

## CHAPTER 7

### **Deterrence and Saddam Hussein: Lessons from the 1990-1991 Gulf War**

Barry R. Schneider

War and deterrence both begin in the minds of men. Deterrence is a psychological phenomenon and begins between the ears of the adversary you try to influence. When you seek to deter a rival from doing something you do not wish him to do, you must find a way to influence his perceptions of situations, for people act not necessarily on reality but on their perception of it. As Henry Kissinger once said, “A bluff taken seriously is more useful than a serious threat interpreted as a bluff.”<sup>1</sup>

To deter, you need to influence the rival’s cost/gain evaluations. He needs to understand he has far more to lose by initiating conflict, or by escalating it to unacceptable levels, than by not doing so.

In this study, we look at President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and President George H.W. Bush of the United States and their respective governments’ attempts to deter one another in the period just before Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and through the subsequent Gulf conflict that ended in February 1991. On the United States side of this deterrence effort, one must also include the deterrent effect of U.S. coalition partners in the crisis and war.

In this analysis we look at a series of deterrence questions:

1. What are the limits of deterrence theory? Are the clearly stronger military powers able to deter significantly weaker powers all or most of the time?
2. What are the elements of deterrence strategy Western strategists developed during the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union?
3. Why was Saddam Hussein not deterred from ordering the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990?

4. Why was Saddam Hussein not deterred from facing vastly superior and coalition forces assembled to force him out of Kuwait between August 1990 and January 1991?
5. Why were the United States and the coalition forces not deterred by Iraq from initiating combat in January 1991?
6. Why did Saddam Hussein not resort to use of chemical and biological weapons in the war as an equalizer against more powerful coalition forces?
7. Why during this conflict was Saddam Hussein not deterred from attacking Israel, a state with a nuclear arsenal?
8. Why did the United States and the coalition not pursue Iraqi forces into their country and end the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad? Was the United States deterred from pursuing the war all the way to Baghdad by the residual Iraqi military capability?
9. Was the United States deterred from the use of nuclear weapons in the war by the threat of Iraqi retaliation with chemical and/or biological weapons?
10. What conclusions and lessons can be extracted from this conflict regarding deterrence as a strategy for future crises?

### **The Limits of Deterrence**

Deterrence is based on deductive reasoning, not evidence from history. It is a rational deduction that a weaker power should not be willing to risk almost certain defeat if it starts a war with a much more powerful rival. Also, it is a logical assumption that leaders of countries should not enter into conflicts where it appears to them they would be incurring catastrophic losses or would likely lose things the leadership values most.

On the face of it, this seems very rational and almost indisputable. The problem is deterrence does not work so often and so clearly in the real world. An inductive approach that looks at the empirical evidence from past international conflicts shows a very mixed picture.

Surprisingly, reviews of case studies show history is full of occasions when demonstrably weaker opponents have initiated what appear to be absolutely irrational attacks on much stronger opponents.<sup>2</sup>

According to one RAND study, in 22 percent (17 of 76) of conflicts that occurred from 1816 to 1974, weaker military powers initiated wars with stronger states. This obviously can have disastrous results in some cases. For example, in the 1864-1870 War of the Triple Alliance, Paraguay's dictator, Francisco Solano Lopez, invaded Brazil. He also attacked Argentina when that state did not allow his forces free passage through the territory. Uruguay then joined these two giants in the conflict against Paraguay. By the end of this ill-advised aggression by Paraguay, that small country had 85 percent of its population killed, reduced from 1.4 million in 1864 to just 0.22 million by 1870. By the war's end, Paraguay had just 29,000 adult males left alive.<sup>3</sup> Such wars can be caused by crazy rulers.

They can also be initiated by those simply unwilling to live under the heel of the enemy, thereby putting honor and their cause above survival. Think, for example, of Patrick Henry's famous words in the American Revolution, "Give me liberty or give me death." The signers of the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 all were willing to risk their lives in their cause. Indeed,

[F]ive signers were captured by the British and brutally tortured as traitors. Nine fought in the War for Independence and died from wounds or from hardships they suffered. Two lost their sons in the Continental Army. Another two had sons captured. At least a dozen of the fifty-six had their homes pillaged and burned... Seventeen of them lost everything that they owned.<sup>4</sup>

Weaker states also start ill-advised wars due to wishful thinking, misperception, groupthink, illogic born of stress or a stubborn refusal to confront the facts.<sup>5</sup> In some historical cases, decision-makers have chosen to focus primarily on their aims and own resources and have discounted those of the adversary despite clear evidence they will lose if they push further into the crisis.

Another situation that pushes weaker powers to attack much stronger states is when time is considered not to be on their side. Saddam Hussein in 1980 is thought to have attacked Iran, a larger country with

more resources and three times the population of Iraq, because he feared Iran would attack in a year or so when better organized. Leaders sometimes feel forced to start a war immediately when their chances of success, while slim, would be even poorer at a later time.

Weaker indigenous groups also often launch wars against stronger opponents out of nationalist sentiment and a desire to remove foreign or rival group influences. This is an old story repeated many times as revolutions opposed colonial regimes or the domination of other ethnic groups. In many cases these revolutionaries pit their superior zeal and a greater stake in the outcome against superior rival military forces that often do not have the same commitment to victory over time. Many times these revolutions and insurgencies fail. Sometimes, however, the fortunes of the sides reverse over time such as happened in China when communist guerrilla forces challenged initially superior nationalist Chinese forces and eventually became the stronger side in winning a protracted civil war.

Others may decide to fight an enemy with superior potential rather than give up long-standing goals or a way of life. They may be willing to bet their willingness to absorb casualties is greater than the rival's, and he will tire of the war and be willing to sue for peace short of total victory, leaving the smaller state that initiated the war in possession of their goals. This appears to be the line of thought of the Japanese leadership before Pearl Harbor and of Saddam Hussein after the coalition buildup in Saudi Arabia had put a powerful army in Saudi Arabia in the fall and winter of 1990 after his invasion of Kuwait. It also appears to have been the mindset of the Confederate leaders when they challenged the much more populous and industrialized North in the American Civil War.

Moreover, deterrence assumes state leaders can control their subordinates. Leaders of weaker states might not authorize an attack on a stronger power, but it may take place anyway because some subordinates do not follow orders.

Others might decide to strike out and start a war if they believed their regime was about to fall. Some might initiate a conflict or escalate one against a hated enemy for highly emotional reasons or if they calculated it might marshal more domestic support for their leadership at home. This is the inside-outside theory of war causation, a conflict started for internal domestic reasons. This appears to have been a partial cause of the 1982

Argentine-United Kingdom war in the Falklands, where for largely domestic political reasons the ruling junta challenged British control of the islands.

Still other leaders might be religious, cultural or ideological zealots who will stop at nothing to destroy some hated adversary, leaving the consequences to chance. For example, at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis the Castro brothers, in a fit of revolutionary zeal, urged the Soviet leadership to fire at the United States their nuclear-tipped missiles stationed in Cuba, even though it meant their own likely deaths and the wholesale destruction of their country. Some initiators of combat may care more about their place in history rather than about the immediate consequences for themselves and their people.

However, this is not to say deterrence cannot or should not work in the majority of cases. Rather, it is wise to remember deterrence of war or escalation still can fail, even when a much stronger power confronts a weaker one, or even where both sides would suffer catastrophic warfare losses if they entered into a conflict.

### **Cold War Deterrence Theory**

Luckily this did not happen during the Cold War when a central nuclear war could have caused hundreds of millions of deaths. By 1949, both the United States and Soviet Union had nuclear weapons, and both sides held the life or death of the rival society in their hands. The peace was secured by the dual hostage situation described as mutual assured destruction.<sup>6</sup> If the system failed, it would have failed deadly.

Deterrence theory developed as U.S. and allied policy-makers and strategists worked to understand the implications of nuclear weapons and how they might be used to keep the peace and advance U.S. and allied security. Several elements were eventually recognized as fundamentally important to strategic deterrence.

First, it was deemed crucial that the U.S. and its allies maintain a nuclear retaliatory force that could inflict what an aggressor leadership would consider unacceptable damage to themselves and their vital interests.<sup>7</sup> Aggressors must be made to believe the risks of attacking the United States and its allies were clearly and significantly greater than any conceivable rewards they might gain from such action.

Second, a potential aggressor must be made to realize the U.S. and allied leaders not only must have such lethal capabilities, but also must be willing to use such retaliatory power if challenged. Adversary risk-taking leaders must be convinced, by word and deed, that our leaders are willing, not simply to threaten to use force in response to aggression, but also to act should the line be crossed. Without both the physical capability to inflict unacceptable levels of damage on an aggressor party and the evident will to use such force, the U.S. and allied deterrent would lack credibility and might risk war where an adversary adventurer misperceived the situation. For example, this might have been the cause of the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the origin of the attack must be known if the real aggressor is to be deterred. If an adversary leader thought he could disguise the origin of his attack, perhaps making it seem as if it came from another state, he might feel he could strike and escape the consequences. This is the problem discussed by the late Herman Kahn when he talked about the possibility of what he termed catalytic war.<sup>9</sup> Party A might strike Party B, making it look like it came from Party C, causing B and C to fight. Thus, a vigilant early warning and tracking system and an effective forensics capability should be a fundamental part of any successful deterrent posture. Deterrence requires a return address.

Fourth, the U.S. and allied retaliatory forces must be able to ride out an adversary surprise attack and still retaliate with overwhelming and accurate force, holding hostage what rival leaders value most. This has led the United States to rely on a mix of forces in a strategic triad of nuclear-armed ICBMs deployed on U.S. soil, strategic bombers, deployed worldwide, carrying both nuclear standoff missiles and nuclear gravity bombs, as well as nuclear-tipped SLBMs carried on ballistic missile submarines that roam the world's oceans.

Even the former Soviet Union, with its very extensive nuclear forces, could not have hoped to preemptively destroy so much of the U.S. and allied nuclear forces as to escape nuclear annihilation in return. It was seen as impossible for anyone to destroy all retaliatory elements of the U.S. alliances and strategic triad to the degree necessary to escape assured destruction in return. Maintaining this "second strike" capability was deemed an essential component of a classical deterrence posture.

Finally, deterrence is based on assuming an opponent has complete knowledge of the situation and will act rationally. This sounds plausible but how do you define rationality? Are suicide bombers rational? Further, if adversary leaders are willing to die, or see most of their followers die, in order to inflict terrible wounds on the United States and/or its allies, then deterrence may fail even if you can “take them with you.”

In an era where multiple personalities guide rogue states, some of them high-risk takers, deterrence could fail. If it fails, the United States and its coalition partners will need capable counterforce units and excellent missile and air defenses all the more to limit casualties and preserve the chance for a military victory. In a crisis that has not yet escalated to war, the presence of such capable offensive strike forces and effective defenses may help to deter war.

If an adversary knows there is a good chance his deployment of chemical, biological, radiological and/or nuclear (CBRN) weapons may attract U.S. counterforce strikes that could destroy his weapons before they can be employed, he might be deterred from acquisition or attempted use of them. The same logic pertains to a situation where his use of WMD in wartime would be nullified by effective active and passive defenses. Either way, through offense or defense, if U.S. and allied forces were to rob him of a potent threat, he may be more reluctant to incur the costs of building and deploying such weapons. Thus, a rogue state regime may be deterred by the threat of retaliation or by the threat of having his attack neutralized by effective defenses. He might be deterred either by the sword or the shield, or by a combination of both. Deterrence produced by possessing effective military countermeasures (i.e., deterrence by denial) and deterrence produced by the threat of an overwhelming retaliation should be mutually reinforcing.

On the other hand, we can never be absolutely sure when deterrence has worked, but it is obvious when it has failed to work. When it fails, a war begins or a conflict escalates. When a deterrence policy and posture is successful, this is a non-event since no war starts or no escalation takes place. However, correlation is not necessarily causation. Just because A precedes B, it does not prove A caused B. Indeed, B might have another cause altogether.<sup>10</sup>

How do you prove that without a certain deterrence policy something, otherwise, might have happened? Unless you were able to step out of the present and rerun history to see what would have happened differently without a given deterrence policy or posture, you cannot prove the deterrence stance caused the outcome. So deterrence is far from an exact science. Deterrence is an art and we can only infer when it is successful since we have not yet found a way to read an adversary's mind or re-run historical events with one or more of the variables changed.

### **The Faceoff: George H.W. Bush versus Saddam Hussein**

The 1990-1991 Gulf War involved 34 coalition governments and leaderships all pitted against Iraq. It was not simply crisis bargaining and warfare directed by two men. Thirty-four coalition leaderships had to be coordinated and military personnel from 34 militaries had to be made into one effective fighting force with unity of command.

Things were simpler on the other side. In Iraq, all important military and diplomatic decisions were those of Saddam Hussein acting essentially alone. This was far less true of President George H.W. Bush, but in the end it was he who mobilized and led the coalition to war, and it was he who made the final decision about when to attack the Iraqi Army in Kuwait, and, after 40 days of air bombardment and 100 hours of a ground war later, it was his decision to declare and negotiate a ceasefire with Iraq that stopped short of going on to Baghdad.

It would be difficult to find two more different men facing each other in a crisis or a war. They were separated widely in their educations, exposures to the wider world, family upbringings, values, cultures, languages, regional problems and political systems. Moreover, the leader of each country inherited a different set of world, regional and domestic problems and pressures. Both inherited a different set of previous commitments and policies from their predecessors and had a different public to deal with. Saddam Hussein and George Bush, therefore, came to this 1990-1991 conflict with very different backgrounds and perspectives.

Simply put, George Herbert Walker Bush was born to privilege and power. His father was a U.S. Senator. Saddam Hussein was born in a poor Iraqi village and his father died before he was born. Bush attended

Andover Preparatory School and Yale University. Hussein dropped out of school in his teenage years and did not finish high school until he was 24. At the time, he was sought in Iraq for an attempted killing of the Iraqi President, and was a fugitive living in Cairo, Egypt. Saddam never completed a college degree, although he attended several law classes while in Egypt.

The two also differed in other ways. Bush served as a pilot in the U.S. Navy in World War II, engaged in 58 air combat missions and won the Navy Cross for bravery. Saddam Hussein never served in the Iraqi military, and, when he applied as a young man, was denied entry into the Iraq Military Academy, one of the few paths available for poor Iraqis attempting upward mobility in their society.

Bush was widely traveled and had served overseas as U.S. Ambassador to China and later as Chief U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Hussein never has traveled outside the Middle East. Bush was very knowledgeable about the international system and worldwide threats. He served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Saddam worked exclusively within the Ba'ath Party where he first served as an organizer, then as a hit man, and later as the feared head of party security responsible for thousands of executions.

Bush served in elective politics in the United States, first as a Congressman from Texas, later as Chairman of the Republican Party National Committee, and finally as Vice President and President of the United States. By 1990, Bush already had won five elections on his way to the top of the U.S. political system. On the other hand, Saddam Hussein murdered and terrorized his way to the top of the Iraqi political system. He had never won an election until after he seized the Presidency in 1978. All political contests thereafter probably were rigged as he built a terroristic police state.

His was a fearful and feared regime, and Saddam Hussein essentially was the sole foreign policy and defense policy decision-maker in Iraq. It could be said "Saddam was Iraq and Iraq was Saddam" from the standpoint of policy decisions. As Charles Duelfer later concluded in a 2004 report to the Director of Central Intelligence, "Saddam Hussein so dominated the Iraqi regime that its strategic intent was his alone."<sup>11</sup>

It is instructive to realize how little knowledge Saddam Hussein had of the United States or its leaders. While President Bush was no Middle East expert, he was far better informed than Saddam about the other side's capabilities. However, both leaders lacked a clear knowledge of the other. FBI interrogator George Piro, assigned the task of interrogating Saddam after his capture in 2003, concluded from months of interviews, "One striking theme that emerged was just how little we knew about Saddam and how little he knew about us."<sup>12</sup>

These two leaders came from opposite ends of the earth. One is reminded of the Kipling verse when considering these two: "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain should meet." Their cultures were very different as were their life experiences. Saddam was a thug and mafia-like Iraqi leader, originally born in poverty, who maneuvered and eventually killed his way into power in Iraq. In 1991, two of his biographers concluded, "In the permanently beleaguered mind of Saddam Hussein, politics is a ceaseless struggle for survival. The ultimate goal of staying alive and in power justifies all means. Plots lurk around every corner. Nobody is trustworthy. Everyone is an actual or potential enemy."<sup>13</sup>

Bush was an American blue blood who started from a favored position and then achieved his way to the top of the U.S. political system. When they confronted each other over Kuwait, President Bush was leader of the richest country in the world at the head of the most powerful military force ever deployed. Confronting him was President Saddam Hussein, with his million-man army, the fourth largest in the world, now sitting astride 19 percent of the world's oil supplies after his occupation of Kuwait.

### **The Invasion of Kuwait**

After the Iran-Iraq war, very badly needing funds to rebuild and protect his regime, Saddam Hussein ordered his forces to seize oil-rich Kuwait in order to repay his creditors, recoup his wealth, and re-equip his security and armed forces.<sup>14</sup> At that time "Iraq had approximately \$80B in debts stemming from the war with Iran, compared with a GNP of about \$35B, with a hard-currency income of about \$14B."<sup>15</sup>

If his biographers are to be believed, Saddam Hussein probably invaded Kuwait only after long and careful thought. In previous critical

decisions he was a careful planner. For example, when deciding whether to nationalize the nation's oil wells in 1972, Saddam exhibited a blend of caution and boldness. His chief biographers say,

[T]he nationalization affords yet another vivid example of Saddam's calculated risk-taking style of operation. He proved himself a cautious, yet daring decision-maker who did not flinch before a challenge. Weighing his options carefully and taking the necessary precautions, he did not rush into a hasty decision. But, once he made up his mind, he moved swiftly and resolutely toward his target.<sup>16</sup>

Later, after the invasion when his aggression against Kuwait was challenged by the United States and most of the rest of the world, Saddam refused to back down as the U.S.-led coalition poured military personnel, equipment and supplies into nearby Saudi Arabia starting in August 1990 until continuing until the end of hostilities in February 1991. Early in this military buildup tensions were high at the White House because it took months to get enough firepower transferred to the theater to offset an initial Iraqi Army advantage in the theater. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and its oil reserves seemed at the mercy of Iraq's Army if Saddam chose to continue its operations and invade the Saudi kingdom.

Clearly, at this point the United States leadership had spelled out its determination to defend Saudi Arabia and its desire to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. To bolster this deterrence posture, the U.S. had the clear potential military might to defeat Iraq, and this was augmented by clear verbal and non-verbal signaling of U.S. and allied intentions. The U.S. began a continuing military mobilization in the Gulf, and engaged in a worldwide diplomatic campaign to enlist allies into a coalition and to condemn Iraq's invasion at the United Nations.

Why didn't Saddam Hussein realize the catastrophe he was about to suffer and withdraw his forces back to Iraq before the coalition juggernaut destroyed his armed forces in the field? There are several hypotheses. First, he might not have had situational awareness and may have believed the U.S. President and coalition leaders simply bluffed. Second, Saddam might have engaged in wishful thinking and not faced the

unpleasant possibilities he had not foreseen. Third, he might not have understood the total mismatch his forces faced and how few casualties they could inflict on a technologically superior force. Fourth, Saddam might have feared a military withdrawal would undermine his leadership and status in Iraq and lead to his replacement. Fifth, Saddam may have calculated he simply could not do without Kuwait's oil revenue to finance his own depleted treasury and to rebuild his security forces and army, and, thus, perhaps he gambled on being able somehow to keep his Kuwaiti prize.<sup>17</sup>

As the crisis deepened and war was about to begin again, the United States sought to persuade Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait without a fight, or, if a war was inevitable, at least tried to persuade the Iraqi leader not to order the use of chemical or biological weapons by warning he would face dire consequences.

Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, may have sought to deter a coalition attack or a U.S.-U.K.-French use of nuclear weapons by threatening retaliation with his chemical and/or biological weapons. Once the war began, the U.S. hoped in vain to deter Saddam from attacking Israel, and, once that failed, acted to influence the Israelis to let the U.S. and coalition troops do the retaliating for them, rather than have Israel enter the war and split the coalition.

Saddam, facing a superior foe, misunderstood what a mismatch it was for his army and air forces to try to compete with the coalition forces and felt high U.S. casualty rates would buy him a compromise peace that would have left his regime intact. He badly miscalculated on how many casualties his forces could inflict, but his residual chemical and biological weapons, unused in the conflict, might have helped deter a U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq after Saddam's forces had been driven from Kuwait.

Sometimes an adversary leader may operate in a world of his own, surrounded by "yes-men," and cut off from realistic intelligence about the United States, its allies, and their intentions. This appears to be the case with Saddam Hussein at the time of Desert Storm. Such an enemy leader may disregard the messages and intelligence reports he receives, preferring instead to follow his own thinking and adhere to previous stereotypes or misinformation.

## **U.S. Attempts to Deter Iraq from invading Kuwait (July-August 1990)**

When trouble brewed over rights in the Rumaila oil fields, a disputed area along the Iraq-Kuwait border, President Bush sent his ambassador, April Glaspie, to see if the dispute could be settled peacefully. Her meeting with Saddam Hussein appeared to be cordial and gave no hint of his inclination to take military action against Kuwait. Nor did it say much about the United States interest in backing Kuwait in the dispute. Indeed, according to reports, "U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie told Saddam that 'We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.'"<sup>18</sup> Later, the U.S. State Department followed with another message that Washington had "no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait." Saddam must have seen this as an indication he would have little to fear from the United States if he intervened in Kuwait.

Although it is likely Saddam Hussein had already decided on the invasion of Kuwait at that time, Ambassador Glaspie reported he seemed inclined to negotiate. This was communicated to President Bush who then had the U.S. State Department transmit the following message back to the Iraqi leader stating that:

I am pleased to learn of the agreement between Iraq and Kuwait to begin negotiations in Jeddah to find a peaceful solution to the current tensions between you. The United States and Iraq both have a strong interest in preserving the peace and stability of the Middle East. For this reason we believe these responsibilities are best resolved by peaceful means and not by threats involving military force or conflict.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps if this letter had included a stronger tone, one that emphasized a threat to use military power to block any move by Iraq to settle the dispute by means of the Iraqi Army taking over Kuwait, Saddam might have put the invasion plan on hold. Using 20-20 hindsight, it is easy now to conclude that President Bush's letter, though very reasonable

on its face, was evidently not the warning shot across the bow the situation required. The U.S. response was too mild to influence a dictator who did not play by any agreed upon international rules and who was bent on seizing a rich prize that could solve most of his financial and security problems if his aggression went unopposed.

Saddam Hussein might have interpreted the mild U.S. response as a green light to do what he wanted to do. Certainly it was not a stern warning to cease and desist. He might well have calculated the United States was distracted elsewhere and it would not respond forcefully to a fait accompli. Kuwait might have looked like a lucrative prize that could easily be taken, an immediate benefit realized with only a distant, intangible and uncertain risk being run in undertaking to occupy it.

This would fit with the pattern of Saddam Hussein's operational code at home and abroad. Plan carefully, conceal your moves, and then strike decisively and violently to achieve your ends. Preemptively attack against your unprepared, unsuspecting, misled opponent. Moreover, Saddam did not think the United States leadership had much of an appetite for combat or battle casualties, as they had withdrawn when they had had their fill of casualties in previous conflicts in Vietnam and Lebanon.

As James Baker notes in his memoir, "With his flagrant move into Kuwait, Saddam Hussein's ambitions revealed themselves in all their grandiosity."<sup>20</sup> The question that comes to mind regarding this scenario is why the United States did not do more to deter this attack on Kuwait. The answer was the Bush administration leadership was distracted and simply did not anticipate such a violent move from Saddam Hussein.

Writing eight years later in his memoir, former Secretary of State James Baker explained:

With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy to argue that we should have recognized earlier that we weren't going to moderate Saddam's behavior, and shifted our policy approach sooner to a greater degree than we did. At the least, we should have given Iraqi policy a more prominent place on our radar screen at an earlier date. I believe the reasons we didn't change our policy approach earlier and to a greater extent are myriad and complex. And while I wish

we'd focused more attention on Iraq earlier, given what happened, I remain unpersuaded that anything we might have done, short of actually moving armed forces to the region, would have deterred Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, Baker believes there was little support at first for blocking Saddam's ambitions in Kuwait. In his "view the only realistic chance to deter Saddam would have been to introduce U.S. forces into the region – and neither the Kuwaitis, the Saudis, the Soviets, nor the Congress would have supported that course before August 2. Indeed, it was only the shock of the invasion that allowed us to intervene militarily at all."<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the United States was fully occupied with events happening inside the Soviet Bloc as the Berlin Wall came down and Eastern Europe began to revolt against communist party control in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was unwilling to implement the "Breshnev Doctrine," and use the Red Army to terrorize the Eastern Europeans back into submission. The United States foreign policy leadership was primarily focused on these events and paid too little attention to the local squabble between Iraq and Kuwait over oil rights along their border.

Saddam acted when the U.S. focus was directed elsewhere. His invasion caught everyone unprepared. As James Baker recalls,

Without exception, our friends in the region consistently argued that Saddam was only posturing and that confrontation would simply make matters worse. Simply put, the reason why nobody believed Saddam would attack is because no realistic calculation of his interests could have foreseen a full-scale invasion of Kuwait. Shevardnadze had put it correctly in Moscow on the third day following the invasion: "this was an irrational act that made no sense."<sup>23</sup>

Baker also recalls,

[E]ven the Israelis believed that Saddam was bluffing to bully the Kuwaitis into economic concessions. Israel's intelligence service, the Mossad, told U.S. intelligence counterparts that Saddam's rhetoric was designed to deter an Israeli attack, not threaten one of his own. As late as July 31, King Hussein and President Mubarak reassured us that Saddam was engaged in verbal bluster, not literal threats. Ironically, most of our allies privately worried throughout the spring and summer of 1990 that the United States might overreact to Saddam's new aggressiveness!<sup>24</sup>

However, no one who understood Saddam Hussein's volatile nature, his extreme ambition and his lifelong tendency toward violence should have been surprised. Just the fact that a strong military under his command resided next door to a poorly defended neighbor in Kuwait that was oil rich should have suggested vigilance in any crisis brewing between the two. One has the image of a Lion contemplating a Lamb with the latter about to become dinner, or in Kuwait's case, an oil prize that represented 8 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, sitting next to Saudi Arabia, another relatively defenseless state that owned another 25 percent of the world oil reserves. Coupled with Iraq's estimated 11 percent, Saddam Hussein would control much of the Middle East oil supply. However, the United States and the rest of the world were caught by surprise and were unprepared to take the deterrence steps that might have persuaded Saddam to stop short of an invasion of Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein's first name translated into Arabic means "one who confronts." He had lived up to that throughout his entire violent lifetime. The "Butcher of Baghdad" had a career filled with blood and violence. He was thought to have killed his first victim when only a young teenage boy. He was a hit man for the Ba'athist Party and tried to assassinate the leader of Iraq. Later, when his cousin ruled Iraq, he served as the head of a lethal and brutal security service that killed opponents without remorse.

He ruled with fear, and his models were Stalin and Hitler whose biographies he had read with admiration. In 1978 he forced his cousin from power and took over as leader of Iraq. The bloodbath in Iraq

escalated as he exterminated tens of thousands of domestic adversaries. In one of his first acts as Iraq's supreme leader, he called a meeting of hundreds of top Ba'ath Party leaders, singled out many of them for so-called acts of disloyalty, arrested and read them their death sentences on the spot, and forced the remainder of his party leaders to serve in firing squads that shot their doomed colleagues the next day.

Not satisfied with violence against possible domestic opponents, Saddam Hussein almost immediately went to war with his neighbors. In 1980, less than two years after the coup that brought him to power, he ordered his army to attack Iran. The result was an eight-year war that bled both states and featured the extensive use of chemical weapons and ballistic missile attacks, both initiated by Saddam's commands. In retrospect, the United States and other states concerned with the security of the region and its important oil reserves should have anticipated possible violence from a dictator whose entire career was marked with a resort to violence in solving his problems or acquiring his goals.

### **Coalition Deterrence of Iraq from invading Saudi Arabia, 1990-91**

During the initial phases of the 1990-1991 Gulf War, both sides attempted to deter the other from certain actions. Saddam sought to deter U.S. intervention into the conflict by the threat of heavy U.S. and coalition casualties. From August 1990 until January 1991, the United States and the other coalition partners sought to deter Saddam from ordering his forces, then in Kuwait, to invade Saudi Arabia before it could be adequately defended. Iraq already had 11 percent of the world's proven oil reserves when Saddam Hussein ordered his forces into Kuwait. Had he held on in Kuwait, he would have gained another 8 percent of the world's oil reserves, or 19 percent overall. Had he continued on and conquered Saudi Arabia, a country that owns 25 percent of the world's oil reserves, Saddam would have controlled 44 percent of the world's oil reserves. Clearly, he had to be stopped or U.S. and allied vital interests in the region would have been threatened.

However, it is not at all clear whether Saddam Hussein ever seriously considered invading Saudi Arabia after consolidating his hold on

Kuwait. Thus, we do not know if deterrence worked or was not needed in this case.

Certainly the thin Saudi and United States forces there in August and September 1990 could not have offered much resistance. However, to invade Saudi Arabia would have shed U.S. and Arab blood and perhaps the few U.S. forces sent immediately to the Saudi kingdom served as a trip wire, a down payment on further U.S. fighters to come and give battle to the Iraqi Army should they be attacked. Thus, an Iraqi attack on Saudi Arabia almost certainly would have triggered a war with the United States, something the Iraqi dictator almost certainly should have wanted to avoid if possible. Thus, the U.S. forces trip wire force quite likely served to halt the Iraqi force at the Saudi border until a military buildup there would permit coalition offensive action in January 1991.

### **Saddam's Failure to Hold the Coalition at Bay**

Once the U.S. began to move its own forces into the region after the Iraqi seizure of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein had one of two moves available.

First, he could order his forces to attack and occupy much of Saudi Arabia just as they had in Kuwait. If he was to do this, he would have had to act immediately, for time was not on his side. A seizure of the Saudi kingdom would have greatly complicated the United States task of introducing large forces into the region. Certainly, he could have inflicted far more casualties and been much harder to dislodge from Kuwait if he had continued his offensive in August or September 1990 on into Saudi Arabia. In retrospect, the best defense he could mount was a good offense early before Operation Desert Shield could establish a significant force in the region to oppose his forces.

His second option was to do nothing except build up his defenses along the Saudi-Kuwait border and watch as the coalition troops poured into the theater opposite his army in Kuwait. Saddam elected the second option and relied upon his large army in Kuwait to deter an attack by threatening large coalition casualties should they attack. This was a contest of wills with the U.S. President and his allies, and ultimately

Saddam Hussein lost. The coalition was not deterred from war and the result was a catastrophic defeat for the Iraqi military.

Why was the coalition not deterred from attacking Saddam's forces in Kuwait? First, Iraq dealt with states and forces much greater than his own. President Bush and his advisers and the other coalition leaders had a much greater appreciation of the qualitative superiority of their forces than did Saddam. Operation Desert Shield had put an impressive, well equipped army of 543,000 U.S. troops and thousands of other coalition military personnel at the disposal of General Norman Schwarzkopf Jr. and President Bush by January 1991.

It was clear to most military experts the coalition would have control of the air and sea around Kuwait. Further, coalition ground forces had superior armor, superior artillery, superior mobility, superior training, superior protective gear against chemical and biological weapons, and superior intelligence.

Further, the United States, United Kingdom and France were states with nuclear weapons and Iraq had been warned that any use of CB weapons would possibly be met with overwhelming responses. The bottom line was it was not likely Iraq could win a war with the coalition.

Beyond this, most of the states in the region and the West would not allow Iraq to pose such a threat to their oil supplies and economies. As previously noted, Kuwait controlled 8 percent of the known world oil reserves and its neighbor, Saudi Arabia, 25 percent. Add to this Iraq's control of 11 percent, and Saddam Hussein would either have or directly threaten up to 44 percent of world oil supplies. It was deemed in no one best interest to allow this to happen. Therefore, if Iraq did not willingly quit Kuwait, it must be expelled, and the coalition had the military means to make this happen. Saddam had very weak deterrent cards to play in this scenario and he was unable to deter the coalition attack that began on Jan. 17, 1991.

### **Saddam's Fallback Position: Deterring a Coalition March to Baghdad**

Why did Saddam Hussein refuse to withdraw from Kuwait as the coalition military buildup continued opposite his forces in Kuwait from

August 1990 until January 1991? At some point, one would have thought he would have realized a military superpower and its allies would easily defeat his forces and bring catastrophic consequences to his armed forces and regime. What kept him from retreating in the face of overwhelming force before the coalition military hammer struck?

It is possible that Saddam Hussein believed his own rhetoric and believed either the coalition, despite the buildup of forces in Saudi Arabia, was bluffing or that his army could hold its own in combat with the United States.

It is likely Saddam felt he needed the resources from Kuwait to rebuild his regime and its security forces to remain in power. He might also have reasoned a forced retreat from Kuwait, coupled with the disastrous war he had just concluded with Iran, would so weaken him at home that rivals might take encouragement from his weakened position and reputation to overthrow his regime and execute him. He might have calculated it was better to fight and rally the Iraqi people against a foreign foe than to capitulate and face their censure.

Saddam Hussein appeared to believe even if Iraq failed to deter a coalition attack on his forces and country, he nevertheless calculated he could deter the U.S.-led coalition from horizontal escalation<sup>25</sup> of the conflict into Iraq. He believed he could mount a stout enough defense so the coalition could not overrun his forces and occupy Iraq. He felt the U.S. leadership would stop short of attempting a total victory once U.S. forces absorbed very high casualty rates. He might also have retained hopes he could hang on to some of the Kuwait oil fields if the fighting led to a stalemate.

Saddam Hussein also thought the United States was less formidable than many others believed. Six months before his invasion of Kuwait, Saddam addressed the fourth summit of the Arab Cooperation Council in Jordan and stated:

Brothers, the weakness of a big body lies in its bulkiness. All strong men have their Achilles heel. Therefore...we saw that the United States departed Lebanon immediately when some Marines were killed... The whole U.S. administration would have been called into question had

the forces that conquered Panama continued to be engaged by the Panamanian Armed Forces. The United States has been defeated in some combat arenas for all the forces it possesses, and it has displayed signs of fatigue, frustration, and hesitation when committing aggression on other people's rights and acting from motives of arrogance and hegemony...<sup>26</sup>

As one analyst wrote:

Saddam was hoping for a political not military victory in the Gulf War. He believed that he would triumph if, in the course of the ground war, Iraq inflicted substantial casualties on the Americans. On one occasion he even mentioned a casualty figure that believed would break America's will to fight; "We are sure that if President Bush pushes things toward war and wages war against us – his war of aggression which he is planning – once five thousand of his troops die, he will not be able to continue this war."<sup>27</sup>

As a result of this conclusion, Saddam Hussein ordered his generals to direct their forces to "inflict 'maximum casualties' on U.S. soldiers when the fighting started."<sup>28</sup> He believed U.S. leaders would face mounting domestic pressure to halt their war efforts as the killing continued and the numbers of U.S. dead increased.

Former Secretary of State Baker recalls, "In retrospect, the war may seem to have been a clinical and relatively straightforward affair. At the time, however, we were confronted with very sobering casualty figures, estimated by the Pentagon to be in the thousands; the specter of possible chemical and biological attacks; and a war expected to last for months not days."<sup>29</sup>

Baker summarized, "Moreover, Saddam may have misread history. He apparently was fixated by our experience in Vietnam and, like Hafez al-Assad, thought our pullout from Lebanon after the Beirut barracks bombing in October 1983 showed Americans were 'short of breath.'

Unlike Assad, however, Saddam was willing to test that proposition in a high profile, high-risk way.”<sup>30</sup>

As one analyst put it, Saddam Hussein was “a great believer in the eventual victory of the side willing to suffer the most.”<sup>31</sup> To win the war politically, if not militarily, Saddam was willing to lose thousands more of Iraqi dead to inflict the requisite number of American dead to achieve his ends.

General Norman Schwarzkopf clearly was worried Iraqi chemical weapons might cause major coalition casualties. In his memoir he wrote,

You can take the most beat-up army in the world, and if they choose to stand and fight, we are going to take casualties: if they choose to dump chemicals on you, they might even win....My nightmare was that our units would reach the barriers in the first hours of the attack, be unable to get through, and then be hit with a chemical barrage. The possibilities of mass casualties from chemical weapons was the main reason we had sixty-three hospitals, two hospital ships, and eighteen thousand beds in the war zone.<sup>32</sup>

Schwarzkopf was also worried Saddam Hussein prepared to use chemical weapons on the coalition army if it tried to go around the Iraqi flanks.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, Saddam Hussein was perhaps both right and wrong in his deterrence estimates in late 1990. He was clearly mistaken about his Army’s ability to inflict five thousand or more coalition casualties in that war. The U.S. personnel killed in action were 148 battle-related deaths and 145 out-of-combat deaths.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the U.K. suffered 47 deaths, 38 from Iraqi fire. France suffered two deaths, and the Arab countries, not including Kuwait, suffered 37 deaths.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand it is clear President George H.W. Bush sought to minimize both coalition and Iraqi casualties and one reason he halted the war after only 100 hours of fighting was to stop the slaughter, on both sides, even at the price of not directly toppling Saddam’s regime in Baghdad, despite having that possibility well within his grasp when he ordered the ceasefire.<sup>36</sup>

Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, worried also about the downwind effects of targeting Iraqi biological warfare laboratories and facilities. He feared for civilians and coalition military personnel operating downwind, yet felt these sites still needed to be neutralized in the air campaign if possible. Powell was even more concerned about the effects of possible biological weapons attacks on allied troops than those of chemical attacks.<sup>37</sup>

And who can say if the Iraqi military had been able to fight a much more protracted war, that the Bush administration might not have called a ceasefire and settled on a compromise peace as the U.S. casualty toll reached Saddam's estimate of 5,000 dead Americans? Note in the present war in Iraq, in mid-2009, U.S. casualties have yet to reach 5,000 killed, but the United States is withdrawing without having completely defeated the Iraqi insurgency, as the cost of continuing indefinitely is perceived as unacceptable.<sup>38</sup>

Once the shock and awe of the coalition combined arms attack sent the Iraqi forces into precipitate retreat, there was little to stand between the U.S.-led forces and Baghdad. However, eight reasons deterred President Bush from going beyond the Kuwait borders with Iraq.

First, the United States did not want Iraq to dissolve, but rather wanted it to serve as a balancer to Iranian power in the region.

Second, President Bush wished to stay within the limits of the United Nations mandate given him and feared he would lose the unity of the coalition if he widened the war beyond such legal limits. UN resolutions limited coalition actions to expelling Iraq from Kuwait.

Third, the United States did not want the war to be perceived as a war of conquest for oil. President Bush felt the continuation of the war into Iraq would cause the U.S. to be portrayed as the aggressor rather than Iraq.

Fourth, President George H.W. Bush did not want the costs of occupying, pacifying and rebuilding Iraq if the U.S.-led coalition took it over. Moreover, there was no organized Iraqi opposition to turn power over to, so the occupation would be lengthy and painful.

Fifth, President Bush wished to limit the economic and human costs of the war, not only to the coalition but to Iraq as well. He believed entering Iraq would increase the will of the Iraqi army to fight since they

would be defending the homeland rather than Kuwait. President Bush and his advisers also felt they did not want to get into an urban house-to-house war, or a chemical or biological weapons war, with increased U.S. and coalition casualties.

Sixth, the U.S. leaders did not expect Saddam Hussein to be able to stay in power once the dimensions of his defeat were felt in his country. Carrying the war into Iraq might have made him a national hero in Iraq, rather than a defeated adventurer. As James Baker wrote in his memoirs, “Strategically, the real objective was to eject Iraq from Kuwait in a manner that would destroy Saddam’s offensive military capabilities and make his fall from power likely.”<sup>39</sup> President Bush and his advisers felt the U.S. political and military war aims had been obtained.

Seventh, U.S. leaders wanted to prevent Israel from intervening in the conflict and thereby undermining the Arab ally participation in the war. Also, had Saddam ordered chemical and/or biological attacks on Israel as the war continued, the Israeli leadership might have responded with a nuclear attack on Baghdad. What might have occurred after such an exchange would have been very uncertain, but it was not a problem the Bush administration wished to risk.

Finally, an invasion of Iraq might have backfired politically in the United States and triggered major political opposition to the President. Halting at the border left the United States and the Bush Administration with ultra-high approval ratings. Keeping the U.S. military in the theater would have been unpopular with the troops and at home.

### **U.S. Deterrence of Iraqi Chemical and Biological Weapons Use**

On the other hand, the United States and its coalition partners tried to compel the retreat of Iraqi forces from Kuwait short of war in the months from August 1990 until January 1991. Failing to deter war, President Bush, at least, was intent on deterring Saddam Hussein from ordering chemical and biological attacks on Coalition forces and from burning the Kuwaiti oil fields. He warned the Iraqi dictator in clear and forceful terms this would be a catastrophic step if enacted.

Note the Jan. 5, 1991, letter addressed to Saddam Hussein. President Bush wrote and had Secretary of State James Baker deliver to the Iraqi Government via the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, in mid-January, 1991:

Let me state, too that the United States will not tolerate the use of chemical or biological weapons or the destruction of Kuwait's oil fields and installations. Further, you will be held directly responsible for terrorist actions against any member of the coalition. The American people would demand the strongest possible response. You and your country will pay a terrible price if you order unconscionable acts of this sort.<sup>40</sup>

To augment Bush's warning letter, James Baker restated to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz the consequences for Iraq if they were not to leave Kuwait:

Our objective is for you to leave Kuwait. That's the only solution we will accept. And if you do not do that, then we'll find ourselves at war, and if you do go war with the coalition, you will surely lose. This will not be a war of attrition like you fought with Iran. It will be fought with the means and weapons that play to our strengths, not to yours. We have the means to define how the battle will be fought, and yours do not.

This is not to threaten but to inform. You may choose to reject it, or not to believe what we say, but we have the responsibility to tell you that we have tremendous technological advantages in forces, and our view is that if conflict comes, your forces will face devastatingly superior firepower. In our view – and you may reject this and disagree – our forces will really destroy your ability to command your own forces.

We owe it to you to tell you there will be no stalemate, no UN ceasefire or breathing space for negotiations. If

conflict begins, it will be decisive. This will not be another Vietnam. Should war begin, God forbid, it will be fought to a swift, decisive conclusion.

If the conflict involves your use of chemical or biological weapons against our forces, the American people will demand vengeance. We have the means to exact it. With regard to this part of my presentation, this is not a threat, it is a promise. If there is any use of weapons like that, an objective won't just be the liberation of Kuwait, but the liberation of the current Iraqi regime and anyone responsible for using those weapons will be held accountable.<sup>41</sup>

To reinforce the idea WMD might be met with WMD, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney also stated publicly, "Were Saddam Hussein foolish enough to use weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. response would be absolutely overwhelming and it would be devastating."<sup>42</sup>

In cases like the Gulf War, there are certain possible advantages in dealing with an enemy leader like Saddam Hussein, who has seldom hesitated to use maximum violence to achieve his aims and solve his problems. Such a leader, in his own mind, may project his own ruthlessness upon his opponent, in this case the President of the United States.

If a Saddam-type of killer would not hesitate to use all his available weapons against a previous foe, he might expect a stronger adversary to do the same against him if he escalated to WMD use against it.<sup>43</sup> In such cases the very ruthlessness of a rogue chief might become the ally of U.S. ability to deter his chemical or biological weapons employment against the United States or its allies.

Since Saddam Hussein did not use chemical or biological weapons in the subsequent fighting in Kuwait, despite the fact he had previously shown no hesitation about using them against Iran in their eight-year war, or against his own Kurdish populations when they opposed him, it might fairly be concluded U.S. threats deterred his chemical and biological use. Of course, with deterrence one can never prove 100 percent that it worked. Saddam might not have wanted to use them for other reasons.<sup>44</sup> Clearly,

the U.S. threat of retaliation did not stop him from setting fire to Kuwait's oil fields as his forces evacuated that country. That U.S. deterrent message obviously did not work.

In 1998, seven years after Operation Desert Storm, ex-President George H.W. Bush and his former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft published a memoir of their times in power titled *A World Transformed*. Although Saddam Hussein was still in power in Iraq at the time of the memoir and was still considered a threat to U.S. and regional allies, Scowcroft nevertheless wrote the Bush administration had only been bluffing about using nuclear weapons should Saddam Hussein order the Iraqi Army to use chemical or biological weapons. Indeed, Scowcroft wrote that:

No one advanced the notion of using nuclear weapons, and the President rejected it even in retaliation for chemical and biological attacks. We deliberately avoided spoken or unspoken threats to use them on the grounds that it is bad practice to threaten something you have no intention of carrying out. Publicly, we left the matter ambiguous. There was no point in undermining the deterrence it might be offering.<sup>45</sup>

James Baker's memoir tells the same story:

The President had decided, at Camp David in December that the best deterrent of the use of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq would be a threat to go after the Ba'ath regime itself. He had also decided that U.S. forces would not retaliate with chemical or nuclear weapons if the Iraqis attacked with chemical munitions, there was obviously no reason to inform the Iraqis of this. In hopes of persuading them to consider more soberly the folly of war, I purposely left the impression that the use of chemical or biological agents by Iraq could invite tactical nuclear retaliations.<sup>46</sup>

Saddam might have believed this threat simply because he was not a person given to moral limits and had previously always used all weapons at

his command, witness the merciless Iraqi chemical attacks during the Iran-Iraq War against both military and civilian personnel. He might have viewed President Bush as like himself, willing to use everything for victory.<sup>47</sup>

However, it could not have helped subsequent deterrence efforts to publicize the United States had bluffed and never seriously considered using its nuclear advantages in the 1990-1991 Gulf War. After all, when the various memoirs of Bush, Scowcroft, Baker and Powell were published, Saddam Hussein was still in power in Iraq and might have needed to be deterred from future adventures by succeeding U.S. Presidents. Also, it should be noted other adversary leaders in other states like North Korea, Syria and Iran can also read, and as a result, might conclude in future crises they too, were relatively safe from any U.S. nuclear retaliations.

In any case, it is not clear Saddam Hussein believed his biological weapons in particular would be effective, because it later became clear in the mid-1990s, that Iraq had not made great progress at the time of the 1990-91 Gulf campaign, in mating its experimental biological weapons program to an effective delivery system. However, chemical weapons were another thing entirely. His regime had manufactured tens of thousands of chemical weapons and had used them to deadly and strategic effect against Iran. As the CIA later concluded,

In Saddam's view, WMD helped save the regime multiple times, He believed that during the Iran-Iraq War chemical weapons had halted Iranian ground offensives and that ballistic missile attacks on Tehran had broken its political will. Similarly during Desert Storm, Saddam believed WMD had deterred Coalition Forces from pressing their attack beyond the goal of freeing Kuwait.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, Iraq's military had the most experience delivering chemical weapons in actual battle conditions of any military in the world at the time of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. On the other hand, it is not clear Saddam and his commanders believed his forces were superior to U.S. forces on a toxic battlefield where U.S. forces, unlike most of his Iraqi military, were well trained and relatively better equipped than the Iraqi

forces to fight in a chemical environment. U.S. and NATO preparations against the possible onslaught of the Warsaw Pact chemical threat had equipped the U.S. forces to fight better than the Iraq Army in this realm. Thus, it might have been that U.S. forces passive defenses played a major part in Iraq's decision not to use chemical arms, perhaps as great a role as President Bush's implied nuclear threat.

At any rate, it is likely the combination of the implied U.S. nuclear retaliatory threat and the superiority of U.S. training and better protective gear against chemical effects combined to keep the Iraqi chemical weapons out of play.

### **Iraqi Chemical and Biological Capability: Deterrent to U.S. Nuclear Weapons?**

What confidence did Saddam Hussein have that the United States would not use its superiority in nuclear arms to destroy his army in Kuwait?

First, the Iraqi dictator hoped to deter President Bush and other coalition leaders from attacking because he believed the Iraqi military, at the time the fourth largest in the world in terms of numbers in uniform, could inflict substantial casualties on what he perceived as a casualty-adverse opponent.

Second, even President Bush's direct warning letter communicated to Saddam Hussein via Secretary Baker in a meeting with Tariq Aziz on Jan. 5, 1991, could be read the United States would not use its nuclear superiority so long as Iraqi chemical and biological weapons were not used (see Appendix B of this paper). Thus, there is the question of "who was deterring whom?" Was George Bush deterring Saddam Hussein's use of chemical and biological weapons? Or was he also indicating Iraqi chemical and biological warfare capabilities would deter U.S. use of nuclear weapons on Iraq?<sup>49</sup>

Saddam Hussein clearly put out warnings that Iraqi chemical and biological weapons would be used in the contingency of a U.S. or U.K. use of nuclear arms. For example, in a meeting with former British Prime Minister Edward Heath in October 1990, Saddam said, "If the going gets hard then the British and Americans will use atomic weapons against me, and the chances are that Israel will as well, and the only thing I've got are

chemical and biological weapons, and I shall have to use them. I have no alternative.”<sup>50</sup> President Bush also was under no illusions on this as he had noted on more than one occasion that Saddam “has never possessed a weapon he did not use.”<sup>51</sup>

Saddam possibly felt his biological and chemical weapons were his ace in the hole. Saddam’s poison gases had played a key role in holding the stronger Iranian military at bay and had brought the Iranians to the peace table. According to one Middle East analyst, “Saddam took the experience of the war with Iran, in which gas eventually caused the Iranian military to lose its most potent weapon – its will to fight – to mean that Iraq possessed an absolute weapon capable of stopping modernized armies as well.”<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, the U.S. leadership had serious concerns about such chemical and biological weapons use or the President would not have made it such a central issue in his warning letter to Saddam Hussein. Further, the Combatant Commander, General Schwarzkopf, was especially concerned the Iraqi Army might ruin the “Left Hook” flanking movement by his ground forces with a devastating chemical barrage. General Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was particularly focused on the potential casualties that might come from an Iraqi biological warfare strike.

James Baker also admitted the casualties that might flow from urban warfare and from Iraqis’ who would fight harder to protect their homeland would cause many more American deaths. Thus, it is plausible the chemical and biological threats and anything that had the potential to greatly escalate U.S. casualties impacted U.S. thinking and helped serve as an Iraqi deterrent to an invasion of Iraq.<sup>53</sup> Thus, it is possible Saddam’s WMD threat, in the form of chemical and biological weapons, might have been responsible for saving his regime.

### **U.S. and Israeli Failure to Deter Iraq from attacking Israel**

The coalition air campaign began on Jan.17, 1991. The next day, Saddam Hussein ordered the first of 48 Scud missile attacks on Israel as well as the first of 41 such attacks against the coalition forces in Saudi Arabia. Apparently, the threat of possible Israeli nuclear retaliation did not deter such a decision. This was risky for clearly Israel had enough

nuclear firepower to utterly destroy Iraq. Saddam played a very dangerous game with them.

On the other hand, Saddam attempted to split the coalition by attacking Israel. Would the coalition Arab allies fight on the same side as Israel against another Arab state? This was considered highly unlikely in Washington, D.C.<sup>54</sup> For this reason, United States leaders were concerned an Israeli counter-attack would undermine the support of the Arab partners in the U.S. coalition against Iraq.

Thus, U.S. leaders rushed Patriot theater missile defenses to help defend Israel from Iraqi missiles, and devoted over 2,000 air sorties against the Iraqi SCUD missile launchers in an attempt to protect Israel and keep them out of the fight. Ultimately, the swift and decisive air-land-sea war unleashed by the coalition made short work of the Iraqi military forces, and the combination of theater missile defenses and U.S. diplomacy all helped dissuade Israel from participating with its armed forces.

## Conclusions and Lessons Learned

*Lesson 1: What deterred the Soviet Union in the Cold War will not apply to all cases.*

Deterrence is a rational strategy and theory of how to prevent war or escalation of a war. However, the evidence of history is deterrence often fails. Deterrence is inexact, an art not a science. What works perfectly in one case may fail wholly in another. Indeed, it is the weaker party that attacks the stronger party in about one of every five wars. So deterrence is not a given even when your government or coalition has overwhelming military superiority over an opposing state.

The Cold War strategy the West adopted to deter a Soviet nuclear or conventional attack seems to have worked, although one can never be absolutely sure what kept the peace. Was it because the West had a retaliatory capability to destroy the U.S.S.R. and Warsaw Pact? Was it because in crises, Soviet leaders believed the U.S. leaders had the will to use their nuclear weapons if necessary? Was it because the United States and its allies had a second strike force, one not vulnerable to a surprise disarming attack? Or was it because the West faced rational leaders in

Moscow who understood the logic of mutual assured destruction? Or were we simply lucky? Would war have occurred if all these factors had not been put in place? Or would both sides have maintained the peace anyway? And how much retaliatory force was enough to deter a war with the U.S.S.R.? Did we need thousands of nuclear weapons or just a few? How much was enough to deter war and the escalation of crises?<sup>55</sup> We can never know for sure. We are only certain that we did not have a central nuclear war with the Soviet Union and its Warsaw pact and other allies.

One thing clear from the Gulf War example is despite all the destructive power in the United States, U.K. and French nuclear arsenals, and for all the coalition's conventional might, they could not deter Saddam Hussein from seizing Kuwait, and they could not compel him to withdraw his forces without first resorting to war. One reason for this is the U.S. and coalition did not develop a firm response to Iraq prior to Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait. Had the United States delivered a strong warning and deployed forces to back this up prior to Saddam's final decision to invade Kuwait, he might have been deterred. The tardiness of the deterrence signals ruined the chances for their success.

This calls into question whether the Cold War calculus of what it takes to deter a conflict worked in the Gulf War. Apparently, the possession of nuclear weapons by his opponents did not deter Saddam Hussein or compel him to leave Kuwait or end the conflict until his forces were routed in Kuwait. He was willing to strike U.S., U.K., French and Israeli targets, risking possible nuclear annihilation. He was willing to fight a coalition of over 30 states in Kuwait rather than withdraw peacefully.

***Lesson 2: States that possess WMD or other extraordinary military power may feel that they can afford to start a conflict and keep it within tolerable levels of escalation where they can achieve their aims.***

Perhaps Saddam Hussein believed the threat of his chemical and biological (CB) weapons would deter any nuclear use by the coalition forces, and perhaps he even believed, under his chemical and biological deterrent umbrella, his forces in Kuwait were formidable enough to deter a coalition attack or to prevent a complete and utter defeat.

Saddam Hussein may have relied on his CB capability first to deter any coalition attack on his forces in Kuwait. This failed on Jan.17, 1991, when the coalition air attack began. Second, he may have relied on his CB threat to prevent U.S., U.K., French and Israeli nuclear attacks. There is no evidence such weapons use had ever been seriously considered by any of the four states. Indeed, memoirs of U.S. decision-makers Bush, Scowcroft, Baker and Powell, indicate this was never seriously considered, although Secretary of Defense Cheney asked the Joint Chiefs to look into the utility of nuclear strikes if the President ever changed his mind.

Finally Saddam Hussein may have assumed his CB arsenal would have made it too costly for the coalition to march to Baghdad, occupy Iraqi territory and replace his regime. Clearly, he might have been tempted to use such weapons and risk further coalition escalation to nuclear weapons, as his situation became more and more desperate. Even if he resisted the impulse to use CB weapons as the invasion of Iraq began, it is likely if it became clear to him his regime was about to fall, the CB gloves quite likely would have come off, and the coalition might have been struck with last minute chemical and biological revenge strikes.<sup>56</sup> Saddam Hussein probably realized coalition leaders would also understand the perils from Iraq's CB weapons of trying to achieve a total defeat of his regime. It is likely he is correct this possibility weighed heavily in the U.S. and coalition decision not to press for a total defeat of his forces and regime in Iraq.

***Lesson 3: Saddam felt he was willing to sustain deeper casualties than the United States, and this would give him a political if not military victory. States willing to suffer more than their opponents may count on their adversary halting the war effort when casualties reach a certain painful threshold that tempers their war aims.***

It appears Saddam was willing to gamble the United States was so casualty averse we would halt our military operations after suffering the first 5,000 deaths from the clash with Iraq. Of course, he was badly mistaken in how his forces matched up with the coalition. Since his forces were able to kill only 148 U.S. fighters in the battles that ensued, not 5,000,

his deterrence theory of U.S. and coalition escalation, estimated at a threshold of 5,000 killed in action, was never tested.

It should be noted President Bush and his field commander, General Schwarzkopf, prepared for possible heavy coalition casualties. Note the United States and the coalition had transported 63 mobile field hospitals to the region before launching Operation Desert Storm, as well as two hospital ships and 18,000 hospital beds.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, while Saddam Hussein thought the United States leaders were very averse to suffering casualties, nevertheless, he still perhaps underestimated President Bush's regard for human life – Iraq lives as well as those of Americans and the rest of the coalition. Indeed, unlike Bush, it may never have occurred to Saddam Hussein to limit his military actions in order to prevent enemy combatant deaths as well as those of his own forces.

***Lesson 4: If the rival leadership does not understand when it faces extreme military disadvantages, deterrence of the weaker by the stronger side is more likely to fail. Situational awareness and rationality must be joined together in the rival leadership for the deterrent effect to work.***

The Cold War deterrence requirement of having a situationally aware and rational opponent was not met fully in the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein may have been logical in his thinking, but ignorant of important facts. He was not situationally aware of the magnitude of military forces arrayed against him nor was he cognizant of much of the movement on the battlefield due to faulty intelligence. For example, he did not have satellites for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance of the coalition forces, and much of the Iraqi air force had fled by the time the coalition ground forces attacked. Saddam never detected the “Left Hook” flanking attack General Schwarzkopf put into motion at the beginning of the land battle.

***Lesson 5: Dictators who kill the messenger seldom get good intelligence and are far less effective in countering adverse possibilities.***

Saddam Hussein had a decision style that produced “yes men” only, robbing him of much important information on which to inform his decisions. To disagree with him was literally to risk your life if you were in his circle. His extreme brutality gave him unrivaled power. It also gave him information that conformed only to what his advisers thought he wanted to hear. Saddam did not welcome negative news or views and thus became the prisoner of his own perceptions of reality and rarely had those views been challenged or informed by facts or interpretations counter to his preconceptions such as: (1) the view the United States would not respond to an attack on Kuwait, or (2) the belief the coalition would not attack him in Kuwait because he had chemical and biological weapons, or (3) the Iraqi force could hold its own with that of the coalition, or (4) his forces could at least inflict 5,000 U.S. casualties and save him from absolute defeat.

***Lesson 6: Many variables go into whether deterrence will work: time, place, culture, politics, leadership and the personalities that make the decisions. The greater the divergence between the personalities, world views of the adversary leaders, and the leadership stakes in the outcome, the greater the chances for deterrence to fail.***

In this 1990-1991 Gulf War there were two kinds of deterrence to consider: (1) deterrence of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and (2) deterrence of an escalation of that war once it had begun. This was a war with many players, but it is fair to begin with the two key players in this drama, President Saddam Hussein and President George H.W. Bush. On the Iraqi side, the unquestioned chief decision-maker was Saddam Hussein. Saddam was Iraq, and Iraq was Saddam in this case. He was the unrivaled Iraqi decision-maker in foreign and defense policy.<sup>58</sup>

Things were a bit more complicated in the U.S. and coalition side. Clearly President George H.W. Bush was the ultimate decision-maker.<sup>59</sup> The United States was the key state in the formation of the coalition since it was and is the world’s military superpower. However, others like U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were influential in collaborating with the United States leadership. Thatcher was considered particularly instrumental in advising President Bush to take an uncompromising policy requiring Iraq

to abandon Kuwait or face war. And clearly, the instruments of power were provided by all the coalition members as they mobilized for war, sent their armed forces to Saudi Arabia and participated in Operation Desert Storm that succeeded brilliantly in routing the Iraqi Army in Kuwait.

The frequent insensitivity of enemies to each other's stakes and signals, and the all-too-often misperceptions they have of each other's aims and motives is at the core of why deterrence theory so often fails to explain interstate behavior in conflict situations.

***Lesson 7: Deterrence fails frequently, and what works in one case will fail in another. Governments run largely by a single dominant individual are rare and thus deterring Saddam Hussein and Iraq will be different from most cases where power is shared. Lessons learned from this case study should be applied very cautiously to other cases.***

One must also be careful in drawing deterrence lessons from a particular case. In the 1990-1991 Gulf War, Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq with an iron fist and did not have to negotiate with others in forming his decisions. Thus, Iraq was a unitary actor. This will not always be the case. In most states power and decisions are shared by a group at the top. Power is often dispersed. Deterrence becomes a group affair. One must persuade a group of decision-makers and power holders before deterrence can succeed. Thus, on the Iraqi side at least this is a special case where one man, Saddam Hussein, could speak for the entire country, and his will became Iraq's path.

On the opposing side, although he was by far the most influential decision-maker on his side of the conflict, President Bush could not have acted nearly as freely as Saddam Hussein did in Iraq. Bush and his able team first had to mobilize diverse coalition of allied states, secure the backing of the U.S. Congress, seek the support of the United Nations, and mobilize U.S. public support prior to kicking off the January 1991 counterattack against Iraq. Even so, once such efforts to mobilize support had succeeded, it took additional time to deploy and equip a sufficient military force in the region to repel the Iraqi invaders from Kuwait. Nearly six months elapsed before the coalition was ready to go to war to reclaim Kuwait.

In other cases where a government attempts to deter a war or launch one, the power to make such decisions may be shared, and policy may be a product of multiple factors that combine to take the decision or policy in a certain direction. This becomes even more complicated when the more power is shared on both sides. Thus, the 1990-1991 Gulf War may be a special case, and you must be careful about drawing general conclusions about deterrence from it.

***Lesson 8: When dealing with an adversary bent on achieving a fait accompli, quick reaction time is absolutely required. Be alert and ready to act at the outset or fail to deter leaders like Saddam Hussein. When still considering the opening move, a rival leadership can be more easily turned away from an act of aggression. After a decision has been made and a plan set in motion, deterrence can be far more difficult or impossible.***

Timing of the U.S. and coalition deterrence campaign was too late against Saddam to prevent Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Right from the start, the U.S. leadership needed to use unambiguous language with a violence-prone leader like Saddam Hussein. All he respected was superior force and will. Anything less was not going to keep him from seizing his prize, particularly since it represented, in his mind, the path to financial solvency and subsequent physical security. It would be wise for the United States and other allies to first inventory their absolute vital interests, things like preventing the Middle East's oil reserves from falling under the control of a hostile dictator whose interests were opposed to peace and security in the region and whose grip on world energy supplies could not be trusted. After that, a continuous defense and deterrence policy and posture would be needed in the region to keep these vital interests secure.

Where these types of leaders and regimes are positioned to adversely impact U.S. and allied vital interests, particular high-level attention needs to be paid to them. When such a potential challenger is positioned to threaten a vital interest or vital ally, contingency plans need to be pre-formulated for deterring them from any power grabs or hostile interventions. These plans need to have forces attached to them so once a crisis begins, these forces can be rapidly mobilized and sent to the region

to signal the seriousness of U.S. and allied intentions and to undergird the tough talk and warnings that U.S. and allied leaders must be prepared to give potential aggressors.

Beyond that, it would be wise to profile and pay extra close attention to all foreign leaders like Saddam Hussein who have a track record of violence and aggression, and who have shown repeated lawless behavior against domestic rivals and their international neighbors. Interdisciplinary teams of profilers who have read every word and observed every action of aggressive leadership should help inform U.S. decision-makers about the motives, situation and operational codes of these potential trouble makers. Such teams of profilers should stay with the observation of these particular leaders over years and decades rather than be rotated into other assignments and succeeded by uninformed and inexperienced intelligence officers. Moreover, it would be wise to have at least two parallel teams of profilers to compete in their assessments and provide decision-makers with alternative evaluations. It would also be useful if a representative of these competitive “Red Team” groups would give their interpretations of likely next moves and motives of that particular rival leader or leadership team.

***Lesson 9: Beware of the enemy whose modus operandi is to attack preemptively and who has a track record of extreme violence and bold risk taking.***

Saddam Hussein believed in careful plotting and swift and violent preemptive moves against his domestic and foreign foes. He came from a background that made him see enemies everywhere and he may have been seen as, or even actually been, paranoid. However, as the saying goes, just because he was paranoid does not mean people were not out to get him, especially after he had killed his way to the top of the Iraqi political system. He had actually made so many thousands of enemies by that time it was probably completely rational to act like a paranoid ruler. First he had killed the enemies of the Ba’ath Party in Iraq and anyone that stood in their way to power.<sup>60</sup> After that was secure, he killed anyone who he thought might become a rival, even if that was not yet the case. He killed

anyone who grew in popularity like some of the more successful Iraqi generals who fought well in the Iran-Iraq War.

He killed to maintain Sunni power over the majority Shia sect in Iraq. He killed Kurdish leaders who represented an independent power source. Once at the pinnacle of power after 1978, he launched wars against his neighbors in Iran<sup>61</sup> and Kuwait and sent his forces to the doorstep of Saudi Arabia. Tens of thousands of Iraqis, Iranians and Kuwaitis therefore died as a result of his aggressions.

Hussein constantly analyzed who might possibly become his rivals inside Iraq and planned brutal elimination campaigns to remove them by lethal means. In the summer of 1979, Saddam admitted to a colleague, “I know that there are scores of people plotting to kill me, and this is not difficult to understand. After all, did we not seize power by plotting against our predecessors? However, I am far cleverer than they are. I know they are conspiring to kill me long before they actually start planning to do it. This enables me to do it before they have the faintest chance of striking at me.”<sup>62</sup>

Saddam’s violent and ceaseless domestic purges follow the pattern of the terror campaigns of Stalin’s rule in the Soviet Union, a leader whose bloody methods deeply impressed him. Saddam’s endless warring foreign policy also reminds one of Adolph Hitler’s ceaseless wars against all neighbors and all other ethnic groups.

Saddam Hussein never felt secure and his prophylactic arrests and executions no doubt kept him in power longer than previous Iraqi leaders who were all removed by coups. Indeed, the five previous rulers of Iraq all lost power in this way. Hussein also felt the Islamic Republic of Iran posed a potential lethal threat to his rule. Not only were they hostile, they were Shiite Muslims like nearly 60 percent of his Iraqi countrymen. Their revolution had targeted him. He felt he had to preemptively destroy them or see his regime destroyed by them, hence his decision to attack Iran in 1979 while they were still getting organized. Like his domestic purges, he struck before his enemies realized his lethal intent.

*Lesson 10: Understand the situation and perspective of adversary leaders to anticipate when and where they might decide to initiate*

***hostilities. Plan to deter and counter them with contingency plans and quick reaction forces in anticipation of such contingencies.***

After the Iran-Iraq war ended in a ceasefire in 1988, Saddam was desperate to rebuild his armed forces and security forces before Iran regrouped and attacked again. Iran had come dangerously close to defeating him in the previous conflict and was a country with three times the population of Iraq, and four times the land area. Yet, his forces were spent, and because of his adventures, he was out of credit and deeply in debt. This led him to attack Kuwait as a means of recouping his fortunes and preparing for what he feared was the inevitable Iranian resumption of the war. The Bush administration in 1990 did not have its focus on the Iraq-Kuwait dispute, nor did it appreciate Saddam Hussein's dilemma and his modus operandi enough to anticipate his attack and occupation of Kuwait. Bush and his advisers were surprised and unprepared for the event although the threat could have been anticipated with better intelligence and forethought.

***Lesson 11: Understand what motivates the adversary leadership in terms of retention of their personal power and survival in order to predict your chances of success or failure in attempts to deter further acts of war or escalation. Put yourselves in their shoes. See the world from their perspective when planning to counter them.***

Saddam Hussein may have felt a retreat from Kuwait would have weakened him in the eyes of the Iraqi military and people and made him more vulnerable to overthrow. Already he was in a weakened position. He had just concluded a disastrous eight-year war with Iran costing hundreds of thousands of lives and billions of dollars worth of funds. He may have reasoned that this, coupled with forced humiliating retreat from Kuwait, might have given strong encouragement to his domestic and international rivals to try to remove him from power. Better, he might have thought, to take on a foreign force, rally the Iraqi people once more behind his rule against an external enemy, than to slink back to Iraq in defeat without putting up a fight. That posture could get him deposed and killed.

Saddam likely reasoned it was better to fight in Kuwait, try to get a compromise peace, keep some of the fruits of his invasion, and stay in power and alive. Thus, Saddam appears to have concluded what was best for him personally was to put his people and his military through yet another war, however painful. He was willing to lose thousands more of Iraqis in order to preserve his own regime and his own life. Thus, Saddam was not to be compelled to leave Kuwait without a fight.

***Lesson 12: While it certainly helps if you are trying to deter a rational opponent rather than an irrational one, rational leaders without situation awareness can still fail to understand the likely consequences of their actions and may fail to be deterred.***

Deterrence can be especially difficult when the opponent is severely lacking in situational awareness. Saddam Hussein was unfamiliar with the United States and its leadership. He had only a weak grasp of our political system.

Nor did Saddam Hussein appear to keep track of who President Bush and his key advisers met with the day he launched the invasion of Kuwait. On Aug. 2, 1990, President Bush met with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the “Iron Lady of Britain.” It would not have taken much analysis to ascertain the kind of strong action she was likely to and did recommend to President Bush in response to the Iraqi invasion. Further, other top U.S. leaders met in Moscow with top Soviet leaders. Thus, it was far easier to begin to mobilize the United States and its allies with its leaders in such close proximity. This does not seem to have occurred to Saddam Hussein and his advisers.

Moreover, the Iraqi dictator was an untutored military leader who appears not to have grasped the power and capability of the U.S. and coalition forces arrayed against him once they were mobilized and deployed to the region. Saddam did not trust his own military. He launched the invasion of Iran division by division through personal calls to his commanders because he did not trust them to coordinate operations in a joint fashion. Allowing them to meet and plan operations jointly might have also given them an opportunity to conspire against him. He separated his commander and forced them to communicate only through him. As a

result, when that war began, there was a day or two before some of his military leaders even were informed they were at war with Iran.<sup>63</sup>

General Chuck Horner, the Joint Forces Air Commander during Operation Desert Storm, observed it was probably not the wisest coalition strategy to try to target Saddam Hussein during the war. He noted had it occurred:

[K]illing Saddam may have turned out to be as serious mistake...In his paranoia; Saddam often had his top generals executed. The threat of execution sometimes concentrates the mind, but more often it leads to paralysis. This weakening of his military leadership could only benefit the coalition. And finally, as general Schwarzkopf pointed out after the war, Saddam was a lousy strategist, and thus a good man to have in charge of Iraqi armed forces, under the circumstances.<sup>64</sup>

In retrospect, it is difficult to imagine how Saddam Hussein expected to fight a war effectively against the coalition when his air forces were swept from the skies, when his armor and artillery were out-ranged, when he did not have any air and space intelligence, surveillance or reconnaissance capabilities, when his forces were poorly trained and when he lacked adequate command and control of his own forces. Saddam Hussein clearly did not appreciate the caliber of U.S. and allied forces he faced and assumed his large army could inflict thousands of casualties on the coalition. This, he planned, would win him a compromise peace and the chance to survive and fight another day after the immediate conflict had ended. He was lucky to have survived and did not do so because his forces executed his plan or because his strategy worked.

Saddam Hussein's leadership and lack of situational awareness led the Iraqi military into a catastrophic defeat. According to one summary of the war, "Iraqi military casualties, killed or wounded, totaled an estimated 25,000 to 65,000 and the United Nations destroyed some 3,200 Iraqi tanks, over 900 other armored vehicles and over 2,000 artillery weapons. Some 86,000 Iraqi soldiers surrendered. In contrast, the U.N. forces

suffered combat losses of some 200 from hostile fire plus losses of four tanks, nine other armored vehicles, and one artillery weapon...; Although coalition aircraft flew a total of 109,876 sorties, the allies lost only 38 aircraft versus over 300 for Iraq...The terms of the cease-fire were designed to enable U.N. inspectors to destroy most of Iraq's remaining missiles, chemical weapons and nuclear weapons facilities."<sup>65</sup>

***Lesson 13: Beware of situations where a potential adversary sees great immediate and easy gains to be achieved by taking military action, and where his risks are seen as remote, abstract and distant. It will be important to try to reverse these perceptions of limited and distant risk, and to do so emphatically early in a crisis situation, to improve the chances for deterrence to work.***

Saddam Hussein saw an immediate prize in Kuwait where he could add 8 percent of the world's oil supply to his resources, find a way out of his massive debt situation, gain the purchasing power to re-equip his armed forces and police to protect his regime and his life, and fund future extensions of his power and influence. He got a mild disclaimer from the United States that it had no particular interest in the outcome of his dispute with Kuwait over the Rumailia oil fields. There appeared to be no immediate strong opposition to his unspoken aspiration to add Kuwait to his realm. This could have been foreseen if the United States and other interested regional powers had been more alert and perceived the danger sooner. Clearly, in mid-1990 a violent and ambitious Saddam Hussein considered seizing a rich trophy, one that appeared could to be had for the taking, without any immediate or significant costs.

Richard Ned Lebow and Janet Gross Stein have examined over 20 cases of deterrence failures and concluded their studies "support the conclusion that policy makers who risk or actually start wars pay more attention to their own strategic and domestic political interests than they do to the interests and military capabilities of their adversaries."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, such aggressors "may discount an adversary's resolve even when the state in question has gone to considerable lengths to demonstrate that resolve and to develop the military capabilities needed to defend its commitment."<sup>67</sup> Thus, a government can do everything right to deter an

adversary and still fail because the rival does not estimate the outcome the same way.

***Lesson 14: Until a sizeable deterrent force can be sent to a region of potential conflict, it is a useful stopgap to send a tripwire force to signal U.S. intent to fight any attempt at aggression from the beginning.***

Such a U.S. tripwire force was sent early to Saudi Arabia in the fall of 1990 to show Saddam Hussein an attack on Saudi Arabia would spill U.S. blood and draw the United States into a conflict with Iraq. This action may have saved Saudi Arabia from an invasion in the period between the August 1990 invasion and occupation of Kuwait and the initiation of the coalition air war in January 1991 and the ground war in February 1991. Like the U.S. army forces stationed in Berlin, Germany, during the Cold War, these tripwire forces would not have been able to stop the enemy forces from seizing that territory immediately, but it would have been a down payment on a future U.S. military escalation and counterattack. Being drawn into a war with the world's military superpower should serve as a considerable reason for rethinking an aggressive move.

***Lesson 15: In cases where both sides possess some form of mass casualty weapons, deterrence can work in both directions. Both can be deterred from use of the chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons by the threat of the other. On the other hand, both may still feel free to prosecute a limited conventional war, feeling secure that their CBRN deterrent will shield them from a similar enemy attack.***

Saddam Hussein attacked the forces of the coalition that included three nuclear weapons states: The United States, United Kingdom and France. Moreover, he ordered his force to launch ballistic missile attacks against Israel, reputed to be another nuclear weapons state. This probably would not have happened if Saddam Hussein had not possessed chemical or biological weapons he thought could deter possible nuclear responses.

Further, it is reasonable to assume Iraq's possession of chemical and biological weapons may have been one of several factors that persuaded President Bush and other coalition members not to follow up

their rout of Iraqi forces in Kuwait with a march all the way to Baghdad. Clearly, the U.S. military and political leaders were fully aware of the potential harm that might have come to U.S. and coalition personnel from a massive chemical or biological attack by Iraq.

Indeed, it is possible massive medical problems were simply generated by allied bombing of chemical weapons storage and production facilities. Some 183,000 U.S. military personnel were victims of symptoms referred to as Gulf War syndrome, more than a quarter of the U.S. men and women sent to fight in the war were declared permanently disabled, and some speculate these casualties were resulted from coalition air attacks on Iraqi CW facilities that caused downwind fallout and contamination.<sup>68</sup>

In summary, it is not possible to prove without doubt that deterrence works since it is not feasible to prove war would have occurred in the absence of deterrence signals. On the other hand, it is clear when deterrence actions fail. War and conflict escalation are clear signals of a degree of deterrence failure. Even here, it is not possible to know how much further up the escalation ladder the conflict would have climbed if deterrent actions been taken and signals had not been sent.

In the 1990-1991 Gulf War, no one successfully deterred the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or successfully compelled the Iraqi Army to leave peacefully. U.S. deterrent signals were too weak at the beginning and too late to stop him. U.S. tripwire forces sent to early to Saudi Arabia in the late summer and fall of 1990 possibly deterred Saddam Hussein from sending his army through Kuwait and into Saudi Arabia, although it is not clear whether he was willing to risk such a gamble had U.S. reinforcements not been sent to assist the Saudi Kingdom.

It seems likely Saddam Hussein was deterred from using chemical and biological weapons in the stern warning communicated to the Iraqi leadership by President Bush and the nuclear forces at his command. Saddam could not be sure the United States would not use nuclear weapons in response to a CB attack, especially if the United States and its allies suffered mass casualties from such attacks.

We now know there was no serious consideration of employing U.S. or allied nuclear weapons during the conflict. The Bush policy team felt that U.S. nuclear superiority should deter Iraqi chemical and biological

weapons use and coalition conventional superiority was so pronounced as to make victory very likely.

Saddam Hussein was willing to let his forces and population bleed to whatever degree to inflict the level of losses that might make his opponents limit their war aims. Indeed, Saddam might have been correct. The potential threat of mass casualties may partly account for President Bush's decision to end the war 100 hours after the ground campaign had routed the Iraqi army in Kuwait. Saddam may have considered Bush's actions as an exercise in "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory" since he survived and retained power after the ceasefire took place.

The 5,000-death threshold Saddam Hussein predicted would cause the coalition leaders to sue for peace talks never was reached, and his theory of deterrence was therefore untested. However, it appears the coalition forces were prepared to suffer large losses to achieve their war aims, but since this threshold was never even approached, it is impossible to say when the allies would have considered discussing peace terms due to mounting casualties.

Clearly, the Iraqi dictator took risks far beyond what Soviet leaders were willing to risk in the Cold War when confronted with overwhelming U.S. military power and a dedicated deterrent posture. The risk-taking and violent personality of the Iraqi leader, coupled with the mild deterrent signals the U.S. sent at the beginning of the Iraq-Kuwait confrontation, led Saddam Hussein to gamble on seizing an oil-rich treasure that could bail him out of the financial problems caused by the huge costs of the Iran-Iraq war. He sought to recoup his losses in Kuwait.

Thus, every crisis and conflict has different elements and players, Deterrence lessons from one case study may or may not apply to another. Deterrence is clearly an art and can fail despite the best practices of the state attempting it, since it takes two sides stepping to the same tune to have it work. Unfortunately, deterrence is a two-sided affair. Ultimately, it will work only if the potential aggressor concludes that the outcome will likely result in a price they are unwilling to risk. Those attempting to deter them can do everything possible to signal why a war would be too costly, but the ultimate decision is up to the Saddam Husseins of the world.

## **Appendix A**

### **Desert Shield/Desert Storm Timeline<sup>69</sup>**

#### **August 1990**

- 2 Iraq invades Kuwait.
- 6 U.S. forces gain permission to base operations in Saudi Arabia.
- 7 F-15s depart for Persian Gulf.
- 7 USS Independence battle group arrives in south of Persian Gulf.
- 8 First TFW and 82nd Airborne arrive in Persian Gulf.

#### **November 1990**

- 8 The United States sends 200,000 additional troops.
- 29 United Nations authorizes force against Iraq.

#### **January 1991**

- 9 Baker delivers Bush warning letter to Saddam via Aziz.
- 12 Congress approves offensive use of U.S. troops.
- 15 United Nations withdrawal deadline passes.
- 17 D day. Coalition launches airborne assault.
- 18 Iraq launches Scud missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia.
- 25 Air Force begins attacking Iraqi aircraft shelters.
- 26 Iraqi aircraft begin fleeing to Iran.
- 29 Battle of Khafji begins. Airpower destroys Iraqi force.

#### **February 1991**

- 24 Ground War begins. Start of 100 hour battle.
- 26 Fleeing Iraqi forces destroyed along “Highway of Death.”
- 28 Cease-fire becomes effective at 0800 Kuwait time.

## **Appendix B**

### **A Warning Letter to Saddam Hussein From President George H.W. Bush**

Mr. President,

We stand today at the brink of war between Iraq and the world. This is a war that began with your invasion of Kuwait; this is a war that can be ended only by the Iraq's full and unconditional compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 678.

I am writing you now, directly, because what is at stake demands that no opportunity be lost to avoid what would be a certain calamity for the people of Iraq. I am writing, as well, because it is said by some that you do not understand just how isolated Iraq is and what Iraq faces as a result. I am not in a position to judge whether this impression is correct: what I can do, though is try in this letter to reinforce what Secretary of State Baker told your Foreign Minister and eliminate any uncertainty or ambiguity that might exist in your mind about where we stand and what we are prepared to do.

The international community is united in its call for Iraq to leave all of Kuwait without condition and without further delay. This is not simply the policy of the United States: it is the position of the world community as expressed in no less than twelve Security Council resolutions.

We prefer a peaceful outcome. However, anything less than full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 678 and its predecessors are unacceptable. There can be no reward for aggression. Nor will there be any negotiation. Principle cannot be compromised. However, by its full compliance Iraq will gain the opportunity to rejoin the international community. More immediately, the Iraqi military establishment will escape destruction. But unless you withdraw from Kuwait completely and without condition, you will lose more than Kuwait. What is at issue here is not the future of Kuwait – it will be free, its government will be restored – but rather the future of Iraq. The choice is yours to make.

The United States will not be separated from its coalition partners. Twelve Security Council resolutions, 28 countries providing military units to enforce them, more than one hundred governments complying with sanctions – all highlight the fact that it is not Iraq against the United States but Iraq against the world. That most Arab and Muslim countries are arrayed against you as well should reinforce what I am saying. Iraq cannot and will not be able to hold on to Kuwait or exact a price for leaving.

You may be tempted to find solace in the diversity of opinion that is American democracy. You should resist any such temptation. Diversity ought not to be confused with division. Nor should you underestimate, as others have before you, America's will.

Iraq is already feeling the effects of the sanctions mandated by the United Nations. Should war come, it will be far greater tragedy for you and your country. Let me state, too that the United States will not tolerate the use of chemical or biological weapons or the destruction of Kuwait's oil fields and installations. Further, you will be held directly responsible for terrorist actions against any member of the coalition. The American people would demand the strongest possible response. You and your country will pay a terrible price if you order unconscionable acts of this sort.

I write this letter not to threaten, but to inform. I do so with no sense of satisfaction, for the people of the United States have no quarrel with the people of Iraq. Mr. President, UN Security Council Resolution 678 establishes the period before January 15 of this year as a "pause of good will" so that this crisis may end without further violence. Whether this pause is used as intended, or merely becomes a prelude to further violence, is in your hands, and yours alone, I hope you weigh your choice carefully and choose wisely, for much will depend upon it.

George Bush<sup>70</sup>

## Appendix C

### Iraq Launches Missile Strikes<sup>71</sup>

If Iraq was forced to obey UN resolutions, the Iraqi government made it no secret it would respond by attacking Israel. Before the war started, Tariq Aziz, Iraqi Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, was asked, “If war starts...will you attack Israel?” His response was, “Yes, absolutely, yes.”<sup>72</sup> The Iraqis hoped attacking Israel would draw it into the war. It was expected this would then lead to the withdrawal of the U.S. Arab allies, who would be reluctant to fight alongside Israel. Israel did not join the coalition, and all Arab states stayed in the coalition.

The Scud missiles generally caused fairly light damage, although their potency was felt on Feb. 25 when 28 U.S. soldiers were killed when a Scud destroyed their barracks in Dhahran. The Scuds targeting Israel were ineffective due to the fact that increasing the range of the Scud resulted in a dramatic reduction in accuracy and payload. Nevertheless, the total of 39 missiles that landed on Israel caused extensive property damage and two direct deaths, and caused the United States to deploy two Patriot missile battalions in Israel, and the Netherlands to send one Patriot Squadron, in an attempt to deflect the attacks. Allied air forces were also extensively exercised in “Scud hunts” in the Iraqi desert, trying to locate the camouflaged trucks before they fired their missiles at Israel or Saudi Arabia.

Three Scud missiles, along with a coalition Patriot that malfunctioned, hit Ramat Gan in Israel on Jan. 22, 1991, injuring 96 people, and indirectly causing the deaths of three elderly people who died of heart attacks. Israeli policy for the previous 40 years had always been retaliation, but at the urging of the U.S. and other commanders, the Israeli government decided discretion was the better part of valor in this instance. After initial hits by Scud missiles, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir hesitantly refused any retaliating measures against Iraq, due to increasing pressure from the United States to remain out of the conflict. The U.S. government was concerned any Israeli action would cost it allies and

escalate the conflict, and an air strike by the IAF would have required overflying hostile Jordan or Syria, which could have provoked them to enter the war on Iraq's side or to attack Israel.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “It’s Time for a New Deterrence Model,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, 4th Quarter (2008), 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Barry Wolf, *When the Weak Attack the Strong: Failures of Deterrence*, (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Report N 3262-A, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Original source was Ernest R. Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 910-911. See also, Barry R. Schneider, *Future War and Counterproliferation* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), Ch. 4.

<sup>4</sup> See Wikipedia, Constitution and Founding Fathers, “What Ever Happened to the Founding Fathers?” This was their promise: “For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

<sup>5</sup> For another good discussion, see Richard Ned Lebow, “Conclusions,” in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology & Deterrence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), Ch. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Mutual Assured Destruction went by the acronym MAD. Dr. Warner Schilling later added another acronym for those who wanted to develop offensive nuclear options to disarm the other side with a counterforce strike in this heavily armed nuclear environment. He called this option Capable of Firing First If Necessary (COFFIN).

<sup>7</sup> Of course this still begs the question of how much U.S. and allied nuclear capability was enough to inflict that unacceptable level of damage, and what did the adversary think was an unacceptable level of damage? Further, how could we know for sure? What metrics could we use to determine this? This information or estimation of what was needed, of course, would be used to guide our deterrence strategy, our targeting policy (SIOP), our nuclear force composition, and our DOD and DOE acquisition and budget strategies.

<sup>8</sup> For example, during the year leading up to the Cuban Missile Crisis, it appears Nikita Khrushchev, general secretary of the Communist Party and leader of the Soviet Union, had come to the conclusion that President John F. Kennedy was a weak leader who would not act to thwart a Soviet fait accompli that put Soviet missiles into Cuba. Khrushchev had seen Kennedy’s administration fail in the Bay of Pigs Crisis, fail to respond to a communist invasion of Laos and fail to respond to Soviet pressure on Berlin. Khrushchev had also engaged in bullying Kennedy at a Paris summit conference where the young President seemed not to acquit himself very forcefully. The relative youth and inexperience of Kennedy compared to Khrushchev may have also played a part in the Kremlin’s risky decision to place missiles into Cuba.

<sup>9</sup> Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960).

<sup>10</sup> Here is an example of the logical problem. If almost all war began in the spring of the year, and the U.S. baseball season starts in the spring, does this then mean that the inception of the baseball season triggers war? No, obviously not. Just because A precedes B, does not mean it causes B. Both might be caused by another factor C. Clearly correlation (e.g., A then B) is not causation. It is very likely that another factor leads to fewer wars starting in the winter – the weather (Factor C). Clearly, military campaigns are far easier to launch in moderate weather rather than in the dead of winter when roads are clogged with ice and snow and army movements are much more difficult. Spring is the opening of campaigning season (and baseball) in parts of the world with severe winters.

<sup>11</sup> Charles A. Duelfer, Special Adviser to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD, See “Regime Strategic Intent,” *Comprehensive Revised Report with Addendums on Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2004), 1.

<sup>12</sup> See “Interrogator Shares Saddam’s Confessions,” 60 Minutes, CBS Television, (Jan. 27, 2008). Diane Sawyer of ABC News interviewed Saddam on June 24, 1990, and discovered he did not know there were no U.S. laws against joking about or criticizing the U.S. President. Nor did he fathom the working of checks and balances in the U.S. political system, where power is shared between the executive, legislative and judicial systems. Saddam asked, “Who, then, am I supposed to deal with?” See Karsh and Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein, A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 178-79.

<sup>13</sup> Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>14</sup> See Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis: Lessons from the War with Saddam Hussein* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1991), 7. In 1990, Saddam tried to re-arm Iraq before Iran could resume the war they had just fought to a draw. He was spending \$5B per year on modernizing his military. As a result, Saddam Hussein had run out of credit and faced a mounting financial crisis. He feared this financial crisis would then result in a security crisis. To add injury, Kuwait and UAE produced and sold more oil than the limits they had agreed upon at the previous OPEC meetings. This reduced the profit margins for Iraqi oil and infuriated Saddam, who saw these declining oil prices as frustrating his expansionist dreams and as putting his regime in

jeopardy. Much like the Japanese who before Pearl Harbor reacted to the U.S.-imposed oil embargo that threatened their aspirations for a Japanese co-prosperity sphere in Asia, Saddam had felt the financial noose closing on his dreams when he hit upon the idea of invading oil-rich Kuwait to solve his troubles. Thus, he was adamant about keeping the Kuwaiti prize he had just seized, the prize that was going to solve his financial and security dilemma.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Karsh and Rautsi, Op.cit. 78.

<sup>17</sup> Some analysts of previous deterrence failures conclude, "Policy makers who risk or actually start wars pay more attention to their own strategic and domestic political interests than they do to the interests and military capabilities needed to defend its commitment. Their strategic and political needs appear to constitute the principal motivation for a resort to force." This observation was based on 20 cases of failed deterrence. See Richard Ned Lebow, "Conclusions" in Jervis, Lebow, and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 216.

<sup>18</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Can Saddam Be Contained? History Says Yes," *New York Times* (Feb. 2, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 358-59.

<sup>20</sup> James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 276.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 273-74.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Herman Kahn wrote about two kinds of escalation of a conflict, vertical and horizontal. Vertical escalation involved walking up the rungs of the escalation ladder to higher and higher levels of conflict. In a war between nuclear armed states, this might begin with low-level conventional conflict and escalate into higher-level nuclear exchanges. Horizontal escalation is where the theater of a conflict is widened, by involving adjacent territories or other countries in the conflict, perhaps even extending the conflict to a different theater or region of warfare altogether. See Herman Kahn, *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

<sup>26</sup> From a speech given by Hussein at the fourth summit of the Arab Cooperation Council, Amman, Jordan (Feb. 24, 1990). See FBIS NESAS (Feb. 27, 1990), 1-5. Found by this author in Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Detering or Coercing Opponents in Crisis: Lessons from the War with Saddam Hussein* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND R-4111-JS, 1991), 56.

<sup>27</sup> Avigdor Haselkorn, *The Continuing Storm, Iraq's Poisonous Weapons and Deterrence* (New Haven, Conn.; Yale University Press 1999), 52. This estimate by the Iraqi dictator was made in an interview carried on German television and was released by INA, FBIS (NES) (Dec. 14, 1990), 22.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Baker, Op.Cit. 303-304.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 349. Ambassador April Glaspie "recounted a very telling story about being invited along with other diplomats to a dam construction site in Northern Iraq. Saddam had made disparaging remarks about the Vietnamese laborers who were building the dam, dismissing them as sub humans. 'And these are the people who beat the Americans,' he marveled...Iraq's leader thought that Vietnam had so traumatized the American psyche that we would never fight again." See Baker, Op.Cit., 355.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Haselkorn's research lists as his source, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (Feb. 17, 1991), written by Rear Admiral Mike McConnell, then Director of Intelligence for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, McConnell indicated that U.S. forces found such a written order in Kuwait.

<sup>32</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *Autobiography: It Doesn't take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 439.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. He wrote, "I was worried about the great empty area of southern Iraq where the (coalition) army would launch its attack. I kept asking myself, 'What does Saddam know about that flank that I don't? Why doesn't he have any forces out there?' The intelligence people suggested offhandedly, 'Maybe he plans to pop a nuke out there.' They then nicknamed the sector the 'chemical killing sack.' I flinched every time I heard it."

<sup>34</sup> "Gulf War," <http://www.answers/cp./topic/gulf-war>, 39.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., The quote is from Barry Rubin, *Cauldron of Turmoil; America in the Middle East* (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1992), 144.

<sup>37</sup> Colin Powell with Joseph Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 490-491. He said, “The biological worried me, and the impact on the public the first time the first casualty keeled over to germ warfare would be terrifying.”

<sup>38</sup> U.S. deaths among military personnel in Operation Iraqi Freedom as of April 2009 were just over 4,200 killed over a period of six years of fighting.

<sup>39</sup> Baker, Op.Cit., 437.

<sup>40</sup> For the full text of this letter, see Appendix B of this paper.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 358-359.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War Final Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 25.

<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, if a rogue state leader always expects the strong to use all its weapons against him, why not use his NBC weapons first when they could inflict maximum damage?

<sup>44</sup> As James Baker concluded in his book, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, “We do not really know this was the reason there appears to have been no confirmed use by Iraq of chemical weapons during the war. My own view is that the calculated ambiguity regarding how we might respond has to be part of the reason,” 359.

<sup>45</sup> George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 463.

<sup>46</sup> Baker, Op Cit., 359.

<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, it could be argued that Saddam may have believed earlier U.S. pledges not to use nuclear weapons, even in wartime, against those non-nuclear parties in good standing with the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT) regime. Iraq was considered in compliance with the NPT by the IAEA at the time of the invasion of Kuwait. Only later, after the ceasefire in February 1991, did UN inspectors prove Iraq had cheated massively on the treaty regime. In 1978, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance made a unilateral and nonbinding U.S. pledge prior to a NPT Review Conference in order to persuade more nonnuclear states to back the treaty extension. This was a policy statement of the Carter administration, but not a treaty or legally binding commitment. However, by 1990, the United States had adopted a legal interpretation and doctrine called “belligerent reprisal” that got the U.S. out of that legal box. It announced the U.S. government interpreted its NPT pledge not to use nuclear arms against non-nuclear parties to the treaty as null and void if these states were to initiate the use of either chemical or biological weapons. It is more likely Saddam did not believe the earlier U.S. pledge not to use nuclear weapons if war began simply because he would not keep such a pledge himself if he were in the place of the U.S. President.

<sup>48</sup> Duelfer, Op.Cit, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Again, review President Bush’s letter of warning to Saddam Hussein, Appendix B.

<sup>50</sup> Haselkorn, Op.Cit., 57. The original citation is CNN, cited in AFMIC Weekly Wire 02-91 (u),” File 970613\_mno2\_91\_0\_txt\_0001.txt (Washington, D.C.: DIA {?}, 1991). This plan of strategic reciprocity was confirmed in 1995 by Tariq Aziz who said that the Iraqi military had been authorized to use their biological weapons in the event that Baghdad was attacked with nuclear weapons. See Haselkorn, 53.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>53</sup> How seriously the U.S. leadership took the Iraqi CBW threat is testified by the fact that during the run-up to the war, until its conclusion, President George H.W. Bush was accompanied by a military officer who carried a gas mask for emergency use.

<sup>54</sup> However, the Syrian Chief of Staff later stated in a Q&A session, when an Air War College group later visited Damascus, Syria would have stayed in the coalition despite Israeli participation in order to remove Saddam Hussein’s forces from Kuwait.

<sup>55</sup> McGeorge Bundy, national security adviser to Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, has written, “There has been literally no chance at all that any sane political authority, in either the United States or the Soviet Union, would consciously choose to start a nuclear war. This proposition is true for the past, the present and the foreseeable future... In the real world of real political leaders...a decision that would bring even one hydrogen bomb on one city of one's own country would be recognized in advance as a catastrophic blunder; ten bombs on ten cities would be a disaster beyond history; and a hundred bombs on a hundred cities are unthinkable.” Bundy’s analysis would suggest the United States and any other state should be content with a minimum deterrence posture. On the other hand, some U.S. strategists like former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, once enunciated a doctrine of essential

equivalence saying the United States would be safest if it matched the numbers of strategic weapons on the Soviet side no matter their number or overkill capability. This was at a time when both sides had tens of thousands of nuclear weapons. Still others have attempted to strike a balance between the retaliatory power needed and the level of damage that could be inflicted on the adversary, Two RAND analysts calculated the optimal U.S. retaliatory capability for destruction against Soviet population and industry at a given time. They sought to find a posture that gave “the most bang for the defense buck,” yet suggested ways to put rational limits of the size of the nuclear forces required.” For example, see Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). A reading of their analysis would lead one to conclude the optimal size of the U.S. nuclear retaliatory force was 400 equivalent megatons of explosive power. This, would, for example, give in 1971, the U.S. capability to kill 39 percent of the Soviet population and 77 percent of Soviet industry. Their calculations also indicated this would put U.S. destructive power on the “flat of the curve.” Even a doubling of the U.S. equivalent mega tonnage to 800 EMT would “only” kill 5 percent more of its population and only 1 percent more of its industry. Thus, some might conclude the “optimal” solution would be to deploy enough nuclear weapons in such a fashion, in all likely scenarios, 400 EMT worth of U.S. nuclear weapons would make it through Soviet attacks and defenses to hit their targets in the USSR were the Kremlin leaders ever to launch a nuclear attack. See Enthoven and Smith, 207.

<sup>56</sup> Note Saddam Hussein plotted an assassination attempt against George H.W. Bush on April 13, 1993, when the retired U.S. President visited Kuwait. This revenge strike failed, but revealed much about Iraqi dictator’s predilections. He was willing to risk the wrath of the United States just to kill the U.S. leader that had so soundly defeated and humiliated him in the Gulf War of 1990-1991. If he was willing to risk a renewed war and his grip on power to exact revenge it is not hard to imagine how much more willing he would have been to use all means at hand to deal a last chemical or biological death blow if he thought his regime was about to be destroyed.

<sup>57</sup> Schwarzkopf, Op.cit., 439.

<sup>58</sup> See Charles A. Duelfer, Special Adviser to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD, *Comprehensive Revised Report with Addendums on Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Decisions may be influenced by key decision-makers, but these, in turn, may be influenced by allies, legal restrictions, political commitment and consideration and, bureaucratic politics, and standard operating procedures, psychological factors and group dynamics. Decision-makers seldom begin decisions on issues with a blank slate. See Allison Graham with Phillip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (New York, Pearson Longman Publishers, 1999), 2nd Edition.

<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Saddam’s earliest contribution to the Ba’ath Party was to attempt an assassination of Iraqi President General Qassem in 1958, a bungled attempt that brought him fame in the Ba’ath Party and exile in Syria and Egypt for three years. His later climb to the presidency of Iraq is akin to Lee Harvey Oswald becoming president of the United States 19 years after assassinating John F. Kennedy.

<sup>61</sup> Some estimate the total dead from the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War to have been in the neighborhood of 500,000 Iranians and Iraqis slain.

<sup>62</sup> Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>63</sup> Author’s interview with an unnamed Iraqi general under contract with the CIA after leaving Iraq.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Clancy with General Chuck Horner (Ret.), *Every Man a Tiger* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1999), 374-375.

<sup>65</sup> See “Gulf War,” <http://www.answers.com/topic/gulf-war>, p. 6. Unfortunately, 183,000 U.S. veterans of the Gulf War, more than a quarter of all who participated in the war, have been declared permanently disabled by the U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs as a result of “Gulf War Syndrome.” “About 30 percent of the 700,000 men and women who served in U.S. forces during the Gulf War still suffered an array of serious symptoms whose causes are not fully understood,” 40.

<sup>66</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology & Deterrence* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 216.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> “Gulf War,” <http://www.answers.com/topic/gulf-war>.

<sup>69</sup> This chart is an adaptation of one found in Tom Clancy with General Chuck Horner, *Every Man A Tiger* (New York: G.P.Putnam’s Sons, 1999), xii.

<sup>70</sup> See George Bush, *Public Papers of George Bush: Book 1* (Jan. 1 to June 30, 1991), “Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on President Bush’s letter to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq” (Jan. 12, 1991). See also, Michael R.

---

Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1995), Chapter 9, "The Mailed Fist," footnote 17.

<sup>71</sup> "Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm," Wikipedia, [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com).

<sup>72</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order, 1990-1991* (Princeton, 1993), 332.