

## Gulf War - UPSC International Relations Notes

The Gulf War is the name given to the international conflict that erupted in Iraq in 1990, and involved many countries of the world. This is an important topic for the international relations segment of the [UPSC Syllabus](#).

In this article, you can read all about the reasons for the Gulf War, its impact on the world order and India during the Gulf War.

### Gulf War

The Gulf War started when Iraq, under dictator Saddam Hussein, invaded its neighbouring country Kuwait, claiming it as Iraq's 19th province.

- On 2nd August 1990, Iraq annexed its southeastern neighbour Kuwait, a country which is 25 times smaller in size than itself.
- Iraq was, at that time, ruled by Saddam Hussein.
- Hussein claimed Kuwait as Iraq's province, but the real **reasons for the invasion** were:
  - Hussein eyed Kuwait's huge oil reserves. He thought Iraq could acquire a significant bargaining power in the world if it owned massive oil reserves.
  - Iraq had accrued huge debts after its war with Iran. The country also owed Kuwait a significant amount. (Ironically, it was the US that had armed Iraq with weapons to aid in its war against Iran, which was on bad terms with the US since its Islamic Revolution in 1979.)
  - A third reason was that Hussein wanted to link this annexation with the Palestinian conflict.
- Upon the annexation, the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) reprimanded Iraq and warned of military action if it did not retreat by 15 January, 1991.
- As Hussein showed no intention to back off, despite the UN warnings, US-led coalition forces comprising more than 30 nations, assembled troops in Saudi Arabia.
  - The coalition included the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, France, Canada, Syria, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, the UAE, Thailand, Qatar, Bangladesh, Italy, Netherlands, Australia, Niger, Sweden, Philippines, Senegal, Argentina, Spain, Belgium, Bahrain, Poland, South Korea, Norway, Singapore, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Greece, Hungary and New Zealand.
  - They totalled about 7 lakh troops.
- However, the due date passed by and Iraq showed no signs of retreating.
- After the deadline, the coalition forces launched **Operation Desert Storm**, in which they destroyed Iraq's oil refineries, air defences and other major infrastructure. This was a naval and aerial bombardment offensive.
- This was followed by **Operation Desert Shield**, a ground offensive, which started in February.
- In February end, Kuwait was released after Hussein signed a ceasefire agreement. The war officially ended on 28 February 1991.

### Gulf War Impact/Results

After the war ended, Iraq was required to submit to inspections to assess and ensure that it did not possess any chemical or weapons of mass destruction.

- Iraq lost anywhere between 25000 to 50000 of its troops, and also more than 3000 civilians.
- On the coalition side, only 300 troops were killed.
- Kuwait lost more than 4000 troops and 1000 civilians.
- Saudi Arabia and Israel also lost some civilians in Iraqi scud missile attacks.

### India and the Gulf War

India had been one of the earliest countries to recognise Saddam Hussein's Baath regime. Iraq had also been pro-India especially when other countries in the region tilted towards Pakistan. The then Indian Prime Minister was [Chandra Shekhar](#), and the Indian government maintained its signature non-aligned stance during the Gulf War. However, India rejected linking the conflict with the Palestinian issue.

Between August and October 1990, India evacuated more than 1,75,000 Indian citizens from Kuwait. The Guinness Book of World Records records this event as the largest number of people evacuated by a civilian airliner.

