



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Political Science

THE FIRST AND SECOND GULF WAR: AN INSIGHT THROUGH MY LENS -BY RAGHAV GHEI

KEY WORDS:

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ABSTRACT

When Saddam Hussain invaded his oil abundant and rich neighbor, Kuwait, he was not expecting the UN to mandate the liberation of Kuwait by force. What followed is something he must not have expected in his wildest dreams. In both the wars, the army of the Islamic Republic of Iraq, under his guidance, was crushed. Why did the Iraqi army face such a defeat? What were the factors that lead to such a crushing defeat? It was due to these questions along with many more that the topic for this research project is The First and Second Gulf Wars: An Insight Through My Lens.

Introduction

It all started in the year 1990. Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing its petroleum. Speculations are rampant as to why Iraq made such an inflammatory accusation, with some saying that it may have been due to its non-payment of the 14-billion-dollar loan it borrowed from Kuwait. Kuwait was a country rich and filled with resources galore, especially petroleum, whose production in Kuwait had led to decrease in the revenue Iraq obtained through oil. Due to the above factors, Iraq felt it necessary to invade Kuwait, which is exactly what they did at 2 am, on the 2nd of August, 1990. They overran the country in a matter of hours and the Kuwaiti forces were no match for the Iraqi army. Saddam Hussain announced his achievement to the world and proclaimed Kuwait to be a province of Iraq a few days later.

Kuwait was now officially a part of Iraqi territory.

What followed:

The other countries, especially the US and the UN, were not happy at all with this step taken by Iraq. They immediately took the step that, I feel the UN is the champion of, imposing economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iraq and fostered international condemnation for this action.

On the night of August 6, 1990, The Secretary of Defence, Dick Cheney, Norman Schwarzkopf, the head of the middle east command of the US (USCENTCOM), and many others were a part of the delegation to the Saudi ruler's Jeddah palace, keeping him aware of the events that occurred barely a few days ago and fearing a possible attack on Saudi Arabia's eastern oil fields. In fact, it was in that meeting where it was decided that the US would use Saudi Arabia as a staging point for the troops. King Fahd, the ruler of Saudi Arabia said that there was no time to ask the religious scholars about allowing Christian troops, and added that if they waited too long, they would become like Kuwait as well, surmising it grimly in a sentence, that the Kuwait that currently existed was in hotel rooms in Cairo, Paris and London. The US, over a period of time became, worried that they would lose their most trusted ally in the middle east, began to deploy assets in Saudi Arabia and doing military drills in a bid to deter and put a halt to the Iraqi's even trying to think about capturing the oil fields of Saudi Arabia, under an operation codenamed Desert Shield and was called to a halt when Saddam Hussain called Kuwait a province of Iraq. These exercises were a false flag, trying to confuse the Iraqi's, in the words of Norman Schwarzkopf.

The UN passed a slew of resolutions for the liberation of Kuwait, including UNSC Resolution 678, which gave Iraq a withdrawal of troops deadline on the 15th January 1991, and declared that if Iraq did not withdraw, liberation by force was authorised. At 12 am on the 16th of January 1991, it was clear that Iraq wanted to put up a fight, and in Saddam Hussain's words, it would be a fight like no other. And indeed, it was, just not from his perspective, but from the world's and especially

the US's perspective.

The first shots of the war were fired by a group of AH-64 Apache helicopters belonging to the US Army, which began Operation Desert Storm on the 17th of January, with 35 countries a part of it and it being the largest alliance since the second world war. The air campaign was intense and the ground campaign was also insanely intense, with the coalition forces steamrolling and decimating the Iraqi forces.

After the Gulf War, the Iraqi military was a fraction of what it was before the war started, fully due to the losses they suffered at the hands of the coalition. The Iraqi casualties are estimated to be much higher than what was reported by the government and they lost their edge in the region. They were in such a bad state that they lost virtually their entire air force and over 50% of their tanks, Armoured Personnel Carriers and artillery pieces.

One of the most powerful militaries in the world

The Iraqi military was the fourth largest in the world as of 1988. It was battle hardened and had fought in the Iran-Iraq war, which had recently ended and its memories were still fresh. They even had a sizable size of special forces units with them, including the elite Iraqi Revolutionary Guard, respected around the world. The Iraqi's were very well defended in the ground, as you can make out by now, with many tanks, rocket systems, artillery pieces and the infamous Scud missiles. Baghdad, at the time, was said to be the most defended city in the world, with 478 early warning radars, aiding the command-and-control centres in decreasing the reaction time of the Iraqi Air Force. In addition to all this, they had 154 Surface to Air Missile sites and many anti-aircraft guns, many fixed and many movable. After the capture of Kuwait, they benefited from the capture of 5 German fast patrol vessels, to an already decent navy and other ships that were undamaged.

So then where did they go wrong?

There is a very famous saying, technology is a two-edged sword. That is one of the main reasons they lost. I will give a few examples to make my case. The first being the case of different, new technologies used by the coalition forces. Night warfare, infra-red sights, were among the many new things developed by the US and they used this to their advantage. 'Smart' bombs like precision guided munitions and laser guided bombs, were extensively used during the war and were in another league compared to the unguided, or so called 'dumb' bombs used by Iraq. Another area they lost out on was aircraft. After the Vietnam war, during the mid-70's, the US went into a phase of redevelopment and experimenting new technologies. It was due to this phase like the F-117A Nighthawk, B-2 Spirit, the helicopter AH-64 Apache and the infamous drone today: The predator (an early version, there have been some modifications and new variants over the subsequent years) were developed and these were unproven at the time of the Gulf War, meaning that they looked good on

paper, but nothing was known about their performance in actual war, and this war proved without a doubt that the US was much ahead of the rest of the world in terms of technology and military superiority, with all of these above mentioned technologies showing their capabilities with textbook perfection and all (except the nighthawk) still being used today as well. The tanks, which the US had just developed a few years ago, were new and raw, compared to the battle tested T-72 from Russia, which Iraq used. Analysts all over the world were quite interested in this face-off between the tanks as it represented a battle for the superiority of American or Russian engineering, But the US M1 Abrams and the UK's Challenger, crippled and outclassed the Russian tanks. The average infantry soldier was better equipped in the coalition in comparison to the Iraqi's and this was due to the diffusion and distribution of better technology.

Another reason was the superb planning and right tactics involved. Take for instance, the shock and awe aerial campaign that kicked off the Gulf War. The coalition decimated crucial sites of the Iraqi's, which were communication centres, command and control centres, bunkers and power plants scattered all over Baghdad and Iraq, which completely confused the defense forces and did not enable them to react. The next wave that followed was of 688 planes of the coalition comprising F16's, one of the best fighters in the world. In fact, the campaign was so effective, that Hussain had the man in charge of the Iraqi Air Defences executed. The Iraqi navy was decimated at the battle of Bubiyan, sinking 21 ships with no losses to the US and UK navies as the Royal and Canadian navies prowled and attacked lone Iraqi ships that were not with support, and those that were, were handled with the appropriate number of ships/planes needed to destroy them.

Another factor due to their loss, which has always been a decisive factor in conflicts around the world is allies. They help in multifarious ways like economic support, military support, bases for launching troops and many more. Iraq had no one and was up against the likes of countries like the US, UK, France, Saudi Arabia to name a few, with Saudi acting as a staging point for these countries to launch their attacks in Iraq. Iraq was deliberately ostracised internationally as well, so as to avoid any country from entering into an alliance with it.

Why I feel the US became the harbinger of war in this case:

The Gulf war was the first major conflict the US was involved in since the Vietnam war, (I am excluding the Cold War, since I feel that it remained cold, and not an active, or shooting war and hence, wasn't exactly a war, but the introduction of something new, the proxy war). The infamous Pentagon papers had just leaked, which detailed how the US knew it was losing the war, but still sent thousands of soldiers to their deaths, and hence, their reputation amongst the people was low. They were also looking to show the people their military might to justify the absolutely insane amount of military spending during the Cold War. Afghanistan and Vietnam were fresh on the people's memories. In a nutshell, they were looking for an excuse to make the people forget the mishaps of US foreign involvement.

Some reports also suggest that the US actually profited from the war as well, as other countries gave them more money than their cumulative expenses. After the war, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the US heralded the world into a unipolar order with it being the sole superpower, which is rapidly changing with China. The US wrote in clear, capital letters in bold that they were not to be messed with and that those who would mess with them would face the wrath of the US military. It was this war that changed everything.

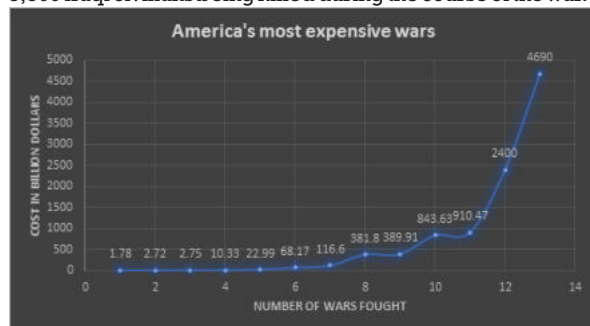
Numbers don't lie:

There is a very famous saying, numbers don't lie. This is the

most apposite in context of the Gulf war. Here is some numerical data to prove the same.

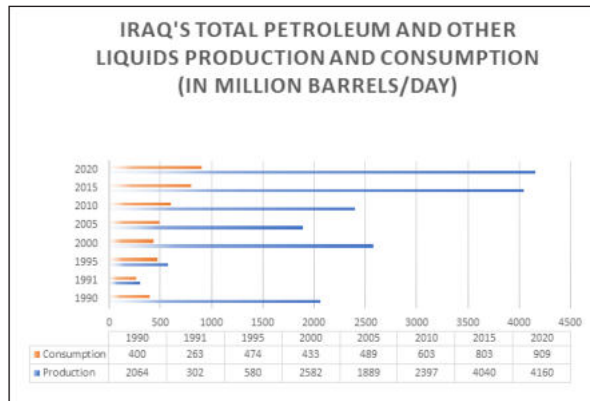


A poster showing some hard-hitting facts of the Gulf War, with 3,500 Iraqi civilians being killed during the course of the war.



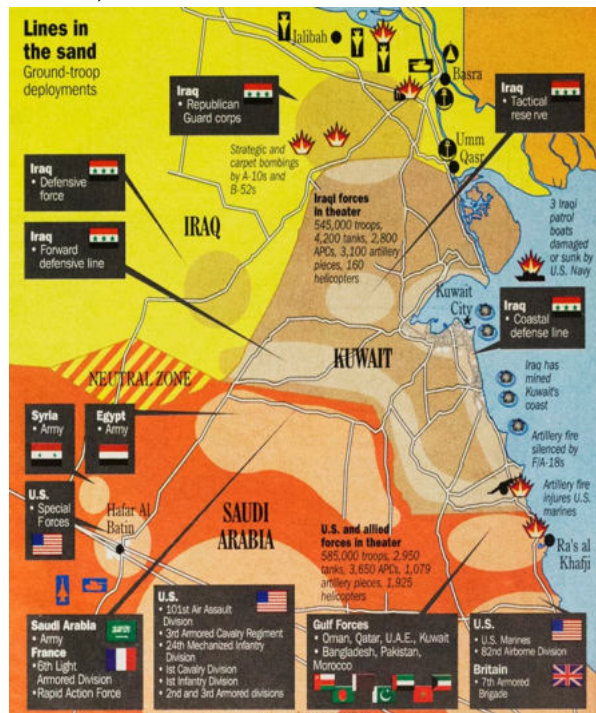
In Iraq, they spent a combined of 2.516 trillion dollars (the first and second gulf wars combined) with 2.4 trillion dollars for the Invasion of Iraq (2003) and 116.6 billion dollars for the Persian Gulf War, more than the cumulative GDP of many countries! This graph is the best example of excessive US military spending, and shows how much they are willing to pay to continue to maintain global hegemony.

NOTE: I HAVE ADJUSTED THE FIGURE OF THE IRAQ WAR, AS IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED TO HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 2 TRILLION DOLLARS, WITH THE FIGURE I HAVE TAKEN TO BE 2.4 TRILLION, AS MENTIONED IN MANY ARTICLES ON THE SAME.



Iraq's petroleum production has fluctuated while consumption has remained constant. The production hit rock bottom, due to the US obliterating any key infrastructure related to petroleum (the war was due to oil and petroleum, as I have mentioned above in the beginning), and even dipped a

significant bit during the Iraq war of 2003 (Operation Iraqi Freedom).



Ground Troop deployments in Iraq for Operation Desert Storm. As visible from the graph, it is quite easy to see that the Iraqi's were up against a huge force of the coalition.



The Highway of Death became one of the most famous symbols of the Gulf War. The US killed hundreds of Iraqi troops trying to escape on this highway, and hence this highway was named the highway of death.

• **THE SECOND GULF WAR (INVASION OF IRAQ A.K.A OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM) 2003**

Abstract:

The world witnessed a transition from the 20th century to the 21st century on paper in 2000 but in practice and on paper, it was on 11th September 2001, also known as 9/11, according to the US calendar. It was a watershed moment as it started the famous wars of Afghanistan and Iraq, clubbed under the infamous War on Terror that the president of USA at the time, George W. Bush waged. Considered one of the most expensive wars that the US ever waged, I knew a bit about the war of Afghanistan, but not so much about the Iraq theatre of this War. That is what I have tried to dwell on and learn a bit

more about.

Introduction:

Iraq first used chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war. More details of Iraq's Biological Weapons program along with a chemical weapons program surfaced after the Gulf War following investigations conducted by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) which had been tasked with the disarmament of Iraq post the war. The investigation concluded that the program had not continued after the war. The U.S. and its allies then maintained a policy of "containment" towards Iraq. This policy involved numerous economic sanctions by the UN Security Council; the enforcement of Iraqi no fly zones declared by the U.S. and the UK and ongoing inspections by the UN. The Iraqi military regularly challenged the no-fly zones imposed.

The investigation by the United Nations found some of these weapons in 1995, but these were subsequently destroyed in 1998 before the UN inspectors left, and in almost all the cases they were destroyed between 1991-1994 and the remaining ones were destroyed in 1998, as mentioned above. In the report, it is mentioned that the UN could not make significant finds for many years.

The US gave its own justification, saying that Iraq failed to account for 1.5 tons of VX, 1000 tons of mustard gas and 550 filled munitions, despite the UN's top body on this, UNMOVIC, saying that this was not true. Even a UN inspector, in fact, when on record saying and I quote, "When you ask the question, "Does Iraq possess militarily viable biological or chemical weapons?" The answer is "NO!" It is a resounding "NO". Can Iraq produce today chemical weapons on a meaningful scale? No! Can Iraq produce biological weapons on a meaningful scale? No! Ballistic missiles? No! It is "no" across the board. So, from a qualitative standpoint, Iraq has been disarmed. Iraq today possesses no meaningful weapons of mass destruction" unquote and even accused the UN personnel were spying. Knowing all these crucial facts, the United States still waged war. But later, had to eat their own words since they could not find any evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD's), and this led to a huge loss in popularity and a downfall in the image and prestige of the country with the Star-Spangled Banner.

Before the war, about a year before, the US covertly sent troops in the region. CIA Special Activities Division and the Army's special forces were there organizing resistance and conducting surveillance on top Iraqi officials, and striking them with precision, degrading their capabilities to a large extent. So, Iraq was already quite defeated, since the forces managed to make the Iraqi forces surrender in front of a vastly overequipped enemy.

The war kicked off in typical US fashion, in an air campaign, with the US, UK, Australia and Poland being the countries waging war. The air campaign, led by the US, made quick work of the Iraqi surface to air missile sites and was swift and effective. The ground campaign was surreal, with US, British and Polish special forces making quick work of the already diminished Iraqi military. Canada, even though publicly said that they were not involved, gave equipment and supported the effort clandestinely. No wonder, the Iraqi government collapsed in 3 weeks.

Another interesting aspect of this war, was the use of contractors like Blackwater. These are former military personnel that are hired by the company for services, like bodyguards and even as hitmen. These contractors were used extensively by the US in Iraq, in order to keep the military casualties down, as the Pentagon, in its records, does not keep a record of the lives lost in service of the country by private contractors, but only keeps them of military personnel actively serving.

Why did the US wage war even though the facts were in open domain?:

This is the first question that came to my mind when I read the above paragraph. Was it to show the world its hegemony? Or was it to show the world what happens when you mess with the US?

According to an article by the CNN, they said that the war was because of oil, as Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world. From ExxonMobil and Chevron to BP and Shell, the West's largest oil companies have set up shop in this country, which is something I agree with to some extent, but this is not the complete explanation of this. An article of Al Jazeera along with a research paper I read called One War, Many Reasons by Markus Nikolas Heinrich talks about the other, darker reason. US Hegemony in World Politics. The US was shattered after 9/11, their morale was shattered and they could not believe such a thing could have even taken place and against the US. They were desperate for an opportunity to show their power and dominance in the world order. The people knew action needed to be taken and wanted to see some results. So, they decided to wage war. Besides Bush officials, there is and was no evidence to prove that the Iraqi's produced biological weapons, but concocted rumours that it was being produced, even though the UN produced evidence beyond doubt, that the country did not, as I have mentioned above. So, in a nutshell, this was a war created out of nothing, and ended also with nothing achieved to show for it, except a propaganda victory for the US since Saddam's government was deposed off and a new regime put in place and got more bases for which to control the region, of which they have no dearth.

In harsh words, a war which was a waste and could have absolutely been avoided in feasible circumstances and could have saved the US more than 2 trillion dollars.

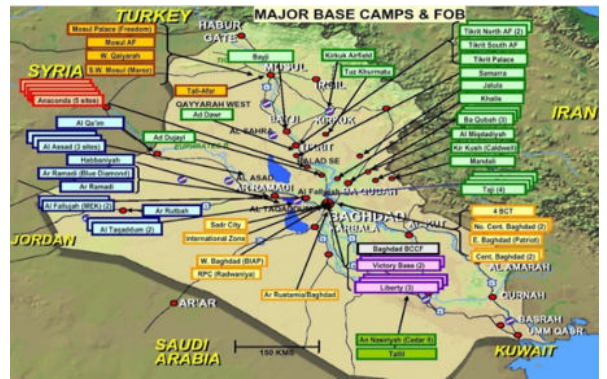
Some visual data about the war:



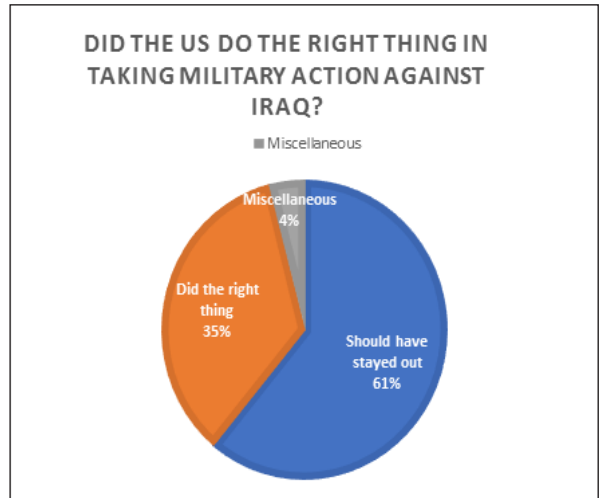
The headlines in the New York Times when at the time President Bush started the air campaign.



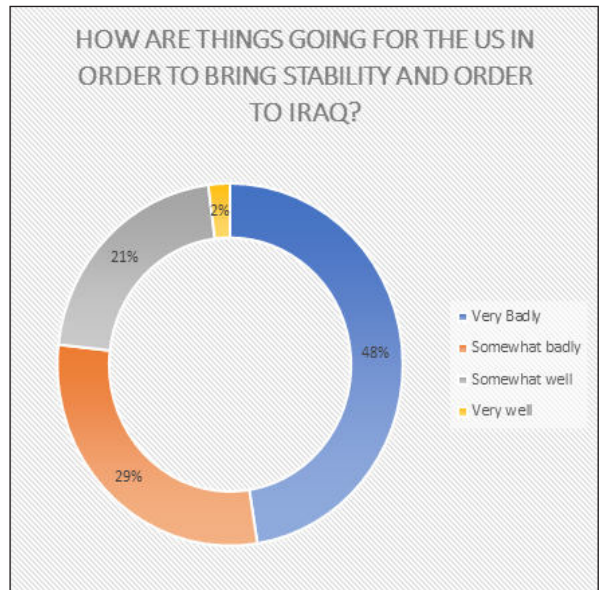
The no-fly zones established by the UK and the US, denoted by the orange colour zones.

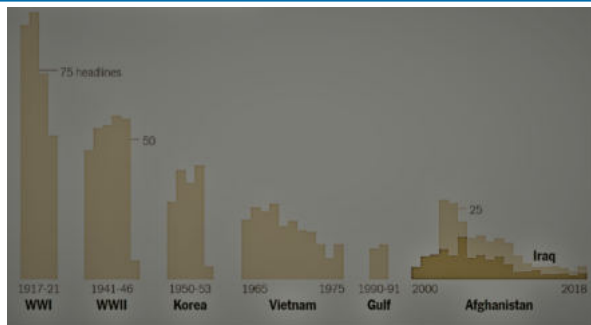


These sites are all the major bases and FOB (Forward Operating Bases) that have been used by the US and the coalition during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003. Look at how many of them are there, no wonder the US has more than 800 bases around the world!

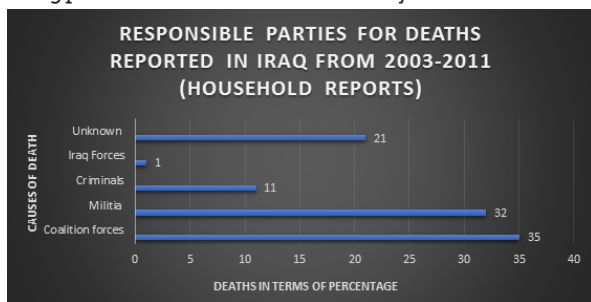


Both these pie charts are made from 2 questions in a poll conducted by The New York Times and the CBS. As evidently noticeable from the poll, the US people in 2005 only were strongly against the US invasion of Iraq, and the government lost the little popular opinion it had left post 9/11, even though interestingly, the opinion was completely opposite, with people favouring the invasion of Iraq when the US invaded in 2003. This opinion must have changed seeing how long the war has extended.





A very interesting graph by the New York Times. This graph shows the number of yearly war related headlines, with the 2 world wars having the highest headlines, but in third place, the Iraq war. According to me, this is because the Bush administration wanted to justify their invasion to the public, even though there was no justification for invading any country without evidence. This shows how desperate the US were to project their image, since the New York Times is ready around the world, as a dominating country, and not the weakling after 9/11. This graph, in my opinion, is the best representation of how the US tried to justify its invasion and to bring patriotism to its zenith in the country.



A graph by PLOS, a non-profit organisation, showing the responsible party for violent deaths every year from 2003-2011 in percentage. Clearly, the coalition was the cause of many.

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