Termination of Operation Desert Storm – Analysis

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Introduction

The termination of Desert Storm set the precedent for how the United States would conduct its foreign objectives in the post-Cold War world. On February 27th, 1991 a U.S.-led UN Coalition of 28 nations (Russia and Arab nations included) made a decision to end the Gulf War. The termination was quickly determined for a myriad of reasons; international cooperation, stability in the Middle East, trust of Arab nations, and the achievement of United States objectives in the region. Some conflict emerged in differing views of Saddam's continued reign in Iraq, while other potential issues arose in the rebellions in Iraq that happened soon after the war. However, through it all, President H.W. Bush and his administration gathered all the facts and evaluated all potential outcomes. The lasting impact this created was an enormous influence of United States foreign policy post-Cold War. This influence is one of the most important legacies of the termination of Operation Desert Storm

History

On August 2, 1990, Iraq fulfilled its expansionist goals and invaded Kuwait. "Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had clear international repercussions with regards to oil reserves. For the security of the State of Israel and of friendly Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, Iraq's expansionism posed an ominous threat to regional stability in the Middle East" (Crabb & Mulcahy 1995, 253). In response to the Iraqi invasion, President George H.W. Bush mobilized troops to the Persian Gulf region. Between August of 1990 and January of 1991, a series of peace talks and negotiations occurred in an attempt to solve the conflict through diplomatic channels. President H.W. Bush went to the United Nations in an effort to generate international cooperation. A major

decision of the H.W. Bush administration was that "Resistance to Iraqi aggression must entail a multinational effort, involving America's friends and allies abroad, other states within the Middle East, and the United Nations" (Crabb & Mulcahy 1995, 253). This international effort was in part to avoid the mistakes and stigma from the Vietnam War era, as well as to ensure that United States security measures would be taken seriously by not only the international world, but by Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Thus, the United States sought for and secured a U.S. led UN Coalition consisting of 28 states, Russia, and many Arab nations.

During these diplomatic peace efforts, there was a "Massive, steady buildup of American military power...in the [Gulf] region" mainly off the coast and in Saudi Arabia (Crabb & Mulcahy 1995, 253). This force included not only American military power, but the efforts of the other members of the UN coalition. The fact that many members of the coalition came together so quickly after the end of the Cold War (particularly Russia and the United States) had lasting implications, particularly during the termination of Desert Storm. The details of this situation will be discussed later in this paper. Additionally, with the backing of the UN Security Council resolution and the formation of the United States led coalition, President H.W. Bush gained approval from Congress to use force in the war if necessary. In January 1991, the coalition entered the Gulf War with firepower and force. The United States and the UN gave Saddam a deadline to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. When Saddam didn't withdraw, the United States launched a military air campaign called Desert Shield.

On February 24, 1991, the United States launched the ground campaign called Desert Storm. After only 100 hours on the ground, this campaign led to an unprecedented and rapid victory (Office of the Historian, The Gulf War). During the 100 hours, the Iraqi army was overpowered and outmaneuvered as the United States and its allies conducted strikes upon the

Iraqi Revolutionary Guard on the infamously dubbed 'highway of death' that led from Kuwait back to Iraq. Eventually, the six weeks of the Desert Shield (43 days) and Desert Storm (100 hours) campaigns culminated on February 27th when President H.W. Bush declared that the United State's objectives were met, and he made the decision to pull out of the Middle East (Whicker, Pfiffner, & Moore 1993, 35). "On March 2, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 686, which set forth conditions for a cease-fire. Iraq was obligated to accept its provisions, which included sanctions and payment of reparations for war damages. Iraq was obligated to return property stolen from Kuwait" (Office of the Historian, The Gulf War).

Deliberation and Decision

The H.W. Bush administration came into the Persian Gulf with four goals: "First, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government. Third, security and stability for the Gulf—an important interest of the U.S. since the time of Harry Truman. And fourth, the protection of American citizens abroad" (Whicker, Pfiffner, & Moore 1993, 31). These objectives were the standards that guided President H.W. Bush in his decisions regarding the Gulf War.

After President H.W. Bush ordered the commencement of Operation Desert Storm on February 24th, the coalition of allies quickly pushed the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait and back into Iraq. "At 10:15 the morning of February 27, Dick Cheney reported that the southern half of Kuwait was now free" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 485). This signaled the accomplishment of the United States and the international community's goals (as set out by the United Nations), and an end of the military capacity in the Persian Gulf Conflict. The next step in the process was to complete discussions with Saddam and the Iraqis through diplomatic channels.

That same February 27th "The President's advisors sat in the Oval Office for our daily discussions on the war. There was a sense of euphoria in the air. Ground operations had gone far better than the most optimistic of us had dared to hope...there seemed to be an unspoken consensus building that this was it" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 485). The next steps in the termination of Operation Desert Storm and the end of the Gulf War would need to be precise and executed with the utmost awareness as to what consequences and successes could follow. President H.W. Bush first ensured that the U.S. and allied military situation was secure. The safety of a withdrawal was necessary for the success of the Operation. This was vitally important because "some of the allies were sensing an end to the fighting as well," yet were unwilling to take steps unless the United States first gave the command (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 485). The allies were looking to the United States as not only the coalition leader, but the principle actor in determining how to leave the Middle East.

Later in that meeting, in his characterically prudent and matter-of-fact way, "The President asked whether it was time to stop. There was no dissent" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 485). This decision to end the war and pull out of Iraq was made in much the same way as many of the other decisions in the H.W. Bush administration were resolved: The input and facts from every person and faction involved were considered, and then the final decision was made by President H.W. Bush. "President Bush left no doubt about who made the final decision in national security policy and who symbolized his administration's position in foreign affairs" (Crabb & Mulcahy, 254).

After President H.W. Bush asked if everyone felt that it was time to stop the military campaigns, and after a final meeting with General Schwarzkopf (the General on the ground in the Middle East) to confirm the safe disengagement of their forces, President H.W. Bush gave

the order to end the war. As Brent Scowcroft said, "In what was probably too cute by half, we agreed to end hostilities at midnight, Washington time, for a ground war of exactly 100 hours" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 486).

The decision to end Desert Storm was made with the same swiftness and surety in which Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm had been executed. In a single day a decision was made, everyone was on the same page, and the decision was executed. President H.W. Bush gave a speech to the American people at on February 27th at 9 p.m. saying, "Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met. Kuwait is once more in the hands of Kuwaitis, in control of their own destiny" (WT, 486). The process of this decision-making and completion illustrated the goals of not only President H.W. Bush, but the people he worked with in the United States (such as Cheney, Scowcroft, and Powell) and in the international community.

Challenges of the Decision

There are important reasons why President H.W. Bush, his advisors, and the international community supported the decision to pull out of Iraq and not push further to topple Saddam's regime. There was vigorous debate at the time, and there are still on-going debates as to what the best decision was. The first discussion was in regards to public image. President H.W. Bush discussed the fact that the members of the UN coalition and his team "Had all become increasingly concerned over impressions being created in the press about the 'highway of death' from Kuwait City to Basra" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 485). President H.W. Bush was keenly aware of the negative impact the media could have on a war such as the repercussions the United States experienced with Vietnam (Whicker, Pfiffner, & Moore 1993, 31). This led President H.W. Bush and other members of his cabinet to a heightened awareness of potential press

situations which could be negatively construed against the war and the military fighting in it. One of their worries regarding public image if the coalition continued to advance into Iraq was the negative image the infamous"highway of death" could by overshadowing the stunning military success of the Gulf War. Essentially, the United States wanted to leave on a relatively high note. This desire is reflected in their rapid termination and withdrawal. Additionally, as Mr Cheney said, "The American military 'had done a tremendous job' and the Iraqi Army was by then so weak that it was a question of whether the administration 'wanted to ask our men and women to continue to slaughter the enemy'" (Bumiller 2011). The fact that the United States saw the suffering and stopped the campaigns instead of entirely destroying the people of the nation they were at war with, is telling of the caliber of leadership in the nation at that time.

Another aspect of the decision to pull out and not push forward with toppling Saddam was more diplomatic. If Saddam was overthrown by the U.S. led UN Coalition, the United States "would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 489). The Iraqi region is extremely hostile to the United States, and therefore any occupation on behalf of the United States would escalate to potential civil war or revolutions, which in turn would lead to further destabilization in the Middle East. The simple fact was that allowing Saddam to remain in power was a decision the United States could work with; they could more easily anticipate what to expect. If Iraq were to be under United States occupation, there was a high chance of destabilization in Iraq specifically, and in the Middle East in general. No one wanted that destabilization, especially the Arab nations which had joined the U.S. led UN coalition. President H.W. Bush determined that if the United States had pushed forward to topple Saddam, "The [UN] Coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, there was no viable 'exit strategy' we

could see, violating another of our principles," which had been set out prior to going into the Persian Gulf (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 489; Whicker, Pfiffner, & Moore 1993).

President H.W. Bush consistently expressed his support for Saddam being "eliminated from power by indigenous forces within Iraq" (OA/ID 90018-Conflict Resolutions in the Gulf, 3). There was always an unknown factor with Saddam and his potential survival. If his regime survived after he was ousted from Kuwait, it could represent a defeat for the U.S.-led UN Coalition in the future. Essentially, there would be a "battlefield victory, but a political defeat" (OA/ID 90018-Conflict Resolutions in the Gulf, 3). What President H.W. Bush and his tem determined was "strategically and politically crucial" was that the U.S. led UN Coalition have the last word in how the termination of Desert Storm happened (OA/ID 90018-Conflict Resolutions in the Gulf, 3). The general belief was that if Saddam was forced to accept the terms of the UN Security Council resolution and still be in power in Iraq, he would possibly be a "lesser evil than regional reactions to a pointed effort to kill or capture him" and the United States would set the precedent for those regional reactions by how they terminated Desert Storm (OA/ID 90018-Conflict Resolutions in the Gulf, 3).

The cooperation of the international community working was a major factor in the H.W. Bush administration's strategy for deciding how they would function in the post-Cold War world. The administration had been trying to set a precedent for dealing with potential international threats. By working with the United Nations and forming a coalition to lead into the Middle East, the United States was also establishing itself as leader in the international community. Because of the trust involved in the coalition and the unprecedented nature of relationships with Russia and the U.S., the termination and drawdown of Operation Desert Storm was supported by all involved at the time. Therefore, "Going in and occupying Iraq, thus

unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to established" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 489).

The main reason for the United States' decision to withdraw was their stance on maintaining their foreign policy goals. When the goals were achieved [withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; restoration of Kuwaiti government; security and stability for the Gulf, which can be interpreted many ways; and the protection of American citizens abroad (Whicker, Pfiffner, & Moore 1993, 31)], the United States kept its word and left the region. This action gave the United States additional trust in the international community and the Middle Eastern nations they had fought alongside. Furthermore, the international coalition of countries and the reaction to potential United States actions was taken into consideration during the decision making process. The reason the administration decided against continuing the campaigns to remove Saddam was not simply because of the potential costs to the United States, but also the cost to the allies in the international community, and, most importantly, the United States' goals for foreign policy post-Cold War.

Implementation

One of the most positive outcomes of the termination of Operation Desert Storm was the improvement in the American and international public image of the United States military and their engagement in war. Because there was such a quick decisive end to the war and the United States removed their forces immediately after their objectives had been met, the United States military and nation were viewed in favorable terms. The American people's attitude towards the military and certain conflicts the United States engaged in was a positive one. President H.W. Bush, commenting on the Gulf War, said, "I was (and am) proud of the way our military

performed, very proud. Many of those who had served in the previous thirty years had been 'beaten up' largely because of the way the Vietnam War had been fought. A generation of Americans had been acclaimed for refusing to service. Those who did serve often returned home, not to gratitude and praise, but to ridicule-even while the draft-dodger and the protester were considered by many to be courageous, even heroic. Now this has been put to rest and American credibility restored" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 486). The international community earned greater respect for the United States after they kept their word and reacted to issues that challenged their national security in a decisive manner. The efficient and effective Gulf war had turned a page in how America would engage in international affairs in the future, and it also improved that opinion at home.

The termination of Operation Desert Storm was carried off without issues. There were no problems in its execution. The situation was resolved and "The Persian Gulf crisis had ended with a momentous victory by United States and its allies" (Crabb & Mulcahy, 254). The military campaign was complete. However, there were some problems arising in diplomatic and political areas. "The necessary limitations placed on our objectives, the fog of war, and the lack of a 'battleship *Missouri*' surrender [i.e. the surrender of the Japanese in 1945 at the end of WWII on the Battleship *Missouri*] unfortunately left unresolved problems, and new ones arose," (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 488). The issue of the lack of a 'battleship *Missouri*' ending to the war was not simply a wish for more publicity. Soon after the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and the Middle East, the public opinion in Jordan and in Baghdad was that the United States was forced to "Capitulate" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 488). Unfortunately, because of a lack of a clear ending or surrender, Jordan and Baghdad believed they had won the war, at least in the immediate aftermath.

One of the most prominent of the problems, and one that has merited the most contentious discussion after the war, was Saddam and his continued rule in Iraq. President H.W. Bush and many other members of not only his council but the international community as a whole, would have liked to see Saddam's fall from power associated with the loss of the war. Unfortunately, "Saddam's defeat did not break his hold on power, as many of our Arab allies had predicted and we had come to expect" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 488). As stated earlier, this is the point where the United States and its allies were in a bind. The United States had not pushed forward and ousted Saddam from office because of the potential failure of the state. No one wanted to destabilize the Middle East with the potential downfall of Iraq. However, even though President H.W. Bush would never promise to aid an uprising against Saddam, he did want him gone. Thus, "President Bush repeatedly declared that the fate of Saddam Hussein was up to the Iraqi people" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 488-489; OA/ID 90018-Conflict Resolutions in the Gulf, 2). The point was that it was the responsibility of the people in Iraq to rise up and take control of their government.

Unfortunately, almost immediately after the Gulf War and in the chaos that followed, "Spontaneous Shiite rebellions in the South and Kurdish unrest in northern Iraq broke out but were eventually suppressed by Saddam Hussein and his Revolutionary Guards" (Office of the Historian, The Gulf War). This presented Saddam a way to reassert himself as leader and to consolidate more power around him (Quinlivan 1999, 145). The Iraqi military was suddenly put to work against the rebels, and they had no time to ponder on how Saddam had lost the Gulf War in a rather humiliating defeat. Saddam remained in power largely because his military and the members of the government and his family who were gathered closest to him remained loyal (Quinlivan 1999, 145-146). This loyalty to Saddam remained until 2003 when President W. Bush

invaded Iraq and captured him. Saddam was then found guilty of crimes against humanity and executed in 2006. Although this was a resolution, it did not counteract the fact that Saddam remained in power for another fifteen years after the Gulf War.

As discussed, there were positive and negative conclusions to the termination of Desert Storm The positive results were cooperation between the United States and the international community, the efficiency and effectiveness of the war, and an increased positive public image. The negatives include the lack of a decisive and known end to the war, timing of the ceasefire, and allowing Saddam to remain in power without limitations on his leadership or addressing the factor of loyalty in his family and followers. There were and still are contradictory views on the termination of Desert Storm with issues such as the desires for the destruction of Saddam's Revolutionary Guard, and the public's calls for the physical occupation of Iraq (Cline 1998, 363-364). After a great deal of discussion and debate, it was determined by the H.W. Bush administration that "Major expansion or continuation of the war would probably have created an even worse situation in the region, with considerably more instability resulting" (Cline 1998, 363).

Different Potential Outcome

Saddam Hussein was not overthrown in 1991. As mentioned earlier, the United States had reasons not to overthrow Saddam at that time. A question that has long been debated since the Gulf War is what would have happened if he had been overthrown. What would have happened if Saddam had been forced to personally accept the terms of the Iraqi defeat (instead of sending a general to do the humiliating task) and then shouldering him with the responsibility and political consequences of a defeat? This is a question that President H.W. Bush and his advisors did examine carefully. The reasons for not toppling Saddam were numerous. The three

main reasons were: the United States would potentially be viewed negatively, they would lose credibility in the International Community and Arab nations, and the U.S. would most likely have to take over Iraq which would cause a plethora of other problems.

At the time, the idea of forcing Saddam to accept defeat personally was a potentially viable course of action. Unfortunately, after a great deal of debate and discussion, President H.W. Bush and his team came to the conclusion that if they forced Saddam to accept the terms of Iraq's defeat and he refused, "We would be left with two options: continue the conflict until he backed down, or retreat from our demands" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 489-490). If the United States started with a precedent of revitalized post-Cold War relations and leadership in the international community and then backed down from those demands when Saddam refused, they would lose their influence and credibility. On the other hand, if Saddam refused and the United States continued the conflict until he backed down, that would have sent the wrong message and would have, "split our Arab colleagues from the coalition and, *de facto*, forced us to change our objectives" (Bush & Scowcroft, 489-490). After carefully weighing the potential outcomes, President H.W. Bush and his team eventually allowed Saddam to send a general in his place to accept the terms of defeat. While this did allow Saddam to save face and stay in power, in the long run the potential consequences for the United States and their allies were too large to risk forcing Saddam.

Conflicting Views on Termination

Today there are many opinions on the Gulf War and the termination of Operation Desert Storm. As one example, "few have expressed pleasure with the results of the Gulf War. Despite all of the victory celebrations and self-congratulations, there remains a feeling of a job left unaccomplished" (Cline 1998, 375). As discussed before, the issue of Saddam was a prominent

problem that the administration recognized could be viewed as a U.S. led defeat in the region (OA/ID 90018-Conflict Resolutions in the Gulf, 3). Additionally, the Kurdish rebellions in Iraq helped Saddam to remove judgement from him and focus his Revolutionary Guard on a new hostile force. By doing this Saddam maintained power, and while potentially not as much influence, he still was the leader of Iraq (Quinlivan 1999, 147). Because many Americans view "incomplete victory as defeat" (Cline 1998, 375) the public opinion which was so positive immediately after the war could turn sour because Saddam was in power and rebellions were rife in the Middle East. While some things had improved (Kuwait's liberation for example), many other problems had arisen.

On one hand, many people do say that there were negative implications on American Foreign Policy and the Middle East from the Gulf War and how it was terminated. However, as the decisions that were made are reviewed, it is apparent that the pros and cons of each issue were addressed and resolved in the most beneficial way for the present and the future. In the end, what was achieved was far more valuable than what was lost. Essentially, the United States accomplished the objectives: Kuwait was liberated, Saddam has less influence in the region, Iraqi WMD were mostly destroyed, and the United States and its allies have continued access to Middle Eastern oil (OA/ID CF01473 Public Diplomacy after Desert Storm, 1-2). These are not the only positive outcomes from the United States termination of Desert Storm. The cooperation of the international community both during and after the Gulf War was an "unprecedented international coalition against aggression" that America helped create, and "the first ever multinational negotiations [Madrid conference 1992] involving Israel and the Arab states are underway" (OA/ID CF01473 Public Diplomacy after Desert Storm, 2). Hopefully, the results from the conference in Madrid are the first step of many towards peaceful negotiations. So, "no

the Gulf War did not solve all the problems of the Middle East. But it did leave this region and indeed the world a far better place for us all" (OA/ID CF01473 Public Diplomacy after Desert Storm, 3). For instance, the essential component of the continued improvement of the Middle East after the Gulf War was due to how the United States implemented their foreign policy goals in the region and terminated Desert Storm. A key example is that "the United States ended the war as the 'liberator of Kuwait.' Extending the war could have made the United States the 'occupier of Iraq'" (Cline 1998, 376). The liberation of Kuwait was something that the international community and many Arab nations could stand behind. However, the role as occupier of Iraq, besides being a difficult situation for the United States, would be harder to garner support from the international community or the Arab nations (Cline 1998, 377).

Foreign Policy Implications: Then & Now

The implications from the termination of Operation Desert Storm on the foreign policy of the United States are extremely important to consider. President H.W. Bush and his team set out not only with objectives for the Gulf War, but with plans for the post-Cold War Foreign Policy of the United States.

The Gulf War was "A vast multinational effort that eventually involved the participation of nearly 30 nations opposing Iraqi aggression" (Crabb & Mulcahy 1995, 259). The international response and participation was spearheaded by the United States at the UN The administration wished to project certain principles to the world regarding their goals for the Gulf War. The easiest way to do this was to go to the United Nations. This could, "Provide a cloak of acceptability to our efforts and mobilize world opinion" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 491). The goal of the United States in going to the UN was twofold. First, it was to garner more leverage to persuade the U.S. Congress to grant the ability to go to war (not necessarily to declare war)

which is something that President H.W. Bush was adamant about (Bumiller 2011). The second reason was to utilize knowledge that President H.W. Bush had gained from the Vietnam war, "The idea that in any new major commitment of U.S. armed forces abroad, the nation must work in close concert with its friends and allies" (Crabb & Mulcahy 1995, 259). In order to do this during the Gulf War, the United Nations came into play. Because the United States and the Soviet Union were on the same 'side' for the first time since WWII, the UN Security Council was able to function as it is supposed to. The coalition of 28 member-states was created, with the United States as the leader.

A vital aspect of the United Nations coalition was that the United States was in charge of it. "It was important to reach out to the rest of the world, but even more important to keep the strings of control tightly in our hands" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 491). Another significant component of the UN coalition were the members. Many of the Islamic nations were members of the coalition. They found themselves aligned with Russia and the United States (and Israel) in ways that previously would have been implausible. The ability to lead a diverse coalition in an effective way meant that the United States had the upperhand in the confrontation with Iraq (Crabb & Mulcahy 1995, 260). It also meant that the United States was strengthening its post-Cold War foreign policy by "establishing a model for the use of force" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 491).

This model of international cooperation with the United Nations has been attempted with varying degrees of success since the termination of the Gulf War. Because of the way President H.W. Bush and his team decided to conduct the Gulf War and then terminate Desert Storm, the United Nations is much more efficient than it was during the Cold War years. This is not only due to the power of the coalition, but the decision to end the Operation at that time in order to

keep international ties strong. The efforts of the United States on creating, leading, and preserving the unity of the coalition in the Gulf War are not only practical, but they are still used as examples today of how to go to war and how to end a war (Bumiller 2011). Additionally, "This development may possibly signify the revival in the fortunes of the United Nations as a peace-keeping agency" (Crabby & Mulcahy 1995, 260). If the United States had decided to go into Iraq or had chosen other courses of action, the UN Coalition would have disbanded and the UN would have even less influence than it had during the Cold War.

The effort the United States put into the UN coalition before, during, and after the Gulf War did not end after the termination of Operation Desert Storm. The United States proved to the Arab nations who had allied with them that they would keep their word. "Our prompt withdrawal helped cement our position with our Arab allies, who now trusted us far more than they ever had. We had come to their assistance in their time of need, asked nothing for ourselves, and we left again when the job was done...our new credibility resulted in a quick and substantial payoff in the form of a Middle East peace conference the following year in Madrid" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 490). The allies the United States solidified in the Middle East during this time period have been very influential in current dealings in that region. By allowing the Arab nations to see that the United States would come to their assistance, as well as protect what was in the United States' national security interests, and that they would not overstep boundaries or cross lines, was instrumental to those relationships.

Additionally, the United States had a further goal in the region of, "openness as a U.S. objective towards the Arab nations" (OA/ID 90018 U.S.-Arab Relations, 3). Most democratic societies view openness and communication, whether through international organizations or bilateral negotiations, as a positive influence for peace. On the other hand, most Middle East

societies have "moved cautiously, if at all in this direction" (OA/ID 90018 U.S.-Arab Relations, 3). This presents potential conflicts of interest with the U.S.-Arab relations. The United States entered into the Middle East during the Gulf War with the key goal of finding "the right balance between support for stability among traditional friends and encouragement of openness and evolutionary political change" (OA/ID 90018 U.S.-Arab Relations, 3). The United States was working towards this goal, and utilized their prompt withdrawal from the Middle East to gain trust with those Arab nations within the U.S.-led UN Coalition.

Another important aspect of the termination of the Gulf War that has influenced current U.S. foreign policy is the choice to withdraw when they did. There is considerable debate over the precise timing and whether or not the United States caused more problems in the Gulf region by not toppling Saddam, or at least taking out a few more Revolutionary Guards (Cline 1998, 365), President H.W. Bush stated, "True to the guidelines we had established, when we had achieved our strategic objectives (ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait and eroding Saddam's threat to the region) we stopped the fighting" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 488). This also relates to the above mentioned notion of the "highway of death" and the decision to stop killing. Colin Powell said, "This is historic and there's been nothing like this in history...one thing historic is that we stopped...we didn't just want to kill, and history will look on that kindly" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 487).

President H.W. Bush and his team demonstrated the ability to act quickly and efficiently in the face of potential threats to United States national security interests. They also established that after the war was over and any and all strategic objectives were achieved, the United States had the capacity and understanding to quickly and efficiently withdraw. This is an essential component of U.S. foreign policy post-Cold War that President H.W. Bush hoped to achieve.

This action should influence current leaders in the United States to determine not only when the war is over, but also to recognize the limits of the war, even if there are dissenting views and voices.

A final aspect of the termination of Operation Desert Storm was that the United States solidified its position in the post-Cold War world. President H.W. Bush paved the way for how the United States was going to act in the world with regards to foreign policy. "The Gulf War became, in many ways, the bridge between the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 491). The United States and Soviets worked together against Iraq, signaling a change in that relationship. The United States, Israel, and previously unaligned Arab nations worked together to achieve a common goal with the use of an international peacekeeping institution. And most importantly, the United States was stepped up as a world leader. "The United States had recognized and shouldered its peculiar responsibility for leadership in tackling international challenges, and won wide acceptance for this role around the globe. American political credibility and influence had skyrocketed...the result was that we emerged from the Gulf conflict into a very different world from that prior to the attack on Kuwait" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 492).

There is a potentially negative aspect in the time since President W. Bush's administration invaded Iraq in 2003, leading to the present necessity to keep U.S. forces in the region. Some say that this correlates to the 'unfinished business' left by President H.W. Bush with Saddam, however, there is nothing to back up this claim. Since the invasion in 2003, the United States has consistently maintained a presence in Iraq which is what President H.W. Bush was trying to avoid after the Gulf War.

Conclusion

In my opinion, the termination of Operation Desert Storm showed vital implications for how the United States conducts its foreign policy. First, as President H.W. Bush said, "We had shown our ability - and willingness - to intervene in the Middle East in a decisive way when our interests were challenged" (Bush & Scowcroft 1998, 490). That ability and decisiveness has been a trademark of United States foreign policy interactions post-Cold War. Second, the United States did something that had never been seen or done before. In 100 hours they had won Desert Storm, and then they pulled out of Iraq. That was the key. The United States was not going to kill simply because they could kill. The decision to stop when the objectives were met is the basis of the United States foreign policy. The withdrawal from Iraq and the Middle East in general indicates that the United States carefully considered all options, and then made the best decision for its national security and that of its allies. Third, the international effort heralded a new way of conducting relations post-Cold War with the UN, Arab nations, and a changing of the relationship between Russia and the United States that has continued long after the termination of Desert Storm.

Finally, President H.W. Bush and his team used the termination of Operation Desert Storm to set a precedent and tone for the post-Cold War world where the United States will intervene if its interests are threatened, and where the United States will help its allies. This is the chief success of Gulf War "There is now something like a new world order, which will not only punish but also disarm aggressors as long as the international community keeps its will and America and her allies stand ready to act with force and dispatch. Most would-be Saddams seem to have got the point" (OA/ID CF01473, 3).

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