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Introduction

 The Gulf War, which began with Iraq's incursion into Kuwait and ended in the humiliating defeat of Iraq at the hands of the U.S.-led world coalition, constitutes an important watershed in the recent history of the Middle East. This event, which precipitated a global crisis, is pivotal for several reasons. First, Iraq's aggression was unprecedented. Never before in the twentieth century had one Arab state occupied and subsequently annexed another. Second, the Gulf War was the first regional war fought against an Arab state by a coalition of Western and Arab countries with Israel's blessings. Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, and Syrian assertiveness even extended to the point of a public condemnation of Iraq's launching of Scud missiles against Israeli cities; one Arab regime had never condemned another for attacking Israel.

Third, for the first time in the twentieth century, non-Muslim, Western military forces launched an offensive against an Arab country from Saudi Arabia, the land of the two most sacred shrines of Islam. Despite the legitimation of the offensive by some Muslim religious authorities, other Muslim clergy and activists considered the Saudi act blasphemous. Fourth, unlike previous wars, this war produced a popular reaction that was neither uniform across the Arab world, nor consistent from the beginning to the end of the crisis. For example, in Arab states that allowed people to express their feelings freely, demonstrators supporting Iraq marched in the streets, while in the states that participated in the Gulf War, popular reaction was closer to passivity. Some influential Islamic groups that opposed Saddam Hussein in August 1990 later became his staunch supporters.

Clearly, the Gulf War has left deep scars that will continue to have a profound effect on Arab society and politics for years to come. Specific questions about the nature of these scars, however, and their implications for peace, security, and stability in the Middle East remain. These questions may be addressed by examining the social and political changes that have taken place since the Gulf War and by speculating about the changes that are likely to occur in the coming three to five years in a number of Arab states.

The diverse, long-term effects of a significant historical event like the Gulf War will take many years to completely disentangle and fully comprehend. Even at the time of this writing—January 1993—not enough time has elapsed to permit an unclouded and definitive view of the effects of the Gulf War. Yet, it is by no means impossible or unhelpful to look now for signs of far-reaching changes in the Arab world that the Gulf War either engendered, accelerated, or redirected. Nor is it fruitless to seek evidence of continuity: Although the Gulf War may have produced surprising changes, it also seems to have had far less effect on certain aspects of Arab politics and society than many observers, especially in the West, predicted. An investigation of both the continuities and the changes is the purpose of this study.

Placing this analysis in its proper historical context requires an overview of Arab politics and society. The remainder of this chapter first offers a brief sketch of the Arab world and then outlines a number of issues affecting various Arab countries, from the Levant to the Maghreb to the Gulf. No special emphasis is given to any particular country or subregion, as such details appear in subsequent chapters. Rather, the purpose is to show how the entire Arab world has been affected by global trends, especially those arising from the end of the Cold War.

ARAB POLITICS AND SOCIETY: A BACKGROUND

Today, the Arab world extends from the Arabian/Persian¹ Gulf on the east to the Atlantic Ocean on the west, a vast area that exceeds 4.6 million square miles and embraces 20 states, with a combined population of about 235 million.² A sense of identification with a single "Arab nation" is "firmly in place both as a collective self-perception" by Arab citizens and "as an identification rubric used by outsiders."³ In spite of the diverse definitions of the term "Arab," all Middle Eastern scholars agree that the common denominator among residents of the Arab world is their language. Formal Arabic

is an official language in all countries of the Arab League. In addition to their common language, most Arabs share the same religion. The overwhelming majority (over 90 percent) are Muslims, predominantly of the Sunni persuasion, and Islam is a vital force in everyday life.

Despite its linguistic, religious, and cultural cohesion, the Arab region is rich in diversity. In territorial size, some countries (Sudan and Saudi Arabia) comprise vast areas that approach 1 million square miles while others (Bahrain) are small enough to fit into a major Western city. The population size ranges from 500,000 for the tiny city-states of the Gulf (Bahrain and Qatar) to 26 million in Algeria, Morocco, and the Sudan, and up to 55 million in Egypt; however, half the Arab states have populations of under 5 million. Economically, a wide disparity exists between the rich oil states, with per capita incomes ranging from \$5,000 (Libya) to \$20,000 (United Arab Emirates), and the poor, labor-exporting countries, where per capita incomes are under \$1,300 (Jordan) and can be as low as \$100 (Somalia).⁴ The combined indigenous population of the "upper-income" countries⁵ falls well under 10 percent of the total population of the Arab world.

Great disparities also exist in education. Several Arab countries have high rates of illiteracy; 52 percent in Egypt, the most populous country, and up to 76 percent in Somalia. By contrast, the majority of adults in several states (such as Kuwait, Lebanon, and Jordan) are literate, and a large number hold college degrees. Substantial differences also exist among Arab states with respect to infant mortality, average family size, and ethnic and sectarian composition.⁶

Although most Arabs are Sunni Muslims, Shi'i Muslims make up a majority in Iraq and form large communities in Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Syria is ruled by the 'Alawis, who emerged as a dissident branch of Shi'ism. The Druze, another offshoot sect of Shi'is, form a cohesive, influential community in Lebanon and Syria. Christian Arabs also constitute significant proportions of citizens in individual states. In addition, there are small numbers of other minority religious groups such as Jews and Baha'is. The ethnic composition of the Arab world is also diverse, including not only Arabs but also a few million Kurds in Iraq and Syria, a significant percentage of Berbers in Morocco and Algeria,⁷ a large community of Armenians in Lebanon and Syria, and a large number of non-Arab Africans in the Sudan.

One way to capture this diversity is to divide the Arab world territorially into four areas that have, to a large extent, distinctive

historical and sociocultural features.⁸ The first of these is the Arabian Peninsula, which includes Saudi Arabia, five small Gulf states, and Yemen. Inhabitants of the peninsula speak similar Arabic dialects and have similar dress codes and social mores. All have maintained a Bedouin heritage, and some of their tribes share common ancestors. Conservative, puritan Islam is the prevailing political culture. The Arabian Peninsula has proved to be the area least hospitable to pan-Arabism and least cooperative with other parts of the Arab Middle East.⁹

The second area is the Nile Valley (Egypt and Sudan, particularly the northern part), which shares the same Arabic dialect, African connection, water resources, borders, and historical experience, including Egypt's occupation of Sudanese territory. Egypt, the cradle of many ancient civilizations, had the characteristics of a sovereign nation long before the modern concept of a nation began to crystallize.

The Fertile Crescent or Arab Levant (Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian population) is a third area in which a number of ancient civilizations took root. Levantines share similar social values, dialects, dress codes, urbanity, and drive for education. These states are most prone to pan-Arabism and extreme political ideologies.¹⁰

The Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia) people share similar dialects that are hard for other Arabs to understand. The colonial legacy, particularly that of the French, is a distinctive feature of this area.

The social stratification system in the Arab region is complex, with both domestic and intercountry dimensions. Each society is stratified in terms of religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic (income, education, and occupation), residence, and background. Status is defined also by an individual's tribe or clan (its power and influence, size, and relation by descent to Prophet Muhammad) and family within the clan. Enormous social differences exist between countries based on the availability of natural resources and human resources, the quality of life, the religious and sectarian composition, the ethnic composition (Arab and non-Arab), and prestige and historical legitimacy of rulers or ruling families.

THE ARAB WORLD IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The end of the Cold War made it possible for the United States to forge a world coalition against Saddam Hussein and to win the Gulf War with negligible losses.¹¹ Well before the outbreak of the

Gulf crisis, however, some features of the new international system began to have a significant impact on Arab politics and society, most notably the demise of the Soviet Union as a superpower; the resultant transformation of the role of the United States in world leadership; the international trend toward economic and political liberalization; and the revival of national, ethnic, and religious identities.

U.S.-Led Multipolarism

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States has become the world's sole political and military superpower, a development that has had a profound impact on the Middle East. Perhaps the most immediately apparent results of this transformation are that cooperation has replaced competition in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict¹² and that new restrictions have been imposed on transfers of weapons of mass destruction.

Although America's commitment to Israel has remained firm, Israel's strategic importance to the United States is said by many observers to have declined.¹³ At the same time, Arab allies of the former Soviet Union, whether they be governments or political or paramilitary groups, cannot turn to its Russian successor for protection or support if they pursue radical policies or engage in military adventures. Commitments made by the former Soviet leadership to Arab allies, including bilateral defense or cooperation treaties, have been either scrapped or greatly restricted. Sensing their vulnerability, many of the former Soviet clients in the region have turned to the United States.

The cutback of arms transfers by the new Russian government has led many Arab states to seek other suppliers, such as China and North Korea. Although sufficient to safeguard the Arab states' national security, Chinese and Korean weapons are limited in diversity and quality (perhaps with the exception of the Scud C missiles available to Syria). By contrast, the security concerns of the United States' Arab allies—notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt—are met with a continuous flow of sophisticated U.S. weapons such as fighter planes, tanks, and missiles. The end of the Cold War has resulted in severe international restrictions on the transfer of technology for weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear bombs and chemical and biological weapons, thereby limiting the ambitions of some Arab regimes—notably Iraq and Syria—to attain strategic parity with Israel, which has nuclear technology.

The changes brought about by the end of the Cold War are not limited to the political and military spheres. Although the United States remains the world's largest economic power, the emergence of Japan and the newly integrated Western Europe as major economic players has led rich Arab states to start expanding their economic ties beyond the United States. Meanwhile, the economic woes of poorer Arab regimes threaten their political stability. While the United States can provide much help, either bilaterally or through international financial agencies, assistance from the European Community and Japan could ultimately reorient the policies of these Arab governments.

Economic Liberalization and Democratization

Since the late 1980s, political liberalization has swept over various parts of the globe. Although the end of the Cold War was not the sole inspiration, the fall of Soviet Communism has certainly accelerated, fortified, and broadened the process of political liberalization. In a dramatic shift, which the noted American political scientist Samuel Huntington calls "global democratic revolution," many countries have switched from authoritarianism to some form of democracy.¹⁴

During the past two decades, transitions from nondemocratic to democratic forms of government have far exceeded reverse transitions. Regimes that have democratized began their transformations from a variety of authoritarian forms: dictatorship, military regime, oligarchy, or single-party regime. The processes of democratization, and the results, have been diverse. Some states have adopted two-party systems, others multiparty systems or parliamentary democracies, and still others have adopted presidential systems. But common to almost all transitions has been "selection of a government through an open, competitive, fully participatory, fairly administered election."¹⁵

Concomitant with democratization is a powerful trend toward economic liberalization. The failure of centralized, planned economies—as demonstrated in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe—was not the only factor in the process. Nondemocratic regimes have been pressured both by their domestic constituencies and by international monetary organizations (mainly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) to bring their economies in line with the prevailing international order. The drive toward economic privatization is gaining increasing momentum in regimes

that are democratizing as well as in nondemocratic political systems. It seems that autocratic governments are recognizing the need for a transition to a market economy. This change, however, can generate popular demands for political liberalization, which may, ultimately, lead to democracy. In fact, many analysts, especially in the United States, believe that a market economy is a necessary condition for stable democracy.¹⁶

The international trend toward democratization and market economy has important implications. First, the concept of democracy is strongly associated with freedom and liberty, which are widely cherished values. Second, many scholars contend that democratic states do not tend to engage in violent conflicts with one another.¹⁷ If this view is correct (and it should be noted that it is still the subject of much debate), as more countries democratize so the world will become more peaceful, and it is possible that democracy in the non-industrialized countries will, in the long run, produce prosperity.¹⁸

These powerful international trends had a visible impact on the pre-Gulf War Arab world, where authoritarianism and socialist economies were creating popular dissatisfaction. The demand for liberalization was expressed in a variety of forms. Street demonstrations and social unrest in several countries often followed hikes in the prices of food and other basic commodities implemented under reforms mandated by the International Monetary Fund. Petitions to rulers, articles in newspapers and magazines, and informal meetings between prodemocracy activists and Arab governments all featured demands for some opening of political systems and the transformation of economies toward the market system.

The response of Arab governments was generally accommodating, at least superficially. Between January 1988 and July 1990, national elections to legislative bodies were held in the then-Yemen Arab Republic, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait. Municipal and provincial elections took place in Algeria. Egypt held national elections in the midst of the Gulf crisis in November 1990. Several formerly socialist states decided to privatize their economies. The extent and pace of transformation varied, however, from one country to another. For example, economic change was limited and slow in Iraq, Algeria, and Syria but kept a moderate pace in Egypt.

Revival of Ethnic and Religious Aspirations

The breakup of the former Soviet Union into independent states and the demise of socialism in Eastern Europe have facilitated the

expression of deep-rooted ethnic beliefs and religious feelings that had been suppressed for decades. For example, Serbs, Bosnians, and Croats have demonstrated their conflicting national aspirations in Yugoslavia, while Muslims in Azerbaijan and other central Asian states have sought to assert their religious identity. There has also been a surge of long-suppressed feelings of transnational group identity, such as that of the Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. The resultant social unrest and bloody domestic conflicts are expected to continue as ethnic or religious minorities seek to govern themselves within states that often show little respect for their rights.

The revival of ethnic and religious aspirations frequently breeds radical political movements as an "antithesis" to prevailing suppressive regimes. Such movements may be racist or religious fundamentalist in nature. The latter are perhaps particularly dangerous, for when political extremism is clad in religious garb it can acquire a sacred character in the eyes of its supporters, emboldening them to refuse compromise and to challenge the status quo by force. Instability and bloody civil wars are too often the result.

A variety of Islamic groups with conservative, liberal, and radical orientations have emerged or have reactivated, seeking a political role. Their messages appear to have been well received by large numbers of young Muslim Arabs whose problems have not been addressed, nor basic human needs satisfied, by their regimes. After witnessing the failure of existing ideologies and regimes to provide them with food, services, and jobs while repressing them often ruthlessly, the young Arabs seem to have found refuge in Islam.

The religious renaissance has not been limited to Islam. Among Israeli Jews, fundamentalist groups have become increasingly active. Christian Arabs have also begun to demonstrate their religious distinction and loyalty more visibly. For example, in Egypt and Jordan, many Christians have started to observe religious rituals more regularly and to celebrate their holidays with greater fanfare. This resurgence of religious feelings has occurred, at least in part, as a reaction to the rise of Islamic radicalism and increasing demands on the part of many Muslims for the application of Islamic law (*shari'a*) in Arab societies that have a Muslim majority.

Palestinians have long been struggling to assert their distinctive national identity. While upholding, at least in theory, the concept of pan-Arab nationalism, the Palestinian guerrilla movement and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have emphasized the independence of the Palestinians from all other Arabs. The call for Palestinian self-determination, the demand for an independent state, the

independence of the PLO from all other Arab regimes, and the severing of relations between Jordan and the West Bank all testify to the strongly held national aspirations of the Palestinians.

ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS BOOK

Each of the following chapters focuses on a different aspect of the Arab world after Desert Storm. Chapter 2 examines the Gulf War's demographic and economic impact, especially in those countries that have experienced the most severe effects. The enormity of the economic and human costs of the war is perhaps little appreciated outside of the Middle East. The aim of this chapter is to convey, if not the exact costs of the Gulf crisis, then certainly a good sense of the scale of economic dislocation and human displacement and suffering.

Chapter 3 discusses trends toward political liberalization in Arab countries, beginning in the pre-Gulf War era. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Western media speculated that the trend toward political liberalization and democratization sweeping various regions of the world would eventually reach the Arab countries, particularly those that were directly involved in the war. This chapter searches for signs of a significant move in that direction by surveying changes in political systems, state bureaucracies, militaries, ruling parties, opposition groups, and political ideologies.

Chapter 4 analyzes the decline of pan-Arabism in the face of territorial nationalism and the rise of political Islam, ideological changes that were accelerated by the Gulf crisis, although their roots lie in events of the preceding two decades. Inter-Arab relations and the new Arab order, or disorder, are studied in chapter 5. Chapter 6 takes a close look at the implications of the sociopolitical changes described in earlier chapters with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict and prospects for stability and peace in the Middle East.

This book is an investigation of specific topics from a comparative, cross-country perspective. Selection of the topics was based partly on the author's interest and area of expertise but chiefly on his judgment of the importance of the changes taking place in the subject examined. Since a detailed study of all 20 members of the Arab League would be a work of several volumes, this book examines only those Arab states that have manifested significant social and political changes. Other states are referred to when they demonstrate the nature of the change their neighbors may undergo in the future.

Six countries—Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria—are singled out for examination. Not all six feature prominently in each chapter, however; rather, attention is centered on those countries in which topic-relevant changes have occurred. For example, in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia no popular Islamic movements that warrant special examination have emerged in the wake of Desert Storm, whereas Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria have witnessed a rising influence of Islamic fundamentalism. (*Fundamentalism* is used in this book to denote the restrictive interpretation of Islam that demands strict adherence to the letter of the *shari'a*; *Islamist* is used to refer to all groups—including, but by no means restricted to, the fundamentalists—seeking greater state recognition of Islamic culture, traditions, tenets, and interests.)

Each of the selected cases has a special significance. Iraq, a major Arab power in the Fertile Crescent whose oil reserves are second only to those of Saudi Arabia, created a global crisis by occupying Kuwait. Kuwait, whose rich resources and strategic location motivated the international coalition's efforts, was the victim of Iraq's aggression. Saudi Arabia, a regional power and the leader of the Arab Gulf states, is a pillar of the world economy whose stability and security is of vital strategic interest to various international parties. It is also the site of the two most sacred mosques of Islam, visited by millions of pilgrims each year. Egypt represents the Nile Valley group of Arab countries. It is the most populous Arab state and the only one to have established peaceful relations with Israel, which it has maintained for over a decade. The long-established self-confidence that was demonstrated by this step, along with Egypt's Western support, were crucial to its leadership of the Arab coalition against Saddam Hussein. Jordan was the only pro-Western neighbor of Iraq that did not join the anti-Saddam alliance. It has also played a central role in the Arab-Israeli conflict because of its location and large Palestinian population. Algeria is a major Maghreb state that, until recently, played a leading role in the Third World and in the nonaligned movement. Algerian Islamic fundamentalists were denied a virtually assured popular mandate by the cancellation of runoff elections in January 1992. Together, the six selected countries account for over half the total Arab population and for about 47 percent of the world's proven oil reserves.¹⁹

Despite their political, economic, and military importance in the region and in the world at large, the six selected countries do not manifest all of the social and political complexities of the entire Arab world; nor are they statistically representative of all Arab

countries, despite belonging to the four distinct territorial areas described earlier. However, the comparative study of several well-selected cases can produce important knowledge about the nature and extent of change in the phenomena investigated. Without doubt, a comparative analysis provides a better, broader vision of issues than does a single case study.

As of January 1993, two and one-half years have elapsed since Iraq invaded Kuwait. This book assesses the impact of the Gulf War by comparing today's situation in the Arab world with the situation before August 2, 1990. It takes into account significant changes that have occurred since the independence of the selected countries as well as detailing the course of key political, economic, and social developments between August 1990 and January 1993.

The research for this book drew chiefly on two types of sources. The first source is published literature in English and Arabic, including scholarly material from fields such as political science, international relations, demography, and sociology, as well as journalistic works. In addition, journals of various kinds and many Arabic, American, and European magazines and daily newspapers were monitored from September 1, 1991, through January 15, 1993. The second source of data is personal interviews with a host of experts on the given countries. These experts include academics, journalists, writers, public officials, and politicians from the Middle East and the United States. (Complete lists of published materials used and people interviewed are provided in the Sources Used section toward the end of this book.)

Inevitably, the diversity of sources yields a diversity of facts, figures, and opinions. Rather than merely describing this variation, this book seeks to indicate what seem to be the most reliable of reports, the most plausible of statistical estimates, and the most popularly held opinions. For instance, the approach in chapter 2, which analyzes the economic and demographic consequences of the Gulf crisis, is to report the range of most recent values given by diverse sources, each with an unknown and probably wide margin of error. Within each range, a single value ("a point estimate," as statisticians call it) usually is offered that seems to this author the most plausible gauge of the extent of change in the relevant demographic and economic areas. The aim is not to compute a number of statistics with maximum precision, but rather to highlight major changes and powerful trends that even approximate, conservative estimates such as these will illuminate. Likewise, in those chapters dealing with the internal politics of the Arab nations and the nature

of the Arab regional system, the actions and opinions of a wide variety of political actors are not only described but also evaluated in the light of past experiences, current developments, and likely future scenarios.

This approach is, of course, inherently judgmental. In seeking to present a balanced portrait of the Arab world after Desert Storm, the author has drawn on his own knowledge and experience in assessing the reliability and accuracy of the numerous sources of information used in the course of this study. No doubt some readers will take issue with the author's characterization of particular Arab regimes, with his assessment of the most probable outcome of a government's present policy, or with his understanding of an opposition group's current strategy. Such a critical reading is welcomed. Hopes for peace and stability in the Arab world will be advanced not by the persistence of misconception, ignorance, or silence, but by the widening and deepening of informed debate and open-minded dialogue.