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Bush’s War: For Oil or Moral Imperative

Michael Mumaugh

When it comes to relations with the Middle East everything seems to boil down to one interest: oil. As demand for energy rose in the late twentieth century the events occurring in the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf became important to the entire world. America as many other Western nations tried to keep good relations with oil producing nations in the Gulf region. With the fall of Iran, the United States started a reorganization of its Middle East alliances. Under the administrations of Carter, Reagan, and Bush, America began to shift support to Iraq, to keep the supply of oil from the Middle East flowing. So, it may appear from America’s past foreign policy and economic situation in 1990 the United States went to war in the Persian Gulf for oil in 1991. Though one can make this argument, documents and actions demonstrate George H. W. Bush went into Kuwait in 1991 to defend international law, establish the foundations for his New World Order, and to punish a dictator for his transgressions. To understand this position the tangled web of alliances, historical background, and economic issues must be examined.

The same year Iran fell to the Islamic Revolution, Saddam Hussein became the president of Iraq. While the Carter administration was reeling from the changes occurring in Iran, Saddam and many in Iraq feared Khomeini’s desire to spread the Islamic Revolution. With continued border conflicts and a distrust of the regime in Iran, Saddam in September of 1980 launched an invasion of Iran. Iraq wanted to seize control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, establish control of the Khuzestan oil fields,
and stop Iran from spreading the ideals of the Islamic Revolution.\(^1\) The Iran-Iraq War set the stage for the problems which would occur in the 1990s, therefore it is important to understand what happened during this conflict. It would seem with all the problems Iran was causing for America, the United States would back Iraq in this conflict, yet Carter, in the closing days of his presidency, claimed neutrality in the conflict. The Carter administration did not challenge Iraq’s taking of the al-Arab waterway, but when Iraqi forces continued into Iran, Carter became concerned. With all this going on, Carter refused to send United States troops to protect important oil pipelines in the region, but he did send naval units to ensure the Straits of Hormuz were kept open so oil supplies would not be cut off.\(^2\) Though Carter maintained official neutrality, the United States gave Saddam what he believed was a message of support. On April 14, 1980, Carter’s national security adviser Brzezinski stated, “We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq...We do not feel that American-Iraqi relations need to be frozen in antagonisms.”\(^3\) This support led Saddam to believe that his war with Iran would be supported by America. Iraq received arms from the French and Soviets and monetary backing from six Arab states, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia among them. Initially, the offensive went well for Iraq, but they had underestimated the Iranian military complex. Though disorganized it was able to enlist large numbers of men, and their resolve stalemated and then reversed Iraqi gains. By 1982 the Iranians pushed the Iraqi army out of Iran and entered Iraq. It would be during the Iranian

3 Bennis and Moushabeck, 33-34.
Operation Ramadan, boys as young as nine and men as old as fifty were used to run through Iraqi mine fields and artillery fire to clear the way for Iranian tanks. The Iranians took massive casualties but regained lost territory. Calls for a negotiated peace were denied by both sides in 1982 causing the war to drag on allowing Iraq to regain the initiative. By 1984 it was reported 300,000 Iranians and 250,000 Iraqis were dead or wounded. By 1986 Iraq turned to a static defense strategy, which caused large Iranian casualties, and by 1988 Iraq resumed its offensive. With the use of chemical weapons Iraq was able to roll back Iranian troops. Before the cease fire in August of 1988 Iraqi forces had penetrated deep into Iranian territory and captured large amounts of armored vehicles including artillery. It is hard to actually know how many were killed and wounded by wars end but it is estimated nearly one million Iranians and over 375,000 Iraqis were killed or wounded. One thing was certain, was even in victory, Iraq was near bankruptcy and would look to find ways to limit its financial problems.

So, how would Ronald Reagan treat the situations in the Middle East when he took up the presidency after Carter? Reagan kept Carter’s policy of keeping the Straits of Hormuz open even as if it looked like it would be closed due to the fighting in 1984. When asked if he would use military force to insure the Straits were not closed Reagan said, “I don’t think it would be proper for me to talk about tactics... I do not believe the free world could stand by and allow anyone to close the Straits.” Reagan stiffened the American presence in the Gulf when it looked as the Iranians were closing in on the Straits during their 1982-84 offensives.

This increased resolve, shown by National Security Decision Directive 114, allowed for the use of force to protect oil production facilities and shipping in the region. This security decision showed a move toward siding with Iraq to protect American oil interests in the Persian Gulf. As the war dragged on, America in 1987 offered to re-flag Kuwaiti oil tankers, which had come under threat of attack in the region. Reagan also sent 42 warships to the Gulf to protect the oil shipments coming through the Straights. Though this show of power caused problems for Iran, it would not be without cost. Though the American warships protected the oil supplies in the region the *Vincennes Crisis* gave America’s foreign policy in the region trouble. Overall, the American presence in the Gulf gave Iraq some support, but for the most part America seemed to be protecting its oil supply, not backing Saddam’s regime. Carter and Reagan’s policies in the Gulf gave Saddam a false belief of support in his regime. All American policies seemed to favor Iraq, especially when it came to the arms embargo on Iran. The selling of missiles to Iran during the Iran-Contra Affair was the only U.S. action contrary to the majority of pro-Iraq policies. Though America did see Iraq as the lesser of two evils in the region, America would be more interested in keeping the supply of oil open in the region so nothing such as the economic crisis during the oil embargo would happen again.

Though the Iran-Iraq War was brought to an end in 1988 it would be the starting point for the turmoil Saddam caused in the 1990s. The Iran-Iraq War caused massive casualties on both sides and left Iraq in severe financial troubles. Saddam saw himself and his nation as the bulwark against Islamic extremism, and it was this belief which caused...

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him to demand the Arab nations to forgive his nation’s debts. The war caused Iraq to accumulate a debt of over $80 billion, which was nearly twice Iraq’s gross national product, and half of this debt belonged to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. By 1990, Saddam believed his country was being treated unfairly by the other Arab nations. He wanted his nation’s debts to be forgiven because he believed he had fought a war to protect them from the spread of the Islamic Revolution, but they refused. On top of Kuwait’s refusal to negotiate on the debt, Saddam also believed Kuwait was cutting into his nation’s oil profits by lowering the price of oil due to their supposed overproduction of oil. To make the situation worse, Saddam argued Kuwait was taking Iraqi oil out of the disputed Rumaila oil field located on the Iraq border with Kuwait. Saddam saw these activities as part of a Kuwaiti plot to hurt Iraq and led to his plans to invade Kuwait to retaliate for what was seen as an economic declaration of war. Surely, Saddam had to believe the United States would not just stand by and let him invade a country which was not only peaceful, but was also an oil producer. The following were some of the reasons Saddam Hussein believed he would not meet heavy resistance if he was to invade Kuwait. Saddam believed Saudi Arabia would not allow any non-Muslim to use their land to launch a campaign to liberate Kuwait or help defend their country. He also believed America was still suffering from the Vietnam Complex and would not be willing to fight on foreign soil. Lastly, Saddam believed his troops, who had proven themselves in the Iran-Iraq War, could match the United States if they entered the conflict. Of course all these assumptions would turn out to be

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7 Bennis and Moushabeck, 52.
8 Ibid., 51-53.
9 Ibid., 53.
The United States continued to have a somewhat pro-Iraq stance in the Middle East into the early Bush years. This continued pro-Iraqi stance was outlined by George H. W. Bush’s National Security Directive 26, which called for the U.S. to provide military training to Iraqis along with economic and political support. Yet, even this show of support was thin. The directive also stated should Iraq continue to meddle with the activities of other Middle Eastern nations the United States would support its allies in the region, namely Saudi Arabia, and provide them co-operational security.10 Though the United States told Saddam they would not just stand by and let Iraq dominate the region, Iraq moved forward with its plans to invade, and on August 2, 1990 Iraq began its invasion of Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait, caught by surprise, escaped to Saudi Arabia only minutes before Iraqi troops entered Kuwait City. Once in control, Saddam claimed he was liberating Kuwait and began to establish a “Provisional Free Kuwait Government.”11 Saddam’s decision to invade Kuwait forced the United States to decide if it would intervene. Would it be the rise in oil prices, caused by the fear created by the fall of Kuwait, or the desire to defend the rights of an independent country and United Nations Resolutions that would bring the United States military into the region?

Fears of oil prices going up due to Saddam’s demands on OPEC along with the moving of 30,000 troops to the Kuwaiti border appeared in the August 6th edition of Newsweek. Though experts said the lower demand and large reserves of oil in America would keep the prices in the United States from rising too high, these assurances did not calm

11 Bennis and Moushabeck, 57.
all fears. For it was said if Iraq’s pressure on OPEC continued, prices could sky rocket by winter time. When Saddam did invade Kuwait and began to seize control of the oil fields and refineries, the price of oil on the stock market rose fourteen percent in two days. Some economists like Phillip Verleger feared the Iraqi actions in Kuwait would force other OPEC countries to give in to Saddam’s demands for higher oil prices. He believed oil could rise to $30 a barrel and the U.S. embargo on Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil imposed by Bush could cause a 1970s style recession. Though Verleger presented a dark future not all economists were as negative. Others argued the loss of Kuwaiti oil would not cause a huge reduction in the oil supply. Iraq’s need for money would force them to keep up production and other OPEC nations could increase output to cover the small amount of oil not produced by Kuwait. Yet even these more optimistic predictions relied on Saddam not imposing production cut backs on OPEC nations. President Bush’s decision to send troops to defend Saudi Arabia limited some of the fears of oil price spikes, but if war did break out in the Saudi oil fields, the price of oil was predicted to soar to $50 a barrel. With all of this combined many Americans feared a massive recession and a return to the 1970s gas lines. Secretary of State Baker outlined the reason the United States was going to defend Saudi Arabia and its oil supplies when he said, “If you want to sum it up in one word: it’s jobs... Because an economic recession worldwide, caused by the control of one nation, one dictator, of the West’s lifeline [oil] will result in the loss of jobs on the part of American citizens.” Yet one

12 “Guess Where Oil Prices Are Headed?,” Newsweek, August 6, 1990, 50.
14 Ibid., 29-30.
16 Dilip Hairo, Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War. (New York, Routledge,
question remains unanswered, why didn’t Bush open up the Strategic Oil Reserves? Surely, this would have lowered fears, but it was not until after the offensive against Iraq began that Bush opened up the reserves. In fact, when the oil reserves were opened in 1991, the price of oil fell by a third almost over-night.\textsuperscript{17} So, why did he open the reserve only after the conflict started? It was because the S.O.R is only to be tapped in times of emergency. Not sure how events would go after the beginning of hostilities, there was a chance of a national energy emergency. Therefore, Bush opened the reserves.\textsuperscript{18} The statement by Baker and the refusal to open the reserves gives substance to those who argue the Gulf War was only for oil. However, to limit the reasons for U.S. actions to only these events is naïve. The actions to get Saddam to leave Kuwait through either unilateral action or, the favored U.N. action, showed Bush wanted to establish how international law would be upheld in the emerging post-Cold War world.\textsuperscript{19}

Before anything got out of hand, it was imperative the U.S. get the United Nations support before it did anything in the Gulf. Secretary Baker told Bush that U.N. support and resolutions gave the appearance the U.S. was not going it alone.\textsuperscript{20} While getting this support, Bush got permission from Saudi Arabia to station around 50,000 troops in the Persian Gulf. After the November election, Bush began to increase the number of troops to 430,000 enough to maintain an offensive if necessary.\textsuperscript{21}

Many Arab nations voted during the Arab League Summit to also send

\textsuperscript{17} Bennis and Moushabeck, 264-265.
\textsuperscript{21} Dilip Hiro, 237-238.
troops to defend Saudi Arabia, which destroyed any hope for Saddam’s call for an Arab holy war against the United States. On top of the military buildup to limit Saddam’s influence in the Middle East, Bush continued to push resolutions through the United Nations which strengthened the blockade and brought more nations to oppose Saddam. The United States, United Nations, and Arab states strengthened their positions as Saddam threatened a hostage crisis. When Kuwait fell, around 3,100 Americans and other Westerners were trapped in the country. Saddam threatened to place these hostages at military bases to prevent the U.S. from bombing them, and threatened their starvation till the blockade was lifted. Bush’s response was to wait out Saddam and see if the sanctions would cause him to back down. Bush did say in a press release he was “deeply troubled by the use of innocent civilians as pawns” but he knew if Saddam began to kill hostages war would erupt and the coalition would have the moral initiative. Bush was unwilling to deal with a Tehran-like situation and was determined that something needed to be done. The pressure to do something got the U.N. Resolution 664 passed on August 18th, which demanded the release of all detained foreigners. Luckily, the hostage crisis came to an end when Saddam, knowing the hostages hurt his chances for negotiations, released them on August 28th. Even during the hostage crisis, military planning went ahead and in fact many Arab leaders were calling for the conflict to begin quickly. They believed the only way of getting Saddam to back down was with military action. It was also reported many American troops were attempting to get the Iraqis

22 Ibid., 20-21.
24 Ibid.
25 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, 349-350.
to show acts of aggression.27 Though many wanted a fight, there were many things which had to be accounted for. If it came to conflict, this war would be the first desert combat for the United States since World War II, therefore, the troops would have to learn to deal with the extreme heat and sandy environment. Also, coalition forces had to deal with the threat of Iraq using chemical weapons, therefore, troops would have to learn to use anti-gas uniforms, which made the heat worse, and how to use the antidote kits to combat nerve agents.28 Overall, the buildup of coalition troops in Saudi Arabia ended any threat Saddam could take the Saudi oil fields. Establishing a strategy to combat the problems of the desert during Operation Desert Shield paid off in November where the use of force against Iraq was passed by the United Nations with Resolution 678. The resolution set a deadline of January 15, 1991 for Saddam to meet the demands of United Nations Resolution 660, which demanded Iraq withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait. If Iraq did not follow the demands of the Resolution, the U.S. led coalition had the authority to push him out with force in what would be called Operation Desert Storm.29

On October 1, 1990, Bush speaking at the U.N. General Assembly said he hoped for a diplomatic solution, but the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait would not stand. If the Iraqis would unconditionally withdraw, there would be opportunities for Iraq and Kuwait to settle their differences permanently.30 Saddam turned down this compromise and on October 4th he stated on Iraqi national radio “there would be no compromise Iraq will

30 Jean Smith, 170.
never give up one inch of this land now called Province Number 19.”31 With Iraq making this firm statement of resolve, it was now apparent offensive operations were probably going to be called for. If it was going to come down to military action to take back Kuwait, coalition forces would have to overcome Saddam’s superiority in men, artillery, tanks, and their defense in depth. To make things worse, in December, Saddam increased his troop numbers in Kuwait to around 480,000 men and 1,300 tanks. General Powell informed Bush he believed a ground war would be necessary, but the coalition did not have enough troops to invade Kuwait.32 It would be mid-February before the U.S. would have the 430,000 troops needed to go on the offensive, so any action taken after the January 15th deadline would have to be done with air power.33 Also even before it came to going on the offensive the United States would have to make sure its coalition stayed together. The numerous allies had different orders for their troops pertaining to how and when they could engage in combat. It was believed if Saddam provoked hostilities, all the coalition troops would fight and, if the U.S. decided to go on the offensive to push Saddam out of Kuwait, some might not agree to go in. The Saudi, Egyptian, and Kuwaiti forces would fight either way, and seemed to be more belligerent than the American troops in wanting Saddam gone. For the European troops, only the British were willing to fight under U.S. authority, French troops would only fight in a defensive role.34 This uncertainty in how the troops would fight would cause problems in the operations of Desert Shield, and hurt planning for Desert Storm.

31 Ibid., 171.
32 Dilip Hiro, 274.
33 Ibid., 292.
seemed as if he might be trying to buy more time with negotiations. Bush demonstrated the desire to negotiate to the final hour by allowing Baker to meet with Iraqi ambassador Aziz. The coalition had mixed reactions to the agreement but it would solidify support for the coming war on the American home front. On January 9, 1991 Secretary Baker talked with Iraqi ambassador Aziz in Geneva. Baker handed Aziz a letter from Bush which called for Iraq to follow through with the demands of U.N. Resolution 678, only after that would the United States be willing to work with Iraq. Aziz refused to take the letter and it appeared Saddam would not leave Kuwait willingly before the January 15th deadline. On January 12th the United States Congress passed a resolution allowing for the use of the “United States Armed Forces pursuant to United Security Council Resolution 678 in order to achieve implementation of Security Council Resolutions.” Now that Bush had the authority of Congress and the United Nations, preparations of war went ahead. On January 16th, a day after the U.N. deadline, Bush addressed the nation on television at 9 pm stating, “Tonight the battle has been joined.”

Operation Desert Storm begun in the late hours of January 16, 1991, and it would be a six week operation which saw massive numbers of air sorties. The first stage of the operation was to take out Iraqi command and control facilities, airports, missile launch sites, radar sites, and oil refineries. The second stage was to destroy the Iraqi air force, Scud capabilities, and decimate Iraqi ground forces. As the air campaign went forward, many military officers were finding the bombings were not achieving the effects they wanted. The Iraqis had placed many of

35 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, 419-421.
36 Jean Smith, 223.
37 Dilip Hiro, 300.
38 Jean Smith, 250.
39 Dilip Hiro, 319.
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their planes in reinforced air shelters, and the successful deployment of inflatable dummy tanks and aircraft hindered the air campaign. During the first week alone the 12,000 sorties only destroyed 41 of Iraq’s 700 airplanes, and the attempts to destroy Iraq’s missile launchers were proving difficult due to their mobility. The only part of the bombing campaign which was working was the destruction of the transport infrastructure which limited the logistical support of the Iraqi Army. Yet Iraqi moral in Kuwait was still high when during a propaganda campaign to get Iraqi troops to surrender in early February, only 86 out of 360,000 did. With the start of Operation Desert Storm, Saddam lived up to his threat to expand the war. Hoping to splinter the Arab Coalition against him, Saddam began to launch modified Scud missiles at Israel hoping they would retaliate. Many of these missiles hit Tel Aviv and Haifa, causing a few causalities. Instead of retaliation, the Israelis held back under U.S. pressure. This created a lot of sympathy for Israel, and the Arab Coalition did not splinter as Saddam had hoped. As time passed, the bombing seemed to crack Saddam’s resolve, for he began to look to the Soviets for a negotiated peace.

In February, Saddam began working with Gorbachev to work out an agreement for a negotiated pull out of Kuwait and a military cease fire, but it came with many demands. This agreement made between Saddam and Gorbachev called for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait thereby fulfilling the National Security Council Resolution 600, but it also called for U.S. forces to withdraw by the end of the month. The agreement called on Israel to pull out of Palestine, all of Iraq’s debts were to be forgiven, Gulf countries would be left alone to create their own security arrangements,

40 Ibid., 322, 334.
41 Ibid., 352.
42 Ibid., 323-324.
and the Gulf would be free of any foreign military bases. Now if Bush went into the Gulf only for oil, this should have been agreeable. In the January 14, 1991 issue of *Newsweek*, Baker presented the belief the U.S. could negotiate with Saddam. Baker said if Saddam left Kuwait, the United States promised not to attack Iraqi forces and would not stop their Arab brothers if they decided to turn over oil fields or even a few islands in the Gulf to Iraq. Also, the United States would work to end the embargo, except for arms on Iraq, and would be willing to work on the Palestine problem. This was before the conflict started, and with Saddam refusing to agree to meet these early negotiations he destroyed any chance Bush would agree to anything, but Iraq meeting all United Nations Resolutions. When Saddam announced he would live up to the negotiated terms with the Soviets, Bush said he would not honor them. Bush declared the United States and coalition forces would enforce the United Nations Resolutions and called on Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait unconditionally. Bush took this firm stance because he and many military officials believed Saddam was conducting a scorched earth campaign in Kuwait during their pull out. It was true, Iraqi forces were at work destroying the whole oil production infrastructure in Kuwait as they began to pull out. Bush gave Saddam an ultimatum saying Saddam had seven days to meet the demands of Resolution 600 or coalition troops would begin their ground offensive. Apparently not believing the American threats Saddam began withdrawing his troops from Kuwait according to the agreement with the Soviets. Had Saddam held firm in Kuwait, his troops might have blooded coalition soldiers from their solid defensive positions, but on February 24, 1991 Saddam’s troops

43 Ibid., 364-365.
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were caught in the open when Operation Desert Sabre was launched. This assumption is based on the Iraqi army had a chance of putting up a good fight due to the lack of devastation caused by the air campaign, and the fact even before the offensive began many Pentagon officials were unsure of the exact condition of Iraqi forces. Yet by noon on the first day coalition forces, had achieved their twenty four hour objectives, and by the 26th, coalition forces were closing the circle around the Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait on highway 80. Even as things were going bad on the ground for Iraqi forces, Saddam continued to say his troops were holding back American troops and his troops were only tactically withdrawing from Kuwait. Bush will set the record straight by saying Iraqi forces were in full retreat. Bush stated retreating Iraqi forces would be treated as threats and the only way to avoid more casualties was for the Iraqis to throw down their arms. Once coalition troops encircled the retreating Iraqi forces the casualties became great along the road, gaining it the nickname, the Highway to Hell. The fighting was made even worse due to all the black smoke created by the 500 or more Kuwaiti oil wells which had been torched by the Iraqis making it hard to breathe and lighting up the Iraqi retreat. By February 27th, Kuwait City was retaken by coalition troops and thousands of Iraqi soldiers were taken prisoner. On February 28th, Bush, believing enough blood had been shed, and with all Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, he called a cease fire. Surprisingly, no one had figured the offensive would have gone so well. From the beginning

48 Dilip Hiro, 387.
of the ground war to its finish, it only took 100 hours.\textsuperscript{50} All that was left now to keep the hostilities from starting back up was getting Saddam to publicly agree to all twelve U.N. Resolutions.\textsuperscript{51}

On February 27, 1991 Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a letter to the U.N. declaring they would fully comply with all resolutions. On March 2, 1991 the United Nations passed Resolution 686 which confirmed a cease fire and demanded Iraq return all stolen property back to Kuwait and enter into talks with coalition army commanders to arrange for the ending of all hostilities.\textsuperscript{52} On March 2\textsuperscript{nd}, Bush addressed the troops in the Gulf over the radio: “This is a war we did not seek and did not want. But Saddam Hussein turned a deaf ear to the voices of peace and reason... the coalition faced a moral imperative to put a stop to the atrocities in Kuwait.”\textsuperscript{53} Now with hostilities finished, Kuwait liberated, and Saddam agreeing to all the U.N. Resolutions, it was time to take stock of the situation. Kuwait had to rebuild around 730 oil wells, of which about 640 of them were still on fire. With so much destruction in Kuwait it would take years for the country to replace its oil producing infrastructure. In all, the destruction caused by the conflict placed the cost of the war around $61 billion.\textsuperscript{54} So with these stats in mind, can the war for oil argument stand with such destruction done to oil facilities? It would seem the United States and other coalition troops went to war against Iraq to uphold the United Nations Resolutions and keep a

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush 1991 Book I}, 187.
\textsuperscript{54} Dilip Hiro, 398.
dictator from bullying other nations.

With all the information presented, is there an argument for the assumption the United States went into the Persian Gulf War for oil and oil alone? Looking at the policies established under Carter, Reagan, and even Bush prior to the outbreak of war, it would seem oil was a driving factor in all of them. Yet if one is going to claim only the United States’ actions were driven by the demand for oil then they are ignoring the acts of Iraq during the 1980s and ’90s. Saddam wanted the Shatt al-Arab waterway, which would make shipping oil into the Gulf quicker for Iraq, and taking Iran’s Khuzestan oil field would make large sums of money for Iraq. Then, before the invasion of Kuwait, what was Saddam asking for; control of Kuwaiti islands in the Gulf and control of the entire Rumaila oil field, even though Iraq already controlled the majority of it. So, it can also be argued oil was defiantly the driving force in Saddam’s actions in the Gulf. Many will look at the economic situation in late 1990 to base their argument Bush was interested only in oil. Yes, there was a spike in oil prices and fears of oil and gas shortages, yet as already shown, not everyone agreed the fall of Kuwait would spell disaster in the oil markets. In fact, when the market was the most violent, right before military operations against Iraq, Bush opened the national oil reserves, therefore easing fears and causing the price of oil to fall. Even this action was argued as evidence Bush wanted oil since he waited so long to open the reserves. He waited so long because the reserves are only to be used in times of national crisis. Therefore, when hostilities began, no one knew how the war would go, and under these uncertainties Bush opened the reserves. Bush moved toward combat in the Middle East for some of the same reasons Truman went to Korea; such blatant aggression cannot
stand. Bush got international support through the United Nations and through this united front, placed an effective embargo on Iraq as well as conducted a successful military operation. If Bush stood against Iraqi aggression only to regain Kuwaiti oil, why did he not accept the negotiated settlement offered by the Soviet Union? Even though this agreement complied with Resolution 660, it also seemed to reward Iraq by giving them many of the concessions they wanted. Bush would see this as a diplomatic ploy and demanded Saddam comply with all of the U. N. Resolutions, which would not reward Saddam for his aggression. Even though early American policies seemed to favor the argument for the U.S. going to war for oil, it was not the reason U.S. led coalition troops went to war against Iraq. There is enough evidence that shows America went to liberate Kuwait, and with so much damage to the oil producing capabilities in the region, discounts the war for oil argument.