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THESIS

**LIFE AFTER UNSCOM: THE REGIONAL RESPONSE TO
AN UNSUPERVISED IRAQI WMD PROGRAM**

by

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December 1999

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On 16 December 1998, United Nations arms inspectors were evacuated from Iraq. DESERT FOX commenced as the United States and Britain began an aerial attack as punishment for Iraq's repeated violations of UN resolution 687. While Iraq was punished, the resulting situation left an unsupervised Iraq to reconstitute its WMD program. This thesis examines the regional response of Iraq's neighbors to the perceived threat that Iraq might pose. Specifically, the reactions of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel during the nine months following DESERT FOX are examined under a "balance of threat" model as posited by Stephen Walt. External responses such as realignments and internal responses such as WMD proliferation are sought to determine if "balance of threat" is a valid model to predict a state's behavior. This thesis determines if there has been a significant response from the region and if it requires a U.S. policy change. Finally, policy implications for the United States are discussed and new recommendations are proffered. Data used to write this thesis was strictly open source. Classified data could certainly alter the conclusions of this study.

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THE REGIONAL RESPONSE TO AN UNSUPERVISED IRAQI WMD PROGRAM**

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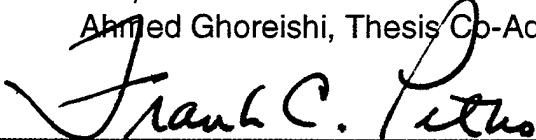
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On 16 December 1998, United Nations arms inspectors were evacuated from Iraq. DESERT FOX commenced as the United States and Britain began an aerial attack as punishment for Iraq's repeated violations of UN resolution 687. While Iraq was punished, the resulting situation left an unsupervised Iraq to reconstitute its WMD program. This thesis examines the regional response of Iraq's neighbors to the perceived threat that Iraq might pose. Specifically, the reactions of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel during the nine months following DESERT FOX are examined under a "balance of threat" model as posited by Stephen Walt. External responses such as realignments and internal responses such as WMD proliferation are sought to determine if "balance of threat" is a valid model to predict a state's behavior. This thesis determines if there has been a significant response from the region and if it requires a U.S. policy change. Finally, policy implications for the United States are discussed and new recommendations are proffered. Data used to write this thesis was strictly open source. Classified data could certainly alter the conclusions of this study.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the aftermath of DESERT STORM, the United Nations had imposed a cease-fire agreement on Iraq. One of the conditions of this agreement consisted of the formation of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), mandated to supervise Iraqi disarmament and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). During the course of its operation, UNSCOM discovered large quantities of chemical weapons, a hidden biological weapons program, and a nuclear weapons program more advanced than originally estimated by U.S. intelligence, and also in violation of the Treaty on Nonproliferation (NPT). Additionally, the arms inspectors assigned to UNSCOM were consistently misled, denied access to certain sites, and otherwise prevented from performing their duties by the Iraqi government. Eight years later, Iraq still had not conformed to the international mandate and UNSCOM was unable to fulfill its mission. The United States and Britain resorted to military force to punish Iraq and cause it to conform to all U.N. resolutions. Operation DESERT FOX commenced after all UNSCOM personnel were removed from Iraq.

Since that operation, UNSCOM has not been reactivated and no monitoring or inspection regime is in place. Knowing the problems that UNSCOM encountered, it could be assumed that Iraq is reconstituting its WMD program. Iraq's neighbors should perceive this condition as a threat. Historically, Iraq has threatened its neighbors. It invaded Iran in 1980, Kuwait in

1990, and fired missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel during DESERT STORM. With this latest perceived threat, how should Iraq's neighbors respond? Does Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Israel fear an unsupervised Iraqi WMD program?

This thesis examines the foreign policy and security measures that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel have conducted as a response to the end of UNSCOM. Using Stephen Walt's "balance of threat" theory as a lens, have new regional alignments been formed in response to UNSCOM's demise? What other means could these states use as a balance against the perceived Iraqi threat? An analysis of the past nine months reveals that some change has occurred within the region, but these changes might have occurred regardless of the end of UNSCOM.

The thesis concludes that Iraq might not be as much a threat as it is currently portrayed. Based on the evidence presented in this thesis, it is possible that UNSCOM did a better job in Iraq than currently recognized. Currently, the United States uses periodic air attacks as a means to contain Iraq. Moreover, the United States continues to endorse harsh economic sanctions on the Iraqi people. As such, U.S. policy in the region might be contributing more to the new regional alignments than the perceived Iraqi threat. Arab regimes want to distance themselves from the U. S. policies toward Iraq, because of the unpopularity among their own populations.

This thesis recommends a modification to current U.S. policy in the region, including a reduction in the economic sanctions that harm the Iraqi population, and a new inspection regime that could reduce threat perceptions within the region.

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I. INTRODUCTION

On 16 December 1998, all United Nations arms inspectors were withdrawn from Iraq and "Operation DESERT FOX" commenced. The United States and Britain began an aerial attack on Iraq's suspected WMD facilities and other military targets as punishment for its failure to comply with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 687 and 715.¹ On 19 December, Iraqi vice-president Taha Yassin Ramadan announced that Iraq would no longer cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), and that UNSCOM's "mission is over."²

After seven years of inspections, investigations and stand-offs, U.N. sanctions are still in place against Iraq, U.S. policy appears contradictory, and allegations of American spying undermine U.N. credibility. Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program is now unsupervised by the international authorities as called for by U.N. Resolution 687.³ As a result, the instability in the Middle East persists.

¹ "Bombing in a Quicksand," *The Economist*. 19 December 1998. Available [Online]: <[http://www.economist.com/archive /view.egi](http://www.economist.com/archive/view.egi)> [20 March 1999].

² Frontline: "Spying on Saddam," Chronology. Available [Online]: <[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ unscom/etc/cron.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/unscom/etc/cron.html)> [30 April 1999].

³ United Nations Special Commission, Website. Available [Online]: <<http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/unscom.htm>> [11 March 1999].

Now that UNSCOM's arms inspectors are gone, what will be the regional response of Iraq's neighbors to an unsupervised Iraqi WMD program? This thesis addresses this question by determining the response of Iraq's neighbors to the demise of UNSCOM. It estimates if there will be new regional alignments, accelerated arms races, or both. Nine months after Desert Fox, what has occurred in the region?

A. RELEVANCE OF MIDDLE EAST STABILITY AND SECURITY

The Persian Gulf is of great strategic importance to the United States. Sixty-nine percent of the world's known oil reserves lie within that region.⁴ The possible realignment of Middle East states or the continued WMD proliferation by those states in response to an Iraqi WMD threat can add to Middle East instability. The threat of an arms race and WMD proliferation also can lead to an increase in the number of threats perceived in the region's capitals, prompting more armed conflicts and disruption to the global economy.⁵ U.S. policy has been so focused on containing Iraq through UNSCOM since 1991, that policymakers have not evaluated the steps that regional actors have taken on their own to combat the perceived Iraqi threat. Understanding the alliances and

⁴ Prepared Statement of General Anthony C. Zinni, Commander in Chief U.S. Central Command, before the Senate Armed Forces Committee. 13 April 1999.

⁵ James Leonard. *National Threat Perceptions in the Middle East*. (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1995) 6.

WMD strategies that comprise this regional response is necessary for proposing an effective U.S. policy to contain Iraq in the wake of UNSCOM's failure.

The conclusion of DESERT STORM in April 1991 led to a renewed desire for peace in the Middle East. Several peace initiatives were explored and some confidence-building measures were undertaken.⁶ The coalition sponsored by the United Nations to repel Iraqi aggression against Kuwait imposed severe restrictions on Iraq, denying it the capability to produce and maintain weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. The mechanism used to enforce these restrictions was an organization referred to as UNSCOM.⁷

1. The Mission of UNSCOM

UNSCOM was an international attempt to enforce a disarmament program on a militarily defeated, but unoccupied, country. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, dated 3 April 1991, established the terms and conditions for a cease-fire between Iraq and the allied coalition assisting Kuwait.⁸ Section C of this Resolution created the United Nations Special

⁶ Richard E. Darilek. *A Crisis or Conflict Prevention Center for the Middle East*. (Santa Monica: RAND, 1995) 13.

⁷ United Nations Special Commission, Website. Available [Online]: <<http://www.un.org/Depts/unscorn/unscorn.htm>> [11 March 1999].

⁸ Ibid.

Commission tasked with the international supervision of Iraqi disarmament and elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.⁹

UNSCOM performed on-site inspections of Iraq's biological and chemical weapons, and its ballistic missile capability. During the course of its duties, UNSCOM was authorized to destroy or demilitarize Iraqi chemical or biological weapons and to account for and destroy any related sub-system, research, manufacturing capability or support for those weapons. Furthermore, it was to supervise the destruction of all ballistic missiles that were capable of achieving ranges greater than 150km and to eliminate missile support or production facilities. UNSCOM also was tasked to assist the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to eliminate Iraq's nuclear weapons production capability.¹⁰

2. Successes and Failures

UNSCOM destroyed more chemical and biological weapons in the seven years that it was operational, than were destroyed during the allied coalition's DESERT STORM bombing campaign.¹¹ UNSCOM destroyed much of Iraq's ballistic missile capability and infrastructure, and further degraded its nuclear weapons program. These actions occurred despite political obstacles, massive Iraqi deception and concealment, and the significant Security Council fractures

⁹ United Nations Special Commission, Website. Available [Online]: <<http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/unscom.htm>> [11 March 1999].

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Scott Ritter, *Endgame* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 197.

that evolved between the permanent members over UNSCOM's role in regard to the U.N. sanctions.

Despite these significant achievements, many believe that UNSCOM failed in its mission. The reasons for its supposed failure resulted from the numerous problems associated with disarming a country against its will in the absence of support from an occupying military force to back-up an international mandate. Certainly the threat of American and British air power aided the inspections, but without "on-the-spot" forces, the Iraqis could continue to delay, deceive, and deny access to restricted areas. Additionally, the fragmentation of the United Nations Security Council helped undermine UNSCOM's mission. France, Russia, and China were more interested in lifting economic sanctions on Iraq than in guaranteeing Iraqi disarmament.¹² UNSCOM also lacked a mechanism for gathering its own intelligence. Its reliance on outside intelligence agencies, such as the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Britain's intelligence agency known as "MI-6," and Israel's intelligence organization known as "Mossad," led to the co-option of UNSCOM's mission by states, detracting from its appearance of objectivity.¹³ In its later stages, UNSCOM

¹² Robin Wright, "Spying on Saddam," interview, *Frontline*, Stephen Talbot. Available [Online]: 27 April 1999. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/unscom/etc/cron.html>> [30 April 1999]. Ritter, 156.

¹³ Seymour M. Hersh. "Saddam's Best Friend," *The New Yorker*, 5 April 1999, 32.

evolved into an American tool for Iraqi containment, evoking significant international criticism and undermining U.N. efforts to contain Iraq.

3. U.S. Policy after UNSCOM

The continued enforcement of United Nations Resolutions 687 and 715 has enormously burdened the Iraqi people. Iraq's isolation as an Arab and Islamic state however, has garnered great sympathy from neighboring Muslim populations.¹⁴ Moderate Arab regimes feel popular pressure to soften their position towards Iraq. The United States continues to point at Iraq as an external threat to the small Gulf regimes, citing the suspected presence of nuclear weapons, as well as the continued concealment of chemical and biological weapons.¹⁵ In this regard, Iraq continues to defy U.N. resolutions. Due to Iraq's lack of cooperation with U.N. mandates, the United States maintains a significant force posture in the region. This policy is supported by the Arab regimes in the Gulf, Egypt, and Syria despite the opposition of their people.¹⁶

¹⁴ "What Next for Iraq?" *The Economist*. 2 January 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://www.economist.com/archive/view.egi>> [20 March 1999].

¹⁵ Prepared Statement of General Anthony C. Zinni, Commander in Chief U.S. Central Command, before the Senate Armed Forces Committee. 13 April 1999.

¹⁶ Ibid.

B. METHODOLOGY

Three countries have been selected to explore the regional response to the end of UNSCOM: Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel. These countries were chosen because each has participated in past conflicts with Iraq. Iran fought an eight-year war against Iraq and felt the sting of its chemical arsenal. Saudi Arabia was part of the coalition that fought against Iraq during DESERT STORM, serving as the host country to launch the allied attack that evicted Iraq from Kuwait. The Saudis also were subjected to Iraqi Scud missile attacks. Israel was the victim of Iraqi Scud missile attacks during the same conflict and was threatened by Iraq's chemical weapons. In fact, Iraq has attacked each of these states with its missile force. Furthermore, as the most strategically and militarily significant actors within the region, regional security can not exist without their participation in either security agreements or arms control regimes. Finally, these countries have different political systems and ideologies. Iran is a theocracy, Saudi Arabia is a monarchy, and Israel is a democracy. Each of these systems differs from Iraq's dictatorial autocracy. A similar response by all three to a change in an Iraqi threat would suggest that external forces, not domestic events, are driving their foreign and defense policies.

1. Theoretical Framework

Stephen Walt's "balance of threat" theory will be used as a lens to identify each actor's response. His book *The Origins of Alliances*, documents thirty-six separate bilateral or multilateral alignments or alliances between Middle East

states.¹⁷ Not all of these alignments were the result of superpower rivalries, some involved regional issues such as Arab nationalism or pan-Islamism. Applying his model to the current political and military behavior of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel would help explain the response of Iraq's neighbors to the end of UNSCOM.

a. Theories of Alignment

There are several theories of alignment used to explain and predict the foreign policy behavior of states. The most common of these theories are balance of power, bandwagoning, and ideological affinity.

Balance of power theory is the most prominent. As Kenneth Waltz points out, "states are unitary actors who, at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination."¹⁸ These conditions cause states to create balances of power.

To achieve their goals, states use internal or external means. Internal means consist of military, economic or other domestic actions that result in an increase in aggregate power. This would include WMD proliferation. External means are those efforts designed to strengthen one's own alliance or weaken an adversary's alliance.¹⁹ Balance of power theory is most applicable to

¹⁷ Stephen M. Walt. *The Origins of Alliances*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1987.) p. 11.

¹⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz. *Theory of International Politics*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979) p. 118.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 18.

the eras of imperialism by the Great Powers, and the foreign policy behavior of those European states seeking to stem universal domination.²⁰

The bandwagoning theory of alignment suggests that states align with the more powerful or threatening side, instead of balancing against it. It identifies appeasement as a means to evade an attack. Like balance of power theory, alignment is determined based on external threats, but the weaker states will bandwagon to share the fruits of victory. Generally, this theory proposes that states are attracted to strength rather than to weakness.

Walt's "balance of threat" theory, however, refines explanations of the external mechanisms of balancing. Walt proposes that states seek alliances to protect against perception of threats rather than raw power. At issue is how states respond to threats. The degree of perceived threat posed by a potential adversary determines state behavior. Level of threat is determined by aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capability, and perceived intentions.²¹

Although Walt's theory predicts external balancing in response to an increased threat, it does explain how countries will be selected as allies. The theory of ideological affinity provides a potential answer. It suggests that alliances result from states sharing political, cultural or other traits. It posits that

²⁰ Steven David. *Choosing Sides*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991) p. 4.

²¹ Walt, 22.

a common political outlook and structure will facilitate alignment. Leaders with the same views seek each other's support.

b. WMD Proliferation as an Internal Means to Balance

Walt argues that balancing is more common than bandwagoning, pointing out that in a balancing world, states are more secure since a ready deterrent exists.²² Bandwagoning however, creates more conflict as successful aggressors attract more allies. Applying these theories will help explain post-UNSCOM behavior. Equally important though, are the internal actions that the state actors have incorporated to protect themselves from the Iraqi threat. These actions include their own attempts at WMD proliferation and ballistic missile programs to act as deterrents.

Two of the regional actors have sophisticated WMD proliferation programs in place. China, Russia and North Korea are willing to sell the technology and production capabilities to any country with the cash to pay for armaments. Iran continues to pour money into its military despite pressing needs for increased social spending. Its WMD program has flourished since its war with Iraq. Additionally, Iran's budding missile capability promises to add to the regional threat.

²² Walt, p. 17.

Israel has not acknowledged its own WMD program, but the program is significant.²³ Although both Iran and Israel signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), neither participates in any of the accepted international committees on disarmament or multilateral export control.²⁴

2. The Road Ahead

The following four chapters examine the perceived Iraqi threat and the response of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel to that threat. Each chapter identifies the interests of each actor and examines how Iraq threatens them and identifies their response to the end of UNSCOM. Walt proposes that balancing is more common than bandwagoning, that "threatening states will provoke others to align against them."²⁵ The recent foreign policy behavior of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel will be discussed to evaluate Walt's proposition. Finally, internal means of balancing, in particular development of WMD, will be examined.

Since there is no means to monitor its activity, it is assumed that with the end of UNSCOM, Iraq is reconstituting its WMD program. Therefore Iraq should constitute an external threat to its neighbors. Chapter II examines that threat. It

²³ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 346.

²⁴ United States Information Service, Website. "146 Nations Have Signed Test Ban Treaty," Available [Online]: 24 September 1997 <<http://www.usembassy.org.uk/acda39.htm>> [19 April 1999].

²⁵ Walt, 27.

identifies Iraqi behavior prior to its invasion of Kuwait that led regional actors to perceive it as a threat. It also evaluates the current Iraqi threat and identifies threatening behavior on the part of Iraq toward Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

Chapter III examines Iran's foreign policy maneuvers to reduce its diplomatic isolation. This chapter also describes the Iranian WMD proliferation program that has evolved in response to that threat prior to the failure of UNSCOM. Iran has become more self-reliant, since UNSCOM was operational. Will Iran more likely increase its WMD proliferation or seek alliances? Recent events have created tension on the Iran-Iraq border that could evolve into a new conflict. Will this contribute to Iran's response to the Iraqi threat?

Chapter IV describes the Saudi response to the Iraqi threat. The Saudis serve as the leader of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a collective security arrangement of Arab states. Of all the state actors considered, the Saudis allow the continued presence of large American forces on their soil. This is an unpopular arrangement among the Saudi people and a source of concern for other Arab countries. The Saudis' continued reliance on the United States for protection is a cornerstone of their foreign policy.²⁶ The Saudi leadership succession, however, will affect Saudi Arabia's foreign policy behavior. With Crown Prince Abdullah effectively leading the Kingdom, his policy preferences

²⁶ Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus. *The Whirlwind War*. Available [Online]: <<http://imabbs.army.mil/cmh-pg/www1.htm>> [4 February 1999].

will become more important upon his ascension to the throne. Could a growing rapprochement with Iran significantly alter the U.S.-Saudi relationship? Moreover, will internal problems cause the regime to re-evaluate its relationship with the United States?

Chapter V describes Israel's unique role in the Middle East. Could the end of UNSCOM hamper the Arab-Israeli peace process, keeping anti-Zionist rhetoric in place? Will Israel's existing security agreements be enough to deter Iraqi aggression?

Chapter VI evaluates the regional response to the end of UNSCOM. It suggests policies for the United States to adapt to the changing political landscape of the Middle East. The regional response of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel should be a factor that shapes U.S. foreign policy. The potential for new alignments or realignments, as well as the WMD proliferation programs throughout the region, can adversely affect the U.S. presence and influence within the region.

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II. THE IRAQI THREAT

A. INTRODUCTION

The balance of power within the Persian Gulf has always rested between Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. This balance changed when Saudi Arabia balanced with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). This shift in alliances, along with Iraq's introduction of chemical weapons during this war increased the perception of an Iraqi threat among its neighbors. Existing threat perceptions were further increased when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, during which time Iraq also attacked Saudi Arabia, Israel with ballistic missiles. This chapter highlights the Iraqi behavior during 1983 to 1991 that led to an increase in the threat perceptions of Iraq's neighbors. It also evaluates the current Iraqi threat.

B. IRAQ AND THE BALANCE OF THREAT

Iraq has demonstrated threatening behavior in the past, and its suspected WMD program is the current source of the region's threat perceptions. From Walt's perspective, there are four factors that affect the level of threat. Analyzing the Iraqi threat from this perspective will gauge its credibility and determine the need for balancing behavior by Iraq's neighbors.

1. Aggregate Power

Aggregate power is the sum of a state's total resources (e.g., population, industrial and military capability and technological prowess.)²⁷ In the Iraqi case, its population base is smaller than Iran's but larger than Israel's and Saudi Arabia's. U.N. imposed sanctions have destroyed Iraq's economy. As for its military, some reports have the Iraqi conventional forces at negligible levels, certainly incapable of projecting forces beyond their border.²⁸ It is the Iraqi unconventional forces that are cause for the concern.

According to a 1998 summary of Iraq's WMD capabilities, Iraq still possesses significant quantities of chemical and biological weapons as well as the means and ability to produce more, especially if sanctions are lifted and inspections stopped.²⁹ Gerald Steinberg recently reported in the *Chicago Sun Times* that "Hussein still has a formidable stockpile of weapons with which to terrorize his neighbors, including Israel."³⁰ Iraq also may still possess a small operational force of ballistic missiles. These missiles could be equipped with either chemical or biological warheads. Because Iraq is permitted to produce

²⁷ Walt, 22.

²⁸ Kenneth M. Pollack, "Conventional Military Capabilities," in *Iraq Strategy Review*, ed. Patrick Clawson (Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 175.

²⁹ Michael J. Eisenstadt, "Residual WMD Capabilities," in *Iraq Strategy Review*, ed. Patrick Clawson (Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 171-174.

³⁰ Gerald M. Steinberg, "U.S. Must Split Iran, Iraq Policy," *Chicago Sun-Times* 23 August 1999, Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS [26 August 1999].

and deploy missiles that range 150Km or less, the Iraqis have the infrastructure and technology to rebuild their ballistic missile program rapidly, particularly if sanctions, inspections and monitoring are lifted.³¹ Finally, as Michael Eisenstadt points out, "the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) lacks a complete picture of Iraq's prewar nuclear program."³² Iraq's procurement network and stored bomb components have not been located.³³ UNSCOM inspectors also failed to locate and account for 6000 aerial bombs filled with chemical weapons, as well as seven indigenously produced missiles, capable of delivering VX gas.³⁴ UNSCOM inspectors also knew Iraq possessed the know-how to produce a nuclear weapon if it could obtain a small amount of fissile material.³⁵ These capabilities combined with Iraq's known pattern of deceit and denial make it especially difficult to estimate accurately Iraq's aggregate power. Judging from past analysis, it could be assumed that in comparison to its neighbors, Iraq poses a moderate threat.

³¹ Eisenstadt, p. 173.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Fred Hiatt, "Saddam Hussein: Out of Sight, Out of Mind-Out of Control," *The Plain Dealer*, 29 July 1999. Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS [26 August 1999].

³⁵ Ibid.

2. Geographic Proximity

Walt asserts "the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away."³⁶ This proposition is reflected in relations between Iran and Iraq. Iran and Iraq share a border that has not been demilitarized following the Iran-Iraq War. Iraq also finds itself encircled by unfriendly neighbors. In addition to Iran, Turkey has violated the northern border of Iraq while chasing Kurds. Syria, to Iraq's west, has been a traditional ally of Iran. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are the strongholds of the American forces within the Persian Gulf region. Threat perceptions are increased when unfriendly neighbors share borders.

In the case of Iran and Iraq, several border skirmishes have recently occurred. Each country harbors dissident groups aimed at toppling the other's regime. On 10 June of 1999, Iran launched four SCUD-B missiles at a Mojahedin-al Khalq Organization (MKO) site on the outskirts of Baghdad.³⁷ Even earlier this year, on 13 April, Iranian and Iraqi forces massed near the border as the result of the MKO's claimed responsibility for the assassination of Iran's Deputy Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant-General Ali Sayyad-Shirazi.³⁸ Both states accuse each other of fomenting opposition activities within their

³⁶ Walt, 23.

³⁷ Associated Press, 10 June 1999. Iran Times, 18 June 1999.

³⁸ "Tensions Rise Along Iran-Iraq Border," *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 16 April 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://www.stratfor.com>> [16 April 1999].

borders. Actions by the Iranian-backed "Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution" (SCIRI) and the Iraqi-supported MKO can cause tensions on the border to escalate, reviving hostilities between Iran and Iraq.

The Saudis and Israelis have less to fear from border escalation with Iraq. U.S. forces were quickly dispatched to Saudi Arabia in 1994 when Iraqi units moved into position along the Iraqi border, proving American resolve to protect them.³⁹ Israel does not share a border with Iraq.

3. Offensive Power

Walt points out that offensive power is related but not identical to aggregate power. He asserts that offensive power is the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost.⁴⁰ In the case of Iraq, its conventional offensive power is constrained by continuous attacks by U.S. and British aircraft. Because of the damage inflicted by DESERT STORM, DESERT FOX and almost daily air attacks, Iraq lacks the capability to project its power abroad as it did prior to the Gulf War. Its once vaunted military has been whittled down by continued attacks and economic sanctions. It is barely able to defend itself against its neighbors. Furthermore, it has internal problems with Kurdish rebels in the northern region and the Shi'a population in the south. Keeping these forces in check has also contributed to a decrease in

³⁹ Frontline: Spying on Saddam. 27 April 1999. Transcript Available [Online]: <<http://www.pbs.org/wbgn/pages/frontline/shows/unscom/etc/script.html>> [30 April 1999].

⁴⁰ Walt, 24.

Iraq's conventional offensive power. Despite its current conventional weakness, Iraq did demonstrate its ballistic missile capability during the Gulf War and its will to use chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War.⁴¹

Iraq's unconventional capability constitutes the main threat it poses. As Walt says "the immediate threat that offensive capabilities pose may create a strong incentive for others to balance."⁴² Without sufficient conventional forces though, Iraq would lack the tactical capability to consolidate any offensive gains produced by missile attacks. In that respect Iraq's unconventional weapons might threaten its neighbors' oil production facilities or population centers.

4. Aggressive Intentions

Walt contends that "states with rather modest capabilities may prompt others to balance if they are perceived to be especially aggressive."⁴³ Iraq's aggressive rhetoric and its defiance of UNSCOM and U.N. sanctions demonstrate its aggressive intentions. As Patrick Clawson points out "in both wars it started, Saddam's Iraq has employed ballistic missiles against Tehran, Tel Aviv, Riyadh, and Manama."⁴⁴ Iraq's continued efforts to obtain WMD capable weapons have added to perceptions of its aggressive intentions.

⁴¹ Edgar O'Ballance, *The Gulf War* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988), 77.

⁴² Walt, 24.

⁴³ Walt, 25.

⁴⁴ Clawson, 2.

Between 1983 and 1988, Iraq used chemical weapons every year in its war with Iran.⁴⁵ Saddam Hussein's initial political and military decision to use chemical weapons against Iran was probably an effort to compensate for Iraq's limited manpower pool. Iraq was able to use chemical weapons to minimize personnel and territorial losses by stalling or defeating Iranian human wave attacks. Iran had limited chemical weapon protective equipment and could not retaliate in kind. Although Iraq did not achieve its goal of ending the war with its initial territorial gains, chemical weapon warfare was a significant element in helping Iraq achieve its tactical battlefield objectives and finally ending the war on favorable terms. Iraqis treat chemical weapons as a complement to their conventional arsenal and have demonstrated a will to use them.⁴⁶

The Iraqis and the Saudis have had border disputes since the days of the Saudi-Hashemite rivalry, particularly over territory known as the Neutral Zone. Additionally, the Iraqis have long had territorial designs on Kuwait. In 1973, the Saudis had to send troops to Kuwait to protect it from Iraq.⁴⁷ The Iraqis desire access to the Persian Gulf. Needing such access to ship oil, any threat at

⁴⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East," 4 October 1999. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 78.

⁴⁶ Cordesman, 78; O'Ballance, 212. O'Ballance asserts that Iraq used chemical weapons on an experimental basis, but Cordesman's list of casualties implies a greater trend toward complementing conventional tactics with chemical warfare. The majority of Iraqi chemical attacks were launched from defensive positions against human-wave assaults.

⁴⁷ Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus. *The Whirlwind War*. Available [Online]: <<http://imabbs.army.mil/cmh-pg/www1.htm>>[4 February 1999].

closing the Straits of Hormuz or denying access to the Shatt al-Arab waterway would severely impact their oil export program. Obtaining Kuwait's coastal territory is a key objective for Iraq.

Iraq's revolutionary Ba'athist regime continues to pose a border threat to the Saudis' traditional conservative monarchy.⁴⁸ Since Iraq's 1958 coup, Iraq's secular, revolutionary regime has threatened Saudi Arabia under a pan-Arab socialist banner. Since taking control of their government, the Ba'athist regime under first, General Ahmad Hassan Bakr and since 1979, Saddam Hussein, had a steady relationship with the Soviet Union. The Iraqi's relationship with the Soviets prior to 1991 had caused the Saudis considerable concern. The Saudis had always feared a Soviet presence near their oil fields.⁴⁹ With a Soviet threat no longer a factor, the Saudis still fear Iraqi hegemonic ambitions.

Despite their differences, the Saudis balanced with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War because they feared the influence of Iran's Islamic revolution on the Shi'a population. In 1990 though, Iraq was poised to invade Saudi Arabia after it had invaded Kuwait. Since DESERT STORM, Iraq probably resents the Saudi relationship with the United States and might choose to retaliate against Saudi Arabia for undesirable U.S. actions.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Bahgat Korany. "Defending the Faith amid Change," Korany and Dessouki, eds. *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) p. 313.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 321.

⁵⁰ Patrick Clawson, "Rethinking Iraq Strategy," in *Iraq Strategy Review*, ed. Patrick Clawson (Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 2.

Finally, Iraq has demonstrated aggressive intentions toward Israel. Prior to DESERT STORM, Iraq threatened to burn "half of Israel," a clear reference to its WMD capable missiles.⁵¹ The Iraqis are still proud of the fact that they in fact did attack Israel, without any retaliation from the Jewish State. As Scott Ritter points out from the slogans printed on Iraqi barracks, "It was enough that we made Israel cry." This slogan of Iraq's missile forces epitomizes the Iraqis' pride in their military prowess and ability as an Arab country to inflict damage on their archenemy, Israel.⁵² Since DESERT STORM, when Iraqi Scud missiles exploded on Israel's homeland, Israel has flinched whenever conflict between the United States and Iraq had appeared imminent over disagreements regarding UNSCOM.

C. CONCLUSION

1. Factors Affecting Threat Perceptions

As demonstrated in the following table, the factors of aggregate power, geographic proximity, and aggressive intentions contribute more to the threat perceptions of Iran and Saudi Arabia, than do offensive capability. Geographic proximity affects only Iran and Saudi Arabia while Israel would probably be affected more by offensive capabilities and aggressive intentions.

⁵¹ Shai Feldman, *Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in the Middle East*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 139.

⁵² Ritter, 43.

Neighboring Country	Iraq's Post-UNSCOM Factors that Influence Perceptions of Threat			
	AGGREGATE POWER	GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY	OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY	AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS
IRAN	Moderate Influence	Significant Influence	Moderate Influence	Significant Influence
SAUDI ARABIA	Moderate Influence	Moderate Influence	Minimal Influence	Moderate Influence
ISRAEL	Moderate Influence	Minimal Influence	Great Influence	Significant Influence

Table 1 (Factors affecting Iraq's neighbors)

2. Threat Evaluation

Tim McCarthy, a former UNSCOM inspector rates Iraq as the greatest threat in the region.⁵³ He assesses the most threat posed to Israel, Iran, and than Saudi Arabia.⁵⁴ McCarthy bases this estimate more on Iraq's aggressive intentions toward Israel. The symbolism of an attack against Israel would unify the Arab world and justify Saddam's policies of maintaining Iraq's WMD program.⁵⁵ Israel's lack of a strategic depth, though, makes it more vulnerable to an offensive barrage of WMD capable missiles.

⁵³ Tim McCarthy, interviewed by author at Monterey Institute for International Studies, Monterey CA. 2 November 1999.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Iraq's WMD capability is the main concern of regional actors. Iraq's will to use chemical weapons against Iran, its aggressive invasion of Kuwait, its threatening behavior toward Saudi Arabia and its missile attacks on Israel have clearly demonstrated aggressive intentions and a national will to use force to achieve its national interests. Iraq's recent use of chemical weapons and the unaccountability of its WMD inventories create a threat perception based on Iraq's deceptive practices and defiance of U.N. sanctions and inspections. If this is the general threat posed by Iraq, how will Iraq's neighbors respond to the end of UNSCOM, an event that should heighten threat perceptions?

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III. THE IRANIAN RESPONSE

A. INTRODUCTION

The Iranian response to UNSCOM's end is influenced by the memory of the Iran-Iraq War, in which Iraq used chemical weapons against ill-prepared Iranian troops.⁵⁶ The factors that contributed to the hostilities between Iran and Iraq also remain. The Shatt al-Arab waterway border dispute is still unresolved, and Iraq continues to occupy a portion of Iran's territory. Both sides still retain prisoners of war and both sides continue to support dissident groups operating against each other.⁵⁷ Iraq's economic woes make the Iranian oilfields in Khuzistan a tempting target much like they did at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War. Finally, no peace treaty has been signed and Iran still expects war reparations from Iraq.⁵⁸

Despite these issues, Iran and Iraq share the wrath of the United States and are subjected to the American policy of "Dual Containment." While this might suggest some type of cooperation between the two states, Iran continues to view Iraq as a threat and the idea that their WMD program is unsupervised

⁵⁶ Edgar O'Ballance, *The Gulf War*. (London: Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1988), 149-50.

⁵⁷ "Outstanding Issues in Iran- Iraq Relations," *Salaam*, 18 July 1995. Available [Online]: <<http://www.netiran.com/Htdocs/Clippings/Fpolitics/950718XXFP01.html>>[2 October 1999].

⁵⁸ Ibid.

greatly concerns the Iranian government.⁵⁹ This chapter discusses the interests and goals of Iran and how Iranians perceive an Iraqi threat. It considers Iran's external and internal response to Iraq's unsupervised WMD program.

B. INTERESTS AND GOALS

Iran's primary goal is to restore its position as the dominant power in the Persian Gulf region. The Iranian regime believes that its geographic position, large population, past culture, and strategic petroleum reserves make Iran the regional hegemon.⁶⁰ In the past, Iraq has always challenged Iran for that position and the smaller countries of the region have usually picked sides between the two regional powers. This was clearly evident after Iran's revolution when the other Gulf countries supported Iraq against Iran.

Since its revolution, Iran has suffered significant economic difficulties resulting from the loss in oil revenues. It has sought to improve relations with the other members of OPEC to coordinate oil prices. Iranians also seek the removal of the United States from the Gulf region, viewing the U.S. presence as a challenge to their regional security. The United States has contributed to Iran's economic decline by imposing harsh economic sanctions on it. Ending these sanctions is an important priority for Iran.

⁵⁹ "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment- The Gulf States-Update 5," *Jane's Online*. 21 September 1999. Available <[Online]: http://fore.thompson.com/janes/psrecord.h...91e4a4&NS_template_dir=&NS_initial_frm=1[1 October 1999].

⁶⁰ Michael Eisenstadt, "Implications of a Nuclear-Armed Iran," Undated Paper from Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Iran also seeks self-sufficiency in weapons production. Because it is isolated from much of the international community, Iran's reliance on imported arms and weapons caused it to suffer during the Iran-Iraq War. Therefore, building an indigenous industrial capability and arms industry will certainly add to Iran's aggregate power.

Fulfilling these goals will be facilitated by regional stability. Since Iraq is no longer monitored by UNSCOM, Iran fears it will continue its WMD program. The U.S. commitment to enforce U.N. Resolution 687, and its desire to replace the Iraqi regime keeps the United States in the region and adds to regional instability in the form of Iraqi unpredictability. This situation is detrimental to Iranian interests. The continued U.S. presence prevents Iran from asserting its power over the other Gulf states and allows Iraq to bolster its prestige by continuing the fight against the Western powers.

Since both Iran and Iraq share the isolation of "Dual Containment," neither can expect the international community to protect one from the other. Iraq has demonstrated its aggressive intentions by invading both Iran and Kuwait. Iraqi chemical weapons were used against Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. In addition, the "war of the cities" was characterized by ballistic missile attacks featuring Iraqi Scud-B missiles. Iran found itself unprepared to respond or to deter Iraqi aggression during the war. The Iranian regime was dismayed at the lack of international outrage at Iraq's aggressive use of chemical weapons. As such, Iran is determined to never be unprepared again.

C. THE IRANIAN RESPONSE

Iran's population is twice that of all the Gulf states combined, and is projected to be 160 million by the year 2025.⁶¹ Along with its massive population base, Iran possesses the world's second largest natural gas reserve.⁶² Added to those national assets, Iran's middle-class is highly educated and their military has significant combat experience.⁶³

Iran has rebuilt its military and industrial infrastructure since the Iran-Iraq War. Iran's ballistic missile program has probably passed the level of Iraq's pre-Gulf War program.⁶⁴ Many experts attribute this industrial growth in Iran to the fact that Iraq has been held in check by the U.N. sanctions and UNSCOM inspectors.⁶⁵ This would certainly contribute to an overall increase in Iran's relative power, because Iraqi power would continue to decrease.⁶⁶ With its huge population base and large territory, Iran also retains the edge of strategic depth, which would allow it to absorb some WMD attacks in the event of a conflict with Iraq.

⁶¹ James A. Bill, "The Geometry of Instability in the Gulf: The Rectangle of Tension," Jamal S. al-Suwaidi, ed. *Iran and the Gulf: A Search for Stability*. (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies, 1996) 101.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Jane's Defence Weekly, 10 March 1999, 65.

⁶⁵ *Jane's Online* "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment- THE GULF STATES-Update 4" Available [Online] <<http://fore.thomson.com/janes/psrecord.htm>> [1 October 1999]

1. External Measures

Iran was isolated during the Iran-Iraq War because all the Gulf states rallied behind Iraq, providing the Iraqis significant financial and moral support. At that time, Iran's revolutionary fervor was considered a greater threat than Iraq's aggressive territorial ambitions, therefore the smaller Arab states balanced with Iraq.⁶⁷ Since that conflict, Iran has attempted to demonstrate its peaceful intentions to break out of its isolation. Since UNSCOM left, Iran's external measures have consisted in reinforcing regional ties and promoting new alignments with Iraq's former allies in an effort to balance against Iraq.

Iran and Syria have maintained a significant alliance since the Iran-Iraq War.⁶⁸ Syria's presence within the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq granted legitimacy to the coalition's actions, particularly the creation of UNSCOM. Since UNSCOM's failure, these ties have been crucial to coordinating policies directed at Iraq. Two weeks prior to UNSCOM's demise, Iran and Syria reacted to the \$97 million U.S. offer to the Iraqi opposition by meeting with Iraqi opposition groups.⁶⁹ The Iranians and Syrians realized that without the threat of military

⁶⁶ Walt, 23.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 21. Walt discusses how states bandwagon as a form of appeasement. Both Iran and Iraq threatened the Gulf states, therefore those states balanced against Iran and bandwagoned with Iraq.

⁶⁸ O'Ballance, 53.

⁶⁹ "Iran and Syria Pursue their own Plans Against Saddam Hussein," *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 4 December 1998. Available Online<<http://www.stratfor.com/services/aiu/>> [4 December 1998]. Stratfor translates the Arabic *Al-Hayat* and *Al-Majd* to report these meetings.

attack by the United States, UNSCOM would fail. They both fear that a break-up of Iraq would create an independent Kurdistan as well as a U.S.-sponsored government in Iraq. This situation would be detrimental to their interests. Iran and Syria sponsor their own opposition groups to help overthrow Saddam Hussein.⁷⁰ These actions are consistent with past Iranian behavior that supports Iraqi opposition to undermine Saddam Hussein. Past support, however, was not nearly as urgent when UNSCOM was available to contain Iraq. The end of UNSCOM creates a sense of urgency in Iran to find a solution to the Iraqi threat, by bolstering opposition groups as part of the balancing effort. Iran's support of opposition groups could be considered a method of internal balancing as well as external balancing behavior with Syria.

Evidence of a stronger Iranian-Russian relationship has developed since the end of UNSCOM. *Al-Watan al-Arabi*, on 23 April 1999, discussed meetings between Russian and Iranian officials in which "steps for cooperation between the two countries in order to establish a Russian-Iranian alliance" were discussed.⁷¹ Iran was attempting to replenish its arms stockpiles and to obtain support for its own WMD program and nuclear reactor at Bushehr. According to this same report, the Iranians presented the Russians with a "detailed shopping

⁷⁰ *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 4 December 1998. Available [Online].

⁷¹ Riyadh 'Alam-al-Din, "Report on Secret Serb-Iraq-Iran Contacts," Paris *Al-Watan al-Arabi* (23 April 1999) pp 16-18. Translation by Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Document ID: FTS19990426001658. [1 October 1999].

list" for Russian weapons.⁷² These weapons included modern defensive systems and long-range rockets.⁷³ The Iranians also wanted Russian nuclear arms experts "provided under the pretext of expediting the work in the Bushehr nuclear reactor."⁷⁴

Iran has sought to reestablish its ties to the European Union as well. One success was the resumption of diplomatic ties with the United Kingdom. This provided the Iranian regime with international legitimacy, and strengthened Iran attempts to remove its isolation from the West. Iran wants to appear as a moderate state intent on advocating multilateral agreements. By opening up to Europeans, U.S. businesses will be shut out of economic opportunity. This puts pressure on the United States to move closer to Iran. Iran's goal is to ensure that it has friends despite the U.S. policy of "Dual Containment," while Iraq remains isolated,

The most important Iranian external response to the end of UNSCOM is its growing rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and the other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia grew warmer prior to UNSCOM's departure, but stronger relations have been accelerated since UNSCOM left. The significance of this behavior is that these states

⁷² Riyadh 'Alam-al-Din, 23 April 1999.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. Despite their past differences, Iran has assumed the leadership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and has used this position to lobby the Gulf States for their support. Iran is intent on removing the United States from the Gulf region by demonstrating its peaceful intentions to the smaller Gulf states. As a response to the Iraqi threat, Iran is prepared to assume the mantle of leadership in a new security agreement involving the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), calling for an Arab-Persian "NATO-like" organization to bolster security within the region.⁷⁵ On 3 May, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz al Saud visited Iranian President Mohammed Khatami. After this meeting, President Khatami stated at a news conference that there were "no longer any differences between the two countries."⁷⁶ He further added that the two countries have a relationship based on "friendship and cooperation."⁷⁷ This relationship was solidified in September 1999, when Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah sent a letter to President Khatami "praising the growing ties between the two countries" and calling for a "security cooperation" agreement.⁷⁸ The Saudi response to this offer will be discussed in

⁷⁵ "Iranian-Saudi Consensus Holds Seeds of Major Regional Realignment," *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 4 May 1999. Available [Online] <<http://www.stratfor.com/world/default.htm>> [2 October 1999].

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Saudi Arabia looks to Iran," *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 15 September 1999. Available [Online] <<http://www.stratfor.com/world/default.htm>> [2 October 1999].

the next chapter. From the Iranian viewpoint, however, this is a remarkable step towards their reintegration into Gulf affairs. The Iranians hope that relations with Britain and Saudi Arabia will lead to better relations with the United States.

2. Internal Measures

The Iranians have taken steps to achieve a deterrence capability against an Iraqi WMD threat. Incapable of responding in kind during its past conflict with Iraq, Iranian cities suffered severe casualties.⁷⁹ Iraqi chemical weapons caused thousands of casualties as they repulsed Iranian human-wave attacks.⁸⁰ Since that period, Iran has stockpiled its own reserves of chemical weapons and also pursued a nuclear option. Iran's most obvious response to an Iraqi threat is its ballistic missile program. Although the *Shahab-3* was tested on 21 July 1998, before the end of UNSCOM, Iran has displayed this missile on numerous occasions since the end of UNSCOM.⁸¹ The many parades of this weapon serve as a reminder and deterrent to Iraq: Iran now has a significant WMD capability. Production on the *Shahab-4*, the next generation missile, has accelerated since the end of UNSCOM.⁸²

⁷⁹ Cordesman Anthony H. Cordesman, "Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East," 4 October 1999. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 78.

⁸⁰ O'Ballance, 145.

⁸¹ Farzad Samdeli, "Shahab, Defense from a Position of Strength," Tehran *Resalat* (28 July 1998) p 16. Translation by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Document ID: FTS19980824001277. [1 October 1999].

⁸² Juan Romero, "Charting Reactions to the Islamic Bomb," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 March 1999 Vol 11, p. 34.

Iran has occasionally demonstrated its military strength, especially since UNSCOM destroyed the majority of Iraq's missile stockpiles. On 11 June of 1999, Iran launched four SCUD-B missiles at a Mojahedin-al Khalq Organization (MKO) site on the outskirts of Baghdad.⁸³ The launch was in response to the assassination of Iran's Deputy Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant-General Ali Sayyad-Shirazi by suspected MKO forces.⁸⁴ There was no military response from Iraq. Perhaps the Iraqis were unable or unwilling to retaliate in kind following Iran's missile attack. Iran's missile capabilities, however, continue to grow. The CIA reported in January 1999 that entities in Russia and China continue to supply missile-related technology to Iran.⁸⁵

D. CONCLUSION

Iran's response to an Iraqi WMD program centers on breaking out of its global isolation, realignment with its regional neighbors, and demonstrating its growing missile program as a way to deter Iraq. This has resulted in a change from Iran's usual revolutionary facade to a more moderate and pragmatic stance. However, these measures would have occurred without the end of UNSCOM. Iran seeks to bolster its own interests in the Gulf, and assume a leadership role, regardless of an Iraqi threat.

⁸³ Associated Press, 10 June 1999. Iran Times, 18 June 1999.

⁸⁴ *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 16 April 1999.

⁸⁵ Cordesman, 46.

IV. THE SAUDI RESPONSE

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the Saudi response to Iraq's unsupervised WMD program. It examines the Saudi reliance on the United States for protection, and discusses the role that Saudi succession will play in future Saudi alignments against an Iraqi threat. It also explores the impact on U.S. policies of the improving relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Saudi Arabia's response to Iraq's unsupervised WMD threat will depend on two factors: U.S. policy toward the Iraqi threat, and the policies of the next Saudi King. The Saudis' continued reliance on the United States for protection is a cornerstone of their foreign policy.⁸⁶ Since King Fahd's health has deteriorated, however, Crown Prince Abdullah has been the de facto ruler. This situation is significant because Abdullah is against Western involvement in the region. King Fahd embraced pro-Western policies. Since Abdullah has assumed greater responsibility, Saudi Arabia has grown closer to Iran and is seeking stronger relations with Syria. Abdullah's policies could tilt the Saudis more toward Iran and the other Arab states rather than depending on the United States for protection. This would greatly affect U.S. policy in the region. The

⁸⁶ Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus. *The Whirlwind War*. Available [Online]: <<http://imabbs.army.mil/cmh-pg/www1.htm>> [4 February 1999].

end of UNSCOM should cause the Saudis to turn more toward the United States. For Abdullah though, U.S. policy toward Iraq makes a Saudi tilt toward the United States a hard sell. Since sanctions against Iraq are becoming more unpopular, he is more inclined to improve relations with Iran and distance the royal family from U.S. policies.⁸⁷

For Saudi Arabia, the Gulf War in 1990 was a watershed event. Changes in Middle East politics and the subsequent realignment of states altered Saudi Arabia's status as a global actor. The Iraqi threat to Saudi Arabia demonstrated Saudi vulnerability to potential adversaries. The deployment of foreign troops to help protect the Kingdom offended many Saudis. The threat of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) served as a reminder that American protection is necessary for Saudi security. This threat is highlighted since UNSCOM departed from Iraq.

The Saudi-American relationship has proven to be a thorn in the Iranian's side, as any future security agreements within the Gulf must include American input. Since Iran's revolution, the growth of the Saudi-American relationship resulted in an increased presence of U.S. military forces in the Gulf, whose tactics and maritime prevention measures helped Iraq defeat Iran during their war. Since DESERT SHIELD/ STORM, the continued presence of American

⁸⁷ "Kuwait Focus Reveals Dwindling Gulf Support," *Stratfor Commentary*, 26 October 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://www.stratfor.com/MEAF/commentary/m9910252305.htm>> [25 October 1999].

ground forces has affected the stability of the region. American ground forces in Saudi Arabia deter Iraqi aggression and demonstrate the American commitment to defend the Saudi kingdom. The presence of foreign troops guarding the "Holy Land of Islam" however, continues to arouse the Islamist opposition groups in Saudi Arabia.

B. INTERESTS AND GOALS

The Saudis serve as the leader of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a collective security arrangement of the Arab states on the Persian Gulf. The United States also has established bilateral defense agreements with the other members of the GCC. This serves to solidify its presence and ensures the containment of Iraq and Iran by keeping those two states isolated. Saudi and GCC reliance on the United States, though, affects their relations with other Arab states since the United States is viewed as Israel's protector. Conversely, the Saudis view their influence with the United States as a balancing act against Israel and Iran. In fact, the Saudis lobbied the United States on behalf of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War to extend agricultural credits to Iraq and the Iraqis were ultimately allowed to buy produce from the United States.⁸⁸

After the Iran-Iraq War, Saudi vulnerability to Iraqi aggression revealed the need for military and economic modernization. This modernization effort caused problems for the regime. As Bahgat Korany points out,

⁸⁸ Freedman and Karsh, p. 25.

Their [Saudi Arabia] accelerated modernization generated a backlash from the conservative religious elements who felt that the Islamic character of the society was being seriously eroded.⁸⁹

Domestic pressure on the regime has increased following the growth of the American military presence in the region. To reduce that pressure, the Saudis have been forced to embark on a domestic program designed to help its population. As Anthony Cordesman points out,

It must modernize its society without losing its Islamic and Arab character, and it must restructure its economy to deal with declining per capita oil wealth and the need to rely on native, rather than foreign labor.⁹⁰

The Iraqi threat affects this modernization effort since the regime must focus on external defense, rather than on domestic spending ventures. Modernizing its military rather than pursuing social programs prevents the regime from evolving into a more modern society and providing for its people.

To finance their industrial and economic modernization program, the Saudis have depended on oil-revenues. Thus, it has been in their interests to lower production and reduce the amount of oil on the market, thereby raising oil prices. It remains in the Saudis' interests to keep Iraqi oil from reaching global markets. The Saudis have been reluctant to support lifting sanctions on Iraq.

⁸⁹ Korany, Bahgat. *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984) p. 53.

⁹⁰ Anthony Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: Guarding the Desert Kingdom*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997) 1.

This in turn creates more Iraqi resentment, leading to Iraqi accusations of collusion with the United States.

C. THE SAUDI RESPONSE

The Saudis have responded to Iraq's unsupervised WMD program by allowing the continued presence of U.S. military forces. Using Saudi airfields, U.S. and British aircraft have contained potential Iraqi aggression by their continuous patrols over the "no-fly zones" in Iraq. The United States and Britain have continued to attack Iraqi missile sites, command and control centers, or suspected WMD sites. The Saudis also have continued to modernize their armed forces to serve as an example to the Gulf Cooperation Council. Despite this overriding protection from the United States, the Saudis have sought new alignments with regional actors, the most significant of these is Iran.

1. External Measures

The Saudis and Iranians resumed diplomatic relations in 1991, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Concern about Iran's influence over the Shi'a Muslims in Saudi Arabia, however, caused the Saudis to keep their distance from the Iranians. Since Abdullah has assumed de facto rule over the Kingdom, he has been the most influential member of the ruling family and has assumed a greater role in foreign relations. As the sanctions on Iraq continued, and as Saddam Hussein continued to survive in power, Abdullah has led the movement to improve Saudi relations with Iran. Crown Prince Abdullah sent a message to

Iranian President Khatami on 11 September 1999, expressing satisfaction with the current state of relations and called for "increased collaboration in stabilizing the oil market and developing military cooperation in the Gulf."⁹¹ Abdullah's message is a significant overture because it supports a strong Saudi foreign policy goal. By collaborating with Iran on the oil market, the Saudis and Iranians can drive up oil prices. Maintaining high oil prices is crucial because they support the Saudi social and economic modernization program.

Despite the overtures and high level contact between Iran and Saudi Arabia, there is as yet no formal or informal alliance. In a June interview with *Asharq al-Awsat*, Crown Prince Abdullah denied that the Kingdom had signed secret military and security agreements with Iran.⁹² In that same interview he noted Iran's right of self-defense, clearly referring to an Iraqi threat.⁹³ This growing relationship with Iran has been the result of Abdullah's policy of regional balancing. Abdullah's friendship with Hafez al-Asad of Syria has contributed to the growing relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Syria was Iran's key ally in the Iran-Iraq War, and added legitimacy to the coalition against Iraq in the eyes of Arab populations.

⁹¹ *Stratfor's Global Intelligence Update*, 15 September 1999.

⁹² Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz, "Interview with Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia," interview by Abdul Rahman al-Rashed, *Asharq al-Awsat*. June 1999 Available [Online] <<http://www.arab.net/arabview/articles/rashed33.html>> [24 October 1999].

⁹³ *Ibid.*

The Saudis also are intent on reducing the threat to their southwest border with Yemen. Yemen supported Iraq during DESERT SHIELD/ STORM and relations since that period have been hostile. In fact, border clashes erupted over the past year.⁹⁴ To reduce the Yemeni threat and concentrate on Iraq, the Saudis resumed negotiations with Yemen in April 1999.⁹⁵

2. Internal Measures

Much of what the Saudis have done prior to DESERT FOX concerns conventional military modernization. Having already acquired Chinese CSS-2 missiles, the Saudis possess a ballistic missile capability. Nevertheless, with American urging, more joint training with U.S. military forces has occurred, focusing on chemical and biological defense.⁹⁶ Gregory Gause believes that the Saudis would want some commitment from the Americans to extend their nuclear umbrella over Saudi Arabia if it became clear that the Iraqis deployed WMD.⁹⁷ Whether the United States would formally commit to such an action remains to be seen. If it appeared that the United States would back down from such a request, Gause believes the Saudis would seek their own WMD capability as a deterrent to an Iraqi WMD threat.⁹⁸ Past Saudi behavior supports the notion

⁹⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment-The Gulf States, 29 June 1999.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Gregory Gause, interview by author, via e-mail, 24 September 1999.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

that they might find an "off the shelf" nuclear option attractive. Recently, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan toured Pakistan's secret nuclear facilities in May 1999.⁹⁹ The Saudis might be attempting to purchase nuclear weapons from a cash-strapped Pakistan.¹⁰⁰ These events support Gause's comments. The Saudis might try to obtain their own WMD capability if they suspect a lack of commitment from the United States. Currently, there should be no cause for the Saudis to explore this option.

Today, it is not in the Saudis' interest to pursue a nuclear capability since it would cause serious friction with the United States. In 1994, they did explore the purchase of nuclear reactors from China, but chose not to purchase them. In fact, in an attempt to lessen the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction within the region, Crown Prince Abdullah publicly called for the Middle East to be a Nuclear-Free Weapon Zone on 11 August 1999.¹⁰¹ This action was an attempt to portray the Kingdom as supporting the nonproliferation regime, and to deflect criticism from Sultan's visit to the Pakistani facility. The Saudi visit could have been genuine interest in an "off the shelf" nuclear weapon capability to fill a potential emergency need, or an attempt to demonstrate their solidarity with another Islamic nation.

⁹⁹ "Saudis Seek Atom Bomb," *The Guardian*, 5 August 1999. Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS [26 August 1999].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "Saudi Wants Nuke-Free Middle East," *The Washington Times*, 11 August 1999. Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS [26 August 1999].

The United States has attempted to circumvent the need for Saudi and GCC missile and WMD proliferation by proposing a theater missile defense program, similar to Israel's ARROW program.¹⁰² Construction of this system, however, has not begun. In the meantime, U.S. officials continue to visit the region to promote long-term defense cooperation with the Saudis and other members of the GCC.

D. CONCLUSION

The Saudi response to the Iraqi threat has been in accordance with Walt's balance of threat theory. By maintaining its long-term strategic partnership with the United States, the Saudis receive the most protection for their money. This suggests that there has been no significant change in their behavior since the end of UNSCOM. Continuing this behavior allows them to free money for domestic spending that is vital to social and economic modernization. But the continued presence of American forces and the prolonged sanctions on Iraq allow the Islamist opposition groups to apply pressure on the Saudi royal family.

The Saudi overtures to Iran are a noteworthy change, although the shift occurred prior to the end of UNSCOM. The growing relationship leads back to the natural balance of power within the Gulf that was prevalent before Iran's

¹⁰² "US Wants an Arab Gulf Anti-missile Defense System Against Iraq and Iran," *ArabicNews.Com*, 14 October 1998. Available [Online]: <<http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/daily/day/981014/1998101417.html>> [14 Sept 1999]. "US Official: Iraq is Contained and not a Threat, Cohen to Visit the Region," *ArabicNews.Com*, 14 October 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/daily/day/981014/1998101417.html>> [24 October 1999].

revolution. Even more so, with the growing unpopularity of sanctions, the Saudis also anticipated the end of UNSCOM. With the strengthening of relations with Syria, Iraq is isolated. At the same time, a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement affects U.S.-Saudi relations, since Iran seeks to regain power within the Gulf. Both Iran and the Saudis realize the strategic importance of close relations because they affect oil policies and serve to balance Iraq.

The fact that Prince Sultan visited a secret Pakistan nuclear facility seems to suggest that the Saudis are intent on obtaining WMD. Without a technological or industrial base the Saudis probably would attempt to buy rather than develop a nuclear deterrent.¹⁰³ Despite appearances, the Saudis probably will not attempt to acquire nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future. Having signed the NPT, the Saudis are pushing for a nuclear-free weapon zone within the Middle East. This indicates the Saudis are content with their alliance with the United States for protection against Iraq.

Future Saudi behavior will depend on succession to the throne. Although Abdullah is the de facto ruler, he must follow King Fahd's foreign policies. Once he assumes the throne, Abdullah will be free to change the Kingdom's policies to reflect his own which are characterized as "traditional and populist."¹⁰⁴ The Sudairi faction, of which King Fahd is a member, will maintain close ties with the

¹⁰³ Gause paper, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ "The Saudi Succession," *Stratfor Special Report*, 25 September 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://www.stratfor.com/MEAF/specialreports/special12.html>> [28 September 1999].

West. Again, the role of ideological affinity contributes to alliance selection. Abdullah's choice as next in line, will influence the long-term behavior of Saudi Arabia, and will affect the Saudis' ongoing response to Iraq.

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V. THE ISRAELI RESPONSE

A. INTRODUCTION

During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, Iraq fired forty Scud missiles at Israel to provoke Israeli retaliation.¹⁰⁵ Israel could have retaliated, causing severe damage to Iraq, but that action could have destroyed the coalition of Western and Arab states that had been formed to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Following heavy diplomatic pressure from the United States, Israel exercised restraint.

Israel's position in the Middle East stands as the one uniting issue of pan-Arabism.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Israel is considered a nuclear state by its Arab neighbors and by other states outside the region.¹⁰⁷ This chapter describes the Israeli response to the end of UNSCOM.

B. INTERESTS AND GOALS

Israel's national interests and strategic goals are different than Iran's and Saudi Arabia's. Whereas those countries' interests conflict over economic and territorial issues, the Israeli and Iraqi discord is linked to the overall Arab-Israeli

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 307.

¹⁰⁶ Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996), 32.

¹⁰⁷ Shai Feldman, *Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 122.

conflict. Israel's strategic interests are to maintain its security and achieve favorable terms in a comprehensive Middle East Peace Agreement.

Fearing the Arab potential for conventional military superiority, Israel developed its own unconventional arsenal of nuclear weapons. Israel's nuclear capability forms the basis of a deterrent response to the perceived threat of its Arab neighbors. Avner Cohen describes Israel's nuclear program as "nuclear opacity,"¹⁰⁸

Nuclear opacity is a situation in which a state's nuclear capability has not been acknowledged, but is recognized in a way that influences other nation's perceptions and actions, encompassing the second sense of nuclear ambiguity.¹⁰⁹

Nuclear opacity has allowed Israel to maintain a strategic advantage over its Arab enemies. Israel's strategic goals are to maintain this qualitative weapons advantage while denying the Arabs the same nuclear capability. These goals led to the "Begin Doctrine," in which the Israeli government stated that,

Under no circumstances would we allow the enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against our nation; we will defend Israel's citizens, in time, with all the means at our disposal.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 2. Cohen describes the history and evolution of Israel's nuclear weapons program in this book.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Feldman. 109.

Israel destroyed Iraq's *Osiraq* nuclear reactor in June 1981.¹¹¹ Since that event, Israel has continued to seek military or political alternatives that would deny the Arab countries the ability to develop nuclear weapons.

Israel also has sought to stabilize its borders by building favorable peace agreements with its Arab neighbors. Arab border states realize the futility of using force against Israel to regain their occupied lands.

Israel has continued to maintain its opaque nuclear deterrent. It remains in Israel's interests to continue this policy to preserve foreign aid from the United States and avoid friction in their relationship. Although Israel has not signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), it is willing to participate in other arms control initiatives by signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).¹¹²

C. THE ISRAELI RESPONSE

Israel's special relationship with the United States, its current security agreement with Turkey, and its unconventional weapons capability enable it to maintain a policy of deterrence. As a significant contributor to UNSCOM's intelligence capability, Israel's access to UNSCOM's information gives it a unique perspective on the nature of the Iraqi threat.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Feldman, 105.

¹¹² Michael Barletta and Christina Ellington, "Israel's Nuclear Posture Review." Center for Nonproliferation Studies Website. Available [Online]: <<http://cns.miis.edu/research/wmdme/israelnc.htm>> [17 August 1999].

¹¹³ Ritter, 19.

1. External Measures

Rather than seek additional alliances to balance against Iraq, Israel has sought to strengthen present ties with "great powers" and try to discourage proliferation sales to Iraq and other states perceived to be a threat.¹¹⁴ Three months after DESERT FOX, then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited then Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov. At that time Netanyahu urged the Russian government "to become more active in the Middle East peace process while expressing alarm about the threat of nuclear proliferation in the region."¹¹⁵ Even more recently, Prime Minister Ehud Barak visited Russia and, "pressed Russian leaders at the Kremlin to stanch leaks of advanced-weapons technology to Iran and Iraq."¹¹⁶ On that same visit, Russian President Boris Yeltsin greeted Barak "as an old friend," and pointing at new renovations in the Kremlin, he stated that "we wish similarly to build up our relations with Israel."¹¹⁷ Israel's growing rapprochement with Russia could be an attempt to co-opt a chief Iraqi supplier.

¹¹⁴ Walt, 13. "Great Powers" was a term used to describe those influential European states prior to World War II. I use this term to describe Russia, even as it is no longer considered a "superpower."

¹¹⁵ John Thornhill, "Netanyahu Tells Russia to Boost Mideast Ties," *Financial Times*, 23 March 1999. Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS [26 August 1999].

¹¹⁶ Michael Wines, "Russians Pressed by Barak on Technology to Iran and Iraq," *The New York Times*, 2 August 1999. Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS [26 August 1999].

¹¹⁷ "Russians Pressed by Barak on Technology to Iran and Iraq," *The New York Times*, 2 August 1999.

Israel also has maintained its strong ties with the United States to preserve the flow of American financial aid. In July 1999, President Clinton and Prime Minister Barak announced that "The United States will boost military and security assistance to Israel in order to 'minimize the risks and costs it incurs as it pursues peace' with its Arab neighbors."¹¹⁸ Both leaders stated that the increase will consist of new anti-missile weapon systems and other hardware, as well as closer strategic planning between their militaries.¹¹⁹

This new agreement boosts military aid to Israel to an annual level of \$2.4 billion.¹²⁰ President Clinton's statement best characterizes this unique relationship,

Today we have agreed to strengthen our security assistance to Israel so Israel can best meet the threats of its citizens, including terrorism and the growing threat of long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction.¹²¹

This security aid package continues U.S. support for Israel and helps to deter future aggression from other states.

¹¹⁸ Ken Fireman, "U.S. to Increase Military, Security Assistance to Israel," *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 July 1999. Available [Lexus/Nexus]: REGNWS/CURNWS[26 August 1999].

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ "U.S. to Increase Military, Security Assistance to Israel," *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 July 1999.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Israel's peace-making overtures with the Palestinians, strengthens its borders, but also protects its nuclear weapons posture. On 5 September 1999, Israel and Palestine signed a new plan for implementing a peace agreement. This agreement was quickly implemented in an attempt to move to final status talks, which began on 13 September.¹²² Barak's goal is to take the initiative and negotiate from a position of strength. Furthermore, he reduces the internal threat of Palestinian hostilities to focus on the external threat posed by Iraq. By appearing to give up land for promises of peace, Barak improves Israel's international image and distracts the United States from moving forward with its pressure to sign the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, thus maintaining its opaque nuclear deterrence. On 14 September, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* reported that,

Barak is expected to repel American requests to discuss the 'cut-off' treaty, and as long as the peace process and land concessions continue, the United States will avoid pressuring Israel on the nuclear front, for fear of shaking its confidence.¹²³

Ha'aretz also points out Barak's nuclear policies are in line with his predecessors, viewing "nuclear deterrence as a central element of Israel's

¹²² Mariam Sami, "Mideast Peace Deal Signed," *Associated Press*. 5 September 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://search.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WAPO/19990905/V000804-090399-idx.htm>> [13 September 1999].

¹²³ Aluf Benn, "Open Secrets: The Struggle to Keep Nuclear Capabilities Secret," *Ha'aretz*. Available [Online]: <<http://www3.haaretz.co.il/eng/scripts/article.asp?id=55897&mador=5&date=9/14/99>> [15 September 1999].

security doctrine."¹²⁴ It refers to his statement he made as foreign minister that "Israel's nuclear policy has not changed, will not change—and cannot change."¹²⁵

2. Internal Measures

Israel has accelerated its anti-missile defense programs since DESERT FOX. During the Gulf War, Israel lacked a good defense against incoming missiles. Since that time, Israel has launched the ARROW series anti-tactical ballistic missile program. At the end of 1998, the second stage of this program, the ARROW Continuation Experiments (ACES) Program, was completed. The Arrow Deployability Program (ADP) marks the final stage of this program and a test battery has recently been deployed in the Emek Hefer region.¹²⁶ This program integrates the entire ARROW Weapon System (AWS) with a planned User Operational Evaluation System (UOES) capability.¹²⁷ The ADP program is expected to continue until 2001 and will be the "cornerstone for U.S./ Israeli BMD cooperation."¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Aluf Benn, "Open Secrets: The Struggle to Keep Nuclear Capabilities Secret," *Ha'aretz*. [15 September 1999].

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "Israeli Settlers Slam Arrow Deployment," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, no.7 (18 August 1999) 18.

¹²⁷ "Arrow Deployability Program," BMDO Fact Sheet AQ-99-07, February 1999.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

D. CONCLUSION

It has been nine months since DESERT FOX and the departure of UNSCOM. An Iraqi WMD threat remains. Although the balance of power favors Israel, the Iraqi threat has prompted Israel to respond by strengthening its "great power" ties and at the same time improving its own anti-missile defenses. Prime Minister Barak has continued his predecessor's nuclear policies, viewing Israel's nuclear opacity as a strong deterrent to the Iraqi threat, therefore the end of UNSCOM has not affected Israel's nuclear policies.

The end of UNSCOM has not prompted Israel to forge a new alignment; it relies on its current ties. Israel's response thus far has been to accelerate the Arab-Israeli peace process, strengthening its borders to reduce one threat so that it can concentrate on Iraq. In the process, Israel garners more U.S. commitment to help build its missile defense program.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. ALIGNMENTS

Walt's "balance of threat" theory helps illuminate regional responses to the threat posed by an unsupervised Iraqi WMD capability. The "failure" of UNSCOM served as a benchmark to gauge any change in behavior of Iraq's neighbors as a response to an unsupervised Iraqi WMD threat. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel have all sought to strengthen their own alliances while isolating Iraq. Walt's argument that balancing is more common than bandwagoning is an accurate observation. In a balancing world, states are more secure since a ready deterrent exists. Ideological affinity explains choice of allies.

The most significant action that occurred during this period is the emerging regional alignment that appears to be forming between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The smaller Gulf states will continue to bandwagon with the Saudis as part of the GCC. Although the Iranian and Saudi rapprochement has been a foreign policy goal of each state for some time, the demise of UNSCOM might have revitalized both states diplomatic efforts at rapprochement.¹²⁹ Both of these states have other mutual interests other than containing Iraq. Their oil

¹²⁹ Gause interview.

policies must coincide to maintain high prices on oil.¹³⁰ Their goals involve economics and security. Both the Saudis and Iranians need to invest in domestic infrastructure rather than continue defense spending against a suspected Iraqi threat. The emerging Iranian-Saudi Arabia rapprochement does not diminish the heavy role that the United States plays in Gulf security, but it could affect it in the future.

Iranian overtures to Russia could result in a stronger Iranian military. Russia is cash starved and Iran wants a nuclear power capability. If a growing Iranian-Russian alliance materializes, Iran's nuclear program could be accelerated. This also would elevate existing threat perceptions in the region. There also exists a possibility of a greater Russian influence in the Gulf. A Russian presence in the Gulf would complicate the pursuit of American interests.

Israel has maintained its relationship with the United States and strengthened relations with Russia. Disrupting the Russian and Iraqi relationship and co-opting Iraq's suppliers, benefits Israel's relative power. It also contributes to Iraq's isolation.

In each of the cases studied, the regional response of Iraq's neighbors to an unsupervised suspected WMD program has been consistent with previous behavior. Based on Walt's theory, this lack of significant change suggests that the current Iraqi threat is lower than often estimated in Washington, or Iraq's

¹³⁰ *Stratfor's Global Intel Update*, 4 May 1999.

neighbors are content with their defense policies that already factor in an Iraqi threat. This suggests that the end of UNSCOM might not have heightened threat perceptions among Iraq's neighbors.

Alternatively, the assertion that the Iraqi threat is lower than estimated could be attributed to the fact that UNSCOM did its job after all. Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, UNSCOM was successful in destroying a substantial amount of Iraq's WMD and missile infrastructure and stockpiles. UNSCOM's efforts might have altered the balance of power within the region and Iraq's neighbors are confident in their own deterrence policies based on formal and defacto alliances.

American and British airpower regularly attacks Iraqi targets. This continued bombardment has reduced the Iraqi threat. Perhaps Iraq's neighbors are content to allow the United States to contain Iraq through military power rather than change existing alignments. Recently, a senior U.S. Defense official pointed out "Iraq is being contained. It's not a threat to any of its neighbors."¹³¹ Finally, Iraq's WMD program has been characterized as "the symptoms" of an Iraqi threat, whereas the "problem" is Saddam Hussein's regime.¹³² Perhaps the Gulf regimes are balancing against Saddam rather than Iraq.

¹³¹ "US official: Iraq is contained and not a threat, Cohen to visit the region," *ArabicNews.Com*, 14 October 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/991014/1999101427.html> [24 October 1999].

¹³² John Hillen, "Conquering and Occupying Iraq," in *Iraq Strategy Review*, ed. Patrick Clawson (Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 118.

The idea that Iraq's WMD program is "the symptom" of an Iraqi threat, whereas "the problem" is Saddam Hussein's regime, appears to be an accurate description since Iraqi aggression has been the result of Saddam's hegemonic goals. Saddam's policies resulted in Iraq's invasion of Iran, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the clandestine nuclear program. It also was Saddam who gave the order to use chemical weapons against his enemies in past conflicts. The Iraqi president has earned the reputation as a ruthless dictator who will do anything to protect his regime. All attempts to isolate him and cause an upheaval in his government have failed. By most accounts, there exists no viable alternative to Saddam Hussein outside the Ba'ath Party's ruling members. In the meantime it appears that Saddam Hussein will remain in power. As long as he remains in power, Iraq will continue to be isolated and its neighbors will balance against it.

B. ARMS RACES

While the Saudis sparked some interest by visiting a Pakistani nuclear facility, there have been no regional WMD proliferation surprises by Iran, Saudi Arabia or Israel. Each has continued their existing policies. The Iranians have continued in the production and development of the *Shahab-4*, and the Israelis have continued their *ARROW Deployability Program*. The Iranian request to Russia for weapons also contributes to a regional arms race. Again, as long as U.S. and British aircraft continue to bomb Iraqi military targets, Iraq's aggregate power is reduced, therefore its neighbors will gain more power.

C. U.S. POLICY OPTIONS

Iraq's isolation as an Arab and Islamic state has garnered great sympathy from neighboring Muslim populations.¹³³ The United States continues to point at Iraq as an external threat to the survivability of these neighboring regimes, citing the suspected presence of nuclear weapons, as well as the continued concealment of chemical and biological weapons.¹³⁴ Economically crushed with its population suffering from sanctions, its ruling regime isolated and, with its WMD program unsupervised, there is the perception that Iraq poses a future significant threat to its neighbors. If history is a guide, Iraq does pose a threat.

The Iraqi threat also is recognized as a formidable challenge to overcome. The Iraqi regime is under tremendous pressure. Its economy is in a shambles and there is no end in sight for the United Nations imposed sanctions. Since the end of Operation DESERT FOX, it is estimated that U.S. and British aircraft have flown over 10,000 sorties in Iraq and attacked over 400 targets.¹³⁵ An Iraqi reconciliation with neighboring Arab states is not going to occur as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power. An isolated Iraqi regime might fire a WMD-capable missile at Israel as an act of desperation or martyrdom.

¹³³ "What Next for Iraq?" *The Economist*. 2 January 1999. Available [Online]: <<http://www.economist.com/archive/view.egi>> [20 March 1999].

¹³⁴ Prepared Statement of General Anthony C. Zinni, Commander in Chief U.S. Central Command, before the Senate Armed Forces Committee. 13 April 1999.

¹³⁵ "The War that Time Forgot," Global Intelligence Update 30 August 1999. Stratfor.Com Website. Available [Online]: <<http://www.stratfor.com/world/default.htm>> [2 September 1999].

To counter the Iraqi threat and lessen the threat perceptions of Iraq's neighbors, the United States must modify its current policies. Current U.S. policy gives the Saudis a convenient excuse to pursue other regional alignments. If the United States could endorse a new inspection regime in Iraq while lifting economic sanctions, regional cooperation would increase. Arab populations and regimes are concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people. Moreover, the continued attacks by United States and British aircraft are becoming increasingly unpopular. Ideally, a unilateral lifting of the sanctions with the entry of a new team of international inspectors, followed by an internationally sponsored economic recovery program for Iraq might ease the threat of a new conflict and start another avenue in the "peace process." Gause has suggested a similar plan. He argues for a revision of the sanctions regime in return for a new inspection regime in Iraq. His revision lifts "general economic sanctions in exchange for restoring disarmament operations," and includes three elements. The first is to lift the oil production limits currently imposed on Iraq. The second is to suspend Iraq's obligation to contribute to the U.N. Gulf War compensation fund. The third element is to end the U.N. supervision of food and medicine purchases in Iraq.¹³⁶ The United States could still use military power

¹³⁶ F. Gregory Gause III, "Getting it Backward on Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, (May/ June 1999) p. 55.

to back the inspection regime. As Gause points out, Iraq is contained by the military power of the United States and others, not by economic sanctions."¹³⁷

Middle East threat perceptions encompass many issues, the end of UNSCOM is simply another obstacle to overcome. Further studies might pursue threat perceptions and alignments after a new inspection regime is installed in Iraq.

¹³⁷ Gause, *Foreign Affairs*, 56.

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