

# United states intervention and the gulf war

[Politics](#)



United s intervention and the Gulf War Discovery of oil in the Middle East after the Second World War, and in the aftermath of the Cold War, fierce competition ensued between the two Great Powers to expand their regional exploration using oil diplomacy to extend their spheres of influence by mollycoddling the oil-rich countries in general, and the warring countries, foes, and at loggerheads with each other - Iraq and Iran, in particular. With Saudi Arabia as an ally nurtured by President Truman way back in 1947, the U. S in its seemingly hegemonistic pursuits and driven by the vision of global interdependence in respect of oil, backed up by the Nixon's Twin Pillar Policy of the early seventies, adopted the strategy of " Active and Offshore Balancing" to cultivate the moderates in Iran against Iraq, which, with its communist leanings, was being protected by Soviet Russia. In effect, U. S was attempting to balance against the ' strongest state' in the region. While China joined hands with Russia to counterbalance the U. S initiative, the Soviet focus was on checkmating the U. S-supported belligerent Shia Iran against the bellicose Sunni Iraq. Despite the adverse Vietnam experience of the sixties, the U. S initiative failed to visualize a grand, structured and proactive, long-term balance-of-power (BOP) strategy in the Middle East in dealing with both Iran and Iraq, in the period preceding the late seventies. The sequence of bizarre events commencing from November 1979 and thereafter, involving the Khomeini-led Iranian Revolution, seizure of the U. S embassy in Teheran, American hostage crisis in Lebanon, the Iran-Contra affair (supply of arms in exchange of hostages), and the then Shah of Iran being denied medical treatment in the U. S etc. made the Reagan Administration tilt towards Iraq in the early eighties. The need for up gradation of the U. S Military in the Middle East by deployment of RDF got <https://assignbuster.com/united-states-intervention-and-the-gulf-war/>

envisioned in Carter's Security Framework for protection of American interests, thereafter. It was immediately followed up with the Senior Bush-administered U. S policy of " Constructive Engagement", in which the buzzwords were: " Placate or Confront!" It was then that the American balance-of-threat (BOT) policy came into vogue. It was to the dismay of the U. S. government that even the policy of placating Iraq by political and economic inducements, with a resolve to balance the ' most threatening state', did not deter Iraq from mending its ways. The cautious U. S approach of attempting " to cross the bridge, after reaching the bridge" therefore, did little to further their cause of balancing either by BOP or by the BOT strategies. Against the backdrop of the First Persian Gulf War in which Iraq had invaded Iran, supported by Arab countries and Kuwait in particular, the long standing territorial disputes between Iraq and Kuwait with implications of ownership of oil reserves and Kuwaiti sovereignty came to the fore in the nineties. Non-cooperation to U. N mandated sanctions apart, Saddam Hussein in his bid to execute his ambitious program of post-war economic and military reconstruction and to settle scores with Kuwait - deemed a weakling by him on his country's south side borders, invaded it on the 2nd August 1990. In the absence of a well conceived long term planned strategy to combat the situation, the U. S was left with no other choice other than to adopt an overarching reactive strategy of responding to Saddam Hussein's threat, by organizing the two short term campaigns, ' Operation Desert Shield' and ' Operation Desert Storm' respectively, to protect Saudi Arabia from Iraq and to evict the Iraqi military forces from Kuwait, to ensure collective regional security. This U. S policy of " Dual Containment" enunciated by the Clinton Administration and implemented by the elder Bush

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Administration had harsher overtones to contain both Iraq and Iran, including overthrow of Saddam Hussein, if the situation warranted. Unforeseen circumstances necessitated the intervention of the U. S, leading the war to end on 3rd March 1991, with Iraq agreeing to a cease fire. A closer scrutiny of the policy of American involvement and intervention would reveal that, U. S in effect had barely given any importance to “ Planning” to achieve “ Foreign Policy goals” in the Middle East. Instead of being in the driver’s seat to control the events, the ground realities virtually controlled their actions on an “ as-is-where-is” day-to-day basis. Washington politics and the coalition issues thus got overriding priority, and ‘ Planning for Long term Strategies” was relegated to the background, much to the disadvantage of U. S. foreign policy in the Middle East. A golden chance of U. S earning the tag of an “ Effective and Reliable Balancing Force” in the Gulf was thus lost. This aspect has been brought out elaborately and very effectively in the John Hopkins University Publication: “ Absence of Grand Strategy: The U. S in the Persian Gulf, 1972 - 2005”, authored by Steven. A. Yetiv, Baltimore, MD. The impromptu policies which U. S pursued in the context of the Gulf War have been crisply summarized in the historyguy. com webpage. Bibliography: Yetiv, Steven. A. Absence of Grand Strategy: The United States in the Persian Gulf, 1972 - 2005: Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008. <http://www.historyguy.com/GulfWar.html#GWSyndrome>