President George H.W. Bush
Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Richard N. Haass

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September, 2003
1975  Richard Hass serves as Legislative Assistant to Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI).

1977-79  Haass works as a research assistant for the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

1979-80  Haass serves as Special Assistant to the Undersecretary of Defense during the Carter Administration.

1981-82  Haass is named Director of the Office for Regional Security Affairs in the State Department.

1982-85  Haass joins the State Department’s Policy Bureau as Director for European and Canadian Affairs.

1983-85  Haass serves as Special Cyprus Coordinator for the State Department.

1989

January  Haass is appointed Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council (NSC).

February  The U.S.S.R withdraws military forces from Afghanistan.

May  Richard Haass and Dennis Ross, Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, lead a U.S. team to Israel. They meet with Israeli leaders, and Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to assess “tentative thinking” about elections. The team also visits Egypt and Jordan. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 05/11/1989)

November  The Berlin Wall falls on November 9th.

December  U.S. Forces invade Panama on the 20th of December.

1990

January  As part of a delegation led by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Kimmitt, Haass and other State Department and NSC staff are sent to Afghanistan to accelerate efforts to find a negotiated settlement
between the Soviet-backed government of Mohammad Najibullah and the U.S.-backed mujahedeen guerillas. Haass indicates that Najibullah must agree to transfer political power for a settlement process to move forward. (*The New York Times*, 01/13/1990)

**May**

Haass, along with Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Robert M. Gates and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs John H. Kelly, is sent to India and Pakistan to discuss worsening tensions in Kashmir with representatives from the Indian and Pakistani governments, and to assess the situation for President Bush. While not seeking to directly mediate, the mission hopes to facilitate communication between India and Pakistan and to get a first-hand look at the situation on the ground. (*The Washington Post*, 05/16/1990)


**July**


**August**

Despite earlier assessments that the large buildup of Iraqi forces along the Kuwaiti border was likely a bluff to increase Iraqi leverage over Kuwait, aides from State, Defense, NSC and other agencies meet on the 1st to evaluate growing intelligence indications that an invasion may be imminent. National security adviser Brent Scowcroft and Haass go to the presidential residence to brief the President. While Scowcroft and Haass are briefing the President, Iraq invades Kuwait. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 10/17/1990)

On the 2nd, Scowcroft asks Haass to formulate and draft a memo for an NSC meeting describing a policy to contain Iraq, slow its development of conventional and unconventional military capabilities, and to effect its withdrawal from Kuwait. (George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, New York: Knopf, 1998, p. 321)

Haass attends the NSC meeting at Camp David during which the use of formal military measures in Iraq are first discussed and the necessity of Saudi cooperation is acknowledged. (Richard Haass Oral History Interview, PBS *Frontline*, 1996, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/haass/1.html>
Haass meets Bush upon the President’s return from Camp David, with a cable on recent Iraqi troop movements showing forces gathering on the Saudi border, Haass also reports that diplomatic efforts to bring Arab governments on board are so far unsuccessful. Bush then gives an impromptu message at a press conference that Iraqi aggression “will not stand.” (Bush and Scowcroft, pp. 332-333; The New York Times, 08/06/1990; PBS Frontline Interview)

After receiving a formal Saudi invitation to send troops, Bush directs Scowcroft and Haass to draft a speech that would lay out his goals and rally the American public. Scowcroft and Haass discuss the speech with the President in the White House residence, and stay in the West Wing to refine the speech late into the night. (Fortune, 09/10/1990)

**September**

Bush, Haass, Scowcroft, NSC Soviet desk director Condoleeza Rice and others travel to Helsinki for a one day summit with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to discuss the crisis in the Persian Gulf. (Washington Times, 09/06/1990)

**November**

Haass accompanies Secretary of State Baker on a multi-nation trip to solidify support for a UN Resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq, to assess the commitment of coalition members in advance of any attack, and to coordinate sanctions policy. Also on the trip are Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz, Assistant to the JCS Chairman Lt. Gen. Howard Graves, and Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Janet Mullins. While on the trip, Haass notifies Secretary Baker of an impending White House announcement concerning a large new deployment of U.S. troops to the Gulf. Neither Congress nor the coalition partners have been notified, which Baker knows will create difficulties for the Administration in its efforts to rally support for the possible use of force. (James A. Baker III, The Politics of Diplomacy, New York: Putnam, 1995, pp. 329-330; The Washington Post, 11/04/1990)

**1991**

**January**

In briefing the President about a potential war with Iraq, Haass calls in four of the government’s Middle East experts. April Glaspie, former Ambassador to Iraq, argues that the army will not rebel, and that Saddam Hussein knows the U.S. is coming and is planning to fight. William Rugh, a foreign service officer and former Ambassador to Yemen, argues that winning quickly is crucial if Hussein is to be kept from rallying the populations of the Middle East to his cause. He also warns that even a military loss for Hussein could turn into a political victory, just by standing up to the U.S. A CIA analyst warns of potential strong actions by Israel against Iraq once war begins. Pat Lang of the Defense Intelligence Agency argues that the Iraqi army will fight hard and skillfully and a
Haass: 1991


February
Haass drafts the President’s speech announcing the end of the war. (The Evening News-Harrisburg, 02/08/1991; PBS Frontline Interview)

March
Haass accompanies Bush to a meeting of U.S. religious leaders, where Arab-Israeli harmony is deemed a necessary precondition to the resolution of Palestinian issues. Haass remarks on the need for prudence in devising policies for the area. (The Washington Times, 03/08/1991)

Responding skeptically to a Canadian proposal to ban arms sales to the Middle East, Haass, at a US Institute for Peace meeting, says that while confidence-building measures are possible, enhanced defense cooperation could provide more security than arms control. (The Washington Post, 03/15/1991)

Scowcroft and Haass engage in a secretive trip to the Middle East where, it is speculated, they are following up on an earlier trip by Secretary of State Baker on post-Gulf War issues as well as Arab-Israeli peace issues. It is believed they meet extensively with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. (The Washington Post, 04/02/1991).

May
Haass briefs reporters on the specifics of the Administration’s “New World Order” as it applies to the Middle East. He warns that the ambitious plan will probably be impossible to complete as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power in Iraq, and then outlines the six dimensions designed to ensure stability in the Gulf region. (The Washington Times, 05/10/1991)

After Hussein rejects the idea of a UN police force in Iraq, Haass says all possible sanctions should remain in place until Hussein is removed. “Iraqis will not participate in the region’s post-crisis political, economic and security arrangements until there is a change in regime.” (The New York Times 05/10/1991; The Independent-London, 05/10/1991)

In testimony before Congress, Under Secretary of State Robert Kimmettt responds to the charge of former Under Secretary of Commerce Dennis Kloske that Kimmett and Haass blocked his suggestion to toughen restrictions on technology exports to Iraq prior to the Gulf War. Kimmett tells the panel he does not recall any specific recommendations by Kloske, and that he does not recall Haass saying the President opposed restrictions on Iraq as Kloske has claimed. (The Washington Post, 05/23/1991)

July
President Bush awards the Presidential Citizen’s Medal to Haass and several others who played important roles in the Gulf War. (Reuters 07/03/1991)
September  After Islamic Jihad announces that it is sending an envoy to meet with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Administration reactivates its hostages task force, which includes Haass and representatives from the U.S. mission at the UN. (*The Guardian-London*, 09/25/1991)

October  Haass is part of the U.S. delegation to the Madrid Middle East peace talks. The U.S. has no specific proposals, but hopes that if the talks continue, the environment might change enough to find small breakthroughs. (*The New York Times*, 10/27/1991)

November  *The New York Times* runs an analysis of television’s impact on the Gulf War. Haass is referenced as saying that the concern about how the images of massive destruction would look to the American public sharpened the already existing moral calculation for ending the war as early as possible. (*The New York Times*, 11/05/1991)

1992

February  Haass defends the Bush Administration’s handling of the Gulf War in an address to the Commonwealth Club. When pressed on the idea that the U.S. did not transform the region, he argues that such a standard is too high. “The region is much better off than it was two years ago”, says Haass. He also argues that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was probably impossible to prevent. Haass recounts how allies in the region were not willing to cooperate with the U.S. until after the invasion. Haass argues that given the fact that hundreds of thousands of troops and air strikes did not make Hussein withdraw, a token show of force was unlikely to deter him. Haass further tries to temper hopes that democracy may grow in the region, but says he is encouraged that Kuwait has made several liberalizing moves lately. (*The San Francisco Chronicle*, 02/14/1992)

May  The White House refuses to permit Haass and former presidential assistant Stephan Danzanzky to testify before the House Banking Committee. The Committee is exploring Democratic charges that the Administration’s relationship with the Iraqi regime prior to the Gulf War may have been illegal due its maintenance of the Commodity Credit Corporation program with Baghdad. (*The Washington Post*, 05/22/1992)

June  *The New York Times* reports that earlier in the year, Haass launched the first formal review of U.S.-Iranian relations and initially floated the idea that a new policy of “constructive engagement” (consisting of lifting some sanctions) might useful. What the review concluded, however, was that any sanctions that could be lifted without domestic backlash would not be meaningful to Tehran, and that any policy meaningful to Tehran would be unacceptable domestically in the U.S. Additionally, the failure of constructive engagement with Iraq and new concerns about weapons of
mass destruction (WMD) proliferation caused Haass to conclude that it was not the appropriate time to ease U.S. policy toward Iran. (*The New York Times*, 06/07/1992)

1993

January

Commenting on the unusually high volume and intensity of U.S. foreign policy action during the presidential transition, Haass observes that “a lot of clocks are not ticking on American time.” In the last eleven weeks of the Bush presidency, the START agreement with Russia is completed, U.S. troops are deployed to Somalia, and further clashes with Iraq take place. Also unusual is the level of cooperation between Bush’s foreign policy team and the incoming Clinton team. (*The Washington Post*, 01/17/1993)

In down-playing Russian and French concerns over U.S. bombing of Iraqi targets, Haass say that it is “inevitable that there will be some friction in the coalition,” but that it is largely the “vicissitudes of coalition politics.” He further states that from the U.S. point of view, the existing UN resolutions provide all the authority necessary for the bombing, since Hussein has still not complied with all the relevant UN resolutions. (*Reuters*, 01/19/1993)

In an NBC *Today* interview, Haass explains that Colin Powell has recommended to the Clinton Administration that it step up military action against Iraq to show the Iraqi military that nothing will return to normal as long as Saddam Hussein in power. (*The Washington Post*, 01/20/1993)
Joining the Administration

- How did you come to be selected as Senior Director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council?
- What kinds of discussions and understandings did you have with others regarding your role in the Administration?
- How did your previous experience at the Departments of Defense and State in the Carter and Reagan Administrations shape your views as you joined the Bush Administration? What kinds of lessons did you learn, about either specific policies or navigating a bureaucracy, from your previous positions?

National Security Council

- Discuss your role and responsibilities as Senior Director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the NSC.
- Discuss the organization of the Scowcroft NSC. With whom did you work most closely? Discuss your relationship with Scowcroft. How involved was the President in the functioning of the NSC?
- What issues most occupied your time?
- Discuss your role as a foreign policy speechwriter for Bush.
- Evaluate the ambiguous role of the NSC in regards to policy facilitation versus policy making.

Foreign Policymaking in the Bush Administration:

- How would you characterize your relationship with other elements of the Bush foreign policy making apparatus (State Department, Defense Department, CIA, DIA etc.)?
- Discuss the workings of the Deputies Committee (including Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Kimmitt, Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates, CIA Deputy Director Richard Kerr, Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral David Jeremiah, Defense Department Under Secretary for Policy Paul Wolfowitz). What was your role in the organization?
- Which crises did the Deputies Committee handle most effectively? Were there issues on which the Committee could not reach agreement?
- Afghanistan: Describe your role in ending the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, including your January 1990 trip to prepare for the Baker-Shevardnadze meeting.
- The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Comment on the Bush Administration’s attempts to move the peace process forward? Discuss your role at the Madrid conference. Did your academic work on “ripeness” influence your recommendations on how to proceed in the Middle East?
- The Gulf War: What role or roles did you play during the Gulf Crisis and War? Why, and at what point was it determined that a “carrots” approach to Iraq was not going to work, and a more confrontational approach to Iraq was needed? Describe your relationship with the Saudi Ambassador, Prince Bandar, and how that influenced the crisis. The decision-making process
leading up to the Gulf War seems to be an almost textbook example of how to manage a crisis, yet the ending of the war appears to have been more haphazard. Describe your role during the end game and evaluate the performance of the Administration.

- The Bush Administration seems to have had a remarkably unified set of foreign policy views in comparison to other administrations. If this is so, what effect do you think this had on decision-making? Do you ever feel that some options did not make it to the table?

**The Bush Presidency in Retrospect**

- How effective was Bush as a world leader?
- How was Bush perceived by world leaders and the diplomatic community?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Bush presidency?
- What features of the Bush presidency were missed or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Bush presidency be viewed by future historians?
TIMELINES

• Richard N. Haass Timeline, prepared by Kelly Erickson, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 06/16/2003.


SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY RICHARD N. HAASS


THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
ORAL HISTORY ROUNDTABLE

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL BACKGROUND


THE MIDDLE EAST


