The Gulf Crisis-War

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Introduction

The study of international relations often considers the end of the Cold War as a turning point for the understanding of interactions on the international scene. Classical interstate conflicts would have given way to a more complex lecture of international crisis. It is particularly the scope of infra-state conflicts, and more recently, the development of terrorist threat that would have given birth to a new way of perceiving conflicts through the world. Asymmetrical conflicts highlight the complexity to understand the logics and dynamics of crisis and to manage them. The Iraqi example is particularly relevant to underline the failure of classic management of crises. After two major conflicts in 1990 and in 2003, Iraq is today facing the destabilization of the Islamic State. How is the incapacity of states and International Organizations interpreted to contain crises at the international scale? Various research focuses on interstate disputes and on the logic that could drive political entities to engage in an open military conflict. This field of study has been dominated by the realist conception of interstate relations. The realistic anthropology is based on two mains paradigms. On one hand, international relations can only be understood through objective factors; the only guideline for states is power and national interest. On the other hand, actors are considered as rational, pursuing a quest of maximization. States are the major actors of international relations, thus, they are rational actors who seek to increase their national interest, defined as power. "The majority of theories on the origins of war are based on the premise of a rational actor in pursuit of material satisfaction, whether for the quest of power (the homo politicus) or wealth (the homo economicus)" (Lindemann, 2010). Consequently, it is possible to determine a rational meaning of the beginning of a war, observing objective circumstances and measuring the capacity of power and

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deterrence of each actor implied in a crisis. Deterrence policy has been the heart of the study of interstate crisis because it would "impel actors to initiate or renounce war" (Lindemann, 2010).

These theories have been spread again through the development of neorealism. Theorized by K. Waltz and R. Gilpin, neorealism is inspired by the laws of free-market. These theories would profoundly inspired the US foreign policy and would mark the return of the concept of power under the Reagan Administration. The end of the Cold War appeared as a turning point. The US supremacy let thought that conflict was no longer an available way of thinking and conceiving international relations. However, after September 11, the neorealist theory of J. Mearsheimer, developed in *Tragedy of great powers politics* (2001) states that the world is in a constant movement towards war. This theory has reinforced the influence of realists amongst international studies and conflict is still considered the only meaningful analysis grid.

Nevertheless, this rational theoretical framework does not resist empirical studies. This theory states that the same objective circumstances would lead to the same result. However, it is not able to explain why some interstate crises end up as an armed conflict while others, yet very similar, can be resolved in a pacific way. That is what T. Lindemann demonstrates in his book *Causes of war, the struggle of recognition* (2010). He underlines two major theoretical weaknesses of the rationalist approach of a crisis. First of all, the legitimacy of a conflict cannot only be justified by material considerations, especially in democracies involved in open-armed conflicts: "It would be illusory to suppose that political actors can conduct calculated displays of power without taking into account demands for 'rightness' and 'recognition' by those being governed" (Lindemann 2010). Moreover, symbolic elements cannot be neglected. His study underlines the necessity of taking into account *recognition* as a symbolic element that has a determinant impact of international crisis and how they're managed. "Recognition is crucial for emotional reasons – not only for increasing an actor's self-esteem but especially for avoiding shame (dishonour) and humiliation. Recognition is also necessary for cognitive reasons. One's identity is reinforced through its confirmation by significant others: I cannot consider myself without these others and they cannot consider themselves without me. Furthermore, the quest for recognition involves a strategic dimension: in that a good reputation is essential to obtaining advantages in terms of material resources" (Lindemann 2010). War and conflict perceptions have considerably evolved since the first realist generation. Asymmetrical conflicts that spread throughout the world render an exclusive analysis grid obsolete. To shine a spotlight on symbolic motivations, a crisis study has to focus on actors' motivations, perceptions, subjectivity, and evolution.

The Gulf crisis-war offers a perfect example to test these theories. In this crisis, no objective elements would have been helpful to understand and anticipate the reactions and dynamics of the crisis. The historical study of the policies led during the crisis, which distinguish the pre-crisis and crisis phase, will help to analyse and measure their impacts. To understand the specific circumstances of the Iraqi crisis, some contextual elements will first be provided. Then, the crisis will be sequentially studied to analyse the evolution and the dynamics that led to an open-conflict. In order to underline the weight of each policy in this crisis management, scores between zero and three will be granted to each phase[1]. This method will be successively applied to the deterrence policy, the reassurance policy, the economic sanctions policy, and the recognition policy. While the deterrence effects will be based on realist principles, the three others will take into account symbolic motivations. The reassurance policy will study the material and symbolic actions exchanged between the two main actors of the crisis – Iraq and the United States. A particular emphasis will be given to the sanctions policy led by the US and inspired by the liberal approach. Finally, recognition incentives will be studied to analyse each other's perception. This article does not intend to be exhaustive about the events of the crisis itself, only to underline the sequences of policies useful to analyse the dynamics of the crisis and the importance of recognition in crisis management.

Actors and historical background

Historical background: a longstanding rivalry

The roots of the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 are embedded in the background history of the region. The rivalry between the two states can be traced back to the end of the 19th century and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. The basis of Iraq's contention was to consider Kuwait to be a part of the province of Basra, which was included in the Iraqi territory in 1920 when it accessed to independence (Bingham, 2012). In the 1930s the nationalistic Iraqi King Ghazi stated that Kuwait should be an integral part of Iraq, arguing that Kuwait had been a part of Iraq during the reign of the Ottoman Empire before it was carved out of the country by the colonial Great Britain. The claim was later reiterated by some of King Ghazis successors, one of whom even massed troops on the border of the recently independent Kuwait in 1961. The threat, however, was repelled by British troops sent to protect Kuwait. Despite Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's independence in 1963, in exchange for a large payment from the latter, relations normalized between

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[1] A score of 0 will mean the absence of such policy, a score of 1 will imply a weak policy, a score of 2 a partial application and 3 a strong policy.

the two countries with border-disputes and persistent challenges to Kuwait's legitimacy (Bennis, Moushabeck, 1990). In 1973, Iraqi troops escalated the dispute by intruding into Kuwaiti territory, temporarily occupying a military post. Therefore, 1973 was the date of the first use of armed force by Iraq against Kuwait.

Although more nationalistic sentiments originated from the dispute in the 1930s, oil was the main factor behind the territorial dispute in the 1990s. Specifically, one can trace back the divergence to 1935, when the development of petroleum industry transformed Kuwait into a rich and modern country. During the interstate conflict between neighbouring Iraq and Iran in the 1980s, Kuwait provided financial support to Iraq, which subsequently left the country in debt to Kuwait. This financial dimension was an important cause for the outbreak of war, as Iraq demanded that Kuwait should cancel the debt and compensate Iraq for losses incurred when Kuwait had exceeded OPEC quotas during the Iran-Iraq War.

August 02, 1990: the invasion of Kuwait

Until July 17th, the trigger date of the Gulf War, there was no evidence that Kuwait's perception of the threat arising from Saddam Hussein was higher-than-normal (Brecher, 2013). One clear evidence of this misperception of Iraq's intentions is the lack of deployment of armed forces to the border until July 27th. Despite this longstanding rivalry and tension between the two states, in 1990 Saddam Hussein's perception of the situation changed and he saw the opportunity of Iraq aggrandizement against a very small and wealthy neighbour state which would be facilitated by its military weakness. This perception change is key to understand the transition from a long tradition of offensive speeches and territorial rivalry, to an actual crisis. Thus, upon Kuwait's refusal to meet all demands, Iraq invaded and attempted to annex the oil-rich country in August 2nd 1990.

In this specific crisis, Iraq was the trigger-actor of the crisis. Kuwait, was the first actor to experience period change. Indeed, within six hours, Iraq's army reached the capital and conquered the emirates. This act of brutal invasion triggered the change of perception of the threat from Kuwait, but also from other third-party actors. The invasion transformed the pre-crisis into a bilateral international crisis, soon to become a global crisis.

End and aftermath of the Gulf crisis

Immediately after the invasion President Mubarak of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan tried to combine their efforts in order to mediate a solution to the conflict that would allow Iraq to

withdraw its forces in a diplomatic manner. They managed to postpone the coalition's war efforts and the Arab League's condemnation of Iraq for several weeks. They did not, however, succeed in arranging any constructive negotiations between the parties. A number of UN Security Council resolutions were passed before the USA, together with over 30 supporting countries, launched Operation Desert Storm and Operation Sabre in early 1991. Following these operations, Iraq announced its withdrawal from Kuwait on 26 February 1991.

Actors involved in the Gulf crisis

The Middle East region has crystallized tensions since the beginning of the 19th century. Foreign actors have always took part to the evolution of political events in the region. The Gulf crisis did not escape the rule. Apart from Iraq and Kuwait, the Gulf crisis mobilized the attention of various actors: the United States and Saudi Arabia mainly, but also Bahrain, Egypt, France, Israel, Oman, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates (UAE), the UK and the USSR less directly. Even the "international community" became integral part of the crisis management.

Characteristics of the Iraqi Regime

An autocratic regime in the hands of Saddam Hussein

Former territory of the Ottoman Empire, then mandate of the League of Nations administered by the UK from 1920, Iraq obtained its independence in 1932. In 1958, the Hashemite monarchy, led by King Faisal, was overthrown by a military coup that was proclaimed a Republic, but was in reality a regime governed by a military elite. After having resisted to two coups, the regime fell into the hands of the Baath party. Led by the tandem Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein, the new regime aimed to promote the party and increase its control over the Iraqi territory. Officially republican, the regime was governed from an iron hand. Few months after the rise of the Baath party, purges were organized among the political elite and the army under the pretext of a conspiracy. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) became the ultimate decision-making body, enjoying both executive and legislative authorities. The loyalty of the RCC was guaranteed by the majority presence of relatives and tribal figures from Tikrit. To ensure the power of the RCC, the Provisional Constitution established in July 1970, declared the RCC as the "supreme body of the State" (Article 37). Article 43 granted it the power to promulgate laws. The Baathification of the institutions was completed by the obligation for "all newly elected members of the RCC [to be members] of the

Baath party Regional command" (Article 38). Even if a National Assembly was constitutionally recognized, its powers depended directly on the RCC. Progressively, Saddam Hussein overshadowed Hassan al-Bakr, and in 1979, Saddam Hussein was appointed President of the Republic, where he became the chairman of the RCC.

According to the Freedom House Index[2], in 1990, Iraq was not a free nation. Its Freedom Rating Score, civil liberties, and political rights obtained a score of 7.0. Furthermore, the regime obtained a Polity IV score of -9, which considers Iraq as an autocratic regime. In concrete terms, it implied an increasing control over the population through an intrusive presence of political powers in the Iraqi society. Creating his own militia of approximately 50,000 devoted men and five organizations and paramilitary forces, Saddam Hussein organized a complex security organization responsible for exterior and interior intelligence. Any political dissidence was considered as a threat and consequently, harshly condemned. Political violence was also exercised against civilian population for ethnic or religious motives. It is particularly accurate against Kurdish population, mainly present in the North of Iraq, which were victims of violence campaigns (using bombings and chemical weapons). Saddam Hussein's regime was accentuating the political violence existing since the rise of the Republic.

Saddam Hussein: a charismatic and hubristic leader

Saddam Hussein beneficiated from a charismatic legitimacy, developing a real personality cult. He was glorified through propaganda campaign, relying on the public control of the media. Testifying this personality cult, his date of birth, April 28, became a national day of celebration, with parades across the country. Saddam Hussein understood very well the methods for mass manipulation. Thus, he encouraged publications in his honour, in particular an official biography published in 1977 entitled *The Long Days*: "His childhood became mythologized: how he love to study; how he overcame the obstacles of living in a small undeveloped village; and how he had an 'awareness about the national fate' "(Sanssoon, 2011). The "Great Uncle" or the "Lion of Babylon" was considered the descendant of the prophet Muhammad, using the religious components of devotion to strengthen his image amongst the Iraqis.

Saddam Hussein's politics were inspired from the Baath ideology. However, like Joseph Sanssoon states, the Iraqi regime was more a cult than a political ideology (Sansoon, 2011). Hussein did not

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[2] Founded in 1941, the Freedom House is an independent watchdog organization monitoring and evaluating the degree of freedom in each country. Its annual survey entitled *Freedom in the world* consists in a comparative framework that evaluates political rights and civil liberties. It assigns each country a rating between 1 and 7 with 1 being the most freedom rights and 7 the least.

hesitate to use religion, whereas Baath ideology was based on laic principles. Nevertheless, the Baath doctrine, created in Damascus in 1947 by Michel Aflaq and Salah al Din al Bitar, was an integral part of its political conception. The Baath ideology is characterized by three main principles: it is a socialist doctrine, laic doctrine, and it defends the idea of a single Arab nation. According to this ideology, the fragmentation of the Middle East is thus an arbitrary construction inherited from colonialist times. Indeed, Saddam Hussein saw himself as the successor of Nasser and the future Pan-Arab leader. Convinced of the necessity for Iraq to restore its destiny of regional power, which implies for the country to be free from any foreign influence, Saddam Hussein announced in 1972 the nationalization of Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). With the Egyptian decline and its progressive isolation on the regional scene after the recognition of the Israeli State, Saddam Hussein saw the opportunity to defend Arab interests and started to accentuate his anti-Western declarations. Competing with Syria for the leadership in the region, Saddam Hussein tried to reinforce his position in the Middle East by declaring war to Iran in 1980, the historical Persian enemy. However, Saddam Hussein's ambitions were also facing the transformation of the Arab world. The normalization of Egyptian and Jordanian relations, the appeasement of tensions in Lebanon, and the Soviet Union decline deeply impacted the power balance and the alliances within the region. The communist leader was in no position anymore to provide full support to the Middle East socialist nations while panarabic socialism was competing with thriving new radical doctrines and therefore was in no position to be the aggregate of the Arab identity. Thus, even though Saddam Hussein's decision-making process was mainly based on strategic and geopolitical considerations, the way he implemented his politics was completely embedded in his conviction that Iraq's destiny and his own were one.

The image of the enemy

Understanding the way Iraqi leaders were perceiving Kuwait is essential to understanding the trigger of the crisis. As was exposed in the historical background, the relationship between Kuwait and Iraq was characterized by a longstanding rivalry. After the 1961 crisis, Iraq recognized in 1963 Kuwaiti sovereignty but not the frontiers. The territorial conflict was not resolved and Iraq was still considering Kuwait as part of its territory. The main argument exposed by Iraqi leaders was that the Kuwaiti territory belonged to Basra province under the domination of the Ottoman Empire. Tensions were accentuated about the territorial dispute on the islands of Bubyian and Warba. When Great Britain fixed the current boarders of Kuwait in 1913, Iraq lost vital access to the Persian Gulf.

To compensate this injustice, Iraq attempted to claim the sovereignty over the two islands, but failed. Iraq's ambitions were to "create a new base for petroleum and military operations in the Persian Gulf" (Center for International Development and Conflict Management, *n.d*). However, there is no a priori rejection of Kuwait. The conflict with Kuwait was not necessarily functioning as a foundation for national identity since the conflict with Kuwait is more cyclical. Moreover, Kuwait defined itself as an Arab state, and at the same time Saddam Hussein was defending a speech about the Arab unity. Iraq even accepted Kuwaiti financial help during the war against Iran.

However, Kuwait was a weak country with a large power of opposition. And in time of crisis, Kuwait was the perfect target of Saddam Hussein's anger. After his conflict with Iran, Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of enjoying war time to used oil fields in Rumaila. Saddam Hussein increasingly expressed his grief to regional institutions. On July 15, 1990, in an open letter from Tariq Aziz to the Arab League, the Foreign Minister denounced the threatening behaviour of Kuwait: "In the light of this honest and sincere pan-Arab principles, Iraq has dealt with Kuwait despite the past and present facts [...]. What prompted us to write that letter is that we are, regrettably, experiencing Kuwaiti behaviour outside the framework of the pan-Arab concepts" (Moore, 1990). He accused Kuwait of stealing oil resources: "Since 1980, Kuwait has set up oil installations in the southern section of al-Rumaylah oil field" (Moore, 1990). Iraq warned his neighbours and others in the region, but the warnings were ignored. This situation increased the radicalization of Iraqi decision-makers and lead to an invasion of Kuwait. However, there is no dogmatic idea of the enemy.

The crucial interference of foreign interests

To understand the evolution of the Gulf crisis, it is essential to take into account the interference of foreign actors. Historically, the region has attracted foreign interests. In the 19th century, Great Britain and Russia were playing the Great Game to gain influence in the region. The First World War accentuated the interest of Western countries. A series of agreements, among them the famous Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, organized the sharing of the region between France and Great Britain, a situation confirmed by the mandates delivered by the League of Nations. The impact of colonialism is still perceptible in the region and has been a great determinant of the political and economic evolutions in the region. There are many consequences, however, many are out of the scope of this article. The most obvious impacts are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that spread throughout the whole region and the renewed Arab nationalist feeling that spread with the Baath

doctrine and also with the project of Great Syria. Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the US had been its most reliable support, and this support was seen by the Arab countries as the only reason of Israeli existence.

During the Cold War, Western countries had to face the Soviet expansionism in the region. The Big Two delivered a battle to gain influence in the region in order to make their interests progress. The Soviet Union was facing growing difficulties. In 1989 Eastern Republics proclaimed their independence. Some researchers consider that at this turning point, Saddam Hussein saw an opportunity. Western attention was distracted. "The tide of history was running against dictators" (Engel, 2012). The US support to Israel was complicating the perspectives of creating a zone of influence. However, in 1955, Great Britain obtained the signature of the Baghdad Pact, a safety cordon with Pakistan, Iraq, Iran and Turkey. But in 1959, after the coup and the rise of a new Republic, Iraq retreated from the agreement. Iraq was dreaming of expansionism in the region and saw Iran as a threat. The dispute over the region of Chatt-al-Arab accentuated the tensions. In 1975, the Algiers Agreement established a truce, recognizing the free circulation in Chatt-al-Arab. But the rise of an Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979 revived the tensions. Facing the Iranian refusal to review the agreement, Saddam Hussein decided a military intervention was necessary. Iraq obtained the support of Gulf monarchies and a most countries in the region. At the same time, the rise of an Islamic republic was seen as a threat by Western countries since it was falling into USSR's influence zone. To contain the threat, the US granted military and financial support to Iraq. These eight years of war revealed the military capacity of Iraq. Western countries aimed at creating an equilibrium of powers in the region, but Iraq was becoming too powerful. From this moment, the US diplomacy became more ambivalent. On one hand, they had to protect Israel from foreign attacks and to prevent any tension in the region. On the other hand, Georges H. W. Bush wanted to maintain a friendly relationship with Iraq. National Security Document 26 (October 2, 1989) about the US Policy toward the Persian Gulf recognized that the Gulf access represents "a vital interest". This document underlines the US ambivalent diplomacy towards Iraq since it exposed the necessity to "normalize relations" with Iraq, but the document also threatened Iraq from sanctions in the case of chemical weapons' detention while the evidences of Iraq's previous use of chemical against Iran was clear.

Finally, the reason of the foreign country's involvement has always been twofold: a geostrategic interest to gain access to the sea and the economic interest in oil. Indeed, the region is the most important oil producer and exporter of oil and the American economy is very dependent of the

region for its continuous development. Indeed, the United States' oil consumption was broadly dependent on the Middle East procurement, hence their objective to strengthen alliances with strategic suppliers. Furthermore, the Middle East, developing close relationships with allies in the region was also a way for the US to reinforce their influence and monitor *proxy wars* in a known unstable region. In the 1990s, the US administration also started to be driven by a new political vision influenced by the changes in the global balance of power and neo-conservatism. Born in the 1960s amongst the left wing, this doctrine evolved and triumphed after 9-11. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the main figures of the movement were already in a good position to influence the US foreign policy. Neo-conservatism considers the US hegemony as a safeguard for international security and that using force against dictatorships is conform to the Republican principles of the US and defend a universal moral. (Gueldry 2005). In this respect, the defense of democracy justifies any foreign intervention regardless of the domino effect that the collapse of autocratic regimes and dictatorships could cause. The Gulf crisis was the first large scale application of neoconservative theories. The tandem, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney (1989-1993) and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz laid the foundations of neo-conservatism as the guideline of the American foreign politic. In March 1992, Paul Wolfowitz formalized the concept of preventive war in *Defence Planning Guidance 1992-1994;* and in January 1993 Richard Cheney followed his path with *Defense Strategy for the 1990s: the regional defense strategy*, in which he develops the idea of the necessity to not only react to a crisis but also to reshape the regimes a posteriori (Gueldry 2005). Their way to think and analyse the US role on the international scene must not be underestimated as it is essential to understand the US Administration's perception of their own power and ways to strengthen their influence in a new international order, cleared of their soviet rival.

Understanding the Gulf crisis: policies before and during the crisis

Deterrence Policy

Policies of deterrence are defined by Patrick Morgan as "the threat to use force in response as a way of preventing the first use of force by someone else" (Huth, Russet, 1984). In other words, deterrence policies can be defined as the military and diplomatic strategies employed in order to deter an adversary from using force against oneself or one friendly third-party by threatening reprisals. Morgan identifies two different types of deterrence policies: the immediate and the general deterrence. Immediate deterrence relates to a relationship "where at least one side is seriously

considering an attack while the other is mounting a threat of retaliation in order to prevent it" (Huth, Russet, 1984) whereas general deterrence is a way to regulate relationship between two actors, even if none has a real intention to escalate to an armed conflict.

Famous author Thomas Schelling has identified three conditions for a deterrence policy (Schelling, 1960) to succeed. First, the defendant or the protective entity must own enough authority or credibility for the threats to be efficient. In addition, T. Schelling underlines the importance of clear communication in order for both sides to understand the dissuasive value of an act or of speech. Finally, he insists on what he named the "material variable" which is the need for the military balance to be in favour of the defensive or protective political entity.

Military Balance

In 1990, Iraq had one of the largest and best-equipped army in the world with a defense budget of 13 billion dollars and a manpower superior to 1 million soldiers (Pollack, 2003). As for its weaponry, even if Iraq didn't possess the nuclear weapon, the country was known at the time to possess important chemical warfare capabilities that were fully integrated to their offensive and military doctrine (Terrill, 2009). Opposing Iraq, Kuwait had no fair chance to defend itself on its own. A fact well-known by Saddam Hussein who saw this weakness as an opportunity for economic and territorial gain. Therefore, the military balance prior to the Gulf war was characterized by an important disequilibrium in favour of Iraq. Moreover, the latter benefited from a strong credibility which was built upon Saddam Hussein's traditional reign of fear and upon the recent military victory against Iran. However, Kuwait had none, and always had to rely on stronger allies like Great Britain, to defend itself against external threats.

However, in order to properly assess the military balance prior to the conflict, one must integrate the weight of another key player and a military giant in the conflict: the United States. Despite the lack of strong economic and law abiding relations with Kuwait in particular, the latter featured as a key element for the American economic interest in the region.

Before the crisis

Between July 17th and August 2nd, neither of the main actors perceived the other's level of threat accurately. This misperception of the actual risk explains the non-existence of any efficient deterrence policies from either Kuwait or the United States. No other political entities involved in the dispute (like the OPEC members for instance) effectively tried to deter Iraq's ambitions, for example, by using the threat of reprisals or sanctions. One can argue that this is because the targeted

and protective sides misinterpreted Saddam Hussein's threat as part of his traditional rhetoric, and they did not believe that he would invade Kuwait.

Therefore, the OPEC countries intended to calm the tensions and even access some of Saddam Hussein's requests[3]. Kuwait tried to resolve the dispute using diplomacy and by strengthening its position with its neighbouring countries and did not use any display of military force until July 27th. The same day, the US sent military ships to the Gulf region. However, by that time it was too late to actually impact Iraq's decision to make a move on the border (Frégosi, 1991).

Taking into account the lack of defensive or coercive response and the lack of armed forces mobilization, one can argue that a real and efficient deterrence policy did not exist before the crisis. Every political entity reacted too late for them to have any impact on the assailant's strategies. This is the reason that Kuwait's and the US's policies of deterrence can be classified as level 1, which is the lowest level of deterrence policies. As a result of this first phase, the possibility of a war became above average and it increased after the invasion of Kuwait.

Score: 1

During the crisis

Following August 2nd and its defeat, Kuwait stopped playing any independent role in the evolution of the crisis, and the United States became the most obvious and dangerous opponent for Iraq. That is why, for the sake of consistency, from now on this paper will focus exclusively on Iraq and US strategies. August 2nd is a turning point in the US strategies toward Iraq. Having strong interest in the Middle-East region, the invasion and occupation of Kuwait were perceived as a direct threat since it was representing both as an infringement on the status quo in the region, which would have disrupted their influence, and as a threat on their economic interests.

From this moment, one can argue that American coercion diplomacy choices related more to compellence rather than to deterrence. However, some authors point out that these two strategies could be blended into one (Sperandei, 2006). Nevertheless, some differences must be emphasized. Indeed, deterrence policy aims at persuading the opponent to initiate an action, to preserve the status quo, and to eradicate the destabilizing threat – whereas compellence aims at persuading the opponent to stop or to change their behaviour in a more pro-active way. Compellence strategies are often used once the deterrence policies have failed.

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[3] New York Times, 08/25/1990

As mentioned previously, up until the Kuwait invasion, deterrence policies coming from the United States were misleading until Iraq invaded Kuwait. Even if they failed, compellence strategies after August 2nd were quickly orchestrated; and they were the backdrop of all the Gulf war. Thus, the timeframe between August 2nd 1990 and February 26th 1991 is characterized by a full deterrence-compellence policy, using every possible coercive strategy (Huth, 1998). From the "verbal threat to use force" if Iraq didn't withdrawal from Kuwait[4], to the "build-up of military forces for imminent use" according to a "tit-for-tat" strategy, with an escalation of the level of the threat and the policy of strength where "the defender responds with greater than equal levels of military preparedness".

From August 2nd to November 29th, the strategy of the US relied essentially on verbal and political acts as the condemnation of Iraq invading Kuwait and broad military shows of force with the concentration of US troops in the region in a gradually escalating pressure to coerce Iraq's withdrawal from Iraq without using force for as long as possible (Schelling, 1960). This deployment of US forces in the region did not deter Saddam Hussein from going forward in the conflict since he decided to answer by a tit-for-tat strategy, which led to a lengthy display of military power between the two actors. One famous example is the order from President Bush to send 150,000 more American troops in the region to achieve an "adequate offensive option" (NYT 9/11/90, A12 in Brecher, 2013) followed by the Iraqi deployment of 250,000 more men in Kuwait and in southern Iraq (FBIS-NESA, 19/11/90). Military buildup was central for both actor's strategies, but the United States compellent-deterrent strategy also relied on the creation of a worldwide coalition, which used the United Nations to reinforce their legitimacy. Furthermore, economic sanctions were added to these main strategies, which will be developed later on this paper. On November 29th the final warning was issued by the United Nations Security Council (UN, Resolution 678): either comply and withdrawal all its troops from Kuwait by January 15th 1991, or the Security Council will authorize "all necessary means", including the resort to force to the coalition. On January 17th, the coalition began to strike. This strategy from the US and its allies ended up in a stable probability of conflict. Indeed, none of these policies impacted the actions of Saddam Hussein, who firmly decided to stay in Kuwait.

However, the hubristic personality of Saddam Hussein might also have contributed to the lack of impact of the compellent-deterrent policies. Indeed, the outcome of these types of policies also relies largely on the actor's perception of themselves and others. Obsessed by his image, the idea

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[4] Within hours of the border crossing the White House strongly condemned Iraq's action as a « *blatant use of military aggression* » and announced it was « *considering all options* » if Iraq didn't withdraw all its troops. At the same time, President Bush stated that the invasion underscored the need to restructure U.S defense forces. (Washington Post *08/03/1990*).

that his destiny and Iraq's were combined, along with the desire to affirm his position as the leader of the Arab world, one can believe that going back on his actions would have, in his mind, completely discredited the picture of a strong, powerful and independent country that he had built. This seems especially true considering that it was Western countries that were intervening in his territory. However, undeniable evidence of this thought process cannot been proven. In conclusion, despite the full United States deterrent-compellent policies during the post-Kuwait-invasion (which will be graded as a score 3), both camps held their position and refused to make relevant concession, which led to transform a territorial dispute into a globalized open conflict.

Score: 3

Policy of Reassurance

Before the crisis

Also embedded in realist theories, reassurance strategies usually accompany deterrence policies in order to prevent the escalation of a conflict. However, whereas deterrence policies follow the idea that a state only pursues its rational interests and its pursuit for more power, reassurance policies focus on the psychology of political entities. The latent idea is that often conflicts do not result from incompatible interests but from a misperception of the opponent's intentions. Thus, where deterrence and compellence strategies root the source of aggressive behaviour in the acute vulnerability of adversaries, "reassurance encourages self-defined defenders to search for effective ways of communicating their benign an defensive intention to would-be challengers" (Lebow, 2001) in order to reduce the incentives of adversaries to require the use of force by reducing the fear and insecurity that are responsible for escalation to war (Stein, 1992). To do so, reassurance politics often consist in verbal declarations, negotiations or the reduction of the military capabilities.

However, during the pre-crisis period, Iraq clearly stated their will to invade Kuwait, and therefore had no intention to reassure any other political entities. The only actor who employed this type of strategy was the United States, but still in a misleading manner. Indeed, the United States has had a tradition of high tolerance toward Iraq, who was considered a fence against Iran. A week after the Iraqi threat to Israel, the US State Department's spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler declared that the US "does not have any defense treaties […] and no special defense or security commitments to Iraq" (Hassan, 1990). Then, on July 25th, the US ambassador in Iraq, April Glaspie, gave Saddam Hussein the strongest reassurance signal by stating that they "have no opinion on the Arab-Arab

conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait"[5], which was followed by the reassuring tone of President Bush amidst reports of the massing of Iraqi troops near the border: "Let me reassure you […] that my Administration continues to desire better relations with Iraq". All these verbal interactions gave Iraq the impression that there was no serious obstacle to his plan that would come from the Western countries.

To conclude, one can say that there was, without a doubt, no reassurance strategies coming from Iraq and that the reassurance policies coming from the United States actually accelerated the conflict, giving Iraq the sense that there won't be any reprisal to his aggression to Kuwait. Therefore, this strategy failed.

Score: 3

During the crisis

Once the United States fully entered the conflict post Kuwait invasion, they stopped using any reassurance strategies and started a military build-up in order to compel Iraq to withdraw. In vain. Therefore there was no material reassurance strategy, neither verbal since, under the cover of the Security Council resolution, they asked several time to Iraq to stop their offensive.

On the other side, Iraq did not use any efficient reassurance policy even if they pretended to negotiate some ending of the conflict. Until the end of the conflict, the Gulf war can be characterized as an escalation of threats more than a combination of deterrence and reassurance politics.

Score: 0

Policy of economic sanctions

Before the crisis: the economic repercussions of the Iranian-Iraqi war

A crisis is more prone to breaking out into an armed conflict if the initiator is facing economic problems. The same rule applies to the Gulf crisis. The economic variable is particularly accurate because of the perception of an economic injustice by Saddam Hussein. Indeed, since the beginning of the crisis, the degradation of the Iraqi economy is at the heart of the tensions with the Gulf monarchies, particularly with Kuwait. At the end of the 1980s, Iraq is emerging from eight years of an onerous war against Iran (1980-1988). To finance the war effort, Iraq has contracted debts

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[5] Washington Post, 2008

towards the oil monarchies and the US. Iraq was considering this help as natural, given that his country was defending the Arab nations. At the same time, the years of war had seriously degraded the economic capacities of the country. The mutual objective was to destroy the oil capacities of the adversary. During the war, the oil production in Iraq drastically diminished. Facing the stagnation of the conflict, two foreign actors, the US and Saudi Arabia decided to coordinate their politics to put an end to the war by ruining Iran. Coordinating the collapse of the oil price by tripling its production, and the decline of the dollar in the mid-1985, the PIB of Iraq and Iran were divided by three in one year (Razoux, Verluise, n.d). At this time, oil was providing more than 60% of the GDP and 95% of foreign currency earnings (CIA, nd) in Iraq. In 1989, the GDP per capita was approximately $2,300, but it fell to $938 in 1990 (CIA, nd). Thus, at the end of the conflict, the economic issue was twofold. On the one hand, it had to revitalize its oil production. It considered that the non-respect of the OPEC quotas by oil monarchies was impacting the economic recovery. " The Governments of Kuwait and the UAE implemented an intentional scheme to glut the oil market with a quantity of oil that exceeded their quotas as fixed by the OPEC under flimsy justifications which were devoid of logic, justice, or fairness, and with pretext that none of the sisterly producing states supported it" (Moore, 1990). The relationship with the UAE were normalized by some concessions and the signature in March 1990 of a non-aggression and military assistance agreement. Kuwait did not make any concessions to Iraq, increasing the radicalization of Saddam Hussein's speech. In May 1990, Iraq accused Kuwait of "waging economic war against Iraq by over producing oil and provoking a collapse in world oil prices" (Center for International Development and Conflict Management, nd). This complaint was reiterated on July 18, 1990 when the Prime Minister Tariq Aziz declared that Kuwait is "stealing a vast amount of oil from the southern section of the disputed Rumaila oil field since 1980, worth $2.4 billion" (Center for International Development and Conflict Management, nd). On the other hand, Iraq was facing a considerable debt. All the attempts of negotiations led by Saddam Hussein to cancel the debts failed. It is important to take into account the conspiracy rhetoric in the Iraqi speech. Kuwait was considered a "conspirational" actor supported by the US that "systematically, deliberately and continuously harmed" Iraq (Moore, 1990). Economic difficulties rekindled the claims against Kuwait, and Iraq understood that as a declaration of economic war. Considering that the country would not win the economic war, they would use its military forces (Engel, 2012).

Score: 2

During the crisis

The invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 quickly mobilized the international community. International relations were at a turning point. Considering that Iraq was testing the new international system that was emerging, the international community's response was without precedent. The international policy of deterrence was based on severe economic sanctions. Even before the invasion of Kuwait, the US administration used economic sanctions as a deterrence policy to dissuade Iraq from maintaining its chemical and nuclear arsenal. On July 17, 1990, the US Congress voted on the suspension of agricultural promotion programs to countries that were acquiring weapons of mass destruction (Peterson Institute for International Economics, nd). After the invasion of Kuwait, on August 5, 1990, Japan and China embargoed all oil imports and exports from Kuwait and Iraq (Peterson Institute for International Economics, nd).

After the vote of a first resolution on August 2, 1990, the Security Council enacted an international embargo on Iraq on August 6, 1990 with the resolution 661. All State members were now required to contain any import or export coming or at the destination of Iraq or Kuwait. Moreover, any financial transaction coming from or going to Iraq would be frozen. Facing the determination of the Iraqi leader, on August 25, 1990, the resolution 665 reiterated the embargo and asked to the member States to "use such measures commensurate to the specific circumstances as may be necessary under the authority of the Security Council to halt all inward and outward maritime shipping, in order to inspect and verify their cargoes and destination and to ensure strict implementation of the provisions related to such shipping laid down in resolution 661 (1990)". According to a report provided in front of the US Congress in December 1990 by the CIA Director William Webster, the embargo and the maritime blocus would have succeeded in reducing the importation by 90% and the exportation by 97%. The economic sanctions were isolating even more Iraq.

Score: 0

Policy of recognition

International relations researchers have recently questioned rational statements of crisis management. Observing the importance of symbolic in social relations, they argue that recognition policy can have a major impact on the crisis evolution. The Gulf crisis illustrates the importance of self-perception for a State.

Before the crisis

During the 1980s, the other States perception of Iraq has evolved creating a gap between Saddam Hussein's self-perception and the way international community was considering the country. Recognition policy gives the bill a meaning in hubristic regimes like Iraq. Some studies demonstrated that "leaders who are proud of themselves and of their nations such as Adolf Hitler or Saddam Hussein are more likely to go to war for reasons of honour" (Lindemann, n.d). For them, the idea of losing dignity can take precedence over any other consideration. As was already explained, Saddam Hussein had regional ambitions for Iraq. However, the issue of Iranian-Iraqi war modified that perception. Saddam Hussein considered that Arab countries did not take the measure of Iraq's sacrifices. Despite "all the assistance that Iraq received from its brothers", its country "offered rivers of blood in defense of Pan-Arab sovereignty and dignity", declared Tariq Aziz on July 15, 1990, in its open letter to the Arab League (Moore, 1990). The lack of support of Arab nations after 1988 has been suffered as a real historical traumatism for Iraq. International community and Arab countries underestimated the effect of this feeling. This lack of empathy was seen as an offense to Iraqi sacrifice. One can assume that this context generated frustration and revived the conflict with Kuwait.

Moreover, the end of the war with Iran modified the international community perception. The Security Council voted various resolutions condemning the violation of international law and in Resolution 582 on February 24, 1996, deplored the use of chemical weapons, a condemnation reaffirmed in Resolution 620 (1988). In the National Security Defense 26 (NSD-26), the US warned Iraq that the use of chemical weapons would be answered by reprisals. If Iraq was not yet considered a rogue state, the international community started to pay a particular attention to Saddam Hussein's behaviour. The country was not yet suffering a complete isolation but aggregated to the lack of support from Arab nations, Iraq was progressively put apart. At the same time, Saddam Hussein's speech about foreign presence in the Gulf progressively radicalized. It is true that Saddam Hussein always declared an open hostility to Israel and its supports, consequently to the US. But the hostility soon began to be more and more violent. In its National Declaration on February 8, 1990, Saddam Hussein declared that the "Arab Homeland had to be free from foreign spheres of influence" (Moore, 1990). The hubristic personality of Saddam Hussein and his constant obsession for conspiracy should be kept in mind. In September 1990, after the invasion of Kuwait, he exposed in a letter to all the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in the world that they had the evidence of a "conspiration role played against Iraq by the former rules of Kuwait at the instigation of the United States and its allies" (Moore, 1990). Some researchers pointed out that Saddam Hussein was more

vulnerable at that time. Indeed, 1989 was a turning point in international relations. In the Eastern European countries, dictators were falling. He might have understood the events as the opportunity for him to maintain its position or to fall. Thus, we are perfectly in the case of a symbolic vulnerability that is to say that there is a "gap between the image put forth by decision-makers and that which is projected" (Lindemann, 2010).

Score: 2

During the crisis

The invasion of Kuwait can be seen as a turning point for Iraq's perception all around the world. Iraq was disturbing the new international order that was emerging by questioning international law. Deterrence policy led by international community was coupled with a symbolic denigration of Iraq. From that moment, the country definitely failed into the category of rogue states. Few hours after the invasion, the Security Council voted Resolution 660, which condemned Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and required the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces. It was the first of a long series of twelve resolutions in total. All these resolutions were decided unilaterally without according any concession to Iraq nor presenting alternative bargaining solutions. International community denied any right for Iraq on the Kuwaiti territory, demanding the restoration of royal family in Kuwait. Diplomatic relations were suspended with the closure of the US embassy in August. All regional institutions delivered the same message from the European Community to the Arab League.

More illustrative is the rhetoric used to designate Iraq during the crisis. We assisted to the "demonization" of Saddam Hussein. Emphasized by the media coverage without precedent - with CNN - President Bush's speeches permit to measure Iraq's perception after the invasion. The US President confirmed its determination to "see that invading dictator gets out of Kuwait with no compromise of any kind", qualifying the invasion as "a crime against humanity"[6]. President Bush went far beyond by comparing Hussein with Hitler: "There is a parallel between what Hitler did to Poland and what Saddam Hussein has done to Kuwait". With that expression, Iraq was definitely considered as a rogue state and lost any credibility. The atrocities of the Nazi regime are part of the common memory, thus this metaphor was definitely putting Saddam Hussein to the side of the evil. The same rhetoric methods were used for George H. W. Bush's speech on January 16, 1991 to announce to the American - and international - opinion the start of Operation Desert Storm. Each

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[6] New York Times, 1990

time Georges H. W. Bush referred to Saddam Hussein, his name was accompanied with the term "dictator". The war was not an option, but a necessity: "Some may ask: Why act now? Why not wait? The answer is clear. The world could wait no longer. [...] While the world waited, Saddam Hussein systematically raped, pillaged, and plundered a tiny nation, no threat to its own. He subjected the people of Kuwait to unspeakable atrocities" (Miller Center, nd). The role of media was essential during the Gulf crisis. Some researchers denounced later a vast campaign propaganda organized by the States and relayed by media. For the most critical ones, it would even be the "most media lies" (Chevrier, 2002). Between false information and manipulation, the media would have to have contributed to create a distorted vision, accentuating the gap between Iraq and the rest of the world, between the Good and the Evil.

Score: 0

Conclusion

The Gulf crisis provides a classical example of how deterrence policy in international relations do not always suffice to end a crisis, and therefore, constitutes an empirical limit to the realist analysis of interstate relations and of the outbreak and evolution of a crisis. Indeed, despite the United States' determination to assemble a broad international coalition to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and despite the fact that this coalition had enough manpower and technology supremacy to deter Iraq from keeping the same military strategy, the deadline for the Iraqi withdrawal passed and the crisis ended up in an open armed conflict. Three explanations could shed light on the failure of such coercive policies. First, one can argue that the Unites States failed to build up an efficient strategy of deterrence preceding the invasion. However, this would imply that if an effective deterrence policy would have been applied, Saddam Hussein would have been deterred. A point contradicted by various analyses insisting on the hubristic and symbolic motives of the Iraqi President. A second explanation is Saddam Hussein's miscalculation of the power balance. And the third one is that the international community did not pay attention to Saddam Hussein's claims and underestimated the repercussions of their inaction – and then, after the invasion of Kuwait, failed to take into account the importance of symbolic policy. Therefore, they failed to understand the way of thinking of Saddam Hussein and the intentions of the Iraqi regime, which were effectively uneasy to comprehend, mainly because of the hubristic nature of the Iraqi leader. But this is also because international policies in the management of the crisis did not take into account the importance of

symbolic policy. The interconnection of these three misperceptions and miscalculations ended up in an open armed conflict.

The crisis management of the actors of the conflict was the determinant for the future of the country, its future relations with the United States and the evolution of the whole region. The 1991 Gulf Crisis ended in March, with Iraq suffering military defeat and accepting conditions for a cease-fire. March 1991 is a turning point of Iraq history and introduced an area of isolation and humiliation that started by the country agreeing to accept its liability for any loss, damage, or injury incurred by the other actors. Even though this crisis was partially resolved without impeding too much on Iraqi's honour, the continuous Western deterrence policies, the economic sanctions, and the new military weakness of a country governed by a man deeply concerned by his image and his dignity, were the roots of a growing stigmatization of not only Saddam Hussein but also all Iraq, which caused it to enter the rouge state category. On these grounds of tension and incomprehension, the 2003 invasion by the United States was the ultimate catalyst of the humiliation of the population and of the current deep instability of the country and of the region. The disruption and manipulation of Iraq's tribal organization by the American officials aroused internal rivalries who added to the lack of order and the growing mistrust towards Western countries and allowed the slow building of the foundations of the Islamic State in Iraq: a movement which is today destabilizing the entire region.

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