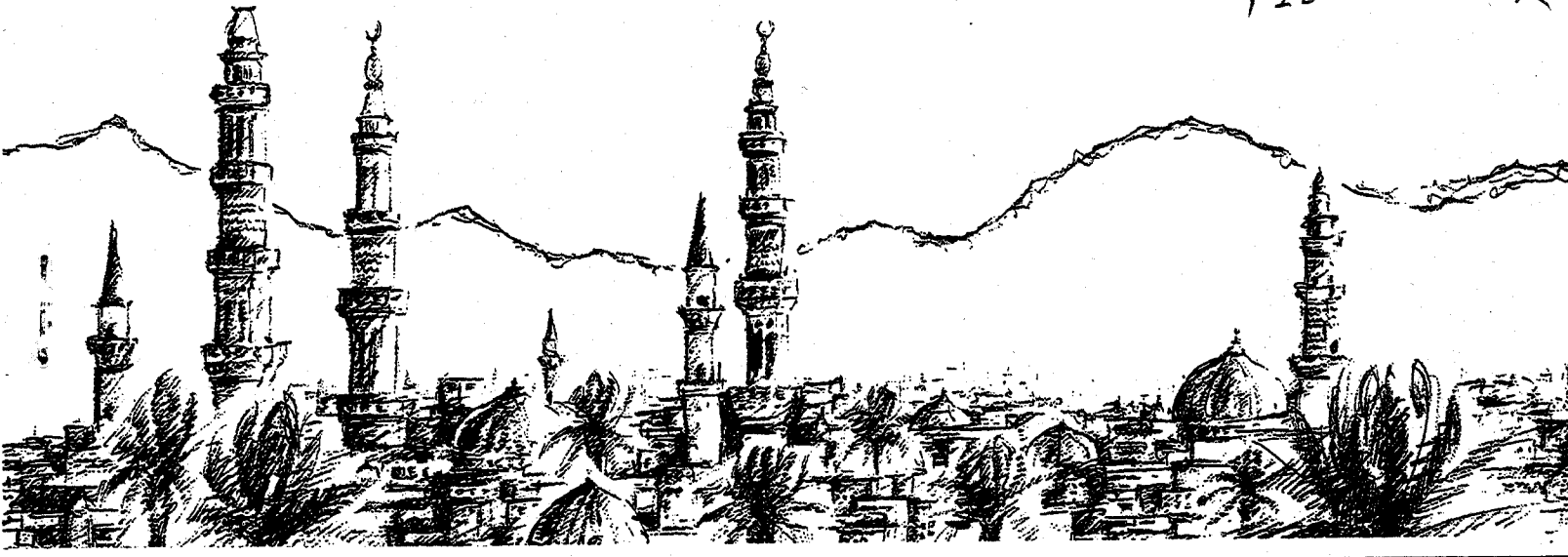


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The United States  
Air Force in the  
Persian Gulf War

# Roots of Conflict

A Military Perspective on the  
Middle East and Persian Gulf Crisis

by Richard G. Davis



1993

**THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR**

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**Center for Air Force History  
1993**

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## INTRODUCTION

On August 2, 1990, the Republic of Iraq occupied the Emirate of Kuwait, extinguished its government and armed forces, and annexed it. This action followed an escalating dispute between the two countries. In brief, the Kuwaitis had refused three Iraqi demands: to forgive loans worth billions of dollars made to Iraq during its war with Iran in the 1980s; to adhere to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' lowered petroleum sales quotas; and to cease the alleged over-exploitation of the Rumelia oil field,<sup>1</sup> which extends across a portion of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border. Although the Iraqis may have prepared for their move far in advance,<sup>2</sup> the Kuwaitis' rejection of their demands provided the ostensible reason for the invasion. Iraq also had tenuous claims, unrecognized by the international community, to overall suzerainty of Kuwait, based on the administrative arrangements it claimed the British had established during their rule of the 1920s through the 1940s, the Ottoman Turks had established during their Empire of the 16th through 19th centuries, and the Baghdad caliphate had established even earlier. By substituting action for rhetoric, Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, transformed a regional quarrel into a world crisis when he seized his neighbor, Kuwait.

By this action, Saddam doubled his proven petroleum reserves to approximately 200 billion barrels and gained control of about 20 percent of the world's total crude oil production. Within a week after Kuwait City

1. Caryle Murphy, "Persian Gulf Crisis Swells: Iraqi Is Given New Title," *The Washington Post*, Jul 20, 1990, p. A12.

2. James Blackwell, *Thunder in the Desert: The Strategy and Tactics of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), p. 72. Blackwell refers to unnamed intelligence sources who claim that the Iraqis had trained since 1989 on one-to-one mock-ups of Kuwait in a base camp in southeastern Iraq.

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fell, hundreds of thousands of U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airmen began to arrive in Saudi Arabia, not only to protect the Saudi monarchy from Iraqi aggression but also to reverse the conquest of Kuwait. When U.S. and world economic sanctions, political pressure, and diplomatic negotiations all failed in the face of Saddam's unbending determination to retain his newly acquired nineteenth province, only two choices remained to the United States, Saudi Arabia, and their many allies: war or surrender. Surrender had unthinkable domestic political consequences for the alliance's leaders. It would guarantee international anarchy by allowing Iraq and other revisionist powers to act on their desire to rearrange the globe to their advantage, free from the threat of reprisal. Therefore, the President of the United States, George H. W. Bush; the King of Saudi Arabia, Fahd ibn Abd al Aziz Al Saud; and their allies chose war.

Early on the morning of January 17, 1991, the Persian Gulf War began. It consisted of massive allied air strikes on Iraq and Iraqi targets in Kuwait. The United States Air Force spearheaded the air offensive and furnished the bulk of the attacking aircraft. During forty-two days of fighting, the U.S. Air Force simultaneously conducted two closely coordinated air campaigns: one in support of allied ground forces; the other, attacking strategic targets. Planners of the strategic air campaign sought to isolate and incapacitate Saddam Hussein's government; gain and maintain air supremacy to permit unhindered air operations; destroy Iraq's nuclear, biological, and chemical capabilities; and eliminate Iraq's offensive military capability, which included its key military production facilities, their infrastructure, and the instruments it used to project its power—the Iraqi Air Force, the Republican Guard, and short-range ballistic missiles.<sup>3</sup>

This study develops background information to place the Persian Gulf War in its proper historical and cultural contexts, unfamiliar to and not easily understood by Americans. The first essay quickly summarizes the relationship between Arab culture and Islam, the history of Islam

3. Briefing Slide, "Air Campaign Plan & Targets," Reflections on DESERT STORM: The Air Campaign, Lt Gen Charles A. Horner, Commanding General, Ninth Air Force, n.d. [May 1991].

## INTRODUCTION

and the Arab conquests, and the creation of one of the flash points in present-day Middle Eastern conflicts—the Arab-Jewish dispute over Palestine. The second essay provides a military analysis of the Arab-Israeli wars from 1948 to 1982. It describes the performance of the engaged armed forces, the performance of Western versus Soviet weapons systems, the development of the respective forces' military professionalization, and the ability of the warring parties to learn from their experiences. The final three essays describe the recent history of the three regional powers of the Persian Gulf—Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. In addition to providing a detailed character analysis of Saddam Hussein and a military analysis of the Iran-Iraq War, these final sections examine the tension that arose in the three nations when the desire for modernization confronted the demands of Islamic conservatism.

## Cultural and Historical Background

Muhammad, the Prophet of God, his revelations and teachings, and the people who first followed him, the Arabs, dominate life in the Middle East. The religion founded by Muhammad—Islam—and its associated traditions, culture, and judicial system pervade all aspects of daily life in the region that encompasses an area of northern Africa and southwest Asia, from Libya in the west to Afghanistan in the east. In countries like Turkey that have anticlerical traditions and in those like Syria and Iraq that have secular socialist governments, only with great difficulty can rulers force significant societal changes on their less radical, less religiously imbued subjects. Although the twentieth century has brought a thin veneer of western thought and western modernization to the Middle East, it has not erased thirteen and a half centuries of Islam. So it was that when tens of thousands of American military men and women arrived in the region, they faced a civilization as different from their own as any on earth—one stranger and even more difficult to comprehend than the one their compatriots encountered when they arrived in Vietnam.

Islam grew from roots planted firmly in Arab culture. The Arabs had a complex and ancient lifestyle originating at the end of the most recent ice age, which left the Arabian Peninsula a desert punctuated by a few oases. For thousands of years, the people of the peninsula adjusted to their harsh environment which permitted only a small margin for error and helped generate a culture both inflexible and tradition bound. (With the such emphasis on survival, little wonder the Arabic language contains 6,000 words for items and thoughts relating to camels.) Two closely related groups evolved from this society: nomads and oasis dwell-

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lers. The nomads' lifestyle discouraged fixed residences and the accumulation of weighty or bulky goods and wealth. It encouraged the accomplishments of the mind: religion, language, genealogy, and relationships. Of the three types of nomadic tribesmen, also known as Bedouins, camel herdsman had primacy over sheep herdsman or goat herdsman. The camel, not the horse which could not thrive in the harsh desert, conferred unparalleled mobility because it could cross large sections of the desert without needing water. For thousands of years, nomadic tribes ranged their seasonal pasturage, raiding and stealing from the herds of their neighbors, or seizing their pasturage. This engendered a warrior ethos, with an accompanying code of honor, and a fierce loyalty toward the tribe. More perniciously, it ingrained an enduring tradition of retaliation and blood feuds. As a group, the Arabs developed no overriding or universal law or authority to judge disputes. For the tribes, and even for a larger sect within a tribe, life consisted of war of all against all; no alliance or coalition survived the death or disenchantment of its makers. This led to a permanent mind-set that Americans in particular find difficult to comprehend: An Arab is less concerned with the right or wrong of another individual's case or the justice of his own complaint than he is with the honor of his tribe, which is measured by the strength and capability of his own tribe relative to the strength and capability of his opponent's tribe. As long as an Arab's tribe can protect a tribe member from retaliation, the individual may do as he wishes.<sup>4</sup> In the modern Arab world, this phenomenon plays out time and again. In its least attractive form, it is seen in the treatment of both Palestinian Arabs and foreign workers and in the taking of hostages.

Although by the time of Muhammad, Arabian oasis dwellers may have outnumbered nomads, their political position was lower. Oasis dwellers—more often than not, closely related by blood and tribe to the nomads—prospered from their mercantile and agricultural endeavors. However, their dependence on a caravan-based commerce and on agriculture (in particular, their dependence on extensive date tree groves) made

4. Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 40–41.



them vulnerable to raids and blackmail, euphemistically called taxation, demanded by the nomads. A few sessile tribes, such as that of Muhammad's birth, the Quraysh of Mecca, used a religious function to expand their influence. The Quraysh had long provided the priests and caretakers for the Kaaba, a shrine filled with idols dedicated to ancestor worship. Even before Muhammad cleansed the Kaaba, turning it into Islam's holiest site, large numbers of pilgrims had conducted an annual pilgrimage there. Like all tourists, they left a portion of their wealth behind, enriching the Quraysh and helping to finance its commercial efforts. By the end of the sixth century A.D., the Quraysh had graduated from being a tribe of simple merchants to one of merchant bankers, with extensive contacts in the Arabian Peninsula and in the entrepôts of the spice trade. These contacts also served as a primitive, but useful, intelligence system. Some Quraysh members also possessed extensive managerial and organizational skills.<sup>5</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad was an Arab. He never left the Arabian Peninsula; he never dealt with significant numbers of non-Arabs, save for the Jews of Medina, whom he eventually destroyed or exiled because they rejected his message. Like the most of his compatriots, he could neither read nor write. His teachings addressed the universal issues of good and evil, salvation and damnation, and the conduct of the believer in this world—these he addressed from the context and perceptions of a man who both ruled an Arab community and led Arabs in battle. By the time of his death in A.D. 632, he had succeeded in organizing the Arabs, then exclusively inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, into a unified polity.

Many factors aided Muhammad in his establishment of the first monolithic state in north and central Arabia. Although his God-given message and personal talents conferred on him unique advantages, so did the timing of his birth. The merchants of Mecca had at last developed the necessary administrative skills for empire. For reasons yet unclear, the tribe of Mecca seemed more receptive to a centralizing impulse and had almost reached a point of initiating a mass migration from the

5. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

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peninsula. Theories speculate that this readiness to migrate resulted from overpopulation (a lack of pasturage, for example) and from prolonged drought. In addition, the two great powers of the region, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire—which occupied present-day North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, Greece, and the Balkans—and the Sasanian Empire—comprised of the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys, Persia, and a portion of the Central Asian Steppes—had exhausted themselves in prolonged and ruinous warfare. Religious conflict in the form of popularly supported heresies against the official state orthodoxies further weakened the internal cohesion of the Christian Byzantine and Zoroastrian Sasanian states.

Muhammad did not merely produce the spark to ignite the already waiting tinder of circumstance, he did far more. He assembled the inert stone and mortar at hand into an enduring edifice of his own design. The Prophet's gift for political consolidation was first demonstrated by his speedy ascension to the dominant chiefdom of Medina. In his years on the caravan routes, before his revelations, he had become intimately familiar with the tribes and their peculiarities. He coupled his knowledge of tribal politics with the traditional means of alliance building: wives, gold, trade, and land. Above all he evinced an extraordinary judgment of his fellowman, favoring leniency and restraint over coercion, and winning over those who could be converted while ruthlessly crushing those who could not. Muhammad's attitude toward conversion and apostasy showed his pragmatism. Whereas anyone, even the enemy on the battlefield, could convert to Islam with a simple phrase acknowledging the primacy of Allah, and be accepted immediately into the community of believers, Muhammad decreed death for the apostate. Simple conversions increased the flock and weakened the will of enemy forces by offering them quarter. Once one became part of the community of believers, the advantages of membership in the group were to be seen as reason sufficient to seduce the individual into remaining. Death for apostasy discouraged members from recanting while assuring that apostates would neither receive nor ask for quarter in battle.

Muhammad, the Messenger of God, overshadowed Muhammad the

political leader. Like early Christianity, early Islam had a powerful leveling tendency that lessened social and economic distinctions among believers. Muhammad preached that all men were equal in the sight of God. This widened Islam's appeal and aided in the recruitment of new members. Islam supplied the higher universal law that had been lacking in Arabic culture. Instead of being caught up in the infinite variability of tribal power politics, a follower could now appeal to a fixed and standard set of divine rules. It was beyond the Prophet's power to eliminate the practice of retaliation; however, he put restrictions on it. Retaliation could occur only if an injured party retaliated for the breaking of Islamic code; retaliation was not to be used to settle a personal grudge. Muhammad forbade feuding within the community of believers. By eliminating the perpetual round of blood feuds, he increased the cohesion among believers. The community of believers, or *umma*, gave its members an institution above and beyond the tribe, one in which all authority could be centralized. Muhammad also expounded at length on the details of the day-to-day life of the members of the *umma*, including matters of their inheritance, marriage, and slavery. Believers could live a life free of the tribe, based on divine guidelines. By tamping down tribal and personal conflict, while simultaneously placing all believers under the control of a single man and one God, Islam supplied an element of cohesiveness and continuity heretofore missing in earlier Arabian Peninsula tribal confederations.<sup>6</sup>

Muhammad's last recorded speech in A.D. 632 at Mecca affirmed many of the above points: "Know that every Muslim is a Muslim's brother, and that the Muslims are brethren; fighting between them should be avoided, and the blood shed in pagan times should not be avenged; Muslims should fight all men until they say, 'There is no god but God'."<sup>7</sup>

Within thirty years of his death, Muhammad's followers had completely overthrown the Sasanian Empire, stripped the Byzantines

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61.

7. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1991), p. 19.

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from North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and codified his instructions in written form, the Qur'an. Not only did these conquests impose Arab rule and Islam, they imposed Arab culture. Study of the Qur'an, required of all believers, encouraged the use of Arabic as the religious and literary language of the new empire. While the Arab conquerors occupied the great cities of the East, they founded their own military cities, such as present-day Cairo, Egypt, in an attempt to separate themselves from the local population. Although the Arabs came from outside the existing civilizations, which by definition made them barbarians, they did not employ exceptionally vicious methods, such as the Mongols did in Eastern Europe and Asia or the Spanish did in the New World. In fact, the Muslims either developed or stumbled upon an elegant and subtle means of perpetuating their rule. Instead of forced mass conversion to Islam and the slaughtering of the upper and administrative classes (other than on the battlefield), the Muslims allowed the local populace to exercise their existing religion freely (something the old governments had not done) and to maintain but not to expand their religious sites. The Muslims retained Arabic as the language of their courts and merely required that their civil servants be believers in Islam and that all non-Muslims pay an extra, and not exorbitant, annual head tax. In short order, the Arabs also forbade non-Muslims from marrying Muslim women, prohibited the wearing of clothes of certain colors by non-Muslims, and refused to accept the testimony of non-Muslims in Muslim courts of law.<sup>8</sup> The old governing families of the conquered Byzantine and Sasanian provinces converted within a generation, but the process took far longer in some areas of the outlying countryside. The Coptic Christians of present-day Egypt never converted, but, within a relatively short time, the vast majority of the conquered citizenry, like their overlords, would pray five times a day facing in the direction of the city of Muhammad's birth, Mecca.

The European world regarded the overthrow of the last of the Roman Empire and the occupation of the Christian Holy Lands as

8. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

unparalleled disasters. They resisted the Muslim conquest. Arabic raids throughout the Mediterranean Sea and the further conquest of much of the Iberian Peninsula reinforced the threat and the Europeans' fears. However, in time the Christians of Iberia would reconquer their land and number themselves among Islam's most implacable foes. Other peoples submitted: The Semitic Syrians and Palestinians had much in common with their equally Semitic Arab cousins, and the vast mass of the Egyptian population had a centuries-old tradition of phlegmatic service to whoever ruled them. Likewise, the Berbers of North Africa had a nomadic tribal society that, after some early resistance, found Islam well adapted to its needs.

Lands to the east also succumbed as the Islamic and Arabic tide rolled across Sasanian Persia, Afghanistan, the Indus River valley, and parts of central Asia. The eastern conquests proved more difficult to assimilate. The Persians, of course, formed the bulk of the peasantry in Persia proper, an area roughly analogous to present-day Iran, and they also comprised the ruling class of the Sasanian Empire. They continued many of their duties under the caliphs, in spite of the fact that they traditionally considered themselves both distinct from and superior to the Arabs. They absorbed Islam and the Qur'an, but they proceeded to add a twist in keeping with the far more mystical beliefs of their former religion. This shift, introduced in the East, created the largest and most enduring of the Muslim schisms, a heresy comparable in significance to the Reformation.

The heresy began with a dispute over the succession from Muhammad, and it developed into something more profound. Unlike the first three caliphs, the fourth—Ali ibn Abi Talib—shared the bloodline of the Prophet Muhammad. Ali was the Prophet's first cousin and had married his daughter, Fatima. Ali ruled indecisively from A.D. 656 to 661. He died at the hand of an assassin at Kufa, an Arab garrison city on the Euphrates River, south of present-day Baghdad. A new dynasty, the Umayyads, moved the Caliphate to Damascus, and Ali's second son by Fatima, Husayn, a direct descendent of the Prophet, revolted in A.D. 680. He raised a tiny band of followers, moved hesitantly, and died with his

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infant son (a threat because of his ancestry) near Karbala, a town between Kufa and Baghdad. A far larger enemy force had surprised him, riddled his camp with arrows, and put Husayn and many of his supporters to the sword. Despite these setbacks, a group of Muslims continued to see Ali and his direct heirs, who had the blood of the Prophet, as the legitimate heads of the community of believers, or Imams.

Ten Imams followed Ali and Husayn before the line ended with the disappearance of the last Imam, Muhammad, in A.D. 874. The adherents of Ali (in Arabic, the *shi'at Ali* or *Shi'is*; in English, Shias or devotees of Shia, also called "twelver" Shias to distinguish them from the lesser branches of Shia) endowed Ali and his line with almost divine, at least more than human, qualities, and thought that by transmission from the Prophet they had received a unique nobility of the soul and a special insight into the Qur'an. The Shias lived in the expectation of the day of the coming of the Mahdi, "him who is guided," when the twelfth Imam would arise and begin the rule of justice in the world.<sup>9</sup> As noted, this messianic movement found its greatest support in the Persian portions of the Arab Empire. When that area regained its independence in the fourteenth century A.D., the Persian King of Kings made the Shia form of Islam the state religion. Persia as well as present-day Iran has remained a state with a majority Shia population. The sites of the tombs of Ali (Al Najaf), his son Husayn (Karbala), and six of their successor Imams in Iraq had become objects of veneration for all Shias by the tenth century A.D. Iraq now counts approximately 60 to 65 percent Shias among its population.

More orthodox Muslims, by no means a single sect that agreed on all points of doctrine and practice, continued to hold a more traditional and less mystical faith. They believed in the primacy of the words and deeds of the Prophet, as demonstrated in the Qur'an and in the daily practices of his life (together, known as sunna). They accepted the legitimacy of the first four caliphs as the rightful successors to Muhammad and became known as Sunnites, and their branch of Islam became

9. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

known as Sunni. Most Muslims adhere to some form of Sunnism.

In A.D. 762, Caliph Al Mansur began to build for the Arab Empire a new capital, Baghdad, possibly named after the Persian word for "the gift of God."<sup>10</sup> Not until a hundred years later did the Arab Empire reach its zenith, but by then the caliphs and their government officials had lost control of the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula, whose members had more or less reverted to their former chaotic civilization and had ceased to send large numbers of warriors to outside regions. In A.D. 1258, after a life-span that exceeded by a hundred years the life-span of the Western Roman Empire, the Arab Empire fell. In that year, the Mongols killed the caliph, sacked Baghdad, and, with their usual insensitivity to collateral damage, slaughtered perhaps 800,000 of its residents.

Eventually most of the region passed into the control of another Islamic empire, that of the Ottoman Turks, where it stayed for at least another 600 years. In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire—those preceding World War I—North Africa, Egypt, and several ports and principalities in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf came under the colonial rule or protection of either the French or the British. With the defeat and breakup of the Turkish Empire in 1918–1919, the French acquired the League of Nations mandate for Lebanon and Syria in 1922, while the British received mandates both for Palestine (which included Palestine and Jordan) and for Iraq in 1920. The mandate for Palestine obliged the British to honor an undertaking that they had committed themselves to during the war. On November 2, 1917, in the Balfour Declaration (named for British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour), His Majesty's Government sponsored "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-

10. Robert Payne, *The Holy Sword: The Story of Islam from Muhammad to the Present* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1959), p. 157.

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Jewish communities in Palestine.<sup>11</sup> Also, during the war, the British had encouraged the Arabs in their hope for political independence, as evidenced in the correspondence between the British Political Officer for Egypt and the sharif of Mecca (the McMahon-Husayn correspondence of 1915-1916).<sup>12</sup>

These rather contradictory wartime undertakings quickly became not one, but two apples of discord. The British refused to grant the Arabs independence and alienated them, leading to a 1941 revolt in Iraq and to anti-British activities within the British-dominated Egyptian Army during the 1941-1942 Western Desert campaigns. British efforts at even-handedness in implementing the Balfour Declaration barely kept the lid on a pot they themselves had brought to a boil. The Jews pushed for maximum immigration into Palestine. The rise of Hitler and of anti-Semitism in Europe created pressure for an even greater influx of Jews. British attempts to reduce the flow met with intense and emotional opposition from the Jews. For the Arabs, the imposition of additional Jews threatened their own stake in Palestine. The Western-oriented, relatively wealthy (by Middle Eastern standards), energetic, Jewish interlopers set up new communities and purchased old land. Thus any land transferred from Arab to Jewish hands meant more Jews and fewer Arabs in Palestine, a reality both sides accepted. By the end of the 1930s, both groups had resorted to terrorism and counterterrorism. British efforts to control the violence merely put them in the middle of a cross-fire. In fact, a Jewish-launched terrorist campaign ended the British occupation of Palestine. The Jews, in part, felt that the British had favored the Arabs in the dispute. They further reasoned that they would emerge victorious in any future conflict in Palestine if the British could not restrain them.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine, west of the River Jordan, into separate

11. William L. Langer, ed., *An Encyclopedia of World History*, 5th ed (Boston, Mass.: Houghton & Mifflin, 1972), p. 1091.

12. Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*, p. 316.



Jewish and Arab states. Arab rejection and British foot-dragging delayed implementation of the resolution until the next year. In early 1948, Jewish underground armies intensified their terrorist attacks against both British and Arab, hoping to consolidate their position before partitioning occurred. Despite the open and somewhat understandable favoritism shown by the British toward the Arabs in this situation, tens of thousands of terrified Palestinian Arabs, encouraged by neighboring Arab states, fled their homes for the safety of surrounding Arab countries. On May 14, 1948, the British Mandate in Palestine ended, setting the stage for a series of wars between the new Jewish state and the surrounding Arab countries.<sup>13</sup> Because of the great intensity of these wars and because several of them pitted arms designed and manufactured in Western Europe and America against arms designed and produced by the Soviet Union, a brief study of these events reveals some similarities and lessons applicable to the war in the Persian Gulf.

13. For a recent and balanced, but pro-Jewish, account of these events, see Howard M. Sachse, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Knopf, 1989), pp. 116–314. For a straightforward narrative of mildly Arabic leanings on the circumstances surrounding the partition, see Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*, pp. 359–60.

## The Arab-Israeli Wars

Israel became a state the day the British Mandate in Palestine ended. Both the United States and the Soviet Union recognized the new nation immediately, but within 24 hours the armies of the Arab League (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon) invaded it. Arab regular forces maintained two major advantages over their opponent: numbers and fire power. Although Israeli armed forces could never redress the problem of numbers, they soon acquired surplus World War II weaponry to equal anything in Arab hands. Although their weapons were inferior, the Israelis nevertheless possessed the innate advantages of cohesion, matchless motivation, and superb leadership. Furthermore, they fought on their own soil, a factor that lessened their logistics problems while it increased those of the enemy. In fifteen months and with 6,000 dead—this, from a population of 600,000—the state of Israel emerged victorious from its trial by fire and forced its enemies, save Iraq, to sign armistice agreements.<sup>14</sup>

As a result, Israel increased its area by 21 percent. Of the former Arab population, 70 percent fled beyond Israel's borders. Placed in camps in the Gaza Strip (a small portion of land on the Mediterranean Sea between Israel and Egypt), on the West Bank of the Jordan River, and in Lebanon, these unhappy people began lives of poverty, humiliation, and frustration. They became the poor relations of the Arab world—without resources, without skills, and without a state. Their refusal to assimilate into their new countries and their hosts' refusal to accept them turned the Palestinians into a bitter people, unwelcome in the land in which

14. Sacher, *History of Israel*, pp. 315–53.

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they lived and unwelcome in their homeland as well. From this miasma of despair would come an open wound of terrorism and blood for both Palestinian and Jew.

The Arab armies revealed several shortcomings. They lacked effective leadership at the both the commissioned and noncommissioned officer levels. The officer corps reflected its French and English training well enough, but Western-style training could not adequately offset the inherent Arab culture, which required too great a distance between the leaders and those led. Senior Arab officers showed little originality and initiative in operations. Save for the British-officered and British-led Jordanian Arab Legion—the smallest Arab force and one composed exclusively of desert Bedouin tribesman—the regular Arab forces lacked cohesion and sufficient training to properly employ the weapons they possessed. King Abdullah of Transjordan squandered the Arab Legion by engaging in city fighting in Jerusalem. As will be discussed briefly below, in subsequent wars between the Arabs and Israelis, the Jews retained their military superiority while the Arabs endeavored to remedy their deficiencies. Considering the Arabs' initial disadvantage when they entered the fray, they made great military progress, but not enough to overcome the Israelis' lead.

Since 1949, the Israelis have fought four wars against the Arabs. During October and November of 1956, in conjunction with the French and British, they defeated Egypt and occupied the Sinai Peninsula, a desert area between their country's southern border and the Suez Canal. The militarily overmatched Egyptians, however, managed to win the diplomatic battles. American President Dwight D. Eisenhower threatened to embargo British and French oil imports and forced British and French alike to withdraw and leave the regime of Gamal Abdal Nasser in place. Although the Israelis had done well militarily and had demonstrated their ability to conduct a lightning offensive campaign, they too had to withdraw. The Arabs did not forget the lesson that support from a superpower could wrest victory from defeat.

In a Six-Day War in June 1967, the Israelis preempted a joint Syrian-Egyptian surprise attack and also invaded and defeated Jordan.

Israel wrested the strategic Golan Heights from Syria; completely occupied the Egyptian Sinai, including the crowded Palestinian refugee camps in the Gaza Strip; and seized all former Palestinian territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River. The Israeli Air Force's devastatingly effective preemptive attack on the Egyptian and Syrian Air Forces in the first hours of the war had several consequences. It assured the Israelis air supremacy throughout the war. This they used to advantage to give their own ground forces relatively generous amounts of close air support, which added to the crushing defeat inflicted on the Arab ground forces. Israeli air attacks alone disrupted and demoralized portions of the Egyptian Army. From its first strikes, the Israeli Air Force established ascendancy over its opponents, not only in the physical sense of greater numbers and brute force, but also in the equally important senses of élan, confidence, and belief in the superiority of men, machines, and methods. For a generation after 1967, Israeli pilots would enter battle secure in victory while the enemy would find his responses slowed by doubt. This ascendancy was not without a negative impact on the Israelis. In neglecting to examine carefully the actual effectiveness of their performance, they became overconfident and failed to adapt to new air defense technologies, to acquire newer close air-support munitions and techniques, and to train realistically for missions other than air-to-air-combat. The humiliation suffered by the Arab air forces caused Arab leaders to work to prevent a repetition of the disaster. Not only did Arab air forces pursue ground dispersal procedures more thoroughly, they also embarked on expensive programs to construct hardened aircraft shelters. Iraq, fearing both Israeli and Iranian aircraft, built more than 500 such shelters by 1989.

In October 1973 Syria and Egypt attacked Israel and achieved a large measure of surprise. The Egyptians crossed the Suez Canal, eliminated Israeli defenses, and waited for a counterattack. The Syrians stormed the Golan Heights and nearly broke through to Israeli plains below. At the last moment, the Israelis halted them, pushed them back, and gained additional territory. On the Egyptian front, the Israelis penetrated across the Suez Canal and isolated a large segment of the Egyptian Army on the east bank of the canal. At that point, after twenty