

On the Origins of the 'Gulf War'

Articles by Hugh Roberts and Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, and transcript of an interview between US ambassador April Glaspie and Saddam Hussein

Hugh Roberts:
How America destroyed the peace

Crown Prince Hassan:
Why Jordan refused to join the war on Iraq

April Glaspie/Saddam Hussein interview

The following article was originally published in the March-April 1991 of the Labour and Trade Union Review. It argues that the unanimous consensus of Arab opinion against the occupation of Kuwait could have brought about a peaceful resolution, but that this possibility was sabotaged by a speedy and effective US intervention. The article also makes an important distinction between ‘sanctions’ and ‘blockade’. It is the confusion between these two concepts that enables some commentators to think there is a parallel to be drawn between the sanctions that were imposed on South Africa and those imposed on Iraq. South Africa was subjected to trade sanctions; Iraq has been subjected to a blockade, or, if you prefer, a siege, which is an act of war. For a parallel we may look to something like the Serb siege/blockade of Sarajevo, which, even though it occurred in a situation of outright war, is generally regarded as having been morally reprehensible.

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How America Destroyed the Peace

by Hugh Roberts

In his broadcast to the nation on January 18 explaining why British forces had gone into action in the Gulf, John Major declared that “In the patient diplomacy of the last five months leaders from around the world have sought peace, and then sought it again. But unfortunately, Saddam Hussein has chosen war. He has rejected every attempt to reach a peaceful solution” (The Times, January 18, 1991).

The first sentence of this statement is formally true. Numerous ‘leaders from around the world’ had indeed sought peace and had done so repeatedly. They included King Hussein of Jordan, Yasser Arafat of the PLO, King Hassan of Morocco and President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, not to mention former European leaders of the stature of ex-prime minister Edward Heath and ex-chancellor Willy Brandt. But this sentence is only formally true, in the Jesuitical sense of truth. For it was

unquestionably intended to suggest that the British and American leaders who were now waging war had previously sought peace. This is the opposite of the truth. It was they who consistently acted to thwart the peace-seeking initiatives of everyone else.

The second sentence is quite untrue. In uttering it, the British Prime Minister simply lied to the British people. And he lied in the full knowledge that this lie would be echoed and endorsed by the leaders of the Labour Party. Three days later, Gerald Kaufman declared in the House of Commons that “What is quite clear is that this is a war that no one wanted, except for Saddam Hussein...it has to be said that, in the end, Iraq rejected diplomacy.”

There had been an enormous amount of diplomacy between August 2, 1990 and January 15, 1991. There was the diplomacy, in which Iraq was vigorously involved, which sought a peaceful solution. And there was the Anglo-American diplomacy which sought to consolidate the anti-Iraq military alliance and frustrate the efforts of the peacemakers. What Britain and America have called diplomacy in respect of Iraq has been an affair of ultimatums issued in the full knowledge that Saddam Hussein could not possibly comply with them without subverting the Iraqi state, backed up by an economic blockade. This, as Edward Heath has rightly pointed out, has been the negation of diplomacy.

The economic blockade has been described throughout by official British and American spokesmen as “sanctions”. In his broadcast on January 18, John Major declared that “We applied sanctions to make our point clear. We refused to trade with Iraq.” That was another lie told to the British people. What Britain and America did went far beyond refusing to trade.

Sanctions would indeed have involved a refusal to sell goods to Iraq and to buy goods from Iraq. Sanctions were imposed on Rhodesia and on South Africa. They damaged the economies of these two countries, and exercised some long-term influence on the evolution of the political situation there, without bringing either country to its knees. But what the British and Americans organised from early August was a full-scale land, sea and air blockade of Iraq to prevent any goods leaving or reaching the country. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (Third revised edition, 1977) defines ‘blockade’ as “the shutting up of a place, blocking of a harbour, line of coast, frontier, etc. by hostile forces or ships, so as to stop ingress or egress.” The critical word in this definition is ‘hostile’. Hostility implies a state of war. And in the conventional terminology of what is fondly referred to as ‘International Law’, an economic blockade is

indeed considered to be an act of war, a belligerent act.

The only western government to state the truth of this last August was France. France initially took the position of agreeing that UN sanctions should be imposed on Iraq, as they had been on South Africa, but that it did not support a blockade. But having, in a passing moment of integrity, reaffirmed this vital distinction, it allowed itself to be induced by Anglo-American pressure to forget all about it.

By mounting a blockade on Iraq last August, Britain and America, under the UN cover, made war on Iraq. This was an extraordinary thing to do. Iraq had not gone to war with either Britain or America, and had no intention of doing so. It suddenly found itself on the receiving end of a major act of war by the strongest military powers in the world. It reacted by making strenuous proposals for a peaceful settlement, and when these were rejected, by interning enemy aliens, as is normal in time of war, and was roundly denounced for taking 'hostages' in consequence.

The interning of enemy aliens was the only hostile action undertaken by Iraq towards Britain and America and the other members of the military alliance ranged against it before January 16. And it was 'hostile' only in the technical sense of the word. In substance it was unquestionably an entirely defensive act, only taken on August 16, that is a full fortnight after all-out economic warfare had been launched against Iraq, eight days after American and British troops had begun arriving on its doorstep in preparation for a possible military campaign against it, and four days after Iraq's proposals for a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement had been rejected out of hand by President Bush.

In such circumstances there was every reason for the Iraqi government to fear that British and American and other western nationals in Iraq might become the target of spontaneous acts of violence from ordinary Iraqis, as Egyptian migrant workers in Iraq had already become, and that western nationals in Kuwait might be involved in embarrassing and possibly disastrous incidents with Iraqi troops there unless taken into protective custody without further delay. It should be noted that western nationals had had a fortnight to get out of both Iraq and Kuwait by this stage, and had been deliberately discouraged by their own governments from doing so.

On the day of Major's broadcast, Douglas Hurd stated that "we have now joined in the war which Saddam Hussein started on August 2, 1990" (The Times, January 18, 1990). There can be no doubt that British public

opinion has sincerely believed in the truth of this statement, and that its support for the war has been in large part premised on this belief. Had Douglas Hurd said that “Saddam Hussein has now been forced to join in the war which we declared on him on August 2, 1990” the British people might have viewed the business of killing a hundred thousand Iraqis in a different light.

In order to force Iraq to join in this war, Britain and America relentlessly sabotaged every effort by Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait on terms which would have permitted the government of Iraq to survive. The crucial acts of sabotage occurred between August 2 and August 10, 1990. These acts were entirely successful, and established a state of affairs which made war inevitable.

The entire Arab world was united in condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. While many Arab governments agreed that Iraq had substantial grievances against Kuwait, they could not accept that these justified the use of force by one Arab state against another. Their own self-interest as states required them to ensure that the invasion was reversed, and there can be little doubt that they would have united to ensure this, had they been given time to do so.

The first Arab state to condemn the invasion was Algeria, which did so on August 2. At a meeting of the council of ministers of the Arab League on August 3, a resolution was carried with a two-thirds majority. This was in three parts:

- (i) condemning the invasion;
- (ii) convoking an extraordinary Arab summit to find an Arab solution to the crisis;
- (iii) rejecting any foreign intervention, whether direct or indirect, in Arab affairs.

The second and third parts of this resolution were proposed by Algeria, which clearly had a shrewd idea of what was in the offing. The fourteen countries which supported this resolution were Algeria, Bahrein, Djibouti, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. It is important to note that the four major Arab states which subsequently joined the US-led military alliance against Iraq – Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Syria – all supported this resolution.

At this stage in the crisis the situation was wide open. The Arab world was united in condemning Iraq and there was every prospect of the Arab League organising effective pressure to persuade it to withdraw. For its part, Iraq had not yet dug itself into an impossible position. It had not annexed Kuwait, and was making clear to Arab and western governments that it was willing to withdraw without further ado if given satisfaction on its border dispute and financial claims. What then happened was a massive escalation of the crisis engineered wholly and entirely by the United States, which split the Arab world down the middle, destroyed the credibility and influence of the Arab League and scotched all chance of a peaceful settlement. On August 4 Saddam Hussein was supposed to go to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia to negotiate a settlement with King Fahd, as had been arranged by King Hussein of Jordan in talks in Baghdad on August 2 and 3. Saddam was so confident that a deal was possible with Fahd that Baghdad radio announced that Iraq was ready to pull out of Kuwait by August 5. But a crucial participant in the planned Jeddah mini-summit was Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. Saddam and King Hussein both believed they had secured Mubarak's agreement to the summit. But in the event Mubarak decided not to go to Jeddah after all. According to Pierre Salinger, once President Kennedy's Press Secretary and now ABC News' chief foreign correspondent, Mubarak changed his mind under American pressure.

On August 5, Yasser Arafat, who had been strenuously trying to promote Arab peace negotiations, saw Saddam in Baghdad."As Arafat walked into Saddam's office, the Iraqi leader opened the conversation by saying: Who sabotaged the summit?' Arafat didn't really know then but he pushed Saddam, saying that an early political solution was absolutely necessary. Saddam replied immediately: 'Go and see the Saudis. We are ready to discuss,' Heading for Saudi Arabia, Arafat stopped in Cairo for another talk with Mubarak. He told him that Saddam is ready to discuss withdrawal from Kuwait but found the Egyptian President very antagonistic, possibly due to increasing pressure from the US. When Arafat arrived in Saudi Arabia on August 7, he was told he could not see King Fahd, who was heavily involved in discussions with US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney" (Pierre Salinger, 'Faltering steps in the sand', The Guardian, February 4, 1991).

Also on August 7, President Bush ordered the immediate despatch of 4,000 American combat troops and aircraft to Saudi Arabia.

It was only after these developments, which made clear that the American

government was actively intervening to prevent an Arab solution and had already effectively suborned the Egyptian and Saudi governments to that end, that the Iraqi government declared the annexation of Kuwait, on August 8. This did not mean that Iraq was no longer willing to consider a withdrawal. On the contrary, it was clearly only a holding operation on Saddam's part, for his next move was to ask Arafat to attend the Arab League summit scheduled for August 9-10 in Cairo and put forward fresh proposals for a settlement there.

According to some sources, a joint PLO-Libyan proposal, which significantly made no reference to any wider Middle East issues, but concentrated on the matters at issue between Iraq and Kuwait and urged serious negotiations between the two parties (in line with one of the clauses in UN Security Council Resolution 660 which everyone except Edward Heath subsequently forgot about) was put forward, but its inclusion on the summit agenda was vetoed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, so that it was not even discussed. According to Salinger, Arafat's proposal was simply that five key leaders (whom Salinger does not specify, but who were presumably Mubarak, King Fahd, the Emir of Kuwait, King Hussein of Jordan and Arafat himself) should go to Baghdad to thrash out a deal which would then be submitted to the rest of the Arab League in Cairo for its approval. "But when Arafat ... proposed the five-nation delegation, it was immediately vetoed by Egypt and Syria" (Salinger, loc.cit.).

Instead, a very different resolution was proposed and voted. This not only differed from Arafat's conciliatory motion. It also differed profoundly from the three-part resolution passed by the Arab League Council of Ministers on August 3. The new resolution

- (i) verbally reaffirmed the decisions of the Arab League Council of Ministers meeting of August 3 (while actually ignoring the second and third of those decisions);
- (ii) affirmed the Arab League's obligation to respect the decisions of the UN Security Council contained in resolutions 660 and 662;
- (iii) condemned Iraqi aggression and resolved not to recognise the Iraqi decision to annex Kuwait;
- (iv) called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait;
- (v) affirmed Kuwaiti sovereignty and independence and called for the

restoration of the lawful government of Kuwait;

(vi) agreed to respond positively to the requests of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to send Arab forces to their defence.

According to Salinger, 'Arafat was stunned ... when he sat down at the Arab League conference table and found before him a communiqué already written. He immediately came to the conclusion that it was written in English and translated into Arabic. Four other delegates to that conference whom I have talked to came to the same conclusion.' (Salinger, loc.cit.) According to other sources whom I have spoken to, the communiqué actually was in English.

This 'communiqué' – in fact, a draft resolution – was presented to the conference by Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It was supported in addition by 10 other states: Bahrein, Djibouti, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Syria, United Arab Emirates. This gave the resolution a majority, with 12 votes out of a total of 21.

Of these 12, only four are substantial states: Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Syria, The remainder are of no military significance and their sovereignty in foreign affairs has long been a polite fiction. Djibouti and Somalia have long been notorious for voting with Egypt on virtually all matters; the Lebanese government is controlled by Syria; Oman is a British client, and Bahrein, Qatar and the UAE were in the Saudis' pocket in foreign affairs.

None of the other substantial Arab states voted for this resolution. Libya and the PLO voted against; Mauritania and the Sudan expressed reservations; Algeria, Jordan and the Yemen abstained; Iraq and Tunisia were absent.

American and British propaganda after August 10 repeatedly claimed that the entire Arab world was united in condemning Iraq and supporting the UN-sponsored Operation Desert Shield. In reality, the unity which had existed within the Arab world on August 3 had been shattered by August 10. It had been shattered by the way Egypt and the Gulf states railroaded the Arab League summit to force through an American-inspired resolution which destroyed the possibility of a negotiated Arab solution in order to provide the most transparent of fig leaves for the establishment of a massive western military presence in the Gulf.

On August 10 the possibility of a peaceful, negotiated, Arab solution to

the Gulf crisis was dead, killed by US pressure. It was made clear to Iraq that it would not be allowed to secure a negotiated withdrawal from Kuwait on terms which would enable the Iraqi government to survive. It was made clear to Saddam Hussein that his main enemies in the Arab world, Syria's Hafez el Assad, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, and the Gulf monarchies, were all aboard the American-led military coalition ranged against him, and that, having chosen their camp, they could not possibly be expected to modify their positions. It was made clear that the American and British attitude was that something called 'International Law' was going to be enforced on Iraq, despite the fact that numerous previous acts of aggression by other states had gone unpunished.

His reaction was to put forward proposals on August 12 for a comprehensive settlement of all outstanding territorial conflicts in the Middle East. This proposal took the Anglo-American position at face value. If negotiations were ruled out because it was a matter of enforcing the law, let the law be enforced properly, that is, equitably; let all transgressions be dealt with. Saddam made it clear that Iraq would agree to abide by International Law if it was demonstrated that International Law actually existed and was being taken in earnest by those who claimed to be upholding it. The way to demonstrate this was to make clear that International Law applied to other states as well as Iraq, notably Israel and Syria, to name but two.

This proposal was immediately rejected by the United States. From that moment on, the Anglo-American and UN position lacked all legal and moral authority in the eyes of the vast majority of the Arab and Muslim world.

From that moment on, Iraqi diplomacy was essentially concerned to highlight the double standards of the American-led alliance and weaken this alliance by playing the Palestinian and Islamic cards. It had not tried to play either of these cards before it was made to understand that neither a negotiated compromise nor an equitable legal outcome were to be allowed it.

From that moment on, the diplomacy of other states was essentially concerned either to reassure their own public opinions that their governments were trying to avoid the war that was already virtually inevitable (France, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, etc.) or to justify and sustain their own participation within the anti-Iraq alliance and extract the greatest advantages in cash and other benefits from staying 'on board'.

According to Saudi military sources, between 85,000 and 100,000 Iraqis have been killed since January 16 because the United States refused to countenance either a diplomatic or a legal solution to the Gulf crisis and acted between August 2 and August 10 last year to make both impossible. The true number of Iraqis who have been slaughtered in the greatest act of western folly and murderous arrogance in living memory may well be very much higher than this, of course.

This is what the British Labour Party has been implicated in by Gerald Kaufman and Neil Kinnock.

This is an article taken from the Guardian, 12/2/1991. In it, Crown Prince Hassan, who was generally assumed at the time to be King Hussein's successor, explains Jordan's refusal to join the war against Iraq.

Both Jordan and the Yemen were severely punished for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Kuwaiti crisis. They were punished economically by the United States and there were massive expulsions of Jordanian and Yemeni workers from Saudi Arabia and from Kuwait.

Jordan, of course, has since made amends, admitted its errors, and been allowed back into the 'International Community' (ie the US and its courtiers). Yemen is still out in the cold. Indeed, not long after the Kuwaiti crisis, there was a Yemeni crisis. Saudi Arabia wanted an oil rich piece of Yemeni territory, marched its troops to the Yemeni border and threatened to invade. The Yemenis, riven by civil war (largely fuelled by the Saudis), could not resist and gave them what they wanted. The similarity to the Iraq/Kuwait crisis was flagrant, but the 'International Community' chose to look the other way.

This is something that deserves to be studied more closely. But for the moment, let us savour Jordan, in the last moment of its moral and intellectual integrity.

Why Jordan refused to join the war on Iraq

by Crown Prince Hassan

There is no contradiction between "conscience" and "legitimacy". The flag of Kuwait still flies, as it should, on the Kuwaiti Embassy in Amman. We have repeatedly affirmed our total opposition to the acquisition of territory by force. Jordan has assiduously implemented UN Security Council sanctions against Iraq at a great cost to its own economy. What Jordan did not do was to send its forces to join the coalition and fight in the war. Our critics conveniently forget these facts and many others. Our allegiance to peace does not put us in any camp except in that of peace.

No effort was spared by Jordan to warn about the destruction, both physical and psychological, that war will bring to the region. There are those who did not understand or did not like our message. Jordan was successively demoted by its critics from, initially, an apologist for Iraq, to tilting towards it. Then to moving firmly into Iraq's camp. And finally to having its allegiance to Iraq.

Since August 2, Jordan has consistently worked for a peaceful solution to the Iraq-Kuwait crisis within the framework of international law and UN resolutions. Alas, such contributions were thwarted. As the recent speech of His Majesty [King Hussein] suggested, there is no contradiction between international legitimacy and an Arab contribution to peace. In

fact, any regional settlement based on justice has to address all the people concerned.

Throughout the period since the outbreak of the crisis, Jordan's sole allegiance has been to peace. His Majesty King Hussein's latest speech is a cry of conscience. We helplessly see the ineluctable course of events that may very soon visit the horrors of weapons of mass destruction upon the region

"The dignity of truth is lost with too many protestations." His Majesty's speech has been criticised for omitting references to Kuwait. Jordan has repeatedly stressed the need to mobilise all efforts in the search for a diplomatic solution based on international law. The very notion of finding a diplomatic solution based on legitimacy implies an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. This has always been Jordan's official position.

As long as the Iraq-Iran war lasted, President Saddam was seen by the West as the party deserving support. That seems clear in the review of Iraq's relations with the west over the past decade. The United States Human Rights Country Reports are instructive. Up until last year, allegations of human rights violations in Iraq were passed over with bureaucratic skill. Positive developments were highlighted, eg the rights of minorities and the rights of women and secularism.

At the UN, meanwhile, Iraq was shielded from exposure to the rigours of the organisation's charter. Early resolutions on the Iraq-Iran war were classics in equivocation and abandonment of principles. Restoration of the status quo ante and the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, so prominent as justification for the collective punishment currently being inflicted on the Iraqi people, were not even mentioned at that stage.

The use of chemical weapons in that war was documented as far back as 1983. Yet no meaningful condemnation was made by the Security Council or any human rights group within the UN system. It was only after the Iraq-Iran ceasefire came into place, a period in which chemical weapons were not used, that President Saddam's image as a ruthless ruler who will not hesitate to use chemical weapons was being carefully nurtured.

Iraq received extensive economic support from the world community during its war with Iran. By the end of the war, credits to Iraq are reported to have reached \$80 billion, provided mainly from the West and from Arab oil countries.

Jordan is not an apologist for any, but there are certain pertinent facts about the Iraq-Kuwait dispute that have to be remembered:

- Historically there have been no fewer than 22 active border disputes in the Gulf region since 1900, and no fewer than 21 in which redress was sought by military force.
- While Kuwait's membership of the Community of Nations as an independent and sovereign state is beyond dispute, it cannot be said that Iraqi territorial claims on some Kuwaiti territory are not without foundation. These claims predate President Saddam, and it is a fact that he had taken more steps to finalise border delimitations than any of his predecessors.
- There is no doubt that Iraq's complaints about Kuwaiti overproduction of oil were genuine and bitterly felt. Evidence that the Kuwaitis were overproducing in violation of existing OPEC agreements is incontestable. It is equally incontestable that the catastrophic effects of such overproduction on Iraq's economy – and ultimately on the very integrity of the state – could not have escaped the notice of the Kuwaiti authorities. Did greed prevail over good sense, or was there an international attempt to weaken Iraq? If the latter is the case, as the evidence suggests, would it be too inappropriate to speak of economic aggression, a notion which in our interdependent world can be as destabilising as armed aggression?

On the occasions on which President Saddam was approached directly without intimidation, he always complied. He promised His Majesty King Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait immediately after the Iraqi invasion. That solution would have prevented a local dispute from becoming an international crisis. But it was undercut by Arab League and Security Council condemnation of Iraq. That marked the beginning of the escalation.

No one can say with a clear conscience that peaceful means were exhausted. In the course of almost six months of crisis characterised by name calling, military preparations and escalation of demands (for example Mrs Thatcher's "Sanctions will not be lifted even if Iraq withdraws") there was only one direct meeting between the USA and Iraq – on January 9, 1991. By then, it was too late. The logic of war had taken on a life of its own and the meeting was meant for different audiences, Congress on the one hand and the Arab masses on the other. No genuine

negotiations.

Despite this, the Iraqis never completely locked the door against a peaceful solution. Thus for example, in his January 13 meeting with the UN Secretary General, President Saddam suggested that Iraq would be ready to “cooperate” if there is a comprehensive application of international legality.

Jordan, although contiguous to Iraq, did not evolve significant economic relations with Iraq until the 1980s. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been the main regional economic partners of Jordan. Both countries absorbed the larger part of Jordanian migrant labour, and provided the main markets for Jordanian agricultural exports.

Significant economic linkages between Jordan and Iraq were in fact a by-product of the Iran–Iraq war. They began when Basra, Iraq’s only outlet to the sea, was closed, forcing the Iraqis to seek alternative ports for the huge supplies needed to sustain the war. Syria denied Iraq the use of its Mediterranean ports which would have provided a second best to Basra, and closed Iraq’s only oil pipeline. In the event, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia began pumping oil on Iraq’s behalf, providing Iraq with credit to prevent an Iranian takeover of the Gulf.

Meanwhile, Jordan’s port of Aqaba became one of two main substitutes for Basra (Kuwait being the other). Road tankers were used to carry Iraqi crude across the desert from Iraq for re-exportation through Aqaba. Jordan additionally provided a variety of supplies to Iraq on a credit basis. All these factors led to a sharp increase in the volume of trade between Iraq and Jordan which was negligible prior to the Iraq-Iran war. As the war progressed and Iraq could not meet its repayment obligations to Jordan, it offered oil in return. Jordan, which was hard-pressed for foreign exchange, consequently took Iraqi crude in repayment of Iraqi debts.

But Jordan switched back to Saudi crude after the eruption of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis in August 1990. Imports through the Tapline shot up to \$22 million during September 1990. But its closure by the Saudi authorities forced Jordan to rely once again on imports from Iraq. The Sanctions Committee of the Security Council realised that Jordan had no other viable alternative.

Sanctions, imposed by the Security Council, severely disrupted economic linkages between Jordan and Iraq. Though those ties were triggered by

the Iraq-Iran war, they were based on a natural but long-forgotten pattern of complementarities. Through Jordan, Iraq can have access to the Red Sea. Jordan's rapidly expanding agricultural and manufacturing sectors have in Iraq a sizeable and nearby market of about 17 million people. Iraq is a major oil exporter whereas Jordan relies on oil imports. Jordanian contracting firms have a competitive edge in a market as close as Iraq. Investment programmes in Iraq provide attractive job opportunities for Jordanian surplus labour.

Despite the disruption caused by the sanctions, Jordan-Iraq economic complementarities may be swiftly revitalised in a post-war scenario. This central spine of the Arab East, with its human and natural resources, can become a major driving force in the reconstruction of the entire region.

The current tragedy unfolding in the Middle East has not stopped us in Jordan from having a vision of peace and prosperity based on law and justice. During the 43 years of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we similarly never did lose hope.

HRH El Hassan Bin Tahal is the Crown Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The following interview was published by the New York Times on Sunday, 23rd September (available at <http://www.chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/glaspie.html>). Although taken from an Iraqi government typescript, its accuracy has not, so far as we know, been disputed by the US government. It is often quoted to support the view that the US government effectively sanctioned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which occurred on August 2nd. The text as given here does not quite support that interpretation, though it does indicate that the US did not go out of its way to discourage it (an extract from a more incriminating alternative version is given at the end). The interest lies more in the opportunity it provides to hear Saddam Hussein state his side of the dispute with Kuwait and with the US; and Glaspie's recognition that the Iraqi quarrel with Kuwait was not unreasonable, her appreciation of Iraqi efforts in defending the area against Iran, her desire to distance the US government from the attacks being launched on S.Hussein in the US media, and her desire that the problems should be solved through the good offices of other Arab countries - all aspects of US foreign policy which changed with dramatic suddenness the moment the invasion took place.

Interview between Saddam Hussein and April Glaspie,
US Ambassador to Iraq, July 25th 1990.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22 -- On July 25, President Saddam Hussein of Iraq summoned the United States Ambassador to Baghdad, April Glaspie, to his office in the last high-level contact between the two Governments before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2. Here are excerpts from a document described by Iraqi Government officials as a transcript of the meeting, which also included the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz. A copy was provided to The New York Times by ABC News, which translated from the Arabic. The State Department has declined to comment on its accuracy.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: I have summoned you today to hold comprehensive political discussions with you. This is a message to President Bush. You

know that we did not have relations with the U.S. until 1984 and you know the circumstances and reasons which caused them to be severed. The decisions to establish relations with the U.S. were taken in 1980 during the two months prior to the war between us and Iran.

When the war started, and to avoid misinterpretation, we postponed the establishment of relations hoping that the war would end soon.

But because the war lasted for a long time, and to emphasize the fact that we are a non-aligned country, it was important to re-establish relations with the U.S. And we chose to do this in 1984.

It is natural to say that the U.S. is not like Britain, for example, with the latter's historic relations with Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq. In addition, there were no relations between Iraq and the U.S. between 1967 and 1984. One can conclude it would be difficult for the U.S. to have a full understanding of many matters in Iraq. When relations were re-established we hoped for a better understanding and for better cooperation because we too do not understand the background of many American decisions. We dealt with each other during the war and we had dealings on various levels. The most important of those levels were with the foreign ministers.

We had hoped for a better common understanding and a better chance of cooperation to benefit both our peoples and the rest of the Arab nations.

But these better relations have suffered from various rifts. The worst of these was in 1986, only two years after establishing relations, with what was known as Irangate, which happened during the year that Iran occupied the Fao peninsula.

It was natural then to say that old relations and complexity of interests could absorb many mistakes. But when interests are limited and relations are not that old, then there isn't a deep understanding and mistakes could have a negative effect. Sometimes the effect of an error can be larger than the error itself.

Despite all of that, we accepted the apology, via his envoy, of the American President regarding Irangate, and we wiped the slate clean. And we shouldn't unearth the past except when new events remind us that old mistakes were not just a matter of coincidence.

Our suspicions increased after we liberated the Fao peninsula. The media

began to involve itself in our politics. And our suspicions began to surface anew, because we began to question whether the U.S. felt uneasy with the outcome of the war when we liberated our land.

It was clear to us that certain parties in the United States -- and I don't say the President himself -- but certain parties who had links with the intelligence community and with the State Department -- and I don't say the Secretary of State himself -- I say that these parties did not like the fact that we liberated our land. Some parties began to prepare studies entitled: "Who will succeed Saddam Hussein?" They began to contact gulf states to make them fear Iraq, to persuade them not to give Iraq economic aid. And we have evidence of these activities.

Iraq came out of the war burdened with \$40 billion debts, excluding the aid given by Arab states, some of whom consider that too to be a debt although they knew -- and you knew too -- that without Iraq they would not have had these sums and the future of the region would have been entirely different.

We began to face the policy of the drop in the price of oil. Then we saw the United States, which always talks of democracy but which has no time for the other point of view. Then the media campaign against Saddam Hussein was started by the official American media. The United States thought that the situation in Iraq was like Poland, Romania or Czechoslovakia. We were disturbed by this campaign but we were not disturbed too much because we had hoped that, in a few months, those who are decision makers in America would have a chance to find the facts and see whether this media campaign had had any effect on the lives of Iraqis. We had hoped that soon the American authorities would make the correct decision regarding their relations with Iraq. Those with good relations can sometimes afford to disagree.

But when planned and deliberate policy forces the price of oil down without good commercial reasons, then that means another war against Iraq. Because military war kills people by bleeding them, and economic war kills their humanity by depriving them of their chance to have a good standard of living. As you know, we gave rivers of blood in a war that lasted eight years, but we did not lose our humanity. Iraqis have a right to live proudly. We do not accept that anyone could injure Iraqi pride or the Iraqi right to have high standards of living.

Kuwait and the U.A.E. were at the front of this policy aimed at lowering Iraq's position and depriving its people of higher economic standards.

And you know that our relations with the Emirates and Kuwait had been good. On top of all that, while we were busy at war, the state of Kuwait began to expand at the expense of our territory.

You may say this is propaganda, but I would direct you to one document, the Military Patrol Line, which is the borderline endorsed by the Arab League in 1961 for military patrols not to cross the Iraq-Kuwait border.

But go and look for yourselves. You will see the Kuwaiti border patrols, the Kuwaiti farms, the Kuwaiti oil installations -- all built as closely as possible to this line to establish that land as Kuwaiti territory.

Since then, the Kuwaiti Government has been stable while the Iraqi Government has undergone many changes. Even after 1968 and for 10 years afterwards, we were too busy with our own problems. First in the north then the 1973 war, and other problems. Then came the war with Iran which started 10 years ago.

We believe that the United States must understand that people who live in luxury and economic security can reach an understanding with the United States on what are legitimate joint interests. But the starved and the economically deprived cannot reach the same understanding.

We do not accept threats from anyone because we do not threaten anyone. But we say clearly that we hope that the U.S. will not entertain too many illusions and will seek new friends rather than increase the number of its enemies.

I have read the American statements speaking of friends in the area. Of course, it is the right of everyone to choose their friends. We can have no objections. But you know you are not the ones who protected your friends during the war with Iran. I assure you, had the Iranians overrun the region, the American troops would not have stopped them, except by the use of nuclear weapons.

I do not belittle you. But I hold this view by looking at the geography and nature of American society into account. Yours is a society which cannot accept 10,000 dead in one battle.

You know that Iran agreed to the cease-fire not because the United States had bombed one of the oil platforms after the liberation of the Fao [sic - meaning obscure]. Is this Iraq's reward for its role in securing the stability of the region and for protecting it from an unknown flood?

So what can it mean when America says it will now protect its friends? It can only mean prejudice against Iraq. This stance plus maneuvers and statements which have been made has encouraged the U.A.E. and Kuwait to disregard Iraqi rights.

I say to you clearly that Iraq's rights, which are mentioned in the memorandum, we will take one by one. That might not happen now or after a month or after one year, but we will take it all. We are not the kind of people who will relinquish their rights. There is no historic right, or legitimacy, or need, for the U.A.E. and Kuwait to deprive us of our rights. If they are needy, we too are needy.

The United States must have a better understanding of the situation and declare who it wants to have relations with and who its enemies are. But it should not make enemies simply because others have different points of view regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We clearly understand America's statement that it wants an easy flow of oil. We understand American saying that it seeks friendship with the states in the region, and to encourage their joint interests. But we cannot understand the attempt to encourage some parties to harm Iraq's interests.

The United States wants to secure the flow of oil. This is understandable and known. But it must not deploy methods which the United States says it disapproves of -- flexing muscles and pressure.

If you use pressure, we will deploy pressure and force. We know that you can harm us although we do not threaten you. But we too can harm you. Everyone can cause harm according to their ability and their size. We cannot come all the way to you in the United States, but individual Arabs may reach you.

You can come to Iraq with aircraft and missiles but do not push us to the point where we cease to care. And when we feel that you want to injure our pride and take away the Iraqis' chance of a high standard of living, then we will cease to care and death will be the choice for us. Then we would not care if you fired 100 missiles for each missile we fired. Because without pride life would have no value.

It is not reasonable to ask our people to bleed rivers of blood for eight years then to tell them, "Now you have to accept aggression from Kuwait,

the U.A.E., or from the U.S. or from Israel.”

We do not put all these countries in the same boat. First, we are hurt and upset that such disagreement is taking place between us and Kuwait and the U.A.E. The solution must be found within an Arab framework and through direct bilateral relations. We do not place America among the enemies. We place it where we want our friends to be and we try to be friends. But repeated American statements last year make it apparent that America did not regard us as friends. Well the Americans are free.

When we seek friendship we want pride, liberty and our right to choose.

We want to deal according to our status as we deal with the others according to their statuses.

We consider the others' interests while we look after our own. And we expect the others to consider our interests while they are dealing with their own. What does it mean when the Zionist war minister is summoned to the United States now? What do they mean, these fiery statements coming out of Israel during the past few days and the talk of war being expected now more than at any other time?

* * *

I do not believe that anyone would lose by making friends with Iraq. In my opinion, the American President has not made mistakes regarding the Arabs, although his decision to freeze dialogue with the P.L.O. was wrong. But it appears that this decision was made to appease the Zionist lobby or as a piece of strategy to cool the Zionist anger, before trying again. I hope that our latter conclusion is the correct one. But we will carry on saying it was the wrong decision.

You are appeasing the usurper in so many ways -- economically, politically and militarily as well as in the media. When will the time come when, for every three appeasements to the usurper, you praise the Arabs just once?

APRIL GLASPIE: I thank you, Mr. President, and it is a great pleasure for a diplomat to meet and talk directly with the President. I clearly understand your message. We studied history at school That taught us to say freedom or death. I think you know well that we as a people have our experience with the colonialists.

Mr. President, you mentioned many things during this meeting which I cannot comment on on behalf of my Government. But with your permission, I will comment on two points. You spoke of friendship and I believe it was clear from the letters sent by our President to you on the occasion of your National Day that he emphasizes --

HUSSEIN: He was kind and his expressions met with our regard and respect.

GLASPIE: As you know, he directed the United States Administration to reject the suggestion of implementing trade sanctions.

HUSSEIN: There is nothing left for us to buy from America. Only wheat. Because every time we want to buy something, they say it is forbidden. I am afraid that one day you will say, "You are going to make gunpowder out of wheat."

GLASPIE: I have a direct instruction from the President to seek better relations with Iraq.

HUSSEIN: But how? We too have this desire. But matters are running contrary to this desire.

GLASPIE: This is less likely to happen the more we talk. For example, you mentioned the issue of the article published by the American Information Agency and that was sad. And a formal apology was presented.

HUSSEIN: Your stance is generous. We are Arabs. It is enough for us that someone says, "I am sorry. I made a mistake." Then we carry on. But the media campaign continued. And it is full of stories. If the stories were true, no one would get upset. But we understand from its continuation that there is a determination.

GLASPIE: I saw the Diane Sawyer program on ABC. And what happened in that program was cheap and unjust. And this is a real picture of what happens in the American media -- even to American politicians themselves. These are the methods the Western media employs. I am pleased that you add your voice to the diplomats who stand up to the media. Because your appearance in the media, even for five minutes, would help us to make the American people understand Iraq. This would increase mutual understanding. If the American President had control of the media, his job would be much easier.

Mr. President, not only do I want to say that President Bush wanted better and deeper relations with Iraq, but he also wants an Iraqi contribution to peace and prosperity in the Middle East. President Bush is an intelligent man. He is not going to declare an economic war against Iraq.

You are right. It is true what you say that we do not want higher prices for oil. But I would ask you to examine the possibility of not charging too high a price for oil.

HUSSEIN: We do not want too high prices for oil. And I remind you that in 1974 I gave Tariq Aziz the idea for an article he wrote which criticized the policy of keeping oil prices high. It was the first Arab article which expressed this view.

TARIQ AZIZ: Our policy in OPEC opposes sudden jumps in oil prices.

HUSSEIN: Twenty-five dollars a barrel is not a high price.

GLASPIE: We have many Americans who would like to see the price go above \$25 because they come from oil-producing states.

HUSSEIN: The price at one stage had dropped to \$12 a barrel and a reduction in the modest Iraqi budget of \$6 billion to \$7 billion is a disaster.

GLASPIE: I think I understand this. I have lived here for years. I admire your extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country. I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.

I was in the American Embassy in Kuwait during the late 60's. The instruction we had during this period was that we should express no opinion on this issue and that the issue is not associated with America. James Baker has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction. We hope you can solve this problem using any suitable methods via Klibi or via President Mubarak. All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly. With regard to all of this, can I ask you to see how the issue appears to us?

My assessment after 25 years' service in this area is that your objective must have strong backing from your Arab brothers. I now speak of oil But

you, Mr. President, have fought through a horrific and painful war. Frankly, we can see only that you have deployed massive troops in the south. Normally that would not be any of our business. But when this happens in the context of what you said on your national day, then when we read the details in the two letters of the Foreign Minister, then when we see the Iraqi point of view that the measures taken by the U.A.E. and Kuwait is, in the final analysis, parallel to military aggression against Iraq, then it would be reasonable for me to be concerned. And for this reason, I received an instruction to ask you, in the spirit of friendship -- not in the spirit of confrontation -- regarding your intentions.

I simply describe the position of my Government. And I do not mean that the situation is a simple situation. But our concern is a simple one.

HUSSEIN: We do not ask people not to be concerned when peace is at issue. This is a noble human feeling which we all feel. It is natural for you as a superpower to be concerned. But what we ask is not to express your concern in a way that would make an aggressor believe that he is getting support for his aggression.

We want to find a just solution which will give us our rights but not deprive others of their rights. But at the same time, we want the others to know that our patience is running out regarding their action, which is harming even the milk our children drink, and the pensions of the widow who lost her husband during the war, and the pensions of the orphans who lost their parents.

As a country, we have the right to prosper. We lost so many opportunities, and the others should value the Iraqi role in their protection. Even this Iraqi [the President points to their interpreter] feels bitter like all other Iraqis. We are not aggressors but we do not accept aggression either. We sent them envoys and handwritten letters. We tried everything. We asked the Servant of the Two Shrines [King Fahd, of Saudi Arabia] to hold a four-member summit, but he suggested a meeting between the Oil Ministers. We agreed. And as you know, the meeting took place in Jidda. They reached an agreement which did not express what we wanted, but we agreed.

Only two days after the meeting, the Kuwaiti Oil Minister made a statement that contradicted the agreement. We also discussed the issue during the Baghdad summit. I told the Arab Kings and Presidents that some brothers are fighting an economic war against us. And that not all wars use weapons and we regard this kind of war as a military action

against us. Because if the capability of our army is lowered then, if Iran renewed the war, it could achieve goals which it could not achieve before. And if we lowered the standard of our defenses, then this could encourage Israel to attack us. I said that before the Arab Kings and Presidents. Only I did not mention Kuwait and U.A.E. by name, because they were my guests.

Before this, I had sent them envoys reminding them that our war had included their defense. Therefore the aid they gave us should not be regarded as a debt. We did not more than the United States would have done against someone who attacked its interests.

I talked about the same thing with a number of other Arab states. I explained the situation to brother King Fahd a few times, by sending envoys and on the telephone. I talked with brother King Hussein and with Sheik Zaid [U.A.E.] after the conclusion of the summit. I walked with the Sheik to the plane when he was leaving Mosul. He told me, "Just wait until I get home." But after he had reached his destination, the statements that came from there were very bad -- not from him, but from his Minister of Oil.

And after the Jidda agreement, we received some intelligence that they were talking of sticking to the agreement for two months only. Then they would change their policy. Now tell us, if the American President found himself in this situation, what would he do? I said it was very difficult for me to talk about these issues in public. But we must tell the Iraqi people who face economic difficulties who was responsible for that.

GLASPIE: I spent four beautiful years in Egypt.

HUSSEIN: The Egyptian people are kind and good and ancient. The oil people are supposed to help the Egyptian people, but they are mean beyond belief. It is painful to admit it, but some of them are disliked by Arabs because of their greed.

GLASPIE: Mr. President, it would be helpful if you could give us an assessment of the effort made by your Arab brothers and whether they have achieved anything.

HUSSEIN: On this subject, we agreed with President Mubarak that the Prime Minister of Kuwait would meet with the deputy chairman of the Revolution Command Council in Saudi Arabia, because the Saudis initiated contact with us, aided by President Mubarak's efforts. He just

telephoned me a short while ago to say the Kuwaitis have agreed to that suggestion.

GLASPIE: Congratulations.

HUSSEIN: A protocol meeting will be held in Saudi Arabia. Then the meeting will be transferred to Baghdad for deeper discussion directly between Kuwait and Iraq. We hope we will reach some result. We hope that the long-term view and the real interests will overcome Kuwaiti greed.

GLASPIE: May I ask you when you expect Sheik Saad to come to Baghdad?

HUSSEIN: I suppose it would be on Saturday or Monday at the latest. I told brother Mubarak that the agreement should be in Baghdad Saturday or Sunday. You know that brother Mubarak's visits have always been a good omen.

GLASPIE: This is good news. Congratulations.

HUSSEIN: Brother President Mubarak told me they were scared. They said troops were only 20 kilometers north of the Arab League line. I said to him that regardless of what is there, whether they are police, border guards or army, and regardless of how many are there, and what they are doing, assure the Kuwaitis and give them our word that we are not going to do anything until we meet with them. When we meet and when we see that there is hope, then nothing will happen. But if we are unable to find a solution, then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death, even though wisdom is above everything else. There you have good news.

AZIZ: This is a journalistic exclusive.

GLASPIE: I am planning to go to the United States next Monday. I hope I will meet with President Bush in Washington next week. I thought to postpone my trip because of the difficulties we are facing. But now I will fly on Monday.

[Another transcript, apparently made available about the 2nd September, contained the following, much more incriminating but probably much more questionable, exchange:

'Saddam Hussein - If we could keep the whole of the Shatt al Arab - our strategic goal in our war with Iran - we will make concessions (to the

Kuwaitis). But, if we are forced to choose between keeping half of the Shatt and the whole of Iraq (i.e., in Saddam's view, including Kuwait) then we will give up all of the Shatt to defend our claims on Kuwait to keep the whole of Iraq in the shape we wish it to be. (pause) What is the United States' opinion on this?

U.S. Ambassador Glaspie - We have no opinion on your Arab - Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary (of State James) Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960's, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America. (Saddam smiles)'

This transcript is available at http://www.totse.com/en/conspiracy/institutional_analysis/saddam.html.

April Glaspie had had a long diplomatic career in the Arab World (Jordan 1966-1967, Kuwait 1967-1968, Sweden 1969-1971, Lebanon 1972-1973, Egypt 1973-1977, Tunisia 1981-1983, Syria 1983-1986, Iraq 1988-1990). She later became US Ambassador to South Africa.]