

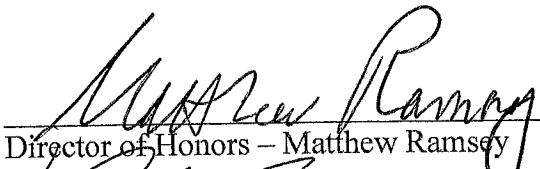
Marshalling Chaos: The US and the Coalition in the Persian Gulf War

By
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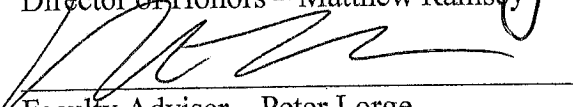
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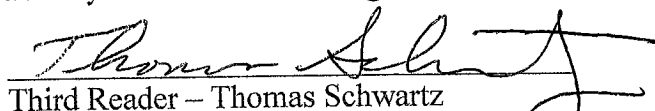
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Marshalling Chaos: The US and the Coalition in the Persian Gulf War

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Special thanks go to Professor Carol Atkinson for sharing her experience of the Persian Gulf War with me. The photographs and stories brought the war to a more personal level that I would have otherwise been unable to appreciate.

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Introduction

The Coalition during the Persian Gulf War manifested itself in military form, but it served more as a diplomatic device than a military necessity for the United States. The US, therefore, needed its coalition partners more to gain diplomatic legitimacy than to assist its military. The members, led by the US, founded the Coalition for diplomatic purposes. American maintenance of the united front proved important when the Coalition reluctantly altered course to a military option. Finally, under intense pressure during Operation Desert Storm, the Coalition faced more diplomatic issues than military concerns.

The Importance of Coalition Warfare

Alongside diplomacy, coalition warfare defined the participation of the United States and its partners in the Persian Gulf War. Unlike alliances, coalitions are not formal, lasting arrangements, known instead for their temporary and circumstantial nature.¹ Several factors prove crucial in the creation and maintenance of a coalition: command and control, doctrine, planning, and integration, among others.² Each of these would play an important role in the Gulf War Coalition, as they had in earlier coalitions in which the United States participated.

American military history, especially in the twentieth century, provides several precedents for participation in coalitions. Throughout the twentieth century, the United States engaged in several globe-spanning conflicts and participated in some kind of coalition in each one. The US joined World War I rather late and played little of a leadership role. The American Expeditionary Force, led by General John Pershing, maintained its own identity despite

¹ Anthony J. Rice, "Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare," *Parameters* (Spring 1997, 27, 1), 153.

² Robert W. Riscassi, "Principles for Coalition Warfare," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Summer 1993), 60, 64-66, 70. Other factors that Riscassi discusses are logistics, campaign, training, and Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I).

eventually serving under the French general Ferdinand Foch.³ Members of the Entente also argued with each other about issues ranging from relations between each nation's forces to where they should station those forces.⁴ The coalition in World War II provides a more striking example of success, but it too had its share of problems. Command and control proved controversial in the opening months of American participation, although the advent of combat in North Africa resolved this issue quickly.⁵ The United States and Britain also found the Soviet Union an untrustworthy partner, and the USSR harbored similar doubts about Britain when the two became allies.⁶ Despite tensions among the partners, they defeated the Axis powers. Even so, issues prevalent in World War II, such as command and control, would resurface in the Persian Gulf War coalition.

The Persian Gulf War provides a unique set of insights into coalition warfare and American participation in coalitions in general. One author on coalition warfare, Anthony J. Rice, expresses in the article "Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare" that the lack of unity of command in Desert Storm should not serve as a model for future operations – that coalition "has assumed a position of role model it ill deserves."⁷ He also mentions that "[u]nity of command is seen by some as a surrender of sovereignty which, unless a nation is in peril, should not be attempted."⁸ However, in August 1990, Iraq threatened Saudi Arabia, putting it "in peril," yet Saudi Arabia still insisted on a divided command structure. I argue that the Persian Gulf War coalition was in fact more effective than Rice suggests and that it worked

³ Rice, "Command and Control," 154-156.

⁴ Jehuda L. Wallach, *Uneasy Coalition: The Entente Experience in World War I* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 27,55, 67.

⁵ Rice, "Command and Control," 157-158. The British and Americans initially did not agree on command structure. It took the initiation of Operation Torch to decide on a supreme commander, Eisenhower. According to Rice, this was the first time the British military served under an American commander.

⁶ Mark A. Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 14, 16.

⁷ Rice, "Command and Control," 166.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

throughout the war to resolve successfully the issues that arose. Unity of command may not have technically existed, but unity of purpose and constant communications among coalition partners ensured that the coalition held together and achieved its purpose effectively.

Overall, in the Persian Gulf War literature, coalition warfare earns some acknowledgement but merits more exploration. Coalition warfare in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm warrants a deeper look, especially the ties between the military and diplomatic aspects of coalitions. I aim to fill this gap with my thesis by discussing why the United States needed coalition partners in the first place. This is significant because, despite the overwhelming military contribution of the United States to the coalition, it still relied on its partners to achieve diplomatic breakthroughs. It was also an opportunity for President Bush to set a precedent for handling future conflicts.

Central Questions

Throughout each chapter of the thesis, I wish to answer the following questions: Why did the US decide to form a coalition? How did the US use its coalition partners to its advantage during each phase of the conflict? How did the other coalition members participate in the Persian Gulf War? How did domestic opinion affect diplomatic and military decisions? How did the coalition maintain cohesion during times of trouble? Finally, why did the US bother to keep the coalition together, and why was it successful in the endeavor? These questions are important because they focus not only on the construction of the coalition but also how it operated during the conflict. They provide the opportunity to explore other coalition members' perspective of the war. They also give a sense of how much the other coalition partners actually participated and what impact they made on the war. The questions also emphasize that the coalition worked at

different levels – military, diplomatic, and domestic – and that these levels worked together and affected each other very often throughout the conflict.

Examining the Coalition and coalition warfare itself at these levels is important, as these levels all interact in the dynamics of war. Carl von Clausewitz noted this relationship in his treatise *On War*. As he explains, “The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of possibility and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and army; but the political aims are the business of government alone.”⁹ In the Persian Gulf War, domestic support, “passions... inherent in the people,” affected the degree and nature of coalition members’ participation. The competence of the US military and, to a lesser extent, that of its partners’ forces, allowed the Coalition to achieve its objectives despite problems they encountered. Finally, the Coalition governments agreed on a goal, and Bush kept his colleagues focused on achieving those aims despite temptations to stray. As the following chapters will demonstrate more clearly, the domestic, military, and political/diplomatic realms interacted throughout the war and became important for the US to maintain not just for itself but for its partners, too.

Structure of the Thesis

I will structure my thesis by organizing the chapters chronologically, and within this chronology I focus on specific themes and crises that dominated each period. I have divided the period of conflict into three phases: August-September 1990, October-December 1990, and January-February 1991. I have divided the war into distinct chronological periods because each period has its unique set of challenges for the coalition. Despite the war covering only two

⁹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89. Examining American conflicts from this perspective is not new. Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr. analyzed the Vietnam War using Clausewitz’s “trinity” in his book *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1982). A sequel to this book, *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell, 1992) examines the aftermath of the Vietnam War through a similar lens.

operations, the conflict seems to have a distinct period in which the transition from a defensive force to an offensive force could have significantly affected the coalition. The first chapter will cover the first two months of the war. This includes the implementation of Desert Shield and the initial deployment of troops. This section will answer the questions of how Bush organized a coalition and the implications of bringing disparate nations together. The second chapter will cover the October through December period, which signifies the end of Operation Desert Shield and the shift to an offensive option in the event that Saddam refused to comply with UN demands. This section will answer how the coalition managed to maintain cohesion in the military and diplomatic transition to the approach of forcing Saddam's troops out of Kuwait. The third chapter covers the actual combat phase of the war, Desert Storm. It more specifically focuses on the military aspect of the war, although it includes diplomatic implications of military actions as well. This chapter explores how the coalition maintained solidarity under fire, a different tension than that discussed in chapter two. Because the offensive operations ended successfully on 28 February 1991 for the Coalition, the main discussion of the Persian Gulf War coalition will end there. The epilogue will discuss how the US military considered, and then put aside, the role of coalition warfare in post-war reforms.

Historical Background: Post-Vietnam Reforms

The American military that fought in the Persian Gulf War differed fundamentally from its Vietnam predecessor. A revolution in technology accompanied a renaissance in doctrinal thought and training reforms that transformed a troubled draft-oriented military into a potent all-volunteer force capable of facing the Soviet threat in Europe. These changes created lasting implications for how the American military operated in a coalition environment.

Technological Revolution

In the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam War, the American military wallowed in the troubles that continued to haunt it even after it withdrew the last troops from Southeast Asia. The United States suffered from Vietnam syndrome, “a widespread perception that in the aftermath of the Vietnam war America had somehow lost its nerve.”¹⁰ According to Colonel Summers, “while American military *power* remained formidable after Vietnam, its military *authority* declined precipitously.”¹¹ Despite American misfortunes abroad, the Soviet threat persisted, and the Soviets had closed the technological gap during the American misadventure in Vietnam. Because the American military could not feasibly match the Soviet forces numerically, it had to compensate its quantitative inferiority with a qualitatively superior force. Part of this drew on the need to best the Soviets technologically.

One of the most important advances for the American military was the information revolution. According to Keith Shimko, “Just as the United States needed to find a way to counter Soviet advantages in quantitative measures of military power, information-age technologies provided a foundation for radical improvements in weapons capabilities. It was not a matter of any single technology but rather a bundle of simultaneous technological advances.”¹² Two problems that have always persisted for militaries are the fog of war and target acquisition. The fog of war is the limitation of information a military knows about its enemies, as noted by Clausewitz. Target acquisition is “the ability of munitions to actually hit, and thus disable or destroy, objects of military significance.”¹³ As Shimko explains, “Although few thought information technologies could completely eliminate these problems, American defense planners and RMA [revolutions in military affairs] enthusiasts believed they could substantially reduce

¹⁰ Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell, 1992), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7. Emphasis in original.

¹² Keith L. Shimko, *The Iraq Wars and America's Military Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 40.

the fog of war and dramatically improve target acquisition.” From this information revolution came the development of airborne control systems such as the AWACS and JSTARS as well as improved UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles).¹⁴

Improved weapons systems accompanied the information revolution. The Army developed the “Big Five”: the M1 Abrams tank, the Apache attack helicopter, the Patriot anti-aircraft (and later reprogrammed as an anti-missile) system, the M2/3 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, and the Blackhawk transport helicopter.¹⁵ The Air Force created advanced fighter aircraft, such as the F-15E Strike Eagle, as well as the stealth bombers that would destroy targets in downtown Baghdad.¹⁶ The Navy developed Tomahawk missiles, which they used in the opening salvo against Baghdad on 17 January 1991.¹⁷ These weapons would demonstrate the military might of the United States during the Persian Gulf War.

These changes in technology provided the American military with the most advanced weaponry in the world. American forces outmatched not only their enemy but also their Coalition partners in the Persian Gulf War. Technology augmented other improvements in the American military, as well.

Doctrinal Renaissance and Training Reforms

The Vietnam War struck a powerful blow to the American military’s confidence. However, leaders in the defense community transformed the failures in Vietnam into lessons for the military to use to improve itself. The technological advances would not mean much if the

¹⁴ Ibid., 40-42.

¹⁵ Robert H. Scales, Jr. *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 1993/2006), 44-45; Department of Defense (DOD), *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1992), 19-20.

¹⁶ Richard P. Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq: Air Power and the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 38, 62.

¹⁷ Ibid., 171.

military could not employ them efficiently, which required a restructuring of doctrine and training.

Two major reformers of doctrine in the post-Vietnam period were Colonels John Warden and Harry Summers, who worked to change the thinking of the air force and army, respectively. According to Hallion, “[b]oth represented a rediscovery and re-emphasis of the teachings of Carl von Clausewitz but with some critical rethinking.” Relying on air warfare theorists such as Giulio Douhet and John Boyd, Warden developed the notion of eliminating targets by attacking the enemy’s center of gravity, defined as points “that an opponent should disrupt and destroy.” The concept originated with Clausewitz, but Warden adapted it to the modern air campaign. Warden’s work also focused on the importance of air superiority, which would allow other operations to proceed unhindered. Warden’s work, compiled in *The Air Campaign*, would prove important for the planning of the air war in the Persian Gulf War. Summers criticized the Army’s performance in Vietnam in his book *On Strategy*. He, too, relied on Clausewitz in his analysis, saying that the American military in Vietnam had neglected the basic principles of war. His work helped the Army undergo a doctrinal renaissance.¹⁸

From this introspection, the Army coordinated with the Air Force to develop AirLand Battle, the doctrine that would prevail during the Persian Gulf War. It combined the idea of air supremacy and maneuver warfare to attack enemy forces effectively. The Army and Air Force created the doctrine with the intent of using it against Soviet forces in Eastern Europe: “AirLand Battle ideally addressed the requirements of mid- to high-intensity war, and, specifically, the challenge of confronting rapidly advancing Soviet forces attack in depth.”¹⁹ However, this warfare of air superiority and maneuver would dominate in the Persian Gulf War against Iraqi

¹⁸ Ibid., 115-118.

¹⁹ Ibid., 77.

forces, and it proved effective even away from the Fulda Gap in Germany, for which it was developed but never implemented.

Alongside the development of doctrine came the improvement in training. To prevent the catastrophic losses that happened at the beginning of most wars, which came from lack of preparation of troops, the armed forces developed their own exercises and training centers that provided the troops with realistic combat scenarios. The Army developed the National Training Center, which was based on the Air Force's Red Flag exercises. The Navy instituted the Top Gun school for its fighter pilots, and similar developments occurred for the Marine Corps.²⁰ Improvements in both doctrine and training, as well as advanced technology, helped re-establish American military confidence and competence.

Implications for Coalition Warfare

The reforms and improvements in the period after Vietnam affected how the United States would work in a coalition. The United States purposefully developed its new equipment to overcome Soviet-designed weapons, giving American troops the technological edge. The US military also designed the weapons and doctrine for war in Europe. AirLand Battle doctrine and the new technology had to be adaptable to work in the desert environment in the Persian Gulf War. AirLand Battle also proved to be flexible, as it took into consideration working with other forces. FM 100-5 *Operations* includes a section explaining how to adapt the doctrine to work with other forces.²¹ The post-Vietnam reforms did not focus specifically on coalition warfare, but they allowed the US to operate in a coalition environment effectively.

Historical Background: The End of the Cold War in the Middle East

²⁰ Ibid., 32-33.

²¹ Field Manual 100-5 *Operations* (1986), 164-168. It discusses in detail how to adapt command and control, intelligence, operational procedures, and combat service support.

In 1990, the United States was emerging as the sole superpower in the geopolitical community. Its former rival, the Soviet Union, stood on the verge of collapse. President Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union had weakened his country, and the Cold War seemed to be nearing its end. Communism in general was no longer the eminent foe – former Warsaw Pact nations were abandoning the Soviet Union and democratizing.²² The end of the Cold War, though, did not signal an era of peace. The Middle East had its own conflict brewing.

US Relations and the Iran-Iraq War

American relations with Middle Eastern nations at the end of the Cold War remained contentious. The issue of Israel, a US ally, and the Palestinian people had plagued relations in the region throughout the Cold War. The peace process stagnated in the late 1980s under the Reagan administration, with violence from both Palestinians and Israelis eroding whatever progress they had made.²³ The Iran-Iraq War that erupted in 1980 drew in unofficial American involvement. The US did not officially choose sides, but the Reagan administration aided Iraq (aside from selling arms to Iran in 1985-1986, which resulted in a scandal).²⁴ Once George HW Bush became president, he tried to improve relations with Iraq. However, in 1990, when the national security strategy identified rogue states as potential problems replacing the Soviet threat, relations with Iraq worsened. Saddam Hussein's regime fit the definition of rogue state with its chemical weapons, large military, and aggressive "expansionist goals," and it would soon cause major problems in the Gulf region.²⁵

The Invasion

²² Jeffrey A. Engel, "The Gulf War at the End of the Cold War and Beyond," *Into the Desert: Reflections on the Gulf War*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.

²³ Peter L. Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 87-91.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

Iran and Iraq had finished an eight-year war in 1988, and Iraq confronted immense debt.²⁶ It relied on oil fields for most of its revenue, and it shared the Rumaylah field with Kuwait. Kuwait had supported Iraq during its war with Iran, but Iraq pressed demands that Kuwait refused to accept. Iraq blamed Kuwait for stealing more than its share of oil from the Rumaylah field and purposefully driving down oil prices by putting too much oil on the market.²⁷ Iraq's threats escalated as Kuwait continued to ignore its demands. Iraq deployed troops on the border between the two countries, but the international community regarded this movement as a bluff.²⁸

On 2 August 1990, Saddam turned his maneuvering into a decisive conquest of Kuwait. Iraqi armor sped into Kuwait while special forces troops descended into Kuwait City. The Iraqi forces easily crushed the small Kuwaiti military, although some of the Kuwaiti units managed to escape. The royal family also managed to flee into Saudi Arabia. By evening, Iraqi troops controlled Kuwait and were moving to consolidate their gains.²⁹

The world quickly learned of Saddam's brazen move to invade Kuwait. The implications of his attack resounded beyond the Middle East. He now controlled a substantial amount of oil and could possibly use it to manipulate the Western nations, which relied so much on this substance.³⁰ He also threatened the balance of power in the Middle East.³¹ His troops were in position to attack Saudi Arabia.³² Finally, the global powers could not let him go unpunished. He

²⁶ Engel, "The Gulf War at the End of the Cold War and Beyond," *Into the Desert*, 27.

²⁷ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 206.

²⁸ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 207-208; Engel, "The Gulf War at the End of the Cold War and Beyond," *Into the Desert*, 31.

²⁹ Scales, *Certain Victory*, 3.

³⁰ Engel, "The Gulf War at the End of the Cold War and Beyond," *Into the Desert*, 34-36; Richard N. Haass, "The Gulf War: Its Place in History," *Into the Desert: Reflections on the Gulf War*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 68.

³¹ Haass, "The Gulf War, Its Place in History," *Into the Desert*, 67-68.

³² DOD, *Conduct*, 3.

had violated international law by invading Kuwait. If the United States and others did nothing, they would be condoning aggression.³³

As the emerging superpower, the United States had to confront this threat. The tools President Bush used mattered, as he could set a precedent for post-Cold War crisis management. His decision to form a coalition and to act in the name of international interests dictated how the crisis evolved.

³³ “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Aspen, Colorado, Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom,” 2 August 1990, Bush Library Public Papers collection, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2124&year=1990&month=8>.

Chapter 1: The World Versus Saddam Hussein, August-September 1990

The first two months of the Persian Gulf War proved crucial in demonstrating not just to the world but also to Saddam himself that he had become a pariah for his brazen attack on Kuwait. The Coalition formed mostly out of diplomatic need but proved effective for the coordinated enforcement of sanctions by the members' militaries. The coordination between Bush and his partners at the beginning of Desert Shield was important because it allowed the Coalition to deter Saddam from seizing Saudi oil and also provided the United States with a powerful diplomatic weapon to use against Saddam. Communication between partners helped seal the coalition, and having common goals from the start helped the Coalition maintain its focus in the first few months of the conflict.

The Response

President Bush's first avenue of response was the press conference in Aspen, Colorado. There he condemned Saddam, asserting to his audience, "We call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all the Iraqi forces. There is no place for this sort of naked aggression in today's world..."³⁴ Bush knew it was his responsibility to act as the leader against Iraqi aggression.³⁵ By quickly and clearly denouncing Saddam, he placed the United States in position to lead the coalition against the Iraqi dictator.

Bush initially refused to state exactly how he would react; he made no promises of military action. His response to the press prevented a commitment he could not afford without proper political support, both domestic and international, claiming that his administration was "not ruling any options in, but we're not ruling any options out." However, he had already

³⁴ "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," 2 August 1990, Bush Library Public Papers collection, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2123&year=1990&month=8>.

³⁵ He reiterates this position in a personal letter from 7 September 1990. George Bush, *All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 479.

gained an international partner in British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who assured the American audience of British support. She told the viewers, “Iraq has violated and taken over the territory of a country which is a full member of the United Nations. That is totally unacceptable, and if it were allowed to endure, then there would be many other small countries that could never feel safe.”³⁶ Thatcher and Bush’s quick response denied Iraq any legitimacy. To strengthen their response, they had to provide a credible punishment for any continued Iraqi aggression.

Both Thatcher and Bush expressed to the reporters at Aspen and to viewers around the globe that they would first go through the United Nations to find a solution to the Kuwait crisis. Bush wanted to use the UN because “[d]ecisive UN action would be important in rallying international opposition to the invasion and reversing it.”³⁷ Thatcher expressed confidence about the use of Chapter VII measures.³⁸ These measures provided a guideline for how the members of the UN should operate in the event of one member’s aggression against another signatory.³⁹ Already the Security Council had begun to take action against Iraq. Bush’s use of the United Nations ensured that the United States would not take unilateral action against Iraq. He sought to garner more global support. The coalition he eventually built granted him the power and legitimacy to stop Saddam.

The Failure of the Arab Summit

In order to become involved more directly in the crisis, the United States needed to coordinate with Saddam’s neighbors. Bush immediately conducted a round of personal phone calls to contact other leaders. One of his first phone calls was to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. In

³⁶ “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Aspen, Colorado, Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom,” 2 August 1990, Bush Library Public Papers collection, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2124&year=1990&month=8>. Hereafter “Remarks and Q&A.”

³⁷ Bush, *A World Transformed*, 303.

³⁸ “Remarks and Q&A,” 2 August 1990, Bush Library Public Papers collection.

³⁹ United Nations, “Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats of the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression,” Charter of the United Nations, <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>>.

the conversation, King Fahd expressed great concern about Saddam's aggression: "I think nothing will work with Saddam but use of force." Fahd also indicated to Bush that he would act as a leader of the Arab response to Saddam. He explained, "Arab leaders must be convinced what has happened is a poor move and through Mubarak and me, we will convene an Arab summit the day after tomorrow [4 August]." Despite his belief that only force could move Saddam, Fahd says, "I hope matters can be resolved peacefully. If not Saddam must be taught a lesson he will not forget the rest of his life, if he remains alive."⁴⁰

Fahd's response to Bush indicates that the Iraqi invasion was not just a transgression of international law. Saddam had violated the trust that had developed among his Arab neighbors. Bush's actions allowed the Arabs to unite against Iraq. Bush drew on this cohesion in the formation of the coalition. He gave the Arabs limited time to find a solution while still recommending putting American troops in the region. In his conversation with the King of Jordan, Bush said that "we cannot acquiesce in the status quo." He urged the Arabs to make a strong response but respected King Hussein's request that the Arab nations "deal with this in an Arab context, to find a way that gives us a better foundation for the future."⁴¹ However, the Arabs could not gather enough solidarity nor make a strong enough response against Saddam Hussein's aggression by themselves. They wanted to discuss the crisis in the Arab Summit, but the meeting was initially postponed because they wanted unanimous condemnation of Saddam.⁴² Despite assurances from Hafiz al-Assad of Syria that the Arabs took a stance favorable to Bush's

⁴⁰ 2 August 1990 Telephone conversation with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection. George HW Bush Library (Hereafter Bush Library).

⁴¹ 2 August 1990 Conversation with King Hussein of Jordan and President Mubarak of Egypt. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁴² 4 August 1990. Telephone conversation with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection. Bush Library. Fahd tells Bush, "The Summit was postponed because the statements by the Gulf States, Mubarak, the Foreign Ministers, Bendjedid, King Hussein showed that if the Summit was held the outcome would not be positive. The Summit would not come out with a unanimous resolution. Because of the seriousness, the resolution should be unanimous."

position,⁴³ the Arab world could not remain united. King Hussein of Jordan defended Saddam's actions, alienating himself and his country from the rest of the Arab League. The Palestinians also supported Saddam because he championed their cause against Israel. Some other nations were more noncommittal. Ultimately, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council states opposed Saddam.⁴⁴

Despite the Arab attempt at diplomacy, Saudi Arabia remained under threat from Iraqi forces. The United States and other nations recognized the need to send troops to ward off another attack by Saddam. Bush explained to King Fahd why he wanted to send United States troops to Saudi Arabia:

The Amir of Kuwait asked us for military intervention, but Iraqi troops had already occupied Kuwait city and there was nothing the US could do. It takes a long time to deploy troops. And that is why I am worried about Saudi Arabia. It was not possible to help him once they had crossed the border. Maybe we can help him down the line but now we can help Saudi Arabia, but we have long lines of supply and we have to move forces long distances.⁴⁵

Time was a commodity: "We need to get those forces there soon or Saddam, flushed with victory, might grab the oil fields and the eastern province. We have no credible presence side by side with Saudi Arabia, and without enhanced air, there is nothing to inhibit him militarily." He assured Fahd of his positive actions toward defending the region: "We also are moving our carrier and the French and the British are moving ships into the Gulf. We need concerted action on economic sanctions. We are pushing Chapter [VII] at the UN to tighten sanctions. Everyone must cooperate to economically bring this man to his knees."⁴⁶

Initially, the Saudis were reluctant to allow US troops into their country. The Saudis needed a guarantee that the Western coalition forces would leave as soon as hostilities ceased.

⁴³ 12 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Hafiz al-Assad of Syria. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁴⁴ Shibley Telhami, "The Arab Dimension of Saddam Hussein's Calculations," *Into the Desert: Reflections on the Gulf War*, ed. Jeffrey Engle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 162.

⁴⁵ 4 August 1990 Telephone conversation with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

They also worried that allowing Western troops into Saudi Arabia would cause them to lose credibility among their neighbors. However, King Fahd eventually accepted Bush's proposal to send US troops to defend Saudi Arabia against Saddam's forces.⁴⁷ Although intelligence said that Saddam's troops were not necessarily moving against Saudi Arabia, his invasion of Kuwait had broken the trust between Iraq and other Arab nations. The Saudis hesitated to believe that Saddam had no intentions of seizing their oil fields. The small Saudi army needed the addition of US and other coalition members' troops to provide a credible defense and deterrent against Iraqi forces.⁴⁸

Gaining the solidarity of a majority of Arab countries granted the multinational forces, especially the western members, the legitimacy to participate in the Persian Gulf. This particular Arab coalition was important because of their need for a balance of power in the region. Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia competed against Iraq for control in the region. The smaller GCC states, like the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, stood in solidarity with another small Arab nation, Kuwait. The Arab nations wanted to demonstrate to Saddam that violating a fellow Muslim nation's sovereignty would not adequately resolve issues.⁴⁹ More importantly for Bush, it proved to the world that it was not just the United States fighting Iraq. As he explained to President Assad of Syria, "even though the United States had responded to the legitimate appeal from King Fahd, the worst thing would be to make this an Arab versus United States issue." Because of the solidarity of most Arab nations against Iraq, however, "now it is the world versus Saddam Hussein."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Bob Woodward, *The Commanders: The Pentagon and the First Gulf War, 1989-1991*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991) 267-273.

⁴⁸ 4 August 1990 Conversation with King Fahd. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁴⁹ Telhami, "Arab Dimension," 162.

⁵⁰ 12 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Hafiz al-Assad of Syria. Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

United Nations Security Council and Domestic Responses

The United Nations Security Council convened an emergency session as soon as the world learned of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Some nations had already taken action on their own initiative – for instance, the Soviet Union, supporting the United States' condemnation of Saddam's invasion, halted arms sales to Iraq.⁵¹ Although the Security Council issued no specific punitive instructions against Iraq, it “[demanded] that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions in which they were located on 1 August 1990.” It also wished for “Iraq and Kuwait to begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolution of their differences and supports all efforts in this regard, and especially those of the League of Arab States.”⁵² This last demand allowed the Arab states to take the first step against Iraq, to sort out regional problems. The resolution was important because it brought the invasion worldwide attention yet allowed the Arab states the opportunity to resolve differences among themselves before the Security Council members became more involved. It also provided the major objective for the coalition: to reverse Saddam's aggression and restore Kuwait's sovereignty. Having this shared goal from the start made it clear that every partner's decision should be made with Kuwait's liberation in mind. Any straying from the central goal, any kind of backdoor dealing could undermine the strength of the coalition.

Deciding the US Response

Although the United Nations Security Council had already addressed and had passed resolutions condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Bush still had to develop a specific response from the United States. He met with his National Security Council on 5 and 6 August. In the first meeting, the NSC discussed military options to accompany the diplomatic consensus

⁵¹ “Remarks and Q&A,” 2 August 1990, Bush Library Public Papers collection.

⁵² United Nations Security Council Resolution 660.

against Iraq. However, the Bush administration hesitated in committing a large force. Secretary of State James Baker said, “We have a problem adding language about a multi-national force. We think this would be premature. We have the potential here for effective sanctions.” Although a military response was an option, the Bush administration preferred to use Chapter VII sanctions before using actual force to drive Saddam’s troops out of Kuwait. The NSC members demonstrate a consensus to send troops to protect Saudi Arabia from potential Iraqi hostility. Brent Scowcroft advised that “Now is the time to get the Saudis everything we have,”⁵³ and Secretary Baker voiced his agreement.

Despite a consensus on options, Bush seemed concerned that Saddam would not take his opposition seriously: “My sense is that Iraq does not believe we will act. Saddam is riding an emotional high. Maybe if he sees it is not business as usual he will change.”⁵⁴ Whatever option the US took, it had to create a large impact on Saddam, but it also required the consent of Congress and the American people if the United States was to remain in the Gulf long enough to ensure the success of its actions.

Domestic Opinion

When the United States initially became involved in the Gulf crisis, Congress and the US population supported Bush’s response. Even so, some citizens questioned American intentions in the Middle East. According to Bush’s recollections, “One criticism was that I had not adequately made the case to the public and the Congress as to the reason we had to get involved. Public opinion would not back for very long the large troop commitment we would need in the Gulf, let alone military action, without being given good justification.”⁵⁵ Bush grew frustrated that the

⁵³ NSC Meeting transcript, 5 August 1990. Bush Library. (Accessed from MTF).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 358.

American population did not understand the situation in Kuwait, how brutally Saddam's men were treating the trapped civilians. Bush notes,

I often felt that the magnitude of what was happening to Kuwait was not properly covered by the press, and therefore was not understood by the American public or members of Congress. This made communicating our interests all the more difficult. Over and over, Iraqi atrocities and stubborn criminal acts would pass by with little comment in the media. People seemed unmoved by the injustices we were witnessing, injustices in which I found even greater reason to resist Saddam.⁵⁶

Bush's coalition partners, especially Ozal and Fahd, who were neighbors of Iraq, updated him on the brutalities committed in Kuwait. Bush cites Iraqi media censorship as one of the reasons why the American public seemed ignorant of the situation and therefore less understanding of why Bush wanted to punish Saddam.⁵⁷

By September, Bush noticed a large increase in disapproval. Polls demonstrated that those who were against involvement rose from 7% in August to 23% in September.⁵⁸ Opposition may have increased, but the majority of the American population supported involvement. Even so, supporters still believed that the other Coalition members needed to contribute more,⁵⁹ highlighting the importance of keeping the Coalition a multinational effort. However, at this stage, the US continued to press for a diplomatic solution, keeping the military option on reserve.

Strangling Saddam

The use of sanctions brought the reality of war home to the Iraqi people, but Saddam continued his absorption of Kuwait. Coalition partners believed that sanctions were a viable alternative to force. However, the concern for sticking to sanctions was that they took too much time to work. They were a passive-aggressive measure, demonstrating a commitment to the cause yet allowing minimal use of military force. Turkey and Saudi Arabia's coordinated

⁵⁶ Ibid., 358.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 358.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 372.

⁵⁹ Guy Gugliotta, "Gulf Policy Fosters Anxious Support: Approval in Poll Solid Despite Concerns Over Cost, Length of Action," *The Washington Post*, 11 Sep 1990, A9.

shutdown of oil to Iraq⁶⁰ could strangle the military's mobility, but Iraqi troops entrenched themselves in Kuwait, indicating to the Coalition that Saddam would not move out of the country. He continued to consolidate his prize. Although the sanctions did not achieve their intended effect on Saddam, they served as a means of unification for the Coalition and became a tangible demonstration of the Coalition's commitment to stopping Saddam. Ultimately the sanctions provided the Coalition forces with a particular direction in their actions, a specific goal toward which they worked.

The Hostage Crisis

While the coalition nations enforced the sanctions, Saddam attempted to counter their efforts by arresting diplomats and foreign nations, forcing these "guests," as he called them, to stay in Iraq and Kuwait. He did not care for their safety. In a letter dating from 17 August, when the crisis began, Bush deplores Saddam's actions. According to information he received from Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gates, the Iraqi forces "would place them [the hostages] in various facilities—he mentioned near oil dumps or chemical plants—whatever. Clearly putting them there so [the buildings] could not be bombed." He recognized the immoral logic in Saddam's actions and sought to fight it: "Blatant hostage holding. Another blatant disregard of international law by a cruel and ruthless dictator. I cannot tolerate, nor will I, another Tehran. I am determined in that. It may cost American lives, but we cannot sacrifice American principle and American leadership..."⁶¹ The hostage crisis provided Bush with another opportunity to assert American leadership, and his coordination of the Coalition partners prevented Saddam from breaking them apart.

⁶⁰ August 1990 Telephone conversations with Fahd and Turgut Ozal. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁶¹ Bush, *All the Best*, 477-8.

Bush had to coordinate coalition nations against the retrieval of hostages to prevent Saddam from using them as bargaining chips that would divide the coalition. He even reached out to those not officially in the Coalition to assist. In a 1 September phone conversation with President Saleh of Yemen, Bush asked the president, “[I]f you felt you could, make any appeal to Saddam Hussein to stop using hostages as a shield--hostages from many countries--because this concept of using innocent travelers, innocent people as pawns is making world opinion solidly opposed to Saddam.”⁶² Coalition partners in kind responded to Bush that they would hold firm against Saddam’s practices. As French president François Mitterrand assured Bush, “France has specific concerns because of our hostages, but this does not alter our policy. On the contrary, this irritates us and strengthens our resolve.”⁶³

Unity of the coalition was important at this point. Because of the constant communication Bush held up with his partners in the coalition, they kept each other aware of Saddam’s attempts to break the coalition through personal phone calls. The trust built up at the beginning kept everyone open and reliable. By working closely with his partners, Bush prevented Saddam from gaining the upper hand and allowed the United States to put up a strong front to pressure the dictator. The hostage-taking could have become a major diplomatic crisis, yet the trust and candidness of the coalition partners denied Saddam success. Diplomatically, the coalition partners granted Bush the opportunity to portray Saddam as the antagonist in the situation and gave the US legitimacy in its opposition to Iraq. The coalition cared about maintaining this image because it helped sustain the alienation of Iraq and kept the coalition focused on its goal of a united offensive against Iraq.

⁶² 1 September 1990 Telephone conversation with President Saleh of Yemen. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁶³ 6 September 1990 Telephone conversation with President Francois Mitterrand. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

Building the Coalition

The United States sent the bulk of the troops to the Gulf,⁶⁴ but for the Coalition to be truly multinational, other members had to participate militarily. Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain immediately pledged support at the Aspen conference and continued to give military and political support to Bush. She offered the deployment of Tornados from the Royal Air Force,⁶⁵ and she also sent a brigade of British armor to the theater.⁶⁶ President Francois Mitterrand of France also promised to contribute troops to the coalition, “both land and air.”⁶⁷ Other nations like Canada and Australia contributed to the coalition by sending naval forces to help enforce the sanctions.⁶⁸ Canada also pledged a squadron from its air force and support personnel to sustain the squadron.⁶⁹

The deployment of armed forces was an obvious response to Saddam’s attack and a clear demonstration of a nation’s condemnation of his policy. However, military force was not the primary solution to forcing Saddam’s troops out of Kuwait. Bush and his colleagues pushed for a diplomatic solution, using economic strangulation to tighten the pressure on Saddam. Economic sabotage of Iraq worked in tandem with the enforcement of the embargo by coalition navies. For some members of the Coalition, this was the only way they could become involved.

⁶⁴ US troop deployments from August to September 1990 are discussed in the “Boots on the Ground” section. Coalition navies will be discussed in the “Enforcing the Embargo” section.

⁶⁵ 9 August 1990 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁶⁶ Peter de la Billiere, *Storm Command: A Personal Account of the Gulf War* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 11.

⁶⁷ 16 September 1990 Telephone conversation with President Francois Mitterrand. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁶⁸ 10 August 1990 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Mulroney and 9 August 1990 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Bob Hawke of Australia. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁶⁹ 10 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Mulroney. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

Japan's primary role in its participation with the Coalition was to provide economic assistance to Coalition partners and to sever economic ties with Iraq.⁷⁰ In early August, Bush contacted Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu and asked what he could contribute to the Coalition. After meeting with the Japanese Diet, Kaifu announced to Bush that he would grant \$1 billion to the Coalition effort, excluding the additional \$22 million used to assist nations suffering the effect of the sanctions on Iraq.⁷¹

Although Japan provided an important economic contribution to the Coalition, its other options were limited by its constitution. Altered after World War II to hinder future aggression, the Japanese constitution prohibited the use of armed forces except for self-defense purposes.⁷² The Diet interpreted this to mean it could not use the self-defense forces abroad. Therefore, when Bush pressed Kaifu to send ships to the Persian Gulf, Kaifu explained that he could not because of constitutional limitations and the inability to change the constitution to contribute further.⁷³ However, he was able to provide logistics and other support to the navies already there.⁷⁴

Germany faced a similar situation to Japan. Germany's constitution limited the capacity in which it could use its armed forces.⁷⁵ Chancellor Helmut Kohl did try to alter the constitution in order to assist the Coalition with German forces, but his country played more of a diplomatic

⁷⁰ 5 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Toshiki Kaifu of Japan. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library. Kaifu explained to Bush, "First, we will embargo all imports from Iraq and Kuwait. Second, we will embargo exports to both countries. Third, we will take measures to suspend loans, credits and investment with respect to Iraq and Kuwait. Fourth, we will suspend economic cooperation with Iraq."

⁷¹ 29 August 1990, 8:39-8:44 pm. Telephone conversation with Toshiki Kaifu of Japan. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁷² Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 360.

⁷³ 29 August 1990, 7:02-7:17 am. Telephone conversation with Toshiki Kaifu of Japan. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library. Kaifu explains, "I will try to increase public support to formulating a new law to allow our self-defense forces to play a role in global situations."

⁷⁴ 29 August 1990, 8:39-8:44 pm. Telephone conversation with Toshiki Kaifu of Japan. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁷⁵ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 360. 22 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Helmut Kohl of Germany. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library. Kohl tells Bush, "We are trying to change the Constitution, but it won't happen very quickly."

role than anything else. For instance, later in the war, Germany encouraged more Turkish participation by guaranteeing the backing of NATO where both countries were members.⁷⁶

Turkey played a unique role in the Coalition. It and Saudi Arabia both had oil pipelines running through Iraq. Prior to the passage of Resolution 665,⁷⁷ Bush coordinated with Turgut Ozal of Turkey and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia for them to cut off oil supplies to Iraq by shutting down the pipelines. Initially the Turkish government was reluctant to commit to this action.⁷⁸ However, Ozal and Bush agreed on using Chapter VII sanctions as the reason for shutting off the pipelines.⁷⁹ Because the Security Council resolution granted them legitimacy beyond just supporting the Coalition, Turkey and Saudi Arabia closed their pipelines with the support of the Coalition.⁸⁰

Turkey also acted in an important diplomatic role. Alongside Sultan Qaboos of Oman⁸¹, Turkey became the intermediary between the United States and Iran.⁸² Ozal assured Bush that the Iranians were displeased with Saddam's maneuvers. Iran also approved of Western troops in the Middle East as long as they did not remain beyond the end of the crisis. Iran promised not to interfere with the Coalition. Ozal kept Bush up to date on his talks with Iran and ensured that a

⁷⁶ This is discussed in a later chapter.

⁷⁷ This resolution specifically called for the enforcement of sanctions.

⁷⁸ 4 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Turgut Ozal of Turkey. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library. The Turkish government had announced that "it wishes to remain neutral," to which Bush responded, "I cannot emphasize enough my view that there can be no neutrality in these circumstances and my hope that we can get the plan, for the Saudis and you [Turkey] to shut down the pipeline if Iraq fails to withdraw from Kuwait as virtually the entire world is calling for them to do."

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ 14 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Turgut Ozal of Turkey. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁸¹ 8 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Sultan Qaboos of Oman. He tells Bush, "They [Iran] will stand alongside the Gulf countries and will do anything asked if there is a need for it." Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

⁸² 3 August 1990. Telephone conversation with Turgut Ozal of Turkey. He tells Bush, "I will talk to Rafsanjani and the Iranians."

country normally antagonistic to the United States actually cooperated. He provided a connection the US would not have otherwise.⁸³

Enforcing the Embargo: Coalition Maritime Interception Operations

Although the military forces sent to the Gulf in August and September 1990 were primarily for the defense of Saudi Arabia, Coalition naval forces played a more active role through maritime interception operations. As part of the initial response, the United States sent a carrier and other naval vessels to the Persian Gulf. Bush encouraged other leaders to send ships if possible. Nations such as France and the UK sent both ground troops and naval forces while others like Spain and Argentina participated in a maritime capacity. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries used their navies to patrol their waters.⁸⁴

The purpose of the multinational naval force was to prevent goods from leaving or entering Iraq. They were to stop ships carrying contraband as delineated by the Security Council sanctions and divert those ships to friendly ports if such material was found. Because of heightened tensions, it was especially important for the navies enforcing the sanctions not to act belligerently. As the Department of Defense's report to Congress explains, "The operational plan considered the danger that unnecessary use of force at the early stages of the crisis might undercut international support for the sanctions or even prompt an Iraqi military response at an inopportune time relative to Coalition building and Operation Desert Shield force deployment."⁸⁵

The maritime interception operations not only demonstrated the solidarity of the coalition in a concrete manner, but they also provided an initial instance of cooperation among multinational armed forces. Enforcing the sanctions meant that the resolutions issued by the

⁸³ In a 4 August 1990 telephone conversation with Ozal, Bush says, "Only you, with your relationships, could have talked both to [Assad] and Rafsanjani." Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

⁸⁴ DOD, *Conduct*, 49, 51-52.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

United Nations Security Council had real power behind them – Saddam’s people would suffer from his obstinacy to withdraw. It also demonstrated how many nations condemned Saddam’s actions. The end of September found 42 non-American ships deployed to the Gulf region. 13 nations had sent actual naval forces while 22 participated in a logistical and support role. Naval Forces Component, Central Command (NAVCENT) coordinated the maritime interception operations in the theater. According to the official DoD report,

Each sector generally included ships from more than one country, in addition to the forces of the local Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, with the understanding that the senior naval officer in each sector would be the local sector coordinator. In the Red Sea and northern Persian Gulf, the local coordinators usually were the US carrier battle group (CVBG) and destroyer squadron commanders.⁸⁶

Cooperation among all those forces was crucial to ensuring effective enforcement of the embargo.

Boots on the Ground: The Military Situation in Saudi Arabia (August-September 1990)

Bush’s diplomacy granted the US military enough forces to provide a solid defense against Saddam. The partners were necessary because they allowed the United States to acquire troops at a faster rate. Partners helped the US overcome logistical difficulties as well as enhancing its technological advantage.

The First Forces

As soon as Bush received King Fahd’s approval to send troops, a contingent of Airborne troops, a nearby carrier group, and some Air Force fighter squadrons hastened to Saudi Arabia. Having coalition forces helped increase the presence faster. An initial deployment of 5,000 Egyptian⁸⁷ and 2,000 Syrian⁸⁸ troops helped bolster the Saudi numbers somewhat. Even with

⁸⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁷ Kim Murphy, “Mubarak Sends Troops, Sees ‘No Hope’ for Averting Clash,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 Aug 1990, A1A. According to Thomas G. Friedman [“Confrontation in the Gulf: Additional Troops Promised by Egypt,” *New York Times*, 9 Sept 1990], Egyptian troops soon exceeded 30,000 in the theatre.

these troops, the coalition still faced the concern of Iraq possibly deciding to attack. Iraqi numbers and troop deployment worried the early coalition forces: "Far exceeding occupation requirements, Iraq had more than enough forces to launch an immediate invasion of Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province. Intelligence reports indicated Iraqi units were being positioned along the Saudi border while reinforcements continued to arrive in Kuwait."⁸⁹ However, by the end of September, this concern disappeared. Each arrival of troops meant Saddam would have to sacrifice much of his own force to capture strategic points in Saudi Arabia. As Schwarzkopf describes in his memoir, "We'd also built a steel curtain against Iraqi air attacks; if an Iraqi bomber had ventured over Saudi territory, Horner's F-15 and F-16 fighters would have gunned it down within ten miles of the border.... The more countries that committed combat forces, the less likely Saddam would be to attack Saudi Arabia.... The coalition air force - from the United States, Great Britain, France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and Qatar -- already outnumbered Iraq's three to one."⁹⁰

The purpose of the first forces, who became the first troops to participate in Operation Desert Shield, the protection of Saudi Arabia, was defensive. As Bush promised, these troops served as a deterrent to Saddam, raising the costs of attacking Saudi Arabia. According to the Department of Defense's report to Congress, *The Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*:

The initial deployment of air, naval, and light ground forces was intended to establish combat forces in theater quickly to deter an Iraqi ground attack and defend key ports and airfields along the Saudi northern Gulf coast. As heavier ground forces arrived in Saudi Arabia, defensive dispositions were to be expanded.... Continuing arrival of armored forces would let CINCCENT [Schwarzkopf] counterattack any Iraqi forces with a strong mechanized reserve.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Jackson Diehl, "Syria's Move Runs Risks, Say Israelis: Assad, in Joining U.S.-Led Effort, Endangers Image Among Arabs," *The Washington Post*, 15 Aug 1990, A12.

⁸⁹ Department of Defense. *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*. Washington, DC, 1992, 31.

⁹⁰ H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero: The Autobiography*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1992) 346, 348. Hereafter *Hero*.

⁹¹ DOD, *Conduct*, 33-34.

However, it would take time for the heavier forces of the coalition to arrive. The presence of a multinational force in August proved that the United States was taking the lead, but it was not fighting alone. However, the defensive nature of this force, as well as its composition, posed concerns for the coalition.

Military Concerns

The largest concerns that the coalition troops faced were a possible move to seize oil fields by Iraq and the Iraqi use of chemical weapons. Because they were unsure of Saddam's intentions, the coalition nations had to move forces into Saudi Arabia as quickly as possible to prevent him from seizing Saudi oil fields. As it was, the Saudi military was a fraction of the Iraqi force. Having the troops work together was not a problem for Schwarzkopf. The size of the military, however, was. Schwarzkopf explains in his memoir:

Militarily, the Saudi air force had meshed neatly with our own.... But their small 66,000-man army was another story. The week we met, [Khaled] said frankly, "You must help with my ground forces. They are in terrible shape." Well paid, well fed, and wonderfully equipped--with modern American, French, and British tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers--the Saudi forces were absolutely tied to their bases, because they had no organization to do the nitty-gritty work of sustaining them in the field.⁹²

Because of their limitations, the Saudis needed the coalition partners to bolster their defenses.

Merely by increasing the size of the military presence in Saudi Arabia helped the United States deter Iraqi aggression.

By September 28, the US had moved a large number of forces into the region. According to Secretary of Defense Cheney at a meeting with the Emir of Kuwait, "There are 170,000 [American] personnel in the region, three aircraft carriers, and the equipment and support including armor and tanks."⁹³ It had taken nearly two months to build up the military to the point

⁹² Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 340. The Saudis had military cities scattered throughout the country where they were based. Also, in *Hero* Schwarzkopf calls him Khalid. I have used Khaled instead for consistency.

⁹³ 28 September 1990 Memorandum of Conversation with Amir [Emir] of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

where it could defend against Iraq. However, having a defensive presence in the region was not enough. As Schwarzkopf explains in his memoir, "Saddam's forces were becoming more and more entrenched, and you didn't have to be Clausewitz to realize we needed a plan for a ground offensive. Not only were the Gulf nations urging us to kick Iraq out of Kuwait, but Powell had made it clear... that Washington was impatiently awaiting an 'offensive option' from Central Command."⁹⁴ Bush had committed US troops to the region. Now that Saddam's forces had assumed a defensive position, the United States needed to alter its plans to push Iraq out of Kuwait.

Conclusion

In order to face the crisis in the Persian Gulf, the United States needed diplomatic legitimacy. Although Japan, France, and the NATO allies came along easily, it was important for Bush to gain the cooperation of the Arab nations that he would be sending military forces to protect. They provided him the legitimacy to intervene through their invitations to send forces, and they also provided military assistance to the Coalition troops. United Nations Security Council resolutions gave international authorization for the actions the Coalition undertook to punish Saddam. The variety of Coalition partners not only proved that the intervention for Kuwait was multinational, but they also provided diplomatic connections not always accessible for the United States, especially Iran. Domestic opinion in the United States did not always recognize the nature of the crisis in the Gulf, which somewhat hindered the extent to which Bush could operate. However, because of the internationality of the Coalition, President Bush still received support for his intervention from the majority of Americans, which allowed him to participate further in the Gulf crisis by sending naval forces to enforce the sanctions and ground troops to defend Saudi Arabia.

⁹⁴ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 354.

Military forces acted as a concrete manifestation of the Coalition's disapproval of Saddam's actions, but the formation of the Coalition occurred under the need for international condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait. The first two months focused very heavily on diplomatic and economic pressure to force Saddam to withdraw his troops. Despite the presence of military forces, the initial intentions of the Coalition were diplomatic. Various partners communicated to Bush that they wanted to pursue a peaceful route to punishing Saddam, saving military force for last. Thus from the start the Coalition acted as a diplomatic device, and only when the members of the Coalition seriously considered the military option did it become a proper military force with a formal command structure in the theater.

Chapter 2: Shifting Focus, October-December 1990

The planning of Desert Storm and the crises that emerged during the latter phase of Desert Shield further revealed the Coalition as a diplomatic device. Saddam's stubbornness forced the coalition to consider a different approach to the crisis. While coalition troops sat in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, leaders grew anxious about Saddam's refusal to respond. The longer they stayed immobile, the more Saddam could consolidate his gains. Because he declined to leave, the United States decided it would have to remove his troops with force, and it gained the support of other Coalition members to do so. This chapter will address the transition from the defense of Saudi Arabia to the preparation of the offensive. How the coalition finally resolved the intervening issues helped reaffirm its cohesion and maintained its focus. More than before, the US needed its partners on board if it were to resolve this crisis successfully.

The Expanding Crisis: Saddam and His Hostages

The hostage crisis became particularly sensitive when Saddam started using his captives as bargaining chips to fracture the coalition. At the beginning of October, Saddam began to release hostages incrementally. A newspaper article from 2 October 1990 noted "the release of nine French hostages... in an attempt to coax Paris out of the global coalition arrayed against [Saddam]." ⁹⁵ In response, "the French government spurned any special treatment and demanded the immediate release of all foreign hostages held in Iraq." ⁹⁶ Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada noted the "release of French nationals" in a 24 October conversation with President Bush. The president replied, "Saddam's trying to get a little high ground in public relations. I'm concerned because these efforts highlight the propaganda nature of all this." Mulroney responded: "we're all being approached to be used as pawns by Saddam and unless we have a

⁹⁵ William Drodzlak, "Iraq to Release 9 French Hostages: Move Seen as Effort to Split Global Coalition against Saddam," *The Washington Post*, 2 Oct 1990, A15.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

united approach we can get cut off at the knees.” “It just damages the solidarity of the alliance,” he added.⁹⁷ Both Canadian Members of Parliament and American Congressmen had been invited to speak to Saddam, and the dictator wanted to bargain away hostages in exchange for concessions from coalition members. The Coalition governments’ decisions not to bargain for hostages foiled Saddam’s attempts to crack the coalition.

Turgut Ozal of Turkey also warned Bush of the Iraqi dictators’ schemes: “Let me tell you that Saddam Hussein is trying to crack the coalition. If he sees any light, he will jump in. I told them in Saudi Arabia to keep a hard line, not give up anything and continue to insist the UN resolutions be fulfilled.”⁹⁸ Bush noted a similar incident when dealing with Mitterrand of France, who had expressed wanting to install a democracy in Kuwait after its liberation, a stance to which the US could not agree. The issue proved minor, but Saddam still attempted to exploit it: “Fortunately, François ceased to make an issue of it, so that the matter had no practical effect on the coalition. Saddam, however, did try to exploit the apparent differences by releasing about 250 French hostages at the end of October, saying it was in response to the UN address.”⁹⁹

Throughout the remaining months in 1990, Saddam eventually released the rest of the hostages. None of the Coalition members broke away after receiving citizens held hostage in Iraq for the past several months. However, the hostage crisis set the stage for changes in the Coalition’s approach to Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait and other crises that happened in this latter phase of Desert Shield. Throughout this period, it was not disagreements in military matters that threatened to break the Coalition but diplomatic crises that strained relations.

The Military Considers an Offensive Option: October 1990

⁹⁷ 24 October 1990 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁹⁸ 24 October 1990 Telephone conversation with President Turgut Ozal of Turkey. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

⁹⁹ Bush, *A World Transformed*, 376.

Considerations for a military option emerged in late September 1990.¹⁰⁰ Schwarzkopf ordered his staff to begin developing an option for the forces they had available. By 6 October, they had a plan ready to present to him. This would become the one-corps option. In order to push the Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, “the plan intended to concentrate as much combat power in the smallest space possible against the weakest Iraqi point ... to lessen the cost of a penetration.”¹⁰¹ Once the forces broke through the Iraqi defenses, they would immediately chase after the Republican Guard. The goal was to eliminate half of the Iraqi troops’ strength – determined by the number of vehicles and equipment destroyed – during the air war. Once the US forces attacked, other coalition troops would protect the flank.¹⁰²

Schwarzkopf sent some of his staff to Washington to brief the President about the plan. The costliness of the one-corps offensive was evident to everyone. Schwarzkopf expresses his reservations in his memoir:

Hearing the planners' presentation, I became certain that, unless the President sent more forces, this was the best possible approach -- and I liked it now even less than when I'd thought of it myself. For one thing, the offensive lacked any element of surprise: it was a straight-up-the-middle charge right into the teeth of Iraqi defenses. And even assuming things went well, casualties would be substantial: the SAMS team had predicted (rather optimistically, I thought) eight thousand wounded and two thousand dead for the U.S. forces, and that didn't include possible mass casualties from chemical weapons, which were impossible to estimate.¹⁰³

Schwarzkopf pressed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell to convince the president to send more forces to Saudi Arabia so that the CENTCOM planners could devise a better option for an offensive. Powell agreed with Schwarzkopf's concerns, saying in his memoir, “He would have enough to defend Saudi Arabia, but hardly enough to

¹⁰⁰ Scales, *Certain Victory*, 125.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 125

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 125-6.

¹⁰³ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 356. SAMS – School of Advanced Military Studies.

drive out an entrenched Iraqi army estimated at half a million men.”¹⁰⁴ Upon hearing the plan, both Bush and Scowcroft had reservations, and Scowcroft expressed his to the briefers:

The option they presented us, an attack straight up through the center of the Iraqi army, seemed to me to be so counterintuitive that I could not stay silent. I asked why not an envelopment to the west and north around and behind the forces in Kuwait to cut them off. The briefer’s answer was that they did not have enough fuel trucks for so extensive an operation and the tanks would run out of gas on the shoulder of the encirclement. In addition, they did not know whether the shifting sands of the western desert would support an armored operation. Therefore it was not feasible.¹⁰⁵

Bush took into consideration diplomatic implications as well as the possibility of numerous casualties. However, a military option was still possible: “Considering how long it could take the sanctions to work, I thought responding to a provocation might be the most likely course.”¹⁰⁶

After the briefings, President Bush agreed to send another corps to Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁷ In mid-October, the CENTCOM planners initiated development on the two-corps option.¹⁰⁸ For this offensive, the US Marines and Joint Forces¹⁰⁹ would hold the Iraqi troops in Kuwait while the new corps and XVIII Airborne would circle around to the west and smash the Iraqis in a hammer-and-anvil strike, also called the Great Wheel. Amphibious forces would remain aboard their ships to deceive the Iraqis into thinking an amphibious invasion was imminent. VII Corps, based in Europe, was eventually chosen as the new corps to deploy to Saudi Arabia. Their heavy armor could match the elite tank units of the Republican Guard.¹¹⁰

New Corps, New Option: November 1990

The arrival of November indicated a shift in the coalition’s plan, not just at the military level but also at a diplomatic level. According to the official United States Army account, “By the time the President announced the deployment of VII Corps on November 8, 1990, the

¹⁰⁴ Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 483.

¹⁰⁵ Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 381.

¹⁰⁶ Bush, *A World Transformed*, 381.

¹⁰⁷ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 320.

¹⁰⁸ Scales, *Certain Victory*, 128.

¹⁰⁹ The Joint Forces comprise all the Arab coalition members.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 128-131.

situation in the Gulf had reached a point where offensive action seemed inevitable.”¹¹¹ The United States was not the only country adding forces to the coalition. General de la Billiere pressed the British government to increase the British forces from a brigade to a division.¹¹² This added presence granted him a somewhat larger hand in Schwarzkopf’s planning: “whereas a brigade always fights as part of a division, and has relatively little freedom of manoeuvre on the battlefield because it has to conform with the divisional tactical plan, a division enjoys much greater autonomy, even though it is part of a corps, because it is usually given an area of ground in which to operate and can work to its own plan.”¹¹³ He reasoned, “To have a division would both increase our prestige in theatre and give us more influence in the shaping of policy.”¹¹⁴ Egypt and Syria also added more forces to the theater. This was important to Schwarzkopf. He explains,

I knew the Egyptians were the real key to Arab participation in Desert Storm. Militarily they were indispensable: I needed them to spearhead the second prong of the attack and pin the Iraqis in western Kuwait, a tough mission for which I had no other units to spare. Their two armored divisions, well trained and outfitted with modern American equipment, constituted the largest ground attack force after ours, and what's more we knew they could fight -- the Egyptians had been exercising with Central Command forces for years. Politically they were the acid test of my plan: the entire Arab world was watching to see whether Cairo would join the offensive.¹¹⁵

General Khaled Bin Sultan of Saudi Arabia also assisted some in planning Desert Storm. According to his memoir, “When it came to planning Desert Storm, our contribution was essentially focused on the liberation of Kuwait, which was our primary war aim, although we were able to vet the overall war plan and we did in fact make numerous changes to ensure its

¹¹¹ Ibid., 133.

¹¹² De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 81-82. A division contains over 20,000 troops and consists of three brigades (*The British Army Today and Tomorrow*, Ministry of Defence, 1 Oct 2013, 10 <http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/ADR002716-STRATCOM_A5_Booklet_V6.pdf>).

¹¹³ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 81.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 82.

¹¹⁵ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 388-389.

compatibility with our aims and resources.”¹¹⁶ He was able to plan specifically for the Arab contingent of the coalition: “We played a major role in planning which vital locations and installations in Kuwait - such as airports, refineries and desalination plants - would have to be immediately secured and protected by our forces, before they were handed over to the Kuwaiti authorities, and what internal security measures would need to be taken.”¹¹⁷

By the time the Desert Storm ground offensive began, the Coalition had about 540,000 troops,¹¹⁸ most of them American,¹¹⁹ ready to battle Saddam Hussein’s forces. American leaders consciously strove to keep the coalition a multinational force.

Framework of Desert Storm

The two-corps option that became Operation Desert Storm consisted of four phases: the air war comprised the first three phases, and afterward would come the ground offensive. The first phase of the air war focused on strategic air targets: it would eliminate Iraqi command, control, and communications (C3); attack important infrastructure targets; and other important targets. In the second phase, the air forces of the coalition would try to gain air supremacy over the Iraqi air force. To accomplish this, they would destroy Iraqi SAM sites, aircraft bunkers, radar systems, and the Iraqi air force itself. The third phase consisted of attacking targets in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO) – basically, destroying the Iraqi army in Kuwait. One of the major targets was the Republican Guard. The coalition forces aimed to destroy at least 50 percent of the Iraqi army forces before launching a ground offensive. Although distinguished as

¹¹⁶ Khaled Bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior: A Personal View of the Gulf War by the Joint Forces Commander* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 195.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹¹⁸ DOD, *Conduct*, 86.

¹¹⁹ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 391. “The number of U.S. personnel in the gulf had hit 300,000 – and our reinforcements from Germany [VII Corps] were only starting to arrive.”

separate parts, the three air war phases would run concurrently. Only when sufficient damage had been done to the Iraqi forces would the ground war begin.¹²⁰

Coalition members greatly feared incurring a disproportionate amount of casualties to achieve the objective. General Sir Peter De La Billiere expresses this concern in his memoir: “Strongly as I supported the international crusade against Saddam, I did not see that this war was worth a lot of British dead.”¹²¹ Generals and political leaders alike balked at the potential for thousands of casualties.¹²² Therefore the plan for Desert Storm was designed to reduce the number of coalition casualties.

Throughout the rest of 1990, the plan would be adjusted to fit the needs of coalition members.¹²³ However, the integrity of the original plan held throughout the rest of the operation. The coalition agreed to the two-corps option. The Arab forces would liberate Kuwait while the Western forces swung out to the west in Iraq to outflank the Iraqis.

The Effects of Additional Troops

The arrival of additional forces committed the coalition nations to a military offensive against Iraq. With the large number of disparate forces, problems arose concerning rules of engagement (ROE), command and control, and each participant’s role in the coming offensive.

One issue that General de la Billiere emphasizes in his memoir is that of rules of engagement. Prior to the start of Desert Storm, British troops had more restrictions regarding how to respond should they be attacked by hostile forces. De la Billiere’s concern centered on the necessary time to respond to an attack. While the Americans would be able to return the attack in a timely manner, British troops would be unable to assist. The confusion caused by

¹²⁰ DOD, *Conduct*, 74.

¹²¹ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 93.

¹²² Baker’s visit to Thatcher in November reflects this idea at the diplomatic level. The visit is discussed below.

¹²³ Scales, *Certain Victory*, 138.

restrictive ROE “produces dire complications, especially as, in every case, potential military response is governed by the political policy of the country to which the armed force belongs.”¹²⁴ De la Billiere had reason for concern, as the *HMS Gloucester* was exposed to Iraqi Exocet anti-ship missiles. He feared that the Iraqi air force could have caused massive casualties because the British forces would have been unable to respond quickly because of their ROE. Eventually both the US and British governments resolved this issue – as De la Billiere explains, “ROE were a matter for constant debate and argument at both national and international level.”¹²⁵

A further issue for De la Billiere was Britain’s role in Desert Storm. Schwarzkopf had the British armor brigade attached to the Marines, and they would support the advance into Kuwait. De la Billiere pressed Schwarzkopf to move this brigade to support the advance into Iraq for two reasons. The first reason was political. He feared that an attack with the Marines into Kuwait, which meant pushing through heavy Iraqi defenses, would cause a disproportionate amount of casualties within the British forces. This was intolerable to him – “I simply did not think this war worth that amount of lives to us and did not believe that we should commit the main British effort at the point where the heaviest casualties were expected, especially with all the other arguments against it.”¹²⁶ Another reason he wanted the brigade to move was because he believed the brigade’s capabilities were better used in the open desert environment in which the encirclement would occur.¹²⁷

Command and control became a concern for political reasons, but it had military implications. Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations wanted to maintain their forces under an Arab leader. CENTCOM was aware of the potential political tension should Arab forces be placed

¹²⁴ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 140.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

under Western command.¹²⁸ Schwarzkopf understood this and accepted Saudi general Khaled Bin Sultan as his co-commander. Khaled would oversee the Joint Forces, which included Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and the smaller Gulf nations.¹²⁹ In reality, however, Schwarzkopf exercised greater control over the Coalition than Khaled did, as Khaled rarely made decisions independent from Schwarzkopf.

Syria and France both proved to be troublesome throughout November and December. Syria initially wanted a position in the offensive into Kuwait. However, at the end of the year, the Syrian forces decided that they wanted no part of the attack against a fellow Arab nation. Schwarzkopf was frustrated. He already had reservations against Syria:

By mid-December President [Hafiz] al-Assad had sent a full armored division to Saudi Arabia. The Syrians would report to [Khaled]; their assignment was to join the Egyptian attack into Kuwait. Still, their presence in the theater made me uneasy--Syria had long been a Soviet arms client and was on the State Department's list of countries that sponsored terrorism. They were the only major coalition partner I did not consult with personally in planning Desert Storm; I felt more comfortable relying on [Khaled] to keep me informed of their intentions. But I was not at all sure when the shooting started the Syrians would come through, because their commander continued to make conflicting statements about whether they would fight.¹³⁰

When Khaled told Schwarzkopf about the Syrian refusal to fight, he “was ready to explode.” He says, “Not only did a Syrian refusal to fight represent a major crack in the coalition, but it jeopardized the entire offensive plan--my responsibility. Without the support of the Syrian tanks, the Egyptians attacking into Kuwait could be badly outgunned.”¹³¹ Despite this frustration, Schwarzkopf managed to integrate Syria into the offensive by including them as a reserve force for the Joint Forces, a proposal Syria found satisfactory.¹³² France proved frustrating for similar reasons. France was reluctant to participate in the offensive against Iraq because it had previously sold arms to Saddam’s forces. The French president was also part of a society friendly

¹²⁸ Scales, *Certain Victory*, 140.

¹²⁹ DOD, *Conduct*, 82.

¹³⁰ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 390-391. Assad’s name in quote was originally Hafez. I have chosen the alternate spelling Hafiz for consistency.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 401-2.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 403.

toward Iraq. The French general finally made a decision, as long as CENTCOM would make a concession. Schwarzkopf recounts the following in his memoir:

Finally, in December, General Maurice Schmitt, the chief of their armed forces, informed me that France did want to be in on the offensive, but that he was concerned that in a head-on battle, his soldiers' lightly armored vehicles would be no match for the Iraqis' heavy Soviet tanks. Therefore, could his forces be assigned the mission of protecting our far western flank? I agreed immediately. I'd been searching for a force to do the job and the French units fit the ticket exactly.¹³³

As Schwarzkopf explains, the French force managed to fulfill a necessary component to his offensive plan.

Although the plan for Operation Desert Storm proved flexible enough to accommodate changes demanded by the other Coalition members, political considerations threatened to weaken the future operation. The fear of high casualties pervaded the process. The creation of the plan also revealed how highly involved the United States was militarily compared to the other Coalition members. The plan received approval from President Bush before Schwarzkopf consulted with his Coalition counterparts, and the changes made by other Coalition members affected only themselves and never the overall plan. The military component of the Coalition did not prove as much as a problem as the diplomatic aspect did.

Domestic Schisms and Political Crises

Although the Coalition had agreed upon a shift toward the use of force, domestic opinion threatened to limit or eliminate that option for several Coalition members. In the case of Britain, domestic issues resulted in a party coup over the prime minister, while in other nations concerns for reelection tempered the contributions made to the Coalition.

The Fall of Margaret Thatcher

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had been a mainstay in the coalition for months. However, members of her own party in Britain did not approve of her actions in domestic

¹³³ Ibid., 390.

politics, and public support for the Conservative Party had dwindled enough to threaten their election prospects. A former Thatcher aide contested her position as prime minister, which escalated into a Conservative race against its party leader.¹³⁴ By 22 November, Thatcher had lost the confidence of her party, and the party election resulted with a victory for John Major.¹³⁵ The near-sudden loss of Thatcher from the Coalition concerned Bush and other Coalition members. Although Major was Conservative like Thatcher, he could still potentially pull Britain out of the war effort. Thatcher's removal affected even the troops' morale some in Saudi Arabia.¹³⁶ However, once Bush related the war plans to the new prime minister,¹³⁷ Major decided to stay on board with the coalition plans, which prevented the transition from becoming a crisis.¹³⁸

Concerns in the United States

In the United States, the possibility of going to war alarmed both Congress and the general public. Congress demanded that it become involved in the decision to engage in hostilities.¹³⁹ Members from both parties objected to the shift toward using the military in an offensive against Iraq and included a clause in a resolution prior to adjourning that it could reconvene if it found such an action necessary to prevent the United States from going to war.¹⁴⁰ The American public's support of Bush dropped during this phase, as well. According to a poll by the *Los Angeles Times*, "Although Americans continue to support the deployment of troops to the region, most of those surveyed disapproved of President Bush's recent decision to nearly

¹³⁴ Craig R. Whitney, "A Spirited Thatcher Defense To Attack on Her Leadership." *New York Times*, 16 Nov 1990, A8. R C Longworth, "3 in race to succeed Thatcher: British leader quits after 11 years." *Chicago Tribune*, 23 Nov 1990, D1.

¹³⁵ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 124-125.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

¹³⁷ Bush, *A World Transformed*, 430.

¹³⁸ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 125.

¹³⁹ Michael R. Gordon, "In Case of War, Congress Wants Right to Meet," *New York Times*, 25 Oct 1990, A12.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

double the American military presence in Saudi Arabia.”¹⁴¹ The polled Americans rejected going to war “by a 53%-38% margin.”¹⁴² Despite continued diplomatic actions to force Saddam to withdraw, Bush had to contend with a continuing decrease in support with a public who did not share his feelings that force would work faster than the sanctions.

Other Partners' Dilemmas

Germany, too, withstood pressure against aiding the Coalition, bound by a constitution that limited military participation and a public uneager to become involved in bloodshed. Near the end of 1990, Chancellor Kohl had to focus on securing his position during the elections. Because of domestic pressures and the possibility of losing power, Kohl became more timid in his stance against Saddam, which frustrated Bush.¹⁴³ Once Kohl was reelected, he faced criticism for his promise to send German troops to fellow NATO member Turkey. After the election, “polls indicate[d] strong public dismay over any German involvement in armed conflict outside of Europe.”¹⁴⁴ Although Kohl wanted to assist the Coalition, domestic pressures limited the amount and nature of the contribution he could make.

Another Coalition partner restricted not only by its constitution but also public opinion was Japan. Kaifu had expressed to Bush earlier that the Japanese constitution constrained his ability to deploy troops to the Gulf. However, Kaifu attempted to push a bill through the Diet that would allow him to send Japanese troops overseas, if not become directly involved in the conflict. The Diet responded negatively, refusing to pass the bill. The debacle also exacerbated Kaifu's declining popularity in Japan, weakening his influence among his own party members.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ronald Brownstein, “The Times Poll: Americans More Wary About Prospect of War,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Nov 1990, VYA1.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Bush, *A World Transformed*, 404.

¹⁴⁴ Marc Fisher, “Bonn May Send Troops to Turkey: Germany Considers Rare Deployment,” *The Washington Post*, 29 Dec 1990, A1.

¹⁴⁵ Steven R. Weisman, “Political Warfare in Japan,” *New York Times*, 26 Oct 1990, A1.

Finally, although Turkey had realistic concerns about defending its borders, its populace disapproved of military involvement against Iraq. To them, the shutdown of the pipelines had been enough and already damaged Turkey's relationship with Iraq. Turkey deployed several divisions to its border with Iraq, fearful of a reprisal. Prime Minister Ozal also considered sending Turkish troops to Coalition forces in Saudi Arabia, but he never carried out such a deployment because of domestic pressures and defense concerns.¹⁴⁶

Most of the domestic crises stemmed from concern of going to war. Throughout the various Coalition nations, the military option proved unpopular. In this instance, domestic discontent affected diplomatic options, which had larger implications – because the Coalition was built on diplomacy, domestic opinion could very much have affected if Desert Storm came to fruition.

Overcoming the Crisis: The Baker Visits and Resolution 678

Secretary of State Jim Baker visited the various political leaders of the coalition in a diplomatic tour in early November. He learned that Thatcher approved of the additional US troops but was reluctant to send more British troops to the theater. Britain eventually conceded the forces to the coalition, including an armored division for the ground forces and minesweepers for the naval task force. The rest of the arrangements worked for Britain: “Mrs. Thatcher has no difficulty whatsoever with (1) current, satisfactory command and control arrangements; (2) staying with us in case of an Iraqi attack on Israel; and (3) air and ground operations against both Kuwait and Iraq.”¹⁴⁷ Because Britain was the third largest contributor to the coalition, securing British cooperation was important.

¹⁴⁶ George de Lama, “Turkish leader, Baker discuss gulf: U.S. seeks support for military move,” *Chicago Tribune*, 8 Nov 1990, D4.

¹⁴⁷ James Baker, London Meetings, 10 November 1990, Memorandum for the President. Bush Library (Accessed from Margaret Thatcher Foundation, hereafter MTF).

In Cairo, Baker asked for President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to add another division. The US needed a larger Arab presence in the coalition, and another division of Egyptian troops could help make the US contribution look less overwhelming. Instead of sending another division, though, Mubarak agreed to supply his forces in Saudi Arabia better and to have his troops help train the other Arab forces.¹⁴⁸ The French, too, proved reluctant to send more troops despite voicing their continued support for the coalition.¹⁴⁹

One of the most important visits, however, was the Gulf trip. During this meeting, Baker arranged with the Saudi leaders how coalition command and control would work. He also alerted the Saudi leadership of issues Schwarzkopf had mentioned, including poor logistical support and the need for the Saudi ground troops to be better prepared for hostilities.¹⁵⁰ This is an example of how diplomatic coordination could assist in the military sphere. Resolving this issue at the diplomatic level ensured that the co-commanders of the coalition (Khaled Bin Sultan over the Arab forces; Schwarzkopf over the rest) had the proper authority. Although the command and control distinctions seemed to divide power, Schwarzkopf still maintained most of the operational control of the coalition forces, and General Khaled followed the plan Schwarzkopf and his advisers had devised.¹⁵¹ This diplomatic exchange helped seal cooperation between the American and Arab forces of the coalition.

Later in November Baker visited members of the United Nations Security Council to secure the votes to pass a resolution that would allow the Coalition to use force against Saddam Hussein. In particular, he tried to persuade some of the more reluctant members to vote with the

¹⁴⁸ James Baker, Cairo Meetings, Memorandum for the President. Bush Library. (Accessed from MTF).

¹⁴⁹ James Baker, Paris Meetings, 10 November 1990, Memorandum for the President. Bush Library. (Accessed from MTF).

¹⁵⁰ James Baker, Gulf Trip, 6 November 1990, Memorandum for the President. Bush Library. (Accessed from MTF).

¹⁵¹ General Khaled Bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior*, 193.

United States. Colombia eventually conceded to give support, but Yemen insisted that it would vote against the resolution. Baker convinced Qian of China not to vote against the resolution, and China eventually abstained during the vote.¹⁵² The vote resulted in 12 Security Council members in favor of the resolution, 2 (Cuba and Yemen) voting against, and China abstaining.

Thus, on 29 November 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678. The resolution “[authorized] Member States co-operating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 January 1991 fully implements... the above mentioned resolutions, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area.”¹⁵³ The Coalition now had international legal authority to push the Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. The resolution also set a deadline for Saddam to withdraw. The US had pushed for 1 January 1991 and the Soviet Union 31 January, but Mitterrand of France offered 15 January as a compromise. The resolution made the date official.

Bush had been pushing for a resolution authorizing the coalition to use force against Iraq, especially because at this time he believed that would be his best option.¹⁵⁴ He and Scowcroft called the Security Council vote a “resounding voice of support.”¹⁵⁵ Bush elaborates: “By setting forth in plain language an authorization to use force to implement the earlier resolutions, and setting a deadline, the UN vote was a tremendous breakthrough.”¹⁵⁶ The resolution especially helped in rallying both international and domestic supporters who had been hesitant prior to its passage. As Bush explains, “It eased some of the problems of coalition maintenance and resolved

¹⁵² Scowcroft and Bush, *A World Transformed*, 413.

¹⁵³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 678, 29 November 1990.

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/678%281990%29>.

¹⁵⁴ 21 November 1990 Telephone conversation with Amir of Kuwait. Bush Telcon/Memcon Collection, Bush Library.

¹⁵⁵ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 414.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 415.

the debate about the need for provocation before we could act. Although we didn't realize it at the time, it also changed the debate with Congress, creating a context for the use of force which helped bring it aboard."¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

Despite domestic concerns and other crises, diplomacy proved potent in maintaining the solidarity and focus of the Coalition. The shift to a military option was not a popular move, but the Coalition eventually agreed that it was necessary to push Saddam out of Kuwait. The Security Council Resolution 678 made manifest this support and provided international legitimacy for the Coalition to pursue Operation Desert Storm. The nature of the crises during this period, especially Saddam's use of hostages in an attempt to break apart the Coalition, reveal that the diplomatic bonds among the members were still vulnerable. The foundation of the Coalition was diplomatic from the beginning, and the creation of Operation Desert Storm revealed that diplomacy and politics in general continued to be a main concern, even in military matters.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 415.

Chapter 3: Unity Under Fire, January-February 1991

During Desert Storm, diplomatic issues threatened to derail the military successes of the Coalition. The operation tested the limits of the Coalition. Diplomatic crises flared even as the coalition militaries pummeled Saddam's forces. The United States managed to solve these issues by consulting its partners – communication, as in other crises, was key. Military capability and diplomatic cohesion helped the coalition maintain the powerful front it needed to seize victory from Saddam Hussein.

Desert Storm: The Coalition in Action

The United Nations Security Council had issued multiple calls to Saddam Hussein to end his aggression. If by midnight on 15 January Saddam did not begin to withdraw his troops from Kuwait, the coalition would attack. Although the United States did try some diplomatic initiatives to prove that force would be the final option, such as having Baker reaching out to Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz one last time, Saddam did little to satisfy coalition demands. Once the deadline passed, Bush's ultimatum went into effect, and the coalition air forces prepared to strike.¹⁵⁸ Within the first 48 hours of the war, the coalition effectively crippled Iraq's capabilities. Coalition air forces destroyed early warning radars in the nighttime strike, and Tomahawk cruise missiles from Navy ships eliminated key targets in downtown Baghdad. The coalition also cut communications between Saddam and his forces, and they targeted electric facilities and other important infrastructure to hinder Iraqi forces further. They soon focused on the Iraqi military itself, weakening it for potential ground operations.¹⁵⁹

The air war succeeded well enough for coalition leaders to reconsider the use of ground forces, but they never entirely ruled out the possibility of a ground war. Air power proved limited

¹⁵⁸ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 344-372.

¹⁵⁹ DOD, *Conduct*, 114-125.

despite the Coalition's technological superiority over the Iraqi forces. Many Iraqi troops surrendered throughout the air phase of Operation Desert Storm, but most of these men were conscripts and did not present much of a threat to Coalition forces. Rather, the Republican Guard posed a greater concern for Schwarzkopf and other coalition military leaders. The heavy armor divisions of the Republican Guard were Saddam's elite units, and they had the latest in Soviet technology, including the most recently developed tanks. They could potentially inflict heavy casualties on the coalition's forces. Despite receiving heavy bombardment during the air war, these units still had much of their capability intact when the ground offensive started.¹⁶⁰

Coalition forces received the first indication that Saddam might succumb to pressure in late January. Iraqi tanks passed into Saudi Arabia and attacked a contingent of US Marines and Saudi troops near the border town of al-Khafji. With help from Qatari troops, the Saudis and Marines repulsed the tanks. The coalition managed to avoid being pulled into a ground war early, and cooperation between American and Arab troops demonstrated the unity of the coalition under fire.¹⁶¹

Throughout February, the coalition air forces continued to wreak havoc on Iraqi troops, and an influx of Iraqi prisoners of war inundated the coalition. However, the anticipated overthrow of Saddam did not occur, and the Iraqi dictator consulted with the Soviets about negotiating a peace rather than concede to coalition demands. Near the end of February, coalition leaders decided to make a final push for a ground offensive, assured by Bush that, despite some pessimistic estimates, the number of casualties would be low.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 253.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 251. I discuss the battle of al-Khafji in greater detail below.

¹⁶² 19 February 1991 Telephone conversation with Turgut Ozal. 20 February 1991 Telephone conversation with President Mubarak of Egypt. Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

On 24 February, US Marines and Arab forces breached Iraqi defenses in Kuwait while US Army and British troops pushed into Iraq as part of a maneuver to cut off the Republican Guard. The ground offensive proved to be far more successful than the Coalition leaders could have hoped, to the extent that some units reached objectives ahead of schedule. The Arabs and US Marines liberated Kuwait before Coalition forces in Iraq could complete their maneuver, sparking fears that the Republican Guard would retreat before the coalition could stop them. Because the Republican Guard gave Saddam much of his military power, it was important for the Coalition to crush these units. Air power continued to pummel Iraqi troops fleeing from Kuwait, leading to a “Highway of Death” on the escape route to Iraq. Overwhelming military success and accusations of needless killing caused Bush and other coalition leaders to call for a ceasefire. The ground war lasted 100 hours.¹⁶³

Domestic Support

The United States may have had support from international leaders, but Bush needed the support from the American population before he could send the troops into harm’s way. One lingering concern for American participation in Operation Desert Storm was the shadow of Vietnam. The military had learned its lesson from the debacle, and it was ready to prove its mettle against the Iraqi forces.¹⁶⁴ Thus far the Americans had supported their efforts in Desert Shield, but the military desired continued support, for, as Schwarzkopf says, “we all remembered feeling abandoned by our own countrymen” in Vietnam.¹⁶⁵ However, Congress still questioned the intervention in Kuwait.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ DOD, *Conduct*, 258-292.

¹⁶⁴ Scales, *Certain Victory*, 6-36.

¹⁶⁵ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 379.

¹⁶⁶ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 436.

Congress proved troublesome to Bush's need for coalition unity. Afraid that Bush would go to war without their consent, Congress introduced and passed resolutions that would allow both the Senate and the House to meet during the recess. Many members of Congress believed that sanctions could still work. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell of the Democratic party listed his major concerns as "An unknown number of casualties and deaths, billions of dollars spent, a greatly disrupted oil supply and oil price increases, a war possibly widened to Israel, Turkey or other allies, the possible long-term American occupation of Iraq, increased instability in the Persian Gulf region, long-lasting Arab enmity against the United States, a possible return to isolationism at home."¹⁶⁷ However, Republican Senator John Warner countered that the United States should not look divided in front of Saddam.¹⁶⁸ Although strong opposition existed in Congress, the press noted, "Many Democrats... believe both houses are likely to go along with the president."¹⁶⁹ Although many in Congress still pushed for sanctions, a large enough majority supported Bush for the president to gain the authority to use force. Before the ultimatum expired, Bush needed Congressional approval to use the troops. He bargained with both parties, but even by the time of the vote the outcome was uncertain. However, Bush received the approval of Congress by a small margin: 250-183 votes in the House of Representatives and 52-47 in the Senate.¹⁷⁰

From the start, Bush ensured that the coalition's composition was multinational. He did not want the Persian Gulf crisis to become a burden solely for the United States. On the eve of battle, he could point to the other coalition members and prove he had international support for

¹⁶⁷ Helen Dewar and Tom Kenworthy, "Congress Opens Debate on Using Force in Gulf," *The Washington Post*, 11 Jan 1991, A24.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 446.

the war.¹⁷¹ Americans would not fight alone. British, French, Saudi, Egyptian, Syrian, and other nation's troops would join them. The American contingent outnumbered the other contingents combined by far, but Bush could emphasize the participation of many other nations regardless of the size of their contribution. The internationality of the coalition and the need to stand united against Saddam helped give Bush the legitimacy he needed to use the troops stationed in Saudi Arabia. He had been willing to risk his presidency to do so,¹⁷² but now he could operate with a somewhat clearer conscience and the knowledge that his nation did support his cause, if not entirely.

The use of force caused a stir in other Coalition countries. In France and Germany, thousands of demonstrators protested the war.¹⁷³ Fears of Iraqi reprisals via terrorist attacks also emanated throughout the populations of the European members of the Coalition.¹⁷⁴ The antiwar movement in Germany in particular continued past the initiation of Desert Storm.¹⁷⁵ Although Chancellor Kohl faced much domestic pressure, he continued contributing to the Coalition with promises of military aid to Turkey¹⁷⁶ and humanitarian assistance to Israel.¹⁷⁷ In France, defense minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement voiced his opposition to the war, and he eventually resigned in response to France's participation in Desert Storm.¹⁷⁸ However, France remained in the Coalition militarily and diplomatically.

¹⁷¹ "Address to the Nation Announcing Allied Military Action in the Persian Gulf," 16 January 1991, Bush Public Papers Collection, Bush Library.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁷³ Marc Fisher, "No Blood For Oil, Yell Germans," *The Washington Post*, 13 Jan 1991, A16.

¹⁷⁴ Alan Riding, "Allied Backing, But Protests Too," *New York Times*, 18 Jan 1991, A13.

¹⁷⁵ Marc Fisher, "Demonstrations Embody the Fear and Pride of Two Nations," *The Washington Post*, 21 Jan 1991, A23.

¹⁷⁶ Marc Fisher, "Germany Pledges \$5.5 Billion More Toward Gulf War." *The Washington Post*, 30 Jan 1991, A23. The \$5.5 billion went to assist the United States. Kohl promised 600 additional German troops to help defend Turkey.

¹⁷⁷ Marc Fisher, "Kohl Aids Israel, Lambastes 'Crass' Anti-U.S. Protesters." *The Washington Post*. 24 Jan 1991, A17.

¹⁷⁸ Alan Riding, "French Defense Chief Quits, Opposing Allied War Goals," *New York Times*, 30 Jan 1991, A11.

In Turkey, Ozal faced domestic opposition for his contributions to the Coalition. At the initiation of Desert Storm, Turkey authorized the United States to use its air bases only for “humanitarian and logistical support.”¹⁷⁹ Even this limited measure sparked anti-war protests, part of which came from fear of Iraqi reprisals for assisting the Coalition.¹⁸⁰ After Iraqi forces launched Scud attacks on Israel, the authorization extended for the use of combat aircraft.¹⁸¹ This only intensified the opposition to Ozal’s actions.¹⁸² The assassination of the top security chief, which occurred after the authorization for the US to use the bases for offensive measures, demonstrated the extent of domestic opposition to Turkey’s participation in the war.¹⁸³ Despite the violence, Turkey continued to allow the US to launch attacks from its air bases.

In India and Spain, the course of the war sparked concern. The Indian prime minister asked Bush to redirect refueling planes to Sri Lanka, where support for the war was firmer, in order to reduce public pressure on him.¹⁸⁴ Spain acted as a base for B-52 bombers, which upset some of the political parties. The Spanish prime minister assured Bush of his support but relayed his precarious position when dealing with the opposition.¹⁸⁵ These instances revealed how domestic opinion could affect military operations during the Gulf War.

Saddam tried to use the divisive factor of public support through propaganda efforts. He tried to portray Coalition military actions as targeting civilian populations. The Coalition leaders grew frustrated with Saddam’s lies and worked to prove that they deliberately avoided civilian targets. In one instance, they even put their own pilots’ lives at risk by not taking out an

¹⁷⁹ Clyde Haberman, “Turkey Gives U.S. Limited Base Use.” *New York Times*, 14 Jan 1991, A9.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Clyde Haberman, “Ankara Authorizes Use of Mediterranean Bases by U.S. for Attacks on Iraq.” *New York Times*. 18 Jan 1991, A13.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Jonathan C. Randal, “Turkey’s Top Security Aide Assassinated.” *The Washington Post*. 31 Jan 1991, A13.

¹⁸⁴ 8 February 1991 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shankar of India. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

¹⁸⁵ 9 February 1991 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gonzalez of Spain. Bush Telcon/Memcon collection. Bush Library.

antiaircraft battery by a hotel in Baghdad.¹⁸⁶ In his personal diplomatic efforts, Bush assured his partners that the military did all it could to protect civilian, religious, and historical sites.¹⁸⁷ Saddam's propaganda efforts failed to make much of an impact on the Coalition's ability to operate, but he did succeed in frustrating the Coalition leaders with his audacity.

Domestic support failed to hinder the Coalition during Operation Desert Storm, but it proved to be a potent weapon and a cause of concern. If the Coalition did not wield the support correctly, Saddam could have taken advantage of it. Because of the diplomatic nature of the Coalition, maintenance of domestic support proved vital.

The Scud Hunt

If Saddam could not break the coalition militarily, he could still exploit the tenuous diplomatic ties binding the partners together. As soon as the Coalition launched the air war against Iraqi forces, mobile Scud launchers moved into place in western Iraq. The next day, these launchers bombarded Israel with Scud missiles.¹⁸⁸ Although Israel was not part of the coalition, Saddam wanted to draw the country into the war because Israel's participation in battle against an Arab nation might cause the Arab members of the coalition to break away. The Scud attack on Israel could allow Saddam "to transform his aggression against an Arab neighbor into a general Arab-Israeli war. As it was an obvious and predictable strategy, it was a problem to which we gave a good deal of anxious thought,"¹⁸⁹ according to General Khaled bin Sultan.

The United States understood Israel's policy of retaliation and feared that because Iraq had attacked Israel, Israel would enter the conflict. Indeed, Israel alerted the Americans to an

¹⁸⁶ Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gonzalez of Spain. Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

¹⁸⁷ 2 February 1991 Telephone conversation with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan; 8 February 1991 with Prime Minister Carlos Menem of Argentina; 8 February 1991 with Secretary General Perez de Cuellar. Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

¹⁸⁸ *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, Effects and Effectiveness, 333.

¹⁸⁹ Khaled bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior*, 348.

impending attack: “[Israeli Defense Minister Moshe] Arens wanted American and Israeli planners to separate their forces - to 'deconflict,' in military jargon - so that Israel could attack Scud targets in western Iraq without inadvertently taking on coalition aircraft.”¹⁹⁰ The initial launches of the Scud missiles had caused little damage, injuring only a few people. Although most of the damage was moral, “Israel wanted the missile attacks stopped. The Americans had to demonstrate that the coalition could suppress the Scuds.”¹⁹¹

Fear of chemical attacks also permeated the coalition, for a Scud equipped with a chemical warhead could cause a catastrophic amount of casualties if it landed near a populated area. Initial Scud attacks had soldiers and commanders scrambling to secure their gas masks.¹⁹² Although no chemical attack ever occurred, the possibility of one as well as fear of Israel’s entry breaking up the coalition made the Scud hunt a priority for the Coalition military.

One solution to the Scud problem was to send Patriot batteries to Israel. The Patriot system, although not perfect, managed to intercept many of the Scud missiles heading toward Saudi Arabia and with lesser success in Israel.¹⁹³ Despite the presence of Patriot batteries, however, Scud missiles still claimed casualties in Israel. To supplement the anti-missile weapons, the Coalition diverted some of its air power to hunting down the mobile Scud launchers. Special forces soldiers from the United States and United Kingdom also searched for mobile launchers in the western desert of Iraq.¹⁹⁴

The Scud hunt did not succeed as much in destroying the Scud launchers as it did in suppressing their ability to fire. Schwarzkopf describes the effects of increased air power in his memoir:

¹⁹⁰ Atkinson, *Crusade*, 83.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹² Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 416.

¹⁹³ Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq*, 185.

¹⁹⁴ *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, Effects and Effectiveness, 340.

The frequency of Scud launches began to drop: in Desert Storm's first week, the Iraqis fired thirty-five; in the second week, eighteen; thereafter all they could manage was an average of one Scud a day. These last firings were almost totally haphazard: a missile crew would race from their hiding place, put up the launcher, fire without completing the standard aiming procedure, and drive off as fast as they could.¹⁹⁵

Because of the large presence of Coalition air power, Scud crews had little opportunity to wreak more havoc in Israel. Special forces proved effective as well. De la Billiere also emphasizes the effects of the special forces' Scud hunt: "The result was that attacks on Israel were effectively suppressed. With the help of the Americans operating north of the road, the SAS drove the Scuds further and further into the Iraqi hinterland, until they were all but out of range."¹⁹⁶

The Scud hunt provided more of a diplomatic challenge than a military issue for the Coalition. Because Schwarzkopf could dedicate a substantial portion of his air power to the Scud hunt, the Coalition had abundant resources to spare owing to the success of American military technological prowess. However, the political leaders of the Coalition took great measures to ensure Israel's absence from the war. Not only did the United States provide Patriot batteries, but Bush also worked with his Arab partners to ensure that, should Israel decide to fight anyway, they would not withdraw from the coalition.¹⁹⁷ General Khaled explains in his memoir, "On the Saudi side, a decision was reached that, whatever Saddam did, we would not allow the liberation of Kuwait to be derailed. This was our prime war aim. If Saddam tried to distract attention by attacking Israel, we would simply carry on with our campaign."¹⁹⁸ Personal diplomacy from Bush secured assurance from Egypt and the Gulf States that they would remain part of the coalition.

Saddam's attempt to break apart the Coalition reveals the diplomatic fragility of the coalition. The possible entry into the war of a traditional enemy of the Arab nations, even against

¹⁹⁵ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 420.

¹⁹⁶ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 227.

¹⁹⁷ 20 January 1991 Telephone conversation with King Fahd. 21 January 1991 Telephone conversation with Hosni Mubarak. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

¹⁹⁸ Khaled bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior*, 348.

the common foe of Iraq, raised fears of a shattered coalition. The Coalition was willing to dedicate resources that could have been used to diminish the Iraqi army to the protection of a nation who was not a Coalition partner. The need to keep the Coalition together despite the United States having most of the military power reveals that the Coalition was more of a diplomatic than military necessity.

The Battle of al-Khafji

The battle of al-Khafji could have drawn the coalition into the ground war earlier than intended.¹⁹⁹ However, cooperation among the American and Arab troops solidified the ties between the two groups, at least diplomatically. The victory at al-Khafji demonstrated American prowess, although Arab troops contributed some to the victory.

On 29 January, US Marines near the border of Iraq witnessed the approach of an Iraqi tank column.²⁰⁰ The enemy tanks surged southward, engaging both Marines and Saudi National Guardsmen. Although the Iraqi troops managed to penetrate coalition lines, their advance made little headway into Saudi Arabia. The town they attacked had also been abandoned earlier in the war, so the coalition had little to fear regarding civilian casualties.²⁰¹ Marine reinforcements, with assistance from other Arab troops, managed to rout the Iraqi tanks, and within two days the town of al-Khafji had been recovered.²⁰²

The battle proved to the forces in Saudi Arabia that Saddam's forces were not as tough as the Coalition had perceived them initially. Although the tanks had overwhelmed the lightly equipped reconnaissance outpost, the Marines had relatively easily pushed the Iraqis back out of Saudi Arabia. Their partners had also demonstrated fighting spirit if not necessarily fighting

¹⁹⁹ Atkinson, 205

²⁰⁰ David J. Morris, *Storm on the Horizon: Khafji – The Battle That Changed the Course of the Gulf War*, (New York: Free Press, 2004), 4.

²⁰¹ Atkinson, *Crusade*, 201.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 211

ability.²⁰³ The battle also indicated that Saddam could be desperate, trying to start a premature ground war that could inflict unacceptable casualties on the coalition forces.

Although he proclaimed victory in “The Mother of All Battles,” Saddam clearly failed to bring the Coalition into an early ground war. American military power helped maintain the diplomatic health of the coalition, as did Bush’s personal diplomacy. Al-Khafji was a disaster averted, and it provided the coalition an example to show the world its strength and cooperation.

Coalition Contribution

Militarily, the other Coalition members acted more in support of the American forces rather than as part of their own operations. The French light infantry protected the flank of the wheel, and the British tank division acted in support of the American armor. US Marines opened the way for Arab troops to liberate Kuwait.²⁰⁴ Despite the overwhelming contribution of American military power, they still found some use for their coalition partners beyond political cover.

Britain was the only partner who had military capabilities similar to the Americans’ technology. The Royal Air Force provided some assistance to the American air force. In particular, the Tornados used special ordnance to damage Iraqi runways.²⁰⁵ Later, other British aircraft like the Buccaneers were equipped with laser-designation to guide smart munitions to their targets.²⁰⁶ Britain also provided the coalition navy with minesweeping ships. This allowed the other coalition members, in particular the American vessels, to position themselves close to

²⁰³ Ibid., 212.

²⁰⁴ DOD, *Conduct*, 258-292

²⁰⁵ De la Billiere, *Storm Command*, 229.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 233-34

the shore, allowing not only a better reach for their ship-borne aircraft but also the feasibility of a false amphibious operation to distract the Iraqi forces stationed in Kuwait.²⁰⁷

Overall, the other coalition members' contribution to the military operations was more politically than militarily helpful. However, their presence did not often hinder the American military, and their military contribution allowed for some flexibility in striking at the Iraqi forces in Kuwait. The predominance of American military strength provided the firepower to drive out the Iraqi troops while the presence of the other members granted the involvement in Desert Storm legitimacy.

Gorbachev's Intervention

Although the Soviet Union supported the coalition initially, it preferred the use of sanctions over the use of violence, and Gorbachev pleaded with Bush not to initiate hostilities against Iraq. Throughout Operation Desert Storm, Bush had to coordinate diplomatic measures with the Soviet Union to prevent confusion among the coalition partners. Personal diplomacy helped maintain the coalition's focus when Gorbachev tried to intervene.

In January, Secretary of State Baker released a statement with the newly appointed Soviet foreign minister Alexander Bessmertnykh. According to the president's recollection, "Bessmertnykh had just read to the press a joint US-Soviet statement which included a phrase saying we 'continued to believe' that a cease-fire was possible if Saddam would make an 'unequivocal commitment' to pull out from Kuwait, backed by immediate and concrete steps leading to full compliance with the Security Council resolutions."²⁰⁸ Neither he nor Scowcroft had been informed of the statement prior to its release to the press. Bush grew concerned over the contents of the statement because it seemed that the United States, without consulting its

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 257

²⁰⁸ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 460.

coalition partners, would “accept a cease-fire for Saddam’s promise,” that it was “prepared to accept something less than the unconditional withdrawal we had been demanding since the invasion.”²⁰⁹ Bush contacted the leaders of the coalition and reassured them that the war with Iraq would press onward. He told Turgut Ozal of Turkey, “There is no difference and there will be no pause to hope he will come to the table.... Please understand that we wouldn’t go around behind the backs of our allies on a new course.... We will pursue the war as you and I have discussed before.”²¹⁰ Although the statement could have jeopardized the trust Bush had built with the coalition members, communication remained key to keeping the coalition together.

Gorbachev continued to push for some kind of backdoor deal with Iraq to stop hostilities. He wanted Iraq to promise to withdraw from Kuwait, and he pressed Bush to accept the deal. Bush, however, maintained his stance that Iraq had to comply with the UN Security Council resolutions or else be removed by force. Bush and Gorbachev maintained correspondence throughout the crisis. In late February, Gorbachev wrote to Bush imploring him not to start the ground offensive and to allow negotiations in Moscow with Saddam.²¹¹ Bush found this unacceptable and responded, “I worry that incompleteness and ambiguities in the proposal may give heart to Saddam Hussein that he can somehow escape the consequences of his actions and obtain an unclear outcome, which he can exploit politically.”²¹² The two also maintained contact through telephone calls during which each side would express his reservations and reasons for

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 461.

²¹⁰ 30 January 1991 Telephone conversation with Turgut Ozal. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

²¹¹ “Gorbachev’s letter to President Bush on Primakov Visit to Baghdad.” National Security Council memorandum. 15 February 1991. Bush Library (Accessed through MTF).

²¹² Second letter to Gorbachev, 19 February 1991. Bush Library (Accessed through MTF).

his actions.²¹³ Bush reassured his own partners in a letter that he would not accept a deal without Iraq's compliance.²¹⁴

Despite his differences with Gorbachev, Bush tried to work with the Soviet peace offer, but he would only cease hostilities if Saddam made a concrete effort to withdraw his troops in a timely manner – within a week, the Coalition decided.²¹⁵ While the Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz engaged the Soviets in Moscow, Saddam's forces in Kuwait lit oil wells on fire.²¹⁶ Bush regarded this act as proof of how untrustworthy his opponent was, and he insisted on a second ultimatum for Iraq to withdraw.²¹⁷ The Coalition was running out of time to push Iraqi forces out of Kuwait before they caused more destruction. Despite Soviet peace efforts, Bush told his military commanders to begin the ground war.

Although the Coalition appreciated efforts toward peace, not keeping in line with the Security Council resolutions could have threatened the solidarity of the Coalition. Bush's personal diplomacy maintained friendly relations with the Soviets while keeping the other Coalition members abreast of his decision to adhere to the Security Council resolutions. Balancing diplomatic desires with military realities kept the Coalition on course to push Saddam's forces out of Kuwait successfully.

Conclusion

The Coalition crippled the Iraqi military in Operation Desert Storm, accomplishing the objective to push the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait and diminishing Saddam's military power.

Although the Iraqi forces initially outnumbered the coalition troops, a devastating air campaign

²¹³ Telephone conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev, 22 and 23 February 1991. Bush Memcon/Telcon Collection. Bush Library.

²¹⁴ Letter to London, Paris, Ankara, Cairo, Riyadh, Taif, Damascus, Tel Aviv, Rome, Canberra. Bush Library (Accessed through MTF).

²¹⁵ 22 February 1991 (11:31am-12:43pm) Telephone conversation with Gorbachev. Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ 23 February 1991 Telephone conversation with Gorbachev. Bush Memcon/Telcon collection. Bush Library.

demolished the ground forces and severed communications with the command in Baghdad. The utter failure of the battle of al-Khafji for Saddam did not prevent him from claiming victory, but it gave Coalition forces the confidence they needed to attack Saddam's forces.

Despite the prevalence of military actions in Desert Storm, the focus of the Coalition's efforts still remained diplomatic. The Scud hunt in particular demonstrated the diplomatic nature of the Coalition, with military resources diverted to prevent a potentially problematic nation from entering the war. Most of the issues that arose during Desert Storm were diplomatic, not military. Gorbachev's intervention threatened to undermine Coalition solidarity, and domestic opposition to the war in many Coalition nations posed potential issues to the heads of state. Throughout these crises, the need for the Coalition to remain or at least appear united helped Coalition leaders maintain the offensive against Saddam.

Epilogue

Coalition warfare defined the United States' participation in the Persian Gulf War. However, a quick survey of post-war literature, especially the military's journals, reveals a decreasing focus on multinational operations and an increasing obsession with revolutions in military affairs (RMA) and information warfare. This trend culminated in the release of a joint strategy to improve the US military.

After the war, the US military wanted to glean lessons from its victory in the Persian Gulf. One of the largest studies after the war was a study commissioned by the Air Force, which was published in 1993. The *Gulf War Air Power Survey*²¹⁸ (GWAPS) spans five volumes, each dedicated to specific aspects of the air war over Kuwait and Iraq. Subjects range from planning and effectiveness of the operations to logistics, support, and the role of intelligence. An introductory volume analyzes the other five volumes and provides an initial determination of the effectiveness of the air war. Other services and units within these services provided official histories describing their role in the war.²¹⁹

The coalition aspect of the Persian Gulf War – namely, what allowed the United States to participate in the first place – did not receive a study of similar depth, but initially after the Persian Gulf War, it garnered a fair deal of attention from the American military. *Joint Force Quarterly*,²²⁰ a journal published by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dedicated part of its initial volumes to the study of coalition warfare. One issue in particular contained a forum exploring the subject:

²¹⁸ US Air Force, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, Washington, DC: US Air Force, 1993. The volumes are as follows: Keaney, Thomas A. and Eliot A. Cohen. *Gulf War Air Power Survey Summary Report* [the introductory volume]; Volume I: Planning and Command and Control; Volume II: Operations and Effects and Effectiveness; Volume III: Logistics and Support; Volume IV: Weapons, Tactics, and Training and Space Operations; and Volume V: A Statistical Compendium and Chronology.

²¹⁹ I have relied primarily on Scales' *Certain Victory*, the Army's official history of the Persian Gulf War, and the Department of Defense's account, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, for this study.

²²⁰ Hereafter, *JFQ*.

one article demonstrates how coalition warfare changed after the end of the Cold War;²²¹ another discusses multinational peacekeeping operations.²²² However, by late 1995, RMA and technology subsumed coalition warfare. In a discussion about military education, RMA receive priority over coalition warfare, and the section that discusses coalition warfare only acknowledges that the US will continue to fight with allies and coalition partners in the foreseeable future.²²³ Coalition warfare ceased to be a subject of primary interest in *JFQ*.

Parameters, published by the US Army War College, followed a similar trend to *JFQ*. One of the first articles in the spring issue for 1992, “New Directions in US Military Strategy,” explores the post-Cold War and post-Gulf War approach of the US Military to crises around the globe, as discussed at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in October 1991. The author, Air Force General James P. McCarthy, places primacy in multinational operations. Although the focus is in Europe, McCarthy notes that the US will be dedicated to ensuring security to partners in all regions of the world. To do this, “that strategy anticipates we will collaborate with allies and coalition partners to resolve a variety of unexpected, fast-rising crises in the future.” In his discussion about responding to crises, McCarthy says, “We fully expect that the United States, our allies, and our coalition partners will be called upon to deter regional aggressors, mediate regional economic and social strife, and promote the stability necessary for fragile democracies to flourish.” To achieve this, the American armed forces “must be capable of prosecuting complex military endeavors in conjunction with allied and friendly forces. Therefore, our armed forces must continue to engage in realistic training and rigorous exercises

²²¹ Anne M. Dixon, “The Whats and Whys of Coalitions.” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Winter 1993-4), 25-28.

²²² John O.B. Sewall, “Implications for U.N. Peacekeeping.” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Winter 1993-4), 29-33.

²²³ Ervin J. Rokke, “Military Education for the New Age,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Autumn 1995), 20.

with our friends and allies to ensure they remain ready for action.”²²⁴ McCarthy anticipates multinational participation in future American operations abroad.

Despite this emphasis, the focus on coalition warfare disappears rapidly in the subsequent volumes of *Parameters*.²²⁵ The issue for Summer 1993 has one article dedicated to coalition warfare. After that issue, an increasing amount of articles discuss the revolution in military affairs and the role of information warfare in the post-Cold War military. In 1995, articles about RMA appear more frequently, and by 1996 they become prevalent topics in each issue.²²⁶ Between *JFQ* and *Parameters*, the services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff seemed to have seized on the idea of increasing the lethality of the forces and have relegated to the background the importance of coalition warfare.

In 1996, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, headed at the time by General John Shalikashvili, released *Joint Vision 2010*. Most of the focus of reform centered on improving the strength of the US military technologically. Only one paragraph explained how the military would approach multinational operations:

It is not enough just be joint, **when conducting future military operations. We must find the most effective methods for integrating and improving interoperability with allied and coalition partners.** Although our Armed Forces will maintain decisive unilateral strength, we expect to work in concert with allied and coalition forces in nearly all of our future operations, and increasingly, our procedures, programs, and planning must recognize this reality.²²⁷

Coalition warfare receives much less attention than technology and implementing information warfare. Although released only a few years after the Persian Gulf War, *Joint Vision 2010* reveals the effect of coalition warfare fading into the background in American military reforms.

²²⁴ James P. McCarthy, “New Directions in US Military Strategy,” *Parameters* (Spring 1992), 5,6.

²²⁵ Article Index for *Parameters* (under Publications), Strategic Studies Institute.
<<http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/Parameters/>>.

²²⁶ I have used 1996 as a stopping point because *Joint Vision 2010* was published the same year. An exception to this trend is Rice’s article, which I mentioned in the introduction – it appeared in a 1997 volume. A further look into *Parameter*’s articles demonstrates a continuation in the trend.

²²⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010*, 1996, 9.

Because *Joint Vision 2010* and the service journals lay aside coalition warfare in favor of self-sufficient lethality, it appears that the military forgot what had allowed them to participate and therefore use that lethality. Firstly, the services focused on making themselves a “decisive unilateral strength,” which would make them the leader in a coalition. However, multilateralism allowed them to participate in the Persian Gulf War. The troops would not have received domestic support had other nations’ forces not participated alongside them. The internationality of the Coalition also reduced pressure on the Arab nations, which, at least for Saudi Arabia, allowed the entrance of American forces into the region to protect them. Secondly, the US military had developed a relationship with some of its fighting partners. Officers from the US Army had been advising the Saudi National Guard before Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait. Maintaining relationships with other nations may seem the domain for diplomats, but, as McCarthy explains in his article, having a military relationship with partners helps achieve strategic goals.²²⁸ Ultimately, as the literature demonstrates, coalition warfare became neglected in the era after the Persian Gulf War despite its importance for the victory the United States and its partners earned.

²²⁸ McCarthy, “New Directions,” *Parameters*, 10. McCarthy notes, “We will seek to strengthen the bonds of friendship and alliances through activities that assist governmental and socioeconomic development.” He adds, “[W]e will engage other nations in peacetime activities of broader significance to the world community. Those endeavors include detecting and significantly reducing the production and trafficking of illegal drugs; deterring, monitoring, and neutralizing terrorist threats while protecting vulnerable targets; and conducting humanitarian assistance, civil affairs, and disaster relief operations.”

Conclusion

The rout of the Iraqi army after one hundred hours of ground operations concluded the seven-month effort of the Coalition to liberate Kuwait. The victory came at relatively little human cost for the Coalition. Once offensive operations had begun, the Coalition struck decisively, and it seized the initiative early in the war and kept it throughout the remaining six weeks. However, diplomatic efforts consumed most of the Coalition's energy, not only for the five and a half months prior to Operation Desert Storm but throughout the military venture as well. Military success was not the concern; the price the Coalition was willing to pay was.

The crises that erupted in the Persian Gulf War proved that the United States needed its Coalition partners more for diplomatic reasons than for military assistance. As the first couple of months demonstrated, the Coalition gave the US the legitimacy, not just at the international level but also at the domestic, it needed to intervene. Diplomacy also remained crucial for the Coalition to remain intact. The possibility of withdrawal of some nations threatened fewer resources for the offensive plan, and lack of multilateralism could have caused the US to lose domestic support, as it would appear to bear all the costs. Finally, the US faced more diplomatic crises than military ones. The surprise attack at al-Khafji demonstrated the capability of the American armed forces, as did the decisiveness and efficiency of the Desert Storm offensive. However, diplomatic pressures such as Israel's potential entry into the conflict threatened to disrupt the Coalition.

Ultimately, the Coalition proved important because it not only allowed the US to intervene but also put restriction on what it could do. The military option proved unpalatable until Coalition members recognized that the sluggishness and inefficiency of the sanctions hurt their cause. Even so, diplomacy ensured that military force was the last option, and the Coalition

had to reach a compromise for the ultimatum's deadline of January 15. Beyond the way diplomacy contoured the Coalition's actions, the Coalition itself demonstrated the necessity of the continuous interaction between the diplomatic/political and military components of coalition warfare.

Unity of Command, Unity of Purpose

In the introduction, I mention Anthony Rice's article discussing the importance of command and control in coalition warfare. He argues that the Coalition in the Gulf War lacked unity of command and therefore serves poorly as an example for the military to follow. He approaches this conclusion by considering the coalition from a strictly military perspective. Technically, he is correct to notice that two generals shared the command of the Coalition. However, the Gulf War proved that not just militarily but also diplomatically the United States served as the de facto leader of the Coalition.

President Bush acted as the political leader of the Coalition from the start of the crisis. He understood that the United States, as the remaining superpower, had to take the lead in undoing Saddam's invasion and set a precedent for the evolving geopolitical environment. Throughout the crisis, Bush used personal diplomacy and Secretary of State Baker to consult and coordinate with Coalition partners. Importantly, Bush insisted that every coalition partner remained on task and did not undermine the Coalition by making a separate deal with Saddam. This contributed heavily to the strength and cohesion of the Coalition, even in times of uncertainty and pressure. Unity of purpose served to keep a sometimes shaky coalition together. Dwight Eisenhower of World War II fame notes in his memoir on the European theatre:

History testifies to the ineptitude of coalitions in waging war. Allied failures have been so numerous and their inexcusable blunders so common that professional soldiers have long discounted the possibility of effective allied action unless available resources were so great as to assure victory by inundation. Even Napoleon's reputation as a brilliant military leader suffered

when students in staff colleges came to realize that he always fought against coalitions—and therefore against divided counsels and diverse political, economic, and military interests.²²⁹

Bush ensured that the Gulf War coalition had no “divided counsels” or “diverse political, economic, and military interests.” By keeping the Coalition united through one political purpose, he allowed for the military components to fulfill their objective: to push Saddam’s troops out of Kuwait.

Schwarzkopf and his staff led the Coalition militarily. Although technically General Khaled bin Sultan commanded the Joint Forces and acted as co-commander with Schwarzkopf, he worked in conjunction with the American general, and the formulation of Operation Desert Storm proved a mostly American effort, with Coalition partners able to contribute only after the American staff constructed the major framework of the plan. Any changes suggested did not affect the integrity of the plan. American forces also played major roles in the operation – American tanks led the assault on the elite Republican Guard units; US Marines opened the way for Arab forces to take Kuwait. The United States contributed the most militarily to the Coalition. Overall, the United States led not just in politically but also militarily, ensuring unity in the Coalition.

Limitations on the Coalition

In the afterword of his memoir, General Schwarzkopf seeks to answer the most common questions people asked him after the war. The first one he addresses relates to a possible invasion of Iraq. Schwarzkopf says,

I am convinced that had a decision been made to invade all of Iraq and capture Baghdad, the coalition that we worked so hard to preserve would have fractured. I am equally convinced that the only forces that would have participated in those military actions would have been British and American. Even the French would have withdrawn from the coalition.²³⁰

²²⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1948), 4.

²³⁰ Schwarzkopf, *Hero*, 498.

Invading Iraq and subsequently overthrowing Saddam Hussein was never a goal of the Coalition. Politically, it was infeasible. The Arabs already refused to send their troops into Iraq; they had agreed only on liberating Kuwait. None of the UN Security Council resolutions called for an overthrow of the dictator, either.

Schwarzkopf's comment reveals an important quality about the Coalition: its diplomatic nature allowed its members to liberate Kuwait, but it limited any further action that could upset the political balance in the region. Diplomacy proved important for the United States to become involved in the first place – Bush had to ask King Fahd permission to deploy American troops on his soil. Diplomacy also restricted how much the Coalition could do. Domestic opinion proved volatile throughout the Persian Gulf War. Although many condemned Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, they also proved reluctant and even opposed to using force to push his troops out of Kuwait. Bush not only had to court his own population but also had to help the other leaders in the Coalition find a way to balance their involvement with domestic interests.

Necessity of the Coalition

The amount of restrictions the United States faced when operating in the Coalition may make working in a coalition seem too troublesome. The United States had to contend with many components – domestic concerns not only at home but also abroad; interests of other Coalition members' governments; deployment of troops abroad under the uncertainty of whether Saddam would press his attack further into the Arabian Peninsula. The Coalition also required constant maintenance, which occurred through personal contact between political leaders and between generals of the Coalition forces. Although the Coalition's goals fell under the Security Council Resolutions, the United States ultimately had to balance everyone's desires.

Despite these issues, it was important that the United States acted in a multilateral manner. Global interests were at stake, not just those of the United States. The Coalition allowed other nations to feel that they played a role in the geopolitical realm and could make a meaningful contribution. It also set the precedent that violations of sovereignty were intolerable to the world, not just to the United States. The Coalition gave the United States access to assets it otherwise would not have, especially Iran, and it mitigated later Soviet interference.

Ultimately, the Coalition proved more valuable diplomatically than militarily. It multiplied the effect of sanctions, even if ultimately they were rendered superfluous by military action. It prevented a potential crisis with Israel, with military action, made possible by abundant forces freed from a decisive air war, bolstering the promises of diplomats. The United States had military control; other nations' forces were incorporated into the offensive designed by American planners and were needed more to show international support than for military effectiveness. Although the Coalition proved difficult to maintain, it succeeded in overcoming an entrenched foe and liberating a nation in need.

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