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The Aftermath of Desert Storm

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Abstract

The Aftermath of Desert Storm is continuing to be felt in the region. People still suffer in different ways from that war. The disadvantages of any war throughout history are very ugly and cruel; Desert Storm is no different. Desert Storm changed the Middle Eastern region. Some feel it changed for the best, particularly those who gained their freedom. Freedom, democracy, and liberating humans from tyranny are some of the better resultants of the war. However others think it changed for the worse, not only those who lost the war, but those who are now faced with the violence that might have been prevented if the Coalition forces had continued on to Baghdad before halting the war.

The Aftermath of Desert Storm

The aftermath of Desert Storm hit many areas in the region and affected many countries in the Middle East. The only other conflicts in the region were the Israeli-Arab conflict which has started in 1948, and the Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1988. The Israeli-Arab conflict is still going on, unofficially, and yet Desert Storm made the Arabs come to their senses and sit together with the Israelis on the table to negotiate peace. Some key impacts as a result of the aftermath of Desert Storm were: forced peace negotiations within the Arab world, humanitarian issues, retaliation of the Kurds and Shi'a by Saddam Hussein, and the environmental tribulations.

Several of the Arab countries in the region, such as Jordan and the people of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), went to Madrid, Spain to negotiate a peace treaty and try to settle land disputes. The Palestinians were actually part of the Jordanian Delegation because Israel didn't want to negotiate with the Palestinians on equal terms. This conference was made possible by the cooperation that the numerous countries of the Coalition showed during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This conference, which was known as the Madrid Peace Conference, was supervised by the United Nations, the United States of America, and Russia. When the final treaty was signed, the Palestinians were allowed to sign as their own separate entity, thus shocking the Arab world because this was not expected. Jordan took a total of four years to sign and ratify the treaty, mainly because of land and water negotiations. They finally signed the treaty in 1995. These peace treaties along with the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait are the only positive events that came out of the Desert Storm conflict.

The humanitarian aspect covers items such as war losses and casualties as well as the toll on the civilian populations of the surrounding areas. The human toll from the war was great.

Both sides lost Soldiers during the conflict, but the Iraqi losses were by far the worst. Coalition and United Nations estimates put the Iraq losses at 100,000 Soldiers dead and over 300,000 wounded. In addition, over 2,300 Iraqi civilians were believed to have perished during the conflict. The exact number will probably never be known though. Coalition losses were not as severe as the Iraqi. Losses on the United States side were 472 Soldiers killed. Saudi Arabia lost 18 Soldiers, Egypt lost 10, the United Arab Emirates lost 3, France lost 2, and Syria and Kuwait lost one each. All of these losses were as a result of combat actions. These numbers do not include another part of the humanitarian impact of the war which was the number of forced refugees in the region. Hundred of thousands of Egyptians were kicked out of Iraq as a result of Egypt participation in the war and more than 93% of the Palestinians who were working in Kuwait were kicked out from Kuwait as a result of Palestinian support to Saddam Hussein.

After the coalition forces won the 100 hundred hour by liberating Kuwait and defeating Saddam's army, the Kurds, of the northern part of Iraq, had visions of autonomous rule. The Kurds, thinking that Saddam's recently defeated regime was weak, rose against him in an effort to fulfill their dreams of having their own independent state. Masoud Barazani, head of the KDP, and Jalal Talbani, leader of PUK, would lead this state. These men made an alliance before the end of the war, and ordered their two militias to spread the revolution to nearby towns in order to revenge Saddam's regime by killing the Ba'ath Party officials and any police officers they could catch. These actions allowed them to gain control of a town called Rania near the Iranian borders and also Iraq's oil center, the town of Kirkuk.

Saddam's forces moved to the north after the Kurds fail to gain support from the Allied forces and withdrew. The Iraqi artillery bombed the newly found Kurdish towns which forced the Kurds back to the mountains to seek shelter. The Iraqi army didn't stop there, they used

helicopters to bomb the Kurdish shelters. They even threw flour on them to remind them of the Anfal campaign when Saddam Hussein's cousin, Chemical Ali, used chemical bombs and killed nearly five thousand Kurds.

In the south of Iraq the Shi'a also felt that Saddam's regime was weak and that it was time to rebel against him. They used the same style of revolution as the Kurds, killing the Ba'ath Party officials and police officers. This revolution spread to many Shi'a towns and cities. The Shi'a ambitions were much more than the Kurds, however as they wanted to move to Baghdad. Once again their dreams would not come true as they rested on the support of the Allied forces which never came. One of the reasons behind the lack of commitment of the allied forces to the Shi'a uprising was due to their fear that the Shi'a had or would have obtained an alliance with the Islamic regime in Iran.

Saddam's response for this uprising was much crueler than his response towards the Kurds; he ordered his Republican Guard Forces, who were considered the top of the Iraqi Armed forces, to terminate the Shi'a uprising. The numbers of dead as well as the way they died was unimaginable. This was one of Saddam's worst humanitarian atrocities. One week after the Shi'a uprising, Saddam regained control of the southern part of Iraq through massive executions and random arrests.

Another important issue arising from the aftermath of Desert Storm is the environmental impact of the war. The Iraqi forces, before eviction from Kuwait at the hands of the coalition, burned 737 Kuwaiti oil wells. These fires last for nearly 9 months after the war. The fumes from those fires are considered one of the most complicated and largest environmental pollutants in modern history. The smoke clouds affected the climate in the region. The fires created acid rains which affected the wildlife and agriculture of the region for many years after the war. As a

result of the oil spills, which happened during the extinguishing of the oil well fires, the soil became more solid. This more solid state of the soil made it unsuitable for agriculture purposes due to the prevention of air circulation within the soil. Another issue raised by the oil fires was an increase of lung cancer and other breathing illness. Another environmental concern stemming from Desert Storm was the amount of depleted uranium and other heavy metals such as lead and tungsten left in both Kuwait and Iraq. Their use during the first gulf war has been cited by many as a contributing factor in a number of instances of health issues in both veterans of the conflict as well as the surrounding civilian populations.

In conclusion, one could say that Desert Storm created more problems for the region than it solved. As a result of Desert Storm, there are more democracies in the Middle East today, as well as many more nations officially recognizing Israel as a state. The war also forced Israel to recognize the Palestinians as a legitimate people. Although the Coalition Forces evicted the Iraqi Armed Forces from Kuwait, the war opened the door for radicals to rise up to the surface by using the war as an excuse for their agendas. The lack of support for those agenda's by the allied nations turned some would be allies into our some of our current enemies.

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