

Diplomatic approach of George H. W. Bush in 1990 and operation Desert Storm

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Abstract

President George H.W. Bush supposed to have relatively weak mandate compared to his predecessor. However when facing the arising crisis in the Gulf he proved not only clear vision of foreign but also a masterpiece of an international diplomacy putting together not only the clear mandate of the UN Security Council but also a coalition of 39 states with different motivations, religious and politic background to quickly execute all the UN resolutions. Keeping especially Israel out of this coalition even after being attacked by SCUD missiles was another prove of advanced diplomacy.

Key Words

1st Gulf War, Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, Ultimate, Hostages, UN resolutions, diplomacy, ceasefire, peace treaty

Abbreviations

AWACS – Airborne Warning and Control Center

BVR – Beyond Visual Range (shot by self-driven rocket on target visible by radar)]

CVBG – Carrier Vessel Battle Group: 6 deployed in gulf war – in peace times 2 – 3

IFF – Identification Friend or Foe – military transponder with secret codes

KIA – Killed in Action

KTO – Kuwaiti Theatre of Operations - under U.S. Central Command

GPS – Global Positioning System (used only by military by then)

MEF – Marine Expeditionary Forces

MIA – Missing in action (mostly POW)

POW – Prisoner of war

Ret. – retired from active duty (may stay in reserve) = allowed to say personal view

ROE – Rules of Engagement (using weapon to avoid civilian or friendly casualties)

XPDR/SQUAK – civilian transponder with public codes under ICAO rules

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1 Pre-war diplomacy

1.1 End of the Cold War in Europe

41st president of the United States George Herbert Walker Bush was a vice president of the United States in 80ies when the bipolar world was melting down. Already since 1986 president Michail Gorbachev changed gradually the very authoritative Brezhnev doctrine using tools as “Perestrojka” or “Glasnost” known even in English. He was also influenced by the Chernobyl nuclear tragedy (he comes from the mixed Russia-Ukrainian marriage). Mr.Gorbachev vision was rather idealistic when confronted with hard actor style of Ronald Reagan talking straight in Berlin: “Mr.Gorbachov turn down this wall...”. Mr. Reagan was not willing to compromise in Reykjavik in 1986. It was virtually end of the Soviet influence in eastern Europe. Communist block melted down quickly in 1989. Removing the iconic Berlin wall. USA became the far most in debts country (both internally and externally). They could afford that unless dollar remains the main reserve currency in the world. (Achen, 1989)

1.1.1 Role of the intelligence services

Before he was the vice-president George Bush was a long term the director of CIA. Having the best overview of the intelligence communities (inclusive FBI, NSA, DIA, Pentagon + others). The tough position of Soviet union was not strange for him and very early becomes the period of very informal information exchange not only between Bush and Gorbachev but also in certain cases even between their own intelligence communities. As Colin Cambell states in his academic review: Phone diplomacy was very strong point of president Bush even in 90ies when video conferences were not quite common (also possible): hot line Moscow-Washington was established since 1962 after the Caribbean crisis and became frequently used again. In 1991 president Gorbachev was even unofficially warned about the probable coup d’etat attempt that turned out finally relatively well but ended the Soviet era and communist party was banned by the Russia president Jelcin.

1.2 Prelude to the Gulf War

During most of the period of communist meltdown the Iraq lead the longterm war against Iran being supported by paradox both by the US, France and Soviet Union. All of them were bothered by the Ayatollah theocratic regime => enemy to all of the world including Arab nations.

1.2.1 Saddam Husein and Baathism ideology aspirations

Iraq finally won the war. It remained economically ruined. At the same time Saddam aspired once again to become a leader of Arab world proclaiming that he was protecting Arabs from Persian (non-Arabic) Iran. The main issue were the money borrowed from oil rich countries. As mentioned above the intelligence community as well as the press cover concentrated on the future in Europe. The arising Gulf conflict was covered mainly Arab League of nations and strongly underrated. Arabic diplomacy historically based on many non-written ancient habits, and relies strongly on the non-written promises as a bit naive nature of their nations. Both Husni Mumbarak and the king Fahd were assured that Saddam Husein is just bluffing when deterring Kuwait. By own words both felt the broken promises like the knife in their back and joined they military units to formed coalition. The satellite snaps showed completely different picture of the story and at least 48 hours before the invasion started on August 2nd there emergency of war was raised to "orange" level. Both president Bush and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher were kept in Camp David residence on bilateral meeting: but they reaction was very quick and immediate as described lower.

1.2.2 April Glaspie, the US ambassador to Iraq

One of the mistake of Saddam in diplomacy was meet the U.S. Ambassador on July 28th on bilateral talk. There exist more transcripts of their talks however the most medialized version in (Danspeckgruber, 1996) cites Glaspie saying: „We have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960s, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America.”

Her words worthily ended up the carrier of this senior diplomat and confused Saddam even more: that USA would not react at least not in military way. That seems a bit strong as Arabic culture by then did not recognize much a women authority. Anyhow was vaguely said during the meeting it was in sharp opposite to what both Bush and Thatcher said on improvised conference just 5 days later.

1.3 Hostages Diplomacy

Very unprecedented issue occurred when Sadddam Husein hold the hundreds of foreign hostages against their will. That was strictly condemned by the whole world. Bush (Campell, 1991) did not over emphasize this particular issue just clearly proclaimed that “He will make Iraq government fully responsible for the health and lives of the hostages held against their will” –in this contexts as at the same time dozens of foreign press and TV workers are voluntarily coming to Iraq and accredit here to cover: under both sides censorship as Peter Arnet mentioned.

1.3.1 Hostages released

On December 3rd Saddams declares his "50:50 chance of war on TV". Ten days later he released last hostages with exception of accredited press personal who wanted to stay. Saddam did not also succeed to arrest original Kuwaiti government as he planned for leverage negotiations.

This unprecedented issue had an extra end-game when Sawfah Airport cease-fire was signed and some investigation were needed for Kuwaities held in Baghdad versus Iraq statement that those were only Iraq citizens escaping from Kuwait after invasion.

1.4 Operation Desert Shield

As the 4th largest mobilized (inclusive non-profesional) army of Iraq by words of Gen. H.N. Schwarzkopf even larger then the U.S. military (Schwarzkopf, 1992) invaded Kuwait within hours of Aug 2nd the UN Security Council passes the resolution No.660.

To be honest: U.S. did not count for national guard and reserves from which 40 thousand were activated to cover the logistic services on US home bases while nearly half of all American Army in Active duty: 400 thousand later 560 thousand of troops many of them also in logistics and support services) was send to Gulf. Firstly these were as usual both Marines division (MEF), 101st Air assault, 82nd Airborne, 1st Cavalry div, 24th div (specialized on desert war) divisions + some other units (cavalry regiments, "Tiger" brigade which is officially part of 2nd armored division. A plan created by US Central Command was confirmed by chief of staff and latest by October 1990 there was practically no real danger of Saddam Invading Saudi Arabia. Even before the war started the casualties occurred mostly relating to logistic accidents and mishaps as moving the half-milion (size of an average city) around the globe.

Although nobody mentioned a possibility of war yet Bush was talking very straight: "the annexation of Kuwait is not going to stand" and "We are dealing with Hitler revisited..." with reference to his own WWII experience. Bush had clear exact knowledge of Hitler policy and appeasement on European war although Bush himself was active pilot on San Jacinto Aircraft Carrier in Pacific (probably youngest naval pilot) during WWII. He was shot down after attacking Japanese communication center and a film record preserved and became very known during his campaign where US submarine is saving Bush from the sea while his 2 other crewmen did not survived. Bush therefore proved his courage and even will to sacrifice for the country as he appreciated human life price as well.

1.4.1 Calculating the economical sanctions possibilities

Strict economic sanction were immediately passed to Iraq and they could be also quickly executed as American Navy now dominated the Gulf and both Syria and Turkey were supporting coalition. The only weak point was Jordan king Hussein

supporting Saddam even on TV. Bush ordered Secretary of state (Baker) to calculate when the effect of sanction can be expected: the estimate of at least 2 years did not make him happy as he preferred immediate withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. The Saddam response was not polite one: first he appointed very unqualified puppet government which did not worked well and so made Kuwait soon as the 19th province of the Iraq itself. Building an international coalition lead by US was Bush's masterpiece. Another Saddam's failure was his faith that US would stream to avoid any military action due to so called "Vietnam syndrome". He left nearly half a year of time to president Bush to organize 39 state coalition gradually positioned from defend (of Saudi Arabia) to attack position. Resolution 678 passed on November 29th gave the deadline of 15th January 1991 to withdraw Kuwait. James Baker made his 11 day trip to organize a coalition of 39 countries: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The difference was that now was necessary to take into account not only defensive but even offensive scenario. There is true that some countries (like France) preferred to play more defensive position - on left flank, while the others (Czechoslovakia for one) deployed only small specialized unit or only air strike force (according to their possibilities). Japan, Germany and even Russia supported coalition at least moral way: Japanese constitution enables just self-defence and no offensive strike but as gen. Schwarzkopf reminds: Japanese became one of the boldest sponsors of the expensive logistic phase of the operation (Schwarzkopf, 1992) because Japan was probably most dependent on Gulf oil imports while China was yet not in so strong position 30 years ago: Deng-Xiao-Ping starting his first reform in very modest way: no official China statement was recorded however votes in UN Security council were more then useful.



Czechoslovakia soldiers delivers drinking water for the U.S. troops..

2 Operation Desert Storm

2.1 War plans in question

First plan (direct attack) presented to Chief of staff was feasible - however the casualty expectation were too high. As Air Force General Buster Glossom declared: "nobody ever doubt about the final result of the war- the only question was the cost of it": meant here in human lives. For the public relation strict order no U.S. military official was allowed to make any estimate of Iraqi fatalities (i.e. dead) the only numbers available were the number of Iraqi POWs held by coalitions (tens of thousands) and estimate of deserted soldiers (similar number on Iraq side). This strict order was due to very negative experience made in Vietnam because even enemy dead are too sensitive issue for public. So let each side counts only its own. That is why the reporters estimates differs even in order of number.

Final number of allied casualties is also difficult to calculate due to opposite reason: the KIA status (US 149) was compared to some 35 accidents and similar friendly fire cases. Gen. Schwarzkopf does not like to differ as he said: "once any projectile is fired ...it is no more friendly to anybody". The whole coalition lost some 400 (incl. serious injured, MIA=mostly POW + other countries losses).

Central command was asked for an alternative plan later known as "Left Hook" and also what is needed to limit casualties: as a result the mighty U.S. 7th corps (=several division included armored ones) was moved from Germany (Where it was needed no more). KTO Kuwait Theatre of Operation was ready now.

2.2 The Air War

Due to the left hook strategy together with fictive amphibious attack from the right the land units were not actually ready in correct position on Jan 17th. More over absolute air power dominance was asked by general including full damage of integrated air defence damage: system KARI (opposite from Iraq) was actually installed by French in 80ies further decrypted by the espionage satellites planes as "Rivet joint" = adapted Boeing 707 with 40 tons of electronic sensors and computers. It is said 7 times stronger than Vietnam in Hanoi. That is why the air war was given the priority. Both naval and land-based from Saudi bases hidden here for the case of cold war from the past already. 100 thousand sorties with minimum casualties (some pilots were saved by special forces others few caught by Iraqis were mis-used for propaganda trials. Only one F18 pilot was killed first day while the estimate was close to 100! As approx. 2/3 of Iraq planes starting never returned home and other were destroyed by bunker buster bombs on earth some preferred to escape to former enemy Iran where they were interned even after war.

The 6 weeks of Air war was much more sophisticated driven usually by AWACS avoiding any air collisions despite relatively dense traffic. Strict ROE enabled civilian planes to travel to Moscow for peace negotiations!

2.3 Khafji incident

Saddam's disdain of (even own) human lives he called for "Mother of all Battles" and had on mind especially blood floods that deters the Allied. The precision bombing did not fulfill this aim and showing limited number of occasional civilian casualties only underlined the fact that allies stream to strike military targets. That is why he made the first ground attack on 30th Jan just to abandoned Saudi city of Khafji. Actually it was rather desperate trial to provoke more blood. Actually there were 3 attack planned – 2 of them stopped by air strike before the border. The 3rd one that crossed the border was underrated by allies as "Reconnaissance in Force" which was not much pleasant anyhow because if it was the reconnaissance really Iraq founds that there are neither strong units on the border no any fortification. There were only several marines OP "Observations post" one of which had to abandon all his belongings (found later as it was) and escaped right to center of Khafji. Directing both Air and artillery power is a dangerous job: 12 marine were killed 7 of which by friendly fire. From 3000 Iraqi troops returned aprox. 800 rest being killed or captured. It showed that Iraqi ground power was probably overrated as they were not able to "fight, communicate and move simultaneously" (Campbell, 1992).

2.4 100 Hour war

The details of Air War are beyond scope of this diplomatic study. Nevertheless big portion of shots were BVR and by paradox the only 1 Saudi pilot (no American) reached 2 shots. Usually Attacking force are supposed to outnumber the defensive troops at least twice. This was not the case as Iraqi were fighting on their home soil: to achieve fair chance for the coalition rude bombardment of the enemy divisions was necessary using the B-52 bombers in last stage. Causing not only human losses but also enormous rate of desertion of Iraqi troops.

Before the Ground War unleashed Saddam received 1 more and last ultimate: Till noon local time Saturday Feb 23RD to start complete and unconditional withdrawal. This last ultimate was a result of Michail Gorbachev mediatory pleading for peace.

Saddam as usual ignored all the diplomatic ultimates and ground war started at 4 a.m. on Sunday morning 24th Feb in rainy weather. It did not prevent 101st to provide the largest 300 helicopter attack in history and setting its own the base 50 miles inside Iraq for supporting further air attack.

Although the war was quick there is again beyond the scope to describe the strategy: left flank was covered by French division. Main attacking group were 2 corps forming American 3rd Army and targeting mainly republican Guard. British 1st Armored Div. Attacked through Wadi Al Batin. The liberation of Kuwait itself was honor of most of the Arab Units (Saudi, Egyptian, Syrian, Qatar, Kuwaiti, Emirates...) together with US Marines. Those were partly faking the amphibious attack

from the sea. Not to forget number of special forces group operating due to GPS in Western desert more reliably than Iraqi soldiers at home: who often lost their way.

2.5 The Hail Mary plan

The "Hail Mary" is the slang from football strategy typical for last decisive minutes and meaning all players play offensive role with minimum defense. Most generals did not know that would come into effect on 8 a.m. on Thursday morning. After the intensive bomb raid on Highway from Kuwait City to Basra later known as a "highway of death" George Bush influenced by the strong public opinion made this decision with demarcation line before the Euphrat river. The Cease-Fire was signed by Iraqi generals authorized by Hussajn to accept practically all the condition. Anyhow Iraq republican guard brake the cease fire by attacking 24th Division trying to shoot out of Basra and escape to Baghdad: after few hours this incident was over. Gen. McCaffry (ret.) admits: "it was big political miscalculation."

2.6 Conclusion

The final peace treaty was signed later on in April as the UN Security council had to adopt the 661 resolution imposing not only economic embargo excluding medical supplies, food and other items of humanitarian help. Councils' sanction committee was established. Several uprising against Saddam could not be supported from the outside (based on UN diplomacy) with exception of non-flight zones on both south and northern Iraq. All the previous resolutions were confirmed.

No International Court Martial was established and none of the Hussein regime representants were judged even despite the clear war crimes made not only against Kuwaities but also against Kurds, Shia muslims and other. Not to mention unprecedented crimes against environment by flooding the crude oil into the sea and intentional setting fire on hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells.

Basically after the 1st Gulf War both the diplomacy and international justice became toothless. It did not diminish the great president Bush success to out together probably the coalition comparable with anti-Hitler coalition since WWII. Unfortunately bold vision that should replace bipolar world by multipolar taking into account more responsible sides inclusive China, Russia, EU + others. Bush called his bold optimistic vision as the "New World order" which afterwards was misused by some reporters as pejorative nick name for conspiracy theories as "Bilderberg" etc. Bush's little bit reserved attitude after a cease-fire with minimum casualties was commented by a reporter absence of pleasure. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf apologized from one of the festive military parade: being instead at the same time present at the requiem mass celebrated for the casualties of war.

Far later after 9-11 (after certain US investigation) Saddam was judged and executed purely by Iraq own justice (no other body involved) for evident war crimes.

3 Literature

3.1 Scopus database

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3.2.1 Personal testimonies

Shortly after their return from the Gulf in 1991 the author of this work visited during their deserved holiday army (helicopter) pilot and his sister that both served in U.S. military: both ARMY & USAF). Their testimony can be disclosed only after their retirement: as usual in US military. They confirmed their determination to liberate Kuwait despite being outnumbered by Iraqis. She (cpt.) after being retired from USAF radar control studied the applied teology at evangelization school on Malta. 3rd friend from activated NAVY reserve stayed on U.S. naval base.