

1991

In My View

Ronald A. Perron

Thomas Synnott

George M. Miller
U.S. Navy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Perron, Ronald A.; Synnott, Thomas; and Miller, George M. (1991) "In My View," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 44 : No. 2 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol44/iss2/12>

This Additional Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

IN MY VIEW . . .



Operation Desert Storm: "Unintended Consequences"

Sir,

In the Winter 1991 edition, the article by Commander Hickman, "Confrontation in the Gulf: Unintended Consequences," was timely, analytical and well written.

Commander Hickman includes Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah in his list of Middle Eastern monarchs who have "passed into history" (footnote 3), and I would have to take exception to including the Sheikh in that list. Sheikh Sabah has definitely not passed into history, but is very active, at the present time, making history with respect to post-war Kuwait. Reports since the liberation of that country indicate that the Sheikh and the other members of the ruling Sabah family are attempting to restore their power. Although the Kuwaiti royal family paid lip service to reforms during the October 1990 conference in Saudi Arabia, events since the liberation point toward the imposition of direct rule by the Sabahs—this time under the umbrella of martial law. There are daily news accounts coming out of Kuwait of Sabah-sanctioned assassination squads actively trying to eliminate any opposition to their rule. There are also accounts of open dissention between those Kuwaitis who stayed behind to oppose the Iraqis, and those Kuwaitis, including most of the royal family, who fled the country and sat out the occupation in Saudi Arabia or the spas and casinos of Europe.

Commander Hickman's analysis that the main reasons for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait were economic is correct. The list provided by the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.S. to "justify" the invasion omitted a very important one, that being the fact that Kuwait and some other OPEC countries were overproducing their oil quotas and undercutting the established prices. These actions in effect reduced Iraq's oil revenues at a time when they were badly needed to help rebuild an economy weakened by the long Iran-Iraq war. The war had reduced Iraq's production capacity and Iraq could not overproduce its quota even if it wanted to. Kuwait was viewed by Iraq as the ring

leader of the overproducers.

Commander Hickman has correctly pinpointed one of the major consequences of the recent Gulf war: that the actions of the U.S. and the coalition may have actually weakened the Saudi government. Rather than what *has* happened up until now in the Gulf, what *will* happen in Saudi Arabia in the next few years will have a greater effect on the U.S. Any changes in Saudi Arabia—and there will be some—will also have deep-reaching effects in the Gulf and the rest of the Middle East and North Africa.

In the same vein, the fact that the U.S. (by the deployment of the Patriot missile batteries) had to come to the assistance of Israel will have far-reaching effects on the politics of the region. No longer can Israel claim to be able to defend itself against its Arab neighbors. The SCUD attacks demonstrated to Israel that the territory they have occupied, through hardship and bloodshed since 1948, cannot guarantee their security. Realization of this just may help pave the way for some compromise on the part of Israel with regard to the Palestinian issue and the occupied territories.

Commander Hickman also pointed, correctly, to the failure of Islam to be a focus for political unity. Ever since Khomeini's Islamic Fundamentalist Revolution in 1979, the "bogeyman" of Islamic Fundamentalism has colored the politics of the area, especially the Gulf. Many observers believed that any Western move against an Islamic nation would provoke a firestorm of Islamic fervor that would sweep over the Infidels. This recent Gulf crisis dispelled that belief. If any event should have been the catalyst for such a firestorm, it most certainly was the Gulf war. It had all the ingredients: Western-led military forces fighting against an Islamic Arab nation, infidels "occupying" Saudi Arabia—site of Islam's holiest cities—and Saddam Hussein's call for a Jihad (Holy War). However, in actuality, the Fundamentalists showed that they would not or could not generate a cohesive front and that Islamic movements and groups were more inclined to use the Gulf crisis for their own ends and as a springboard to further their own national or organizational interests. There was no Pan-Arab Islamic fervor, just relatively minor demonstrations and mostly inbred squabbling, and, thankfully, there were no widespread acts of terrorism in support of Hussein's call for a Jihad.

I agree with Commander Hickman that the status quo ante cannot be restored, and I would add, should not be restored. The conditions in the Gulf and the Middle East present the U.S. and the nations of the region with a unique opportunity to reach at least stability, if not peace. Now that Saddam's military has been greatly reduced as a threat to the region, that Israel, while showing great restraint, has come to realize that territory does not necessarily mean security, and that fundamental changes are probably imminent in Saudi Arabia, and possibly Egypt and Syria, a new era is being ushered into the Middle East. Along with Commander Hickman, I hope that the recent Gulf war will hasten the maturation of attitudes necessary for regional peace. The war has almost certainly caused changes which should make it easier to achieve regional stability.

I thank Commander Hickman for his thought-provoking article.

Ronald A. Perron
Glen Burnie, Maryland 2

Operation Desert Storm: A Look Back at the Siege of Charleston

Sir,

During Operation Desert Storm, I was struck by General Colin Powell's description of our strategy against the Iraqi army: "Our strategy to go after this army is very, very simple. First we're going to cut it off, and then we're going to kill it."

In the second chapter of *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College* (Naval War College Press, 1984), the authors describe how Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, founder of the college, was profoundly influenced by a meeting he had with General William T. Sherman during the siege of Charleston, South Carolina, in January 1865: "Sherman explained the Navy's strategic failures in a few sentences and declared that he would make the city fall without a battle. 'I will cut her communications and Charleston will fall into your hands like a ripe pear,' Sherman said, 'and that is just exactly what came to pass,' Luce related."

Thomas Synnott
Cambridge, Massachusetts

"Ambition and Careerism"

Sir,

As usual, Joseph G. Brennan says it all in his article "Ambition and Careerism" (Winter 1991). Professor Brennan's thoughts are woven together so nicely that it takes a conscious effort at the end of the article to step back and see the complete tapestry.

Professor Brennan's style and classical allusions brought back those grand lectures at the War College, when his words enticed us to follow each silver thread and marvel at the tangents that could be spun from it, crossing and re-crossing themes, and finally discovering ourselves at the center of a gossamer web we only suspected was being knitted around us. He created a marvelous experience for us, in which many of us encountered for the first time a lecture that carried the same magic as an hour spent with Mozart or Shakespeare.

With regard to careerism, I like Professor Brennan's picture of military officers as highly individual, pursuing careers somewhere between individual drive for advancement and the requirements of service before self, and, I suspect, with a reasonably high appreciation of the ethical need to look for a middle ground. I think he makes it clear why I may have found some individuals' actions inappropriate, but haven't been concerned about careerism as a major Navy problem. It may be instructive that the Marines seem to be more concerned, in that they value selfless commitment to service without regard to personal costs more highly than the other services do—and they should, perhaps, given the nature of their warfighting.

While it doesn't provide any better understanding of the issue, the best measure of the effect of careerism on the service is the macroscopic view of the performance

128 Naval War College Review

of the military. After our recent successes, about the worst one can say is that if our leaders' career motivations are suspect, at least these officers are effective in their jobs.

Thanks for an illuminating article.

George M. Miller
Captain, U.S. Navy
University of Colorado



New from the Naval War College

Fundamentals
of
Force Planning

Vol. I: Concepts

Edited by the Force Planning faculty of the Naval War College's National Security Decision Making Department. The book draws together a wide range of both original and reprinted articles. They provide enduring frameworks and concepts for military professionals, scholars, and students interested in the appropriate level and mix of future U.S. military forces. Volume I of what will become a multi-volume series can be obtained for \$23 by calling or writing U.S. Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402-9325. The book number is 008046001391.