the Arab Gulf States, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war

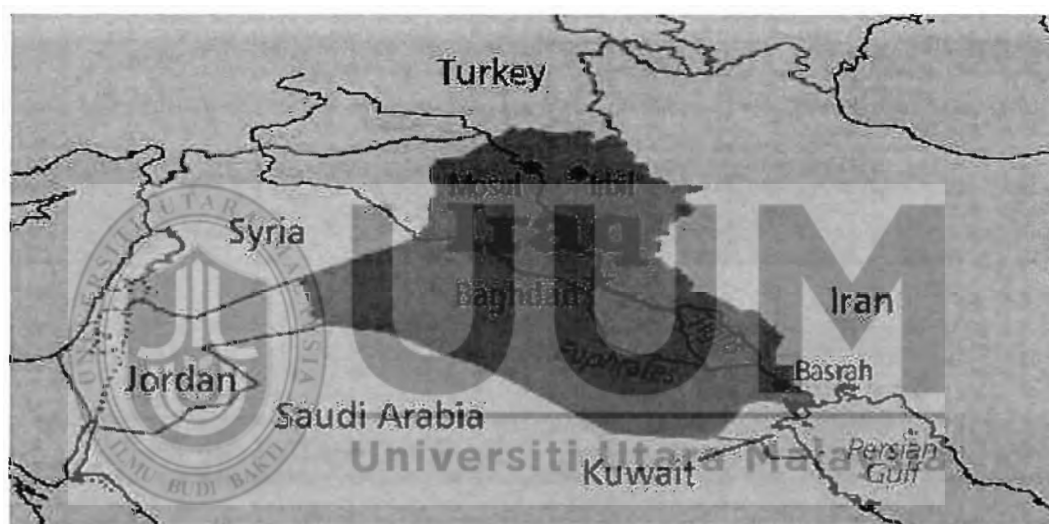
in 1980, and the Gulf Cooperation Council¹ (GCC) which was founded in 1981 as a regional power to protect its member states from the danger of the aforementioned two countries. Thus, the U.S. increased its attention in this area through its security and military cooperation with the GCC States (Shibley 2008: 18).

Kuwait is a small country located in the northeast of the Arab peninsula and the northernmost area of the Arab Gulf. In its north and to the west, Kuwait shares a border with Iraq, in the south it shares a border with Saudi Arabia and to its east lies the Arab Gulf. While Kuwait's total land area is only 17,818 sq km, Iraq, with a total land area of 438,317 sq km is comparatively much larger than Kuwait. Iraq is located in the western part of the Asian continent and shares its western borders with Syria and Jordan, with Turkey in the north, Iran in the east and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the south. The length of the joint border between the Iraq and Kuwait is about 240 km. Kuwait is rich in natural resources like petroleum and natural gas and its economy is also dependent on its fish and shrimp industries. Iraq, on the other hand, depends on its petroleum, natural gas, phosphates and sulfur resources (Al-kenae 2011:2), as shown in Map 1.1.

Historically, the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait have witnessed major tensions in three distinctly different periods with the first being in 1932 when Iraq gained its independence from Britain and King Ghazi of Iraq (1933-1939) tried to merge Kuwait into Iraq, the second was in 1961 when Kuwait became independent from Britain and the former Iraqi president Abdel-Karim Qasim (1958-1963)

¹ The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) can be defined as a regional grouping which brings together the countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It was established in 1981 in response to the regional turmoil of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 (Koch 2010:24).

threatened to occupy Kuwait by using force, and the third was the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in 1990, which led to the outbreak of the Second Gulf War² whereby the U.S.-led coalition forces sought to liberate Kuwait from Iraq in 1991(Crescenzi 2010: 11). The relations between Kuwait and Iraq remained completely cut off from 1990 until 2003 when the U.S. toppled Saddam regime and the new regime in Iraq paved the way for the beginning of a new phase in Iraq-Kuwait relations.



Map 1.1: Iraq and Kuwait.

Source: <https://www.google.com.my/search?q>

After the removal of Saddam in 2003, a new era of relations between Iraq and Kuwait emerged when diplomatic ties were resumed. Kuwait welcomed the demise of Saddam regime and declared its full support of the successive Iraqi governments that were formed after 2003. High ranking officials from both countries paid mutual visits to each other's country (Al-Obaydee 2008:5). Additionally, some Kuwaiti companies, particularly those from the telecommunication and energy sectors,

² The Second Gulf War (August 28, 1990 – February 28, 1991) is defined as the conflict between Iraq and a coalition force of approximately 30 nations led by the U.S. and mandated by the UN in order to liberate Kuwait (Krosnick & Brannon 1993:966).

entered the Iraqi market with the purpose of reinforcing economic relations between the two countries. Furthermore, Kuwait supported the new provisional government formed by Prime Minister Iyyad Allawi (2004-2005), who paid his first visit to Kuwait in August 2004 (Gharir & Jawad 2006:123-126).

In spite of that, there were some suspended issues between Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam era. For example, the border disputes and for this purpose the UN formed a committee to demarcate the borders between the two countries after the Second Gulf War. The committee started its work in 1993 and finalized its decisions on the border disputes between the two countries in 1994. Iraq considered the new border demarcation to be unfair because it gave away more Iraqi territories to Kuwait (Met'ab & Abd 2013:242).

Another major point of dispute is the issue of Iraq's debts and reparations to Kuwait. This problem appeared after the Second Gulf War and it is considered to be one of the biggest political problems that affected the relationship between the two countries. The amount of debts and reparations were more than \$ 36 billion. The government of Iraq asked Kuwait to cancel these debts and reparations because they were related to Saddam era and the current Iraqi government should not be held responsible for it, but Kuwait rejected this request and insisted on collecting all the debts and reparations. As a result of this rejection, international sanctions were imposed upon Iraq under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Shayyal 2009: 27-28).

In addition, the increasing violence and terrorism in Iraq in the post- Saddam era were two of the problems that Iraq had to face and this in turn affected its relations with Kuwait. This was because Iraq could not develop its economic and political

relations with other countries especially Kuwait because it was preoccupied with making efforts to settle its internal problems (Khudair 2012:95).

On the other hand, the government of Kuwait supported the U.S. presence in Iraq in 2003 in order to stabilize the security situation in Iraq and also to counter Iran's influence in the Gulf region. The rapprochement between the U.S. and Kuwait was very clear especially when the U.S. increased its military forces along the Iraq-Kuwait border to prevent the arising of any new tension between the two countries (Essa 2014:58).

In spite of the financial (about \$266 million) and logistical support that Kuwait provided to the U.S. military forces in their efforts to overthrow Saddam, the U.S. was not able to prevent the emergence of sectarian tensions in Iraq and the possibility of them spreading to neighboring countries. So, Kuwait like other Gulf States that participated in all the regional conferences on Iraq, like the one held in Egypt in 2004 which was to ensure the unity and safety of Iraq, refused to interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq (Al-Obaydee 2008:9).

The U.S. became an important regional player in the Gulf region after its occupation of Iraq in 2003 and so it rearranged its relations with the neighboring countries, especially Iran and the GCC States. This was because it was stronger and had the capability to draft new security arrangements in the Gulf region. Thus, the U.S. dealt with the issue of security in the Gulf as if it was an American internal affair and this led to increased interferences in the affairs of the states in the region (Al-Issawi 2006:5).

The repeated crises in Iraq- Kuwait relations drove the regional powers in the Gulf region to exploit these crises in order to achieve their own political and economic benefits. This was because of the geographical and political importance of Iraq and Kuwait in the area. Therefore, the U.S. tried to build a long-term strategic alliance with the GCC through the conclusion of a number of agreements in order to ensure the achievement of the U.S. interests and to prevent the emergence of Iran as a competing power in the Gulf region (Al-Sadoun 2013:60).

In spite of the improvement of relations between Iraq and Kuwait after 2003, tension and instability still existed because of the divergent interests of the regional players such as the U.S., Iran and the GCC. The U.S presence in Iraq has led to the formation of a weak Iraqi government that was not able to manage its internal affairs or to arrange its external relationships with neighboring countries, especially Kuwait (Al-Jumaily & Al-Kinani 2013:20).

On the other hand, Iran benefited from the fall of Saddam regime as it led to the emergence of Iran as a superior power in the Gulf region. Iran also attempted to build an alliance with the Shiite powers which had control over the government in Iraq after 2003 in order to counter the U.S. presence in Iraq. This situation troubled Kuwait's leaders because the political decision- makers in Iraq were under the influence of Iran (Salameh & Sharah 2011: 57-60).

The GCC as a regional player was afraid of the developments in the Gulf region such as the appearance of a new political system in Iraq which was militarily weak and was in alliance with the Shiite political elites in Iran. This may directly threaten the

Sunni governments in the Gulf region of which Kuwait is one of them (Katzman 2005: 5).

Therefore, the analysis of the regional players' (the U.S., Iran, and the GCC) interests in the Gulf region and its effects on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post- Saddam era requires a systematic study that consists of a thorough examination of the political and economic interests of the regional players and their role in the evolution of the conflicts or cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait. The success or failure of the relations between these two countries should also be evaluated.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The unsettled issues between Iraq and Kuwait, such as the borders, debts, reparations and the keeping of Iraq under the Chapter VII of the UN Charter, were considered to be the main problems that affected Iraq-Kuwait relations during the U.S. occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2011. Furthermore, the deterioration of Iraq's security and the inability of the U.S. to control Iraq's borders had a significant impact on the political and economic interests of neighboring countries such as Iran and the GCC States. All of the above-mentioned issues had a direct impact on the security and political situation in the Gulf region and they feared that the Iraqi sectarian conflicts may spread to the countries in the region.

The political and economic interests of the regional players (the U.S., Iran and the GCC) in the Gulf region were the most important factors that affected Iraq-Kuwait relations during the U.S. occupation of Iraq. In this regard, the U.S. tried to keep its presence and to gain control over the political and economic decisions in both Iraq

and Kuwait, whereas Iran attempted to increase its political and economic influence in the Gulf region and at the same time confront the U.S. presence in Iraq. Thus, the GCC States endeavored to keep their political systems safe from the dangers caused by the U.S. occupation of Iraq and to counter the increasing influence of Iran in the Gulf region.

The problem that this research aims to address can be summarized as follows: the competition between the three players, i.e., the U.S., Iran, and the GCC States, whose aims are to achieve the greatest political and economic gains in Iraq and Kuwait, was reflected in the conflict or cooperation between the two countries. In fact, this study seeks to analyze the influences of the regional players on the Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to investigate deeper into the effects of the regional players interests in Iraq-Kuwait relations, the following research questions have been developed:

1. How are the influences of the U.S. interests as a main player in the Gulf region on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam era?
2. How do Iran's interests as a regional player in the Gulf region influence the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era?
3. To what extent do the GCC's interests, as a regional player, have in the convergence or dissonance in Kuwait's relations with Iraq in the post-Saddam era?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the statement of the problem mentioned in the previous section, the present study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the influences of the U.S. interests as the main player in the Gulf region on the Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era;
2. To examine the influence of Iran's interests as a regional player in the Gulf region on the Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era; and
3. To investigate the key effects of the GCC's interests on the Iraq- Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study intends to make strong theoretical points and practical contributions. In terms of practical contributions, this study is designed to provide examples of how the regional players in the Arab Gulf region can effectively block the development of relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Therefore, this study may be informative for policy- makers in these countries, researchers in the field of international relations, non-governmental organizations and other agencies in understanding the roles and effects of the interests of the regional players on Iraq and Kuwait after the removal of Saddam Hussein. The above mentioned statement will be accomplished by adopting the findings and suggestions concluded herein.

Furthermore, this study also investigates the role of regional players in Iraq-Kuwait relations during the U.S. occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2011. It also supplies proactive information about some of the interests and strategies of the regional

players in the Gulf region, e.g., the U.S., Iranian, and the GCC States' strategies. This region can also benefit from the results of this study because the countries involved can use it to find ways or solutions that will deter the agendas of regional countries in order to contribute to the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations. Some of the results mentioned in this study may also be relevant to other countries that face similar circumstances.

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study largely contributes to the related literature. Therefore, this study will subsequently and invariably add to the general body of knowledge regarding the topic at hand. The model proposed in this study sets a benchmark for an action plan and long-lasting and reliable reforms to Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. Moreover, this study will not only establish a benchmark for future studies that relate to the same regional and international challenges pertaining to the Gulf region in particular, but also for Middle East as well.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This research adopts the game theory as an analytical framework in order to have an in depth understanding and interpret the effects of the regional players interests on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post- Saddam era.

In international relations, the game theory is defined as “a study of strategic decision making. Specifically, it is "the study of mathematical models of conflict and cooperation between intelligent rational decision-makers” (Myerson 1991:1). It is utilized in international strategy and military science and furthermore it is used widely in the analysis of issues relating to the fields of sociology, economics, and

politics. Moreover, the lexical item “game” is interchangeable with the word “problem”. It requires a group of players whose interactions are regulated by a set of rules under the premise that all participants are rational and are capable of behaving in ways that further their own self-interests, and where each player seeks to predict the other members’ thoughts and actions by observing the most probable results (John 1969: 371-391).

In 1838, the study of a duopoly by "Antoine Cournot "was the initial case of formal game-theory analysis and the “theory of parlor games” was formed from the above stated research. Furthermore, the game theory was recognized as an official discipline after Von Neumann and the economist Oskar Morgenstern published the game changing book. The theory of games and Economic Behavior in 1944. John Nash validated the theory in 1950 when he said that finite games always have an equilibrium point at which, all players select the actions which are ideal for them given their rivals’ options. The key concept of cooperative game theory has been a topic of interest since then. The game theory was expanded theoretically and utilized for such issues as politics and war in the 1950 and 1960. In fact, it has compelled a revolution since the 1970s (Turocy & Stengel 2001:4-5).

In order to use this model, the user must be aware of each party’s goals and recognize the range and profusion of possibilities. In that respect, there are three organizations of interests (e.g., the opposing interests, the identical interests and the mixed interests). Furthermore, most games do not equate to a zero-sum. In most circumstances, the gains and losses do balance and this is denoted as an economic “equilibrium” which describes a condition of no gain and yet no loss (Admin 2012). The most common applications of the game theory are based on the rules of “mutual

interests” in which each party tries to achieve the game’s best potential outcome. In 2011, Steven stated that the mechanics of the game could be categorized as being relative to the cooperation level among the contestants. In some instances, as a tactic of improving their placement or for acquiring benefits in exchange for collaboration, the players resort to the use of the “non-cooperation” principle (Steven 2011:11-13).

The game theory quantifies the possible outcomes by ranking the relative utilities of the available courses of actions and this whole process utilizes a decision making process. Additionally, the game theory permits members to choose an ideal strategy by generating a relative ranking of all the players involved. Anthony also states that the game theory’s core foundation is that in relation to the potential outcomes, each player possesses the ability of utility preferences. Hence, in order to choose the course of action that provides the maximum utility, each of these utilities are analyzed to aid in the prediction of the course of action each contender is expected to take. The aforementioned statement is assumed based on the premise of coherence and that each competitor is likely to choose the course of action which provides the highest level of utility due to coherence (Anthony 2007:7).

The idea that the choices of the players are interdependent of one another is a common contention in the field of international relations. Furthermore, interdependence can lead to what researchers call strategic reasoning which even for simple exchanges can become quite confusing or unintelligible to the academician. In fact, detailed studies of the above mentioned interactions are possible with direct application of the game theory subsequently, this application yielded full set of models which allowed in-depth investigations of such interactions. Given the players' calculated situations and basic inclinations, ranking the wide range of

strategies each player can use is also of benefit to us. Likewise, we may also predict the expected result(s) of the confrontation of their strategic choices (Allan & DuPont 1999: 23-27).

The study of conflict and cooperation is one of the main goals of game theory research. Likewise, whenever the activities of several agents are interdependent, game theory models can be utilized. The above mentioned interdependent agents may be individuals, groups, firms, or any combination of these. In other words game theory provides a medium to convey structure, analysis, and to understand different strategic scenarios (Turocy & Stengel 2001: 5).

Strategic alliances, cooperation, consortia, coalitions, and partnerships are all catchwords. Based on voluntary covenants such relations frequently lack stability due to the ambiguity of a partner's future conduct. "The self-interest orientation of each party can lead to actions that are individually rational yet produce a collectively suboptimal outcome" (Parkhe 1993:798).

To begin, game theory possesses a principal infrastructure that postulates that the model is composed of one equilateral triangle that is topped by a point termed the pivot, with the two descending sides named the wings. In 1983, Dittmer quantified that the core formulas governing the relationship between the pivot and the wings are in addition to the type of reactions. Two of the reactions can be categorized as symmetrical and the other two can be placed in the asymmetrical category. In this model, all regional actors face each other, yet there are times where parties who are considered as part of the game do not realize it. In an ideal situation, each player

takes a central or pivotal position and then adopts a strategy of establishing cooperation with two competitors (Dittmer 1983:40-41).

In due course, the game theory proves to be the predominant framework that suggests the main effects of regional players interests (the U.S. represents the pivot, while Iran and the GCC States represent the wings) in the bilateral relationships between Iraq and Kuwait in the Gulf region in the post-Saddam era. Figure 1.1 demonstrates the game theory as a comprehensive theoretical framework for this study.

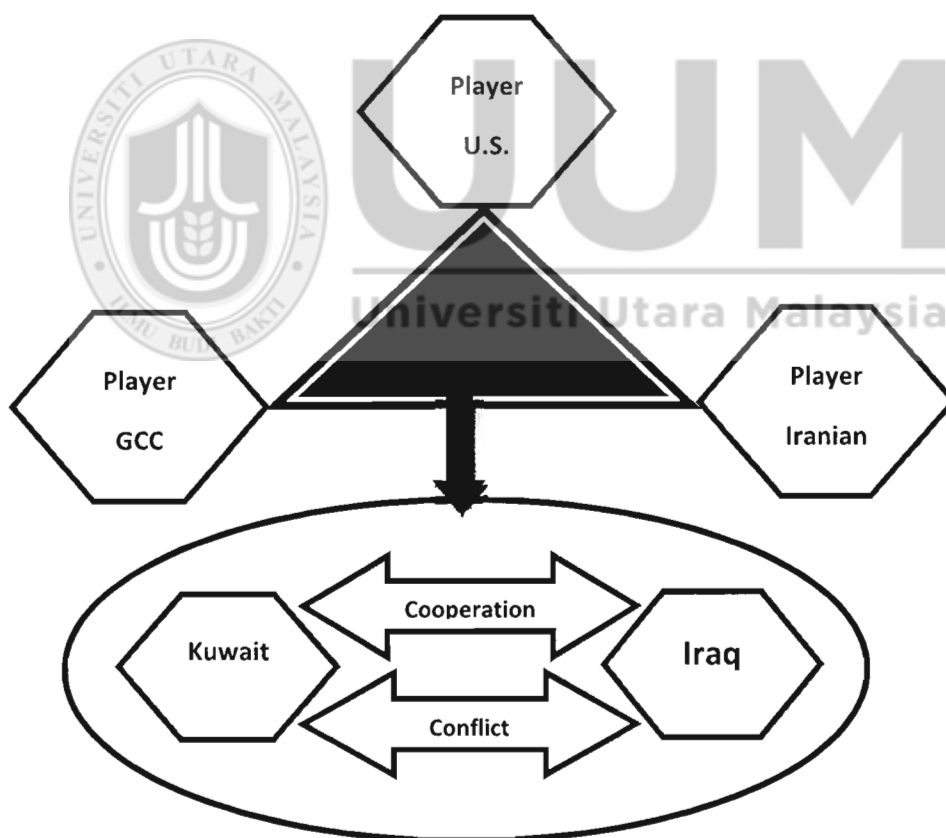


Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework of Analysis.

Source: Ghaffar (2012: 11)

Based on this model, the U.S., Iran and the GCC's interests clearly affect the development of relations between Iraq and Kuwait. This study conceptualizes these categories below as follows:

1.6.1 The U.S. Interests Model as a Pivotal State

The competition between the U.S. and the regional powers in the Gulf region was subjected to the rules of the game theory. Each party cannot achieve gains without making concessions to the others. For example, the U.S. allowed Iran to obtain nuclear technology, but it did not allow Iran to use it against its allies Iraq, Kuwait and the other Gulf States, and at the same time, the U.S military bases in the Gulf region were not subjected to any military threat by Iran (Hadi 2015).

The U.S., in order to enhance its interests in the Gulf region, adopted the policy of threat and protection. The U.S. exploited the Iraqi threat to Kuwait after the Second Gulf War as a means of justifying its military presence and exerting its political influence in the region. Under the pretext of providing protection to Kuwait and the other Gulf States, the U.S. extracted advantages from the Gulf States in the form of obtaining military and logistical facilities for its armed forces during the invasion of Iraq in 2003(Al-Qaisi 2012:46).

In fact, the U.S. holds superiority in many different regions, including the Gulf region, as a way of achieving its interests. The U.S. has the ability to change both its policies and its alliances with the countries of the region in any way that suits it and serves to further its strategic interests (Melhem & Samad 2009:120). The emergence of the U.S. as a strong player in the Gulf region would have the strategically important benefits such as (Al-Qaisi 2012:41):

- 1- Ensuring the continuous flow of oil from the Gulf States to the U.S. and its allies at very reasonable prices;
- 2- Securing the Gulf region for economic purposes such as free trade, investment, finance, and the selling of goods and services to the Gulf States; and
- 3- Preventing the emergence of new regional powers that can threaten the U.S. interests in the Gulf region.

1.6.2 The Iranian Interests Model as a Wing State

Since the Second Gulf War, Iran has struggled to gain recognition as a regional power that is capable of maintaining security in the Gulf. It has tried to bolster its security through the development of military and nuclear armaments and to extend its influence in the Arab Gulf through the establishment of affiliated political, security and military networks (Toukan & Cordesman 2011).

The geographical location of Iran and its vast amount of natural resources are the main factors that drive Iran's expansionary desire and hegemony in the Arab Gulf region. At the same time, it denies the presence of and also ignores key players like the U.S. and the regional powers of the Gulf States. Iran's desire to become a key and strong hegemony in the region is reflected in its actions such as giving support to extremist groups in several regions, its interventions in the affairs of its neighboring countries and the development of a nuclear program which is a very serious threat to the other countries in the region (Cook 2012: 5-6).

On the other hand, Iran saw the presence of the U.S. military in the Gulf region as a dangerous threat to its interests after 2003 because it was hampering its political, security and military ambitions to dominate over this vital region (Sweilem 2013). So the most important characteristic of Iranian policy towards Iraq after 2003 is found in its support of the Iraqi government which was formed during the U.S. occupation of Iraq as well as in its support of the militias that carry out armed operations against the U.S. forces in Iraq in order to thwart the U.S. plans which are in conflict with Iranian interests in the Gulf region (Al-Rubaie 2008:4).

Sharqi (2008) claimed that Iran was afraid of the emergence of a non-allied Iraqi government after 2003 and that it may join the GCC within the next few years. Thus, this may lead to the formation of a new framework for regional security in the Gulf region which does not serve Iran's interests because Iraq and the GCC States including Kuwait will become the biggest regional powers that would compete with Iranian interests in the Gulf region.

1.6.3 The GCC Interests Model as a Wing State

One of the political gains that was obtained by the GCC after the fall of Saddam regime was the end of the Iraqi threat to the Gulf States and the emergence of the U.S. as a regional player and ally with remit to protect the Gulf region from the other regional powers. These gains which the GCC States obtained were made at the expense of other losses such as the U.S. demanding that the Gulf States make several political and internal social reforms within their political systems. Thus, the U.S. had opportunities to manipulate and change the regional balance in the Gulf region according to their own interests (Qutaishat 2011).

Hadi (2015) argued that the key regional players in the Gulf region had different views regarding the security of the Gulf region. Iran considered that the most significant threat was the U.S. military presence in Iraq and Kuwait that raised uncertainty and instability in the region. While the U.S. considered that autocratic regimes like Iran with its regional influence in the Gulf and its interference in the internal affairs of both Iraq and Kuwait through its support of the Shiite powers and parties are among the reasons behind the threat to the security and stability of the Gulf region. Whereas, the GCC considered that the U.S. and Iran were continuously threatening the political systems of the Gulf region in spite of their tendency to ally themselves with the U.S. at the expense of Iran after the Second Gulf War.

The imbalance of power in the Gulf region after the fall of Saddam regime has directly or indirectly persuaded the GCC States particular Kuwait to accept the U.S. presence in the Gulf region, and this was justified from the point of view of the GCC States as follows:

1. The naval force of the GCC States is unable to achieve a balance of power with the Iranian naval force in the Gulf region. In addition, Iran's population far exceeds that of the GCC States.
2. There is a considerable percentage of the Shiite population that live in the GCC States, and their loyalty is to Iran, and if there is any armed conflict they will abandon the GCC States and join Iran (Helayel 2011:77).

Atta (2014) concluded that conflicts and competitions in the Gulf region will increase if the states within the “strategic triangle” (the U.S., Iran and the GCC) are not able to reach an understanding of their common interests and at the same time

fail to understand the importance of the region's security and stability. One of the reasons for the conflict is that their interests may clash due to the visions of the respective parties being different and their tendency to seek an advantage. So, it can be concluded that compatibility will be enhanced and conflicts will be reduced only when the scope of the common interests between Iraq and Kuwait are widened.

However, the researcher is of the view that the Game theory is the most appropriate for this study. Other international theories, such as Realism and Constructivism are not appropriate for this study. In Realism theory, power is the main factor in international relations whereas in Constructivism theory it is based on both sociological and historical foundations of the states in the international system. The Game theory presupposes the presence of divergent interests between more than two players in certain areas where each and every player is trying to achieve its political and economic interests at the expense of the others. As a result, the gains and losses amongst these players would be equal. Therefore, the Game theory can be applied for this study because the competition between the three regional players (the U.S, Iran and the GCC) to achieve their political and economic interests in Iraq and Kuwait was reflected by the conflict or cooperation between the two countries.

1.7 Research Methodology

This section will elaborate on the research methodology that is represented by the procedures, processes and methods that were adopted by this researcher in order to achieve the research objectives. To be more specific, this researcher will provide an overview of the sources of information, population study, data collection methods and data analysis as follow below:

1.7.1 Research Strategy

This study examined the influences of regional players interests in the Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post- Saddam era from 2003 to 2011 by investigating the challenges of the U.S., Iran and the GCC States interests. Qualitative research approach techniques of data collection and analysis were used for several reasons. Firstly, this approach helped this researcher to better understand some of the research concepts e.g., attitude, behavior, etc. Secondly, the qualitative research approach can generate findings that cannot be reached if other procedures or means of quantification are used (Ahmad & Seet 2009: 98-104). Thirdly, this approach is known for being more open-ended when compared with the quantitative approach. This means that when a qualitative research approach is used it will induce the participants of this study to raise more questions and this will assist in the process of obtaining knowledge during discussions (Creswell 2008). Finally, the qualitative method is commonly used to explain or describe as well as to build a hypothesis whereby the causes for the process can be better understood.

The research strategy included the use of face-to-face interviews with fourteen interviewees, three lecturers from the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Baghdad and Faculty of Law and Politics at the University of Basrah in Iraq, two lecturers from the Faculty of Political science at the University of Kuwait, two members of staff from the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, two members of staff from the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry, two diplomats from the Iranian consulate in Iraq, two professional researchers from the Gulf Cooperation Council and one researcher who specializes in Middle East affairs.

This study also used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which helped to get the views and experiences about the effects of the regional players on Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era.

1.7.2 Data Collection Procedure

In this study, primary and secondary data were collected by the researcher:

1.7.2.1 Primary Data

The primary data in this study was divided into two types, the first type being based on the face-to-face interviews and the second type based on reports and official documents.

1.7.2.1.1 Face-to-Face Interview

According to Nachmias (1996: 232) "The personal interview is a face-to-face and is an interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research hypotheses". Mason (1996) argued that interviews are extensively used in qualitative studies. Moreover, interviews may range from the unstructured to the highly structured. This researcher mainly depended on semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. A semi-structured interview refers to an interview method that is basically used to obtain realistic descriptions from the interviewee in relations to the phenomenon under study. The reasons for using this type of data collection is to obtain a deep, rich and holistic understanding of the respondents' intentions, experiences, opinions, attitudes and different ways of thinking.

Also this study employed semi-structured interviews because this method is non-standardized and is commonly used in qualitative analysis. This researcher had a list of questions (Appendix A- presents the interview guide followed throughout the fieldwork) that covered the most important regional powers interests that affected the level of Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. In other words, this researcher was guided by research inquiries. However, this researcher did not use all of these questions in every interview. The arrangement of the questions were also changed depending on the direction taken by the interviewer. Additional questions may also be asked.

Another important point is that purposeful sampling was also adopted for this study. This kind of sampling, according to Miles & Huberman (1994), comprised of individuals who can share their experiences concerning their roles, involvements and conflictive reactions. Moreover, the interviews differed from one individual to another in terms of length, but the general interview duration was conducted over a period of two-months (Mar-Apr 2015). All the interviewees had a good deal of scientific and academic experience with which to support their own reasons for the lack of development in Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post- Saddam era.

Cavana et al., (2001) argued that an interview usually follows a particular pattern that is generally based on entrance strategy, activity, intimacy and exit time. Several types of interviews are available e.g., personal or face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and online interviews.

Face-to-face or phone interviews were performed depending on the complexity of the issues involved, the likely duration of the interview, the convenience of both

parties and the geographical area covered by the survey (Al-badry 2014:29). However, because of the unstable security situation in Iraq and the difficulties in obtaining visas to enter Kuwait, this researcher performed some of the interviews by telephone.

Accordingly, the researcher should be knowledgeable of the interview methods (Halliru 2012:62). This is important for the researcher as it enables the researcher to develop effective questions while he is carefully listening, writing down necessary information and asking follow-up questions. As such, this strategy was utilized in the present study to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

To ensure the successful progress of an interview and to elicit honest responses from the interviewees, they were informed in advance about the objectives of the study. For this reason, this researcher explained the confidentiality of the collected information to the interviewees. To be more specific, this researcher first elaborated upon the nature and purpose of the study and then the interviewees were asked about their personal experiences concerning the long conflict between the two countries and the effects of the regional players' interests on the cooperation and conflict between Iraq and Kuwait. This process was repeated with all the interviewees during the course of the fieldwork. In the present study, the interviewees have worked in different organizations. Therefore, they hold different positions ranging from politicians to academicians who have different levels of education, backgrounds, skills and experiences.

Prior arrangements were made for the interviews to be carried out in the interviewees' offices. The interviews were electronically recorded as it is one of the

best methods to obtain accurate transcriptions (Halliru 2012:65). All the interviews were performed by this researcher personally and recorded using a digital voice recorder which allowed the respondents to speak freely and also allowed this researcher to capture all the nuances of the interview. The questions that were used to guide the interviews for this study are provided in (Appendix A). An English translation of the questions that were administered in Arabic are provided in (Appendix B).

1.7.2.1.2 Reports and Official Documents

In this study, the researcher used a set of reports and government documents, including reports from the UN Security Council on the outstanding issues between the two countries, the international conventions, Final Statements of the GCC, archival documents from the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Iranian Foreign Ministry and the U.S Foreign Ministry, as well as international and regional reports about the U.S, Iranian and the GCC interests in the Gulf region.

1.7.2.2 Secondary data

A secondary data was also collected. The secondary data included previous research reports, magazines, newspapers, theses, journals, and existing findings in journals and books found in many libraries, e.g., the Sultanah Bahiyah library at the UUM, University of Baghdad's library and the Studies Institute of the Arab World. At the same time this researcher also accessed the internet in order to search for more secondary data.

1.7.3 Data Analysis Technique

To carry out the analysis, the first thing that this researcher did was to use inductive reasoning to help him collect a considerable amount of information. Then, he categorized the data, checked it and created a small set of abstracts complete with their underpinning themes. "Besides, the researcher is recommended to develop interpretive narratives from his data in order to encapsulate the phenomenon's complexity" (Haliru 2012:65).

To achieve the objectives and answer the research questions of the present study, this researcher utilized more than one analytical method in order to generate much richer and more accurate outcomes and findings. To be more specific, this researcher employed two methods, namely the descriptive method and the content analysis method.

The present study aims to achieve many objectives with the general purpose being to describe, explain and examine the phenomenon under study, Iraq-Kuwait relations. The reason why this researcher utilized the analytical descriptive method to analyze the data was to provide a systematic and scientific explanation, definition and examination of the data in order to arrive at conclusions from the problems, research questions, current situations and reasonable solutions. In short, the entire collected data reinforce each other in order to prevent any misrepresentation.

1.8 Scope of Study

The scope of this study is limited to the role and influence of the regional players interests in Iraq-Kuwait relations after the U.S occupation in 2003, arguing that the relations between these two countries have seen significant continued tension for

more than a decade since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 during Saddam rule and including the end of this rule in 2003. Therefore, the details about Iraq-Kuwait relations during the said period are reviewed. These areas of interest have many aspects:

- a. This study covered the effects of the regional players interests (the U.S., Iran and the GCC) on the evolution of relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the Arab Gulf region;
- b. The study excluded the neighboring countries, Turkey, Syria and Jordan because they are located outside of the Gulf region;
- c. Iraq-Kuwait relations evolved between 2003 and 2011 due to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq which had a diminishing impact on both countries. In addition to that, after 2011 Iran and the GCC States were helping the two countries to resolve their outstanding problems and to prevent the U.S. from occupying Iraq again.
- d. The game theory was employed in the analysis of diplomatic relations between Iraq and Kuwait under the effects of the varied interests of the regional players in the Gulf region. Moreover, this study is qualitative (descriptive) in nature.

1.9 Limitation of Study

In the course of completing this thesis, this researcher faced some limitations in carrying out this study. For example, during the collection of primary data in Iraq, this researcher faced a lot of obstacles when he tried to interview academic staff of

the local universities and staff of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry because of terrorist attacks and other security threats within the country. In addition to that this researcher also had difficulty in obtaining a visa to travel to Kuwait to conduct interviews with the academic staff of Kuwaiti universities and the staff of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry. Nevertheless, this researcher conducted some interviews by telephone and then obtained their responses in the same manner.

The second limitation is the translation of the interviews from English to Arabic and vice versa. In the interviews, the questions and responses were written in English because the research paper must be written in English. However, the official language of Iraq and Kuwait is the Arabic language. Therefore, all the questions and responses were translated from English to Arabic and vice versa. As a result, the translation process might have given rise to several discrepancies that might have negatively affected the research results. Nevertheless, this researcher addressed this issue by seeking the assistance of a native Arab who is fluent in both languages and is an expert in translation.

1.10 Operational Definition

Regional players: It is defined as the individuals who make the relevant decisions in certain regional areas using certain strategies and describes how a player could play a game and that the pay-offs consist of what a player will receive at the end of the game which is subject to the actions of all the players in the game. Consequently, an individual will select a strategy which produces the largest payout. Collectivity, rationality, and mutual interdependency are the three conventions that an individual is required to have for him to comprehend the game theory (Romp 1997).

The above-mentioned assumptions can help this researcher to analyze the collaborative and confrontational relations between Iraq and Kuwait after taking into consideration their relationship together with the other interests of the regional players in the Arab Gulf region, i.e. the US, Iran and the GCC. Wright (1978:63) defines it as “States with general interest relative to a limited region and the capacity to act alone in this region, which gives them the appearance of local great powers.

The term “regional players” refers to the three existing regional powers, i.e. the U.S., Iran and the GCC, and all three of them have divergent interests in the Arab Gulf region. The U.S. has many military bases and the relevant personnel in Iraq and Kuwait particularly and the Gulf region in general. As such the U.S. was a key regional player when it occupied Iraq from 2003 to 2011. At the same time, Iran was also trying to achieve its objectives in the Gulf region, so it also tried to step up its influence in Iraq and Kuwait. Meanwhile the GCC also actively sought to balance its relations with the U.S. and Iran. On top of that, during the post-Saddam era the GCC sought to reduce the impact the U.S. and Iran have on Iraq-Kuwait relations.

Interests : it can be defined as "enlightened preferences among policy choices, with enlightened meaning of the preferences that the state or people would have if their information were perfect, including the knowledge that they would have in retrospect if they had a chance to live out the consequences of each choice before actually making a decision" (Mansbridge 1983: 25).

The interests of the states are political, economic and cultural in nature. The states must balance these interests as they are very important in fostering good foreign

relations. It will determine whether there is cooperation or conflict, thus resulting in gains or losses to the respective states.

Post-Saddam era: It means a period in Iraqi history characterized by a large American troop deployment in Iraqi territory that began with the U.S.-led invasion of the country in March 2003 which overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein and ended with the departure of U.S. troops from the country in 2011 (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2014). During the post-Saddam period of 2003 to 2011, the regional players in the Arab Gulf region created uncertain relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Sometimes the relationship was improved and at other times the bilateral link was stalemate.

1.11 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters. It is organized as follow:

Chapter One includes the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, theoretical framework, research methodology, scope of the study, limitation of study, operational definition, and organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on related literature as a means to elaborate on Iraq-Kuwait relations in the Post-Saddam era. This chapter investigates the effects of U.S. interests on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait, the effects of Iranian interests in the relationship between the two countries, the effects of the GCC on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait, and the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations.

Chapter Three discusses the evolution of Iraq-Kuwait relations from the early seventeenth century until the fall of Saddam era in 2003, and began with Iraq-Kuwait relations during the Ottoman Empire. The chapter further characterizes the relations during the British colonization (1921–1958) and discusses of Iraq-Kuwait relations prior to Saddam rule (1958-1979), e.g., during the period of republican governments which preceded President Saddam era. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion about the features of Iraq-Kuwait relations during Saddam rule (1979-2003), which includes the Kuwaiti assistance during Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the UN sanctions against Iraq.

Chapter Four analyzes the role of the U.S. interests as a regional player in the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post- Saddam era in 2003. It focuses on the role of the U.S. interests in Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam rule. It examines the U.S. Interests in the post-Saddam Iraq e.g., the economic interests, security and political interests of the U.S. in Iraq and Kuwait. This chapter also analyzes the role of the U.S. interests in the outstanding problems between Iraq and Kuwait e.g., the border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, the problem of constructing Kuwait's "Port Mubarak", the problem of Iraq's debts and reparations to Kuwait, and the problem of Iraq remaining under chapter VII of the UN charter.

Chapter Five discusses and analyzes the role of Iran's interests as a regional player in the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post- Saddam era. This chapter discusses Iran's role in Middle East and how its role was affected by the relations between Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam rule. It also analyzes the political and economic interests of Iran in Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam. This chapter also assesses Iran's interests and its impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations, e.g., Iran's interests

in creating sectarian conflicts and the forestalling of American democracy activity projects in Iraq and the common interests Iran has with the states within the region.

Chapter Six discusses and scrutinizes the effects of the GCC interests as a regional player on Iraq-Kuwait relations. It examines the GCC as a regional power during Saddam rule. This chapter discusses the political and economic interests of the GCC in Iraq and Kuwait in the post Saddam era. In addition, it also analyzes the effect of the GCC interests on the normalization of relations or the creation of tension between Iraq and Kuwait in the post Saddam era.

Chapter Seven concludes the major findings that have been obtained from respondents and secondary data. It also discusses the conclusions that have been drawn from the findings and the discussion of the findings is based on three major aspects namely, the influence of the U.S. interests, Iran's interests and the GCC States' interests in the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations. This chapter also covers other aspects such as the contributions of this study to both theory and practice, and finally the possible directions for future research studies are also highlighted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on all relevant literature to the current study. The main objective of this literature review is to shed light on other researches that is related to the influence regional interests had on the Iraq-Kuwait relations in the Gulf region. Likewise, existing studies occasionally contain references by citing the main reasons for the development or disruption of relations between Iraq and Kuwait and only a few studies provide an in-depth analysis of the current Iraq-Kuwait relations and the expected results. In addition to that, the existing literature does not indicate the regional power's interests in the Gulf region including Iraq and Kuwait. In other words, the vast majority of existing literature do not mention the effect of the major and regional players' interests as a whole on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in post-Saddam era.

Consequently, numerous questions relevant to Iraq-Kuwait relations remain unanswered. This study aims to fill the gap left by existing literature by providing a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the regional players' interests and their impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. The previous studies can be divided into four sections: studies of the effects of the U.S. interests on relations between Iraq and Kuwait, studies of the effects of Iranian interests on Iraq-Kuwait relations, studies of the effects of the GCC States interests on Iraq-Kuwait relations,

and studies of the development of the relations between two countries in the post-Saddam era.

2.2 Studies on the Effects of the U.S. Interests in Iraq-Kuwait Relations

Abu Sulaib (2015:12-16) in his study "Factors of Kuwait's Decision to Support the U.S.-Iraq War of 2003", emphasized that there is a set of internal, regional and international factors that influenced Kuwait's decision to support the American troops to topple Saddam in 2003. Kuwait provided approximately 60% of its national territory for the U.S. troops to use as well as providing financial support to the Americans in their effort to overthrow Saddam regime, though neighboring nations, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, opted not to get involved in the war. The impact of external factors represented by the U.S., forced Kuwait to support the U.S. war against Iraq so as to maintain its good relations with this superpower because the tragedy of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait did not end after its liberation in 1991. Thus the toppling of Saddam regime was like a golden opportunity to overcome those pressures experienced in the past. Abu Sulaib concluded that although Kuwait's decision was to overthrow Saddam and provide support for the U.S. troops had been in Kuwait's national interest, but the same decision will not necessarily achieve the same interest for Kuwait in a similar situation and scenario with a state other than Iraq in the future.

Furthermore, Terrill (2007:25-26) analyzed the feature of the strategic alliance between the U.S. and Kuwait towards security issues Kuwait encountered in the post-Saddam era. Kuwait had on-going security problems with Iraq during Saddam regime when it was a regional power and had the ability to invade Kuwait or during

the post-Saddam when it became disordered with a lot of internal conflicts which made Kuwait afraid of the increasing number of Iraqi refugees on its border with Iraq. Terrill added that there were political differences between Kuwait and the U.S. on some issues concerning the U.S. support for Israel against the Arab states as well as the U.S. did not consult Kuwait on some of the regional issues concerning the security of the Gulf region where Kuwait is a major party. He concluded that Kuwait's interest will require continuous of cooperation and alliance with the U.S. during the coming period and this is especially when the Gulf region is experiencing tension and its security is unstable.

Al-Obeidi (2004:55-57) analyzed the U.S. military strategy and its implications on the Gulf region by studying the U.S. military's strategy planning as well as the principles of the previous American administrations and the extent of their success in achieving the American's interests in the region. Moreover, the U.S. paid attention to a few regions whose existence had a deep and vital impact on the U.S. interests. The Gulf region is one of those regions that occupy a prominent position that is linked to the security of the U.S. and its allies from Europe. The military doctrine of the U.S. was based on the use of maximum military force when its national interests are threatened and the establishment of this force is based on the principle of permanent superiority and the ability to send its troops anywhere and anytime under different circumstances.

In a critical study, Weiner (2014:23-24) stated that the U.S. used its military capabilities during the last decade to protect the flow of oil imports from the Arab Gulf region from its competing states, which makes the securing of oil imports a key focus in the U.S. foreign policy. However, the discovery of enormous reserves of oil

in the U.S. has raised questions about the future of the U.S. role in the Arab Gulf region and its commitments to the security of the region, especially as there is now a marked decline in the role of American foreign policy in the region as a result of increasing American oil production and a marked reduction of imports from the Gulf States. In spite of the changes in oil flow, the U.S. will remain in the region because of its non-oil interests as it remains committed to maintaining the security of the Gulf as well as commitment to protect Israel from its neighbors. Finally, Weiner suggested that in the event the Americans reduce its presence in the Arab Gulf for any reason, the regional states in the Gulf must adopt urgent measures to secure the region through increased cooperation among the Gulf States without trying to possess Mass Weapons of Destruction to preserve its security because this will increase tension and instability in the region.

According to Ahmed (2005:65-69) in his study "The Impact of the U.S. Military Existence on the Political System in Iraq", he argued that the issue of the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003 gave rise to an extensive controversy about the pre-planned U.S intention to exploit the situation so as to achieve its goals in the Gulf region. This represented of the U.S. strategic thoughts and policies that might be applied to make the U.S. gain control over most of the states in the region. The U.S. was not forthright in providing its justifications for the war on Iraq, but there were supreme strategic interests imposed by the U.S. policy to maintain an intensive military presence in Iraq and the Gulf region and to establish a regional military alliance with some of the countries in the Arab region.

In the same context, Hadi (2008:9) in his study "The Political Process in Iraq after the Occupation and its Impact on the Iraqi Insider", discussed the impact of internal,

regional, and international conditions for the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, the political process in Iraq and its phases from the forming the of Iraqi Governing Council in 2003 until the formation of the new Iraqi government after the 2005 elections. Hadi summarized that the U.S. did not have a clear vision of the political scene in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam and as a result there was a lot of internal contradictions and conflict among and within the Iraqi political parties.

In another study, Ibrahim (2010:22-25) stated that the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the internal, regional and international consequences through the analysis of U.S. strategic means towards Iraq's occupation in 2003 were represented by such justifications as the protection of human rights, fighting terrorism and eliminating the Weapons of Mass Destruction possessed by Iraq during that period. Furthermore, the Arab states were the first to be affected by the occupation, especially Syria, Lebanon and Libya, since the U.S. threatened to use its military force to change the regimes in those countries. Ibrahim used the historical approach to examine the political circumstances that encouraged the U.S. to occupy Iraq. In addition to that, the analytical approach was adopted in order to explain the political phenomena that accompanied the invasion and their critical consequences on the states in the region.

Accordingly, Mohammad (2007:13-17) argued about the decision-making based on the American foreign policy, especially on the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the roles of internal and external powers and institutions in influencing this process. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it investigates the political and strategic aspects of the decision-making process that is based on the U.S. foreign policy in terms of the effective factors that influenced its adoption and the identification of the real motives and objectives behind this adoption that have critical implications on

Iraq and the region. However, the regional and international environment was such that many countries were not prepared to accept the war on Iraq and the UN was forced to settle the crisis due to the unconvincing justifications that were given by the U.S. as a pretext for war. Mohammad adopted the analytical approach to examine the regional and international implications of the decision to start a war against Iraq.

Shibley (2008: 19-30) analyzed the security challenges that confronted the U.S. policy in Middle East in the post-Cold War era and especially on terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction. These challenges divided the world into two opposing groups: the first group includes the U.S. and its European and Israeli allies, whereas the second group is represented by the emerging regional parties in Middle East such as Iran and its allies in Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah and some political organizations in Iraq. Shibley used the historical approach through the conveying of historical facts and events that happened in the region in the past. The analytical approach was used to analyze the political issues that are the topics of the current study which is related to the security challenges that American foreign policy had to face in the region.

Saker (2015:10-15) stressed that the U.S. strategy in Middle East was based on two factors. Firstly, the U.S. adopted the right decision after trying all options and alternatives and secondly, the U.S. depended on the work of security and intelligence institutions, and the U.S. Thought Centers. These institutions operated in accordance with the principal aim of serving the American interests regardless of the regional countries' interests. The U.S. would rely more on the low value of Gulf oil after driving down its prices along with trying to flood the market with an over-supply supply of oil, thus reducing the revenue of the Gulf States in particular, and creating

an economic recession and disrupting the developmental projects which will weaken these states. Saker concluded that the U.S. strategy in the Arab region does not pay attention to the needs of the states in the region and does not care about its people and their issues and needs. The U.S. strategy is to deal with the governing regimes in the Arab region according to the requirements of each stage and political situation. Thus, the U.S. policy will change depending on the amount of influence it has attained and the hegemony over that vital region.

On the other hand, Kloub (2011:7-10) discussed the impact of international terrorism on American foreign policy during the 2001-2009 period by examining the political, economic and social dimensions of the terrorism phenomenon and its impact on American interests in the Arab region. The usage of terrorism by some armed groups against the U.S. interests in Middle East was the result of injustice, persecution and the double-standard policy pursued by the U.S. administration towards the Arab and issues of the Muslim world. Kloub opined that it is important to develop a unified Arab strategy to deal with the U.S. interests in the Arab region through joint Arab action, As well as educating young Muslims on how to deal with others and still be in accord with Islamic traditions.

In an analytical study of the role of American policy in the democratic transitions experienced in the Arab region since 2010, Abdullah (2014:5) stated that the American administration has had a direct role in provoking disorder and sectarian and religious conflicts in the Arab region through the use of various tools and means including the media, civil society organizations and religious minorities. All these means served the political, economic and religious interests of the U.S. in the Arab region. The U.S. policy has had an effective role in stimulating the so-called “Arab

spring” revolutions in 2010 which resulted in the change of political regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. Abdullah used the analytical approach to examine and analyze the U.S. policy towards the Arab states.

However, despite the fact that there were extensive studies concerning the U.S. interests in Iraq and Kuwait, there are still many unexplored ambiguities specifically, how does the U.S. interests affect on Iraq-Kuwait relations in post-Saddam Iraq. Moreover, the literature currently available does not cover the significant lack of future solutions to mitigate the impact of the U.S. interests in the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations which incidentally is the objective of this researcher’s current study. In addition to that, the current study will attempt to provide an integrated academic study about the reality of current relations between Iraq and Kuwait from the political and economic aspects while Iraq is occupied by the U.S. and when the U.S withdraws from it. This study will provide a vision of future relation which were not addressed in the previous studies. The previous studies did shed some light on certain stages of the development of the Kuwait-Iraq relations and it also addressed certain specific issues, either political or economic in those relations between the two countries.

2.3 Studies on the Effects of the Iranian Interests in Iraq-Kuwait Relations

In an analytical study, Al-Obeidi (2011: 17-20) analyzed the impact Iranian foreign policy had on the internal and external political decision-making in Iraq after 2003 as well as identifying the compatibility of common political interests between Iran and the U.S. in order to achieve their goals in Iraq after the fall of Saddam regime. This period represented a turning point in Iraqi-Iranian relations since Iran became an

important regional power with its own interests and strategic objectives in the region after the collapse of the Iraqi military force. Besides that, the illegal U.S. war against Iraq was designed to encircle Iran and reduce its influence in the Gulf region. Al-Obeidi adopted the historical approach in the narration of historical events and facts concerning the development of Iraqi-Iranian relations during that period as well as using the analytical approach to analyze in the policies that have been adopted by the decision makers in both countries to develop and improve their relations.

Al-Sultani (2011:18-27) analyzed Iraq-Iran relations and their impact on the stability politics and economy of the two countries by identifying the importance of their respective geographical locations and the border agreements that have been concluded between them as well as studying Iran's excesses at its borders with Iraq when it exploited the political instability in Iraq after 2003. Al-Sultani used the analytical approach in studying the frequent problems between Iraq and Iran and their impact on the Middle East from a geographical and analytical perspective. In conclusion, he recommended the importance of settling unresolved problems between Iran and Iraq peacefully under the auspices of the UN; beside encouraging investment and development opportunities in both countries.

Nasser (2015:22) claimed that the U.S. presence in the Gulf region after 2003 was a direct threat to Iranian security. The Iranian foreign policy has been and is still a key component in guiding and formulating regional alliances and balances in the region. The most important aspect is the decision-making process and the establishment of beliefs and concepts adopted by the Iranian ruling elites in their relations with other regional parties. Finally, Nasser concluded that the essential characteristic of Iranian

policy towards the Gulf States its openness and call for cooperation and dialogue based on its desire to dominate and expand in the region.

In the same context, Jerald (2003:46-50) attempted to analyze the extent of Iran's contribution to the security or tension or both in the Gulf region. He opined that the role of Iran in the Gulf region has been considerably misunderstood and effective diplomatic efforts can encourage Iran to play a more responsible role in the region. Jerald avoided the extremist views and tended to understand Iranian foreign policy by paying special attention to economic factors, internal Iranian policy and the general perception of Iran's regional role not only in the Gulf region but also in other regions. He used both the historical and analytical approaches to achieve the objectives of his study.

Additionally, Salam (2005:33) analyzed the Iranian foreign policy and its formation models as well as the mechanisms for political decision-making by identifying the internal, regional and international dimensions of Iran's regional role in the Gulf region, especially the possibilities of cooperation and conflict between Iran and the Gulf States. The political decision-makers in Iran believed that if Iran does not impose its foreign policy effectively, it will have more regional and international threats and tensions. In addition to that, Iran also plays a critical role in the region and therefore, it must engage in all security arrangements of the Gulf region and must not ignore its role in such arrangements in the future.

In his study "Iranian Nuclear Armament and its Impact on the Security of the Gulf", Al-Khalidi (2007:14-21) clarified the seriousness of Iran's possession of nuclear weapons which makes the Gulf States powerless to fight back thus resulting in Iran

being able to carry out its desired role in the region that will be aligned with its strategic interests. In addition to the identification of the means and ways that were utilized by Iran when dealing with the crisis with the U.S. due to its nuclear development program, Iran also sought to possess non-conventional military capabilities as a deterrent against its regional opponents and international powers and establish itself as a regional power. Al-Khalidi utilized the analytical approach to achieve the objective of this study.

Furthermore, in the analytical study of “The impact of the Intentional Economic Sanctions on Iranian Foreign Policy towards the Middle East region since 2001-2011”, Jarwan (2013:33-35) studied the economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the UN within a theoretical framework and described the evolution from a historical and legal context together with their goals and forms. The economic sanctions upon Iran in 2006 because of its nuclear program provoked Iran to intervene in the affairs of the Middle East. This initiative was to enable Iran to enhance its status or standing in the international arena and help it to manage its negotiations with major powers, especially the U.S. as well as reduce the effects of the economic sanctions that it faced. Jarwan realized that the effects of international economic sanctions on Iran's foreign policy requires a reaction from Iran. However, this is dependent upon Iran's political and economic conditions and geographical location together with its ability to absorb the effects of the economic sanctions.

Al-Hassani (2011: 22-30) argued that Iran's political ambitions in Middle East were due to Iran's foreign policy. Iran's role is not limited to the political aspect only, but it also includes strategic, religious and geo-political dimensions. Due to the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, there has been a shift in Iran's international and regional

relations, especially after the change of the U.S. policy which considered Iran to be an enemy when it was previously an ally; as well as the clash of Iran's Islamic principles with that of many Arabic and Islamic countries. But Iran's political ambitions and objectives remained stable and unchanged despite the U.S. blockade and isolation by the Islamic Arabic countries because of its nuclear program. Al-Hassani concluded that due to the lack of privileged strategic partners to rely upon to support its political and economic status and thus ensuring its security, Iran resorted to developing alternative partnerships with certain European countries. Iran was successful in developing the alternative partnership, but it does not have a solution to the conundrum caused by the U.S. and European alliance, which is heavily influenced by the position of the U.S. and Israel on Iran, especially on matters concerning Iran's nuclear capability and its role in the Gulf region and the Middle East.

In an analytical study, Jerabah (2012:55) confirmed that the concept of Iran's strategy towards the Arab region was not based on the concept of actual collective partnership with the regional states, but it is based on "Shi'ism" which has been adopted by the Iranian government. On the other hand the Arab states' strategy were not based on any specific religious or national basis including the concept of a common security strategy among them, but on several bases of states that may sometimes be contradictory. Jerabah adopted the historical approach to explain some of the events concerning Iran's strategy and the analytical approach to analyze and interpret the behavior of Iran's foreign policy towards the Arab states in the Middle East.

Moreover, Al-Ahwazi (2013:55-60) in his study "The Bases of Iranian Project in the Arab region", discussed the adoption of geographical, historical, and demographic bases by the Iranian government in its foreign policy towards the Arab region. He said that the historical factor is one of the most important factors in Iran's foreign policy since it is correlated with the geographical base when Iran formulated its policies towards Arab region. Iran relied on the principle of superiority when dealing with the Arabs based on a historical factor, the Persian Empire, whereby it had authority over some of the Arab states and the Empire then had ambitions to expand its territories and military domination. Al-Ahwazi concluded that the lack of a unified Arab project to thwart Iran's ambitions resulted in Iran successfully achieving many of its political schemes such as the setting up of cells, spying networks, terrorist groups and opposition political organizations in many Arab states as well as propagating its cultural programs among the Arab communities. As a result, Iran gained political and military superiority over its neighbors.

Besides that, in his the analytical study of the Iranian-American relations along with alterations and changes in spacing and rapprochement between the two countries during the period from 1997 to 2011, Al-Ameri (2011:77-81) showed that the U.S.-Iran relations during that period were governed by interests and ideologies that were consistent with Iran's realistic vision that was represented by its actual and practical behavior in order for it achieve its national goals in the Gulf region. There are two aspects in the differences in the U.S.-Iran relations, the first one is internal and is about the U.S. accusing Iran of violating human rights and the second aspects is a regional concern and it is about Iran's interference in the internal affairs of its neighbors and its attempt to achieve military superiority.

However, the existing literature did not pay much attention on the influence of Iran's interests on Iraq-Kuwait relations, the goals and interests that bind Iran, Iraq and Kuwait in the Gulf region as well as the policies and strategies that have been implemented to reduce the effects of Iranian interests and policies on Kuwait-Iraq relations in the post-Saddam era. These issues are among the objectives that will be achieved by this investigation. In addition to that, the current study differs from the previous studies as it will shed light from the perspective of Iranian security in the Gulf region and its impact on Iran's policy in the Gulf region so that it can through this information identify the proposed roads and options for the countries in the Gulf region including Iraq and Kuwait, on how to deal with this state and what are the challenges.

2.4 Studies on the Effects of the GCC States Interests in Iraq-Kuwait Relations

In order to form a future vision for the establishment of military cooperation between Iraq and the GCC States, Barrak (2009:389-390) analyzed the different phases of Iraqi-Gulf relations in contemporary history and their change from inconsistency to stability according to the circumstances of each phase with particular focus on the post-Saddam period by analyzing the regional variables impact on the Iraqi-Gulf relations. Barrak identified the potential and possible models of military cooperation between the GCC States and Iraq through a review of the current military capacities of the GCC States armies in terms of armaments, training, equipment, scientific and military institutions and the distinctive experiences of those states in manufacturing military related products. He also emphasized on the external factors influencing

military cooperation between Iraq and the GCC especially the U.S. and Iranian factors as being the most effective and influential ones.

In their study "Iraq and the Gulf Security Dilemma after 2003", Abdullah & Atwan (2009:99-100) stressed that the geographic factor has always been a security concern for the GCC States because of their weak defensive capacity to counter any possible regional threats especially with regards to Iran's ambitions to build a great state in the Gulf region. This propelled the GCC States to support Iraq politically and economically against Iran. Thus, the political systems in the Gulf tended to rely on the permanent presence of the U.S. troops to defend them which, at the same time led to increased instability and insecurity in the Gulf region.

In an analysis of the future of the Gulf region under the new security arrangements led by the U.S., Iran and the GCC States, Abootalebi (2007:32) believed that the inability of the GCC States to provide security arrangements to deter regional interventions after 2003 will encourage the U.S. to rely on its military presence and political influence in the region to preserve its vital interests in the Gulf, but this may result in the people of the region to increase their hostility against the U.S. The exclusion of Iran from the Gulf security arrangements will also cause the emergence of isolated hostility against the U.S. presence in the Gulf region. Abootalebi used the analytical method to explain the political and military rivalry between the U.S. and Iran in the Gulf region.

In his study "Gulf-Iranian Relations 1997-2006: Case Study on Saudi Arabia", Mubaidin (2008:76-79) discussed the elements of closeness and conflict in the Gulf-Iranian relations as well as clarifying the important factors which influenced of the

relations between the two countries during the said period. There were several factors that led to the close relations between Iran and the Gulf States and they were the new approach of Iranian politics which called for dialogue and openness, the mutual visits on the highest levels and the signing of economic treaties between the two parties especially after the Second Gulf War. The study showed that regional and international developments, particularly the Iraqi situation after 2003 and the Iranian nuclear program, have led to variability in the Gulf-Iranian relations.

Shammari (2012:13-20) analyzed the most important factors that encouraged the GCC States to be united and the constraints they encountered in their quest to be united. The study was mainly based on the assumption that the GCC States could develop a more integrated federal formula among themselves in order to form a Federal Union in future. There were many internal, regional and international challenges that must be resolved before a strong Gulf Union can be formed. There is also a need to take into account the interests of all the people in the Gulf, especially those from the rich GCC States which give them an extra characteristic in their creation of a successful Gulf Union. Although the GCC States have many accomplishments in the political, economic and military fields, but they have not yet reached the required level with regards to the creation of the Gulf Common Market as well as a unified currency for the Gulf region. Shammari used the historical approach to explore the evolutionary phases for the establishment of the GCC as well as the use of the analytical approach to study the reality and the future of the GCC and the obstacles it will encounter.

In the same context, Ameen (2012:28-34) discussed the importance of promoting economic integration among the Gulf States and the main obstacles that obstruct the

GCC's work to achieve an economically integrated Gulf. There was a set of positive fundamentals to achieve economic integration among GCC States and they are: the people of the member states are homogeneous, the GCC States are of the same origin, have shared history and the climatic conditions are similar they are almost similar in terms of the phases of their economic development, and their economy are based on the production of a single commodity, which is oil. Despite such fundamentals, the integration process of the GCC is developing very slowly because the Gulf States fear the loss of their national sovereignty as a result of the economic integration.

In a critical study, Sajedi (2009:29) emphasized that the political geography of the Gulf region has been and is still an attractive and competitive factor for the major powers because this region is linked to Europe, Africa and South Asia and it has over 63% of the world's oil reserves and 40% of the world's gas resources. Sajedi criticized the Gulf States lack of mutual trust among its members on how to cope with external risks and achieve peace and security among its members. Sajedi used the analytical approach to describe the impact of Iran and the U.S. on the security and stability of the Gulf region.

In an analytical study, Al-Metari (2011:77-79) analyzed the political challenges faced by the GCC States to preserve the security and stability of the Gulf region due to the international and regional competition for the resources of the Arab Gulf. The most important challenges were the Israel's threat to the security of the Gulf due to its alliance with the U.S. as well as the problems caused by religious and political extremism in the region especially after 2003. The security of the Gulf is an international responsibility and it is necessary to keep the Gulf States away from the

conflicts of the major powers that affect international peace and security. Furthermore, it is the duty of the GCC as a regional power, to specify the sources of threat that it face and to consider any aggression against any member of the GCC as an aggression against all of its members. The historical method was used in this study to identify the historical phases of the emergence of the GCC as a regional power as well as the analytical approach in the analysis of its nature and role in the maintenance of security in the Gulf region.

On the other hand, Al-Mahri (2010:44-48) analyzed the political shifts in the new international system and their impact on the security and stability of the GCC States for the period of 1990-2010. The problem of this study lies in the identification of the relationship between the regional shifts and the security and stability in the Gulf region during that period. The GCC States were required to strengthen their military forces through expansion training and the modernization of its armed forces and supporting them with modern technological capabilities. The GCC States have spent huge sums on this trend. However the problem of having a very small population has reduced the effectiveness of the armaments policy as a means to protect of those states. Al-Mahri adopted the historical approach by focusing on the historical aspects of the security of the GCC States along with the descriptive and analytical approach through the examination of regional and international variables.

Al-Mansour (2009:590-594) focused on the new challenges facing the security of the Gulf region after 2003 which are qualitatively different from the traditional challenges that the GCC States faced in the past. Direct security threats to the GCC States emerged primarily from within the states together with the growth of some conservative religious groups with intent to change and reform the internal situations

in the Gulf region through violence and terrorism. Al-Mansour concluded that the period after the fall of Saddam regime have given rise to many visions and projects concerning the security of the Gulf region, but all of them were reliant on the major powers to provide protection for the states in the region.

Jumaili (2011:7-10) discussed the political reforms in the GCC States after the Second Gulf War and their impact with respect to the security and military aspects on the regimes of the Gulf States in spite of the huge sums of money which the Gulf States have spent on armaments to protect their internal security. The most important of those reforms were the legislating of constitutional laws political participations and civil societies because of some recent regional events that occurred the Gulf region. Jumaili used the analytical approach to examine the social, cultural, and economic conditions which encouraged the Gulf States to change and reform through the presentation of the recent major internal problems faced by the GCC States.

Based on the existing literature, it is clear that there is a lack of studies on the role played by the interests of the GCC States in the activation or deactivation of Iraq-Kuwait relations and the reactions of the GCC States on the improved relationship between Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam era. Hence, this researcher will increase the knowledge available on the crucial topics of this study.

2.5 Studies on the Development of Iraq-Kuwait relations

Al-Esimi (2012:8-19) in his study “Kuwait-Iraq Borders Demarcations and its Effects on the Foreign Policy of Kuwait”, dealt with the of Iraq-Kuwait conflicts due to border demarcations between the two countries and their impact on Kuwait’s

foreign policy under international treaties by studying the nature and roots of Iraq-Kuwait border problems in the past. The border conflict between the two countries is a complex topic that has resulted in a lot of political, economic, social and even international crises that have affected and still affect the policies of both countries. The study revealed the need to settle border problems among the Arab states, especially the Iraq-Kuwait conflict, within the Arab League itself and as such this issue requires further studies on the border demarcation issues among the Arab countries to settle the conflicts or limit them in the future.

Al-Kenae (2011:14-16) revealed three issues about the Iraq- Kuwait conflict. Firstly, Kuwait was never part of the Ottoman Empire and thus was never ever a part of Iraq during that period. Secondly, the turbulent history of Kuwait-Iraq relations since the independence of Iraq in 1932 has always invited the intervention of major military powers in the region due to the strategic importance of Kuwait, especially since the discovery of oil. Thirdly, it speculated on the prospects for overhauling Kuwait-Iraq relations in the light of international and regional transformations which have resulted in the fall of Saddam regime in 2003 along with the emergence of Iran as a regional power in the Arab region. Al-kenae opined that we will witness a new pattern of Kuwait-Iraq relations in future because the new regime in Iraq has set different priorities in its relations with its neighbor and the U.S., adding that it now has a democratic system that is different from the former ones.

Al-Nadwi (2009:5-9) opined that the renewed conflicts in Iraq-Kuwait relations were rooted at the end of the 19th century and considered that the major powers, especially Britain and the U.S. have played a significant role in stimulating the conflict since the discovery of the immense oil reserves in both countries. The

Second Gulf War revealed many unsettled controversies between Iraq and Kuwait and most importantly they are the border demarcations, the shared oil fields, compensations and Iraq's debts to Kuwait and Kuwaiti prisoners. Despite the complex conflicts in Iraq-Kuwait relations, these crises were not the first of its kind in the history of international relations and their resolution depends on the real intentions of the conflicting parties as well as on its regional and international roles.

In the discussion of the reality of Kuwait-Iraq relations and how to improve it, Al-Babtain (2011:25-30) believed the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait have gradually evolved into turbulent one since Iraq has been source of threat source to Kuwait's security over the past decades. The motives and causes of Kuwait-Iraq conflict has always been framed under the historical rights of Iraq in Kuwait as well as Iraq's non-commitment to the concluded agreements with Kuwait. Moreover, the reality of the political, security and economic of Iraq in the post-Saddam regimes have affected to some extent of the Kuwait-Iraq relations. However, this would obstruct the cooperation and development of the two countries as the increased tensions and poor Kuwait-Iraq relations will adversely affect the Arab Gulf region in general and the two countries in particular.

Moreover, when analyzing the Iraq-Kuwait relations during the period of 1990-2010 and the identification of the key variables and factors that affect Kuwait's foreign policy toward Iraq, Anzi (2011:20) argued that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 contributed to the turbulent relations between the two countries which lasted until the fall of Saddam regime in 2003 due to the changing concepts of Kuwait's regional and international foreign policy. In spite of all the conflicts and obstacles in the path of Iraq-Kuwait relations, their geographical proximity requires them to cooperate

with each other and Kuwait is specifically concerned with the stability of Iraq, whether in security or the relationship among Iraqi communities and nationalities as all these factors will inevitably affect Kuwait's national security as well as the required a minimum political cooperation and coordination between the two countries.

Al-Azmi (2014:88-90) contended that Kuwait's foreign policy toward Iraq after 2003 was caused by a set of internal factors such as the geographical location, ethnic and religious demographics and their impact on Kuwait's political decisions, as the state's economic power, its need for financial resources and their impact on increasing conflicts between the two countries in addition to the external factors such as the regional and international environments and their impact on the Kuwait foreign policy towards Iraq. These factors interact with each other as causes and effects and influenced Kuwait's foreign policy decision- makers attitude towards post-Saddam Iraq. Al-Azmi added that international organizations, such as the UN, played an important role in the foreign policy of Kuwait because of their role in enhancing Kuwait's political security and status against Iraqi threats. Since the liberation of Kuwait, Kuwait's foreign policy towards Iraq has been based on the UN's decisions that were issued against Iraq after the Second Gulf War.

Zaidi (2013) revealed that Iraq and Kuwait may realize the fact that their geographical proximity as well as their social and historical ties of the past decades can contribute to the resolution of the political tension and economic competition between them after 2003. In addition to that, the two countries should take cognizance of the increasingly serious developments in Middle East and the Arab world by the so-called "Arab Spring" phenomenon since 2010 which can affect all

the existing political regimes in the region. This requires stable Iraq-Kuwait relations and the settling of internal issues for they are the most important and urgent issues at the moment.

Though there were several studies related to the problems between Iraq and Kuwait, but most of them did not give any actual justifications on the reasons behind the instability of Iraq-Kuwait relations after 2003. Instead, they only focused on specific issues which are basically either politically or economically oriented. The present research is the first attempt to investigate the roots of the problem which is a combination of the challenges of regional powers in the Gulf region and this has led to the obstruction of Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era.

2.6 Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on the concept of the influence of regional interests in the Gulf region and their effect on Iraq-Kuwait relations after the overthrow of Saddam in 2003. Based on the previous sections, it can be concluded that international relations between Iraq and Kuwait are characterized as being either cooperative or conflictive, and this depends on each country's interests. Yet, experience has provided that there are no permanent alliances or enmities between these two countries. In fact, it is the nature of their interests within a certain historical stage that turns these relations into being either friendly or hostile. Accordingly, the friendly or hostile relations follow a different set of rules and are based on the different interests of the regional countries. In other words, the issue of Iraq-Kuwait relations has witnessed many ups and downs. One can even claim that often times, the issues surrounding various events subsequent to 1990 all had

negative implications. For that reason, the regional interests have always been the governing factors in the relations between Iraq and Kuwait.



CHAPTER THREE

EVOLUTION OF THE IRAQ-KUWAIT RELATIONS UNTIL 2003

3.1 Introduction

The relations between Iraq and Kuwait are among the most contentious in the Arab Gulf region. The relations have encountered significant tension for decades and in fact it has been there since the end of the nineteenth century. Since the Ottoman's domination up to the demise of Saddam regime in 2003, the pressing issues were the demarcation of the border between Iraq and Kuwait and the recognition of Kuwait's independence. Though the relations between the two parties improved in latter periods, successive Iraqi governments have from time to time been constantly violating their commitments and obligations towards Kuwait.

This chapter discusses the inception of Iraq-Kuwait relations as of the early seventeenth century until the fall of Saddam rule in 2003, beginning with the Iraq-Kuwait relations during the Ottoman rule. The chapter further characterizes these relations during the British colonization (1921–1958) and discusses the features of Iraq-Kuwait relations prior to Saddam era (1958-1979), e.g., during the period of the republican governments which preceded President Saddam era. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion about the features of Iraq-Kuwait relations during Saddam era (1979-2003), e.g., Kuwaiti assistance during Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the UN sanctions against Iraq.

3.2 History of Iraq-Kuwait Relations during Foreign Colonization

Iraq and Kuwait share an interconnected history of relations. The two countries have a common history that dates back to as early as the seventeenth century. Both countries were ruled by the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century until they came under British influence. They were also colonized by the British until Iraq gained independence in 1932 and Kuwait also gained its own in 1961(Cetinsaya 2006:72).

The relations between the two countries have undergone many historical stages. The relations began from the Ottoman rule and eventually reached a new kind of relations during Saddam era. Each stage of the relations carried certain features and each brought positive and negative influences on the development of relations between Iraq and Kuwait. These stages can be addressed as follow:

3.2.1 Iraq and Kuwait during the Ottoman Colonization

Iraq-Kuwait relations have been in highly-tensed situation for many decades. The Ottoman Empire, which governed the Arab region (1516-1916), had a significant role in the creation of these tensions. The Ottomans, for administrative reasons, practiced a segregation policy in Iraq, which was divided into three provinces: Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. In addition to that a large area of the western coast of the Arab Gulf was under the supervision and authority of Basra province. Hence, the administrative policies of the Ottomans significantly contributed to the creation of a new geographical and administrative status of Iraq (Frankel 1992: 360).

For two and a half centuries, Kuwait had administratively been linked with the province of Basra under a royal decree issued by the then Ottoman Governor

“Medhat Pasha” who ruled between 1862 and 1871. The royal decree came as an appreciation of the efforts and support provided by Kuwait's ruler, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Sabah (1866-1892), to the Ottoman forces during the military campaign in the “Al-Ahsa region”³ in 1871. The royal decree stipulated that Sheikh Abdullah Bin Sabbah becomes the “*Qa'immaqam*” (representative) of Kuwait, the Ottoman flag was to be flown in all institutions of Kuwait and Sheikh Abdullah will receive his yearly salary from the treasury of Basra (Adamov 1989:192).

The Emirate of Kuwait can be traced back to 1613 when some tribes and families from “Najd” (central part of the Arabian Peninsula) migrated to an area which was known as “Al-Qareen” and established a political system there in 1756. Sheikh Sabah Bin Jaber (1756-1762) assumed the leadership position and became the Emir of Kuwait. At that point in time, the first political nucleus of Kuwait emerged and Kuwait began to act as an independent state (Abu Hakima 1967:99). This particular act marks the beginning of strained relations between Iraq and Kuwait.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the British sought to bring Kuwait under their influence with the objective of exerting their dominance the Gulf region. During that period (1892), Sheikh Abdullah was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah (1892-1896), whom the British offered to establish an alliance between them that was similar to the ones that the British have with the other Gulf States.

³Al-Ahsa is located in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. In 1871 there was a fight for leadership between the sons of Faisal bin Turki Al Saud, Abdullah, who was loyal to the Ottoman forces, and his brother, Saud. Saud's forces managed to occupy Riyadh after his brother's forces had made an escape. Mean while, the Ottoman forces moved to Najd to reinstate Abdullah and occupied Al-Qatif and Al-Ahsa. So, the first result of the civil war between the two brothers was Al Saud's loss of Al-Ahsa, which remained under the Ottoman control until 1913 (Mukhif & Shuraifi 2011:123-28).

Sheikh Mohammed rejected the offer because of his alliance and cooperation with the Ottomans (Al-Amer 1992: 11-34).

In 1896, Sheikh Mubarak came into power after leading a coup against his brother Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. With this new leadership, Kuwait's political orientation changed and it severed its ties with the Ottoman Empire. Mubarak was never inclined to the Ottomans and his relations became even closer to the British, especially when the Ottomans cooperated with his opponents. Meanwhile, the British were concerned about the increased cooperation between the Ottomans and the Germans and Russians. There were plans to build a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway which would be extended to Kuwait's port at a later stage. Moreover, the deployment of Ottoman forces near Basra was a cause of concern to the British (Al-Kenaee 2011:10-11).

After Sheikh Mubarak came to power, he concluded several agreements with the British government, most of which were concluded independently and in secret. He practically acted on behalf of Kuwait, implying that Kuwait was independent from the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, Mubarak continued to maintain his links with the Ottoman authorities, and therefore, kept a balance between British and Ottoman control (Oskay 2010:34). The following represent the most important agreements:

3.2.1.1 The Anglo-Kuwait Agreement of 1899

The Anglo-Kuwait Agreement of 1899 was the first political agreement signed by Kuwait with a foreign nation and under the agreement Britain provided protection for Kuwait. The agreement created adverse impacts on Iraq-Kuwait relations because Kuwait came under the protection and influence of the British (Al-Jorani 2012:6).

By this agreement with the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mubarak, Britain aimed to achieve the following goals (Lorimer 1972:533):

1. Britain sought to confront some of the Russian and German projects including the railway that was supposed to end at a Kuwaiti port;
2. Britain aimed to ensure that Sheikh Mubarak would not lease, mortgage, or allow any part of Kuwaiti territory to be occupied by a foreign government;
3. Britain wanted to strengthen its political position or status in Kuwait as part of its policy to dominate the Gulf region; and
4. The British aimed to increase their influence in Kuwait and at the same time reduce the influence of the Ottoman Empire.

The contents of the 1899 agreement stipulated that Mubarak would not sell or lease any territory to a foreign power without prior British approval. In the same year, another agreement, with regards to the banning of piracy in the Gulf waters, was signed between Kuwait and Britain. Upon Mubarak's request, another clause was added to this agreement demanding Britain to protect Kuwait against any attacks. However, it was reported that there had been an earlier secret agreement in 1896 prior to the 1899 agreement (Oskay 2010:34). In a letter sent by the British, they affirmed their good intentions towards Sheikh Mubarak, his heirs, and his successors, provided that they are committed to the terms of this agreement (Lorimer 1972:534).

3.2.1.2 The Anglo-Kuwait Agreement of 1900

This agreement was to curtail illicit arms trafficking between Kuwait and the other states. It also established a postal service and appointed a British political agent, Major Knox⁴ in Kuwait. Additionally, the agreement restricted Kuwait's freedom in dealing with al-Saud Ibn al-Rasheed in Saudi Arabia or the governors of Basra. The British rented "Shuwaikh" Port for the British fleet in order to secure a base from which they could attack the Ottomans and Germans in the event the Berlin-Baghdad-Basra-Kuwait railway was constructed (Oskay 2010:35).

As a result of the of coalition between Sheikh Mubarak of Kuwait and the British and the threat this coalition posed to the interests of the Ottomans, the Ottomans reinforced their troops in Basra and expressed their willingness to remove Sheikh Mubarak from power. This prompted the British to increase their presence in the north of Kuwait to support Sheikh Mubarak and protect the northern areas e.g., "Umm Qasr", "Safwan", and the island of "Boubyan" in northern Kuwait (Abu Hakema 1967:30).

3.2.1.3 The Anglo-Ottoman Agreement of 1913

In 1913, Kuwait and Britain signed the Oil Exploration Agreement whereby Sheikh Mubarak of Kuwait pledged not to allow oil exploitation in Kuwait by anyone or party except those recommended by the British government. As a result of this agreement and the growing British influence in Kuwait, the tense relations between

⁴ The dispute between the British and the Ottomans escalated as a result of the decision to place the British Political Agent Major Knox in Kuwait without specifying the period of his residence. The Ottoman Empire viewed that decision as a violation of all previous agreements between the Ottomans and the British. Knox's main task was to follow up Kuwait and Iraq's affairs, set up plans and scenarios to administer the crisis in the Gulf region and write secret reports on the status of Kuwait and Iraq, in addition to installing a British colonial policy in the Gulf (Mekhle 2009).

the Ottomans and the British continued until the Anglo-Ottoman agreement was signed by the two sides in 1913. Under this agreement, Britain negotiated with the Ottoman Empire about the borders of Kuwait based on available ground maps from earlier periods. The two territories were specified and the first one was the internal territory which was mostly inhabited by a settled population and the second one was the external territory which covered the desert areas. This agreement also recognized the Anglo-Kuwait agreement of 1899 and other previous agreements made between the British and the Kuwaiti leaders (Oskay 2010:36).

According to the Iraqi government, the Anglo-Ottoman agreement is the main evidence to support their arguments and claims that Kuwait is a dependent territory of Iraq. Though he was unwilling, Sheikh Mubarak signed the agreement and practically relinquished Kuwait's strategic gain as an autonomous entity from the Ottomans Empire. The agreement referred to Kuwait as an autonomous district that was subordinate to the governor of Basra, and reduced the authority of Kuwait's sheikh to the post of agent. It also permitted the Ottomans to assign an agent to Kuwait (Casey 2007: 51).

Additionally, the agreement stipulated that the date for the exchange of documents and ratification of the agreement was to be done on October 31, 1914, and it was for precisely this reason that the English-Ottoman agreement was not ratified. Following World War I, the Ottoman Empire entered the war against the (Britain, France and Russia), and Britain declared war by invading Iraq. These events prompted Sheikh Mubarak to issue a statement declaring his allegiance to Britain, and he also overtly expressed his desire to expel the Ottomans from the islands located on the "Shatt Al-Arab", claiming it was his legal right to do so (Al-Rahman 2001: 66).

The British government paid special attention to its role in Kuwait with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Subsequently, the Kuwaitis received a letter from the political agent in the Gulf recognizing the Sheikhdom of Kuwait as an independent government under the British protection. With the end of World War I in 1918, the Ottoman Empire was defeated and the Kuwaiti-Ottomans relations were severed accordingly. In 1920, the Ottomans relinquished all their rights to the districts under their control. The clauses contained in this agreement were reaffirmed in the Treaty of Lausanne⁵ which was concluded on July 24, 1923 (Al-Kenae 2011:24).

It was clear that the relations between Iraq and Kuwait during this phase were strained due to two main factors: the unsuccessful policies which the Ottomans followed during their presence in the Gulf region and the desire of the British to promote their oil interests in Kuwait. In other words, what had been the adverse impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations was actually the conflict between these two powers and their desire to achieve its interests and strengthen its hegemony in the Gulf region, whether in Iraq or Kuwait.

3.2.2 Iraq and Kuwait during the British Colonization

After the end of World War I, the victorious countries, e.g., France and Britain divided the Arab territories which had been under the control of the Ottoman Empire before that time according to their colonial interests. As a result, most of the territories were turned into colonies under the so-called “mandate”, a mild political

⁵ Treaty of Lausanne, (1923). Final treaty concluding World War I. It was signed by representatives of Turkey (successor to the Ottoman Empire) on one side and by Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) about sovereignty within its new borders (Goldstein 2013).

alternative for direct colonialism legislated by the League of Nations in 1919. This mandate helped to legitimize domination and influence achieved by the victors. The East Arab region including Iraq and Kuwait came under the British influence, e.g., only 5% of shares of the Iraq Petroleum Company went to Iraq while almost 95% of shares went to Britain and France. In addition, Britain damaged the relations between Iraq and Kuwait by isolating Kuwait from the rest of Iraq. When the British were dealing with the issue of border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait they practiced favoritism by giving to Kuwait land that were inside Iraq (Al-Bazzaz 1967: 67).

The new Iraqi king, Faisal I (1925-1933), exercised his authority under British military supervision. Moreover, the government of King Faisal I did not recognize the separation of Kuwait from Iraq because it believed that the separation would deprive Iraq from its sole access to the Arab Gulf coast. Faisal's attempts to construct a railway system connecting Iraq with Kuwaiti ports on the Gulf were all vetoed by the British. The British colonial policies in Kuwait provoked the Arab national movement in Iraq and Kuwait became a focus of great attention and a symbol of Iraqi humiliation caused by Britain (El-Najjar 2001: 2).

In 1923, the successor of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, signed the Lausanne Treaty, which officially relinquished any claims to historical Ottoman heritage. Consequently, the Kuwaiti Emir, Ahmad Al-Sabah, demanded the settlement of Kuwait's border pursuant to the Anglo-Ottoman agreement. Kuwait and Iraq officially agreed on the demarcation as drawn up by the British in 1923 and later in 1927. This agreement on the demarcation of the borders of Kuwait is considered to be the first official recognition of the two distinctive entities. Moreover, the actual dispute between Iraq and Kuwait clearly materialized in 1932. For the purposes of

allowing Iraq to join the League of Nations, Britain requested Iraq to demarcate its border with Kuwait, but the King of Iraq, Faisal, restated that Kuwait is an integral part of Iraq's territory (Clements 2013:20).

Iraq and Kuwait have exchanged letters regarding its borders and other kinds of relations since the inception of Iraq's independence in 1932. During this period Iraq-Kuwait relations have witnessed great tension because of Britain's failure to provide the appropriate means to deal with many of the issues raised between Iraq and Kuwait. This failure is due to the big differences about such issues within the British government itself and they were as follows (Al-Jorani 2012:13):

1. The issue of arms trade and the smuggling of goods from Kuwait into Iraq:
The Iraqi government presented a complaint to the UN demanding that Kuwait take tough measures to stop arms and goods smuggling across its border with Iraq. However, Britain, as a colonizer of Kuwait, did not take any action to resolve this issue, but followed a policy of pacification which exacerbated the crisis between the two countries (Al-Rahman 2001: 79).
2. The issue of the Iraqi harbor project: The Iraqi's insistence to move forward to construct a port in Kuwait was opposed by the British government. The former Iraqi foreign minister, Tawfiq Al-Suwaidi (1933-1938) presented a letter to the Undersecretary of the British Foreign Office while attending a League of Nations meeting in Geneva on September 28, 1938, stating that Kuwait represents a double problem for Iraq. On the one hand, it is a warehouse for trading and smuggling arms, and on the other hand, it represents a barrier which blocked Iraq's access to the sea. The letter,

therefore, proposed establishing a customs union between Iraq and Kuwait to solve the first part of the problem and making amendments on the northern border of Kuwait by a way of falling back into Kuwait to solve the second part of the problem. However, when the Iraqi minister requested permission from Britain to discuss these issues directly with the Kuwaiti Emir, Sheikh Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah (1921 -1950), the British agent refused the request, recalling the 1899 agreement, which did not entitle the sheikh to negotiate with any party other than Britain (Al-Najjar 1990: 133).

3. The fresh water issue: Despite the Iraqi government declaring its readiness to supply Kuwait with fresh water unconditionally and free of charge, the British agent in Kuwait exerted all his influence to discourage Sheikh Ahmed from taking any step linking him with Iraq. From the British agent's perspective, such rapprochement would lead to a strong Iraqi influence in Kuwait, and therefore, he warned his government that the proposed project would enable the Iraqis at any future stage. The British tried to cast doubts over the Iraqi intentions whatever guarantees they offered. These doubts found their way to Sheikh Abdullah al-Salem (1950 -1965), and he directed his people to build a water distillation facility instead (Al-Najjar & Al-Hadithi 1990: 62 -63).

The King of Iraq, Faisal I, did not have any ambitions to annex Kuwait and re-integrate it into Iraq. However, his son, King Ghazi who assumed the throne in 1933, adopted a different perspective and sought to re-integrate Kuwait into Iraq. In the same year, Iraq deployed its troops along the Kuwaiti border, leading to the first

actual political crisis between the two sides, but the intervention of England, Iran, and Saudi Arabia thwarted the plans of King Ghazi (Aboul-Enein 2004: 70).

When the Iraqi King Ghazi died in a car accident in 1939, the Crown Prince of Iraq, Faisal II, was an infant then. Therefore, the Iraqi's Prime Minister (1939-1958), Nouri Assa'eed then became Iraq's de facto president and speeches and calls to reintegrate Kuwait into Iraq became louder and more frequent than before (Klein 2003: 3).

In the beginning of 1952, the Sheikh of Kuwait, Abdullah al-Salem al-Sabah, paid Iraq a visit whereby he sought to foster better relations with Iraq. The parties agreed to move some agricultural goods freely across the border of the two countries. In addition, Sheikh Abdullah al-Salem generously donated to some Iraqi charities during another visit to Iraq (Joyce 1998). Yet, Iraq publicly declared its aspiration in 1955 to extend its border by some four kilometers into Kuwaiti territory including a desert strip, the island of "Warbah", and the waters surrounding it. Consequently, the British ambassador to Iraq, Sir Michael Wright, proposed leasing the islands of "Warbah" and "Bubiyan" instead of concession. This compromise was initially accepted, but it soon failed when former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Assa'eed demanded that Kuwait allow the Iraq Petroleum Company to construct an oil pipeline which runs from its "Zubair" oil field to "al-Ahmadi" port through Kuwait and down to the southern coast of Kuwait on the Gulf. This demand aroused Kuwait's suspicions and Kuwait rejected this demand. In retaliation, the Iraqi government postponed the demarcation issues of Kuwait-Iraq border, claiming that the time was not ripe for the demarcation exercise (Subsided 2011: 36-37).

In 1957, Kuwait had strong suspicions about Iraq's true willingness to proceed with the demarcation process between the two sides. The British tried to resolve the issue of border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait, but the Iraqis insisted that no demarcation of the borders with Kuwait would be conducted unless Kuwait ceded or leased a four kilometer-wide territorial strip south of "Umm Qasr" and the island of "Warbah". The Kuwaiti response came as an insinuation that the ceding or leasing of "Warbah" Island would be considered provided that the demarcation of the Kuwait-Iraq borders have been fully accomplished (Schofield 1994:167).

In January 1958, the former Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri Assa'eed, publicly called for annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, a remarkable event in the history of relations between Iraq and Kuwait. This call received primary approval from the British. Iraq informed the British about the preparation of all documents needed to accomplish the reintegration of Kuwait. Consequently, the British government called the Iraqi prime minister to discuss the issue of integration, but such a meeting was never accomplished because of Abdel-Karim Qasim's revolution in 1958. The revolution seized power in Iraq after killing King Faisal II and Nouri Assa'eed. Britain responded accordingly and terminated the agreement for the return of Kuwait to Iraq (Klein 2003: 3).

To sum up, the British colonial period represented the worst stage in the history of relations between Iraq and Kuwait. This was due to the unsuccessful policies pursued by Britain, during a period of three-decade of the British colonization of Iraq and Kuwait, in addressing the outstanding problems between the two parties, e.g., the issue of border demarcations and Iraq's recognition of the State of Kuwait. It is worth mentioning here that the British's fears of a growing Iraqi influence in

Kuwait and a stable situation in the region could have threatened their presence. Therefore, they sought not to play any active role in establishing friendly relations between Iraq and Kuwait, and this subsequently led to the escalation of differences and disagreements between the two neighbors.

3.3 Iraq-Kuwait Relations Pre-Saddam Era (1958-1979)

After the change from a monarchy to a republic system of government in 1958, Iraq witnessed the rise and fall of many republican systems. The Iraq-Kuwait relations from 1958 to 1979 can be evaluated through three stages:

3.3.1 President Abdel-Karim Qasim's Administration (1958-1963)

During the late 1950s, Iraq experienced several political changes. The monarchy system was overthrown and replaced by a republican system. Abdel-Karim Qasim, a close ally of the Baath Party, led a coup d'état and assumed the presidency of Iraq in 1958 (Katzman 2005: 1).

While Abdel-Karim Qasim was in power, the relations between Iraq and Kuwait witnessed new fields of cooperation and friendship, e.g., the Sheikh of Kuwait Abdullah visited Iraq on August 25, 1958 to probe the attitudes of the revolution's leaders towards Kuwait and to discuss the course and development of relations between them. Also, Iraq requested to establish an Iraqi consulate or a commercial representative in Kuwait to promote Iraq's interests there and to also serve as a contact office between the two parties (Al-Rahman 2001:290). This visit helped to improve the relations between Iraq and Kuwait and economic and trade delegations between the two countries were exchanged. It also provided Kuwait with the

opportunity to enhance its international status and to run its external affairs on its own. Moreover, this situation enabled the Kuwaiti government to exchange memoranda with the British government, which declared Kuwait's independence in the 1961, terminated the protection agreement of 1899 and replaced it by mutual memoranda. These memoranda formed a cooperation agreement between the two countries in all fields (Al-Nami 2007: 196-198).

During the first three years of President, Abdel-Karim Qasim's administration, the relations between Iraq and Kuwait can be characterized by calmness and cordiality. In March 1961, Iraq sent Sheikh Abdullah an invitation to attend the planned inauguration ceremony of the port of "Umm Qasr". Though Iraq had not requested to use the Kuwaiti territories in this project, the Kuwaiti Emir, showing good will, expressed willingness to allow Iraq to build navigation facilities needed by the new port within Kuwaiti territory, but the Iraqi position towards Kuwait changed when Kuwait sought for independence. By June 19, 1961, Kuwait received full independence through the exchange of memoranda between the political resident in the Arab Gulf, Sir William Luce, and the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem (Schofield 1993: 104-105).

On June 25, 1961, following Kuwait's independence and discovery of huge reserves of petroleum in Kuwait, the Iraqi President, Abdul-Karim Qasim, refused to recognize the independence of Kuwait and revived the demands for the annexation of Kuwait into Iraq, recalling that the Sheikh of Kuwait had been appointed as representative of Kuwait in 1871, a district under the administration of Basra which was one of the three Iraqi provinces at that time. The Iraqi government also

distributed a memorandum to all diplomatic missions in Baghdad, upholding the claims on Kuwait. The memorandum was based on three grounds:

1. The archaeological ruins in Kuwait had close resemblance and connections with those of Mesopotamia;
2. Kuwait was a part of the province of Basra during the Ottoman rule; and
3. Iraq is a successor state of the Ottoman Empire, and hence has a rightful claim on Kuwait (Abidi 1991:9).

In a further development, President, Abdul Kareem Qasim, officially threatened to invade Kuwait. The relations between the two neighbors, therefore, deteriorated once again. The British intervention along with the efforts of the Arab League at that time were against Iraq and thwarted its plans (Clements 2013:20). In response to that threat, around ten thousand British troops were deployed in Kuwait on July 11, 1961. Their task was to protect the northern borders of Kuwait from Iraqi threats. Britain was ready to fight a real war against Iraq in the event of any Iraqi military threat to its ally, Kuwait. (Salem 2008: 140).

The British government upheld Kuwait's request which called upon the Security Council to urgently consider its complaint against Iraq's threats to its independence. In the course of the Council's deliberations, Britain's representative submitted a draft resolution that called upon the member states to respect the independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait, urging them to work for peace and stability in the region. However, the Soviet Union vetoed the draft resolution, and it was not adopted. The Soviet veto came about because the draft of the Security Council

resolution did not include a withdrawal of the British troops from Kuwait (Salem 2008: 142).

Though the Security Council failed to reach a resolution, the Arab League's demands eventually led to the withdrawal of British troops from the Iraq-Kuwait border. On July 20, 1969, the Arab League reached a decision whereby the government of Iraq pledged not to resort to force in annexing Kuwait. The League supported the desire on the part of Kuwait for union or merger with any member state of the League and welcomed the State of Kuwait as a new member in the League, maintaining that the League members would support the request of Kuwait for membership of the UN (Al-Khlaifat 2014: 42-43).

Furthermore, the Arab League made an agreement with the government of Kuwait on August 12, 1961, whereby forces of the Arab League would replace the British troops. The number of Arab League forces amounted to three-thousand troops, consisting of military units from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Arab League's troops were deployed in Kuwait in September, 1961 under the command of a Saudi general. Iraq opposed the entire operations led by the Arab League. The agreement between Kuwait and the Arab League pledged (1) to maintain the integrity and independence of Kuwait, (2) to consider any aggression against Kuwait as aggression against the League's members, and (3) to provide Kuwait with assistance in case of any such aggression, and if necessary, confront it with military forces. In response to this agreement, all Iraqi ambassadors and diplomats were withdrawn from the countries that had recognized the new state of Kuwait (Al-Khlaifat 2014: 44-45).

3.3.2 President Abdul-Salam Arif's Administration (1963-1966)

The political behavior towards Kuwait changed with the new president, Abdul-Salam Arif who overthrew President Abdul-Karim Qasim in February 1963. Iraq recognized Kuwait's independence and agreed on the border issues between the two countries. The settlement between Iraq and Kuwait was based on a correspondence between them in 1932. The Iraqi's recognition of Kuwait provided Kuwait with solid grounds for sovereignty; the signatories of this recognition, Iraq and Kuwait, were considered to be two distinctive sovereign states (Aboul-Enein 2004:71).

Soon after Abdul-Salam Arif was installed as the President of Iraq, the Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Abdullah al-Salem al-Sabah, extended his congratulations to the new president of Iraq. In the same year, Kuwait's application to join the UN was accepted by a unanimous decision of the UNSC and Kuwait was officially admitted to the UN on May 7, 1963. With this admission, Kuwait became the 111th member of the UN General Assembly. As a result, Iraq yielded to the will of the international community and began to improve its relations with Kuwait. The improvement resulted in a series of Kuwaiti investments and aid to Iraq. With respect to water, negotiations and talks were held and they dealt with the issue of how to transport of water from the Shatt-al-Arab to Kuwait. Meanwhile, the two countries demonstrated their close relations with each other through their cooperation in international organizations (Schofield 1993: 101-104).

3.3.3 President Abdul-Rahman Arif's Administration(1966-1968)

After the death of President Abdul-Salam Arif, his eldest brother, Abdul-Rahman Arif, replaced him in 1966 (Katzman 2005:4). During President Abdul-Rahman

Arif's rule, Iraq signed an agreement with Kuwait whereby Iraq recognized Kuwait's independence and full sovereignty according to the details of the demarcation of borders as specified in the letter issued by Iraq's former Prime Minister, Nouri Assa'eed, dated July 21, 1932. The letter was approved by the ruler of Kuwait in his letter dated August 10, 1932. Kuwait and Iraq agreed to work together in order to improve relations and foster cooperation at all levels and they immediately decided to establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level. As a reward for Iraq's change of policy, Kuwait was believed to have provided Iraq with considerable financial subsidies. Despite the apparent conciliation with Kuwait, Iraq was not really conciliated with the issue of Kuwait's independence and territorial integrity. Iraq, from time to time, reiterated its sovereignty claims over parts of Kuwait (Al-Khlaifat 2014: 46).

3.3.4 President Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr's Administration (1968-1979)

In 1968, the Baath party seized power in Iraq after overthrowing President Abdul Rahman Arif and Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr became the president of Iraq. During this period, the issue of border demarcations between the two countries was one of the most important points of contention between them. Kuwaiti officials paid many visits to Iraq to solve the border demarcation issue, but the negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait remained locked in stalemate. Tensions appeared again when Kuwait signed the agreement on the Continental Shelf with Saudi Arabia and Iran in 1968 without involving or consulting Iraq which Iraq shares the continental shelf in the northern Arab Gulf with Kuwait and Iran (Jawad & Al Ghurair 2006: 113).

In the early 1970s, Iraq drew up plans to construct an oil terminal and a naval base on the Kuwaiti island of Bubiyan. To this end, the Iraqi government demanded Kuwait cede the islands of Bubiyan and Warbah to Iraq. During the secret talks of 1971-1972, Iraq proposed an agreement under which Iraq would construct an oil terminal in the deep waters along the Kuwaiti coast, and in return, Iraq would supply Kuwait with fresh water through a pipeline that runs from the “Shatt al-Arab” to Kuwait. It was hoped that such functional cooperation would pave the way for a harmonious solution to the border problem. However, Kuwait turned down the Iraqi proposals. Although the relations between the two countries, from 1969-1971, improved relatively, they did not continue for long. In March 1973, the relations between Iraq and Kuwait suddenly became very tense when Iraqi military forces occupied a part Kuwait near the borders of “Al-Samita”. On March 22, the Kuwaiti government sent a letter of protest to Iraq demanding the withdrawal of Iraq's troops from Kuwaiti territory. Iraq refused mediation efforts by the Arab League, claiming that the matter concerned direct mutual relations between Iraq and Kuwait and there was no need for other parties to meddle in the issue. Finally, Iraq agreed to withdraw from Kuwaiti territory (Pasha 1992: 37-38).

After the conclusion of the Algeria Agreement⁶ between Iraq and Iran in 1975, Iraq demanded that Kuwait lease “Bubiyan” island to them for one hundred years and cede “Warbah” Island in return for Iraq’s recognition of the land borders between the two countries. Kuwait turned down this demand. The issue of the borders remained

⁶ In March 1975, subsequent to discussions at an OPEC meeting Algeria, Iran and Iraq agreed to meet and negotiate their dispute over borders, water and navigation rights. This meeting resulted in the Algiers accord. The Thalweg, meaning the median course of the Shatt-El-Arab waterway, was designated as the border line between the two countries. The accord caused the Shah of Iran to withdraw Iranian support for the Kurdish rebellion, which thereupon collapsed (Kadivar 2009).

outstanding until 1977 when bilateral relations between the two parties resumed and Kuwaiti officials visited Iraq and held talks with their counterparts to settle the border issues. However, Iraq and Kuwait only agreed on the setting up of a committee to follow up and resolve some border issues such as smuggling and encroachment. Major issues like the disputes over the islands and border demarcations were not agreed upon until the breakout of the Iraqi-Iranian war on December 21, 1980 (Al-Khlaifat 2014: 50).

In summary, the four successive republican regimes, that assumed power in Iraq after the demise of the monarchy (1958-1979), had failed to solve Iraq's recurrent geo-strategic problems with Kuwait although they had many opportunities to do so. The problems included the construction of an Iraqi port on the Arab Gulf and acquiring the Kuwaiti island of Warbah and some southern areas for the purposes of extending the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr.

As for Kuwait, it also had many opportunities to solve its problems with Iraq, but during that period suspicions and mistrust dominated the Kuwaiti decision makers, particularly with regard to Iraq's desire to resolve the border demarcation with Kuwait. With the benefit of hind sight, we can see that both governments had erroneous policies which substantially contributed to the creation of tensions between the two countries.

3.4 Iraq-Kuwait Relations during Saddam Era (1979-2003)

In July 1979, Iraq experienced another political change President, Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr, due to his poor state of health, resigned from his position as the President of Iraq and Saddam Hussein took over vacant position (Katzman 2005:6).

During Saddam era, the demarcation issues became less important and even pointless, particularly with the Iraqi government's insistence on full control over Kuwait's northern border and the islands of "Bubiyan" and "Warbah". Kuwait, in return, rejected Iraq's demands, saying it would not cede any part of its territory to Iraq. However, Kuwait signed an agreement with Iraq in November, 1979, which granted Iraq access to the deep water facilities at Kuwait's port of "Shuwaikh" for the purpose of transshipment of goods. The agreement became operative as of May 1980 (Schofield 1993: 119-120). This period can be characterized by many major events which significantly determined the nature and type of relations between Iraq and Kuwait and they are discussed below:

3.4.1 Kuwaiti Assistance during Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)

During the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq-Kuwait relations improved significantly. This improvement was attributed to the support and financial assistance which Kuwait provided to Iraq. During that period, there was widespread fear of the Iranian influence and its expansion into the Arab Gulf states and Iraq in particular was leading the war on behalf of the countries of the region (Al-Jumaily & Al-Kinani 2012:8).

To confront the Iranian military onslaught in 1984, Iraq tightened its security measures on the Kuwaiti islands. Kuwait was under severe pressure to relax its stance on its policy about the islands and it eventually relented. After the visit of the former Kuwaiti prime minister, Sabah Al-Ahmad al-Sabah (1963-1991), to Iraq in November of the same year, there were reports that the two countries agreed, for

security reasons, to place the Kuwaiti islands of “Warbah”, “Bubiyan”, and “Faylaka” under Iraq’s control (Diet 1991: 216).

By the end of the war in 1988, Kuwait had granted Iraq zero interest loans, with a value of, according to sources, \$ 10 billion. Between 1983- 1988, Kuwait allocated the revenues it had earned by the production of about 125,000 barrels of oil per day from the oil fields located on the northern part of the Saudi-Kuwaiti neutral zone to Iraq. Furthermore, transshipment facilities through the Kuwaiti port of “Shuwaikh” were kept open for the Iraqi government throughout the war, which lasted eight years. Additionally, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were jointly providing Iraq with 330,000 barrels of crude oil per day for sale to Iraqi customers. By 1987, Kuwait, along with Saudi Arabia, had given Iraq approximately \$ 50 billion. In addition to granting Iraq free access to Kuwaiti ports, Kuwait also allowed Iraqi supply trucks to go from Kuwait’s southern ports and proceed northwards and across its desert. Through these actions, Kuwait had unequivocally expressed its support to Iraq as a fraternal neighbor state (Al-Kenae 2011: 55-56).

3.4.2 Iraq Invasion of Kuwait in 1990

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was carried out under various pretexts but economic motive was the prime motive for the invasion. In fact, there were several economic reasons that prompted Iraq to invade Kuwait. These reasons can be summarized as follows:

1. Consequences resulting from the Iran-Iraq war;
2. The refusal by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to cancel about \$50 billion of Iraq’s debts;

3. Iraq's accusation of Kuwait for extracting Iraqi oil at its border; and
4. The low price of oil in the late 1980.

These reasons created a disastrous economic situation for Iraq and persuaded Saddam Hussein to capture Kuwait's oil supplies. In addition to the economic motive, Iraq's intention to restore its lost regional power after the eight-year war with Iran provided another reason. As an Iraqi leader, Saddam had the ambition of making Iraq a regional power. Therefore, he perceived that the occupation of Kuwait was an opportunity to control twenty percent of the OPEC production and twenty-five percent of the world's oil reserves, which would make Iraq the dominant power in the Arab Gulf, and probably help Saddam resume his war with Iran (Amiri & Soltani 2011: 189-190).

The aforesaid reasons drove the Iraqi regime to invade Kuwait in August 1990 in order to achieve two major goals: to project Iraq's power in the region and to gain economic benefits. These goals would strengthen Iraq's position within OPEC (Parasiliti 2003:152); and enable Iraq to control the long coast of Kuwait which would provide Iraq with a strategic and excellent position in the Arab Gulf (Al-Taee 2011:15).

3.4.3 UN Sanctions Against Iraq

The international response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was instantaneous. A series of UN Security Council resolutions were made. Significantly, some of these resolutions placed Iraq under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The first

of these Resolutions was no. 660⁷ which was made on the same day of the invasion. The resolution called for Iraq's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. Many resolutions followed, including resolutions 662,664, 665, 666, 669 and others. One of the most important resolutions was resolution no. 661⁸, which imposed economic sanctions on Iraq in the form of restrictions on financial dealings and trade. These resolutions further weakened Iraq militarily and economically and Iraq became isolated from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, Iraq refused to withdraw from Kuwait (Casey 2007:106).

On November 29, the UN Security Council authorized the international coalition to use "all necessary means" including force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, issuing an ultimatum on January 15, 1991. Iraq ignored it and refused to withdraw. On January 17, a coalition led by the U.S. began a series of massive aerial bombardment against different targets in Kuwait and Iraq. The aerial bombardment lasted for forty-three days. In December 1990, Saddam threatened that his first target would be Israel and by January 18, 1991, Iraq launched scud missiles against Israel and Saudi Arabia. One week after the war, oil leakage started to reach down the Gulf coast. On February 15, 1991, the Iraqi forces initiated a process of setting fire to seven hundred oil wells in Kuwait. According to the coalition intelligence at that time, the Iraqi

⁷ The Security Council adopted Resolution 660 (1990), condemning the invasion and demanding Iraq's immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its forces to the positions they had occupied the previous day. See United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM 2003).

⁸ Security Council resolution 661, adopted on August 6, 1990, reaffirming Resolution 660 (1990) and noting Iraq's refusal to comply with it and Kuwait's right of self-defence. The Council took steps to implement international sanctions on Iraq under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The Council decided that states should prevent the import of all products and commodities originating from Iraq or Kuwait; the sale of weapons or other military equipment to Iraq and Kuwait, excluding humanitarian aid; and the availability of funds or other financial or economic resources to either country (Thomas 1997: 106).

front line forces located in Kuwait were likely to surrender in case a ground operation was launched. The coalition forces eventually managed to eject the Iraqi forces and liberate Kuwait. Iraq's infrastructures were destroyed and the Iraqi forces suffered heavy losses (Al-Khlaifat 2014:58-59).

The Security Council issued Resolution no. 686 whereby Iraq was ordered to irrevocably renounce its claims over Kuwait. A commission assigned to demarcate the border between the two countries as per the Kuwait-Iraq agreement in 1963 was formed. By 1992, the commission finalized the demarcation between the two countries. The new demarcation enabled Kuwait to control six oil wells in the "Rumaylah" oil field beside having vital access to the former Iraqi naval base at "Umm Qasr". Although Iraq initially repudiated this commission, Iraq officially accepted the redemarcation later in 1994 as specified by the said commission (Casey 2007: 112).

In 2000, Iraq tried to improve relations and restored diplomatic ties with Kuwait, resorting to mediation under the auspices of Arab the League organization in order to reconcile with Kuwait. However, Kuwait repeatedly turned all that down. In furtherance to his efforts at seeking reconciliation, Saddam Hussein sent a letter of apology, dated August 7, 2002, to the people of Kuwait for what happened and he said that what has happened were "past mistakes". Nevertheless, on December 12, 2002, Kuwait's government refused to accept the apology. At the same time there were international pressures, particularly by the U.S. and Britain, to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime (Hussein 2006:129).

3.5 Summary

The Ottoman and British periods demonstrated that Kuwait was a part of Iraq until World War I. The successive Iraqi governments did not fully recognize the independence of Kuwait. Kuwait developed into an independent entity under British protection. Later, oil wealth enabled Kuwait to develop into an independent “state”, having official relations with its neighbors including Iraq. The struggle between the historical rights of Iraq in Kuwait and the realities of the existence of Kuwait as a “state” contributed to the persistence of the crisis throughout this period.

With the rise of the republican system and the demise of the monarchy in 1958, Iraq-Kuwait relations became more complicated, especially with the calls and attempts made by the former Iraqi president, Abdul Karim Qasim, to annex Kuwait to Iraq. But, the British intervention and efforts exerted by the Arab League thwarted Qasim's plans. However, the Iraqi ambitions in Kuwait became an obsession of successive Iraqi governments until Saddam's era when he occupied Kuwait in 1990, challenging the international community and triggering new and even more complicated conflicts between Iraq and Kuwait especially with the economic sanctions which were imposed on Iraq by the UN.

Consequently, the relations between the two countries deteriorated and disagreements increased until Saddam's regime was overthrown by the U.S. in 2003. Eventually, a new political system emerged in Iraq and represented the beginning of a new state of relations between Iraq and Kuwait under the auspices of the U.S. which will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

U.S. INTERESTS IN THE IRAQ -KUWAIT RELATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The Arab Gulf, where Iraq and Kuwait are located, is one of the areas that has received a great deal of attention from the U.S. in the modern era due to its special geographical location and huge energy reserves of oil and gas. Since the early 1980, the great interests of the U.S. and the Western countries in the Arab Gulf have made the U.S. realized that the region should be under its control and free from any threat by other international powers. Therefore, the U.S. has drafted its strategies and policies clearly to secure its military and economic presence in the region (Qati' 2010: 135).

This chapter analyzes the influence of the U.S. interests in Iraq -Kuwait relations in the post- Saddam era. It examines the role of the U.S. interests in Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam era. In addition, it will also focus on the most important political and economic interests of the U.S. in Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam era. This chapter also analyzes the role of the U.S. interests on the outstanding problems between Iraq and Kuwait and the impact of these interests over the convergence and divergence in relations between Iraq and Kuwait.

4.2 U.S. Interests in Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam Era

The high standard of living enjoyed by the Gulf region at the regional and international levels is one of the important factors for the conflict and rivalry between the regional and international powers (Hassan 2006:45). The U.S. interests in the Gulf region has been associated with energy resources since 1975. Before 1975, the Gulf petroleum resources were not of vital importance for the U.S. because in 1973, the total amount of petroleum imported from the region did not exceed 7% of the total energy consumption in the U.S., but in 1975 the amount increased to 34%. Since then the increasing dependency of the U.S. on primary resources, markets and external trade has become a weak point in the overall American power making it very sensitive and responsive towards actual threats to the U.S. interests in the Arab region. Consequently, the securing of the Arabic sea lanes became an American security interest with heightened priority and the U.S. control over transportation in the Arab Gulf became an essential part of the U.S. maritime strategy (Mohammed 2009).

On October 16, 1973, as a result of the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war⁹, Kuwait made the most important decision when it hosted a meeting for Oil Ministers of the Gulf States who are also members of OPEC and it included Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Iran. For the first time in the history of the oil industry, they unilaterally decided to increase the price of oil by 70% and the price of oil immediately increased from \$ 3 to \$ 5.12 per barrel. On the next day, a meeting of the Oil Ministers of the ten member countries of OPEC was held. They

⁹The Arab-Israeli War 1973 was a war fought by the coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria against Israel from October 6 to 25, 1973. The battlefield was mostly in the Sinai and the Golan Heights, territories that were occupied by Israel since the Six-Day War of 1967. Egypt and Syria wanted to regain the Sinai and the Golan Heights respectively (Sullivan & Jones 2008:9).

decided to reduce oil production by 5% per month. On November 4, 1973, OPEC held another meeting and it decided that oil production would be reduced by a minimum of 25% and this would be achieved by a monthly reduction of 5% (Ramzi 2010).

The U.S. administration felt that they must be firm with regards to the issue of oil security as well as preventing others from controlling the supply of oil. The U.S. has formulated its security strategy in the Arab Gulf based on its vital interests which was to ensure the free flow of oil. As such, this required the prevention of any international or regional powers from threatening the U.S. interests in the region (Fseves 2015). Hence, the U.S. hurriedly concluded two security agreements with Kuwait. The first agreement was on February 24, 1975 and the second was on January 18, 1976 and the subject matter of the agreements was about mutual assistance in the field of defense and logistic services (Morgan Network 2015).

The provision of oil supplies to the U.S. has been reflected in the management of President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) since the beginning of his presidency. He considered that the energy supply to the U.S. was going through a crisis and threatened to use force against any opponents that might seek to impede the flow of oil from the Gulf region. This principle has been subjected to several tests. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), when the Iranians stepped up their attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf to punish Kuwait for giving financial support to Iraq, the U.S. agreed with Kuwait's request to put American flags on the Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Gulf to protect them from Iranian attacks (Al-Sunni 2013).

Subsequently, the U.S. administration pursued a more direct way to strengthen its marine presence in the Gulf after it rented a base from the British on Diego Garcia Island in the Indian Ocean. The U.S. also extended its intervention and rapid deployment forces which started in 1979 into a full military leadership for the Gulf region and it later became known as the U.S. Central Command. Then, the U.S. intervened directly in the Tankers War¹⁰ which emerged in the last phase of the Iran-Iraq war and thanks to the U.S. efforts this war is over (Fseves 2015).

On the other hand, Mohammed (2009) argued that the U.S. felt that the ambitions of the dictatorial regime led by Saddam Hussein, who took power in Iraq in 1979, provided an appropriate environment to strengthen the U.S. presence in the Gulf region, especially with the emergence of a new Islamic political system in Iran in the same year. This provided an excuse for the U.S. to exploit the situation to spark a prolonged armed conflict between the secular Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein and Iran's new Islamic regime and try to connect it with the historical Arab-Byzantine conflicts¹¹. Furthermore, after the end of the first Gulf war, U.S. President George Bush (1989-1993) issued a presidential decree in 1989 which included the need to provide political support and economic aid to Iraq in order to support American influence in Iraq, adjust its political orientations, provide the opportunity for companies from the U.S. to play a major role in the reconstruction of Iraq,

¹⁰The Tanker War started properly in 1984 when Iraq attacked Iranian tankers and the vital oil terminal at Kharg Island. Iran struck back by attacking tankers carrying Iraqi oil from Kuwait and then any tanker of the Gulf states supporting Iraq (Dugdale-Pointon 2002).

¹¹This conflict started between the Persian Empire and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. It was renewed in the modern era due to a number of reasons, including border problems in the Shatt al-Arab, some doctrinal conflicts between the Sunnis and the Shiites, and the desire of both Iran and Iraq to extend of its influence in the Arab Gulf region so as to increase their respective geopolitical significance (Mohammed 2009).

increase petroleum investments and create strong military relations with the Iraqi armed forces. It was clear that the U.S. rejected the increase in the price of petroleum again after it reached \$ 53.39 per barrel in 1982, especially after the exports of Iraqi oil to the U.S. increased and reached 50-60% of its production from 1988 to 1990.

At the beginning of 1990, the U.S. new security strategy in the Gulf was formed by the acceptance of its direct military presence in the region which was to resist any domineering ambitions of other regional powers, specifically Iraq and Iran. This is illustrated by the defense strategy issued by the former U.S. Defense Secretary (Dick Cheney) in January 1990 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. requesting them to stop planning to fight a possible Soviet invasion to occupy the oil fields in the Gulf via Iran. Instead, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were ordered to focus on the regional threats e.g., Iraq that may impact on oil supplies from the region and the stability and security of friendly countries, who are oil producers (Safwat 2012).

Saddam Hussein misconstrued the orientation of the U.S. administration in the Gulf region and thought that he could create a strategic alliance with the U.S. due to the continued U.S. military sales to Iraq in 1988 and 1989, the cooperation in military training of the Iraqi armed forces and the development of economic relations between the two countries. This meant that a new imperialistic era would be strengthened in the early 21st century. Saddam also ignored the fact that the U.S. did not want Iraq to be a regional power with military, economic and technological capabilities in the Arab world or the Gulf region in particular (Mohammed 2009).

The U.S. exploited the crisis of the Iraq-Kuwait relations in 1990 after Iraq accused Kuwait of exporting oil that exceeded the daily quota set by OPEC which resulted in

Iraq suffering a loss of 1 billion dollars annually. The U.S. seemed to be playing a double game towards both Iraq and Kuwait and one of the two possibilities may be considered. The first is that Iraq was subjected to economic pressures and forced to reduce its expenses due to the price of oil and the pressure of its debt and interests incurred during its war with Iran and thus had to reduce the expenditure of its military forces as well as military and industrial projects. The second possibility is that Iraq was grabbing its rights from Kuwait by using its military force (Al-Obeidi 2004: 23).

Moreover, Buzzanco (2008) opined that the U.S. contributed to creating conflict and tension between Iraq and Kuwait despite their superficial differences when it announced in July 1990 that the U.S. would not interfere in any territorial disputes between Iraq and Kuwait thus giving the green light to the Iraqi government to occupy Kuwait in August 1990. As a result, the Second Gulf War to liberate Kuwait in 1991 occurred and the U.S. succeeded in having a permanent military presence in the region (Al-Ajmi 2012: 2). Although the crisis caused by the Iraq-Kuwait relations of that period is the apparent reason for the Second Gulf War, but the U.S. geostrategic goals lie in three main political objectives and they are:

1. To contain Iraq;
2. To secure the vital American interests in the Arab Gulf region in general and Kuwait in particular; and
3. To ensure international compliance with the U.S.

In order to protect the U.S. allies in the Gulf region and avoid a sudden interruption in the supply of energy resources and to prevent the outbreak of another regional

conflict like the Second Gulf War, the U.S. should maintain a security partnership with its key allies in the region, particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, for the long-term. Thus, the U.S. kept more than 15,000 American military personnel in Kuwait after 1991 to prevent the regional neighboring states from attempting to change the strategic balance in the region which is not compatible with American interests (Yasin 2012: 110).

Saram (2012) argued that during the presidency, President of George W. Bush (2001-2009), the U.S. pursued a new strategy based on preventive action and military presence in the Arab Gulf to deter any expansionist force from trying to take control over the Gulf oil. The U.S. imported 2.7 million barrels of Gulf oil per day in 2001 as compared to 2.5 million barrels per day in 2000 and this was about 25% of the total U.S. imports of oil and 14% of the world's total demand. Saudi oil represented 63% of the U.S. oil imports from the Gulf, while the U.S. imports from Iraq was 25%, with 11% from Kuwait and the balance were from Qatar and the UAE.

The preventive action strategy was based on the initiative of the U.S. to take early and sudden procedures against hostile states or groups that might carry out hostile acts that may harm the U.S. goals and interests in the Gulf region because the U.S. decision-makers believed that preventive action is better than waiting for an attack. The U.S. policy during 2001 that was based on the principles of deterrence and containment are, no longer valid today since the nature of its enemies and potential threats have also changed thus requiring the U.S. to change the essence of its policy after taking into account the expansion of terrorist threats and the increasing number

of states that possess chemical and nuclear weapons, most of which are hostile towards and in rivalry with the U.S., particularly Iran and Iraq (Ahmed 2003: 56).

In 2002, the U.S. administration announced that it would seek to achieve three objectives that are very important for the U.S. national security and they are (Al-Qaisi 2012: 41):

1. The war on terrorism, which was a reaction to 11 September 2001 attacks in the heart of the U.S.;
2. The elimination of the evil axis states as specified by the U.S. administration (North Korea, Iran, and Iraq) which have nuclear programs or are in the process of acquiring it ; and
3. The creation of democratic regimes in the Middle East, starting with Iraq.

In line with its objectives, the U.S. is rearranging and restructuring the different regions of the world based on the "flow of oil and gas supplies", through the use of its military force, as evidenced by the U.S. quantum of military expenditure which is the highest in the world (as shown in Figure 4.1)

The decisive factor that has enabled the U.S. to become the solitary great power is its military superiority. This has made the U.S. administration adopt a new strategy that is designed to directly govern and take control over the whereabouts of oil in the Gulf region (Al-Sunni 2013).

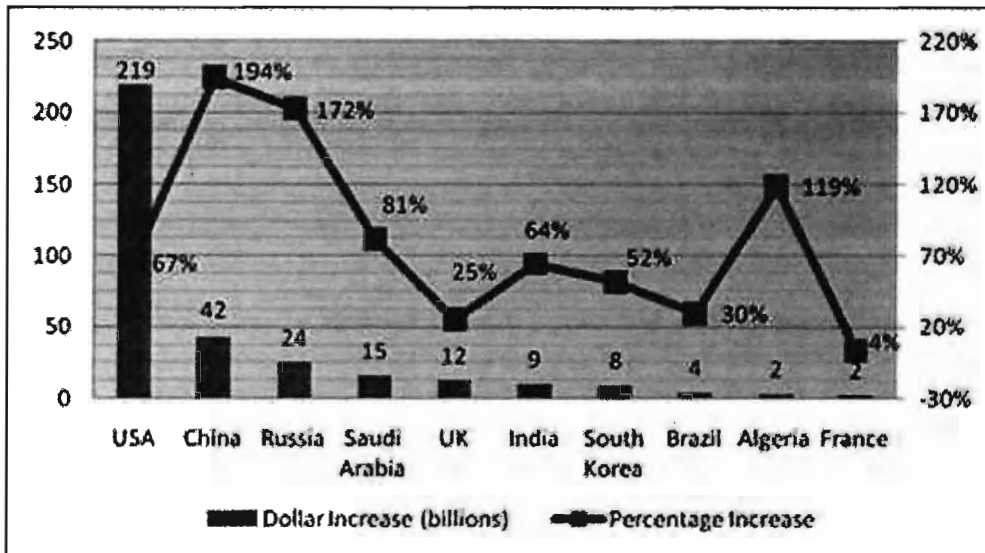


Figure 4.1: Military Expenditure Increase of the U.S. 2000–2009.

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (2009:12).

In summary, the U.S. developed its relations with Iraq and Kuwait to suit its own purposes. The U.S. no longer needed to rely on regional powers to defend its interests and can maintain its own interests thanks to its troops stationed in the Gulf. The U.S. is able to deploy its troops easily in Kuwait or to any other Gulf States to deter any new aggression as well as protect its strategic interests relating to energy sources in the region without having to bring in new forces from other regions. In the end, to defend its interest the U.S. invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam regime in 2003 and this started a new phase of the U.S. interests and its impact on the relations of the Gulf States, especially Iraq-Kuwait relations. The relations between Iraq and Kuwait remained severed after Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. This situation lasted until the removal of Saddam regime by the U.S.

4.3 U.S. Interests in Iraq and Kuwait in the Post-Saddam Era

The U.S. interests, whether in Iraq or Kuwait, are numerous and diverse and it includes political, military, economic and security interests. The importance of these interests and their impact on relations between Iraq and Kuwait are discussed separately and they are as follows:

4.3.1 U.S. Interests in the Post-Saddam Iraq

The U.S. interest in Iraq goes back to a relatively early time, specifically the beginning of the last century. Iraq and its strategic location along with its huge wealth of natural resources have become the focus of attention of the U.S. and subsequently, the U.S. occupied Iraq in 2003 (Abdel Fattah & Abdel Amir 2012: 1). As such, the American behavior and goals in Iraq can be summarized as follows:

4.3.1.1 Economic Interests of the U.S. in Iraq

The economic resources in Iraq are one of the most important factors that prompted the U.S. to the occupation of Iraq in 2003. The U.S tried during this period to promote economic and trade relations in Iraq, especially investment in Iraq's oil sector. Oil has played a great role in the management of international relations since the end of the nineteenth century until the present day due to its importance in providing energy for the various aspects of life. Since oil is only available exclusively in certain areas, it has become an important commercial commodity for which the Western countries compete to acquire or control, particularly the U.S. (Al-Ubaidi 2009:1). Map 4.1 shows the oil and gas infrastructure in Iraq.

The invasion of Iraq helped the U.S. to become a major player in deciding oil prices. The U.S. estimated that its dependence on imported oil would amount to two thirds of its consumption by the end of the next decade and because of this it realized that it would have to face the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) domination of the world oil market. Therefore, the U.S. sought to weaken the power of OPEC by using Iraqi oil to disrupt the world's oil market. The U.S. also tried to prevent the emergence of other oil countries in Middle East such as Iran and Syria as they can disrupt the flow of Iraqi oil to the U.S because of the conflict of the U.S. interests regarding oil and security with the issues of democratic practices in these countries (Abed, interview, 2015).

In addition to that, all the oil fields in Iraq are on land and the oil is close to the surface, thus making them easy to extract and resulting in a lower cost of production. With such favorable characteristics, huge profits can be achieved and its production costs are the lowest in the world. The current cost of exploration is \$ 2 per barrel on average in Iraq (Al-chukraoa 2012:7). Map 4.1 shows the oil and gas infrastructure in Iraq.



Map 4.1: Oil and Gas Fields in Iraq.

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?tbm=isch&q=Oil>

However, Iraq's oil is one of the most important strategic economic objectives of the U.S. This is because Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world with more than 124 billion barrels and this is 10.7% of the world's oil reserves (Abdel Fattah & Abdul Amir 2012: 9). Table 4.1 shows the oil production and oil revenues during the six years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Table 4.1

Iraq's Oil Production, Exports and Oil Revenues from 2003-2008.

Year	Production Million barrels per day	Exports Million barrels per day	Oil revenues Billion dollars
2003	1,378	0,389	7,519
2004	2,107	1,450	17,751
2005	1,853	1,472	19,050
2006	1,957	1,468	27,500
2007	2,183	1,643	37,300
2008	2,281	1,855	58,806

Source: Al-Jubouri (2013: 11).

The U.S. succeeded in achieving its oil strategy in Iraq after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 through the following:

1. The new investments in the energy supply sector, especially oil, are available exclusively to American companies only;
2. The enhancement of oil production capacity in Iraq as production volume may exceed seven million barrels per day in the coming years; and

4. Ensuring the supply of a significant portion of the U.S. oil needs at reasonable prices which would help to raise the competitiveness of American goods in future, in light of the global trade liberalization (Yasin 2012: 114).

Thus, the key factor of the importance of Iraq's oil in the U.S. strategy lies in the fact that the cost of oil production is low which enabled the U.S. oil companies to invest and control over a quarter of the world's oil reserves. One of the U.S. economic targets in Iraq is to integrate the Iraqi economy with the economies of the major industrialized countries, the encouragement of private sector and foreign investments and the shift to a market economy. The U.S. administration also sought and encouraged Iraq to join the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to participate in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The U.S. interests are based on long-term military and economic domination in this region which is rich in natural resources such as oil and other minerals. So the U.S., during that period, worked to increase its military presence by establishing military bases in Iraq and Kuwait (Kawak , interview, 2015).

It can be concluded that Iraqi oil has been the greatest factor for the American decision makers. Moreover, the oil reserves of Iraq was one of the main reasons which led the U.S. to occupy Iraq, thus allowing the U.S. to control the over economic resources in Iraq fully.

4.3.1.2 Security and Political Interests of the U.S. in Iraq

The security and political goals of the U.S. in Iraq are many and complex. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was to achieve three major goals: the first was to overthrow

Saddam regime and its military forces which was a threat to international peace and security, and to achieve a balance of power with neighboring countries; the second was to eliminate tyranny and spread democracy in Iraq, and the third goal was to protect Israel's security and stability (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

When the U.S. occupied Iraq after the fall of Saddam in 2003, it dismantled the then existing military force that was considered to be loyal to Saddam and formed a new military force. Paul Bremer, the U.S. civil administrator in Iraq, decided on May 24, 2003 to disband the Iraqi army. The said decision was taken based on the U.S. strategy to weaken Iraq's military capabilities. That strategy was based on a flimsy pretext of disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction under international resolutions, the foremost resolutions included Resolution No. 687 of 1991 and Resolution No. 1441 of 2002. The U.S. adopted the latter resolution to eliminate Iraqi defense and security forces because the U.S. objective was to maintain a constant military presence in Iraq for as long as possible in order to achieve its integrated political and military goals. The adoption of Resolution No. 1441 was driven by the U.S. main interest which was based on finding an allied political regime in Iraq that is militarily weak (Abdel Fattah & Abdel Amir 2012: 4).

The decision to disband the security forces was aimed mainly at dismantling and demolishing the Iraqi state and rebuilding it later in a way that fits in with Washington's strategy together with its old allies Israel, the GCC States and its new ally Iran (Elwan, interview, 2015). Therefore, the decision to disband the Iraqi army contributed to the significant increase in the number of troops from the U.S. in the region. It also ended the traditional balance which existed in the Gulf region between

Iraq and Iran during the 1970s along with Saudi Arabia as an active economic power (Khudair 2012: 143).

Nonetheless, the security goals of the U.S. foreign policy are volatile and depend on the circumstances and needs dictated by the U.S. interests. Iraq represents a geographically strategic location for the U.S. interests, as Iraq shares geographic boundaries with America's strategic allies e.g., Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the U.S. proceeded to occupy Iraq and weakened its military capabilities for fear of the growing Iranian influence in Iraq, which would pose a threat to Iraq's neighbors. Moreover, the U.S. also wanted to establish a democratic system in Iraq that respects human rights, does not pose any threats to the GCC States and can achieve security and stability in Iraq (Al-Sussi , interview, 2015).

However, it can be argued that the goal of the U.S. after the demise of Saddam regime was to create a new political system in Iraq that neither threatens nor opposes the U.S. interests in the Gulf region. Furthermore, Iraq would become a source of stability and does not pose any threat to the Gulf countries that are allied with the U.S. and in addition to that it was to ensure that Iraq is no longer a source of threat to the security of Israel. The latent goal of this strategy is to keep Iraq as much as possible away from rapprochement or alliance with Iran or subject it to its influence. In addition, the U.S. can make use of Iraq as a tool to put pressure on some regional powers, like Saudi Arabia, by highlighting that Iraq is a close ally and can compete with Saudi Arabia's stature among the Americans (Tu'mah, interview, 2015).

The American strategy in security-cum-military terms was based on the idea that the enhancement of security cum-military relations with Iraq can help the Americans to achieve their strategic goals which include (Yasin 2012: 102-103):

1. Employing Iraq's strategic location so that it is in line with the goals of the U.S. future security and military strategy in the Middle East;
2. Setting up the prospects for permanent American military bases in Middle East particularly in the Gulf region;
3. The establishment of security-cum-military relations with Iraq which can significantly help the U.S. to contain and confront countries with anti-American sentiments in the region and benefiting from the strategic location of Iraq;
4. The military strategy in Iraq is based on the building and forming of military and security establishments according to American perceptions; and
5. Ensuring Israel's security and protecting its interests.

The U.S. has concluded a number of security agreements with Iraq including the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement¹² whereby Iraq was promised that its name would be removed from Chapter VII of the UN sanctions and supervision and it would regain its full sovereignty and international stature (Appendix C: The Iraqi-American Security Agreement). This agreement, from the point of view of many is a detailed

¹² The Iraqi-American Security Agreement is an agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and the organization of their activities during their temporary presence in Iraq. This agreement, signed by President George W. Bush in 2008, stipulated that the U.S. combat forces would withdraw from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009 and all U.S. forces will be completely withdrawn from Iraq by December 31, 2011 (Al-Badry 2014: 226).

framework with a roadmap for improved relations and future cooperation between the two countries in all fields (Abdel Fattah & Abdel Amir 2012: 12).

In fact, the U.S. occupation of Iraq and having a security agreement with it was part of the U.S. vision of an integrated strategy in order to maintain the security and political situation in the Gulf region. This strategy was based on the strengthening of American hegemony over the world and sustaining it for as long as possible and maintaining the position of the U.S. as the only superpower in the international arena. At the same time, the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the retention of large military bases help it to achieve an integrated political, economic and military targets, in addition to helping it to play a pivotal role in the Gulf region (Abboud 2014).

The Iraqi-American Security Agreement achieved strategic gains for the U.S. and of particular importance is it uses Iraq as a security base to counter potential threats against the U.S. national security, whether from armed groups like the “Al-Qaeda” Organization or hostile nations. The agreement also ensured that Israel's security was enhanced through the reduction or elimination of threats from some Arab countries (Hassan, interview, 2015).

In the same context, the essence of the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement seems to be just a transition from invasion under international mandate to a state of direct American guardianship. According to this guardianship, Iraq would be turned into a center in the fight against terrorism or any state threatening the security and stability of Gulf region in future. The agreement was a strategic and planned shift in the U.S. policy to meet the challenges in post-war Iraq. This shift was based on reshaping the

political, economic and social structures of Iraq and to ensure the success of the U.S. projects in Iraq and in the Gulf region (Abed, interview, 2015).

However, the security agreement between the U.S. and Iraq was also to create a new Iraq that is in compliance with the objectives of the U.S. invasion. This in turn was to ensure that Iraq would not deviate from the regional and international game rules as per the U.S. invasion. The ultimate goal of this agreement was to dispel fears of an extension of possible influence from China, Russia and Japan as well as the European Union in the Gulf region, particularly in Iraq. Therefore, such an agreement was considered to be a guarantee and protection of the U. S. interests from international competition in Iraq and the Middle East region (Abdel Fattah & Abdel Amir 2012: 15).

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that the U.S. has managed to achieve several goals and security interests in Iraq after the demise of Saddam regime by undermining Iraq's military capabilities and concluding the security agreement. The most important goals are to ensure the security and stability of its allies in the Gulf region and Israel, to turn Iraq into a major area for fighting terrorism or states with anti-American sentiments and to encircle the hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the Gulf region. On the other hand, the U.S. has failed to achieve its security goals and contributed to the creation of chaos and lack of security and stability. Furthermore, the security agreement between Iraq and the U.S. was designed to legitimize the U.S. invasion of Iraq and to protect the U.S. interests in the Gulf region and it paid no attention to the enhancement of Iraq's security.

4.3.2 U.S. Interests in Kuwait

Generally, the U.S. interests cannot be fragmented, whether in Iraq or Kuwait. In other words, the U.S. interests in Iraq are similar to those in Kuwait, but the conditions differ from one country to another. The U.S. interests in Kuwait are many and diverse. They can be summarized as follows:

4.3.2.1 Strengthening the U.S. Presence in Kuwait and the Arab Gulf

The U.S. presence in Iraq, after 2003, has helped to expand the U.S. military bases in the affiliated countries like Kuwait in the Arab Gulf. The control of the Arab Gulf is the main interest of the U.S. military strategy and this is because the region is an important linking point between the U.S. bases in Europe and those in the Pacific Ocean. The U.S. has set up military bases in Kuwait which later became the key factor of its military strategy in the Gulf, supporting any military campaign in Kuwait or abroad (Arab Gulf Centre 2010).

One respondent interviewed agreed that the U.S. attaches great importance to its interests in Kuwait. In addition, Kuwait is an important and strategic military base for the U.S. interests, and therefore it is in the interest of the U.S. that Kuwait enjoys security and stability. The U.S. strategic interests are based on multiple locations, in addition to Kuwait it also has military bases in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, but they are not necessarily directed against Iraq (Al-Sussi, interview, 2015). In addition to that, the main interest of the U.S. military reinforcement in Kuwait was to prevent the political regime in Iraq from threatening the neighboring countries, especially the Gulf States and Israel, and to maintain security and stability in the region (Al-Rumaihi, interview, 2015).

The U.S. military bases in Kuwait and the Gulf region play several important roles including:

Its first role is of a military feature as they represent a starting point for wars and interventions, where the U.S. can strike groups or regimes that threaten its interests anywhere in the world. The importance of the U.S. military bases is due to its major semi-integrated military operation centers with relative autonomy and the ability to support air, sea or land combat operations. These bases operated under military agreements signed with the host countries (Imran, interview, 2015). The, agreements enabled the U.S. troops to operate rapid major military operations in different locations without the need for a considerable military presence. The most important goals for the reinforcement of the U.S. presence in Kuwait are the protection of its loyal regimes by supporting friendly regimes in Middle East region in general and the Gulf region in particular, to prevent the emergence of any international force in the region threatening the peace, stability and security in the world and to secure oil related energy sources (Al-Mansour 2009: 593).

Its second role is economy-related as it supports the American economy through the companies that provide the bases with weaponry and other supplies such as food, clothes, etc. Halliburton Company in Iraq, for instance, has monopolized all kinds of services provided to the U.S. Army. Most of the shares of the company are owned by leading members of the U.S. Administration and among them is the former U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney (Abboud 2014:23).

In the same context, the importance of the U.S. presence in Kuwait is attributed to the fact that Kuwait is an integral part of the U.S. vital area. Therefore, the U.S.

cannot allow any regional or even international powers to endanger these interests in any shape or form, particularly with the emergence of the U.S. as a superpower after the Second World War. The most important grounds of America's vital area theory in Kuwait is to protect its own economic interests from any potential external threat, so as to ensure the economic prosperity of the U.S. (Al-Rikabi, interview, 2015).

The third role is political in feature as it is considered to be a kind of pressure group inside the host countries. The military presence would prevent the collapse of the allied ruling regimes and, if possible, maintain stability in the implementation of political, economic and social reforms in such countries, in accordance with the U.S. interests (Al-Ghanim 2008:144).

The U.S. sought to make its military bases in the Gulf especially in Kuwait as a place to implement its policies and pursue its interests in other countries, for example, it can be used to confront Iran and reduce its influence in the region or to confront terrorist organizations which endanger its interests (Al-Ansari, interview, 2015).

Camp Doha is a major American base in Kuwait located in the north-west of Kuwait City and it is 60 km from the border with Iraq. It is the logistics center for the U.S. Army in the Middle East. The deteriorating security situation in the Arab Gulf in general and Iraq's inability to protect its borders in particular contributes to the retention of the maximum number of U.S. military units in Kuwait and its strength is estimated to be fifteen thousand troops. The military forces are deployed according to the security agreement¹³ signed between the U.S. and Kuwait after the Second Gulf War and the agreement is renewable every ten years (AL-Dabbs 2012).

¹³The U.S. -Kuwait Security Agreement was signed between the two sides on September 19, 1991. It included several aspects including: increase of cooperation, the conditions associated with the use of

From the above, it can be concluded that the reinforcement of the U.S. presence in Kuwait and the Gulf region, with several military bases, is an essential tool for the extension of the U.S. influence and the protection of its economy and oil interests. These bases contribute to the stability and security in Kuwait and the allied Gulf States by deterring any regional or international force from attempting to expand its influence in the region, especially Iran. These bases act as a starting point against all terrorist organizations that threaten the U.S. interests in the region. In accordance with the U.S. interests, the U.S. tries to turn these bases into a deterrent political and economic means to curb ambitious international competitors and those threatening its interests in the region, thus achieving many political and economic gains.

4.3.2.2 Control over Kuwaiti Oil

The U.S. interests in Kuwait have gained strategic importance and this is attributed to two important factors. Firstly, the growing importance and the U.S. desire to maintain the region's security and stability to ensure the flow of oil to the U.S. and other industrial powers. Secondly, it is the growing role of oil in world politics as it is the most important source of energy which has granted the Gulf region additional political weight and an indispensable strategic advantage. The U.S. seeks to achieve three objectives in the region: (a) to maintain the ability to secure oil imports, (b) at reasonable prices, and (c) ensure sufficient quantities to meet the growing demands of the U.S. and its friends and allies in the world (Al-Rikabi , interview, 2015).

local facilities and storage of military equipment and its quantities, storage areas and number of U.S troops, in addition to the presence of 5,000 U.S. troops in Kuwait and an airborne paratroops battalion to be dropped in case of any threat to Kuwait (Arab Gulf Center for Strategic Studies and Research 2010: 1).

Kuwait has a petroleum-based economy and it is its main export. Petroleum resources account for nearly half of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 94% of export revenues and government income. According to a report by OPEC, Kuwait's proven oil reserves were about 101.5 billion barrels in 2011. Additionally, the data also showed that Kuwait had 1.784 billion standard cubic meters of proven natural gas reserves (OPEC, Annual Statistical Bulletin 2012). Table 4.2 shows the oil exports of the Middle Eastern countries 2007-2011. According to the table, the rates of oil exports of Iraq and Kuwait are quite close to each other.

Table 4.2

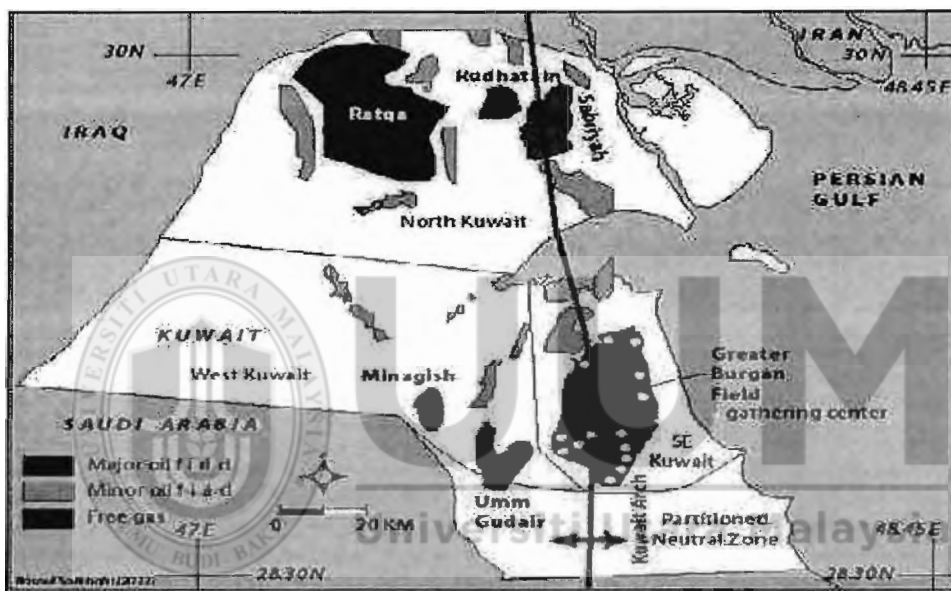
Oil Exports of the Middle East Countries between 2007-2011 (In Million Barrels).

Region	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Middle East	16,948	17,575	15,498	16,322	17,742
Iran	2,639	2,574	2,406	2,583	2,537
Iraq	1,643	1,855	1,906	1,890	2,166
Kuwait	1,613	1,739	1,348	1,430	1,816
Oman	683	593	574	745	738
Qatar	615	703	647	586	588
Saudi Arabia	6,962	7,322	6,268	6,644	7,218
Emirates	2,343	2,334	1,953	2,103	2,330
Others	200	203	147	191	236

Source: OPEC, Annual Statistical Bulletin (2012:4)

According to a report by Al Jazeera, a well-known satellite broadcaster in the Middle East, the total Arab oil reserves stood at 669.6 billion barrels as at the end of 2006. OPEC and the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimated that the total world export of oil in 2006 was about 52 million barrels per day. Hence, Arab oil exports

amounted for about 38% of world exports. The report added that the Arab countries hit a new record in the value of oil exports in 2006, which amounted to more than \$ 393 billion. According to the report, the Kuwaiti Al-Shal Economic Investment Office expected that the GCC members would achieve some \$ 1,300 billion of oil revenue in 2008 and 2009 (Al-Jazeera Television 2010). Map 4.2 shows the most important oil fields in Kuwait.



Map 4.2: Main Oil Fields in Kuwait.

Source: <https://www.google.com.my/search?q=>

On the other hand, there is a significant correlation between the decision-makers and the giant petroleum companies in the U.S. regarding the interests of the U.S. in the Gulf region, specifically in conflict areas, e.g., Iraq and Kuwait which have huge oil reserves in comparison to other areas in the region. Both Iraq and Kuwait have more than 19% of the world's oil reserves and more than 7% of the total global oil production with Saudi Arabia having 25% of the world's oil reserves and 8% of the total global oil production (Al-Obeidi 2004: 24). The U.S. economic interests

depended on having control over the oil wells in Iraq and Kuwait and it also represented the bases for developing security and military strategies that suit America's interests and presence in the region (Imran, interview, 2015).

Therefore, the oil protection issue has received great attention from all the successive U.S. administrations as it is a fundamental interest for the U.S. and the major powers in general due to the presence of huge oil reserves that is easy to extract and cheap to produce when compared to any other region in the world. The U.S. has viewed Arab oil as American oil born in Arab land and this can be seen in statements made by some American politicians. Consequently, Arab oil has been part of the U.S. strategy. The U.S. has not only viewed the Arab region, especially the ones with oil reserves, as sources to secure its energy needs but also as important sources of profit and for the revitalization of its economy (Al-Bloushi , interview, 2015).

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the issue of ensuring a continuous flow of oil from Kuwait and the Gulf is an important factor in the U.S. strategy as it is a primary factor the supports the U.S. economic, political and military influence in the world. Kuwait and the Gulf States are rich with huge proven oil reserves. In comparison with other regions in the world, the Gulf oil is easier to explore and the cost of production is lower. Therefore, due to the growing U.S. consumption of oil and the importance of oil to its economy, the protection of the Gulf region's oil has been incorporated as one of the priorities of the U.S. national security.

4.4 Role of the U.S. Interests in the Outstanding Problems between Iraq and Kuwait

The invasion of Iraq and the collapse of Saddam regime in 2003 have led to important and strategic changes in the U.S. policies in the Arab Gulf region, e.g., the U.S. has shifted from its traditional policy which was based on the maintaining of regional consistency to an active intervention policy with intentions to rebuild the states of the region and to re-organize their relations with each other (Shu'aibi 2004: 117). This shift in the U.S. strategy has significantly influenced of Iraq-Kuwait relations.

During that period, the U.S. has shown a great deal of interest in the contentious issues between Iraq and Kuwait because of their implications on the interests of the U.S. in the region, particularly the energy supply. Nevertheless, Iraq-Kuwait relations worsened from 2003 until the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 because of the outstanding problems between the two countries which have not been resolved. The most important problems include:

4.4.1 Border Dispute between Iraq and Kuwait

Since its invasion of Iraq, the U.S. played a key role in pressuring Kuwait to restore its diplomatic relations with Iraq which involved convincing Kuwait of the need for partnership and close cooperation with Iraq at all political, security and economic levels (Jesus 2014: 48). The U.S. objective of achieving stability between Iraq and Kuwait was to protect its vital and strategic interests in the Arab Gulf. Under the auspices of the U.S., Kuwait hosted the first conference with its neighboring countries in October, 2004. At the conference, the participants stressed on the need to support Iraq's unity, security and integrity, and called for the promotion of

relations between the two countries. They also signed an agreement in December, 2004 whereby Kuwait committed itself to supply Iraq with gasoline and diesel in exchange for Iraqi gas and the whole agreement was valued at approximately \$ 870 million. Later, the two sides also signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries (Al-Obaydee 2008: 5).

The U.S., as a superpower and key player in the Gulf region has affected on Iraq-Kuwait relations positively. From 2003 to 2011, the U.S. went all-out to redevelop relations between Kuwait and Iraq in order to maintain its military and political achievements in Iraq, all the while assuming that it is the savior of the region from the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein (Abed, interview, 2015).

Besides that, the U.S. exerted pressure on Kuwaiti decision-makers to resolve the outstanding border issues which can be better understood through mutual visits by politicians from Kuwait and Iraq with American support and encouragement. Also, the U.S. has military bases in both Kuwait and Iraq and therefore it seeks to preserve its presence in the region for as long as possible and to also simultaneously promote rapprochement between Iraq and Kuwait as dictated by the U.S. interests in the Gulf region, for fear of an extension of Iran's influence in Iraq (Al-Rikabi , interview, 2015).

In 2004, Kuwait expanded up to 15 km into the desert areas of Iraq near to the Iraq-Saudi borders. Kuwait also adopted a new map with the re-delineated land and sea borders with Iraq, which led to angry protests from the residents of Basra in southern Iraq against Kuwait's action (Kload 2015:11).

However, the new relations between Iraq and Kuwait encountered a crisis during the reign of Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Ja'afari, in 2005, when a team of Kuwaiti military force intruded into Iraq's border under the pretext of constructing an iron barrier to protect its territories from attacks due to events that was sweeping through Iraq then as a result of the failure of the U.S. forces to control the security situation in Iraq. This incident adversely influenced Kuwait-Iraq relations. It also instigated both official and popular reactions in Iraq which led to some Iraqi representatives condemning the Kuwaiti incursion into Iraqi territory and waters and they demanded for the review of the border demarcation agreements¹⁴ which were approved by the UN and supported by the U.S. after the Second Gulf War (Al-Obaydee 2008: 7).

These incidents prompted Iraq and Kuwait to hold bilateral talks on the border issues. The U.S. played a major role in these talks which eventually led Iraq and Kuwait to sign an agreement in November, 2006 which allowed Kuwait to complete the construction of an iron fence along the border between the two countries and Kuwait made a commitment to compensate the affected Iraqi farmers. The two sides also agreed to finalize all the practical requirements of border demarcation between the two countries on the basis of the UN Security Council Resolution No. 833 of 1993. The agreement, signed by the two sides, further stipulated the setting up of a buffer zone on both sides of the border where a curfew is imposed and all kinds of activities were prohibited. Furthermore, the two sides discussed the signing of an

¹⁴The agreements that the U.S. concluded with Iraq after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. Under the so-called " Safwan Tent Agreement", Iraq waived large areas of its territories for the benefit of Kuwait in exchange for a cease-fire with the international coalition forces. The U.S. played a central role in the border re-demarcation in favor of Kuwait in 1990 by virtue of its substantial role in the United Nations, which led to the issuance of unjust and unfair resolutions as to border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait in 1993 (Azmi 2013: 90-91).

agreement on the issue of the demarcation of maritime boundaries (Al-Jourani 2013:153).

The U.S. interests positively affected Iraq-Kuwait relations during 2003-2011. There were no Iraqi attacks against Kuwait, but there were cooperation, rapprochement and stability along the Iraq-Kuwait border. The U.S. goal was to prove to the world that what the Americans have achieved in Iraq was a result of the policies they had put in place much earlier (Al-Sussi, interview, 2015).

In addition, the U.S. encouraged security cooperation between the two countries through an agreement (protocol) signed in Kuwait in January 2011 and the objective of the agreement was to conduct joint military patrols to protect the waterways between Iraq and Kuwait. The two sides were also bound by the agreement to exchange information and to report any criminal activity in the ports, coasts or regional waters of the two countries. This security cooperation came as a result of Kuwait's fear of the security vacuum in southern Iraq after the withdrawal of British troops from Basra in 2009, which effectively placed the Iraqis closer to Kuwait's border, making it prone to smuggling and terrorism activities (Al-Jourani 2013:128).

4.4.2 Problem of Constructing Kuwait's "Port Mubarak"

Port Mubarak, which Kuwait commenced construction on the waterway side of the Iraqi Port of "Faw", was the second biggest challenge facing Iraq-Kuwait relations due to the adverse effects of this project on Iraq's economy. Kuwait has a long coastline on the Arab Gulf that extends approximately for 500 km, while the Iraqi coastline is not more than 50 km long. Kuwait has five ports on the Arab Gulf however it chose "Boubyan Island", which is only 1950 meters from the Iraqi border

to build its sixth port (Mubarak Al-Kabeer) due to economic and strategic reasons. It is noteworthy to mention here that the Iraqi Ministry of Transport had laid the cornerstone of the Grand "Faw Port" in Basra in April 2010. One year later, in April 2011, the Kuwaiti government laid the foundation stone of Port Mubarak and commenced construction work, while Iraq has not even started construction work on its port (Al-Jourani 2013: 124-125).

Port Mubarak has become a major dispute between Iraq and Kuwait and it has inflicted major damages to Iraq and has threatened its sole maritime outlet and status. Soon, Kuwait is likely to close the navigation routes in the waterways by building the largest concrete block reinforced with stones and surrounded by steel pillars. This step is considered to be a threat to Iraq as Iraq views it as preparation by Kuwait to cut or block off all navigational routes leading to the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr and thus deprive Iraq from exercising its legitimate rights (Al-Sehaan 2013: 29). On the other hand, Kuwait viewed that Iraqi opposition of the Port Mubarak project is a way of pressuring Kuwait to provide facilities and concessions regarding the outstanding issues between the two countries, especially the issues regarding reparations and debts (Al-Amri 2012: 287). Figure 4.2 represents the site of Kuwait's Port Mubarak.

The Port Mubarak crisis has given rise to negative consequences and cast a long shadow over relations between the two countries. Iraq objected to the construction of Port Mubarak as it violates the UN Security Council Resolution No. 833 of 1991 concerning border demarcations between the two countries. Three rockets were launched from Basra province in Iraq and they landed at the site of the Port Mubarak project on Kuwait's "Boubyan" Island (Middle East Newspaper 2011). Kuwait also

regarded these security threats as a serious danger to diplomatic relations with Iraq (Kuwaiti al-Seyassah Newspaper 2011).



Figure 4.2: Kuwaiti Mubarak Port.

Source: <https://www.stratfor.com/sites/default/files/styles/stratfor>

On the other hand, the U.S. played a major role in the construction of Port Mubarak, next to Iraq's regional waters, in the Gulf region as it is an essential step for the control of the Iraq- Kuwait conflict after the demise of Saddam regime. The U.S. agreed with the project and provided Kuwait with the facilities in order to confront the Iranian influence that competes with the U.S. interests in Iraq. As expected the construction of this port led to tension in Kuwait-Iraq relations and has adversely affected their stability and development (AL- Jumaili & AL-kinani 2012: 21).

The U.S. played a positive role on Iraq-Kuwait relations by making unremitting efforts to bridge the gaps between the views of the two countries and have been successful in some areas. Kuwait, for example, resumed diplomatic relations with Iraq and contributed to the reconstruction process in Iraq. Any stability or

improvement in Iraq-Kuwait relations, from 2003-2011 can be attributed to the successful U.S. diplomacy and its capability to establish security and stability in the region. Nevertheless, the psychological factors were dominant on the political systems in Iraq and Kuwait after 2003. This was especially so in Kuwait as it was still suffering from the effects and concerns of the Iraqi invasion and it was the main reason for the tension between the two countries (Imran, interview, 2015).

On the contrary, the U.S. has no impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations. As a superpower, the U.S. aspires to see Kuwait and the other Gulf States pursue a more sympathetic policy with the new system in Iraq after 2003. But, the Iraqi - Iranian rapprochement and the growing Iranian influence in Iraq have served to heighten Kuwait's and the Gulf States' fear of the new system in Iraq. Therefore, the U.S. let the Gulf States including, Kuwait adopt their own policies on Iraq according to their interests and perception of the situation in Iraq (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

4.4.3 Problem of Iraq's Debts and Reparations to Kuwait

The issue of Iraq's debts and reparations to Kuwait represents another challenge to the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations after the demise of Saddam regime in 2003. Iraq was suffering from accumulated debts estimated at billions of dollars, damaged infrastructures, economic collapse as a result of previous wars (e.g. war with Iran and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) and the economic sanctions imposed by the UN on Iraq for more than 12 years because of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Iraq was in dire need for money to rebuild its institutions and infrastructures, to revitalize its economy and to restart it again. But, Kuwait insisted on Iraq paying its debts and reparations because the members of Parliament of Kuwait refused to

compromise and considered this issue as non-negotiable. Undoubtedly, Kuwait's position towards the issue of reparations¹⁵ adversely affected Iraq- Kuwait relations (Al-Nadwi 2011: 2).

These debts and reparations was a heavy burden on the Iraqi economy and consequently it fell on the shoulders of the Iraqi people. The new Iraqi government regarded the debts and reparations as remnants of Saddam regime and should not be borne by the people and the current Iraqi government. The new Iraqi government called for relations to be based on the exclusion of the policies of Saddam regime together with its mistakes and events and to give it a fresh start by building a new relationship between the two countries (Al Sa'di 2011:41).

The Economic Al-Shall Report (2003) pointed out that the value of the damages caused by the Iraqi invasion in 1990 was estimated at \$ 177.6 billion. The share of the private sector (individuals and private sector) was about \$ 17.2 billion while that of the public sector amounted to about \$ 142.8 billion and in addition to that \$17.6 billion was for the environment (Al-Mutairi et al. 2003).

The UN approved \$ 37.2 billion as compensation to Kuwait due to Iraq's invasion of its territory, of which Kuwait has received \$ 9.3 billion and allotted it as follows: \$ 6.5 billion to the civil sector and about \$ 2.8 billion for the public sector. As for debts, Iraq's total external debts are estimated at about \$ 450 billion. This number was stated by the Iraqi Minister of Planning during a lecture in Dubai in September

¹⁵ The issue of reparations was imposed on Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990, where Iraq was bound by the UN Security Council Resolution No. 687 issued on 3/4/1991 to pay off all financial compensation for damages caused by its invasion of Kuwait. The resolution also included the formation of a fund for paying the reparations and an Administration Committee thereto. A value of 30% of Iraq's annual oil exports was apportioned to pay those damages (Al Sa'di 2011: 40).

2003 and in a meeting with the IMF and the World Bank. These debts are distributed as follows: \$ 320 billion (reparations as a result of the first and Second Gulf War), \$130 billion (external debts which includes interests amounting to \$ 47 billion) and the debt to Kuwaiti which is estimated at \$ 13.2 billion without the interests due on this debt as from the date of borrowing (Anba' Newspaper 2003: 11).

On its part, the U.S. administration exerted mounting pressure on Kuwait to write-off the debts owed by Iraq, to stop the reparations paid by Iraq to Kuwait and to reduce the quantum of reparations to reflect on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Kuwait is linked to the strategic and historical interests of the U.S. and therefore it is not in Kuwait's interest to be in conflict with the U.S. demands in any shape or form (Al-Nafisi 2004: 4).

The U.S. interests that are linked to the Arab Gulf region have had a positive impact in strengthening the relations between Iraq and Kuwait. The U.S. has contributed to the resolution of outstanding disagreements between Iraq and Kuwait and the strengthening of the bonds of cooperation between them by means of easing the heavy financial burdens of Iraq resulting from its previous debts. It also helped to strengthen political cooperation, diplomatic representation, trade and investments to overcome the disputes of the past. The U.S. contributions came about because both Kuwait and Iraq represent an important part of the U.S. strategy (Elwan, interview, 2015).

In addition, the U.S. had the biggest role in the organizing of the Madrid Conference in 2003 which called for the easing of the huge financial burdens owed by Iraq as a result of its previous debts. Its objective was to provide the financial resources

necessary for the reconstruction process in Iraq and to achieve economic stability by providing financial grants and soft loans. This conference collected \$ 33 billion in support for Iraq and the contributors were as follows: \$ 20 billion from U.S. \$ 5 billion from Japan; \$ 5 billion from the World Bank \$ 1.5 billion from Kuwait; \$ 1 billion from Saudi Arabia \$ 835 million from Britain; \$ 300 million from Spain and \$ 231 million from the European Union. The U.S. also contributed to the support of a resolution by the UN Security Council to create an "International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq" to be administered by Britain and the U.S. The draft stipulated that the deduction rate of Iraq's oil proceeds for the benefit of the Reparations Fund is to be reduced from 25% to 5% (Al-Mutairi et al. 2003).

Nonetheless, though the U.S. has played an influential role in pressuring Kuwait to lighten the financial burdens of Iraq as a result of the Iraqi invasion in 1990, this role was not very effective as evidenced by the fact that the debt owed by Iraq to Kuwait has not been written off yet. It is not in the U.S. interests, in light of the circumstances and changes that has occurred between 2003-2011, to see a stable and strong political system whether in Iraq or Kuwait since this would lead to improvement in Iraq-Kuwait relations on the one hand and stabilize Iraq's relations with the Gulf States on the other. Such conditions contradicted with the U.S. interests and orientations in the region which entailed the spreading of chaos in the region (Kawak, interview, 2015).

4.4.4 Problem of Iraq Remaining under Chapter VII of the UN Charter

The resolutions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter were the other challenges facing Iraq-Kuwait relations. As a consequence of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990,

the UN adopted several resolutions and imposed international sanctions on Iraq under Chapter VII, the first of which was Resolution No. 660 in 1990 and the other resolutions followed in quick succession and the final total number was seventy-two (Ali 2008: 10).

The nineteen chapters of the UN Charter contain one hundred and eleven articles and Chapter VII is the only one that has coercive powers to implement resolutions against member countries. The most serious is Article No. 42 which allows the Security Council to take actions and measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. The actions and measures include the use of air, sea and land forces, economic blockade, and other air and sea operations, and the aforesaid actions and measures have actually been exercised against Iraq since 1991. These resolutions remained in force even after the liberation of Kuwait and the restoration of its sovereignty (Iraqi Ittihad Newspaper 2009).

In a different context, the Security Council members have, in several different official statements welcomed the continued cooperation by the governments of Iraq and Kuwait and their high-level commitment to the full implementation of all Iraqi obligations to Kuwait under the relevant resolutions and this was in addition to the commitments given by the Iraqi government to improve relations with Kuwait (Appendix D: The Security Council Press Statements 2009-2011).

However, Kuwait's position on Iraq is that Iraq must still remain under the sanctions imposed by Chapter VII despite the demise of Saddam regime after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Kuwait even demanded, more than once, that the UN Security Council should not remove Iraq from the Chapter VII's list before it fulfills all its

international obligations, especially on the issues of reparations and all matters under Resolution No. 833 about border demarcations between Iraq and Kuwait. Kuwait's position, therefore, created an adverse impact on the development of relations between the two countries (Wahib 2010: 9).

The U.S. interests had an adverse impact on the Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. Being an ally and a protector of Kuwait's security, the U.S. advised Kuwait to hold on to Chapter VII of the UN Charter and insisted that Iraq must be fully committed to the resolutions of the Security Council regarding the effects of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The U.S. could have made Kuwait waive the debts owed by Iraq and help to remove Iraq from Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The U.S. has not been confident that Iraq would become a strategic ally like the GCC States. Thus, the U.S. is trying to make the biggest gains through its relations with Kuwait and the rest of the GCC States (Al-Rikabi, interview, 2015).

The U.S. did not want to free Iraq from Chapter VII of the UN Charter in spite of some positive facts that could have contributed to the lifting of international sanctions on Iraq including:

1. The security agreement signed between the U.S. and Iraq pointed to the lifting of international sanctions on Iraq and that by December 13, 2008 Iraq would have regained its international and legitimate status that it enjoyed before the invasion of Kuwait (Appendix C: The Iraqi-American Security Agreement);

2. The U.S. status as a permanent member in the UN Security Council is influential in the resolutions issued by the Council in relations to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait (Abdel-Razzaq 2012:62); and
3. The U.S. is capable of carrying out successful mediation to persuade Kuwait to end its outstanding problems with Iraq (e.g., debts, reparations and border problems) or to find a way to resolve them which can then make the UN Security Council adopt a resolution to remove Iraq from Chapter VII (Yasin 2012: 107).

The U.S. did not fulfill its duty, as an occupier of Iraq during that period, towards the settlement of the outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait. For example, the U.S. did not exercise its influence on Kuwait to limit its claims with respect to the re-demarcation of maritime borders or the paying off of debts and reparations for the purposes of lifting the international sanctions on Iraq. The U.S. interests require that Iraq remains unstable and militarily weak and Kuwait always remain obsessed with its security fears of Iraq. Instead, after the fall of Saddam, Kuwait followed a policy of revenge against Iraq by demanding border re-demarcation with Iraq to serve its interests. The U.S., during that period, ignored or overlooked the Kuwaiti demands. However, it favored Kuwait at Iraq's expense on some occasions because the U.S. vision of the situation in Iraq has not been settled yet. Accordingly, the U.S. stance was affected by the nature of Iraq-Kuwait relations during that period (Tu'ma, interview, 2015).

In short, the U.S. has had several effects on Iraq-Kuwait relations. Firstly, the U.S. has influenced in a positive way the fostering of diplomatic relations between Iraq

and Kuwait in order to preserve its military and political achievements in Iraq. Secondly, on the contrary, the U.S. has an adverse impact on the strengthening of Iraq-Kuwait relations. The U.S. interests requires that Iraq remains unstable and militarily weak and consequently this adversely affects Kuwait as it would always be obsessed with the security threats from Iraq. Thirdly, the U.S. has had a limited influential role, yet ineffective in general, on Iraq-Kuwait relations. The proof of this is the continuation of some unresolved issues between Iraq and Kuwait until now.

4.5 Summary

The Iraq-Kuwait relations enjoy considerable importance in the political agendas and decision-making circles in the U.S. because of its implications for the latter's interests in the region, particularly energy supply. Though the U.S. views these relations from different angles, they still attach strategic importance to the two countries. In fact, the U.S. is keen to achieve the largest number of possible strategic gains and the slightest loss at the expense of the countries of the region, especially Iran, through the control of the future relations between Iraq and Kuwait. The U.S. is seeking to strengthen Kuwait-Iraq relations, but it is at the same time in pursuance of its own political and economic interests. It sometimes seek to restore and develop the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in order to preserve its military and political achievements in Iraq and win the cooperation of these two countries to keep them away from the influence of Iran and the Gulf states, while on other occasions it seeks to destabilize relations between Iraq and Kuwait by following a double-standard policy in order to destabilize the security of the Gulf region. Thus, the U.S. can

ensure its presence in the Gulf region and work to fuel fears of Iraqi threats among the Gulf countries, especially Kuwait.

Despite the efforts the U.S. has made to foster better relations between Iraq and Kuwait after deposing Saddam, these efforts have been modest and ineffective in resolving the outstanding disputes between the two countries e.g., the border demarcations, reparations and the removal of Iraq from Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In other words, the U.S. role as a key player in the Gulf region was reflected negatively in the search for a common ground for rapprochement between Iraq and Kuwait. Finally, the U.S. is not the sole influential player on the Iraq-Kuwait relations. There is another player, Iran, which will be addressed in Chapter V.



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CHAPTER FIVE

IRANIAN INTERESTS IN THE IRAQ-KUWAIT RELATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Iran's geographical location together with its vast amount of natural resources are the main factors that drives Iran's expansionary desire and hegemony in the Arab Gulf region. At the same time, it denies the presence of and also ignore key players like the U.S. and the regional powers of the Gulf. Iran's desire to become a key and strong hegemon in the region is reflected by its actions, like taking care of extremist groups in more than one region, its intervention in the affairs of its neighboring countries and the development of a nuclear program which is a very serious threat to the countries in the region (Cook, 2012: 5-6). Therefore, Iran's expansionist ambitions in the Gulf region had obvious repercussions on the Iraq-Kuwait relations.

This chapter will discuss Iran's role in Middle East and how its role affects the relations between Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam era. This chapter will also assess Iran's interests and their impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations, e.g., Iran's interests in creating sectarian conflicts, forestalling the American democracy activity projects in Iraq and the common interests Iran has with the states in the region.

5.2 Iran's role in the Middle East

Iran is located in south-west Asia and possesses a strategic maritime location whereby it overlooks the Caspian Sea in the north, the Arab Gulf in the south-west and the Indian Ocean in the south, as shown in Map 5.1 (Al-Bdyri 2008: 345-350).



Map 5.1: Geographical Location of Iran.

Source: (Geography of Iran - Physical Geography 2014).

During the rule of the former Iranian president, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Shah (1941-1979), Iran played an important role in Middle East because of its alliance with the U.S. and Israel and it also had ambitions to dominate the economic resources in that region. Iran's foreign policy in the 1960's was to expand its economic and political influence towards the Arab Gulf in the south, the Arab states in the west, Afghanistan and Pakistan and India in the east. Iran justified its action by saying that it was to protect its oil pipelines from the Gulf to Asia and Europe (Al-Hassani 2011).

In 1965, Iran adopted a political project that included the annexation of most of the Arab Gulf States by Iran. The Iranian government had specified a special budget for the aforesaid purpose. Moreover, there were some factors that helped Iran to implement its political project and they are as follows:

1. The weakness of the Arab States as a result of their defeat in the 1967 war with Israel;
2. The gradual British withdrawal from the Gulf region from 1962 until 1971;
3. The U.S. supported Iran's expansionist ambitions in Middle East (Helayel, 2011: 24-25) ; and
4. Iran benefited from its geographical location vis-à-vis the Arab Gulf States; Iran has the longest coastline in comparison with all the Arab Gulf States i.e., 1200 km out of 3365 km. Therefore, the maritime location is considered to be a major factor for Iran's economic and military force, as shown in Table 5.1 (Al-Swedi 1983:10).

Iran also used an interventionist policy in the internal affairs of foreign states in several areas, for example, Iran supplied the Kurdish forces in northern Iraq with arms to fight against the Iraqi government in Baghdad during the nineteen sixties and seventies. Iran's military intervention in northern Yemen during the civil war in Yemen between 1962 and 1970, Iran's participation in the military action against some armed groups in the province of "Baluchistan", Pakistan in 1973 and Iran's support of the Omani government in its war against the Liberation Front in the "Dhofar" region in the southern part of Oman in 1973 (Al-Hassani 2011).

Table 5.1

Length of Iran's Coast and that of the Arab Gulf States.

Country	Length of Coastline (km)	Rate Length the Coast to Total%
Iran	1200	35.7
Iraq	15	0.4
Kuwait	200	5.9
Saudi Arabia	550	16.3
Bahrain	130	3.9
Qatar	380	11.3
UAE	800	23.8
Oman	90	2.7
Total	3365	100%

Source: Abdullah (1993:33)

After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, there has been a major shift in Iran's regional and international relations in the Middle East, especially after the change of U.S. policy towards Iran whereby it became an enemy even though it had been very strong ally of the U.S. in the past. The role of Iran during that period was to promote Islamic revolution¹⁶ to monarchies in the Gulf States and replace them with governments that had complete loyalty to Iran and the establishment of a sole superior power that is able to resist the ambitions of other states in the Gulf region (Syed 2013).

On the other hand, Iran's expansionist ambitions was at the expense of Israel as Iran supported the Islamic resistance movements in Middle East against Israel, for example, the Lebanese Hezbollah as a representative of the "Shiites" and the Hamas as the representative of the "Sunnis" in Palestine (Amnh 2010:99).

¹⁶The term "exporting the revolution in Iran" appeared after the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution led by "Khomeini" in overthrowing the Iranian monarchy led by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Shah in 1979. This term is based on the carrying out of revolutions similar to that of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in all states that have authoritarian regimes especially in the Arab region (Pukmedia 2014).

An important event which had a significant impact on Iran's ambitions in Middle East was Saddam Hussein's success in seizing power in Iraq in 1979 (Al-Badry 2014:95). The conflict between Iran's desire to expand its interests in the Gulf region and the personal ambitions of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, to dominate over the Gulf region was the main reason that led to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. That period represented the beginning of Iranian interference in Iraq and the rest of the Gulf States (Baker Institute Study 1998:2).

Due to its fear of the impact of the principles of Islamic revolution in Iran on its political system, Kuwait supported Iraq financially in its war against Iran. As a result, Iran increased its terrorist activities in Kuwait in 1983 and attempted to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait in 1985. Iran also carried out several military operations against Kuwaiti oil sites in the Gulf from 1987 to 1988 and these military operations prompted the U.S. to protect Kuwait from any potential Iranian attacks (Salem 2009).

With the outbreak of the Gulf crisis due to Iraqi's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iran was fully aware that any change in the political map among the Gulf States or inside any of the countries should not be allowed if it could lead to the undermining of Iran's strategic interests in the Gulf region. Additionally, the expansion of Iraq and its seizure of Kuwait's oil fields could also lead to the supremacy of Iraq's political and economic status in the region and that would be in conflict with Iran's interests (Rajab 1997: 345).

Throughout the crisis, Iran sought to achieve several strategic goals based on its perceptions of the security in the Gulf region. Firstly, it sought to strengthen its

military capabilities and become a dominant power in the region without intervening as a party in the war. In order to identify the impact of the war on its national security, Iran had remained neutral from the beginning of the war. Secondly, Iran sought to prevent Iraq from becoming a strong state again so that it can not compete with Iran and also limit its ability to extend its influence and achieve its goals in the Arab region. In other words, Iran sought to remove Iraq as a competitor in the Gulf region because of its military capabilities and this would allow Iran to impose its point of view on the countries of the region regarding the security of the Gulf region (Fouda 2000: 44). Therefore, this crisis represented a golden opportunity for Iran to rearrange the balance of power in the region and at the same time maintain its interests that is in line with the ambitions of its political system (Al-Jorani 2012:85).

After the Second Gulf War, Iran dedicated part of its budget for the development of its nuclear program¹⁷ which posed a direct threat to the regional neighboring countries of Iran (Mohammad 2007: 56-57). Thus, Iran's military spending increased from \$ 4.7 billion in 1997 to \$ 7.5 billion in 2000 (Syed 2013).

Besides that, Iran sought to establish free economic zones on the Iranian islands in order to develop economic relations with Kuwait. Trade exchange between the two countries increased from about \$ 78.2 million in 1997, to about \$ 345 million in 2000 and to \$ 621 million in 2003 (Kashk 2014:3).

¹⁷ Iran's nuclear program has been the subject of global hand-wringing for more than two decades. While Iran has insisted it is not building nuclear weapons, its enrichment of uranium and history of deception have created doubts. After years of acrimony and threats to bomb Iran's facilities, Iran and the world powers have agreed to settle the dispute on July 14, 2014. The deal sets limits on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions that have crimped oil exports and crippled its economy (Tirone 2015).

As a result of the improvement of relations between Kuwait and Iran, the Kuwaiti foreign minister, Sheikh Muhammed Salem Al-Sabah, visited Iran on January 12, 2002, and signed security and economic agreements with Iran and they also explored their unified position towards Iraq. Moreover, Sheikh Muhammed also requested Iran's assistance to close the case files against Kuwaiti prisoners of war in Iraq. Iran responded positively with readiness to close the said files through diplomatic ties with the Iraqi government and also promised to release all Kuwaiti prisoners and others from Iraq (Kashk 2014: 1-5).

In 2003, the U.S. threats of using military force against Iraq gave Iran the pretext to build good relations with the Gulf States especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This facilitated and expedited rapprochement for more economic, political and security cooperation. Although Iran supported the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam regime, but it viewed the U.S. military presence in Iraq as an attempt to weaken the regional powers in the Arab Gulf region (Mubaidin 2007:15).

In summary, it can be concluded that since the sixties and seventies of the last century, Iran had been looking forward to achieving its expansionist ambitions in the Middle East in general and the Arab Gulf region in particular through its strong military build-up, and interference in the internal affairs of other states based on the respective states' advantage of geographical location and economic resources. On the other hand, Iran tried to export the principles of its Islamic revolution to neighboring Arab countries and replace the current governments with ones that have complete loyalty to Iran, and this later led to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. After the Second Gulf War, Iran tried to play a positive role with Kuwait by exploiting its dispute with Iraq. This was because Iran was afraid of the growth of

Iraq's strategic role in the Gulf region and it also wanted to achieve greater political and economic gains at the expense of the U.S. interests in the region.

5.3 Iranian Interests in Iraq in the Post-Saddam Era

Iran's interests in Iraq led to Iran taking actions to infiltrate and destabilize the Iraqi regime, thus paving the way for Iran to achieve its foreign policy objectives in Middle East in general and the Gulf region in particular. These interests can be tackled as follows:

5.3.1 Political Influence of Iran in Iraq

Iraq was the top priority in Iran's strategy to achieve its interests with regards to its foreign policy because of the following reasons:

First, from Iran's perspective, Iraq is a regional power that cannot be ignored when looking at the balance of power in the region due to several reasons. Iraq has a human capital that exceeds 30 million people and it is second after Saudi Arabia in terms of oil reserves as it has 124 billion barrels which is enough to produce three million barrels per day for more than 100 years. Thus, the Iranian decision makers recognized the importance of Iraq in the regional balance, now and in the future (Gregory 1998:81).

Iraq received a great deal of attention in Iran's foreign policy because of its geographical adjacency, economic wealth and human capital. These elements helped Iraq to become one of the most active power in the region and a key player in deciding the existing regional balances in the Gulf region (Abed, interview, 2015).

Secondly, Iraq is the gate- way for Iran to the rest of the Gulf States and the Arab World to spread the ideology of its Islamic revolution. Therefore, Iran would be detached from the Shiite's presence in Syria and south of Lebanon if Iraq is not under its control (Gregory 1998:82).

Thirdly, Iran considers that Iraq is a historical, geographical and religious extension of Iran. Consequently, Iran deems that Iraq should be one of its provinces instead of an independent state. In this regard, the first Iranian president after the Iranian revolution in 1979, "Abu Al-Hasan Bani-Sadr", stated that, "Iraq was throughout history a part of "Faris" (Persia) and the Gulf region was always Iranian property. Hence, the Gulf's oil lies within Persian territories"(Farid 2007:57-60).

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 provided the Islamic Republic of Iran with a historic opportunity to transform its relations with Iraq, which was formerly one of its most implacable enemies. It used the long porous border with Iraq, the longstanding ties with key Iraqi politicians, the political and religious parties and armed groups, and its economic and religious power and military intelligence to expand its influence and thus establish itself as the key external broker in Iraq (Eisenstadt et al. 2011: xi).

The Iranian role in Iraq was closely linked to Iran's ambitions to exercise a wider regional role in the Gulf region that is proportional to its political, economic and military capabilities as well as its geopolitical importance. Iran used a number of tools and policies in exercising this role after the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Most notably was Iran's desire to extend the friendship and cooperation with Iraqi political actors, and to have good relations. Such relations would depend on dialogue to

achieve peace and mutual respect for the sovereignty of each country and to leave the past wars triggered by Saddam behind. The support provided by Iran to many Iraqi Shiite parties and militias prevented the U.S. from improving stability in Iraq and therefore made Iran a potential threat to the U.S. (Al-Ansari, interview, 2015).

Iran's interests in Iraq have been reflected by its long-standing regional ambitions and desire to resolve its ongoing dispute with the U.S. over the development of its nuclear program and the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the removal of threats posed by conventional military weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) following the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iran's aim was to prevent Iraq from re-emerging as a threat with or without the presence of the U.S. forces. The prevalence of Shiites in Iraq was viewed by Iran as a potential strategic asset that could advance its interests. Therefore, the Iranian intentions in Iraq partially tallied with those of the U.S., whose aim was to establish a democratic government in Iraq that can support the interests of the majority, the Shiites, and therefore empower potential Shiite allies (Al-Badry 2014:220).

However, Iran's objection to divide Iraq into several states is one of the most fundamental interests of Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq after 2003. For Iran, it is easier to deal with Iraq as one central entity than dealing with multiple ones. Iran still has other vital interests, for example, keeping Iraq militarily weak and unable to threaten it or any other country in the region. Moreover, Iran seeks to strengthen its dominance in the Shatt Al-Arab area, which has been experiencing maritime disputes between the two countries (Tu'mah, interview, 2015).

As a result of the growing Iranian role in Iraq after the fall of Saddam, Iran has become more influential in shaping and steering Iraqi policy towards achieving its interests in the region. The most important tool employed by Iran to achieve these interests was its encouragement to divide Iraq into three regions: a Kurdish region in the north, a “Sunni” region in the center and a “Shiite” region in the south. Eventually, this division would weaken Iraq and remove it from the competition circle as a regional power (Al- Sussi, interview, 2015).

A report was issued by "Baker-Hamilton", a committee formed by the American Congress in 2006 to investigate the most convenient strategy that should be followed in Iraq. The report highlighted the Iranian intervention and its support of the militias. It also recommended that diplomatic talks should be conducted with Iran and Syria to achieve stability in Iraq which could then enable the U.S. forces to move from a combative position, which was operative as of 2003, to a supportive position of the Iraqi forces to maintain stability (Atwan 2007:32).

On the other hand, it is important for the Iranians to deal with Iraq as an ally in order to confront other competitors in the region such as Saudi Arabia. Hence, Iran has been persistently trying to exert its influence on the political process in Iraq in order to achieve its interest through the Iraqi political parties that were loyal to the Iranian government. The Iranian leadership was also seeking to ensure that Iraqi territories would not be used by the U.S. or any Western country as a base for military attacks on Iran because of its efforts to develop its nuclear program (Al-Bloushi, interview, 2015).

During the U.S. occupation of Iraq (2003-2011), Iran's major interest was to prevent Iraq from becoming a strong state once again, which would then compete with it and limit its capability to extend its influence and achieve its goals in the Gulf region (Al-Ghalib 2014:1). Iran has strived to ensure its security and territorial integrity through the building up of a huge military force that is able to defend its territorial integrity and deter any hostile party, whether international or regional, from carrying out military strikes against it (Hussein 2011:13).

Iran has also proceeded to infiltrate the Iraqi leadership system by providing the ruling junta of Iraq with consultation services on some political and economic issues experienced by Iraq which was in addition to intensifying dialogues and communications with them. Moreover, Iran gave the green light to its intelligence services for secret and overt political work in Iraq via Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Iranian intelligence (Wahid, & Hossam 2013: 4). Similarly, the Royal Institute of International Affairs in Britain in a study in August, 2006, reached the following conclusion "the Iranian influence in Iraq is stronger than that of the U.S." (Ahmed 2008:82).

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that Iran has taken advantage of the political vacuum resulting from the fall of Saddam regime as a result of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Therefore, Iran has been able to achieve its interests in Iraq and the Gulf region. Iran's top priority was that Iraq must become a part of Iran's sphere of influence in competition with the U.S. and the GCC. Furthermore, Iran had a significant role in creating a weak and puppet political system in Iraq and was determined to intervene in Iraq's affairs to shape and direct the political process in its favor.

5.3.2 Economic Influence of Iran in Iraq

Iraq does not only represent political importance for Iran but it is also an economic one. According to Iran's decision makers, the importance of Iraq lies in its location which is situated in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula and it is at the midpoint of three continents namely Europe, Asia and Africa (Barzegar 2008:53). Moreover, the area enjoys maritime significance that enables it to play a key role in determining the economic and political interests of certain states. Due to its overlooking site on the Arab Gulf, Iraq has strategic importance as it enjoys geo-strategic advantages with the existence of the largest oil reserves in particular. According to some estimates, Iraq's reserves of crude oil reaches up to 124 billion barrels which is equivalent to 11% of the world's total reserves, in addition to other huge natural resources e.g., gas (Kumins 2004:2). It also ranks as the second richest country in the Arab World as its water resources amounts to 44.1 billion cubic meters per year, thus providing it with a huge agricultural potential. Moreover, Iran has considered Iraq to be a golden opportunity for Iran to rebuild its economy because it has repeatedly experienced fluctuations due to the economic sanctions that the U.S. imposed on Iran over its nuclear program (Al- Ghalib 2014:4-5).

There have been many common interests between Iraq and Iran throughout history, particularly the economic ones. Due to the demise of Saddam regime, the relations between the two countries improved significantly. Iran contributed positively by providing Iraq with goods and energizing religious tourism and it also helped with the reconstruction process (Kawak, interview, 2015).

However, Iran has no real interests in the reconstruction or encouragement of investments in Iraq, but its major interest was to make Iraq into a bigger market for

Iranian products which can help to alleviate the effects of the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the Western countries upon Iran because of its nuclear ambitions. Iran's attempts to develop its economic relations with Iraq was to achieve its main objectives by using Iraq's position OPEC with regards to oil quotas and the control of its prices in order to weaken the Saudi 's position in OPEC (Imran, interview, 2015).

Iran takes advantage of its relations with the Iraqi government formed after 2003 to achieve its economic goals as Iraq has become the most important market for Iran's non- oil products. The two countries signed 110 economic memoranda of understanding and they also agreed to increase the electrical power exported to Iraq from 400 megawatts to 1000 megawatts (Azbawi 2004:85). Moreover, there has also been a boom in religious tourism with one million Iraqis visiting the Shiite shrines in the Iranian cities of "Qum" and "Mashhad" and a similar number of Iranians visiting the Shiite shrines in the Iraqi cities of "Najaf", "Kazimiyah" and "Karbala" (Ahmed & Massad 2009:64-65). Other economic links include contracts concluded between some Iraqi mayors and Iranian companies and businessmen using some Iranian ports and shipping facilities for goods coming into Iraq. Iran also established economic relations in the fields of construction and communication with Iraqi Kurdistan (Al-Swedi 1983:10).

The Iranian's economic interests in Iraq was also increased due to Iraq's dire need for both Iranian products to meet Iraq's basic needs and experience to help in the reconstruction of Iraq. Many Iranian companies have effectively contributed to investment in the construction, power and communication sectors in Iraq. In addition, the religious tourism also increased between two countries. More than two

million Iranians visit the Shiite shrines in Iraq every year because of the close relationship in terms of faith and sect (Hassan, interview, 2015).Iran followed different procedures and exercised certain polices to sustain its economic interests in Iraq including (Wahid & Hossam 2013:4):

1. Iran took advantage of the Iraqi markets and opened them for all kinds of products and making Iraq economically dependent on Iran in almost everything as shown in Figure 5.1.
2. Iran purchased some Iraqi assets (industrial, agricultural and real estate) and turned them into safe havens for its supporters to live in and to seek work, thus widening Iran's sphere of influence;
3. It encouraged Iranian merchants to travel to Iraq and invest there, especially in the Shiite cities;
4. Iran has plans to promote its Port “Al-Khumaini” as a substitute for Jordan’s Port “Aqaba” and to link Iran and Iraq with a railway that extends to Syria and up to Turkey; and
5. Iran has pursued strong ties with the wealthy people of Iraq both in the private and public sectors through the high class businessmen and high ranking officers in Iraq’s administrative body.

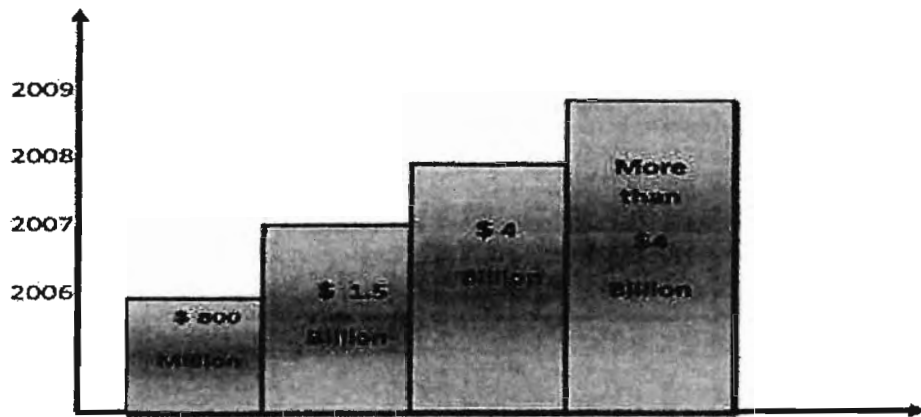


Figure 5.1: Trade Exchange between Iraq and Iran 2006-2009.

Source: Asharq al-Awsat Journal (2009:10)

Moreover, another economic infiltration that was exercised by Iran was its aim to reinforce its interests in the stealing of oil from the oil fields in Basra which is next to its border. Iran has resorted to slant drilling to extract oil from Iraqi oil wells under the pretext of "shared wells" between the two countries. The total volume of stolen oil was estimated at 500 thousand barrels per day (Wahid & Hossam 2013:4).

Based on the foregoing, Iraq has become an essential part in the strategies of Iranian decision-makers that has to be maintained. By virtue of its geographical location, its great amount of wealth and its religious ties with Iran, Iraq would always be of strategic importance to Iran. Hence, the Iranian decision makers would never cease regarding Iraq as one of the top priorities in their regional strategic planning that aims to achieve their supreme nationalist interests. Iran's pursuit of cooperation with Iraq in all fields via the various policies and tools would enable it to achieve political and economic gains at the expense of all other regional players in the region and would alleviate the effects of the economic siege imposed by the Western countries and the U.S. due to its insistence to develop a nuclear program.

5.4 Iranian Interests in Kuwait in the Post-Saddam Era

As in any other international relations, Kuwait- Iran relations has experienced its ups and downs throughout its stages of development. The history of this relation was mostly positive. Crises and periods of tension between Kuwait and Iran did not exceed eight years, e.g., the duration of the Iraq-Iran war. Their mutual interest has been the deciding factor of the relations between them. Iran, from Kuwait's perspective, is a strategic and important country for Kuwait by virtue of its political weight and geographical location. Kuwait, on the other hand even though it is geographically small it occupies a strategic location among Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Kuwait also possesses huge reserves of oil which has end owed it with economic and financial importance. Therefore, Iran sought to maintain and enhance its political and economic interests in Kuwait after Saddam era (Kashk 2014: 1-5).

These interests include:

5.4.1 Political Interests of Iran in Kuwait

In general, Iran is one of the most influential and active players in Middle East and in the Gulf region in particular. It derives its power from two major factors. Firstly, it has expansionist ambitions and tries to maintain its regional supremacy. Secondly, it encounters external threat posed by the U.S. against its strategic project in the Gulf region (Khudair 2012:144). Iran's insistence to develop a nuclear program can hinder the possibility of achieving a security strategy in the Gulf region due to many considerations (Al-Otaibi 2012:74-75):

Firstly, Iran's possession of nuclear weapons can obstruct all efforts made by both Iran and Kuwait to improve relations with its neighbors and to enhance the trust and

mutual benefits between them. The efforts were mainly made to establish a regional security system based on several grounds, primarily the abandonment of force and to resolve all issues through dialogues and negotiations.

On the other hand, Iran also sought to provide different strategic options to deal with the hostile positions of the U.S. and its western allies against Iran because of its nuclear program. One option for Iran is to turn Kuwait into a battlefield where it can settle its problems with the Americans and its allies in the event that they attempt to attack Iran's nuclear reactors. In other words, the reinforcement of Iran's influence in Kuwait would provide the Iranians with many options in their relations with the U.S. (Abed, interview, 2015).

Secondly, Iran's possession of nuclear weapons can spark a nuclear race not only in the Gulf region, but also in the Arab World as many Arab countries would attempt to enter the nuclear club (Al-Otaibi 2012: 75).

Thirdly, the GCC's attempts to establish a common formula in the Gulf region requires international guarantees in terms of trust among the regional parties including Iran. The primary guarantee is not to threaten any country by possessing either nuclear or other weapons. In order to strengthen its influence in the Gulf region, Iran continues to have keen interests in smaller countries in order to reinforce its influence in the Gulf region e.g., Kuwait which is rich in natural resources and occupies a strategic location. Consequently, Iran has become the most serious external threat to the national security of Kuwait. Thus, Kuwait opted to allow the U.S. to build up the largest military base on its soil. Today, Kuwait host the largest U.S. military presence in Middle East (Al-Ani 2009:216).

The U.S. forces on Kuwaiti soil have become indispensable, especially under the current circumstances of wars and crises which posed serious threats to the security systems of the region. Kuwait has experienced fear, instability and alertness for decades as a result of such threats. The history of these threats included the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, the U.S occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the crisis of the Iranian nuclear program. In other words the U.S. military existence in Kuwait after Saddam rule was necessary to counter potential Iranian threats to the neighboring countries (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

The Kuwaiti's fear of the reinforcement of Iran's influence in the Arab region increased after Iran had announced its ambitions to develop a nuclear program and the balance of power shifted in its favor. The new status of Iran became a controversial issue in Iran-Kuwait relations, as Iran sought to assume a key role in the security arrangements in the region. Furthermore, Iran refused to allow the U.S. presence in Kuwait or in any of GCC States, and this contradicted with the vision of these states who perceived it as the guarantor of their security (Al-Ansari, interview, 2015).

Furthermore, as another tool to enhance its influence in Kuwait, Iran conducted active communications with the "Shiite" groups in the Gulf States including Kuwait. The "Shiite" demographical component in Kuwait is considerable. Therefore, Iran sought to gain their allegiance and use it as a pressure tool on the decision- making process in Kuwait and on other political and economic issues between the two countries and maintaining and supporting its interests in Kuwait (Al-Rubaie 2008:4).

Most Kuwaiti clerics, especially the “Shiites”, had studied in Iran and therefore their allegiance is to the Iranians. Additionally, Iran attempted to appeal to the Kuwaiti people by earning their trust through the Shiite sect in order to reject the U.S. military bases in Kuwait which pose a permanent danger for Iran. The religious and sectarian elements are significant for Iran's interests and were used to gain Kuwait's recognition of Iran as the most influential regional player in the Gulf region. In addition, the most important Iranian interest in Kuwait was to strengthen the “Shiites” influence against the Saudi-supported "Salafists" in Kuwait. This influence can also neutralize Kuwait and ensure that it would not align with the hostile countries or those opposing the Iranian influence in the Gulf region (Tu'ma, interview, 2015).

Nevertheless, there was a sense of worry and suspicions regarding the Iranian infiltration in Kuwait that was aimed at supporting the Shiites and the creation of unstable security circumstances as in the case of Bahrain and the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. Since the rise of the Islamic Revolution, the ambitions of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its attitudes towards "exporting revolution" to the Gulf States has been a fundamental principle in its foreign policy, a principle that is given priority over all other interests (Abdel-Malik, interview, 2015).

The religious and sectarian factors in Kuwait are of no importance to Iran. Although Kuwait is a neighboring country and the host of many Iranian investments, the sectarian affiliation is absent since the majority of Kuwaitis are Arab “Sunnis”, not Arab “Shiites”. The Arab Shiites form a minority in Kuwait, thus their influence on the political and economic life is limited in comparison with Iraq where the Shiites constituent is the majority (Imran, interview, 2015).

5.4.2 Economic Interests of Iran in Kuwait

The relations between Iran and Kuwait represent a manifestation of the regional reactions as it clearly reflects how Iran exercises a key regional role by setting up a network of economic and cultural ties with Kuwait (Sharqi 2008:22) .

The importance of Iranian interests in Kuwait lies in their geographical neighborhood as well as the fact that Kuwait is overlooking the Arab Gulf and it is one of the states that is located close to Iran. In addition to that the existence of oil in Kuwait is a major factor in determining Iran-Kuwait relations although Iran itself is an oil producing country (Mohammed 2014).

After the demise of Saddam regime in 2003, the commercial activities between the two countries increased and both of them were also desirous for more coordination on the economic level. Consequently, some Kuwaiti officials visited Iran to discuss the mechanisms and ways needed to increase and develop trade exchanges between the two countries. The mutual interests between Kuwait and Iran are manifested in several aspects, the most important of which were the official and non-official visits between the two sides and the conclusion of joint agreements in various political, economic and commercial fields to activate the inter-trade exchanges and joint investments. Additionally, the exchange of expertise and employment were activated as well as the continuous coordination within the framework of OPEC (Mubaidin 2007:25).

The good relations between Iran and Kuwait can be clearly seen in the mutual visits between the officials of the two countries and the volume of trade which is growing rapidly due to the mutual agreements in the economic field and joint investments,

daily flights between Kuwait and the Iranian cities, a strong presence of Iranian labor and many Iranian schools in Kuwait. Hence, the strong relations and common interests between the two countries are evident (Sussi, interview, 2015).

During this period, Kuwait has become one of the largest trading partners of Iran in the world by virtue of the geographical factors and the cultural similarities between them. The economic openness was unrestricted between Iran and Kuwait and this led to the economic recovery and trade relations between the two countries increased. The trade between them increased from \$180 million in 2003 to \$213 million in 2010, and the share of Iran's exports to Kuwait in 2010 was \$103 million, while imports amounted to \$110 million (Mohammed 2014).

In this regard, while attending the 28th Gulf Summit held in Qatar in 2007, Iranian President "Ahmadi Nejad" provided a program containing twelve points to the GCC States to enforce and develop the cooperation between Iran and the GCC States. Among the twelve points are the development of the tourism industry and facilitating its implementation, ensuring the availability of water and gas to the Gulf States, shared investment in free trade zones, the creation of an economic cooperation organization to serve the citizens in the region, as well as the importance of scientific and educational relations between Iran and the GCC States (Authors group 2009: 52).

Iran's interests in Kuwait are mostly economic and this is ascribed to the tough economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the Western countries on Iran because of its nuclear program. So, Iran has tried to approach Kuwait to market its industrial and agricultural products in order to obtain the necessary revenues despite the fact

that Kuwait has ideological and political differences with Iran, particularly with regards to the presence of the U.S. troops in the Gulf region (Hassan, interview, 2015).

Economic interests are the fundamental motivations for strengthening economic relations between Iran and Kuwait and their importance may override the security and political motives because of the close interests and most importantly, the existence of common bases for agreement in many issues unlike the security and political issues. The Iranian economy depends on multiple resources including oil and gas, and agriculture constitutes 21% of Iran's national income (Al-Dhaba 2001).

Iran also tried to maintain good relations with Kuwait because the two countries share maritime boundaries that lay over oil and gas reserves. Therefore, maintaining cordial relations with Kuwait can make negotiations over exploitation and profit-sharing of these reserves much easier (Shanahan, interview, 2015).

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that Kuwait became an important part of Iran's strategy because of its huge oil wealth and strategic geographical location in the Gulf region. For the same reasons, it has also attracted the interests of other major powers, especially the U.S. In order to highlight its prominent role in Kuwait, Iran has established a network of economic and political interests in Kuwait.

The Iranian government is also interested in Kuwait because Iran wants gain Kuwait's support in the international arena and to increase the volume of trade with it. One the sectarian element, by supporting the "Shiites" in Kuwait, is also an important interest for Iran. Furthermore, the strengthening of Iran's influence in the

Gulf region represents another important interest as well as rejecting the U.S. presence in the Gulf region which threatens its nuclear ambitions.

5.5 Role of Iranian Interests in Iraq-Kuwait relations in the Post-Saddam Era

Iran's interests play a major role in influencing Iraq-Kuwait relations as it manifests itself through some strategies pursued by Iran towards both Iraq and Kuwait. Such strategies are practiced by Iran because of its influence as one of the powers in Middle East generally and in the Arab Gulf region in particular. In this chapter, the researcher will explore the most important Iranian interests and their impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations.

5.5.1 Iranian Interests in Fueling Sectarian Conflict

The fall of Saddam regime in 2003 led to the destabilization of powers in the Arab Gulf region which contributed to the increase in Iranian influence in Iraq and stimulated sectarian conflicts especially with Iraq being ruled by "Shiite" parties which have been accused of owing allegiance to Iran by most of the Gulf States. On the other hand, Kuwait was deeply concerned at the prospects of Iran provoking sectarian issues in its territory or Iraq's sectarian movement would adversely affect Kuwait's security (Mubaidin 2007:8).

The Iraq-Kuwait convergence did not serve the interests of Iran's foreign policy due to Kuwait being a military and political ally of the U.S. and any improvement in relations between Iraq and Kuwait would serve the U.S. interests in the Gulf region. Therefore, Iran tried to expand its political role in Iraq in order to keep Iraq away from the U.S. influence through its support for some of the Shiite parties to carry out

armed operations against the U.S. presence in Iraq. As such, Iranian interests require Iraq-Kuwait relations to be tense or the way it was before the fall of Saddam (Abed, interview, 2015).

Al-Rubaie (2008: 4) opined that the influence of Shiite parties, which formed the majority of the new Iraqi government after the fall of Saddam regime in 2003 with the support of the Iranian government, have reinforced the belief of the Gulf States, especially Kuwait, that the Shiite political elites are loyal to Iran. This is because most of these Shiite parties which were opposing Saddam during his reign of Iraq were in Iran and have received considerable support from the Iranian government and their relationships became very close. Although the leaders of a number of religious parties known in Iraq as the “Da’awah” party and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution have announced that these parties are not influenced by Iran, the Gulf States continue to accuse them of being influenced by Iran. Kuwait in particular, viewed Iran as the main cause for marginalization of Sunni political parties and obstructing their rule of Iraq.

Iran's support for the Shiite community in Iraq and the attempts at marginalizing the Sunni Arabs adversely impacted Iraq-Kuwait relations. Additionally, Kuwait is increasingly concerned with the Shiites' growing power and influence in Iraq, including the emergence of the Shiites as a political power in Iraq after the fall of Saddam regime. The Shiites being, the majority has been a threat to Kuwait especially with Iran's attempts to play a role in Iraq using its historical relations with some of the Shiite political powers. The ambitions of some of these powers is to establish an autonomous state (Shiite province) in Iraq that is in line with Iran's approach. The possibilities of their impact on Kuwaiti Shiites, which comprise 15-

30% of the total population of Kuwait, is by provoking them to claim or declare their desire to integrate with this province (Al-Rikabi, interview, 2015).

Kuwaiti decision-makers have come to realize the Iraq of the post-Saddam era has fallen under the influence of Iran. This is contrary to the effective role that Iraq had during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988 to protect the Gulf region from Iran's ambitions. This is consistent with Kuwait's vision, i.e. Iraq will become the strategic platform for Iran's domination in the Arab Gulf region after the fall of Saddam (Zahra 2008:3).

In addition to that, Iran realized its interests in Iraq and Kuwait after 2003 accordance with specific necessities. Iran on the one hand, has an effective role in settling the unresolved issues between Iraq and Kuwait concerning the borders, debts and compensation due to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and addition to that, its role in the stability of Iraq had positive implications on Iraq's relations with the neighboring countries. On the other hand, the Iranian position was in favor of fueling sectarian strife, disorder and instability in Iraq and Kuwait, which could have contributed to Iran's ability to weaken its neighboring states in the Gulf region (Imran, interview, 2015).

Al-Badry (2014:209) believed that one of the reasons for fueling the sectarian conflict in Iraq after 2003 was the intervention of some neighboring countries, especially Iran. The conflict between the "Sunnis" and the "Shiites" played a role in promoting terrorism and igniting sectarian strife in Iraq. The conflict was a result of the exchange of accusations between the two sides whereby the "Shiites" were accused of using the presence of emerging security forces and their party-based

militias to commit atrocities against the Sunnis. Similarly, the Sunnis were accused of attacking Shiite civilians. This conflict has adversely affected the security situation in Iraq and as a result Iraq-Kuwait relations have also deteriorated. Iraq was very busy trying to manage its very difficult domestic situations and it was at the expense of developing its foreign relations with neighboring countries especially Kuwait. In addition to that, Kuwait also feared that the sectarian conflict in Iraq will influenced its own citizens and cause unrest in the country. Figure 5.2 shows the Iraqi casualties of sectarian violence and the deterioration of security within the country from 2003 to 2010.

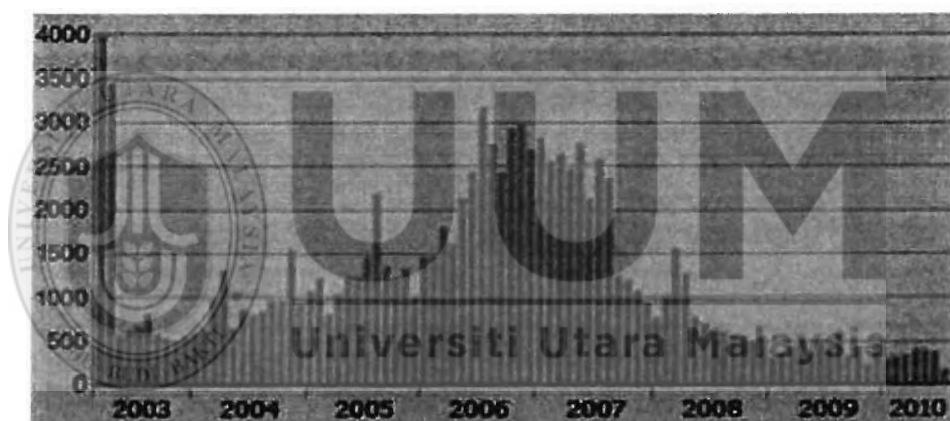


Figure 5.2: Iraqi Body Count Estimate Trends in Casualties (2003-2010).

Source: Cordesman et al. (2013:26)

Consequently, this may have adverse implications on Kuwait's security and stability due to Iran's role and influence in spreading sectarian conflict to Kuwait. Finally, Kuwait's fear is due to the infiltration operations and the illegal trafficking of weapons and drugs. This is manifested by the four clashes between Kuwaiti security forces and the Islamic extremists at the beginning of 2005 as well as the dismantling of a terrorist cell within the Kuwaiti armed forces in early 2006 (Al Sa'di 2011:19).

The good relationship between many Iraqi leaders with members of the Iranian regime after the overthrow of Saddam era have positively impacted on Iraq-Kuwait relations. It cannot be said that the Iranian government had forced Iraq and Kuwait to improve their relations and settle all of their problems .But, it can be said that by virtue of its improved relationship with Kuwait and the new Iraqi leadership, Iran contributed to both Iraq and Kuwait having more convergent views (Al-Bloushi, interview, 2015). In other words, during the period, Iran was a positive factor and not a negative factor in Iraq-Kuwait relations.

Based on the foregoing, Iran's strategy of fueling sectarian conflicts in both Iraq and Kuwait through its support of some Shiite parties adversely affected Iraq-Kuwait relations from 2003 to 2011. The political decision-makers of Kuwait are aware that the Iranian-fueled sectarian conflict in Iraq will widen the gap between Iraq's religious groupings. The religious conflicts in Iraq will definitely and adversely affect the security and stability of Kuwait, and this will in turn negatively affect the development of relations between the two countries.

5.5.2 Iranian Interests to Forestall the American Democracy Project

Since the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam, the U.S. has been keen to implement what President George Bush has termed as the "Freedom Agenda". This would result in the democratization of the region which may range from Iraq to other areas that are considered as the main terrorism platforms in the world. In particular, the U.S. is convinced that the dictatorial regimes supported by it during the cold-war era have provided the appropriate platforms for terrorism as well

as generating it. Therefore these dictatorial regimes must be overthrown and substituted by democratic ones (Hussein 2012).

Al-Yassiri (2007: 238) opined that after 2003, the most prominent characteristic of American interests in the Gulf region is that they were based on democracy and human rights in states that have suffered for decades from the domination of dictators, and have attempted to free their people from oppression and slavery. Consequently, the occupation of Iraq in 2003 is the best evidence of the U.S. plans since they have tried to topple Saddam and replace the government with a new political system that would serve as a model to be emulated by the states in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Wahib (2005) revealed that Iran's passive role in the American democratic project in Iraq and the region is due to several reasons. One of the reasons is that Iran had rejected American projects in the region since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and among the projects is that of the Great Middle East¹⁸ which, as Iran believed, was to keep Iran away from its Arabic and Islamic neighbors. Iran has been eager to remove Saddam who was its greatest threat, but it could not accept that the U.S. has replaced the Iraqi political regime that was hostile to Iran, being concerned at the enhancement of the U.S. hegemony in the region. Likewise, it could not accept the presence of the U.S. forces on a long-term basis at its western borders. Hence, Iran resorted to two strategies in order to achieve its interests:

¹⁸The Greater Middle East, a term launched by the former U.S. President, George W. Bush's administration, refers to a wide area encompassing the entire Arab world, in addition to Turkey, Israel, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the American claims, it is a comprehensive project that seeks to promote political, economic and social reforms in that region (Ibn Gharbī 2008: 56).

1. Forestall the U.S. occupation of Iraq by causing the greatest possible loss of U.S. troops using Iraqi political forces and their militias who reject their occupation. In addition, it coordinated with Syria to embrace a greater number of collaborators in order to resist the U.S. presence, open their borders for them and facilitate their training and transit through its territory into Iraq; and
2. Advancing the development of its nuclear program that would serve as a deterrent to the U.S. and Israel if they tried to attack Iran.

The failure of the U.S. project in Iraq along with Iran's effective and prominent role in Iraqi affairs would not be in Kuwait's favor because Kuwait is the first ally of the U.S. in the Gulf region. Moreover, Kuwait's hesitation to concur with Iraq lies in its fear of Iranian-Iraqi Shiite expansion and the Iran-based Iraqi political decisions. Kuwait's main objective in hoping for the success of the U.S. project in Iraq is to keep Iraq weak so that it is unable to threaten the security and stability of Kuwait in future (Al-Ansari, interview, 2015).

In the same context, Iran's role in forestalling the U.S. project adversely impacted Iraq-Kuwait relations because the regional states are always influenced by the policies of Iran. Kuwait is worried about the existence of a strong regional state at its border with Iraq, such as Iran, that occasionally threatens to occupy all the Arab Gulf States. The growing Iranian influence inside Iraq, especially during the rule of former Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari had enhanced Iran's dominance over Iraqi political decisions which were not in favor of Kuwait's continuing relationship with Iraq (Al- Sussi, interview, 2015).

During the rule of the former Iranian president "Ahmadi Nejad" (2005-2013), Iran had declared that it could enhance the success of the U.S. project in Iraq and the region if the U.S. changes its policies towards Iran to be in line with Iran's interests. Based on the above-mentioned statement, Iran is capable of interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq and the region as well as bargaining with the U.S. to forestall its projects that are designed to promote the U.S. interests in the region (Hussein 2014). Accordingly, the Iranian strategy of frustrating the U.S. project in Iraq and the region would have several effects on Iraq-Kuwait relations.

Contrary to that, Iran's interests to forestall the U.S. project would have an effective role in Iraq-Kuwait relations. The U.S. presence in Iraq and the region along with the adoption of the democratic project have led to increased pressure on Kuwait to adopt political reforms. This is due to the decision-makers in the U.S. who believe that the most serious danger and the biggest threat in future are embodied by political dictatorship and the absence of democracy which are the most important factors for the spread of terrorism and extremism. Additionally, Kuwait fears that Iraqi events represented by the changes in the political system, periodic elections and the development of a new constitution would be reflected in its political system because Kuwait is unwilling to adopt all these democratic developments. Finally, Iran's role in thwarting the U.S. project in Iraq and the region would have a positive role in assuring Kuwait to exclude its political system from this democratic reforms. This would contribute to the stability of the political and diplomatic relations between Iraq and Kuwait (Elwan, interview, 2015).

In the same context, for more than half a century, Iran as an influential regional player in the Gulf region has been a strong supporter of the peaceful settlement of all

outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait as both are located in the Gulf region. By using the strategy of frustrating the American democracy project, Iran was also hoping to keep the territory free from foreign interventions, especially by the U.S. As a result during that period Iran played a constructive role in supporting the stability and security of Iraq and Kuwait and non-interference in the internal affairs of the two countries (Hassan, interview, 2015).

In the end, it can be concluded that the Iran's interests to frustrate the U.S. project which aims to democratize Iraq and the region have had multiple reflections on Iraq-Kuwait relations. On the one hand it has played an adverse role in the stability of Iraq-Kuwait relations, where these interests have succeeded in promoting Iranian hegemony over Iraq and the Gulf region. Thus Iran would work to weaken these states and make them its base to confront the U.S. if it attacks Iran's nuclear program. On the other hand, this interest has played a constructive role in the stability of Iraq-Kuwait relations because they provided assurance to Kuwait that its political system would be excluded from the democratic reforms sought by the U.S. It also makes Iran contribute to the settlement of disputes among the states in the region, especially between Iraq and Kuwait free from foreign interventions.

5.5.3 Common Interests of Iran with the Regional States

Despite the diversity of foreign policies used by Iran when dealing with the nations of the world, it must be noted that there are constants based on the general interest of the country that cannot be compromised. All Iranian politicians are in agreement with these constants that embodies the enhancement of Iran's status in the world in general and in the Gulf region in particular (Sharqi 2008: 27).

The common interests of Iran with the regional states have a positive impact on the U.S. as the new tension in Iraq-Kuwait relations is not in favor of Iran and that this tension would be sufficient justification for the foreign presence in the region, particularly the U.S. presence which is in conflict with Iran over its nuclear program. This would also serve as justification for the GCC States to enter into long-term security agreements with the U.S. in order to maintain their political systems. This is the main reason that encouraged Iran to support both Iraq and Kuwait to settle their outstanding problems after the Second Gulf War. This is evidenced by Iran's participation in and calling for the convening of several conferences during that period, including the conference of Iraq's neighbors in Iran in 2006 which focused mainly on the security situation in Iraq and its consequences on neighboring countries including Kuwait (Kawak, interview, 2015).

Iran was the most important regional player in the Gulf region, so its interests grow and expand depending on the expansion of its influence and its increasing role in line with its capabilities to maintain those interests (Cordesman & Khazai 2012:124). Hence, Iraq and Kuwait realized that the best way for them and for Iran is to live with peace and prosperity as well as closing the hostility and war files and that each party understands the interests of the other parties without any doubts or entering into alliances against each other. As a result, this three-way relationship witnessed stability during the period. Therefore, Iranian interests positively impacted on Iraq-Kuwait relations and sometimes encouraged them (Elwan, interview, 2015).

There was no excessive impact of Iran's interests on the Iraq-Kuwait mutual relationship. Iran has specific strategic goals with respect to Iraq and has a generally

effective relationship with Kuwait, particularly given their shared maritime boundaries over gas and oil fields". This shows that they maintain good relations with each other. Closer Iraq-Kuwait relations would be supported by Iran, but it would not be an active participant in ensuring the stability of this relationship for long periods of time (Shanahan, interview, 2015).

On the other hand, the Iran's interests do not overly impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations because Kuwait is afraid of both Iraq and Iran. Kuwait still remembers the Iraqi invasion in 1990 of its territory and Iran's tactical neutrality towards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which was to wait for the Iraqi army to be destroyed by the international coalition forces. On the contrary the current Iraqi government has doubts and do not have confidence with Kuwait because Kuwait is still demanding for the enforcement of international resolutions relating to sanctions on Iraq because of its invasion of Kuwait and they are being supported by the GCC States and the world as well (Abdel-Malik, interview, 2015).

In despite of Iran's good relations with some Gulf States, exemplified by its commercial and economic relations with the UAE, Qatar and Oman, it continues to have turbulent relations with Saudi Arabia. This is due to the Saudi's firm position against Iranian interference in Arabic affairs, especially its intervention in Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi affairs besides its support of the revolutionary movements in Bahrain and Yemen which have a significant role in the destabilization of relations between Iraq and the Gulf States including Kuwait. Saudi Arabia considers Iraq to be an ally of Iran due to the expansion of Iranian influence in Iraq. This in turn makes the Gulf States afraid of the convergence of Iraq and Kuwait (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

Consistent with Iran's interests in the Gulf region, Iran has concerns about any rapprochement and agreement in Iraq-Kuwait relations as they are not in its favor, especially with the U.S. support which could settle the turbulent history between the two countries. Additionally, Iran has been and is still working very hard to keep Iraq away from the U.S. and all its allies in the region. Besides that Iran would exploit its influence in Iraq even though it may create friction with the U.S. and its allies (Wahib 2007: 39).

Nevertheless, Iran's interests have an adverse impact on Iraq-Kuwait relations because Kuwait is part of the Gulf system that views the spread of Iranian influence in Iraq as a threat to its interests. This is because after 2003, Iraq was not fully free to establish its external relations with the neighboring countries. Consequently, new Iraqi regimes would always be biased in favor of Iran and this is at the expense of the GCC States including Kuwait on matters concerning controversial issues including Iran's possession of nuclear technology and the border problems that is still unsettled between Iran and some of the GCC States (Al-Ansari, interview, 2015).

Saadawi (2005) argued that the conflict of interests between Iran and the U.S. in the Gulf region after the fall of Saddam regime revealed several assumptions regarding the known game theory in international relations. One party's gains are the losses of the other party, yet the conflict equation is at least considered a gain and this is what Iran is trying to achieve. On the other hand, the U.S. insists on dealing with the conflict equation which makes it mobilize all its forces together with other international, regional and local allies inside Iraq. However, the events of the past years have proven that the interests between the Iran and the U.S. in Iraq are

compatible rather than contradictory. Therefore, their relations are not expected to develop into a conflict, but it would be a cooperative one. Since both parties are projecting their powers, they would cooperate and seek to share the spoils and interests at the expense of the regional and Arab powers.

Based on the above, Iraq-Kuwait relations were surrounded by suspicions and mistrust between the two countries. The common interests of Iran with the interests of the Gulf States played a significant role in determining the path of Iraq-Kuwait relations either positively or negatively to serve the objectives of Iran's foreign policy in the region. On the one hand, the interests of Iran as an important regional player in the Gulf region adversely impacted the achievement of rapprochement in Iraq-Kuwait relations as a result of the policies pursued by Iran to destabilize the Gulf region and Iran's negotiation with the U.S. over the development of its nuclear program. On the other hand, Iranian interests had a positive impact on the stability of Iraq-Kuwait relations because the tension in the relationship allowed another regional player, represented by the U.S. to exist in the Gulf region and share the political and economic gains with Iran. However, Iran is not in favor of the U.S. presence in the region.

5.6 Summary

It can be concluded that Iraq-Kuwait relations have been affected by Iran's role in Middle East in general and the Gulf region in particular. This was seen in Iran's desire to play an expanded regional role that commensurate with its political, economic, military and nuclear capabilities, as well as its geopolitical importance in the Gulf region. Iran has had a number of political and economic interests after the

U.S. occupation of Iraq in order to strengthen its role, notably in the fueling of sectarian conflicts, thwarting the U.S. democratic project in Iraq in addition to trying to reconcile its interests and those of the states in the region by improving its relations with them and building relationships that could later establish dialogues based on peace and political and economic mutual cooperation that would serve Iran's interests in enhancing its influence away from the U.S. threats.

The political and economic interests of Iran in the Gulf region have had obvious positive impact on the stability of relations between Iraq and Kuwait because Iran has very different goals for Iraq than those of the U.S., Iran seeks to ensure that Iraq does not serve as a base for the U.S. interests because the U.S. presence in Iraq threatens Iran's interests. Iran has aggressively extended its networks, patronage, economic and religious ties, aid, money and military support to various factions in Iraq in order to achieve these goals. On the other hand, Iran's interests had negative effect on Iraq-Kuwait relations, because the presence of a strong Iraqi political system with influences in the region and having strong ties with the states in the region, especially Kuwait does not serve Iran's interests in the Middle East.

The policies practiced by Iran to interfere in the affairs of the states in the region have led to the creation of another regional player represented by the GCC States which would have an influential role in determining the nature of Iraq-Kuwait relations. This would be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

GCC STATES INTERESTS IN THE IRAQ -KUWAIT RELATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Due to the importance of its strategic location, the GCC States have been a competitive issue among the Western countries for several years. This region had been invaded and subjected to several military campaigns by the colonial powers. The strategic importance of this region became more prominent when oil was discovered in the middle of the twentieth century. The strategic, economic, petroleum-rich and military importance of this region has provoked some states, especially the U.S. to establish its military bases in the region (Al-Qaisi 2012: 64).

The GCC States, except Saudi Arabia, are small in terms of its land size, population and military capacities, but they all have immense oil wealth. The main problem of this region is its location which is experiencing turbulent and unstable situations, and this is due to the presence of major international and regional powers, such as the U.S. and Iran for they have expansionist ambitions in the region .As such, the security issue is considered to be more sensitive for these small states, particularly with the multiplicity of possible dangers and threats against the security of the Gulf region (Al-Allaf 2006:16).

This chapter will deal with the GCC States interests and its influence in Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post- Saddam era. It analyzes the role of the GCC States in Iraq and Kuwait during Saddam era. In addition, it will also examine the most important

political and economic interests of the GCC States in Iraq and Kuwait after the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Then, it analyzes the main role of the political and economic interests of GCC States and their impact on the convergence and divergence of relations between Iraq and Kuwait.

6.2 The GCC as a Regional Power during Saddam Era

The GCC is a regional inter-governmental political and economic union and it is made up of all the states of the Arab Gulf, except Iraq. Its member states are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). All these states are located in the Arabian Peninsula in southwest Asia (Hamdan 2012), as shown in Map 6.1. The union was established on May 25, 1981 in the UAE and the unified economic agreement among these states was signed on November 11, 1981 in Abu Dhabi in the UAE.



Map 6.1: GCC States.

Source: Members of the GCC States (2012:3)

The objectives of this union includes: the formulation of similar regulations in the various fields such as religion, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, and administration; the promotion of scientific and technical progress by establishing scientific research centers; the planning of joint projects; the creation of a unified military force and encouraging the cooperation of the private sector; the strengthening of ties among their peoples; and the formation of a single currency (Mohsin 2009:5).

One of the main reasons for the establishment of this union was the necessity to create a safer regional environment so that the core existence of the state is not compromised by outside threats following the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war in the early eighties. These states have many common features that distinguished them from other countries in the region. All six countries are oil producers, absolute monarchies, Arab and Muslims, with a majority of them being Sunnis (Giardullo 2012:5). In other words the GCC was formed to collectively address security challenges from external threats. The threat of the Iran-Iraq war and the Iranian Revolution and its efforts to export Islamic revolution to the Arab side of the Gulf were the incentives behind this cooperation to have a collective security (Al-Motairy 2011:10).

During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the GCC established the Aljazeera Shield Forces¹⁹ in 1982 in order to promote the idea of creating a unified Gulf army to fight

¹⁹The Aljazeera Shield Forces are military forces formed by the GCC States in 1982 consisting of 100,000 soldiers based in Saudi Arabia and primarily used for protecting the GCC States from any external danger. Among the most important roles of these forces was their participation in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991(Al Failakawi 2014:18).

the present or future foes of the GCC States. This can be illustrated by the three major goals (Al-Mutairi 2011:144):

1. The necessity of protecting the Gulf oil export from Iranian threats because the GCC States supported Iraq in its war against Iran.
2. The protection of the Gulf oil wells in the region.
3. The protection of the GCC territories from any external attacks.

Although the existence of the Aljazeera Shield Forces in the region served as an emerging power, in 1987 Kuwait was forced to seek protection from major powers like the U.S. by putting their flags on Kuwaiti vessels or oil tankers passing through the Gulf waters because of the inability of the military forces in the GCC to repulse of Iranian threats, especially after their support of Iraq in its war against Iran in 1980 (Noman 2011).

During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the GCC States not only were unable to settle the Iraq-Kuwait conflict before its occurrence, but they were also unable to predict its implications on the Gulf region and keep the region away from the risk of global conflict. Hence, from the end of 1991 and after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, the U.S. has taken care of the Gulf's security after containing it militarily and politically (Al-Mutairi 2011:144). Due to the aforesaid U.S. action, the security of the Gulf region has become an international issue and an integral part of the U.S. interests and it has taken steps to enhance its influence in the Gulf region (Al-Ani 2005: 16).

In 1991 when the Iraqi forces withdrew from Kuwait, the U.S. demanded the GCC States to allocate a portion of their military budget to support the security and stability of the Gulf region. Hence, these states signed a security pact, known as the Damascus Declaration with Syria and Egypt in 1991. This declaration states that the GCC States would provide funds to Syria and Egypt amounting to \$10 billion and these two countries would fight against any military force that the GCC States may be exposed to (Al- Bastaki 2003: 82).

The Second Gulf War also created instability and fears in the political environment of the region and this was specifically due to the aggressive policies of Saddam era. As a result, the GCC States adopted new methods that provided priority to the external threats at the various levels (both internal and external). This was reflected by the increasing interests in the military and defense dimensions about the security concept through the increase in expenditure on arms deals (Al-Issawi 2006: 86). During the period 1990-1999, the total military expenditure of GCC States was \$291 billion, the purchases of GCC states from and this was 15% of the total global arms market. These states spend almost 4% of their annual budget on defense-related weapons and the amount spent was 6% to 15% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the states.

In 2000, the GCC States signed a joint defense agreement. This agreement was to enhance military cooperation between the member states and in addition to that, any attack on any member of the GCC would be considered to be an attack on all the member states (Al-Metari 2011: 88). Hence, they formed a quick reaction force with strength of 22,000 soldiers to repel any hostility against any members of the GCC. In 2001, cooperation between the GCC and the U.S. resulted in the establishment of

the Supreme Defense Council which is the largest joint military projects. The task of this Council is to hold consultative meetings for the establishment of a unified air defense system in the Gulf region (Kusacc & Micolmaan 2013).

In short, it can be concluded that the emergence of the GCC as a regional player during Saddam rule was due to the regional developments and challenges witnessed by the Gulf region, especially during the conflict stage between Iraq and Iran and their desire to expand its influence towards the Gulf region. In spite of the massive military spending by the GCC States to develop its military capabilities, they were still not able to provide a secure environment for the countries in the Gulf region, thus, prompting these states to use the capabilities of major powers, especially the U.S. to protect their systems from any external aggression.

6.3 The GCC States and Iraq in the Post-Saddam Era

The U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003 was an important turning point in the history of international and regional political relations in terms of its current and future implications on the relationships among the regional states that have important strategic interests in Iraq. The GCC States were on the front foot of those states as its interests extended to political and economic interests (Al-Tai 2012: 3).

6.3.1 The Political Interests

The GCC is a homogeneous political entity that has historical experience, geographical location and common borders with Iraq, and it seeks to achieve their common political interests in Iraq with the aim of being able to sustain their own political systems. These diverse interests can be divided into the following:

6.3.1.1 Maintaining the Unity and Independence of Iraq

According to Kadhim (2009:84), one of the risks that threatened the GCC was the repercussions of sectarian strife or sectarian violence in Iraq²⁰ which led to instability in Iraq. Sectarian violence in Iraq was a result of regional and international factors, and there was a call by some of the Iraqi political parties to divide Iraq into several states based on religion and race. It was a point of grave concern for the security and stability of the GCC States because the establishment of a Shiite state in Iraq would be quite similar to the Islamic Republic of Iran and it may become a threat to the GCC States because, it may provoke the aspirations of the Shia minority in their territories to claim and obtain political and economic gains similar to what the Shiites of Iraq have achieved and even possibly fight for separation. All these concerns have prompted the GCC States to emphasize their categorical rejection of any calls that could fragment and divide Iraq based on doctrinal beliefs and sectarian differences, which was not in their interest.

The best example is a call by the Supreme Council of the GCC in its closing statement of its twenty-fifth session that was held in Bahrain in 2004. The council expressed its sympathy towards the Iraqi people and its desire to cooperate with the brotherly Iraqi people, its rejection of the proposal to divide Iraq and the need to preserve Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs. They also encouraged the other countries in the region to take the same approach (Appendix E: Final Statements of the GCC, 2004).

²⁰Sectarian strife in Iraq revives the doctrinal conflicts by dividing people into two parties; one of them is Shiite, which is politically dominant; and the other is Sunni. Eventually, this conflict will result in denying the existence of the other party and ending its existence. The case of fragmentation will continue until the conflict occurs inside the parties themselves (Al-Agha 2015).

The GCC's policies as a regional organization towards Iraq was aimed at achieving national unity in Iraq, maintaining its integrity, security and stability, and keeping it away from a sectarian- or religious-based divisions because they realized that their own security depends entirely on Iraq's security and stability (Abdel-Malik, interview, 2015).

The power imbalance in the Gulf region after the fall of Saddam regime forced the GCC States, particularly Kuwait, to change their policies towards Iraq. The GCC States insisted that an undivided, stable, and unified Iraq would have a significant impact on the stability of the region and would be complementary to the GCC States (Al-Jourani 2013:124).

In contrast, Sharqi (2008:24) contended that Iran, on its part, was afraid of creating an Iraqi government that was unfaithful to it and it might join the GCC in the near future and this would lead to the formation of a new the regional security framework in the Gulf region that is contrary to Iran's interests because Iraq and the GCC States including Kuwait, who are Iran's rivals would become the greatest regional power in the region.

The main interests of the GCC States towards Iraq after the toppling of Saddam era were to ensure that the sectarian conflicts in Iraq do not spread to their states as they have the same social framework as Iraq. The fears of the GCC States arose due to the Shiite minority within the varied population in the GCC States. In Kuwait about 20% of its population are Shiites. In Saudi Arabia it is about 15 to 20%, and they are the majority in Bahrain (Al-Rikabi, interview, 2015).

Nevertheless, the GCC rejected all sectarian policies taken by the Shiite government in Iraq after 2003 against the Sunni Arabs. For example, Saudi Arabia refused to normalize its diplomatic relations with Iraq because the majority of Iraqi political parties that formed the Iraqi government were under Iranian influence. Thus, the Sunni Arabs citizens in Iraq have been deprived of jobs in important government institutions, especially in the security sector (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

6.3.1.2 Stabilizing the Security Situation in Iraq

After 2003, the GCC States have tried to play an active role in stabilizing the security situation in Iraq by supporting stability and peace in Iraq and returning it to its previous status before its occupation of Kuwait in 1990. The GCC tried to reduce the dangerous consequences of the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003 by voicing its objection about dividing Iraq into states based on race and religion, the propagation of doctrinal and sectarian strife or even the promotion of civil war. All of these mentioned matters would inevitably affect the security situation of the neighboring Gulf States (Al-Hariri 2007: 34).

During the period of the U.S. occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2011, the security situations in Iraq deteriorated because of terrorist activities that targeted civilians and Iraqi security forces. There were accusations against some of the GCC States that lies adjacent to Iraq, for supporting terrorism in Iraq. For example, Saudi Arabia was accused by the U.S. for allowing some of its fighters to enter Iraq to carry out armed attacks against the U.S. forces (Kawak, interview, 2015). Subsequently the Saudi government carried out campaigns and raids at its borders with Iraq to destroy or disable the extremist groups.

However, there was a link between the security situation in Iraq and the violent events which took place in some of the GCC States in the post- Saddam era. For example, the confrontations between Saudi security forces and some terrorist elements in 2003 and the violent events in Kuwait and Qatar over the past few years (Kadhim 2009:72-75).

The major interests of the GCC States with regards to Iraq can be summarized as the maintenance of its own security and stability. The GCC States also stressed that Iraq must not interfere in the internal affairs of the GCC countries, especially Kuwait, in order to promote security and stability in the Gulf region. Thus, the stability of the internal situation in Iraq would have a positive impact on the level of political relations of the GCC with Iraq (Abed, interview, 2015).

The importance of stability in Iraq so that GCC's interests can be achieved during the period of 2003-2011, can be seen by the GCC States recognition of the new political system in Iraq after the fall of Saddam rule. The best example of the GCC States' desire to support Iraq's stability was the opening their embassies in Iraq, even though at that time the security situation inside Iraq was still bad (Al-Sussi, interview, 2015).

In the closing statement of the twenty-sixth session of the Supreme Council of the GCC that was held in the UAE in 2005, the Council welcomed the Iraqi Parliamentary elections that was held on December 15, 2005 because these elections included the participation of all ethnic affiliations of the Iraqi people. The Supreme Council hoped that the results of these elections would lead to the opening of a new page in the history of modern Iraq that ensures its unity and stability. The Council

also urged the Iraqi people to continue dialogue in order to arrive at a comprehensive national consensus which was the main guarantee for Iraq's unity, stability and sovereignty. The Council reiterated the commitment of its member states to honor their pledge for the reconstruction of Iraq (Appendix E: Final Statements of the GCC, 2005).

6.3.1.3 Fear of Increasing Iranian Influence

Most GCC States realized that their interests cannot be achieved away from the regional security visions of other states. Thus, their own security vision in the Gulf region was based on the cooperation of all member states in order to achieve stability in the region. These states consider that any security breach in any of the Gulf States can cause a breach in the security of the others. As a result, member states foreign policies were consistent towards Iraq as they want Iraq to have an independent sovereignty and be governed by Iraqis without the interference or domination of Iran or the U.S. under any pretext (Al-Rumaihi, interview, 2015).

Abdel-Razzaq (2012:55-58) argued that Saudi Arabia had provided logistic support to the U.S. forces for the occupation of Iraq and to remove Saddam in order to reduce the Iraqi threats to the GCC States. But the Saudi Arabia feared that Iran could play a strategic role in Iraq and it can affect its internal security if Iraq supports some armed groups against the political systems in the Gulf.

Besides that, there was no accurate information regarding the Gulf States' support for certain extremist groups in Iraq. But, it can be said that the emergence of Shiite leaders in Iraq has led to the deepening of sectarian conflicts in the region and have contributed to the support of those extremist groups in Iraq by some parties,

especially the Shiites in the GCC States. As a result Iraq's relations with some of the GCC States have been adversely affected (Al-Bloushi, interview, 2015).

The best example of the GCC States' role to free Iraq from Iranian influence is found in the final statement of the twenty-seventh session of the Supreme Council of the GCC, which was held in Saudi Arabia in 2006. The GCC States called upon Iran to respect the unity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq. The emphasis was on non-interference in its internal affairs by any party in order to achieve the objectives that serve Iraqi national unity and finally to stop its political extension or cultural influence inside Iraq which may lead to division and sectarianism (Appendix E: Final Statements of the GCC, 2006).

In the same context, the GCC confirmed, at their meeting on March 23, 2010 in Kuwait that in order to achieve security and stability in Iraq the following actions need to be done:

1. Not to allow the expansion of Iranian influence inside Iraq and that Iran's relations with Iraq must base on mutual interests and non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq;
 2. To establish an Iraqi national unity government that does not exclude any political group and
 3. To follow the dialogue of the GCC states with all the Iraqi political parties
- (Kload 2015:11).

Helayel (2011: 106) agreed that the Shiite's political, economic and social demands increased in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia after 2003 and they are as follows:

1. The political empowerment of the Shiites in Iraq by taking power after the fall of Saddam which was enhanced by the U.S. project of democratizing Middle East in 2003 and preparing the base platform for the rise of the Shiites to power in Iraq;
2. Iran's political orientations and its growing influence inside Iraq after 2003. According to Iran's view of Iraq, it is an important point of contact for Iranian interests due to the Shiite presence in some of the GCC States; and
3. Iran's interference in the affairs of the Gulf region.

Furthermore, the GCC States also feared the possibility of having a Shiite state in the south of Iraq which would mean that Iranian influence had extended to the Gulf region. This was especially so when there is a Shiite minority in the GCC States, particularly in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and a majority in Bahrain. This issue had been discussed in the conference of the neighboring states in Saudi Arabia on April 18, 2003 and the participating countries were the GCC States, Iran, Turkey and Syria (Hisham 2012:97).

The importance of Iraq in the Gulf region encouraged the GCC States to enlist Iraq into the Council so as to keep it away from Iranian influence. However, some of the GCC States such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were avoiding rapprochement with Iraq and were against Iraq joining the Council because they believed that Iraq was already under the influence of Iran. Therefore, they would be dealing indirectly with Iran if Iraq is made a member of the GCC (Elwan, interview, 2015).

On the other hand, the Gulf States were also concerned with the development of Iranian nuclear capabilities (as shown in Figure: 6.1) as it is another factor of

instability that threatened the Gulf region. Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would limit the freedom of movement of the GCC in the region as well as affect their claim of the Arab islands²¹ that were occupied by Iran in 1971. It would also enhance Iran's image and support for some of the extremist groups in the Gulf region (Melhem & Samadi 2009:111-112).



Figure 6.1: Iran's Nuclear Facilities.

Source: International Atomic Energy Agency (2010:3).

Iran has been the biggest beneficiary of the deteriorating internal security situation in Iraq and as a result Iran has been able to increase its influence in Iraq. Thus, the Gulf States may face some risks due to Iran's interests in Iraq. This has led to both the U.S. and Gulf states to agree that in order to reduce Iran's influence in Iraq, it is important that they must strengthen their political relationship with some of the Sunni parties in Iraq. They also realized that there is a need to strengthen military

²¹On November 30, 1971 after Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf, Iran occupied three UAE islands: "Abu Musa, Greater Tumb, and Lesser Tumb", under the pretext that these islands are part of Iranian territory. The importance of these three islands lies in the fact that they are located at the entrance of the Arab Gulf and that Iran's occupation of these islands will enable it to control one of the most important waterways in the world and the most movement of ships in the Strait of Hormuz (Al Sayegh 2007: 24).

and security cooperation between them as well as to sign new security agreements that allow the US military to be present in the Gulf region and for a longer period.

Qutaishat (2011) argued that the U.S. occupation of Iraq changed the regional balance of powers in favor of the U.S. which it is not just a partner in the balance, but it would also be the strongest party that determines the form and type of balance among the regional powers in the Arab Gulf region. In spite of the U.S. being able to reduce the influence of Iran and its interference in the Gulf region, the GCC States were not in favor of this balance because the U.S. will move the balance away and this would not serve the GCC States interests.

In the same context, the GCC States adopted the same U.S. position in opposing Iran's nuclear issue, where the GCC promoted the presence of U.S. troops on its territory because of its fear of Iran's nuclear supremacy. Thus, the GCC States enhanced its military cooperation with the U.S. (Hassan, interview, 2015).

In spite of all the pretenses of the GCC States about the subordination of Iraq to the influence of Iran and the U.S., Iraq has shown that it is able to neutralize the ambitions of Iran and the U.S. to control the region through Iraq's possession of human capital, military capabilities and economic policy in order to confront any expansionist attempts by other regional powers. This situation could be seen by the refusal of some Iraqi political powers of under Iran's influence, as well as the Iraq's opposition of the U.S. presence in Iraq in the post-Saddam era (Elwan, interview, 2015).

6.3.2 The Economic Interests

The development of economic relations between the GCC and Iraq after the U.S. occupation of Iraq was due to two reasons. The first reason was the U.S. granted the GCC the right of investment in Iraq due to their financial contribution towards the cost of the U.S. war against Iraq in 2003. The second reason is related to the desire of the political systems in the Gulf to increase their economic activities in Iraqi cities that have stable security like the “Kurdistan” region and the central and southern areas of Iraq where the Americans are providing protection (Al-Hariri 2010: 263).

The GCC States tried to make its own efforts to make Iraq as a market for the investment of goods from the Gulf in the post- Saddam rule. Thus, the security support given by the Gulf States to Iraq contributed to the revival of its commerce and the reconstruction its basic economy that would serve the GCC States as well as investing its oil wealth (Al-Ansari, interview, 2015).

The UAE was among the Gulf States which increased its economic dealings with Iraq after 2003 with commercial transactions increase 28% during 2006-2008 and increased slightly by 1.2% in 2007 and 2008 and the total value exceeded three billion dollars. This is a reflection of the tireless efforts of government and private sector institutions to improve the economic relations and expand the commercial cooperation between the UAE and Iraq. The UAE non-oil exports to the Iraqi market had increased by more than 89% reaching about \$358 million in 2007, whereas the value of re-export from the UAE to Iraq remained high despite a drop of 5.7% and reaching more than \$2.6 billion (Abdel Aziz 2010: 2-6).

Moreover, the investment opportunities which Iraq provided to the GCC States' investors have been estimated to be more than \$100 billion, and this is inclusive of the reconstruction projects of Iraq's infrastructure that were destroyed during the Second Gulf War. In August 2007, the UAE hosted the business and investment in Iraq conference. Many Gulf and Iraqi businessmen participated in the conference which was to encourage the Gulf companies to invest in Iraq. In late 2007, an Iraqi-Gulf meeting was held in Bahrain. It was the largest and most important investment conference for Iraq with the participation of more than 900 commercial companies and 1,200 Iraqi and Gulf businessmen (Al-Obaeidy 2010:343-344).

Kuwait's call for Iraq to join the GCC in 2012 was a good initiative for the strengthening of Iraq-Kuwait relations from the economic perspective. It revealed Kuwait's desire for partnership with Iraq within the regional system of the northern Gulf States. It can be seen through this action, that Kuwait was diversifying its economy so as not to be totally dependent on oil (Al-Sumaria News 2012).

Besides that, there was another move that contributed to the strengthening of economic relations between Iraq and the GCC States. The Secretariat of the GCC in its meeting held in Oman in March 2009 agreed on the reinstatement of Iraq's membership in the Federation of the GCC States' Chambers²² (Al-Obaeidy 2010:3:45).

In same context, by allowing Iraq to join the GCC would be an important step for the promotion of its economic interests in the region because Iraq has a large human

²² The Federation of GCC Chambers: One of the most important economic institutions in the Gulf region. It was established in 1979 in order to strengthen the economic and trade cooperation between the GCC States. Iraq regained its membership in the institution in 2009 after it was isolated in 1990 because of its invasion of Kuwait (Al-Obaeidy 2010:3:50).

capital and economy. The total population of the GCC States together with Iraq's population would reach about 65 million and they also own 57% of the total oil reserves in the world. Thus, Iraq joining the GCC would contribute to the adoption of an overall integration policy which would enable the Gulf States to enter the overall production system for strategic industries in the Gulf region (Al-Rikabi Interview, 2015).

Despite the improvement in Iraq's economic relations with the GCC States, some of the Gulf States were unwilling to return the active economic role of Iraq in the Gulf region. For example Saudi Arabia is not favor of Iraqi oil production returning to the levels that existed before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 because Saudi Arabia is worried that Iraq may replace it by supplying the need of the world's oil markets.. However, this situation is an opportunity for the U.S. to use Iraq to pressure Saudi Arabia within OPEC (Kawak, interview, 2015).

It can be concluded that the economic interests of the GCC States in Iraq were based on the achieving of national unity in Iraq, the maintenance of its integrity, security and stability to keep Iraq free of sectarian and religious-based divisions and the fear the of sectarian conflicts spreading to its member states which have the same social context as that of Iraq. They want Iraq to have an independent sovereignty that is governed by Iraqis without any interference or domination by other regional players, whether it is Iran or the U.S. Most of the GCC States also realized that their interests cannot be achieved without maintaining the regional security of the Gulf region.

Besides that, the attempts made by the GCC States to play a consensual political role in the Gulf region have resulted in the GCC states becoming an important

economic force in the region and they have made efforts to make Iraq into a market for goods from the Gulf and a place for the investment of Gulf funds as well as its oil wealth.

6.4 The GCC and Kuwait's Mutual Political and Economic Interests

The GCC States have a number of political and economic interests in Kuwait and it is one of the most important members in the GCC and it also shares many common political, economic, social and historical with the other states of the GCC.

6.4.1 Political Interests of the GCC States in Kuwait

The GCC members share many private common factors such as location, language, religion, Arab nationalism, and history. They have a major role in the survival of these countries within a single entity and to not separate them from each other. It was natural that the GCC States linked up with the interests of Kuwait and those interests were mostly important political interests. Kuwait, like the other GCC States is ruled by a monarch and successive future monarchs are confined to members of the ruling Al Sabah family²³. The interests of the GCC require that the current system of Gulf cooperation must be maintained. They fear that what has happened in Iraq, namely the chaos and lack of security and stability after the fall of Saddam regime may spread to their shores later (Al-Hariri 2013:4).

Kuwait also played a major role in the resolution of all contentious issues between the GCC States as it facilitated the resolution of difficulties that were faced by the

²³The constitution of Kuwait states that "Kuwait is a hereditary Emirate, the succession to which shall be by the descendants of the late Mubarak Al-Sabah" (Al-Syagha 2014: 41).

GCC States. For example, Kuwait played an important role in resolving the disputes between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in 1995 when Saudi Arabia was accused of supporting the coup against the Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa. It was the only country in the GCC States that had a distinctive and strong parliament, the Kuwaiti National Assembly, and its members were elected through democratic elections and this was not available in the other states (Abed, interview, 2015).

In order to maintain the security interests in Kuwait and the rest of Gulf States, the GCC adopted, at the thirtieth session of the GCC in Kuwait in December 14, 2009, some resolutions which supported the joint defense strategy of the GCC States including Kuwait. These resolutions included an agreement to increase military spending to develop the combat capabilities of the Aljazeera Shield Forces. This is to enable them to deter any external aggression and at the same time have a common defense system among the GCC States that would allow them to identify the real threats to the GCC States and to develop the main strategies to counter the threats. The Council also stressed upon the fixed positions of the GCC countries in fighting terrorism in the Gulf region (Appendix E: Final Statements of the GCC, 2009). Table 6.1 shows the military spending of the GCC States.

In spite of the common interests of the GCC, there were some disputes between the member states. However, the disputes did not affect the work of the GCC as a single entity. For example, Kuwait resented Saudi Arabia's attempt to dominate over the GCC States as well as the role of Islamic "Salafi" movement in Kuwait which was supported by Saudi Arabia. Kuwait was also offended by Qatar's intervention when Qatar rejected the way Kuwait handled the Bahraini government on matters related to the Shiite community (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

Table 6.1

Military Spending in GCC States During 2009-2011 (In \$US Current Billions)

COUNTRY	2009	2010	2011
Saudi Arabia	41.300	45.200	48.500
UAE	7.880	8.650	9.320
Kuwait	4.180	4.650	4.070
Oman	4.020	4.180	4.290
Qatar	2.500	3.120	3.460
Bahrain	705	747	943
Total	60.585	66.547	70.583

Source:Cordesman (2014:40).

6.4.2 Economic Interests of the GCC States in Kuwait

The economic interests of the GCC States in Kuwait is very important. Kuwait is one of the most important markets for goods and merchandise from the Gulf. Kuwait is also considered to be the gateway into Iraq for the neighboring regional countries such as Iran, Turkey, Syria and Jordan because most of the imported and exported goods of Iraq passed through Kuwait all year round. Kuwait is also linked to the GCC on the issue of oil as it is trying to adopt an unified economic policy with the Arab Gulf states on the price of oil, the amount of oil production and all oil- related activities and policies in the Gulf region (Elwan, interview, 2015).

Oil was the backbone of the economies of the GCC, where it was the primary source of income in all the GCC States. The total crude oil production in the GCC States in 2011 was about 16.4 million barrels per day as compared to about 6.2 million barrels in 1985 and this meant that crude oil production grew a rate of 165% between 1985 and 2011. The significant increase in oil production and oil prices led to the growth

of the economies of the GCC States. Despite the significant expansion in other economic activities in the GCC States, oil and gas still contributed about 50% of the GDP in 2011. (General Secretariat of the GCC. 2012:49). Table 6.2 shows the oil production in the GCC States.

The GCC States have many common investment projects and their oil and gas reserves are 40 % and 23% of global oil and gas reserves respectively. The Gulf States contributed to the stability of global oil prices because they export 25% of the world's total exports and so the major Western countries like the U.S., Britain and France are keen on the stability of the Gulf - Gulf relations in order to safeguard their interests (Abed, interview, 2015).

Table 6.2
Production of Oil in the GCC During 2008-2011.

COUNTRY	2008 (B/D1000)	2009 (1000 B/D)	2010 1000 B/D)	2011 (B/D 1000)
U.A.E	2,840	2,520	2,520	2,564
Bahrain	183	182	182	190
Saudi Arabia	9,198	8,184	8,166	9,311
Oman	757	813	865	885
Qatar	839	792	807	733
Kuwait	2,676	2,262	2,312	2,699
TOTAL	16,493	14,753	14,852	16,382

Source: General Secretariat of the GCC (2012: 56)

The bilateral trade between the GCC States has more than doubled in size, rising from \$ 32.2 billion in 2005 to \$85.1 billion in 2011. Exports among the GCC States in 2011 was about \$52.1 billion as compared to \$3 billion in 1984, an increase of \$49.1 billion or a growth of 1637% and intra-exports also achieved a significant

increase between 2008 and 2011. It was \$40.870 billion in 2008 and it rose to \$52.1 billion in 2011 (General Secretariat of the GCC, 2012: 50). Table 6.3 shows the exports among the GCC States.

Trade between the GCC States and the world have been estimated to be at \$1.2 trillion in 2011 and this shows the importance of the GCC States in international trade and its weight at the global level. In fact, the total export of the GCC States to the outside world was \$ 811.2 billion in 2011 and oil was the main component (Al Failakawi 2014:78).

Table 6.3

GCC Intra-Trade: Export. (In \$US Current Million)

Country	2008	2009	2010	2011
U.A.E	9,626	8,812	9,069	8,731
Bahrain	3,918	2,559	1,958	2,341
Saudi Arabia	24,676	20,521	19,078	22,065
Oman	4,987	5,200	4,405	5,009
Qatar	7,448	6,910	3,704	1,173
Kuwait	1,410	1,410	1,383	1,552
TOTAL	52,066	45,411	39,597	40,870

Source: General Secretariat of the GCC (2012: 58).

The Federation of the GCC's Chamber of Commerce was the most important institution which sponsored economic interests between Kuwait and the other GCC States. Kuwait had played a prominent role in this institution because it had strong

economic ties with the members of GCC states especially in light of the existence of free trade zones between the GCC States. (General Secretariat of the GCC 2013).

Besides that, other economic institutions that Kuwait shares with, other than the members of the GCC were the Common Gulf Market which was founded in Qatar in 2007. The objective of this organization was to at promote trade and economic exchanges as well as the free movement of goods and services between the GCC States without any restrictions (Al Failakawi 2014: 32). However, the trade exchange between the GCC States increased dramatically from \$15 billion in 2002 to \$85 billion in 2011(Elaf Journal 2013).

Finally, it can be concluded that the security and economic interests between the GCC States and Kuwait were interlinked with each other. There were no border problems between the GCC States and Kuwait. The GCC States were closely linked to the security system in Kuwait. It was in the interest of the GCC States that Kuwait remained safe and stable because any instability in Kuwait would affect the stability of the GCC States and any threat against Kuwait would be considered as a threat against them as well. Therefore, they were keen to support and maintain the security of their countries against any external threat. Kuwait was one of the most important markets for goods and merchandise for the other GCC States. However, it is not only the economic common factors that connect the states of GCC, but also their fate and future as well.

6.5 Role of the GCC in Iraq-Kuwait Relations in the Post-Saddam Era

After the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the collapse of Saddam regime in 2003, the GCC confirmed many times and on different occasions its support for Iraq to build a

new political system through the UN resolutions pertaining to the political process in Iraq like the UN Security Council resolution number 1546 which was issued on June 8, 2004²⁴. The GCC invited all the parties in Iraq to form a government of national unity representing the entire spectrum of Iraq's ethnicity to establish good-neighborly relations and to bridge the confidence with Kuwait. The GCC confirmed in different meetings and conferences their interest in building a new and strong Iraq and to speed up the economic reconstruction process in Iraq. The GCC supported the International Compact on Iraq which was issued in the Sharm el-Sheikh's conference in Egypt in 2007. The GCC provided Iraq with financial support under a five-year plan and in return Iraq would carry out political, economic and security reforms and improve its relations and solve all the suspended issues with Kuwait (General Secretariat of the GCC 2008).

The GCC's interests in Iraq in the post-Saddam era were based on the unity of Iraq, preventing Iraq from being divided into many states based on race and religion, and preserving its security and stability. The GCC States had a significant role in supporting Iraq-Kuwait relations and this enhanced the development and improvement of these relations. They realized that it was not in their interest to deal with a fragmented and unstable Iraqi state because it would inevitably affect their interests in general and Kuwait in particular since the latter is the closest neighbor of (Al-Bloushi, interview, 2015).

²⁴ The resolution passed by the UN Security Council after the overthrow of Saddam regime refers to the establishment of the UN mission to assist Iraq in establishing a democratic government that represents the Iraqi people. The resolution also stressed the on need for cooperation and coordination between the new Iraqi government and the multinational forces in Iraq in order to return security and stability back to the Iraqi cities. (The UN Security Council 2004: 2).

In order to achieve security and stability in Iraq, the Kuwaiti political decision-makers realized the importance of supporting Iraq economically; especially after the UN announced in 2005 that Iraq needs more than \$ 65 billion. Thus, Kuwait provided during the period of 2003-2010 economic aid to Iraq amounting \$1.5 billion (Kload 2015:12).

The GCC States, through their participation in global and regional conferences like the “Manama” Conference²⁵ in Bahrain in 2006, gave assurance that it would protect Iraq and prevent its fragmentation. It was necessary to establish a stable and secure political and economic relations between Iraq and Kuwait. In fact, the security issue was very important and necessary for the GCC States. Therefore, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait built barriers along its borders with Iraq to prevent trespass and smuggling. Kuwait-Iraq relations are multifaceted and Kuwait was willing to live in peace and built good relations with Iraq, but Iraq's internal problems hindered any progress on the matter and this was made worse by the border and ideological issues between the two countries (Al-Rumaihi, interview, 2015).

In spite of the above, the GCC supported the relations between Iraq and Kuwait during the U.S. occupation of Iraq. But, sometimes the GCC made decisions that were in Kuwait's favor, and at the expense of Iraq. The best example of this is, the GCC supported the right of Kuwait to establish economic projects within the nearby regional waters that is very close to Iraq such as Port Mubarak in Kuwait. This port gave rise to tension in Iraq-Kuwait relations in 2011, especially after Iraq refused to

²⁵The GCC held the Manama conference in the presence of Iran in Bahrain on September 8, 2006. The participants agreed that the Arab Gulf region is facing very serious threats and cannot be resolved unless all the countries work together (Al-Metari 2011:82).

allow the construction of the port because it would affect the economy of Iraq (Tu'mah, interview 2015).

During the thirty-second session of the GCC in Saudi Arabia in December 2011. The GCC supported the position of Kuwait on the construction of Port Mubarak since it was built on Kuwaiti land and within its territorial waters. The GCC expressed that it was important for Iraq to fulfill its international obligations towards Kuwait as it would enhance confidence between the two countries. The Council also stressed on the need for Iraq to complete the implementation of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions such as the completion and maintenance of border signs in the implementation of resolution number 833 and to identify all remaining Kuwaiti hostages and missing citizens (Appendix E: Final Statements of the GCC 2011).

On the other hand, the GCC's interests impacted Iraq-Kuwait relations differently during the post-Saddam era. The GCC states had reservations about the new political system in Iraq after 2003 and as such did not play a positive role in its relations with Iraq and Kuwait. As such the GCC has not been able to resolve the suspended issues between Iraq and Kuwait since the Second Gulf War until the present day (Imran, interview, 2015).

In fact, the policy of every state of the GCC depended on the interests of each state towards Iraq. The UAE has the strongest relations, among the other Gulf States, with Iraq both from the commercial and economic point of view. In addition, the UAE had direct flights into Baghdad and Kurdistan. In contrast to that, Iraq didn't have good relations with Bahrain because of the intervention of some Iraqi Shiite parties, which have strong relations with Iran, on the interior political situations of Bahrain.

While Qatar had good economic relations with Iraq and the Gulf States, it was also aware of the need to help Iraq to be ruled by a united government. Saudi Arabia had the worst relations with Iraq in comparison with the other Gulf States due to the Iranian influence inside Iraq especially after 2003 (Al-Essa, interview, 2015).

There was heightened tension in the relations between Iraq and some of the GCC States after 2003, due to the fear of the GCC of the possibility that Iraq may conveniently allow the U.S. to have military bases in the country. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the U.S. had withdrawn a large part of its military forces from Saudi Arabia in 2004 and it had also announced its desire to establish of four military bases in Iraq. However, Iraq would be the U.S. new choice as the main center to oversee the region. This change may cause serious danger to the GCC especially after the growth of Iranian influence in the Gulf region (Awad 2007: 198-199).

However, the GCC States did not play a positive role to support Iraq-Kuwait relations between 2003 to 2011 because of Saudi Arabia's influence and attempts in the GCC to achieve its own objectives, the existence of a large proportion of Shiites in Iraq and Kuwait's population as well as the new democratic system in Iraq after 2003. All the aforesaid reasons prevented the GCC States from supporting the Iraq-Kuwait convergence (Hassan. interview, 2015).

The impact of the GCC on the Iraq-Kuwait relations during the period of 2003-2011 did not reach the levels which the GCC States sought to establish, i.e., a full and stable diplomatic relations between Iraq and Kuwait. The role of the GCC during that period focused on giving support to Kuwait's claim for the implementation of

the UN resolutions against Iraq, especially those related to the demarcation of the borders with Kuwait (Abdel-Malik, interview, 2015). However, the weakness the GCC to strengthen relations between Iraq and Kuwait dates back to the Iraqi government's non-compliance with the policies of the Gulf States and the unstable security situation in Iraq as well as the Iran's increasing influence in Iraq

6.6 Summary

The GCC States sought to enhance their political and economic relations with Iraq in the post- Saddam rule through the maintaining of Iraq's unity and independence, the stabilization of the security situation and the reduction of Iranian influence in Iraq. The GCC States were also afraid that the chaos and lack of security and stability in Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime may spread to their country. The common interests of the GCC with Kuwait were many and varied and they included political, economic and security interests. However, the GCC States are closely linked with the security system in Kuwait for they consider that Kuwait's security is a part of their national security and keeping Kuwait safe and stable is in their interest since this stability would extend to their states. On the other hand, the GCC's interests impacted Iraq-Kuwait relations differently during the post-Saddam era. The impact appears to be dependent upon Iraq's domestic situation, its political and security stability, fighting off Iran's influence and the fear of the U.S. presence in the Gulf region.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This study is about the main roles of the regional players and how their interests affects the development or decline of the relations between Iraq and Kuwait, particularly after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The relations between Iraq and Kuwait have been greatly influenced by the interests of the U.S., Iran and the GCC States. Furthermore, the roles of these aforementioned countries threaten the development of better relations between Iraq and Kuwait. To investigate these roles, this study adopts the qualitative interview approach whereby the multiple interests that have contributed to the determination of relations between Iraq and Kuwait are identified. Therefore, this study explored the political and economic interests of each of the three regional players in the Arab Gulf.

This chapter discusses the major findings that have been obtained from respondents and secondary data. It also discusses the conclusions that have been drawn from the findings and the discussion of the findings is based on three major aspects namely, the influence of the U.S. interests, Iran's interests and the GCC States' interests in the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations. This chapter also covers other aspects such as the contributions of this study to both theory and practice, and finally the possible directions for future research studies are also highlighted.

7.2 Discussion of the Findings

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of this study, an analytical descriptive method was used to answer the research questions that are geared towards exploring the potential roles of the diverse interests among the regional players that affect the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the post- Saddam era, and to suggest strategies to strengthen the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the political, security and economic fields. The discussions on the qualitative findings include the role of the U.S. interests, Iran's interests and the GCC States interests.

7.2.1 Role of the U.S. Interests

This part of the study answers research question one, the influence of the U.S interests as the main player in Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. The findings of this study reveal that the U.S has strengthened its continued presence in the Gulf region, especially in Iraq and Kuwait, after the fall of Saddam regime. Its continued presence has enabled the U.S to achieve several political gains at the expense of the other regional powers in the Gulf region. After the occupation of Iraq by the U.S, it has become a regional neighbour or rather one of the parties of the Gulf's regional system. This has made the U.S. to rearrange its relations with the countries of the region, particularly Iran and the GCC states, as it is the strongest party and is able to make new security arrangements in the region.

The findings show the success of the U.S. mediation process between Iraq and Kuwait in 2003, after it was cut off in 1990. This entails the success of the U.S. in diplomacy, security and stability between the two countries. The U.S. assisted Kuwait and hosted the first conference for the neighboring Gulf States in 2004,

which emphasized support for the unity and stability of Iraq. Therefore, the U.S. presence in Iraq between 2003 and 2011 was an important factor in the prevention of insecurity and reoccurrence of conflict between Iraq and Kuwait.

The study finds that the U.S. interests in the Arab Gulf region had a significant influence on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait. This was through its contribution to the resolution of some of the disagreements between Iraq and Kuwait. It has also strengthened the bonds of cooperation between them as these two parties are important in the framework of the U.S. strategy. In addition, the U.S. has also contributed to the mitigation of the enormous financial burden on Iraq as a result of its debts to Kuwait. The U.S. government has succeeded in convening the Madrid Conference in 2003 which was with the active participation of Kuwait and its objective was to support Iraq financially. A sum of \$33 billion was raised, which reflected positively on the increasing trade and investments between the two countries.

In contrast, this study has shown that the U.S. did not manage to settle some of the outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait during its occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2011. The U.S. did not use its influence over Kuwait to reduce its claims concerning the demarcation of the maritime border and payment of Iraqi debts and reparations to Kuwait or to end the international sanctions against Iraq. This has led Iraq remaining under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and the renewed disputes between the two countries during the U.S. occupation of Iraq. It can be argued that the U.S. is not confident that Iraq would be a strategic ally like the GCC States. The tension of Iraq-Kuwait relations would be the justification for the U.S. long-term presence in the Gulf region.

In spite of the above, the U.S. exerts influence on Kuwait to amortise the financial dues paid by Iraq due to its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. However, the U.S. has not been successful on this matter. This has given rise to mistrust between Iraq and Kuwait. In addition to that, the establishment of Kuwait's Port Mubarak in 2011, situated near to Iraq's territorial waters, and the encouragement of the U.S. to prevent the emergence of Iraq as an economic power in the region has increased the tension between Iraq and Kuwait during that period.

The findings reveal that the U.S. continuous dependence on oil supplies from the Arab Gulf in general and from Iraq and Kuwait in particular has become a national security problem for the U.S. given its need for raw materials. This explains the reason for the direct U.S. military presence in the Gulf region after the Second Gulf War. In addition to that, it also sought to promote its vital economic interests by establishing a link with the Iraqi economy. This was through the opening up of the Iraqi economy to the world and encouraging the growth of the private sector, foreign investments, the transition to a market economy, the introduction of Iraq within the framework of the World Trade Organization and the participation of Iraq in the International Monetary Fund. As a result, these interests are reflected on the relationship between the two countries.

The study shows that after the occupation of Iraq, the U.S. demanded that Kuwait and the other GCC States adopt political and economic reforms along the lines of Iraq after 2003. The success of the new experience of democracy that Iraq had undergone after Saddam regime through the adoption of a new political system, the holding of periodic elections and the setting up of a new constitution for the

country has raised the concerns of Kuwait that these would be a strain on its own political system. Therefore, the success of the Iraqi political system in adopting the democratic and constitutional foundations under the U.S. occupation did not serve the interests of Kuwait and its relationship with Iraq.

The study shows that the inadequacy of security and stability in Iraq after 2003 has served the U.S. interest that is, enabling it to stay longer in the Gulf region. This justifies the attempt by Kuwait to strengthen its military and security ties with the U.S. due to its fears of the collapse of the security system in Iraq and the possibility of its movement to Kuwait given its geographical proximity to Iraq. The deterioration of the security situation along the Iraq-Kuwait border in light of the presence of the U.S. military forces in Iraq caused tension in political relations between the two countries in 2005 when some Kuwaiti military forces entered into Iraqi territory under the pretext of protecting its borders from the terrorist activities originating from Iraq.

The study also finds that after the collapse of Saddam regime, the U.S. was able to strengthen its presence and interests in Iraq and Kuwait by having many security agreements and establishing military bases in the Gulf region. The U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement in 2008 and the military bases in Kuwait and other GCC States for instance have contributed to the achievement of several U.S. interests in Iraq and Kuwait, which have an impact on the their relationship. The most important of these interests is to make these two countries into the main arena to achieve stability in the Gulf region and to deter any regional or international powers, especially Iran, from trying to dominate over the region.

Besides that, the study also shows that the U.S.'role in Kuwait-Iraq relations has been affected to some extent by Iran's support of the Shiite parties in Iraq with weapons in order to carry out armed operations against the U.S. presence. This has led to a decline in support for the U.S. to adjust the security and stability in Iraq and so it has an impact on the neighbouring countries, especially Kuwait.

It can be concluded that the role of the U.S. interests in the relations between Iraq and Kuwait had several effects which range from the positive to the negative. This is to maintain the political and economic gains of the U.S. on these two countries. The U.S. sometimes support the relations between Iraq and Kuwait by solving some of the problems that exist between them and gaining the cooperation of the two countries in order to keep them away from the influence of Iran. On other occasions, in contrast, the U.S. destabilises the relations between Iraq and Kuwait by failing to do its duty as an occupier of Iraq that has a responsibility to stabilise the security condition and to resolve the outstanding issues with the neighbouring countries, especially Kuwait. Therefore, the U.S. can strengthen its presence in the Gulf region and work on raising Kuwait's fear of Iraqi threats.

7.2.2 Role of the Iranian Interests

This part of the study answers research question two, the influence of Iran's interests as a regional player in Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. This study finds that the impact of Iran's interests on Iraq-Kuwait relations during the U.S. occupation of Iraq had several effects. Iran sometimes has a positive attitude towards the two countries to end their problems regarding the border demarcation, the outstanding debts and compensation due to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

This is in addition to its contribution to the need for the return of security and stability of Iraq, which is due to the positive benefits of Iraq's relations with the neighbouring countries. At other times, Iran's position is to provoke sectarian chaos, conflicts and instability in Iraq and Kuwait, which can enhance Iran's ability to weaken the neighbouring regional countries in the Gulf region.

With respect to the positive roles of Iran, the study shows that Iran played a significant role in solving the problems after the Second Gulf War between Iraq and Kuwait. This is because it is against Iran's interests to have new tensions between Iraq and Kuwait after the demise of Saddam's rule as that would give justification for the presence of the U.S. troops in the Gulf region for a long time, especially when the U.S. is in conflict with Iran over its nuclear program. In addition to that, there would also be justification for the GCC States to conclude new long-term security agreements with the U.S. so that they can keep their political systems. Therefore, Iran has sought to bring the views of both parties closer through the participation of the GCC states in several conferences held during that period, including Iraq's neighbor's conference held in Tehran in 2006, which mainly focused on the security aspects with respect to Iraq's peculiar security conditions and its repercussions on the neighboring countries, including Kuwait.

In addition to the above, the study finds that Iran has also sought to play a positive role in Iraq-Kuwait relations for both religious and geographical reasons. Hence, Iran believes that Iraq and Kuwait represent an extension of its Shiite aspect and shared geographical boundaries with them. Therefore, it is possible for Iran to

exploit its influence in both countries to confront the U.S. if it tries to strike at Iran or attack it in any way.

The study shows that the religious and sectarian factor was in Iran's interests so that Kuwait has to recognise Iran as an influential regional player in the Gulf region. The emergence of the Shiites in Iraq as a political power and their desire to establish a Shiite province in southern Iraq in line with Iran's approach has raised Kuwait's fears of the possibility that Iran would use the sectarian factor through its influence on the Shiites of Kuwait, which constitute about 30 percent of the total population, by provoking their feelings to claim for or declare their integration with this region. Kuwait has witnessed, during the period between 2005 and 2006, several confrontations with Islamic extremists supported by Iran. Therefore, Iran tries to gain the trust of the Shiites in Kuwait and uses them as a political tool to apply pressure on the decision-making process in Kuwait to compromise with the controversial political and economic issues between the two countries.

The findings of the study also reveals that the adverse impact of Iran's interests on relations between Iraq and Kuwait from 2003 to 2011 was through the strategy of fueling sectarian conflicts in Iraq and Kuwait. This is because the presence of an Iraq-Kuwait rapprochement is not in the interest of Iran's foreign policy since Kuwait is a military and political ally of the U.S., and any reconciliation between Iraq and Kuwait would serve the U.S. interests in the Gulf. That is why Iran tried to expand its powers into Iraq politically in order to keep Iraq from falling under the U.S. hegemony through its support of some of the opposition Shiite parties to oppose the American presence in Iraq. The political decision-makers in Kuwait

are aware of the extent of Iran's influence on the sectarian conflicts and disputes that would deepen the extent of the internal disputes in Iraq.

The study shows that Iran's role in Iraq and Kuwait after the demise of Saddam's regime was closely associated with the ambitions of Iran to play a wider regional role in the Gulf region which would be commensurate with its political, economic and military capabilities. Iran fears that the establishment of a non-allied Iraqi government may join the GCC in the coming years and hence it would lead to the formation of a new framework for regional security in the Gulf region in a way that does not serve Iran's interests. This is because Iraq and the GCC States, including Kuwait, would be the biggest regional competitive powers in the region. Thus, Iran used several diplomatic approaches and policies to play this regional role during that period, notably the strengthening of political and military influence in Iraq in order to prevent it from becoming a strong state again and which can then compete with Iran and limit its ability to extend its influence and achieve its objectives in the Gulf region. This is in addition to the development of its nuclear program to confront any international or regional force that threatens Iran's interests in the region.

Kuwait fears that the strengthening of Iran's influence in the Gulf region has increased after Iran started to develop its nuclear program. The issue of Iran's nuclear program has become contentious in Iran-Kuwait relations, after Iran's announcement of its desire to strengthen its influence and rejected the U.S. presence in the Gulf. This is in conflict with the vision of Kuwait, which sees the U.S. presence as an important factor to ensure its security. Kuwait would be the first country to be politically and militarily affected if there is any military

confrontation between the U.S. and Iran, given its geographical proximity to Iran's nuclear facilities in the Gulf region.

The results of the study also shows that Iran aims at strengthening its influence in Kuwait in order to provide several strategic options to confront the U.S. presence in the Gulf by making this territory into a region for Iranians to reckon with the Americans and their allies in the event they attack Iran. It has also sought to neutralize Kuwait and to ensure that it would not support the states that are hostile to or oppose Iranian influence in the Gulf region. At the same time Iran has also tried to soften the stance of the GCC States towards Iranian influence in the Gulf region.

Iran's role in confronting the U.S. influence in Iraq and the rest of the members of the GCC States has reflected adversely on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait after the demise of Saddam's regime because Kuwait is the first ally of the U.S. in the region, and the faltering U.S. presence in Iraq conflicts with the interest of Kuwait. It is also not in the interest of Kuwait for Iran to have an important and prominent role in shaping Iraq's foreign policy. Kuwait fears the Iran-Iraq Shiite expansion and the political subordination of the Iraqi decision-makers to Iran although its ties with Iran are cordial. Hence, this has led to Kuwait's reluctance to strengthen its relations with Iraq given that Kuwait's main goal is to keep Iraq as a weak state and that it is not under the influence of Iran.

The findings of the study have shown that the role of the economic interests of Iran on Iraq-Kuwait relations had a significant impact, especially in the post-Saddam era. Hence, Iran sought to cooperate with Iraq and Kuwait in all fields

through the use of multiple means and policies which has enabled it to achieve political and economic gains at the expense of other regional players in the Gulf region. Iran has also sought to turn Iraq into a big economic market which is open to Iranian products as it would help to reduce the effects of the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Iran because of its nuclear program. At the same time, Iran has also deepened trade ties with Kuwait as this an important strategic target for Iran's interests because of its geographical location and oil wealth.

It can be concluded that Iran's interests in both Iraq and Kuwait are balanced interests which do not require Iran to be with or against the improvement of Iraq-Kuwait relations. Iran aims at achieving its interests in accordance with specific requirements. In other words, if Iran's interests require that there is tension in the relations between Kuwait and Iraq, it would be for it, and vice versa. Based on this, Iran aims to acquire all the tools that would enable it to attain these goal in the Gulf region at the expense of its opponents and the regional influential player, that is, the U.S..

7.2.3 Role of the GCC States Interests

This part of the study answers research question three which investigated the effects of key GCC's interests on Iraq-Kuwait relations in the post-Saddam era. The findings of the study reveal that the role of the GCC States' interests after the demise of Saddam's regime in 2003 ranges between a supportive and positive role in bringing about the rapprochement between Iraq and Kuwait and a weak or non-supportive role in bringing about the compromise between these two countries.

This seems to be related to a large extent to the internal conditions and the lack of political stability and security in Iraq. It can also be associated with the alliance and reunion between Iraq and Iran, which raises the concerns of the GCC States in general and Kuwait in particular.

The GCC States are closely linked to the security system in Kuwait. They consider Kuwait's security to be an absolute part of their national security. It is in the interest of the members of the GCC that Kuwait remains a safe and stable country because its stability would also mean the stability of all the other member countries. Therefore, they strongly believe that Iraq should not interfere in the internal affairs of Kuwait and must be committed to the principles of good neighbourliness in order to build up confidence and to promote security and stability in the Arab Gulf region.

The interests of the GCC with Kuwait are strong and interconnected with each other because Kuwait was the country which initiated the founding of this council and has played a major role in its survival up to now. In addition to that, Kuwait is one of the most important markets for goods and merchandise from the Gulf region and is also a preferred location to invest Gulf money as compared to Iraq. Its economic policy on oil is united with the GCC States. That is, the unity of the common interests is the strong connection between Kuwait and the rest of the members of the GCC. Thus, the interests of Kuwait are considered to be closer to the GCC than to that of Iraq, and this has affected the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations.

The study reveals that the interests of the GCC in Iraq is to maintain its unity, prevent it from being divided and preserve its security and stability. All of them had a major role in the improvement of relations between Iraq and Kuwait after the demise of Saddam regime. The members of the GCC are aware that the deterioration of the security situation in Iraq would inevitably affect Kuwait, as it is geographically closest to Iraq. The positive role of the GCC can be seen through the statements issued at the meetings of the General Secretariat of the GCC from 2003 to 2011, which supports and encourages cooperation and rapprochement between Iraq and Kuwait.

Thus, the desire of the GCC has been for Iraq to be an independent sovereignty and ruled by the Iraqis themselves without interference or domination by the other regional players, like Iran and the U.S., under any pretext. Therefore, the split of Iraq on the basis of sectarian and communal grounds under the U.S. occupation and the increase in Iran's influence have been met with absolute rejection by the GCC States.

In contrast, the findings have revealed that the GCC has adversely impacted on Iraq-Kuwait relations through their failure to resolve outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait. This is because of the concerns of the GCC States regarding the political and democratic changes in Iraq after 2003 and their fear that these democratic changes may influence the citizens of their own countries, including Kuwait, to topple their governments. This is because the current political systems of the GCC States are based on the monarchical system and only specific families have been governing these states for many decades.

The study also concludes that although the decisions taken by the GCC in all their periodic meetings during the U.S. occupation of Iraq strengthened Iraq-Kuwait relations, but these decisions were biased in favour of Kuwait at the expense of Iraq. For example, Iraq was required to respect Kuwait's sovereignty and the right to establish economic projects within the territorial waters close to Iraq, including Port Mubarak. This has led to tension in the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in 2011, especially after Iraq objected strongly to the construction of the port and was of the opinion that it would adversely affect the Iraqi economy.

The study shows that the competition between the three players, i.e., the U.S., Iran, and the GCC States, in Iraq and Kuwait in the post-Saddam era were subjected to the game theory in international relations. Based on the game theory, the conflict of interest between the key players does not necessarily lead to armed conflict. In this regard, the U.S. allowed Iran to have nuclear technology, but it did not allow the use of force or nuclear technology against its interests and allies in Iraq and Kuwait. Therefore, Iran did not attack the U.S military bases in Iraq or Kuwait though it does not like the U.S. presence in the Gulf. This result is consistent with the earlier findings of the game theory which is based on the view that the political and economic interests of the competing regional powers in the Gulf region would determine the development of relations between Iraq and Kuwait.

Iraq-Kuwait relations is determined by the different visions of the regional players on the security and stability of the Gulf region after the demise of Saddam's regime. However, Iran sees the U.S. military presence in Iraq and Kuwait as the most dangerous because it raises doubts and instability in the region. In contrast,

the U.S. sees Iran's influence in Iraq and Kuwait as a threat to peace and security in the Gulf region. The GCC States, on the other hand, sees the U.S. and Iran as a constant threat to their political systems though they have tended to be an ally of the U.S. at the expense of Iran after the Second Gulf War.

The political and economic interests of the regional players in the Gulf region are the main motivation for the trends and policies pursued by these regional powers in terms of the relations between Iraq and Kuwait. When these regional powers were aware that the stability of bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait are to their advantage or served their interests, they encouraged Kuwait to improve its relations with Iraq as well as encouraged Iraq to make further efforts and provide reassurance to maintain the security and sovereignty of Kuwait. However, when these regional powers realized that the convergence between the two countries damaged their interests, they worked towards the deterioration of relations between Iraq and Kuwait by the fueling of crises between these two countries.

The findings of the study also shows that despite the renewed problems between Iraq and Kuwait after the demise of Saddam regime in 2003, the common desire between them is the development of their bilateral relations away from the interventions of some of the regional players such as the U.S. and Iran in their internal affairs was the main reason behind some of the improvements in diplomatic relations between the two countries at the political and economic levels.

7.3 Contribution of the Study

The contribution of this study can be categorized into two aspects, namely, theoretical and practical. The theoretical contributions are intended for the academic domain and the body of knowledge, whereas the practical contributions are designed for practitioners and society at large.

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

Firstly, this study contributes to the understanding of the implications of the roles of the regional players' interests in the Gulf region in terms of the convergent and divergent relations between Iraq and Kuwait with particular focus on the post-Saddam era. Therefore, this is timely and relevant as the prolonged period of Saddam Hussein regime was considered a time in which democracy was suspended in Iraq. This also reveals that the aforementioned regime witnessed the worsening of relations between the two countries.

Secondly, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing additional concepts concerning the political and economic interests of the U.S., Iran and the GCC States in improving or impairing Iraq-Kuwait relations. These concepts have been derived from the existing literature and body of knowledge while this study expanded on it by interviewing experts, academicians and other stakeholders to explore their life experiences on the most important influence of the regional states and their impact on the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait. This study has evidently laid a foundation for future studies. In other words, the findings can serve as a springboard for other studies. Furthermore, this study has also provided a framework that may guide future studies in this area.

Thirdly, the study has utilized the postulations of the game theory thereby applying it in the context of Iraq-Kuwait relationship and the roles of the dominant players, the U.S., Iran and the GCC. The findings reveal the interplay between cooperative and non-cooperative partners. The study categorically explains how powerful nations interfere in the domestic affairs of Iraq and Kuwait.

Fourthly, another landmark of this study is the analytical descriptive analysis in which a detailed account of the political, economic and power displays between the U.S., Iran and the GCC States on the fragile relationship between Iraq and Kuwait was discussed.

7.3.2 Practical Contributions

From a practical standpoint, the line of inquiry of this study is highly relevant to the following people:

Firstly, political leaders, politicians, policymakers and researchers in the field of international relations can utilize the results provided by this study to draft useful explorations about the most important political and economic interests of the regional powers in the Gulf region. This study has identified critical challenges that have been imposed by the interests of the regional powers which have led to both the convergence and divergence in Iraq-Kuwait relations after the fall of Saddam Hussein regime.

Secondly, the international community can utilize the results of the study to have a better understanding of the reasons behind the improvement in relations between Iraq and Kuwait, the relationship between the two countries after the

removal of Saddam Hussein and the critical challenges facing Iraq and Kuwait as well as those who participated in the strengthening of the relationship, which this study has revealed are helpful in their endeavors.

Thirdly, the study has contributed to the assessment of the political developments of Iraq and Kuwait especially after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Similarly, this study has also exposed the political, economic and security roles exercised by the key players in the Gulf region. Then again, the political consultants will benefit equally from the findings of this study especially in giving suggestions on the better way to handle disputes at the international arena.

7.4 Directions for Future Research

First of all, this study only employed the qualitative approach, using both face-to-face and telephone interviews. However, face-to-face and telephone interviews do not offer the same interaction and observation as an ethnographic research approach. The latter allows the researcher to become fully involved with the participants. The researcher can live among the respondents or research subjects for the purpose of obtaining a detailed and holistic understanding of their problems. Therefore, future studies can employ ethnographic research as an active part in the study process.

Secondly, the focus of this study was restricted to the influences of three regional players' interests (the U.S., Iran, and the GCC) on the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations and therefore, it did not take into consideration the influences of the interests of the other regional players such as Turkey, Syria, and Israel that

were later observed to have significantly affected the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations.

This researcher was able to answer the research questions that were highlighted in this study. However, due to the scope of this research, the researcher was not able to address certain areas that may be related to this research. As such there is a need to conduct further research of the aforesaid areas. Therefore, this researcher recommends further studies in the following areas:

1. Further research can be conducted on the security strategies adopted by the U.S. in the Gulf region after the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein, in order to build a wide perception of the impact of the U.S. on the relations between Iraq and Kuwait;
2. Further research on the impact of the other neighboring countries interests such as Turkey and Syria on the rise or decline of Iraq-Kuwait relations after the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime;
3. Further studies on the Sunni-Shiite conflicts in the Gulf region to find out the problems of repeated crises in Iraq-Kuwait relations;
4. Further research on the outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait over border demarcations, debts, reparations and the application of UN resolutions against Iraq;
5. I also suggest a replication of the study of the impact of regional interests on neighboring countries, such as the ones in this study and those that are similar to Iraq and Kuwait in order to validate the findings of this study;

6. Further studies on the establishment of the GCC and the political and economic powers to get to know more about the roles of the GCC in the development of Iraq-Kuwait relations;
7. Further investigations to acquire sufficient understanding of Iran's nuclear program and how the program has affected the relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the Gulf region; and
8. A quantitative study on this particular issue with a view to include a larger sample size that would help to generalize and validate the findings of the present study.



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